Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms

Edited by Peter Lorge

The Chinese University Press

Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms
Edited by Peter Lorge

ISBN: 978-962-996-418-4

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
SHA TIN, N.T., HONG KONG
Fax: +852 2603 6692
Fax: +852 2603 7355
E-mail: cup@cuhk.edu.hk
Website: www.chineseupress.com

Printed in Hong Kong

Dedication

To Sebastien Lee Xiabin Kline, Nora Rose Said Mostern, and Aileen Tansen and Lindsay Sloane Miller Lorge

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY
LEFT BLANK

List of Contributors

Hugh R. Clark is Professor of History and East Asian Studies at Ursinus College (Pennsylvania, USA). He has written extensively on the history of southern Fujian province across the Tang-Song transition. His notable works include *Community, Trade, and Networks:* Southern Fujian *from the 3rd to the 13th Centuries* (Cambridge University Press, 1991) and *Portrait of a Community: Society, Culture, and the Structures of Kinship in the Mulan River Valley (Fujian) from the Late Tang through the Song* (The Chinese University Press, 2007). Clark is the author of "The Southern Kingdoms between the T'ang and Sung" in *The* Cambridge History of China, vol. 5, "Five Dynasties and Sung."

Johannes L. Kurz graduated at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, in 1993 in classical Chinese studies. Currently he is working as a senior lecturer in the History Department of Universiti Brunei Darussalam. He is the author of *Das Kompilationsprojekt Song Taizongs (reg. 976–997)* (2003), and *China's Southern Tang Dynasty, 937–976* (2011).

De-nin Lee is Assistant Professor of Art History And Asian Studies at Bowdoin College. She is author of *The Night Banquet: A Chinese Scroll through Time* (University of Washington Press, 2010) and continues to do research in Chinese painting.

Peter Lorge is Assistant Professor of Chinese and Military History at Vanderbilt University. He is the author of *War, Politics and Society in Early Modern China, 900–1795* (2005), and *The Asian Military Revolution* (2008).

Tracy Miller received her PhD in Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Pennsylvania and is currently Associate Professor of History of Art at Vanderbilt University. A specialist in the ritual architecture of medieval China, her first book, *The Divine Nature of Power: Chinese Ritual Architecture at the Sacred Site of Jinci* was published by Harvard University Asia Center in 2007. Her contribution to this volume is part of a larger study of local style in monumental timber-frame buildings in China constructed from 900 to 1200 CE.

Ruth Mostern is Associate Professor of History in the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts at the University of California, Merced. She specializes in the political geography of imperial China and in data analysis methods for historical geography. Her book *Dividing the Realm in Order to Govern: The Spatial Organization of the Song State (960–1276 CE)* was published by the Harvard University Asia Center in 2011. As an American Council of Learned Societies Digital Innovation Fellow (2011–12), she is beginning a project on the environmental history of the Yellow River.

Naomi Standen is Professor of Medieval History at the University of Birmingham, having previously lectured in Chinese history at Newcastle University and at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. Her research is concerned with borderlands and interconnections across Eurasia. Publications include *Unbounded Loyalty: Frontier Crossings in Liao China* (Hawai'i, 2007) and the chapter on the Five Dynasties in the Cambridge history of China, Vol. 5a.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY
LEFT BLANK

Contents

List of Contributors v

Introduction 1

Peter Lorge

The Origins of This Volume 3
The Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms as a Period 5
Conclusion and Beginning 10
Notes 12

Who Wants to Be an Emperor?
Zhao Dejun 趙德鈞, Youzhou 幽州 and the Liao 遼 15

Naomi Standen

Loyalty, Legitimacy and Historiography 17
A Different World 19
The Good and Faithful Servant 23
Surviving the Succession 30
Choices 32
Notes 41

Scoundrels, Rogues, and Refugees:
The Founders of the Ten Kingdoms in the Late Ninth Century 47

Hugh R. Clark

An Analytical Framework: Parsing Words 48
The Founders 51
Conclusions 67
Notes 70

Han Xizai (902–970): An Eccentric Life in Exciting Times 79

Johannes L. Kurz

Han Xizai in the Twentieth Century 80
Early Career 81
Han Xizai's Career under the First Southern Tang Emperor 82
Involvement in Politics 83
Private Life 86
Conclusion 92
Notes 93

Lessons from Paintings at the Periphery: The Murals from Baoshan Tomb 2 and Five Dynasties Art History 101

De-nin D. Lee

Introduction 101
The Murals from Baoshan Tomb 2 102
Some Contexts for Art Historical Analysis and Interpretation 109
Lessons from Painting at the Periphery 114
Conclusion 117
Notes 119

