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# Competition over Content

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## *Negotiating Standards for the Civil Service Examinations in Imperial China (1127-1279)*

帝制中國 (1127-1279) 科舉規範之爭

Hilde De Weerd

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## Introduction

Last winter, in the tenth month, I managed to be sent from the provinces to participate in the examinations at the capital. In the spring of this year, in the third month, I obtained the [advanced scholar, or *jinsbi*] degree. . . . Now, wealth and status such as yours are hard to attain. I hope that you, Censor, would look for a wife for me this year, and that you would look for a position for me next year. . . . Maybe you forget a lot, and maybe extraordinary talent is uncommon, but if for once the unexpected were to occur and I were to join you at the top of the bureaucracy, then when you looked at me from the corner of your eyes, you would have regrets and you would apologize to me. How could I be affected by you!

—From a letter by Wang Lengran,  
early eighth century

Rencong paid attention to serious scholarship and was devoted to the way of government. He severely censured frivolous and superficial writing. Originally Liu Sanbian, the advanced scholar (*jinsbi* 進士), liked to compose licentious songs. His compositions were transmitted everywhere. He once composed a song titled “The Crane Rises Up in the Sky” that concluded as follows: “I may exchange my empty title for some drinking and some soft singing.” When the emperor announced the results of the examinations in the front hall, he had dropped him from the list on purpose. [The emperor] said: “Just go and do some drinking and enjoy some soft singing! Why would you want an empty title!” Then in 1034 Liu succeeded in the examinations. Later he changed his name to [Liu] Yong. Only then was he able to be promoted and serve in the bureaucracy.

— Wu Zeng, *Nenggai zhai  
man lu*, 16.418

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EPIGRAPHS: Wang Dingbao, *Tang zhiyan*, 2.12b–13b; cited in Fu Xuanzong, *Tangdai keju yu wenxue*, 172–73. Wu Zeng cites the lyric in full; cited in part in Yü Ying-shih, *Zhu Xi de lishi shijie*, 1: 290–91.

*The Civil Service Examinations:  
Continuity and Change*

Regularly held, written civil service examinations—from their first use for the recruitment of government officials during the Sui 隋 dynasty (581–617) until their cancellation in 1905, shortly before the collapse of the imperial order—were instrumental in the creation and maintenance of political unity across the Chinese territories. Emperors intent on reducing the power of alternative sources of political authority such as aristocratic birth or military power promoted the use of written examinations in order to recruit men likely to put loyalty to the dynasty ahead of family interests or military ambition. The establishment of a tiered system of local, capital, and court examinations during the Song dynasty (960–1279) mirrored the hierarchy of bureaucratic control over the Chinese territories and tied literate elites across the empire to the various levels of government and ultimately the court. Participation in the examinations turned literate elites into state subjects at the local and national levels.

The civil service examinations further solidified political unity through the social and cultural effects of their continued use. Access to the financial and social resources required for participation in the examinations, in the form of subsidies for years of study or social status qualifications, excluded the majority of the population; by the same token, literati (or scholar-official) status became associated with participation in the examinations. Although the odds of passing were consistently low and the prospects for a career in government slim even for successful candidates, the numbers of those sitting for the examinations increased as participation per se became a status marker.

The centrality of examination participation to the status of scholar-officials was the result of a transformation in elite Chinese society. The adoption of the civil service examinations under the Sui and Tang 唐 (618–907) dynasties<sup>1</sup> and their promotion at the cost of other channels

1. Historians typically trace the origins of regular civil service examinations held across the empire and for the recruitment (not simply the promotion) of officials to the Sui dynasty. For a slightly different reading of the examinations held under the Han and Six Dynasties, see Dien, "Civil Service Examinations."

for recruitment under the Song dynasty restructured the value system of elite society. In the older system, family pedigree was primary and intellectual capital secondary; between the ninth and the twelfth centuries, family pedigree and social status became dependent on intellectual capital acquired through participation and success in the examinations. It is this transformation that explains why elite families continued to invest in the civil service examinations throughout the nineteenth century in spite of the long history of discontent and open criticism of the failure of the examinations to fulfill their promise to recruit the best for officialdom.

This restructured value system transformed the everyday life of literate elites. Each stage in the typical life of the literatus was marked by the centrality of the examinations. Literati education, from childhood through adolescence, focused on the knowledge and skills tested in the examinations. In adulthood, the literatus remained engaged in the examinations as participant, teacher, examiner, or as a father overseeing the education of male offspring. The centrality of the examinations in elite family life produced a disposition among elite men and women to valorize education. This carried over into other areas of social life. Elite marriage strategies were adjusted to reflect the recognition of degree-holders. In the religious field, elite aspirations were expressed in prayers to gods wielding control over the fate of examination candidates. In urban areas, the nomenclature of the examinations was applied to the naming of streets and commercial items.

The centrality of the examinations also shaped elite behavior and expectations. As the examinations became central to elite status, the state granted more privileges to participants, ranging from protection against physical punishment to labor exemptions to the codification of a distinctive dress code.<sup>2</sup> Successive dynastic regimes ranked examination candidates and graduates in a proliferating hierarchy according to the degree of their success and measured their privileges accordingly. As illustrated by the two stories translated above, the privileges generated corresponding sets of expectations.

The story of Wang Lengran 王冷然 (ca. 698–742) dates to the early eighth century, to a time when the aristocratic families of the north

2. Takahashi, "Sōdai no shijin mibun ni tsuite"; Min, "The Sheng-yuan-Chien-sheng Stratum in Ch'ing Society."

were contesting the use of examinations. It was one of many in the collection of examination anecdotes compiled by Wang Dingbao 王定保 (870–940) in the mid-tenth century. In this and other stories circulating about Tang dynasty advanced scholars (*jinsbi*), holders of the most prestigious examination degree were portrayed as uninhibited and lacking in the decorum that was the hallmark of aristocratic families. After his success in the examinations in 717, Wang Lengran sent a blunt letter to his old acquaintance Gao Changyu 高昌宇 (fl. 710s), then active at court as a censor. Wang's lack of decorum was evident not only in his straightforward appeal for Gao's help in securing a position but also in his request to arrange a wedding for him first. The letter was very likely Wang's way of poking fun of an "old friend" who had failed to recommend him. After Wang had graduated without the help of this friend, he set out to shame him into helping him translate his degree into official emoluments.<sup>3</sup>

Within the context of Tang elite society, Wang Lengran's letter was indicative of the rising status of advanced scholars. Since the reign of Empress Wu 武 (r. 690–705), advanced scholars had gained access to leading positions at court. However, the letter also expressed the frustration of the advanced scholars. As a new subgroup in the political elite, they were still marginal to the political scene, which continued to be dominated by the aristocratic families from the north. The aristocratic families based their claims to power on pedigree and the protection of aristocratic traditions. One century after Wang Lengran's letter to Gao Changyu, Prime Minister Li Deyu 李德裕 (787–850) argued that the examinations produced men who excelled in literary skill but who were unable to operate at court because they lacked the knowledge of court etiquette that was second nature to those raised in aristocratic households.<sup>4</sup>

The story of Liu Sanbian 柳三變 / Liu Yong 柳永 (990–1050), included in Wu Zeng's 吳曾 (?–after 1170) mid-twelfth century collection of anecdotes and observations, illustrates both the higher sociopolitical status the advanced scholar enjoyed by the eleventh century and the corresponding expectations. Liu Sanbian's initial behavior is reminis-

3. For this story, see Moore, *Rituals of Recruitment*, 77–79.

4. Des Rotours, *Le traité des examens*, 204–5. Cf. Twitchett, ed., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 3, *Sui and T'ang China*, 652–53.

cent of the activities for which Tang advanced scholars were notorious. In representations of Tang dynasty advanced scholars, insolence was the rule. Following the first Song emperor's revaluation of the civil service examinations in the creation of a unified empire, however, the title of advanced scholar conveyed respect, and those who vied for it or held it were expected to behave as prospective civil servants of the dynastic state. In the eyes of Song rulers and political elites, the behavior of Tang advanced scholars was a token of their lack of dynastic loyalty and evidenced in their service to the regional warlords who eventually overthrew the Tang.<sup>5</sup>

Zhao Kuangyin 趙匡胤 (927–76), the founder of the Song dynasty, reinstated the civil service examinations upon his ascension to the throne in 960. He and his successors expanded the role of the examinations to the extent that they became the primary channel for entry into officialdom in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>6</sup> The primacy of the examinations was especially evident in the assignment of top posts in the central government. According to one estimate, 72 percent of twelfth-century chief and assistant councilors held the *jinsbi* degree.<sup>7</sup> The importance the Song dynasty attached to the examinations throughout its reign was unprecedented and transformed Chinese culture.

The number of literati participating in the examinations continued to grow at exponential rates, even as the territories of the Song state diminished by about half in the twelfth century. John Chaffee estimates that the number of candidates taking the qualifying prefectural examinations increased from 20,000 to 30,000 in the early eleventh century to 79,000 one century later and reached 400,000 or more by the mid-

5. Yü Ying-shih, *Zhu Xi de lishi shijie*, 1: 272–312.

6. Protection privileges increased during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries (Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates*, 29). Despite the increased ability of high officials, many of whom we may surmise held degrees, to obtain low-ranking official positions for male family members, Chaffee's work demonstrates that the declining employment opportunities for *jinsbi* degree-holders without powerful family connections did not impact the popularity of the examinations among literati. The number of candidates preparing for and sitting the examinations continued to grow throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, reaching 400,000 by the mid-thirteenth century (*ibid.*, 35).

7. *Ibid.*, 29, citing Sudō, *Sōdai kanryōsei to daitochi shoyū*, 20–25. Note that the percentage Chaffee derived from Sudō's numbers covers the period from 1127 to 1194 and excludes those councilors for whom no information was available.

thirteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Preparation for and participation in the civil service examinations had by then become hallmarks of scholar-official status.

Intellectually, the civil service examinations defined educational standards for literate elites across the empire. By determining the format of the examinations, emperors and court officials prescribed training in particular literary and administrative genres. They also endorsed changing configurations of the classical canon and, at times, other texts such as commentaries on the Classics. The imposition of curricular standards contributed to the dissemination of a shared language for the practice of poetry, classical exegesis, and the discussion of history and government among examination candidates and graduates. Fluency in this language determined scholar-official status. And as the civil service examinations became central to scholar-official status during the Song dynasty, literati competition over the definition and redefinition of examination standards restructured the examination field. The principal goal of this book is to explicate the restructuring of the examination field in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Song China.

#### *From Northern Song to Southern Song*

Like human relationships in the social, political, and intellectual fields more generally, those in the field of the civil service examinations changed considerably during the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279). During the first half of the Song dynasty, the court, the capital, and local communities were dominated by an elite whose marriage alliances and political networks spanned the extent of the Song empire and whose ambitions focused on the court and the capital. Intellectual eminence was associated with top court officials like Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–72), Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–86), or Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–86), or with those with powerful relations at court such as Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–85) and Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107). The aristocratic traditions of the past and the Song founders' policies of centralization created tight bonds between the court and the ruling elite.

After the capture of the capital Kaifeng 開封 by the armies of the expanding Jurchen Jin empire (1115–1234) in 1127, the imprisonment of

8. Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates*, 35.

the retired and reigning emperors Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1101–25) and Qinzong 欽宗 (r. 1126–27), and the turmoil and dislocation caused by the flight of hundreds of thousands of court servants, officials, soldiers, and commoners, the court in its new capital of Lin'an 臨安 (Hangzhou 杭州) was no longer the sole or even the main focus of literati ambition. Literati elites settled outside of the capital, intermarried with other local families, invested in local welfare projects, and prided themselves, along with other local elite families, on their reputations as managers of local society.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Neo-Confucian beliefs and practices, emphasizing moral self-cultivation and its translation into local educational and social welfare institutions, gradually spread among elite families.

Corresponding changes occurred in the civil service examinations, and those changes in turn reinforced the broader social and political changes just outlined. The civil service examinations resemble other Northern Song institutions such as the government archives and the Memorials Office (Jinzouyuan 進奏院), which was charged with the compilation and distribution of the court gazettes. These institutions existed during the Tang and Five Dynasties (907–60) but were re-engineered as part of the centralization campaign launched by the first Song emperors. They were key institutions in the reassertion of imperial control over the regional warlords who successfully competed with

9. For the paradigmatic articulation of this interpretation of Song history, see Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen*. Beverly Bossler (*Powerful Relations*) modified this interpretation of the Northern to Southern Song transition and concluded that the distinction between Northern and Southern Song elites as presented in the works of Hartwell and Hymes was more apparent than real. The families of top-ranking officials continued to marry outside local networks in Southern Song times, and the lower bureaucracy during the Northern Song was staffed by elites that acted like Southern Song local elites. Bossler argued that the shift identified in earlier scholarship was largely the result of historiographical developments. Bossler's caveat about the differences in the Northern and Southern Song historiographical record does, however, not amount to a rejection of the localist paradigm. She pointed out that the transition from the Northern to the Southern Song was marked by significant social and political changes that gradually transformed life in the provinces. Whereas the top members of the political elite settled in Kaifeng during the Northern Song period, they dispersed to larger cities after the court moved to Lin'an and never returned to the capital as a resident class of professional bureaucrats. For further discussion, see De Weerd, "Amerika no Sōdaishi kenkyū ni okeru kinnen no dōkō."

the court between the eighth and the tenth centuries and the elites who served them. Gradually these institutions took on a second role in communications between the court and the provinces. They developed into sites through which local elites gathered information about the court, discussed it, and fed it back to the center.<sup>10</sup>

The institutional history of the examinations illustrates the changing relationship between court and literati from the Northern to the Southern Song period. Throughout the Northern Song, the court frequently revised the organizational framework of the examinations. The revisions reflected both the Song emperors' policies of centralization and the conflicts between opposing court factions. These revisions broke with Tang and Five Dynasties precedents and established parameters for the civil service examinations that held until the nineteenth century.

First, in 1071, the court, then under the control of the famous reformist councilor Wang Anshi, cancelled all degrees in "various fields" (*zhuke* 諸科; a generic name for separate examinations on the Classics, dynastic histories, the ritual canon, and law). Thereafter candidates in the regular examinations competed for the "advanced scholar," or *jinsbi*, degree only. Second, in contrast to Tang practice, the regular *jinsbi* examinations had been held at three levels since the first decades of the Song dynasty. The prefectural examinations (*jieshi* 解試 "forwarding examination") were held every third year in the fall. In the early years of the Song dynasty, there was some fluctuation in the frequency with which the examinations were held, but in 1066 the three-year interval became standard. This practice prevailed throughout the rest of imperial Chinese history.<sup>11</sup> Those who passed, the *juren* 舉人 "presented men," were as yet unqualified for office. They proceeded to the capital to take the departmental examination (*shengshi* 省試) in the early spring. Those who passed this examination, organized by the Ministry of Rites under the Department of State Affairs (Shangshu sheng 尚書省), advanced to the palace examination (*dianshi* 殿試) in the late spring.<sup>12</sup>

10. De Weerd, "Court Gazettes' and 'Short Reports.'"

11. Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates*, 51.

