

turn their lands over to the public, asking that they be turned into well-fields, it still could not be done. Why?

Su Xun proceeds to describe in detail the system of land organization, irrigation, and local administration associated with the well-field system as it is set forth in the Rites of Zhou. He concludes that such an intricate system could never be reproduced under existing conditions.

When the well-fields are established, [a corresponding system of] ditches and canals [will] have to be provided. . . . This could not be done without filling up all the ravines and valleys, leveling the hills and mountains, destroying the graves, tearing down the houses, removing the cities, and changing the boundaries of the land. Even if it were possible to get possession of all the plains and vast wildernesses and then lay them out according to plan, still we would have to drive all the people of the empire, exhaust all the grain of the empire, and devote all our energy to this alone for several hundred years, without attending to anything else, if we were ever to see all the land of the empire turned into well-fields and provided with ditches and canals. Then it would be necessary to build houses within the well-fields for the people to settle down and live in peace. Alas, this is out of the question. . . .

Now if there were something approximating the well-field [system] that could be adopted, we might still be able to relieve the distress of the people.

At this point Su reviews the proposals made in the Han dynasty for a direct limitation of land ownership and the reasons for their failure.

I want to limit somewhat the amount of land that one is allowed to hold, and yet not restrict immediately those whose land is already in excess of my limit, but only make it so that future generations would not try to occupy land beyond that limit. In short, either the descendants of the rich would be unable to preserve their holdings after several generations and would become poor, while the land held in excess of my limit would be dispersed and come into the possession of others, or else, as the descendants of the rich came along, they would divide up the land into several portions. In this way, the land occupied by the rich would decrease and the surplus land would increase. With surplus land in abundance, the poor would find it easy to acquire land as a basis for their family livelihood. They would not have to render service to others, but each would reap the full fruit of the land himself. Not having to share his produce with others, he would be pleased to contribute taxes to the government. Now just by sitting at court and promulgating the order throughout the empire, without frightening the people, without mobilizing the public, without adopting the well-field system, still all the advantages of the well-fields would be

obtained. Even with the well-fields of the Zhou, how could we hope to do better than this?

[From *Jiayouji* (SBCK) 5:7a-9a — dB]

THE NEW LAWS OF WANG ANSHI

The reform movement that marked time after Fan Zhongyan's fall from power reached its greatest heights during the reign of the Emperor Shenzong (r. 1068-1085) under the leadership of Wang Anshi (1021-1086), one of China's most celebrated statesmen. With the sympathetic understanding and patient support of Shenzong, who was widely acclaimed for his conscientiousness as a ruler, Wang embarked on a most ambitious and systematic program of reform, designed to remedy the evils already described in the memorials and essays of his Confucian contemporaries. A brilliant scholar and a vigorous administrator, Wang had close ties, both officially and intellectually to the leading figures in the Confucian revival, and he burned with a desire to achieve the restoration of the ancient order that they believed to be the only solution to China's ills. This came out in Wang's first interview with the emperor in 1068, when the latter asked what Wang thought of the famous founder of the Tang dynasty as a model for later rulers. Wang replied: "Your Majesty should take [the sage kings] Yao and Shun as your standard. The principles of Yao and Shun are very easy to put into practice. It is only because scholars of recent times do not really understand them that they think such standards of government are unattainable."

Wang, as a matter of fact, had no thought of completely revamping Chinese society and restoring the institutions described in the classical texts. As the first of the readings to follow makes clear, his aim was rather to adapt the general principles embodied in those institutions to his own situation, making due allowance for vastly changed circumstances. Furthermore, from the manner in which he set about his reforms, we can see that he was no social revolutionary or utopian theorist but, rather, a practical statesman whose first concern was always the interests of the Chinese state and only secondarily the welfare of the Chinese people. Thus his initial reforms were aimed at the reorganization of state finances, with a view to achieving greater economy and budgetary efficiency. And virtually all of the important economic changes later effected by Wang were proposed by a special "brain trust" assigned to the task of fiscal reorganization, with state revenue very much in the forefront of their minds. Nevertheless, it is to the credit of Wang that he saw what few Chinese statesmen or emperors were willing to consider: that in the long run the fiscal interests of the state were bound up with the general economic welfare of the people, and both with the promotion of a dynamic and expanding economy. Therefore, even though he did nothing so drastic as the reorganization of Chinese agri-

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culture into well-fields, his approach was bold and visionary in the sense that he saw the problem of reform as reaching into virtually all spheres of Chinese life; and, though few of his measures were new or highly original, his program taken as a whole was broader in scope and more diversified in character than anything attempted before or after—until Communist rule.

The first of Wang's New Laws (or Measures) (*xinfa*) aimed at achieving greater flexibility and economy in the transportation of tax grain or tribute in kind to the capital. His basic principle was that officials be enabled to resell the goods collected and use funds at their disposal to procure at the most convenient time and place (and with the least transportation cost) the goods required by the government. This was later expanded greatly into a vast state marketing operation that extended to all basic commodities the type of price control and storage system traditionally associated with the "Ever-Normal Granary." In this way the state's assumption of a much more active role in the economy was justified by the common interest of the state and the people in reducing the cost of government and stabilizing prices.

So, too, with the second of Wang's measures, a system of crop loans to provide peasants in the spring with necessary seed, implements, and so on, which would be repaid at harvest time. It was designed, on the one hand, to help the peasant stay out of the clutches of usurers at a difficult time of the year, while on the other hand, it brought revenue to the government through the interest paid on the loans.

