

Different Views On The Political Geography Of The Empire In The 11th Century: Debates Over Military Affairs Between Wang Anshi And Sima Guang

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to ask how prominent Song scholar-officials perceived regional disparities through an analysis of their military-related writings. The north-south divide is usually the first topic to appear when scholars discuss regional disparity in the Song. By focusing on the writings of the southern scholar-official Wang Anshi and his northern opponent Sima Guang, I argue that rather than conceiving the differences between these two great figures with the framework of north-south divide, it would be more fulfilling to understand the debates as an expression of their different perspectives about how an empire should be spatially organized. Analyzing the controversies over *baojia* and other military establishment, I will show that Wang's and Sima's visions represented two radically different ways of understanding the spatial structure of the empire. In Wang's case, the current state of vast regional differences signified a less than ideal form of human existence. The state institutions were perfect for molding the widely diverse territories into a coherent unit. Sima Guang, on the other hand, envisioned the empire as a collection of regions, each with its own set of priorities that the court should respect.

Keyword: Northern Song Wang Anshi Sima Guang
Spatial organization military

“Emphasize the civil, de-emphasize the military” (*zhongwen qingwu* 重文轻武) has almost become a set phrase used to explain why the Song was not the powerful Han or Tang. According to a popular perception, the Song founders, after witnessing how the loss of control over the military had cost the rulers of the Five Dynasties their empires, became wary of the possibility of themselves falling prey to the recurring problem. As such, immediately after Emperor Taizu (太祖, r. 960-975) ascended to the throne, he “disarmed” his generals during the dramatic episode of “removing military command over a cup of wine” (*beijiu shi bingquan* 杯酒释兵权).¹ Following this, Emperor Taizu and his successor Emperor Taizong (太宗, 976-997) put together a series of measures aimed at minimizing the threat of the military. From then onwards, monarchs and civil officials began to engage in conspiracies to suppress the military men and the court adopted an indifferent attitude toward military affairs. This approach resulted in the weakening of the armies and caused the eventual downfall of the dynasty.

Recent scholarship has attempted to revise such a perception of the military in the Song, pointing especially to the fact that military affairs were among the most widely discussed topics among scholar-officials.² Indeed, the conventional approach to Song history that leaves out the military aspects because of Song perceived military weaknesses has prevented us from truly

1 This incident is most vividly depicted in Li Tao (李焘, 1115-1181), *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 《续资治通鉴长编》, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中华书局, 1986), 2.49. Li’s narrative is based on a shorter account of the same event in Sima Guang (司马光, 1019-1086), *Sushui jiwen* 《涑水纪闻》, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 1.11-13.

2 See for example Chen Feng 陈峰, *Bei-Song wujiang qunti yu xiangguan wenti yanjiu* 《北宋武将群体与相关问题研究》, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), esp. pp. 251-302. Chen accepted the claim that the Song was hostile toward military men but argued that military affairs remained a priority on Song government’s agenda.

appreciating Song figures' views on a variety of issues. The purpose of this paper is to partially correct the conventional approach by making an inquiry into how prominent Song scholar-officials perceived regional disparities through an analysis of their military-related writings.

The north-south divide is usually the first topic to appear when scholars discuss regional disparity in the Song. Indeed, the great Tang-Song transition witnessed the rise of the south (the southeast to be exact) as the economic and cultural center of the Chinese empire. Accompanying this transformation was a heightened sense of north-south differences. Qian Mu (Ch'ien Mu) had noted long ago that in the early days of the Northern Song, the post of prime minister was dominated by northerners and there were some discontent when the southerners began to make their ways into this highest rank of the bureaucracy.³ While it is geographical essentialism to argue that all different views on government were the result of conflicts between northerners and southerners, different conditions in both regions had indeed given rise to different political considerations. Peter Bol argues that north and south had regional priorities. For the north, defense of the northern frontier was more important than economic development. "[I]t is therefore not surprising that it a southern chief councilor (Wang Anshi 王安石, 1021-86) adopted policies that promoted economic development whereas his foremost opponent, a northern chief councilor (Sima Guang 司马光, 1019-86), gave priority to social stability and insisted that economic growth was a function of the size of the population."⁴

In other words, the controversies between Wang Anshi and Sima Guang can be partly attributed to their interest (or lackof) in national defense and

3 Qian Mu 钱穆, *Guoshi dagang* 《国史大纲》, (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1992), p. 581.

4 Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, (Cambridge MA.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), p. 18.

this in turn was shaped by their different regional experiences. This paper will show that while this assumption is generally true, regional disparities can take many different forms apart from a simple north/south dichotomy, especially when we consider their actual policy recommendations in relation to their perceptions of regional differences.⁵

