

# Zhu Xi's Military Thought

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Used abbreviations

LYZS	He Yan and Xing Bing, ed., <i>Lunyu zhushu</i>
SS	Tuotuo, ed., <i>Songshi</i>
SSZJJZ	Zhu Xi, <i>Sishu zhangju jizhu</i>
WJ	Zhu Xi, <i>Huiian xiansheng zhuwengong wenji</i>
ZXNP	Wang Maohong, <i>Zhu Xi nianpu</i>
ZZQS	Zhu Xi, <i>Zhuzi quanshu</i>
ZZYL	Zhu Xi, Li Jingde, ed., <i>Zhuzi yulei</i>

## Introduction

### Thesis statement

Despite the exalted status of Southern Song 南宋 (1127–1279) scholar Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) within contemporary scholarship, relatively little effort has been made to understand his views on military affairs and policy, notwithstanding the repeated claim that the topic bore particular significance to Zhu and exerted a profound influence on his worldview.<sup>1</sup> Born after the dramatic fall of the northern court at the hands of the Jurchen Jin 金 (1115–1234) and its subsequent relocation to the south in 1127, Zhu Xi's lifetime was marked by a continuing stand-off between the two states. Save for several violent interruptions, most notably following a Jurchen invasion in 1161, the situation remained largely stable throughout his life. However, Zhu viewed this period of coexistence as a reflection of his dynasty's weakness and considered the military recovery of the “Central Plains” (*Zhongyuan* 中原) a moral imperative.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, the topic of warfare permeated his work, featuring not only in those writings directly concerned with practical issues of contemporaneous political relevance, but also in his more theoretical and foundational works. Among the former selection of writings, one may count a sizeable collection of monographs, court memorials, and letters exchanged between Zhu Xi and influential figures at court, as well as with his colleagues within the intellectual community of the “Learning of the Way” (*Daoxue* 道學), with whom Zhu discussed the strategic intricacies of the Jin-Song conflict.<sup>3</sup> Arguably most representative of the second selection of writings, namely those works with a primarily theoretical or philosophical orientation, were Zhu Xi's commentaries on the *Four Books* (*Sishu* 四書) and the frequent discussions on their topics with his disciples, as recorded in the *Thematic Discourses of Master Zhu* (*Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類).<sup>4</sup> As the current thesis will contend, Zhu

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Daniel K. Gardner, *Chu Hsi: Learning to Be a Sage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 7–11, and Brian McKnight, “Chu Hsi and His World,” in *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*, ed. Wing-tsit Chan (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), 408–9.

<sup>2</sup> This point is most famously made in 1162, when Zhu presented his first official memorial to the throne of Emperor Xiaozong 宋孝宗 (r. 1162–1189). See Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Hui'an xiansheng zhuwengong wenji* 晦庵先生朱文公文集, incorporated in *Zhuzi quanshu* 朱子全書, ed. Zhu Jieren 朱傑人, volumes 20–25 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), 11.569–80. Hereafter respectively *WJ* and *ZZQS*.

<sup>3</sup> For the position of *Daoxue* within the strategic debate, see Zhang Weiling, “Cong Nansong zhongqi fanjinxi zhengzheng kan daoxuexing shidafu dui huifu taidu de zhuanbian 從南宋中期反近習政爭看道學型士大夫對“恢復”態度的轉變” (MA Diss., National Taiwan University, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類, ed. Li Jingde 黎靖德 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986). Hereafter *ZZYL*.

Xi's approach to the topic of warfare throughout this body of work demonstrates a striking degree of thematic, philosophical, and perspectival unity. The aim of the present thesis is to map this strand of military thought, seeking to answer the following research question:

*How have Zhu Xi's views on warfare informed and found reflection in his recorded work?*

Despite the distinct importance of military issues within Zhu Xi's life and thought, much of the present-day debate has taken place at the margins of the discourse. Three interrelated issues characterize the limitations of recent scholarship.

Firstly, recent approaches have been limited virtually exclusively to Zhu Xi's political writings on the contemporaneous Jin-Song conflict, with little regard for war as it featured in his more foundational or philosophical works. Arguably most important among this latter sphere of discourse is Zhu's commentary on the *Four Books*, collected into the *Collected Commentaries on Chapters and Phrases of the Four Books* (*Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集註).<sup>5</sup> Between 1163 and 1190, concurrent with the span of his activities as an anti-peace advocate, Zhu Xi authored commentaries on the *Lunyu* 論語, *Mengzi* 孟子, *Daxue* 大學, and *Zhongyong* 中庸.<sup>6</sup> Presented by Zhu Xi as the primary gateway through which the Confucian scholar may reach an understanding of metaphysical Principle (*li* 理), the universal pattern underlying and normatively determining the proper course of all things "as they should be" 所當然, the contents of the *Four Books* reflected the foundation for most, if not all, of his thought.<sup>7</sup> Emphasizing throughout his commentaries the foundational importance of Principle to his theory of government and all its legitimate activities, he indicated that military policy was not exempt from its normative strictures.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, I will devote chapters 1 to 3 to these foundational commentaries.

Secondly, recent assessments of Zhu Xi's views on warfare, confined to the topic of the strategic debate at the Song court, have remained narrow in scope. They have tended to concentrate singularly on one of three chief issues, focusing on Zhu Xi's moral case for war

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<sup>5</sup> Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集註 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983). Hereafter SSZJJZ.

<sup>6</sup> Conventionally translated as the *Analects*, *Mencius*, *Great Learning*, and *Doctrine of the Mean*. See Daniel K. Gardner, "Principle and Pedagogy: Chu Hsi and the Four Books," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 44:1 (1984): 57–9.

<sup>7</sup> *WJ*, 57.2736. For the self-professed importance of the *Four Books*, see *WJ*, 59.2811; *ZZYL*, 14.249.

<sup>8</sup> See for example SSZJJZ, 134–5, 154–5.

against the Jurchen,<sup>9</sup> his support for either an aggressive or defensive grand strategy,<sup>10</sup> or his proposals for military and political reform.<sup>11</sup> As these have hitherto been discussed mostly as separate issues, several important points of interaction and interdependence between these topics within Zhu Xi's broader thought on the conflict have gone unnoticed. As I will demonstrate more closely in chapters 4 to 6, besides serving to nuance our understanding of each issue individually, these focal points of interaction simultaneously indicate a substantially more coherent strand of military thought than has previously been suggested.

Thirdly, previous attempts at relating Zhu Xi's statements on these and related issues to broader processes of historical development, particularly with regards to Zhu's personal intellectual development as well as historical and political circumstances throughout his life, have suffered from the use of a relatively narrow range of sources. The present thesis will consult a broader range of public memorials, private letters, and individually authored monographs than previous assessments have taken into account. By doing so, I seek to provide alternative interpretations for many key statements uttered by Zhu Xi throughout his political and commentatorial activities.

At this point it bears emphasizing that, considering the mostly concurrent historical development of Zhu Xi's "theoretical" and "practical" spheres of writing, it is difficult if not impossible to identify a clear unidirectional flow of influence between them. On the contrary, as I will argue throughout the subsequent chapters, several important points of similarity between the spheres suggest the possibility of a complex and multidirectional relationship. These observations underline the necessity for a thoroughly historicized approach, aimed not only at relating Zhu Xi's arguments to their proper historical context, but also at facilitating the identification of parallels and possible loci of interaction. More fundamentally, they suggest one may attribute to Zhu Xi a coherent strand of military thought, formed over several

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<sup>9</sup> Qian Mu 錢穆, *Zhuzi xinxue'an* 朱子新學案, 5 volumes (Taipei: Sanmin shuju, 1971), 5:77–9; Li Longxian 李隆獻, *Fuchouguan de xingcha yu quanshi* 復仇觀的省察與詮釋 (Taipei: Taida chuban, 2015); Hoyt Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism: Ch'en Liang's Challenge to Chu Hsi* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 169–76.

<sup>10</sup> Zhu Ruixi 朱瑞熙, "Zhu Xi shi touxiangpai, maiguozei ma? 朱熹是投降派、賣國賊嗎?" *Lishi yanjiu* 9 (1978): 72–7; Zhang Weiling, "Hui fu taidu"; Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism*, 170–9; Yu Yingshi 余英時, *Zhu Xi de lishi shijie* 朱熹的歷史世界 (Beijing: Sanlian chubanshe, 2004), 272–88; Zhou Chaxian 周茶仙, "Zhu Xi junshi sixiang shulun 朱熹軍事思想述論," *Zhuzi xuekan* 13 (1999): 322–34.

<sup>11</sup> Jiang Guozhu 姜國柱, "Zhu Xi de junshi sixiang 朱熹的軍事思想," *Zhuzi xuekan* 17 (2003): 134–5; Zhou, "Junshi sixiang," 323–5; Niu Pu, "Confucian Statecraft in Song China: Ye Shi and the Yongjia School" (PhD. Diss., Arizona State University, 1998); Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism*, 178–9.

decades through the influence of his concurrent and interrelated experiences as both an influential philosophical thinker and an active participant in the political debate.

### Sources and methodology

The present thesis is divided into two main parts, each focusing on a particular set of sources. Because of the reasons outlined above, this is a distinction in focus only; considerable overlap must and will occur.

The first part of the thesis, focusing on Zhu Xi's theoretical and speculative approaches to warfare, will revolve around a close reading of the *Four Books* and his interlinear commentary.<sup>12</sup> Relevant passages are identified on the basis of keywords.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, I shall refer extensively to the record of conversations Zhu Xi had with his disciples throughout the last decades of his life, collected in the *Zhuzi yulei*.<sup>14</sup>

In the second part of the thesis, focusing on Zhu Xi's writings on the contemporaneous Jin-Song conflict, I shall widen my scope to include a considerably greater collection of sources, virtually all of which are arranged in the *Collected Works of Mister Hui'an, Zhu Wengong* (*Hui'an xiansheng zhuwengong wenji* 晦庵先生朱文公文集).<sup>15</sup> Most importantly, these include Zhu Xi's official court memorials (*fengshi* 封事 and *zouzha* 奏劄), personal letters (*shu* 書), prefaces (*xu* 序), biographies (*xingzhuang* 行狀) and stele inscriptions (*bei* 碑).<sup>16</sup> Additionally, I will consult two thematic arrangements found in *juan* 110 and 133 of the *Zhuzi yulei*, entitled respectively "On Warfare" (*Lun bing* 論兵) and "Barbarians" (Yidi 夷狄).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> I base myself on the 1983 Zhonghua shuju 中華書局 edition of the *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集註. The basis for this edition is a copy of a woodblock print dated to 1242.

<sup>13</sup> These include *bianfang* 邊防 "border defense", *bing* 兵 "soldiers; armaments", *di* 敵 "enemy", *fa* 伐 "armed expedition", *jun* 軍 "army; military district", *lu* 虜 "captive", *rong* 戎 "weapons; military affairs", *tao* 討 "to suppress", *tuntian* 屯田 "agro-colonies", *yidi* 夷狄 "barbarian", *zhan* 戰 "war; battle", and *zheng* 征 "to conscript; punitive campaign".

<sup>14</sup> For the dating of these conversations, I rely on the indications included in the introduction to the 1986 edition of the *Yulei*, complemented with the work of Tanaka Kenji 田中謙二, "Shumon deshi shiji nenkō 朱門弟子師事年攷," *Toho gakuho* 東方學報 44 (1973): 147–218.

<sup>15</sup> This collection is incorporated into the *Zhuzi quanshu*, spanning volumes 20 through 25. The basis for this reproduction is a woodblock edition originally carved in 1265.

<sup>16</sup> For the dating of these writings, I rely primarily on Wang Maohong 王懋竑, *Zhu Xi nianpu* 朱熹年譜, annotated by He Zhongli 何忠禮 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), hereafter *ZXNP*; complemented with Chen Lai 陳來, *Zhuzi shuxin biannian kaozheng* 朱子書信編年考證 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> *ZZYL*, 110.2705–12, 133.3185–201.

My approach to these sources is to contextualize them in three important ways. Firstly, I aim to locate these findings within their respective strands of philosophical and political argumentation, relating them to the broader conceptual frameworks that constituted Zhu Xi's thought. Secondly, having identified these strands, I will continue to historicize them by examining how processes of internal continuity and change informed their development throughout Zhu Xi's commentarial and political activities. Thirdly, relating these processes to the changing historical, political, and social circumstances that marked Zhu Xi's lifetime, I aim to reconstruct the motivations shaping these developments.

### Thesis structure

The reasons to divide the current thesis into two main parts are twofold. Firstly, Zhu Xi's views on military affairs as they feature in his classical commentaries have not yet been subjected to any attempt at systematic analysis. In order to both achieve the necessary depth of analysis and provide it with the platform it has hitherto been denied, I shall dedicate the first three chapters primarily to this sphere of discourse.

Secondly, the division reflects a significantly more fundamental characteristic of Zhu Xi's thought. Within the cosmological framework that emerged throughout his commentaries, transcendental Principle, as the universal pattern normatively determining the course of all things, theoretically preceded the latter. Put simply, Principle gave shape to events, not the other way around. Assuming that Zhu Xi indeed believed this doctrine to be applicable to real-world politics, it appears consistent with his own theoretical framework to discuss his philosophical views prior to the reassessment of his more practically-oriented writings. As I will demonstrate in subsequent chapters, the latter sphere of writing indeed reflects several key features of the frameworks put forth in Zhu's classical commentaries.

As I noted previously, this approach runs the serious risk of anachronistically attributing to Zhu's applied political writings of the 1160s and 1170s a philosophical framework that he did not in fact fully commit to writing until the late 1180s, marked by the formalization of his commentaries on the *Daxue* and *Zhongyong*. By carefully placing each statement in its proper historical and intellectual context, I aim to mitigate this risk. Simultaneously, by focusing first on the most explicit articulations of Zhu Xi's philosophical framework, those exhibited in his classical commentaries, I aim to facilitate the subsequent identification of partly *implicit* reflections of and precursors to these strands of thought within those writings aimed chiefly at concrete issues of contemporaneous political relevance.



The aim of chapter 1 is to establish the importance of the topic of warfare within Zhu Xi's interpretation of the *Four Books* and to identify the main perspectives through which he addressed the topic. Of particular interest is the relation Zhu envisioned between proper governmental practice, ideally founded on the apprehension of Principle, and the formulation of military policy. In chapter 2 I shall discuss the notion of the punitive expedition, the only morally acceptable form of aggressive warfare within this military paradigm. Focusing on the tension between moral virtue and military strength that informed Zhu Xi's conceptualization of this type of warfare, I will discuss its implications for Zhu's views on political legitimacy and Chinese-barbarian relations. The aim of chapter 3 is to depart momentarily from these political and strategic approaches to warfare and turn instead to its implications for Zhu Xi's theory on individual morality and historical legitimacy. I will argue that Zhu Xi's moral framework eventually allowed for a decidedly positive approach to warfare, framing it as a morally legitimate and functionally indispensable implement of government, worthy of practically-oriented concern.

Chapter 4 marks my turn to those writings concerned chiefly with issues of concrete contemporaneous interest, focusing on his case for an eventual offensive against the Jurchen Jin. Challenging the recent claim that Zhu supposedly abandoned the revanchist cause in his later years, I will examine several conceptual shifts that enabled him to maintain this case for war with unabated fervor. In chapter 5 I will reassess Zhu Xi's position within the strategic debate. Revisiting the commonly held assumption that Zhu "hawkishly" advocated war during the early 1160s, I will instead argue that his demonstrable awareness of perceived Song military weakness as early as 1161 determined his consistently defensive and preparatory attitude, suggesting distinct conceptual parallels with the theoretical framework outlined in part 1. Building further on this conceptual scaffolding in chapter 6, I will reassess Zhu Xi's concrete policy recommendations. I will argue that, reflecting the dynamic between moral cultivation and concrete governmental practices emphasized in his classical commentaries, his approach to warfare remained sensitive to the demands of historical, social, and strategic circumstances. Throughout, I will reflect on several substantial implications of this argument for our understanding of Zhu Xi's broader political philosophy, his thought on individual morality, and his participation within Song political debate.

# 1. The Classics and Warfare

The aim of this chapter is to identify the status of warfare as a topic within Zhu Xi's interpretation of the *Four Books* and to uncover the perspectives through which he addressed it. In the first section I address Zhu Xi's attitude toward warfare as a concept in the abstract and, more concretely, as a topic of scholarly inquiry. Contrasting his comments with those of his scholarly predecessors and the supposed tradition of "Confucian pacifism" described in recent scholarship, I argue that Zhu placed a distinct importance on practical knowledge of military affairs. In the second section I determine the precise status of material and preparatory military policy within Zhu Xi's broader framework of legitimate government activity. Based on a discussion of the distinction between the "root" (*ben* 本) and the "tip" (*mo* 末) of government, famously introduced in the *Great Learning*, I argue that Zhu eventually came to see concrete military preparations as an essential aspect of proper government. In the third section I extend this discussion to the act of war itself, examining the specific standards used to qualify legitimate warfare.

## 1.1 Initial approaches: military knowledge

The portrayal of Zhu Xi as a life-long advocate of war against the Jurchen Jin, noted in the introduction, stands in stark contrast with the notion of "Confucian pacifism", a recurrent theme throughout modern scholarship on the topic of warfare within classical Confucian literature. One of the earliest descriptions of this notion can be found in the work of Lei Haizong, who unambiguously condemned this tradition as a "culture without soldiers".<sup>18</sup> A similar reiteration of this view has been expressed by John Fairbank, who has claimed that the Confucian scholarly tradition functioned to privilege civil (*wen* 文) over military (*wu* 武) topics of knowledge and regarded a recourse to violent conflict as a sign of moral bankruptcy.<sup>19</sup> It is in this vein that Wang Yuankang, in his work on imperial Chinese strategic culture, has pointed specifically to Zhu Xi's commentatorial work as a direct cause of a supposed "growing trend of pacifism and aversion to war" during the Southern Song.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Lei Haizong 雷海宗, *Zhongguo wenhua yu zhongguo de bing* 中國文化與中國的兵 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, [1939]2001), 102.

<sup>19</sup> Frank A. Kiernan and John K. Fairbank, *Chinese Ways in Warfare* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 7–9.

<sup>20</sup> Wang Yuankang, *Harmony and War: Confucian Culture and Chinese Power Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 79.

One of the textual passages most widely cited as an example of the supposed pacifist component within the Confucian canon is *Analects* 15:1, which narrates how Duke Ling of Wei 衛靈公 questioned Confucius on the topic of troop formations. Apparently dissatisfied with this particular line of inquiry, Confucius responded: “I have heard of matters pertaining to sacrificial vessels; I have not learned about military affairs.” 俎豆之事，則嘗聞之矣；軍旅之事，未之學也。<sup>21</sup> Confucius is supposed to have left Wei the very next day, allegedly confirming his distaste with all military topics.<sup>22</sup> In his interlinear commentary to this passage, Zhu Xi instead suggested a different interpretation, arguing that while Confucius did not object to the topic of warfare in general, he was reluctant to discuss it with rulers he considered immoral: “Duke Ling of Wei was a ruler who lacked the Way and, furthermore, had military aspirations. Therefore, he responded by saying he had not learned about it and left [Wei].” 衛靈公，無道之君也，復有志於戰伐之事，故答以未學而去之。<sup>23</sup> As the wording of Zhu’s comment suggests, it was not the topic of warfare in general but rather its combination with the supposed immorality of the Duke that was the reason for Confucius’ disapproval.

Zhu himself seems to have had no distaste for military knowledge, and it is unlikely he indeed believed Confucius was ignorant on the topic. The biography of Confucius included in the *Records of the Historian* (*Shiji* 史記), which Zhu himself assigned a certain degree of credibility and cited extensively in his own introduction to the *Analects*,<sup>24</sup> in fact records that the disciple Ran You 冉有 had obtained his apparently outstanding military skill from Confucius himself.<sup>25</sup> While one might doubt the truthfulness of these particular records, Zhu Xi himself indeed possessed considerable knowledge of the more technical aspects of military affairs. Speaking to his disciples about the necessity of such practical knowledge for a proper investigation of Principle, Zhu stated: “[Scholars] nowadays do not understand the methods of troop formation, so whenever they discuss the military their discussions come to nothing.” 今人不曾理會陣法，則談兵亦皆是脫空。<sup>26</sup> Demonstrating his own knowledge on the subject, Zhu Xi discussed on several occasions the treatise on troop formations entitled *Explanation of*

<sup>21</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 161.

<sup>22</sup> This interpretation is provided in Yao Xinzong, “Conflict, Peace, and Ethical Solutions: A Confucian Perspective on War,” *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies* 4:2 (2004): 102; and Hu Shaohua, “Revisiting Chinese Pacifism,” *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 32:4 (2006): 259.

<sup>23</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 161.

<sup>24</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 41–3.

<sup>25</sup> Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記, 10 volumes (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963), 47.1934.

<sup>26</sup> *ZZYL*, 66.1635.

*the Eight Front Diagram* (*Bazhen tushuo* 八陣圖說), authored by his disciple Cai Yuanding 蔡元定. Engaging its contents in detail, he criticized the allegedly ignorant tacticians of his time and offered several suggestions regarding their particular faults.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, while Zhu occasionally expressed severe criticism of the classical thinkers traditionally associated with the “school of the military” (*bingjia* 兵家), as I will discuss more closely in the third section, he simultaneously demonstrated a close familiarity with their works and referred to them on several issues. One such issue was the perceived bloat and inertness that supposedly characterized the Song military, which he illustrated to his disciples in 1188 by citing the principle of “creating change by dividing and concentrating [troops]” 分合為變 from *Master Sun’s Art of Warfare* (*Sunzi bingfa* 孫子兵法).<sup>28</sup> The Song armies of his own time, one is led to believe, were no longer capable of practicing this fundamental technique. Claims that Zhu had reportedly discussed this principle with famed Song general Zhang Jun 張浚 (1097–1164) himself several decades prior, suggest that Zhu Xi did not shy away from questions of concrete military strategy.<sup>29</sup> Other than on technical matters, Zhu furthermore cited phrases from these works to illustrate a diverse range of issues found within the Confucian classics.<sup>30</sup>

That Zhu used examples of warfare to illustrate otherwise unrelated matters, does not mean he took the topic lightly. In *Analects* section 7:12, Confucius is described as exercising great caution in reference to the three topics of “fasting, war, and sickness” 子之所慎：齊，戰，疾。<sup>31</sup> Some have suggested such hesitation could imply his disapproval of these topics and even indicate a supposed war-averse component within the Confucian tradition.<sup>32</sup> Zhu Xi, on the contrary, pointed out that caution (*shen* 慎) suggested not disapproval but rather an affirmation of the gravity of the issue, implying that the possibly far-reaching consequences of warfare required careful attention. Echoing a strikingly similar dictum from the *Art of War*, Zhu commented: “War intertwines the fate of the people and the survival of the state.” 戰則

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<sup>27</sup> ZZYL, 132.3166, 136.3238–40.

