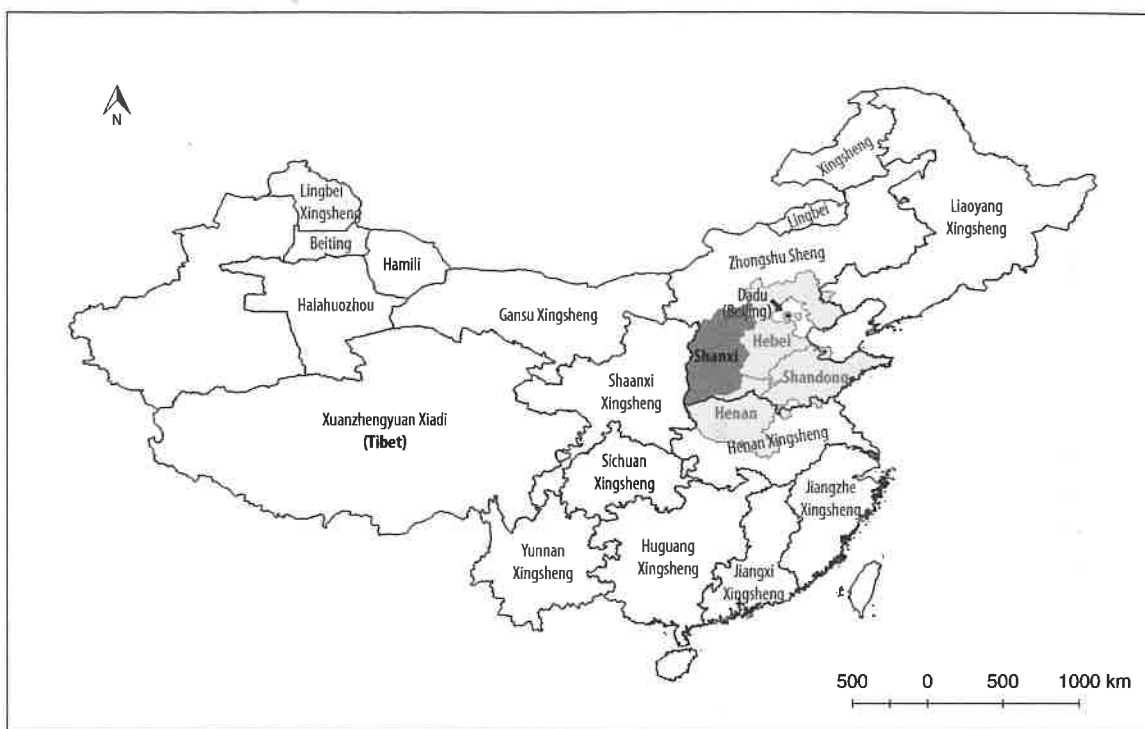


In the Wake of the Mongols

*The Making of a New Social Order in
North China, 1200–1600*

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Published by the Harvard University Asia Center
Distributed by Harvard University Press
Cambridge (Massachusetts) and London 2018



MAP 1 The Mongol-Yuan Empire superimposed on the territory of modern China. Map adapted from "Yuan Dynasty Provincial Boundaries in 1290," downloaded from https://worldmap.harvard.edu/data/geonode:yuan_dynasty_provincial_boundaries_in_12_ia2. Harvard CHGIS.

INTRODUCTION

Like many young men in prominent northern Chinese families, Zhou Xianchen (1188–1262) studied hard through his early years. He hoped to follow in his older brother's footsteps and pass the civil service examinations. As a boy, Xianchen attended school in his home county—Dingxiang in the northern part of Shanxi province. Dingxiang is located just south of the Yanmen Pass, one of the major passes in the Great Wall. On the other side of the Great Wall stretched the grasslands of the Mongolian steppes, where in 1206 Chinggis Khan (ca. 1162–1227) was forming a powerful confederation after being named leader of all the people in tents, who would be soon known by the entire Eurasian world as the Mongols. As a young man in his twenties, Xianchen knew little about what was happening on the steppes. He continued to study for the exams.

Then in 1216 the Mongols attacked his hometown, and Xianchen gave up his hope of becoming a civil official. He first organized a local militia to fight the Mongols and defended his relatives and fellow townsmen, but the Mongol troops, riding powerful steeds and using lethal weapons, overwhelmed the Chinese. The Mongols shot what were then the world's most advanced compound bows with uncanny accuracy and used large-scale siege weaponry such as catapult-propelled gunpowder shells to break through the walls of well-guarded cities and towns.¹ Xianchen and his fellow townsmen surrendered. An experienced martial artist, Xianchen

1. Morgan, *The Mongols*, 80.

switched sides and joined the Mongol armies, which went on to conquer all of north China (*huabei* 华北) by 1234. His military service to the Mongols earned him the most prestigious social status of Hereditary Vassal (*shihou* 世侯), which allowed him and his family to monopolize the local government of Dingxiang through subsequent decades. In a few short years, Xianchen transformed himself from an examination candidate to a local warlord, and his family from a scholar-official one to a military one.

These transformations resulted from more than good luck and military prowess. Like many other strongmen who rose up in the military under the Mongols, Xianchen chose to work with clergy of Complete Realization Daoism (*Quanzhen dao* 全真道).² Quanzhen Daoism was the most powerful religious movement in north China at the time. Xianchen and the Quanzhen Daoists worked together to rebuild the postwar social order, which subsequently consolidated his family's new power. During a military campaign in southern Shanxi province, about three hundred kilometers from his home in Dingxiang, Xianchen met Guo Shouwei, a Quanzhen nun famed for her devotion. Xianchen repeatedly and earnestly invited her to his native village and eventually convinced her to relocate. There, they established the new Xuanyuan Abbey under Shouwei's supervision. This abbey helped local villagers recover from their losses and rebuild community solidarity.

Two texts carved into stone recount the lives of this man and woman. In the early twentieth century, a scholar from Dingxiang collected local inscriptions including the two texts.³ One of the steles, installed on Xianchen's grave by his family members, recorded his biography; it still stands there today. The other stele, no longer extant, was installed at the

2. Scholars often translate the term *zhen* as "perfected," "perfection," "authenticity," or "realization." See Mairson, "Accounts of the Foundation of the Quanzhen Movement," 95–96; Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*, 9–17. However, the question remains open whether the word *zhen* has a single meaning in Quanzhen teachings. The term's meaning—referring to "perfection," "realization," or "authenticity"—varies in different contexts and it seems to me that the name Complete Realization (Quanzhen) Daoism best captures the sense of the term.

3. Wang Liyong 王利用, "Gu zuofuyuan shuai quan sizhou duryuan shuai xuan shou zhenxing qianhu Zhouhou shendao bei" 故左副元帅惟四州都元帅宣授征行千户周侯神道碑, *JSK*, 2.40a–45a; Zhou Rouzhong 周柔中, "Xuanyuan guan ji" 玄元觀記, *JSK*, 2.13b–15b.

