

用來談論真實的寫作，在其作為談論真實的媒介的同時，也是所談論的真實的要素——因此用來提及真實的語言被視為是指示物，而有其本身的地位。在所有詩的陳述中皆顯現有這種語言的觀點，並且現代主義者的「散文」著作，如普魯斯特、喬伊斯、吳爾芙、史丹等人的著作中，語言本身被做為一種論述的「內容」，其被重視的程度，就像作為一般的「客體」或「主體」那些真實的非語言要素一樣。在這類的寫作中，「真實」(reality)的呈現(vorgestellt)並沒有像寫作的表明或「提出」(presented)所佔的份量多。這並不是真實被改變成寫作，而是真實能在寫作中被理解，只要語言能說是真實的立現，且能在寫作本身的行為的產物中出現此種真實。這絕非「語言決定論」。相反地，這只是承認被用來呈現真實的語言，是屬於它所欲呈現的那個真實的一部份。

這樣一個語言形式的觀點是過於自我的，如果它不能承認現代主義者寫作的實踐中所產生的文學形式的問題（如混合各種形式類型的實驗、欲證明風格與語意內容的融合的努力、對傳統的類型體制信仰的破壞、拒絕接受類型的規則——特定的事件類型有它們自己「專有的」表現形式的觀點——表明的意義與潛在的意義間的區別的泯除、淡化主觀描述與客觀描述的區分，尤其是堅持要區分字面的語言與比喻的語言是不可能的。），已經無可比擬地證明了所有「自然的」語言，在本質上是比喻的。在現代主義者對敘述的呈現形式與「客觀性」所做的實驗的指引下，顯示了歷史研究的真正核心不可挽救的是意識形態的。

Name or Substance? Between *zhengtong* (正統) and *yitong* (一統)*

Yuri Pines

Unless [the ruler] is able to bring together the Nine Provinces (China) under Unified Rule (*yitong* 一統), he has only the name of Son of Heaven but lacks its substance (Sima Guang 司馬光).¹

Scholars routinely point to the close links between the ideal of political unity (*yitong* 一統 or "the Great Unity" — *da yitong* 大一統) and the concept of a proper or legitimate succession (*zhengtong* 正統) in Chinese political thought. It is less clear, however, whether the impact of the Great Unity paradigm on Chinese political culture was confined to the issue of legitimization, or whether it had broader political implications. To reformulate the question in the words of Howard Wechsler: to which domain did the quest for political unity belong: to that of political ideal only or to political practice as well?²

* I am indebted to Professors Andrew Plaks and Irene Eber, Dr. Michal Biran and to anonymous reader for their insightful remarks to the earlier versions of this paper.

¹ 苟不能使九州合為一統，皆有天子之名而無其實也。(Sima Guang 司馬光, *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 [rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 1992], 69: 2187).

² See Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of*

The present paper tries to analyze the role of the Great Unity paradigm in China's political life beyond the realm of political rhetoric and historiographic conventions. We shall see that already in 221 BCE, the success of the first imperial unification derived in no small measure from the First Emperor's astute manipulation of the common conviction of contemporary thinkers and statesmen that "stability is in unity." Then we shall survey political dynamics of the periods of disunion when two or more contending regimes coexisted on Chinese soil. I hope to show that the declared commitment of major political actors to the goal of unification created the situation of the "zero-sum game" in which nobody could be trusted and no lasting peaceful coexistence between the rivals was possible. This situation effectively hindered the persistence of separatist regimes in "All under Heaven" (*tianxia* 天下), since such regimes were conceived of not only as illegitimate but also as unsustainable. Thus, the adherence to the *da yitong* paradigm eventually became one of the major factors, or even the major factor, which facilitated restoration of the unified empire after periods of disunion.

A. The Great Unity and the Issue of Legitimate Succession

Generations of Chinese historians and political thinkers were preoccupied with the issue of "legitimate succession," endorsing or denying legitimacy of past dynasties. These discussions matured during the Northern Song (北宋, 960-1126), with Ouyang Xiu's (歐陽修, 1007-1072) essay "On Legitimate Succession" (*Zhengtong lun* 正統論). Unlike most of his predecessors, whose discussions of dynastic legitimacy served immediate political needs, Ouyang Xiu sought a

the T'ang Dynasty (New Haven: Yale UP, 1985), 13.

broader theoretical generalization of what is to be considered proper rule. He dismissed as partisan the speculations of earlier thinkers, who discussed the issue of dynastic succession in terms of the "five phases" (*wu xing* 五行 or "five powers" *wu de* 五德) cycle, and downplayed the importance of endless discussions about the moral image of past dynasties. Instead, Ouyang Xiu suggested a more solid basis for determining dynastic legitimacy: the true ruler must occupy a proper position (i.e. that of the Son of Heaven) and, most importantly, he must unify All under Heaven.³

Ouyang Xiu's essay suggests that the issue of unified rule was of primary importance in determining dynastic legitimacy. Ouyang Xiu states explicitly that doubts over dynastic legitimacy can only be resolved through the analysis of the dynasty's actual achievements, of which unification of All under Heaven was the most important. Indeed, Ouyang Xiu invariably denies the legitimacy to those ruling houses which failed to unify the realm, and, conversely, hails as legitimate

³ See Ouyang Xiu, *Zhengtong lun* 正統論, (*Wenzhong ji* 文忠集 16, rpt. *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 [Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1991], Vol. 1102, 129-135). Historical discussions about the issue of "legitimate succession" are summarized by Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤 in *Zhongguo shixue shang zhi zhengtong lun* conveniently 中國史學上之正統論 (rpt. Shanghai: Yuandong, 1996). Rao traces the origins of dynastic legitimacy discussions to the Han dynasty (漢, 206 BCE-220 CE); recently Hirase Takao 平勢隆郎 suggested that the concept of *zhengtong* appeared already in the Zhanguo period (戰國, 453-221 BCE) (see *Saden no shiryō hihan teki kenkyū* 左傳史料批判的研究 (Tōkyō: Kyūko shoin, 1998). Whatever the origins of the *zhengtong* dispute, scholars agree that it achieved theoretical sophistication only during the Song period (see Rao, *Zhengtong*; cf. Chen Fangming 陳芳明, "Songdai zhengtong lun de xingcheng beijing ji qi neirong" 宋代正統論的形成背景及其內容, in: Du Weiyun 杜維運 and Huang Jinxing 黃進興, eds., *Zhongguo shixueshi lunwen xuanji* 中國史學史論文選集 [Taipei, 1980], Vol. 2, pp. 378-401). Ouyang Xiu was not the first thinker to suggest that political unification was the crucial precondition for dynastic legitimacy; such notion appears, albeit less explicitly, already in the writings of Xi Zuochi (習鑿齒, fl. 347-373 CE), whose views are discussed in an insightful study of Andrew Chittick, "Dynastic Legitimacy during the Eastern Chin: Hsi Tso-ch'ih and the Problem of Huan Wen", *Asia Major* 1 (1998), 21-52.

all the unifying dynasties, including the Qin (221-207 BCE). These views were endorsed by many of Ouyang's contemporaries and followers, including one of the most influential political thinkers in Chinese history, Sima Guang (司馬光 1019-1086)⁴

Ouyang Xiu's and Sima Guang's bold withholding of legitimacy from those dynasties that failed to unify the realm is remarkable. After all, the Song dynasty itself did not complete the goal of unification when it grudgingly recognized the Khitan Liao (遼, 915-1125) dynasty's rule over sixteen prefectures of the Central Plain. Although Ouyang Xiu and Sima Guang prudently refrained from discussing the issue of their own dynasty's legitimacy, we may assume that the dangerous political implications of their theory did not go unnoticed.⁵ That two leading statesmen and thinkers nevertheless unequivocally stated their position that legitimacy depended primarily on political unification, suggests that this approach was shared – implicitly at least – by most of their contemporaries.

Indeed, while later thinkers frequently questioned Ouyang Xiu's and Sima Guang's premises on moral or ethnic grounds, the pivotal place of political unification for ensuring political legitimacy was widely endorsed.⁶ These close

⁴ For Sima Guang's views see epigraph. For more on the Song dynasty discussions about legitimate succession, see Rao, *Zhengtong*, 35-49 and 89-124.

⁵ That Ouyang Xiu's theory was potentially detrimental to Song's legitimacy is suggested, for instance, by Richard L. Davis, in "Historiography as Politics in Yang Wei-chen's 'Polemic on Legitimate Succession'" , *T'oung Pao* 69: 1-3 (1983), 39. It worth reminding, however, that the case of the Northern Song was relatively complicated: despite its pretensions, Liao was not unanimously conceived of as Chinese-style dynasty, and its challenge to the concept of unified rule was less pronounced than that to the Chinese world order. The discussion about territorial limits of *yitong*, however, is beyond the scope of the present paper. In what follows I shall concentrate on the problems of political unity roughly within the boundaries of the first Chinese empires, the Qin and the Early Han.