"The Usurper's Empty Names": Spatial Organization and State Power in the Tang-Song Transition 125

Ruth Mostern

Introduction 125
Territory and Authority in the Late Tang: A Geographical Perspective on the Rise of Provincial Power 128
Control over Territory during the Five Dynasties 132
Recreating an Empire 144
An Empire for a Continent: The Story of Guangnan 154
Conclusion 159
Notes 160

Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed: Local Style in the Architecture of Tenth-Century China 167

Tracy Miller

Something Old: Tang Architecture in Shanxi and
Its Legacy in the Tenth Century 169
Something New? Tenth-Century Architecture in China's Southeast 195
Something Borrowed: Architecture and Cultural Politics 208
Conclusion 213
Notes 214

The End of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms 223

Peter Lorge

The Later Zhou Dynasty (951–960) 225
Song Taizu and the Founding of the Song Dynasty 227
Song Taizong and the Foundation of Song Culture 232
Song Zhenzong and the Creation of Song Imperial Culture 234
Song Zhenzong and the Dawn of Song Imperial Culture 238
Conclusion 240
Notes 242

Chronology of Dynasties, Kingdoms and States 243

Index 245

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY
LEFT BLANK

Introduction

Peter Lorge

There are two general approaches to discussing the history of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (*Wudai Shiguo* 五代十國). The first, adopted by traditional historians and carried over into most contemporary practice, is to see the period as a break, an interregnum of disunity between the large, unified empires of the Tang 唐 and Song 宋 dynasties. The second, which this volume will pursue, is to see the period as fully continuous with the Tang and Song. As part of the Tang-Song transition, the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period shared in all of the trends in social, economic, cultural and political development from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries, lacking only a unified political center. This diminished imperial overlay opens a historiographical window on the underlying structures and mores of middle period China, allowing not only a clearer view of individuals and local circumstances, but also providing a useful comparative sample for the growing body of studies of Chinese local culture.

Since it is not the purpose of this volume to criticize the traditional historical approach to this period, a brief discussion of its characteristics and origins is in order. Traditional histories served important political and cultural purposes in assigning beginnings and endings to periods. One of the contributors to this volume, Johannes Kurz, has previously published an outstanding article on the coining of the term "Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms" by the eleventh-century statesman Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) in connection with the creation of his *Historical Records of the Five Dynasties* (*Wudai shiji* 五代史記).[1] Ouyang's intentions in writing a history of the period were more didactic than historical, however, and he often seemed to have had more of an eye toward explaining how the Song dynasty came to be as it was in reaction to the period, than to analyzing the period itself. This understanding of Ouyang is implicit, I think, in Richard Davis' comment that "… the *Historical*

Records nonetheless contains insights and agendas that are distinctly eleventh-century in origins …" though Davis himself might not agree with this view.[2]

Ouyang Xiu effectively cut the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period off from the Song and even the Tang, encapsulating in his history all that could go wrong in the Chinese ecumene. As war-torn and chaotic as the late Tang was, particularly after the Huang Chao 黃巢 Rebellion (875–884) shattered what political strength the Tang court had rebuilt after the An Lushan 安祿山 Rebellion (755–763), the Five Dynasties period was even worse. The Song dynasty was built on the ashes of a political body consumed by rampant militarism. Its cure for this self-destructive infighting and warfare was reestablishing the dominance of civil government. This was not without its costs, however, and men of Ouyang Xiu's generation believed that civil dominance had created a militarily weak empire. Ouyang was therefore excusing the situation the Song found itself in during the eleventh century, while at the same time celebrating the accomplishments of the dynasty. To him, virtually every aspect of Chinese civilization had collapsed during the Five Dynasties, and the founding of the Song marked a clear break with that dark time.

But culture did not die during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms. Not only did it flourish in places like the Southern Tang 南唐 and Shu 蜀 courts, it also provided the foundation for the Song culture that emerged in the late tenth century. The very culture that Ouyang Xiu prized in the eleventh century grew directly out of the early and mid-tenth century, and was mostly southern in origin (as was Ouyang himself). Political fragmentation deprived the period of a single culture, at least with respect to a ruling court, allowing many cultures to exist simultaneously. It would have been difficult for a conventional Confucian moralist like Ouyang to accept that anything good could come of such a politically, and by extension morally, compromised period. Unfortunately, the worlds of politics and culture proceeded just as often in parallel as in concert, interacting only minimally. The central conceit of traditional historiography, that political periodization is the master ordering narrative, created a perhaps unacknowledged cognitive dissonance for men like Ouyang Xiu with respect to the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms.