Xuanyuan Abbey by Xianchen and his younger brother. It documented how Shouwei built the abbey and worked with local villagers. These two texts preserve significant information on the alliance between the warlord and the nun. That alliance was typical of the times. Hundreds of similar local inscriptions tell similar stories of difficult conditions in north China during the Mongol conquest and of a new world that subsequently emerged.

This book is about that new world, in which men like Xianchen and women like Shouwei exercised power in local society. It tells the stories of many northern Chinese like Xianchen and Shouwei who under Mongol rule gave up one life path and consciously chose to lead a new kind of life, especially a religious one.

Chinese society experienced multiple devastating invasions by various foreign conquerors, yet none was as catastrophic as the Mongol conquest of north China in the early thirteenth century. In just two decades following the Mongols' first attack in 1211, Mongol troops systematically ravaged every city, town, and village that refused to surrender and ruthlessly killed countless inhabitants. In 1207, before the Mongol invasion, census-takers registered about fifty-three million people in the territory controlled by the Jin dynasty (1115–1234); by the time the war ended in 1234, that number had dropped by two-thirds.⁴ Wiping out more than half of the population and ruining much of the farmland and communities, the Mongols caused the old social order to collapse.

This book poses two key questions: How did northern Chinese men and women rebuild their society after the devastation of the Mongol

4. There are no accurate records or any scholarly studies of the death rate in north China during the Mongol conquest, but the few available statistics are suggestive. According to the official histories of the Jin and Yuan dynasties, when the Jin government took the last national census in 1207, the government registered 7,658,438 households and 53,632,151 individuals. The population in this year reached its Jin-dynasty peak in north China (*JS* 46.1036). In 1235 and 1236 the Mongol government registered about two million households in the Hebei, Shanxi, and Shandong regions. Although there were problems of unregistered households, changes in the average size of a household, and geographic variation, the dramatic population loss during the Jin-Mongol war was clear. For studies on the household categories and problems with those numbers, see Otagi, "Mongurujiin seiken shita no kanchi ni okeru hanseki no mondai" 蒙古人政権下の漢地における版籍の問題, in his *Tōyō shigaku ronshū*, 4: 212–59; Wu Songdi, *Zhongguo renkou shi*, 379–84; Zhang Boquan and Wu Yuhuan, "Jindai de renkou."

conquest? How did their efforts alter social and economic forces in the succeeding centuries? These questions highlight the short- and long-term impacts of the Mongol conquest on north China. Although largely unknown, a surprisingly large number of existing inscriptional sources—such as the two texts about Xianchen and Shouwei—provide sufficient evidence to answer these questions.

Based on these fascinating local materials, this book recounts a remarkable, yet previously untold, story of how northern Chinese men and women resiliently adapted to the unprecedented circumstances of the Mongol conquest and created a radically new social order under the leadership of Daoists and Buddhists. In this new social order, Quanzhen Daoism and Buddhism led northerners to form new social groups so that they could survive the Mongol invasion and rebuild communities after the war and other disasters. More impressively, both religious orders created new networks that circulated and distributed resources and wealth in the north. The Quanzhen Daoist and Buddhist orders also took in people of diverse motivations and then deployed them in a wide variety of intellectual, religious, social, and economic projects. The orders' clergy acted as the social and even political elite at the local level, translating initiatives of the Mongol rulers and the imperial state so that they served local interests.

This book documents the making of this distinctive social order during the Mongol era in the northern province of Shanxi, and its unmaking after the Mongols left in 1368. It sheds light on the fundamental ruptures in Chinese society caused by the Mongol conquest and argues that there was a distinctive northern path of social transformation featuring clergy activism. The Mongol era was not the only period in Chinese history when the clergy were influential.⁵ It was, however, the only time after the eleventh century during which organized religions served as institutional anchors in the remaking of the social order down to the village level.

5. Before the Mongol era, powerful religious orders in Chinese history included the Celestial Masters Movement during the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), Kou Qianzhi's state-backed version of Celestial Masters Daoism in the sixth century, and the Buddhist order during the Tang dynasty (618–907).

This book's geographic focus, north China, includes today's Shandong, Shanxi, Hebei, and Henan provinces as well as the Beijing and Tianjin areas (see map 1). Between the twelfth and the seventeenth centuries, this region experienced four dynastic transitions alternating between foreign and Chinese rule. In 1127, the Jurchen, an originally forest-dwelling people in modern Manchuria, defeated the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127) and established a dynasty in north China named Jin (金, "gold," which referred to the name of a river in their original territory). The Mongols defeated the Jin in 1234. The early Mongol khans ruled north China as part of the Great Mongol State (*Yoke Monggol Ulus*, or *Damenggu gao 大蒙古國* in Chinese). In 1271 Khublilai Khan (r. 1260–94), grandson of Chinggis Khan, broke away from the unified Mongol empire. He borrowed from Chinese tradition to create a dynasty, which he named "the Great Yuan" (元, "prime"), a term taken from the Chinese classic *Book of Changes*.⁶ Yuan rule in China ended in 1368, when the Chinese peasant and former Buddhist monk Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328–98) led an army that drove the Mongols out of Beijing and established the Ming (明, "bright") dynasty (1368–1644). In the seventeenth century, Han Chinese rule again gave way to foreign rule when the Manchus—descendants of the Jurchen—conquered the Ming and ruled China as the Qing (清, "pure") dynasty (1644–1911).

If we compare the Mongols to the other two foreign dynasties, the Jin and the Qing, we can understand better what made them unique. The Jurchen and the Manchus largely retained and even consolidated a Chinese model of social order that had been fully established in the Northern Song dynasty. The Confucian literati (*shi* 士 or *shidafu* 士大夫, which more often than not refers to scholar-officials), a social group whose members specialized in learning, spearheaded the creation and understanding of this model, in which literary skill and scholarly learning were the major qualifications for entrance into officialdom via civil service examinations testing knowledge of Confucian classics. During the Northern Song, civilian rule underpinned this literati-centered social order, and political power rested in the alliance between the emperor and the bureaucracy

6. In doing so, the Mongols started a new tradition, and following dynasties chose names that referred to their fundamental trait instead of the founding family's name or origin.

run by scholar-officials.⁷ The Jin and the Qing continued this model of social order.⁸ The Mongols did not: they introduced new systems of governance that drew heavily on steppe traditions and bypassed many Confucian political norms, resulting in structural changes throughout Chinese society. Their rule departed so radically from the Northern Song-Jin model that they created a uniquely decentralized political order. This is the immediate historical context for the new social order that is the subject of this book.

The Transformation of the Political Order under Mongol Rule

To understand why the social changes in north China were unique, we must first understand the profoundly transformative nature of Mongol rule. Destructive as they were, the Mongol invasions were just the beginning of this transformation. Six subsequent generations of northern Chinese would live under and adapt to a political and social system that was unlike anything China had ever experienced before.

Above all, the Mongol-Yuan regime created a whole new system of social stratification by classifying its subjects according to their "ethnic" and professional identity as defined by the Mongols. The Mongols divided all people into four ethnic groups in a descending order of legal status: the Mongols, the *Semi* 色目 people (that is, the "various categories" of Central and Western Asian peoples), the Han people (*hanren* 漢人), and the Southerners (*nanren* 南人). The Han people referred to residents of

7. The establishment of this political order of civilian rule, as Deng Xiaonan has amply demonstrated, was also the outcome of a long-term ideological enterprise of shaping a powerful Song political culture known as "the 'Ancestors' Family Instructions," which was originally formulated by the Song literati and constantly used by the emperor and his officials to stabilize the political order. See Deng, *Zuzong zhifa*. A concise English version of this important work is available in Deng and Lamouroux, "The 'Ancestors' Family Instructions."

8. Scholarship of the New Qing history has demonstrated that the Manchus applied different ways of governance in the empire's frontier regions where Han Chinese were not the majority population. See Elliot, *The Manchu Way*.

the previous Jin territory, regardless of their actual ethnic identity preceding the conquest. Similarly, the Southerners referred to residents of the previous territory of the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279). Along with redefining "ethnic" identity, the Mongols established a complex household system that organized people into eighty-three hereditary household categories.⁹ The ethnic four-rank system was fundamentally a form of political stratification. It often came into play when the government handed out offices and other state honors. In contrast, the household system was a form of rigid social stratification. It had more impact on people's social and economic life.

Meanwhile, unlike their immediate predecessors, the Mongols did not base their administrative models only on the traditions of earlier dynasties. They freely borrowed from multiple historical models and traditions of the nomadic steppes, Islamic and Central Asian regimes, and Chinese dynastic institutions. As a result, the Mongol-Yuan state created multiple centers of legitimate political power and established varied routes to these centers of power. Many of these new power centers and routes were alien to Song or even Jin scholar-officials.

To begin with, the Mongol-Yuan state extended the prerogatives of the emperor to the entire royal family. In doing so, it formalized alternative centers of political power held by Mongol princes, empress dowagers, imperial sons-in-law, and even distinguished generals. The Mongols, as Peter Jackson has pointed out, regarded their conquests "not as the possessions of the emperor or Great Khan but as the joint property of the imperial family as a whole, including female members."¹⁰ Provision thus had to be made for all imperial family members. Chinese practices since the Tang and Song dynasties had located most imperial descendants in the capital and afforded them an affluent lifestyle but little political power.¹¹ The Mongol rulers, in contrast, continued the nomadic customs of patrimonialism to give fiefs to princes and other nobles.

The Mongols' fiefs were of two basic types: "*ulus*" (*ulus* is a Mongolian term meaning "realm, people under one ruler"), mainly on the steppes;

9. On the distinctive household system under Mongol rule, see Huang Qinglian, *Yundai buji zhishi yanjiu*.

10. Jackson, "From Ullus to Khanate: The Making of the Mongol State c. 1220–c. 1290," 12.

11. Chafee, *Branches of Heaven*, 8.

and "appanage" ("tonxia" 投下 in Chinese sources, meaning "shares of population, lands, and booty") in settled areas. While *ulus* holders directly controlled their domain and people, appanage holders did so indirectly. In theory, officials answerable to the great khan governed the appanages, but control was often highly contested. From the time Ögödei Khan (r. 1229–41) distributed appanages in north China in 1236, Mongol nobles appointed overseers (*darughachi*) and judges (*jarghuchi*) in their appanages; some even had their private representatives collect taxes directly. Appanage holders had their representatives in the central government and drew on government resources to reward their retainers (*keziq* in Mongolian; *queexue* 怯薛 in Chinese sources) or to patronize religious establishments.¹² As emperor, Khubilai Khan created a special type of appanage known as "fiefs of stationed princes": the princes and their descendants inherited positions as the highest military leaders in their fiefs—often in strategically important frontier regions—and shared administrative power with local civil governments.¹³ The Mongol appanage system resulted in multiplicity in the political structure of Yuan China. Unlike the Chinese imperial system that concentrated all state power in the hands of the emperor and his bureaucracy, the Mongol khan co-ruled with his entire imperial clan.

While the Mongol rulers did draw on Chinese institutional models to create a bureaucracy, the Yuan administration was fundamentally based on a key Mongol tradition: recruitment practice favored hereditary transmission.¹⁴ The dozens of families who had "*hujia'ur*" status monopolized almost all high-ranking positions.¹⁵ *Hujia'ur* is a Mongolian term (*genjiao* 根脚 in Chinese) indicating personal connections, family background, and seniority. In the Mongol-Yuan political context, *hujia'ur* referred particularly to an individual's or family's historical connections to Chinggis Khan and his descendants. The *hujia'ur* families received special recogni-

tion for the loyalty that bound Mongol rulers to their subjects. When later Mongol rulers appointed civil and military officials, they gave priority to men from families with *hujia'ur* connections. The earlier those connections had been established, the more prestigious the family, and the higher the ranks its male members could receive.¹⁶

While the majority of *hujia'ur* families were Mongols or *Semu* people, about twenty ethnically Chinese families also achieved *hujia'ur* status. These were the families of the most powerful Chinese Hereditary Vassals, who governed territories with tens of cities and commanded armies with tens of thousands of soldiers.¹⁷ Almost all *hujia'ur* families originated from military leaders who had joined early Mongol khans in the wars of conquest—men like Zhou Xianchen, whose story opened this book. Descendants of these military elites inherited their ancestors' privileged positions. They formed the upper and middle classes of the governing elite in the Mongol-Yuan regime. The regime thus brought back a style of government based on aristocracy (which had vanished in China during the tenth century) by creating a hereditary status group with guaranteed legal privileges and access to office.¹⁸

The Mongol tradition of hereditary transmission explains early Mongol rulers' indifference to the Chinese system of civil service examinations, the defining meritocratic institution of the Chinese Confucian state since the Northern Song. Also, as the Mongols traditionally valued technicians over scholars, early Mongol rulers expressed no interest in employing the services of Confucian-educated scholars.¹⁹ Although Khubilai Khan and his successors used Confucian cultural heritage as a means of reinforcing their political legitimacy in China, they established no civil service examinations until 1313, when they announced the restoration of the

12. Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China*, 73–79; Arwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia*, 18–19; Li Zhi'an, *Yuandai jiefeng zhidu yanjiu*, 53–154 and 247–51.

13. Li Zhi'an, *Yuandai jiefeng zhidu yanjiu*, 183–205.

14. Chinggis Khan first established the policy of ensuring that all of the 90–120 captains of the "thousand" military units would receive a hereditary share in government authority and revenues, and this tradition of hereditary transmission soon spread to all levels. See Arwood, "Mongols," 242 and 245.