⁶ One of the staunch critics of Ouyang Xiu's views was the Song loyalist, Zheng Sixiao (鄭思肖, 1241-1318), whose refusal to submit to the Mongols resulted in the most radical ethnocentric view of dynastic legitimacy (see his "Gu jin zhengtong

links between *zhengtong* and *yitong* have led some modern scholars to see *da yitong* merely as a legitimization device or a dominating historiographic narrative rather than as political reality. Recently, in a most iconoclastic study, Edward Schafer has argued that *da yitong* was nothing but a myth, "a persistent dream, an unachieved ideal of an archaic golden age," while Prasenjit Duara has similarly suggested that the quest for unity was mostly a product of traditional imperial historiography. Several other Western scholars, particularly specialists in modern politics, have endorsed similar views.⁷

A brief overview may indeed suggest that "the Great Unity" paradigm was merely part of China's imperial rhetoric. The proclaimed desire to unify All under Heaven was all too often nothing but a symbolic manipulation aimed to bolster the ruler's prestige without any actual commitment to attaining this goal. Thus, for instance, the last notorious ruler of the Southern state of Wu (吳, 222-280), Sun Hao (孫皓, r. 264-280), who was in no position to lay claim to the Central Plain, nevertheless enfeoffed his sons as "kings" of the northern principalities such as Lu 魯, Qi 齊, and even Zhongshan 中山 and Dai 代 far to the North.⁸ A thousand years later, in 1214, when the state of Jin (金, 1115-1234)

dalun" 古今正統大論, in: *Zheng Sixiao Ji* 鄭思肖集 [Shanghai: Guji, 1991], 132-137). A century later Fang Xiaoru (方孝孺, 1357-1402) added moral dimensions to Zheng Sixiao's ethnic arguments (see Rao, *Zhengtong*, 57-58 and 151-57). Other voices of dissatisfaction with Ouyang Xiu's theory were heard throughout the imperial period; they, however, remained in a clear minority (see Rao, *Zhengtong*; see also Davis, "Historiography").

⁷ See Schafer, "The *Yeh chung chi*" , *T'oung Pao*, 76, 4-5 (1990), 148; Duara, "Provincial Narratives of the Nation: Federalism and Centralism in Modern China" , in idem, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1995), 184 *et passim*. The tendency to view China's unity as ephemeral became particularly pronounced among some scholars of modern China, after the dissolution of the USSR and the Tiananmen incident (see Maria H. Chang, "China's Future: Regionalism, Federalism or Disintegration," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 25, 3 [1992], 211-27; Gerald Segal, "China Changes Stage: Regionalism and Foreign Policy," *ADELPHI*, 287 [March 1994]).

⁸ These proclamations were made in 269 and in 280 when the state of Wu was

was at the nadir of its power, its Presidential Council (*shang shu sheng* 尚書省) boldly claimed: "we have now annexed Liao and Song and unified the Land of Xia [China]." ⁹ There are many more examples of this kind. Shall we assume then that *da yitong* was indeed primarily a political convention, like the frequent declarations of a dynasty's international superiority, which belonged mostly to the realm of imperial rhetoric rather than to political reality?¹⁰

In the following discussion I shall suggest that this reductionist interpretation of the *da yitong* paradigm is misleading. Far from being confined to issues of legitimization issues and historiographic considerations, the Great Unity ideal was present as a motivating force in the thought, writings and actions of political leaders and thinkers in the situation of endemic conflict embedded in the multi-state system which recurred on Chinese soil during periods of disunion. To illustrate this, I shall first trace the origins of the concept of *da yitong* to show that it became the common legacy of the formative period of Chinese political thought, the Zhanguo age (戰國, 453-221 BCE), and that this unanimous quest for political unity played a crucial role in facilitating the success of the Qin 秦 unification in 221 BCE. Second, by analyzing the impact of *da yitong* on political

approaching its ignominious defeat by the state of Jin 晉, and Sun Hao was in no position to plan an attack against the north. See Chen Shou 陳壽, *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua 1997), 48: 1170-74.

⁹ See *Da Jin deyun tushuo* 大金德運圖說 rpt. in: *Siku quanshu* vol. 648, p. 321. For details see Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China: Discussions under the Jurchen-Chin Dynasty (1115-1234)* (Seattle: Un. of Washington Press, 1984; cf. his translation on p. 169).

¹⁰ For an excellent study of imperial rhetoric and its relationship to actual political reality, see Wang Gungwu, "The Rhetoric of a Lesser Empire: Early Sung Relations with its Neighbors", in Morris Rossabi, ed., *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries* (Berkeley: Un. of California Press, 1983), 47-65. Compare with Alexander S. Martynov, *Status Tibeta v XVII-XVIII vv. v Traditsionnoj Kitajskoj Sisteme Politicheskikh Predstavlenij* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), 40 *et passim*.

strategies during the periods of disunion, I shall try to show that the proclaimed adherence to a unified state played a major role in preventing formation of long-lived separatist entities on Chinese soil, contributing thereby to the constant resurrection of unified rule. Finally, I hope that this discussion will allow us a better understanding of the background and the reasons for Ouyang Xiu's and Sima Guang's endorsement of the Great Unity paradigm as the core of dynastic legitimacy.

B. "Stability is in Unity" – The Political Legacy of the Pre-Imperial Period

Scholars disagree when and how the Great Unity paradigm emerged, with answers ranging from the Shang (商 c. 1570-1045 BCE) and Western Zhou (西周, 1045-771 BCE) to the Tang (唐, 618-906 CE) periods.¹¹ While most of these assertions are well grounded, the evidence suggests, nonetheless, that the crucial

¹¹ The Shang-Western Zhou date for the emergence of the quest for unity was suggested in a not very convincing study by Xiao Junhe 蕭君和, *Zhonghua tongyi shi* 中華統一史 (Harbin: Heilongjiang jiaoyu, 1997). Yanaka Shinji 谷中信一 suggested late Zhanguo-early Han dating ("Sengoku jidai kōki ni okeru tai ittō shisō no tenkai" 戰國時代後期における大一統思想の展開, *Nihon Chūgoku gakkai gojū shūnen kinen ronbunshū* 日本中國學會 50 周年記念論文集 [Tōkyō, 1996], 1303-1320). Michael Loewe traces the origins of the *da yitong* to the Former Han dynasty (206 BCE-8 CE) (see his "China's Sense of Unity As Seen in the Early Empire," *T'oung Pao* 80, 1-3 [1994], 6-26); Mansvelt B. J. Beck suggested that it appeared in the Later Han (25-220 CE) ("The Fall of the Han," in M. Loewe and Denis Twitchett, eds. *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 1: The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 B.C. - A.D. 220* [Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1986], 369-376); Qiu Jiurong 邱久榮 attributed it to the idealization of the Han rule during the subsequent period of disunion (220-589 CE) ("Wei Jin Nanbeichao shiqi de da yitong sixiang" 魏晉南北朝時期的大一統思想, *Zhongyang minzu xueyuan xuebao* 中央民族學院學報 4, [1993], 45-51); while Denis Twitchett suggested the Sui-Tang unification (589-906) as the crucial period during which the ideal of unitary state was formed ("Introduction," in: *The Cambridge History of China. Vol. 3: Sui and Tang China, Pt. 1*, [Cambridge, 1979], 7).

period in the formation of the *da yitong* paradigm was the age of turmoil preceding the emergence of unified rule in 221 BCE. The collapse of the multi-state system of the Chunqiu (春秋, 722-453 BCE) and the subsequent Zhanguo age in particular played the pivotal role in the unanimous quest for political unification which was shared by almost all of the known Zhanguo thinkers.

There is no need to discuss here in great detail the futile attempts of Chunqiu statesmen to establish a viable multi-state system on the ruins of the Western Zhou dynastic rule.¹² Centuries of search for inter-state stability failed to generate appropriate norms for settling international disputes. Neither ritual rules of international intercourse (*li* 禮), nor the elaborate system of alliances (*meng* 盟), neither an appeal to mutual trust (*xin* 信), nor the invocation of deities and spirits as guardians of international order could deal adequately with the intrinsic conflict embedded in the multi-state system. Similarly, statesmen's hopes that a powerful hegemon (*ba* 霸) would enforce stability through his military superiority were of little avail to the beleaguered Chunqiu world. The common desire to acquire lands at the expense of weaker neighbors invalidated inter-state agreements and engendered perpetual military conflicts. By the mid-sixth century BCE major states, such as Chu 楚, Jin 晉 or Wu 吳, abandoned their former pretension to act in accord with reciprocal norms of inter-state relations and with increasing candor manifested their belief that "might is right." Consequently, late Chunqiu statesmen concentrated

¹² For the detailed discussion, see Yuri Pines, " 'The One that pervades All' in Ancient Chinese Political Thought: Origins of 'The Great Unity Paradigm' " (*T'oung Pao*, forthcoming).

on protecting the interests of their state, and were less inclined to search for solutions that would restore stability to the entire Zhou world.¹³ As Chunqiu statesmen admitted their inability to provide international stability, the way was open for new political actors and new approaches.