12. For a brief introduction to the examination routine in Song times, see Hirata, *Kakyo to kanryōsei*.

The palace examination was a third institutional innovation of the Northern Song dynasty. Theoretically the emperor himself presided. It originated in the first emperor's self-proclaimed desire to create a personal bond between himself and his officials and to instill loyalty in the bureaucracy.<sup>13</sup> Fourth, the format of the *jinsbi* examinations underwent major changes. Northern Song court officials incessantly debated the pros and cons of different examination genres and their place in the sequence of tests to be completed over the course of each examination. Their proposals led to frequent and abrupt alterations in examination procedures during the eleventh and early twelfth centuries. In the last century of the Northern Song period, for example, rules concerning the position of poetry in the examinations changed six times (see Chapter 5).

The activity of the Northern Song court contrasts sharply with the retreat from centralization and institution-building on the part of the Southern Song court. Between 1150 and 1279, the focus of this study, there were no significant changes in the organizational framework of the civil service examinations. The layout of the *jinsbi* examinations at both the local and the metropolitan levels remained the same throughout the second half of Song rule. According to the regulations issued by the court in 1145,<sup>14</sup> which shaped procedures through the end of the dynasty, both the prefectural and the departmental examinations consisted of three sessions.

Candidates who opted for the poetry track were required to write one regulated verse (*shi* 詩) and one regulated poetic exposition (*fu* 賦) in the first session, one exposition (*lun* 論) in the second session, and

13. Even though the palace examination itself became an enduring legacy to all subsequent imperial regimes, Zhao Kuangyin's assertion of imperial control over recruitment was not honored by his successors. Institutionally, the emperor's prerogative to fail candidates was rescinded under Emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1023–63) in 1057. The first emperor reigning in the southern capital, Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127–62), further renounced the right to change the ranking of the candidates as they appeared on the list prepared by the examination officials (Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates*, 23; Araki Toshikazu, *Sōdai kakyo seido kenkyū*, 303, 332; Ning, "Songdai gongju dianshi ce yu zhengju," 154).

14. Already in 1128 the court decided to accept candidates in both the poetry and the Classics tracks. Gaozong reconfirmed this decision in 1145 (Araki Toshikazu, *Sōdai kakyo seido kenkyū*, 393–94; SHY, XJ, 4.21b). I thank John Chaffee for drawing my attention to the earlier decree.

three policy response essays (*ce* 策) in the last session. Those who chose the “meaning of the Classics” (*jingyi* 經義) track wrote three essays on the classic in which they specialized, one essay on *The Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), and one on the *Mencius* (*Mengzi* 孟子) for the first part; then, like their colleagues in the poetry track, one exposition in the second session; and, finally, three policy response essays in the final session.<sup>15</sup> Candidates in either track who sat for the palace examination had only to write a response to one policy question.

The acquisition of the knowledge and skills tested in the different sessions of the examinations shaped childhood education (*xiaoxue* 小學). The ability to compose poetry was required for the poetry session; knowledge of the Classics was tested in the meaning of the Classics and exposition sessions; the memorization of historical events and anecdotes recorded in the histories and philosophical texts was a precondition for success in the policy response session. Children were taught such skills in official elementary schools or in private schools run by lineages, local communities, or individual teachers. Private tutoring, frequently by family members, was common either as an alternative to schooling or in preparation for attendance at a government school. Elementary school curricula presupposed basic literacy in the form of the ability to read and write a limited set of characters.<sup>16</sup>

Preparation for the examinations intensified after students entered secondary education (*daxue* 大學). Age limits for the beginning and ending of both elementary and secondary education were inconsistent. Some students started the second stage of education at the age of twelve, whereas others began at the age of fifteen.<sup>17</sup> From early adolescence on, students continued to study the Classics, histories, and philosophical texts and practiced responding to questions on these sources in the formats tested in the examinations. This stage in the life of the student had no fixed end. Barring early graduation or the renun-

15. Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates*, 5; Araki Toshikazu, *Sōdai kakyo seido kenkyū*, 394; SHY, XJ, 4.21b–22a, 28b.

16. On childhood education during the Song period, see Zhou Yuwen, *Songdai ertong de shenghuo yu jiaoyu*; and Yuan Zheng, *Songdai jiaoyu*, chap. 5.

17. Zhou Yuwen, *Songdai ertong de shenghuo yu jiaoyu*, 119. Cf. Chen Wenyi, *You guanxue dao shuyuan*, 307–8, 327–29; and Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates*, 5–6.

ciation of the examination path to success, students could continue to prepare for and participate in the examinations until old age.

The curriculum of this second stage in the education of the literati was a central concern of the activist emperors and court officials of the Northern Song period. Before the invention of modern media, standardized testing would have been impracticable. The license given individual examiners to design questions and oversee grading was a constant source of conflict in the highly factionalized atmosphere of Song court politics. The continual shifting and anonymity of the examiners prevented the formation of curricular monopolies and thus reinforced the impersonal power of the state. Some Northern Song politicians, nevertheless, conceived of the civil service examinations as an instrument for the indoctrination of a standardized state curriculum. Most famous were the efforts of Wang Anshi. In the 1070s, Wang Anshi commissioned a set of new commentaries on the Classics and a new dictionary, distributed them to government schools, and made them a core requisite for the civil service examinations. Commercial printers were quick to follow the court's lead and sold printed editions of the state-imposed curriculum (Chapter 5).

As the examinations became central to scholar-official status, students preparing for the examinations kept close watch on curricular standards, which were more likely than the institutional framework to change. As the Southern Song court withdrew from curricular leadership, the examinations became the site of intense competition among scholars, especially among those of the literate elite who turned to teaching. Teachers translated competing intellectual and political agendas in their examination preparation classes and textbooks. Given the new relationship between the examinations and the scholar-officials, they were not merely defining curricula for examination preparation; curricular standards also reflected elite conceptions of statesmanship and local leadership.

### *The Examination Field*

This book analyzes examination curricula by investigating a wide range of primary sources produced in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that fall broadly within the genre of the examination manual (Table 1 in Appendix B). By “examination manual,” I refer to a wide array of

textbook genres, including encyclopedias, anthologies, rhyme dictionaries, examination guides, classical texts and commentaries, and histories. Encyclopedias (*leishu* 類書) are classified collections of primary source texts and interpretive essays. Anthologies (*zongji* 總集) are collections of full-length essays, typically by reputable authors, arranged by author or genre. I read these materials in conjunction with essay questions and responses included in the collections of individual authors and official reports and private commentary on examination preparation and examination essay writing.

The central questions this book addresses converge on the subject of how standards were set for the examinations. How did changes in curriculum and examination criteria take place? How did occupational, political, and intellectual groups shape curricular standards for examination preparation and evaluation criteria for examination writing? How did examination standards shape the political and intellectual agendas of the groups involved?

I ask these questions as a way to reframe debates about the civil service examinations and their place in the imperial Chinese order. Since the early twentieth century, three major theses have captured scholarly attention. The first posits that the examinations ought to be perceived in terms of the establishment and consolidation of hegemonic state power. In the 1920s, Naitō Konan advanced the first version of this thesis. He argued that the establishment of a three-tiered examination system (local, departmental, and palace examinations) as the main channel of official recruitment and the elaboration of procedures intended to maximize fairness provided Song emperors with a neutralized bureaucracy. Naitō saw the subordination of this impersonal bureaucracy to imperial power as a major factor in the transition from a medieval aristocratic Chinese society to a modern centralized state during the Song reign.<sup>18</sup> The paradigm of imperial absolutism (and political modernity) has since been questioned in research on power relations at

18. For a study in English on the hypothesis, see Miyakawa, "An Outline of the Naitō Hypothesis." Araki Toshikazu (*Sōdai kakyo seido kenkyū*, preface, introduction, and *passim*) cast his work on the Song examinations in the framework of this thesis—even though he did not identify it with Naitō. Araki was a student of Miyazaki Ichisada, the second head of the Kyoto school founded by Naitō.

court, in the bureaucracy, and in local society.<sup>19</sup> In recent years, this thesis has resurfaced in a different guise. Benjamin Elman has proposed that the civil service examinations primarily consolidated dynastic state power not as a political instrument of imperial absolutism but as an educational strategy ensuring political legitimacy.<sup>20</sup> Iona Man-Cheong adds that, in the eighteenth century, political legitimacy was achieved through the subjectification of the individual to the state, a process engendered by years of preparation for and participation in a proliferating number of examinations.<sup>21</sup>

I generally accept the Althusserian argument that participation in the examinations identified examination candidates as subjects of the state, and I will argue that it applies to Song as well as Qing times. Participation in the examinations implied recognition of the legitimacy of the dynastic state. This recognition did not, however, automatically extend to the emperors and court officials in charge of the dynastic state. More work is needed on the question of how political subjectivity was articulated, interpreted, and modified among an intellectually and politically divided scholar-official class. The field of the civil service examinations overlapped with that of court and bureaucratic politics. Factionalism spilled over into examination preparation, and partisan agendas shaped examination writing. The field of civil service examinations further accommodated agents (such as private teachers and commercial printers) and agendas external to court and bureaucratic politics. The historical question of how examination standards were set and altered therefore requires that the examinations be perceived as a site for competition among differing political and intellectual agendas within the parameters of the imperial state rather than as an arena for the celebration of an all-encompassing imperial ideology.<sup>22</sup>

A second thesis that has animated debate in Chinese social history since the 1940s posits that the civil service examinations resulted in

19. See, e.g., Chaffee, *Branches of Heaven*; Davis, *Court and Family in Sung China*; and Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen*.

20. Elman, "Political, Social, and Cultural Reproduction"; idem, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*.

21. Man-Cheong, *The Class of 1761*.

22. De Weerd, Review: *The Class of 1761*.



high degrees of social mobility from the Southern Song through the Qing dynasty. Based on statistical analysis of lists of successful candidates, Edward Kracke, Jr. (in 1947), and Ho Ping-ti (in 1962) concluded that staggering numbers of successful *jinsshi* candidates, over 50 percent in the Southern Song, 49.5 percent in the Ming, and 37.6 percent in the Qing, came from families with no immediate patrilineal forefathers in the bureaucracy.<sup>23</sup> In the 1970s and 1980s, critics of the mobility thesis pointed out the underestimation of the scope of significant family ties in the earlier studies and subordinated the significance of examination degrees in obtaining and maintaining power to other social factors, such as wealth, landholding, and marriage.<sup>24</sup>

In a landmark study of the Song civil service examinations, John Chaffee integrated the problematic evidence on social mobility into a study of the multiple social functions of the examinations over the course of the Song dynasty. He argued that, as the dynasty progressed, although the number of candidates soared to an estimated 400,000 and fairness, chances of success, and opportunities for entering the bureaucracy declined, the examinations retained their appeal to an increasingly localized elite because of their social function as a status marker: "The institutions, ceremonies, symbols, and stories surrounding the examinations set off officials from commoners, literati from non-literati."<sup>25</sup> Due to the examinations, learning, which was not reducible to the other social factors mentioned above, gained an unprecedented priority in the determination of elite status. Even though I recognize the contribution local history has made to our understanding of the nature of Chinese elites and agree that elite status accrued to groups other than the literati, I propose that the centrality of examination learning (which is not necessarily examination success) to the status of Chinese literati, which accompanied both the expansion of examination participation and the elite turn toward localist strategies, was essential to the restructuring of

23. Kracke, "Family Versus Merit"; Ho, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China*.

24. Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen*; Beattie, *Land and Lineage in China*. For review articles summarizing this debate, see Ebrey, "The Dynamics of Elite Domination in Sung China"; and Waltner, "Building on the Ladder of Success."

25. Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates*, 188.

the field of the civil service examinations in the twelfth century examined here.

The cultural characteristics and effects of the examinations have come to the forefront of academic debate since the 1980s. Most influential, and most controversial, in the new wave of research on the cultural dimensions of the examinations is Benjamin Elman's work. His articles and hefty monograph on "the cultural history of the civil examinations" between 1400 and 1900 stand out as the only systematic discussion of the various manifestations of late imperial examination culture, ranging from language acquisition to religious practices to the art of interpreting dreams to predict examination success.<sup>26</sup> The controversy surrounding Elman's work centers on the thesis that, as a mechanism of selection, the examination system was, inherently, a "process of social, political, and cultural reproduction of the status quo."<sup>27</sup> In brief, the political legitimation of the dynasty through education (political reproduction) and the perpetuation of the elite through their control over the cultural resources required for examination success (social reproduction) necessitated cultural reproduction, which Elman defines as the perpetual internalization and externalization of "orthodox schemes of classical language, thought, perception, appreciation and action."<sup>28</sup> Cultural reproduction was more than the result of attempts by representatives of the imperial state to control literati culture; literati interests, Elman emphasizes, were also represented in the cultural arena of the examinations.<sup>29</sup>

The history preceding the cultural reproduction of classical and Neo-Confucian discourse in the Ming and Qing dynasties covered in Elman's work suggests that reproduction works better as an explanation of the social history rather than the cultural history of the examinations, or, more specifically, their intellectual history, which is the focus of this book. The reproduction thesis is essentially a response to, and denial of,

26. Elman, esp. "Political, Social, and Cultural Reproduction"; and idem, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*.

27. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, xxix. For challenges to Elman's interpretation, see, e.g., the reviews by Chow, Langlois, and Magone.

28. Elman, "Political, Social, and Cultural Reproduction," 20.

29. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, xxiv.

the social mobility thesis; it argues that the cultural requirements of the examinations effectively excluded the majority of the population throughout imperial Chinese history. Few would challenge this view. The question of how curricular change was achieved, as it was in the emergence and ascendancy of Neo-Confucian ideology in examination curricula in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, cannot be answered adequately with the model of cultural reproduction. The distinction between literati and commoners, as well as distinctions among literati groups, resulted from cultural reproduction as well as cultural innovation.

My approach to the questions raised at the beginning of this section is informed by a particular conceptualization of the civil service examinations. I conceive of the civil service examinations as a bounded cultural space in which students, teachers, emperors, examiners, court and local officials, literati intellectuals, editors, and printer/publishers in effect negotiated standards for examination preparation and examination essay writing. This cultural space, or field, was separate from the field of court and bureaucratic politics and the field of literati intellectual culture. It operated according to its own norms, even though those norms overlapped with those of both the political and the intellectual fields. "Field" in this sense is a heuristic device, one that allows for the systematic investigation of not only the rules and relationships that shaped examination preparation and examination essay writing and changes in them but also the various kinds of relationships between the examination field and other social, political, and cultural fields.