In the passage that follows, I will discuss Wang Anshi's and Sima Guang's writings on military affairs. I will first examine Wang Anshi's recommendation on setting up and implementing the tithing system (*baojia* 保甲). This will be followed by a discussion of Sima Guang's view on local militia before the New Policies era and how it shaped his response toward *baojia* and other military reforms undertaken under the New Policies regime. In doing so, I hope to show that without taking their views on regional military organization and administration seriously, we will not be able to fully understand their intellectual positions in relationship to how the problem of regional disparity was being conceived in the eleventh century. To anticipate the conclusion, Wang's and Sima's views on regional military establishments represented two very different ways of conceiving the empire's political geography. Wang's ideal empire was one without regional differences while Sima's was a confederation of regional interests.

Origins and developments of *baojia* under the New Policies

Although clearly not his priority, Wang Anshi still had to address military matters given that it was one of Emperor Shenzong's (神宗, r.

5 Ruth Mostern has recently called to our attention the importance of recognizing that state-building in the Song was closely related to how policy makes perceived spatial organization. She argues that the Song approach represents a "middle period cycle" of spatial arrangement that aimed at establishing a centralized civil-bureaucratic order. See Mostern, *Dividing the Realm In Order to Govern: The Spatial Organization of the Song State (960-1276)*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011).

1068-1086) main concerns.⁶ One of his important proposals for fixing security and defense problems was to implement *baojia*.⁷ The term *baojia* is a Song invention. Before the Song, *bao* and *jia* (and other terms) were used to refer to different forms of local organizations that served different purposes. What makes Song *baojia* different is that it was intended for performing two functions at once: 1) to organize the local society for keeping population census to facilitate tax collection and labour service and maintaining local order; 2) to introduce (at least in theory) a conscription system that would partially reduce reliance on professional military troops so as to reduce the

6 James T. C. Liu has noted that it was always Emperor Shenzong who brought military affairs and strategy up for discussion. Liu, *Reform in Sung China: Wang An-shih (1021-1086) and His New Policies*, (Cambridge MA.: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 57.

7 Just like the other new policies, the introduction of *baojia* evoked instant debates and Wang's opponents sought to undermine the credibility of the system by proposal other alternatives. The controversies, especially between Wang Anshi and Sima Guang, have been substantially studied by historians. Liang Qichao, motivated by his own sense of political activism, greatly praised Wang Anshi for his determination in pushing for military reform. Sima Guang, in Liang's view, was but a conservative figure willing to be humiliated by the "northern barbarians." (Liang Qichao 梁启超, *Wang Jingong* 《王荆公》, [Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1936]). For a very different reason, scholars in mainland China in the middle of the twentieth century generally applauded Wang's effort and condemned Sima's unwillingness to defend the country against foreign threats. For instance, when discussing Sima Guang's critique of the tithing system, Deng Guangming castigated Sima for denying the patriotic sentiment of the people. See Deng Guangming 邓广铭, *Bei-Song zhengzhi gaigejia Wang Anshi* 《北宋政治改革家王安石》, (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000), pp. 232-34. This stance has been revised by some beginning in the 1980s (See Wang Zengyu 王曾瑜, "Wang Anshi bianfa jianlun" 《王安石变法简论》, *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 《中国社会科学》, 3 [1980]: 141-54.). In Japan, one of the most substantial studies of *baojia* is

burden that the latter had imposed on state finance.⁸ In theory, the system would group “host” and “guest” households together into units of ten called Group (*bao*). Five such units would then be grouped into a Large Group (*dabao* 大保) and five *dabao* would form a Superior Group (*dubao* 都保). For every resident household, if there were two or more adult male (*ding* 丁), then at least one would be chosen to be a guard man (*baoding* 保丁). Each *bao* was also allowed to keep weapons except for the prohibited ones.⁹

Tracking the discussions at the court during Emperor Shenzong’s reign, we can however notice that the actual implementation was much

still the important article written by Ikeda Mabota in 1954. Using a Marxist framework of class analysis, Ikeda argues that *baojia* was introduced to prevent the deprived peasants from stirring social unrest and thus threatening the stability of a centralized bureaucratic state. See Ikeda Mabota 池田誠, “Hogoh ō no seilitsu o sono tenkai: ō An-seki no seiji kaikaku no mondai” 〈保甲法の成立をその展开: 王安石の政治改革の問題〉, *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 《東洋史研究》, 12.6 (1954): 1-32. American scholars, in contrast, did not employ the Marxist framework but still noted Wang’s strong zeal for creating a centralized state (see for instance, Liu, *Reform in Sung China*, pp. 85-88.). Peter Bol, in particular, has argued that *baojia* was introduced to push family ties aside and kept the people oriented toward the state. On the other hand, Sima Guang had always strived to maintain a sharp distinction between public and private, and he saw the system as a harshly imposed policy that destroyed daily agricultural activities and taught the people to become bandits. See Bol, “Government, Society, and State: On the Political Visions of Ssu-ma Kuang and Wang An-shih,” Robert P. Hymes and Conrad Schirokauer eds., *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 176-77.

