

The Fallen Sage

Emperor Huizong's Dilemma and the Wise Ruler Doctrine

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失落的圣人

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宋徽宗的困境与明君思想¹
Sònghuīzōng de Kùnjìng yǔ Míngjūn Sīxiǎng

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¹ 'Doctrine' 在英文中表示一系列由特定群体采纳并推行的政治理念或宗教信仰，中文通常翻译为 '学说'、'主义'、'法则' 或 '信条'。本文将归化翻译为更加笼统的 '思想'，以匹配中国传统政治文化语境中的 '明君' 一词。

This work is substantially my own, and where any part of this work is not my own, I have indicated this by acknowledging the source of that part or those parts of the work.

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Abstract

This dissertation is an interdisciplinary study of the reign of Emperor Huizong (1100-1126), whose rule proved so paradoxical: after building a new stage of the Northern Song dynasty that resulted in two decades of prosperity, his empire collapsed within a few years. The dissertation examines the strengths and weaknesses of the three leading explanations of the failure of Huizong's rule, and it shows why they cannot adequately account for the collapse of the empire. The root cause of Huizong's downfall was not that he was an undisciplined ruler, or that he was the victim of military misjudgements, or that he badly handled tensions between his own Daoist beliefs and a Confucian bureaucracy, as has been claimed. The dissertation asserts that Huizong instead had a legitimation problem. It shows that in his struggle for political power Huizong mainly relied upon the doctrine of the Wise Ruler. This doctrine is analysed in some detail, in order to develop the main thesis. It is argued that Huizong's attachment to the Wise Ruler doctrine trapped him within a dilemma: questing for unrestrained political power and at the same time claiming authority as a sage-like ruler. This contradiction eventually triggered his downfall. The dissertation shows that the Wise Ruler doctrine stipulated that (a) the emperor's power and authority should be tightly integrated; (b) that there had to be a subtle balance between the emperor and the other forces in the ruling group; and (c) the ruling group was entitled to comprehensive dominance over the common people. In practice, the dissertation argues, the consolidation of Huizong's political power destroyed the balance in the ruling group and exacerbated tensions with the disadvantaged common people. The tensions between the emperor's power and authority sowed the seeds of the Northern Song empire's destruction. The dissertation argues that the case of Huizong is of great relevance for future research on pre-modern and modern Chinese political leadership, political system and political culture, and that the issue of power and authority is a perennial challenge for all rulers.

摘要

本文是一篇对宋徽宗统治时期（1100-1126）的跨学科研究，其统治已被证明极具悖论性：在建立起北宋皇朝的全新阶段并迎来长达二十年的繁荣之后，其帝国在数年间土崩瓦解。本文考察了对宋徽宗统治失败的三种主要解释的优缺点，并显示这些解释为何不能充分说明帝国的崩溃。宋徽宗垮台的根本原因不在于上述解释所声明的他是一名不自律的统治者，或他是军事误判的受挫者，抑或他对自身道教信仰与儒家官僚之间紧张状态的不当处理。本文反而认为宋徽宗的统治合法化具有问题。这一问题显示在宋徽宗争夺政治权力的过程中其主要依赖于明君思想。为发展本文的主要论点，本文对该思想的一些细节进行了分析。本文的主要论点是宋徽宗对明君思想的依附令其陷入了一个两难的困境：在寻求无掣肘政治权力的同时宣称自身圣人统治者身份的权威。这种矛盾最终导致了他的垮台。本文显示明君思想规定：（甲）皇帝的权力与权威应当紧密结合；（乙）皇帝与统治集团中的其他势力之间必须保持有微妙的平衡；以及（丙）统治集团理应在普通百姓之上具有全面的统治地位。本文认为在实践中，宋徽宗对自身政治权力的巩固破坏了统治集团内部的平衡状态并恶化了统治集团与处于劣势的普通百姓之间的紧张局势。皇帝的权力与权威之间的紧张关系为北宋帝国的灭亡埋下了种子。本文认为，宋徽宗的案例对今后研究古代与近现代中国的政治领导、政治制度与政治文化具有重要意义，而有关权力与权威的问题对所有统治者都将是一个长期存在的挑战。

Notes on Translation and Chinese Conventions

This dissertation romanises Chinese characters in accordance with contemporary Mainland China's official standard, *Basic Rules of the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet Orthography* (GB/T 16159-2012). In addition, it adds footnotes in order to show some details of the translating process from Classical Chinese to English. Moreover, it provides a Chinese Character Glossary at the end of the dissertation.

Ancient Chinese historical documents use the Chinese calendar to record dates. According to the Chinese calendar, a 12-month-year has only 354 days. Furthermore, especially to link the lunar year to the solar year, the Chinese calendar inserts an intercalary month approximately once every three years. As a convenience to readers, this dissertation converts all Chinese dates into Western dates (as per the Gregorian calendar). The author has used the online tool developed by Academia Sinica Center for Digital Cultures (<https://sinocal.sinica.edu.tw>) to undertake the calendar conversions.

In this dissertation, all premodern Chinese people's names use Chinese order (with family name first), and all modern Chinese authors' names use English order (with given name first). In addition, although premodern Chinese people preferred using their courtesy names in daily life, the dissertation refers to them by their given names only. All members of the imperial house of Northern Song normally had multiple names in historical records. In order to avoid confusing readers, the dissertation calls all emperors by their temple names, all empresses and consorts by their surnames, and all other members by their given names.



Seated Portrait of Emperor Huizong

Artist: Anonymous

Date: painted in the Song period (960-1279)

Source: National Palace Museum of Taipei (OPEN DATA)

‘亢龙，有悔 (Kàng lóng, yǒu huǐ)’ – 《易经》

‘... the dragon exceeding the proper limits. There will be occasion for repentance.’

– *I Ching*, translated by James Legge (2013, p. 80)

Introduction

Ensnared within his palace pleasure gardens, a dissolute aesthete-emperor paints exquisite birds and flowers, even as the empire rots from corruption within and succumbs to invasion from without. Such is the classical historiographic image of Emperor Huizong ... Rich in tragedy and irony, the contradictions and contrasts of Huizong's reign have been suppressed by historians, who have reconstructed a fragmentary corpus of primary sources into a didactic and moralistic narrative.

Levine (2009, p. 556)

This dissertation seeks to contribute to a problematic topic in the politics of China: the issue of the ruler's power and authority. Based on this primary goal, it provides a study of the reign of Emperor Huizong (1100-1126), the penultimate ruler of the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127). The dissertation examines the doctrine of the Wise Ruler (*Míngjūn Sīxiǎng*) in Chinese political culture,² and explains why the dramatic rise and fall of Huizong within a 26-year reign via a new research focus – his legitimation problem. The research findings establish a dilemma in which Huizong trapped: the emperor oscillated between a quest for unrestrained political power and a claim to authority as a sage-like ruler. The dissertation argues that this contradiction decisively triggered his final failure.

Failure of Emperor Huizong

The reign of Emperor Huizong can be divided into three stages. From 1100 to 1102, Huizong gradually mastered the highest political power of the Northern Song empire after a series of political struggles. On 23 February 1100, Emperor Zhezong (r.³ 1085-1100) unexpectedly died at the age of 23 without a son, and this triggered an intense competition for the throne (Ebrey 2014, pp. 38-70). Huizong won the throne relying upon the support of Empress Dowager Xiang, though as Zhang Dun⁴ said he was neither the first heir in accordance with the principle of eldest-successor (*lǐ zhǎng*) nor the legal heir permitted by the rituals and laws of the imperial house (*lǐ lǜ*) (Tuo ed. 1977, *juan* 19, pp. 357-8). In the first year, to get rid of Xiang's control Huizong followed the norms of the Wise Ruler to develop his authority in government, and then in secret he cooperated with bureaucrats to resist against Xiang and her relatives (Ebrey

² The term 'the Wise Ruler (*Míngjūn*)' has a variety of alternatives in Eastern Asian political culture such as 'Sage-Like Ruler' (Yu 2016), 'Sage King/Sage Ruler' (Allan 2015; Kim 2014), 'Model Ruler' (Kuhn 2009) and 'Sacred Kingship' (Ebrey 2014).

³ In this dissertation, the abbreviation 'r.' stands for 'reigned'.

⁴ Zhezong's grand councillor.

2014, pp. 38-82). Meanwhile, on the surface Huizong maintained an alliance with Xiang to defeat another potential heir to the throne: Prince Si (Zhang 2004). As a result, Huizong eliminated Xiang's influence and Si's faction, and consolidated his position of monarch (Zhang 2004, pp. 4-5).

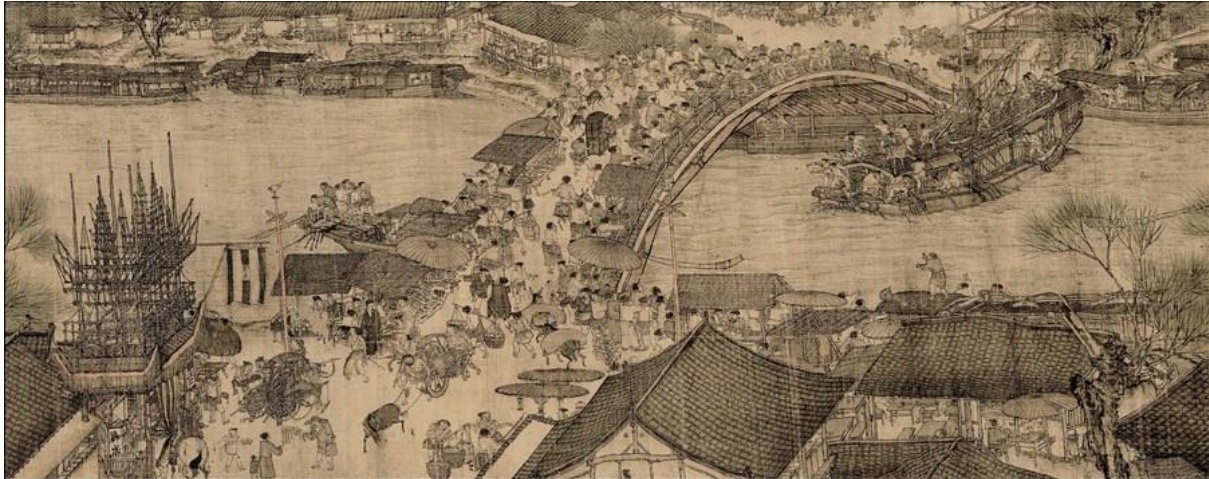
From 1102 to 1119,⁵ Emperor Huizong first established a new order in the imperial government by through a violent centralisation of political power, and then led his empire to usher in a flourishing period. After a failed try to form a new government based on factional conciliation (cf. Ebrey 2014, pp. 71-97; Levine 2009, pp. 566-71; Zhang 2002; Zhang & Qing 2018), Huizong built his own faction consisting of three minor forces to control the governmental system: marginalised scholar-officials (*shìdàfū*), eunuchs, and Daoists⁶ (Ebrey 2014, pp. 98-158). Then, Huizong launched three cleansings of bureaucracy from 1102 to 1104 and serious political persecutions of blacklisted scholar-officials (Ebrey 2014, pp. 98-119; Levine 2009, pp. 572-8). Through this vigorous centralisation of government, Huizong and his allies dominated the political system of Northern Song (Levine 2009, pp. 578-89; Zhang 2004, pp. 4-5). Relying upon his unrestrained political power, Huizong and his allies implemented extensive reforms, involving the integration of the fiscal and tax system (Huang 2002, p. 40; Levine 2009, pp. 589-96; Wang 2014), the legalisation of the governmental monopoly of key circulating commodities (Ebrey 2014, pp. 91-105, 318-35; Huang 2002, p. 39; Xu ed. 1957, *juan* 9789, pp. 5215-28), the improvement of the management of domestic and international trade (Ebrey 2014, pp. 90-103, 321-35, 373-5; Huang 2002, p. 40; Xu ed. 1957, *juan* 9789, pp. 5215-28), the streamlining of the personnel system (Ding 2010; Xu ed. 1957, *juan* 27484, pp. 3723-6; Zhang 2020), the adjustment of the currency (Ebrey 2014, pp. 329-42; Huang 2002, pp. 39-40),

⁵ Some policies started earlier, in 1101.

⁶ Daoists participated in Huizong's government later than the other two forces, but they kept contact with Huizong during the early stage of his reign.

the expansion of the educational and examinational system (Chaffee 1985; Levine 2009, pp. 585-9; Tian 2007), the enlargement of the imperial clan institutions (Levine 2009, pp. 600-2), the progress of the public health system (Goldschmidt 2006, pp. 275-323), and the establishment of widespread government-funded charity for vulnerable social groups (Ebrey 2014, pp. 105-7; Levine 2009, pp. 596-600; Zhang 2015). These reforms further concentrated social resources, and caused extravagance and corruption in the empire (cf. Levine 2009, pp. 603-6; Meng 1961; Wang 2014). During this period of 1102 to 1119, he constantly kept domestic social conditions stable, and actively quested for the geopolitical advantages of Northern Song via a series of wars against Tibetan states⁷ and Western Xia (Levine 2009, pp. 615-22). The Northern Song empire peaked in terms of population (cf. McDermott & Yoshinobu 2015, pp. 326-8; Tuo ed. 1977, *juan* 85, p. 2095), cultural prosperity (Ebrey 2008) and size of territory (cf. Lin 1998; Smith 2006, pp. 78-130; Tan 1991, 51-2). Through devoting himself to Daoism, Huizong presented as a sage-like ruler with divine authority (Ebrey 2014, pp. 131-294, 343-71; Levine 2009, pp. 606-14). He seemed to become the greatest ruler of the Northern Song dynasty.

⁷ Mostly in the Qingtang region.

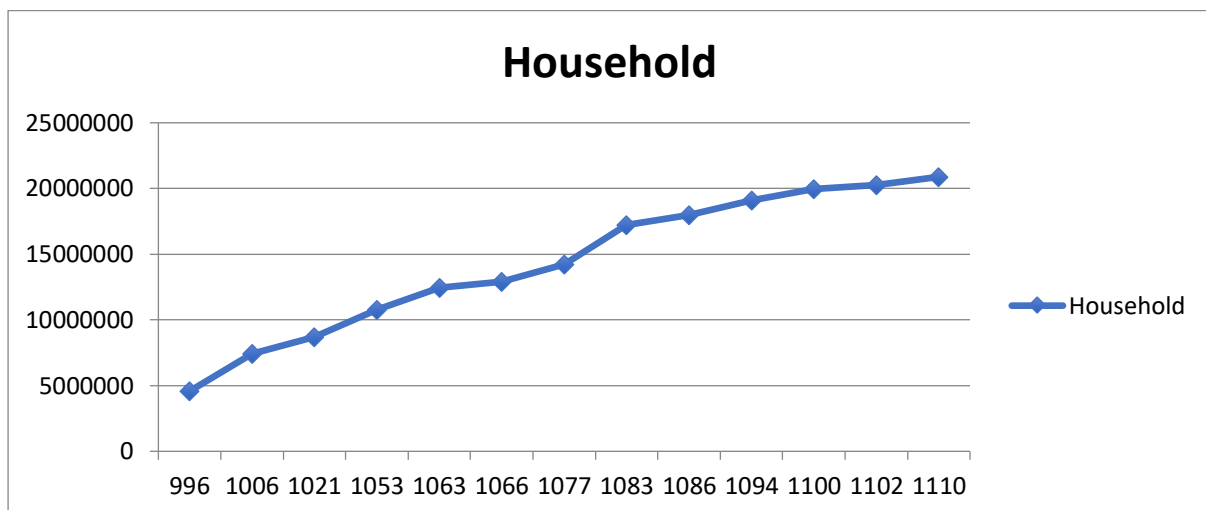


Scene: Inside the Capital of Northern Song

A section of *Along the River During the Qingming Festival*⁸ shows the commercialised Capital.

Artist: Zhang Zeduan (1085-1145)

Source: *Shanghai Daily* (online archive)



Population Growth of Northern Song (996-1110)⁹

Drawn by the author

⁸ Or *Peace Reigns over the River*; see Ebrey (2014, p. 643), 清明上河图. For a critique of *Along the River During the Qingming Festival*, see Ihara and Yoshida (2001).

⁹ This diagram has been drawn by the author based on McDermott and Yoshinobu (2015, p. 328), and Tuo (ed. 1977, *juan* 85, p. 2095).



Emperor Huizong's Northern Song (1100-1126)¹⁰

Drawn by the author

¹⁰ This map has been drawn by the author to show the largest extent of the Northern Song empire during the reign of Emperor Huizong (1100-1126). In general, the map is based on the Full Map of the Liao-Northern Song Period in *The Concise Historical Atlas of China* Tan ed. 1991, pp. 51-2). The map marks the northwestern disputed territories of Northern Song according to Qian (2004, p. 100), Wang Anzhong's *Chuliao Ji* (1971, *juan* 6, *Inscription of Dinggong Jifa*) and Wang Hou's *Gong Zhuang* cited in Yang (ed. 2006, *juan* 140). The map marks Northern Song's tributaries and neighbours according to Beckwith (2009), Bielenstein (2005, pp. 9-100, 111-92, 473-672), Dar (2019), Guo and Zhang (2001, p. 305), Millward (2007), Tuo (ed. 1977, *juan* 22, 485-8, 490-6), van Schaik and Galambos (2011), Yang (2005) and Yang (2014, Chapter 3). The map marks the southwestern Jimi systems in Northern Song according to Guo (2000). The map marks the original location of 'Sixteen Prefectures' and the redefined region of 'Sixteen Prefectures' according to Mostern (2011), Zhao (1966) and Marshall Agnew's map cited in Ebrey's *Emperor Huizong* (2014, p. 60). Northern Song Chinese believed the lost 'Sixteen Prefectures' region is a part of Song's heartlands. The map shows the approximate extent of Northern Song during the reign of Emperor Huizong (1100-1126) described in the above-mentioned literature, and it may not represent the actual historical borders of the empire.

However, the story was not at an end. Emperor Huizong dramatically lost everything in the last few years of his reign. From 1119 to 1126, Northern Song suffered a series of turbulences, disasters and wars. Huizong's throne started to show cracks when extreme extraction of revenue and severe corruption of bureaucracy triggered popular uprisings from 1119 to 1121 (Levine 2009, pp. 614-5, 622-7). So as to restore his authority, in 1121 Huizong motivated his empire to attack the Liao dynasty and justified this invasion as a recovering operation of the lost heartlands of Northern Song – 'Sixteen Prefectures (Yān Yún Shíliù Zhōu)' (Levine 2009, pp. 627-33). However, a range of military setbacks destroyed his ambition and exacerbated the decline of his authority (Ebrey 2014, pp. 399-414). This failed war ignited a violent unrest that swept through the north of Northern Song in 1124 (Bi ed. 1928, *juan* 95). In 1125, Jin broke the Jin-Song alliance against Liao and started the invasion of Northern Song (Levine 2009, pp. 633-9). In order to quell the anger of Jin, Huizong's courtiers persuaded him to urgently abdicate the throne (Ebrey 2014, pp. 421-34). However, Huizong's abdication did not stop Jin's invasion. It instead caused a sudden division of the bureaucracy, and Northern Song 'left itself open to a Jurchen blitz ... as if it were undefended' (Smith 2009, p. 28). On 20 March 1127, Jurchen troops broke through to the imperial capital Kaifeng, and captured Huizong and his family (Levine 2009, pp. 639-43). In the end, Northern Song, one of the most advanced countries in the 12-century world, abruptly collapsed under the attack of a 12-year-old nomadic dynasty. Even in modern-day China, many people still believe that the failure of Huizong is one of the most shameful chapters in the country's history.

Three Leading Explanations for Huizong's Failure

The reflection on the failure of Emperor Huizong started after the establishment of the Southern Song dynasty in 1127. At that time critics accused Huizong and his allies as the chief culprits in the collapse of the Northern Song dynasty, and the official records condemned Huizong's

rule and systematically excluded his achievements (Levine 2009, p. 558). Then, generations of Chinese official historians adopted these condemnatory attitudes to Huizong, resulting in a distortion of the image of Huizong (Levine 2009, p. 558). Huizong was stereotyped as a ‘playboy emperor (fēngliú tiānzǐ)’ and had a set of prejudicial labels (such as ‘extravagant’, ‘prurient’ and ‘complacent’) applied to him (cf. Ren 1994; Si 1993). This condemnation deeply influenced many Chinese scholars’ view of Huizong’s rule (Bao 2009, p. 115).

Many Chinese scholars believed that the reign of Emperor Huizong was a ‘completely downward spiral’ (Levine 2009, p. 560), and they shared a very influential explanation on his final failure: the Northern Song empire collapsed because Huizong was an *undisciplined ruler*. In *Song History*, ancient Chinese historians in 1300 CE stated that:

By tracing the causality of his downfall, [it should be considered that] Emperor Huizong was neither a fool nor a tyrant, and there were no usurpers during his reign. The special reason of Huizong’s failure was his arrogance sourced in his mortal wisdom and partiality, which caused the marginalisation of upright courtiers and his intimation with crafty flatterers (Tuo ed. 1977, *juan* 22, p. 418, my translation).¹¹

Consistent with this, Wang Fuzhi (1619-1692) in *Arguments on Song* also commented that Huizong was an undisciplined and arrogant man (zì zī kuáng fū). Furthermore, he indicated the inevitability of Huizong’s collapse:

The ruler¹² did not seem to be the ruler over subjects, and the ministers did not seem to be the ministers under ruler ... with scattered people to resist against a catastrophe, everything was tending to a collapse (Wang 1928b, *juan* 8, my translation).¹³

¹¹ The original text in Classical Chinese is: 迹徽宗失国之由，非若晋惠之愚、孙皓之暴，亦非有曹、马之篡夺，特恃其私智小慧，用心一偏，疏斥正士，狎近奸谀。

¹² Huizong.

¹³ The original text in Classical Chinese is: 君不似乎人之君，相不似乎君之相...拥离散之人心以当大变，无一而非必亡之势。

In establishing their idea of undisciplined ruler, generations of Chinese historians pointed to three aspects of Huizong's personality weakness (cf. Levine 2009; Tuo ed. 1977, *juan 22*):

- (a) Huizong was a decadent and negligent ruler who succumbed to his manipulative and dishonest courtiers;
- (b) Huizong was a narcissistic and pretentious ruler who was brought down by flattery;
- (c) Huizong had overindulged passions for art, and it damaged his ability to govern and wasted huge governmental revenue.

In summary, the explanation of undisciplined ruler assumes that Huizong's personality could decisively impact the fate of his empire, and it positions Huizong as a bad ruler without the self-awareness needed as the highest ruler of China so that his empire would inevitably collapse.

