

CHAPTER ONE : HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

I. THE SONG DYNASTY AND ITS POLICIES

The history of China witnessed many drastic changes in terms of its political, social, economic and cultural structure. The main contributing factor to these changes was the rise and fall of its many ruling kingdoms, or as it is more commonly called, dynasties. It is a fact that every historical event has its cause and effect. For example, the Han Dynasty rose after the rebellions which took place towards the end of the Qin Dynasty. The Tang Dynasty came about after the five nomadic tribes from the north invaded China (*Wuhu Luanhua*).¹ As a result, both the Han and the Tang Dynasties were built upon the ruins of previous eras.

The Han and Tang Dynasties had concentrated much on expanding their territories through military power and were also successful in developing an outstanding and powerful government. These two dynasties were one of the most glorious times in the history of China. The Song Dynasty emerged after the dark ages of the Five Dynasties (*Wudai*, 907-960 A.D.).² Due to the fact that Han and Tang dynasties had stationed most of their military forces in the north-western part of the country because of war-engagements, this had left the north-eastern part of the country unguarded, providing an opportunity to the nomadic tribes at the borders of

¹ After the fall of Western Tsin (265-317 A.D.), five nomadic tribes in the north and north-west of China, began to move towards the Great Wall and the Yellow River areas. This migration had led to the establishment of "conquest dynasties" and brought great influence to the social and political life in the Central Plain. The incident was called *Wuhu Luanhua*, and the five tribes were the Xiong Nu, Xian Bei, Jie, Di, and Qiang.

² During the time of the Five Dynasties, in the short span of fifty-three years, five dynasties and thirteen emperors with six different family-names ruled China. These five dynasties are Later Liang (*Hou Liang*, 907-923), Later Tang (*Hou Tang*, 923-936), Later Tsin (*Hou Tsin*, 936-946), Later Han (*Hou Han*, 947-950) and Later Zhou (*Hou Zhou*, 951-960).

China to grow in power. The tribes, including the Liao, the Jin and the Mongols, intended to move their territories southwards. Their frequent invasions of Chinese territory directly affected the Song Dynasty from its early days to its fall. As a result, the fate and history of the Song Dynasty was closely linked to the expansion of power by its nomadic neighbours.

In 960, Zhao Kuangyin (r.960-976) brought about a rebellion at Chenqiao, overthrowing the later Zhou Dynasty and inscribed a new page in the history of China. This marks the beginning of the Song Dynasty and Zhao Kuangyin was posthumously named Song Tai Zu.

In the aftermath of the Five Dynasties, China was still in a chaotic state. There had been an urgent need for Song Tai Zu to keep his throne to prevent the kingdom from splitting and ending up as another short-lived dynasty. During his reign, all his policies on political, military, financial and economic affairs were based on the principle of check and balance to prevent misgovernment.³

In his efforts to unify the empire and at the same time to bring peace and stability to his regime, Tai Zu adopted the principles of absolutism and centralization to govern his newly-founded dynasty. He was fully aware that the political instability since the era of the Five Dynasties was largely the result of the recalcitrance and abuse of power by the military and the powerful generals. This can be seen during the time of the Five Dynasties when four emperors had come into power through mutinies among the troops and Song Tai Zu himself was one of them. Therefore, he was fully conscious of the danger and repercussion of too much power being vested on army

³ See Deng Guangming, Qi Xia, *Liang Song Zhengzhi Jingji Wenti* (Shanghai Zhishi Chubanshe , 1988), ch. 2, p. 16.

personnel. To deal with this potential danger, he had made use of his political influence to bring about a change in the status of the military vis-a-vis the civil officials in order to put an end to the potential danger caused by an over-powerful military. Furthermore, in an attempt to eliminate regional power, he decided to implement the policy of centralization by centralizing all military, political and financial power under the control of the central government. A well-organized civil service examination system was also set up (under Tai Zong). The institutional changes were implemented for the personal interest of the ruler ultimately, and in the process, the autocratic power of the emperor was greatly augmented.