The Chunqiu period remained unique in Chinese history, as the only age when statesmen sought to perfect the multi-state system rather than demolish it. "An intellectual breakthrough" in the late Chunqiu - Zhanguo years resulted, among other things, in a new vision of the international order.¹⁴ This vision was suggested by members of the newly ascendant stratum of *shi* 士. Unlike Chunqiu hereditary ministers, whose concerns were typically confined to the needs of a single state, the *shi* frequently crossed borders in search of better appointments. Accordingly, they were better aware of the need to ensure stability for the entire Zhou realm. Confucius (孔子, 551-479 BCE), the first of the eminent *shi* thinkers, was also the first to propose the restoration of centralized rule in All under Heaven. Confucius suggested that only the Son of Heaven should have the right

¹³ Early Chunqiu statesmen commonly argued that to achieve international supremacy the ruler must abide by moral and ritual norms of inter-state intercourse. By the late Chunqiu, however, these sentiments were regarded obsolete; many of the leading statesmen of that period frankly admitted that only he who never fails to act resolutely and harshly would subdue other overlords. For more of the late Chunqiu intellectual trends, see Yuri Pines, "The Search for Stability: Late Ch'un-ch'iu Thinkers", *Asia Major*, 10, (1997), pp. 1-47.

¹⁴ For the designation of the Chunqiu-Zhanguo intellectual activities as "intellectual breakthrough", see Yu Yingshi 余英時, "Zhongguo gudai zhishi jieceng de xingqi yu fazhan" 中國古代知識階層的興起與發展, Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo 中央研究院歷史語言研究所, *Zhongguo shanggu shi daiding gao* 中國上古史待定稿 (Taipei, 1985), Vol. 4, 51-110.

to issue “rites, music and punitive expeditions,” at the expense of the overlords (*zhuhou* 諸侯). This suggestion, despite its explicit resort to the bygone Zhou model, was highly innovative for its time – none of Confucius' contemporaries or immediate predecessors had ever suggested curbing the overlords' power.¹⁵ Confucius' desire to restrain the forces of disintegration on the international level inspired future generations of thinkers to raise the banner of political unification as the only solution to the inter-state turmoil.

The issue of unity figures prominently in Zhanguo discourse. The second of the major pre-Qin thinkers, Mozi (墨子, c. 468-390 BCE), went one step further towards pursuing the goal of political unification. Mozi considered political and social fragmentation a major malady of contemporary society. He discarded the Western Zhou model as inefficient, and searched for new, more stable patterns of state formation. Accordingly, Mozi proposed a model of a highly centralized state in which all major functionaries remain under close surveillance of the Son of Heaven, and ideological uniformity solidifies political unity.¹⁶ Although, like Confucius, Mozi did not offer practical ways of attaining unity, his model was a further step towards the quest for the unitary state.

Another eminent Zhanguo thinker, Laozi (老子, fourth century BCE?), provided

¹⁵ See Confucius' views in Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, annot., *Lunyu yizhu* 論語譯注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), “Ji shi” 季氏 16.2: 174. Hereafter I discuss Zhanguo philosophical texts as if they are truly representative of the views of the thinkers to whom these texts are ascribed. Needless to say, this is done for the sake of the current discussion only and does not represent my views of the authenticity of these texts. For more about the innovative role of Confucius' vision, see Pines, “Confucianism, ‘The Great Unity Paradigm’ and Chinese Political Culture”, paper presented at the Commemoration Conference of Confucius' 2550th Birthday, Beijing, October 1999.

¹⁶ Mozi discussed this ideal state organization in his “Elevating the Uniformity” (or “Identifying with Superiors”, *Shang tong* 尚同) chapters. See Wu Yujiang 吳毓江, *Mozi jiaozhu* 墨子校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1994) “Shang tong shang 尚同上” 11:109-110.

further philosophical stipulations for political unification. Although Laozi's political ideal is usually identified with the communal utopia of a “tiny state, small population,” proposed in par. 80 of his text,¹⁷ a careful reading indicates that Laozi nonetheless envisioned a unified realm and even provided a metaphysical basis for this goal. Laozi's emphasis on the principle of Oneness (*yi* 壹), which refers to the epistemological unity of the universe, to the Dao as the single progenitor of the “myriad things” and to the single principle of the functioning of the Cosmos and of society, eventually led him to the notion that the unifying principle of Oneness on the cosmic level had to be matched by political unity below.¹⁸ Consequently, elevation of the Oneness led to the elevation of the ruler:

Therefore, the *Dao* is great, Heaven is great, Earth is great, and the King is also great. There are four [who are] great in the state, and the King is one of these.¹⁹

This passage attributes to the ruler unprecedented metaphysical importance. Elevation of the King to the position of virtual equality with *Dao*, Heaven, and Earth, the three ultimate unifying forces of the Cosmos, led in due course to the idea of the Single Ruler in All under Heaven. This interpretation is supported by the *Laozi's* discussion of the practical matters concerning the unification of *tianxia*; several times the text discusses the proper way to “attain All under Heaven.”²⁰ Unlike Mozi, Laozi might have envisioned a loose unification, but

¹⁷ See, for instance, A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao* (La Salle: Open Court, 1989), 234.

¹⁸ For the *Laozi's* discussion of the Oneness or One (一), see Gao Ming 高明, *Boshu Laozi jiaozhu* 帛書老子校注, Beijing: Zhonghua, 1996), pars. 39, 42, 54.

¹⁹ 故道大，天大，地大，王亦大。國中有四大，而王局一焉。(par. 25). This is in accord with both Mawangdui 馬王堆 versions; the Guodian 郭店 version places Dao after Earth (see Jingmenshi Bowuguan 荊門市博物館, *Guodian Chumu zhujian* 郭店楚墓竹簡 [Beijing: Wenwu, 1998], 112).

²⁰ See, for instance, paragraphs 48 and 57, where Laozi suggests seizing All under Heaven through

he evidently rejected the persistence of the multi-state world.

Laozi's concept of the ruler's equality with *Dao* had a strong impact on political forms of Daoism, often designated as the Huang-Lao 黃老 "school". These commonly emphasized the unique position of the ruler, his virtual equality with Heaven and Earth and his task to cherish the lives of all beings.²¹ The unique position of the ruler as the generator of the proper order in All under Heaven implied that he had to preside over the unified realm. Shen Dao (慎到, fl. late fourth century) argued: "When All under Heaven lack the single esteemed [person], then there is no way to carry out the principles [of orderly government, *li* 理]." ²² Similar arguments, namely that only a single ruler can ensure the proper functioning of All under Heaven were expressed in the mid-third-century BCE compendium, *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, and in several other late Zhanguo texts.²³

the lack of activities (*wu shi* 無事); cf. par. 29. See also par. 61, which discusses the proper ways of the great state to annex the small state (*Boshu Laozi*, 123-25).

²¹ The *Jing fa* 經法 manuscript, unearthed in 1973 in Mawangdui states: "The ruler of men [equals?] Heaven and Earth." 人主者，天地之□也。(The missing character is in all likelihood *san* 參 [one who stands in trinity with]. See Mawangdui Hanmu boshu zhengli xiaozu 馬王堆漢墓帛書整理小組, *Jing fa* [Beijing: Wenwu, 1976], "Lun" 論, p. 27). Similarly, authors of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 attributed to the Son of Heaven the unique Heaven-like function of cherishing the life of all human beings generated by Heaven (Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoyi* 呂氏春秋校譯 [Shanghai: Xuelin, 1990], "Ben sheng" 本生 1:20).

²² 天下無一貴，則理無由通。Shenzi 慎子, "Wei de" 威德。Quoted from P.M. Thompson, *The Shen tzu Fragments* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1979), p.240. For Shen Dao's views, see Roger T. Ames, *The Art of Rulership* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 72-5; Randall P. Peerenboom, *Law and Morality in Ancient China* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 229-234. Shen Dao's views of the political implementation of the *Laozi*'s theory were echoed by Han Feizi (韓非子, d. 233 BCE) (see Hsiao-po Wang and Leo S. Chang, *The Philosophical Foundations of Han Fei's Political Theory* [Honolulu: U. of Hawaii Press, 1986], 6-12).

