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# Political Legitimacy in Chinese History: The Case of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-535)

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Puning Liu

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北人詆南為島夷，南人指北為索虜，在當日之人，不務修德行仁，而徒事口舌相譏，已為至卑至陋之見。

Northerners slighted Southerners as “Island Barbarians,” while Southerners pointed to Northerners as “Plaited Barbarians.” The people in those days never worked at cultivating their virtue or practicing benevolence. Instead, they just looked for occasions to dispute and slander one another. It was a show of the most vulgar and ugliest kind.

— Emperor Yongzheng 雍正 (r. 1722-1735)



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## Preface

Four years ago, when I started doing my Ph.D. research in Leiden, I never thought it would turn out to be a journey this tough but joyful. It has been a challenging task to “talk” with various politicians, philosophers, and historians in Chinese history, and investigate their distinct views on legitimacy. Luckily, many people supported me along the way.

It is hard to adequately express my gratitude to my mentor, dr. Paul van Els, one of the most warm-hearted and encouraging supervisors that I have ever seen. He guided me into the groves of academe, and continuously offered me kind encouragement. I thank him for his wonderful support during my entire Ph.D. period.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to my other supervisors, prof. dr. Franke Pieke and prof. dr. Hilde De Weerd, both of whom meticulously read this manuscript. Pieke’s comments on the aim and structure of this dissertation greatly helped me improve this work; and De Weerd is a paragon of erudition who taught me how to do rigorous scholarship. I also thank prof. dr. Barend ter Haar, who provided insightful comments the issue of sinicization, and prof. dr. Ding-Xiang Warner, who gave me crucial feedback on Wang Tong.

In the past three years, I was fortunate to attend the Chinese history research meetings organized by De Weerd. I thank my friends in those meetings: Gabe, Jialong, Xiong, Jiyan, Daniel, Monica, Hu Jing, and others. Every two weeks, we gathered to exchange views on each other’s research. I benefited greatly from your views. Many thanks also go out to my friends in Leiden: Rui, Guangsheng, Wenbo, Yinguang, Ka, Liu Jia, Niu Jing, Yifei, Shanshan, Xiaoyu, Jiali, Siyuan, Jianqiang, Ruixuan, and others. We had lots of fun here, which render my memories of Leiden colorful.

I owe the deepest appreciation to my parents for supporting my choice of an academic career even though they knew it would take me far from their side. They also provided me with financial support that enabled my studies in Leiden.

In the end, I thank you, my reader. It is a great joy to see that you share with me an interest in the issue of political legitimacy in Chinese history. I hope you will find as much happiness in reading this dissertation as I experienced writing it. *Omnes homines natura scire desiderant.*

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Chart 6. Ouyang Xiu's Version of the Succession of Legitimate Dynasties

## List of Abbreviations

*Jinshu* 晉書, *JS*

*Liangshu* 梁書, *LS*

*Nan Qi shu* 南齊書, *NQS*

*Sanguozhi* 三國志, *SGZ*

*Songshu* 宋書, *SS*

*Weishu* 魏書, *WS*

*Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑒, *ZZTJ*