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Besides the sphere that would be recognized as pertaining to government finance, there were two other activities of the state that vitally affected both the physical well-being of the people and the health of the state. These had to do with the time-honored "right" or "power" of the government to demand from the people both labor service and military service. In the Song, Chinese armies were maintained on a professional basis, with tax revenues providing the means for hiring constabulary and soldiery. To eliminate the great expense of such mercenaries, who were idle much of the time, Wang introduced a militia system whereby each locality would be organized for self-defense and self-policing, with families grouped pyramidally in units of ten, a hundred, and a thousand, taking a regular turn at providing such able-bodied service. This represented not only a system of collective security in each locality but one of collective responsibility as well, the various members of each group being held mutually responsible for the misconduct of any individual. Curiously enough, to achieve the same ends of economy and efficiency in the handling of local government services, Wang used precisely the reverse method. That is, the minor functions of government, which were sometimes menial and often burdensome, had always been performed on an unpaid, draft basis. Wang considered this a system that weighed too heavily on the individuals and households to whom the assignment fell. In place of the draft services, which were essentially a labor tax, he therefore substituted a money tax graduated to "soak the rich," and from the proceeds of that tax men were hired to perform these official services.

The same principle of equalization was applied to the land tax through a new system of land registration and assessment, which was designed to accomplish the same aim as the legendary "well-field" system without any actual redistribution of land or property. This was known as the "square-fields" system, because all taxable land was divided up into units one *li* square, upon which the taxes were graduated in accordance with the value of the land, so that those with less productive land paid proportionately less.

The foregoing examples will serve to indicate the general character and scope of the *New Laws* having an economic importance. In addition, Wang embarked on a fundamental overhauling of the civil service examination system, which in the early Song had come in for much criticism from Confucians who deplored the premium it placed on literary style and memorization of the classics at the expense of a genuine understanding of Confucian principles and their practical application. In place of the traditional forms of composition and memory testing, Wang substituted an essay on the "general meaning" of the classics. This raised problems, however, as to how traditional standards of objectivity and impartiality could be maintained in judging the performance of candidates with respect to the handling of ideas and interpretation. Wang solved this in his own way by promulgating a standard essay form and a revision of the classics with modernized commentary to serve as an authoritative guide for both candidates and judges.

Almost immediately controversy developed over Wang's interpretations of the classics, which were closely bound up with his whole political philosophy and governmental program. Whether or not Wang's policies were truly in keeping with the basic teachings of the Confucian tradition is a question that has been debated right down to modern times. There can be no doubt that the *New Laws* or systems that he adopted bore a strong resemblance to Legalist-inspired institutions that had vastly augmented the economic power of the state during the reign of Emperor Wu of Han. It is equally evident, however, that the benevolent paternalism ascribed by Confucians to the ancient sage kings could be easily construed, as it was by Wang, to justify a vigorous exercise of state power to promote the general welfare. Wang's memorials are replete with classical precedents for each of the actions he proposes to take. Perhaps nowhere is the close tie between Wang's reforms and classical authority better illustrated than in his use of the *Rites of Zhou*, which he revised under the title *New Interpretation of the Institutes of Zhou* (*Zhouguan xinyi*). For this classical text Wang made the strongest claims in his personal preface:

When moral principles are applied to the affairs of government . . . the form they take and the use they are put to depend upon laws, but their promotion and execution depend upon individuals. In the worthiness of its individual officials to discharge the duties of office, and in the effectiveness with which its institutions administered the law, no dynasty has surpassed the early Zhou. Likewise, in the suitability of its laws for per-

petuation in later ages, and in the expression given them in literary form, no book is so perfect as the *Institutes of Zhou* (*Zhouguan*).

So effectively did Wang use this book to justify his reforms that his edition of it became one of the most influential and controversial books in all Chinese literature. To deny Wang the support he derived from it, his opponents alleged that the *Institutes of Zhou* was itself a comparatively recent forgery. In later times writers commonly attributed the fall of the Northern Song dynasty to Wang's adoption of this text as a political guide.

Thus Wang's espousal of the *Institutes of Zhou* represents the culmination in the political sphere of the long debate in Confucian circles over the applicability of classical institutions, as described in the books of rites, to conditions obtaining in the Song dynasty. At the same time Wang's effort to reinterpret these texts — to discard the Han and Tang commentaries — and to use a modernized version as the basis for a reformed civil service examination system, stressing the general meaning of the classics instead of a literal knowledge of them, is a concrete expression of the Confucian urge to break with the scholarship of the Han and Tang dynasties, both in the field of classical scholarship and in the form of civil service examinations, in order to return to the essential purity of the classic order. In this respect Wang stands together with the Cheng brothers, Zhu Xi, and a host of other Song scholars in their determination to set aside accepted interpretations and find new meaning in their Confucian inheritance, just as subsequent scholars of a more critical temper would someday reject the Song interpretations and press anew their inquiry into the meaning and validity of the classics.

WANG ANSHI: MEMORIAL TO EMPEROR RENZONG (1058)

This document, sometimes called the Ten Thousand Word Memorial, is famous as Wang's first important declaration of his political views. Those who look to it for a manifesto outlining his later program will be disappointed, for aside from his general philosophy it deals only with the problem of recruiting able officials. Those who recognize, however, that in China any reformer had to wrestle first of all with the intractable bureaucracy will appreciate why Wang, like many other Song reformers, should have given first priority to this question. Subsequent readings, including the protests of Wang's critics, will show that in the final analysis this remained the most crucial issue.

Note how Wang strikes a balance between the importance of laws and systems (the Legalist tendency) and the Confucian view that good government depends ultimately on men of character and ability, unhampered by legalistic restrictions. Observe also his final insistence that the accomplishment of needed reform may justify coercive measures.

