

1 Gentlemen versus Petty Men

Song officials inherited from earlier periods of Chinese thought a rich and varied discourse on the nature of human beings and how they should relate both to each other and to the state. A prominent feature of this discourse was its tendency to analyze complex phenomena into patterns of bipolar complementarity. “Bipolar” entails two contrasting poles or positions; “complementarity” presumes these opposites interact with each other over time in ways that produce recognizable, recurring patterns. In the best-known example, the permutations of *yin* and *yang* through the sixty-four hexagrams of the *Book of Changes* provided an analytical system that developed over the Zhou dynasty and had become a fixture in the intellectual and operational toolkit of Song thinkers and politicians.¹

Most Song thinkers held with the Han philosopher Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE) that human nature was a mixture of admirable and vile inclinations. Their cultivation would cause the admirable inclinations to predominate and result in a good person or *junzi*; cultivation of the evil would produce a deplorable person or *xiaoren*.² This dichotomy – the former usually translated “gentleman,” with overtones of a noble or superior man; the latter as “petty men,” with overtones of inferior or ignoble men – became basic to Chinese, and especially Song, political thinking. The distinction first arose in the second half of the Spring and Autumn period. Originally, the entire hereditary aristocracy was considered *junzi*, “nobles” or “lords.” Eventually, however, declining standards of behavior forced its leaders to designate reprobate kinsmen as “petty men,” thus reserving the status of *junzi* for those presumed still able to demonstrate intellectual and moral leadership.³ This transition was well under way when Confucius seized upon the terms as labels to

¹ For the classic description see Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China. Volume 2: History of Scientific Thought*, 273–345. For Song see Tze-ki Hon, *The Yijing and Chinese Politics: Classical Commentary and Literati Activism in the Northern Song Period*, especially chapter 3, “Mission of Civil Bureaucrats,” pp. 49–76.

² Yang Xiong, *Exemplary Figures*, 38–39.

³ Yuri Pines, *Foundations of Confucian Thought*, 165–71.

distinguish those who had succeeded in his own program of moral education from those who had not. This *junzi/xiaoren* distinction pervades the *Analecets*, *Mencius*, and even late Zhou non-Confucian discourse.

Despite long and prolific use over the centuries, these terms retained for Song officials at least two overtones of their early origins. First, the distinction between *junzi* and the *xiaoren* was based on moral, not on social or even intellectual, criteria. Second, both *junzi* and *xiaoren* belonged to the political or ruling class. As we shall see below, *xiaoren* had at least two senses in Song political discourse: first, fellow literati whom the writer opposed politically and attacked as *xiaoren*; and second, non-literati political actors such as eunuchs, female bureaucrats, military officials, or clerks. In both cases, however, the person's perceived moral behavior triggered the *xiaoren* label. A Song official's literati status did not automatically render him a *junzi*; nor did a commoner's status necessarily render him a *xiaoren*. One indeed often encounters blanket condemnations of non-literati groups as *xiaoren*. Such uses arise not because all members of the group were considered *xiaoren*, but because literati perceived the majority of the group to behave badly. Thus, even though the latter groups were not literati, they were perceived as officers of the state, as members of a greater officialdom that comprised both *junzi* and *xiaoren*.

Modern scholars have focused on the *junzi/xiaoren* distinction largely in connection with studies of Song factionalism, giving far less attention to its implications for other areas.⁴ The inadequate, almost comical character of any English rendering of these terms, plus the stark moral divide they reflect, have deterred both Western and Chinese historians from undertaking more comprehensive studies of how these terms actually functioned in Song. Yet the Renzong era Confucian revival brought these terms to the center of political discourse and generated a robust rhetorical system that aligned the *junzi/xiaoren* distinction with other bipolar Zhou era dichotomies such as moral duty versus profit (*yi/li* 義/利), virtue versus talent (*de/cai* 德/才), public versus private (*gong/si* 公/私), and forthright or straight versus skewed or biased (*zheng/xie* 正/邪). Aligning the axes and intersecting vectors of these pairs with those of the *junzi/xiaoren* dichotomy created a vigorous medium for Song Confucian discourse. This rhetoric provided, even for non-literati, a "common language" to discuss many aspects of governance for the remainder of Song, and influenced not only politics, but also historiography.

Few topics consume more space in Song political discourse than recruitment and personnel management. Two conversations between Emperor Taizong and his councilors reveal how the early Song maintained conventional, practical,

⁴ Luo Jiaxiang, *Bei Song dangzheng yanjiu*, 1–19; Ari Daniel Levine, *Divided by a Common Language*, 24–36. For significant exceptions see Chen Zhi'e, *Bei Song wenhuashi shulun*, 260–76 and Hou Daoru, "Sima Guang *Taixuan jizhu* zhong de junzi yu xiaoren."

and only minimally Confucian approaches to these issues. In 983/6, Taizong lauded the recent cohort of *jinshi* graduates and expressed his delight in recruiting so many *junzi* to his court. He went on to extol his efforts to recruit widely, to position his choices according to their individual talents, and to monitor their performance. Although he hoped all posts could be filled with “good talents,” he said he would prefer to find one truly excellent official rather than many mediocre ones. To this, Chief Councilor Zhao Pu 趙普 (911–981) agreed that the Great Peace would result when positions were staffed by officials best suited to carry out the duties of those positions. But he added, quoting *Analects* 4.7, that *junzi* and *xiaoren* can each be recognized by their mistakes. The then prevailing pre-Song commentary on this ambiguous passage held that *xiaoren* should not be faulted for lacking the abilities of *junzi*, thus implying that the wise ruler finds an appropriate position for each “talent.” In essence, Zhao Pu here reminds Taizong that *junzi* and *xiaoren* both have their uses and warns him not to neglect the talents of *xiaoren* in his quest to collect a court of *junzi*.⁵ Zhao Pu’s advice contains no trace of the later Confucian disdain for the *xiaoren* and urges Taizong not to overlook their usefulness to the state.