- 8 Wen Juntian 闻钧天, *Zhongguo baojia zhidu* 《中国保甲制度》, (1935, reprinted in *Minguo congshu* 民国丛书 [Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1989]), p. 115.
- 9 Tuo’tuo et al., *Song Shi* 《宋史》 (hereafter SS), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 192.4767. For a succinct description of this system, see Brian E. Mcknight, *Village and Bureaucracy in Southern Song China*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 33-35.

more complicated. The matter was officially brought up to the court in the winter of 1070 when Zhao Ziji 赵子几 (n.d.), who was then overseeing the implementation of ever-normal granaries and irrigation around Kaifeng, submitted a memorial to the court complaining that the regions around the capital were full of bandits. According to Zhao, this problem occurred because the *baojia* system that had worked well in the past had been left in a state of disrepair for ages and there was no way for the local government to prevent the villages from being attacked by bandits. He therefore proposed that *baojia* to be restored so that the rich and the poor alike could rely on each other and lived safely.¹⁰ Given the precision of Zhao's proposal, Deng Guangming is right, I think, to argue that this was a well thought-out plan that the reformers, headed by Wang Anshi, had prepared for some time.¹¹

In response to Zhao's call, the Court of the National Granaries (*sinong si* 司农寺) issued a standing order in the twelfth month of the same year, instructing the two counties of Kaifeng and Xiangfu 祥符 in the capital region to set up *baojia*. The measures proposed indicate that the main concern at this point was still local security.¹² A few months later, in the third month of the following year, Emperor Shenzong had a lengthy discussion with Wang Anshi regarding *baojia*. Shenzong was worried that implementing *baojia* forcefully would create social unrest as he had heard that some people would chop off their fingers just to avoid being enlisted. The fear arose because the people had likened *baojia* to a conscription system. It was at this occasion that Wang Anshi suggested to the emperor that *baojia* could also function as a conscription system. He insisted that turning *baojia* into a conscription system would not cause social unrest. Wang's optimism was

10 Li Tao 李焯, *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 《续资治通鉴长编》 (hereafter XCB), (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1983), 218.7ab.

11 Deng, *Bei-Song zhengzhi gaigejia Wang Anshi*, pp. 220-21.

12 XCB, 218.6a-7a.

based on the experiences in Shaanxi and Hedong, where the government had experimented for decades with building the so-called “Guard of Victory” (*baojie* 保捷) army, a special form of imperial army, through conscription. According to Wang, no serious unrest was reported in these areas. It would therefore be far-fetched to assume that the people would rebel simply because they had to join the army.¹³

A brief description of Song military establishment is needed for understanding Wang’s argument. In the Song, there were basically three types of army: 1) Imperial army (*jinjun* 禁军) commanded by the court, which was responsible for defending the capital and carrying out large-scale military missions; 2) auxiliary force (*xiangjun* 厢军) commanded by prefectural government, which provided protection for the prefecture and labour for local projects; and 3) local militia (*xiangbing* 乡兵), whose soldiers, responsible for safeguarding the local community, were natives enlisted through conscription based on household registry.¹⁴ Local militias in different regions were given different names in different periods. In Shaanxi and Hedong, a major kind of state-sponsored local militia in the 1060s was called “Righteous Corps” (*yiyong* 义勇). Initially, soldiers of *yiyong* would remain at home and received military training only during the off seasons of farming. However, in times of need, the court would turn them into professional soldiers, assemble them under the command of the “Guard of Victory” and tattoo their arms to prevent them from escaping.¹⁵ This policy will be discussed in greater details later when we examine the opinions of Sima Guang. Here, suffice it to point out that Wang’s idea of using *baojia* as a reserve military force stemmed mainly from the peculiar conditions at the northern frontier where foreign threats were the most imminent. Besides the capital area, it was only in the

13 Ibid., 221.22a-23b.

14 SS, 187.4569.

15 Ibid., 190.4708-9.

five northern circuits that directly faced the Liao and the Xi Xia¹⁶ that *baojia* was institutionalized in 1073 to provide serious military training.¹⁷ In other parts of the empire, there was no persistent attempt to train *baojia* servicemen for carrying out military missions.¹⁸

