

# A Case Study of the Formation and Influence of Civilianization of *Jinshi* in Song Dynasty

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## ABSTRACT

Imperial examination in song Dynasty became the mainstream form for scholars to enter officialdom. Interestingly, compared with the Sui and Tang dynasties, the number of jinshi in the Song Dynasty not only increased, but also compared with the tang dynasty, most of the jinshi in the Song Dynasty were from the common class. Fan Zhongyan is one of the representatives of "sorrow before joy". His early background and imperial examination experience all influenced his later official career and spiritual outlook. Combined with the cultural background of the change of the style of scholars in the Song Dynasty, Fan Zhongyan had a certain profound influence on the bureaucrat class and social outlook of the northern Song Dynasty.

Fan Zhongyan is a symbol of the transformation of the style of the young scholars in the early Song Dynasty, His life experience is the epitome of the civilianization of jinshi in the Northern Song Dynasty. So the study of this subject should focus on him.

Taking Fan Zhongyan as an example, this paper tries to discuss the formation and influence of the civilianization of jinshi in the Northern Song Dynasty.

**Keywords:** *Jinshi, Civilianization, Fan Zhongyan.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

After the establishment of the Song Dynasty, Song Taizu attached great importance to the development of culture and education, which influenced the policy of the emperors of the Song Dynasty. The advocacy of reading and the prevention of martial arts gradually formed the basic state policy of "emphasizing literature over martial arts". In addition, with the improvement of the imperial examination system, more and more civilians realized their life goal of being an official and running a country through reading. Historically, this phenomenon could be summed up as "civilianization of *jinshi*".

The researches on the civilianization of *jinshi* in the Northern Song Dynasty and its causes are relatively sufficient. From the perspective of social trends, the "inducement type" cultural policy in Tang and Song dynasties created conditions for the cultural downward movement. In Tang and Song dynasties, ancient scholars were attracted to study Confucian classics by becoming an official, so that they could rise to the top. Under the

same conditions, children from relatively poor families from the common people tend to enter the upper class of scholastic officials in this way [1]. At the same time, the professional barriers of the separation of scholars, agriculture, industry and commerce were removed, and the restrictions on the entry of the sons of industry and commerce into official positions were gradually relaxed. In order to seek higher social status, most of the peasants from poor families passed the imperial examinations to become officials. As a result, the composition of the scholar class has changed significantly, showing the characteristics of civilianization and openness [2]. From the perspective of educational changes in the Tang and Song dynasties, the middle and late Tang dynasties were in chaos, and the official schools, the main source of tribute scholars, were gradually abandoned [3]. At the end of the Tang Dynasty and the Five Dynasties, private schools of big families were destroyed, and private schools of noble families were gradually replaced by private lectures and temple education with sociality, and gradually developed into social and civilian academies [4].

Non-governmental private schools had developed rapidly. Unlike official schools, which limited the involvement of children from the common people, private schools did not have unlimited access to students and recruit more students than official schools. Someone studying in private schools joined the ranks of scholars through the way of rural tribute, which broke the former situation of ordinary scholars. Even after the social stability in the early Song Dynasty, the state revived official schools and private schools were suppressed to some extent. At that time, however, the admittance threshold for official school students was much lower than that in the Tang Dynasty, and children from poor families could also attend school in the Imperial academy. The civilianization of education was even more reflected in the education movement. Local official schools were established in many counties, and the imperial court also sent academic officers to give lectures, so that more scholars from the common people had the opportunity to pursue official education [5].

The progress of science and technology and the development of commodity economy had promoted the popularization of education. The development of commodity economy lead to a richer variety of cultural articles. Some scholars showed the characteristics of price stratification according to different raw materials and techniques. The continuous improvement of paper-making technology also effectively reduced the price of paper. The decline in the price of cultural goods had provided better learning conditions for those scholars from poor families[6]. At the same time, the application of printing in classics and history became popular since the Five Dynasties. The prices of many classics and classics were greatly reduced through printing, and many hand-copied copies were also spread around the world, making it easier for students from poor families to obtain books. In addition, Yiyue also made great contributions to the civilianization of jinshi. In order to support poor students to take the exam, scholars provided financial aid to help students, which relieved the economic pressure of students from poor families to take the exam [7]. As for the civilianization of the society in song Dynasty in many aspects of culture, Sun Guodong even put forward that one of the reasons lies in the gradual decline of most gentry due to the prolonged wars in the late Tang and Five Dynasties. Until the Northern Song Dynasty, the Tang clans almost disappeared. The decline of the gentry and the gradual rise of the poor families contributed to the civilianization of the northern Song Dynasty.

With the background of the transformation of the scholar-bureaucrat class in Tang and Song dynasties, this paper will take Fan Zhongyan as an example to analyze the historical influence of the civilianization of Jinshi in the Northern Song Dynasty.