Your servant observes that Your Majesty possesses the virtues of reverence and frugality and is endowed with wisdom and sagacity. Rising early in the morning and retiring late in the evening, Your Majesty does not relax for even a single day. Neither music, beautiful women, dogs, horses, sight-seeing, nor any of the other objects of pleasure distract or becloud your intelligence in the least. Your humanity toward men and love of all creatures pervade the land. Moreover, Your Majesty selects those whom the people of the empire would wish to have assisting Your Majesty, entrusts to them the affairs of state, and does not vacillate in the face of [opposition from] slanderous, wicked, traitorous, and cunning officials. Even the solicitude of the Two Emperors and Three Kings did not surpass this. We should expect, therefore, that the needs of every household and man would be filled and that the empire would enjoy a state of perfect order. And yet this result has not been attained. Within the empire the security of the state is a cause for some anxiety, and on our borders there is the constant threat of the barbarians. Day by day the resources of the nation become more depleted and exhausted, while the moral tone and habits of life among the people daily deteriorate. On all sides officials who have the interests of the state at heart are fearful that the peace of the empire may not last. What is the reason for this?

The cause of the distress is that we ignore the law. Now the government is strict in enforcing the law, and its statutes are complete to the last detail. Why then does your servant consider that there is an absence of law? It is because most of the present body of law does not accord with the government of the ancient kings. Mencius says, "Though he may have a humane heart and a reputation for humaneness, one from whom the people receive no benefits will not serve as a model for later generations because he does not practice the Way of the former kings."¹⁵ The application of what Mencius said to our own failure in the present is obvious.

Now our own age is far removed from that of the ancient kings, and the changes and circumstances with which we are confronted are not the same. Even the most ignorant can see that it would be difficult to put into practice every single item in the government of the ancient kings. But when your servant says that our present failures arise from the fact that we do not adopt the governmental system of the ancient kings, he is merely suggesting that we should follow their general intent. Now the Two Emperors were separated from the Three Kings by more than a thousand years. There were periods of order and disorder, and there were periods of prosperity and decay. Each of them likewise encountered different changes and faced different circumstances, and each differed also in the way he set up his government. Yet they never differed as to their underlying aims in the government of the empire, the state, and the family, nor in their sense of the relative importance and priority of things [as set forth

15. Mencius 4A:1.

in the *Great Learning*, chapter 1]. Therefore, your servant contends that we should follow only their general intent. If we follow their intent, then the changes and reforms introduced by us would not startle the ears and shock the eyes of the people, nor cause them to murmur. And yet our government would be in accord with that of the ancient kings. [1a-2a]

The most urgent need of the present time is to secure capable men. Only when we can produce a large number of capable men in the empire will it be possible to select a sufficient number of persons qualified to serve in the government. And only when we get capable men in the government will there be no difficulty in assessing what may be done, in view of the time and circumstances, and in consideration of the human distress that may be occasioned, gradually to change the decadent laws of the empire in order to approach the ideas of the ancient kings. The empire today is the same as the empire of the ancient kings. There were numerous capable men in their times. Why is there a dearth of such men today? It is because; as has been said, we do not train and cultivate men in the proper way. [3a]

In ancient times, the Son of Heaven and feudal lords had schools ranging from the capital down to the districts and villages. Officers of instruction were widely appointed, but selected with the greatest care. The affairs of the court, rites and music, punishment and correction were all subjects that found a place in the schools. What the students observed and learned were the sayings, the virtuous acts, and the ideas underlying the government of the empire and the states. Men not qualified to govern the empire and the states would not be given an education, while those who could be so used in government never failed to receive an education. This is the way to conduct the training of men. [4a]

What is the way to select officials? The ancient kings selected men only from the local villages and through the local schools. The people were asked to recommend those they considered virtuous and able, sending up their nominations to the court, which investigated each one. Only if the men recommended proved truly virtuous and able would they be appointed to official posts commensurate with their individual virtue and ability. Investigation of them did not mean that a ruler relied only upon his own keenness of sight and hearing or that he took the word of one man alone. . . . Having inquired into his actions and utterances, they then tested him in government affairs. What was meant by "investigation" was just that—to test them in government affairs. . . . [But] it is not possible for the ruler to investigate each case personally, nor can he entrust this matter to any other individual, expecting that in a day or two he could inquire into and test their conduct and abilities and recommend their employment or dismissal. When we have investigated those whose conduct and ability are of the highest level, and have appointed them to high office, we should ask them in turn to select men of the same type, try them out for a time and test them, and then make recommendations to the ruler, whereupon ranks

and salaries would be granted to them. This is the way to conduct the selection of officials. [5a-b]

[In ancient times] officials were selected with great care, appointed to posts that suited their qualifications, and kept in office for a reasonable length of time. And once employed, they were given sufficient authority for the discharge of their duties. They were not hampered and bound by one regulation or another but were allowed to carry out their own ideas. It was by this method that Yao and Shun regulated the hundred offices of government and inspired the various officials. [6a-b]

Today, although we have schools in each prefecture and district, they amount to no more than school buildings. There are no officers of instruction and guidance; nothing is done to train and develop human talent. Only in the Imperial Academy are officers of instruction and guidance to be found, and even they are not selected with care. The affairs of the court, rites and music, punishment and correction have no place in the schools, and the students pay no attention to them, considering that rites and music, punishment and correction are the business of officials, not something they ought to know about. What is taught to the students consists merely of textual exegesis [of the classics].