This understanding of the civil service examinations has been enriched by the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>30</sup> Bourdieu defined fields as sites in which individuals compete over different forms of capital, that is, economic, cultural (language or knowledge), or symbolic (prestige) resources. The positions individuals assume in a particular

30. For a comparable application of Bourdieu's concept of "field" to the imperial civil service examinations, see Chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China*, esp. 11–12, 154. Whereas Chow emphasizes the subversive potential of the expansion of commercial printing in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century examination field, this study aims to explain the processes of negotiation between scholar-officials and the court and among intellectual and political associations that shaped examination preparation.

field are structured—they are determined by the distribution of the kind of capital at stake in that field. Regardless of the positions of individuals in this structured space and regardless of their goals (preservation of the status quo or change), all of them share the basic rules governing the field. The field thus resembles a game. At the very least, the individuals or agents must think the game and the stakes at play in it are worthwhile.<sup>31</sup>

The application of the notion of field as a heuristic device to examination preparation and examination essay writing helps us reconstruct the history of the types of agents involved, their specific interests, their positions and possible changes to them, their relationships with other agents, and the conventions that governed participation in the setting of examination standards. Examination standards were shaped by different types of agents, such as emperors and their entourages, examiners, teachers, examination graduates and candidates, literati intellectuals, editors, and publishers. The actions of these agents affected both examination preparation (study activities that led to participation in prefectural, departmental, and palace examination sessions) and examination writing (the writing of actual examination essays). I conceive of examination preparation and examination writing as two generic categories of exchanges in the examination field. As explained in Chapter 2, the examinations tested competence in two areas that defined the scholar-official: textual exegesis and the discussion of government. We can call these two areas of competence forms of examination capital. Specific interests in examination capital diverged as different agents espoused different modes of interpretation in textual exegesis and the discussion of government. In the twelfth century, for example, the court officials serving as examiners supervising the departmental examinations called for a classical mode of interpretation, endorsing in broad terms pre-Song texts and modes of explanation, the "Yongjia" 永嘉 teachers adopted a historical mode of interpretation in both exegesis and the discussion of government, and Learning of the Way (Daoxue 道學) teachers advocated moral philosophy and moral judgment as

31. Bourdieu, *Distinction, The Field of Cultural Production, and Language and Symbolic Power*. I found John Thompson's introduction to the last title especially useful in configuring Bourdieu's disparate explanations of the "field" concept.

"Field"

the guiding principles for both. The following chapters attempt a history of the interests of these groups, the positions they occupied, and the relationships among them.

The preceding clarification of terms is meant to inform readers of the concepts that have helped me organize and explain the relevance of the wide range of source materials for this project. It is by no means intended as an unmediated application of Bourdieuan sociology to twelfth- and thirteenth-century Song society. There are, for example, clear differences between Bourdieu's understanding of "field" and my use of the term. In Bourdieuan sociology, the actions of individuals in particular fields are directly related to their *habitus* (or predispositions), and those predispositions are in turn shaped by class background. Class background, or at least difference in class background, is an inapplicable variable in the context of the imperial Chinese civil service examinations. The lack of social background data on examination candidates and graduates, teachers, editors, and printer/publishers precludes such an analysis. Consequently, agents in the examination field represent occupational roles, not social or professional classes.

The reconstruction of the history of the field of the civil service examinations has an immediate bearing on broader areas of Chinese history, specifically intellectual history. One question that has loomed large on the research agenda of Chinese intellectual historians is how the Neo-Confucian movement of the Learning of the Way obtained the support of Chinese elites. In contrast to the conclusions of political and social historians who have attributed its spread to its imposition as state orthodoxy in 1241 or to the appeal of its rejection of an examination degree as the hallmark of the scholar-official,<sup>32</sup> this book explains how Learning of the Way ideology was disseminated in the field of the civil service examinations.

32. For the first view, see James T. C. Liu, "How Did a Neo-Confucian School Become the State Orthodoxy?"; and idem, *China Turning Inward*. For the second view, see Bol, "This Culture of Ours," 333-34; and Bossler, *Powerful Relations*, 205. On the involvement of Daoxue proponents in local educational and social welfare programs, see Gardner, *Learning to Be a Sage*, 23-34; de Bary and Chaffee, eds., *Neo-Confucian Education*, esp. the articles in parts II-IV; Hymes, "Lu Chiu-yuan, Academies, and the Problem of the Local Community"; and von Glahn, "Chu Hsi's Community Granary in Theory and Practice."

An example of my use of Bourdieu's concept of the field will illustrate the relevance of this project to the broader history of Chinese intellectual culture. My examination of the relationships between the intellectual field and the examination field demonstrates that the intellectual and political agendas of literati traditions were mediated by the conventions of examination preparation, and that individual traditions' adaptations to such conventions related to their wider social and political success. The examination capital of the Learning of the Way movement was small and suspect in the twelfth century. Learning of the Way teachers and students proved unable to translate their modes of exegesis and of discussing government into sustainable examination capital. At the same time, teachers of the Learning of the Way were accumulating capital in the larger field of literati intellectual culture by writing and printing large numbers of books and establishing schools and shrines. By the mid-thirteenth century, Learning of the Way modes of interpretation dominated the field of the examinations because teachers and candidates successfully converted intellectual capital into examination capital. This conversion, however, placed the intellectual legacy of the Learning of the Way in the hands of different agents and transformed Learning of the Way ideology. Parts III and IV of this book discuss how the examination field functioned as a key location for the adaptation, extension, and contestation of Learning of the Way ideology.

The history of the Learning of the Way in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as traced in this book also suggests a different answer to the larger question of how the civil service examinations contributed to the continuity (or reproduction) of the imperial order. As the civil service examinations became central to literati status, proponents of political and moral philosophies had to participate in the examination field in order to appeal to literati. Proponents of the Learning of the Way therefore inserted themselves forcefully into this field, albeit reluctantly in some cases (for example, Zhu Xi 朱熹 [1130-1200]).

Examination capital could be converted into political capital. The adoption of Learning of the Way standards by the late Southern Song emperors followed, and subsequently strengthened, the position of authority Daoxue leaders had already obtained in the intellectual and examination fields. For all players, participation in the imperial civil service examinations implied acceptance of the rules not only of the

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examination field but also of the imperial order of which it was part. The examinations contributed to the imperial order because they led to the court's recognition of standards for literati status negotiated between literati groups and representatives of the imperial state in the examination field.

The history of two twelfth-century intellectual traditions animates the field model of the civil service examinations developed in this study. This book traces how “Yongjia” and Learning of the Way teachers promoted distinctive modes of exegesis and of discussing government in the examination field. It also attempts to understand how other teachers adopted and adapted these modes of scholarship, how students used them, how editors and printer/publishers sold them, and how examiners, court officials, and emperors reacted to them.

The Yongjia tradition and the Learning of the Way movement originated as regional intellectual formations and appeared on an empire-wide scale in the second half of the twelfth century. As the name suggests, the Yongjia tradition was closely associated with Yongjia county (which housed the seat of Wenzhou 温州 prefecture; in present-day Zhejiang province). In a narrow sense, it refers to those scholars native to Wenzhou prefecture working in a distinctive tradition of exegesis, historical scholarship, and administrative reasoning and advocating a distinctive political reform program. More frequently I use the term “Yongjia” (in quotation marks) in a broader sense to refer to teachers active in nearby prefectures, all located in the East Zhe circuit (Zhedong 浙東; present-day eastern Zhejiang), who shared the methods and vision of the Yongjia teachers in many respects. The term was used in this broader sense in the twelfth century. Even though “East Zhe teachers,” a term frequently employed in modern intellectual history, is more accurate, I will follow the suggestion of an anonymous reviewer of this book, and use “Yongjia” throughout to avoid confusion.

The histories of the “Yongjia” and Learning of the Way traditions were closely intertwined. Proponents of both traditions were dismissed from office for their opposition to court policies in the 1190s. Because of their shared experience, these two traditions have frequently been treated as the same. Chapter 1 describes the differences between “Yongjia” scholarship and the Learning of the Way movement. The

subsequent chapters, outlined below, recount their divergent histories in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century examination field.

Chapter 2 highlights the relevance of examination writing to literati culture. In examination expositions and policy response essays, the two genres of examination writing discussed in this book, scholar-officials demonstrated competence in two of the areas that defined the scholar-official: textual exegesis and the discussion of government policy. By the mid-twelfth century, private teachers and intellectual formations participating in the examination field focused on training in these two areas. Their curricula were shaped by contemporary conventions that governed both the selection of source materials and the methods of analysis and presentation. The overview of the general characteristics of twelfth-century examination writing in this chapter depicts the conventions that shaped the activity of the “Yongjia” and Learning of the Way teachers in the examination field.

“Yongjia” teachers occupied a central position in the examination field in the second half of the twelfth century. Based on an analysis of the reception of examination writing, Chapter 3 demonstrates that the work of the “Yongjia” teachers shaped examination standards in the last decades of the twelfth century. This chapter attributes the appeal of “Yongjia” teachers to their commitment to a political reform program aimed at restoring the authority of the Song court over all its former territories and the successful translation of this political program into examination writing. Chapter 4 sets out the curricular programs underlying the success of the “Yongjia” teachers. It shows that they taught the skills and the political program admired in their examination writing in a comprehensive curriculum that included courses in composition, institutional history, administrative reasoning, and the textual analysis of the Classics, philosophers, and the histories.

Zhu Xi, the central figure in the Learning of the Way movement in the twelfth century, perceived the dominance of “Yongjia” scholarship in the examination field as a pernicious influence on classical exegesis, historical scholarship, and government, the very activities defining literati status. Beginning in the last decades of the twelfth century, Learning of the Way teachers began to formulate alternative standards for examination writing. By the mid-thirteenth century, Learning of the Way examination curricula had displaced “Yongjia” curricula, and

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Learning of the Way texts were officially endorsed as authoritative sources for examination preparation. Chapter 6 analyzes the Learning of the Way curricular offensive. It traces the transformation of Learning of the Way ideology—from an antagonistic stance toward competing forces in the examination field to the reconciliation of Learning of the Way moral philosophy with diverse literati traditions in the more traditional areas of competence tested in the examinations such as history, government, and composition. Chapter 7 discusses the ascendancy of Learning of the Way standards by analyzing examination essays written between the 1180s and the 1270s. It explains the impacts of Learning of the Way discourse on both the exegesis of classical and historical texts and the discussion of issues in administrative policy in examination writing. The gradual ascendancy of Learning of the Way discourse in examination writing paralleled the trajectory of its ideological transformation in examination preparation. By the mid-thirteenth century, examination candidates shed the confrontational language of philosophical debate and adopted the textual legacy of the Learning of the Way, that of Zhu Xi in particular, as canonical texts.

The shifting curricular strategies of Learning of the Way teachers and their growing impact on examination writing corresponded to shifts in court policy regarding the examination curriculum. After a major persecution campaign in the 1190s, the court gradually endorsed Learning of the Way teachers and texts as authoritative sources for students engaged in examination preparation. Chapter 5 discusses the role of the court and the central bureaucracy in the definition of examination standards between the 1130s and 1270s. Government regulations from this period bear evidence of a shift in court policy from curricular ecumenism in the twelfth century to curricular standardization in the last half century of Song dynastic rule. Both positions contrasted sharply with the reformist curricular policy of the last decades of Northern Song rule and attest to the lasting influence of the Southern Song court's early decision to withdraw from a trendsetting to a policing role in the examination field.

## Part I

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### *Prolegomena*

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The reputation of Yongjia scholarship in the twelfth century was the product of the examination success of Wenzhou prefecture and the commercialization of examination preparation. The stereotypical Yongjia scholar was the examination teacher who limited his teaching to the basic knowledge and skills tested on the civil service examinations. This negative stereotype was part of a larger critique of the commodification of the examinations among twelfth-century critics. In the eyes of critics like Zhu Xi, the examinations had become a means to an end; they were manipulated by teachers and students to ensure students' success and future careers. Because examination preparation courses were available to those who could afford them, the examinations no longer served to select the most worthy for government service and moral leadership.

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This critique captured a trend in literati life. Examination teaching became an attractive business as a result of the combined effect of supply and demand. Increases in the numbers of prefectural examinees as well as of students preparing for the examinations, which was even larger but for which we have no estimates, created a demand for instruction. This demand was met in part by the expansion of commercial printing and private teaching. Teachers of successful students gained large followings; several of them reportedly taught hundreds of students.<sup>41</sup> Commercial printers were eager to publish their works. The increase in the number of teachers was spurred not only by the increased demand but also by the abundant supply of unoccupied scholars eager to engage in teaching, preferably as a temporary money-making venture. This trend was especially evident in Wenzhou, where there was both a large number of candidates preparing for the prefectural examinations and an abundant supply of educated men unable to obtain or maintain government positions, some of whom had examination degrees.

Chen Fuliang and Ye Shi, the two Yongjia teachers discussed in this book, were examples of this trend. They taught to support themselves. After they passed the departmental examinations in the 1170s, their reputations spread beyond Wenzhou. Commercial printers collected their examination writings, and printed editions of their examination

41. For examples beyond Wenzhou prefecture, see Liu Hsiang-kwang, "Yinshua yu kaoshi"; and Liang Gengyao, "Nan Song jiaoxue hangye xingsheng de beijing."

policy response essays were, according to official and nonofficial accounts, bestsellers among examination candidates (Chapter 4).

To a certain extent, the stereotype of the Yongjia teacher as an examination tutor held true. Yongjia scholarship reflected the emphasis on classical exegesis, historical studies, administrative reasoning, and prose composition skills that lay at the core of the Yongjia teachers' examination preparation curricula. The stereotype was flawed insofar as it underestimated the intellectual and political agenda that inspired Yongjia examination teaching and the scholarship produced by Yongjia teachers more broadly.

In contrast to the copious studies on Neo-Confucianism or the Learning of the Way in its narrow definition, little scholarship has been devoted to the development of the Yongjia tradition. With the exception of Ye Shi, whose political thought and sharp critique of Zhu Xi's genealogy of the Way exerted a strong appeal on modern intellectual historians, in-depth scholarship on individual Yongjia intellectuals or the intellectual history of Yongjia as a whole is lacking.<sup>42</sup> This study is not intended to fill this gap; it is, rather, a first step toward the reconstruction of interactions between regional intellectual traditions in Song political culture. Chapters 3 and 4 analyze the "Yongjia" position on exegesis and government as it was reflected in examination essays and manuals. These chapters and the discussion of Zhu Xi's critique of "Yongjia" scholarship in Chapter 6 underscore the correspondence between "Yongjia" institutional history and both classical scholarship and examination teaching.