Levine (2009) critiques that the explanation of undisciplined ruler is based on the moralistic bias of Chinese historiography and the distorted image of Emperor Huizong, and then he provides another explanation for the failure of Huizong: the *military misjudgements* Huizong made in the wars against Liao and Jin directly caused the collapse of the Northern Song empire. First of all, Levine (2009, p. 615) suggests that the resilience of Northern Song even after a series of popular uprisings and natural disasters was still enough to continue the rule of Huizong. Then, Levine (2009, p. 615) argues that the central problem is that Huizong and his courtiers were 'unaware of their own strategic and tactical blind spots' in the wars against Liao and Jin. To support this argument, Levine (2009, pp. 615-43) underlines that after their early victories on the northwestern frontier of Northern Song from 1103 to 1119, Huizong and his courtiers were too overconfident to meticulously plan the invasion of Liao and the defence to Jin. During the wars against Liao and Jin, they also did not carefully check the feedback from the lower officials and generals, and the imperial court's commands thus aggravated the chaos on the war-front (Levine 2009, pp. 627-33). Ultimately, the lack of vigilance in the imperial court

decisively caused the military setbacks, the diplomatic incompetence, and the collapse of the imperial armies (Levine 2009, pp. 633-43).

Relatively recently, Ebrey (2014) finished a comprehensive biography of Emperor Huizong, and in her work she recast his image into one of a more enterprising ruler who paid much attention to make his empire powerful and magnificent. In formulating her positive opinion of Huizong's reign, Ebrey (2014) exposes deep contradictions of political ideology within the Northern Song empire that Huizong had to solve, and she argues that the emperor himself should not be the only factor explaining the collapse of the empire. Ebrey (2014) points out the importance of Huizong's Daoist beliefs, and focuses on the *ideological confrontation* between Huizong and his Confucian bureaucracy. Exploring these matters in detail, Ebrey (2014, pp. 343-71, 505-15) shows that following his Daoist beliefs, Huizong carried out a range of radical policies to establish his authority as a sage-like ruler and to realise the ideal society of China in his imagination, but his actions aroused a dissatisfaction among the Confucian scholar-officials in bureaucracy. It is evidenced that the contest between Daoism and Confucianism in government damaged Huizong's cooperation with the scholar-official group, and compromised his ability to govern the empire (Ebrey 2014, pp. 343-4). During the crisis of his late reign, it was difficult for Huizong to run the government smoothly without a devoted Confucian bureaucracy, no matter how powerful he was (Ebrey 2014, pp. 395-448). Therefore, Ebrey (2014, pp. 421-74) implies that the ideological confrontation between monarch and bureaucracy eventually resulted in the alienation of the Confucian bureaucracy and the lack of leadership of Northern Song during the wars against Liao and Jin.

Strengths and Weaknesses

This dissertation observes that the three leading explanations – undisciplined ruler, military

misjudgements and ideological confrontation – are highly linked with each other. In the development of the explanation of military misjudgement, although Levine (2009) strictly critiques traditional Chinese historians' condemnatory comments, his argument on Emperor Huizong's overconfidence in the wars against Liao and Jin shared a similar thinking with the traditional historians: the emperor played an active and decisive role in the decision-making process. Ebrey (2014) also accepts that the choices Huizong made would significantly impact the historical outcomes, but her main breakthrough is to link Huizong's political practice with the broad background of Northern Song: institutional settings, governmental culture, religious beliefs and the society in which Huizong was living. Ebrey's (2014) biography is informative, providing rich details of Huizong's cultural environment and his life experience, and her work has provided a foundation for this dissertation further to explore the external factors in Huizong's failure. In particular, Ebrey's (2014) emphasis on Huizong's cultural identity and political ideology suggests that it is necessary to learn about the interrelationship between political culture and institutional settings in Chinese history (Ropp ed. 1990) in order to deeply understand the actions of Chinese rulers and the dynamics of the Chinese political system in the past and present (cf. Brown 2014; Levine 2015; Zhang 2019).

Based on Ebrey's (2014) new way of approaching the case of Emperor Huizong, this dissertation takes a political-centric view to discover the root cause of Huizong's failure in the institutional settings of Northern Song. The dissertation argues that the root cause, missed in the three leading explanations, is the problem of Huizong's legitimation. For traditional Chinese historians, they have paid too much attention to Huizong's 'evil' thoughts and behaviours, without deeply examining the structures and mechanisms of the Northern Song political environment. For Levine (2009), his interpretation mainly focuses on the supremacy of Northern Song over its neighbour states at the multinational level rather than Huizong's

dominance within the ruling group at the domestic level. For Ebrey (2014, pp. 368-71), when she discusses the clash between Daoism and Confucianism, she comments that there is in fact no evidence to show that Huizong's devotion to Daoism was about strengthening his authority. However, Ebrey (2014) does not see Huizong as weak early in his political career, and this point appears in many Chinese scholars' works (e.g. Huang 2002; Wang 2015; Zhang 2004; Zheng 2020). From the representative example, Zhang (2004) stresses that Huizong was responsible for a violent centralisation of political power in his early rule, and this centralisation destroyed many forces in the Northern Song political system so that he achieved unrestrained political power. Although in these works many Chinese scholars maintain the negative stereotype of Huizong and his rule, their sensitivity in respect of a powerful ruler in a centralised political system suggests the importance of studying Huizong's power and authority.

This dissertation argues that Emperor Huizong's rule is an abnormal case in the Northern Song dynasty. Most of the time the Northern Song monarchs' political power was strictly restrained due to the highly developed bureaucratic institutions (Kuhn 2009, pp. 29-48). However, unlike his predecessors, Huizong in fact built an extremely centralised political system to concentrate political power and social resources without limitations. The concentration of Huizong's political power had weakened the bureaucracy's capability to restrict his adventurous decisions and radical policies. By tracing the origin of Huizong's centralisation measures, the dissertation argues that the centralisation was the result of his legitimisation, which in turn was the result of his victory in the heir competition. After the centralisation process, Huizong successfully achieved unrestrained political power, and he thus claimed authority as a sage-like ruler. Paradoxically, in the late crisis of his reign Huizong lost everything, and no one showed strong loyalty to his rule. Therefore, the dissertation underlines that Huizong's failure is largely an issue of power and authority. The dissertation argues that it is necessary to find the core of the

institutional context of Huizong's rule in order to understand the source of his power and authority. This core is not Huizong's personality nor his beliefs; instead, it is a general and practical doctrine that mixes with multiple schools of thought in Chinese political culture: namely, the Wise Ruler doctrine.

Heart of the Puzzle of Huizong's Rule

Originating in ancient Chinese political schools of thought (such as Confucianism, Daoism, Legalism and Moism), the Wise Ruler doctrine comprises the concept of the Wise Ruler with political and institutional derivations (Chan 1963). As a mixed concept, the Wise Ruler has not yet been well defined, though a range of English scholars have noticed various versions of the Wise Ruler concept in Chinese political culture (e.g. Ames 1983; El Amine 2015; Fraser 2017, pp. 77-103; Schneider 2018). Generally speaking, the Wise Ruler means a ruler who shows outstanding qualities (such as virtue and wisdom), and the Wise Ruler doctrine links the ruler's qualities with the ruler's right to rule China. When the ruling group could not find the first successor to the throne, the Wise Ruler doctrine would support the ruling group to choose a 'good' ruler to govern China legitimately. In Bell's (2015) summary, the respect for the Wise Ruler sowed the seed of a kind of 'political meritocracy' in China: the high-quality individual has the potential right to govern the Chinese community, to the extent that China has continuously developed a merit-based governmental system from the premodern period through to the modern period.

This dissertation analyses some aspects of the Wise Ruler doctrine, and it demonstrates that the Northern Song dynasty was a period of institutionalisation of the Wise Ruler doctrine due to the growth of the scholar-official group and the development of bureaucratic administration. The dissertation shows that the Wise Ruler doctrine required the Northern Song monarch to

combine his political power with his authority to achieve the long-term stability of society. In addition, in Northern Song the Wise Ruler doctrine maintained a subtle balance between monarch and scholar-officials through giving the scholar-official group a legal right to resist against the monarch's political power. Moreover, the Wise Ruler doctrine preserved the gap between the ruling group and the common people in Northern Song society. The Wise Ruler doctrine deeply shaped the institutional settings of Northern Song, and it enhanced the old Chinese empire's ability to embrace a long period of rapid social changes.

This dissertation argues that the dysfunction of the Wise Ruler doctrine is the heart of the puzzle of Emperor Huizong's rule. Although the Wise Ruler doctrine played a positive role in the cooperation between monarch and scholar-officials, Huizong's attachment to the Wise Ruler doctrine trapped him within a dilemma. The lack of legitimacy to succeed to the throne pushed Huizong to go to extreme lengths to centralise his political power, while he did not have sufficient authority to maintain his dominant position constantly. It is evident that he paid much attention to claiming authority as a sage-like ruler (Ebrey 2014), but this was futile since his unrestrained political power destroyed the balance in the institutional context of Northern Song. The cooperation between Huizong and the scholar-official group was marked by low trust, and the scholar-official group was not committed to Huizong's rule. Therefore, the dissertation argues that Huizong as the highest ruler of China never achieved integration of power and authority so that his rule was very risky. The issue of Huizong's power and authority sowed the seed of Northern Song's destruction. Hence, Huizong's rule collapsed very fast when popular uprisings and military setbacks shook his throne in his late reign.

Critical Historical Institutionalism

The above paragraphs indicate that the central topic of this dissertation is the issue of Emperor Huizong's power and authority. To analyse the case of Huizong, the dissertation is comprised of a political-centric interdisciplinary study with mixed methodology. Similar to the works of Levine (2009) and Ebrey (2014), this interdisciplinary study applies knowledge from many different disciplines, such as Chinese politics, Chinese history, Chinese culture, Chinese philosophy, Chinese economy and Chinese military, in order to build a panorama of the institutional context of the Northern Song empire. The interdisciplinary approach means that a range of materials have been collected, including Chinese historical records, works of Chinese philosophy and culture, premodern Chinese scholars' narratives, and contemporary studies on Huizong in English and Chinese. Then, based on the framework of narrative study (cf. Goodson, Loveless & Stephens eds 2013; Wisniewski & Hatch eds 1995), the dissertation interprets Huizong's ruling mode and explains his failure via a constructivist method focusing on the author's own understanding and the temporary 'truths' of history (cf. Bacud, Cardenas & Velasco 2014; Fioretos, Falleti & Sheingate eds 2016, pp. 1-10; Hay 2008; Jones 2010; Keeys & Huemann 2017). In order to improve the reliability of the research outcomes, the dissertation uses a triangulation method to cross-reference different materials for the same research point (Clark, Foster & Bryman 2019, pp. 108-9). The dissertation applies the triangulation method in two ways. Firstly, it cites the materials from different fields in order to reinforce each argument made in the dissertation. Secondly, it employs multiple theories to develop a comprehensive view of Huizong's failure.

This dissertation is a historical study, and it follows Foucault's suggestion that learning history is to produce knowledge of the present (Wickham 1990, p. 41). The study of history mirrors

what its author is facing and experiencing. The context of the dissertation is the rise of China: a populous country governed by a strong political leadership via a centralised political system is showing its ‘visible inner resilience’ and ‘international standing power’, even during the COVID-19 pandemic (Keane 2020a). As Keane (cf. 2018b, p. 47; 2018c; 2020a; 2020b) emphasises, understanding this emergent superpower is necessary for every democratic state since the unique Chinese regime with its crafted ruling tools is influential for the future development of the world. In particular, Keane (2018a) observes the paradoxical attitude to political power in today’s Chinese government: many state officials feel anxious about the strong political leader’s ‘unrestrained power’ as much as they fear the democracy of ‘power sharing, power chastening’. Comparably, Sullivan (2012) perceives the two opposed forms of leadership in 1895-1978 China: one is a single leader with absolute authority, and the other is grouped leaders with institutional restrictions. Sullivan (2012) remarks that although in modern China a degree of ‘compromise’ within the ruling group has been possible, generations of the ruling group have actively promoted the devotion to a particular leader, which has often damaged the political balance in the ruling group. This dissertation seeks to study the case of Huizong in Chinese history in order to generate new understandings about Chinese political leadership, the Chinese political system and Chinese political culture.

Following Ebrey’s (2014) emphasis on the importance of Chinese institutional settings, this dissertation employs *critical historical institutionalism* to support the research on Emperor Huizong’s case. The dissertation posits that the decline of Huizong’s political power is traceable as a historical process through observing the power relationships structured in the institutional context (cf. Lecours 2000, p. 514; Pierson 2016). Path dependence is a major concern of the dissertation (Fioretos, Falleti & Sheingate eds 2016, pp. 8-10), and it concentrates on three aspects of historical sequence: the original conditions of Huizong’s rule (Pierson 2004, p. 44-

8), the unexpected outcomes of Huizong's decisions (Collier & Collier 2002, p. 8), and the limited impact of Huizong's subjective preference (Capoccia 2016). Meanwhile, beyond these focuses the dissertation pays much attention to conceptual languages in political culture, especially three key terms – *power*, *authority* and *hubris*. It sets Huizong as a more active and interpretative political actor behaving in the institutional context in order to take into account social and cultural factors (cf. Ansell 2008; Bell 2011; Hay 2008).

This dissertation adopts Yu's (2016, pp. 42-3) interpretation of 'power' and 'authority': power in essence is a kind of coercion structured in institutional settings, and authority in essence is a kind of convincing influence based on humans' ability, legitimation or rationality (cf. Waters & Waters 2015). In addition, Yu (2016, p. 43) remarks that authority is different from power because authority makes the object obey voluntarily (cf. Mommsen 1989). Importantly, Yu (2016, pp. 43-7) stresses that ancient Chinese scholars' view on power and authority is distinct from the current understanding. The concepts of power and authority are implicit in the two ruling modes demonstrated by ancient Chinese scholars: 'Bà Dào (Rule by Force)' and 'Wáng Dào (Rule by Consent)' (Yu 2016, pp. 45-7).¹⁴ In brief, Bà Dào (Rule by Force) is to make one's subjects obey by force, coercion and violence, while Wáng Dào (Rule by Consent) is to influence one's subjects to voluntarily consent to obey by legitimating one's rulership (Yu 2016, pp. 45-7). Furthermore, Yu (2016, p. 45) mentions that the ruling group in premodern China usually combines Bà Dào (Rule by Force) and Wáng Dào (Rule by Consent) through the institutionalisation of the Wise Ruler doctrine in order to integrate the ruler's power and authority, maintain the balance within the ruling group, and dominate the culture in society.

¹⁴ These two terms have been translated as 'Hegemonic Way' and 'Kingly Way' in English (Yu 2016, p. 49), but this dissertation considers that these translations may cause the English reader confusion. Hence, based on Professor John Keane's suggestion, the dissertation retranslates them as 'Rule by Force' and 'Rule by Consent' in English.

This dissertation interprets power and authority in the premodern Chinese context by observing the institutional structures of the Northern Song empire. For Emperor Huizong's power, it focuses on the distribution of power relationship and social resource, and it argues that Huizong's centralisation is a process to concentrate and solidify the advantage of power relationship (Pierson 2016) and social resource¹⁵ (cf. Marquis & Tilcsik 2006; Musgrave & Nexon 2018, pp. 593-609) across governmental, economic, cultural and military sectors of the empire (Mills 1956). For Huizong's authority, it mainly studies the institutionalisation of the Wise Ruler doctrine in the traditional ritual system, bureaucratic honour system and social value system (Yu 2016, pp. 46-7). The dissertation interprets the historical material to the effect that the Chinese ruler's authority is based on both the needs of Chinese people (the 'instrumental' authority – cf. Smith 2013, pp. 376-9, 383-8; Weigand 2015) and the shared values within Chinese society (the 'substantive' authority – cf. Smith 2013, pp. 376-9, 383-8; Weigand 2015), in accordance with Yu (2016).

In exploring the issue of power and authority, this dissertation applies the theory of hubris to show the danger of unrestrained political power and the gap between Chinese political culture and Western political culture. In brief, 'hubris (ὑβρις)' is a term from ancient Greek politics which means that a powerful or outstanding person becomes overconfident, and then challenges the gods¹⁶ (cf. Cohen 2004, pp. 61-77; Keane 2009, pp. 62-70; Picone, Dagnino & Mina 2014). It implies the risk of the ruler's arrogance that will cause the abuse of power so that in Western political culture it is necessary to restrict every individual's political power through the institutional design (cf. Keane 2009; 2018b). Compared with the theory of hubris, the Wise Ruler doctrine has a self-contradictory attitude to the powerful man. On the one hand,

¹⁵ Or political capital.

¹⁶ This term has a strong sex connotation because it originally refers to sexual crimes.

it claims that the Wise Ruler should concentrate the political power of the Chinese empire. On the other hand, it suggests the importance of balance within the ruling group. This dissertation argues that the self-contradiction of the Wise Ruler doctrine resulted in the peculiar experience of Huizongs' rule in Chinese history, and this contradiction is due to the unique view of cosmos and humanity in Chinese culture.

The Wise Ruler Doctrine

From today on, let heaven and earth bear me witness, in order to preserve the country there will be no more reversals. Given the current crisis, it is essential to communicate openly, without circumlocutions. We need all men of wisdom and courage to develop strategies to solve this calamity. I hope that the relief armies coming from the four regions will devise ways to repel the enemies at the two borders. May they remember the accumulated virtues of the kind and wise [rulers of the past] who looked after the world for over a hundred years.

Emperor Huizong's edict on 16 January 1126 (Ebrey 2014, p. 425)

The Wise Ruler doctrine is not well defined in Chinese political culture since it has plural elements from different Chinese political schools of thought. The general concept of the Wise Ruler is that a ruler who is performing to an advanced level has the potential right to rule China. In practice, the Wise Ruler doctrine, usually observed and upheld by the scholar-official group, contains not only a series of political teachings but also a range of norms and institutions to regulate the ruler of China. This dissertation analyses the Wise Ruler doctrine's theoretical basis and its evolution. It focuses on two schools which deeply influenced Emperor Huizong's political thought: Confucianism and Daoism.¹⁷

Confucianism vs Daoism

In the foundation works of both Confucianism and Daoism, the Wise Ruler concept is tied with the Chinese term 'Dé' which is literally translated as 'Virtue' or 'Integrity' in English. In Confucianism, Dé (Virtue or Integrity) refers to a set of necessary qualities of ruler in accordance with the Confucian normative system of morality. When Confucius (551-479 BCE) interpreted the text in the oldest Chinese classic, *I Ching* – 'the superior man active and vigilant all the day, and in the evening still careful and apprehensive' (Legge 2013, p. 79)¹⁸ – he said it requires that 'the superior man advances in virtue (Dé), and cultivates all the sphere of his duty'.¹⁹ The most famous Confucian work, *The Analects* (2016), refers to many Confucian norms about rulers,²⁰ and in this book Confucius (551-479 BCE) makes a well-known statement on the legitimacy of a ruler with a high degree of Dé (Virtue or Integrity):

¹⁷ Notably, this dissertation does not discuss Chinese political culture after the reign of Emperor Huizong. Such as a representative example of this topic. So, for example, the doctrine of Nèi Shèng Wài Wáng (Jing 2012) is discussed because it was influenced by the rise of Neo-Confucianism after the reign of Emperor Huizong (Bol 2008).

¹⁸ The original text in Classical Chinese is: 君子终日乾乾，夕惕若厉，无咎。

¹⁹ The original text in Classical Chinese is: 君子进德修业。In Confucius, *Qian* of *I Ching*, translated by Legge.

²⁰ E.g. *The Analects*, Book I, Chapter V.

The Master²¹ said, ‘He who exercises government by means of his virtue (Dé) may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it.’

(*The Analects* 2016, Book II, Chapter I, p. 9)²²

Confucius evidently uses the metaphor of stars to show that a ruler’s steady authority should be based on a high degree of Dé (Virtue or Integrity).

In Confucian political thought, there are two core elements of a ruler’s Dé (Virtue or Integrity): ‘Rén’ and ‘Yì’, literally translated as ‘Benevolence’ and ‘Righteousness’ in English (El Amine 2015).²³ They show that the Confucian concept of ruler is related to the understanding of humanity in Confucian philosophy (El Amine 2015). The quintessential Confucian scholar Mencius (371-289 BCE) saw human nature as being essentially good (*Xing Shàn Lùn* – Chan 1963, pp. 65-6; Swain 2017, pp. 73-94).²⁴ He set out Rén (Benevolence) and Yì (Righteousness) as the most important criteria for a legitimate ruler (Legge 1875, p. 124),²⁵ and this vision is distinguished from many other scholars in the same period who stressed the profit-sharing relationship between monarch and subjects (cf. Ames 1983, pp. 142-64; Fu 2016; Hansen 2001, pp. 55-112; Pines 2017; Rainey 2010, pp. 105-18; Sawyer 2007). Further, Mencius posits that the highest Chinese ruler’s legitimacy is based on the Governance of Benevolence (Rén Zhèng) which means gaining the Chinese people’s devotion by exerting benevolence and goodness, clearly linking a ruler’s qualities with his political legitimacy (Rainey 2010, p. 98).²⁶ More radically, Mencius claims the Chinese people’s right to challenge the current Chinese ruler’s

²¹ In *The Analects*, ‘the Master’ is Confucius.

²² The original text in Classical Chinese is: 子曰：为政以德，譬如北辰，居其所而众星共之。

²³ Some works translate them as ‘Humanity’ and ‘Duty’ in English, but this dissertation considers that these translations may cause the English reader confusion.

²⁴ E.g. *Mencius*, Book 2A, Part 6.

²⁵ E.g. *Mencius*, Book 1A, Part 1.

²⁶ *Mencius*, Book 1A, Part 7. Rainey (2010) translates the term ‘Rén Zhèng’ as ‘Government of Humanity’ in English, but this dissertation considers that this translation may cause the English reader confusion. Hence, the dissertation retranslates it as ‘Governance of Benevolence’ in English.

rule if the ruler ignores the norms of Governance of Benevolence (cf. He 2012, p. 44; Song 2011).²⁷

In El Amine's opinion (2015), such classical Confucian political thinking reflects the doctrine of Virtue Politics (Dé Zhèng) which sees the ruler's Dé (Virtue or Integrity) as the foundation of the political order; in fact, Mencius makes Virtue Politics the source of the Chinese ruler's legitimacy (cf. Sterckx 2019a; Xia 2020). Furthermore, El Amine (2015) shows that in Confucian political thought one's Dé (Virtue or Integrity) could be transmitted to another person via teaching and civilising (jiào huà), so it was possible to cultivate a ruler's Dé (Virtue or Integrity) through education and regulation (cf. Tan 2003). It could be argued that the Virtue Politics doctrine is the Confucian version of the Wise Ruler doctrine. According to Ebrey (2014, pp. 17-21), the Confucian bureaucracy taught the Virtue Politics doctrine to generations of Northern Song monarchs in their childhood including Emperor Huizong, and it also developed a complicated system of norms in Northern Song to regulate the monarchs' behaviour.

Compared with Confucianism, Daoism concentrates more on a ruler's monopoly of knowledge and wisdom. The term 'Dé (Virtue or Integrity)' in Daoism is related to a kind of supreme knowledge and wisdom which makes the wise man distinct from the common people. Daoism uses the term 'Dào (Universal Process²⁸)' to explain the source of one's Dé (Virtue or Integrity) through tracing the changing natural environment and the dynamics of human society. Dào (Universal Process) is an abstract cosmic concept which gives credence to the essential processes of the universe determining the natural environment and human society (cf. Sterckx 2019b; Wang 2015). A wise man²⁹ (zhìzhě) is able to understand the moving mechanism of the

²⁷ *Mencius*, Book 4B.

²⁸ Hinton (2015) translates the term 'Dào' as 'Way' in English, but this dissertation considers that this translation may cause the English reader confusion. Hence, the dissertation retranslates it as 'Universal Process' in English.

²⁹ An alternative term is 'superior (Daoism)'.

universe via *Dào* (Universal Process) and then learn the supreme knowledge and wisdom. Daoism sees this ability as deriving from a kind of inner potency (or inner sagacity, *nèi shèng*) that develops in a wise man's spirit through the wise man's self-cultivation (Höchsmann, Yang & Kolak eds 2007).

Therefore, in Daoism a high degree of inner potency – manifesting as one's 'Shàng Dé (High Integrity)' – is the necessary quality to be the Sage Ruler (*Shèng Rén*, the Daoist Wise Ruler³⁰). *Shàng Dé* (High Integrity) does not mean 'a high degree of Dé'; rather, it means 'the supreme form of Dé'. A classic statement on these concepts appears in Hinton (2015, p. 74):

High Integrity (*Shàng Dé*) never has Integrity (*Dé*) and so is indeed Integrity (*Dé*).

Low Integrity (*Xià Dé*, 'the common form of Dé') never loses Integrity (*Dé*) and so is not at all Integrity (*Dé*).

...

Lose Way (*Dào*, Universal Process) and Integrity (*Dé*) appears.

Lose Integrity (*Dé*) and Humanity (*Rén*, Benevolence) appears.

Lose Humanity (*Rén*, Benevolence), and Duty (*Yì*, Righteousness) appears.

Lose Duty (*Yì*, Righteousness), and Ritual (*Lǐ*) appears.

This classic statement on Daoism is in contrast to the Confucian Virtue Politics doctrine which emphasises *Rén* (Benevolence) and *Yì* (Righteousness) as the basic norms of legitimate rule. It highlights and legitimises the division between the wise group and the common people in human society. In Daoism, the Sage Ruler's high degree of inner potency is superior to any norm, moral and tradition in human society. Based on this view, Daoism sees the superiority of the Sage Ruler's high wisdom as the core of a durable social order (Hinton 2015, p. 74).³¹

³⁰ An alternative term is 'the Master (Daoism)'.
³¹ *Tao Te Ching*, Book *Te Ching*, Chapter 38.

Importantly, Daoism affirms the Sage Ruler's monopoly of advanced knowledge in human society. Related to this is the doctrine of Doing-Nothing Governance (Wú Wéi Ér Zhi):

Never bestow honors and people won't quarrel.
Never prize rare treasures and people won't steal.
Never flaunt alluring things and people won't be confused.
This is how a sage³² governs.
Fill bellies and empty minds,
strengthen bones and weaken ambition,
always keep the people from knowing and wanting,
then those who know are those who never presume to act.
If you're nothing doing what you do
all things will be governed well (Hinton 2015, p. 35).³³

Daoism seems to envision that a community of people without knowledge and desires is easier to govern. The Doing-Nothing Governance doctrine is explained by the Daoist idea that the universe creates constant change via *Dào* (Universal Process), and so change is not needed as part of a ruler's concrete actions (cf. Ames 1983, pp. 28-64; Hinton 2015, p. 70).³⁴ In other words, under Daoism the Sage Ruler is inherently the legitimate ruler of the human society due

³² The Sage Ruler.

³³ The original text in Classical Chinese is:

不上贤，使民不争

不贵难得之货，使民不为盗

不见可欲，使民不乱

是以圣人之治也

虚其心，实其腹

弱其志，强其骨

恒使民无知 无欲也

使夫知不敢

弗为而已

则无不治矣

Tao Te Ching, Book *Tao Ching*, Chapter 3.

³⁴ *Tao Te Ching*, Book *Tao Ching*, Chapter 37.

to his supreme knowledge and wisdom. In support of this idea, Zhuangzi (369-286 BCE) argues that only through self-cultivation – a natural process via *Dào* (Universal Process) – can a wise man develop the supreme knowledge and wisdom needed to be the Sage Ruler, so any political teaching or regulation of the ruler is harmful (Höchstmann, Yang & Kolak eds 2007, p. 309).³⁵ Another Daoist, Ge Hong (283-343³⁶), gives a more straightforward explanation of the Doing-Nothing Governance doctrine in his work *Master Who Embraces Simplicity* (Ge 1990, my translation):

So the Wise Ruler solves a problem when it is easy to solve, eliminates harm when it is not harmful, never damages good because the damage of good will encourage evil, never handles issue when he is hesitating.³⁷

This explanation highlights the core concern of the Doing-Nothing Governance doctrine in Daoism, which is about strictly maintaining the existing order in human society. In sum, Daoism sees the Sage Ruler's legitimacy as determined by *Dào* (Universal Process). According to Ebrey (2014), such Daoist teachings deeply influenced Emperor Huizong's political thought.

Concluding on the differences between Confucianism and Daoism as they relate to the Wise Ruler doctrine, obviously the two schools generally regard this doctrine as the source of the Chinese ruler's right to rule, but they have different requirements for the way to gain legitimacy. Confucianism uses morals and norms to teach and regulate a ruler to be the Wise Ruler, while Daoism emphasises the 'determinism' of the Wise Ruler's natural superiority.³⁸ In the next subsection, this dissertation will discuss the mixing process behind these two different schools of thought on the Chinese ruler's legitimacy.

³⁵ *Zhuangzi*, Book 33.

³⁶ Or 283-364.

³⁷ The original text in Classical Chinese is: 故明君治难于其易，去恶于其微，不伐善以长乱，不操柯而犹豫焉。 *Master Who Embraces Simplicity*, Outer Chapter 14.

³⁸ Or a kind of inherent supreme quality, like divinity.

Mixed Sources of Legitimacy

Rather than the Wise Ruler doctrine, in practice it was Confucian ethics (Rújiā lúnlǐ) plus the rituals and laws of the imperial house that played a central role in matters of succession to the throne of China (cf. Allan 2015; Ebrey 1991, pp. 6-8; Song 2015). According to Jin (1956), Confucian ethics originated in the patriarchal clan laws (zōng fǎ) of the Zhou dynasty (1046-256 BCE). The core of Confucian ethics is one of the patriarchal clan laws: the principle of eldest-principal-successor (dízǎngzǐ jìchéng zhì). This principle states that in every Chinese family unit,³⁹ the man should have only one principal wife⁴⁰ (zhèng qī), and the eldest son born from the principal wife, called the ‘eldest principal son (dízǎngzǐ)’, should be the first successor to the family property (cf. Du & Zheng 2005; Jin 1956; Wang 1999; Wang 2013). Drawing from the patriarchal clan laws and the ritual system of Zhou (Zhōu lǐ), Confucian ethics helped develop the rituals and laws of the imperial house to regulate the succession order in the broad imperial clan (cf. Ebrey 1991; Elman & Kern 2010; Song 2015).

Furthermore, Confucian ethics influenced the development of the Chinese ruler’s hereditary right to rule the human world. Since the Zhou dynasty, generations of ancient Chinese scholars have claimed that the highest ruler of China is the eldest principal son (Tiān zǐ) of the God of Heaven (Tiān)⁴¹ who is the only legitimate successor to the God of Heaven’s Property⁴² – ‘All under Heaven’ (Tiān Xià) including all territories, resources and people which under the God of Heaven’s physical body – the sky (cf. Didier 2009; Smith 1996; Swain 2017). However, the

³⁹ From the imperial family to the common family.

⁴⁰ Regardless of how many vice wives (normally named qiè) he has.

⁴¹ Notably, the God of Heaven in Chinese traditional culture is not only a personified god but also a series of natural rules that regulate the cosmos; it thus cannot be simply understood as an alternative version of the Christian God (cf. Didier 2009; Smith 1996; Sterckx 2019b; Swain 2017). Many English translators use ‘Heaven’ instead of ‘the God of Heaven’ to translate the Chinese term ‘Tiān’, but this dissertation translates it as ‘the God of Heaven’ in English in order to underline the patriarchal relationship between the God of Heaven and the Chinese ruler.

⁴² This dissertation translates the Chinese term ‘Tiān Xià’ as ‘the God of Heaven’s Property’ in order to show the Chinese ruler’s ownership of territory, resource and people succeeds from the God of Heaven.

Chinese ruler's hereditary right to rule the human world has a weakness: how to prove that the current Chinese ruler is the eldest principal son of the God of Heaven? Due to this weakness, the Chinese ruler's legitimacy cannot be separated from the support of the Wise Ruler doctrine (Bell ed. 2010), and the conflict between rule by virtue and rule by hereditary right becomes the central problem of Chinese dynastic politics (Allan 2015, pp. 9-10). To understand this conflict, Yates (1997) and Loewe (2011) claim that the evolution of the Chinese ruler's right to rule has been influenced by the interplay between Daoism and Confucianism. This dissertation thus traces the mixing of Confucian and Daoist elements in the Wise Ruler doctrine by focusing on a representative scholar belonging to the Confucian school – Dong Zhongshu (179-104 BCE), whose theories of legitimacy were widely discussed by Emperor Huizong and his experts (cf. Ebrey 2014; Lu 2015).

Dong Zhongshu was a famous Confucian scholar in the Han dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE) who combined the Virtue Politics doctrine of Confucianism with Daoist perspectives on legitimacy. In his book *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn*, Dong Zhongshu first explains the unbreakable relationship between human beings and the God of Heaven:

What gives birth cannot make human beings. The maker of human beings is Heaven (Tiān, the God of Heaven). The humanness of human beings is rooted in Heaven (Tiān, the God of Heaven). Heaven (Tiān, the God of Heaven) is also the supreme ancestor of human beings. This is why human beings are elevated to be categorized with Heaven (Tiān, the God of Heaven) (Queen & Major eds 2015, p. 363).⁴³

Then, Dong proceeds to mix elements from Daoism, especially the Doing-Nothing Governance doctrine, with his Confucian theory of the right to rule:

⁴³ The original Classical Chinese text is: 为生不能为人，为人者，天也，人之人本于天，天亦人之曾祖父也，此人之所以乃上类天也。 *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn*, Chapter 41.

For those who govern humankind, no Way (Dào, Universal Process) is clearer than husbanding [the aspects of] the self that [derive from] Heaven (Tiān, the God of Heaven), just as they issue forth from Heaven (Tiān, the God of Heaven). In causing them to issue forth, [the ruler] must, with the utmost effort, respond to Heaven's (Tiān, the God of Heaven) sending forth the four seasons. Thus there is nothing to be added to the governance of Yao and Shun.⁴⁴ 'One might be enriched or impoverished; one might be allowed to live or be executed; but one cannot be made to rebel.' Thus it is said: 'If not [in accordance with] the Way (Dào, Universal Process), do not act; if not [in accordance with] the standard, do not speak.' This expresses it (Queen & Major eds 2015, p. 364).⁴⁵

It can be argued that Dong uses the need to keep the existing social order as espoused in the Doing-Nothing Governance doctrine to justify the ruler's dominance over the common people. Such an argument reflects Dong's fundamental view of the cosmos – 'the Consistency Between the God of Heaven and Human Beings (Tiān Rén Hé Yī)' (Ching 1997; Huang 2010): in short, the quality of being human originates in the God of Heaven's human-like nature; the God of Heaven thus determines all phenomena in human society including the ruling and ruled.

Based on this unique cosmic view and the Confucian Virtue Politics doctrine, Dong suggests two crucial doctrines to limit the source of political legitimacy: 'the Interaction Between the God of Heaven and Human Beings (Tiān Rén Gǎn Yīng)', and 'the Mandate of the God of Heaven (Tiān Mìng)'. The Interaction Between the God of Heaven and Human Beings states that the God of Heaven will respond to every Chinese ruler's governance (Ching 1997; Huang 2010). If the God of Heaven accepts the current Chinese ruler's governance, the ruler and his

⁴⁴ Two ancient Chinese rulers who were widely praised as ideal Chinese rulers.

⁴⁵ The original text in Classical Chinese is: 为人主也，道莫明省身之天，如天出之也。使其出也，答天之出四时而必忠其受也，则尧舜之治无以加，是可生可杀而不可使为乱。故曰：非道不行，非法不言。此之谓也。 *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn*, Chapter 41.

subjects will live in peace and stability (Ching 1997; Huang 2010). On the other hand, if the God of Heaven does not accept the current Chinese ruler's governance, the ruler and his subjects will suffer from societal unrest and natural disasters (Ching 1997; Huang 2010). The second doctrine, the Mandate of the God of Heaven, claims that every Chinese ruler receives the Mandate of the God of Heaven which requires the ruler to govern the human society well (Queen & Major eds 2015; Zhao 2009). If the current Chinese ruler cannot fulfil the Mandate of the God of Heaven, the God of Heaven will punish the ruler by inducing social disorder to force the competition of a new ruler from the Chinese community (Luke 2010; Queen & Major eds 2015; Zhao 2009).

It can be observed that Dong's theories not only clarify the source of the Chinese ruler's legitimacy, but also strengthen the restriction of the Chinese ruler's political power based on the Wise Ruler doctrine. In particular, with respect to the Chinese people's right to challenge the monarch, Dong's position is quite similar to Mencius's. However, this dissertation notes that Dong's theories pay much attention to the Wise Ruler's role in maintaining the existing social order. The 'good governance' aspect of Dong's theories implies that social stability is the most important thing for the Chinese people, and Dong's core thesis is that only the Wise Ruler's rule could achieve long-term stability. The dissertation argues that this emphasis on social stability rather than the danger of power and hubris makes the Wise Ruler doctrine susceptible to dysfunction.



Chinese bronze script character for Tiān (The God of Heaven)

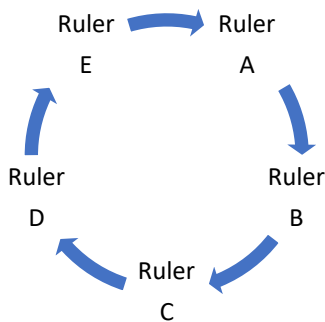
The God of Heaven gives man the mandate to stabilise human society, and it will respond to the ruler's good and bad performance.



The ruler should understand and follow the God of Heaven's natural rules for human society in order to fulfil the mandate. Only the Wise Ruler can achieve the long-term stability of human society.



Chinese bronze script character for Wáng (The King or the Ruler)



If the current ruler too incompetent to fulfil the mandate, the God of Heaven will deliver natural disaster and societal unrest to warn the current ruler.

If the current ruler is still incompetent, the outstanding subjects will have the right to defeat him and then establish a new dynasty of China.

Figure 1: A Brief Model of Dong Zhongshu's Theories on the Chinese Ruler's Legitimacy⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Based on Queen and Major (eds 2015). The Chinese Bronze script characters are cited from Xiaoxueguan (2020).

Three Sources of the Wise Ruler Doctrine

To understand Dong's emphasis on the maintenance of the existing order in human society, this dissertation examines three sources of the Wise Ruler doctrine in Chinese political culture which have continuously shaped the division of Chinese society into the ruling group and the common people: *ancestor worship*, *self-discipline* and *convergence of elites*. As the original grounds on which the Wise Ruler doctrine was institutionalised, these three sources play a crucial role in structuring the multiple roles of the Wise Ruler doctrine in Chinese politics.

Ancestor Worship

Chinese society had a widespread belief in ancestor figures since the Shang (Yin) dynasty (ca. 1570-1046 BCE) practised ancestor worship (*zǔxiān chóngbài*), and it has been combined with a set of rituals to link mankind with the God of Heaven (Yao & Zhao 2010). Ancestor worship means that the Chinese people deify and idolise their ancestor figures through a series of rites and customs in order to perform their respect for the ancestors' virtue, wisdom and spirit (cf. Ebrey 1991, pp. 15-31; Lakos 2010). According to Lakos (2010, p. 12), the evolution of ancestor worship in China started approximately 10,000 years ago, and records of early ancestor worship appeared in about 4500 BCE. Although original ancestor worship involves the ancestors of one's clan only, ancestor worship later came to involve the praising of ancient great rulers in Chinese history (Lakos 2010, pp. 17ff.). For instance, Chinese people constantly pay their respects to Huang Emperor⁴⁷ who is praised as the founder of the Chinese civilisation (cf. Hon & Stapleton 2017; Johnson 2016; Su 2017; Veith 2015; Yeung 1998).

⁴⁷ Or Yellow Emperor.

There are two ways to perform worship to ancestors. Firstly, Chinese people believe that when their ancestors passed away the ancestors' spirits returned to the God of Heaven, and they could communicate with their ancestors to gain their virtue, wisdom and power through the commemorations and rites of the ancestor worship (cf. Nadeau 2012; Ren 2019; Yao & Zhao 2010). This is the way of the deification of ancestor figures, and it implies a primitive view of the cosmos⁴⁸. Secondly, for ancient great rulers, the Chinese people idealise these rulers' ability and personality through imagining and beatifying their stories; these ancient figures thus became the cultural 'idols' of the Chinese community (cf. Cook 2012; Guo & Guo 2020). This is the way of idolisation of ancestor figures, and it results in the maintenance of the strong rightfulness of the ancient great rulers in Chinese history (Swain 2017, pp. 51-72). In many ancient Chinese scholars' arguments about good governance and good ruler, the stories of the ancient great rulers of China are repeated to support the scholars' arguments (e.g. Xia 2020).

Furthermore, ancestor worship has gradually seen worship of the dynastic ancestor become part of the political tradition of the Wise Ruler doctrine. In Northern Song, the imperial clan constructed their ancestors' images as 'model' rulers in order to establish the devotion to the imperial clan in Chinese society (Zhu 2019), and the ancestors' stories of the imperial clan were used to teach and regulate the later monarchs (Kuhn 2009, pp. 29-48). It is evidenced that many Chinese bureaucrats used crafted stories of a dynasty's old monarchs to put pressure on the current monarch (cf. Choi 2017; Deng 2006). For example, when Chen Shixi⁴⁹ instructed Emperor Huizong to keep away from the courtiers' flattery, he warned:

The appearance of sweet dew, the gushing of sweet water springs, the arrival of unicorns and phoenixes, the growth of vermilion herbs – these are natural phenomena that occur

⁴⁸ Similar to the Consistency Between the God of Heaven and Human Beings.

⁴⁹ Huizong's Investigating Censor (Jiānchá Yùshǐ).

according to the intrinsic nature of things. Flatterers label them auspicious omens and sing their praises in order to appeal to the ruler's vanity. This is what your ancestors guarded against (Ebrey 2014, p. 78).

It can be argued that to some extent ancestor worship gave the scholar-official group a way to regulate and even challenge the current ruler (Ebrey 2014, p. 62).

This dissertation argues that ancestor worship implies worship of advanced knowledge, the essence of ancestor worship. In early Chinese society, the structure of the clan evolved based on climate-determined agricultural production methods, and differences of custom between the privileged group and the common people gradually became obvious (Lakos 2010). This process reflects the close relationship between social change and the need for natural knowledge and social knowledge (cf. Guo & Guo 2020; Wang 1998; Wittfogel 1957). Chinese people worshipped clan ancestors and ancient rulers because they usually held advanced knowledge. For instance, Chinese people praise Huang Emperor for his teaching of cooking and clothing to the community (Sima 1959, *juan* 1, pp. 1-9). Noteworthy, although patriarchal factors significantly shaped ancestor worship (Wang 1998), the worship of advanced knowledge was still essential. For instance, the female ancestor Lei Zu was worshipped as the Ancestor of Sericulture (*Xiān Cán*) because in an ancient story she created the first sericulture method in Chinese society (cf. Guo 2017; Guo 2020; Ji 2020; Wang 2017). It could be argued that this worship of advanced knowledge is a source of the Wise Ruler doctrine in Chinese political culture.

As an aside, this dissertation supports the idea that the Chinese people have historically sought an ideal ruler who understands and protects the needs of agricultural production including the need for a regular working schedule and social stability. Accordingly, the Wise Ruler doctrine

has tended to prioritise social stability as the main task of the Wise Ruler (cf. Luke 2010; Zhao 2009). This idea is inspired by Wittfogel (1957) who makes an interesting point that Chinese rulers have had a kind of instrumental legitimacy due to the need for a strongman to lead the community to deal with natural disasters such as floods. It is similar to Lyu's (2018, pp. 29-35) argument that Daoism seeks to achieve long-term social stability because of the need to maintain regular agricultural production.

Self-Discipline

In this dissertation, self-discipline (*zìwǒ shùfù*) refers to the Chinese people's voluntary compliance with the individual holding visible political power, high social rank or rich social resources, and it reflects the gap between the privileged groups⁵⁰ and the common people in premodern China. Many scholars and authors have observed the phenomenon of self-discipline in Chinese society, and their commentary has been highly controversial. Those taking a positive view believe that self-discipline is due to the Chinese people's willingness to have a stable society, strong leadership and merit-based social hierarchy (e.g. Keenan 2011). Self-discipline allows outstanding individuals to rise and govern the Chinese people. When Bell (2015, pp. 152-4) praises the Chinese people's preference to maintain the governance of high-quality rulers, he likens this preference to be a vote for the wise and virtuous. However, those taking a negative view suggest that this self-discipline is a kind of natural servility (*nú xìng*) in Chinese society. According to the most representative view of natural servility, the Chinese people tend to voluntarily show servitude to dictators and the privileged group as a historical legacy of the long-lasting social hierarchy in China (e.g. Zhu 1985). It can be seen that both sides highlight self-discipline's role in maintaining the social order in China.

⁵⁰ Such as imperial clan, scholar-official and landed gentry.

An example from Chinese political culture illustrating the role of self-discipline is the Three Cardinal Principles (Sān Gāng). The Three Cardinal Principles state that the son naturally obeys the father, the subject naturally obeys the ruler, and the wife naturally obeys the husband (Jin 2020). These principles are similar to Confucius's view on the maintenance of monarchy:

The Duke Jing, of Qi, asked Confucius about government.

Confucius replied, 'There is government, when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, and the son is son.'

'Good!' said the duke; 'if, indeed; the prince be not prince, the minister not minister, the father not father, and the son not son, although I have my revenue, can I enjoy it?' (*The Analects* 2016, pp. 47-8)⁵¹

The Three Cardinal Principles clearly highlight the importance of the fixation of social rank: everyone should act in accordance with their identities and roles in the hierarchical society.

To understand the dual image of self-discipline, it is necessary to identify the central reason for the Chinese people's voluntarily compliance with the privileged group. This dissertation argues that the self-discipline is the reflection of the Chinese people's view of cosmos: the naturally unequal social relationships in Chinese society derive from the society's voluntary compliance with the God of Heaven rather than from a human's power and privilege. Dong Zhongshu states that in Chinese culture everything in the universe may be identified as either 'Yang' things or 'Yin' things based on the God of Heaven's regulation (Queen & Major eds 2015, pp. 371-

⁵¹ The original text in Classical Chinese is:

齐景公问政于孔子。

孔子对曰：君君，臣臣，父父，子子。

公曰：善哉！信如君不君，臣不臣，父不父，子不子，虽有粟，吾得而食诸？

Book XII, Chapter XI.

440).⁵² Explaining the source of the social order in China, Dong highlights the principle of Yin-Yang – ‘Yang is Lofty, Yin is Lowly (Yáng Zūn Yīn Bēi)’ (Queen & Major eds 2015, pp. 393-8).⁵³ Social hierarchy is created by the unequal relationship of Yin-Yang:

Although a husband may be from the humble class, he is considered yang in every case.

Although a wife may be from the noble class, she is considered yin in every case.

...

All those in superior positions are considered yang by their subordinates;

all those in subordinate positions are considered yin by their superiors (Queen & Major eds 2015, p. 395).⁵⁴

It can be argued that the ‘determinism’ of the God of Heaven deeply influences Chinese political culture, and that self-discipline originates in the acceptance of this ‘determinism’. It is not surprising that self-discipline as a form of natural servility is evidenced in Chinese political culture.

However, in practice compliance with the God of Heaven is not the only basis of self-discipline. Yu (2016, p. 45, my translation) argues that Wáng Dào (Rule by Consent) in fact encourages the Chinese people’s self-discipline via sharing the values and norms of the Wise Ruler doctrine, which establishes a kind of ‘substantive’ authority:⁵⁵

The key to implementing Wáng Dào (Rule by Consent) is to win the Chinese people’s minds. If the rulers aim to receive the people’s voluntary obedience to their actions and

⁵² *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn*, Group 5.

⁵³ *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn*, Chapter 43.

⁵⁴ The original text in Classical Chinese is:

丈夫虽贱皆为阳，
妇人虽贵皆为阴。

...

诸在上者皆为其下阴，
诸在下者皆为其上阴。

Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn, Chapter 43.

⁵⁵ The source of a ruler’s authority is based on the subjects’ shared values.

decisions, they must make the people feel these actions and policies are ‘legal’ and ‘rational’, [because these actions and policies] are representing the people’s self-interests or the common interests of the community. This⁵⁶ is ‘Identity Politics’ in modern politics in fact.

As well, Yu (2016, p. 45, my translation) points out the relationship between a Chinese ruler’s ‘instrumental’ authority⁵⁷ and the Wise Ruler doctrine:

The substantive content of ‘the Virtue Politics’ or ‘the Governance of Benevolence’ is that a ruler [should] be in line with the needs of the people, and care about the people’s emotions and feelings.

This dissertation argues that Dong’s interpretation of the Chinese social hierarchy is not comprehensive. It is evidenced that the Chinese people’s self-discipline manifests as an expectation for high-quality rulers rather than just a capacity to worship power and privilege, and this cultural expectation provides one basis for the Wise Ruler doctrine.

Convergence of Elites

The notion of an ideal society is always a popular topic in Chinese political culture, and Emperor Huizong set it up to be the ultimate goal of his reign (Ebrey 2014). Ancient Chinese people explored several theoretical political models for achieving the long-term stability of society. This dissertation explores four of these models: ‘Shàn Ràng (Virtuous and Non-Hereditary Rule)’ in ancient stories, ‘Hóng Fàn (Virtuous and Absolute-Dominant Rule)’ in the *Book of Documents*, and ‘Dà Tóng (Harmonic and Non-Hereditary Rule)’ and ‘Xiǎo Kāng (Virtuous and Hereditary Rule)’ in the *Book of Rites*.

⁵⁶ Wáng Dào (Rule by Consent).

⁵⁷ The source of a ruler’s authority is based on the subjects’ needs.

Shàn Ràng (Virtuous and Non-Hereditary Rule) is described by the legends of ancient Chinese tribes, and on the surface it means a way for the current ruler to choose the next ruler based on one's personality and ability to govern rather than one's hereditary right (Allan 1981; Jiang 2011). The two representative examples are Shun and Yu whose enthronements were based on non-hereditary succession (Allan 1981; Jiang 2011). Generations of Chinese scholars questioned whether Shàn Ràng (Virtuous and Non-Hereditary Rule) was the beautification of illegal or violent seizure of the throne (e.g. Rainey 2010); since the late Han dynasty (the third century) this model has become the beautification of usurpation or abdication (e.g. Chen 1959, *juan* 2). However, it may be argued that using the instance of imperial China to imagine the political model of the ancient Chinese tribes is anachronistic. According to Fang (2014), the early Shàn Ràng (Virtuous and Non-Hereditary Rule) perhaps was more about power sharing and political balance within the ruling clans of the ancient Chinese tribes. These ruling clans were integrated together via the relationships of marriage (e.g. Liu 2007; Yen 2017), and in the tribes they monopolised political system, social culture and advanced knowledge (Fang 2014). Therefore, it can be argued that Shàn Ràng (Virtuous and Non-Hereditary Rule) is a kind of blood nobles' meritocracy emphasising cooperation within the convergent ruling group.

Hóng Fàn (Virtuous and Absolute-Dominant Rule⁵⁸) emphasises the high-quality ruler's absolute dominance over the whole Chinese society. The *Book of Documents* (Legge 2004) imagines the sole ruler with 'perfect excellence'⁵⁹ will enjoy the absolute advantages of social resource, political power and religious divinity in Chinese society. The ruler will directly control the common people, even their right to live or die (Legge 2004). Most importantly, Hóng Fàn (Virtuous and Absolute-Dominant Rule) assumes that the wisest individual should

⁵⁸ The term 'Hóng Fàn' is usually translated as 'the Great Plan' in English, but this dissertation considers that this translation may cause the English reader confusion.

⁵⁹ Ultimate wisdom and virtue.

naturally gain the legitimacy to control the distribution of resource in Chinese society (Legge 2004). It can be argued that this model aims to establish the sole ruler's disproportionate advantages of resource in the Chinese hierarchical society. Also, this model prevents any change in the power relationships in Chinese society. In Emperor Huizong's political practice, he employed Cai Jing's political teaching of 'Richness, Prosperity, Happiness and Grandeur (Fēng Hēng Yù Dà)' (Yang & Zhao 2019) which is similar to the idea of Hóng Fàn (Virtuous and Absolute-Dominant Rule) to claim that the emperor should enjoy the disproportionate advantage of all the resources available to the whole community (Tuo ed. 1977, *juan* 472, pp. 13724-5). Based on Cai Jing's political teaching, Huizong had highly concentrated political power and social resources during his reign.

In the *Book of Rites*, Dà Tóng (Harmonic and Non-Hereditary Rule⁶⁰) shows a kind of ideal society where the community autonomously selects their ruler based on personality and ability to govern (Legge 1885, part 4), and it is a typical model of Chinese meritocracy interpreted by Chinese scholars (cf. Chang 2020; Mo 2020). According to Chang (2020), Dà Tóng (Harmonic and Non-Hereditary Rule) claims that the God of Heaven's Property – territory, resource and people in the world – is owned by every individual in the Chinese community, and the Sage Ruler⁶¹ will naturally emerge via Dà Dào (Grand Course) – the ultimate discipline of human society from the God of Heaven. Based on this claim, some scholars argue that Dà Tóng (Harmonic and Non-Hereditary Rule) is familiar with Daoist political thought in that it emphasises the ruler's monopoly of knowledge and wisdom (cf. Yi 2002; Zhang 2004). This dissertation argues that Dà Tóng (Harmonic and Non-Hereditary Rule) is close to a kind of disciplinary society imagined by Foucault (1979) where everyone lives in accordance with

⁶⁰ This term has various translations including 'Great Union', 'Great Unity' and 'Great Harmony'.

⁶¹ When ancient Chinese scholars described the political model of Dà Tóng (Harmonic and Non-Hereditary Rule), they employed the term 'Sage Ruler' from Daoism.

potential rules of society. In support of this argument, the dissertation accepts that Dà Tóng (Harmonic and Non-Hereditary Rule) is similar to Daoism: the community will naturally divide into the wise group and the ingenuous group, and the wise group has an inherent right to govern. Its ‘harmonic society’ is built on a high degree of cooperation within the wise group, and the ingenuous group has a high degree of self-discipline to obey the wise group; the society thus is in a state of ‘great unity’.

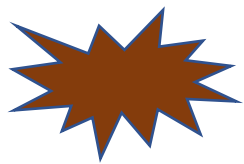
In contrast to Dà Tóng (Harmonic and Non-Hereditary Rule), Xiǎo Kāng (Virtuous and Hereditary Rule⁶²) originated in ancestor worship, blood nobility and individual self-interest (Legge 1885, part 4). Under this model people behave following their social identities and rationality,⁶³ and good rulers are born from political teachings, cultural norms and institutional settings (Legge 1885, part 4). Therefore, for virtuous rulers who aim to achieve the long-term stability of this divided society, it is necessary to structure the social constructions based on the Virtue Politics doctrine (Legge 1885, part 4). These social constructions will strengthen the hierarchical order in society (Bell 2008, pp. 38-56), and will regulate every clan and individual (Legge 1885, part 4). It can be observed that Xiǎo Kāng (Virtuous and Hereditary Rule) is familiar with Confucianism, and implies a conflict between rule by virtue and rule by hereditary right.

By summarising the four theoretical political models in Chinese political culture, this dissertation argues that all models anticipate a convergence of Chinese elites. The main difference between the four models is the state of the convergent ruling group: cooperative or single-ruler-dominated. For Shàn Ràng (Virtuous and Non-Hereditary Rule) and Dà Tóng

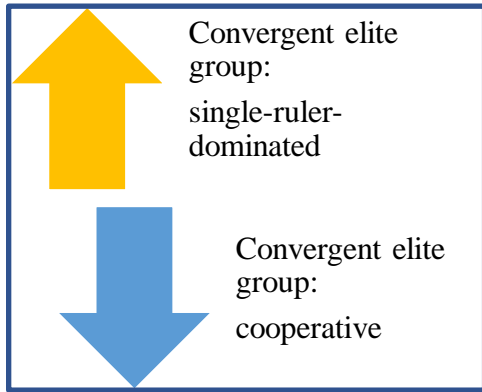
⁶² This term has various translations including ‘Small Tranquility’, ‘Lesser Tranquility’ or ‘Moderately Prosperous Society’.

⁶³ Especially family identity.

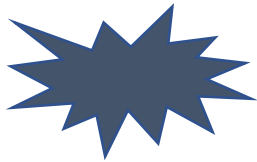
(Harmonic and Non-Hereditary Rule) the cooperation and integration within the ruling group is the core of the models, while for Hóng Fàn (Virtuous and Absolute-Dominant Rule) and Xiǎo Kāng (Virtuous and Hereditary Rule) the single ruler or ruling family is the core of the models. This devotion to the convergence of elites is distinct from the modern political theories of democracy. For instance, in Dahl's (1961) argument on plural society and Mills's (1956) warning about the integration of elite groups, there is vigilance about the power of the convergent ruling group. Ancient Chinese scholars, in contrast, did not fear a convergent ruling group. They instead believed that the convergence of elites would achieve the long-term stability of Chinese society, if the ruling group was of high quality. This unique belief provides yet another basis of the Wise Ruler doctrine.



Collapse of political system and disorder of society:
a low-quality ruler holding concentrated power



Boundary of political
and social stability



Collapse of political system and disorder of society:
divergence of elites

Figure 2: Convergence of Elites to Achieve Long-Term Social Stability

The Wise Ruler Doctrine in Northern Song

In practice, the Wise Ruler doctrine underwent an institutionalisation process, and it structured the institutional settings of Northern Song. To demonstrate this process, this dissertation traces the growth of the scholar-official group, and outlines the influence of the Wise Ruler doctrine on Northern Song politics as follows: the Wise Ruler doctrine stipulated that (a) the emperor's power and authority should be tightly integrated; (b) there had to be a subtle balance between the emperor and the other forces in the ruling group; and (c) the ruling group was entitled to comprehensive dominance over the common people.

Scholar-Official Group

Chinese historical records show that in practice the Wise Ruler doctrine is ambiguous and manipulable due to the tensions between the monarch and the scholar-officials. A change in the balance of the ruling group will obviously alter the implementation of the Wise Ruler doctrine. Firstly, the ruler can manipulate the Wise Ruler doctrine when the monarch's power is much stronger than that of the scholar-official group. For instance, although Emperor Taizong of Tang (r. 626-649) murdered his brother, and forced his father to abdicate, he was beautified as the Wise Ruler by the scholar-official group due to his dominant political power (Chen 2010, pp. 1-3).⁶⁴ Secondly, the Wise Ruler doctrine facilitates cooperation between the monarch and the scholar-official group, even if the cooperation is not virtuous. For instance, Emperor Xuanzong of Tang (9th century, r. 846-859) condoned the widespread corruption of a powerful faction in

⁶⁴ Otherwise, when the monarch is too weak to control the scholar-official group, the scholar-official group can employ the Wise Ruler doctrine to challenge the monarch's legitimacy. For example, Wang Su (a scholar-official) challenged the legitimacy of Emperor Xian (posthumous name) of Han (r. 189-220) due to Xian's disadvantage of political power. See Chen (1959, *juan* 13, pp. 415-6).

the bureaucracy, but the scholar-official group still beautified him as a model of the Wise Ruler (Wong 2010).⁶⁵

The rise of the scholar-official group was a long-term process in Chinese history. Following the establishment of the patriarchal/hereditary monarchy in early China, the blood nobles gained the advantages of advanced knowledge, political power and cultural influence (Loewe & Shaughnessy 1999). In the Zhou dynasty, the blood nobles built a decentralised system of multiple autonomous states under the rule of the King of Zhou: *fēng jiàn* (cf. Byres & Harbans 1985; Loewe & Shaughnessy 1999; Roberts 2006). Low-rank blood nobles did not own autonomous states so that the only advantages they had were ownership of land resources and advanced knowledge. They eventually became the highest occupation – the ‘scholar-officials’ – in the Four Occupations hierarchy⁶⁶ (cf. Fairbank ed. 1957, pp. 235-45; Fairbank & Goldman 1998, pp. 46-71). Then, due to the decline of the blood nobles, the scholar-officials who mastered the ability of governance became the mainstream force in the bureaucracy (Fairbank & Goldman 1998, pp. 39-71, 88-107). To select skilful scholar-officials, imperial China constantly improved its merit-based civil service system and personnel system (cf. Bishop 1968; Song 2011; Tian 2012) until the introduction of *Kē Jǔ* (Imperial Examination) – the nationwide examination for selecting new members of the bureaucracy (cf. De Weerd 2007, pp. 2-7; Elman 2013; Fairbank ed. 1957, pp. 251-62)⁶⁷.

With the introduction of *Kē Jǔ* (Imperial Examination), the high-privileged clans’ position gradually declined, and the low-privileged clans’ position improved very fast (cf. Fairbank ed.

⁶⁵ This beautification process is illustrated by Wang Fuzhi in *Arguments on Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Governing* (1928a, *juan* 26, Chapter 5).

⁶⁶ From high to low the occupations were scholar-officials (landed gentry), peasant farmers, artisans and craftsmen, and merchants and traders.

⁶⁷ During the evolution of the scholar-official group, there was great tension between members from high-privileged clans (*wàng zú*) and members from low-privileged clans (*hán mén*) (cf. Tackett 2014; Zang 2016).

1957, pp. 251-62; Lee 1985). Moreover, a range of sociopolitical changes in Northern Song including the containment of military leaders and the development of printing technology led to the unprecedented expansion of the scholar-official group in Chinese society (Chaffee 1985; Hartman 2015; Mote 1999, pp. 119-49; Smith 2009). Hartman (2015, p. 47) highlights that the expansion of the scholar-official group in Northern Song resulted in a huge social network of ruling clans sharing their advantages⁶⁸ and benefits based on the protection privilege (yīn):

... Officials often took younger scholars into their houses as ‘house clients’ where the clients acted as tutors, secretaries, or copyists. As the official career of the client developed, his relationship with his patron remained. Under certain circumstances, it was even possible for a senior official to use yin privilege⁶⁹ for a house tutor. Also, upper-echelon literati maintained very large immediate families. One official might often support a household of forty or more individuals who lived together. And literati families often intermarried. Given these large family structures and extensive intermarriage, many top officials, especially in Northern Song, were related to each other through marriage.

It can be seen that the strong scholar-official group in Northern Song dominated the political system, and had a significant influence on Chinese political culture (Hymes & Conrad eds 1993).

Meanwhile, three original conditions of the establishment of the Northern Song dynasty weakened the monarch’s power and authority. Firstly, since the Northern Song dynasty was established through Emperor Taizu’s (r. 960-976) usurpation of the Later Zhou dynasty’s (951-960) throne, the monarchs of Northern Song had a relatively weak legitimacy (Hung 2014). Secondly, because the northern nomadic empire Liao claimed their monarch to be the eldest

⁶⁸ In Hartman’s (2015, p. 47) words, this was a network of ‘patronage associations’.

⁶⁹ Yīn, one’s privilege to protect another one’s position, advantages and benefits in the bureaucratic system.

son of the God of Heaven, and the early Northern Song dynasty failed to defeat the Liao dynasty; the imperial house of Northern Song thus had to employ the Wise Ruler doctrine to strengthen their monarchs' legitimacy (Tao 1988). Thirdly, rapid economic transformations, including the emergence of a commercial economy, a banking system and overseas trade, caused a range of social changes such as urbanisation, the invention of private newspapers, and the rise of civil culture and entertainment (cf. Smith 2009; Yang 2018).

These social changes triggered a crisis in traditional Chinese society and culture which were based on the agrarian economy, and allowed the scholar-official group to spread its cultural influence effectively (Smith 2009). In the economy, the scholar-official group not only owned the majority of the land property but also linked with influential guilds and merchants to enjoy the benefits of commercialisation (Fairbank & Goldman 1998, p. 106). In the military, the scholar-official group had significant power to restrict generals (Dreyer 2002, pp. 25-6), and Northern Song monarchs had to employ eunuch generals to balance the military sector (cf. Wang 2016; Zhang 1993). In culture, the scholar-official group converged three influential cultural groups – Confucians, Daoists and Buddhists – to form the Confucianism-leading mainstream in society (Kuhn 2009, pp. 99-119; Lu 2015). The wide spread of the scholar-officials' influence resulted in a series of reforming movements and factional conflicts between Reformers and Anti-Reformers in Northern Song's government (see Table 1). In these political dynamics, the monarch had very limited power to suppress the scholar-official group completely until Emperor Huizong's reign. Finally, the social changes led to a subtle balance between a weak monarch and strong scholar-officials (Kuhn 2009).

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Year	Reforming movement or anti-reforming movement	Highest ruler in power	Ruling faction (the ruling faction's box colour is brighter than the opposition faction's)	
1043-1045	Qingli Reforming Movement (Leader: Fan Zhongyan)	Emperor Renzong	Innovative	Conservative
1045-1063	Qingli Reforming Movement failed		Innovative	Conservative
1063-1067		Emperor Yingzong	Innovative	Conservative
1067-1069		Emperor Shenzong	Reformer	Anti-Reformer
1069-1076	Xining Reforming Movement (Leader: Wang Anshi)		Reformer	Anti-Reformer
1076-1080	Xining Reforming Movement failed, but Emperor Shenzong maintained some reform outcomes		Reformer	Anti-Reformer
1080-1082	Yuanfeng Reforming Movement (Leader: Emperor Shenzong)		Reformer	Anti-Reformer
1082-1085	Yuanfeng Reforming Movement finished		Reformer	Anti-Reformer
1085-1086	Yuanyou Anti-Reforming Movement (Leader: Sima Guang)		Reformer	Anti-Reformer
1086-1093	Conflict of conservative regionalists	Empress Dowager Gao	'Reformer' (*reorganised marginalised scholar-officials)	'Anti-Reformer' (*three factions of conservative regionalists: Shuo, Luo and Shu)
1093-1094	Shaosheng Reforming Movement (Leader: Zhang Dun)	Emperor Zhezong	'Reformer'	'Anti-Reformer'
1094-1100	Cleansing of conservative scholar-officials (Leader: Zhang Dun)		'Reformer'	'Anti-Reformers'
1100	Balanced Government	Empress Dowager Xiang	Mixed Faction	
1101-1102	Balanced Government	Emperor Huizong	Mixed Faction	
1102-1126	Emperor Huizong's reforms and cleansings		'Reformer' (Emperor Huizong's own faction)	

Table 1: Factional Politics in Northern Song⁷⁰

⁷⁰ This table is mainly based on Bi (ed. 1928, *juan* 43-95), Levine (2008), Liu (1959), Liu (2019), Williamson (1937), Xu and Yuan (2018), and Yu (2004).

Institutionalisation of the Wise Ruler Doctrine

The strong scholar-official group pushed the development of bureaucratic administration and the institutionalisation of the Wise Ruler doctrine in Northern Song (Kuhn 2009). In a study on Wáng Dào (Rule by Consent), Yu (2016) summarises three ways to institutionalise the Wise Ruler doctrine: through the ritual system for maintaining the social order, the honour system for deifying the ruling group's members, and the value system for beautifying the ruling group. All these institutions were highly developed in Northern Song. With regards to the ritual system, the Northern Song emperors followed a range of Confucian etiquette and rituals to show their respect for the God of Heaven and their responsibility to spread their virtues within the empire. In practice, the ritual system continuously influenced every Chinese people's life experience (Ebrey, Walthall & Palais 2006, pp. 159-63,168-72; Kuhn 2009).

With regards to the honour system, the Northern Song dynasty further developed the appellation system of monarch (cf. Kuhn 2009, 29-48; Yang 2014). For instance, the scholar-official group had authority to decide the posthumous name and temple name of the dead monarch (cf. Di 2008; Lin 1996; Yang 2014). In Northern Song, the posthumous name was used to praise one's quality and achievements, and the temple name was used to mark one's honour and to position one's spirit among the ancestor spirits (cf. Choi 2017; Di 2008; Lin 1996; Yang 2014). Scholar-officials used the honour system to beautify or vilify the past ruler or scholar-official's image in history in order to regulate the current monarch's behaviours (cf. Di 2008; Kuhn 2009, pp. 29-48; Lin 1996; Yang 2014). For example, to praise Emperor Renzong's (r. 1022-1063) observance of the Confucian norms of Politics of Benevolence and his cooperation with the scholar-official group, the bureaucracy ruled 'Rén (Benevolent)' to be the emperor's temple name; this marked Emperor Renzong as a model emperor under the Wise

Ruler doctrine and a positive example for later monarchs (Lan 2013; Tuo ed. 1977, *juan* 12). Also, the living monarchs as well as the subjects were limited in their *míngjié* (personal fame⁷¹) (Elman, Herman & Duncan 2002; Guo 2012; Wang 2011). For example, when Zhang Dun as Emperor Zhezong's grand councillor arrested a large number of scholar-officials, Emperor Zhezong claimed that Zhang Dun's immoral behaviour damaged his *míngjié* (personal fame) because Zhezong had a moral responsibility to supervise and improve Zhang Dun's governance to be virtuous (Tuo ed. 1977, *juan* 18).