That, however, was not the way men were taught in ancient times. In recent years, teaching has been based on the essays required for the civil service examinations, but this kind of essay cannot be learned without resorting to extensive memorization and strenuous study, upon which students must spend their efforts the whole day long. Such proficiency as they attain is at best of no use in the government of the empire, and at most the empire can make no use of them. . . . [6b-7a]

[Of old] . . . those scholars who had learned the way of the ancient kings and whose behavior and character had won the approval of their village communities were the ones entrusted with the duty of guarding the frontiers and the palace in accordance with their respective abilities. . . . Today this most important responsibility in the empire . . . is given to those corrupt, ruthless, and unreliable men whose ability and behavior are not such that they can maintain themselves in their local villages. . . . But as long as military training is not given, and men of a higher type are not selected for military service, there is no wonder that scholars regard the carrying of weapons as a disgrace and that none of them is able to ride, or shoot, or has any familiarity with military maneuvers. This is because education is not conducted in the proper way. [8a-9b]

In the present system for selecting officials, those who memorize assiduously, recite extensively, and have some knowledge of literary composition are called "splendid talents of extraordinary accomplishment" or "men of virtue, wise, square, and upright." These are the categories from which the ministers of state are chosen. Those whose memories are not so strongly developed and [who] cannot recite so extensively, yet have some knowledge of literary composition

and have also studied poetry in the *shi* and *fu* forms, are called "advanced scholars" (*jinsshi*). The highest of these are also selected as ministers of state. It can be seen without any question that the skills and knowledge acquired by men in these two categories do not fit them to serve as ministers. . . . [11b]

In addition, candidates are examined in such fields as the Nine Classics, the Five Classics, specialization [in one classic], and the study of law. The court has already become concerned over the uselessness of this type of knowledge, and has stressed the need for an understanding of general principles [as set forth in the classics]. . . . When we consider the men selected through "understanding of the classics," however, it is still those who memorize, recite, and have some knowledge of literary composition who are able to pass the examination, while those who can apply them [the classics] to the government of the empire are not always brought in through this kind of selection. [12b]

It has already been made clear that officials are not selected with care, employed in accordance with their competence, and kept in office long enough. But, in addition, when entrusted with office, they are not given sufficient authority to fulfill their duties, but find their hands tied by this law or that regulation so that they are unable to carry out their own ideas. . . . Nevertheless, there has not been a single case in history . . . that shows that it is possible to obtain good government merely by relying on the effectiveness of law without regard to having the right man in power. On the other hand, there has not been a single case in history, from ancient times to the present, that shows that it is possible to obtain good government even with the right man in power if he is bound by one regulation or another in such a way that he cannot carry out his ideas. [14a-b]

Your servant also observes that in former times when the court thought of doing something and introducing some reforms, the advantages and disadvantages were considered carefully at the beginning. But whenever some vulgar opportunist took a dislike to the reform and opposed it, the court stopped short and dared not carry it out. . . . Since it was difficult to set up laws and institutions, and since the men seeking personal advantages were unwilling to accept these measures and comply with them, the ancients who intended to do something had to resort to punishment. Only then could their ideas be carried out. [17a]

Now the early kings, wishing to set up laws and institutions in order to change corrupt customs and obtain capable men, overcame their feeling of reluctance to mete out punishment, for they saw that there was no other way of carrying out their policy. [17b]

[From *Linchuan xiansheng wenji* (SBCK) 39:1a-19a — dB]

MEMORIAL ON THE CROP LOANS MEASURE

This memorial submitted to the Emperor Shenzong in 1069 calls for the extension to other parts of China of a system of crop loans already experimented with on a limited

basis in Shaanxi province. For this purpose Wang proposes to draw upon the reserves of the government granaries, which he insists would still be able to fulfill their function of stabilizing agricultural prices and storing grain despite the diversion of funds for lending purposes. The memorial is somewhat vague in its wording, and the precise details of the operation of this system are unclear, perhaps because Wang assumed a familiarity with the existing system on the part of those he addressed.

In the second year of Xining (1069), the Commission to Coordinate Fiscal Administration presented a memorial as follows:

The cash and grain stored in the Ever-Normal and the Liberal-Charity granaries of the various circuits, counting roughly in strings of cash and bushels of grain, amount to more than 15 million. Their collection and distribution are not handled properly, however, and therefore we do not derive full benefit from them. Now we propose that the present amount of grain in storage should be sold at a price lower than the market price when the latter is high and that when the market price is low, the grain in the market should be purchased at a rate higher than the market price. We also propose that our reserves be made interchangeable with the proceeds of the land tax and the cash and grain held by the fiscal intendants, so that conversion of cash and grain may be permitted whenever convenient.

With the cash at hand, we propose to follow the example set by the crop loan system in Shaanxi province. Farmers desirous of borrowing money before the harvest should be granted loans, to be repaid at the same time as they pay their tax, half with the summer payment and half with the autumn payment.¹⁶ They are free to repay either in kind or in cash, should they prefer to do so if the price of grain is high at the time of repayment. In the event that disaster strikes, they should be allowed to defer payment until the date when the next harvest payment would be due. In this way not only would we be prepared to meet the distress of famine but since the people would receive loans from the government, it would be impossible for the monopolistic houses¹⁷ to exploit the gap between harvests by charging interest at twice the normal rate.

Under the system of Ever-Normal and Liberal-Charity Granaries, it has been the practice to keep the grain in storage and sell it only when the harvest is poor and the price of grain is high. Those who benefit from this are only the idle people in the cities.

Now we propose to survey the situation in regard to surpluses and shortages in each circuit as a whole, to sell when grain is dear and buy when it is cheap, in order to increase the accumulation in government storage and to stabilize

16. Interest of 2 percent per month (24 percent per annum) was to be charged for the loans. Private moneylenders generally charged more.

17. This refers to usurers who seek to monopolize wealth in the form of money, goods, or land, but not to industrial monopolists in the modern sense.