The continuity within the Chinese ecumene extended to its periphery as well. As De-nin Lee shows in her discussion of tomb murals in what was Liao territory, some remarkably accomplished painting that does not fit into the existing art historical schema for the period, a schema based

again in eleventh-century analysis, was done at a considerable remove from the urban centers of Chinese culture. Modern art history has reacted to this sort of art by creating, just as Ouyang Xiu did, categories that isolate it from the main narrative. "Liao art" can be conveniently set aside, along with "regional art," leaving intact the Tang-Song transition from figure painting to monumental landscapes. This single thread of narrative made sense from the perspective of the unified culture of eleventh-century Song China, but it was only one part of a richer and much more complex history.

Diversity is the nemesis of imperial orthodoxy, and any effort to explore the complexity of Chinese culture is inherently subversive of the imperial, or even national, order. It is for this reason that when regional elites in subsequent periods were dissatisfied with the central government, they turned to the study of the early tenth century, as well as other periods when the Chinese ecumene was not controlled by a single government. Conversely, the goal of someone concerned with bolstering imperial legitimacy, like Ouyang Xiu, was to emphasize the unity of both territory and culture even when there was no single government. In effect, the Chinese empire existed regardless of "temporary" political divisions, caused by the inability of the legitimate imperial court to extend its authority over the whole territory.

The "legitimate succession" (*zhengtong* 正統) ran through the series of northern regimes that led to the establishment of the Song dynasty in 960. This was not very difficult to maintain, since the Song extended its rule to most of the former Tang empire. While the issue of political disunity had to be directly confronted, it was still possible to fit it into Confucian historiography through pre-existing means. Cultural disunity could not be so easily finessed, since any attempt to explicate it was an admission of its existence. The articles in this volume all turn on these gaps in unity, whether political or cultural, and how later historians attempted to reconcile them.

The Origins of This Volume

Several years ago, Steven Miles, a historian of Qing dynasty China asked me what was happening during the tenth century in Guangdong that would so interest people living there in the nineteenth century. He knew that their interest in the history of the Southern Han 南漢, the kingdom that ruled that area, was an assertion of regional identity, but not

whether there was something more to the Southern Han than its independence.[3] My own work on the creation of the Song empire only dealt with the destruction of the Southern Han in 971, not the polity itself or its culture. Moreover, while the cultures of the Southern Tang and Shu kingdoms strongly influenced Song culture, Southern Han culture apparently did not make a similar contribution. The only published work in English on the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period at that time was Wang Gungwu's *The Structure of Power in North China during the Five Dynasties*, and it focused exclusively on how the roots of Song government lay in the institutional development of the military governors' administrative structure.[4] Scholarship in Chinese, Japanese, and other Western languages was similarly sparse.[5] I simply could not answer the question, which prompted a discussion about remedying this lacuna in the scholarship.

Our first thought was to gather a collection of individual studies of each of the polities existing in China from 907 to 960. That approach would have sidestepped the issue of overall coherence by presenting a set of histories of adjacent, contemporary or successive states. But Naomi Standen argued strongly and convincingly against that approach, and her objections are worth summarizing here. While admitting the value of specialized studies of single polities, Standen felt that a collection of essays offered the opportunity to discuss the nature of the period as a whole. Of even greater importance was the deep interconnectedness of the various polities. Not only were polities connected across borders, but subsequent dynasties in a given area maintained remarkable continuity of personnel and culture with their predecessors. Moreover, many of the concepts inherent in those political divisions created misleading impressions of the ethnic and cultural separations spanning the Chinese ecumene, the steppe, and non-Han groups in the south. Standen argued, as she has done so forcefully in her other writings, that some of the most important issues, like loyalty, were not ethnically driven.[6]

Standen's arguments were compelling, and made it clear that we had been taking the traditional view, using the political narrative to organize culture. A series of individual histories would therefore deepen our understanding of each polity studied without really advancing the overall understanding of the period as a whole. We also, for both pragmatic and personal reasons, rejected the idea of trying to follow a series of topical threads across the period. Naomi Standen and Hugh Clark had themselves recently finished chapters for the *Cambridge History of China*

providing overviews of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms, respectively. The danger now loomed that a collection of articles without the structure of political divisions would degenerate into incoherence.

As I sought out contributors and discussed the volume with them, my fears in that regard were soon allayed. Freed of the immediate political structure, there was nevertheless a consistent pattern in the contributions. Without the simplifying power of a single government, an intellectual space opened up in the period between the ecumene-spanning governments of the Tang and Song dynasties. This gap between a politically and culturally asserted unity of "China" and the reality of politics and culture during the period created the possibility of people and polities functioning independently of an imperially-defined relationship. This is to say that there was no imperial court to determine if something or someone were good or bad because of how they related to the court. Given that designations like "bandit" or "scoundrel" were fundamentally subjective, as Hugh Clark's contribution amply illuminates, but also vitally necessary to Chinese imperial historiography, Chinese historians' handling of this period was quite varied.