²³ "The true king upholds Oneness and becomes the Rectifier of the myriad things. The army needs the general, thereby it is unified. The state needs the ruler, thereby it is unified. All under Heaven needs the Son of Heaven, thereby it is unified. The Son of Heaven upholds oneness, thereby unifying it [the realm]. Oneness means [proper] government; doubleness means chaos." (*Lüshi chunqiu* "Zhi yi" 執一, 17: 1132). For similar views in other Zhanguo texts, see, for instance, the *Guanzi* 管子 (Xie Haofan 謝浩範 and Zhu Yingping 朱迎平, *Guanzi quanyi* 管子全譯 [Guiyang: Guizhou

Not only adherents of the Huang-Lao school stressed the desirability of the unified rule; other thinkers shared this conviction. Confucius' followers played a particularly important role in promoting the quest for unity. They were moved primarily by the sense of urgent political necessity to put an end to the ever-increasing international turmoil, wars and suffering. Mencius (孟子, c. 379-304 BCE) expressed these views best. King Xiang of Wei (魏襄王, r. 318-296 BCE) asked him "How to stabilize All under Heaven?" Mencius plainly replied: "Stability is in unity."²⁴ Mencius' saying may be considered the motto of Zhanguo thought.²⁵ Unification of the Zhou realm was the only rational way to put an end to the continuous bloodshed of the Warring States.

Other followers of Confucius frequently invoked the Master's authority to emphasize the primacy of the goal of unification. Some quoted Confucius' alleged saying: "Heaven does not have two suns, the people do not have two kings."²⁶ Others, like the authors of the *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳, conceived the quest for unity as one of the most important aspects of Confucius' political

renmin, 1996], "Ba yan" 霸言 23: 357); *Jing fa*, "Liu fen" 六分, pp. 16-17; and *Han Feizi* (Zhou Zhongling 周鍾令 et al, *Han Feizi suoyin* 韓非子索引, "Yang quan" 揚權 8:739).

²⁴ 定於一。(Yang Bojun, *Mengzi yizhu* 孟子譯注 [Beijing: Zhonghua, 1992], "Liang Hui Wang A" 梁惠王上 1.6: 17-18).

²⁵ We may recall here a lamentation of the authors of the *Lüshi chunqiu* who bitterly complained, shortly after the annihilation of the remnants of the Zhou house in 256 BCE: "Nowadays, the house of Zhou is already destroyed, [the line of] the Sons of Heaven is already severed. There is no turmoil greater than the absence of the Son of Heaven; without the Son of Heaven, the strong overcome the weak, the many lord it over the few, they incessantly use arms to harm each other." (今周室既滅而天子已絕。亂莫大於無天子，無天子則強者勝弱，眾者暴寡，以兵相殘，不得休息。 *Lüshi chunqiu* "Jin ting" 謹聽 13: 705; cf. "Guan shi" 觀世 16: 958).

²⁶ 天無二日，民無二王。(Mengzi "Wan Zhang A" 萬章上 9.4: 215). Several chapters of the *Liji* 禮記 cite this saying differently: "There are no two suns in the sky, nor two kings on Earth." (天無二日，地無二王。Sun Xidan 孫希旦, *Liji jijie* 禮記集解 [Beijing: Zhonghua, 1996], 7:522; 30: 1283; 49: 1470).

legacy, as delivered in the *Chun qiu* 春秋.* Yet others concentrated on ritual imperative of preserving the single instigator of “rites, music and punitive expeditions,” which meant that a ruler who lacks this power is not a true king.²⁷

Ritual compendia of the late Zhanguo, which highlighted the uniquely exalted position of the Son of Heaven in the Zhou ritual system, undermined the legitimacy of the self-proclaimed Zhanguo kings, and had a strong impact on the language of Zhanguo discourse. The terms “true king” (*wangzhe* 王者) and “Son of Heaven” (*tianzi* 天子) in Zhanguo philosophical texts refer neither to the self-proclaimed kings of the Zhanguo states, nor to the shadowy figure of the Zhou sovereign, but exclusively to the omnipotent ruler of a future unified realm.²⁸ This terminology reflects the thinkers' conviction that the current state of fragmentation of All under Heaven was an anomaly that should be overcome after unification; only then would a true king reign.

Thus, Zhanguo thinkers supplied justifications from different

* The *Gongyang zhuan* begins with the following explanation of the *Chun qiu* text: “Why does [the *Chun qiu*] say ‘the King’s first month?’ – To magnify the unified rule.” (何言乎王正月？大一統也。See *Gongyang zhuan* rpt. *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏 [Beijing: Zhonghua, 1991], Yin 1, 1:2196). The *Gongyang zhuan* was apparently composed in the mid-Zhanguo, but it was first recorded only during Jingdi’s reign in the Han dynasty (景帝, r. 156-141 BCE). The *Gongyang* repeatedly insists that the Son of Heaven must rule over the unified realm; no lands can be external to his rule (Yin 1, 1:2199; Xi 24, 12:2259; Cheng 12, 18:2295). Elsewhere the *Gongyang* reiterates: “The desire of the [true] King is to unify All under Heaven.” (王者欲一乎天下。Cheng 15, 18:2297).

²⁷ See, for instance the “Qu li” 曲禮 chapters of the *Liji*. These chapters were apparently compiled in the mid-Zhanguo period (see Yoshimoto Michimasa 吉本道雅, “Kyōkurei kō” 曲禮考, in: *Chūgoku kodai reisei kenkyū* 中國古代禮制研究 [Kyoto: Kyoto U., 1995], 117-163).

²⁸ This analysis of the usage of the terms *tianxia* and *tianzi* in late Zhanguo discourse was suggested by H.G. Creel in *Shen Pu-hai* (Chicago: The U. of Chicago Press, 1974), 59-60, 200; cf. Ishii Kōmei 石井宏明, *Dong Zhou wangchao yanjiu* 東周王朝研究 (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu daxue, 1999), 159-72. “Kings” of the Zhanguo states dared not proclaim themselves Sons of Heaven; the only exception was the attempt by the notorious King Min of Qi (齊閔王, r. 300-283 BCE), but his claims were rejected even by the weakest of his neighbors, Lu 魯 and Zou 鄒 (see He Jianzhang 何建章, *Zhanguo ce zhushi* 戰國策注釋 [Beijing: Zhonghua, 1991] “Zhao ce 趙策 3” 20.13: 737).

angles – political, philosophical and ritual – of the goal of unification. By the late Zhanguo period the need for unification was clear and thinkers concentrated accordingly mostly on practical question, how to achieve unification and how to preserve the future unified state from renewed disintegration.²⁹ Xunzi (荀子, c. 310-218 BCE), for instance, believed that the ability to “jointly rule All under Heaven” was the major achievement of the Duke of Zhou (周公, d. c. 1037) and that it was the most important goal of the “Great Ru” 大儒 in general.³⁰ But how to achieve this goal? Xunzi apparently rejected the possibility of forceful unification; he believed that it could be achieved peacefully, and that the moral superiority of the Son of Heaven would suffice to ensure his dominance. Xunzi was not unique in disliking violence; all the thinkers surveyed above shared the same anti-militaristic sentiments and avoided recommending unification of the realm by coercive means.³¹

²⁹ Most interestingly, even those statesmen and thinkers whose personal interests should have discouraged them from advocating unification, namely representatives of the “school of alliances” (*zonghengjia* 縱橫家), nevertheless shared a belief in the need for unity. Although these skillful diplomats personally benefited from the Zhanguo international disorder, and might have suspected that future unification would invalidate their skills, they dared not advocate legitimacy of the multi-state order. Even the leading representative of this school, Su Qin (蘇秦, d. 284 BCE), or the anonymous authors of his speeches, realized that the international order was doomed. Hence, during his alleged meeting with King Hui of Qin (秦惠王, r. 337-311 BCE), Su Qin vividly depicted the demise of the multi-state system and consequently suggested “to annex the overlords’ [states], to swallow the world, to declare yourself emperor and to bring about orderly rule.” (*Zhanguo ce*, “Qin ce 秦策 1” 3.1: 74). Evidently, the need for unity was apparent to almost every Zhanguo political figure.

³⁰ See Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1992), “Ru xiao” 儒效 8: 114-116 and 8: 138. Cf. Xunzi’s emphasis that the ability to effectively unify the world is the major feature of the Son of Heaven (“Wang zhi” 王制 9:171).