In centralizing the military power, the crucial factor was the imperial army (*jijun*), which was most well-trained and powerful. In order to prevent this army from staging another rebellion, Tai Zu had dealt with it wisely. First of all, he relieved the previous generals of their power in controlling the troops and their power was taken over by the Three Military Bureaus (*Sanya*) and the Bureau Of Military Affairs (*Shumiyuan*). The *San Ya* had the power to control and hold the army in its physical sense but the power to order any military operation was vested in the hands of the *Shumiyuan*. Therefore, both the parties above had no sole power to operate a military movement,⁴ and that had eliminated the likelihood of them overthrowing the government. Furthermore, their power in the army would not become too strong because there was a separation of power among them. The second step taken by Tai Zu was in the organization of the army. The imperial army was given intensive training and then stationed around the capital region for security purposes. Furthermore, the ratio between the imperial army in the capital and the regional forces within the

⁴ Li XinChuan, *Jianyan Yi Lai Xinian Yaolu*, (Beijing : Zhonghua Shuju, 1988) thereafter *YL*, ch. 5, p. 124.

country was carefully maintained so that the emperor possessed enough military power to control the troops outside the capital area, while at the same time, the emperor could also gather the help of troops from outside the capital to fight the imperial army in the capital if necessary. The emperor would then have no worries over his own troops overthrowing him while defence against foreign attacks was also taken care of by the regional forces.

To prevent the military leaders from conspiring with the soldiers to go against the government, a system called *gengshufa* was practised. This was a “rotation and transfer” system requiring all soldiers to be transferred every three years to other places. This would lead to a situation whereby the soldiers would not know their generals so well as to jointly revolt against the government.⁵

In the centralization of political power, the policy was to keep the administration in the prefectures under the control of the central government, which was in turn under the full control of the emperor. Civil officials instead of military generals were sent to the prefectures to take charge of the administration, to regulate and control the local government. In addition, civil officials sent to the prefectures would serve for a term of three years at the same place and would have to be assigned to other places for a new position when the three years' term was up. Again, this was in accordance to the “rotation and transfer system” to prevent them from gaining too much power by staying on in the same position for too long.⁶

⁵ Chen Dengyuan, *Guoshi Jiuwen* (Beijing: Zhunghua Shuji, 1962) ch. 32, pp. 275-277.

⁶ Feng Qi, *Songshi Jishi Benmo*, (Taiwan: Shangwu Yingshuguan, 1956) thereafter *SSBM*, ch. 2, p. 7. See also Tuo Tuo, *Songshi*, (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1977) thereafter *SS*, ch. 167, pp. 1929-1930, and Xu Song, *Song Huiyao Jigao*, (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1957) thereafter *SHY*, ch. 11939, p. 2366.

The power of the officials at court was also limited as they were totally subjected to the control of the emperor with regard to their assignments and functions. In addition, their power of making decision were also divided and separated by having more than one person holding the post of decision making. This, however, had led to a situation whereby government officials in their respective positions were faced with the problem of ascertaining what their duty actually was.⁷

The policy of centralization and absolutism had the greatest impact upon the position of the chief councillor. In the central government, the chief councillor was supposed to be the most powerful and important person. However, Song Tai Zu and his brother Tai Zong (r.976-997) had deliberately chosen to curtail and reduce the power and authority of the chief councillor in the government. This was a step to prevent the chief councillor from revolting against the ruler and consequently the emperor's power was greatly augmented.⁸

From the past experience of trouble created by regional power held by the Military Governors during the times of the late Tang and the Five Dynasties, Tai Zu understood the importance of having control over both military power and financial resources in the regions. Several steps were taken to assemble all the wealth on to the central government to strengthen its financial position. The Commissioner of Finance (*Sansishi*) was in charge of the national finance while the Transport Commissioners (*Zhuanyunshi*) were responsible for transferring the wealth from the regions to the central government. In addition, scholar-officials from the capital were also dispatched

⁷ SS, ch. 161, p. 1832.