What became clear throughout all of the contributions was that the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period was different from either the Tang or Song, while also very familiar. There was an extraordinary freedom of movement, physically, intellectually, artistically, politically, and even administratively. Culture flourished because it was not unified, and, because of the historiographical window opened by this centerless period, it is actually possible for us to see that variety. Although Song intellectuals traced their proximate roots to Tang antecedents, they owed a very great deal to the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms. There was a deep-rooted ideological shift away from the cultural need for a defining imperial center during the period, which was later reflected in Song culture. All of the contributors describe aspects of this shift, while my own concluding chapter describes the emergence of Song culture, and thus the conclusion of the period.

The Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms as a Period

I would like to explain the rationale for treating the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms as a heuristic unit. It is worth asking whether the period from 907 to 960 can or should be discussed as a whole, or if it is merely an odd artifact of traditional Chinese historiography without redeeming

value? If, as I have argued, it was fully continuous with the Tang and Song, then why should such a short period be studied separately? At the same time, the central tenet of this volume, that there was a deep-rooted ideological shift that took place during this period, seems to contradict the notion that it was fully continuous with the Tang and Song. It is not so difficult to reconcile these positions when we acknowledge, on the one hand, that there was not a sharp break between *periods*, and, on the other, that the *conditions* during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms were different in significant ways.

The Tang central government declined long before 907 and the Song central government took several decades after 960 to establish full control over its empire. In some places, like Sichuan, the decline began sooner and the establishment of control took longer.[7] The many component parts of the Chinese ecumene were not on the same economic, political or cultural cycles as the Tang declined. While effective central government never meant that regional economies operated in lock-step, it did have a great degree of control over the intellectual and cultural spheres, as well as political institutions. A strong center not only created an officially sanctioned imperial culture, it also engendered a counterculture. That counterculture was not necessarily in opposition to imperial culture; it could also function as a new or external force attempting to change imperial culture. Imperial culture simplified the understanding of intellectual and cultural trends, at least historiographically, by identifying a dominant power and locating other forces with respect to it. As long as that political center existed in some form, no matter how weak, this overall structure influenced the general perspective of the actors in every sphere. This is most clearly demonstrated in the life of Han Xizai 韓熙載, the historiographically paradigmatic literatus of the time, and the subject of Johannes Kurz's contribution to this book, but also in the many power seekers discussed by Hugh Clark. The actual political break in 907 was therefore significant in removing that vestigial, but important, ideological brake.

The Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period was the culmination of decades, if not more than a century, depending upon one's perspective on the late Tang, of increasing regional development at the expense of the center. Multiple rulers claimed to be emperors, and were able to interact with each other while maintaining their own titles. This reality helps put some perspective on the Song court's ability and reluctance to acknowledge the Kitan ruler as an emperor in 1005. The Song imperial project

had attempted to create and enforce an ideology requiring that there be only one emperor ruling a unified Chinese empire. Since 907, however, a multiplicity of imperial ideologies based in the same intellectual tradition had allowed for a different discourse. Historians and moralists spent considerable effort in the eleventh century attempting to digest, or otherwise accommodate this uncomfortable reality. Indeed, it might not be too far wrong to suggest that this political/ideological issue was the starting point of the eleventh-century Song intellectual problematique. A fundamental shift had occurred that knocked the previous imperial worldview askew.

Zhao Kuangyin's 趙匡胤 (927–976) founding of the Song dynasty in 960 did not immediately recreate an imperial center like that of the Tang. Decades of bloody warfare accompanied by similarly extensive ideological and administrative efforts gradually put most of the pieces of the empire together. Ruth Mostern's discussion of the spatial organization of government administration clearly demonstrates both the differences between Song and Five Dynasties' practice, and the incremental bureaucratic ground war that extended central control to the provinces.[8] The ideological efforts extended through history writing, and formed the basis of the traditional historiography that has shaped the primary sources themselves. Thus, even were we to defy the category of "The Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms," it would be reified at the most basic level of research by the change in sources from one traditionally constructed period to the next. It is true that the biographies of many important early Song figures contained in the *Song History* (*Songshi* 宋史) do recount their pre-Song careers, but this is always done with respect to the "inevitable" Song unification.