Yongjia scholarship was associated with a group of teachers active in Yongjia and the other counties in Wenzhou in the twelfth century. Its close association with a group of intellectuals was reflected in such

42. In English there are only the two book-length studies on Ye Shi by Winston Lo and Niu Pu. Zhou Mengjiang's work offers a survey of the history of Yongjia scholarship, but the bulk of his work is devoted to Ye Shi's life and intellectual career. Oka Motoshi has written a series of articles on the social and intellectual history of Wenzhou. See also Bol, "Reconceptualizing the Nation"; and Chu Ping-tzu's and Kondō Kazunari's works. On the occasion of the 860th anniversary of Chen Fuliang's birth, a commemorative volume was published based on a conference held in 1997. This title, *Chen Fuliang danben bai liushi zhounian jinian ji*, was unavailable to me. I thank Song Jaeyoon for bringing it to my attention and sharing those chapters he copied. The dissertation by Lo Wing Kwai, "Chen Fuliang yanjiu," is currently unavailable to the public.

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contemporary references as “the scholars of Yongjia” (*Yongjia zhuru* 永嘉諸儒) and “the Yongjia gentlemen” (*Yongjia zhugong* 永嘉諸公).<sup>43</sup> Even before the emergence of Chen Fuliang and Ye Shi on the intellectual scene in the 1160s and 1170s, Zhou Xingji 周行己 (1067–?), Zheng Boxiong 鄭伯熊 (1127–81), and Xue Jixuan 薛季宣 (1134–73) had already established reputations in classical scholarship, institutional history, and governance. Chen Fuliang and Ye Shi carried on this tradition of scholarship, which was characterized by a common administrative agenda, the analysis of institutional history as an aid in formulating policy proposals, and an interest in the main literati traditions of the eleventh century, including the legacy of the Cheng brothers and the Su family. The Yongjia tradition was further cemented by teacher-disciple relationships between its main representatives. Zheng Boxiong and Xue Jixuan taught Chen Fuliang, who in turn taught Ye Shi.

Unlike the Learning of the Way, the Yongjia tradition was not defined by a body of texts or a genealogy of teachers. Chen Fuliang and Ye Shi specifically objected to genealogical discourse in the definition of literati traditions of learning. In their view, genealogies established divisions among scholars and introduced partiality into scholarly discourse. Similarly, teacher-student relationships were not genealogical. They conceived of relationships between teacher and students in horizontal terms, with students referring to teachers as friends or brothers and not masters or fathers.<sup>44</sup>

Rather than defining the Yongjia tradition by mere geographical location, position in the examination field, a body of texts, or an intellectual genealogy, I see it as a mode of scholarship, a method of historical and policy analysis and textual exegesis, developed by three successive generations of teachers in Wenzhou. The primary characteristic of Yongjia scholarship and teaching was a preoccupation with current affairs.<sup>45</sup> Chen Fuliang identified four broad topics as important: the

43. ZYYL, 86.2207, 97.2480, 107.2660, 123.2962, 136.3250.

44. Oka, “Nan Sō ki no chūki shakai ni okeru ‘yū’”; De Weerd, “The Ways of the Teacher.”

45. My discussion of the main attributes of Yongjia scholarship is based primarily on the commemorative writings Chen Fuliang dedicated to his teachers Zheng Boxiong and Xue Jixuan. See De Weerd, “The Ways of the Teacher.”

restoration of imperial power (in reaction to the monopolization of power by individuals and factions at court), border affairs and military planning, supernumerary troops and officials, and taxation. The Yongjia teachers did more than share a common set of concerns in these areas; they developed a set of proposals to address the problems they identified. They formulated an administrative agenda that amounted to a call for a general scaling back of central government activity. They envisioned a smaller government, fielding a smaller army and a more effective bureaucracy and requiring lower tax revenues. In their view, a reduced government was essential to the restoration of Song power and to the well-being of local society.

② Second, Yongjia scholarship was characterized by a commitment to realize its administrative agenda. This commitment entailed an irreverent and independent attitude. Independence, or impartiality, was a principle of government for Yongjia teachers. It expressed their belief that factional affiliations should be avoided in policy debates and decisions. This attitude was amply demonstrated in their criticism of both the emperor and court factions, on one hand, and the exclusivist intellectual politics of the Learning of the Way, on the other hand (Chapter 3).

Third, in Yongjia scholarship administrative action was grounded in broad scholarship. The Yongjia teacher read widely and published on all manner of subjects. The teacher’s consulting of a variety of texts reflected the Yongjia principle of impartiality—just as the emperor was to consult all scholarly opinion, the teacher was to read all scholarly writing. In response to critics who perceived this emphasis as a sign of the lack of a unified vision and integrated philosophy, Yongjia teachers defended broad and inclusive scholarship as the basis for the analysis of the Song’s military, tax, and bureaucratic problems and the foundation for its political program.

Fourth, Yongjia scholarship critically incorporated Cheng Learning. The Yongjia teachers demonstrated in their intellectual exchanges and publishing record a clear interest in Cheng Learning. Xue Jixuan wrote commentaries on those classical texts that were at the core of Chengist moral philosophy, *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, and *The Analects*. He defended the value of these texts against those who found fault with their use in Chengist discourse. Chen Fuliang cited Xue’s

response to a comment from Military Affairs Commissioner Wang Yan 王炎 (1137–1218):

They [the high officials] cannot reform their minds and correct the beginnings to complete the task of dynastic restoration. They only chase after achievement and profit and boast to deceive the public. Today they commonly say that *The Doctrine of the Mean* and *The Great Learning* are old expressions, and they hate to listen to them.

不能格心正始以建中興之業。徒僥倖功利夸言以眩聽。今俗皆曰：中庸大學陳編厭聞。

The Yongjia teachers shared the Chengist view that the moral reform of the emperor and high officialdom were essential to the reinvigoration of the Song state. They also agreed that the classical texts the Cheng brothers had selected to propagate the message of moral cultivation contributed to this end.

The Yongjia teacher was, on the other hand, not an advocate of the exclusive truth of Cheng Learning. For the Yongjia teacher, Cheng Learning was but one of many schools in the intellectual legacy of the past that provided answers to contemporary issues. There were historical connections between Cheng Learning and Yongjia scholarship. Zhou Xingji had studied with Cheng Yi; Xue Jixuan had a meeting during his youth with the hermit Yuan Gai 袁溉, a student of the Cheng brothers.<sup>46</sup> These connections demonstrate an interest in Cheng Learning on the part of the Yongjia teachers, but they did not claim a line of transmission in Cheng Learning. The association with Cheng Learning did not provide an identity for the Yongjia teacher as it did for the teacher of the Learning of the Way. As indicated in the Introduction, I use the term “Yongjia” (in quotation marks) to refer to teachers active outside Wenzhou prefecture whom contemporaries associated with Yongjia scholarship because of shared interests in Cheng Learning, institutional history, government, and composition.

46. Chen Fuliang, *Zhizhai ji*, 51.2a.

### *Scholarship and Movement*

The strong sense of identification fostered in Learning of the Way discursive practices turned it into an intellectual formation of a different type than the regional traditions such as Yongjia. The Learning of the Way became a movement in the twelfth century. Its members were self-identified and advocated, under its flag and in an organized and systematic manner, a radical reorientation of Song society and the polity in line with Learning of the Way moral philosophy. The Yongjia tradition made no coordinated effort to promote its political and intellectual agenda. It was a mode of scholarship, a way of historical and policy analysis and textual exegesis. There was a political vision associated with it (Chapters 3 and 4), but that vision was not based on universal claims; it did not generate a canon or proselytizing institutions. Its aim was to transform the way in which scholars (as aspiring officials) and officials thought about government. Yongjia administrative thought was based on historical and policy analysis and textual exegesis broadly conceived; its teachers did not envisage a transformation of society as a whole.<sup>47</sup>

The difference between the Yongjia tradition as a mode of scholarship and the Learning of the Way as a movement is illustrated in the ways in which the discourses of the two schools diverged. The Yongjia preoccupation with current affairs and the development of a political program contrasts with the Learning of the Way's development and transmission of a coherent moral philosophy. Yongjia emphasized the art of argumentation in political writing and the teaching of that skill; the Learning of the Way, the personal affirmation of its truth (Chapter 4). Broad scholarship, the critical evaluation of Cheng Learning, horizontal relationships between teachers and students, and the claim of impartiality and a refusal to construct an exclusive intellectual or political identity in the Yongjia tradition are matched against the centrality of

47. In *Zhu Xi de lishi shijie*, Yü Yingshi sees all Song Confucians as fighting for social and political reform. I am not convinced that we can equate a commitment to political reform with a commitment to social reform. The Learning of the Way had a comprehensive reform of society and polity (moral reform) in mind; Yongjia was more narrowly focused on administrative reform (social and economic reform). For a thorough critique of Yü's approach and conclusions, see Hartman, “Zhu Xi and His World.”



a new canon of classical texts and the writings of the Four Masters, the vertical relationships of intellectual genealogy, and stridency and exclusivism in intellectual and political activity in the Learning of the Way.

These differences have significant implications for the way in which we analyze the relationship between the Learning of the Way and Yongjia scholarship. The Yongjia teachers have frequently been included in broad definitions of the Learning of the Way by Chinese literati in the imperial period as well as by modern scholars. The differences between the Learning of the Way movement and the Yongjia teachers, particularly the refusal of many of the latter to identify with the Learning of the Way, suggests that they represented distinct intellectual and political formations, with a different organizational nature, even though they shared intellectual and political interests.

With regard to their mutual relationship, the intellectual history of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century examination field recounted in the following chapters pursues two lines of argument. First, the histories of Yongjia scholarship and the Learning of the Way movement demonstrate that intellectual formations were defined by their interaction in the examination field. The contrasts outlined above were the result of actions in the examination field. The curricular strategies of the Yongjia teachers and the cluster of discursive practices that characterized the Learning of the Way were shaped in part by teachers' and students' rejection or modification of alternative modes of examination learning.

Second, the examination field functioned as a barometer measuring and forecasting the authority of intellectual formations. Examination manuals and essays reveal the shifts in the interpretation of intellectual traditions among scholars and officials. The intellectual history of the examination field allows us to explore the interpretation of intellectual traditions not only among leading thinkers and their disciples but also among virtually unknown literati. The changes in the cluster of Learning of the Way discursive practices, for example, were indicative of the change in its status from the ideology of a radical minority in the twelfth century to that of an official ideology invoked by the mainstream by the mid-thirteenth century.

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## *Examination Expositions and Policy Response Essays in Literati Culture*

As explained in the Introduction, during the Southern Song period, the second session of each level of the civil service examinations required candidates to compose one exposition (*lun*), and the third session, three policy response essays (*ce*). The requirements in the first session of the examinations varied, depending on the candidate's track. Those candidates opting for the poetry track were tested on their ability to compose poetry in two genres: regulated poem (*shi*) and poetic exposition (*fu*). Those opting for the Classics track were examined on the classic of their choice as well as *The Analects* and *Mencius*.

My analysis of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Song examination preparation is based exclusively on an investigation of expositions and policy response essays, the manuals that were produced to train students in these two genres, and discussions of conventions and criteria governing exposition and policy response writing in government and literati circles. My decision to limit the scope of the analysis to only two of the five examination genres is based on two considerations. First, examination expositions and policy response essays have survived in much greater numbers than have examination poetry and essays on the meaning of the Classics for the Southern Song period. Expositions, policy questions, and response essays can be found in several anthologies and in the collected writings of a relatively large number of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Song literati. By contrast, few examples of

examination poetry collections or essays on the meaning of the Classics are extant, too few to allow for the reconstruction of long-term developments.<sup>1</sup> Second, the preservation of examination expositions and policy response essays in individual authors' collected writings suggests that Song literati attached particular significance to them. Their significance derived from the decisive impact of these genres in the higher-level examinations and their centrality in literati culture broadly speaking. Expositions and policy response essays were expressions of competence in two of the areas that defined the scholar-official: textual exegesis and the discussion of government policy.

As did contemporary observers, modern historians have downplayed the import of the last two sessions on the overall result of the examinations.<sup>2</sup> In the twelfth century, candidates and examiners shared the assumption that the grades on the first session determined the final grade at the prefectural level of the examinations. According to Wu Cong 吳琮 (twelfth c.), papers in the second and third sessions at the lowest level of the examinations counted only when no decision could be made on the basis of the first session.<sup>3</sup> Wu Cong's observation confirmed the more general perception among Song literati that the burden of grading so many candidates made it impossible for examiners to give each paper due consideration. The magistrates and provincial officials

1. The three examination essays on *The Spring and Autumn Annals* in Lin Xiyi's 林希逸 (ca. 1210–ca. 1273) collected works (*Zhuxi yan zhai shiyi gao xiji*, 8.1a–9a) are, to my knowledge, the only example of the inclusion of examination essays on the meaning of the Classics in a Southern Song collection. Pu Yanguang's article on Song essays on the meaning of the Classics is based primarily on *Standards for the Study of the Exposition* (*Lanxue shengchi* 論學繩尺). Although examination essays on the meaning of the Classics and examination expositions certainly overlapped, they should not be seen as the same thing. Northern Song essays on the meaning of the Classics have been better preserved. Seventeen essays appear in Liu Anjie's 劉安節 (1068–1116) collected writings, *Liu Zuoshi ji* 劉左史集. Two essays on the meaning of the Classics were included in Lü Zuqian's anthology (*Song Wenjian* 宋文鑑). A dozen or so Song essays appear in Ming and Qing dynasty collections of essays on the meaning of the Classics. See *Jingyi mofan* 經義模範; and Yu Changcheng 俞長城 (*js.* 1685), *Keyi tang yibaiershi mingjia zhuyi* 可儀堂一百二十名家制義. I was unable to consult Yu's *Song qi mingjia jingyi* 宋七名家經義. Liu Chenweng's 劉辰翁 (1231–94) *Xuxi's Collection of Poems on the Four Seasons* (*Xuxi sijing shiji* 須溪四景詩集) is the only surviving collection of examination poetry.

2. See, e.g., Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, 26.

3. *Lun jue*, 3a.

serving as examiners allegedly checked the expositions and policy response essays only when in doubt about the quality and the ranking of the papers submitted in the first session. Examiners read the expositions and policy response essays of those examinees whose first-session papers were borderline. They also graded the papers of the second and third sessions to determine the appropriate ranking of those candidates whose first-session papers received the same grade.

Whereas the ability to compose poetry and knowledge of the Classics came first in the evaluation of examination candidates at the local level, the ability to write prose expositions and policy response essays took pride of place in the departmental and palace examinations. According to Wu Cong, candidates were judged primarily by their responses in the last two sessions at the departmental examinations.<sup>4</sup> This meant that a successful answer to an exposition or policy question could in and of itself be sufficient to make the cut. Average grades in all three sessions did not necessarily lead to success, but distinction in either the second or third session could ensure a place on the list of departmental examination graduates.