The value system in Northern Song included the traditional values of Confucian ethics and a range of precepts to govern suggested by past monarchs and scholar-officials, and it influenced the scholar-official group's devotion to virtue (Ebrey 2014; Kuhn 2009). The devotion to virtue maintains the institutional settings and agendas based on the Confucian Wise Ruler doctrine, such as the regular admonishment, and impeachment, of the monarch by courtiers (cf. Bishop 1968; Kuhn 2009). The Wise Ruler doctrine forced the monarch to accept the criticisms of the scholar-official group, and legalised the protection of every scholar-official's right to admonish (cf. Diao 1998; Kuhn 2009, pp. 29-48; Li 2010). The Wise Ruler doctrine also required the monarch to learn and respect the scholar-officials' expressed thoughts, traditions, values and norms (Kuhn 2009, pp. 29-48; Lyu 2018, pp. 99-119). The highly institutionalised Wise Ruler doctrine constructed a kind of 'disciplinary monarchy' that was highly limited by the normative system of the Wise Ruler doctrine.

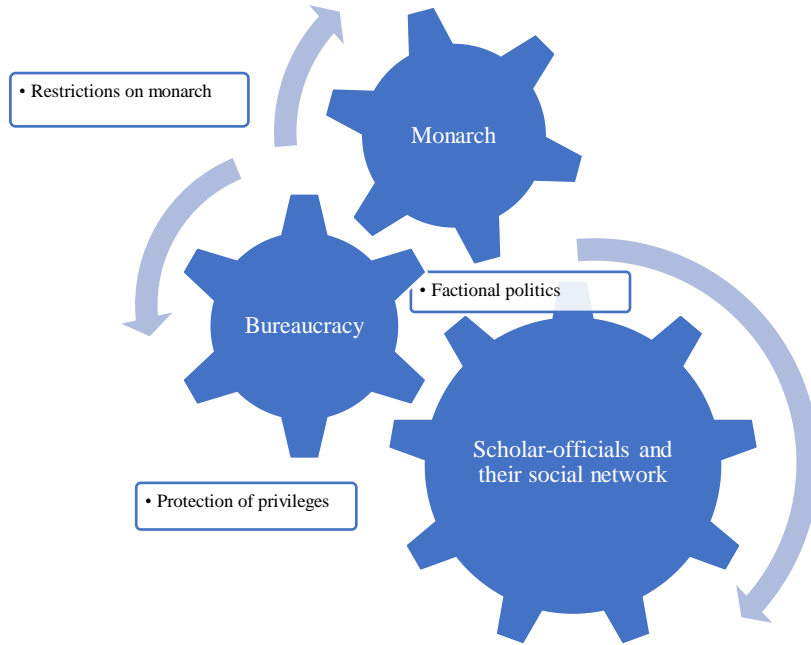
To summarise the main claims of this chapter, the Wise Ruler doctrine helped shape the three general features of Northern Song politics. Firstly, the monarch's power and authority were highly integrated in the institutional settings of Northern Song. This meant that every monarch

⁷¹ A kind of reputation indicating one's moral qualities in accordance with the Confucian moral system.

of Northern Song had to consider the subjects' consent to his rule as important as his own political power. Secondly, due to the scholar-official group's crucial role in governance and significant influence on Chinese society, the Northern Song monarch needed to have a cooperative relationship with the scholar-official group. In other words, the monarch had to share his power within the ruling group in order to establish his authority. Therefore, in Northern Song it is rare to find a tyrant-styled or a dictator-styled ruler, and it is also rare to find a powerful ruler who can eliminate the factional conflicts in bureaucracy (Hartman 2015). Thirdly, the scholar-official group supported the social division between the ruling group and the common people in Northern Song society. The ruling group's advantage was comprehensive in all social fields due to the alliance between the monarch and scholar-officials for sharing their advantages and resources. Hence, in Northern Song the common people had to comply with various rituals and customs promoted by the ruling group (Ebrey, Walthall & Palais 2006, pp. 159-63, 168-72), even something that was harmful to the individual's physical health, such as Chinese women's footbinding (Wang 2000).

This dissertation argues that the Northern Song society seems like a huge disciplinary society as imagined by Foucault (1979) where every individual self-regulates his or her behaviours under potential social rules or disciplines. The ruling group of Northern Song was an 'exquisite machine' with gears cleverly working together to drive the entire empire to maintain the stability and effectiveness of traditional monarchy with bureaucratic administration at a time of radical social change. The dissertation argues that Emperor Huizong's failure was the destruction of this subtle balance. He destroyed the symbiotic relationship between monarch and scholar-officials, and it caused the dysfunction of the institutional settings in Northern Song based on the Wise Ruler doctrine. In this process, Huizong maximised his political power, but he lost the authority of the scholar-official group's consent.

The Ruling Group (Subtle balance and bureaucratic administration)



The Common People (The ruling group's comprehensive dominance)

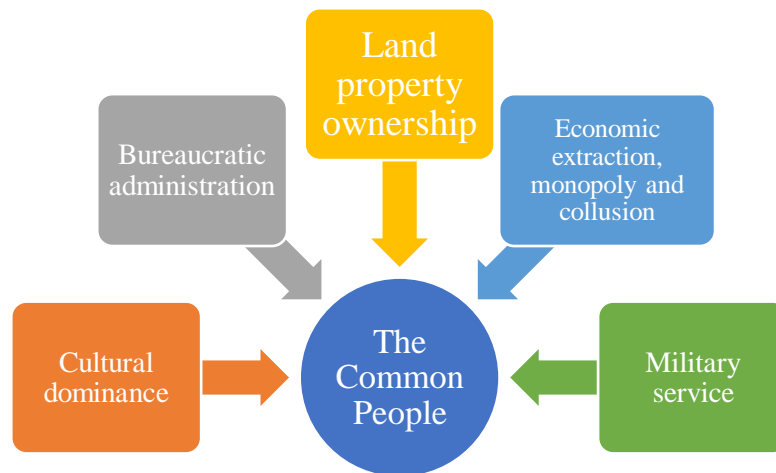


Figure 3: A Model of Northern Song's Macro-Institutional Settings⁷²

⁷² Mainly Based on Hartman (2015).

Emperor Huizong's Dilemma

Now, a king has power over life and death and can confer benefits and impose penalties. How can anyone resist his orders? I must warn against subordinates who deliberately procrastinate: From now on, when I issue special instructions and decisions, it is acceptable to exhaustively discuss their pros and cons in memorials, which I will consider with an open mind. But it will be classed as a case of great disrespect if orders are simply not carried out on the grounds that they conflict with the usual practice.

Emperor Huizong's edict of 1106, Ebrey (2014, p. 98)

This dissertation examines Emperor Huizong's failure through dividing his reign into three stages: legitimisation problem (1100-1102), centralisation (1102-1119) and collapse of authority (1119-1126). Firstly, the dissertation shows that Huizong's legitimisation problem caused him to evade cooperation with powerful factions in the bureaucracy. Secondly, it analyses Huizong's main acts of centralisation in four sectors of the Chinese empire (government, economy, culture and military), and it argues that Huizong's autocratic policies aimed to protect his weak rule. Thirdly, it observes that Emperor Huizong's downfall was brought about by an inter-exacerbation between the decline of his authority and the decay of bureaucratic administration. Finally, the dissertation demonstrates Huizong's dilemma.

Legitimation Problem

Originally, Emperor Huizong was not the natural heir to the throne. When Emperor Zhezong died at the age of 23 without any son in 1100, Empress Dowager Xiang and the leader of the imperial court Zhang Dun caused a debate on the first successor to the throne in order. In this debate, recorded in *Song History*, Empress Dowager Xiang employed the Wise Ruler doctrine to refuse other princes to succeed to the throne, and she pushed Huizong (age 17) to be the first heir:

On 23 February 1100, Emperor Zhezong passed away. Empress Dowager Xiang held the imperial court behind a screen, [and she] cried to courtiers: 'the empire is unlucky, the old emperor does not have a son, it is necessary to solve soon the matter of the God of Heaven's Property'⁷³ ... the empress dowager said: 'Of all the sons of Emperor Shenzong,⁷⁴ the eldest one Prince Bi has sick eyes. The next is Prince Ji,⁷⁵ so he should

⁷³ The matter is ensuring a new emperor.

⁷⁴ Zhezong's father (r. 1067-1085).

⁷⁵ Huizong.

succeed.’ Zhang Dun sternly said: ‘In accordance with the principle of eldest-successor,⁷⁶ Prince Bi should be the first successor. In accordance with the ritual laws of the imperial house, Prince Si whose birth mother⁷⁷ the same as Zhezong’s should be the first successor.’ The empress dowager said: ‘All [of Zhezong’s brothers from Prince Bi on down] are equally Shenzong’s sons. It would be difficult to distinguish among them [on the basis of parentage].’ ... [after some courtiers supported Empress Dowager Xiang] The empress dowager then said: ‘The old emperor⁷⁸ said: “*Prince Ji⁷⁹ is gifted and healthy, and benevolent and filial, [so that he is] distinct from other princes.*”’ Zhang Dun thus became silent. Hence, [the imperial court] called Prince Ji⁸⁰ to enter [the palace] to enthrone, and the empress dowager held the political power of the emperor to decide all policies of military and empire (Tuo ed. 1977, *juan* 19, pp. 357-8, my translation⁸¹). It appears that Huizong’s successful enthronement relied on Xiang’s support through stressing Huizong’s high qualities which distinct from other princes, and the Wise Ruler doctrine played the central theoretical basis of Huizong’s legitimacy to succeed to the throne.⁸² This point is also proven by Huizong’s announcement to abdicate in 1126 (Ebrey 2014, p. 432).

It is evidenced that Empress Dowager Xiang’s aim in having Emperor Huizong enthroned was to protect her position in the imperial house (see Table 2). Xiang did not bear a son with Emperor Shenzong, and Consort Dowager Zhu was the birth mother of Emperor Zhezong (Ebrey 2014, pp. 10-2). If the next emperor’s birth mother still was Zhu, it is possible that Zhu

⁷⁶ An alternative to the eldest-principal-successor principle if there is no eldest principal successor.

⁷⁷ Consort Dowager Zhu.

⁷⁸ Zhezong.

⁷⁹ Huizong.

⁸⁰ Huizong.

⁸¹ Based on Ebrey’s (2014, p. 38).

⁸² Notably, for the day of succession *Sequel of Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Governing* records an extra detail: Zhang Dun refused Huizong’s quality to be the Wise Ruler: ‘Prince Ji (Huizong) is flighty, he should not be the ruler of the empire!’ (Bi ed. 1928, *juan* 86, my translation). Although this record is argued to be tampered content in *Sequel of Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Governing* (Huang 2015), it still is the evidence showing that the Wise Ruler doctrine played the central theoretical basis of Huizong’s legitimacy to succeed to the throne.

would challenge Xiang’s position of the highest woman in the imperial house (Liu 2016). Also, Zhu and her son Prince Si had already formed a political faction in the bureaucracy, and Zhang Dun was a representative member of the faction, which would directly challenge Xiang’s position (Zhang 2004). Therefore, Xiang refused the idea of Si succeeding to the throne. As well, Xiang refused the idea of Zhezong’s eldest brother Prince Bi succeeding to the throne since Bi’s mother Consort Dowager Wu was also a living high-rank consort (Ebrey 2014, p. 14). Compared with Si and Bi, Huizong was the best choice of the successor to the throne for Xiang because his birth mother Consort Chen passed away before the death of Zhezong (Liu 2016). During the enthronement event Huizong accepted Xiang’s invitation to form a political alliance by showing his filial obedience to Xiang (Ebrey 2014, pp. 43-4). It could be argued that Huizong’s compliance with Xiang was also a strategy to strengthen his legitimacy because filial obedience is a kind of virtue in Confucianism.

Potential heirs	Age	Birth mother, title: Consort (Dowager)	Consorts’ Ranking	Conditions to succeed to the throne	Other main players
Prince Bi	17	C.D. Wu	3	The eldest Prince, bad eyes	Cai Bian Zeng Bu Xu Jiang Liang Congzheng
Prince Ji ⁸³	17	C. Chen (died)	4	[Quality] ‘distinct from other princes’	
Prince Yu ⁸⁴	16	C. Lin (died)	2		
Prince Si	16	C.D. Zhu	1	The legal heir in accordance with ritual laws supported by Zhang Dun	
Prince Ssi ⁸⁵	15	C. Lin (died)	2		

Table 2: Main Players at the time of Huizong’s Accession⁸⁶

The historical records show that Empress Dowager Xiang controlled Emperor Huizong’s power and authority, and the bureaucracy resisted her influence. For instance, on 18 June 1100 Zeng

⁸³ Emperor Huizong.

⁸⁴ The original Chinese name is a heteronym: 侯. Ebrey’s (2014) spelling is Prince Wu.

⁸⁵ The original Chinese name is Si (悝), which spelling is the same as Prince Si’s name. This dissertation thus uses Ebrey’s (2014) spelling, Prince Ssi.

⁸⁶ This table is mainly based on Ebrey (2014, p. 40).

Bu⁸⁷ warned Emperor Huizong to deal with the retirement of Xiang carefully, and after the conversation Zeng Bu was very afraid of Xiang's punishment (Ebrey 2014, pp. 49-50). Even after her retirement on 8 August 1100, Xiang continued to influence the government, and Huizong secretly supported the bureaucracy's resistance against her. On 19 October 1100, Chen Guan⁸⁸ criticised Xiang's relatives' bad behaviour and Xiang's control of the imperial government, and the next day the imperial house punished Chen Guan, forcing him to leave the central government (Ebrey 2014, p. 66). Huizong secretly rewarded Chen Guan for his challenge to the empress dowager, and Chen Guan continued to submit memos criticising Xiang's faction (Ebrey 2014, p. 66). Under the bureaucracy's resistance to her influence, Xiang completely gave up her political power in December 1100 at the earliest⁸⁹, and she died on 12 February 1101 (cf. Tuo ed. 1977, *juan* 19, pp. 360-1).

Emperor Huizong needed an alliance with Empress Dowager Xiang to defeat other potential heirs. Therefore, before Xiang's death, on the surface Huizong kept showing his filial obedience to Xiang to maintain an alliance with her (Ebrey 2014, pp. 38ff.). According to Zhang (2004), the major resistance against Huizong was from the faction of Consort Dowager Zhu and Prince Si, and the political struggles between Huizong and Si are hidden in many historical records of Northern Song. By collecting the clues of Si's resistance against Huizong, Zhang (2004) points out that Huizong defeated Si's faction through disintegrating Zhang Dun's faction in the imperial court in 1100, dismissing Liang Congzheng⁹⁰ in the imperial house in April 1101 and destroying Zhao Shen's⁹¹ plan for rebellion in March 1102. Also, Huizong offered his other brothers the better status of prince to win their support in the imperial house;

⁸⁷ The main councillor whose political identity is close to the faction of 'Reformer' in the imperial court.

⁸⁸ A scholar-official whose political identity is close to the faction of 'Anti-Reformer' in the imperial court.

⁸⁹ In November 1100, the imperial house still forbade courtiers to harm 'the empire' by scandals.

⁹⁰ A chief servant eunuch.

⁹¹ A scholar-official in the Imperial Academy (Tài Xué).

to maintain his authority as the Wise Ruler, since 1102 Huizong had implemented policies to protect other members in the imperial house and to expand the imperial clan's privileges (cf. Zhang 2004; Levine 2009, pp. 600-2). Arguably, Huizong's legitimation problem significantly shaped his early political struggles with Xiang, Si and other political actors related to the imperial clan.

Importantly, before and after his political struggles with Empress Dowager Xiang and Prince Si, Emperor Huizong avoided completely relying upon any particular powerful faction in the bureaucracy. After the downfall of Xiang and Si, he still kept his neutral position in the government and tried to form a balanced government with multiple factions (Ebrey 2014, p. 71; Zhang & Qing 2018; Zhang 2002) – this is also known as a factional conciliation government. However, the serious conflict between the Reformer faction and the Anti-Reformer faction destroyed Huizong's attempt to balance the bureaucracy, and he eventually formed a more centralised government (Ebrey 2014, p. 97). When Huizong reorganised his ruling faction in the government, he still did not fully depend on any existing strong faction in the bureaucracy. He instead sought a new faction consisting of three marginalised or minor forces: 'swinging in factional conflict' or low-rank scholar-officials,⁹² some eunuchs,⁹³ and some Daoists⁹⁴ (Ebrey 2014, pp. 98-105). The weak scholar-officials in Huizong's faction did not have obvious political influence within the ruling group. Their leader Cai Jing was expelled from the imperial court in 1094 before Huizong's reign (Ebrey 2014), and he was a political actor who kept swinging between the reformers and the anti-reformers (Tuo ed. 1977, *juan* 472). Similarly, the eunuch system and the Daoist group in Northern Song did not have a very dominant position before Huizong's reign⁹⁵ (cf. Hartman 2015; Kuhn 2009). In Table 3, it can

⁹² The majority of them came from marginalised groups in the Reformer faction.

⁹³ In Northern Song, the eunuch group has a very weak influence on government.

⁹⁴ In Northern Song, the mainstream belief system in the bureaucracy and society is Confucianism.

⁹⁵ Emperor Zhenzong's (r. 997-1022) devotion to Daoism will be discussed below.

be seen that the six members of the head group of Emperor Huizong’s government, called ‘Six Traitors’ or ‘Six Felons’, did not hold high-rank positions in the political system of Northern Song at the beginning of Huizong’s reign. It seems that Huizong’s arrangement weakened the bureaucracy’s influence on his actions and decision (e.g. Zhang 2004). It can be argued that Huizong did not want any powerful group in bureaucracy due to his weak legitimacy based on the Wise Ruler doctrine⁹⁶.

Name	Political identity and personal characteristics	Post before joining Huizong’s faction	The year joined Huizong’s faction
Cai Jing	‘Swinging in factional conflict’ bureaucrat, famous literati, beautiful appearance	Hanlin academician, recipient of edicts	1102
Tong Guan	Eunuch general, painter, good appearance	Enshrine eunuch officer in Hangzhou prefecture	Between 1100 and 1104
Wang Fu	Scholar-official without factional identity, good speaker, beautiful appearance	Low-rank academician and official since 1103	1119
Zhu Mian	Poor family, has a Daoist father, famous architect	Common people	1105
Li Yan	Eunuch	Eunuch manager of imperial gardens	1121
Liang Shicheng	Eunuch official, good writer, ‘Su Shi’s [a famous literati] lost son’	Low-rank official	Between 1111 and 1118

Table 3: Huizong’s Main Allies – ‘Six Traitors’⁹⁷

Centralisation

From 1102, Emperor Huizong reorganised the government so that it would completely obey his orders, and this marks the beginning of his centralisation efforts (Levine 2009, pp. 578-89; Zhang 2004, pp. 4-5). Emperor Huizong also introduced a series of reforms to concentrate

⁹⁶ Interestingly, according to Tuo (ed. 1977), three of the ‘Six Traitors’ have a good appearance, and five are famous or skilful in their cultural groups. It is evidenced that Huizong focuses on these kinds of symbolic capitals (Musgrave & Nexon 2018, pp. 593-609) to form an influential cultural group serving his later cultural dominance (Ebrey 2014).

⁹⁷ This table is largely based on Ebrey (2014), Tuo (ed. 1977, *juan* 22, 455, 468, 470, 472) and Wang (2015).

power and wealth (see Chapter 1). This dissertation analyses his centralisation efforts into four sectors: government, economy, military and culture. In government, Huizong made extensive changes to the bureaucratic administrative system, and he led a series of suppressions on the scholar-official group (Levine 2009, pp. 578-89). A good example is the large-scale cleansing of bureaucracy and the political persecutions of the scholar-official group that he ordered between 1102 and 1104.⁹⁸ On 25 October 1102, 583 officials were divided into the categories of ‘proper or correct’ or ‘improper or deviant’ in a blacklist, and 80 of them were sent to remote positions in bureaucracy (Ebrey 2014, p. 111). On 29 October 1102, 117 influential scholar-officials, dead or alive, were listed in the second blacklist (Ebrey 2014, p. 111). On 26 June 1104, 309 current or former councillors, officials, eunuchs and disloyal subjects were vilified as a treacherous group and punished by imprisonment or exile, and their clans were denied the right to access government and education (Ebrey 2014, p. 112). Then, Huizong built a range of monuments throughout the empire to record the banning of the blacklisted scholar-officials (Ebrey 2014, p. 112). Between 1105 and 1106, due to resistance from the scholar-official group and the appearance of a huge comet, these monuments were gradually pulled down by Huizong, but the political persecutions of the listed individuals and their family members continued until the collapse of the Northern Song dynasty (cf. Levine 2009, pp. 578-89; Lu 2015).

Importantly, the blacklisted individuals consisted not of only anti-reformers but also of some reformers or neutral individuals in the bureaucracy or other groups (see Table 4), so it could be argued that the main purpose of the political cleansing was to weaken the whole ruling group’s capability to balance Emperor Huizong’s political power rather than to attack a particular political faction. In addition, Huizong carried out another three main reforms in government:

⁹⁸ In *Yuanyou Factional Membership Monument*, Cai Jing claimed that this event showed Emperor Huizong’s ‘benevolence, sagacity, preeminence and might’ (Wang 2009, p. 120).

the extreme censorship of scholar-officials' works (such as Su Shi) (cf. Ebrey 2014, pp. 118-9; Levine 2009, pp. 578-89; Lu 2015), the streamlining of the personnel system (Ding 2010; Xu ed. 1957, *juan* 27484, pp. 3723-6; Zhang 2020), and the expansion of the education and examination system (Chaffee 1985; Levine 2009, pp. 585-9; Tian 2007). These political reforms reorganised the old social network of the scholar-official group and the ways they shared advantages and influenced society (Levine 2009). As a result, Huizong had strongly control over the bureaucratic system (Ebrey 2014). Huizong's political reforms destroyed the structure of the bureaucracy and the balance between monarch and scholar-officials.