We are therefore left with a period that has previously been defined as "Not-Tang" and "Not-Song" in the negative sense of having no real identity or history. But if we reverse that characterization into a positive sense of a period that was, indeed, not the same as the preceding and following periods, then it becomes the place where late Tang culture and society became something else (Not-Tang), but before it became the quite different Song culture and society. Traditional historiography was didactic, but it was not necessarily wrong in needing to mark off the period between two great dynasties. The Song did not return to the Tang system, whether early, middle or late, or even try to, beyond the retention of certain titular offices. Song government, that purportedly most civil of institutions, was evenly split between the military side and the civil side.

This state of affairs would have been unrecognizable to the founders of the Tang, and reflected major developments in military administration and culture. When Ouyang Xiu lamented the dominance of military men during the Five Dynasties, he must also have been aware, having earlier written a history of the Tang, of how much more pronounced the military was in the Song government.

Wang Gungwu traced the origins of Song government institutions to the military governors' administrations of the Five Dynasties.[9] This historical development explains much of the military character of Song government, but not all of it. Although David McMullen used debates at the Tang court over worship in the martial temple to highlight a growing anti-militarism among court officials, he could just as easily have pointed out that the creation of a martial temple to parallel the civil temple with Confucius at its head, and the reaction to that, indicated the growth of martial culture in the Tang court.[10] Türkic generals gained great power over the course of the dynasty, and the power of the aristocratic clans declined (though the Türkic associations of the imperial family alert us to the danger of making too strong an ethnic or cultural distinction). The major rebellions of An Lushan and Huang Chao were part of these changes, among many others, and Tang society and culture were still changing when the dynasty ended in 907. Indeed, the next three dynasties, the Later Liang, Later Tang, and Later Jin, played out the final political and military acts of a struggle between groups begun under the Tang.

The Kitan invasion of 946–947 was a pivotal event in north China. While the Kitan capture of Kaifeng and destruction of the Later Jin dynasty demonstrated the reach of Kitan power, their inability to maintain that position conversely demonstrated that their reach had exceeded their grasp. In any event, the political struggles of the Tang finally ended with all sides destroyed. A new configuration of players began to take shape that would close out the period. While it is clear that many early Song generals and statesmen began their careers in the later part of the Five Dynasties, it is less clear whether there were significant breaks in the personnel of the ruling class. The examination system began to create a class of new men in the civil service in the early Song, but the military appears to have continued the Five Dynasties pattern, although further research on this is needed to be certain.

One of the main questions raised, but not answered, by this volume is whether or not Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms practice persisted into the Song in other spheres as well, be they intellectual, cultural or

simply regional. To what extent did regional differences truly end with political unification? Here we should recall Beverly Bossler's forceful refutation of the Hartwell-Hymes thesis of change in marriage practice from the Northern Song to the Southern Song elites.[11] Bossler convincingly argued that the change was apparent, rather than real, and had more to do with the source material than with an actual change in practice. It may well be that the Northern Song period was anomalous in so effectively covering up the inherent differences within its empire. If that were the case, then the noted phenomenon of literati turning toward local activism in the Southern Song, to cite one possible example, might also be an artifact of the sources. All of this points to the critical place that the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period can play in our understanding of Chinese history.

Was this relatively brief period a "turning point" where China swerved off the medieval road and onto the uncharted and unpaved path to modernity? Was it the leading edge of the Song invention of what we would today call "the modern"?[12] We must retreat from these larger issues, however, to consider the analytic structure that underpins their prosecution. Not only have the contributors to this volume accepted the non-unity of China in the first half of the tenth century as revealing rather than aberrant, they have also handled the political/territorial divisions with great sophistication. They have not, as would have been so easy, disregarded these divisions out of hand, but neither have they accepted the constraints these distinctions explicitly impose. This extends even to the sorting of political units into "Five Dynasties" and "Ten Kingdoms." Ouyang Xiu had particular political and didactic reasons for separating the Five Dynasties from the Ten Kingdoms, but, as mentioned above, there were less charged reasons for doing so as well. Ruth Mostern is surely right to emphasize the intentions of governments in their administrative and geographic organizations of their territory.

It is also clear that local phenomena could remain local as well as become imperial. Tracy Miller's contribution contrasts the local architectural style of southern Shanxi 山西, the Shangdang 上黨 region, with that of Zhejiang 浙江. The Zhejiang style was adopted by the Song imperial court and established empire-wide over the course of the dynasty, while Shangdang architecture remained the same and local. By a quirk of history, Shangdang architecture is better preserved than that of any other region for the Song period. Yet, since it is really a local rather than a dynastic style, it cannot be directly used as an example of Song imperial

architecture, though it can be used as an example of architecture during the Song. Local architecture probably remained local in most places. Of course, the grandest Song imperial buildings are not extant, making useful comparison with other large-scale architecture, like that of the Kitan Liao empire, for example, impossible.[13] The actual remnants of Song imperial architecture are fragmentary, and a solid reconstruction of its style beyond our reach; only local style is extant.