Nevertheless, Wang Anshi was confident that local militias organized in a *baojia* format could function as a supplement for the professional army. Therefore, in 1075, the command of *baojia* was transferred from the Court of National Granaries to the Ministry of War, signaling that the reformers were now more willing to exploit the military potential of *baojia*.¹⁹ It was also in the same year that efforts were put into converting formerly established local militia into *baojia* in a few frontier localities (in Sichuan, the Middle Yangzi, Huai River and Lingnan regions) with a substantial indigenous population and vibrant military activities.²⁰ In short, when Wang Anshi pushed for an empire-wide implementation of *baojia*, he was not blind to regional disparities. Rather, he practiced caution in bringing the military aspects of the system along slowly, emphasizing it only in certain capricious regions. Apparently, Wang's regional sensitivity in this case cannot be fully explained using north-south divide as an analytic framework. The regional issue here was not north and south, but rather frontier and non-frontier.

Yet, it is beyond doubt that in Wang's view, *baojia* was a perfect form of military organization that was universally valid and that could restore the antique ideal of "Integrating the capacities of soldier and farmer" (*bingnong yiti* 兵农一体). He thought it was absurd for some to claim that *baojia* was

16 The Five circuits were Qinfeng 秦凤, Yongxingjun 永兴军 (both in present-day Shaanxi), Hedong, Eastern Hebei and Western Hebei.

17 XCB, 246.21b-22a.

18 Ibid. See also Xu Song 徐松 ed., *Song huiyao jigao* 《宋会要辑稿》 (hereafter SHY), bing 兵, 2.12-15.

19 Ibid., 192.4770.

20 Ibid., 192.4769.

essentially not suitable for some regions because of the local custom. In 1072, there was a rumor about the court was planning to enforce military training of *baojia* in Sichuan. Upon hearing this rumour, a Zhao Bian 赵抃 warned the emperor that the custom of Sichuan had predetermined that the people there should not be taught to go to war. If the court insisted in doing so, it would risk losing the support of the people. In response, Wang Anshi clarified that there was no attempt to do so, but he refused to accept Zhao's persuasion. He cited the stories of great leaders in history such as King Wu, Han Gaozu 汉高祖 and Zhuge Liang 诸葛亮 using the Sichuan people as soldiers to refute Zhao's claim.²¹ The message that Wang was trying to get across was that with the correct state policies, the perceived disparities of different regions would disappear and all regions could be made uniform and shaped into a coherent system.

When fully implemented, *baojia* would marginalize the different types of local militia formed for tackling different regional conditions. In replacement, *baojia* introduced a uniform system that, according to its most powerful critics Sima Guang, tended to disregard local priorities and hence was not only useless but harmful. In order to fully understand Sima's attack on *baojia*, we will have to first trace his view on local militia before the New Policies era.

Sima Guang on state-sponsored local militia before the New Policies era

Sima Guang came from a prominent bureaucratic family of the north and spent most of his career in the north. Yet it is also important to note that Sima's first ever extant writing on military matters was a memorial composed on behalf of his father Sima Chi (司马池, 980-1041) when the latter was serving as the prefect of Hangzhou in 1040. We shall begin our discussion

21 XCB, 238.2511.

with this memorial. In 1038, the Tangut people formally established the Xi Xia empire in the northwest and began raiding Song territories. In response, the Song government moved rapidly to set up different forms of military organization both along the northern border regions and the relatively peaceful southern regions, including the Lower Yangzi delta where the economy was blooming. In the memorial, Sima requested the court not to set up in Liangzhe Circuit the kind of local militia called “Archers” (*gongshou* 弓手) found in the northern regions.²² Xiao-bin Ji has a detailed discussion on the content of this memorial. He argues that the ideas in this memorial foreshadowed many of Sima’s ideas and has convincingly shown that Sima was particularly concerned with the possibility of bringing unnecessary changes to the status quo and imposing excessive burden on the people.²³ What Ji has noted but did not discuss in detail is the rhetoric of regional differences that Sima employed. In order to demonstrate that the *gongshou* system was not suitable for Liangzhe, Sima repeatedly highlighted the peculiarity of the local customs. According to Sima, the only thing that the Wu 吳 people knew was agriculture and not war, and it was well-known that these people were physically weak. Therefore the desired outcome of making them battle ready would be minimal even if they were to go through military training. But Sima nearly contradicted himself when he mentioned that the Wu people were historically rebellious since the Warring States’ period and therefore it would be dangerous to allow them to acquire military skill and have access to weapons.²⁴

22 Sima Guang, “Lun Liangzhe buyi tianzhi gongshou zhuang” 〈论两浙不宜添置弓手状〉, *Wenguo Wenzheng Simagong ji* 《温国文正司马公集》 (hereafter SMGJ), Suoben Sibu congkan chubian 缩本四部丛刊初编, 16.176-77.