Over a decade later, in 995/1, Taizong and the Assisting Chief Councilor Kou Zhun 寇準 (961–1023) were discussing the recent execution of two minor officials for embezzlement of state funds. The emperor remarked that since *junzi* and *xiaoren* will always exist, the best the ruler can do is to attempt to identify the two: “If everyone was a *junzi*, what need would there be for punishments?” To which Kou Zhun observed that *xiaoren* had existed even under the sage-ruler Yao. And he continued, “Today, even among those who wear Confucian garb and hold high position there are those who attach themselves to *xiaoren*, plotting to secure their own comfort. Why worry about these vile clerks!”⁶ This exchange reveals that Taizong had not changed his earlier opinions: (1) officialdom will always contain *junzi* and *xiaoren*, (2) the task of the ruler is to identify and punish the latter before they endanger effective governance.⁷ In his response, however, Kou Zhun, a *jinshi* graduate of 980, suggests a greater danger and hints at the coming infusion of *junzi* and *xiaoren* as bipolar moral categories into Song discourse on factional politics. For him, *xiaoren* lurk even at the highest echelons of government, posing as (“wearing the garb of”) Confucians. Most probably, Kou had specific individuals in mind, but he sought more broadly to expand Taizong’s conception of *xiaoren* beyond the petty law breakers he had just executed.

⁵ *Changbian*, 24.547; He Yan, *Lunyu jizhu*, 4.4b.

⁶ *Changbian*, 37.808; *SS*, 470.13679–80; *Huangchao gangmu*, 5.102.

⁷ An immediately ensuing exchange at *Changbian*, 37.808–9 makes this specific point.

This transition – from a conception that, because *junzi* and *xiaoren* will always exist, the wise ruler will find positions suitable for both, to a Confucian conception that *xiaoren* should be excluded from governance as morally inferior men – took decades to gain momentum and was never fully complete. The two conceptions, with many variations in between, continued to exist until the end of the dynasty. Nonetheless, in the *Long Draft* Li Tao located a seminal event in 1038/10, about which he commented “from this point the discourse on factions began.” The event in question was the issuance of an inner directive warning officials that the recent flood of memorials supporting Fan Zhongyan in his attacks on the Chief Councilor Lü Yijian 呂夷簡 (979–1044) constituted impermissible factional behavior. Assisting Chief Councilor Li Ruogu 李若谷 (970–1049) explained the warning: alluding to Zhao Pu’s advice that *junzi* and *xiaoren* both have their uses, he warned that factional attacks indiscriminately target *junzi* and *xiaoren* alike, and thus make it difficult for “upright officials to establish themselves.”⁸ The edict and Li’s elaboration implied that Fan and his supporters lacked the standing to distinguish between *junzi* and *xiaoren*, a function that Taizong had clearly reserved for the emperor alone.

As the Confucian resurgence gained momentum through the late 1030s and early 1040s, Fan Zhongyan and Ouyang Xiu, in an effort to work around the edict of 1038, argued that *junzi* could form legitimate, beneficial political factions. Ouyang’s 1044 essay “Discourse on Factions” marked a seminal moment in the development of Song Confucian political thought. After the departure of Lü Yijian in 1043/3, the emperor turned to Fan Zhongyan, Fu Bi 富弼 (1004–1083), and Han Qi 韓琦 (1008–1075) to form a new administration. This group, with Ouyang’s support as remonstrator, had thwarted the appointment of Xia Song 夏竦 (985–1051), a Lü protégé, as Bureau of Military Affairs (hereafter BMA) commissioner in favor of one of their own, Du Yan 杜衍 (978–1057). In addition, Shi Jie 石介 (1005–1045) composed a “Poem on the Sagacious Virtue of Qingli” that, while lauding the virtues of the new administration, lampooned Xia as a miscreant. Xia Song in turn charged that his antagonists had acted in collusion as a political faction. Ouyang Xiu wrote his “Discourse on Factions” and submitted it to the emperor in 1044/4 specifically to counter Xia’s accusation.⁹

The core of Ouyang’s essay directly challenged Xia’s premise, as well as standard political theory, that because factions work against the interests of the sovereign, they are all composed of *xiaoren* and thus necessarily bad. In a few short lines, Ouyang made the following claims. First, *junzi* can also associate to form factions. Second, *xiaoren* factions are inherently false because their only

⁸ *Changbian*, 122.2881–82; for Fan Zhongyan’s attacks on Lü Yijian see Michael Charles McGrath, “The Reigns of Jen-tsung and Ying-tsung,” 297–300.

⁹ McGrath, “The Reigns of Jen-tsung and Ying-tsung,” 319–21. For a detailed reading of the poem see Lin Tianwei, “Lun ‘Qingli shengde shi’ yu Qingli zhi zheng.”

motivation is short-term gain. They dissolve either fighting over the spoils or once the specific gain has been achieved. Third, *junzi* factions, on the contrary, adhere because their members are committed to common goals of individual moral self-cultivation and state service. Fourth, the stability of the state depends upon the sovereign's ability to identify true *junzi* factions and advance them in office, while removing the *xiaoren*. The remainder of the short essay cited some basic historical precedents before its conclusion, insisting again that the emperor must "distinguish *junzi* from *xiaoren*."¹⁰

As is well known, this gambit to justify Confucian faction building was unsuccessful, and Ouyang himself seems to have backtracked to a more tempered position. But the real importance of the essay was to supercharge the Confucian character of the *junzi/xiaoren* dichotomy and to infuse the old terms with a highly contemporaneous, political meaning. Furthermore, the essay's unstated implications challenged long-standing notions about the proper relations between the sovereign and his officials. First, Ouyang defined *junzi* and *xiaoren* by elaborating on the pithy pronouncement in *Analects* 4.16 that "gentlemen understand what is right; petty men understand what profits them." Ouyang's core definition of the *junzi* proceeds as a commentary on this maxim:

[*Junzi*] hold fast to the Way and to what is right; they practice loyalty and trust; they value repute and integrity. When they use these values to cultivate their persons, they improve each other and become united in the Way. When they serve the state, they help each other, and become unified in their aspirations, from first to last as one.

Ouyang does not write that only Confucians can be *junzi*, but his emphasis on "cultivating one's person" (*xiushen* 修身) and the need to develop a sense of personal morality as a prerequisite for state service are basic Confucian doctrines: the qualities one needs to excel at state service must first be developed in private study and in communion with like-minded men intent upon duty, loyalty, and integrity. In other words, a *junzi* faction begins as a self-selecting and self-supporting group; and, by implication, its members will function within state service in the same way. Ouyang thus posed a stark challenge to the early Song idea of what a court filled with *junzi* would mean. For Taizong, the ideal court would contain officials he had personally selected and that were personally loyal to him. For Ouyang, the ideal court would be staffed by morally trained officials, unified in their commitment to the Way. They would be ultimately loyal to the sovereign but also to each other.

¹⁰ Ouyang Xiu, *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 17.297–98; *Changbian*, 148.3580–82. For a detailed reading see Levine, *Divided by a Common Language*, 47–56. Southern Song sources widely cite the essay, which was incorporated into Ouyang's official biography. See *Dongdu shilüe*, 72.1b–21; *SS*, 319.10376; also Lü Zuqian, *Song wenjian*, 94.1330; *Huangchao gangmu*, 12.264–65; *Songshi quanwen*, 8B.439.

Because Ouyang has changed the definition of how *junzi* behave politically, the implication of his conclusion that the sovereign's duty is to "discriminate between *junzi* and *xiaoren*" differs drastically from what Taizong would have understood such a phrase to mean. For Taizong, he himself as emperor would decide case by case who was a *junzi* and who not. For Ouyang Xiu, since the brotherhood of *junzi* was self-acknowledging, the duty of the emperor should be merely to sanction that acknowledgment. As we shall explore below in Chapters 6 and 8, the early Song emperors, as products of the military culture of the Five Dynasties, viewed themselves as the sole arbiters of individual talent. They chose their subordinates one by one to perform specific tasks based on criteria of their own choosing. But for Ouyang Xiu, "discrimination" means identifying and advancing groups of officials who have already self-identified as *junzi*. This idea of a pre-existing "faction," legitimate because of its united commitment to the Confucian Way of governance, challenged in at least three ways the ultimate authority of the emperor over all personnel decisions. It implied that only the senior members of a "*junzi* faction" should be selected for leadership positions. It implied that these leaders, to ensure group unity, should be entrusted in turn with the appointment of their subordinates. And it implied finally that the sovereign's only real duty was to determine the authenticity of the group as a legitimate *junzi* faction and appoint its leadership to senior offices.

Non-literati actors pushed back immediately and repeatedly against the premise that only *junzi* could be appointed to high office and against the corollary that, if *xiaoren* were to have any place in government, they should be subordinate to *junzi*. Among the vocal critics of Ouyang Xiu's essay was the senior eunuch Lan Yuanzhen 藍元震 (d. 1077). In a secret memorial to the emperor, he pointed out that Cai Xiang 蔡襄 (1012–1067) in a 1036 poem had lauded Ouyang Xiu, Fan Zhongyan, Yin Zhu 尹洙 (1001–1047), and Yu Jing 余靖 (1000–1064) as "four worthies." In return, when these officials came into power, they rewarded Cai with a top position. In Lan's view, Cai's appointment used state resources (Cai's salary) to support a private coalition. He calculated that if each of the five or six members of this faction were to bring in ten associates, "within a few years they will fill all important positions in government . . . No one will dare to speak against them. Wielding their hatred to pay back their enemies, what will they not do?"¹¹ Although the eunuch's response repeated conventional anti-faction rhetoric, his numbers provide an interesting perspective on mid-eleventh-century administration: namely, that a unified coalition of a half dozen senior administrators could, if given free rein to appoint their subordinates, dominate Song government. With this simple

¹¹ *Changbian*, 148.3582; for a detailed biography of Lan Yuanzhen see Ho Koon-wan, "Bei Song neichen Lan Yuanzhen shiji kao."

calculation, the eunuch effectively warned against and countered all three of Ouyang's implied challenges to imperial authority.

Despite the immediate failure of Ouyang's challenge, many influential Confucian literati held similar views. Over the next several decades, they restated each of his propositions explicitly as they developed the notion of "shared governance," or as Wen Yanbo 文彦博 (1006–1097) put it to Emperor Shenzong 神宗 (1048–1085; r. 1067–1085) in 1071: "You rule together with us who are the officials."¹² Yet no Song emperor ever accepted all of the premises and implications of Ouyang's essay. Rather, there developed between the monarchy and the Confucian literati a perpetual dialogue on the scope and execution of the sovereign's authority over the recruitment and management of officials. Since the definition of *junzi* was now fixed, this conversation soon diverged along two lines, each following one of the two referents of the term *xiaoren*. On the one hand, in accordance with the Spring and Autumn period meaning of the term, the petty man could be a failed or apostate *junzi*, meaning in Song a technically qualified literatus whom other literati for some reason marked as morally unfit for *junzi* status. In this case, the distinction between *junzi* and *xiaoren* took place within a supposedly unified cultural group, all of whose members recognized each other as literati. Thus, Ouyang's injunction to the emperor that he must "distinguish between *junzi* and *xiaoren*" was a charge that he must discern the true Confucian literatus from the false one. And there soon arose a plethora of petitions that the emperor do so, along with extensive advice on how to undertake this evaluation. On the other hand, since many Confucian literati held that most members of non-literati groups behaved as *xiaoren*, these groups could be classified en masse culturally and politically as *xiaoren*. The latter topic soon evolved into a debate about whether "virtue" or "talent" should be the preferred qualification for office, a topic that will be studied in Chapter 2.