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the prices of commodities. This will make it possible for the farmers to go ahead with their work at the proper season, while the monopolists will no longer be able to take advantage of their temporary stringency. All this is proposed in the interests of the people, and the government derives no advantage therefrom. Moreover, it accords with the idea of the ancient kings, who bestowed blessings upon all impartially and promoted whatever was of benefit by way of encouraging the cultivation and accumulation of grain.

This proposal was adopted by the emperor and put into effect first in the limited areas of Hebei, Jingtong, and Huainan, as suggested by the Commission to Coordinate Fiscal Administration. The results obtained were later considered to justify extension of the system to other areas.

[From *Songshi* 176:17b-18b — dB]

CHENG HAO: REMONSTRANCE AGAINST THE NEW LAWS

This memorial by Cheng Hao, who was originally a supporter of Wang Anshi, is directed primarily against the crop loan system. Cheng contends that the system is generally unpopular and that force is required to compel repayment. It is difficult to determine, however, just what segment of the populace Cheng presumes to speak for — the peasantry as a whole or only an influential, articulate minority. There is no evidence of any widespread discontent or violence in opposition to Wang, but it is possible that the administration of the system was quite uneven and that certain areas may have been adversely affected. Though the interest charges were less than those of private moneylenders, at 20 to 24 percent per annum they were substantial enough that an extensive program might be turned by venal officials into a highly lucrative business.

Recently, your servant has presented repeated memorials asking for the abolition of the advancing of crop loans at interest¹⁸ and abolition of the [Economic] Administrators.¹⁹ Day and night [your servant] waits expectantly, and yet Your Majesty still has not acted upon them. . . .

Now whether the state is secure or insecure depends upon the feelings of the people; whether there is order or disorder hinges upon how things are handled at the start. If great numbers of people are opposed, then whatever one may say, one will not be believed; but if all the people are of one accord, then whatever one does will certainly succeed. . . .

Your servant considers that Your Majesty already sees clearly into the heart of the matter and fully realizes what is right and what wrong. The mind of Your

18. The text is vague here, referring only to "advance allocations."

19. Administering the various economic activities of the government, such as the Ever-Normal Granaries, the salt and iron monopolies, and so on.

Majesty does not hesitate to make a change; it is only the minister in charge of the government who still persists in his obstinacy. Thus the people's feelings are greatly agitated and public opinion becomes more clamorous. If one insists on carrying these policies out, certain failure awaits them in the end. . . . Rather than pursue one mistaken policy at the expense of a hundred other undertakings, would it not be better to bestow a grand favor and reassure the people's minds by doing away with the disturbances caused by those sent out to enforce these decrees and by manifesting your humanity to the extent of abolishing the interest charged on crop loans? Moreover, when the system of buying and selling grain is put back into effect,²⁰ our accumulated reserve will expand. The government will then be without fault in its administration, and public opinion will have no cause to be aroused.

[From *Mingdao wenji* (SBBY) 2:4b-5a — dB]

WANG ANSHI: IN DEFENSE OF FIVE MAJOR POLICIES

In this memorial Wang reaffirms the correctness of his principal policies, while conceding that in three cases much will depend on the effectiveness with which the officials concerned administer them.

During the five years that Your Majesty has been on the throne, a great number of changes and reforms have been proposed. Many of them have been set forth in documents, enacted into law, and have produced great benefits. Yet among these measures there are five of the greatest importance, the results of which will only be felt in the course of time and which, nevertheless, have already occasioned a great deal of discussion and debate: (1) the pacification of the Rong [Tangut] barbarians, (2) the crop loans, (3) the local service exemption, (4) the collective security [militia], (5) the marketing controls.

Now the region of Jingtang and the Tiao River [in the northwest] extends more than three thousand *li* and the Rong tribes number two hundred thousand people. They have surrendered their territories and become submissive subjects of the empire. Thus our policy of pacifying the Rong barbarians has proved successful.

In former times the poor people paid interest on loans obtained from powerful persons. Now the poor get loans from the government at a lower rate of interest, and the people are thereby saved from poverty. Thus our policy on agricultural loans has worked in practice.

It is only with regard to the service exemption, the militia, and the marketing controls that a question exists as to whether great benefit or harm may be done.

20. That is, when the reserves of the Ever-Normal Granaries are used for price-support operations rather than being committed to the lending program.

If we are able to secure the right type of man to administer these acts, great benefits will be obtained, but if they are administered by the wrong type of man, great harm will be done. Again, if we try to enforce them gradually, great benefits will be obtained, but if they are carried out in too great haste, great harm will be done.

The *Commentary* says, "Things not modeled after the ancient system have never been known to last for a generation." Of these three measures mentioned above, it may be said that they are all modeled after the ancient system. However, one can put the ancient system into practice only when he understands the Way of the ancients. This is what your servant means about great advantages and disadvantages.

The service exemption system is derived from the *Institutes of Zhou* [i.e., the *Rites of Zhou*], in which the *fu*, *shi*, *xu*, and *du* are mentioned. They are what the King's System [section of the *Record of Rites*] describes as "the common people who render services to the government."

However, the people of the nine provinces vary in wealth, and the customs of the various regions are not the same. The classifications used in the government registration [for local service] are not satisfactory for all. Now we want to change it forthwith, having officials examine every household so that they will be assessed on an equitable basis and requiring the people to pay for the hiring of men for all kinds of local services, so that the farmers can be released and return to their farms. If, however, we fail to secure the right kind of person for the administration of this measure, the classification of people into five grades [in proportion to their financial status] is bound to be unfair, and the hiring of men to perform services would not be executed in an equitable manner.