15. Funada, "Semuren yu Yuandai zhidu shehui," 166.

16. Xiao, "Yuandai sida menggu jiazü" 元代四大蒙古家系, in his *Nei beiguo*, 511.

17. Xiao, "Yuandai jige hanjun shijia de shihuan yu hunyin" 元代幾個漢軍世家的仕宦與婚姻, in his *Nei beiguo*, 278.

18. For the disappearance of the aristocracy during the Tang-Song transition, see Tackett, *Destruction*.

19. As Elizabeth Endicott-West has pointed out, the Mongols' disdain for Confucian-educated scholars derived not so much from any hostility to the Confucian tradition but rather from the ease with which the Mongols recognized the utility of practical endeavors such as record keeping and military skills (*Mongolian Rule in China*, 113).

examinations on a triennial basis.²⁰ Yet they recruited only twenty-five holders of *jìnshì* 進士 ("presented scholar," the highest degree for imperial civil service examinations in Chinese history) from each of the four legally defined ethnic groups. This meant they recruited no more than fifty adult Chinese males in a given exam year, compared to the many hundreds who were recruited every three years during the Song and the Jin. Moreover, the *jìnshì* degree holders, who accounted for a mere 4.3 percent of all government officials in the last fifty years of the Yuan, never earned the respect of the Yuan rulers. The degree holders' political status was not only much inferior to that of men from *hujiaur* families but even lower than that of those who entered officialdom through the route of clerkship, a path the literati of the Song and Jin had despised.²¹ The Mongol-Yuan political world thus marginalized the Confucian literati.

Among the Chinese population in north China, job performance and personal connections replaced literary skill and Confucian learning as the major qualifications for entrance to and promotion within Mongol-Yuan officialdom. Four occupational groups benefited most from the Mongols' recruitment standard of job performance, as Iiyama Tomoyasu points out: members of the military; clerks; members of specialist households, and religious leaders. Many northern Chinese men were drawn to military service by the prospect of rapid promotion and an extraordinary privilege that was seldom granted to their civilian counterparts: they could transmit their office to their heirs. Many educated men, on the other hand, were attracted to careers as clerks, due to the possibility of promotion into officialdom.²² However, the clerical route to office was a long and tedious journey for such men: they had to work their way up through unranked or low-ranking clerical positions to attain a ranked, salaried position as a local official, and thirty years of service in a prefectural government merited promotion into officialdom only at the low rung of the

20. The Mongol-Yuan regime continued to worship Confucius as the supreme sage of state orthodoxy in temples devoted to him and supported the establishment of Confucian temple-schools from the metropolis down to the county level to accommodate members of Confucian households.

21. Xiao, "Yuandai keju yu jingying liudong: yi yuantong yuannian jinshi wei zhongxin" 元代科舉與精英流動: 以元統元年進士為中心, in his *Nel beigua*, 187–90.

22. Iiyama, "Genealogical Stoles in North China," 164.

seventh of nine grades. By the time they became local officials, most men had reached a relatively advanced age. Only a few could achieve high-ranking positions before retirement, and those who did so often had secured patronage from Mongol princes or other nobles.²³ So although the Mongol-Yuan regime offered some institutional routes for Chinese men to enter the bureaucratic government, the rewards were few.

By Chinese standards, the most peculiar and unorthodox recruitment measure was the elevation of specialist households and religious leaders. In the complex household system, the specialist households were those whose members had proficiency in a specific skill, such as craftsmanship, medical knowledge, divination, or animal handling. The Yuan government created specific bureaucratic agencies to administer specialist households separately from the ordinary commoner households (*minhu* 民戶). It also assigned specialist households to permanent and hereditary service to *ulus* and appanage holders, who set up private agencies to oversee them. Talented men from specialist households, if judged to be particularly skilled by the Mongol ruling elite, could gain access to official positions in those agencies by rising through the ranks to become heads of their industry in a particular region.²⁴ Since the *ulus* and appanage holders directly appointed officials to staff their private agencies, personal connections played an important role for specialist-household men seeking promotion. In these ways, the social group of craftsmen and other manually skilled people gained official status for the first time in Chinese society.

Religious leaders, on the other hand, gained power through a distinctive system of separate government bureaucracies for each recognized religion.²⁵ These religious bureaucracies held civilian jurisdiction through

23. For examples, see Iiyama, "A Career between Two Cultures."

24. Li Zhi'an, *Yuandai jingfeng zhidu jianjiu*, 162–82; Iiyama, "Genealogical Stoles in North China," 164–65.

25. The Mongols recognized four major religions: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, and Nestorian Christianity. In the 1280s, the Yuan regime created three different court bureaucracies to administer religious communities, the *Xuanzheng Yuan* 宣政院 for Buddhism, the *Jixian yuan* 集賢院 for Daoism, and the *Congfu si* 崇福司 for Christianity (YS 87.2192–94 and 89.3273). Although Islam was one of the four religions recognized by the Mongols, no central Muslim organization was founded in Yuan China. This was likely due to Islam's fall from favor in Khublai's reign. See Atwood, "Buddhists as Natives."

the controversial system of joint courts (*yuehui* 約會), which allowed their representatives, together with other authorities, to settle legal cases that involved religious communities.²⁶ Given the overwhelming influence of Buddhism and Daoism as two native religions in China, the religious bureaucracies under Mongol rule were often referred to as "Buddhist and Daoist government offices" (*sengdao yamen* 僧道衙門) in Chinese sources.

In this system of religious administration, the Buddhist bureaucracy reigned supreme. After Khubilai became the great khan of the Mongol empire in 1260, he established Tibetan Lamaist Buddhism as the state religion. Imperial patronage of Buddhism continued until 1368, and the Buddhists became the most powerful religious group in Yuan China.²⁷ Paralleling the civil bureaucracy from the central court to regional and local governments, the Buddhist bureaucracy formed a semiautonomous power center on both the national and local levels. The Mongol state even granted Buddhist officials ranks and honors in the same way as it did for civil officials. The Mongols thus made religious service a prominent route to government office, opening up new access to power, status, and wealth.

Even before 1260, the Mongols had granted clergy extraordinary social and economic privileges. The Mongols subscribed to a unique political theology which, as Christopher Atwood argues, assumed that the religions the Mongols favored—including Buddhism and Daoism—all prayed to the same God, who had blessed Chinggis Khan with victories in war and continued to respond to human prayers by granting favors to the dynasty. To secure God's blessings through prayer, the Mongols gave their favored religions extensive tax exemptions and patronage. While early Mongol rulers did not collect any taxes from the religious orders, Khubilai tried to curtail their religious privileges by ordering them to pay land and commercial taxes, but his successors revoked his policy.²⁸ In general, the level of tax exemption and autonomy the Mongols granted to the clergy as a whole was far greater than that in earlier or later dynasties. The Quanzhen Daoists, benefiting from their master's early personal connections to Chinggis Khan, were the first Chinese religious group that took advantage of this policy, and the Buddhists quickly followed suit.

26. Cho, "Beyond Tolerance."

27. Franke, *From Tribal Chieftain to Universal Emperor*, 58.

28. Atwood, "Validation by Holiness or Sovereignty," 252.

In sum, the political system of the Mongol-Yuan regime marked a genuine departure from the meritocratic civilian rule established in the Northern Song dynasty. The Jin state had partially inherited this Song tradition. It concentrated its military power among the Jurchen but continued to bring Chinese literati into the civil bureaucracy via the civil service examination system. The Mongol-Yuan regime, in contrast, adopted a policy of strong decentralization and a steppe-style aristocracy. Mongol rulers allocated legitimate political power to multiple centers within and beyond the regular bureaucracy and allowed both institutional and personal access to those power centers. They also created a hereditary status group to constitute the bulk of the upper and middle classes of governing elite and preferred people with either personal connections or inherited positions, in spite of any other recruitment criteria.