23 Ji, *Politics and Conservatism in Northern Song China: The Career and Thought of Sima Guang (1019-1086)*, (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2005, pp. 31-33.

24 Sima Guang, “Lun Liangzhe buyi tianzhi gongshou zhuang,” 16.177.

Whether such stereotypical images of the Wu people being weak or rebellious were accurate is not the issue here. The point is that by evoking regional differences, Sima was in fact arguing that policies issued by the court should be adjusted according to regional priorities. In Sima's view, the priority of Liangzhe was economic rather than military. It therefore made no sense to disturb this arrangement by importing into the region a system that ignored peculiar local conditions.

It may be tempting to read Sima Guang's argument in this memorial as an attempt to use a north-south divide characterized by a military\economic dichotomy for undermining the court's proposal. Yet, when Sima protested against the court's decision to institute "Righteous Corps" in Shaanxi in 1064, he employed a similar line of reasoning, stressing that the Shaanxi people were not useful as soldiers because what they had learnt since young was farming. Sima was serving as the co-administrator of the Remonstrance Bureau at that time when the news that the court, under the recommendation of Han Qi (韩琦, 1008-1075), was going to set up the "Righteous Corps" system in Shaanxi arrived. The recommendation was made during a period when Xi Xia was becoming more aggressive. Han opined that in order to maintain a sizeable army without putting too much pressure on state finance, the Song court should follow the Tang Garrison Militia (*fubing* 府兵) system. The existing "Righteous Corps," according to Han, could work like *fubing* if used properly. In the three northern regions of Shaanxi, Hebei and Hedong, only Shaanxi did not employ the "Righteous Corps" system. Han therefore suggested that one adult male from every Shaanxi household with three adult males to be enlisted into the "Righteous Corps." In order to prevent the soldiers from running away, Han further proposed to tattoo the back of their arms for identification purpose.²⁵

25 XCB, 203.4b-5b. According to Han, tattooing the soldiers' arms could prevent them from escaping and at the same, would cause fewer disturbances as compared to tattooing their faces.

Here, Han Qi was drawing upon a theory of uniformity across regions to support his proposal. In Han's view, since all three northern circuits were critical strategic regions, it was only appropriate that the Shaanxi people shared the same load of defending the country as those of Hedong and Hebei. In response, Sima Guang submitted eleven memorials, of which six are extant, within days to the emperor, urging him to reject Han's suggestion. The emperor did not heed Sima's advice however, and Sima had to write another memorial asking the emperor to remove him from his current office because he had failed badly in doing his job but apparently the emperor did not abide.²⁶

Sima Guang's was a native of Shaanxi,²⁷ and he made it no secret that his affiliation with the place and his familiarity of the local conditions played an important role in his appraisal of the situation. He recalled that when he was serving his mourning duty at home in the 1040s, he had witnessed how the court's order of recruiting "archers" and later putting them under the command of "Guard of Victory" had caused great distress to the local people and harmed the development of the region. Sima worried that this new round of forced recruitment would further deprive Shaanxi's chance of recovering from the disaster that the court created twenty years ago.²⁸

Regarding the issue of uniformity, Sima Guang stressed the importance of maintaining true fairness. He argued that even if Shaanxi did not institute

26 Gu Donggao 顾栋高, *Sima Guang nianpu* 《司马光年谱》, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 3.89-93. The modern edition includes two chronicles of Sima Guang, one written by Gu Donggao in the Qing and the other written by Ma Luan 马峦 in the Ming.

27 Sima's home county was Xiaxian 夏县 of Shanzhou 陕州. Although this place now belongs to Shanxi province, in the Song it was part of the Yongxingjun 永兴军 circuit, which was one of the two circuits that formed the informal administrative unit of Shaanxi. See note 18.