Identity	Names in 26 June 1104 blacklist	Names in both 26 June 1104 blacklist and 29 October 1102 blacklist
High-rank courtiers in the imperial court	27	21
Low-rank courtiers in the imperial court	49	35
Low-rank officials in civil service system	177	37
Military officials	25	4
Eunuchs	29	7
Disloyal subjects	2	1
Total	309	105

Table 4: Names in 26 June 1104 Blacklist⁹⁹

In terms of the economy, Emperor Huizong's reforms undermined the economic advantages shared in the social network of scholar-officials. Those who gained benefits from the commercialisation including bureaucrats, landed gentry, merchants and traders were targets of Huizong's extraction of economic resources (Huang 2002). The extensive reforms included finance and taxation (Huang 2002, p. 40; Levine 2009, pp. 589-96; Wang 2014), monopoly on salt and tea (Ebrey 2014, pp. 91-105, 318-35; Huang 2002, p. 39; Xu ed. 1957, *juan* 9789, pp. 5215-28), trade management (Ebrey 2014, pp. 90-103, 321-35, 373-5; Huang 2002, p. 40; Xu ed. 1957, *juan* 9789, pp. 5215-28), and currency (Ebrey 2014, pp. 329-42; Huang 2002, pp. 39-

⁹⁹ This table is largely based on Ebrey (2014, p. 112).

40). The reforms allowed Huizong to concentrate the empire's wealth. To legitimate the concentration of economic resources, Cai Jing created the political teaching of 'Féng Hēng Yù Dà' to allow Huizong to extract huge revenues from the wealthy members in society (Tuo ed. 1977, *juan* 472, pp. 13724-5; Yang & Zhao 2019), and this extreme extraction led many rich people to commit suicide (Tuo ed. 1977, *juan* 472, p. 13723) and many common people to be more vulnerable (cf. Tuo ed. 1977, *juan* 472; Wang 2014; Yang 2018). This dissertation argues that Huizong instigated the economic reforms because he wanted to further weaken the considerable forces within the scholar-official group which potentially challenged his dominant position. According to the social field theory, the dominant member in a social hierarchy will maintain dominance by constantly concentrating the valuable political capital (Musgrave & Nexon 2018, pp. 593-609). Importantly, when Huizong concentrated economic resources, he institutionalised his economic advantages through creating a series of new policies and laws, and these policies and laws continued to have effect in later Chinese dynasties (Huang 2002). It may be argued that Huizong's concentration of economic advantages strengthened the foundation of his unrestrained political power.

Paradoxically, Emperor Huizong also spent a lot of government revenue from 1102 to 1107 to establish widespread charities including charity clinics, poorhouses and paupers' graveyards, and this policy shows his quest for authority as a sage-like ruler based on the Wise Ruler doctrine (Ebrey 2014, p. 106):

It was an ancient idea that the benevolent ruler would make arrangements for the care of those with no relatives to support them – widows, widowers, orphans, and the childless – and earlier Song rulers had made sporadic provisions, especially for the needy in the capital ... As John Chaffee notes, there were precedents for government welfare programs, but under Huizong they were extended much more systematically, which

‘represented a radical assumption of responsibility for at least minimum levels of welfare for the poor.’

To interpret this paradox, this dissertation argues that the widespread charity combined with the extreme extraction of economic resources was a redistribution of social resources from the rich groups to the poor groups. This redistribution was intended to weaken the potential strong forces that could challenge Huizong’s dominant position, and maintain the poor people’s daily life in order to establish Huizong’s sage-like image in the poor groups which would then be reluctant to threaten Huizong’s rule. Also, the policy would benefit Huizong’s allies¹⁰⁰ because it was executed by Huizong’s own faction.

In terms of culture, Emperor Huizong invested in his cultural identity and dominance. In order to build his authority as a leading artist and literati, Huizong spent much money on inviting many influential masters and experts to visit and collecting rare works of art between 1102 and 1112 (Ebrey 2014; Ihara & Yoshida 2001). Also, he spent a huge amount of government revenue on building a series of gardens and structures to show his love for traditional culture (Ebrey 2014). These policies were not compatible with his political persecution of the scholar-official group. To interpret this paradox, this dissertation argues that Huizong’s investment of economic resource in the culture field represented a conversion of political capital (Musgrave & Nexon 2018). It can be argued that this investment helped him to claim authority as a sage-like ruler by transforming his economic advantages into cultural dominance.

To further understand Huizong’s primary interest in investing in culture, the dissertation focuses on the conflict between Daoism and Confucianism. According to Ebrey (2014), Huizong was very passionate in following Daoism. After taking up Daoism, from 1110 to 1119

¹⁰⁰ In traditional Chinese historians’ term: corruption (cf. Levine 2009; Wang 2014; Wong 2010).

Huizong employed a range of divine revelations to claim his authority as a sage-like ruler, until the popular uprising shook his throne (Ebrey 2014). As stated earlier, Daoism supports monarchs to naturally exercise political legitimacy if they can show a gifted quality to be the Sage Ruler. It is evidenced that Huizong widely supported the activities of Daoist groups in order to exercise his right to rule gifted by the God of Heaven (Ebrey 2014). Hence, the dissertation argues that Emperor Huizong's predilection for Daoism and divine revelations was in fact used to manipulate the source of his right to rule – the Wise Ruler doctrine – by separating from the Confucian scholar-officials' education and regulation. Also, it was a performance aimed to show Huizong's dominance over the common people and also over the scholar-official group. As support for this idea, the dissertation refers to Huizong's ancestor Emperor Zhenzong's devotion to Daoism, which, it has been established, was used to strengthen his authority (cf. Sun & Chen 2014; Zhu 2019). Ebrey (2014) doubts the evidence of Huizong's rationality to use Daoism to strengthen his authority. However, this problem could be explained by the idea of unintended consequence of historical institutionalism (Collier & Collier 2002). It shows that the decision-maker may not care much about the potential effectiveness of his policy, but the implementation of the policy resulted in the unintended consequence benefitting the decision-maker. In other words, the impact of Huizong's decision was not only determined by Huizong's plan but also the context that Huizong's single-head-dominance within the ruling group would lead to the deification of his image. This deification was based on the alienation of the Confucian mainstream in the ideological confrontation: Huizong and his allies could directly influence the common people to worship to Huizong.

In respect of the military, Emperor Huizong ordered his close eunuchs to control the imperial army in order to balance his scholar-official allies, and he continued to mobilise his empire to take active offensive stances (Wang 2016). Huizong's aggressive military policy won a series

of wars against Tibetan states and Western Xia, and these victories enhanced his authority over the Chinese people (Levine 2009, pp. 615-22). Notably, Huizong's military operations showed his desire to realise the great things his ancestors had not achieved (cf. Ebrey 2014; Levine 2009). All Emperor Huizong's four major wars – the war against Tibetan states, the war against Western Xia, the war against Liao and the war against Jin – shared the same goal of recovering the territories and power projections the past rulers of China lost (cf. Ebrey 2014; Levine 2009). Also, Huizong used military tax to concentrate social resources during the war period (Ebrey 2014, pp. 406ff.). Thus, it can be argued that Huizong's radical military policies were intended to establish his authority based on the Wise Ruler doctrine through following the wishes of dynastic ancestors.

Collapse of Authority

This dissertation argues that the process of Emperor Huizong's downfall was not just triggered by his military setbacks in the wars against Liao and Jin. Instead, it was also caused by a long-term inter-exacerbation between the decline of his authority and the decay of bureaucratic administration in his late reign. This process may be divided into three stages. The first stage was the corruption of bureaucracy (Levine 2009, pp. 603-6). The dissertation claims that Huizong played the role of 'activator' to exacerbate the corruption in his empire for three reasons. Firstly, he destroyed the long-lasting factional structures in the bureaucracy so that the new members of government had fewer internal restrictions in the bureaucracy to deal with (Wang 2015). Secondly, when he sought the concentration of political power and economic resources, the bureaucracy could take advantage of the radical reforms and aggressive military operations (cf. Huang 2002; Levine 2009; Wang 2014). Thirdly, because of his unrestrained political power, the bureaucracy shared a fear of Huizong's punishment which caused bureaucrats to be selfish, self-protecting and short-sighted: the only thing the bureaucrats

needed to do was to obey Huizong's orders, and they earned many benefits in executing these (cf. Wang 2015; Wong 2010).

Due to the spread of corruption and the extraction of revenue, in the second stage of the inter-exacerbation process starting in 1119, a range of popular uprisings challenged Emperor Huizong's authority on the basis of the Wise Ruler doctrine (Levine, pp. 622-7). Because of the bureaucratic corruption, the Chinese people had less resilience to natural disasters and wars, even after Huizong established many welfare institutions, and social disorder eventually unfurled. The outbreak of popular uprisings was not expected by Huizong, and the dysfunctional bureaucratic administration was unable to maintain social stability (Ebrey 2014, p. 440). The popular uprisings were repressed very fast in 1121 given the common people in Northern Song were so comprehensively disadvantaged, but meanwhile Huizong's other dangerous decisions led to the overload of his empire: namely, the wars against Liao and Jin.

In the third stage of the inter-exacerbation, Emperor Huizong's adventurous war decisions destroyed everything he had. Before the final victory over Western Xia in 1119, Huizong had already started a plan to realise his ancestors' dream – to recover the 'Sixteen Prefectures' region lost hundreds of years ago (Ebrey 2014, p. 385): it was possible that if Huizong won the war against Liao, he would probably be able to restore his authority over his empire and continue his unrestrained political power and his single-head-dominated rule. The diplomatic communication for forming the alliance between Song and Jin started in 1115, and the alliance was established in 1120 (Ebrey 2014, p. 395). However, due to a range of popular uprisings, Northern Song did not attack Liao until late 1121. After it had begun to invade, its armies faced a series of military setbacks from 1121 to 1122 (Levine 2009, pp. 627ff.). The long war period

led this tired empire to exhaustion (Ebrey 2014, p. 395). As a result, the war against Liao weakened the Northern Song empire and activated the decline of Huizong's authority.

It is evidenced that the dysfunctional bureaucracy caused the bad performance of Northern Song's armies during the wars against Liao and Jin. Conflict between officials and generals caused the disorder of Northern Song's armies, while Jin's formidable armies conquered the territories of Liao very fast (Ebrey 2014, pp. 406ff.). Ultimately Northern Song had to pay Jin for the 'Sixteen Prefectures' region, and Jin's leaders expressed their contempt for Northern Song (Ebrey 2014, p. 410). Not only that, when the Jin dynasty launched the invasion of Northern Song, the government of Northern Song seemed to be 'stuck' (Ebrey 2014, p. 421) due to the outbreak of turmoil in the empire's north, the expose of scholar-officials' anger and the collapse of Emperor Huizong's authority. Eventually, Huizong was defeated by the military setbacks and the resistance from the scholar-official group. On 18 January 1126, under his courtiers' persuasion, he abdicated from the throne in order to save his empire and himself, but the empire still struggled under the chaos of factional conflicts and Jin's invasions because no one could control the whole empire after Huizong's downfall. Finally, Northern Song collapsed on 20 March 1127.

Emperor Huizong's Dilemma

Drawing on the above study of the Wise Ruler doctrine and the above analysis of Emperor Huizong's reign, this dissertation demonstrates the dilemma Huizong had to face. The dilemma stemmed from the dual roles of the Wise Ruler doctrine in the politics of Northern Song. On the one hand, the Wise Ruler doctrine gave the scholar-official group a way to constrain and challenge Huizong's ruling authority. On the other hand, the Wise Ruler doctrine was the only source of Huizong's political legitimacy. It could be interpreted that Huizong's right to rule

based on the Wise Ruler doctrine includes a dimension of negative political legitimacy (NPL, showing what is illegitimate) and a dimension of positive political legitimacy (PPL, showing what is legitimate) (Abulof 2015). For the NPL dimension, the Wise Ruler doctrine regulated his actions and decisions in accordance with the norms of Confucian bureaucracy. For the PPL dimension, the Wise Ruler doctrine provided him with the legitimacy to concentrate political power and social resources, and it allowed him to challenge the balance between monarch and scholar-officials.

Therefore, great tension between Emperor Huizong and the scholar-official group pushed Huizong to seek disproportionate political power to counter the negative influence of the Wise Ruler doctrine on his personal dominance. This was because the weak legitimacy induced Huizong's innermost fear to lose his throne, especially when without Empress Dowager Xiang's support. When Huizong's political power became unrestrained, the balance between monarch and scholar-officials in the ruling group failed, and the role of the Wise Ruler doctrine to restrict the Northern Song monarch became dysfunctional. The dissertation argues that, based on the dysfunctional Wise Ruler doctrine, Huizong's single-headed authority over the subjects (especially over the scholar-official group) was in fact very fragile. His power and authority had never integrated together; Huizong thus had to spend so much resource on protecting his authority as a sage-like ruler.

Through his various ventures in many social fields, Emperor Huizong on the surface developed his identity of the sage-like ruler. However, the Chinese ruler's authority is not only a substantive authority based on the shared value system in society but also an instrumental authority reflecting the subjects' needs. For the scholar-official group, Huizong's authority was in fact built on his personal force (Bà Dào) rather than the scholar-officials' real consent (Wáng

Dào). For the common people, their opinions were deeply shaped by the ruling group since as stated above the ruling group had comprehensive dominance over the common people. The dissertation argues that ‘the subjects’ needs’ to some extent is in fact ‘the needs of the other powerful members in the ruling group’. How could Huizong build an instrumental authority based on a highly suppressed scholar-officials group? Therefore, Huizong desperately looked for an alternative way to constantly strengthen his authority (such as repeating his claim of superiority based on Daoism), but this was impossible in the context of Northern Song due to the central role of the Confucian scholar-officials. In this dilemma, all his extensive reforms, his political persecutions, his concentration of economic resources, his development of cultural identity, his devotion to Daoism and his military operations were investments in a blackhole – his absolute authority impossible to achieve.

Based on the three sources of the Wise Ruler doctrine discussed in Chapter 1, Emperor Huizong originally had two options: maintain cooperation with the scholar-official group or become the only powerful man in the ruling group. With the first option, Huizong would still fear the potential threat from the strong factions in the bureaucracy (Zhang 2002). Hence, in his early reign Huizong tried to form a mixed government with multiple factions in order to balance the protection of his legitimacy and cooperation with the bureaucracy. However, he failed. It could be said when Emperor Huizong turned to concentrate his political power, the seed of his tragedy was sowed: in the institutional settings of Northern Song the bureaucratic administration was the core that allowed the empire to function, and Huizong had no way to avoid co-governance with the scholar-official group. Even if Huizong avoided the wars against Liao and Jin, he had to find a way to escape from the cage of the Northern Song ruling mode of power sharing, or his downfall was only a matter of time: the inter-exacerbation between the decline of his

authority and the decay of the bureaucracy would continue to weaken the empire and induce Huizong to make some adventurous decisions to save his authority.

It is true that Emperor Huizong gathered a group of allies to form his own faction in order to support his rule. However, they could not replace the whole huge scholar-official group. Huizong was not a god nor a superman. It was not always possible for him to realise his 'good' plans without the effective cooperation of the majority of scholar-officials. He could not completely rely on a highly obedient faction. Importantly, Huizong's allies never represented the mainstream of the scholar-official group, and they highly rely upon Huizong's concentrated political power and social resource. The faction of Huizong appeared due to Huizong's need for strengthening his weak legitimacy so that his faction in fact was his ruling tool. The formation of Huizong's faction was a process of the institutionalisation of advantages (Pierson 2016) that many minor forces grouped to build their power-sharing relationships with Huizong so that they had enough capability to repress the mainstream scholar-official group. In this power structure, Huizong was always the sole core. That is why after Huizong's downfall his faction soon collapsed, and no one stopped the chaos in bureaucracy. All in all, Huizong's failure was due to the potential risk of the long-standing tension between the monarch and the scholar-official group in the institutional context of Northern Song, and this risk existed because the Wise Ruler doctrine prioritises the convergence of elites over vigilance about the ruler's hubris and abuse of power. Unfortunately, as a successor with weak legitimacy, Huizong opened the Pandora's Box of politics of Northern Song, or of China.

Three Leading Explanations

Returning to the three leading explanations of Emperor Huizong's failure, this dissertation compares its new explanation with each leading explanation's core thesis and main arguments (see Table 5). It selects three crucial problems leading the Northern Song empire to an end collapsed: dysfunctional bureaucratic administration, failed wars against Liao and Jin, and extreme extraction of economic resources plus extraordinary expenditures. The first explanation is that of undisciplined ruler. The core thesis is that Huizong's personality weakness was the main reason for his failure. In relation to the first problem, it is argued that the decay of bureaucracy was due to the disloyal ministers' manipulation of Huizong's political power and authority (Levine 2009, pp. 558-561). In relation to the second problem, it is argued that flatterers' overtures to Huizong triggered the wars against Liao and Jin (Tuo ed. 1977, *juan* 22-3). In respect of the third problem, it is argued that Huizong's overindulged passion for art led him to waste much resource (cf. Ebrey 2014; Levine 2009).

The second explanation is that of military misjudgement. Its core thesis is that Emperor Huizong's misjudgements in the wars against Liao and Jin were the main reason for his failure (Levine 2009, p. 615). In relation to the first problem, it is argued that the overconfident monarch and courtiers ignored the disadvantage of Northern Song in the wars against Liao and Jin; the bureaucracy thus had limited preparations and responses to the wars (Levine 2009, p. 615). In respect of the second problem, it is argued that Huizong's ambition directly triggered the wars against Liao and Jin, and Northern Song did not prepare well for the wars (Levine 2009, pp. 615ff.). In relation to the third problem, it is argued that the economic problem has less relevance for Huizong's failure (Levine 2009).

The third explanation is that of the ideological confrontation between a Daoist monarch and a Confucian bureaucracy. Its core idea is that the contradiction between Daoism and Confucianism damaged Huizong’s ability to govern (Ebrey 2014). In relation to the first problem, it is argued that the contestation between Daoism and Confucianism strained the cooperation between monarch and bureaucracy, and the alienation of Confucian scholar-officials compromised Huizong’s capability (Ebrey 2014). In respect of the second problem, it is claimed that the failure of the wars against Liao and Jin was due to the bureaucracy’s potential resistance against Huizong’s commands (Ebrey 2014, pp. 421ff.). In relation to the third problem, it is argued that Huizong’s economic policies manifested his dream of an ideal society, his piety of Daoism and his identity of artist, which should not be harshly condemned (Ebrey 2014).

Name of explanation	Core thesis	First curial problem: dysfunctional bureaucratic administration	Second curial problem: failed wars against Liao and Jin	Third curial problem: extreme extraction of governmental revenues and extraordinary expenditures
New Explanation	Emperor Huizong’s legitimation problem is the main reason for his failure, and his dilemma in power and authority resulted in and end collapse.	It is caused by Emperor Huizong’s quest for unstrained political power in order to protect his weak legitimacy.	It is triggered by Emperor Huizong’s demand to restore his authority based on the Wise Ruler doctrine, and it failed due to the broken balance of the ruling group.	It is due to Emperor Huizong’s concentration of social resources and his investment of political capital in strengthening his authority based on the Wise Ruler doctrine.
Undisciplined Ruler	Emperor Huizong’s personality weakness is the main reason for his failure.	It is caused by the disloyal ministers’ manipulations of Emperor Huizong’s political power.	It is triggered by the flatterers’ inducement, and it failed due to the flatterers’ dishonesty.	It is due to Emperor Huizong’s overindulged passion for art.
Military Misjudgement	Emperor Huizong’s military misjudgement was the main reason for his failure.	It is caused by overconfidence in the imperial court.	It is triggered by Emperor Huizong’s ambition, and it failed due to poor preparation for the wars.	It has less relevance to Emperor Huizong’s failure.
Ideological Confrontation	Emperor Huizong’s belief in Daoism was the main reason for his failure.	It is caused by the Confucian bureaucracy’s resistance against Daoism.	It is triggered by the long-standing geopolitical strategy of Northern Song, and it failed due to the Confucian bureaucracy’s resistance against Emperor Huizong’s commands.	It is due to Emperor Huizong’s devotion to Daoism, his desire for an ideal society and his identity as an artist.

Table 5: Comparison of the Four Explanations’ Core Theses and Main Arguments

Responding to the Core Theses

The explanation of undisciplined ruler blames Emperor Huizong's 'bad' personality, based on the traditional bias in Chinese historiography. This explanation has a very critical assumption: if there is a ruler with a 'good' personality to govern the empire, Northern Song will not collapse. So, what does 'good' mean? If it means 'perfect' – one's personality has all the required or desirable characteristics to be a successful ruler – the question will arise: is a ruler with a perfect personality a necessary condition for achieving a successful rule in the context of Northern Song? Even Emperor Renzong – the model emperor of Northern Song – was found to have many personality weaknesses, so the perfect personality of the ruler is not really a necessary condition to successfully rule (Wang 1928b, *juan* 4). Levine (2009) holds a similar view that blaming Emperor Huizong's personality is a biased thesis, but his explanation of military misjudgement also judges that Huizong's overconfidence triggered his failure. It appears that Levine (2009) agrees with the idea of the ruler-centric decision-making process.

It is true that in a centralised political system, the highest ruler's personality and psychology will significantly influence the decision-making process, as Machiavelli (2014) illustrated. Hence, this dissertation does not reject the ideas of undisciplined ruler and military misjudgement. The dissertation agrees that Emperor Huizong was indeed not an ideal ruler in Chinese history, and his personal and psychological characteristics significantly shaped his preferences and decisions. However, he was not as bad as the description in the explanation of undisciplined ruler nor as careless as the description in the explanation of military misjudgement (as Ebrey (2014) said). This dissertation argues that these two explanations do not provide the main reasons for Huizong's failed rule.

This dissertation accepts Ebrey's (2014, p. xiii) suggestion that environmental conditions also played an important role in shaping Emperor Huizong's political practice. Ebrey (2014) highlights the ideological confrontation between Daoism and Confucianism, and the dissertation accepts her idea. However, this dissertation argues that the central problem in the institutional settings of Northern Song was not the ideological problem but the problem of Huizong's weak legitimacy. This weak legitimacy was due to Huizong's abnormal succession to the throne in reliance on the Wise Ruler doctrine, and it resulted in the doubtful authority of his reign. The dissertation argues that the conflict between Daoism and Confucianism was not only related to Huizong's personal belief but also to the tensions between his power and his authority. The failed integration of Huizong's power and authority increased (or induced) his passionate devotion to Daoism under the potential resistance from the Confucian mainstream.

Dysfunctional Bureaucratic Administration

In relation to the dysfunctional bureaucratic administration, the undisciplined ruler explanation emphasises that it came about because the decadent and negligent monarch was manipulated by his disloyal ministers (Tuo ed. 1977, *juan* 22, p. 418). However, this dissertation finds that Emperor Huizong had a strong hold of power and control of the bureaucracy (Zhang 2004). Although it is difficult to trace every courtier in government due to the incompleteness of existing historical records, this dissertation shows that even the closest allies of Huizong had to obey his orders (at least on the surface). The most representative example is Cai Jing. Cai Jing is considered to be the most long-term grand councillor of Huizong's faction (Levine 2009, pp. 578-89), but in fact Cai Jing was repeatedly demoted by Huizong in 1106, 1109, 1120 and 1125 (Ebrey 2014). Although it is evidenced that Cai Jing was not very passive after some of his demotions (e.g. Ebrey 2014, p. 416), a historical record shows that after his demotion in

1120, because Cai Jing felt Huizong did not favour and trust him, Cai Jing needed to flatter his sons Cai You and Cai Tao¹⁰¹ to ensure his safety (Bi ed. 1928, *juan* 95).