⁸ Qian Mu, "Lun Songdai Xiangquan", *Songshi Yanjiu Ji*, (Taipei, Zhonghua Congshu, Vol. 1, 1958) thereafter SSYJ, pp. 455-461.

to local governments and various commercial organizations to supervise and control financial matters.⁹

Apart from centralizing political, military and financial powers, an additional step taken to strengthen the power of the central government and the authority of the emperor was through the establishment of a more effective civil service examination system. With the new effective civil service examination system that lasted through the Song Dynasty, scholars would have to sit for the palace examination hosted by the emperor himself. In this way, the candidates who succeeded in passing the examinations would in turn be regarded as the students of the emperor, and would swear loyalty to him.

It can thus be seen that this important policy of centralization apart from strengthening the central government, had the ultimate purpose of strengthening the emperor's power and weakening ministerial power. This so-called policy of "strengthening the trunk and weakening the branches" (*qianggan ruozhi*) had the ultimate effect of augmenting imperial power and leading to the growth of absolutism.

After the death of Song Tai Zu, Tai Zong had inherited the throne and he also followed the rules and principles laid down by Tai Zu in governing the country. He also emphasized the role played by the civil officials in government, regarding them as much more important than the military personnel.

The rules and the traditions laid down by the founding emperors during their reign were supposed to prevent misrule among their subordinates and to provide themselves with power to control their ministers. However, descendants of Tai Zu and

⁹ *SSBM*, ch. 2, p. 8.

Tai Zong tended to follow the rules and dynastic traditions blindly without realizing the motive behind it. Therefore, the system of government which was initially effective was rendered a failure later. The crux of the matter was the placing of too much faith on civil officials. As time passed by, the situation worsened when military personnel were generally regarded with distrust by the court.

Since the time of the third emperor of the Northern Song, Zhen Zong (r.998-1022), the country's wealth had begun to deteriorate and military power of the empire was weakening from day to day due to inappropriate management. By the year 1126, the Jin had moved south invading Song. After his ascension, the emperor Gao Zong (r.1127-1162) had no choice but to lead his subordinates to retreat to the south to the Yangzī region, to avoid the massive military movements of the Jin army. The Song Dynasty from then on was known as the Southern Song (Nan Song) as it only controlled the southern part of the country.

China at that time was in total chaos, similar to the chaotic time of the Five Dynasties. Apart from the problem of external invasion, what constituted a greater problem was the oppression of the military upon the population, which caused much hatred against them from the people.

At a later stage when the chaotic situation was under partial control, the generals were once again deprived of the military power which was given to them during war time. Civil officials were trying their best to regain power, to have control over the military who had gained much power during the war. The government also decided in favour of a treaty of peace with the Jin administration so that the military personnel would not gain more power and influence in the process of war.

Under the leadership of Song Gao Zong who had strictly observed the dynastic traditions and policies laid down by his ancestors, the Southern Song was able to achieve peace and stability for a fairly long period. No doubt, the establishment of peace was also due to some other personal factors.

The objective of this thesis is to examine how Gao Zong was able to successfully save himself and his dynasty from the chaotic situation and from the enemy invasions. Gao Zong's internal and external policies and the motivating forces behind his policy decisions will be discussed in the following chapters.

2. THE DOWNFALL OF THE NORTHERN SONG

The Song Dynasty was established in 960 by Tai Zu but the task of unification was finally achieved during the reign of his successor Tai Zong. However, Tai Zong had failed twice in his missions to invade the Liao.¹⁰ The Liao had remained in the north and posed a potential danger to the Song.

During the reign of Zhen Zong, the Treaty of Chanyuan¹¹ had brought about a short interval of peace to the Song Dynasty. During the time of Ren Zong (r.1022-1063) although some disturbances were caused by the Xi Xia in the western borders, on the whole, the country was quite peaceful and tranquil.

¹⁰ Song Tai Zong had invaded the Liao in order to recover the sixteen states of Yan Yun (see footnote 13). These two famous battles are known as the battle of Gaoliang River in 979 and the battle of Qigouguan in 986. After the failure of these two military movements, he did not try again to invade the Liao.

¹¹ The Treaty of Chanyuan was the treaty between the Song and the Liao, signed in 1005 at Chanzhou (modern Puyang in Henan). According to the treaty, the Song would have to contribute an annual tribute of 300,000 taels of silver and 300,000 bolts of silk to the Liao and the Song emperor would be regarded as a younger brother of the Liao ruler. The tribute was later increased to 500,000 units of silver and silk each during the time of Ren Zong.