<sup>28</sup> ZZYL, 110.2708. See Yang Bing’an 楊丙安, ed., *Shiyi jia zhu Sunzi jiaoli* 十一家註孫子校理 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), 142. Hereafter *Sunzi*.

<sup>29</sup> ZZYL, 110.2705–6.

<sup>30</sup> See for example ZZYL, 52.1262, 75.1920, 125.2996–7.

<sup>31</sup> SSZJJZ, 96.

<sup>32</sup> James A. Stroble, “Justification of War in Ancient China,” *Asian Philosophy* 8:3 (1998): 172; Don J. Wyatt, “Confucian Ethical Action and the Boundaries of Peace and War,” in *Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence*, ed. Andrew R. Murphy (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 239.

眾之死生、國之存亡繫焉。<sup>33</sup> In a further explanation to his disciples, Zhu affirmed the necessity for deliberation and clarity of purpose in war, stating that “Nothing throughout the world is more critical than the army and the [imposition of] punishments, so these matters cannot be taken lightly. Carelessness when approaching the battlefield formations will result in the wrongful killing of many people.” 天下事最大而不可輕者，無過於兵刑。臨陳時，是胡亂錯殺了幾人。<sup>34</sup>

Besides confirming the importance of warfare as a concept requiring careful deliberation, Zhu’s comments furthermore suggest a considerably more concrete approach to war by invoking the image of the actual battlefield itself. It is in this respect that Zhu departed significantly from his scholarly predecessors. Xing Bing 邢昺 (932–1010), for example, interpreted *Analects* 7:12 solely as a general condemnation of warfare, mostly detached from practical considerations: “Weaponry is inauspicious and warfare is perilous, and one is not certain of victory. Because [the sovereign] values the life of his people, he must indeed be cautious about it.” 夫兵凶戰危，不必其勝，重其民命，固當慎之。<sup>35</sup> Whereas Xing treated warfare in the abstract, describing it as a generally inauspicious concept to be avoided at all costs, Zhu Xi’s use of the concrete imagery of an actual battlefield suggests he assumed warfare to be largely inevitable and thus requiring careful deliberation. This reorientation with regards to *Analects* 7:12 not only reaffirms his aforementioned occupation with concrete aspects of warfare, but also indicates the necessity of such knowledge for the conduct of government.

Simultaneously, however, several classical passages seem to contradict this interpretation. In *Mencius* 7B:4, Mencius appears to unequivocally condemn military skill: “There are people who say: ‘I am skilled at marshalling troops, I am skilled in warfare.’ This is a great crime.” 我善為陳，我善為戰。大罪也。<sup>36</sup> In no less ambiguous terms, *Mencius* 4A:14 similarly suggests that “Those who are skilled in warfare should suffer the highest punishment.” 善戰者服上刑。<sup>37</sup> This apparent rejection of military ability has led several

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<sup>33</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 96. Compare this with Sunzi’s opening statement: “War is a grand affair of the state, a matter of life and death, and the road to survival or ruin.” 兵者，國之大事，死生之地，存亡之道。 Cf. *Sunzi*, 1.

<sup>34</sup> *ZZYL*, 110.2711.

<sup>35</sup> He Yan 何晏 and Xing Bing 邢昺, ed., *Lunyu zhushu* 論語註疏, ed. Li Xueqin 李學勤 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), 7.89. Hereafter *LYZS*.

<sup>36</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 365.

<sup>37</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 283.

modern scholars to cite Mencius as a paragon of a supposed “Confucian pacifism”, with Mark E. Lewis labelling him the “most forthright pacifist of ancient China.”<sup>38</sup>

In his commentary to these passages, Zhu did not directly rebut these apparent blanket condemnations of military knowledge, noting solely that “‘Those who are skilled at warfare’ refers to the followers of Sun Bin and Wu Qi.” 善戰，如孫臏吳起之徒。<sup>39</sup> Zhu Xi’s seemingly tacit agreement with Mencius’ condemnation of these *bingjia* and their military skill, implied by the absence of further qualifying or explanatory commentary, appears at odds with much of the preceding. Before addressing this tension any further, I will first examine more closely the status of military policy within Zhu’s broader theory on government practice and identify its relation with the notion of moral cultivation.

### 1.2 Military policy and the theory of government

Besides technical knowledge on topics like troop formations, the conduct of warfare furthermore requires certain material preparations. This topic is brought to the fore in *Analects* 12:7, where disciple Zigong 子貢 asks Confucius about the preconditions for proper government. According to the most common interpretation of this passage, Confucius supposedly pointed to three preconditions: “Ensure sufficient food, sufficient weaponry, and the confidence of the people.” 足食，足兵，民信之矣。<sup>40</sup> When Zigong subsequently asked which of these three Confucius would discard first, he tellingly answered: “I would discard weaponry.” 去兵。<sup>41</sup> As traditional commentators have likewise suggested, Confucius’ concise answer suggests he considered military preparations inferior to both agricultural provisions and popular trust. Xing Bing, for example, commented: “Because weapons are instruments of evil, destroyers of the people, and squanderers of material wealth, he would discard them first.” 以兵者凶器，民之殘也，財用之蠹也，故先去之。<sup>42</sup>

Contrasting with both modern and traditional interpretations of this passage, Zhu Xi instead interpreted the third clause of Confucius’ answer, popular trust (*minxin* 民信), not as a

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<sup>38</sup> Mark E. Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), 129.

<sup>39</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 283.

<sup>40</sup> This interpretation of food, weaponry, and popular trust as three separate conditions is maintained in several prominent translations. See for example James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Vol. 1* (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1991), 254; Arthur Waley, *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 164; and Edward Slingerland, *Confucius Analects: with Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003), 128.

<sup>41</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 134.

<sup>42</sup> *LYZS*, 12.160.

third precondition for benevolent government but rather as the end effect that is realized after both food and weapons are sufficiently provided for. While Zhu similarly noted that weaponry should be discarded before food, his concluding remarks indicate he did not consider this to be the main point of the passage: “To speak of it from the perspective of popular sentiments: one’s trustworthiness will only find acceptance among the people when weapons and food are sufficiently provided for.” 以人情而言，則兵食足而後吾之信可以孚於民。<sup>43</sup> Contrasting sharply with recent interpretations of *Analects* 12:7, which have focused primarily on the unimportance of military policy suggested by Confucius’ short answer,<sup>44</sup> Zhu Xi interpreted the passage as a positive affirmation of the importance of concrete military preparation as a legitimate concern of the ruler.

This practical and partly utilitarian approach appears closely related to Zhu’s views on other aspects of government policy. One instructive example of this approach is provided in *Analects* 2:3, in which Confucius describes a distinction between punishment and regulatory degree on the one hand and government by virtue and ritual on the other. Both traditional and modern commentators have interpreted this passage as a condemnation of punishments and decrees, favoring instead the transformative force of moral virtue.<sup>45</sup> By contrast, Zhu Xi argued that these more mundane forms of government activity were equally legitimate and indeed indispensable, serving to correct those individuals who proved unreceptive to the transformative force of virtue. Explaining *Analects* 2:3 to his disciples, he stated: “As some will not conform when you put them in line [with virtue and ritual], you cannot dispense with punishments.” 齊之不從，則刑不可廢。<sup>46</sup> Pointing to the importance of punishment as a complement to virtue, Zhu Xi even complained directly to Emperor Xiaozong in 1188 that sentencing had become too lenient in recent years.<sup>47</sup>

In sum, one may relate Zhu Xi’s views on military preparation to a broader conception of what constituted legitimate government activity. Zhu Xi did not put his trust solely in the transformative force of moral virtue; more practical implements such as armies and punishments remained integral to the governmental toolbox. However, while this contradicts the objections raised in passages like *Mencius* 4A:14 and 7B:4, in regard to which, in his commentary, Zhu seemed to tacitly reject the value of military knowledge and, by extension,

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<sup>43</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 134–5.

<sup>44</sup> Yao Xinzong, “Confucian Perspective,” 102; Wyatt, “Ethical Action,” 239.

<sup>45</sup> Examples of such traditional interpretations are provided by He Yan and Xing Bing, *LYZS*, 2.15. For recent interpretations, see Legge, *Chinese Classics*, 146; Waley *Analects*, 88; and Slingerland, *Analects*, 8.

<sup>46</sup> *ZZYL*, 23.548.

<sup>47</sup> *WJ*, 14.656–8.

its actual application by the sovereign, it does not yet adequately explain the underlying contradiction.

Before addressing this tension more closely, it is essential to note that Zhu did not conceptualize weaponry and punishments as wholly equal, complementary counterparts to moral virtue, operating alongside it on an equal level or plane within his theory on government practice. Instead, he envisioned a sequential process between the two aspects, in which moral cultivation served to precede and inform the practical implements of government.

The theoretical foundation Zhu Xi gradually developed for this approach is described most succinctly in the first section of his commentary to the *Great Learning*, not formally completed until 1189.<sup>48</sup> According to Zhu's reading of the first section of this text, the proper way of governing the realm consisted of two distinct stages, namely the moral ordering of oneself ("elucidating illustrious virtue" *ming mingde* 明明德) and the moral ordering of others ("reinvigorating the people" *xinmin* 新民). To indicate the sequential order of precedence between these two stages, Zhu classified them as respectively the "root" (*ben* 本) and its accompanying "tip" (*mo* 末). The foundational "root" of governance consisted purely of moral self-cultivation, involving the investigation of things (*gewu* 格物), advancing knowledge to the utmost (*zhizhi* 致知), making one's thoughts sincere (*chengyi* 誠意), and rectifying one's mind (*zhengxin* 正心). Central to this effort was the proper identification of Principle, the universal moral pattern that informed all matters and determined how they should ideally run their course. Only after one had gained a proper understanding of Principle, one became capable of giving morally correct expression to the "tip" of governance, involving the ordering of one's household (*qijia* 齊家), the government of the state (*zhiguo* 治國), and ultimately the pacification of the world (*ping tianxia* 平天下).<sup>49</sup> The two stages were inseparably connected: while the "root" as personal cultivation served to inform and determine the expression of the "tip", the "tip" in turn represented the ultimate extension of one's individual morality to the rest of society.<sup>50</sup>

As indispensable tools of the ruler, punishments and military preparations constituted integral components of the second stage or "tip" of governance. In response to a question posed by a disciple about "reinvigorating the people", Zhu explained: "It is to use ritual,

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<sup>48</sup> SSZJJZ, 3–4.

<sup>49</sup> For an in-depth discussion of this process, see Daniel K. Gardner, *Chu Hsi and the Ta-Hsueh: Neo-Confucian Reflection on the Confucian Canon* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 49–59.

<sup>50</sup> Zhu emphasized the inextricable relation between "root" and "tip" as early as 1170 in a letter to Lü Baigong 呂伯恭, *WJ*, 33.1425–7. For dating, see Chen Lai, *Kaozheng*, 73.



music, institutions of law, government regulations, and punishments to rid [the people] of their old impurities.” 有禮樂、法度、政刑，使之去舊汙也。<sup>51</sup> The connection between the “tip” of governance and military policy in particular was made explicit by Zhu in reference to the aforementioned *Analects* 15:1, in which Confucius refused to teach Duke Ling of Wei about troop formations. In his *Questions on the Four Books (Sishu Huowen 四書或問)*, Zhu Xi explained the relation to his disciples: “Speaking of the military, then troop formations are certainly the ‘tip’. Speaking of the Way of governing, then the military, in turn, is the ‘tip’.” 以兵而言，陳固兵之末；以治道而言，則兵又治道之末也。<sup>52</sup> Since, as noted earlier, in Zhu Xi’s reading of the text Duke Ling was a particularly objectionable ruler, one may assume he had not devoted much of his energy to the “root” of governance, his own moral constitution.

Unbound by moral considerations and a regard for “things as they should be” as determined by Principle, the formulation and execution of military policy could not reliably result in sustainable government: “Although the state is rich, its people will be poor; although the army is strong, its state will be defective; although material gain is nearby, its damaging effect will appear in the distance.” 國雖富，其民必貧；兵雖彊，其國必病；利雖近，其為害也必遠。<sup>53</sup> In sum, while Zhu Xi conceptualized concrete military preparation as a legitimate and indeed necessary concern of the ruler, such policy should always be informed by a properly cultivated moral constitution. As he himself summarized it between 1189 and 1192: “People say that the benevolent should not manage armies and the righteous should not manage wealth. I say that *only* the benevolent may manage armies and *only* the righteous may manage wealth.” 人言仁不可主兵，義不可主財。某謂，惟仁可以主兵，義可以主財。<sup>54</sup>

### 1.3: Principle and just war

Moral considerations based on Principle should ideally inform not only the formulation and execution of military policy, but also the conduct of war itself and the reasons one might maintain to engage in it. It is on this point that I may return to the problematic *Mencius* sections 4A:14 and 7B:4 and address the tension between their apparent condemnation of military capability and Zhu Xi’s considerably more positive attitude toward the topic. As I pointed out earlier, Zhu noted in his commentary to 4A:14 that he interpreted the target of

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<sup>51</sup> ZZYL, 14.267.

<sup>52</sup> ZZQS, 6:845.

<sup>53</sup> WJ, 75.3623. The source is entitled *Preface to seeing off Zhang Zhonglong* 送張仲隆序.

<sup>54</sup> ZZYL, 138.3291.

Mencius' condemnation as a rather particular group of individuals: “Those who are skilled at warfare’ refers to the followers of Sun Bin and Wu Qi.” 善戰，如孫臏吳起之徒。<sup>55</sup> While Zhu occasionally cited the works of these *bingjia* in positive terms, he disagreed with them on a fundamental issue. At the heart of this disagreement lay the accusation that the militarists had inverted the sequential order between the cultivation of the “root” and its accompanying “tip”, effectively subordinating moral cultivation to the needs of warfare. In a letter addressed to Liu Gongfu 劉共父, he discussed the matter within the context of preparation against the contemporaneous Jurchen Jin:

Internal cultivation and putting ourselves in order lies at the root of what we should concern ourselves with; it is not something we should do only *after* having formed the desire to make others our enemy. [...] That is precisely why Guan Zhong, Lord Shang, Wu Qi, and Shen Buhai ultimately ran afoul of the followers of the Sage, despite not being completely without merit. 夫內修自治，本是吾事所當為，非欲與人為敵然後為之 [...] 彼管仲、商君、吳起、申不害非無一切之功，而所以卒得罪於聖人之門者。<sup>56</sup>

Zhu Xi's objection to both militarists and legalists, here addressed together, centered on the inversion of *ben* and *mo* that allegedly characterized their thought. As a consequence, they had “Awakened in the ruler a heart that was willing to exhaust his troops in wanton acts of aggression.” 啟人君窮兵黷武之心。<sup>57</sup> Such aggressive acts of violence proceeded solely from a desire to procure territory and material benefit without regard for the people's welfare, resulting in particularly destructive engagements: “When war is waged to contest land, the slaughtered fill the fields; when war is waged to contest cities, the slaughtered fill the cities.” 爭地以戰，殺人盈野；爭城以戰，殺人盈城。<sup>58</sup> Consequently, as noted earlier, Mencius argued that such rulers deserved the “highest punishment”. However, contrary to the suggestion that this served as a blanket condemnation of all warfare, one may infer at this point that for Zhu Xi this charge was aimed solely at those rulers who had neglected the “root” of government and instead focused solely on the “tip”. Due to the subsequent lack of an ethical foundation, this naturally resulted in particularly bloody wars of conquest.

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<sup>55</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 283.

<sup>56</sup> *WJ*, 37.1620.

<sup>57</sup> *WJ*, 73.3551.

<sup>58</sup> *Mencius* 4A:14; *SSZJJZ*, 283.

Simultaneously, several comments suggest that Zhu Xi in fact considered particular acts of warfare not just acceptable but indeed morally imperative, consistently invoking Principle as the primary determinant of what qualified as such “righteous” military action. One instructive example is presented in *Analects* 14:22, where Confucius is described as requesting that an armed force is sent to suppress Chen Heng 陳恆, who had reportedly murdered his lord in the neighboring state of Qi 齊 and usurped his throne. As the act of regicide violated the first of the five cardinal relations (*wulun* 五倫), Zhu Xi demanded severe punishment: “For the subject to murder his lord is the greatest perversion of the human relations, something Heavenly Principle does not tolerate.” 臣弑其君，人倫之大變，天理所不容。<sup>59</sup> This normative line of argumentation contrasts sharply with a related account in the *Chunqiu zuozhuan* 春秋左傳, where it is instead claimed that Confucius’ primary considerations were strategic and perhaps even opportunist in nature, not unlike the *bingjia* tacticians: “Chen Heng murdered his lord. Half the people of Qi do not support him; if we add these to the multitudes of Lu, he can be vanquished.” 陳恆弑其君，民之不予者半。以魯之眾，加齊之半，可克也。<sup>60</sup> Citing the words of his intellectual predecessor Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107), Zhu Xi simply dismissed these suggestions and reaffirmed the primary importance of the moral cause: “These were not the words of Confucius. If he truly spoke like this, then he would be basing himself on strength instead of righteousness. [...] Regarding the method of defeating Qi, this was a *secondary matter* to Confucius.” 此非孔子之言。誠若此言，是以力不以義也[...]至於所以勝齊者，孔子之餘事也。<sup>61</sup>

The final lines of Zhu Xi’s response neatly encapsulate the order of precedence between the “root” and “tip” of government and the allowance it made for certain acts of armed intervention. At the root of Zhu’s interpretation lay the observation that murdering one’s lord was an offense punishable by death, based on a prior identification of Principle. In other words, contrary to recent suggestions that Zhu Xi’s philosophical framework inspired a “growing trend of pacifism and aversion to war”,<sup>62</sup> its core principle of moral self-cultivation as the “root” of government unambiguously mandated military action if certain conditions were met. Furthermore, while it was unthinkable for the sage to initiate war based on anything

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<sup>59</sup> SSZJJZ, 154.

<sup>60</sup> Kong Yingda 孔穎達, ed., *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), 59.1682.

<sup>61</sup> SSZJJZ, 155. Emphasis mine.

<sup>62</sup> Wang, *Harmony and War*, 79.

but a thorough investigation of Principle, he simultaneously introduced the possibility of material and strategic considerations. Although Zhu objected to the *Zuozhuan* account in which Confucius was *primarily* occupied with the question of how to defeat Qi as a state, his final line suggests he did not dismiss such considerations outright and indeed allowed them “secondary” status (*yushi* 餘事) as the “tip” of warfare. Emphasizing the inextricable relation between morality and practice in this particular case of military strategy, Zhu explained to his students: “Whenever the Sage handled affairs, it was not that he only understood moral Principle and did not inquire at all into the [practical] merits and demerits of the case; something has to be actually feasible for one to accomplish it.” 聖人舉事，也不會只理會義理，都不問些利害，事也須是可行方得。<sup>63</sup>

### Conclusion

Zhu Xi’s commentaries indicate a consistent occupation with military affairs as a legitimate and indeed vital aspect of proper government, functioning comparably to legal punishment and regulation by decree within his broader theory on legitimate governmental practice. However, drawing on the inextricable, sequential relationship he envisioned between the “root” of moral cultivation and its accompanying “tip”, Zhu Xi argued that as the “tip” of governmental practice such policies should always proceed from a systematic investigation into Principle as the normative determinant of things “as they should be”. He applied similar considerations to the conduct of war itself, arguing that certain violations of Principle not only allowed but even mandated military intervention. In the following chapter, I will assess how these considerations shaped Zhu Xi’s conceptualization of one particular type of righteous warfare, namely the punitive campaign.

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<sup>63</sup> ZZYL, 44.1130.

## 2. The Punitive Paradigm

The aim of the current chapter is to assess Zhu Xi's conceptualization of the punitive campaign (*zheng* 征 or *zhengfa* 征伐), described in recent literature as the only sanctioned form of warfare within the Confucian tradition.<sup>64</sup> I examine three key aspects of the punitive paradigm that prove particularly significant for my later discussion of Zhu Xi's views on contemporaneous issues. In the first section I address the relation between the use of armed force and the supposed ideal of non-violent attraction of foreign elements, arguing that Zhu Xi saw both inspiring virtue and military force as complimentary necessities for punitive warfare. In the second section I address the ideal of political and military centralization as a primary function of the punitive paradigm. Focusing on Zhu Xi's conceptualization of the Mandate of Heaven, I argue that Zhu Xi considered the creation and maintenance of centralized military order a political ideal, albeit one subject to strategic and historical considerations. In the third and final section I assess the relation that Zhu envisioned between punitive warfare and barbarian encroachment, arguing that he viewed the perceived barbarian incapacity for change as a justification for military action.

### 2.1 Moral power and military force

One recurring characteristic of the punitive expedition, as it features throughout the *Four Books*, is that it functions primarily as a last resort. Preferable by far was the conversion of foreign or hostile peoples through less violent means. Zhu Xi himself described this ideal in his commentary to *Analects* 16:1, which narrates Confucius' disapproval of a plan to attack the statelet Zhuanyu 顛與. He commented:

Cultivate order inside [yourself and the state], and thereafter far-away peoples will submit. If there are some who do not submit, then cultivate your virtue [further] to cause them to come to you; you indeed should not wear out your troops in far-away places. 內治修，然後遠人服。有不服，則修德以來之，亦不當勤兵於遠。<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Wyatt, "Ethical Action," 239–44; and David Graff, "The Chinese Concept of Righteous War," in *The Prism of Just War: Asian and Western Perspectives on the Legitimate Use of Military Force*, ed. Howard M. Hensel (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 199–201.

<sup>65</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 170.