This novel political milieu under Mongol rule bred a new social environment in north China. Many Chinese individuals and families readjusted their career choices and sought to take advantage of whatever connections they could foster with powerful patrons. Careers in the military, clerical positions, or specialist households all relied heavily on the authority of the state. Only the religious route provided not just relatively easy access to powerful patrons but also access to ideological and institutional clout outside the government. Underpinned by their unprecedented political, social, and economic power, Buddhist and Daoist orders established their institutions in almost every city, town, and village throughout north China. The clergy and their institutions, serving as critical indigenous agents in negotiating with the Mongol state, provided northern Chinese with new, but effective, means of navigating the perils and uncertainties of Mongol rule.

A focus on religious institutions and clergy leads to the two inherently connected issues examined in this book: the social institutions that dominated local society and the social elites whose members ran those institutions. These institutions and elites often played important roles in the social reorganization caused by dynastic transition, political reform, and natural disaster. The process of social reorganization, in turn, revealed major changes in power dynamics as institutions and individuals vied for political clout, social status, and material wealth. The existing scholarship on social elites and their institutions has largely focused on south China, and it forms the most relevant intellectual context for this study.

to engage with. Focusing on north China allows this book to show the workings of a local society quite different from that in the south.

The South-Centered Narrative of Social Change in Middle-Period China

According to the traditional Confucian ideal, the family provided a timeless model for ruling elites to organize society and govern the state. A passage from *The Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學), one of the Confucian *Four Books*, articulates the prevailing Confucian ideology about the relation among self, family, state, and the world: "Those of antiquity who wished that all people throughout the empire would let their inborn luminous virtue shine forth put governing their states well first; wishing to govern their states well, they first established harmony in their households; wishing to establish harmony in their households, they first cultivated themselves" (古之欲明明德於天下者，先治其國。欲治其國者，先齊其家者，先修其身).²⁹ This Confucian ideal of political governance and social arrangement, as Anthony Yu argues, posits that there is a fundamental unity between the realms of ethics and politics based on family and state.³⁰ The family was the basic unit of society, and no intermediary institutions existed in the social space between family and state.

Early Confucian teachings thus provided little instruction to the ruling elite on how to establish leadership in society beyond managing their own households and serving virtuously in government. Instead, religious Daoism and Buddhism, increasingly important after the second century CE, provided the first intermediary institutions in Chinese history to link the family to society and the state. Religious Daoism posed the first challenge to Confucian ideology but recognized the importance of family. Buddhism, on the other hand, rejected the Chinese family system and valorized a celibate clergy. Daoist and Buddhist monasteries flourished and by the tenth century provided nongovernmental public space, education, and community.³¹

29. *The Four Books*, 4–5.
30. A. Yu, *State and Religion in China*, 96.
31. Gernet, *Buddhism in Chinese Society*; Dien, *Six Dynasties Civilization*, 387–423.

In the late tenth century, the Northern Song dynasty began a new era of social change in terms of dominant social elites and institutions. On the one hand, Song China, as Robert Hymes argues, saw a strong new tendency of "laicization of religion" driven by the growth of a commercial market in religion. The balance of power and initiative shifted from the clergy toward the laity. While the laity provided demand, the clergy offered services catering to the laity's needs, often for payment.³² On the other hand, accompanying the new rebalancing of lay-clerical relations was a full-fledged Confucian revival. The Northern Song fully established the civil service examination system, which granted Confucian literati both a chance to hold government office and a privileged legal status. Benefiting from their elite status, literati created new literati-centered institutions based on kinship. On a broader scale, they also formed non-kin networks based on social connections and mutual recognition as fellow literati. Using these networks, Song literati drew on preexisting dyadic ties of friendship, shared student status, student-teacher relationships, and shared local origin to form poetic or intellectual societies.³³ In this period, the literati-centered social transformation occurred in both north and south China.

The year 1127 marked a watershed in Chinese history. In the century that followed the Jurchen conquest of the Northern Song, China was divided, with the south under the Southern Song and the north under the non-Chinese rule of the Jin dynasty. In the past few decades, historians of middle-period China have enthusiastically responded to the influential hypothesis proposed by Hymes and Robert Hartwell, which posits that there was a localist shift in the Song literati after 1127. According to this hypothesis, the Southern Song literati developed new locally oriented strategies and self-definition as well as new patterns of elite life and elite-state relations that continued in southern China down to the Qing dynasty.³⁴ In demonstrating how political office continued to be appreciated as an indication of the literati's place in the Southern Song, Beverly Bossler recognizes the localist shift but emphasizes that the change was gradual and more continuous than disruptive in the Northern and Southern Song

32. Hymes, "Song Society and Social Change," 596.
33. *Ibid.*, 631–32.
34. Hartwell, "Demographic, Political, and Social Transformations of China"; Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen*.

periods.³⁵ In his recent work, Hymes stresses that in the Southern Song, the sons of prominent families—both those who had not yet achieved office and those who had reached high office—adopted this localist strategy, but he cautions us not to misunderstand the “localist strategy” construct as “dissociation from the state or the complete abandonment of national-level aspirations by Southern Song elites.”³⁶

Intellectual historians have emphasized the relationship between the localist shift and the contemporary Neo-Confucian intellectual movement of the Learning of the Way (*Daoxue* 道學), led by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200). Highlighting localism and voluntarism as two major features, Peter Bol argues that the Neo-Confucian Movement in the Southern Song suited a social elite whose members had developed considerable independence from the state and did not always hold office. The same centuries saw the rise both of the southern literati as an independent social force and of Neo-Confucianism as a literati ideology.³⁷

In the 2003 volume *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*, scholars argue that the Jiangnan 江南 region of the lower Yangzi River basin was the only region that continued the earlier trend of social transformation—particularly the localist turn of literati elite—after the Mongol conquest of the south in the 1270s. Although their exclusive emphasis on Jiangnan is problematic, these scholars importantly show that the Southern Song pattern of local literati social centrality continued in the Yuan.³⁸

35. See Bossler, *Powerful Relations*. Her argument has been echoed by Huang Kuanchong's case studies of several elite families, which demonstrate that both Northern and Southern Song elite families based their social networks on local society and aimed at office in the central government (*Songdai de jiazhi*).

36. Hymes, “Sung Society and Social Change,” 631, see also 627–58.

37. Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*. While accepting Bol's view in general, Hymes also argues that the Learning of the Way Movement was not only a reflection of what he called “the *shih*-oriented culture” but also “a considered and critical response to it” (“Sung Society and Social Change,” 658).