The reigns of Zhen Zong and Ren Zong came thirty-eight years after the founding of the dynasty by Tai Zu. Following their efforts in territorial expansion, the first two emperors worked hard to bring about internal peace and stability in the country. Under the policy of "strengthening the trunk and weakening the branches", they managed to create a peaceful and stable nation under civilian rule and protected it against the possibility of rebellions by military personnel. However, since the death of the second emperor Tai Zong, several problems soon arose with regard to the dynastic traditions and principles of government. It was time for changing the dynastic policies but unfortunately, the descendants of the Song founders did not inherit the capabilities of their ancestors in bringing about an effective administration. This, together with other external and internal factors, had led to the weakening of the nation, which made it extremely difficult for the Song to rise again in power.

Therefore, ever since the reigns of Zhen Zong and Ren Zong, the Song Dynasty continued to be economically poor and militarily weak. By the time of Hui Zong (r.1100-1125), the country's financial and political position was in a poor state. At this point of time, the Jurchen had rapidly risen in military power in the north and rebelled against the Liao. They successfully rebelled against the Liao by 1115. The Jurchen under the control of Wanyan Aguda, had established the kingdom of Jin.¹² By the time the Jin troops were on their way to overthrow the Liao, The Song harboured the intention of using their help to recover the states of Yan Yun¹³ previously controlled by the Liao.

¹² The Jurchen resided in China along the area of the Heilongjiang and Changbaishan. During the times of the Five Dynasties' disarray, the Liao had taken all their land. At the end of the 11th century, one of the tribes called Wanyan had become the leader. In 1101, the Liao emperor Tian Zuo was on his throne and due to his misgovernment, the Jurchen people had seized the opportunity to revolt. See Xu Mengxin, *Sanchao Beimeng Hui Bian*, (Taipei: Wenhai Chubanshe, 1962.) thereafter *HB*, ch. 3, pp. 32-38.

¹³ The sixteen states of Yan Yun were previously in the map of China. During the time of Shi Jinglang (r.936-942) of Later Tsin, the territories were given to the Liao. During the time of Tai Zong, efforts

In 1120, negotiations were successful and a "Treaty By the Sea" (*Haishang Zhi Meng*) between Song and Jin was signed. It was agreed by both parties that they would adopt the Great Wall to be the demarcation line of their borders. Furthermore, they had come to an agreement whereby they would attack the Liao troops from both sides. The Jin army would attack Liao's capital Zhongjing and the Song would attack Yanjing. The treaty also mentioned the fact that the annual tribute previously sent to the Liao must now be presented to the Jin.¹⁴

However, the treaty signed on this occasion seemed to be incomplete in many ways. Conflicts were sooner or later inevitable and relationship between Song and Jin went sour when circumstances changed later. In the end, by 1125, the Jurchen started to invade Song. By 1126, the Jin had captured both the reigning emperor Qin Zong (r. 1125-1126) as well as the ex-emperor Hui Zong.¹⁵ They had the intention to install someone who was not from the Song royal family to be the puppet emperor in an attempt to halt the continuance of the Song Dynasty.

3. THE ENTHRONEMENT OF PRINCE KANG

In the winter of 1126, the Jin troops had swiftly overthrown the Song Dynasty. Although they did conquer the Song, they did not intend to govern the country themselves as they knew that it would be very difficult for them to govern and control

were made to recover the land but were not successful (see footnote 10). Since then, the Song did not try again to attack Liao, but the Liao had attacked Song several times until the Treaty of Chanyuan (see footnote 11) was signed.

¹⁴ See *HB*, ch. 4, pp. 5-6a.