The militia act had its origin in the *qiuji*²¹ system of the Three Dynasties, which was adopted by Guan Zhong in Qi, Zichan in Zheng, and Lord Shang in Qin, and was proposed by Zhong Zhangtong to the Han ruler. This is not just a recent innovation. For hundreds and thousands of years, however, the people of the empire have been free to live together or to disperse and go in all directions as they chose, not subject to any restriction. Now we want to change it forthwith, organizing the people into units of fives and tens and attaching one village to another. Unlawful activities would thus be kept under observation while humaneness would be manifested to all; the soldiers would be housed in their own homes and ready for any use. If, however, we fail to secure the right kind of person to administer this measure, the people will be alarmed by summonses and frightened by mobilization, and thus the people's confidence will be lost.

21. A system under which units of 128 families each provided men and weapons for military service.

The marketing controls originated with the Supervision of the Market in the Zhou dynasty and the Price Stabilization and Equalization System of the Han dynasty. Now with a fund of one million cash we regulate the prices of commodities in order to facilitate the exchange of goods and also lend the people money on which they pay the government an interest of several tens of thousands of cash annually. We are, however, aware of the fact that commodities and money do not circulate very well in the empire. It is feared that officials eager for personal fame and rewards will seek to achieve speedy results within a year's time, and thus the system will be subverted.

Therefore, your servant considers that the above three measures, if administered by the right kind of person and put into effect with due deliberation, will bring great benefits, whereas, if administered by the wrong men and put into effect with too great haste, they may do great harm.

Thus, if we succeed in carrying out the Service Exemption Law, the seasonal agricultural work of the farmers will not be disturbed and the manpower requirements [of the state] will be borne equally by the people. If the Militia Law is carried out, the disturbances caused by bandits will be brought to an end and our military power will be strengthened. If we succeed in carrying out the Marketing Control Law, goods and money will be circulated and the financial needs of the state will be met.

[From *Linchuan xiansheng wenji* (SBCK) 41:4a-5a -dB]

OPPOSITION TO THE NEW LAWS OF WANG ANSHI

SU SHI: MEMORIAL TO EMPEROR SHENZONG

Su Shi (1037-1101), also known by his pen name Su Dongpo, was one of two famous sons of a famous father, Su Xun. An outstanding poet, calligrapher, and painter as well as a public official, Su Shi was initially sympathetic to the aims of Wang Anshi but was subsequently driven from court because of his outspoken opposition to the New Laws. In this eloquent memorial, which suggests something of his famous prose style, Su criticizes especially the new labor service, crop loan, and state marketing systems. Note his complaint that Wang's original proposal concerning the marketing system seemed to have been deliberately vague and seemingly innocuous, as if to hide Wang's real intentions.

What a ruler has to rely upon is only the human heart. Human hearts are to the ruler what roots are to a tree, what oil is to a lamp, water to fish, fields to a farmer, or money to a merchant.

Now Your Majesty knows that the hearts of the people are not happy. Men, whether within the court or outside, whether worthy or unworthy, all say that

from the founding of the dynasty to the present, the fiscal administration of the empire has been entrusted solely to the commissioner, assistant commissioners and the supervisors of the Finance Commission, who for more than one hundred years have left no matter untended. Now, for no cause, another commission has been set up in the name of "Coordinating the Policies of the Three Fiscal Offices."²² Six or seven young men are made to discuss fiscal policies day and night within the bureau, while more than forty aides are sent out to explore this situation. The vast scale of their initial operations has made people frightened and suspicious; the strangeness of the New Laws adopted has made officials fearful and puzzled. Worthy men seek for an explanation, and failing to get any, cannot relieve their anxiety; small men simply conjecture as to what is going on at court and give voice to slander, saying that Your Majesty, as the master of a hundred thousand chariots [i.e., of a large empire and army] is interested in personal profit and [that] the official in charge of the government administration, as the chancellor of the Son of Heaven, is concerned with controlling wealth. Business is at a standstill and the prices of goods have been rising. . . . [3b-4a]

Now the Commission to Coordinate Fiscal Administration has the reputation of seeking for profit, while the six or seven young men and their forty or more aides are instruments for the pursuit of profit. . . . The man who plunges into the forest with a pack of hunting dogs and then protests, "I am not hunting," would do better to get rid of the hunting dogs, and then the animals will not be so frightened. . . . Therefore your servant considers that in order to expunge the slander, to call forth harmonious feelings, to restore public confidence, and put the nation at rest, nothing better could be done than to abolish the Commission to Coordinate Fiscal Administration. . . . [4b]

Since ancient times men drafted from the households in each district have always had to be used for local services. . . . Now some people have heard that in the region of Zhejiang and Jiangsu, a few prefectures hire men to perform these services, and they want to extend this practice throughout the empire. This is like seeing the dates and chestnuts of Beijing and Shaanxi, or the taro root of Sichuan and then advocating that the five grains be done away with. How could that be made feasible? Besides, they want the proceeds from government factories to be used for the hiring of public storage and transport officers.²³ Although they are expected to render long-term service, they receive meager payment for their labors. Since they receive so little for such long service, from now on they may be expected gradually to fall away and go else-

22. The Office of Salt and Iron [Monopolies], the Office of Funds [Disbursements], and the Office of the Census [Revenue].