The rhetoric of distinction that arose in the Qingli period permanently altered the framework of Song political discourse. Writing in the Southern Song, for example, Luo Dajing 羅大經 (*jinshi* 1229) praised the opinion of Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139–1192) that the world was best treated as one large family. Thus, in antiquity, Shun and Confucius had settled conflicts between *junzi* and *xiaoren* as "family matters." Luo held that this approach had persisted into the early Song, "when the terms *junzi* and *xiaoren* were not in use; it was as if we were one family, and *junzi* suffered no disasters. But after these terms first arose in Qingli, there was now a division between my family and his family, and *junzi* suffered from disasters, each more severe than the last."¹³

The rhetoric of *junzi* and *xiaoren* entered immediately into the vocabulary of personnel management. For example, in 1048/5, the censor He Tan 何郯

¹² *Changbian*, 221.5370. ¹³ Luo Dajin, *Helin yulu*, 126.

(1004–1072) framed his argument that Emperor Renzong should dismiss Xia Song, then BMA commissioner, as an example of the sovereign's duty to distinguish *junzi* from *xiaoren*. He began his memorial by correlating *junzi* and *xiaoren* with other bipolar pairs such as “forthright/skewed” and “order/chaos.” Wise rulers learned long ago, he wrote, that *junzi* and *xiaoren* will always exist, but combining them together in the same administration has always resulted in failed governance; therefore, good rulers distinguished between them by advancing the former and demoting the latter. The memorial then launched into a description of Xia's character and bureaucratic career that pegged him as a stereotypical *xiaoren* – shallow, avaricious, duplicitous, and conniving. Specifically, He Tan charged that Xia Song had conspired with his long-term eunuch ally, Yang Huaimin 楊懷敏, chief of the capitol police, to cover up responsibility for a recent breach in palace security. Although this specific accusation is the most concrete argument for Xia's dismissal, He makes this instance of collusion representative of Xia's entire career. The charges of moral depravity first made against Xia in Cai Xiang's private poem of 1036 have now entered the official language of policy discourse. Lastly, He's memorial exercises what will later become a major motif in the rhetoric of distinction. The intersection of the two definitions of *xiaoren* as self-serving profit seekers presumed that since personal benefit motivated both apostate literati (here Xia Song) and non-literati groups (here the eunuch Yang Huaimin), therefore the two groups will naturally make common cause with each other.¹⁴

By the next decade, Confucian thinkers, especially the Qingli reformers who had been rehabilitated during the late Renzong reign, had coordinated these rhetorical motifs into the basis of a robust and comprehensive argument for how and why the sovereign should not appoint *xiaoren* to higher office. For example, in 1056/11, Ouyang Xiu, now a Hanlin academician, opposed the appointment of Jia Changchao 賈昌朝 (998–1065) as BMA commissioner. Although Jia's father had passed the *jinshi* in 992, his son was granted *jinshi* status by imperial decree in 1017 as reward for submitting a poem that extolled new suburban sacrifice rituals.¹⁵ Jia Changchao then rose to become chief councilor during 1040s, when he thwarted the Qingli reforms. Ouyang's memorial began by noting that “literati public opinion” was in an uproar over the appointment. He attacked Jia as a mediocre scholar whose duplicitous ways and clever words had harmed good officials during his prior term as councilor. Many officials, Ouyang reported, feared Jia's return. He faulted Renzong for failing to understand a vital element of the appointment process, namely the need to observe who supports and who opposes an appointment. He urged the

¹⁴ *Changbian*, 164.3949–52, where Li Tao quotes the full text of He Tan's memorial.

¹⁵ *SS*, 285.9613; Fu Xuancong, *Song dengkeji kao*, 42, 102.

emperor to advance appointments that *junzi* approve and *xiaoren* oppose, and to reject those that *junzi* oppose and *xiaoren* approve. How should one distinguish between the two groups? “The *junzi* stands firmly at court, speaks out forthrightly, does not flatter the ruler nor collude with powerful ministers; and so all praise his integrity and loyalty. These officials oppose Jia Changchao. Eunuchs, female officers, and close retainers are largely *xiaoren*. They all support him. From this Your Majesty may know what kind of man he is.”

Ouyang argues that Jia has colluded with eunuch allies inside the palace who have lobbied the emperor on his behalf. Ouyang maintained that Renzong, without any formal input from those who oppose the appointment, knew only what his retainers told him on the issue. Ouyang was careful not to suggest that the emperor had formally consulted with his inner retainers, but rather that they had utilized their constant proximity to the emperor to praise Jia and to lobby indirectly for him. “A word in the morning, a mention in the evening,” and Renzong had come to think that Jia was the right man for the position. As a result, the appointment was made via inner directive, by-passing the routine chancellery process that would include procedures for incorporating opinion from line officials (on this distinction see Chapter 4). Ouyang warned that the Censorate was already preparing to charge Jia and his eunuch allies with a variety of crimes, once he should take office. He concluded by urging Renzong to “reject the secret advice of your close retainers and accept the public opinion of the literati.”¹⁶

Southern Song historians and anthologists rightly understood Ouyang’s memorial against Jia Changchao as an important milestone in the evolving conception of Confucian governance. If, on the one hand, Ouyang backed off from his earlier perilous defense of *junzi* factions, on the other hand, he had now further refined a contemporaneous definition of the *junzi* and how the *junzi* should interface with imperial decision making. The essay on factions, written in 1044, wrote simply that the *junzi* “served the state.” The 1056 memorial against Jia Changchao presented a sophisticated view of how the *junzi* works through institutional structures to achieve that goal. As an extension of his inner moral qualities, the *junzi* is now one who “stands firmly at court,” speaking out forthrightly and publicly on issues. His vehicle is “public opinion” (*gonglun/gongyi* 公論/公議). Unlike modern meanings of the term, Ouyang frames *gonglun* as the collective voice of the *junzi* expressed institutionally through government agencies and functions that he envisions as the domain of *junzi* and as vehicles for incorporating their forthright opinions into imperial decision