A prototypical description of this kind of moral attraction was identified by Zhu Xi in another passage in his *Commentaries on the Four Books*, *Mencius* 2A:3, where it is suggested that the legendary Shang King Tang 商湯王 and Zhou King Wen 周文王 had initially accumulated their empires through the attractive force of their moral virtue.<sup>66</sup> When he discussed this passage with his disciples, he pointed to the moral exemplars Tang and Wen, who had faithfully served alleged tyrants for years before taking up arms, to explain that military action was legitimized only when all attempts at peaceful conversion had failed:

When Tang was subservient to Ge and when King Wen was still subservient to the Kun barbarians, they served them with the hope they would repent their evil ways. How could [Tang and Wen] have waited solely to launch a punitive campaign against them? It was exactly as it should have been. 湯之事葛，文王事昆夷，其本心所以事之之時，猶望其有悔悟之心。必待伐之，豈得已哉？亦所當然耳。<sup>67</sup>

Observing that the resulting type of punitive warfare was founded directly on a paradigm of peaceful, virtue-based conversion, recent scholarship has argued that these and similar expeditions, as they featured within the *Four Books*, should be interpreted as idealized, virtually “bloodless” encounters.<sup>68</sup> In this view, victory depended not on military strength and strategy but on the attractive power of benevolence (*ren*) and rightness (*yi*) to assuage hostilities and convert enemies.<sup>69</sup> Functioning identically to the ideal of peaceful attraction outlined above, the punitive army would find little use for their weaponry as enemies deserted their unjust overlord and joined the righteous assailants. One of the most explicit pieces of evidence for the supposed belief in the non-violent nature of punitive warfare is found in the main text of *Mencius* 7B:3, where Mencius challenged the account provided in the *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書) of the notorious battle at Muye 牧野, fought between the allegedly tyrannical Shang king Zhòu 紂王 and the man subsequently known as Zhou king Wu 武. Citing the benevolent character of Wu, Mencius argued that the received account of

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<sup>66</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 235.

<sup>67</sup> *ZZYL*, 51.1225–6.

<sup>68</sup> Graff, “Righteous War,” 200–5.

<sup>69</sup> Stroble, “Justification of War,” 174; Yao Xinzong, “Confucian Perspective,” 101.

the battle, which claimed that “blood flowed [so profusely that] it set afloat wooden pestles” 其血之流杵, could not have been correct.<sup>70</sup>

Zhu Xi’s commentary on *Mencius* 7B:3 portrays a rather different approach to punitive warfare, ultimately suggesting his acceptance of the unavoidability of armed confrontation. Claiming in his interlinear commentary that the sight of Wu’s army had caused Zhòu’s troops to abandon their ranks and turn on their fellow soldiers in despair, Zhu explained that the Shang carnage was partly self-incurred: “The people of the Shang murdered each other; it is not so that King Wu murdered them.” 商人自相殺，非謂武王殺之也。<sup>71</sup> While Zhu Xi’s final statement could plausibly be taken to imply that he believed Wu’s troops took no part in the battle at all, in apparent accordance with the recent claim that a punitive army “would not have to bloody its swords”,<sup>72</sup> other statements on the topic indicate Zhu did not fully believe this to be true. Discussing Wu’s military campaigns with his disciples in 1191, he acknowledged the possibility that many enemy combatants had indeed been slain by Wu or his soldiers. However, what separated him from less benevolent rulers throughout history, in Zhu Xi’s view, was the relatively limited scale of his engagements:

The way the ancients employed troops differed from that of later times. [...] I have never believed they murdered four or five hundred thousand men [on a single occasion], like the people of later ages have. But to say they have killed many people, this I believe. 古人用兵，與後世不同 [...] 那曾做後世樣殺人，或十五萬，或四十萬，某從來不信。謂之多殺人，信有之。<sup>73</sup>

Consequently, the provision and use of actual weaponry remained indispensable, as Zhu explained in a conversation with his disciples in the 1180s: “It is not the case that he did not use troops. Rather, his employment of troops was simply different from the [rulers of] the warring states of that time, who lacked moral Principle.” 非不用兵也，特其用兵，不若當時戰國之無義理耳。<sup>74</sup> While some people could indeed be converted without the use of force,

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<sup>70</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 364. As recent commentators have interpreted Mencius’ pronouncement, the transformative power of moral virtue rendered actual armed conflict unlikely; see Graff, “Righteous War,” 205; Stroble, “Justification of War,” 174, 185.

<sup>71</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 364.

<sup>72</sup> Stroble, “Justification for War,” 185.

<sup>73</sup> *ZZYL*, 25.634.

<sup>74</sup> *ZZYL*, 51.1221.

it appears that some force remained necessary for those who proved unreceptive to the influence of virtue.

In sum, Zhu Xi's comments point to two distinct but seemingly related aspects of punitive warfare. While he conceptualized the attractive force of moral virtue as an integral aspect of the punitive campaign, he also indicated on several occasions that actual violent conflict was not wholly avoidable; as long as it was guided by an understanding of Principle, this was not necessarily a problem. Rather than arguing for an either-or dichotomy between moral cultivation and armed intervention, it appears he instead conceptualized them as complimentary aspects, possibly even at work simultaneously during a campaign.

## 2.2 Warfare and political order

Punitive warfare, as it featured in the *Mencius* and *Analects*, was aimed at both the creation and the maintenance of a centralized political order. As several scholars have recently argued, it was characterized by hierarchism as well as hegemonism: as the imposition of a unifying moral order by those who had a claim to it upon those who had not, the punitive paradigm assumed a fundamental status inequality between the former and the latter.<sup>75</sup> As Wyatt has noted, this type of warfare sought to translate a presumed moral authority into a political hegemony, serving to impose the norms of its underlying moral system on those who proved unwilling or incapable of adhering to them.<sup>76</sup> The centralization of military authority played an important part in Zhu Xi's conceptualization of this ideal; yet, as we shall see below, its practice was deeply sensitive to the demands of historical and strategic circumstance.

One of the most explicit articulations of this objective is found in *Analects* 16:2: "When the Way prevails throughout the world, then ritual, music, and punitive campaigns all proceed from the Son of Heaven." 天下有道，則禮樂征伐自天子出。<sup>77</sup> Zhu's commentary to this passage suggests he considered this a matter of Principle, to be complied with lest one invariably loses power altogether: "The more severely you go against [this] Principle, the faster you will lose [authority]." 逆理愈甚，則其失之愈速。<sup>78</sup> That Zhu considered centralized military agency essential, is suggested in even less ambiguous terms in his commentary to the aforementioned *Analects* 16:1, which describes how the supposedly illegitimate overlord of Lu 魯 desired to launch a punitive attack on Zhou vassal Zhuanyu.

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<sup>75</sup> Graff, "Righteous War," 204–5; Wyatt, "Ethical Action," 241–4.

<sup>76</sup> Wyatt, "Ethical Action," 242.

<sup>77</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 171.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*



Zhu noted that Principle itself determined the fundamental inappropriateness of such an action: “Zhuanyu was a fiefdom created by the former kings [of the Zhou], so no one may attack it. [...] This is the ultimate ideal according to the Principle of the matter, an unchanging, settled essence.” 顓臾乃先王封國，則不可伐 [...] 此事理之至當，不易之定體。<sup>79</sup> As the Zhou house still (nominally) occupied the chief position in the political system during Confucius’ lifetime, Principle itself determined in absolute terms its monopoly over the conduct of warfare.

This assertion of centralized authority as an absolute norm contrasts sharply with statements Zhu Xi made elsewhere. Perhaps most contrastive is *Analects* 14:22, which, as I have described previously, portrays Confucius himself as pleading directly with the duke of Lu, not the Zhou Son of Heaven, to send armed forces to Qi and depose the usurper Chen Heng. In his interlinear comments to this passage, Zhu Xi first appeared to circumvent the issue by stating that, considering the severity of the offense, anyone could take unilateral action: “This [crime] is something Heavenly Principle does not tolerate. Anyone may apprehend and execute him, let alone neighboring states!” 天理所不容，人人得而誅之，況鄰國乎。<sup>80</sup> Several lines later, however, he continued by citing seemingly conflicting statements attributed to his predecessor Cheng Yi: “The intent of Confucius was certainly to call the crime by its proper name, report to the Son of Heaven above, and report to the local notables below.” 若孔子之志，必將正名其罪，上告天子，下告方伯。<sup>81</sup> When Zhu elaborated on this same passage in the *Questions on the Four Books*, he concluded that historical circumstances would determine which course to take, but stopped short of explaining which applied to the case of *Analects* 14:22.<sup>82</sup>

In the first analysis, therefore, there appears to be certain ambiguity regarding Zhu Xi’s thought on the value of centralized military authority and, by extension, its function within the received text of the *Analects*. This has led the modern scholar Yao Xinzong to doubt the extent to which centralized moral authority, previously described as a fundamental characteristic of the punitive paradigm, indeed represented a necessary or even important factor.<sup>83</sup> David Graff, citing several passages in the *Mencius* that similarly suggest an allowance for decentralized warfare, has argued instead that Zhou influence had eroded to

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<sup>79</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 170.

<sup>80</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 154.

<sup>81</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 155.

<sup>82</sup> *ZZQS*, 6:831–3.

<sup>83</sup> Yao Xinzong, “Confucian Perspective,” 97.

such an extent by the time of Mencius and even Confucius before him that its authority had become negotiable and decentralized military action permissible.<sup>84</sup> As I will argue below, neither suggestion appears fully applicable to Zhu Xi's views. To this end, I shall first examine the nature of the political order punitive warfare was meant to sustain and the cosmological principles that determined its legitimacy.

At the foundation of this political order lay what is commonly translated as the "mandate of Heaven" (*tianming*).<sup>85</sup> Recent interpretations have described the term as either a transcendental standard of sanctioned conduct, or, from an immanent perspective, as the "totality of conditions and potentialities" constituted by contingent historical and social forces.<sup>86</sup> Zhu Xi's conceptualization of *tianming* reflected key aspects of both perspectives. Commenting on the first line of the *Doctrine of the Mean*, "The Mandate of Heaven is called 'inborn nature'" 天命之謂性,<sup>87</sup> Zhu explained:

Inborn nature is Principle. Heaven transforms and creates the myriad things through *yin* and *yang* and the five phases, using vital energy to create form, and Principle is indeed bestowed on all things; it is like a mandate or a command. 性，即理也。天以陰陽五行化生萬物，氣以成形，而理亦賦焉，猶命令也。<sup>88</sup>

Crucial to one's understanding of Zhu Xi's vision is his identification of the "mandate of Heaven" with Principle, earlier described as the universal pattern that determined how all things should ideally run their course, in accordance with the chief virtues that constituted Zhu's moral universe. Accordingly, one could interpret Zhu's view of *tian* as a transcendental standard, an ideal course "mandated" to all things in the process of their creation. Simultaneously, however, Zhu emphasized the creative and transformative interplay between Principle and "vital force" (*qi* 氣) along the directions of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 and the five phases (*wuxing* 五行), resulting in a cosmology that was determined by the interactions of all its particular constituents. Put concretely, the particular way in which individuals could (and

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<sup>84</sup> Graff, "Righteous War," 205.

<sup>85</sup> Few modern analyses of Zhu's *tianming* discuss its political implications, instead focusing predominantly on its metaphysical foundation. See for example Wing-tsit Chan, *Chu Hsi: New Studies* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), 212–21.

<sup>86</sup> For the transcendental interpretation, see Herrlee Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft in China. Vol. 1: The Western Chou Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 82; Yao Xinzong, "Confucian Perspective," 92–6. For the immanent perspective, see Stroble, "Justification of War," 175–8.

<sup>87</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 17.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

*should*) give expression to their Heaven-bestowed inborn morality was dependent on societal and historical circumstances.<sup>89</sup> In sum, the transcendental standard of Principle that lay at the root of Zhu's conceptualization of the Mandate, and thereby the moral ground for punitive warfare, was always contextualized.

As the primary locus of this contextualization, society ultimately determined the “bearer” of the Mandate as a functional analogy to Heaven itself.<sup>90</sup> One important example of this mechanism, discussed on multiple occasions by Zhu himself, is presented in the narrative of the last Shang King Zhòu and his relations with Zhou kings Wen and Wu. Whereas Wen is traditionally said to have served Zhòu loyally throughout his life, his successor Wu eventually deposed Zhòu when popular opinion of him had deteriorated to such an extent that he lost the Mandate.<sup>91</sup> Particularly relevant for my present purposes is Zhu Xi's repeated observation that although Wen had conducted several major campaigns during his appointment, he did not unilaterally engage in military action not directly sanctioned by Zhòu within territories still loyal to him, let alone strike at Zhòu himself.<sup>92</sup> Citing his intellectual predecessor Zhang Zai 張載 (1020–1077) in his commentary, Zhu noted: “As [Zhòu] was not yet cut off from Heaven's Mandate, they interacted as befitted lord and minister.” 天命未絕，則是君臣。<sup>93</sup>

The determining factor that ultimately negated this stricture and legitimated Wu's armed intervention was described by Zhu as “nothing but human emotion” 人情而已。<sup>94</sup> The significance of this final remark lies in the observation that Zhang Zai (and Zhu Xi after him) had claimed that human emotion (*renqing* 人情) functioned as the real-world expression of one's inborn nature, itself identical with Principle.<sup>95</sup> Although Principle represented certain absolute, transcendental norms, it was functionally immanent in the people. As such, their overwhelmingly negative emotional response to Zhòu's tyranny represented the contextualized expression of an underlying, transcendental moral foundation. Conversely, as

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<sup>89</sup> Kirill Thompson, “Li and Yi as Immanent: Chu Hsi's Thought in Practical Perspective,” *Philosophy East and West* 38:1 (1988): 37–40.

<sup>90</sup> Zhu noted in 1191: “How does one receive the Mandate from Heaven? It is simply so that the people and Heaven are identical.” 命如何受於天？只是人與天同。ZZYL, 81.2126.

<sup>91</sup> SSZJJZ, 222.

<sup>92</sup> ZZYL, 51.1229. SSZJJZ, 282.

<sup>93</sup> SSZJJZ, 222.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Qian Mu, *Xinxue'an*, 2:25–30. See Zhang Zai 張載, *Zhang Zai ji* 張載集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1978), 374.

long as the people had not yet indicated Zhòu's loss of the mandate, Wen's political and indeed military subservience was unnegotiable.<sup>96</sup>

By the time of Confucius and Mencius, the Zhou house had similarly lost a significant share of its political legitimacy, reflected in popular indifference to its status and discontentment with the violence that accompanied its waning authority. However, Zhu found that this process was not yet irreversible during Confucius' lifetime:

Even though the Zhou house had faded into obscurity by the time of Confucius, the world still recognized the rightness of honoring it. This is why 'honoring the Zhou' constituted the foundation of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. By the time of Mencius, seven states vied for supremacy and no longer did the world know a Zhou existed; popular distress had become extreme. By that time, if a feudal prince could practice the Kingly Way, he may reign. 孔子之時，周室雖微，天下猶知尊周之為義，故春秋以尊周為本。至孟子時，七國爭雄，天下不復知有周，而生民之塗炭已極。當是時，諸侯能行王道，則可以王矣。<sup>97</sup>

At this point I may resume my previous discussion of *Analects* 14:22, in which Confucius appeared to support unilateral military action independent of the Zhou house. Contrasting with statements by Graff and Yao cited earlier, it seems that Zhu Xi did not in fact consider the legitimacy of the Zhou house at the time of Confucius to be negotiable, as it had not yet lost the mandate. However, as it had suffered significant territorial and institutional losses, historical circumstances had created leeway for decentralized military action, as long as it was aimed precisely at reviving its political authority. Once "the Way prevailed throughout the world" 天下有道,<sup>98</sup> as it was suggested in *Analects* 16:2, military authority would again be the sole prerogative of the Son of Heaven.

In sum, it appears that while Zhu Xi conceptualized centralized military authority as the "absolute ideal according to the Principle of the matter" 事理之至當,<sup>99</sup> he simultaneously remained sensitive to the demands of historical and strategic circumstance.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Zhu repeated this argument in three separate letters: in 1163 to Fan Bochong 范伯崇 (*WJ*, 39.1771–3), in 1166 to Xu Yuanpin 徐元聘 (*WJ*, 39.1757–8), and in 1191 to Chen Chun 陳淳 (*WJ*, 57.2731–42). For the dating of these letters, see Chen Lai, *Kaozheng*, 28, 40, 344.

<sup>97</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 205.

<sup>98</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 171.

<sup>99</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 170.

### 2.3 Barbarians within the punitive paradigm

The insistence on the centralization of political order is reflected in Zhu Xi's approach to what he termed barbarians (*yidi* 夷狄). Although he consistently invoked the supposed barbarian nature of the Jurchen Jin throughout most of his recorded statements concerned with practical contemporaneous issues, the topic featured only sporadically in his classical commentaries.<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless, the several references made to barbarians specifically within the context of armed conflict demonstrate a high degree of thematic unity. At the heart of this approach lay a fundamental, ethnocentric distinction between a cultured political center and an ever-present, barbaric periphery.<sup>102</sup> As Yang Shao-yun has pointed out, Zhu's conceptualization of political legitimacy depended in part on the ability of the cultured center to maintain this division.<sup>103</sup> This ideal is reflected in Zhu's commentary to *Analects* 14:17, where he discussed the merit of reformer Guan Zhong 管仲 (725–654 BCE). Noting Guan's role in the unification of the central states against barbarian encroachment, he concluded: "Honoring the House of Zhou and repelling the barbarians are two ways of bringing order to the world." 尊周室，攘夷狄，皆所以正天下也。<sup>104</sup>

Zhu traced the conjunction of these supposedly interrelated ideals to another of the classics, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋), and claimed on multiple occasions that they constituted its most fundamental principles. As Zhu explained to his disciples on one occasion after 1189: "To maintain the Chinese states as internal and the barbarians as external, this is the main point of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*; one must understand this." 內諸夏，外夷狄，此春秋之大旨，不可不知也。<sup>105</sup> While Zhu undoubtedly focused chiefly on the issue of governance on the internal (Chinese) side of the dichotomy, as Hoyt Tillman has

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<sup>100</sup> As I shall discuss more closely in chapter 6, this nuanced approach may have similarly informed Zhu Xi's views on Song military centralization.

<sup>101</sup> For example, Zhu referred to the Jurchen as *yidi* or *lu* 虜 "captive" in official memorials presented in 1162, 1163, 1188, 1189, and 1194. Cf. *WJ*, 11.569–80; 13.631–7; 11.589–614; 12.617–26; 12.626–30.

<sup>102</sup> The partly spatial nature of this distinction is embodied in the cartographical genre entitled *huayi tu* 華夷圖. According to Luo Dajing 羅大經 (1194–1242), Zhu Xi had once intended to produce such a map himself; see Luo Dajing 羅大經, *Helin yulu* 鶴林玉露 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 3:3.282. For the increasing popularity of this type of map among Song literati, see Hilde De Weerd, *Information, Territory, and Networks: The Crisis and Maintenance of Empire in Song China* (Cambridge: Harvard Asia Center, Harvard University Press, 2015), 112–7.

<sup>103</sup> Yang Shao-yun, "Reinventing the Barbarian: Rhetorical and Philosophical Uses of the Yi-Di in Mid-Imperial China" (PhD. Diss., University of California, 2014), 343–4.

<sup>104</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 153.

<sup>105</sup> *ZZYL*, 83.2173.

rightly pointed out, one should not underestimate the concrete importance he simultaneously attached to the external issue.<sup>106</sup> Indicating that the theoretical issue was inextricably tied to concrete politics, Zhu claimed in the 1180s that the 1141 peace treaty with the Jurchen had led to widespread disregard of this fundamental ideal: “Ever since Qin Hui made peace with the barbarians, scholars have avoided speaking of the [difference between] internal and external, so the great meaning of the *Annals* has become obscured.” 自秦檜和戎之後，士人諱言內外，而春秋大義晦矣。<sup>107</sup> In Zhu’s estimation, the post-1127 failure to militarily “repel the barbarians” (*rangyi* 攘夷) had led to the contravention of the most central teachings of the *Annals*.

Besides dividing the two entities along spatial lines, Zhu Xi also appears to have distinguished between them in terms of agency, consistently describing the barbarian element as a passive, reactive counterpart to the active cultural center. He cited the words of Fan Zuyu 范祖禹 (1041–1098) to explain this relationship in his *Outlines and Details of the Comprehensive Mirror* (*Tongjian gangmu* 通鑑綱目):

To have barbarians in the Central Lands (*zhong guo*) is like having night during the day, shadow in the light, or petty persons among noble men. When the Central Lands are misgoverned, the four barbarian tribes encroach one after the other. 中國之有夷狄，如晝之有夜，陽之有陰，君子之有小人也。中國失政，則四夷交侵。<sup>108</sup>

While Zhu Xi never explicitly named the cause of this apparently inherent passivity and, by implication, inferiority of barbarians, one possible explanation is provided in his discourse on inborn nature and the limits to its expression imposed by one’s natural endowment of *qi*. After a discussion on the implications of differences in *qi* endowment between living things, Zhu concluded in 1188: “Barbarians stand somewhere between people and animals, so in the end they are difficult to change.” 到得夷狄，便在人與禽獸之間，所以終難改。<sup>109</sup> Recent scholarship has been in disagreement over the particulars of this discussion. According to Chang Chishen, Zhu argued that barbarians owed their inferiority to a particularly “barbarian”

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<sup>106</sup> Hoyt Tillman, “Proto-Nationalism in Twelfth-Century China? The Case of Ch’en Liang,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 39:2 (1979), 413–4.

<sup>107</sup> ZZYL, 83.2175.

<sup>108</sup> ZZQS, 10:2277. While it must be noted that Zhu Xi was regularly critical of Fan Zuyu’s *Tangjian* 唐鑑 referred to here, he presented this particular quote without rebuttal. I take this to signify his agreement.

<sup>109</sup> ZZYL, 4.58.

inborn nature, derived from “distinctive Principle” (*teshu zhili* 特殊之理), setting them apart from humans who possessed superior distinctive Principle.<sup>110</sup> In Hoyt Tillman’s interpretation, Zhu Xi argued instead that while barbarians shared the same Principle as humans, its proper expression was obstructed by their particularly stunted endowment of *qi*.<sup>111</sup> Thirdly, Yang Shao-yun has proposed that Zhu’s thought may have evolved over time, shifting from the former to the latter position through the early 1190s.<sup>112</sup> For my present purposes, however, the ultimate implications of these viewpoints are identical: innate inferiority determined that barbarians were physiologically unlikely to develop the human virtues necessary to participate properly in the universal moral order.

On this point one may draw an instructive parallel with Zhu Xi’s theory on legal punishment. As suggested in the preceding chapter, Zhu considered punishments necessary to correct those individuals who remained unreceptive to the transformative force of moral virtue.<sup>113</sup> As several scholars have recently pointed out, Zhu Xi’s explanation for the relative incapacity for moral development inherent in some people was similarly informed by his thought on *qi* endowment.<sup>114</sup> Because such innately deficient individuals could not be expected to comply with the predominant social order of their own accord, for example through study and ritual, Zhu considered the forceful application of punishment permissible and even necessary to ensure social order. As similarly innately deficient creatures, barbarians who proved belligerent necessitated the application of military force.<sup>115</sup> The military “repelling” of aggressive barbarians, then, can be conceptualized as a form of rectifying punishment on a much larger scale, aimed at reaffirming their particular position in relation to the center of Zhu Xi’s cultural world.