23. *Yajian*—a type of service involving responsibility for the storage and transportation of public goods or property. Considered extremely burdensome, this responsibility was previously assigned to and rotated among the more well-to-do families, who often tried to evade it.

where. How seriously this will affect the whole basis and functioning of local governments can well be imagined! [7b-8a]

Although in recent years, households in the rural districts have been allowed to hire men [to perform these services], nevertheless, if these hired men ran away, the households still had the responsibility [of replacing them]. Now in addition to the Twice-a-Year Tax, another tax item has been introduced, called the labor charge, which pays for the government's hiring of men. Thus the government has taken upon itself the responsibility for the hiring of men. Since Yang-Yan (727-781) in the Tang dynasty abolished the system of [land] taxes in grain, labor taxes [on able-bodied men], and the cloth exaction [on households] and replaced it with the Twice-a-Year Tax,²⁴ the sum of all taxes collected in the fourteenth year of Dali (779) was used as the basis for determining the rate of the Twice-a-Year Tax. Thus the land, labor, and cloth taxes were all combined in the Twice-a-Year Tax. Yet now, while the Twice-a-Year Tax is kept as before, how can a labor tax again be demanded? When a sage introduces a law, he always takes thousands of generations into consideration. How can we add another item to the regular taxes? [8b-9a]

Households of which a female is head and those with only a single male are the most unfortunate of all under-Heaven. The first concern of the ancient kings was to show them compassion; and yet now the first concern of Your Majesty is to make them [pay for] local services. These are the households in which the family line will be discontinued when its present members die or those in which the only male is still too young. If several years were allowed the latter, he would become an adult, render service, grow old and die, and have his property confiscated by the government [since there is no one to inherit it]. How can a ruler, so rich as to possess all within the four seas, have the hardness of heart not to take pity on such persons? [9b]

There has long been a prohibition against the practice of crop loans. Now Your Majesty has inaugurated the system and made it a regular practice year after year. Although it is declared that there shall be no compulsion to make people take the loans, nevertheless after several generations, if there should be oppressive rulers and corrupt officials, can Your Majesty guarantee that there will be no compulsion? . . . [10a]

Even if the regulations are strictly enforced and there is really no compulsion, those people and households who would willingly apply for it must be the poor and the families in need, for if they had any surplus of their own, why would they come and do business with the government? But when the [poor] people are whipped and pressed to the extreme, they will run away, and when they have run away, their debts to the government will be apportioned among their neighbors, who are collectively responsible. . . .

24. See ch. 18.

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Of all such measures the Ever-Normal Granary may be considered the best. It is modest in what it seeks to preserve and yet far-reaching in its effects. Suppose a county of ten thousand households has only one thousand bushels of grain in storage. When the price of grain is high, if the one thousand bushels are put on the market, the prices of goods are kept stable. When the price of goods in the market is kept stable, there is a sufficiency of food in the land. There is no hoarding of grain by some while others beg for food, no pursuing and pressing by the headman of the village to make people pay back their loans. Now if the Ever-Normal Granary is converted to a crop loan fund, and one bushel of grain is lent to each household, then what will be done to relieve the hunger of all those besides the thousand households [so provided for]? Besides, there is always the fear that the government funds of the Ever-Normal Granary will prove insufficient. If all the funds are used up to buy the grain, then none will be left for moneylending; if the fund is held for lending purposes, then very little grain will be bought. Thus we see that the Ever-Normal Granary and the crop loan system are by nature incompatible. . . . [10b-11a]

During the time of Emperor Wu of Han, the financial resources of the nation were exhausted, and the proposal of the merchant Sang Hongyang, to buy commodities when prices were cheap and sell them when prices were dear, was adopted. This was called Equal Distribution.²⁵ Thereupon business came to a standstill and banditry became widespread. This almost led to revolution. When Emperor Zhao ascended the throne, scholars all rose up in opposition to the theory [of Sang]. He Guang [the chief minister] heeded the desires of the people and granted their request that the system be abandoned. Then all under-Heaven were reconciled to the throne and no further trouble arose. It is surprising to hear this kind of proposal raised again. When this law was first introduced, it sounded as if very little were involved. They said merely that goods bought cheaply here should be transferred elsewhere when prices were high, using supplies near at hand to ease scarcity afar. But offices and staffs have been set up all over, and a large amount of cash has been appropriated. The big and wealthy merchants have all become suspicious and dare not move. They believe that . . . the government never engages in the exchange of goods without competing with the merchants for profit. . . . Now for the government to buy such and such a commodity, it must first set up offices and staffs, so that the expense for clerical and fiscal services is considerable at the outset. If not of good quality, an item will not be bought; if not paid for in cash, an item cannot be purchased. Therefore the price paid by the government must be higher than that paid by the people. And when the government sells goods, it will still suffer the disadvantages mentioned before. How can the government get the same profit as the merchant? . . . [11a-12a]

25. A state marketing system covering all principal commodities. See ch. 11.

The preservation or loss of a state depends upon the depth or shallowness of its virtue, not upon its strength or weakness. . . . When a ruler knows this, he knows what is important and what is not important. Therefore the wise rulers of ancient times did not abandon virtue because the country was weak, nor did they permit social customs to suffer because the country was poor. [12b-13a]

[From *Jingjin Dongpo wenji shilue* (SBCK) 24:1a ff. — dB]

SIMA GUANG: A PETITION TO DO AWAY WITH
THE MOST HARMFUL OF THE NEW LAWS

Sima Guang (1019-1086) was one of the giants among the scholar-statesmen of the Confucian revival in the eleventh century. He had already had a long and distinguished career in high office when he left the government in 1070 out of opposition to Wang Anshi's policies and subsequently devoted himself to writing his monumental general history of China. Following the death of Wang's patron, the Emperor Shenzong, Sima Guang served briefly as prime minister before his own death and was responsible for the abolition of many of Wang's reforms.