Furthermore, both Levine (2009) and Ebrey (2014) argue that the bureaucracy was not dysfunctional over a long period: it had become very dysfunctional during the wars against Liao and Jin. For Levine (2009) the bureaucracy did not prepare well for the wars, and for Ebrey (2014) the bureaucracy showed its resistance against Huizong's belief in Daoism, which led to military setbacks. This dissertation accepts that the dysfunction of bureaucracy was most apparent in his late reign, but it further stresses that the decay of the bureaucracy was a long-term process.¹⁰² The decay of bureaucracy occurred because Huizong did not form a 'healthy' relationship with the bureaucracy: although his bureaucratic system demanded obedience, he never received strong loyalty from the scholar-official group. Therefore, when Huizong's suppression of the scholar-official group continued, the bureaucracy on the surface kept praising Huizong's achievements, but when Huizong's suppression of the scholar-official group was mitigated, the scholar-official group showed strong resistance against Huizong's reign, in the form of cheating, renegade behaviour, perfunctory attitudes and irony (Ebrey 2014, pp. 395ff.).

Failed Wars Against Liao and Jin

We come now to the failed wars against Liao and Jin. Although Jin's invasion of Northern Song was due to a series of events which Northern Song was relatively passive (Levine 2009, pp. 627ff.), it is true that Emperor Huizong's aggressive policies towards Liao eventually triggered the rise of Jin, and in the war against Liao Emperor Huizong was a very interpretative actor

¹⁰¹ The two sons were favoured by Huizong at that time. Cai Tao's given name is a heteronym: 绦 (條). It could be pronounced as Tao, Tiao or You. This dissertation chooses Tao, and Ebrey (2014) chooses Tiao.

¹⁰² This idea is shared by many Chinese scholars, such as Ding (2010) and Zhang (2004).

who had the flexibility to choose his approach to Liao. In relation to Huizong's goal of war against Liao, on the one hand, it is evidenced that the victory of the war against Liao was helpful to maintain Huizong's authority, and the interest in achieving the ancestors' aims was an important factor in Huizong's decision-making process (cf. Ebrey 2014; Levine 2009). On the other hand, the preparation to invade Liao started before the popular uprisings, so the restoration of Huizong's authority may not have been the main factor in Huizong's early decision-making process (Ebrey 2014, p. 380). According to Ebrey (2014, p. 385), there is a view that the war against Liao was in fact based on the long-standing state policy to recover the 'Sixteen Prefectures' region (cf. Zhang 1980).

This dissertation argues that Huizong's war decision was driven by multiple factors: his arrogance, the existing state policy and the need to restore his authority. However, it is evidenced that the timeline of Huizong's military operations was continuous (see Table 6) so that Huizong tried to form the alliance with Jin to invade Liao before the final victory of the war against Western Xia. There would have been a constant motivation in Huizong's mind to continue his aggressive external policies. It could be argued that Huizong was a narcissistic and pretentious ruler who always want to invade his neighbour states to show his greatness, but the dissertation prefers to interpret this motivation as the need (or desire) to strengthen his dominance within the empire. There are three grounds for this. Firstly, when Northern Song was on war footing, Huizong set up a military tax on the rich to support his military operations (Ebrey 2014, pp. 406ff). Secondly, Musgrave and Nexon (2018) use the example of the Yongle (reign name) Emperor of Ming (r. 1402-1424) to show that Chinese rulers will strengthen their domestic dominance through aggressive external affairs policy (cf. Mu 2018). Thirdly, since Huizong's military operations all related to the territories his ancestors lost, his courtiers usually hyperbolically proclaimed the expansion of the empire's territories to amplify

Huizong’s reputation exceeding to his ancestors (cf. Qian 2004, p. 100; Wang 1971, *juan* 6; Yang ed. 2006, *juan* 140).

Timeline	Tibetan States	Western Xia	Liao	Jin
1101	Pre-war stage			
1102	War-stage			
1103	War-stage			
1104	War-stage	War-stage		
1105	Post-war stage	Post-war stage		
1106	Pre-war stage	Pre-war stage		
1107	Pre-war stage	Pre-war stage		
1108	War-stage	War-stage		
1109	Record Lost	Record Lost		
1110		Record Lost		
1111		Record Lost		
1112		Record Lost		
1113		Record Lost		
1114		War-stage		
1115		War-stage	Diplomatic Conversation	Diplomatic Conversation
1116		War-stage	Diplomatic Conversation	Diplomatic Conversation
1117 (*Dali’s subordination)		War-stage	Diplomatic Conversation	Diplomatic Conversation
1118		War-stage	Pre-war stage	Diplomatic Conversation
1119 (*Western Xia’s subordination)		Post-War stage	Pre-war stage	Diplomatic Conversation
1120			Pre-war stage	Alliance
1121			War stage	Alliance
1122			War stage	Alliance
1123			Treaty with Jin to buy ‘Sixteen Prefectures’	Treaty with Jin to buy ‘Sixteen Prefectures’
1124			Treaty with Jin to buy ‘Sixteen Prefectures’	Treaty with Jin to buy ‘Sixteen Prefectures’
1125			Post-war stage	Post-war stage
1126				Jin’s Blitz to Northern Song

Table 6: Timeline of Emperor Huizong’s War Policies Against His Neighbour States¹⁰³

¹⁰³ This table is largely based on Bi (ed. 1928, *juan* 87-96), Ebrey (2014) and Levine (2009).

As well, before his preparation to go to war against Liao, Emperor Huizong experienced a long-term confrontation between Daoism and Confucianism, and he began to suppress Buddhism to vent his dissatisfaction (Ebrey 2014). However, this suppression was resisted by the scholar-official group, even Buddhism was not the mainstream of the scholar-official group (Ebrey 2014, pp. 343-71). The scholar-official group supports Buddhism because the scholar-official group aimed to embed Buddhism into the Confucian mainstream (Lu 2015). It could be argued that Huizong's plan to attack Liao was intended to transfer the domestic tensions to the external war. Therefore, after the outbreak of popular uprisings, Huizong abolished some of his supports (such as the Daoist education system) to Daoism and dismissed Cai Jing in 1120, but he did not choose to stop the war (Ebrey 2014). The main aim of his decision to continue the war against Liao was arguably to restore his authority via this adventurous way.

Issues of Financial Revenue and Expenditure

The controversy around the issues of financial revenue and expenditure focuses on the role of Emperor Huizong's personal preference. This dissertation maintains the view stated earlier that even if Huizong did not pay much attention to the issue of his authority in his original decision-making process, the consequence of his economic extractions and expenditures was a conversion of economic resources to symbolic resources (Musgrave & Nexon 2018, pp. 593-609). Although the records of Huizong's participation in the decision-making process of financial revenue and expenditure are incomplete, it is evidenced that his most decisions were highly influenced by the political teachings of the Wise Ruler doctrine¹⁰⁴. This dissertation has analysed most of the recorded conversations translated by Ebrey in *Emperor Huizong* (2014), including preserved talks, memorials, edicts, letters, reports and other communications

¹⁰⁴ Such as the political ideal of 'Richness, Prosperity, Happiness and Grandeur' (Yang & Zhao 2019).

between Huizong and his subjects (see Table 7). The result is highly observable that most of these conversations focused on the norms and concepts related to the Wise Ruler doctrine. In these conversations, Huizong and his subjects used various languages of the Wise Ruler doctrine, drawing from Daoism, Confucianism, ancient Chinese political culture and even Buddhism. They often linked the elements of the Wise Ruler doctrine with the rightfulness of Huizong's decision-making. The result shows that four of five conversations related to financial topics showed the elements of the Wise Ruler doctrine, and most of the conversations related to education and civil service also showed. Therefore, it is argued that the Wise Ruler doctrine deeply influenced Huizong's political thought, and this in turn influenced Huizong to pay much attention to his authority as a sage-like ruler when he decided the use of his government revenue.

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Conversations	True/False	Conversations	True/False	Conversations	True/False
Talks related to Huizong's enthronement in 1100 (pp. 38-70)	T	Memorials related to warnings of Heaven's displeasure from 1100 to 1102 (pp. 74-80)	T	Talks and memorials related to governmental revenue policies and fiscal reforms from 1101 to 1102 (pp. 91-106)	T (financial)
Talks, memorials and edicts related to Empress Dowager Xiang in 1100 (pp. 38-102)	T	Ren Boyu's memorials about the principle of Yin-Yang and the Mandate of the God of Heaven in early 1101 (p. 76)	T	Talks and memorials related to Confucian political teaching from 1101 to 1102 (pp. 59-110)	T
Talks between Zeng Bu and Huizong in June 1100 (pp. 49-50)	T	Memorials related to the war against Tibetan states from 1101 to 1102 (pp. 60-3)	T	Chen Guan's memorials related to temple building project in late 1101 (p. 82)	F (directly rejects Cai Jing's ministry)
Chen Guan and Chen Shixi's memorials about the relationship between Huizong and Si in October 1100 (p. 78)	F (main focus on geopolitical topics)	Jiang Gongwang's memorial in 1101 (pp. 72-4)	T	Talks, memorials and edicts related to the criticism of Cai Jing from 1105 to 1107 (pp. 103-22)	F (main focus on the problem of Cai Jing's manipulation)
Gong Guai's memorial and Huizong's responding edict in May 1100 (pp. 61-3)	T	Wang Di's Memorial in July 1101 (p. 77)	F (main focus on Daoist ceremony)	Talks and memorials related to charity between 1102 and 1108 (pp. 105-7)	T (financial)
Talk and memorials related to Zhang Dun in 1100 (pp. 41-113)	T	Cai Jing's proposal for the expansion of governmental schools on 5 October 1102 (p. 120)	T	Talks, memorials and edicts related to the political persecutions on scholar-officials between 1102 and 1104 (pp. 107-19)	T
Huizong's talks, edicts and visits to Confucian schools from 1103 to 1106 (pp. 119-23)	T	Memorials and talks related to the Nine Cauldrons from 1104 to 1105 (pp. 166-8)	T (financial)	Shen Ji's memorial against the high-denomination coins in early 1106 and Zhou Xingji's memorial in mid 1109 (pp. 333-4)	F (directly talk about currency issue)
Conversations about governmental education (pp. 186-217)	F (main focus on art and science)	Da Jingzhi's letter to Huizong in 1113 (pp. 146-8)	T	Zhou Wuzhong's reports on civil service in 1120 (pp. 339-40)	T
Wang Anzhong's 50 memorials to praise Huizong from 1104 to 1118 (pp. 173ff.)	T	Cai Jing and other councillors' memorials to praise Huizong from 1102 to 1114 (pp. 82-179)	T *legitimation problem	Zhao Tingzhi's memorials in early 1105 (p. 104)	F (directly reject Cai Jing's ministry)
Memorial about the New Policy agenda in 1104 (p. 123).	F (Focus on Confucian orthodoxy issue)	Poems and memorials about auspicious events and Huizong's identity of artist (pp. 169-85)	T *legitimation problem	Talks, memorials and edicts related to the confrontation between Daoism and Buddhism from 1118 to 1120 (pp. 359-70)	T
Huizong's communications with Liu Hunkang through letters from 1107 to 1110 (pp. 131-49)	T	Wei Hanjin's memorial in 1104 (pp. 161-82)	F (art)	Talks and memorials related to the war against Western Xia between 1106 and 1119 (pp. 373-9)	T
Cai You's nine memorials about the design of a Bright Hall (pp. 270ff.)	T (financial)	Talks, memorials, diplomatic discourses and edicts related to the wars against Liao and Jin (pp. 379ff.)	T (except planning military operations)	Talks, memorials and edicts related to Huizong's downfall (pp. 421-448)	T *legitimation problem

Table 7: Conversations Between Emperor Huizong and His Subjects Related to the Wise Ruler Doctrine or Not¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ This table is mainly based on Ebrey (2014).

Conclusion

... the ruler is also a person, and he has to take care of his private interests. Critically said, it is possible that there is an individual who transcends private interests, but the society is never governed by a sole person. It is always governed by a [social] class. An individual who transcends private interests can be found, but a [social] class which transcends grouped interests cannot be found.

Lyu (2018, p. 50, my translation)

The heart of this dissertation is Chapters 2 (The Wise Ruler Doctrine) and 3 (Emperor Huizong's Dilemma). In Chapter 2, the dissertation explored the Wise Ruler doctrine by examining its role in Chinese society, its sources and modes of institutionalisation at an important moment of Chinese political history. By reviewing in detail the Wise Ruler doctrine, the dissertation probed the critical interpretations of two Chinese political schools of thought (Confucianism and Daoism), their views of the Wise Ruler doctrine, and Dong Zhongshu's theories of legitimacy. By studying the sources of the Wise Ruler doctrine, the dissertation has revealed the reverence for 'advanced knowledge', the distinction between the ruling group and the common people, and the claim that Chinese people have a preference for a coherent ruling group – whether based on cooperative leadership, or a single ruler. In relation to the institutionalisation of the Wise Ruler doctrine, the dissertation considered the growth of the scholar-official group, and it emphasised that the Wise Ruler doctrine has three key stipulations: (a) the emperor's power and authority should be tightly integrated, especially because the emperor's authority does not spring naturally or automatically from his power; (b) the need for a subtle balance between the emperor and the other forces within the ruling group; and (c) the ruling group is entitled to exercise power comprehensively over the common people.

In Chapter 3, the dissertation explained the sources of Emperor Huizong's downfall, and it did so by exploring in some depth the details of his reign. The dissertation showed that his rule was marked by three stages: the early legitimisation problem Huizong faced, the centralisation of his power, and the collapse of his imperial rule. The dissertation argued that Huizong's legitimisation problem decisively shaped his actions and decisions in the political struggles of his early reign. It went on to argue that Huizong tried hard to weaken the power of the scholar-official group and to strengthen his grip within the ruling group through a process of centralisation. However, this power move destroyed the subtle political balance within the

Northern Song dynasty. Finally, the dissertation argued that Huizong's need to restore his reputation as a sage-like ruler led to the further decay of bureaucratic administration, and eventually ignited the wars against Liao and Jin. By combining the interpretation of Huizong's rule in Chapter 3 with the discussion of the Wise Ruler doctrine in Chapter 2, the dissertation has highlighted Huizong's dilemma. Huizong's legitimacy was significantly constrained by the Wise Ruler doctrine, but that in turn forced him to adopt radical tactics so as to consolidate his political power. However, that exposed him to a sharp contradiction: between his ruling style and the institutional environment of the Northern Song dynasty. The result was that Huizong found it difficult to establish a durable authority within the ruling group. His quest for power contradicted his yearning for authority. The great tensions between Huizong's considerable political power and his weak authority eventually led to his downfall. By contrast with the three leading explanations of his failure as a ruler (Huizong as an undisciplined ruler, his military misjudgements and his ideological confrontations), this dissertation has instead shown the fundamental significance of Huizong's legitimation problem: the mismatch between his considerable power and the weakness of his authority.

In its reexamination of the theory and practice of the Wise Ruler doctrine, the dissertation observed the way Chinese political traditions display a distinct style of political leadership, political culture and political dynamics. The famous modern Chinese political scholar Simian Lyu (2018, p. 139) argues that if a political system of constitutional monarchy and party rotation had been born in Chinese history, then it would most likely have happened in the Northern Song dynasty. Lyu (2018) goes on to say that although the Northern Song dynasty was similar to other Chinese dynasties, in that the ruling group exercised a visible dominance over the common people, the characteristics of the Northern Song's ruling group included significant power sharing at the top, cooperative governance and factional balancing.

Nevertheless, this dissertation has shown that the case of Emperor Huizong reveals the central danger that bedevilled the Northern Song dynasty: when the emperor struggled for dominance within the ruling group, he did everything to outflank and defeat the scholar-official group, and did so by way of an extreme accumulation of power resources that resulted in a centralised ruling system. That is why, contrary to Lyu (2018), the chances of a constitutional government in the Northern Song period were very slim, as this dissertation has shown at length, and Hartman (2015, pp. 46-7) also briefly suggested.

This dissertation concludes with three key research findings. Each has a considerable relevance for understanding contemporary Chinese politics. Firstly, the dissertation has shown that the Wise Ruler doctrine does provide a large set of theories and institutions for the purpose of establishing power sharing and political cooperation within any given ruling group. In principle, the Wise Ruler doctrine could in practice evolve into a mature system of ‘modern political meritocracy’, as Bell (2015) has outlined. Secondly, the dissertation has highlighted the way that the comprehensive dominance of the ruling group over the common people is a key element of Chinese political culture. That further implies that the blueprint for building a harmonious society and a meritocratic government based on the Wise Ruler doctrine in practice requires a hierarchically ordered society. Social equality and civil rights will necessarily have a precarious status in such a political system because the fundamental principle of harmony and meritocracy requires their downgrading and subordination. But that requirement in turn implies the need for great vigilance about the dangers of hubris and the abuse of power. This second conclusion surely has wider implications, for instance in understanding the potential risks inherent in the emerging Sinocentric international order: any attempts to build a big power or empire, for instance by attempting to control surrounding neighbours and by projecting national power onto the global world order, will surely be troubled by the resistance of other

sovereign states and organisations to any attempt to apply the hierarchical order specified in Chinese political culture (Lee 2017). In sum, the lesson of Emperor Huizong's dilemma and the Wise Ruler doctrine is that it offers a new way to understand domestic and international Chinese politics — the challenges produced by the contradiction between the complexity of large-scale social relations and the dream of a durable and legitimate and centralised political system.

Finally, and most importantly, the dissertation has suggested that on the matter of power and authority in China, the case of Emperor Huizong teaches us about the potential deep contradiction between rulers' power and their authority. The successful ruler has to find a subtle point of balance: between effectively amplifying their political power in matters of government and cultural influence in society, at the same times as carefully nurturing and maintaining the consent and support of political elites and the governed. In the Northern Song dynasty, Emperor Huizong's failure teaches us that any given ruler's authority cannot be completely consolidated by violently concentrating political power. Using force may rapidly expand political power, but it cannot produce a durable mode of government. Force cannot breed legitimacy. In other words: strongmen (or strongman politics) will always potentially be weakened by the failure to establish a reliable source of consent. The single case of Emperor Huizong's failure highlights a more general lesson: those rulers who want to enjoy a long-term reign must pay careful attention to the task of resolving the perennial tension between power and authority.

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¹⁰⁶ This dissertation provides the English translations of the titles of Chinese sources (made by the original author/s), even though some of these may cause the English readers confusion.

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¹⁰⁷ All figures and tables in this dissertation have been created by the author, with most based on other sources.

*Appendix A: Chronology of Premodern Chinese Dynasties*¹⁰⁸

Shang dynasty, ca. 1570-1046 BCE	
Zhou dynasty, 1046-256 BCE	
Qin dynasty, 221-207 BCE	
Han dynasty, 202 BCE-220 CE	
Three Kingdoms period, 220-280	
Jin ¹⁰⁹ dynasty, 266-420	
Northern and Southern Dynasties period, 420-589	
Sui dynasty, 581-618	
Tang dynasty, 618-907	
Five Dynasties period, 907-960	
Song dynasty, 960-1276	Liao dynasty (Khitans), 907-1125
Northern Song dynasty, 960-1127	
Emperor Taizu, r. 960-976	
Emperor Taizong, r. 976-997	
Emperor Zhenzong, r. 997-1022	
Emperor Renzong, r. 1022-1063	
Emperor Yingzong, r. 1063-1067	
Emperor Shenzong, r. 1067-1085	
Emperor Zhezong, r. 1085-1100	
Emperor Huizong r. 1100-1126	
<i>Jianzhong Jingguo period, 1101</i>	
<i>Chongning period, 1102-1106</i>	
<i>Daguan period, 1107-1110</i>	
<i>Zhenghe period, 1111-1118</i>	
<i>Zhonghe</i> ¹¹⁰ <i>period, 1118-1119</i>	
<i>Xuanhe period, 1119-1126</i>	
Emperor Qinzong 1126-1127	
Southern Song dynasty, 1127-1276	
Yuan dynasty (Mongolians), 1215-1368	
Ming dynasty, 1368-1644	
Qing dynasty (Manchus), 1644-1912	
	Western Xia dynasty (Tanguts), 1038-1227
	Jin dynasty (Jurchens), 1115-1234

¹⁰⁸ This chronology is generally based on Ebrey (2014, pp. xxi-xxii). All years have been converted into the Gregorian calendar.

¹⁰⁹ This 'Jin' is Jin (晋), which Chinese character is different from the Jin (Jīn, 金) dynasty (1115-1234).

¹¹⁰ The original Chinese reign name is a heteronym: 重和. This dissertation translates it to 'Zhonghe' in English, following Ebrey (2014, p. xxii).

Appendix B: Timeline of Emperor Huizong's Reign¹¹¹

Year 1100

23/2 Emperor Zhezong dies. Emperor Huizong succeeds to the throne with Empress Dowager Xiang's support.

13/3-11/4 Han Zhongyan is brought to the imperial court to form a balanced (or coalition) government.

18/6 Zeng Bu warns Emperor Huizong to carefully deal with the retirement of Empress Dowager Xiang.

28/6 Cai Bian is dismissed from the central government.

2/7 Suppressed scholar-officials are restored to their old ranks.

8/8 Empress Dowager Xiang ends her rule.

13/9 Emperor Zhezong is buried.

10/10 Emperor Huizong visits his brothers and is chastised by Chen Guan and Chen Shixi.

12/10 Zhang Dun retires from the central government.

19-20/10 Chen Guan criticises Empress Dowager Xiang, and Emperor Huizong rewards him in secret.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 18 years old.

6/11 Cai Jing is assigned a provincial post.

12/11 Zeng Bu becomes junior grand councillor to form a balanced government.

?/12 Empress Dowager Xiang fully gives up her political power.

?/? Emperor Huizong summons Liu Hunkang to court.

Year 1101

Preparing for the war against Tibetan states.

12/2 Empress Dowager Xiang dies.

?/4 Liang Congzheng is dismissed.

30/7 Emperor Huizong requests separate lists of those for and against Emperor Shenzong's policies.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 19 years old.

¹¹¹ This timeline is generally based on Ebrey (2014, pp. 531-42). All dates have been converted into the Gregorian calendar.

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15/12 Emperor Huizong performs his first Suburban Sacrifice.

Year 1102

The war against Tibetan states.

10/1 Emperor Shenzong is enshrined at Western Temple of Spectacular Numina.

?/3 Zhao Shen's plan for rebellion is destroyed.

6/4 Tong Guan is sent to Suzhou and Hangzhou.

24/5 Han Zhongyan is removed from the central government, which shows the failure of the balanced government.