In sum, it appears that Zhu Xi found non-violent “moral attraction” of the sort I have described in the first section of this chapter inapplicable to barbarians he considered to be particularly aggressive. The transformative attraction to exemplary virtue would entail the rejection of one’s erstwhile belligerent ways, and this kind of moral change is precisely what

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<sup>110</sup> Chang Chishen 張其賢, “Zhong guo gainian yu yidi zhibian de lishitantaoy 中國概念與夷狄之辨的歷史探討” (PhD. Diss., National Taiwan University, 2009), 252–4.

<sup>111</sup> Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism*, 263n7.

<sup>112</sup> Yang Shao-yun, “The Barbarian,” 345–7.

<sup>113</sup> ZZYL, 23.548.

<sup>114</sup> Wu Shuchen 武樹臣, “Zhu Xi falüsixiang tansuo 朱熹法律思想探索,” *Beijing daxue xuebao* 5 (1983): 76–7; Xu Gongxi 徐公喜, *Zhu Xi lixue falüsixiang yanjiu 朱熹理學法律思想研究* (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 2004), 155–7.

<sup>115</sup> As I will elaborate more closely in chapters 4 and 5, Zhu noted about the contemporaneous Jurchen Jin: “These caitiff are simply like birds and beasts, and nothing else. How could they be subdued through softness?” 虜禽獸耳，豈可以柔服也。ZZYL, 131.3142.

Zhu's conception of the barbarian was incapable of. As a result, no non-violent solution could plausibly restore the *zhong guo* to proper order.

### Conclusion

Despite the stated ideal that one should focus on the transformative effect of one's moral virtue instead of "wearing out troops in far-away places", Zhu Xi indicated that military action at times remained necessary to ensure social and political order, especially when faced with supposedly deficient groups who could not be expected to participate in Zhu Xi's cultural world of their own accord.<sup>116</sup> Rather than arguing for an either-or dichotomy between moral cultivation with the aim of "peaceful attraction" on the one hand and armed intervention on the other, he instead conceptualized them as complimentary aspects. Within Zhu's ideal political order, Principle determined that military policy was the sole prerogative of the Son of Heaven, although this ideal was sensitive to the demands of strategy and circumstance.<sup>117</sup> More fundamentally, these findings suggest that Zhu Xi's approach to warfare depended strongly on context and circumstance. I shall explore this notion further in the following chapter.

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<sup>116</sup> As I will demonstrate in chapter 5, Zhu classified the Jurchen barbarians as one such group of creatures inherently incapable of adhering to this order, necessitating the use of military force to expel them from the *zhong guo*.

<sup>117</sup> I will discuss the reflection of this approach in Zhu Xi's thought on military centralization during the Song in chapter 6.



### 3. War and Personal Morality

In the preceding chapters I argued that, under certain circumstances, Zhu Xi considered warfare to be unavoidable. The sagely King Wu, for example, was compelled to launch a military expedition against the notorious King Zhòu and prevent further suffering among the populace. At the same time, however, it is suggested on multiple occasions throughout the classical literature that this may have reflected an inadequacy in Wu's own moral constitution.<sup>118</sup> As I demonstrate in the current chapter, Zhu reformulated his interpretation of this contrast at several points throughout his life. In the first section, I address the criteria Zhu maintained to determine when one was legitimized to depart from the supposedly ideal, non-violent methods of conflict resolution and resort to armed intervention. I argue that, by gradually framing his ethical system in terms of “standard” (*jing* 經) and “expedient” (*quan* 權) and thereby allowing for the historical contextualization of moral judgment, Zhu attempted to reconcile his insistence on the universality of Principle with the supposedly undesirable yet necessary nature of warfare. In the second section, I further nuance this historicized approach and turn to Zhu Xi's assessment of Wu's personal morality. By discussing a frequently recurring thought experiment between Zhu and his disciples, involving a historical comparison between the ancient sages Shun and Wu, I argue that Zhu gradually separated Wu's moral imperfections from his decision to wage war, further consolidating his historicized approach to warfare.

#### 3.1 Legitimizing war: the “expedient”

As noted throughout the preceding chapters, Zhu approached benevolent military interventions, such as those conducted by sage kings Tang and Wu, as occasionally necessary responses to historical circumstance. As Zhu argued to his disciples in 1193: “At that time a group of wicked individuals had assembled [around Zhòu] to harm the realm, and they could not be dispersed. King Wu had no choice but to attack.” 當時聚一團惡人為天下害，不能消散。武王只得去伐。<sup>119</sup> Simultaneously, however, Zhu maintained that such recourse to armed conflict should always be considered a last resort, allowable only when the attractive force of one's moral virtue proved ineffective. As noted in the preceding chapter, Zhu Xi's partially immanent conceptualization of the mandate of Heaven, which initially barred Wen

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<sup>118</sup> As for example in *Analects* 3:25 (as reflected in his music), 7:15 (as the target of virtuous remonstrance), and 8:20 (as compared to his predecessors).

<sup>119</sup> ZZYL, 25.634.

and Wu from deposing Zhòu, meant that a correct judgment of human emotion, as the functional expression of one's inborn virtues, played a crucial role in deciding when one was legitimated to deviate so extremely from the moral norm.<sup>120</sup> Discussing this problem in a letter to his disciple Chen Chun 陳淳 during the 1190's, Zhu pointed to the difficulty of making such a decision: "This is the point at which the sage uses the expedient. Only those who are profound and of incisive righteousness may resolve [such cases]; one cannot discuss them using the regular norms." 到此則聖人用權之地，惟幾微義精者乃可以決之，自不容以常法論也。<sup>121</sup> Only someone possessed of a sagely sense of rightness, Zhu argued, could reliably adapt the norm to abnormal situations.

Recent scholarship has yielded several complementary accounts of Zhu's conceptualization of the expedient (*quan*) and its relation with the moral standard (*jing*). Essential for a proper understanding of the term is the observation that Zhu Xi, seemingly over the course of multiple decades, sought to reconcile two seemingly antithetical approaches to moral normativity.<sup>122</sup> Firstly, scholars identified by Zhu simply as "Han dynasty Confucians" had described *quan* as "being at variance with the standard while complying with the Way" 反經合道.<sup>123</sup> Cheng Yi, on the other hand, had insisted that the universality of Principle meant that "the expedient is the same as the standard" 權即是經,<sup>124</sup> effectively abolishing it as a meaningful term. As Cheng equated "the Way" (*dao* 道) as universal Principle with the "standard", it was difficult to accept the Han suggestion that morally just action could both be at variance and in compliance with it. Zhu initially adopted Cheng Yi's stance in his 1177 commentary to the *Analects*.<sup>125</sup> However, as I shall argue below, he simultaneously recognized that there remained some extraordinary events, like King Wu's decision to attack and execute his former lord Zhòu, which clearly deviated from any prevalent moral standard.

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<sup>120</sup> For Zhu's conceptualization of emotion (*qing*) as the functional extension of one's inborn nature (*xing*) and its relation to warfare, see section 2.2.

<sup>121</sup> *WJ*, 57.2731. Zhu expressed similar reservations to Emperor Ningzong 宋寧宗 in 1194; Cf. *WJ*, 14.665–7.

<sup>122</sup> Wei Cheng-t'ung, "Chu Hsi on the Standard and the Expedient," in *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*, ed. Wing-tsit Chan (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), 255–61; Tillman, *Ascendancy*, 168–78; Yue Tianlei 岳天雷, "Zhu Xi lun quan 朱熹論權," *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao* 56 (2013): 169–79.

<sup>123</sup> *ZZYL*, 37.986–95.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> Commenting on *Analects* 9:30, Zhu explicitly rejected the Han conceptualization; *SSZJJZ*, 116.

His eventual solution was to reintroduce a certain distinction between “the Way” and “the standard” and describe them as operating on two different conceptual levels.<sup>126</sup> While *jing* and *quan* both represented inherently temporary moral norms, with the latter acting as the occasional and situational redefinition of the semi-permanent former, the *dao* as universal Principle served to “string together” (*guan* 貫) and inform both. This appears to corroborate my discussion of Heaven (*tian*) in the preceding chapter, where I noted that while Principle represented a universal moral norm, this norm should always be approached by observing the particular (social or historical) circumstances that formed its temporary contextualization. Put differently, while the standard made a claim to certain transcendent principles, such as the five relations (*wulun* 五倫) and filial piety (*xiao* 孝), its inherently immanent function meant that independent historical or societal change (*bian* 變) could render these principles temporarily untenable.<sup>127</sup> As Schirokauer has similarly noted, Zhu Xi had developed a strongly historicized conceptualization of morality, without yielding to moral relativism.<sup>128</sup> Speaking to his disciples in 1193, he cited the examples of the martial sage kings Tang and Wu to explain this historicized contextualization of *jing* and *quan*:

The [proper relations between] lord and minister and between older brother and younger brother are the constant standard of Heaven and earth, something that cannot be changed. When Tang and Wu executed Jie and Zhòu, these were indeed cases of ministers killing their lords [...] how could they not be at variance with the standard! However, as the progress of time had reached these particular points, Principle determined they should act in the ways they did. Despite being at variance with the standard, they indeed complied with Principle. 君臣兄弟，是天地之常經，不可易者。湯武之誅桀紂，卻是以臣弑君 [...] 豈不是反經！但時節到這裏，道理當恁地做，雖然反經，卻自合道理。<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Wei Cheng-t'ung, “Standard and Expedient,” 258–9; Yue Tianlei, “Lun quan,” 170–3.

<sup>127</sup> Although the distinction between “immanent” and “transcendent” characteristics does not feature in the literature cited here and above, these characteristics of Zhu’s Principle are particularly descriptive of his conceptualization of *quan*.

<sup>128</sup> Conrad Schirokauer, “Chu Hsi’s Sense of History,” in *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China*, ed. Robert P. Hymes and Conrad Schirokauer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 208–12.

<sup>129</sup> ZZYL, 37.990.

By concluding that Tang and Wu were “at variance with the standard yet compliant with the Way” as they conducted their punitive campaigns, Zhu indicated his eventual embrace of the supposed Han dynasty conceptualization of *quan*. Corroborating recent suggestions that his embrace of the Han position enabled him to accommodate more readily deviant yet situationally justifiable behavior,<sup>130</sup> it appears this changing conceptualization of *quan* went hand-in-hand with his increasingly explicit rationalization of Tang and Wu’s acts of punitive war. Accordingly, it was not until the completion of this conceptual shift that Zhu ultimately established Tang and Wu as the primary examples of the proper use of the expedient.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, by equating the expedient with Principle itself, Zhu firmly grounded such judgments within his broader cosmology.<sup>132</sup>

These findings contrast sharply with the observations of Wei Cheng-t’ung, who, as the only one among recent scholarship to address the cases of Tang and Wu, has rejected Zhu’s pronouncements as unacceptable and “absurd”.<sup>133</sup> As war and regicide are inherently and universally immoral acts, Wei argues, *quan* cannot be applied to these cases.<sup>134</sup> As Tang and Wu had already been deeply entrenched as venerated sages (*shengren* 聖人) long before Zhu’s writing, Wei continues, Zhu could not but bow under the pressure of tradition and similarly idealize their allegedly abhorrent acts of war and regicide.<sup>135</sup> In other words, it was not actual merit but rather their canonical status as sages that supposedly justified their actions in Zhu’s eyes.

While the canonical status of Tang and Wu as *shengren* may have indeed informed Zhu Xi’s judgment, there remain two problems with Wei’s thesis. Firstly, as noted throughout

<sup>130</sup> Wei Cheng-t’ung, “Standard and Expedient,” 256, 267–8; Tillman, *Ascendancy*, 177–8.

<sup>131</sup> In his 1177 commentaries, in which he still explicitly rejected the Han position in favor of Cheng’s theory, Zhu at no point suggested any connection between *quan* and the cases of Tang and Wu. Contrarily, all 12 instances in the *Yulei* in which Zhu rationalized the actions of Wu and Tang on the basis of “expediency” were recorded between 1193 and 1199. Cf. ZZYL, 35.909, 37.986–95, 49.1205, 51.1229, 58.1365, 62.1484.

<sup>132</sup> I trace Zhu Xi’s association between expediency, sagehood, and military action as far back as his first official communication with Emperor Xiaozong in 1162, when he laid out his case against peace with the Jurchen. Directly following an initial encouragement for Xiaozong to “accord with Principle as the times dictate” 因時順理, involving “extraordinary action and extraordinary merit” 非常之事、非常之功, he continued by emphasizing the foundational importance of the investigation of Principle (*WJ*, 11.571). One year later, when Zhu restated his case for war against the Jurchen before the Emperor, Zhu similarly encouraged Xiaozong to study the Classics with the explicit aim of “responding to the endless changes of the age” 應當世無窮之變 (*WJ*, 13.632). Although at this point he did not yet employ the terminology of *quan* and *jing*, which he would not associate explicitly with warfare until the 1190s, his repeated insistence on the connection between moral cultivation, historical change, and military action is suggestive of a continuous process of conceptual development.

<sup>133</sup> Wei Cheng-t’ung, “Standard and Expedient,” 265.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 265, 268.

the preceding chapters, no *a priori* rejection of warfare was possible for Zhu. On the contrary, he maintained on several occasions that warfare and even regicide were occasionally sanctioned by Principle itself. As such, contrary to Wei's claims, there is no reason to assume that Zhu's conceptualization of *quan* as a moral concept was fundamentally inapplicable to war. Secondly, while Zhu indeed consistently described the exercise of the "expedient" as the sole prerogative of the sage, I would argue that such pronouncements served first and foremost to emphasize the particular difficulty of making the moral judgments involved in its practice, rather than reflect any sort of dogmatic belief in the inherent infallibility of sages.<sup>136</sup> In fact, as I will demonstrate in the following section, Zhu Xi could occasionally be openly critical of Wu's rash behavior during his military campaign.

As no *a priori* rejection of warfare was possible in Zhu's strongly historicized conceptualization of morality, it is plausible that his repeated insistence on the good intentions of Tang and Wu signified something more than a mere dogmatic concession to accepted tradition. As Zhu claimed to his disciples in 1193: "During their punitive campaigns, Tang and Wu were fully and solely concerned with a feeling of compassion [and the intention of] saving the people; they did not consider anything else." 湯武之征伐，只知一意惻怛救民而已，不知其他。<sup>137</sup> On another occasion, he furthermore equated such motivations with the chief virtue of benevolence (*ren* 仁) itself.<sup>138</sup> While it is true that their canonical status as sages may indeed have informed these estimations to some extent, there is no fundamental contradiction between these views and his broader moral framework that suggests an artificial or dogmatic rationalization on Zhu's part. One may conclude that, seemingly correlative with his gradual embrace of the Han conceptualization of *quan* and *jing* towards the middle of the 1190s, Zhu ultimately firmly grounded the concept of punitive warfare within his Principle-based ethical framework, gradually envisioning a close conceptual relation between moral cultivation, historical change, and military action.

### 3.2 Zhu Xi's historicized understanding of war

In order to reconstruct Zhu Xi's rationalization of Wu's armed intervention against Zhòu, I have maintained the premise that external, historical circumstances had supposedly prevented Wu from exercising the morally preferable alternative, namely that of non-violent conversion

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<sup>136</sup> For Zhu's insistence on restricting the "expedient" to the sage, see his letter to Chen Chun cited above. See also ZZYL, 37.986–95.

<sup>137</sup> ZZYL, 25.637. Zhu made an identical argument in an undated letter to Xu Yuanpin 徐元聘; cf. WJ, 39.1757.

<sup>138</sup> ZZYL, 53.1277.

through the attractive force of his moral virtue.<sup>139</sup> While I thereby established that Zhu considered Wu's choice ethically justifiable, I have so far neglected to ask the question how Wu's own moral constitution, as described by Zhu, may have determined the ultimate flow of events. Put differently, it remains a possibility that Wu's "inevitable" recourse to war stemmed from an inadequacy inherent in Wu's virtue itself. Recent scholarship and, as I shall demonstrate below, Zhu Xi himself have indeed suggested Wu was not perfect.<sup>140</sup> If true, this could imply that Wu's attack on Zhòu was only "marginally" justifiable; had a more cultivated sage been in his place, war might still have been avoidable. In the remainder of this section, I will examine how Zhu Xi addressed this speculative problem and assess its implications for his broader view on the moral implications of warfare.

The textual foundation for most of Zhu's discussions on this topic can be traced to *Analec*s 3:25, which describes a comparison between the celebratory musical compositions *Shao* and *Wu*, attributed to the sage kings Shun and Wu respectively. In the traditional understanding of this passage, the provided descriptions are taken to reflect the moral qualities of Shun and Wu: "The Master said of the *Shao*: 'It is fully excellent as well as fully good.' Of the *Wu*, he said: 'It is fully excellent, but not yet fully good'." 子謂韶，盡美矣又盡善也；謂武，盡美矣未盡善也。<sup>141</sup> Among Zhu's commentatorial predecessors of the Northern Song (960–1127), whose comments he had collected in his 1172 *Lun-Meng jingyi* 論孟精義, there was certain agreement regarding the interpretation of this passage.<sup>142</sup> Regarding the "excellent" part of the passage, the commentatorial predecessors agreed virtually unanimously on both the supposed historical inevitability of Wu's recourse to violence and the positive value of the new political order he initiated.<sup>143</sup> It is on this point of political merit that both Shun and Wu were "fully excellent". Regarding the "good" part of the passage, the commentators noted that while Wu's resort to force was deemed to have been generally undesirable, certainly when compared to Shun's non-violent attainment of the realm along the ideal of "moral attraction" (see chapter 2), it was not his own moral inadequacy but rather the totality of historical developments that had determined his actions. It was warfare in

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<sup>139</sup> See for example ZZYL, 25.634.

<sup>140</sup> Stroble, "Justification of War," 171; Wei Cheng-t'ung, "Standard and Expedient," 265.

<sup>141</sup> SSZJJZ, 68.

<sup>142</sup> ZZQS, 7:130–1.

<sup>143</sup> This point is reflected most clearly in the comments of Cheng Yi, Fan Zuyu, and Xie Liangzuo 謝良佐 (1050–1103); ZZQS, 7:130.

general, but not Wu's decision to engage in it, that was "not yet fully good" according to the early Song commentators.<sup>144</sup>

While Zhu similarly noted the supposed historical necessity of war in his own commentary to *Analects* 3:25, formally completed five years later in 1177, he departed significantly from this commentatorial precedent in his interpretation of what made Wu "not yet fully good". Zhu commented:

Shun succeeded Yao and brought about order, while King Wu attacked Zhòu to rescue the people; their merit was one and the same. Therefore, both musical compositions were fully excellent. However, whereas Shun exhibited his virtue naturally and furthermore obtained the realm through abdication, Wu returned to his virtue [through cultivation] and furthermore obtained the realm through punitive war and executions.<sup>145</sup> Therefore, the substance [of their actions] differed. 舜紹堯致治，武王伐紂救民，其功一也，故其樂皆盡美。然舜之德，性之也，又以揖遜而有天下；武王之德，反之也，又以征誅而得天下，故其實有不同者。<sup>146</sup>

In what appears to be a direct reference to *Mencius* 7B:33, in which Mencius similarly compared Shun's natural exhibition of virtue with Wu's more forceful efforts at "returning" to it, Zhu Xi suggested a rather more critical interpretation of the second phrase of *Analects* 3:25.<sup>147</sup> While he did not go so far as to actually challenge Wu's claim to sagehood, as Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) had done before him partly on the basis of this particular passage,<sup>148</sup> the wording of Zhu's final lines suggests he may have observed a causal connection between Wu's supposed inferior moral attainment and his decision to initiate war. The logical flipside to this observation, namely that Shun could avoid war because of his naturally perfected virtue, was suggested by Zhu to his disciples between 1189 and 1192: "Shun was a sage who was 'born knowing it'. People would turn to his magnificent virtue on their own accord; it

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<sup>144</sup> See for example the comments by Cheng Yi, Xie Liangzuo, and You Zuo 游酢 (1053–1123); *ZZQS*, 7:130–1.

<sup>145</sup> It is important to note that, for Zhu Xi, virtue (*de* 德) as an innate property was synonymous with inborn nature (*xing*). While this innate virtue was readily accessible to Shun, Wu had to engage in thoroughgoing cultivation to "return" to it. Cf. *ZZYL*, 14.260.

<sup>146</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 68.

<sup>147</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 373. As elaborated below, the implication is that Wu's efforts at cultivation were somehow incomplete. See *WJ*, 53.2495–7.

<sup>148</sup> Su Shi 蘇軾, *Su Shi wenji* 蘇軾文集, ed. Kong Fanli 孔凡禮 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 5.137–9. Zhu challenged Su's thesis throughout the 1190s. Cf. *ZZYL*, 35.907–8, 910.

was simply not necessary for him to wage punitive expeditions.” 舜是生知之聖，其德盛，人自歸之，不必征伐耳。<sup>149</sup>

It was not until the middle of the 1190s that Zhu gradually moved to nuance his position and ultimately disavowed any causal relation between Wu’s being “not yet fully good” and the act of (benevolent) military aggression. The primary vehicle for this change was the introduction of a frequently recurring, speculative exercise in alternative history, with disciples repeatedly asking Zhu what Shun would have done had he been in Wu’s position. On the first recorded occasion of this question in 1191, Zhu remained ambiguous.<sup>150</sup> When the same question was put to him again two years later, he stated that King Wen and even the venerated Shun himself would have similarly rebelled violently against Zhòu, had they been in Wu’s position: “If King Wen had managed to remain until the time of King Wu, and [Zhòu] had still not diminished his old habits, he could not but have attacked. Had Shun been there, he would similarly have dispatched an expedition.” 若使文王待得到武王時，他那舊習又不消散，文王也只得伐。舜到這裏也著伐。<sup>151</sup> In a development that occurred in tandem with Zhu’s gradual reconceptualization of the notion of *quan*, Zhu increasingly emphasized historical circumstance as the main determinant of benevolent martial behavior.<sup>152</sup> In 1199, he furthermore denied *any* causal link between the sage’s virtue and his decision to wage war: “That he was ‘[not yet fully] good’ speaks only of his virtue, something pertaining to Wu’s person; it had nothing to do with matters of punitive war.” 善只說德，是武王身上事，不干征伐事。<sup>153</sup>

Having thereby fully embraced the historical approach to *Analects* 3:25 first advocated by his Northern Song predecessors, Zhu Xi’s attention shifted instead to Wu’s particular behavior during his campaigns as a possible explanation of what had made him “not yet fully good” in the eyes of Confucius. When compared with similar campaigns conducted by Tang, as Zhu noted on several occasions, Wu’s conduct was particularly rash or “coarse” (*cu* 粗).<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> ZZYL, 25.636. The phrase cited in parentheses refers to *Analects* 16:9.