The emphasis on expository writing was even more apparent in the palace examinations. After 1070, the highest level of the examinations consisted of only one session and featured a policy response question. The ranking of the cream of the examinees was thus based on their ability to discuss the policy issue raised by the emperor or, more commonly, his court advisers. The decision in 1070 to change the focus of the palace examinations from poetry to policy essays was part of a larger trend. The abolition of regulated poetry and the poetic exposition as the main criteria of evaluation at the highest level of the examinations reflected the widely shared belief that the use of poetry as an evaluative tool in civil service recruitment was questionable. From 1070 on, the policy response replaced poetry as the hallmark of the holder of the *jinsshi* degree.<sup>5</sup>

Twelfth-century literati debate revolved around the interpretation of classical, historical, and philosophical texts and the discussion of

4. *Ibid.*, 2b.

5. Araki Toshikazu, *Sōdai kakyo seido kenkyū*, 299.

Song dynastic history and current affairs. The ability to participate in exegetical and political discussions was a defining characteristic of the scholar. It mattered in officialdom and in private exchanges among scholars. Exegesis had traditionally been closely associated with officialdom. The quotation and interpretation of passages from the Classics and previous dynastic histories characterized political discourse in oral and written form at court and in bureaucratic communication more generally. The testing of these skills in the civil service examinations underscored their connection with the state. Political discourse at all levels of the bureaucracy connected the exegesis of classical and historical texts with the discussion of Song policy. Court debates, memorials, and reports bear witness to the fact that Song officials were well informed about Song historical precedent and the current political climate. The currency of the history of early Song politics and information about state affairs in officialdom spilled over into the examination field. Students requested instruction in current affairs in addition to the Classics and the history of the Han and Tang dynasties and bought encyclopedias and anthologies that reproduced recent official documents (a violation of publishing laws; see Chapter 4).<sup>6</sup>

The expansion of the literati class under Song rule, as attested by the growing numbers of prefectural examination candidates, ensured that the discussion of policy cut across official and private arenas. As an examination degree, or simply participation in the examinations, became the hallmark of the scholar and a license to exert local leadership, the discussion of policy joined exegesis and the exchange of poetry as activities defining literati status. The inclusion of political argument in the self-definition of the scholarly elite was manifested in the pride taken in examination policy questions and response essays. The validation of political argument in the examination field further created conditions for the scholars' creative adaptation of examination genres. Literati pursued the policy question and response outside the immediate context of examination preparation and participation in the private discussion of contemporary policy (see Chapter 7).

6. On the dissemination of archival documents, see De Weerd, "Byways"; and idem, "What Did Su Che See in the North?"

### *Exegesis and Examination Writing*

The application of exegetical skills was required in both the examination exposition and the policy response. Examination exposition topics were quotations from classical, philosophical, historical, or, less frequently, literary texts. Candidates were required to demonstrate their familiarity with the textual tradition by identifying the source of the passage and evaluated on their ability to formulate a coherent interpretation of the meaning of the passage and its immediate context. Exegetical skills were also tested in policy response essays. The discussion of classical and historical cases was an essential rhetorical step in the two main types of policy questions, questions on the Classics and the histories and questions on contemporary affairs. Furthermore, questions on the Classics and the histories were specifically designed to test candidates' ability to explicate classical and historical texts in relationship to one another and to engage them in exegetical debates that spanned the history of textual commentary.

Examination standards affected exegesis in two ways. First, the selection of topics shaped the focus of exegetical effort. The preference for particular Classics and histories, or chapters from them, channeled literati attention. Both the court and examination teachers had the power to so direct literati attention. The following chapters explain why and how the authority to define the focus of exegetical effort shifted from the court in the eleventh century to teachers in the twelfth century. Second, the rhetorical conventions of examination genres molded the ways in which students read and applied texts. Politicians and teachers eager to change the ways in which literati interpreted the classical and historical heritage therefore vied to reform the structural requirements of examination genres. Both "Yongjia" and Learning of the Way teachers transformed exegesis through examination teaching. Their efforts need to be understood against the background of the twelfth-century examination conventions sketched below.

Standards for examination writing were shaped by government regulations. At frequent intervals during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Song government posted examination regulations. These rules, discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, dealt primarily with administrative aspects. Instructions concerning evaluation were limited to setting the

length of examination papers, stipulating proper procedures for filling out blank sheets, and listing the violations that led to immediate disqualification, such as the use of taboo characters and plagiarism. The official regulations did not specify the structural requirements of each genre to be tested, nor did they identify a core curriculum of examination texts or a list of banned books.<sup>7</sup>

The authors of the official regulations and their audience nevertheless believed that structural requirements guided the composition of papers in each of the genres tested on the examinations. In an 1171 report on the departmental examinations, Liu Zheng 留正 (1129–1206), then imperial recorder (*qiju sheren* 起居舍人), wrote: “As for the state’s selection of scholars, [the papers tested in] each of the three sessions have their structural requirements (*tizhi* 體制). Therefore, we call to be selected ‘according with the norms’ (*bege* 合格).”<sup>8</sup> Here Liu Zheng was confirming a theoretical assumption common among twelfth-century Chinese literati. At the core of each genre of prose and poetry lay a set of characteristics that defined the makeup of the written text. Liu Zheng evidently felt a need to confirm this assumption explicitly because examination papers from the 1160s demonstrated that the core characteristics of the examination genres were subject to significant change.

The authors of the official regulations assumed that most texts in the bibliographic categories of the Classics, the histories, and the philosophers were legitimate sources for examination questions and answers. The concerns they expressed about the use of Buddhist writings and the works of contemporary authors suggest that they felt that some categories of texts should be excluded. However, because in the 1130s the Song government had committed itself to the “Great Impartiality” policy (Chapter 5), official regulations did not prescribe writing and curricular standards. Examiners and students turned to professional teachers and private printers for guidance.

7. For a more detailed discussion of examination regulations, see De Weerd, “The Composition of Examination Standards,” 16–23.

8. SHY, XJ, 4.41a.

#### CURRICULAR STANDARDS

Teachers collected examination papers and authored mock examination essays and used them in class to teach students the sources and types of questions found in recent examinations. Through careful analyses of such texts, teachers taught current conventions in examination writing. Private printers, in collaboration with teachers, printed collections of examinations papers. Such collections often featured annotations and, in some cases, evaluations by the examiners or renowned teachers. Among the large repertoire of examination cribs discussed in Chapter 4, anthologies of examination essays, especially those gathered from graduates after the examinations, were considered the most reliable guide to examiners’ questions and evaluation criteria. One extant example of such an anthology, *Standards for the Study of the Exposition* (*Lunxue shengchi* 論學繩尺, late 1260s or early 1270s), allows us to gauge curricular and writing standards for examination expositions in the second half of the twelfth century.

Little is known about the compilers. Wei Tianying 魏天應, a *jinsbi* degree-holder from Jian’an 建安, selected the essays. Wei was a disciple of Xie Fangde 謝枋得 (1226–89), an examination teacher of some renown, who was also involved in the business of anthologizing (Chapter 4). Lin Zichang 林子長, an instructor at the Lin’an Prefectural School, annotated the volume.<sup>9</sup> At least 28 percent of the expositions selected by Wei Tianying were from departmental examinations, and at least 44 percent were taken from internal and preliminary Imperial College (Taixue 太學) examinations. He also included a few expositions from local examinations, local and departmental avoidance examinations (*caoshi* 漕試, *bieyuanshi* 別院試), examinations at the school for the imperial family (*zongxue* 宗學), and local schools (see Table 2 in Appendix B).<sup>10</sup> The essays of those who ranked first in the departmental

9. Following the gloss on *jingxue* 京學 in Nakajima, “Sōshi” “Senkyōshi” *yakuchū*, 1: 10.

10. The edition from the 1330s at the Seikadō in Tokyo mentions the type of examination for which the essay had been written as well as the ranking the authors of the expositions attained. The great majority gained first place in the relevant examination. Both Zhu Shangshu (*Song ren zongji xu lu*, 366–72) and Zhang Haiou and Sun Yaobin (“*Lunxue shengchi* yu Nan Song luntwen”) fail to mention this edition and list fifteenth-

examinations were the most prestigious models. As indicators of the examination standards at the highest center of learning in the capital, the essays of Imperial College students also commanded special attention.<sup>11</sup>

The essays span the last century of the Southern Song dynasty. The earliest essay was written around 1154, the last few date from 1268; there are essays from all intervening decades.<sup>12</sup> The preponderance of essays date from the last decades of the twelfth century and from the 1250s and the 1260s (see Appendix A and Table 3 in Appendix B). The relatively large number of essays written before 1200 may reflect a preference for the works of Chen Fuliang; the even larger percentage of essays from the 1250s and the 1260s<sup>13</sup> shows the preoccupation with the latest trends in examination writing. The range in the dates of the expositions and in the types of examinations for which they were written makes *Standards for the Study of the Exposition* an excellent source for an investigation of curricular and writing standards.

Table 4 in Appendix B charts the sources of the topics of the expositions in *Standards for the Study of the Exposition*. Two other anthologies printed in the thirteenth century are included for comparison. Table 4B charts the sources of the topics of those essays in *Standards for the Study of the Exposition* that can be dated to the period 1150–1200. The essays included in *Chen Fuliang, the Founding Father of the Exposition* (*Zhibizhai*

century editions as the earliest editions. For the Imperial College preliminary examination and the avoidance examinations, see Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates*, 103, 108.

11. For other examples of the prestige of the Imperial College in examination preparation, see Chapter 4. Imperial College papers may also have been attractive because many tried to take the college entrance examinations to enhance their chances for examination success; see Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates*, 104–5.

12. Zhang Haiou and Sun Yaobin (“Lunxue shengchi luntiwén yu Nan Song luntiwén,” 95) write that the earliest essay dates from 1132. They identify the author of one of the essays, Chen Shizhong 陳時中, as a man who passed the examinations in 1132. Most likely they are referring to Chen Shizhong 陳時仲, who is listed as a successful candidate in a local gazetteer (Liang Kejia, comp., *Chunxi Sanshan zhi*, 28.11b). The fact that the name of the 1132 graduate is written differently combined with the fact that there were other examination graduates named Chen Shizhong 陳時中 makes this identification problematic. In general, I have not assigned dates to essays for which there are multiple plausible authors.

13. The number of essays from the 1250s and the 1260s is higher than indicated in the table. The similarities between the essays dated to the 1250s and the 1260s and many of the undated essays suggest that many undated essays were also written at that time.

*lunzu* 止齋論組) were also written during the second half of the twelfth century. These tables reveal a remarkable homogeneity both in terms of the sources used and also in the share of each source in the total number of questions. *The History of the Han Dynasty* (*Hanshu* 漢書) was by far the most popular source for exposition topics. Historical subjects, predominantly from *The History of the Former Han*, *History of the Later Han* (*Hou Hanshu* 後漢書), and *The New History of the Tang* (*Xin Tangshu* 新唐書), account for one-third to one-half the total.<sup>14</sup> Mencius ranked second, followed by *The Analects*, *Instructions of Master Yang* (*Yangzi Fayán* 揚子法言),<sup>15</sup> and *Xunzi* (荀子).

This selection bears witness to the authoritative position of Ancient Prose (古文 *guwen*) in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>16</sup> In the eighth and ninth centuries, the first Ancient Prose masters to design a genealogy of the Way of Antiquity, Han Yu and Pi Rixiu 皮日休 (ca. 834–ca. 883), had listed Confucius, Mencius, Xunzi, Yang Xiong, and Wang Tong 王通 (584–618), the alleged author of *Explaining Centrality* (*Zhongshuo* 中說), as the legitimate transmitters of civilization.<sup>17</sup> Tenth- and eleventh-century proponents of Ancient Prose also gave priority to the works of these masters in their teaching and added Han Yu to the list.<sup>18</sup>

Twelfth-century masters of Ancient Prose adopted the standard histories of the Han and Tang dynasties as the major sources for their historical studies.<sup>19</sup> The priority assigned these histories became a matter of concern to the government. In 1185, Ni Si 倪思 (1147–1220), then an Erudite Scholar at the Imperial College, reported that topics for expositions on history at the time were selected solely from the histories of the Han and Tang dynasties. He objected:

14. For the publication history of the dynastic histories in the Song period, see Ozaki, *Seishi Sō Gen han no kenkyū*.

15. Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE) finished the *Fayan* in 12 CE.

16. For a further discussion of the history of Ancient Prose writing in twelfth- and thirteenth-century examination preparation, see Chapters 4 and 6.

17. He Jipeng, *Tang Song guwen xin tan*, “Tang Song guwen yundong zhong de wentong guan,” 253–63.

18. *Ibid.*, 264–71, 282–83.

19. For discussions of the conflict between Chen Liang and Zhu Xi on this matter, see Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism*, 134–52; *idem*, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendancy*, 169–78; and *idem*, “Ch'en Liang on Statecraft.”

As for the Three Kingdoms, the Six Dynasties, and the Five Periods, people see them as periods of decline, they despise them and are ashamed to talk about them. However, the advantages and disadvantages of their recruitment, the efficiency and inefficiency of their defense, the tight or loose nature of their policy making, the skillfulness and ineptness of their planning, as well as their methods of handling soldiers and the people, and the records about the conditions of defeat and victory—as mistakes of the past and warnings for the future, all of these are useful. Students should investigate all these matters. . . . I beg that the examiners be ordered to select from various histories without constraints when designing topics.<sup>20</sup>

至若三國六朝五代，則以為非盛世事。鄙而恥談。然其進取之得失，守禦之當否，籌策之疏密，計慮之工拙，與夫兵民區處之方，形勢成敗之迹，前事之失，後事之戒，不為無補。皆學者所宜講。 . . . 乞申敕考官課題命題雜出諸史，無所拘忌。

Questions based on the Classics, on which many famous earlier expositions were written,<sup>21</sup> are remarkably absent from these anthologies. The prominence of the Classics in the first session of the examinations accounts for this. In the first session, candidates in the Classics track were tested on their classic of specialization; topics for poetic expositions and regulated poems often came from the Classics as well. Yet, the possibility of duplication in sessions one and two was not regarded as problematic in the case of *Mencius* and *The Analects*. Candidates in the Classics track had to write one essay on *Mencius* and one on *The Analects* in the first session of the examinations. This discrepancy attests to the prominent position *The Analects* and *Mencius* held in twelfth-century literati circles. The inclusion of *The Analects* and *Mencius* in the Four Books,

20. SHY, XJ, 5.7b–8a.

21. Among Su Shi's six expositions for the special examination of 1061, one dealt with a passage from *Gongyang's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu Gongyang zhuàn* 春秋公羊傳); another was on a passage from *The Book of Songs*; see Jin Zheng, *Keju zhidu yu Zhongguo wenhua*, 126. He wrote one of his most famous essays, "The Most Compassionate Penalties and Rewards" ("Xingshang zhonghou zhi zhi lun" 刑賞忠厚之至論), in reply to a question on a passage from *The Book of Documents* during the departmental examinations of 1057 (*ibid.*, 115). *The Changes*, *The Book of Rites*, and *The Book of Documents* were regular sources for exposition topics in the palace examinations between 978 and 1063. For the topics of the palace examinations for these years, see the list in SHY, XJ, 7. See also Ning, *Bei Song jinshi ke kaoshi neirong zhi yanbian*, appendix, table 2, 183–85.

the core curriculum of the Learning of the Way, was a confirmation of the ranking these books already enjoyed in the Ancient Prose tradition (Chapter 6).<sup>22</sup>

#### WRITING STANDARDS

Model examination expositions not only taught students the main sources for examination questions but also familiarized readers with the rhetorical characteristics of the exposition genre. Teachers, editors, and printers alerted twelfth-century students to the typical layout of the examination exposition in lectures and in annotated anthologies such as *Standards for the Study of the Exposition*. By the 1150s, the sequence of the main parts of the examination exposition had become standardized. Students were expected to apply the typical format in the examinations, even though these requirements were not specified in examination regulations. Standardization affected not only the structural layout of the genre but also its argumentative strategy.<sup>23</sup> Argumentation in parallel format had become standard according to twelfth-century observers. These two practices shaped the "Yongjia" teachers' innovations in the

22. See Chapters 5 and 6. Learning of the Way critics were more upset about Learning of the Way uses of *The Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 中庸) and *The Great Learning*. In memorials during the Campaign Against False Learning, Learning of the Way critics urged scholars to "take Confucius and Mencius as their teachers and to study the Six Classics, the philosophers, and the histories" and not to "devote themselves entirely to false teachings from 'recorded conversations' and to *The Doctrine of the Mean* and *The Great Learning* in order to give literary expression to their wrong views" (SHY, XJ, 5.17b; WXTK, 5.302b; see also XZZTJ, 729). For a discussion of the campaign, see Chapter 5.