Ultimately, the value of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms as a heuristic unit is evident in the very idea of the Chinese imperial dynastic structure. Many trends in Tang history continued through the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms and on into the Song. But the very fact that the transportation of southern culture, whether books, scholarship, scholars, or architecture to the north during the Song, was an act of imperial legitimation and a show of power, demonstrates the profoundly changed significance that political ideology brings. Notions of loyalty or correct behavior were constrained and categorized during the Song in ways that they could not be during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms. Having a center did matter, as did not having a center. The openness of the period was very different, and not to be seen again in China.

Conclusion and Beginning

The notion that Confucius edited the *Spring and Autumn Annals* so as to subtly indicate praise and blame was part of a tradition that embedded considerable moral force in the writing of history. Most specifically, the choice of what was studied, at what length, and how it was portrayed, exclusive of explicit comment, was itself an argument for a particular interpretation of history. Chinese historians recognized the power of the selection process from early on, without benefit of contemporary Western theoretical hand-wringing over the "objectivity" of history. There was no objective or amoral stance for the historian, though he should work from reliable documentation and not manufacture events and conversations himself. The process of "reflecting" or acting as a mirror, to pay heed to Song emperor Shenzong's renaming Sima Guang's history a "mirror," was inherently didactic.

Dynasties, courts and emperors did place their mark on their times and even on subsequent times. China had many dynasties, courts and emperors, often contemporaneous, during the first half of the tenth century, and they also influenced their time. What is perhaps most

interesting about the political divisions of that period is that courts tried to maintain them, both to preserve their own power and to preserve their own separate identities. Power and identity cannot be easily separated, and the Song project was aimed at unifying both under its own banner.

The resolution of the centripetal forces of regional diversity required a deep-rooted ideological shift, which was later reflected in Song culture. Culture was drawn into the center from different parts of the empire, along with local elites, and then recirculated in an attempt to overcome that diversity. It could only be partially successful, of course, as was acknowledged by the writing of local gazetteers to inform rotating magistrates about the district they had come to administer. An outside administrator sent from the imperial court could not expect to understand the local environment. But these practical manuals could also become instruments asserting local identity over the imperial version. To write a manual about a locality was to create a conceptual category, and to legitimize places, events and people ignored by the imperial court. Those decisions were made locally, and with respect to local concerns.

It remains an open question whether the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period should be considered a time of "international" relations within the former territory of the Tang. An earlier generation of scholars argued for a "China among equals" during the Song, when the Song had to face powerful steppe empires and treat with them diplomatically as equals.[14] Yet it seems clear that this sort of diplomacy of equals had begun during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period and never really stopped until the Yuan consolidation in the late thirteenth century. It was only retrospectively that some Chinese writers imagined that culturally Chinese individuals should have preferred loyalty to a Chinese ruler to loyalty to a non-Chinese ruler. This criticism of some early tenth century generals and officials made sense in the new culture of the Song, where one of the main props of the court's legitimacy was its reasonable claim to represent Chinese culture. By extension then, culturally Chinese people owed the Song court allegiance.[15]

The complexity of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period is more real than apparent, and it remains a daunting task to engage with it and write about it in an understandable way. It is my hope that this book will be part of a growing series of studies of the period. Unlike the history of the Tang or Song, there are, as yet, few signposts marking the way through. This creates great freedom, since we have fewer pre-conceived notions to overcome. The greatest of those notions are that it is not a

period worth studying, that it is merely a degenerate and aberrant time between great dynasties, and that no one studies it. This book attempts to lay those ideas to rest and go a step toward a true beginning of the study of this fascinating time. Underlying the complexity is possibly one of the most important periods of change in Chinese history.