³¹ Xunzi argued that the “Great Ru” “would do nothing to attain All under Heaven if this requires acting unrighteously or killing an innocent person.” (*Xunzi* “Ru xiao” 8: 120-21; cf. “Wang zhi” 9:158). Similar sentiments were shared among others by Confucius, Mozi, Laozi and Mencius. The

Practical ways of achieving unification were supplied, in the final analysis, neither by Confucian ethics nor by Daoists' philosophy, but by the cynical and realistic doctrine of "agriculture and war" (*nong zhan* 農戰) developed by the Legalist (*fajia* 法家) thinkers, particularly by the eminent Zhanguo statesman, Shang Yang (商鞅, d. 338 BCE). Shang Yang ridiculed those thinkers who advised the rulers to emulate the patterns of the sage kings of antiquity and achieve unification by primarily non-military means. "These ways are blocked for a long time, but contemporary rulers are unable to dismiss them; hence, the three dynasties lack the fourth one," he said.³²

To establish the fourth dynasty Shang Yang recommended acting resolutely both at home and abroad. Warfare, in particular, was an indispensable means of acquiring true kingship. However, warfare alone was insufficient to ensure universal rule; it had to be accompanied by a series of political, economical, and mostly administrative undertakings aimed at firm integration of the newly acquired lands into the expanding state. Shang Yang suggested a systematic series of measures designed to turn the state into an apparatus of expansion with the ultimate aim of universal rule. Shang Yang's views were further modified by later Legalist thinkers, particularly Han Feizi (韓非子, d. 233 BCE) and Li Si (李斯, d. 208 BCE),³³ whose efforts, coupled with victories on the field of battle,

most radical opposition to military unification was, perhaps, that of the late fourth - early third century BCE thinkers Song Xing 宋銜 and Yin Wen 尹文 from the state of Qi, whose radical imperative: "Forbid aggression, disband troops" is mentioned in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (see Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *Zhuangzi jinzhuyi* 莊子今注今譯 [Beijing: Zhonghua, 1994], "Tianxia" 天下 33: 870-871).

³² 此道之塞久矣，而世主莫之能廢也，古三代不四。 (Jiang Lihong 蔣禮鴻, *Shang jun shu zhuzhi* 商君書錐指 [Beijing: Zhonghua, 1996], "Kai sai" 開塞 7:54-55).

³³ For a detailed analysis of Shang Yang's thought see, for instance, Liu Zehua 劉澤華, *Zhongguo zhengzhi sixiang shi* 中國政治思想史 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin, 1996), 291-314. For Han Feizi's modification of Shang Yang's ideas, see Han Feizi, "Ding fa" 定法 43: 841-42 *et passim*; for Li Si's views, see *Shiji* 史記 (rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1992) 87: 2539-63.

facilitated Qin unification in 221 BCE.

Qin's success was indeed amazing. We might be reminded that Zhanguo states harbored a deep hatred towards Qin, and contemporary statesmen frequently designated it as the "land of wolves and jackals." Nevertheless, no significant attempt was made to reestablish the vanquished states either during the Qin campaigns of 230-221 BCE, or later, during the First Emperor's reign (221-210 BCE); no serious resistance movement tried to regain independence. Why do the leaders of the Warring States seem to give up independent rule with such ease?³⁴

Part of the answer is, of course, the series of successful political and administrative measures undertaken by the First Emperor and his chief aide, Li Si, to solidify their unprecedented achievement.³⁵ Yet, these measures do not sufficiently explain the rapid and undeniable success of the unification in the short term. The rest of the answer is suggested by an implacable critic of Qin, the Han statesman Jia Yi (賈誼, 199-166 BCE), who wrote:

Qin appropriated all within the seas, annexed the overlords' [states]; [its ruler] faced south and called himself emperor; thus he nourished all within the four seas, and the gentlemen of All under Heaven docilely bowed before his wind. Why did this happen?

³⁴ For Zhanguo hatred of Qin, see *Zhanguo ce* ("Xi Zhou ce" 西周策 2.3: 49; "Chu ce 楚策 1" 14.17: 508; "Zhao ce 3" 20.10: 726; "Wei ce 魏策 3" 24.10: 907). Although one might have expected a prolonged struggle against the Qin conquest, aside from two ill-prepared attempts to restore the extinguished states of Zhao 趙 and Chu 楚 in 228 and 224 BCE respectively, and a rebellion in the former Han 韓 lands in 226, the unification was remarkably smooth. It was only during the self-destructive rule of Hu Hai 胡亥, the notorious Second Emperor (二始皇帝, r. 210-207 BCE), that major uprisings began.

³⁵ For the Qin unification measures, see *Shiji* 6: 235-263. See also Derk Bodde, "The State and Empire of Ch'in," in: *Cambridge History of China: Vol. 1, 52-72*; Li Ling 李零, "Qin Han liyi zhong de zongjiao - guanyu 'Shiji fengshanshu' he 'Han shu jiaosizhi' de kaoguxue sikao" 秦漢禮儀中的宗教--關於史記封禪書和漢書郊祀志的考古學思考, paper presented at the U. of California, Berkeley, Feb. 1997.

I would reply that in recent generations the world had for a long time been without [a true] king. The Zhou house had sunk into insignificance, the Five Hegemons had passed from the scene, and no commands were obeyed under Heaven. Hence, the overlords in governing relied on strength alone, the strong impinging on the weak, the many lording it over the few; arms and armor were never set aside, and the people grew exhausted and impoverished. Now, after Qin faced south and ruled All under Heaven, this meant that there was a Son of Heaven above. The masses hoped that they would obtain peace and security and there was nobody who did not whole-heartedly look up in reverence. This was the moment to preserve authority and stabilize achievements, the foundations of lasting peace.³⁶

An astute thinker, Jia Yi realized that popular support of the long-awaited unification was the crucial factor in Qin's final success. After the long period of turmoil and wars, the people obtained peace and security; hence they willingly accepted Qin's domination. The Qin rulers, particularly the First Emperor, were aware of these feelings, and manipulated them to legitimize their rule. The issue of peace and tranquility for the "black-headed" people of All under Heaven was the pivot of Qin's propaganda and of the emperor's self-glorification, as exemplified by the texts of the stone tablets, erected by First Emperor in the newly conquered regions of his realm. The emperor reminded everybody that he

³⁶ 秦并海內，兼諸侯，南面稱帝，以養四海，天下之士斐然鄉風，若是者何也？曰：近古之無王者久矣。周室卑微，五霸既歿，令不行於天下，是以諸侯力政，疆侵弱，眾暴寡，兵革不休，士民罷敝。今秦南面而王天下，是上有天子也。既元元之民冀得安其性命，莫不虛心而仰上。當此之時，守威定功，安危之本在於此也。(Shiji 6.283; modifying B. Watson's translation, *Records of the Grand Historian*. Vol. 3: *Qin Dynasty*, [Hong Kong: Chinese U. of Hong Kong, 1993], 80-81).

"brought peace to All under Heaven,"³⁷ so that the "black-headed people are at peace, never needing to take up arms;"³⁸ that "he wiped out the mighty and unruly, rescuing the black-headed people, bringing stability to the four corners of the empire,"³⁹ and that by "uniting All under Heaven, he put an end to harm and disaster, and then forever he put aside arms."⁴⁰ This propaganda referred directly to the principle of "stability in unity" and we may plausibly assume that it enjoyed a positive response from broad segments of the populace.

Qin, thus, was the first dynasty to invoke successful political unification of the realm as the core of its legitimization. The survey of Qin inscriptions furthermore suggests that the importance of *da yitong* in Qin propaganda by far outweighed other legitimization devices, such as resort to the five phases cosmogony.⁴¹ By unifying the realm Qin achieved, even if only for a brief while, peace and security for the populace, and this achievement was the major source of compliance with its harsh rule. Qin set thereby an important precedent for the succeeding dynasties: henceforth, political unification became the primary goal of the dynastic founders, a precondition for obtaining concrete popular support – and not only historiographic legitimacy.

The anti-Qin rebellion of 209-207 and the ensuing civil war provided those who might have dreamed of the reestablishment of the pre-imperial order with convincing arguments in favor of continuing unification. A powerful rebel leader, Xiang Yu (項羽, d. 202), decided to reestablish the multi-state order, with grave

³⁷ See the Liangfu 梁父 inscription (219): *Shiji* 6.243; Watson, *Records*, 46.

³⁸ The Langye 琅邪 inscription (219): *Shiji* 6.245; Watson, *Records*, 48.

³⁹ The Zhifu 之罘 inscription (218): *Shiji* 6.249; Watson, *Records*, 51.

⁴⁰ The Zhifu inscription: *Shiji* 6.250; Watson, *Records*, 51.