23. Despite the similarities, a crucial difference exists between the regulated examination expositions from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and later eight-legged essays. The difference lies in the second component of the rhetoric of the examination exposition, the argumentative strategy. Parallelism defined the argumentative strategy of the eight-legged essay after the early fifteenth century, whereas it was only one of many argumentative strategies used in regulated expositions; see Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, 380–403. According to Zhu Shangshu (*Songdai keju yu wenxue kaolun*, 210–32), the standardization of layout affected all examination genres with the exception of the policy response essay, whose structure he considers dependent on randomly ordered questions and thus inherently resistant to standardization. I discuss standardization in the policy response below.

teaching of composition and the Learning of the Way critique and reform of examination conventions.

According to the eighteenth-century editors of *The Complete Collection of Books in the Four Bibliographic Categories* (*Siku quanshu* 四庫全書), there was an unmistakable trend toward formalization in the examination expositions written after the establishment of the Southern Song dynasty in 1127.

In the beginning people did not yet stick to established formats. Su Shi's "The Most Compassionate Penalties and Rewards," for instance, manifested an innovative structure.<sup>24</sup> People did not yet value sticking to the details of the head-neck-heart-belly-waist-tail format. After the move to the south, people endeavored to adhere to a more elaborate format, and the structural regulations became more rigid. The examiners held to fixed formats in their expectations of others, and everybody followed their fixed formats to comply. Thereupon the dogmas of "double bolts" [explaining words or phrases in a parallel structure] and "three doors" [developing three lines of argument] arose.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, there were separate norms for examination essays. Even those with unlimited and extraordinary talent could not overcome this. It must be because of this reason that this collection has "standards" ["cord" (*sheng*) and "foot" (*chi*) are both units for measuring things] in the title!

... The structural rules for the sections called "broaching the topic" (*poti*), "following up on the topic" (*jieti*) "minor discussion" (*xiaojiang*), "the main discussion" (*dajiang*), "going back to the topic" (*rutu*), and "tracing the origins of the topic" (*yuanti*) are in fact the beginnings of the eight legs (*babi*). Thus one can see wherefrom the writing for the imperial examinations originates.<sup>26</sup>

24. See note 21 above. For translations of this essay, see Margouliès, *Le kou-wen chinois*, 271–74; and Shi Shun Liu, *Chinese Classical Prose*, 232–35.

25. For examples, see *Lun jue*, 25a–28a. Although the "double bolts" can metonymically stand for parallel prose and the eight-legged essay, as a rhetorical technique it was also very popular among Ancient Prose writers. Han Yu's name is commonly associated with the technique in Southern Song anthologies. See *LXSC*, *passim*; and Suzuki, "Hakkobun no enkaku oyobi keishiki," 699. This is an illustration of the blurred lines between parallel and Ancient Prose writing. In many cases the difference in the application of parallelism (fairly strict vs. ad hoc) indicates what style the author is adopting; other stylistic features provide further indicators. For an example of the metonymical use of the "double bolts" and similar terminology, see Gu Yanwu, *Rixibilu jishi*, 2: 16.21a; cited in Yin Gonghong, *Pianwen*, 158.

26. SKTY, 38.4162.

其始尚不拘成格。如蘇軾“刑賞忠厚之至論”自出。未賞屑屑於頭項心腹腰尾之式。南渡以後講求漸密程式漸嚴。試官執定格以待人。人亦循其定格以求合。於是雙關三扇之說興，而場屋之作遂別有軌度。雖有縱橫奇肆之才，亦不得而越。此編以繩尺爲名，其以是歟！

其破題接題小講大講入題原題式實後來八比之濫觴。亦足以見制舉之文源流所自出焉。

The head-neck-heart-belly-waist-tail format refers to subdivisions of essays that had become standard by the second half of the twelfth century. The examination exposition comprised six subdivisions, arranged in a fixed sequence. The first three subdivisions were relatively short. The author introduced the main argument succinctly in the opening lines, or *poti* (an introduction of two to three lines). An outline of the main subarguments, of equal or slightly greater length, followed the summary statement of the argument in the continuation (*jieti* or *chengti* 承題). The author could opt to continue the introductory part with a more detailed abstract of the exposition in the minor discussion, or *xiaojiang*. Together the mandatory one-paragraph statement of the argument in the *poti* and *jieti*, and the optional clarification of the argument in the minor discussion formed the introductory part of the exposition (*maozǐ* 冒子). The main segment of the text (main discussion, or *jiangti*) was usually preceded by the identification of the source of the question in the citation, or *yuanti*. In rare cases, the citation followed the main discussion. The citation then linked the main argument to the conclusion (*jieti*), instead of marking the end of the introduction and the beginning of the main body of the exposition.<sup>27</sup>

The eighteenth-century editor singled out the "double bolts" and the "three doors" (or "three leaves") as signs of the formalization of exposition writing after 1127. He did so for good reasons. The double bolts and three doors reflected the trend toward parallel argumentation in regulated examination expositions.<sup>28</sup> A piece by Huang Huai 黃槐, who

27. This structural division may go back to similar organizational schemata for regulated (examination) poetry during the Tang. See the arguments by Mao Qiling 毛奇齡 (1623–1716) and Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728–1804) in Liang Zhangju 梁章鉅 (1775–1849), *Zhiyi congshu*, 1.6b; see also Suzuki, "Hakkobun no enkaku oyobi keishiki," 697; and Jin Zheng, *Keju zhidu yu Zhongguo wenhua*, 61. The Siku editors see the eight legs as an extension of this subdivision, as do these literary historians.

28. Cf. Zhu Xi's criticism cited in Chapter 6.

obtained the *jinsbi* degree in 1154, illustrates both the standardized format of and the use of parallel argumentation in regulated expositions of the twelfth century. It further underscores the authority accorded the Ancient Prose tradition in examination preparation by the mid-twelfth century.

“[If] the knowledgeable man [also] does what causes him no trouble” [topic of the exposition]

The exposition:

All affairs in the world are accomplished by the good planning of knowledgeable men, and they are defeated by the busy meddling of knowledgeable men.

Therefore, that which completes the affairs of the world is knowledge, but that which destroys the affairs of the world is equally knowledge.

When the rights and wrongs, the benefits and harms, of the affairs of the world have not yet become manifest, who else but the knowledgeable man can discern these things? If he follows the set momentum of the rights and wrongs and the benefits and harms, and handles affairs on the basis of the necessary development of the rights and wrongs and the benefits and harms, then what harm could there be in the morally superior man’s use of knowledge? *On the other hand*, if one estimates knowledge too highly, breaks moral standards to pursue fame and utilizes techniques to handle affairs, one will bring confusion to what can be easily done in the world. Only then will there be things in the world that do not accord with their natural principles. When things do not accord with their principles, one will cause harm by relying on benefit at a time when one has to consider the rights and wrongs and the benefits and harms. The origins of busy meddling really come from this.

“[If] the knowledgeable man [also] does what causes him no trouble,” one should be excited by Mencius’ arguments [citing the topic from *Mencius*].<sup>29</sup>

智者行其所無事 [topic]

論曰：

天下之事成於智者之善謀，

而敗於智者之多事。 [poti]

故成天下之事者智也。

而敗天下之事者亦智也。 [jieti]

天下之事是非利害之未形，非有智者孰能辨之？因其是非利害之定勢而處之以是非利害之當，然則君子於智何惡之有！

29. LXSC, 2.89a–93b; Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 2, *The Works of Mencius*, 331.

惟夫智者過而矜之裂道以徇名任術以處事，取天下之所安行者而畀之膠膠擾擾之地。天下之事始有不循其理者矣。不循其理而從事於是非利害之際，將以利之適以害之。多事之原實基於此。 [xiaojiang]  
智者行其所無事。宜有激於孟子之論也。 [yuanti]

The topic the examiner assigned in the departmental examinations of 1154 was adapted from a line in *Mencius*. In a speech reported in Chapter IVB, Mencius debates the topic of “knowledge” (*zhi*) and “knowledgeable men” (*zhi zhe*).<sup>30</sup> Even though the passage covers only Mencius’ response and not the context of the debate, we can imagine Mencius responding to Mohist arguments. The two main themes of Mencius’ speech are “knowledge” and “inherent character” (*gu* 故), concepts central to Mohist philosophy. Mencius argues that knowledge is ambivalent. He objects to knowledge that ignores and distorts the natural disposition of things. Mencius’ interpretation of knowledge was predicated on his views on human nature and development and, more generally, the nature and development of all things. In other dialogues and speeches recorded in *Mencius*, the master maintained that all human beings and things possess inherent capacities, which, when properly nurtured, determine the course of natural and moral development.

In the passage Huang Huai was asked to consider for his examination exposition, Mencius argues that when discussing the nature of things (*xing* 性), we must pursue their inherent character (*gu*). Mencius maintains that it is easy to pursue the inherent character of things. That is what Yu did in directing the waters that had flooded the Chinese plains in Antiquity. In Mencius’ rendering, Yu made the waters flow in their natural direction. His work was easy and successful because he did not interfere with the natural course of the waters. The examiner lifted the topic for the examination exposition from the line, “If *knowledgeable men* do also *what causes them no trouble* [as Yu did], then their knowledge is great indeed.”

In the *poti* and *jieti*, the first two sentences in the translation, Huang set out the polarity that guides the argumentation of the essay: using knowledge is both necessary and dangerous. In the one-paragraph

30. For translations, see Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 2, *The Works of Mencius*, 331; and D. C. Lau, *Mencius*, 133.



summary, Huang Huai indicated that the exposition pursues two lines of argument. On one hand, all affairs in the world depend on knowledgeable men for their completion. On the other hand, knowledge is also a potential source of destruction for all things. The author worked out both sides of the proposition in the main body of the text (see Fig. 1).

In the minor discussion quoted in full above, Huang Huai offered a theoretical explanation of the underlying cause for the different uses of knowledge. Knowledge of the irreprehensible kind acts on opportunities to move things in the direction of their preordained course of development. Knowledgeable men who put their knowledge to positive use monitor their surroundings. They determine the rightness (*shifei*) and beneficialness (*libai*) of the course of affairs and act to steer affairs in the direction of their normative paths of development. Knowledgeable men of the reprehensible kind, on the other hand, determine rightness and beneficialness without reference to the normative paths of development. For this reason, their actions are based on partial interest (*li* 利) and cannot be undertaken with the smoothness that characterized Yu's guiding of the waters.

Huang Huai's exposition on the need to monitor the set course (*ding-shi*) of affairs and his use of rightness and beneficialness as the criteria for monitoring events are reminiscent of the political philosophy of the Yongjia teachers, discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. In their lectures and course materials, the Yongjia teachers taught students preparing for the examinations to evaluate circumstances and to calculate the benefits and harms resulting from different courses of action. Huang Huai's argument differs from the more overtly utilitarian approach to calculating benefit and harm in typical Yongjia expositions, however. Beneficialness in Huang's exposition is predicated on the normative pattern of development of each affair. In this perspective, calculations of benefit and harm cannot determine the course of action because the inherent patterns of development of individual things are just one of several aspects factored into such calculations.