Notes

1. Here I have followed Richard Davis in his translation of the *Wudai shiji* 五代史記. Ouyang Xiu, *Historical Records of the Five Dynasties*, trans. Richard Davis (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
2. Davis (note 1), xliv.
3. This line of inquiry subsequently yielded the article: Steve Miles, "Rewriting the Southern Han (917–971): The Production of Local Culture in Nineteenth-Century Guangzhou," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 62, no. 1 (June 2002): 39–75.
4. Wang Gungwu, *The Structure of Power in North China During the Five Dynasties* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1963).
5. For a survey of the Japanese scholarship in the field, see Yamazaki Satoshi, "Topics and Results of the Studies of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period during the Past 25 Years," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 36 (2006): 145–167.
6. For a more detailed discussion of these issues, see Naomi Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty*: *Frontier Crossing in Liao China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007). On the issue of loyalty see also Jonathan Karam Skaff, "Barbarians at the Gates? The Tang Frontier Military and the An Lushan Rebellion," *War and Society* (2000): 18, 23–35.
7. For the conquest of Sichuan (the Kingdom of Shu) by the Song, see Peter Lorge, "From Warlord to Emperor: Song Taizu's Change of Heart during the Conquest of Shu," *T'oung Pao* (2005): 320–346.
8. For the military campaigns that created the Song dynasty, see Peter Lorge, "War and the Creation of the Northern Song State" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1996).
9. Wang Gungwu, *The Structure of Power in North China During the Five Dynasties*. This book has recently been updated and reissued as *Divided China: Preparing for Reunification, 883–947* (Singapore: World Scientific Press, 2007).
10. David L. McMullen, "The Cult of Ch'i T'ai-kung and T'ang Attitudes to the Military," *Tang Studies* 7 (1989): 59–103.
11. Robert Hartwell, "Demographic, Political, and Social Transformation of China, 750–1550," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 42, no. 2 (1982): 365–442; Robert P. Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen: The Elite of Fu-chou, Chiang-hsi, in Northern and Southern Sung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and Beverly Bossler, *Powerful Relations: Kinship, Status and the State in Sung China (960–1279)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998). Hartwell largely accepted Bossler's position, though he did not revisit the issue in print.

12. For a sensitive and wide-ranging discussion of some of the background issues regarding the historical category of "early modern," see William Caferro's forthcoming book, *Contesting the Renaissance*. Professor Caferro kindly made an early draft of this book available to me.

    Franciscus Verellen, in an article that regrettably could not be included in this book, argues that the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period actually gave rise to early modernity in China. Verellen's position is convincing, and if he is right, then the break between the Tang and Song may be more real and significant than previously thought. Moreover, he will have localized perhaps the first instance of "modernity" in world history. The breakdown in central political control allowed for local developments that may well have, though Verellen does not argue this, led to instances of Habermas-like public spheres for the literati.
13. For Liao architecture, see Nancy Shatzman Steinhart, *Liao Architecture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997).
14. Morris Rossabi, ed., *China Among Equals* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983).
15. Standen (note 6), 149–171 passim.

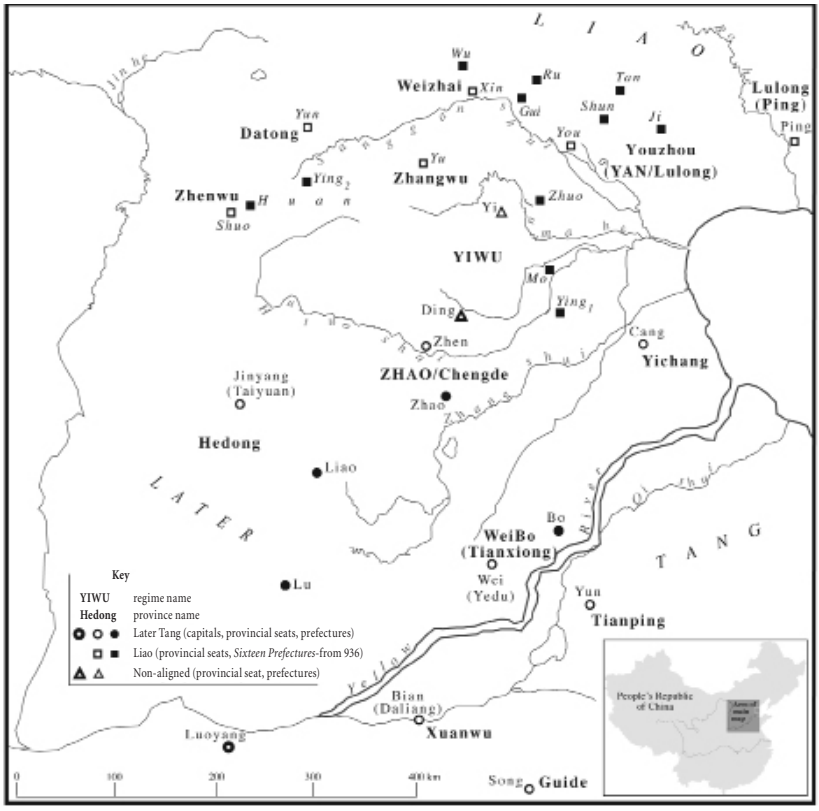
THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY
LEFT BLANK