28 Sima Guang, "yiyong di'er zazi" 〈义勇第二割子〉, SMGJ, 31.271-73.

the “Righteous Corps” system as Hedong and Hebei did, it did not make the local people better off because the people were already exploited by the “archers” recruitment. The court’s decision to introduce “Righteous Corps” in Shaanxi therefore functioned as double penalty.²⁹ In other words, Sima did not believe that given current circumstances, the court should pursue uniformity across the three northern regions by instituting the same kind of military establishment in these regions. Instead, the court should take note of the peculiar conditions of Shaanxi and made an exception. Sima did mention that the “Righteous Corps” system had also caused the common people in Hedong and Hebei to suffer, but apparently this was not his main concern as he first made this comment only in the fourth of the six existing memorials.³⁰ Throughout, Sima was primarily concerned with speaking up for his fellow Shaanxi countrymen, trying to relieve them from the court’s harsh policies and he employed a rhetoric of north/northwest divide to get his points across.

Within Shaanxi, the plan was to group every five hundred *yi*ong soldiers into one *zhihui*, led by a commander and other military officials congruent to the ranks found in imperial armies. Military training was conducted on every tenth month of the year for a month and soldiers were rewarded with money.³¹ Originally, *yi*ong were put under the command of individual prefectures. However, in the tenth month of the third year of Xining (1070), new supervising officials (*tiju yi*ong *guan* 提举义勇官) under the command of a newly appointed military-affair commissioner (*xuanfushi* 宣抚使)³² were appointed specifically for coordinating matters concerning

29 Sima Guang, “*yi*ong *di*yi *zazhi*” 〈义勇第一劄子〉, SMGJ, 31.271.

30 Sima Guang, “*yi*ong *di*si *zazhi*” 〈义勇第四劄子〉, SMGJ, 32.273-75.

31 XCB, 203.4b-5b.

32 Unlike strategic management-pacifying commissioner, *xuanfushi* was an ad hoc appoint staffed with high court officials. In Shaanxi, it was not until the mid-1060s that the first *xuanfushi* was appointed. See SS, 167.3957.

yiying. In the same month, a suggestion was made to divide Shaanxi's *yiying* into seven formations that did not correspond entirely with Shaanxi's administrative boundaries for more vigorous training and deployment in preparation for war. The suggestion was implemented two months later.³³

To understand the significance of this change, we need to describe briefly the peculiar administrative structure of Shaanxi. In the beginning, a fiscal commissioner-in-chief (*duzhuanyunshi* 都转运使) was appointed by the central government to oversee tax transportation and other affairs of Shaanxi.³⁴ But in 1001 when the relationship with the Tanguts became hostile, a strategic management-pacifying commissioner (*jinglue anfu shi* 经略安抚使) was appointed to coordinate defensive efforts at the border. In 1041 when the Song court decided that a comprehensive plan was needed to defend better against the Tanguts who established the Xi Xia empire in 1038 and began raiding Song territories, it formally created four new circuits—Qinfeng 秦凤, Jingyuan 涇原, Huanqing 环庆 and Fuyan 鄜延—out of the northern border region of Shaanxi and an office of strategic management-pacifying commission was set up in each of these circuits. As Charles Hucker points out,

In the absence of other important Commissioners, as in some frontier regions, the Military Commissioner³⁵ sometimes

33 XCB, 216.6b-7a; 223.2a; SHY, bing 2.4-5; 2.8.

34 In other "normal" circuits, the title was deemed "fiscal commissioner" (*zhuanyunshi*). A commissioner-in-chief was appointed to coordinate matters of two or more circuits. In contrast, in strategic regions such as Shaanxi, Hebei and Hedong, a commissioner-in-chief was put in charge of one circuit. See Gong Yanming 龚延明, *Songdai guan zhi cidian* 《宋代官制辞典》, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), pp. 483.

35 Hucker translates *jinglue anfu shi* as "military commissioner."

became overall coordinator of civil as well as military affairs, with a designation such as Commander-in-chief (*tu tsung-kuan* 都总管); and he was ordinarily concurrent Prefect of the military prefecture governed from his headquarters.³⁶

In comparison with other “typical” circuits where the functions of different offices of commission were different and thus diffused, the circuits that were headed by a strategic management-pacifying commissioner cum prefect of the capital prefecture were apparently highly centralized. Furthermore, the commissioners were often authorized by the court to govern their prefectures with great freedom.³⁷ With this arrangement, the court formally recognized that the strategic management-pacifying commissioners were also *local* officials instead of simply agents of the court sent out to conduct specific missions, as in the case of fiscal commissioners or judicial commissioners (*tidian xingyushi* 提点刑狱使). It also formally declared that, unlike other “typical” circuits which were created not so much for functioning as administrative locales but more for coordinating court-imposed missions among a group of prefectures, a circuit in the Shaanxi region was also an administrative locale with its own local priorities.