Your servant sees that the late emperor was sagacious and intelligent, did his utmost to govern well, and sought to employ an able man to assist him in achieving peace and order. This man was entrusted with the administration of government. His advice was acted upon, and his plans were followed. Nothing could ever come between them. . . . Unfortunately the one in whom he placed his trust was a man who largely failed to understand the feelings of men and the principles of things and who could not fulfill the expectations of his sage master. He was self-satisfied and opinionated, considering himself without equal among the men of the past and the present. He did not know how to select what was best in the laws and institutions of the imperial ancestors and to bring together the happiest proposals put forth throughout the empire, so as to guide the imperial intelligence and assist in accomplishing the great task. Instead he often adulterated the traditional regulations with his own ideas, which he termed "the New Laws (or Measures)." Whatever this man wanted to do could neither be held up by the ruler nor changed by the people. Those who agreed with him were given his help in rising to the sky, while those who differed with him were thrown out and cast down into the ditch. All he wanted was to satisfy his own ambitions, without regard to the best interests of the nation. . . .

The crop loans, the local service exemption, the marketing controls, the credit and loan system, and other measures were introduced. They aimed at the accumulation of wealth and pressed the people mercilessly. The distress they caused still makes for difficulties today. . . . Besides, officials who liked to create new schemes that they might take advantage of to advance themselves suggested setting up the collective security militia system (*baojia*), horse-raising

system, and the horse-care system²⁶ as a means of providing for the military establishment. They changed the regulations governing the tea, salt, iron, and other monopolies and increased the taxes on family property, on [buildings] encroaching on the street,²⁷ on business and so forth, in order to meet military expenses. The result was to cause the people of the nine provinces to lose their livelihood and suffer extreme distress, as if they had been cast into hot water and fire. All this happened because the great body of officials were so eager to advance themselves. They misled the late emperor and saw to it that they themselves derived all the profit from these schemes while the emperor incurred all the resentment. . . .

Your servant has already pointed out that training and inspection of the militia involves a great expenditure of labor and money for both the government and the people, and yet the militia is of no real use in war. To pay money in lieu of local services is easy on the rich and hard on the poor, who must contribute to the support of idlers and vagrants [paid to perform these services]. It results in the peasantry losing their property and being reduced to utter misery without recourse or appeal. The general commanderies now have absolute control over the army administration, while local civil officials have no authority whatever and no means of coping with emergencies. [47:9b]

The best plan now is to select and keep those New Laws that are of advantage to the people and of benefit to the state, while abolishing all those that are harmful to the people and hurtful to the state. This will let the people of the land know unmistakably that the court loves them with a paternal affection. . . . This worthy achievement will be crowned with glory, and there will be no end to the blessings it bestows. Would this not be splendid?

[From *Wenguo wenzheng Sima gong wenji* (SBCK) 46:5b-9b, 47:9b - dB]

ZHU XI: WANG ANSHI IN RETROSPECT

Though Wang's New Laws were largely abolished by Sima Guang, after the latter's demise political forces representing Wang's point of view recouped their strength and held power much of the time until the ignominious fall of the Northern Song dynasty in 1126. Many of Wang's policies were briefly revived, and some of them — like his public services system, the local security and militia system, and the type of exami-

26. These systems were designed to provide horses for the army after the old grazing lands had been occupied by hostile tribes. Under the horse-raising system (*huma*), people bought horses that, when raised, were sold to the government. Under the horse-care system (*baoma*), the government provided the horses or the funds to buy them, and the people were expected to take care of them for the militia. In either case, horses that died had to be replaced at the individual expense.

27. A tax on roadside stalls, kiosks, etc.

nation essay he introduced into the civil service system — reappeared in later dynasties. Nevertheless, Wang's reputation among later generations of Confucian scholars was generally low, the majority sympathizing with Sima Guang, Su Shi, the Cheng brothers, and others who had condemned Wang for his flagrant disregard of "human feelings" (which should not necessarily be interpreted to mean "public opinion") and especially for his suppression of criticism at court. Zhu Xi (1130-1200), the preeminent philosopher of the Song school whose views became enshrined as orthodox Neo-Confucianism in later dynasties, was a follower of the Cheng brothers. In these excerpts from his recorded conversations, however, he attempts a balanced judgment of Wang Anshi's strengths and weaknesses, trying to rise above the partisan passions stirred up in the great era of reform.

We were discussing Wang Anshi's meeting with Emperor Shenzong. "It was a chance that comes only once in a thousand years," I said. "Unfortunately Wang's ideas and methods were not correct so that in the end everything went to pieces the way it did." Someone asked, "When Wang Anshi started, was he so self-assured about his methods and tactics, or did he become so only later?" I replied, "At first he felt only that something should be done. But later when other people began to attack him, he became obstinate and unyielding. Unless one reads his diary one has no way of understanding the full story. As a matter of fact, he became so overbearing in argument and so contemptuous of everyone around him that men like Wen Lugong [Wen Yanbo] did not dare to utter a word." Someone asked about Sima Guang's actions. I replied, "He saw only that Wang Anshi was wrong, and this led him to go too far in the other direction. When the whole matter first came under discussion, men like Su Dongpo also felt that reforms should be undertaken, but later they all changed their minds completely." [30b-31a]

The implementation of the reforms was actually planned by all the statesmen together. Even Cheng Hao did not consider them to be wrong, for he felt that the time was ripe for a change. Only later, when everyone's feelings had been aroused, did Cheng Hao begin to urge Wang Anshi not to do things that went against human feelings. Finally, when Wang had rejected the advice of everyone else and was using all his power to enforce his policies, the other statesmen began to withdraw. Daofu asked, "If even the man in the street could tell that the implementation of these reforms would be harmful, why was it that Cheng Hao did not consider them wrong?" I replied, "The harm came from the way that Wang put them into practice. If Cheng Hao had been doing it, things would certainly not have ended up in the mess they did." . . . [32a-b]

Renjie remarked that the *baojia* [militia] system that Wang Anshi put into effect in the capital area naturally aroused opposition at the start. But when the gentlemen of the Yuanyou Party abolished it entirely, what they did was to upset completely a system that was already well established. "That is quite true," I replied. [32b]