<sup>150</sup> ZZYL, 25.637.

<sup>151</sup> ZZYL, 25.634. Zhu expressed a similar belief in an undated letter to Xu Yuanpin. Cf. *WJ*, 39.1757–8.

<sup>152</sup> In the period between 1196 and 1200, Zhu noted Shun’s possible recourse to warfare on three occasions. Cf. ZZYL, 25.636–7.

<sup>153</sup> ZZYL, 25.635–6. Tanaka Kenji has determined that Chen Chun, who recorded this statement, studied under Zhu in 1190 as well as in 1199. As several statements recorded between 1189 and 1192 directly contradict this quote, I date it to 1199. See Tanaka Kenji, “Shiji nenkō,” 153–8.

<sup>154</sup> In a letter addressed to Liu Jizhang 劉季章, Zhu argued that while both Tang and Wu had similarly “returned to their nature” 反性 through forceful effort, as is described in *Mencius* 7B:33, Wu had been significantly less successful in this endeavor. This may explain the difference in their martial conduct. See *WJ*, 53.2495–7. A



Whereas Zhu had still claimed in his 1177 commentary that both Tang and Wu had “felt shame because of their [momentarily lacking] virtue” 有慚德, statements dated to 1199 suggest he had started to doubt the extent to which Wu was indeed capable of such self-reflection.<sup>155</sup> Perhaps most telling was the way Tang and Wu had concluded their campaigns: whereas Tang had simply banished Jie, Wu instead chose to personally decapitate Zhòu and hang his head from a pole.<sup>156</sup>

At this point one must be careful not to overstate the severity of Zhu’s criticism. After all, he himself had expressed a similar wish regarding the head of the Jurchen chief sometime between 1189 and 1192.<sup>157</sup> More to the point, Zhu stated explicitly on several occasions that Wu’s rashness ultimately did not detract from his status as a sage (*shengren*).<sup>158</sup> Far more significant is the observation that Zhu’s eventual preoccupation with these details indicates his underlying acceptance of warfare as a historical necessity. While this position can already be partly identified in his 1177 commentary to *Analects* 3:25, it was not until the 1190s that Zhu Xi could fully embrace the positive evaluation of Wu’s military actions as it was shared among his Northern Song predecessors, concurrent with his gradual reconceptualization of the “expedient”.

### Conclusion

Building on the simultaneously transcendental and immanent nature of his ethical framework, Zhu Xi increasingly allowed for the historicization and contextualization of moral judgment. While he had already encouraged the recently enthroned Xiaozong in the 1160s to devote his studies to Principle so that he may respond correctly to the “endless changes of the age”, undoubtedly referring to his own subsequent case for war against the Jurchen, it was not until the 1190s that he started to explicitly associate his emergent terminology of *jing* and *quan* with matters of warfare. This development coincided with his gradual rejection of Cheng Yi’s conceptualization of *quan*, which he ultimately dismissed as being too rigid, in favor of the Han position. Indicative of these developments was his changing assessment of the sagely Wu, whose military endeavors he ultimately moved to thoroughly contextualize

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record of similarly addressed letters in the *Zhu Xi nianpu* suggests a dating between 1195 and 1200. See *ZXNP*, 457–70.

<sup>155</sup> *SSZJJZ*, 68; *ZZYL*, 61.1474.

<sup>156</sup> Zhu cited this behavior as a reflection of Wu’s “not yet fully good” moral constitution on several occasions between 1193 and 1199. See *ZZYL*, 35.907, 61.1474.

<sup>157</sup> *ZZYL*, 133.3200.

<sup>158</sup> He mostly did so in response to Su Shi, who had argued the opposite. *ZZYL*, 35.907–8, 910.

and, in 1199, even completely divorced from any personal moral flaws he may have had. Provided one had a sagely insight into the normative strictures of Principle, recourse to warfare was the product of historical circumstance, not moral deficiency.

## 4. Zhu Xi's Case for War

The present chapter marks my turn to Zhu Xi's thought on the concrete military issues facing the Song, focusing on his participation in the war and peace debate at court. As he himself described it, participants within the strategic debate favored either an indefinite peace accord (*he* 和), short-term military offensive (*zhan* 戰), or a more protracted preparatory defense (*shou* 守).<sup>159</sup> Whereas the difference between the latter two positions was mostly a matter of military strategy, Zhu's lifelong opposition to the signing of peace treaties with the Jurchen had a thoroughly philosophical foundation. In the first section, I examine Zhu Xi's first official articulation of his case against peace, presented to the throne in 1162, focusing on his argumentation for the paired goals of recovering the northern Central Plains (*huifu zhongyuan* 恢復中原) and taking revenge against the Jurchen (*fuchou* 復讎). In the second section, I examine Zhu's subsequent encounter with Emperor Xiaozong in 1163, focusing on his evolving conceptualization of the nature of revanchist sentiment. Continuing upon this conceptual scaffolding in the third section, I challenge the recently held claim that Zhu Xi supposedly abandoned revenge as a legitimate argument for war from the 1180s onward, demonstrating that he maintained this cause unabatedly.

### 4.1 "Enemies of our father"

Following its crushing defeat at the hands of Jurchen forces during the 1127 "Disaster of Jingkang" 靖康之禍, the Song court relocated its capital to the south, where Emperor Gaozong 宋高宗 eventually ordered the initiation of peace negotiations in December 1138.<sup>160</sup> As Tao Jing-shen has pointed out, an important common thread uniting the immediate opposition against these negotiations was the traditional injunction against "sharing the same skies as an enemy [who had killed] one's father" 父之讎弗與共戴天, cited from the *Record of Ritual* (*Liji* 禮記).<sup>161</sup> One record in the *History of the Song* (*Songshi* 宋史) has named Zhu Xi's own father, Zhu Song 朱松 (1097–1143), as a cosigner of the memorial submitted in

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<sup>159</sup> See for example WJ, 13.633. Huang Kuanchong 黃寬重 has described these positions as the three legs of the "tripod" 鼎 of Southern Song strategic debate. See Huang Kuanchong 黃寬重, *Wansong chaochen dui guoshi de zhengyi* 晚宋朝臣對國是的爭議 (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan daxue wenshi zongkan, 1978), 71.

<sup>160</sup> Tuotuo 脫脫, ed., *Songshi* 宋史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 29.537. Hereafter SS.

<sup>161</sup> Tao Jing-shen, "The Move to the South and the Reign of Kao-tsung (1127–1162)," in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 5, pt. 1, *The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907–1279*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 678. For the *Liji* source, see Sun Xidan 孫希旦, ed., *Liji jijie* 禮記集解 (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1990), 4.87.

protest against the negotiations, suggesting a concrete link between this early appeal to canonical justification and the later foundation of Zhu Xi's own case against peace.<sup>162</sup> Although Zhu Xi himself would later recollect, undoubtedly with some exaggeration, that "Everyone, regardless of wisdom or status, unequivocally agreed [these negotiations] were unacceptable" 天下之人，無賢愚，無貴賤，交口合辭以為不可，<sup>163</sup> peace was established and maintained without significant incident for two decades. When in 1161 Jin prince Wanyan Liang 完顏亮 led an abortive incursion into Song territory, the war and peace debate reignited at court.

Immediately following the abdication of Gaozong in July 1162, his successor Xiaozong issued a public decree calling for 'forthright counsel' (*zhiyan* 直言).<sup>164</sup> Two months later, Zhu Xi submitted his memorial to the throne.<sup>165</sup> The content of this memorial has previously been analyzed by several scholars, who have unanimously described a high degree of argumentative continuity with Zhu's second memorial, presented the following year in 1163.<sup>166</sup> However, as I will argue below, several differences between the two writings indicate a gradual shift in Zhu's argumentation. This development will prove particularly significant for our analysis of the development of his argumentation following the 1160s, discussed in the next section.

In his first memorial in 1162, Zhu based himself on the notion of Principle to reiterate the same canonical justification for war his father had maintained before him. While he pointed to both irredentism (*huifu*) and revanchism (*fuchou*) as legitimate cases for war, his focus lay virtually exclusively on the latter:

To us, the Jin caitiffs are "enemies one may not share the same skies with", enemies we may not make peace with; the moral Principle of this case is clear. [...] What is meant with "to insist on peace" has a hundred disadvantages and not a single benefit, so what kind of hardship could justify it? Now, the notions "taking revenge on enemies and punishing wrongdoers" and "strengthening yourself and doing good" appear in the Classics, and they are exceedingly clear. 夫金虜於我有不共戴天之讎，

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<sup>162</sup> *SS*, 473.13754.

<sup>163</sup> *WJ*, 75.3618.

<sup>164</sup> *SS*, 33.617.

<sup>165</sup> For precise dating, see *ZXNP*, 20.

<sup>166</sup> Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism*, 175–6; Zhu Ruixi, "Touxiangpai?", 72–4; Li Longxian, *Fuchouguan*, 72–3.

則其不可和也，義理明矣 [...] 所謂講和者，有百害無一利，何苦而必為之？夫復讎討賊、自彊為善之說見於經者，不啻詳矣。<sup>167</sup>

Contrary to what Zhu's final statement suggests, his argumentation did not move beyond normative assertions at this point in time. As noted earlier, the phrase "an enemy one may not share the same skies with" 不共戴天之讎 is an abbreviated reference to the *Liji*, originally referring specifically to the murderer of one's father.<sup>168</sup> As the commentator Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) had noted, "A father is his son's 'Heaven'. If the son [is willing to] live under the same skies as the person who killed this 'Heaven', he is no filial son." 父者子之天，殺己之天，與共戴天，非孝子也。<sup>169</sup> Zhu's subsequent phrase "taking revenge on enemies and punishing wrongdoers" 復讎討賊 appears to refer to another of the Classics, namely the *Gongyang Commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋公羊傳: "The minister who does not punish wrongdoers, is not a true minister; the son who does not avenge [his father], is not a true son." 臣不討賊，非臣也。子不復讎，非子也。<sup>170</sup> The normative claims about the "true son" and his filial duty to pursue revenge suggest a decidedly familial conceptualization of revenge, at least in its explicit articulation.

Regarding the issue of recovery (*hui fu*) as a case for war, Zhu remained substantially less articulate, possibly suggesting he considered the legitimacy of this cause self-evident. Contrasting strongly with contemporaries such as Chen Liang 陳亮 (1143–1194), who utilized elaborate geomantic and cosmological theories to argue for the necessity of recovering the north,<sup>171</sup> Zhu simply juxtaposed his aim to "recover the Central Plains" with the need to "repel the barbarians" 攘夷狄 without further elaboration.<sup>172</sup> As I noted in chapter 2, Zhu would eventually connect these aims to what he considered the main tenets of the *Annals*, namely "To keep the Chinese states as internal and the barbarians as external." 內諸

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<sup>167</sup> WJ, 11.573.

<sup>168</sup> It appears Zhu used the character *chou* 仇 and its variant *chou* 讎 interchangeably, both meaning "enemy" or "enmity".

<sup>169</sup> Sun Xidan, *Liji*, 4.87.

<sup>170</sup> He Xiu 何休 and Xu Yan 徐彥, *Chunqiu gongyangzhuan zhushu* 春秋公羊傳註疏, ed. Li Xueqin 李學勤 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), 3.65.

<sup>171</sup> See Tillman, "Proto-Nationalism," 406–12; and Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism*, 172–5.

<sup>172</sup> WJ, 11.573, 576.

夏，外夷狄。<sup>173</sup> However, this ethnocentric case against peace with the Jurchen remained mostly implicit throughout Zhu's official communications at court.

In sum, during his first formal encounter with Xiaozong, Zhu's most explicit focus lay on the supposed connection between Principle and an apparently related pair of normative claims regarding the "true son" and "true minister" to plead against peace with the Jurchen. While the relation remained implicit and unelaborated, his direct reference to the *Liji* injunction suggests he was chiefly concerned with the filial duty of the "true son" at this point in time.

#### 4.2 "Enemies of our lord"

The historical records indicate that Zhu Xi and his fellow anti-peace advocates initially succeeded in convincing Xiaozong. In June 1163, Song general Zhang Jun 張浚 crossed the Yangzi river to rally his troops. After an initial string of victories, however, the Song army suffered a devastating defeat at Fuli 符離 several weeks later, and no more subsequent Song victories were reported.<sup>174</sup> Peace negotiations commenced soon afterwards. Although negotiations would eventually bog down over several disagreements, Xiaozong's concession of "four prefectures and an annual payment in coin" to the Jin in October 1163 indicates he had set his sights on peace.<sup>175</sup>

One month later, Zhu Xi presented his second memorial, consisting of three short texts, to the throne.<sup>176</sup> In the second text he restated his case against peace with the Jurchen, this time in considerably more explicit terms. Following an extensive discussion of the necessity of self-cultivation and the investigation of Principle, he pointed to the particular Principle he had in mind:

Benevolence is nowhere greater than between father and son, and righteousness is nowhere greater than between lord and minister. This is what is called "the essence of the three guiding principles" and the "root of the five constants".<sup>177</sup> They are the apex of the Heavenly Principle of human relations, and nothing between Heaven and earth

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<sup>173</sup> ZZYL, 83.2173.

<sup>174</sup> SS, 33.622–3.

<sup>175</sup> SS, 33.624.

<sup>176</sup> ZXNP, 22.

<sup>177</sup> The "three guiding principles" 三綱 refer to the relations between lord-subject, father-son, and husband-wife. The "five constants" 五常 refer to the virtues of benevolence (*ren*), rightness (*yi*), ritual propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and trustworthiness (*xin*).

escapes their influence. It is said that “one may not live under the same Heaven as the enemy of *one’s lord* or one’s father,” which relates to all that is covered by Heaven above and supported by the earth below. 仁莫大於父子，義莫大於君臣，是謂三綱之要、五常之本、人倫天理之至，無所逃於天地之間。其曰君父之讎不與共戴天者，乃天之所覆、地之所戴。<sup>178</sup>

The canonical foundation of Zhu’s argument, namely that one may not share the same skies as one’s father’s enemy, is again cited from the *Liji*, but with one substantial modification: instead of the “enemy of one’s father” 父之讎, Zhu now pointed to the “enemy of one’s *lord* or one’s father” 君父之讎. In effect, Zhu enlarged the scope of a moral norm traditionally confined to family affairs, gradually extending its application to the sovereign and, more concretely, his military policy. As Conrad Schirokauer has pointed out, Zhu discerned a particularly strong correlation between the traditional bonds of respectively lord-minister and father-son, to the point that “there is no difference between the political and familial relationship.”<sup>179</sup> However, while this connection had remained implicit in the 1162 memorial, through the simple juxtaposition of the son’s duty to “take revenge” with the minister’s task to “punish wrongdoers”, it became explicit in 1163.<sup>180</sup> Furthermore, Zhu concluded the argumentative portion of his memorial by relating these observations directly to the notion of inborn nature (*xing*), indicating he traced the desire to avenge one’s lord to Principle itself.<sup>181</sup>

Besides revealing an apparent argumentative shift in Zhu Xi’s thought, the increasingly explicit nature of his argumentation may furthermore indicate a mounting sense of urgency and perhaps even frustration on his part, as he witnessed Xiaozong’s abrupt abandonment of his earlier pro-war fervor after the defeat at Fuli. As he would note in the 1180s: “Initially, the Emperor was keenly motivated to recover [the Central Plains], but at the defeat at Fuli he became grief-stricken.” 上初恢復之志甚銳，及符離之敗，上方大慟。<sup>182</sup> Similarly, in a letter addressed to Wei Yuanlü 魏元履 shortly after the 1163 encounter with Xiaozong, Zhu voiced his desperation: “The peace treaty has already been settled; evil theories rush about in a great torrent. This is not something that can be ‘crossed by a single

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<sup>178</sup> WJ, 13.633–4. Emphasis mine.

<sup>179</sup> Conrad Schirokauer, “Chu Hsi’s Political Thought,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 5 (1978): 141–2.

<sup>180</sup> This argumentative shift has remained virtually ignored throughout recent scholarship. Cf. Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism*, 175–6; Li Longxian, *Fuchouguan*, 72–3.

<sup>181</sup> WJ, 13.634.

<sup>182</sup> ZZYL, 127.3058.

reed’.” 和議已決，邪說橫流，非一葦可杭。<sup>183</sup> It is likely that Zhu Xi restated his argumentation partly in response to Xiaozong’s expanding support for the peace initiative, as it rendered a short-term reformulation of military policy increasingly unlikely.

In sum, while Zhu’s 1162 and 1163 memorials indeed demonstrate a certain degree of thematic unity, one can simultaneously observe a distinct shift in both tone and content, resulting in an increasingly explicit, political formulation of the revanchist cause. In the next section, I will challenge recent claims that Zhu Xi eventually abandoned this line of argumentation through the 1180s, arguing that it was precisely his gradual reconceptualization of Jurchen enmity that enabled him to maintain this argument for the remainder of his political life.

#### 4.3 Zhu Xi’s enduring case

There is a general consensus throughout recent literature that Zhu gradually abandoned the moral revanchist cause from the 1180s onward, shifting his focus entirely to the irredentist aim of recovery (*hui fu*). Two matters in particular are usually taken together to illustrate this development: firstly, the supposedly decreased significance or, according to some, complete absence of revenge-related themes in Zhu’s 1188 *Sealed Memorial Presented in Year Wushen* (*Wushen fengshi* 戊申封事);<sup>184</sup> secondly, the 1198 statement, recorded in the *Yulei*, that avenging one’s father had ceased to be a valid reason for war as too much time had elapsed.<sup>185</sup> These claims are difficult to reconcile with the observation that, throughout the 1180s and ‘90s, Zhu actually repeatedly stressed the moral importance of revenge.<sup>186</sup> To address this apparent contradiction, I shall first examine how his line of moral argumentation developed following his 1163 audience.

Undoubtedly incensed by the public announcement that peace negotiations with the Jurchen had been concluded in January 1165,<sup>187</sup> Zhu reaffirmed his commitment to the revanchist cause on several occasions throughout the later 1160s. Explaining the perceived demerits of the recent “talk of peace” (*jianghe* 講和) at court in an 1165 letter addressed to

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<sup>183</sup> *WJ*, 24.1083. Zhu refers to the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經), where a “single reed” (*yi wei* 一葦) is taken to denote a miniscule effort. The inversion of this classical proverb suggests his pessimism.

<sup>184</sup> *WJ*, 11.589–616. See Li Longxian, *Fuchouguan*, 75; Zhu Ruixi, “Touxiangpai?”, 74; and Yu Yingshi, *Lishi shijie*, 525.

<sup>185</sup> *ZZYL*, 133.3197–200. See Li Longxian, *Fuchouguan*, 76–9; Zhu Ruixi, “Touxiangpai?”, 76–7; Qian Mu, *Xinxue’an*, 5:77–9; Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism*, 175–6.

<sup>186</sup> Two examples, discussed below, are *WJ*, 14.662 (dated to 1188) and *ZZYL*, 95.2450 (dated 1198).

<sup>187</sup> *SS*, 33.630.



Chen Junqing, he claimed that “even for ten thousand generations, ministers and sons will remember and repay the enemies of our ancestors.” 祖宗之讎，萬世臣子之所必報而不忘。<sup>188</sup> On another occasion that same year, writing in his *Preface to the Forthright Opinions of Year Wuwu [1138]* (*Wuwu dangyixu* 戊午讜議序),<sup>189</sup> Zhu criticized certain individuals who had insisted on an upper time limit of five generations for revenge, arguing that such strictures applied only to commoners.<sup>190</sup> He concluded: “One who possesses all-under-Heaven continues an endless succession covering ten thousand generations, so ten thousand generations may necessarily avenge him.” 若夫有天下者，承萬世無疆之統，則亦有萬世必報之讎。<sup>191</sup> Whereas throughout the early 1160s Zhu had simply juxtaposed the duty to avenge one’s father with the duty to avenge one’s lord, these subsequent comments suggest his focus had shifted to the sovereign as the primary locus of revanchist sentiment. Furthermore, this emphasis on the sovereign as the determinant of revanchist legitimacy displays a close correlation with Zhu’s eventual conceptualization of warfare as the sole prerogative of the Son of Heaven, expressed in his 1177 *Analects* and *Mencius* commentaries and described previously in chapter 2, suggestive of a close conceptual relationship.

One common thread among Zhu’s subsequent discussions of the revanchist cause throughout the 1170s and 1180s was his explicit identification of the state (*guo* 國 or *guojia* 國家),<sup>192</sup> as opposed to any individual “father”, as the historical recipient of Jurchen violence. In two 1178 stele inscriptions devoted to Liu Gong 劉珙 (1122–1178), who had supported Zhu’s views on the Jin, Zhu noted the importance of “repaying for the state the disgrace caused by our enemies.” 為國家報雪讎恥。<sup>193</sup> Similarly, in a later poem composed in memory of Liu, Zhu noted that “the disgrace caused by the enemies of the state has not yet been set right.” 國家讎恥未雪。<sup>194</sup> The state represented the most tangible connecting element between

<sup>188</sup> *WJ*, 24.1085. Dated to 1165 in *ZXNP*, 26.

<sup>189</sup> This was a preface to a document attributed to Wei Shanzhi 魏揆之, discussing events three decades prior. See Yu Yingshi, *Lishi shijie*, 277.

<sup>190</sup> For one possible target of Zhu’s accusation, see Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 and Jia Gongyan 賈公彥, *Zhouli zhushu* 周禮註疏 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), 14.359.

<sup>191</sup> *WJ*, 75.3618. Dated to 1165 in *ZXNP*, 26.

<sup>192</sup> Alternatively, *guojia* may be taken to mean “state and household”, as in Zhu’s *Zhongyong* and *Daxue* commentaries. When used in the specific context of Song governmental affairs, however, Zhu seems to refer singularly to “the state”. One indication of this is his repeated juxtaposition of *guojia* with topics of military policy and strategy, which he conceptualized exclusively as state affairs. See for example *WJ*, 26.1178, 29.1259; *ZZYL*, 133.3191, 133.3197.

<sup>193</sup> *WJ*, 88.4100, 88.4126. For Liu’s support for Zhu’s views, see *SS*, 386.11853.

<sup>194</sup> *WJ*, 87.4073.

successive sovereigns, and, as Conrad Schirokauer has pointed out, Zhu made no significant distinction between the state and the sovereign as foci of loyalty.<sup>195</sup> Particularly striking is the concurrence of this development with the formative period of Zhu's *Analects* and *Mencius* commentaries, in which, as I have argued previously in chapters 1 and 2, he explicitly conceptualized warfare as a legitimate activity exclusive to the state. More salient for our present purposes is the implication that, as long as the state persisted, past enmity could serve to legitimize future military response, even when the actual perpetrators of the historical crime were long dead and no direct sons of "murdered fathers" remained.