Huang Huai's arguments differed from those of another twelfth-century school of thought. Huang Huai's reference to the normative patterns of development (*li* 理) of individual things calls to mind the

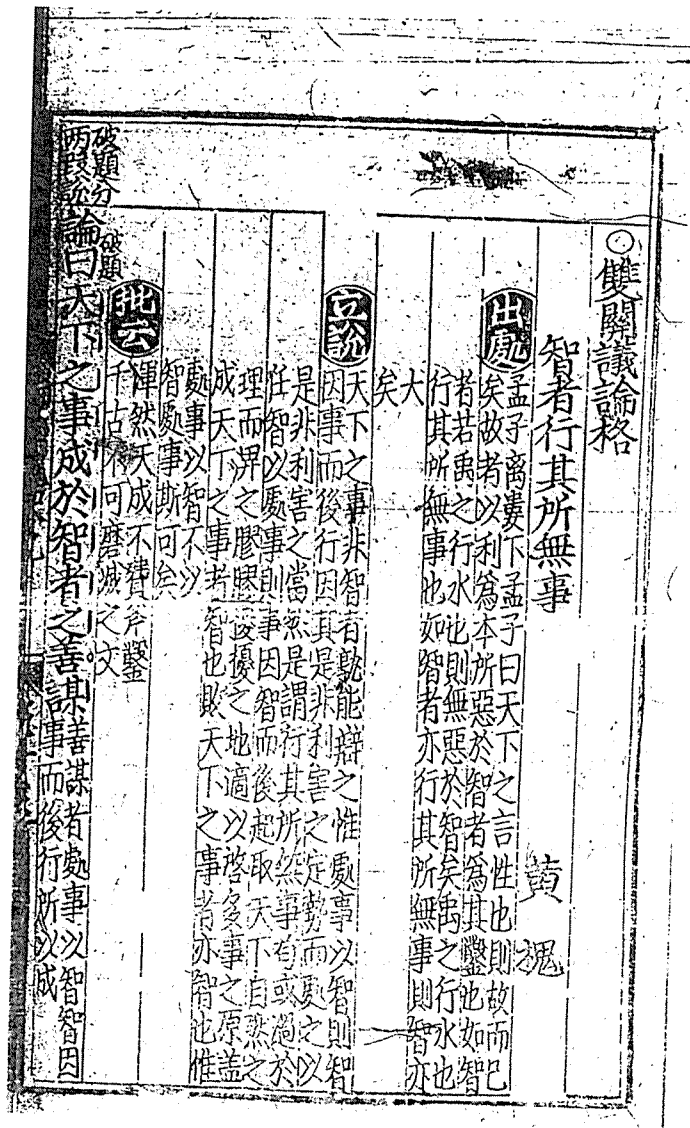


Fig. 1 The beginning of Huang Huai's examination exposition in *Standards for the Study of the Exposition* (1270s). This page demonstrates the use of front commentary (including the full citation of the essay topic, an essay abstract, and a critical appreciation), top-margin commentary, intralinear commentary (in small characters), and interlinear commentary, along with punctuation and stress marks in thirteenth-century examination anthologies (Yuan edition, 1335-40, held at the Seikadō bunko; microfilm of this edition at the Harvard-Yenching Library).

interpretations of this same concept developed by the teachers associated with the Learning of the Way. *Li* (pattern, coherence) was the cornerstone of the philosophy developed by four generations of teachers after the mid-eleventh century and synthesized from the 1150s on by Zhu Xi. Teachers associated with the Learning of the Way defined *li* as the moral coherence of the world. *Li* occupied a central position in Neo-Confucian moral philosophy because it expressed both the belief in the operation of an absolute moral force in the cosmos and the conviction that the operating principles of this moral force were inherently accessible to the human mind. Moral self-cultivation, of which Neo-Confucian philosophers developed several models, was the path each human being had to follow to gain insight into and act upon the universal principles of morality embedded in the cosmos and in their own minds. Fundamental Confucian moral values, including humaneness (*ren* 仁), filial commitment (*xiao* 孝), loyalty (*zhong* 忠), and wisdom (*zhi* 智), were redefined as forms of the universal principle of moral coherence.

Huang Huai did not accord *li* the explanatory power it had in the work of his Neo-Confucian contemporaries. In his exposition, he interpreted it as the natural patterns of development (*ziran zhi li*) of individual affairs. By “affairs,” he meant administrative interventions, and the examples he marshaled in the discussion of the positive use of knowledge (main discussion) were the social welfare policies associated with benevolent rulers in Antiquity. These rulers taught their people the techniques of agriculture, the manufacture of clothing, and the construction of boats because these three activities satisfied natural needs. These rulers also invented weapons, seals, and city walls to protect their people from devious and violent behavior. In Huang’s assessment, their educational policies and protective measures were proof of their ability to steer public affairs in the right and beneficial direction.

Several of Huang Huai’s examples were identical to those Han Yu used in “Finding the Origins of the Way” (“Yuan dao” 原道).<sup>31</sup> This eight-century Ancient Prose essay, and Han’s prose oeuvre more generally, had gained a wide following in the twelfth century among teachers preparing students for the examinations. The “Yongjia” teachers advo-

31. For a discussion of this essay, see Hartman, *Han Yu and the Tang Search for Unity*, 145–62.

cated analysis of the works of Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan as models of Ancient Prose writing, but they went beyond Tang models. In the decades following the examinations of 1154, “Yongjia” teachers modified the eighth-century models of Ancient Prose and promoted more contemporary models.

Huang Huai’s prose was modeled on the older eighth-century Ancient Prose models. In his comments on Huang’s exposition, Lin Zichang pointed out Huang’s indebtedness to Liu Zongyuan’s prose.<sup>32</sup> Despite their criticisms of parallelism, eighth-century Ancient Prose authors did not totally abandon the parallel structures that were the hallmark of the writing style practiced at the courts of the Six Dynasties and the Tang dynasty. Rather, they applied parallelism flexibly, as in the philosophical prose written before the second century CE. In Ancient Prose, parallelism was not the governing rhetorical pattern; it was simply one of many devices used to heighten the effect of the author’s argumentation.<sup>33</sup>

In the prose of Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan, rhetorical flexibility was matched by a comparable relaxation in diction. Liu Zongyuan’s prose was characterized by concision, but not at the cost of clarity. The language of Ancient Prose was straightforward and shorn of dense allegorical phrases. The sentences were laced together with grammatical particles to clarify the relationships between the polysemous characters. The following passage from the main discussion in Huang’s exposition illustrates the clear-cut diction and the use of parallelism in Ancient Prose:

Are there really no affairs in the world? If one does not perform, there are no benefits. If one does not act, there are no accomplishments. So, there has never been a time when there were no affairs in the world. Therefore, to get

32. Lines A1–B1 and A4–B4 in the passage translated below were modeled on the opening lines of Liu Zongyuan’s “On Feudalism” (“Fengjian lun” 封建論):

Does the cosmos really have no beginning? I cannot find out.  
Do human beings really have a beginning? I cannot find out.  
天地果無初乎? 吾不得而知之也。  
生人果有初乎? 吾不得而知之也。

For a brief discussion of this essay, see Chen Jo-shui, *Liu Tsung-Yüan and Intellectual Change*, 96.

33. On the use of parallelism in Ancient Prose, see Yin Gonghong, *Pianwen*, 161–63.

rid of wisdom on the grounds that there are no affairs—this will prevent one from completing things that can be achieved in the world.

Are there really affairs in the world? Those who do things destroy them. Those who hold on to things lose them. So, there has never been a time in the world when there were things. Therefore, to use wisdom on the grounds that there are affairs—this will open up all sorts of disasters in the world.

What should a noble person faced with this situation do?

A.

天下果無事乎?

不爲則不利;

不行則不成.

天下蓋未始無事也.

故以無事而去智, 則不足以立天下可成之功.

B.

天下果有事乎?

爲者敗之;

執者失之.

天下蓋未始有事也.

故以有事而任智, 則適以啓天下紛紛之禍.

C.

君子於此當何如哉?

In this passage at the very beginning of the main discussion, Huang Huai used parallel structures to describe a dilemma in the relationship between knowledge and affairs. Does knowledge come first, and does it create affairs to act upon for itself? Or, do affairs present themselves *a priori* and activate the proper kind of knowledge? Parallelism works at two levels in this passage. Lines one, four and five in sections A and B match syntactically and semantically. Lines two and three within each section are parallel, and these two sequences also correspond structurally with each other in sections A and B. The syntactic parallelism in the opening passage of the main discussion presents in condensed format the two lines of argumentation Huang pursued in the remainder of the text. Huang first argued that affairs should precede the use of knowledge and cited actions of the rulers of Antiquity to illustrate this line of argument. In the second part of the main discussion, he supplied evidence for his argument that knowledge wielded improperly leads to catastrophes. Based on the cases of the strategists and militarists of the

Warring States period, Huang concluded that disaster ensues when knowledge not guided by the course of affairs dictates action.

In sum, Huang Huai's 1154 exposition exemplified the standards for examination prose in the mid-twelfth century. Its layout embodied the ideal structural format described in contemporary writing manuals.<sup>34</sup> His prose demonstrated the influence of Ancient Prose on examination writing and validated the contemporary critique of the role of parallel argumentation in classical and philosophical discourse.<sup>35</sup>

In contrast to exposition topics, which focused on an isolated passage, policy questions on the Classics and the histories tested students' broader familiarity with classical, philosophical, and historical texts and the commentarial tradition. Policy questions juxtaposed passages from one or several sources and asked students to explain obscure and contradictory statements. The following question illustrates this technique. The examiner, Lü Zuqian, asked students to discuss a series of conflicting statements on the significance of "humaneness" (*ren* 仁) and "sagehood" (*sheng* 聖) from *The Analects*, *Mencius*, and *The Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮):

As for the discussion of sages and humane people in the Confucian school, even Confucius did not presume to be up to it. The way of the sages and the humane people is all-encompassing; other people are not up to it. However, when the Duke of Zhou [ca. eleventh c. BCE] compiled *The Rites of Zhou*, he listed humaneness and sagehood between wisdom and rightness on one hand and unbiasedness and balance on the other. He instructed people by listing these terms next to one another without ranking them. Even Confucius did not think it appropriate to apply these terms to himself, but the Duke of Zhou held such expectations for all scholars of the empire. Could it be that Confucius and the Duke were talking about different kinds of morality?

34. *The Art of the Exposition* (*Lun jue* 論訣) is a collection of tips on exposition writing citing the work of twelfth-century teachers. Several of the teachers discussed the structural format exemplified in Huang's exposition.

35. The essays of Yang Wanli 楊萬里 (1127–1206) provide further examples of this technique. Nine out of his ten essays were structured on a polarity between two phrases that differ only slightly; see the examination expositions in his collected works, *Chengzhai ji*, 90.

When Zi Gong [ca. fifth c. BCE;<sup>36</sup> Duanmu Si 端木賜] asked about “giving extensively and providing for the multitude,” Confucius replied, “How could such action qualify someone as just a humane person? Such a person must be a sage!”<sup>37</sup> Does this mean that there is a qualitative difference between humaneness and sagehood?

Allegedly, Confucius seldom spoke of humaneness.<sup>38</sup> However, the number of his statements and responses to questions touching upon it is innumerable. How could it be that he seldom spoke of it?

As for sagehood, it is clear from the start that it cannot be said that Confucius seldom talked about it. However, there are fewer passages in *The Analects* about sagehood than about humaneness. How come?

Confucius acknowledged Bo Yi [ca. eleventh c. BCE] as a humane man but ranked him as a wise person.<sup>39</sup> Mencius acknowledged Bo Yi as a humane man but proceeded to rank him as a sage.<sup>40</sup> What is the explanation for this?

These are all questions that I have not yet seen through. I hope you can explain them and report back to me.<sup>41</sup>

問孔門之論聖與仁。雖夫子，有所不敢居。其道至大固非它人之所能與也。而周公之制周禮列仁聖於智義中和之間。並舉以教人而無所輕重。夫子猶不敢以此自居，而周公乃以此待天下之學者，周孔豈二道邪？

子貢問博施濟眾而孔子對以何事於仁必也聖乎。是仁與聖果有優劣耶？仁之一字號為夫子所罕言。然其立言其答問及於仁者不可縷數。安在其為罕言耶？

至於聖初非夫子之所罕言。而載於論語反不若言仁之多。抑又何也？

夫子許伯夷以仁，止目之以賢。孟子許伯夷以仁，遽目之以聖。其說復安在耶？此皆疑而未喻者。願明以告我。

36. For more biographical information on Zi Gong, see Brooks and Brooks, *The Original Analects*, 290.

37. *Lunyu*, VI:30; D. C. Lau, *The Analects*, 85.

38. *Lunyu*, IX:1; D. C. Lau, *The Analects*, 96.

39. *Lunyu*, VII:15; D. C. Lau, *The Analects*, 87–88. Bo Yi was held up as a model of both brotherly love and dynastic loyalty. He was the eldest son of the Lord of Guzhu. His father designated his second son, Shu Qi, as heir. At his father's death, Shu Qi deferred to Bo Yi, but the latter would not accept the fief. When King Wu of Zhou put an end to Shang rule, Bo Yi and Shu Qi starved themselves out of loyalty to the Shang king.

40. *Mengzi*, VB:1; D. C. Lau, *The Works of Mencius*, 149.

41. Lü Zuqian, *Donglai ji waiji*, 2.15b–16b. Cf. idem, *Lü Zuqian quanji*, vol. 1, waiji, 2.639–40.

This question fell under the contemporary rubric of “questions about the Classics” (see Table 5 in Appendix B). This designation reveals the connection between this type of question and the larger context of twelfth-century intellectual culture. “Doubts about the Classics” is a more literal rendering of what I translated as “questions about the Classics.” The critical investigation of inconsistencies (in word usage or argument) within a given classic and research into discrepancies among classical texts was a trend in the classical scholarship of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>42</sup> In the work of some exegetes, the trend of critically analyzing the linguistic and semantic consistency of the classical tradition led to the questioning of the authenticity of canonical texts.

In twelfth-century policy questions, however, the juxtaposition of conflicting passages usually did not lead to the radical questioning of the Classics. Rather, this technique of questioning was used to test candidates' broad familiarity with the textual tradition, their philological skills, and their ability to reconcile contradictions within the Classics. As we shall see in Chapter 6, the emphasis on the abilities to reduce contradictions to paradoxes and to interpret the Classics as a coherent moral philosophy characterized policy questions authored by Learning of the Way teachers.

Policy questions on the textual tradition bore the traces of intellectual debate in more explicit ways. Questions about the Classics and histories not only were designed to force students to struggle with conflicting statements in the original sources but also could require the discussion of disagreements in later commentaries and scholarship (Table B5, subject 11). The relative merit of Han, Tang, and Song interpreters of the classical tradition was a bone of contention that divided scholars in the twelfth century but was increasingly resolved in favor of the intellectual lineage of the Learning of the Way in the thirteenth century. Chapter 7 analyzes the debate between the Masters of “Yongjia” and the advocates of the Learning of the Way on the relative merit of Song interpreters of the classical tradition in policy questions.

42. Ye Guoliang, *Song ren yijing gajing kao, passim*. The first appendix in Ye's work (pp. 177–203) provides a chronological overview of publications doubting or changing classical texts. For a more narrowly focused study of doubting and changing classical texts in the early Song period, see Feng Xiaoting, *Song chu jingxue fazhan shulun*, pt. 1.

*Government and Examination Writing*

Policy response essays and expositions were often linked in the minds of twelfth-century students preparing for the examinations. In both the exposition and the policy response sessions, students were tested on their ability to answer questions from the philosophers and the histories, texts that did not appear on the official lists of the Classics promulgated in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The exposition and policy response sessions were frequently discussed together because of their curricular similarities and the different requirements of the Classics session. Policy questions drew from a broad range of textual sources including the Classics, the dynastic histories, contemporary official documents, the philosophers, and the collected writings of major Tang and Song intellectuals. Occasionally, and in violation of court edicts banning such sources, examiners used nonwritten materials such as unidentified sources of opinion.