¹⁵ In 1125, when Hui Zong heard that the Jin were going to attack Song, he abdicated his throne to Qin Zong and fled to the south. The Jin army then retreated and he went back to Kaifeng. In 8th/1126, the Jin troops made a sudden attack. As the Jurchen were using the tactic of attacking and negotiating at the same time, the Song emperor did not evacuate this time. In 4th/1127, Hui Zong and Qin Zong were taken as hostages. See *SS*, ch. 22, pp. 415-418 and ch. 23, pp. 421-436. This tragic incident has been known as "the Calamity of Jingkang" (Jingkang was the reign title of Qin Zong).

such a large country. Their plan was to eliminate the Zhao imperial family once and for all. Anyone with the royal surname Zhao would be taken captive to prevent any member of the imperial family from rising and leading the Song people against Jin. Other than that, a new puppet emperor would be enthroned and the puppet administration would serve as a buffer between Jin and Song. They had installed the chief councillor of the Song Dynasty Zhang Bangchang as the new emperor. He would serve as a puppet ruler controlled by the Jin.¹⁶ With the above strategy, the Jin hoped to exert its control over the Song and at the same time avoid direct conflict with the Song people. Further, the appointment of Zhang Bangchang as the new ruler had the advantage of “using a Chinese to control the Chinese” (*yihua zhihua*). With this arrangement, the Jin administration would have enough time to concentrate on governing their internal affairs in their own country so that they could consolidate their territories north of the Yellow River. At the same time, the territories of the Song south of the Yellow River would also be controlled and watched closely by the Jin.

Zhang Bangchang, the Song chief councillor who was installed as emperor, did not ascend the throne voluntarily.¹⁷ He was forced to accept the throne and after the invaders retreated to the north, he tried to look for members of the Zhao imperial family who had not been captured by the enemy to take over his throne. Despite their efforts to eliminate the Zhao imperial clan by taking all of them in captivity, the Jurchen had left behind two members who managed to escape. One of them was the wife of Zhe Zong (r. 1085-1100), the Empress Meng (1073-1131). She was left alone by the Jurchen because she had been demoted to the status of commoner by her

¹⁶ *YZ*, ch. 3, p. 66 and pp. 80-81.

¹⁷ See Wang Zhangwei, “Lun Zhang Bangchang”, *Shichao*, new edition (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, History Society of Lianhe Shuyuan), Vol. 12, pp.10-25.

husband and her name therefore did not appear in the list of the imperial family members.¹⁸ The other person who was not taken captive was the ninth son of Hui Zong, Prince Kang, named Zhao Gou.¹⁹ He was away from the capital serving as Chief Commander of the national army when all the above events were taking place and he thus escaped the fate of being captured.

Earlier, in 1st/1126, the Jin army had besieged Kaifeng. To avoid being attacked, Qin Zong had surrendered a large amount of gold and silver, and gave away some territories in exchange for his safety. On top of the gifts surrendered, Qin Zong also adhered to the Jin's request for the surrender of the chief councillor Zhang Bangchang and the emperor's brother, Prince Kang, as hostages to be held in Jin.²⁰

In 2nd/1126, a night ambush was carried out on the Jin camp by the Song general Yao Pingzhong (b.1099) but it was not successful. Thereupon, the two hostages under captivity were being interrogated. Zhang Bangchang was worried but Prince Kang showed no sign of fear. Consequently the Jurchen suspected that Prince Kang might not be the real brother of the emperor nor did he come from the royal family. A decision was thus made to exchange Prince Kang for Hui Zong's third son, Prince Su, to be the hostage. Fortunately for Prince Kang, he was set free after this.²¹

During the eleventh month of the same year, Prince Kang was again requested to go to Jin for peace negotiations. When he was on his way there, he stopped at

¹⁸ *YL*, ch. 2, p. 62.

¹⁹ Zhao Gou, posthumously named Gao Zong (1107-1187), was the ninth son of Hui Zong. His mother was Wei Xian Fei (1080-1159). He was given the title of Prince Guangping in 1108 and was later given the title Prince Kang in 1121. See *SS*, ch. 24 - ch. 32 for his biography.

²⁰ Prince Kang had volunteered to be the hostage. See *YL*, ch. 1, p. 13.

²¹ *SS*, ch. 24, pp. 439-440. See also *YL*, ch. 1, p. 14.

Cizhou. The Governor of Cizhou, Zong Ze (1060-1128), requested him not to proceed further. At the same time, Prince Kang had received a written invitation from Wang Boyan (1069-1141), the administrator of Xiangzhou, to go over to Xiangzhou, and thus Prince Kang decided to stay there for the time being.