¹⁶ Ouyang Xiu, *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 111.1667–70. Southern Song sources widely cite Ouyang’s memorial; see *Changbian*, 184.4452–54; Zhao Ruyu, *Songchao zhuchen zouyi*, 13.121–22; and Lü Zuqian, *Song wenjian*, 46.703–4. Despite Ouyang’s memorial, Jia was appointed to the position and remained through 1058.

making. Chapter 5 will further explore Ouyang Xiu's functional definition of these "ministers of Confucian learning."

These organs are the remonstrance agencies – the Bureau of Policy Criticism and the Censorate – as well as the court academic agencies. Also vital to Ouyang's conception of public opinion is the integrity of the regular process for generating imperial edicts through the Secretariat and the Chancellery (*Menxia sheng* 門下省), where the Secretariat drafter (*Zhongshu sheren* 中書舍人) (in the former) and the supervising secretary (*Jishi zhong* 給事中) (in the latter) had authority to return the document for errors or omissions. These agencies and procedures stand at the core of the "public" communication channel, to be examined in detail in Chapter 4, and constitute the functional nexus of Confucian institutionalist governance. In Ouyang's view, all these procedures and functions serve to assist the sovereign in his primary task of "distinguishing *junzi* from *xiaoren*." Finally, in his view, efforts to undermine or by-pass these institutions and to influence imperial decision making without regard for the safeguards of public opinion strengthened the political hand of those non-literati actors, "mostly *xiaoren*," who closely surrounded the sovereign and could thus exert informal influence over him.

By the end of the next decade, the political discourse that arose from the struggles of the Qingli period had evolved into a fully developed theory and practice of Confucian governance. The advent of a new sovereign, Emperor Shenzong, only nineteen at the time of his ascension in 1067/1, presented the opportunity and the need to restate the Confucian principles of institutionalist governance as they had evolved to this point in time. Two memorials written by the elder statesman and Qingli veteran Fu Bi set forth a systematic vision of governance that emphasized to the young emperor the centrality of his role as distinguisher of *junzi* from *xiaoren*. His memorial of 1067/8 treats this topic alone; a slightly later tract from 1069 places this imperial function within Fu Bi's larger vision of governance. Both texts were written to explain general principles to a young ruler new to his station and thus offer particularly cogent exposés of their topics.

Writing only seven months after Shenzong had assumed office, in "On the Need to Distinguish between *Junzi* and *Xiaoren* when Gathering Advice," Fu Bi predicts that if Shenzong cannot evaluate the quality of the advice he receives then his already proven virtue of gathering a wide spectrum of advice will not necessarily lead to better governance. He builds upon Ouyang Xiu's definitions of *junzi* and *xiaoren*, pointing out that the latter always outnumber the former, that many *xiaoren* have a knack for appearing to be *junzi*, and that these factors make an official career difficult for the true *junzi*. To address these problems, Fu Bi maintains that the sovereign's sole duty is to avoid appointing *junzi* and *xiaoren* together in top positions. In order to identify the true *junzi*, the emperor must listen carefully to the advice he receives. Since there is often

financial gain for opinion that pleases the sovereign, the true *junzi* is likely to be the official who risks his career to offer advice that displeases him. Proffering such advice takes courage and loyalty; only two or three officials in a thousand will elect to do so. But these will be the true *junzi*. Shenzong should seek out such officials, nurture them carefully, and promote them into senior positions.¹⁷

Named chief counselor in 1069/2, but too ill to travel to Kaifeng, Fu Bi submitted to Shenzong a long memorial that combined an outline of his theory of governance with advice about how the emperor should proceed in his absence. The memorial, entitled “On Distinguishing the Straight from the Oblique,” begins with a summary of the classic analogy between the state and the human body, whereby components of the human body equate to components of Song officialdom. “The ruler is the head; the Council of State members are the arms, legs, heart, and spine; remonstrators, censors, and ministers-in-attendance who proffer counsel are the eyes and ears; and the multitude of officials in the capital and provinces are the muscles, joints, and veins.” Just as a robust organism demands that all body parts be healthy and work in coordination with each other, so does the body of the state demand harmony among its components. Fu Bi’s analogy affords outsize importance to the state counselors, equating them to arms, legs, heart, and spine. He emphasizes the need for harmony among these officials, about a dozen men who comprised the leadership of the Secretariat and BMA.¹⁸ As Ouyang Xiu had first articulated, this harmony results not from collusion for short-term gain but as a natural result of common adherence to personal integrity and the public interests of the state. He stresses that unity among these officials sets a powerful example for the rest of officialdom and cites historical examples to show that personal conflicts among chief counselors weaken dynastic governance, just as diseases of the major organs lead to physical incapacitation.

Fu Bi invokes a series of quotations from the *Classic of Changes* to demonstrate the bipolar complementarity of *junzi* and *xiaoren*. Periods of misrule when *xiaoren* predominate have been the norm throughout history; periods of peace under *junzi* have been rare. Therefore, since even a single *xiaoren* among a leadership of *junzi* will spur disunity, these rare periods of good governance arise only when the ruler can eliminate all *xiaoren* from leadership. Once constrained in middle- and lower-level positions, the *xiaoren* have no option but to conform to the moral domination of *junzi* leadership. Fu Bi concludes that “the Son of Heaven has no official post, no set duties; his sole function is to distinguish between *junzi* and *xiaoren* and to employ or reject them accordingly.”