⁴¹ For the Qin search for cosmological foundations for its power, see *Shiji* 6: 237-238.

consequences for all. Initially, Xiang Yu favored the idea of a loosely unified empire under the puppet emperor Yi Di (義帝, d. 206), but he soon changed his mind. After assassinating Yi Di in 206, Xiang Yu attempted to govern All under Heaven from the position of "hegemon-king" (*bawang* 霸王). However, the void of legitimate power eventually led to chaos, and the war of all against all devastated most of the Chinese world. Under these conditions, the need for unification became apparent to most political actors. The major reason for the ultimate success of Xiang Yu's rival, Liu Bang (劉邦, d. 195) was his skill in establishing himself as the only candidate able to restore unity and to bring an end to turmoil and war. The banner of unity raised by Liu Bang enabled him to attain the support of outstanding advisors and generals. After ascending the throne, Liu Bang preserved major aspects of the Qin imperial structure intact, testifying to the continued popularity of the Great Unity ideal.⁴² Future contenders for the Mandate learned the lesson: only a would-be unifier could rely on popular support. Henceforth, unification meant legitimation.

C. The *Da yitong* Paradigm and the Restoration of the Unified Empire

The above discussion suggested that the prevalent quest for unity played a

⁴² Although in the course of his struggle Liu Bang had to make concessions to his generals and granted them a semi-independent status of "kings/princes" (*wang* 王), he evidently never envisioned resurrecting the Zhou order. Shortly after the Han victory, independent kings were replaced by members of the Liu clan, but even this compromise derived primarily from the weakness of the central government rather than from its intention to preserve autonomous units within the empire. The first century of Han rule is marked by the steady reduction of the kingdoms' size and authority until a sufficient degree of centralization had been achieved in Wudi's 武帝 reign (r. 141-87 BCE) (see a detailed discussion by Michael Loewe, "The Former Han Dynasty," in: *Cambridge History of China: Vol. 1*, 103-179).

major role in facilitating Qin imperial unification. Of similar significance was the impact of the *da yitong* paradigm on patterns of political behavior during the later periods of disunion. In the following pages I shall try to show that the prevailing belief in the exclusive legitimacy of unified rule prevented the emergence of lasting separatist regimes on Chinese soil during the periods of dynastic disintegration, contributing thereby to the recurrence of the unified rule after ages of anarchy and chaos.

The period I have chosen to illustrate this point is the long age of turmoil following the disintegration of the Han dynasty in the late second century CE, the so-called Wei-Jin-Nanbeichao period (魏晉南北朝, 220-589). Except for the brief unification under the Jin dynasty in 280-304, China remained divided between two or more contending regimes, many of which were established by alien peoples from northern and western frontiers. Local potentates and other "heroes of the age of chaos" (*luan shi yinxiong* 亂世英雄) seized the opportunity to carve out princedoms and mini-empires that mushroomed at the outskirts of the former Han realm. Regionalism, ever present in China's history, seemed to acquire new political dimensions.⁴³ Generations of division might have encouraged the rivals to conceive of a newly emerging multi-state system as a *fait accompli*. This, however, did not happen.

Even from a superficial glance at the dynamics of Wei-Jin-Nanbeichao political life we may discern the constantly present desire to reunify the realm. Not only

⁴³ Regionalism, namely the desire to preserve local economic and political interests, was an ever present force on the Chinese political scene (see, for instance, a discussion by Franz Michael, "Introduction: Regionalism in Nineteenth-Century China," in: Stanley Spector, *Li Hung-chang and the Huai Army: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Chinese Regionalism* (Seattle: U. of Washington Press, 1964), xxi-xliii. For regionalism in the Later Han, see Hans Bielenstein "Wang Mang, The Restoration of the Han Dynasty and Later Han", in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 1*, 240-287.

powerful states such as Wei (魏, 220-265) and Western Jin (西晉, 265-316) sought to restore Han glory by reestablishing the unitary state; weaker regimes shared this goal as well. For instance, the state of Shu-Han (蜀漢, 221-263) exhausted its resources in futile attempts to conquer the Central Plain, pursuing the course of unification to the point of self-destruction. The state of Wu, albeit less active militarily, nevertheless displayed its adherence to the goal of reunification at the symbolic level, as mentioned above.⁴⁴

The fourth- and fifth-century nomadic and semi-nomadic rulers of the Central Plain remained declaratively committed to the *da yitong* paradigm. For instance, Shi Le 石勒 (r. 319-333), the founder of the Later Zhao (後趙, 319-351), stated on his deathbed:

Wu and Shu (i.e. the states of Eastern Jin in the south and Cheng-Han in Sichuan) are not pacified yet, script and gauges [of vehicles] are not unified, the Sima house has not yet been severed at Danyang; I am afraid that later generations will regard me as one who did not fulfill the prophecy [of my great future].⁴⁵

A shrewd and gifted statesman, Shi Le realized that unless complete unification was achieved, his extraordinary success (rising from the position of a slave to that of an emperor who ruled most of the Central Plain), would be insufficient to

⁴⁴ See note 8 for the state of Wu; for the Shu Han policy, see Rafe de Crespigny, "The Three Kingdoms and Western Jin: A History of China in the Third Century AD," *East Asian History*, 1, 1 (1991), 24; John Killigrew, "Zhuge Liang and the Northern Campaign of 228-234," *Early Medieval China* 5, 1999, 55-91.

⁴⁵ 吳蜀未平，書軌不一，司馬家猶不絕於丹陽，恐後人將以吾為不應符籙。(Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 et al, comps., *Jin shu* 晉書 [rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1997] 105: 2753). The Sima 司馬 was the ruling house of the state of Jin. "Scripts and gauges are not unified" is the allusion to Qin unification measures of 221 BCE. For the prediction concerning Shi Le's "great future", see *Jin shu* 104: 2707. For Shi Le's career, see David Honey "Sinification as Statecraft in Conquest Dynasties of China: Two Early Medieval Case Studies", *Journal of Asian History*, 30, 2 (1996), 135-149.

ensure posthumous glory. Personal motives, however, were not necessarily the only reasons for the ruler's desire to unify All under Heaven. Half a century after Shi Le's futile attempt to "pacify Wu and Shu" another ambitious leader, Fu Jian 苻堅 (r. 357-385) of the Former Qin (前秦 350-394) determined to conquer the last independent regime on Chinese soil, the state of Eastern Jin. On the eve of the disastrous Fei 淝 river campaign (383), Fu Jian declared:

It is not that my lands are not vast and people are not sufficient: but I contemplate unifying the six dimensions in order to save the common people. "Heaven has begotten the masses of people and has raised up rulers for them" in order to eliminate the troubles and extinguish the turmoil; how can I be fearful of hardship?⁴⁶

Fu Jian's declaration that his intention to unify "the six directions" was aimed to improve the people's lot, not to magnify his name, is in accordance with the highest Confucian percepts. Whether it represents a gesture of modesty or a genuine feeling does not concern us here; what is important is that Fu Jian invoked the goal of unification in an apparent attempt to legitimize his campaign in the eyes of his followers and, possibly, in the eyes of the Jin population as well.⁴⁷ While Fu Jian met a disastrous end, his desire to "pacify" (*ping* 平) or

⁴⁶ 非為地不廣，人不足也；但思混一六合，以濟蒼生。天生蒸庶，樹之君者，所以除煩去亂，安得憚勞？(*Jin shu*, 114: 2914, cf. translation by Michael C. Rogers. *The Chronicle of Fu Chien: A Case of Exemplar History*, (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1968), 161; a citation is an allusion to the *Shi jing* 詩經. "Dang" 蕩. *Shisanjing* 18: 552 and *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 (Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, annot., *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 [Beijing: Zhonghua, 1981], Xiang 襄 14: 1016). Rogers raised the question of the reliability of Fu Jian's biography; but his doubts were partly refuted (see Hans Bielenstein, "The Six Dynasties: Vol. I," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, 69 [1996], 87-88).

⁴⁷ Indeed, some elite members of the Eastern Jin might have positively responded to Fu Jian's promise to bring peace to All under Heaven and wished to cooperate with him (Chittick, "Hsi Tso-ch'ih," 47).