In the same month, the Jin army again invaded Kaifeng for the second time. Qin Zong's reaction this time was different. He had declared war against the Jin. He further appointed Prince Kang as the Generalissimo requesting him to be the commander of the armed forces of Hebei, and to gather troops back to the capital to provide help.²² Prince Kang had started the journey moving the army back to the capital on 14/12th/1126. During the journey, he had deliberately taken a longer way doing a detour delaying the troops.²³ All that was needed to move the army from Xiangzhou to Kaifeng using short-cuts was four days but he had chosen not to do so. It was quite natural that during that time, at the young age of twenty, Gao Zong was faced with various difficulties in making his decisions. Inexperience and hesitation in deciding military action were the main reasons behind the delay. Furthermore, doubt with regard to the strength of the Song troops was another reason for the delay. Also, Prince Kang had only limited time to gather the armed forces from different parts of the country as he was appointed General Commander at a very short notice. Though he was successful in gathering 80,000 men,²⁴ most of the soldiers were inexperienced in warfare. Lack of military training was one of the factors affecting the quality of the troops. Besides, there were also many badhats, bandits and unqualified personnel taken

²² *YL*, ch 1, pp 18-19. See also *IIB*, ch 71, p 10a.

²³ Li An, "Song Gao Zong Chu Ren Bingma Dayuanshuai Shimo", *Zhongguo Lishi Xuehui Shixue Jikan*, Vol. 4(1972), pp. 79-80.

²⁴ *YL*, ch. 2, p. 58.

into the troops. This had made the troops unable to co-operate among themselves. Further, the troops gathered by Prince Kang were trained only to obey to their own leaders and therefore they could not cooperate with one another and thus caused a lot of delay in troop movement. Also, the situation at that time was rather confusing. Rumors were heard everywhere, especially when the troops were at Daming, that a decree was received stating that there was no need for the troops to proceed²⁵ as the emperor was said to be negotiating with the Jin. Although this was suspected to be a fake order given to delay them, there was no evidence to prove that and this made Prince Kang hesitate and further delayed the troops. His fear was that if the troops had been dispatched too speedily to the capital, it might affect the “negotiation” taking place. This dragged on until the fourth month of the following year, and before the arrival of the rescue troops, both the emperors were taken hostages. Prince Kang then moved his troops to Nanjing (modern Shangqiu in Henan).²⁶

After the withdrawal of the Jin army, the chief councillor Zhang Bangchang, acting under the advice of his colleague Lu Haowen (1046-1131), decided to install Prince Kang as the emperor. The first thing they decided to do was to reinstate the former empress of Zhe Zong, Empress Meng, as the Empress Dowager who would reign “behind the screen”. Then, Zhang Bangchang would step down from his throne and by the order of the Empress, Prince Kang would be requested to turn up in the capital to be crowned.²⁷

²⁵ *Ibid.*, ch. 1, p. 22.

²⁶ Prince Kang’s journey in dispatching his troops can be referred to in *HB*, chapters 71, 72, 73, 74, 81, 83, 95, and 101.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, ch. 101, pp. 2-3a. See also *IZ*, ch. 4, pp. 94-95.

However, Prince Kang decided against going to Kaifeng since the city had just been invaded, and the Jin troops might return for another attack any moment. To protect the Song position and also to ensure food and ammunition supply, the original plan was shelved and it was decided that Zhang Bangchang should move to Nanjing to crown Prince Kang under the Empress' order.

After the enthronement of Prince Kang, the reign title of Jingkang was changed to that of Jianyan,²⁸ and Prince Kang was known posthumously as Song Gao Zong. From the beginning of the Song Dynasty until the captivity of the two emperors, 167 years had passed and there were nine rulers who had been on the throne. Its capital Kaifeng was situated north of the Huai River and this era is therefore known as the Northern Song. After the fall of Northern Song, Song Gao Zong had moved the capital to Lin'an, south of ^{the Yangzi} River. This new chapter in history signals the beginning of the Southern Song.

²⁸ See *HB*, ch. 101, pp. 1-3a; see also *SS*, ch. 24, p. 443 and *YL*, ch. 5, p. 115.