¹⁷ *QSW*, 28:604.351–54; Zhao Ruyu, *Songchao zhuchen zouyi*, 14.125–27.

¹⁸ For a list see Gong Yanming, *Songdai guanzhi cidian*, 82–83.

In response to the obvious question of how the ruler should make these decisions, Fu Bi cites the advice of Mencius that he should reject suggestions from close retainers and advisors and consider the appointment only of those who enjoy the widest possible support. But, taking nothing on faith, he must personally investigate and verify even these rare paragons before appointment.¹⁹ Translating Mencius into Song political terms, Fu Bi explains that the proper method for obtaining informed input is to listen to “the public opinion of the entire empire.” This may include opinion from his close advisors, but the emperor cannot act on their opinions alone, nor rely only upon his own uninformed instincts. He must gather information from unbiased sources, evaluate independently, and make his own decisions. Fu Bi acknowledges that even Yao found this a difficult process, but he implies that Shenzong should avail himself of the full resources of his “eyes and ears” in making appointments to the “arms, legs, heart, and spine.”²⁰

As Fu Bi’s two memorials make clear, by the late 1060s the rhetoric of distinction had evolved into a code language for the entire theory and structure of Song Confucian governance. It defined the principal and only duty of the sovereign (to appoint *junzi* to high office); it defined the ideal relationship between the sovereign and this leadership of *junzi* (harmony based on integrity and loyalty); and it identified the Secretariat, the remonstrance organs, and the academic agencies as the core components of such governance. So important had the rhetoric of distinction become that Fu Bi included the phrase in his final will and testament to Shenzong, an emphasis that found its way into Southern Song historiography and into Fu Bi’s official biography.²¹ The premise that Song emperors preferred *junzi* as civil leaders and thereby promoted “benevolent” governance became a narrative staple in the grand allegory of Song history.²²

Fu Bi’s tracts, especially his memorial of 1069, were written in the shadow of the New Policies. Also in 1069, Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–1085), using the same rhetoric of distinction, warned that the emperor could not employ both *junzi* and *xiaoren* together, for the latter would undermine the requisite commonality of purpose between ruler and servitor upon which successful administration depended. Citing the *Book of Documents*, he advised the young emperor to model himself on Yao and Shun and to “select servitors who share a single mind, united in virtue.”²³ The reference to the sage-emperors Yao and Shun

¹⁹ D.C. Lau, *Mencius*, 67.

²⁰ *QSW*, 28:606.371–76; Lü Zuqian, *Song wenjian*, 45.685–90; Zhao Ruyi, *Songchao zhuchen zuyi*, 15.134–37.

²¹ *Huangchao gangmu*, 21.509–10; *SS*, 313.10257.

²² Hartman, *The Making of Song Dynasty History*, 248–73.

²³ Cheng Hao, *Er Cheng ji*, *Henan Chengshi wenji*, 1.450–52; see Hou Daoru, “Sima Guang *Taixuan jizhu zhong de junzi yu xiaoren*,” 4 n.7.

implies that before the emperor can exercise the discrimination necessary to effectively select officials, he himself must submit to Confucian moral training, in essence to prepare himself to recognize and then lead the self-identified *junzi* faction that Ouyang Xiu had earlier described.

The advent of the New Policies and their opposition intensified the political application of all aspects of the rhetoric of distinction. By 1071 Wang Anshi himself had begun to frame his opponents as *xiaoren* and urged Emperor Shenzong to purge the anti-reformers in order to form a cadre of officials united behind the New Policies.²⁴ Likewise, the attacks of the anti-reformers against economic aspects of the New Policies heightened the association of *xiaoren* as officials intent on “profit” at the expense of “moral duty.”²⁵ The rhetoric of distinction had indeed become, as Levine has so aptly described, a “common language” that came to divide Song officialdom. This language and this division would soon permeate not only political discourse but also historiography and endured for the remainder of the dynasty. The Confucian rhetoric of *junzi* and *xiaoren* soon became a tool of the inquisitions under Emperors Zhezong 哲宗 (1077–1100; r. 1085–1100) and Huizong, undergirded the autocracies under Cai Jing 蔡京 (1047–1126) and Qin Gui, and formed a staple of the language of *daoxue* politics and historiography.

A hint of these looming developments can be seen in a remarkable tract that the censor Fan Bailu 范百禄 (1030–1094) addressed to the young Emperor Zhezong midway through the Yuanyou administration in 1090/3 – “A List of Criteria for Distinguishing the Straight from the Oblique.” Fan advised the fourteen-year-old sovereign, then already demonstrating teenage impatience with his Confucian tutors, that the emperor could determine which of his officials were straight *junzi* and which were oblique *xiaoren* by observing their policy suggestions and their actions.

Of those we may call impartial and straight, some are by nature honest and direct, others act from a sense of loyalty, others wish to requite the state, others to establish their reputations and integrity. Of those we may call nefarious and oblique, some cater to Your Majesty’s wishes, others pander to the powerful, others are by inclination one-sided and perverse, while others scheme for imperial favor and gain. The motivations of these two groups are not the same, and they cannot be employed together.²⁶

Fan then proceeded to map these two categories onto ten areas of official life and policy formation. The results are so mechanical they can be expressed in Table 1.1:

²⁴ Hou Daoru, “Sima Guang *Taixuan jizhu zhong de junzi yu xiaoren*,” 4–5.

²⁵ Luo Jiayang, *Bei Song dangzheng yanjiu*, 17–18.

²⁶ Zhao Ruyu, *Songchao zhuchen zouyi*, 16.150.