At this point I may address two particular textual records cited among recent scholarship as evidence for Zhu's supposed rejection of the revanchist cause. Firstly, Zhu Xi's 1188 *Sealed Memorial* has recently been interpreted as marking either his decreased interest in or even total abandonment of the belief that revenge was a legitimate motivation for war.<sup>196</sup> Perhaps most remarkable is the recent claim by Li Longxian 李隆獻 that the issue of revenge played no role whatsoever throughout the memorial.<sup>197</sup> On the contrary, while Zhu indeed dedicated most of the text to a practical discussion of several economic and military policies, his concluding remarks indicate that the ultimate aim of these initiatives was *precisely* to wreak vengeance and to change the fact that "the enemy caitiffs had not yet been annihilated" 仇虜不滅.<sup>198</sup> In another series of memorials presented to Xiaozong that same year, Zhu stated his case even more explicitly. Addressing the Emperor directly, he affirmed his belief in revenge in the form of a carefully packaged accusation: "It is not that you do not desire to repay the disgrace brought upon the royal ancestral temple, yet sometimes you could not avoid [falling for] cowardly and short-sighed schemes [of peace]." 非不欲報復陵廟之仇耻, 而或不免於畏怯苟安之計.<sup>199</sup> Zhu Xi's use of the "royal ancestral temple" (*lingmiao* 陵廟), possibly referring to Xiaozong's recently deceased predecessor Gaozong,<sup>200</sup> furthermore reaffirms my observation that he had shifted his attention to the sovereign and, by extension, the state itself as the primary focus of revanchist sentiment.

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<sup>195</sup> Schirokauer, "Political Thought," 143.

<sup>196</sup> For the former view, see Zhu Ruixi, "Touxiangpai?", 74; and Yu Yingshi, *Lishi shijie*, 525. For the latter view, see Li Longxian, *Fuchouguan*, 75.

<sup>197</sup> Li Longxian, *Fuchouguan*, 75.

<sup>198</sup> *WJ*, 11.608. Similarly, in an 1189 letter Zhu repeated the proverbial dictum that the Song "could not share the same skies" 不共戴天 with the Jurchen, as the "number one case of rightness" 第一義. *WJ*, 28.1227.

<sup>199</sup> *WJ*, 14.662.

<sup>200</sup> Gaozong had died one year earlier. See *SS*, 35.687.

The second piece of textual evidence repeatedly cited to prove Zhu's supposed abandonment of revanchism is a single record in the *Yulei* in which Zhu discussed the maximum timeframe for revenge, particularly against the murderer of one's father, dated between 1198 and 1200.<sup>201</sup> Repeatedly stressing the necessity to take revenge as soon as circumstances allowed, mainly to prevent the gradual cooling of one's sentiments, Zhu indeed stated that timeframes of nine and even one hundred generations specified in the *Chunqiu* commentaries were "nonsensical theories" 亂說.<sup>202</sup> As such, he remarked, it would have been best had the Jurchen been repaid in the early years of Gaozong's reign, when the turmoil of 1127 was still fresh on the minds of those involved. As most direct victims and perpetrators of the incursion were dead by the late 1190s, sentiments had cooled and, perhaps more importantly, the current generation of Jurchen bore no direct guilt of the incident. Furthermore, Zhu stated, the revanchist cause had been taken up by certain opportunist career officials to further their own schemes, to the extent that "upright men and proper scholars had come to reject revanchism and approved of peace negotiations." 端人正士者，又以復讎為非，和議為是。<sup>203</sup> Those who advocated a short-term offensive against the Jin at this point in time, he lamented, did so only to the detriment of the dynasty.

However, despite these considerations and contrary to recent claims cited above, Zhu did not in fact explicitly reject revanchism at any point throughout this *Yulei* record. Furthermore, whereas the discussion focused primarily on the legitimacy of avenging one's *father*, I have noted previously that, as early as the 1170s, Zhu had shifted his attention to the *sovereign* and the enduring dynasty itself as primary loci for Song revanchist sentiment. Accordingly, directly following his denunciation of certain timeframes as "nonsensical theories", Zhu noted a crucial caveat: "These matters are multifarious. The matter of avenging sovereign and state is also different [from avenging one's father]." 事也多樣。國君復讎之事又不同。<sup>204</sup> In this light, it appears that Zhu denounced solely the legitimacy of avenging one's *father* as a case for war by the late 1190s; avenging one's sovereign and the Song state remained on the table.

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<sup>201</sup> ZZYL, 133.3197–200. See Li Longxian, *Fuchouguan*, 76–9; Zhu Ruixi, "Touxiangpai?", 76–7; Qian Mu, *Xinxue'an*, 5:77–9; Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism*, 175–6.

<sup>202</sup> ZZYL, 133.3198.

<sup>203</sup> ZZYL, 133.3199. As Zhang Weiling has recently argued, this statement was not meant to denounce revanchism itself, but rather the political climate of the 1190s, which proved particularly hostile to Zhu and his political allies. See Zhang Weiling, "Huifu taidu," 67.

<sup>204</sup> ZZYL, 133.3197.

Accordingly, several records dated to the same period between 1198 and 1200 have Zhu consistently affirm the revanchist cause, consistently paired with the necessity to eventually “recover the Central Plains”. At one such point, he summarized his case: “The grand essence of our state in the south-east consists precisely of recovering the Central Plains and erasing the disgrace caused by our enemies.” 國於東南，所謂大體者，正在於復中原，雪讎恥。<sup>205</sup> Zhu’s use of the term “grand essence”, subsequently described as “what should be done according to the Principle of the matter” 事理當合做處，<sup>206</sup> indicates that the moral legitimacy of revenge on the Jurchen barbarians remained guaranteed by Principle itself. Furthermore, his consistent pairing of revenge as a moral argument for war with the aim of recovering the northern plains demonstrates that the two goals remained inextricably related.<sup>207</sup>

### Conclusion

While Zhu Xi initially focused chiefly on the Principle-determined moral duty to take revenge against the “enemies of one’s slain father”, it appears that several historical developments caused him to gradually shift his attention to the sovereign and, by extension, the state itself as the primary foci of revanchist sentiments. This gradual process of conceptual development, stretching from 1163 into the late 1180s, ensured that Zhu could maintain revenge as a legitimate case for war alongside the irredentist aim of recovering the Central Plains, as the “grand essence” of the Song state as it persisted in the south-east. At the same time, however, it appears that factors such as the particularly hostile political climate towards the end of Zhu Xi’s career served to influence his attitudes to a certain extent, to the point that he ended up viewing pro-war elements at court with a large degree of suspicion, despite his fundamental opposition to the peace treaty with the Jurchen Jin. While this did not significantly diminish his position on revanchism, I shall argue in the following chapter that it did determine his views on the other two major positions in the court debate, namely those of *zhan* and *shou*.

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<sup>205</sup> ZZYL, 95.2450. See also ZZYL, 127.3058–9; and WJ, 89.4152–3.

<sup>206</sup> ZZYL, 95.2450.

<sup>207</sup> See for example WJ, 28.1126–7, 89.4152–3; and ZZYL, 133.3196–7.

## 5. The Strategic Debate

Although Zhu Xi was fundamentally opposed to an indefinite peace accord (*he*) with the Jin, this should not be taken to imply he supported an immediate offensive (*zhan*) with similar fervor. The aim of the current chapter is to determine the precise measure between the latter type of “hawkish” aggressiveness and a more defensive attitude (*shou*) within Zhu’s proposals. In the first section, through a close discussion of his 1162 memorial within its historical and argumentative context, I challenge recent claims regarding Zhu’s supposed “hawkish” support for an immediate offensive in the early years of his political life. In the second section, I assess the subsequent development of Zhu’s position, demonstrating that persistent political and institutional impediments to military preparation, internal to the functioning of the Song dynasty itself, motivated him to maintain and reinforce his defensive attitude. In the third section, I shift my attention to factors external to the dynasty, focusing specifically on the perceived barbarian nature of the Jurchen Jin and its influence on Zhu’s position, ultimately informing his rejection of both *he* and *zhan* as acceptable positions within the debate.

### 5.1 Initial positioning: reassessing Zhu’s “hawkishness”

Recent scholarship has yielded two competing descriptions of Zhu’s career as an anti-peace activist. Firstly, based on the comparatively aggressive style of moral argumentation found in his first memorial presented in 1162, it has been argued by Qian Mu (in 1971), Zhu Ruixi 朱瑞熙 (in 1978), and Hoyt Tillman (in 1982) that Zhu Xi “hawkishly” supported an immediate offensive against the Jin in the early 1160s, gradually shifting his focus to long-term defensive preparation over subsequent decades.<sup>208</sup> The most immediate cause for this change, it is claimed, was the 1163 Song defeat at Fuli, which had supposedly laid bare Song military weakness. Secondly, the analyses of Brian McKnight (in 1986) and Zhou Chaxian 周茶仙 (in 1999) instead suggest a much greater degree of continuity in Zhu Xi’s support of preparatory defense.<sup>209</sup> Not coincidentally, the latter two discussions do not address his rather “hawkish” 1162 memorial. As I shall demonstrate below, several comments made throughout this first

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<sup>208</sup> The term “hawkish” has been suggested by Tillman. See *Utilitarian Confucianism*, 170–9. A similar argument is proposed in Zhu Ruixi, “Touxiangpai?”, 72–3, and in Qian Mu, *Xinxue’an*, 5:75–8. Shu Jingnan extends this “hawkish” phase as far as 1188; see Shu Jingnan 東景南, *Zhuzi da zhuan* 朱子大傳 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2003), 769.

<sup>209</sup> See McKnight, “Chu Hsi,” 423–5, and Zhou Chaxian, “Junshi sixiang,” 322–34. Yu Yingshi, while providing a thorough description of the broader political debate, touches upon Zhu’s personal views only occasionally and virtually exclusively post-1165. See Yu Yingshi, *Lishi shijie*, 272–88.

public statement indeed suggest a hawkish case for war. Several other statements, however, instead indicate a much more preparatory attitude. To address this apparent contrast, I shall first discuss the 1162 memorial in closer detail.

Perhaps most suggestive of a “hawkish” attitude is the sheer amount of attention Zhu devoted to his moral case against peace with the Jurchen in 1162. As I observed in chapter 4, he argued that Principle itself determined the necessity of “avenging slain fathers” and “repelling the barbarians”.<sup>210</sup> Furthermore, he insisted that one of the main arguments supposedly put forth by advocates of peace negotiations, namely that the Song military was not up to the task, was fundamentally unacceptable.<sup>211</sup> In this light, it is indeed easy to see how his attitude could be considered “hawkish”. However, several other statements contradict this interpretation. Firstly, emphasizing the disastrous influence peace negotiations supposedly had on Song offensive capabilities, Zhu conceded that “strategic dispositions have not been brought to fruition; advancing forward, we cannot strike; falling back, we cannot hold.” 形勢未成，進不能攻，退不能守。<sup>212</sup> At another point, he noted that only “after several years [of preparations], when our determination is settled and our energies are filled to satiation, our state will be wealthy and the military powerful.” 數年之外，志定氣飽，國富兵強。<sup>213</sup> In the first analysis, Zhu’s approach of lamenting Song military weakness while simultaneously condemning peace advocates for adopting this same argument appears contradictory. I shall address this contrast further below, following a closer examination of his claims.

The implication underlying Zhu’s statements, namely that the Song military was unprepared for an immediate counteroffensive during the early 1160s, is corroborated by several recent examinations. Peter Lorge has indicated that, while the Song navy had managed to fend off the 1161 invasion led by Jurchen prince Wanyan Liang, the infantry and cavalry necessary for a counterattack had yet to be prepared several months earlier.<sup>214</sup> Recurrent reports of an imminent Jurchen incursion had been ignored by Emperor Gaozong, who instead insisted on the 1141 peace treaty as a guarantee of security until the final months before the invasion.<sup>215</sup> Zhu Xi’s prior awareness of these structural weaknesses is strongly reflected in his letter to Huang Zushun 黃祖舜 (1100–1165), sent shortly after the assassination of

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<sup>210</sup> *WJ*, 11.573–5.

<sup>211</sup> *WJ*, 11.573, 574.

<sup>212</sup> *WJ*, 11.574.

<sup>213</sup> *WJ*, 11.576.

<sup>214</sup> Peter Lorge, *War, Politics, and Society in Early Modern China* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 63–4.

<sup>215</sup> Tao Jing-shen, “Kao-tsung,” 703–4.

Wanyan Liang in December 1161. After initially expressing his delight with the death of the Jurchen leader, he pointed to long-standing military neglect, coinciding with the duration of the 1141 peace treaty, as an obstacle impeding further action: “For twenty-odd years, government policy has been unprincipled, military preparations have been neglected, and the power of our state has been weak.” 二十餘年，朝政不綱，兵備弛廢，國勢衰弱。<sup>216</sup> While Zhu supported an eventual counterattack against the Jin, it appears he considered an immediate offensive unfeasible. He concluded: “If we conscript troops now, they will be weak and useless; if we are about to contend with [the Jin] for the Central Plains, we will be unfamiliar with its tactical dispositions.” 募兵則兵脆弱而無用；將據中原而與之爭，則形勢未習。<sup>217</sup> Clear parallels between these private comments and the reservations Zhu would express publicly several months later in 1162 indicate that his pessimism regarding Song military capability was persistent.

However, this does not yet fully explain why he was so adamantly opposed to the peace agreement, even as a temporary measure. While the 1141 treaty admittedly introduced a significant fiscal burden and placed restrictions on the amount of border garrisons the Song could maintain,<sup>218</sup> it is not altogether clear whether these strictures would have completely obstructed any and all covert offensive preparations.

In Zhu’s view, however, the concurrence of the 1141 Jin-Song peace treaty with the perceived onset of Song military dilapidation was not coincidental. Throughout his political career, he pointed to “talk of peace” (*jianghe* 講和) as the root cause of Song weakness. He emphasized the debilitating effects of pro-peace efforts throughout his 1162 memorial, at one point stating unambiguously that “What is meant by ‘talk of peace’ has a hundred disadvantages and not a single benefit, so what kind of hardship could possibly necessitate it?” 所謂講和者，有百害無一利，何苦而必為之。<sup>219</sup> Similarly, as he stated to his students in the 1180s, “Throughout our dynasty, the military has been wrecked by the word ‘peace’.” 本朝禦戎，始終為和字壞。<sup>220</sup> Besides indicating his fundamental opposition to peace, these remarks furthermore suggest a reference to the institutional power wielded by the small group

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<sup>216</sup> WJ, 24.1076. For this dating, see Chen Lai, *Kaozheng*, 22.

<sup>217</sup> WJ, 24.1078.

<sup>218</sup> Herbert Franke, “Treaties Between Sung and Chin,” in *Études Song: In memoriam Étienne Balazs*, ed. Françoise Aubin (Paris: Mouton, 1970), 78–9.

<sup>219</sup> WJ, 11.573.

<sup>220</sup> ZZYL, 133.3200.

of “court favorites” 近習之臣 who initially championed the peace discourse at court.<sup>221</sup> As Zhang Weiling 張維玲 has pointed out, pro-peace court favorites (*jinxi* 近習) close to Gaozong and his successor Xiaozong often held positions with substantial influence over the military and had even actively delayed the initiation of preparatory measures against Jurchen incursion.<sup>222</sup> Zhu Xi himself noted in his biography of the famed general Zhang Jun that peace advocates had deliberately worked to sabotage defensive garrisons in an attempt to persuade Xiaozong of the necessity to make peace.<sup>223</sup> Regardless of the truthfulness of these claims, it is clear that Zhu considered the peace accord, or rather its advocates, to constitute a structural impediment to military readiness.

In sum, if Zhu was at all hawkish in the initial stages of his public career, this was certainly not to plead for an immediate offensive (*zhan*). Instead, while he might have been cautiously optimistic regarding Xiaozong’s initial desire to “avenge slain fathers” and “retake the Central Plains”,<sup>224</sup> he had emphasized the need for “several years” of defensive preparations as early as 1162. The 1163 defeat at Fuli, however devastating, did not represent a pivotal moment for Zhu in this regard. As I shall demonstrate in the following section, he maintained this attitude for the remainder of his political life.

### 5.2 Enduring defensiveness

In chapter 4 I suggested that, while Zhu Xi’s underlying revanchist motivations remained consistent throughout his career, the 1163 defeat at Fuli stimulated him to formulate his moral case for war in increasingly explicit terms. Similarly, whereas in 1162 he focused primarily on the strategic demerits of peace agreements, with the result that his preparatory posture remained largely implicit, this stance became explicit in 1163. Zhu explained his long-term strategic view:

We should combine offense (*zhan*) and defense (*shou*) into a single strategy. This ensures that, as our defenses are firm, we possess the means for waging an offensive; as our offensive is successful, we possess the means to defend. One engenders the other, as a circle without end, maintained year after year, month after month. 合戰守

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<sup>221</sup> See *WJ*, 11.586 (dated 1180). The topic, in conjunction with perceived military dilapidation, featured repeatedly in Zhu’s memorials. See *WJ*, 11.599–600, 14.662, 12.623–4, 12.628–9.

<sup>222</sup> Zhang Weiling, “Hui fu taidu,” 36, 46–8.

<sup>223</sup> *WJ*, 95.4434.

<sup>224</sup> *ZZYL*, 127.3060.



之計以為一，使守固而有以戰，戰勝而有以守，奇正相生，如環之無端，持以歲月。<sup>225</sup>

The emphasis on the gradual yet determined nature of this approach is striking. In another segment of the memorial, Zhu explained the rationale behind his combination of *shou* and *zhan*: “The strength of an offensive lies in a sincere advance to seize [the objective], but it suffers from reckless action. The art of the defensive lies in firm self-strengthening, but it carries the difficulty of prolonged [stand-off].” 戰，誠進取之勢，而亦有輕舉之失。守，固自治之術，而亦有持久之難。<sup>226</sup> As Zhu Ruixi has similarly argued, it is plausible that the warning against “reckless action” here referred directly to the failed counterattack into Jurchen territory led by Zhang Jun in 1163, several months prior to Zhu’s writing.<sup>227</sup> If so, the clear parallels between this condemnation of rash action and his persistently negative appraisal of Song military strength, dating back to 1161, suggest that he may have indeed opposed this campaign even before it happened.

This would furthermore serve to nuance the view, proposed by Qian Mu and Tillman, that Zhu Xi had viewed the early 1160s as a “missed chance” for revenge. In this interpretation, the period between Wanyan Liang’s assassination in 1161 and the Fuli defeat in 1163 had presented an “opportunity for a quick victory”.<sup>228</sup> Several decades later, he indeed noted that “If the state had undertaken great action, it would have required only 150,000 crack troops [in 1161].” 國家若大舉，只用十五萬精兵。<sup>229</sup> However, other comments suggest that he actually had a considerably more long-term understanding of what constituted “great action” than Qian and Tillman suggest. Discussing Song military policy between the 1141 peace treaty and the 1161 invasion, Zhu explained: “Dissolutely they prepared not even the slightest strategy. Had they prudently worked on self-strengthening during the peace, then [Wanyan] Liang’s upheaval would have constituted a grand chance to retake the Central Plains in one swoop.” 蕩不為一毫計。使其和中自治有策，後當逆亮之亂，一掃而復中原，一大機會也。<sup>230</sup> It was not a momentary lapse of political initiative but rather long-

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<sup>225</sup> WJ, 13.636.

<sup>226</sup> WJ, 13.633.

<sup>227</sup> Zhu Ruixi, “Touxiangpai?”, 73.

<sup>228</sup> Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism*, 179. See also Qian Mu, *Xinxue'an*, 5:75–6.

<sup>229</sup> ZZYL, 133.3197.

<sup>230</sup> ZZYL, 133.3201.

standing neglect that had caused the Song to miss this “chance” for victory, at least in Zhu’s analysis. Put simply, the war had been lost before it even started.

As long as the perceived root cause of Song weakness persisted, namely the “talk of peace” combined with the institutional and military authority of its advocates, Zhu maintained his opposition to immediate action. Writing to his frequent correspondent Chen Junqing 陳俊卿 in 1165, he lamented: “Now, ‘talk of peace’ has blocked our state’s grand plan for recovery; ‘talk of peace’ has destroyed the practices of our border defenses.” 夫沮國家恢復之大計者，講和之說也；壞邊陲備禦之常規者，講和之說也。<sup>231</sup> Pacifism, Zhu concluded, had come to fully dominate state discourse (conventionally termed *guoshi* 國是).<sup>232</sup> In an 1170 letter addressed to Zhang Shi 張栻 (1133–1181), son of famed general Zhang Jun, he again emphasized the need for several years of comprehensive military restructuring. Invoking *Mencius* 4A:7 to illustrate his point, he noted that the required amount of time depended on the extent of dilapidation, “Just like Mencius had spoken of five years for a great state, seven years for a small one.” 若孟子大國五年、小國七年之說。<sup>233</sup> Supposedly pro-peace court favorites maintained their authority over military affairs throughout subsequent decades.<sup>234</sup> As consequently no significant progress was made in the restoration effort, at least in Zhu’s estimation, he repeatedly adjusted his preparatory timeframe, from “more than ten years” 十餘年 of required preparation in 1180 to a “maximum of thirty years” 多做三十年 in the 1190s.<sup>235</sup> One important example of the perceived influence of the court favorites was their authority over military appointments throughout the 1170s and early 1180s, which had allegedly led to widespread bribery in the sale of military posts.<sup>236</sup> I will discuss these particular issues in the following chapter. For now, it suffices to note that according to Zhu Xi, the dynasty remained structurally weakened and the task of recovery had to be postponed.

In sum, both private and public statements made by Zhu Xi regarding the Jin-Song conflict indicate a greater degree of consistency than has hitherto been described. When placed in its historical and argumentative context, the 1162 memorial conveys a markedly defensive and preparatory message, despite its aggressive style of moral argumentation. This defensive attitude would only intensify through later decades. His practically-oriented concern

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<sup>231</sup> *WJ*, 24.1085. Dated to 1165 in *ZXNP*, 26.

<sup>232</sup> *WJ*, 24.1086–7. See Yu Yingshi, *Lishi shijie*, 272–88.

<sup>233</sup> *WJ*, 25.1109. Mencius claimed King Wen could lead a great state to eminence in five years and a lesser one in seven. Cf. *SSZJJZ*, 279.

<sup>234</sup> Zhang Weiling, “Hui fu taidu,” 48–51.

<sup>235</sup> See respectively *WJ*, 11.585, and *ZZYL*, 133.3200.