## 2. TRANSFORMATION OF SCHOLAR-BUREAUCRAT CLASS

After the Sui and Tang Dynasties, the selection of officials no longer depended on the "nine grades" system, but through the imperial examination system. This system broke the superiority of gentry since the Wei and Jin dynasties and extended the selection of officials to almost all social classes, including the civilian class [8].

Since the establishment of the imperial examination, many people from humble backgrounds changed their destiny through this way, such as Fang Xuanling, the famous prime minister in the early Tang Dynasty. In the late Tang dynasty, the frequent peasant uprisings and the decline and fall of great families created conditions for the literati of the common class to step onto the stage of history. However, from the late Tang dynasty to the Five Dynasties and Ten States, although they were heavy on military and light on civil affairs, literati were ultimately needed to govern the government and manage people's livelihood. They no longer favored the literati with an undistinguished head, but paid more attention to the literati with an ordinary background. At this time, the status of literati reached its lowest point, but at the same time, literati began to transform, and some practical talents from petty officials became the mainstream of literati in the five dynasties [9]. For example, Feng Dao, a famous prime minister in the Five Dynasties and ten Kings of four dynasties, was born in a family of farmworkers. Zhao Pu, who assisted Song Taizu and Song Taizong, was also from an ordinary official family and did not belong to the gentry class. But they still exert their talents, become the top officials, and promote the development of history.

In the first year of Jianlong (960), Zhao Kuangyin founded the Song Dynasty and carried out the state policy of emphasizing literature rather than military power. In order to recruit the world's talents, the imperial examination system was constantly reformed. Inheriting the Tang system in the early Song Dynasty, the subjects, procedures and examinee restrictions of the imperial examination system were improved by reference. In the third year of Jianlong (962), Emperor Taizu of the Song Dynasty issued an eddecree forbidding public nomination, which changed the practice of public nomination and public examination in the Tang dynasty, making the imperial examination the most important way to enter an official position and further improving the status of the imperial examination. In order to avoid favoritism and favoritism among officials, emperor Taizu of the Song Dynasty (973) added a temple examination in the sixth year of Kaibao, and the emperor himself presided over the examination. From then on, a three-level examination system of township examination, provincial examination and temple examination was established. At the same time, the number of candidates for each imperial examination kept increasing. In the

early ten years of the founding of the Song Dynasty, there were no more than 20 people who took part in imperial examinations every year. Until the third year of Kaibao (970), the number of people who took part in imperial examinations increased to 114. After that, the number decreased sharply, and then increased to 500 in the second year of Taiping Xingguo (977). After that, there were about three or four hundred people enrolled in the examination, sometimes reaching thousands [10], which was in sharp contrast to the twenty or thirty people enrolled in the examination in the Tang Dynasty. In the eighth year of the Great and Medium Xiangfu period, the admission of special examination entries was completely institutionalized and normalized, and the number of candidates was greatly increased, which became one of the characteristics of the imperial examination system in the Song Dynasty. The establishment of the system of naming, copying and locking up the imperial court effectively prevented officials from practicing favoritism, suppressed the dominant position of senior officials and gentry in the imperial examination, and gave the examinees who were born in white a relatively fair opportunity to take office.

The above reforms of the imperial examination system made all social strata, especially the common people, eager to change their personal destiny through the examination. The emperor also hoped to cultivate talents for the country through reform to get rid of the evil image of cliques among officials and big families manipulating the imperial examinations. The perfection of the imperial examination system effectively enriched the composition of officials in the Song Dynasty, making more white coats have the opportunity to serve as officials in the dynasty.

### **3. A CASE STUDY OF FAN ZHONGYAN**

Fan Zhongyan was born in Xuzhou in 989. Due to the early death of his father, his mother was forced to remarry. When he was a child, Fan Zhongyan followed his stepfather into many eunuchs. The vigorous development of culture in the early Song dynasty also gave Fan zhongyan the opportunity to study hard.

He often boarded at The Liquan Temple on the nearby Changbai Mountain and ate frozen porridge every day. This experience not only laid a solid foundation for his future literary achievements, but also honed his will [11]. In 1015, Fan Zhongyan was 27 years old when he first took part in the imperial examination. Later, he was appointed as the general manager of the Guangde Army to join the army, in charge of prison proceedings, cases, and began his political career. He served as an official for forty years, resisted the Western Xia, the implementation of the New policy of qingli, and strived to change the situation of internal troubles and foreign invasion of the Northern Song dynasty.

Many ideals and reform measures put forward by Fan Zhongyan were reflected in his new policy of celebrating the calendar. In 1015, Fan Zhongyan conferred the rank of jinshi in the eighth year of the dazhong Dynasty. In the same year, the number of jinshi was 716. In the following five examinations, the total number of candidates increased from 527 to 1,839. At the same time, the Yin Bu system (a kind of official appointment system, which endows the offspring of high officials in the court with certain posts, with the characteristics of the imperial family) was gradually expanded. A large number of Yin bu children were assigned official posts, and because of the family elders in the dynasty to protect, promotion is quick and easy. In 1036, Fan Zhongyan in the Lv Yijian administration of more than the appointment of the apprentice under the birth of the "Hundred officials map", Lv Yijian quality of poor candidates. The above problems had accumulated for many years by the time of qingli. Therefore, Fan Zhongyan took the lead in proposing reform for the promotion or demotion of officials. As the top of the "ten things", it can be seen that the local government had an important influence on the people of the country.