Table 1.1 *Fan Bailu's criteria for distinguishing the impartial and straight from the nefarious and oblique*

	The impartial and straight 公正		The nefarious and oblique 姦邪	
Remonstrance	His honesty makes the ruler accept advice dispassionately	質直, 使之虛中聽納	His flattery makes the ruler hide his mistakes and refuse remonstrance	諂諛, 使之諱過拒諫
Personal character	Virtue and moral duty	德義	Merit and profit	功利
Religious ritual	Honors the ancestral temple, reverses sacrificial rituals	尊宗廟, 敬祭祀	Slights the ancestral temple, ignores the spirits	簡宗廟, 略神祇
Filial behavior	Promotes family harmony, supports the elderly	親睦九族, 惠養耆老	Neglects the family, abandons the old	疎薄骨肉, 棄老遺年
Policies of the ancestors	Respectful and modest, adheres to dynastic standards	恭儉清淨, 奉循典法	Opulent and unrestrained, disregards the old statutes	驕侈放肆, 不顧舊章
Agriculture	When farm work is hard, his mercy extends to the old and infirm	稼穡艱難, 惠及鰥寡	Disdains agriculture, no pity for the orphaned and helpless	輕鄙農事, 不恤憫獨
War and peace	Pacifies the border, halts warfare	柔遠息兵	Activates the military, pursues warfare	用兵攻戰
Penal law	Allowing for circumstances, cautious about punishments	原情謹罰	Uses harsh laws to establish his authority	峻法立威
Corvée policy?	Comforts the people, to everyone's benefit	安民利眾	Works the people, agitating everyone	勞民動眾
Personnel policy	Advance the <i>junzi</i> , employ the good	進君子, 用善良	Draw near the <i>xiaoren</i> , employ the wicked	近小人, 用惡德

Source: Fan Bailu, "A List of Criteria for Distinguishing the Straight from the Oblique," *QSW*, 76:1656.52–53.

Although Fan Bailu's rhetoric sometimes, no doubt intentionally, confounds the agency of the servitor and its imperial result, his message is plain enough: employing the straight produces policy outcomes different from employing the oblique. And mixing the two produces muddle. The influence of the political disputes over the New Policies is clear. The labels in Table 1.1's leftmost column are not in Fan's text but are my attempt to classify each of his ten distinctions. These categories combine traditional Confucian associations of the *junzi* as honest, virtuous, pious, and filial with Yuanyou characterizations of the New Policies as wasteful, pro-war, anti-agriculture, criminally harsh, and socially disruptive. Fan's tract demonstrates how rapidly and thoroughly the disputes over the New Policies magnified the political impact of the rhetoric of distinction.²⁷ According to Zhu Xi, Liu Zhi 劉摯 (1014–1081) supplied Empress Dowager Gao 高皇太后 (1032–1093) with ready-made lists of *junzi* and *xiaoren*, hoping no doubt to streamline the young emperor's task, but Zhezong refused to consider his suggestions.²⁸

What had begun fifty years earlier as an effort to interject Confucian morality into governance had morphed into a litmus test of political orthodoxy. When the Yuanyou period ended in 1094, the new reformist administration lost no time in applying “straight” and “oblique” classifications to purge the former Yuanyou administrators, including Fan Bailu, from office. In 1095 this new administration established the Agency for the Classification of Bureaucratic Documentation (*Bianlei chenliao zhangshu ju* 編類臣僚章疏局), whose purpose was to review and classify Yuanyou period documents for potential use in judicial proceedings that removed Yuanyou officials from office.²⁹ In 1102, this documentation was combined with another review of memorials that had been submitted in 1100 during a brief return to power of the anti-reformers, the so-called “Yuanfu period (1098–1100) submitters.” The result was a seven-tiered register divided into three “straight” and four “oblique” grades. Forty-one officials were determined to have submitted “straight” documents; 541 were deemed to be “nefarious and oblique.” Each level carried an appropriately calibrated reward or punishment. The names of the worst 120 oblique offenders were inscribed on a stone tablet erected at court.³⁰ This stele was the precursor to the more famous “Stele Register of the Nefarious Yuanyou Faction” (*Yuanyou jiangang bei* 元祐姦黨碑) erected in 1106.³¹

²⁷ *QSW*, 76.1656.52–53. Southern Song works widely cite Fan's tract; see *Changbian*, 439.10579; Zhao Ruyi, *Songchao zhuchen zouyi*, 16.150; *Huangchao gangmu*, 23.562; *Songshi quanwen*, 13C.852–53; and *SS*, 337.10792.

²⁸ *Zhuzi yulei*, 127.3047.

²⁹ Yang Zhongliang, *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian jishi benmo*, 102.7b–8a, 13a, 17a–18a; see also Luo Jiaxiang, *Bei Song dangjin yanjiu*, 221–24.

³⁰ Yang Zhongliang, *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian jishi benmo*, 124.1a–10b contains the complete, subdivided list of officials in each of the seven categories; see also *SHY*, *zhiguan*, 68.1a–3b.

³¹ Yang Zhongliang, *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian jishi benmo*, 122.9b–14a; *Changbian shibu*, 24.610–15; *Huangchao gangmu*, 27.681. See also Chen Lesu, “Guilin shike Yuanyou dangji” and Ebrey, *Emperor Huizong*, 107–18.