In contrast, candidates in the “meaning of the Classics” track were tested only on their familiarity with the classic of their choice and associated commentarial traditions in their first session; noncanonical sources were typically not used in the questions or the answers. The list of the Classics was subject to some alteration, but it was strictly defined at any given point in time. During the Southern Song dynasty, the curriculum consisted of *The Book of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經), *The Changes*, *The Book of Documents* (*Shujing* 書經), *The Rites of Zhou*, *The Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記), *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋), *The Analects*, and *Mencius*.<sup>43</sup>

The differences between the exposition and the policy response were predicated on the different uses of historical evidence and philosophical arguments in each genre. In the exposition, students were asked to distill a general truth from the event referred to in the question. Expositions were by definition concerned with the underlying principles of events and ideas. According to the description of the genre in *The Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragons* (*Wen xin diao long* 文心雕龍), a treatise on literature that had shaped Chinese literary theory

43. Yuan Zheng, *Songdai jiaoyu*, 50. The list had been subject to change in the last decades of the Northern Song. See *ibid.*, 29, 34, 38–39.

since its first appearance ca. 500 CE, expositions “encompass a multitude of explanations and investigate one underlying principle.”<sup>44</sup> The demonstration of one general truth informed the layout and the rhetoric of examination expositions. In Huang Huai’s exposition, the general truth was announced in the opening sentence of the essay. Each subdivision of his exposition contributed to the thesis that knowledge based on the understanding of the proper course of events is required for the successful completion of affairs. Expositions thus tested the student’s ability to discover philosophical truths in the textual tradition. Evidence from the histories and the philosophers provided the material for theoretical debate.

Policy questions asked students to perform the reverse mental process: concretization rather than abstraction was the main goal of the exercise. A policy question confronted students with a list of events and asked them to apply lessons from these events to contemporary administrative and cultural questions. In theory, the application of cultural knowledge and the formulation of concrete proposals and solutions were the goals of the policy response exercise.

The Song government left not only the sources but also the range of topics for policy questions undefined. Teachers at government and private schools developed courses and manuals to introduce students to the main topics and sources used in policy questions. Zeng Jian 曾堅, who was active as a teacher in the mid- to late thirteenth century, briefed his students on the range of questions they could expect in his *Secret Tricks for Responding to Policy Questions* (*Dace mijue* 答策秘訣),<sup>45</sup> a survey of policy question topics and a digest of lines of argument for tackling them. Zeng Jian’s hints were based on an extensive reading of contemporary examination essays. He quoted policy response essays by forty-one authors; nine of the twenty-one men who can be identified

44. Liu Xie, *Wen xin diao long*, 4.18, 327; for a translation of this passage and the full chapter on the exposition, translated as “treatise,” see Shih, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragons*, 101–8. This passage is on p. 102. On the early history of the exposition, see Kinney, *The Art of the Han Essay*.

45. An extant copy of *Dace mijue* is appended to a Yuan anthology of policy essays, *The Mirror of Peace: A Collection of Policy Essays* (*Taiping jinjing ce* 太平金鏡策), preserved at the National Palace Museum Library in Taipei. For more information on editions, see the Appendix.

obtained their *jīnshǐ* degrees in the second half of the twelfth century; the remainder received theirs in 1202 and 1205. This manual thus provides an excellent index of the range of subjects in twelfth-century policy questions (see Table B5 and Appendix A).<sup>46</sup>

Zeng Jian's list of topics and subtopics coincides roughly with the subjects covered in twelfth-century questions preserved in the collected works of individual authors. The omission of sections on economic and financial matters, such as monetary policy, the budgets of the central and local governments, or the state monopolies on salt, tea, and liquor in Zeng's manual is the only notable difference from other contemporary sources.<sup>47</sup> The inclusion of sections on the learning of human nature (*xíngxué* 性學) and the transmission of the Way indicates how concepts central to the Learning of the Way found their way into examination manuals from the late twelfth century on.<sup>48</sup>

Zeng Jian's repertoire of topics was, broadly speaking, shared across the political and intellectual spectrum and reflected fundamental characteristics of Chinese political culture. The preparations for the examinations trained Song dynasty elites in imperial political culture in three major areas. The first was the proper relationship between sovereign and official servant. Candidates were asked to articulate the virtues of the imperial form of government as well as the standards to which the exercise of imperial power should conform (Zeng's category 1). Students were also asked to reflect on the attributes of the official and his responsibilities in assisting the emperor in the exercise of imperial power (categories 2, 6, and 10). Second, examination candidates were expected to demonstrate versatility in the textual tradition that formed the basis for contemporary political discourse. Policy questions on the Classics, the histories, literature, and scholarship in general measured students' exposure to classical texts as well as their ability to contribute to contemporary debates on the interpretation and value of these sources (categories 7 and 11). Finally, policy questions trained examina-

46. Wang Yinglin (*Yuhai*, 201.3a–11b) cited similar lists of topics compiled by scholars preparing for the more demanding polymaths examination.

47. Compare the examination encyclopedias discussed in Chapter 4.

48. See Chapter 7 for a discussion of twelfth- and thirteenth-century questions on the genealogy of the way.

tion candidates in the business of imperial government, its organization, functions, and procedures. The topics covered in this broad category correspond to the operation of the Six Ministries, the main central government agencies: the Ministry of Rites (sacrifices, palace buildings, rituals and music, education and examinations, disasters, and astronomical observations, etc.; categories 3, 5, 9, and 12), the Ministry of Punishments (Xingbu 刑部; legal affairs; category 1), the Ministry of Revenue (Hubu 戶部; land taxes; category 3—and commercial taxes and monopolies not mentioned by Zeng Jian), the Ministry of Works (Gongbu 工部; water conservation; category 3), the Ministry of Personnel (Libu 吏部; recruitment and promotion, category 5), and the Ministry of Military Affairs (Bingbu 兵部; military organization, military strategy, and reunification; categories 3 and 8). These topics figured on the curricula of teachers and examiners of different persuasions and reappeared in manuals and questions in the thirteenth century. The specific questions asked under these broad topical categories and the methodologies required in answering them were subject to variation and change.

Essay questions were subdivided into two main categories, those on the Classics and the histories (*jīngshǐ* 經史), discussed in the previous section, and those on contemporary affairs (*shíwù* 時務).<sup>49</sup> The second category of policy question, questions on government business, followed a format similar to that of the questions on classical and historical texts. Teachers and examiners typically listed different approaches to governmental organization and administrative practice and invited candidates to evaluate their pros and cons. They cited cases drawn from different periods of Chinese history and asked students to take sides in policy debates, past or contemporary. Such exercises in argumentation tested the ability of examinees as prospective officials to formulate and defend plans in policy debates. By listing competing interpretations,

49. Song Qi 宋祁 (998–1061) proposed that the three policy essays required in the first session of the departmental examinations consist of one essay on the Classics and the histories, and two on contemporary government. Emperor Renzong implemented this proposal in 1044, but, following negative reports, agreed to rescind it the following year. The regulations issued in 1045 required three essays in the last session but did not specify their contents (Araki Toshikazu, *Sōdai kakyo seido kenkyū*, 96).

policy questions involved teachers, examiners, and examination candidates in controversies about a wide range of issues concerning government and scholarship.

The high esteem for policy response essays in the Song dynasty is readily apparent from their place in Song records. Many Song scholars preserved their policy response essays and had them included in their collected writings; in contrast, almost no examination poems and relatively few essays on the Classics and expositions were left for posterity.<sup>50</sup> Biographies of Song figures quote passages from the subject's departmental, palace, or decree examination essay to prove his moral stature or administrative insight.<sup>51</sup> Intellectuals of different orientations also compiled lists of questions for use in the classroom or as puzzles for acquaintances or random readers.<sup>52</sup>

The prestige of the genre among examiners and examinees derived from its association with a tradition of high officials who had exploited the genre to give frank advice to their sovereign. Foremost among these was the Han intellectual Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179?–104? BCE). His essays on the way of government, formulated in a response to the questions posed by Emperor Wu 武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE) on the occasion of a decree examination, demonstrated the direct impact examination writing could have on the central government. Dong Zhongshu's answers to the emperor's questions resulted in the emperor's promotion of Dong's interpretation of Confucian learning.<sup>53</sup>

Under the Song dynasty, the policy response was the last genre to be added to the list of genres tested in the *jinsbi* examinations. After re-

50. Most collected writings from the Southern Song period do not include examination expositions. The collected writings of Lu Jiuyuan, Yang Wanli, Fang Fengchen 方逢辰 (1221–91), and Wei Liaoweng 魏了翁 (1178–1237) are the rare exceptions. See also note 1 to this chapter.

51. Examples abound. See, e.g., the biography of Chen Fuliang, in *SS*, 423.12634–36; and that of Wang Mai in Chen Fuliang, *Zhizhai xiansheng wenji*, 52.8b.

52. The policy questions of many Song officials were included in their collected writings. For examples, see the questions by Zhu Xi, Chen Fuliang, Lü Zuqian, Zhen Dexiu 真德秀 (1178–1235), Cheng Bi 程秘 (1164–1242), and Wu Yong 吴泳 (*js.* 1208) discussed in this chapter and in Chapter 7.

53. For a brief description of the three essays and their impact on the Han court, see Twitchett and Loewe, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, 1: 710–13, 753–56. According to *The Cambridge History*, the examination took place in either 140 or 134 BCE.

peated requests, Emperor Renzong agreed to add policy questions to the *jinsbi* examinations in the mid-1020s.<sup>54</sup> The valorization of the policy response in the Song civil service examinations started with the Qingli 慶曆 Reforms in 1043. Fan Zhongyan and Ouyang Xiu proposed that the policy response session be the first in the series of three sessions and requested that the results for the first session be decisive in the ultimate outcome. Students who failed this part of the examinations would not be allowed to sit for the subsequent sessions, which featured expositions and poetic genres.<sup>55</sup> Fan's emphasis on candidates' ability to discuss government shaped the history of the Song examinations. The arrangement was canceled the next year, but policy response essays, henceforth tested in the third and final session of the examinations, became a crucial factor determining examination results and scholars' reputations. According to fellow reformer Song Qi 宋祁 (998–1061), the demotion of the session on poetic composition to third place accelerated a trend among scholars to value policy over poetry.<sup>56</sup>

Following in the footsteps of the reformers of the Qingli period, Wang Anshi implemented a series of measures to enhance the weight of the policy response in the civil service examinations. Most important among these was the establishment of the policy response as the only genre to be tested in the palace examinations. Henceforth, the discussion of contemporary government determined the ultimate outcome of the examinations.<sup>57</sup>

The policy response essays required examinees to respond to a long list of questions. The questions tended to be relatively short at the beginning of the Song Dynasty, when the examiners condensed their

54. The poetic genres (*shi* 詩 and *fu* 賦), expositions (*lun* 論), and essays on the Classics (*moji* 墨義) had been tested in the *jinsbi* examinations since the beginning of the dynasty (Araki Toshikazu, *Sōdai kakyo seido kenkyū*, 94, 372–74). For a more detailed overview of early requests for the incorporation of policy essays in the examinations and the history of their official adoption, see Ning, *Bei Song jinsbi ke kaoshi neirong zhi yanbian*, 104–6.

55. Araki Toshikazu, *Sōdai kakyo seido kenkyū*, 377–80.

56. *Ibid.*, 374–80.

57. Wang Anshi did away with the poetry session in the *jinsbi* examinations and increased the number of policy essays to be written in the departmental exams from three to five. (Araki Toshikazu, *Sōdai kakyo seido kenkyū*, 298–99; Ning, “Songdai gongju dian-shi ce yu zhengju,” 147).

questions to ten to twenty lines and students copied them out in full on their answer sheets. By the 1190s when policy questions from the first half of the eleventh century were upheld as models of concision,<sup>58</sup> the questions had lengthened considerably. Examiners had become accustomed to writing long treatises. Although of a later date, the questions collected in *Standards for the Study of the Policy Response* (*Cexue Shengchi* 策學繩尺), a compilation of nineteen school and civil service examination essays from the last decades of the Southern Song (Chapter 7), illustrate a trend starting in the twelfth century. Instead of a hundred characters or so, the number usual in the first half of the eleventh century, the length of the questions in this collection range from 536 to 1,373 characters, and average 833. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, candidates were no longer asked to copy down the questions; they were printed and distributed to each examinee.<sup>59</sup>

The student's response to the policy question resembled the memorial, the official medium for the communication of administrative problems and proposals. Official regulations set the length for the examination policy response at 500 characters in the early Northern Song period. Wang Anshi's 1070 regulations stipulated that the essay be no longer than 1,000 characters. The examination regulations issued in 1145 did not mention the required length, but the re-endorsement of the regulations of the Yuanyou period (1086–94) suggests that a maximum length of 700 characters was in effect.<sup>60</sup>

Mirroring the license that examiners took in the formulation of policy questions, however, candidates felt free to write as much as they deemed appropriate. The nineteen essays in *Standards for the Study of the Policy Response*, written for local examinations and Imperial College tests, averaged 1,467 characters and ranged from 822 to 2,205 characters long. Students attached even greater weight to their essays for the palace and decree examinations and took even more liberties with them. The ex-

58. Zhu Xi, "Xuexiao gongju siyi" (Private opinion on schools and selection through examinations) in *Zhu Xi ji*, 69.3639–40.

59. Questions were first printed in 1008 for display in the examination compound; later, printed copies were distributed to all candidates (Araki Toshikazu, *Sōdai kakyo seido kenkyū*, 338).

60. *SHY*, XJ, 4.21b–22a, 28b. For the number in the Yuanyou period, see Araki Toshikazu, *Sōdai kakyo seido kenkyū*, 95.

pectations for the policy response essays in these examinations were higher. Han models were about 2,000 characters long; during the Song period, the minimum length for essays in the decree examinations was set at 3,000 characters.<sup>61</sup> Yet, candidates exceeded the minimum at a rate comparable to that in their essays for the lower-level examinations. Zhou Nan's 周南 (1159–1213) policy response for the palace examination of 1190, discussed in Chapter 3, was 8,061 characters long.

The disregard for the requirements regarding length brings out the similarities between the policy response and genres, such as the memorial, reserved for the discussion of policy by professional officials. At 10,651 characters, Yao Mian's 姚勉 (1216–62) essay for the palace examination of 1253 is one of several surviving examples of policy response essays that took on the dimensions of a "ten-thousand word memorial," the stereotypical memorial proposing major reform policies.<sup>62</sup> Due to the formal resemblance of essays on administrative issues to memorials, the policy response essays of several Southern Song examination candidates were ranked with the official proposals they formulated after obtaining their *jinsshi* degrees. Wang Mai's 王邁 (1185–1248) 1217 palace examination essay, in 7,553 characters, and his essay for the 1235 decree examination, of comparable size, were included in the memorials section in his collected works.<sup>63</sup> In a postface to another examination candidate's palace examination essay, Li Maoying 李昉英 (1201–57) wrote that there was no difference between Xu Guangwen's 許廣文 essay and a memorial.<sup>64</sup> The relevance of examination policy writing to the factional politics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is discussed in Chapters 3, 5, and 6.

61. Araki Toshikazu, *Sōdai kakyo seido kenkyū*, 408.

62. Yao Mian, *Xuebo ji*, 7.1a–33a.

63. Wang Mai, *Quxuan ji*, 1.1a–23b, 23b–46a.

64. Li Maoying, *Wenxi ji*, 4.2b.