38. Smith and von Glahn, eds., *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition*. See particularly the introduction, chapter 1, and chapter 7. Christian Lamouroux points out the necessity of studying other regions first before jumping to these conclusions, especially the assumption that the Jiangnan experience represented the general trajectory of historical development for most other regions in late imperial China (review of *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition*).

In the literati-centered society of south China in the Southern Song and Yuan, local literati elites indeed created their own institutions. They not only established a new model of inclusive local lineages,³⁹ Southern literati, especially Neo-Confucians, also created private academies as institutional bases to form networks. To offset the great influence of Buddhist and Daoist devotional societies among commoners, literati elites created charitable granaries and community compacts. They hoped that these would absorb non-literati families into reconstituted local communities under the leadership of literati families.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, by supporting Buddhist and Daoist monasteries as well as the temples of local cults, southern literati families expanded their influence into the religious realm.⁴¹

The increasing influence of literati-centered institutions, as Hymes argues, contributed to the continued laicization under the Mongols.⁴² The southern laity held more power than they had earlier, and the clergy were more inclined to try to accommodate the interests of the laity. This phenomenon reached well beyond the elite level to encompass the popular level. Consider Barend ter Haar's innovative study of lay devotional societies in the Song and Yuan periods. These societies, which often did not have clerical leadership, demonstrated a capacity for lay religious achievement.⁴³

This South-based narrative represents the prevailing approach to middle-period Chinese history in general and to state-society relations in particular, with an almost exclusive focus on the literati. This approach is appropriate for the south. The south developed the strongest literati culture of all Chinese regions after the eleventh century, and it was in the south that the influential Neo-Confucian Movement arose after the twelfth century. As this book shows, however, this model does not apply to the north, which underwent more than two hundred years of foreign

39. See Clark, *Portrait of a Community*; Hymes, “Sung Society and Social Change,” 656–57.

40. Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, 229–56.

41. Hymes, *Way and Byway*, chapter 5, and “Sung Society and Social Change,” 600.

42. Hymes, “Sung Society and Social Change,” 618–21.

43. Ter Haar, *The White Lotus Teachings*, 1–113.

rule after 1127.⁴⁴ The leading historians of the Song and Yuan dynasties, including Xiao Qiqing, Li Zhi'an, and Hymes, have all called attention to regional discrepancies between the north and the south in economic, cultural, and political traditions after 1127.⁴⁵ The north and the south indeed followed very different paths of social transformation, particularly in their responses to Mongol rule.

A Different Path: The Social Dominance of Religious Institutions

A wide range of local sources will show that as far as north China was concerned, religious institutions functioned as critical building blocks but that, interestingly, northern Confucian literati and their institutions were much weaker than their southern counterparts. Even after the Mongols unified the two regions in 1279, the Confucian literati as a distinctive social group remained strong only in the south. The Mongol government placed the Chinese literati under the category of Confucian households (*rubu* 儒户) and granted them exemptions from the duty of labor service similar to what Buddhists and Daoists enjoyed. But unlike the clergy, Confucian households did not receive tax exemptions because the Mongol rulers did not see Confucianism as a religion.⁴⁶ Also, although men of Confucian households continued to study Confucian texts in public school, mastery of those texts no longer led to political office. The Mongols excluded both northern and southern scholars from political power. Nevertheless, southern literati suffered much less from the Mongol invasion than their northern counterparts did, and the southerners' institutions

remained relatively intact. After 1279 most former Song literati families in the south continued to thrive; they controlled positions in private academies and official schools, developed lineage organizations, and played leading roles in organizing local militia, water control and relief efforts, and even religious affairs.⁴⁷

In contrast, the influence of northern literati remained almost negligible. Confucian households in the north accounted for about 0.167 percent of the entire population of north China, whereas in the south the number was close to 1 percent.⁴⁸ Men from the northern Confucian households studied or taught in official schools, as there were few private academies in the north. They spent decades holding different positions as schoolteachers or government clerks before finally being promoted to an office of the lowest rank—if they were lucky. Moreover, while 80–100 percent of the counties in the south had official schools, only 10–25 percent of the counties in the north did.⁴⁹

Northern elites included the families of those who had secured government or extragovernment appointments in the regular civil bureaucracy, military service, the separate administration of specialist households, or Mongol nobles' appanages. Indeed, as Hymes rightly suspects, northern elites were more dependent on offices and the state than their southern counterparts were.⁵⁰ Among the northern elites, families of Hereditary Vassals such as General Zhou Xianchen attained the most prestige.⁵¹ These families exerted great influence in local society. They commonly put up genealogical steles in ancestral graveyards to confirm

44. Two studies have discussed north China but still focus on literati. See Ong, *Men of Letters*; Koh, *A Northern Alternative*.

45. Xiao, "Zhongguo jinshi qianqi nanbei fazhan de qiyi yu tonghe: Yi Nansong Jin Yuan shiqi de jingji shehui wenhua wei zhongxin" 中国近世前期南北发展的歧异与汇合: 以南宋金元时期的经济社会文化为中心, in his *Yuandai ziqun wenhua*, 1–22; Li Zhi'an, "Liangge Nanbeichao"; Hymes, "Song Society and Social Change," 658–61.

46. Khutblai issued two edicts (in 1284 and 1285) specifying that Confucian households would be exempted from labor service but not from paying land and commercial taxes. YDZ, 2:1090–91.

47. Walton, "Song-Yuan zhuannian de hanren"; Su, *Yuandai difang jingying*.

48. According to Xiao's estimates, northern Confucian households in 1276 numbered 3,890, constituting only 0.61 percent of the total number of military and civilian households (2,320,000). Li Xiusheng has pointed out the mistake in Xiao's calculation and argued that the correct percentage should be about 0.167 percent. See Xiao, "Yuandai de rubu: Rushi diwei yanjinshi shangde yizhang" 元代的儒户: 儒士地位演进史的一章, in his *Yuandai shi xintan*, 15; Li Xiusheng, "Yuandai de rubu," 2–7.

49. Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates of Learning*, 136–37.

50. Hymes, "Song Society and Social Change," 659.

51. There is a rich body of scholarship on hereditary lords in the Mongol and Yuan periods, mostly in Japanese and Chinese. For a review of this literature and the most recent study, see Fu, *Yuandai Hanren shibou qunti*. For a study in English, see De Rachewiltz, "Personnel and Personalities."

their kinship solidarity and claim elite social status.⁵² They also intermarried with other powerful families. Still, their power did not reach very far. General Zhou's family, for instance, exercised influence in only a few neighboring villages. Also, unlike southern literati families, the new elite families in the north focused on their own descent groups and rarely incorporated non-kin into their networks.

Religious institutions, in contrast, brought the northerners together. Again, as General Zhou Xianchen's fellowship with the nun Guo Shouwei shows, northern elite families had to rely on powerful religious institutions to help them create and strengthen community solidarity. In a war-torn society, religious organizations proved most successful in nurturing community sentiment among people with different surnames and from different localities.