Shaanxi’s administration was therefore highly unique; it demonstrated the court’s willingness to grant greater autonomy to a particular place for carrying out more flexible and thus more efficient military assignments. By putting *yiyong* under the command of individual prefectures was but one of the signs showing that the strategic management-pacifying commissioners cum prefects were sole authorities of the regions that they governed. Needless to say, the new arrangement of appointing supervising officials,

36 Charles O Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), pp. 45-46.

37 SS, 167.3960.

which were initiated by reform-minded officials, tended to disregard existing regional administrative hierarchies and thus undermine the authority of local government headed by the strategic management-pacifying commissioners. Instead, power was now transferred to the newly appointed supervising officials who were entrusted with conducting military movement translocally. For instance, Sima Guang, who was then serving as prefect of Yongxingjun and who was supposedly the overall in-charge of all civil and military affairs of the circuit, could only submit a memorial asking the court to reconsider its decision to deploy and train soldiers of *yiyong* more frequently under the order of *xuanfushi*. The court did reconsider, and several months later, appointment of supervising official was terminated under pressure and power was handed back to the local officials.³⁸

Still, the momentum of reform was already irreversible. During the same time when *yiyong* was reorganized, reform-minded officials implemented the *baojia* system together with other new military measures. As leader of the conservative clique, Sima Guang was among the most vocal in criticizing New Policies-style military reforms.

Sima Guang's critique of *baojia* and other military-related New Policies

Besides *baojia*, another crucial military policy that undermined the power of regional government was the implementation of the “commander-troop” (*jiangbing* 将兵) system. The previously system of “rotating garrisons” (*gengshu* 更戍) was thought to have resulted in the separation of commanders and their troops. Under the new system, the tie between a commander and his troops became fixed, thus increase the former's control over the latter. It was hoped that this could correct the fault of the old system

38 SS, 191.4736-37; XCB, 218.18b-21a; 223.2a.

that led to “commanders being unfamiliar with their troops and vice versa” and hence enhance the overall efficiency of military operations.³⁹

The system was first introduced in Shaanxi in the early 1070s by the then strategic management-pacifying commissioner of Jingyuan circuit Cai Ting (蔡挺, 1014-1079), whose strategy was adopted by Emperor Shenzong and implemented in 1074. Initially, thirty-seven commanders were assigned to an equal number of military zones in the capital regions, Hebei, Jingdong 京东 and Jingxi 京西.⁴⁰ The system was later expanded to include most parts of the empire during the remaining of the reform era. Although the original designer of the system was a Shaanxi strategic management-pacifying commissioner and key officials of the strategic management-pacifying commissions were sometimes appointed concurrently as commanders or given the authority to recommend the transfer or promotion (and demotion) of military commanders,⁴¹ it is apparent that as the system evolved, it created in Shaanxi a substantial number of trans-prefectural military zones whose boundaries did not coincide exactly with the existing administrative structure.⁴² It is as if a new layer of administration—one that was created purely by military considerations and that ignored the civil aspects—was imposed onto the existing one. In order to maintain the relative autonomy of the military zones, regular local officials were generally forbidden to interfere with the affairs of which.⁴³

Sima Guang wrote and memorialized the court extensively on these New Policies’ military reforms after he temporarily resumed power in

39 For a succinct discussion of this system, see Wang Zengyu, *Songchao bingzhi chutan*, pp. 95-102.

40 XCB, 256.9b-10a.

41 XCB, 266.14a; 273.13b.

42 Kim Song-gyu, *Sōdai no seihoku mondai to iminzoku seisaku*, pp. 230-34.

43 Luo Qiuqing 罗球庆, “Bei Song bingzhi yanjiu” 〈北宋兵制研究〉, *Xinya xuebao* 《新亚学报》, 3.1(1957): 249-50.

1085, a year before his death.⁴⁴ Two key points that repetitively surface in these memorials are: 1) All these new measures ignored existing regional administrative arrangement and interfered with the authority of local officials, depriving them of the ability to govern their assigned territories effectively. Sima's proposal in general was to entrust regular regional offices with the task of overseeing military affairs and removed all additional court-imposed administrative layers and personnel created during the New Policies years. On the "commander-troop" system, Sima complaint that it deprived local officials the power to deploy troops that were once under their command but now belonged to the newly appointed military commanders. On *baojia*, he advocated successfully for the removal of routine trainings at drill grounds, thus releasing the supervising officials from their most important task. Subsequently, all supervising officials whose power often overwrote those of the local officials were also recalled by the court. 2) The New Policies reliance on conscription for building local militia had greatly impeded agricultural production and brought panic to the once peaceful countryside. As an alternative, he proposed to recruit soldiers through hiring, thus avoiding turning the entire north China into a war zone and the majority of the local population into soldiers. This was one of his ways of limiting the state's direct interference with the local economy and the existing social structure.