Fan proposed to greatly reduce the number of students under each senior official's name and to reduce the number of officials eligible for the system. Although the restriction on the application of Yin Supplement system has no direct influence on promoting the admission of white clothes to official posts, it has reduced the proportion of senior family members, senior officials and students in the dynasty and the chances of becoming officials.

Fan also put forward many restrictions on the promotion of officials. On the one hand, he cleaned up the bureaucracy to avoid the family disciples and the children of senior officials who had no achievements and could rise through the ranks by family forces or the elder brother of senior officials. On the other hand, he also provided more fair opportunities for the promotion of the disciples in white who had made great achievements for a long time.

Fan knew very well the importance of education and recommended Sun Fu to be an official in the imperial Palace to preach his teaching methods. Compared with the traditional Confucian teachings taught in the academies at that time, Fan zhongyan was more inclined to the teaching ideas of Hu Yuan and Sun Fu. He believed that teaching and educating people should emphasize the importance of practicality. He attached more importance to students' personal opinions on governing for the people, rather than reading and reciting classics and poems [12]. Therefore, Fan zhongyan recommended Sun Fu as the leader of the educational reform in the New Policy of Qingli and carried out Qingli Promotes schools. Hope to be more in addition to the shortcomings of the old school, for the country to cultivate more talents. Hu Yuan, who

was recommended by him, had a prominent family, but since the decline of his grandfather, he had reached the point of poverty without self-sufficiency. Sun Fu's family was poor since childhood, but they were both recommended by Fan Zhongyan to serve as officials in the court and benefit the people. Fan Zhongyan focused on the promotion of talent and ability, which was different from the favoritism of Lv Yijian and others who recommended disciples and clansmen for the purpose of forming the party and expanding the power. Instead, he vigorously promoted the children of poor families and those who failed in many attempts. Fan Zhongyan's move did not aim at increasing the number of civilian officials, but it also promoted the development of civil scholars in the Northern Song Dynasty.

Fan noticed that at that time, people were neglecting their personal knowledge because they emphasized this knowledge in the imperial examination. He stressed that theory should be first followed by poetry [13]. In addition, it is recommended that all students attend school for at least 300 days a year in order to understand their daily conduct and academic work [14]. In this way, it is the encouragement and protection of the poor disciples who study hard.

Fan put forward corresponding solutions to many problems and hidden dangers faced by the Northern Song Dynasty. However, these plans were blocked by many high-ranking officials of the dynasty and failed. Although the reform failed eventually, the reform measures and experience of qingli New Deal still played an invisible role in providing basis and lessons for Wang Anshi's reform several years later.

In addition, Fan zhongyan often donated money to scholars from poor families to help them study and take the exams. Fan Zhongyan was born in a poor family and knew it was not easy for him to study in a poor family. He founded fan Shi Yizhuang. At first, it was named as respecting ancestors and receiving ancestors. With the expansion of its construction and the increase of clan members, it gradually changed into welfare subsidies for poor clansmen. In order to encourage students to follow official education, Fan Zhongyan set up a private school in yizhuang, extending the former private school education established by each family to the scope shared by the whole family [15]. This greatly reduced the difficulty for the common class to read. Yizhuang's support for scholars goes beyond material satisfaction. It also provides a way to study, exempts tuition fees and gives extra rewards to examinees who take the imperial examination. The intellectual and spiritual teaching is reflected in the selection of teachers, teaching content and so on. The content of the course is in line with Fan zhongyan's philosophy of education and academia, emphasizing the application of learning.

Fan Zhongyan's many achievements not only contributed to social stability, but also promoted the

process of civilization of jinshi in the Northern Song Dynasty.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

As a trend and phenomenon, the civilianization of jinshi in the Northern Song Dynasty is summarized by later generations according to the historical facts of the continuous expansion of the proportion of civilian officials in the early Northern Song Dynasty.

Based on a brief summary of the political and social background of the early Northern Song Dynasty, taking Fan Zhongyan as an example, this paper preliminarily combs his achievements in attaching importance to talents, establishing schools, affirming the xian tuan in his life, clarifying bureaucrats and paying attention to the selection and appointment of populist officials. From Fan Zhongyan's case, this paper finds that the civilian intellectuals in the early Northern Song Dynasty played a certain role in coping with the political and social changes at that time, objectively promoted the social reform, and changed the spiritual outlook of the intellectuals in the Song Dynasty. This study will be beneficial to provide a case for the study of ancient intellectuals and social change. At the same time, it also hopes to cause an in-depth study of the popularization of scholars in the academic circles.

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