<sup>236</sup> *WJ*, 11.583–4, 11.595.

with the concrete military capabilities of the Song reminds strongly of a similar concern expressed in his 1177 interlinear commentaries. As I noted in chapter 1, he approached the topic of concrete military preparation in the *Analects* and *Mencius* as a legitimate and indispensable government activity, essential for the maintenance of popular trust and a strong state. Having observed the Jurchen onslaught in 1161, Zhu Xi's recommendations to Xiaozong echoed the *Analects* dictum of "ensuring sufficient weaponry" 足兵 as an essential part of benevolent statecraft.<sup>237</sup>

Furthermore, these observations reflect strongly my findings in chapters 2 and 3, where I noted that Zhu Xi's moral approach to warfare was deeply sensitive to the demands of historical circumstance. Although he attached absolute, Principle-determined importance to avenging one's father and the Song state itself, this certainly did not mean that one should plunge oneself into battle recklessly, just as he conceded the possibility that even Confucius had deliberated on military strategy as a "secondary matter" 餘事 in the context of *Analects* 14:22. After all, "Whenever the Sage handled affairs, it was not that he only understood moral Principle and did not inquire at all into the [practical] merits and demerits of the case; something has to be actually feasible for one to accomplish it." 聖人舉事，也不會只理會義理，都不問些利害，事也須是可行方得。<sup>238</sup> It is plausible that Zhu's early anti-peace activism informed the practical and historicized approach that characterized his discussion of military affairs in his later classical commentaries. I shall discuss this possibility more closely in chapter 6, through a discussion of his concrete policy recommendations. Before doing so, however, I must first complete my survey of his position within the strategic debate.

### 5.3 Barbarians and strategic discourse

Throughout the preceding discussion, I have focused primarily on factors internal to the dynasty, most notably the aspect of domestic factional politics and its perceived effect on military preparation. So far I have neglected to address the primary *external* factor, namely the perceived barbarism of the hostile Jurchen, which further informed Zhu's view. As noted in chapter 2, the *Chunqiu*-inspired worldview that distinguished between "cultured" center and "barbarian" periphery, coupled with his impression that barbarians were physiologically incapable of developing the human virtues, had motivated him to reject the possibility they

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<sup>237</sup> SSZJJZ, 134.

<sup>238</sup> ZZYL, 44.1130.

could ever be “subdued through softness” 以柔服.<sup>239</sup> Due to their supposedly innate barbarian inferiority, the Jurchen were unlikely to participate properly in the social order of the *tianxia*. This fundamental premise influenced his position in two closely related ways: one pertaining to his opposition to the signing of peace treaties, the other informing his simultaneous opposition to an immediate offensive.

Zhu reflected on the issue of Jurchen trustworthiness and their participation in peace treaties on several occasions throughout his life. One instructive example is his discussion of the events of 1123, when Song leadership had supposedly breached a peace agreement with the Jin by offering asylum to the fugitive Liao 遼 general Zhang Jue 張穀 (d. 1123) who had rebelled against the Jurchen.<sup>240</sup> Speaking to his disciples in the 1190s, he commented:

Whenever his generals requested to raise troops to punish us, [Jurchen leader] Aguda refused, saying: “We have already settled our oath of alliance with the Song; how could we break it?” Even a barbarian was capable of maintaining trustworthiness and righteousness, while we broke the alliance and lost their trust, thereby incurring the anger of the barbarians! 其諸將欲請起兵問罪，阿骨打每不可，曰：「吾與大宋盟誓已定，豈可敗盟！」夷狄猶能守信義，而吾之所以敗盟失信，取怒於夷狄之類如此。<sup>241</sup>

Peter K. Bol has recently interpreted this passage as an affirmation of a fundamental equality between barbarians and the Chinese, suggesting that Zhu Xi found them both equally capable of developing moral virtues like trustworthiness (*xin* 信).<sup>242</sup> This reading appears incompatible with my previous findings, namely that he found barbarians to be incapable of reliably expressing these moral virtues to their full extent. One may observe a parallel in Zhu’s 1198 claim that Jin ruler Shizong 金世宗 (r. 1161–1189) had reportedly achieved some semblance of benevolent government, sufficiently so to merit the generous nickname “Little

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<sup>239</sup> ZZYL, 131.3142.

<sup>240</sup> These events would later be cited as a pretext for the catastrophic invasion of the Northern Song by the Jurchen in 1126. Cf. SS, 22.418. See also Tuotuo 脫脫, ed., *Jinshi* 金史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 133.2845.

<sup>241</sup> ZZYL, 127.3050.

<sup>242</sup> Peter K. Bol, “Geography and Culture: The Middle-Period Discourse on the *Zhong guo*,” in *Kongjian yu wenhua changyu* 空間與文化場域, ed. Huang Yinggui 黃應貴 (Taipei: Hanxue yanjiu zhongxin, 2009), 81–2.

Yao and Shun” 小堯舜。<sup>243</sup> However, he concluded that these attainments were superficial and incidental: “How could he change his barbarian ways? I fear he is just talented and approximated benevolent government by mere coincidence.” 他豈變夷狄之風。恐只是天資高，偶合仁政耳。<sup>244</sup> Similarly, it seems plausible that his main point was not to claim Aguda had displayed anything more than “coincidental” trustworthiness, but rather to emphasize by contrast the moral deficiency of Northern Song leadership at the time.<sup>245</sup> That Chinese leadership could not maintain a moral standard “*even* a barbarian” 猶夷狄 had managed to approximate despite his inborn deficiency, was alarming indeed.

Accordingly, Zhu Xi’s writings demonstrate a long-standing distrust of Jin participation in peace agreements. As early as 1162, he claimed in his first memorial to Xiaozong that the Jurchen barbarians would simply exploit the treaty as a cover for further military preparations, to be discarded once they found themselves fit to take the south.<sup>246</sup> Huang Kuanchong has suggested that this sentiment may have been widespread at the time, citing the *Da Jin guozhi* 大金國志 as stating that “Regarding the use of the military, the Great Jin solely used peace negotiations to aid their offensive efforts.” 大金用兵，惟以和議佐攻戰。<sup>247</sup> Regardless of their actual truthfulness, such claims resonate well with Zhu’s writings and appear to have informed his thoughts on the issue. In a letter addressed to his acquaintance Liu Pingfu 劉平甫, for example, he stated: “[Our] payments to the caitiff are extremely generous. I suspect that their strength has in fact dwindled, which is why they wish to delay our troops.” 虜人待遇甚厚，或疑虜勢實衰，故欲且緩我師耳。<sup>248</sup> In his estimation, while the Jurchen had made it their strategy to use the peace treaty as a cover for further offensive preparations, partly sponsored by the Song treasury, Chinese leadership remained complacent and “found peace sufficiently dependable” 以和為可靠<sup>249</sup> to maintain security. As such, Zhu Xi’s opposition to the signing of peace treaties was not only moral and institutional, as noted earlier, but also thoroughly strategic.

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<sup>243</sup> ZZYL, 133.3196.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>245</sup> A similar sentiment is expressed in ZZYL, 127.3051, 130.3130–2.

<sup>246</sup> WJ, 11.574–5. See also WJ, 13.635.

<sup>247</sup> Huang Kuanchong, *Guoshi zhengyi*, 10. See Yuwen Maozhao 宇文懋昭, ed., *Da Jin guozhi jiaozheng* 大金國志校證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 7.113. See also De Weerd, *Information, Territory, and Networks*, 401–3.

<sup>248</sup> WJ, 24.1081. See also ZZYL, 133.3191–2, 133.3200–1.

<sup>249</sup> ZZYL, 133.3200.

Lastly, while these observations cemented his opposition to peace, they simultaneously contributed to his rejection of an immediate offensive and ultimately strengthened his defensive and preparatory attitude. As noted previously, Zhu Xi was aware of reports that Jin leadership had attained increasingly stable and even benevolent standards of government.<sup>250</sup> According to Yang Shao-yun's recent interpretation of these statements, he had supposedly welcomed these reports as evidence that the Jurchen had lost their "barbaric military prowess" and became vulnerable to attack.<sup>251</sup> However, a closer reading of related pronouncements instead indicates Zhu viewed these developments as matters of grave strategic concern. Responding to a question regarding Jurchen military power, he warned: "If they continue like this and no great stretches of brutal misrule [mark their reign], then it is to be feared that ultimately we will not be able to eliminate them." 若是如此做將去，無大段殘暴之事，恐卒消磨他未得。<sup>252</sup> In other words, while (supposedly accidental) governmental success on the Jurchen side ultimately "failed to impress" Zhu Xi from a moral perspective,<sup>253</sup> he nevertheless considered it a distinct strategic threat.

Unfortunately, Zhu did not elaborate further on these claims. One possible way of interpreting them is offered by Huang Kuanchong, who has recently demonstrated that relative stability under Jin Shizong had significantly decreased pro-Song activism and rebellion within Jin territory during the final decades of his life.<sup>254</sup> As I observed in chapters 1 and 2, Zhu noted throughout his classical commentaries that he considered relative moral decrepitude in the enemy a strategic advantage, as it would inspire the oppressed populace into spontaneous rebellion to support a morally superior invader. Besides the classic example of King Wu, whose inspiring presence had turned the subordinates of "wicked" King Zhòu against him, he furthermore noted that even Confucius himself considered rebellious insurrection among hostile forces a legitimate strategic asset in his case against Chen Heng of Qi.<sup>255</sup> Conversely, such reasoning suggests that a relatively stable government could strengthen one's military position by reducing internal unrest. Although Zhu Xi did not explicitly refer to these cases in his discussion of Jurchen governmental stability and its

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<sup>250</sup> Multiple statements throughout the 1190s are provided in ZZYL, 133.3195–6.

<sup>251</sup> Yang Shao-yun, "The Barbarian," 348.

<sup>252</sup> ZZYL, 133.3195.

<sup>253</sup> Tillman, "Proto-nationalism," 426.

<sup>254</sup> Huang Kuanchong 黃寬重, *Nansong shidai kangjin de yijun* 南宋時代抗金的義軍 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1988), 130–2.

<sup>255</sup> See sections 1.3 and 2.1.

implications for military reconquest, it is plausible that these considerations informed his demonstrable alarm over increasing Jurchen “benevolence”.

In sum, the perceived barbarian nature of the Jurchen Jin informed Zhu Xi’s position within the debate in two closely related ways. Firstly, he cited the supposedly “barbarian” incapacity for moral development to argue against the signing of peace treaties with the Jurchen, doubting the extent to which they could be trusted to uphold their end of the agreement. Secondly, possibly inspired by classical examples of popular insurrection, he noted that Jin governmental stability, even if achieved only accidentally, had significantly strengthened its military position.

### Conclusion

Contrary to what his particularly assertive style of moral argumentation has suggested to some, Zhu Xi appears to have been a virtually life-long proponent of the defensive (*shou*) position within the strategic debate. Even before the catastrophic 1163 counterattack against the Jurchen, he expressed his doubts regarding Song military readiness. Following twenty years of perceived military neglect, it is doubtful that he indeed viewed the early 1160s as “an opportunity for a quick victory”. This defensive position intensified in later years, as the perceived institutional impediments to reconquest persisted. Significant thematic parallels with the ideas expressed in his 1177 commentaries, particularly with regards to issues of military policy and preparation, suggest a high degree of interaction between his political and philosophical spheres of discourse. Ultimately, it appears that Zhu Xi’s experience with the concrete demands of warfare may have informed his strikingly “realist” approach to military topics within the *Four Books*. After all, “something has to be actually feasible for one to accomplish it.” In the following chapter, I shall turn to the concrete policies and measures Zhu proposed to accomplish his revanchist and irredentist goals.

## 6. Reforming the Song Military

Despite the particularly assertive character of Zhu Xi's moral case against peace, especially in the early stages of his political life, Zhu remained deeply concerned with several structural weaknesses that had crippled Song offensive capabilities. The aim of the current chapter is to examine these perceived weaknesses and assess the measures he proposed for military restoration. In the first section, I shall examine the philosophical and theoretical framework that structured his proposals. Addressing the recent claim that there existed a fundamental contrast between Zhu Xi's plans for military restoration, grounded in seemingly esoteric notions of moral cultivation, and the results-oriented proposals of his more "utilitarian" colleagues, I will argue instead that concrete military reform served as an inextricable component of Zhu Xi's brand of "moral rearmament". In the second and third sections, I will apply these considerations to the individual policy suggestions that constituted his plan for restoration, touching on issues of military leadership, troop quality, and fiscal responsibility.

### 6.1 Cultivating the "root": moral regeneration and the military

As one of the most central aspects within Zhu Xi's thought, it is perhaps unsurprising that moral self-cultivation, aimed at the development of the chief virtues like benevolence and righteousness through the investigation of Principle, featured prominently throughout his policy recommendations. It is in this vein that Hoyt Tillman and Niu Pu have recently described Zhu Xi's plan for restoration and recovery as a project of "moral rearmament" and "moral regeneration", suggesting personal cultivation as the primary way of preparing for the eventual reconquest of the north.<sup>256</sup> In this interpretation, Zhu Xi's views contrasted strongly with those of his more practically-oriented contemporaries like Chen Liang and Ye Shi 葉適 (1150–1223), conventionally termed "utilitarians", who were indeed chiefly occupied with concrete military and institutional reforms as means of restoring Song capabilities.<sup>257</sup> However, Zhu Xi's position within this supposed dichotomy has remained largely unelaborated. While it is noted that cultivation of the moral virtues would help fight corruption and facilitate government reform, it has remained unclear how these aims related concretely to the revanchist and irredentist effort.<sup>258</sup> Furthermore, several specific military policies ascribed exclusively to the "utilitarians" by Tillman and Niu, such as the

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<sup>256</sup> See respectively Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism*, 177–80; and Niu Pu, "Confucian Statecraft," 38–41.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>258</sup> Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism*, 178; Niu Pu, "Confucian Statecraft," 38.



decentralization of military responsibility and the revitalization of agricultural colonies, indeed featured extensively throughout Zhu Xi's writings.<sup>259</sup> To relate these initiatives to Zhu Xi's moral and philosophical thought, I shall first reassess the function of moral self-cultivation within the context of military affairs.

One textual passage that is particularly suggestive of a preoccupation with moral cultivation is provided in the final section of his aforementioned 1163 memorial. Citing the example of King Xuan of the Zhou 周宣王 (r. 827–782 BCE) to summarize the classical ideal of military management, Zhu stated:

When King Xuan inherited [the Way of Kings Wen and Wu], he restlessly cultivated his conduct, appointed the wise and employed the capable, cultivated state affairs internally, and repelled barbarians externally. Consequently, the Way of the Zhou flourished magnificently again. Looking at it from this perspective, we can understand the Way through which the former sage kings managed the barbarians: they did not take awe-inspiring might as the root, but virtuous and meritorious conduct; their appointments were not at the frontier, but at court; they did not see utility in weapons and food, but in guiding principles. 宣王承之，側身修行，任賢使能，內修政事，外攘夷狄，而周道粲然復興。臣嘗以是觀之，然後知古先聖王所以制御夷狄之道，其本不在乎威疆，而在乎德業；其任不在乎邊境，而在乎朝廷；其具不在乎兵食，而在乎紀綱。<sup>260</sup>

For a proper understanding of this seemingly anti-militarist passage and its place within Zhu Xi's broader scheme for military restoration, we must first examine its underlying theoretical assumptions. Most fundamentally, the structure of Zhu's argument strongly reflects the sequential ordering between "root" (*ben*) and "tip" (*mo*) that would continue to characterize his political thought. As noted in chapter 1, Zhu Xi maintained that government policy unbound by moral considerations could not be sustainable: "Although the state is rich, its people will be poor; although the army is strong, its state will be defective." 國雖富，其民必貧；兵雖疆，其國必病。<sup>261</sup> All policy was ideally informed by an investigation into Principle and the moral virtues. Accordingly, Zhu indeed emphasized in 1163 that the sage kings "did

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<sup>259</sup> See for example *WJ*, 11.583, 11.607–8.

<sup>260</sup> *WJ*, 13.636.

<sup>261</sup> *WJ*, 75.3623.

not take awe-inspiring might as the root, but virtuous and meritorious conduct.” However, as I likewise noted in chapter 1, this process of moral cultivation constituted only the first half of the governmental process. When Principle determined that warfare was necessary, military action constituted the legitimate functional expression or “tip” inextricably tied to this particular “root”.<sup>262</sup> It is in this vein that Zhu claimed, immediately following his statements on the exemplary ways of King Xuan in 1163, that the establishment of a moral foundation would serve *precisely* to facilitate “the Way through which the ancient sage kings ‘strengthened the root and routed the enemy’ and ‘repressed the barbarians by might’.” 古先聖王所以彊本折衝、威制夷狄之道。<sup>263</sup> The particularly close relation Zhu Xi envisioned between “root” and “tip” meant that his seemingly esoteric call for “moral regeneration” was thoroughly practical in ultimate orientation, inextricably tied to concrete military policy.<sup>264</sup>

One prominent target of Zhu Xi’s apparent call for moral regeneration appears to have been the aforementioned handful of supposedly pro-peace court favorites, whose perceived influence over military affairs he viewed as the root cause of Song military weakness.<sup>265</sup> Indeed, it is not coincidental that directly following his statements about King Xuan, Zhu continued by asserting that the “influence of flattering sycophants” 佞幸之勢<sup>266</sup> constituted the most crucial issue facing the Song. As the foremost among the “guiding principles” 紀綱 referred to by Zhu, reestablishing proper relations between lord and minister by “appointing the wise and employing the capable” and maintaining “virtuous and meritorious conduct” according to the classical ideal was essential to eliminating this institutional obstacle to military preparations.<sup>267</sup> The apparent aim of Zhu Xi’s “moral regeneration” was precisely to create a political environment conducive to the preparatory policies hitherto impeded by the “talk of peace”.<sup>268</sup>

As the court favorites retained their alleged authority over military affairs and the perceived fundamental cause of Song military dilapidation persisted, Zhu Xi continued to

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<sup>262</sup> As noted in chapter 4, Zhu Xi viewed the revanchist and irredentist cause as the Principle-determined “grand essence” 大體 of the Song state. ZZYL, 95.2450.

<sup>263</sup> WJ, 13.637. Emphasis mine.

<sup>264</sup> Zhu Xi reaffirmed the ultimately practical orientation of his moralist scheme in his 1180 memorial to the throne: “If military reform and fiscal relaxation constitute the ‘root’ of providing relief to the people, then this furthermore depends solely on the sovereign who rectifies his preoccupations, intent on establishing guiding principles.” 若夫治軍省賦以為恤民之本，則又在夫人君正其心術以立紀綱而已矣。WJ, 11.581.

<sup>265</sup> WJ, 11.599–600, 14.662, 12.623–4, 12.628–9. See also Zhang Weiling, “Huifu taidu,” 46–51.

<sup>266</sup> WJ, 13.637.

<sup>267</sup> For the status of the relation between lord and minister (*junchen* 君臣) as the foremost among the “three guiding principles” 三綱, see section 4.2.

<sup>268</sup> Zhu Xi repeated this argument almost verbatim in 1165. Cf. WJ, 24.1084–8.

emphasize moral regeneration as the “root” of his plan for restoration throughout subsequent decades.<sup>269</sup> One important example of the perceived influence of the courtiers was their authority over all topmost military appointments throughout the 1170s and early 1180s, which had allegedly led to widespread bribery in the sale of military posts.<sup>270</sup> I will discuss these and similar issues, relating to the “tip” of the restoration effort, in detail in the following section, touching on practical issues of military leadership, troop quality, and fiscal responsibility.

### 6.2 Developing the “tip”: military reform

Whereas Zhu Xi had indicated his concerns regarding perceived military weakness as early as 1161, it was not until 1180 that he began to discuss particular issues and concrete solutions in a systematic fashion. He repeated a consistent list of problems, examined further below, on multiple occasions throughout subsequent decades.<sup>271</sup> This initial period of increased attention to specific issues coincided with Zhu Xi’s brief assignment as prefect of Nankang Military District 南康軍 between 1179 and 1181, where he devoted attention to the material and fiscal issues that affected local military capabilities.<sup>272</sup> Repeated reference to the situation in Nankang throughout his 1180 memorial suggests it may indeed have been this particular experience that alerted Zhu to the specific issues affecting the military and the fiscal pressure its upkeep exerted on the populace.<sup>273</sup> Besides the issue of fiscal responsibility for military expenditures, to which I shall devote the next section, Zhu Xi focused on three main areas of concern.

Firstly, Zhu was concerned over what he perceived to be a steep decline in the quality of military leadership.<sup>274</sup> Due to rampant bribery in the sale of military posts by the “court favorites” surrounding the emperor, he argued, many officers and generals now lacked actual military experience and administrative bloat had increased significantly.<sup>275</sup> Noting pessimistically that the average general occupied himself solely with metaphysical Principles, poetry, and fine calligraphy, Zhu concluded: “How does this improve anything?” 何益於

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<sup>269</sup> He repeated this argument to the throne in 1180, on two occasions in 1188, once in 1189, and again in 1194; see respectively *WJ*, 11.586, 11.599–600, 14.662, 12.623–4, and 12.628–9.

<sup>270</sup> *WJ*, 11.583–4, 11.595.

<sup>271</sup> For example in 1188 and 1189; see respectively *WJ*, 11.606–11 and 12.625–6.

<sup>272</sup> *ZZYL*, 106.2640, 108.2681.

<sup>273</sup> *WJ*, 11.581–2.

<sup>274</sup> This is similarly noted in Zhou Chaxian, “Junshi sixiang,” 323–5; and in Jiang Guozhu 姜國柱, “Zhu Xi de junshi sixiang 朱熹的軍事思想,” *Zhuzi xuekan* 17 (2003): 134–5. Jiang and Zhou do not address the institutional root cause of this issue, nor the primary solution proposed by Zhu.

<sup>275</sup> Zhu Xi noted this issue as early as 1170 in a discussion with Zhang Jingfu 張敬夫; cf. *WJ*, 25.1110–1. See also his 1180 and 1188 memorials; *WJ*, 11.583–6, 11.595. See also *ZZYL*, 110.2706–10.

事。<sup>276</sup> Furthermore, in order to recoup the costs of the substantial bribes involved, new generals allegedly turned to their subordinates as new sources of revenue; ultimately, the local populace bore the brunt of these extortionist practices.<sup>277</sup> The chief solution was to wrest authority over the hiring of new military personnel from the select group of court confidantes and redistribute it to a wider selection of knowledgeable individuals at court. Actual combat experience, not ability to pay, should be the deciding qualification.<sup>278</sup>

Secondly, Zhu alleged that as officers became increasingly incompetent, new recruits remained idle and no longer received adequate training. Efforts to remove old and weak soldiers from the ranks were frustrated, while new recruits were taken on indiscriminately. As a consequence, “The soldiers of the realm number four to five hundred thousand nowadays, yet these are all frail and useless men.” 今天下兵約四五十萬，又皆羸弱無用之人。<sup>279</sup> Like his utilitarian-oriented colleagues Ye Shi and Chen Liang, Zhu argued that rising military expenditures had not resulted in a more reliable fighting force.<sup>280</sup> As Zhou Chaxian has recently pointed out, Zhu repeatedly proposed to inspect the military records (*junji* 軍籍) and eliminate weak and underperforming personnel.<sup>281</sup> Much more fundamental, however, was the perceived *root* cause of administrative incompetence, namely the supposed influence of the “court favorites” on all topmost military appointments. As such, “moral regeneration” aimed at the top-down rectification of the military apparatus remained Zhu’s priority.

Thirdly, Zhu pointed to long-standing efforts at military centralization as a factor exacerbating these issues. He interpreted these efforts, initiated by dynastic founder Taizu 宋太祖 (r. 960–976), as a response to the politically and militarily autonomous “buffer towns” (*fanzhen* 藩鎮) that had contributed to the downfall of the Tang 唐 (618–907). As noted in chapter 2, Zhu Xi considered centralized military authority the “absolute ideal according to the Principle of the matter” 事理之至當,<sup>282</sup> to be maintained lest one invariably loses power altogether. Citing *Analects* 16:2 as he applied this stricture to the Tang precedent, Zhu noted: “The Master’s saying that ‘ritual, music, and punitive expeditions all stem from the Son of Heaven’ explains the situation [of the *fanzhen*] exceedingly clearly.” 夫子說禮樂征伐自天子

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<sup>276</sup> ZZYL, 110.2710. The point was to balance these activities with actual practical knowledge.

<sup>277</sup> WJ, 11.583–4.

<sup>278</sup> WJ, 11.583–4; ZZYL, 110.2710.

<sup>279</sup> ZZYL, 110.2705–8.

<sup>280</sup> Zhou Mengjiang 周夢江, *Ye Shi yu yongjia xuepai* 葉適與永嘉學派 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1992), 208–9.

<sup>281</sup> WJ, 11.583, 11.608, 12.626. Zhou Chaxian, “Junshi sixiang,” 324–6.

<sup>282</sup> SSJJZ, 170.

出一段，這箇說得極分曉。<sup>283</sup> However, while Taizu's initiative was therefore fundamentally commendable, the process suffered from its own success as local defensiveness, especially on the frontier, decreased accordingly. Emphasizing the importance of moderation in such policies, Zhu noted to his disciples after 1191:

Looking back at [the mistakes of] the preceding Five Dynasties, our own dynasty took all the military power away from the buffer towns, together with all of their discretion over rewards, punishments, and policy. However, our prefectures and counties subsequently became weak and frail, so that all of them were defeated by the [Jurchen] bandits during the Jingkang disaster [of 1127]. This was indeed caused by a failure to observe the proper measure. 本朝監五代，藩鎮兵也收了，賞罰刑政，一切都收了。然州郡一齊困弱，靖康之禍，寇盜所過，莫不潰散，亦是失斟酌所致。<sup>284</sup>

One crucial way of restoring the “proper measure” was to revivify the system of agricultural colonies (*tuntian* 屯田) and task the frontier prefectures with the training of farmer-soldiers (*minbing* 民兵), ideally attaining fiscal self-sufficiency through agricultural activities.<sup>285</sup> In the first analysis, this idea may appear at odds with the repeated insistence on military centralization. I shall address this issue more closely in the following section on fiscal reform. for my present purposes it suffices to note that Zhu Xi stressed the necessity of delegating military maintenance to the prefectures, not unlike his utility-minded colleagues.<sup>286</sup>

Historically, Song founder Taizu had bolstered his efforts at centralization by maintaining a system of regular troop rotations (*gengshu* 更戍) between capital and frontier. The aim of this system was twofold: firstly, it was meant to break personal bonds between commanders and their subordinates; secondly, it was to provide the capital-based Imperial Army (*jinjun* 禁軍) with regular training opportunities as it toured the frontier.<sup>287</sup> Although Zhu Xi referred regularly to these “methods of Taizu” 太祖法 as an important way of restoring the Song military, his chief concern lay primarily with the second, not the first, purported aim of the system: “Today's soldiers are useless. [...] It would be fitting to disperse the metropolitan armies and train the soldiers in the counties, rotating them north across the

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<sup>283</sup> ZZYL, 83.2172.

<sup>284</sup> ZZYL, 24.599.

<sup>285</sup> WJ, 11.583, 11.607–8, 12.626.

<sup>286</sup> See for example Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism*, 179; Zhou Mengjiang, *Ye Shi*, 210.

<sup>287</sup> Wang Zengyu 王曾瑜, *Songchao bingzhi chutan* 宋朝兵制初探 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 55–8.

Huai each year to guard the border, in accordance with the methods of Taizu.” 今日兵不濟事 [...] 宜散京師之兵，卻練諸郡之兵，依太祖法，每年更戍趨去淮上衛邊。<sup>288</sup> Furthermore, contrary to what was originally the primary aim of the system, Zhu Xi emphasized the need to acquaint generals more closely with their subordinates as well as local strategic dispositions, despite the possibility that vested interests could take hold.<sup>289</sup>

To Zhu Xi, these statements did not contradict his simultaneous insistence on the centralization of military authority in the hands of the emperor. He noted to his students that although Taizu’s armies had been dispersed throughout the prefectures, “they were all called ‘Imperial Armies’ and remained at the disposal of the Son of Heaven; no other levies [of troops] were allowed.” 謂之禁軍者，乃天子所用之軍，不許他役。<sup>290</sup> What had brought down the late Tang, according to Zhu, was that all local institutional power, both military as well as civilian, had been monopolized completely into the hands of individual military commissioners (*jiedushi* 節度使).<sup>291</sup> As such, the issue was not necessarily that some discretion over military matters had been delegated to local actors, but rather that this authority was no longer balanced out institutionally by other officials. This institutional counterbalancing, Zhu appears to have argued, would ideally ensure the Son of Heaven retained his final say on military affairs.

In sum, Zhu Xi’s goal was to achieve the “proper measure” between Tang decentralization and the perceived over-centralization of the Song. One of the methods meant to achieve this balance, namely the regular rotation of troops and generals, would simultaneously serve to address perceived shortcomings in the quality of soldiers as well as their commanding officers. Ultimately, however, Zhu Xi insisted that the primary cause of the perceived decrease in Song military capabilities was deeply institutional, tracing it to the court favorites who wielded the authority over all topmost military appointments. “Moral regeneration” aimed at the top-down rectification of the military apparatus remained Zhu’s fundamental priority. In the following section, I will extend these considerations to his thought on fiscal reform.

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<sup>288</sup> ZZYL, 110.2707. See also ZZYL, 110.2706, 130.3202.

<sup>289</sup> WJ, 11.584, 21.966.

<sup>290</sup> ZZYL, 130.3103.

<sup>291</sup> ZZYL, 110.2707, 128.3075.

### 6.3 Tuntian and fiscal reform

Following dynastic founder Taizu's decision to relieve local governments of their responsibility to train and maintain armies, partly out of fear these could potentially be used in future uprisings, central government spending on the military increased substantially.<sup>292</sup> In Zhu Xi's own estimation, military spending claimed between eighty and ninety percent of the entire state budget, a figure similarly repeated by his utilitarian-minded colleagues.<sup>293</sup> Part of the problem was that, although the dynasty had lost a significant share of its territory to the Jurchen in 1127, it had not re-proportioned expenditures accordingly: "Although nowadays our tax income does not equal that of our ancestors, we maintain more troops than they ever did; how could we not be in these dire straits?" 今以不如祖宗時財賦，養祖宗時所無之兵，安得不窮也。<sup>294</sup> As Zhu observed personally during his tenure as prefect in Nankang Military District, this system had burdened the agrarian populace with an increasingly unbearable fiscal pressure.<sup>295</sup>

The proposed solution was to partially decentralize responsibility for the maintenance of the army and defer it back to the prefectures.<sup>296</sup> As early as 1165, Zhu indicated in a letter to Wang Shuai 汪帥 that he sought to revitalize the system of agricultural colonies, tasking the frontier prefectures with the training of self-sufficient farmer-soldiers.<sup>297</sup> The currently dominant system, in which peasant farmers labored for the upkeep of soldiers who themselves supposedly "sat around idly while eating their fill" 飽食安坐, was inefficient as it left an important source of labor untapped.<sup>298</sup> As one of the few contexts in which Zhu still envisioned a feasible role for the Mencian well-field system (*jingtian* 井田), he suggested that such colonies should divide their fields into nine smaller plots and dedicate the harvest of the middle plot to the maintenance of the colony's military staff.<sup>299</sup> While the system would primarily serve to decrease army expenditures by the central government, thereby lowering the tax burden and easing the strain on grain transport infrastructure, it would simultaneously

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<sup>292</sup> Wang Zengyu, *Songchao bingzhi*, 287–94.

<sup>293</sup> Almost three decades separated Zhu Xi's first use of this figure in 1171 and the last occasion in 1198, suggesting he considered the problem persistent; *WJ*, 25.1113; *ZZYL*, 110.2709. For Ye's reference to this figure, see Zhou Mengjiang, *Ye Shi*, 209.

<sup>294</sup> *ZZYL*, 110.2708.

<sup>295</sup> *WJ*, 11.581–2.

<sup>296</sup> This has recently been pointed out by Zhou Chaxian, along with a general description of the *tuntian* system. Cf. Zhou Chaxian, "Junshi sixiang," 326–8.

<sup>297</sup> *WJ*, 24.1088.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> See Zhu's 1170 letter to Zhang Jingfu; *WJ*, 25.1115. See also *ZZYL*, 110.2709.

increase the amount of soldiers that could sustainably be maintained along the frontier. As an essential element in his strategy for restoration, Zhu Xi proposed the *tuntian* system to Xiaozong in virtually all of his policy-oriented memorials following 1180.<sup>300</sup>

Although Zhu Xi discussed the *tuntian* system predominantly in terms of its fiscal merits, several statements suggest he simultaneously considered it a vehicle for military training, preparation, and, perhaps most importantly, border defense. Speaking to his disciples in the 1190s, he noted: “If we have [the prefectures] train soldiers, manufacture armaments, and construct ramparts in order to defend one area, then wouldn’t this amount to covert yet formidable preparations?” 若使之練習士卒，修治器甲，築固城壘，以為一方之守，豈不隱然有備而可畏。<sup>301</sup> While Huang Kuanchong has rightfully pointed out that the type of local militarization proposed by Zhu benefited efforts at increasing domestic security, Zhu Xi’s writings instead indicate he conceptualized the system primarily in terms of external security and border defensiveness.<sup>302</sup> This approach is observable as early as 1165, when Zhu Xi argued to Wang Shuai that agricultural colonies were crucial to prepare for the supposedly inevitable breakdown of peace agreements with the Jurchen, established earlier that year.<sup>303</sup> Fifteen years later, summarizing his proposal for military reform to Xiaozong, Zhu similarly placed the *tuntian* system and its farmer-soldiers firmly within his strategy for national defense:

It is my humble opinion that only by carefully selecting military officials and reexamining the military records, we can economize on military expenses; [only] by expanding the agricultural colonies can we make military reserves plentiful; [only] by training farmer-soldiers can we improve our border defenses. 竊意惟有選將吏、覈兵籍，可以節軍費；開廣屯田，可以實軍儲；練習民兵，可以益邊備。<sup>304</sup>

However, Zhu Xi’s interest in *tuntian* was not without several strong reservations. In a 1171 letter to Zhang Jingfu, he noted that previous attempts at reinstating the system had failed as certain “dissolute swindlers” 欺誕者 had abused it for personal gain and misstated its aims.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> See for example *WJ*, 11.583, 11.607–8, 12.626.

<sup>301</sup> *ZZYL*, 110.2707.

<sup>302</sup> Huang Kuanchong 黃寬重, *Nansong difang wuli* 南宋地方武力 (Taipei: Dongda tushu gongsi, 2002), 54–5, 65, 130.

<sup>303</sup> *WJ*, 24.1088.

<sup>304</sup> *WJ*, 11.583.

<sup>305</sup> *WJ*, 25.1115.



Possibly indicating that this had become a common argument against the system in its entirety, Zhu Xi argued in his 1180 address to Xiaozong that although certain “dissolute and deceptive petty persons” 誕謾小人 had caused previous attempts at revitalizing *tuntian* to fail, this was not a necessary outcome of the system itself.<sup>306</sup> As with other issues, Zhu Xi traced the root of this problem to those individuals at court who supposedly wielded great authority over military appointments and thereby exerted significant influence over the direction of military reform. The rapid decrease in the quality of commanding staff caused by this alleged abuse of power jeopardized the functioning of the entire system, as the officers tasked with its local supervision were no longer adequately qualified.<sup>307</sup> While it would theoretically be possible to remedy this somewhat by appointing additional civil officials to directly oversee colony management, Zhu noted to Xiaozong in 1180, the entire point of the system was precisely that it would allow the military to become financially self-sustaining without such costly governmental intervention.<sup>308</sup>

As such, while Zhu considered *tuntian* vital to continued fiscal survival of the military and, by extension, the dynasty itself, the success of any such initiative depended wholly on the quality of its military leadership. As long as institutional authority over all topmost military appointments remained in the hands of the supposed “court favorites”, possibly the very same “deceptive petty persons” Zhu accused of sabotaging previous attempts at reinstating the system, the most crucial item in Zhu Xi’s plan for restoration remained to be his particularly results-oriented brand of “moral regeneration”.

### Conclusion

Despite its esoteric appearance, Zhu Xi’s call for “moral rearmament” was directly and inextricably related to concrete military reform. Reflecting the sequential relationship between “root” and “tip” that he would later use to describe the governmental process in his 1189 commentaries, Zhu indicated in 1163 and beyond that his brand of “moral regeneration” was ultimately meant to attain practical results. His foremost priority was to remove the perceived institutional impediments to military restoration, namely the handful of court favorites who had allegedly monopolized authority over all topmost military appointments. Once this

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<sup>306</sup> *WJ*, 11.584.

<sup>307</sup> *WJ*, 11.607–8.

<sup>308</sup> This should not be taken to mean the system would be free from central oversight. Zhu noted that yearly inspections of commanding staff remained vital to the scheme, aimed at ensuring that these measures did not again tip the balance of military (de)centralization towards the “buffer towns” of the notorious Tang example (*WJ*, 11:608).

impediment was removed and the quality of military leadership was restored, commanding staff could once more be trusted to train their troops properly and reliably implement the *tuntian* program of agricultural colonies to ensure the long-term fiscal survival of the military and the state. Military over-centralization should be counteracted to improve local military capabilities, ideally attaining the “proper measure” without giving way to the notorious buffer towns of Tang precedent. In this light, Zhu Xi’s policy proposals demonstrate distinct parallels with those of his utilitarian-oriented contemporaries.

## Conclusion

The aim of the present thesis was to examine Zhu Xi's thought on military affairs and assess its reflection in his writings and recorded sayings, including both his philosophical works and his statements on concrete contemporaneous issues. A closer examination of this body of work has indicated the existence of a complex and multidirectional relationship between these spheres of discourse, suggesting one may attribute to Zhu Xi a coherent strand of military thought, formed over several decades through the influence of his concurrent experiences as both an active participant in Song strategic debate and as a prominent member of the intellectual community of the "Learning of the Way".

The theoretical framework that came to inform Zhu Xi's thought on the formulation and execution of military policy reflected several key characteristics of his broader view on government practice. At the foundation of this framework lay the notion of Principle, as the normative determinant of all things "as they should be", the investigation of which was the most fundamental priority of any individual intent on governing. Due to the inextricable yet sequential nature of the relation Zhu Xi envisioned between this "root" of the governmental process and its accompanying functional expression or "tip", he maintained that a proper understanding of normative Principle should serve to inform and guide all military policy and action. At least in his own understanding, this distinguished his approach from that of the *bingjia*, whose alleged inversion of the root-tip hierarchy had "awakened in the ruler a heart that was willing to exhaust his troops in wanton acts of aggression." 啟人君窮兵黷武之心.<sup>309</sup> Conversely, as long as it was guided by an understanding of Principle, warfare was not necessarily reprehensible or even problematic. The particularly close conceptual relationship Zhu consistently evoked between military policy and other practical implements of government, like legal punishment and regulatory decree, suggests he accepted them equally as legitimate governmental concerns, readily translatable into real and practical government policy. The implications of this conceptual pairing for Zhu Xi's thought on legal affairs represent a promising avenue for further research into his legal and political thought.

Simultaneously, Zhu Xi recognized that certain violations of Principle not only allowed but indeed mandated military intervention, aimed at maintaining social and political order both domestically within the Chinese cultural sphere of the "Central Lands" as well as in relation to the perceived barbarian elements inhabiting its outer periphery. Functioning

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<sup>309</sup> WJ, 73.3551.

complimentarily to the transformative force of the sovereign's moral virtue when this peaceful influence proved insufficient to accomplish the task, Zhu Xi eventually came to conceptualize such recourses to punitive warfare as inevitable, "expedient" responses to acute historical circumstance. At the foundation of this thoroughly historicized approach to warfare lay Zhu Xi's partially immanent conceptualization of universal Principle. Instead of viewing moral virtue and its transformative influence as a panacea to solve all conflict, Zhu maintained instead that the complex interactions between myriad historical entities occasionally resulted in situations that could only be adequately addressed through armed intervention. While such actions may be at variance with the prevalent moral standard, they ultimately "complied with the Way" 反經合道 and indeed Principle itself.<sup>310</sup> Challenging the recent claim that it was incorrect for Zhu Xi to apply his particular conception of the "expedient" (*quan*) to issues of war, I would instead suggest that the topics of warfare and military policy present a promising avenue for further inquiry into the Confucian intersection between individual morality and the forces of history.

One of the earliest and indeed most prominent reflections of this approach can be observed as early as 1162, decades before its formalization as a theoretical principle in Zhu Xi's interlinear commentaries, in his first public case for war against the "the enemies of our sovereign and our fathers". Urging the recently enthroned Xiaozong to "respond to the endless changes of the age" 應當世無窮之變,<sup>311</sup> Zhu Xi appealed to the primacy of Principle itself to argue that the Jurchen had to be expelled from the "Central Lands" by force. Challenging the recently held suggestion that he eventually abandoned this cause later in life, I demonstrated in chapter 4 that by reconceptualizing the sovereign and the enduring dynasty itself as the primary foci of revanchist sentiment, Zhu in fact maintained both the revanchist and irredentist causes as the Southern Song's "grand essence" 大體 with unabated fervor to the end of his life.<sup>312</sup> The close similarity between this real, contemporaneous case for war and his later comments on classical cases of war as they featured in his commentaries on the Confucian classics, authored throughout subsequent decades, suggest that his political advocacy of war against the Jurchen Jin may have exerted a substantial influence on the way Zhu would continue to approach the legitimacy of warfare as an issue of scholarly interest.

As some wars were necessary, so was the need to adequately prepare for them. As early as 1161, Zhu Xi indicated that, based on his perception of the Song military as both

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<sup>310</sup> ZZYL, 37.986–95.

<sup>311</sup> WJ, 13.632.

<sup>312</sup> ZZYL, 95.2450.

materially and institutionally derelict, an immediate offensive against the Jurchen was unfeasible. Subsequent memorials submitted shortly after Wanyan Liang's abortive incursion furthermore suggest that this defensive and preparatory attitude persisted and indeed strengthened substantially throughout and beyond the 1160s, despite the particularly assertive style of moral argumentation Zhu employed against advocates of the peace treaty. These observations challenge the recently held view that Zhu supposedly maintained a "hawkish" support for an immediate counterattack. More fundamentally, they corroborate the argument that Zhu Xi's approach to warfare was deeply sensitive to the demands of historical, societal, and strategic circumstance. One instructive reflection of this practically-oriented approach is Zhu Xi's admission that even Confucius himself may have entertained strategic considerations in his case against Chen Heng of Qi, eventually concluding that "something has to be actually feasible for one to accomplish it." 事也須是可行方得.<sup>313</sup> Coupled with the observation that Zhu Xi's public advocacy for the defensive (*shou*) position within the debate coincided with the formative period of his commentaries on the Confucian *Four Books*, these findings suggest a strongly intertwined process of conceptual development, ultimately constituting a consistently realist and nuanced view on matters of warfare.

Lastly, this nuanced approach manifested itself throughout Zhu Xi's targeted analyses of Song military dilapidation, presented on multiple occasions to the Emperor himself. Reflecting the sequential relationship between "root" and "tip" that informed his broader view on the governmental process, Zhu Xi insisted that moral cultivation played a foundational role within his plan for Song military restoration. However, offering a substantial corrective to recent approaches to the topic, I have demonstrated that these calls for "moral rearmament" were consistently targeted at a very particular impediment to Song restoration, namely the perceived influence of several court favorites who had allegedly usurped the authority over all topmost military appointments at court. Once this issue was rectified, Zhu argued, the quality of commanding staff could be restored and the proper training of soldiers could be resumed. To ensure the fiscal sustainability of the military, particularly along the northern frontier, Zhu Xi proposed to revitalize the *tuntian* system of military agricultural colonies. These measures furthermore served to counteract a long-standing tendency towards increasing military centralization which, starting from Song founder Taizu, had wrought havoc on local military capabilities. Several points of distinct resemblance between Zhu Xi's proposals and those of his supposedly more "utilitarian" contemporaries suggest that despite its initially esoteric

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<sup>313</sup> ZZYL, 44.1130.

appearance, Zhu Xi's plan for restoration was in fact thoroughly practical in its ultimate orientation. Unfortunately, due to space constraints I have only been able to provide a cursory description of Zhu Xi's policy proposals and identify several similarities they shared with those of his contemporaries. A more thorough comparative analysis of these proposals based on my findings may prove to be a fruitful point of departure for further inquiry into the strategic debate at the Southern Song court.

In sum, I have delineated the primary characteristics that constituted Zhu Xi's strand of military thought. Sensitive to the demands of history, society, and strategy, this strand of thought left its traces through all spheres of discourse, manifested in Zhu Xi's commentaries on the classics, his personal letters to close friends and powerholders at court, and indeed in the political memorials he submitted to the Emperor himself. Integrating a utility-oriented concern for the practical demands of the moment with his broader moral and cosmological philosophy, Zhu Xi ultimately developed a multi-faceted yet coherent strand of military discourse.

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