“stabilize” (*ding* 定) All under Heaven continued to inspire future generations of northern leaders. Thus, Helian Bobo (赫連勃勃 r. 407-424), a Xiongnu 匈奴 ruler of the short-lived Xia (夏 407-431) dynasty in Ordos, incessantly reiterated his aim to emulate the achievement of the putative ancestor of his people, Great Yu 大禹, and to unify the realm. Similar claims were made by leaders of the Later Qin 後秦 (384-417), Yao Chang 姚萇 (r. 384-393) and Yao Xing 姚興 (r. 394-416). The quest to unify All under Heaven remained the major political goal of the Northern Wei (北魏, 386-534) rulers, from the dynastic founder, Tuoba Gui (拓跋珪 r. 386-409) to the sinified Yuan Hong (元宏 r. 471-499).⁴⁸

The rulers' proclamations in favor of unification do not mean of course that each of them relentlessly pursued this goal, objective conditions notwithstanding. In fact, for a variety of internal and external reasons many rulers of the period of division preferred to postpone the goal of unification, concentrating instead on ensuring the stability and prosperity to their own state. This policy was particularly characteristic of the southern leaders, most of whom favored the policy of “one-sided peace” (*pian'an*) over military adventures north of the Yellow river.⁴⁹ Some of the

⁴⁸ For Helian Bobo's claims, see *Jin shu* 130: 3202-3210; for Yao Chang and Yao Xing see *ibid.*, 95:2496 and 130: 3202; it should be mentioned that particularly under Yao Xing the state of Later Qin achieved a series of major military and political successes which apparently bolstered Yao Xing's self-confidence (see Wang Zhongluo 王仲魯, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 魏晉南北朝史 [Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1998], 300-301). For declarations and deeds of the Northern Wei rulers, see Wei Shou 魏收, *Wei shu* 魏書 (rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1997), 2:37 and 53: 1182-83; see also Shen Yue 沈約, *Song shu* 宋書 (rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1997), 95: 2337. For Northern Wei attempts to extinguish the state of Liu Song (劉宋, 420-479), see Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin*, 388-391.

⁴⁹ The policy of “protecting the boundaries and tranquilizing the people” (*bao jing an min* 保境安民) was characteristic of the southern regimes not only during the Nanbeichao period, but in the later periods of division as well (see, for instance, Li Zhiting 李志庭, “Yetan Qian Liu baojing anmin

emperors half-heartedly recognized the legitimacy of rival claimants to the Mandate and even established diplomatic ties with them⁵⁰. Nonetheless, as we shall see, such measures were invariably conceived of as ad hoc, temporary arrangements; when circumstances allowed, they were repeatedly abandoned in favor of resolute military action.

The awareness that peaceful coexistence with the rival was only a temporary measure dominated the politics of the age of division. Thus, the great Eastern Jin military and political leader, Huan Wen (桓溫, d. 373) clearly stated in his reports to the throne that the long period of military passivity of the Jin court was merely in expectation of a favorable opportunity; now, Huan Wen suggested in 353, the time was ripe to “annihilate the bandits” and to “erase the country's humiliation.”⁵¹ Although competing interests at the Jin court prevented Huan Wen from achieving ultimate success in his military campaigns, what is important to our discussion is that none of Huan Wen's opponents dared contradict his arguments. Despite their notorious lack of military vigor, southern courtiers realized that their failure to pursue the goal of unification significantly impaired their legitimacy; they knew, therefore, that every opportunity for

guo” 也談錢鏐保境安民國策, *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 中國史研究 4, [1997], 92-3 *et passim*). The excellent example of Realpolitik calculations prevailing over ideological obligations is the politics of the Southern Song court (see details in S.N.Goncharov, *Kitajskaja Srednevekovaja Diplomattia: Otnoshenia mezhdu Imperiiami Tsin' i Sun, 1127-1142*, [Moscow: Nauka, 1986], 236-7 *et passim*). See also a discussion by R. Davis on southeastern China's regimes apparent predisposition towards the policy of “*pian'an*” (*Wind Against the Mountain*, [Cambridge Ma.: Harvard U. Press, 1996], 142-43).

⁵⁰ See, for instance, Shu-Han's unenthusiastic recognition of Wu imperial claims in 229 (de Crespigny, *Generals of the South: The Foundation and Early History of the Three Kingdoms State of Wu* (Canberra: Australian National U., 1990), 459-462). For international relations among rival regimes during the Nanbeichao period, see Wang Youmin 王友敏 “Nanbeichao jiaopin liyi kao” 南北朝郊聘禮儀考, *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 3, (1996), 144-154.

⁵¹ For Huan Wen's proposals, see *Jin shu* 98: 2570-2575; for the background of his campaigns and the reasons for their failure, see Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin*, 333-339; Bielenstein, “The Six Dynasties,” 72-80; Chittik, “Hsi Tso-ch'ih”, 29-39.

conquering the north and restoring unified rule should be taken.⁵² Several times throughout the period of disunion southern dynasties attempted major invasions of the north, and although these campaigns invariably failed, they indicated the southerners' resoluteness to achieve reunification under their rule, and signaled to the northern regimes that no real possibility existed of long-term peaceful coexistence with Jiankang regimes.⁵³

Thus, most of the contending regimes of the age of division displayed their determination to unify All under Heaven, and by so doing repeatedly questioned the legitimacy of the multi-state world. What are the reasons behind this commitment to a goal, which was by no means easily achievable? Why did none of the local potentates, Chinese or aliens, attempt to establish a separatist entity and protect his regime's independence? What caused them to pursue the course of military confrontation with their neighbors even to the point of self-destruction, as happened to the states of Shu-Han and Former Qin?

The most ready answer, of course, is that the rulers of the post-Han age sought to emulate the success of the great dynasties of the past, Qin and particularly Han. The self-confident leaders dreamt of Han imperial grandeur and were aware of the fame that would accrue to their names if they would achieve unification. Shi Le's above statement speaks for itself; Helian Bobo and many other rulers might have cherished similar hopes for magnifying their name, even though they were

⁵² For Huan Wen's proposals, see *Jin shu* 98: 2570-2575; for the background of his campaigns and the reasons for their failure, see Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin*, 333-339; Bielenstein, "The Six Dynasties," 72-80; Chittik, "Hsi Tso-ch'ih", 29-39.

⁵³ Aside from Huan Wen's campaigns, two major attempts to regain the north were undertaken in 416-417 by Liu Yu (劉裕 d. 422) – the future founder of the Song dynasty (宋, 420-479) and again in 529 by Xiao Yan (蕭衍 r. 503-549), the emperor of the Liang dynasty (梁, 503-557). Both attempts failed: despite their declared desire to regain the north, southerners failed to invest sufficient military means to achieve this goal. See Wang, *Wei Jin*, 378-384 and 446; Bielenstein, "Six Dynasties", 114-115 and 201.

sufficiently astute not to manifest these personal sentiments publicly.

Second, we may plausibly assume that at least some of the rulers and courtiers keenly believed that "stability is in unity" and that unification was the only alternative to the state of devastating warfare. We should remember that although regional regimes often achieved remarkable economic, administrative and cultural successes, these could not obliterate the immeasurable suffering for the population as the result of endemic warfare and the lack of stability. For instance, the struggle between the states of Wu and Wei in the third century turned the area along the Huai River into a wasteland,⁵⁴ while the grave results of the mid-fifth century Northern Wei incursions into the Song territory are vividly depicted by Shen Yue (沈約, 441-513) in the *Song shu* 宋書:

The strong were killed, the weak – imprisoned. Of several dozens of thousands of households in the area from the Yangzi and the Huai to the Qing and the Ji rivers, even one in a hundred could not flee to the lakes and the marshes. Villages became wasteland, wells were empty; none will return "to hear dogs barking and the cocks cries."⁵⁵

like their Zhanguo predecessors, that only reunification of the realm would put an end to the suffering of the "black-headed" people. Fu Jian, cited above, expressed precisely these sentiments.

The above motives for seeking unification do not differ basically from those present in pre-imperial times. New factors, however, made the quest for unity even more urgent for the post-Han rulers. The need for legitimacy was of particular importance. Each of the dynasties that succeeded the Han was of

⁵⁴ See de Crespigny, *Generals of the South*, 492 *et passim*.

⁵⁵ 強者爲轉屍，弱者爲繫虜，自江、淮至于清、濟，戶口數十萬，自免湖澤者，百不一焉。村井空荒，無復鳴鷄吠犬。(《Song shu》95: 2359). The last sentence is an allusion to the *Laozi*, par. 80.

dubious legitimacy since its seizure of the Mandate was considered by many as an act of usurpation.⁵⁶ Alien rulers in particular were aware of the vulnerable foundations of their regimes. They were invaders, whose dynasties lacked both the pedigree and the cultural refinement of the Chinese rulers. Besides, as David Honey has shown in his inspiring study, alien regimes were torn apart by two distinct constituencies: Chinese subjects who sought to establish an ordinary imperial dynasty, and the nomadic tribesmen who were more interested in pillage and looting than in the adoption of Chinese court rites. The best way to satisfy both sides was to pursue unification, which was the surest way to acquire dynastic legitimacy. Honey argues that legitimization concerns played a crucial role in encouraging the unification course of such northern leaders as Liu Yuan 劉淵 (d. 310), the ruler of the Han 漢/Former Zhao 前趙 (304-329), and Shi Le.⁵⁷

This belief in “legitimation through unification” deeply influenced the dynamics of political life during the period of division. A ruler's determination to unify the realm effectively precluded the possibility of long-term peaceful coexistence together with rival states. Even the most amicable neighbor could easily turn into a mortal enemy whenever he felt himself able to fulfill his aspirations for unification. For instance, in 280, the Jin courtier Yang Hu 羊祜 used these arguments to persuade Sima Yan (司馬炎, Jin Wudi 晉武帝 r. 265-290)

⁵⁶ Of course, the usurpation was more often than not presented as the abdication of the former ruler in favor of the new house (for details of which see Howard Goodman, *Tsao P'i Transcendent: The Political Culture of Dynasty-Founding in China at the End of the Han* [Scripta Serica, 1998]). This however, did not suffice to silence the dynastic opponents who never failed to realize the coercive nature of the ceremony of abdication.