Who Wants to Be an Emperor? Zhao Dejun 趙德鈞, Youzhou 幽州 and the Liao 遼

Naomi Standen

By the time the Tang 唐 (618–907) fell, a regionalised political system comprising multiple, coexisting regimes had been the norm for five of the six and a half centuries since the fall of the the Eastern Han 東漢 (25–220).[1] While it was certainly not the case that just anyone could found their own polity or take one over, still there were considerably more potential leaders than during most of the Han and the first half of the Tang. How were such choices made? Who was considered eligible to become ruler of a regime? And what of the alternatives? The rules of the game as played in more stable times could be bent, ignored, trampled or changed, but they were not altogether in abeyance. Such remnants and reinterpretations combined with fresh takes on revived or alternative rulebooks as well as outright innovation, all played out by individual personalities responding to specific exigencies, to produce unpredictable outcomes. In such circumstances, studying the winners shows us only part of the story: we can also learn from those who tried and failed.

Zhao Dejun 趙德鈞 (d. 937) was ultimately one of history's losers. Beginning as a competent general, Zhao married his adopted son to a princess and served faithfully and effectively as a prefect and governor (*jiedushi* 節度使) in various places in the border region of Hebei 河北 during the turbulent period of the early Five Dynasties 五代 (907–960).[2] But when Shi Jingtang 石敬瑭, the governor of the neighbouring region, resisted his master's authority in 936 and called in assistance from the Kitan-led 契丹 Liao 遼 empire (907–1125) to found his own regime of Later Jin 後晉 (936–947), Zhao Dejun not only failed to oppose this challenge actively but also sought to take the throne and the Liao alliance for himself, effectively in competition with Shi Jingtang.



Map 1. Hebei, Hedong and northern Henan to the end of Zhao Dejun's governorship

This final choice of Zhao's has coloured almost all considerations of his life. Although our earliest source, the *Old History of the Five Dynasties* (*Jiu Wudaishi* 舊五代史), conveys Zhao's life in all its complexity—some of it good, some not so good—the more influential eleventh-century sources were highly critical.[3] His chief crime is presented as repeated acts of disloyalty: to his master the Later Tang 後唐 (923–936) emperor, to Shi Jingtang as the new emperor of Later Jin, and even to the Liao emperor. Since then Zhao Dejun has been largely ignored, although more recently, occasional Chinese writers have either condemned him for offering the Chinese realm to the foreign Kitan, or emphasised the significance of his defences against them, depending on their view of the wider events that brought the Liao south and placed Shi Jingtang on the throne in the

Central Plains.[4] The difficulty of interpreting these events, and Zhao Dejun's ultimate failure to achieve his goals, have perhaps been disincentives to study him more closely. Yet the situation might easily have turned out very differently.

This chapter is not a counterfactual account, but it is only fair to note that, faced with a choice between Shi Jingtang and Zhao Dejun to be ruler of the new dynasty at Bianzhou 汴州 (present-day Kaifeng 開封), the Liao emperor Deguang 德光 (Liao Taizong 遼太宗, r. 926–947) almost chose Zhao. Such a close call warrants further investigation, and here I try to see things from Zhao Dejun's point of view. Although I will argue that he was a faithful servant to the last, the important question is not whether he was loyal or disloyal, but what his options were and how he negotiated them. Discussion of his faithfulness provides a context within which we may understand his bid for the throne as a reluctant, last-ditch attempt to sustain the Tang restoration rather than a long-term goal directed towards his own benefit. Reexamination of the sources suggests not simply that Zhao was unfairly vilified in the later works, but also opens a window onto a world of very different concerns, where loyalty meant something unfamiliar to us, provincial autonomy was the norm, and leadership rested on practical effectiveness rather than ideology. Within this world Zhao functioned as a loyal servitor in his various roles as a high-placed member of an important retinue, a provincial governor, and manager of a borderland. Each role offered its own perspective on events, so that Shi Jingtang's challenge to the master they both shared confronted Zhao Dejun with a remarkably wide range of possible choices, none of them easy.

Loyalty, Legitimacy and Historiography

Our picture of Zhao Dejun has been heavily influenced by the interpretative history offered in Sima Guang's 司馬光 *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (1084), in which clear writing combines with careful research and coherent narrative to produce compellingly authoritative judgements. The *Tongjian* presents a three-dimensional view of Zhao Dejun that incorporates both praise and criticism, but ultimately conveys what has become the standard picture of him as an exemplar of disloyalty having longstanding designs on the throne. As such, Zhao's story contributes to Sima's exposition of the ideal of single-master loyalty, which culminated in his famous correlation of loyal ministers who serve only one emperor with faithful