Both the language and the process of the decade of inquisitions from 1094 through 1104 can be found in Fan Bailu's tract and grew from the Confucian rhetoric of distinction. Cai Jing's preamble to the stele register of 1106 makes three points, all of which are implied in Fan's text of fourteen years earlier. First, the faction list is a product of the imperial responsibility to demarcate clearly between good and evil. Cai Jing twice refers to this concept, each time using a quotation from the *Book of Documents*, where the sovereign "signalizes the good and separates the bad from them" and "distinguishes the good so as to cause ill for the evil." Second, the list of 309 was obtained after a careful review of the official writings of a much larger group of officials. And third, since the oblique will be removed from office, the stele is erected as a warning to future generations of officials of the need to preserve the commonality of purpose between ruler and servitor.³²

Politicians of all persuasions in the Southern Song continued to utilize the rhetoric of distinction and appeal to its ensuing premises for political order. Even ministers subsequently judged anti-Confucian such as Qin Gui, Cai Jing's successor in the "lineage of evil," for example, when encountering in 1139/7 stiff resistance to his peace negotiations with the Jurchen, remarked to Emperor Gaozong on the need to "distinguish between *junzi* and *xiaoren*." Once the process was complete, he went on to observe, "the way toward good rule can be fully attained." Qin's use of the cliché here signaled to Gaozong that they should begin the purges of those opposed to negotiation.³³ Later in the century, Zhu Xi and other *daoxue* advocates embraced the distinction, especially the injunction against "mixing" of the two types. Emperor Xiaozong's many failed attempts to coax contending factions into functional coalitions heightened *daoxue* sensitivity to the issue and especially the injunction against "mixing *junzi* and *xiaoren*." Zhu Xi wrote to the new emperor Guangzong 光宗 (1147–1200; r.1189–1194) in 1189 that previous attempts to bring together *junzi* and *xiaoren* in the same administration had always failed, because the presence of one type always drives away the other. He argued that the Yuanyou administrators failed because they did not completely purge their opponents, who then later returned to power and acted against them.³⁴

Zhu Xi repeated this advice again in 1191 in a series of letters to the then Chief Councilor Liu Zheng 留正 (1129–1206), whom Zhu accused of pursuing a centrist administration because Liu feared being labeled a factionalist. Zhu argued that the ultimate political consequences of not purging the current *xiaoren* from office would be much greater than the short-term cost of enduring the factionalist label. And he again criticized the Yuanyou officials for failing to

³² For Cai Jing's text see Wang Chang, *Jinshi cuibian*, 144.1a–b. For the earliest Song text see Ma Chun, *Taozhu xinlu*, 25a–b. For the *Book of Documents* quotations see James Legge, *The Shoo King*, 573.

³³ *Yaolu*, 130.2443. ³⁴ Zhu Xi, *Zhu Xi ji*, 12.491–92.

fully purge their own ranks. They had correctly marked their opponents as *xiaoren*, but they had been too loath to acknowledge that many of their own associates were likewise *xiaoren*. Thus, they had failed to cleanse their own ranks. Zhu urged Liu to make a clean sweep of his own administration, whatever the immediate political cost.³⁵ Zhu Xi's letters to Liu Zheng reveal not only the vitality of the rhetoric of distinction but also its continued use to describe concrete issues and real personalities. Chapters 10 and 11 will describe the contemporary referents behind Zhu Xi's language and show how the increasing polarization of Southern Song political culture enhanced for *daoxue* adherents the attractiveness of this rhetoric of distinction.

Traditional Chinese historians seldom draw a straight line from the *junzi* and *xiaoren* of Ouyang Xiu's "Discourse on Factions" to Cai Jing's inquisitions. But, as Levine has emphasized, by the end of the eleventh century the *junzi* and *xiaoren* of all political persuasions shared a common language, and that language was the rhetoric of distinction. This rhetorical bipolarity grounded three primary self-reinforcing and circular elements of eleventh-century Confucian political culture: (1) a definition of the Confucian literatus as a member of a self-identifying and self-sustaining group of morally committed officials; (2) a political language that defined this group in relation to those it excluded; and (3) an emphasis on the primary duty of the monarch being to govern by distinguishing between *junzi* and *xiaoren* among his top administrators.

The bureaucratic factionalism that resulted from implementation of the New Policies sharpened, expanded, and integrated these elements. A touchstone passage was Sima Guang's rebuke in the *Comprehensive Mirror* of the Tang Emperor Wenzong 文宗 (809–840; r. 827–840) for his lament that he could easier manage rebellious governors than he could the feuding Niu and Li factions at his own court. For Sima, the remark betrayed Wenzong's inability to distinguish *junzi* from *xiaoren* among his officials. Because the former were open and fair (*gong* 公), factual (*shi* 實), and virtuous (*xian* 賢), their conduct was straightforward (*zhengzhi* 正直). Because the latter were private and selfish (*si* 私), duplicitous (*wu* 誣), and venial (*buxiao* 不肖), they formed factions. But Wenzong's inability to distinguish between the two permitted both to enter court service. And since their characters and actions were as fundamentally opposed as blocks of ice and bricks of hot charcoal, the result was bureaucratic feuding, diffusion of imperial authority, and dynastic weakness. Sima Guang's Yuan dynasty commentator recognized immediately that the great historian was also commenting on the politics of his own time.³⁶

³⁵ Zhu Xi, *Zhu Xi ji*, 28.1207–09, 1211–12.

³⁶ *Zizhi tongjian*, 245.7899–900; Sima Guang also cites this example in his "Discourse on Factions," see Levine, *Divided by a Common Language*, 58. For the Niu/Li factions see Michael T. Dalby, "Court Politics in Late T'ang Times," 639–59.

It would be overly reductive simply to equate *junzi* with the Confucian institutionalism and *xiaoren* with the imperial technocracy of our models. Nonetheless, as we will explore in Chapter 8, the Confucian activism of the eleventh century brought to the center of Song political discourse a mindset that ruled out the possibility of a viable middle ground and that came to regard political compromise as moral compromise. The contrast between *junzi* and *xiaoren* fortified the Confucian penchant for bipolar thinking and dualistic oppositions. And, as the eleventh century advanced, the ancient Zhou terms came increasingly to reflect the functional polarization of the real world of Song politics. Accordingly, the political rhetoric of *junzi* and *xiaoren* became fundamental to the historiographical development of all three components of the grand allegory: the *junzi* of Song sought to bring about benevolence governance; for this reason, the Song founders chose *junzi* as political leaders; but a lineage of evil *xiaoren* thwarted these intentions