8/6 Su Che, Fang Chunli, and 50-odd others are banned from the capital.

11/6 Empress Dowager Xiang is buried.

13/6 Cai Jing and Zhao Tingzhi are given posts in the imperial court.

26/6 Zeng Bu is dismissed from the central government, and the balanced government ends.

20/8 Cai Jing is appointed to the central government.

26/8 The Advisory Office is created.

3/10 Charity clinics are established.

5/10 The beginning of the reform of governmental education system.

19/10 Poorhouses are set up in the capital.

25/10 583 officials are divided into the categories of 'Proper or correct' or 'Improper or deviant' in a blacklist, and 80 of them are sent to remote government positions.

26/10 Memorials written in 1100 are scrutinised to classify authors by degrees of orthodoxy and heterodoxy.

28/10 Zeng Bu and Han Zhongyan are demoted for their handling of Empress Dowager Liu.

29/10 Political persecutions of 117 scholar-officials in the bureaucracy, many long dead.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 20 years old.

Year 1103

The war against Tibetan states.

19/1 The beginning of the reform of the currency system.

25/1 The beginning of the reform of the local education system.

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16/5 Censorship on the publication of Su Shi's works.

26/5 Portraits of anti-reformers are removed from the Temple of Spectacular Numina.

3/6 Broad censorship on the press of famous literatis' works.

10/7 Wang is installed as empress.

7/10 Imperial clansmen are ordered not to marry their children to blacklisted scholar-officials.

18/10 Establishment of a new medical school.

19/10 Prefectures are ordered to establish temples for Emperor Huizong.

27/10 Prefectures are ordered to erect the stele of blacklisted scholar-officials.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 21 years old.

Year 1104

The war against Tibetan states; Western Xia intervenes.

4/2 Those who submitted deviant memorials are banned from entering the capital.

11/2 Further reform of currency.

15/2 The agenda of the expansion of the education system.

27/2 Casting of Nine Cauldrons begins.

1/3 Paupers' graveyards are established.

15/5 Prefectural Honouring Calm Daoist temples are instructed to hold services on Emperor Huizong's Personal Destiny days.

24/6 Emperor Huizong's new faction claims the identity of 'Reformer' faction.

26/6 309 current or former councillors, officials, eunuchs and disloyal subjects are vilified as a treacherous group and punished by imprisonment or exile, and their clans are denied the right to access government and education.

4/7 Schools for calligraphy, painting and mathematics are established.

25/8 Reorganisation of the historical records of Emperor Shenzong's reign is commenced.

21/9-20/10 Tong Guan and Wang Hou are given houses in the capital.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 22 years old.

23/11 Emperor Huizong visits the Imperial Academy.

6/12 Reforms of the personnel system and education system are announced.

15/12 Suburban Sacrifice to heaven is performed.

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?? The number of students in governmental schools reaches 210,000.

Year 1105

13/2 Cai Bian is dismissed again.

14/2 Tong Guan is given a military command.

4/3 New reform of currency in four northern circuits is announced.

25/6 Political persecutions begin to be scaled down.

?/8 Cai Jing initiates discussion of building a Bright Hall.

30/9 A sacrifice is performed for the Nine Cauldrons in Nine Completions Hall.

20/10 The ban on relatives of blacklisted scholar-officials is removed, the first step in reducing measures against banned scholar-officials.

30/10 35 students from the reformed education system are granted civil service degrees.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 23 years old.

?? The new currency is issued in Emperor Huizong's calligraphy.

Year 1106

Preparing for the war against Tibetan states and Western Xia.

30/1 The process of restoring those who had been banned to ranks of men eligible for office begins.

10/2 The appearance of a comet.

10/3 Cai Jing is dismissed.

21/3 A collection of Emperor Huizong's imperial brush edicts is printed.

29/4 Prince Si dies.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 24 years old.

10/12 Prince Bi dies.

Year 1107

Preparing for the war against Tibetan states and Western Xia.

1/2 Cai Jing returns to be the grand councillor.

7/2 The Agency for Deliberating on Ritual is established.

12/4 Emperor Huizong issues an edict on the 'Eight Conducts, Eight Offenses' system for promotion through the reformed education system.

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3/8 Emperor Huizong is praised as a sage-like ruler due to the clearing of the Yellow River.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 25 years old.

Year 1108

The war against Tibetan states and Western Xia.

22/4 Liturgy for the Daoist Golden Register Retreat is issued.

1/11 Empress Wang dies.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 26 years old.

Year 1109

3/7 Cai Jing is dismissed again, until May 1112.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 27 years old.

Year 1110

25/1 Casting of the new currency is stopped.

17/8 Emperor Huizong writes an essay on the Music of Great Brilliance.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 28 years old.

15/11 Empress Zheng is appointed.

?/? Emperor Huizong answers dozens of questions from the Agency for Deliberating on Ritual.

Year 1111

18/2 1318 Unauthorised shrines in the capital are ordered abolished.

10/4 Emperor Huizong writes out in his own hand his preface for the new ritual code.

14/6 Further reform of currency begins.

?/10 Tong Guan accompanies the envoy to Liao.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 29 years old.

?/? Emperor Huizong shows his 60 Daoist hymns to some officials.

?/? Emperor Huizong commissions a collection of pharmacological prescriptions.

Year 1112

29/2 Cai Jing's titles are restored.

9/6 Cai Jing begins coming to the imperial court every third day.

11/2 Emperor Huizong turns 30 years old.

Year 1113

4/1 Tong Guan is promoted to the highest honoured military officer.

11/5 A palace hall is converted into the Jade Clarity Harmonious Yang Daoist temple.

16/5 *New Forms of the Five Categories of Rites of the Zhenghe Period* is issued.

3/9 Mingda Consort Liu dies. Later she is posthumously promoted to empress.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 31 years old.

29/11 It is ruled that 100 Daoist masters should participate in the Suburban Sacrifice and rites at the Temple of Spectacular Numina.

14/12 Emperor Huizong has a vision of heavenly spirits on the way to Suburban Sacrifice to heaven.

Year 1114

The war against Western Xia.

14/1 Emperor Huizong issues a call for collecting Daoist books.

8/2 26 ranks for Daoist officials are created.

4/7 Huizong writes an account of the emergence of spirits on the way of the Suburban Sacrifice to earth.

11/2 Emperor Huizong turns 32 years old.

Year 1115

The war against Western Xia.

The establishment of the Jin dynasty.

Preparing for the alliance with Jin.

2/3 Prince Huan (Emperor Qinzong) is appointed heir apparent.

13/5 Zhao Liangsi defects from Liao to Song, and he meets Emperor Huizong.

1/8 Construction of the Bright Hall begins.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 33 years old.

?/? Dali is required to pay tribute to Emperor Huizong.

Year 1116

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The war against Western Xia.

Preparing for the alliance with Jin.

16/3-14/4 Tong Guan becomes the second head of the imperial military sector.

1/8 Prince Huan (Emperor Qinzong) is married.

9/9 Officials on the northern border are instructed not to incite incidents.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 34 years old.

20/12 More than 200,000 students in governmental schools start classes.

?/? Highest Clarity Precious Registers Temple is completed.

Year 1117

The war against Western Xia.

Preparing for the alliance with Jin.

17/2 Daoist schools are established.

10/3 Lin Lingsu reports on the descent of spirits conducted by 2,000 monks at the Precious Registers Temple.

5/5 Emperor Huizong tells officials not to use his title of Master of Religion Lord of the Dao except in religious contexts.

2/7 The Bright Hall is completed.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 35 years old.

1/12 Cai Jing is allowed to come to court only every fifth day.

?/? Dali is officially declared as the tributary state of Northern Song.

Year 1118

The war against Western Xia.

Preparing for the alliance with Jin.

Preparing for the war against Liao.

8/1 Spirits descend at Kunning Hall.

2/3 Nine Divine Empyrean cauldrons are cast and are installed at the Precious Registers Temple.

11/5 Buddhist texts that slander the Daoists are identified so that they can be suppressed.

1/6 Emperor Huizong issues in his own name a theoretical treatise on medicine, the *Classic of Sagely Benefaction*.

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30/8 Emperor Huizong's commentary on the *Tao Te Ching* is ordered engraved on stone at the Divine Empyrean temple in the capital.

17/9-16/10 Northern Song envoys travel to Jin.

4/10 Cai Jing's proposal to compile a *History of the Dao* is approved.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 36 years old.

5/12 Huizong transmits registers to 800 people at the Precious Registers Temple.

?/? Emperor Huizong's daughter marries Cai Jing's son Cai Tao.

Year 1119

The war against Western Xia.

Preparing for the alliance with Jin.

Preparing for the war against Liao.

21/2 The first emissary from Jin arrives.

3/3 Buddhist divinities are renamed.

2/8 Western Xia sues for peace, and becomes the tributary state of Northern Song.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 37 years old.

?/? Song Jiang's popular uprising.

Year 1120

Alliance with Jin.

Preparing for the war against Liao.

26/1 Author of a text criticising Emperor Huizong's incognito trips outside the palace is banished.

23/2 Daoist schools are abolished.

5/3 Northern Song sends a second envoy to Jin.

6/7 Cai Jing retires.

1/10 Further suppression of Buddhism begins.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 38 years old.

23/11 Fang La openly rebels in Muzhou.

Year 1121

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Alliance with Jin.

The war against Liao.

?/1 A banquet is held at the Extended Blessings Palace.

?/1 Emperor Huizong is informed of Fang La's uprising; first troops are dispatched.

10/2 Tong Guan suppresses Fang La's rebellion.

8/3 Hangzhou is recovered from the rebels.

20/4 Mingjie Consort Liu dies; she is later posthumously promoted to empress.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 39 years old.

?/? Song Jiang's popular uprising is suppressed.

Year 1122

Alliance with Jin.

The war against Liao.

9/2 Emperor Huizong writes an essay to commemorate the completion of Northeast Marchmount.

21/2 Jin captures the Liao Central Capital.

17/5 Emperor Huizong reviews troops before they depart for Yanjing.

28/6 Tong Guan prepares for attacking Liao.

4/7 Northern Song's armies are defeated by Liao's armies at Baigou.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 40 years old.

Year 1123

Yellow River floods.

Treaty between Song and Jin.

14/5 Northern Song's armies enter Yanjing, which has already been thoroughly looted.

1/8 Tong Guan retires.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 41 years old.

?/12 Jin objects to Song handling of Zhang Jue.

Year 1124

Treaty between Song and Jin.

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Popular uprisings in the north of Northern Song.

1/2 The imperial court celebrates the defeat of Liao.

10/9 Tong Guan is called back from retirement and sent to Yanjing.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 42 years old.

24/11 Cultural censorship is reiterated.

10/12 Wang Fu is dismissed.

Year 1125

Jin is preparing to invade Northern Song.

26/1 Cai Jing is brought back from retirement.

23/5 Cai Jing is dismissed again. A tax is imposed on those who do not serve in the military.

10/7 All government departments are ordered to reduce expenditures.

2/11 Emperor Huizong turns 43 years old.

?/12 Emperor Huizong performs his last Suburban Sacrifice.

Year 1126

The war against Jin.

11/1 Tong Guan arrives with news of the Jurchen invasion. Soon news also arrives that Guo Yaoshi has defected to Jin.

18/1 Emperor Huizong abdicates. Emperor Qinzong succeeds to the throne. After around one year, Northern Song collapses on 20 March 1127.

Appendix C: Chinese Character Glossary

(Consort Dowager) Wu / 武氏 (?-1107)

(Consort Dowager) Zhu / 朱氏 (1052-1102)

(Consort) Chen / 陈氏 (1054-1089)

(Consort) Lin / 林氏 (1052-1090)

(Empress Dowager) Gao / (太后)高氏 (1032-1093)

(Empress Dowager) Xiang / (太后)向氏 (1046-1101)

(Empress) Wang / (皇后)王氏

(Empress) Zheng / (皇后)郑氏

(Mingda Consort) Liu / (明达皇后)刘氏

(Mingjie Consort) Liu / (明节皇后)刘氏

(Prince) Bi / (宗室)赵佖 (1082-1106)

(Prince) Si / (宗室)赵似 (1083-1106)

(Prince) Ssi / (宗室)赵偲 (1085-1129)

(Prince) Yu (or Wu) / (宗室)赵侯 (1083-1127)

Along the River During the Qingming Festival (or Peace Reigns over the River) /

清明上河图

An undisciplined and arrogant man (Zì zī kuáng fū) / 自恣狂夫

Ancestor worship (Zǔxiān chóngbài) / 祖先崇拜

Anti-Reformer (faction) / 旧党, 元祐党

Auspicious / 祥瑞

Bà Dào (Rule by Force) / 霸道

Baigou / 白沟

Bright Hall / 明堂

Buddhism / 佛教

Buddhists / 佛教徒

Cai Bian / 蔡卞 (1048-1117)

Cai Jing / 蔡京 (1047-1126)

Cai Tao (or Tiao, You) / 蔡绦 (?-1147+)

Cai You / 蔡攸 (1077-1126)

Central Capital / 中京

Chen Guan / 陈瓘 (1057-1124)

Chen Shixi / 陈师锡 (1057-1125)

Circuit / 路

Classic of Sagely Benefaction / 圣济经

Confucian / 儒者

Confucian ethics (Rújiā lúnlǐ) / 儒家伦理

Confucianism / 儒家

Confucius / 孔子 (551-479 BCE)

Courtesy name / 字

Dà Dào (Grand Course) / 大道

Da Jingzhi / 笮净之 (1068-1113)
Dali / 大理 (937-1094, 1096-1253)
Dà Tóng (Harmonic and Non-Hereditary Rule) / 大同
Dào (Universal Process) / 道
Daoism / 道家, 道教
Daoist / 道教徒
Dé (Virtue or Integrity) / 德
Divine Empyrean / 神霄
Dong Zhongshu / 董仲舒 (179-104 BCE)
Emperor Huizong (of Song) / 宋徽宗 (r. 1100-1126)
Emperor Qinzong (of Song) / 宋钦宗 (r. 1126-1127)
Emperor Renzong (of Song) / 宋仁宗 (r. 1022-1063)
Emperor Shenzong (of Song) / 宋神宗 (r. 1067-1085)
Emperor Taizong (of Tang) / 唐太宗 (r. 626-649)
Emperor Taizu (of Song) / 宋太祖 (r. 960-976)
Emperor Xian (posthumous name) (of Han) / 汉献帝 (r. 189-220)
Emperor Xuanzong (of Tang) (9th century) / 唐宣宗 (r. 846-859)
Emperor Yingzong (of Song) / 宋英宗 (r. 1063-1067)
Emperor Zhezong (of Song) / 宋哲宗 (r. 1085-1100)
Eunuch / 宦官
Extended Blessings Palace / 延福宫
Fan Zhongyan / 范仲淹 (989-1052)
Fang Chunli / 范纯礼 (1031-1106)
Fang La / 方腊 (?-1121)
Fēng jiàn / 封建
Footbinding / 缠足
Ge Hong / 葛洪 (283-343)
Gong Guai / 龚夬 (1057-1111)
Grand councillor / 宰臣
Great Brilliance / 大晟
Guo Yaoshi / 郭药师
Han / 汉 (202 BCE-220 CE)
Han Zhongyan / 韩忠彦 (1038-1109)
Hangzhou / 杭州
Hanlin / 翰林
High-privileged clans (wàng zú) / 望族
History of the Dao / 《道史》
Hóng Fàn (Virtuous and Absolute-Dominant Rule) / 洪范
House clients / 门客
Huang Emperor (or Yellow Emperor) / 黄帝
Inner sagacity (Nèi sheng) / 内圣
Investigating Censor (Jiānchá Yùshì) / 监察御史

Jade Clarity Harmonious Yang Temple / 玉清和阳宫
Jiang Gongwang / 江公望
Jin / 金 (1115-1234)
Kaifeng / 开封
Kē Jǔ (Imperial Examination) / 科举
Kunning Hall / 坤宁殿
Landed gentry / 士绅, 乡绅, 缙绅
Later Zhou / 后周 (951-960)
Legalism / 法家
Lei Zu / 嫫祖
Li Yan / 李彦 (?-1126)
Liang Congzheng / 梁从政 (?-?)
Liang Shicheng / 梁师成 (?-1126)
Liao / 辽 (907(947)-1125)
Lin Lingsu / 林灵素 (1076-1120)
Liu Hunkang / 刘混康 (1035-1108)
Low-privileged clans (Hán mén) / 寒门
Luo (Regionalist) / 洛学, 洛党
Mencius / 孟子 (371-289 BCE)
Moism / 墨家
Muzhou / 睦州
Natural servility (Nú xìng) / 奴性
Nèi Shèng Wài Wáng / 内圣外王
Neo-Confucianism / 宋明理学
New Forms of the Five Categories of Rites of the Zhenghe Period / 《政和五礼新仪》
New Policy / 新法
Nine Cauldrons / 九鼎
Nine Completions Hall / 九成宫
Northeast Marchmount / 艮岳
Northern Song / 北宋 (960-1127)
Personal Destiny / 本命
Playboy emperor (Fēngliú tiānzǐ) / 风流天子
Political meritocracy (or Chinese meritocracy) / 贤能政治(尚贤制)
Posthumous name / 谥号
Precious Registers Temple / 宝籙宫
Prefecture / 州
Principal wife (Zhèng qī) / 正妻
Protection privilege (Yīn) / 荫
Qingli Reforming Movement / 庆历新政 (1043-1045)
Qingtang / 青唐
Reformer (faction) / 新党, 元丰党
Reign name / 年号

Rén (Benevolence) / 仁
Ren Boyu / 任伯雨 (ca. 1047-ca. 1119)
Richness, Prosperity, Happiness and Grandeur (Fēng Hēng Yù Dà) / 丰亨豫大
Ritual (Lǐ) / 礼
Scholar-official (Shìdàfū) / 士大夫
Self-discipline (Zìwǒ shùfù) / 自我束缚
Shàn Ràng (Virtuous and Non-Hereditary Rule) / 禅让
Shang (or Yin) / 商(殷) (ca. 1570-1045 BCE)
Shàng Dé (High Integrity) / 上德
Shaosheng Reforming Movement / 绍圣绍述 (1093-1094)
Shen Ji / 沈畸
Shu (Regionalist) / 蜀学, 蜀党
Shuo (Regionalist) / 朔学, 朔党
Sima Guang / 司马光 (1019-1086)
Six Traitors (or Six Felons) / 六贼
Sixteen Prefectures (Yān Yún Shíliù Zhōu) / 燕云十六州
Song Jiang / 宋江
Southern Song / 南宋 (1127-1279)
Su Che / 苏洵 (1009-1066)
Su Shi / 苏轼 (1037-1101)
Suburban Sacrifice / 郊祀
Suzhou / 苏州
Teaching and civilising (Jiào huà) / 教化
Temple name / 庙号
Temple of Spectacular Numina / 景灵宫
The (imperial) court / 朝廷
The Advisory Office / 讲义司
The Agency for Deliberating on Ritual / 议礼局
The Ancestor of Sericulture (Xiān Cán) / 先蚕
The Confucianism-leading mainstream / 儒释道三教合流
The Consistency Between the God of Heaven and Human Beings (Tiān Rén Hé Yī) / 天人合一
The Daoist Golden Register Retreat / 金籙斋
The Doing-Nothing Politics (Wú Wéi Ér Zhì) / 无为而治
The eldest principal son of the God of Heaven (Tiān zǐ) / 天子
The Four Occupations (from high to low: scholar-officials (landed gentry), peasant farmers, artisans and craftsmen, and merchants and traders) / 四民 (从高到低: 士、农、工、商)
The God of Heaven (Tiān) / 天
The God of Heaven's Property (or 'All under Heaven', Tiān Xià) / 天下
The Governance of Benevolence (Rén Zhèng) / 仁政
The Imperial Academy (Tài Xué) / 太学
The imperial clan / 皇族
The imperial family / 皇家

The imperial house / 皇室, 宗室
The Interaction Between the God of Heaven and Human Beings (Tiān Rén Gǎn Yìng) / 天人感应
The Jin-Song alliance / 金宋海上之盟
The King of Zhou / 周王, 周天子
The Mandate of the God of Heaven (Tiān Mìng) / 天命
The patriarchal clan laws (Zōng fǎ) / 宗法
The principle of eldest-principal-successor (Dízhǎngzǐ jìchéng zhì) / 嫡长子继承制
The principle of eldest-successor (Lì zhǎng) / 立长原则
The ritual system of Zhou (Zhōu Lǐ) / 周礼
The rituals and laws of the imperial house (Lǐ lǜ) / (皇室)礼律
The Sage Ruler (or the Master (Daoism), Shèng Rén) / 圣人
The Three Cardinal Principles (Sān Gāng) / 三纲
The Virtue Politics (Dé Zhèng) / 德政
The Wise Ruler (Míngjūn) / 明君
The Wise Ruler doctrine (or the doctrine of the Wise Ruler, Míngjūn Sīxiǎng) / 明君思想
Tong Guan / 童贯 (1054-1126)
Vice wife (Qiè) / 妾
Wáng (The King or the Ruler) / 王
Wang Anshi / 王安石 (1021-1086)
Wang Anzhong / 王安中 (1076-1134)
Wáng Dào (Rule by Consent) / 王道
Wang Di / 王觐 (1036-1103)
Wang Fu / 王黼 (1079-1126)
Wang Su / 王肃 (195-256)
Wei Hanjin / 魏汉津
Western Xia / 西夏 (1038-1227)
Wise man (or superior, Zhìzhě) / 智者
Xià Dé (Low Integrity) / 下德
Xiǎo Kāng (Virtuous and Hereditary Rule) / 小康
Xìng Shàn Lùn / 性善论
Xining Reforming Movement / 熙宁变法 (1069-1076)
Xu Jiang / 许将 (1037-1111)
Yang / 阳
Yang is Lofty, Yin is Lowly (Yáng Zūn Yīn Bēi) / 阳尊阴卑
Yanjing / 燕京
Yì (Righteousness) / 义
Yin / 阴
Yongle (reign name) Emperor (of Ming) / 永乐皇帝 (r. 1402-1424)
Yuanfeng Reforming Movement / 元丰改制 (1080-1082)
Yuanyou Anti-Reforming Movement / 元祐更化 (1085-1086)
Yuanyou Factional Membership Monument / 元祐党籍碑
Zeng Bu / 曾布 (1036-1107)

Zhang Dun / 章惇 (1035-1105)
Zhang Jue / 张觉 (?-1124)
Zhao Liangsi / 赵良嗣 (?-1126)
Zhao Shen / 赵谗 (1079-1102)
Zhao Tingzhi / 赵挺之 (1040-1107)
Zhou / 周 (1046-256 BCE)
Zhou Wuzhong / 周武仲 (1074-1128)
Zhou Xingji / 周行己 (1067-1125)
Zhu Mian / 朱勔 (1075-1126)
Zhuangzi / 庄子 (369-286 BCE)