When the Mongol conquest destroyed vast numbers of villages, ordinary northern Chinese, especially powerless peasants, had a difficult time rebuilding their communities. Many of them turned for protection to powerful Buddhist and Daoist monasteries, which often had massive landholdings. These monasteries enjoyed tax exemptions that allowed them to accumulate both wealth and property. Buddhists and Daoists participated in agricultural production and the building of infrastructure and so helped rebuild postwar village communities. It was a popular practice among northern villagers—not just local governors like General Zhou Xianchen—to invite monks and nuns into their village communities to serve as abbots of local hermitages or temples. Villagers also organized associations of lay believers attached to those temples. To avoid paying land taxes, many villagers “donated” their farmland to large Buddhist or Daoist monasteries and affiliated themselves with the monasteries as “tenants.”

Buddhist and Daoist institutions were in general much more powerful than Confucian ones under the Mongols. Buddhist and Daoist orders even linked family and state in the Mongols' distinctive household system. Under Mongol rule, three types of households paralleled the Three Teachings (*sanziao* 三教) in Chinese tradition: Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist. Confucian scholar-officials worried that Buddhist and Daoist households outnumbered them in the empire as a whole. In 1271, a scholar-

52. Iiyama, “Sonkoryō hikokugun,” 157–59.

official named Wei Chu presented a memorial to Khubilai seeking an imperial order to allow the Hanlin Academy to function as an office in charge of Confucian households' affairs. Wei argued that because the government had specific bureaus for Daoist and Buddhist households, and even for households of musicians, it was urgent to set up an office to take care of Confucian households.⁵³ Yuan Confucians such as Wei clearly understood that their teaching had a critical weakness compared to Buddhism and Daoism: the lack of strong institutional ties among its followers.

Buddhists and Daoists parlayed their material wealth, monastic establishments, patronage networks, and religious bureaucracies into genuine political and social influence. Their impressive monastic networks, including thousands of monasteries in cities, towns, and villages throughout China, contributed to expansive connections among their members—including both the clergy and lay followers—at a level Confucians could not match. The Buddhist and Daoist orders became the dominant social institutions in stabilizing and rebuilding postwar society. Eventually, it took more than a dynastic transition and changes in state policies for the two religions to lose that influence in the late imperial period.

The Setting, Sources, and Chapter Outline

This book focuses on Shanxi because that province provides a perfect regional context for exploring long-term social change in north China. From ancient times, the province has been a coherent geographical unit. It is bounded by the Taihang Mountains in the east, and one of its two historical names is *Shanxi* 山西, meaning “west of the mountains.” The Liliang Mountains and the Yellow River create a natural border between Shanxi and Shaanxi province to the west; Shanxi's other historical name is *Hedong* 河東, meaning “east of the river.” The province is bounded on the south by the Yellow River and on the north by the Yin Mountains and steppe. Two-thirds of the province lies in the eastern part of the loess plateau. Hilly lands occupy the province's eastern and

53. Wei Chu 魏初, “Qing yi hanlin guan ru” 請以翰林管儒戶, in *Yandai zongji jilu*, 11177.

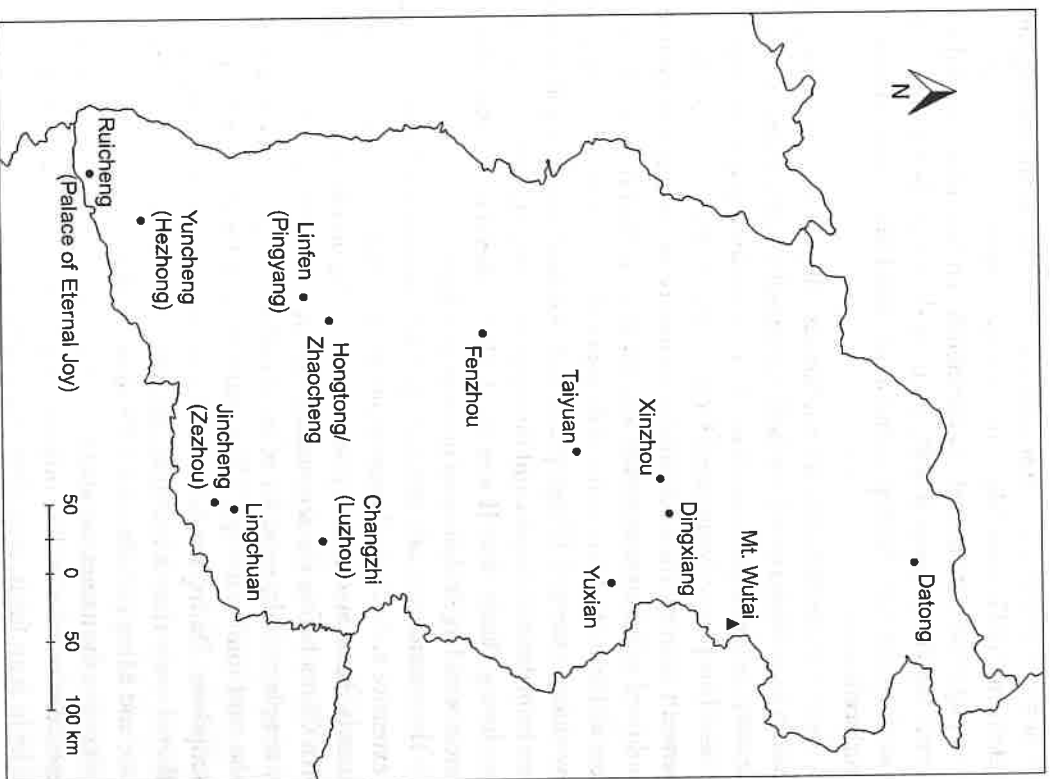
western sections, and a string of river basins lie in the middle along its biggest river, the Fen.

Shanxi maintained a high degree of continuity in administrative structure across the various dynasties after the thirteenth century. The province includes three major regions from north to south: Datong 大同, Taiyuan 太原, and Pingyang 平陽 (map 2). In the Yuan dynasty, for the first time in history, these three regions were integrated into one regional administrative unit under the name of the Pacification Commission of Hedong Shanxi (*Hedong shanxi dao xuanwei si* 河東山西道宣慰司), which was under the direct administration of the Central Secretariat (*Zhongshubeng* 中書省), the central government's chief administrative agency. In the Ming these three regions became Shanxi province. This study mainly focuses on the regions of Taiyuan and Pingyang, which jointly bore the name Hedong from the Northern Song dynasty on.⁵⁴ The region of Datong is excluded from this study because it inherited culture and population from the Liao dynasty (907–1123) instead of the Northern Song. Also, unlike Taiyuan and Pingyang, in the Jin dynasty the Darong region was a gathering point for Jurchen nobles, who owned much of the local land.⁵⁵ After 1127, exemplifying the common experience of north China, communities in Taiyuan and Pingyang underwent many periods of large-scale social disruption because of wars, raiding by nomads, and natural disasters. The recurrent fragmentation of local society resulted in the reshuffling of local power structures.