⁵⁷ See Honey “Sinification as Statecraft.” It should be mentioned that the concept of unified rule, albeit not in its rigid form, existed among China's nomadic neighbors at least since the early Xiongnu empire of the late third-early second centuries BCE (see Thomas J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empire and China* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1989] 36-41 *et passim*). This may explain why nomadic leaders easily adopted the Chinese concept of *da yitong*.

to annihilate the southern neighbor, the state of Wu:

The former emperor (Sima Zhao 司馬昭, d: 265) complied with Heaven and responded to the opportunity, he pacified Ba-Shu 巴蜀 (i.e. the state of Shu-Han) in the west and established amicable relations with Wu-Kuai 吳會 (i.e. the state of Wu) in the south; all within the seas could rest and the multitudes of the commoners were joyous and tranquil in their hearts. However, Wu again betrayed the good trust, causing recurring troubles at the frontiers. Thus, although the opportunity is granted by Heaven, the task must be completed by men; if we do not raise once and forever troops to annihilate them, the masses of conscripts will never obtain peace.⁵⁸

Yang Hu clearly implies that the enemy must be annihilated, since no other possibility of lasting peace existed. His views, warmly endorsed by the emperor, are representative of the intellectual trends of that time. As nobody could trust his neighbor, the life-and-death struggle became inevitable. The zero-sum game of the politics of disunion evidently left participants no other choice. Hence, the saying “stability is in unity” became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

What strategies could regional leaders adopt under these conditions? Clearly, a long-term course aimed at protecting regional independence was doomed; it was obvious that none of the rival leaders would agree to an independent entity in the lands of the former Zhou realm, since such would be forever perceived as a source of future threats. The best choice then was to turn a regional state into a springboard toward future conquest and unification of All under Heaven. This

⁵⁸ 先帝順天應時，西平巴蜀，南和吳會，海內得以休息，兆庶有樂安之心。而吳復背信，使邊事更興。夫期運雖天所授，而功業必由人而成，不一大舉掃滅，則眾役無時得安。(Jin shu 34: 1018).

was indeed the strategy of most of the regimes of the age of disunion. Alternatively, rulers of relatively modest ambitions adopted a less assertive policy of "wait and see." Through flexible diplomacy they preserved close ties with major contenders for the Mandate, hoping that later they would be able to cede a semblance of independence for the sake of protecting their regional interests. During the post-Han period this policy was mostly followed by the rulers of small western empires, such as Cheng-Han 成漢 (304-347) and the Liang 涼 states in modern Gansu province. Richard Mather summarizes the politics of northwestern China in the late fourth and early fifth centuries as follows:

There is even something pathetic in the eagerness with which the various non-Chinese groups would offer their allegiance, first to Lü Guang [呂光, the founder of the Late Liang 後涼, r. 386-399], then to Wei You 尉佑, then to Qifu Qiangui [乞伏乾歸, the ruler of Western Qin 西秦, r. 388-400], and later to Yao Xing [姚興, the ruler of Later Qin 後秦, r. 394-415], always in the hope that at last a leader had appeared who would bring unity and a measure of stability.⁵⁹

In this atmosphere unification became a nearly predictable outcome of the period of disunion. As the multi-state order was considered both unsustainable and illegitimate, separatist tactics were doomed, and indeed were never pursued; consequently, regional differences never developed into a full-scale quest for independence. The ease with which regional regimes disappeared from the map

⁵⁹ Richard B. Mather, *Biography of Lü Kuang* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1959), 25, modifying Mather's text to *Hanyu pinyin*. For the similar aspirations of Li Xiong (李雄, r. 304-334), the emperor of Cheng-Han, see *Jin shu* 81: 3039. For the policy of the state of Western Liang (西涼, 400-421), see Qi Chenjun 齊陳駿, *Hexi shi yanjiu* 河西史研究 (Lanzhou: Gansu jiaoyu, 1989), 145-163.

of China is amazing, particularly when compared with European or Arab history. After conquest by a more successful state, unless the new unifiers displayed extreme cruelty or folly, no resistance movement of any consequence ever prevented them from reintegrating the rival states into the newly emerging empire. In many cases local elites remained largely indifferent to the outcome of the struggle, which was conceived of as the private matter of the self-proclaimed emperor, rather than the common cause of regional independence. Those who lost the Mandate, lost it forever.⁶⁰

Thus, the universal adherence to the *da yitong* paradigm resulted in a situation, which precluded the persistence of regional regimes. Commitment to the goal of unification was not, as we have seen, merely a rhetorical device aimed to bolster dynastic prestige; rather it was a conscious and rational choice in a world that denied the legitimacy to nothing but a unified empire. Insofar as every powerful leader displayed his desire to unify All under Heaven, no viable multi-state system was possible. Under the given conditions, regional independence was not only illegitimate; it was simply an idle dream. The unitary state had to be restored, and it was indeed restored after each of the numerous periods of division in Chinese history.

Summary

The above discussion suggests that although the *da yitong* paradigm was an

⁶⁰ De Crespigny summarizes southern gentry's attitudes towards the state of Wu as follows: "Sun Quan [孫權, the first Wu emperor, r. 222-252 CE] might have hopes of imperial state, but his subordinates had more limited ambitions, they could expect to maintain some position under any regime, and they had no particular commitment to the fortunes of Wu." (*Generals of the South*, 507).

indispensable part of the *zhengtong* concept, its impact on Chinese history can by no means be reduced to a legitimization device; nor was it primarily a historiographic or symbolic matter. Rather, the Great Unity paradigm reflected the common conviction of Chinese statesmen and thinkers that nothing but a unified state could ensure peace and stability for the populace. In the absence of adequate means for settling inter-state disputes, the slogan "stability is in unity" became a political reality. Unification of the realm, being the only reasonable solution to the continuous bloodshed and turmoil embedded in China's multi-state system, became the common quest of the broadest segments of the population. The Qin dynasty's successful appeal to legitimization through unification set a precedent for the future claimants for the Mandate.

Furthermore, the concept of "legitimation through unification" shaped political dynamics during the periods of disunion. The manifested commitment of all major political actors to the goal of unification precluded establishment of peaceful relations between the contending regimes and created a situation of a zero-sum game from which only one winner could emerge. This situation doomed the possibility to establish a separatist political entity within the lands of the former Zhou realm. Accordingly, none of the regional leaders ever tried to protect his hard-won independence, regarding instead his state as nothing but a springboard for future unification. The resultant recurrence of the unified empire became a predictable outcome of the age of division. This may explain why, unlike any other great continental empire in world history, which did not survive the first breakdown, China successfully reintegrated after prolonged periods of disunion. The universal belief that "stability is in unity" became a self-fulfilling prophecy, which precluded search for alternative ways for ensuring peace and stability. Again, the *da yitong* paradigm proved to be of pivotal

political importance.

The above discussion allows better appreciation of the depth of political insight of Ouyang Xiu and Sima Guang. When these thinkers dismissed earlier cosmological speculations and downplayed moral factors, elevating instead successful unification as the major determinant of dynastic legitimacy, this was not done merely for "making less complicated and more objective criteria for judging legitimacy."⁶¹ Ouyang Xiu's and later Sima Guang's essays were meant to serve as guidelines for rulers rather than for historians. By emphasizing political unification as the core of dynastic legitimacy, both thinkers sought neither to serve immediate partisan needs, nor to bolster the legitimacy of their dynasty, but to find basic laws of historical processes throughout Chinese history. Actual political achievements – of which unification was the most tried and true one – were by far more important than later historians' praise and blame. Indeed, the generations of emperors who read Ouyang Xiu's and Sima Guang's discussions internalized their lessons. The conviction that successful unification means legitimacy never disappeared from Chinese rulers' consciousness, and continued to direct their policies, in the past as well as in the present.

⁶¹ This was suggested by Davis in "Historiography".