With Sima Guang's counteractive approach, the earlier functions of regional administrative apparatuses that were sidelined by New Policies-style military arrangements were partially restored, but not for long. Beginning

44 For some examples, see Sima Guang, "qiba baojia zhuang" 〈乞罢保甲状〉; "qiba jianguan zhuang" 〈乞罢将官状〉; "qiba baojia zhazi" 〈乞罢保甲劄子〉; "qiba tiju guan zhazi" 〈乞罢提举官劄子〉; "qiba baojia zhaozhi changing gongshou zhazi" 〈乞罢保甲招置长名弓手劄子〉 SMGJ, 46.358-59; 47.361-62; 48.367-68; 51.383-84; 54.405-6.

from the late 1080s, many of the New Policies measures were gradually brought back by reform-minded emperors and officials.⁴⁵

Conclusion

How did Wang Anshi and Sima Guang conceive of spatial differences with the context of the empire? One of the purposes of this paper is to show that the question could best be answered by looking at their writings on military affairs. At the heart of the debate concerning *baojia* was whether professional army should be abolished and replaced by local militias built through conscription. Yet this primary concern was often addressed rhetorically from a regional perspective. For Wang Anshi, despite the existence of regional disparities, superimposing onto the society a policy such as *baojia* that was derived from the ideal of antiquity could eventually resolve regional differences and bring all under Heaven into a holistic system. This is entirely consistent with his general vision that the state should shoulder the responsibility of “uniting morality and making [varied] customs uniform” (*yi diaode, tong fengsu* 一道德, 同风俗). In contrast, Sima Guang insisted that the state should refrain from directly interfering with the working of the society and this should begin with the state being sensitive towards the different customs and conditions of different regions. He did not believe that there could be a universal policy that could fit all local conditions. Instead, he advocated for giving the local officials greater autonomy in dealing with local affairs, including the military ones. In Sima’s vision, state policies should be implemented with flexibility according to the peculiar conditions of each region, defined in accordance with existing administrative units. A universal program as envisioned by Wang Anshi that attempted to make all regions uniform was, according to Sima, not only unnecessary but harmful.

45 SS, 192.4782-89.

Wang's And Sima's vision therefore represented two radically different ways of understanding the spatial structure of the empire. In Wang's case, the current state of vast regional differences—not only in terms of a north-south divide, but also in terms of unequal social, economic and cultural developments in different parts of the country—signified a less than ideal form of human existence. The state institutions, designed according to the wisdom of the sages in antiquity and imposed top-down from the court, were perfect for molding the widely diverse territories into a coherent unit. In other words, for Wang the empire in its ideal form would function smoothly as a political entity free of regional disparity and conflict. Sima Guang, on the other hand, envisioned the empire as a collection of regions, each with its own set of priorities that the court should respect. This is not to say that Sima was of the opinion that state apparatus should be removed. On the contrary, as we have seen, Sima still spoke of regions mainly in terms of existing administrative units. But the empire in its ideal form was not, As Wang Anshi would have it, a uniform entity without regional variations. Instead, it was supposed to be a coalition of administrative regions of diverse geographical, social and cultural characters.

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asserted that ‘The Six Classics are all Histories’ (*liu jing jie shi*). Their statements were considered the precursors of the relationship between classical and historical studies in the twentieth century. This article focuses on Wang Yangming’s statement that ‘The Five Classics are all Histories’ to contextualize Wang Yangming’s original meaning in its contemporary intellectual environment and compares with intellectuals’ interpretations in later periods. Based on the comparison of the similarities and differences between Wang Yangming’s conception and other later interpretations, this article shows how the understanding of traditional culture was reconstructed in the context of early twentieth century intellectual transformation from classical studies to historical studies. This article argues that the statement, ‘The Five Classics are all histories,’ should be understood as ‘The Five Classics include Histories’ (*wu jing han shi*). In the context of Wang Yangming’s writing, there is no evidence to show that he had any intention to challenge the orthodox status of the Classics, nor he had agreed that historical studies should be more important than classical studies. More importantly, he did not believe that the Classics should be treated as the object of historical studies, which differs essentially with the interpretations of ‘The Five Classics are all histories’ by scholars in later periods and especially in the twentieth century. Therefore, we should not believe in the relationship between classical and historical studies in the middle and late Ming Dynasty by simply following intellectual interpretations of the twentieth century. It was these intellectuals, and not Wang Yangming himself, who projected their idea of ‘The Five Classics are all Histories’ to confirm their own expectations of reconstructing the modern academic system in China in the twentieth century.

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