This study also focuses on Shanxi because of the province's rare abundance of available local sources from numerous religious establishments. Throughout history the region has developed strong traditions of religious belief and practice. The scarcity of water contributes to the popularity of rainmaking rituals and water deity worship. Often seen as a cradle of ancient Chinese civilization, Shanxi had an extraordinarily rich collection of famous mythical and historical figures, many of whom developed into local tutelary deities known for bringing rain or water resources. It was

54. The administrative units in the Taiyuan area in the Jin, Yuan, and Ming dynasties were, respectively, the northern circuit of Hedong, Taiyuan circuit (Jining circuit after 1305), and Taiyuan prefecture; the units in the Pingyang area were the southern circuit of Hedong, Pingyang circuit (Jinning circuit after 1305), and Pingyang prefecture.

55. Liu Pujiang, *Liao Jin shilun*, 219.



MAP 2 Places in Shanxi province mentioned in this book. Map adapted from "Provinces of China (Circa 1997)," downloaded from https://worldmap.harvard.edu/data/geonode:Provinces_1997. Harvard CHGIS.

also home to several important sacred sites for the organized religions of Buddhism and Daoism. Mt. Wutai, in northern Shanxi, became a Buddhist pilgrimage site as early as the eighth century, while the Palace of Eternal Joy (*Yongle gong* 永樂宮), built by the Quanzhen Daoist School in southern Shanxi, developed into a national Daoist center in the thirteenth century.

From the eleventh century on, Shanxi villagers formed community worship associations (*she* 社) to hold regular religious ceremonies—often featuring theatrical performances—in temples dedicated to various local deities. This practice continued for a thousand years. Even in the early twentieth century, the traditional community worship associations still conducted religious ceremonies and hired theatrical troupes. Many of these activities died out in the early years of Communist rule, but they have since reemerged. Geographical isolation and strong religious traditions helped many temples and inscriptions carved on stone steles to survive during World War II and the Cultural Revolution, when similar sources were largely destroyed in other provinces.

These materials made this study possible. Recent publications, as well as extensive archaeological excavations in Shanxi, have produced a body of newly discovered primary sources touching on all aspects of life in north China before the seventeenth century: inscriptions on stone steles, temple murals, epitaphs of local leaders, irrigation documents on stone, and tomb carvings.⁵⁶ The main sources for this study are stele inscriptions. During my fieldwork in Shanxi between 2006 and 2014, I collected more than a hundred unpublished inscriptions from the Jin, Yuan, and Ming periods, especially those on the reverse sides of the steles that give the names, occupations, and villages of the donors. Many of these steles remain in their original temples and shrines. Some of them still lie in farm fields, and others have been moved to local museums. I have transcribed many of these unpublished inscriptions and used them

56. This study has greatly benefited from a provincewide project in the past decade that has published stele inscriptions from all counties and cities in the series *A Complete Collection of Steles in Shanxi* (*Sanjin shike daquan* 三晉石刻大全). The series now includes more than forty volumes, and more are on the way. Unfortunately, however, many of the inscriptions published in it are not accompanied by information about the donor.

in this study (appendix 1). This book also draws on a wide range of other local sources, especially local gazetteers and literary anthologies.

The nature of existing local sources reflects the north-south divergence between 1200 and 1600. In south China, a large number of sources on paper survive in the forms of manuscript and printing. These include anthologies, genealogies, contracts, and miscellaneous notes. They have enabled social historians to write in-depth accounts of social change in regions like the lower Yangzi delta, the Pearl River delta, and Fujian province.⁵⁷ In contrast, printing—especially for private and commercial purposes—was much less common in the north, and cultural expression on paper was also less important. As in other northern regions, the most distinctive local sources in Shanxi are stele inscriptions. As this study will show, the exceptional abundance of stele inscriptions in north China, particularly in the Mongol-Yuan period, is not an accident. Steles were the most common way for northern individuals and institutions to express their social power. For this reason, steles are not just a source material. They also reveal the nature of the social performance the actors—including those who installed the steles, wrote the inscriptions for the steles, and read the steles—had in mind in the past.

Five chapters structured by time period and topic follow. This study focuses on the Mongol-Yuan period and provides partial coverage of the Jin and Ming dynasties for context. In the Jin dynasty, the group with the most social prestige was the literati, who received a Confucian education in state-sponsored public schools and entered Jin officialdom through civil service examinations. Tracing the life experiences of the well-known scholar Yuan Haowen (1190–1257), who witnessed the flourishing of a Confucian social order based on examination ties, chapter 1 provides the baseline for northern Chinese society before the Mongol conquest.

The next three chapters consider the social, political, and economic dimensions of the religious institutions that created the distinctive social order in north China under Mongol rule. The Quanzhen Daoist order assumed a quasi-governmental role and organized the postwar social reconstruction from 1234 to 1281 (chapter 2). The order accommodated

57. Szonyi, *Practicing Kinship*; D. Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor*; Dean and Zheng, *Ritual Alliances of the Putian Plain*; McDermott, *The Making of a New Rural Order*.

destitute former Jin literati, provided northerners with alternative education, promoted the activities of women outside their families, and helped urban and rural residents use Quanzhen ideological ties to bind fragmented communities together. Chapter 3 analyzes the powerful new Buddhist order centering at Mt. Wutai. Elite Wutai monks creatively used their connections to the Mongol rulers and their official positions in the powerful new Buddhist bureaucracy to bring wealth and prestige to their lay families. The new Buddhist order challenged traditional norms: people came to see Buddhist monks as both filial sons and reliable husbands. Buddhist and Daoist clergy extended their influence beyond the monastery and established extensive socioeconomic ties in local society. Buddhists and Daoists penetrated irrigation associations, locally powerful and exclusive village institutions for water management and allocation (chapter 4). They participated in developing irrigation projects, acted as heads of local irrigation associations, and rebuilt rural infrastructure after the devastating earthquakes of 1303.

In 1368, the Chinese overthrew the Mongols and placed a Chinese emperor on the throne. The Ming dynasty reinstated the civil service examinations and suppressed organized religions, both Buddhist and Daoist. The distinctive Yuan-type social order changed and within two hundred years vanished in Ming Shanxi. As chapter 5 will show, this long history of unmaking the old order reveals the legacy of Mongol rule in late imperial China.

In short, Mongol rule had a much deeper and longer lasting impact on local society than the previous wave of Jurchen conquest. For three decades after the Jurchen conquest of north China in 1127, the Jin state borrowed Northern Song institutions to promote Confucianism and recruited Chinese literati to the civil bureaucracy. The northern literati retained their status as the political and social elite under Jurchen rule. State patronage and the lack of competition from southern literati resulted in by far the highest number of degree holders that north China ever produced.

The Mongols, however, transformed both the political and the social order in north China, excluding Confucian literati from government office and bringing previously marginalized social groups to the forefront. Meanwhile, the Chinese people—both literati and non-literati—showed great flexibility and creativity in their reaction to the unexpected crises

of foreign rule. They did not exclusively follow the prescriptions of some literati elites. More remarkably, religion provided the most dynamic ideological and institutional resources. Northern Chinese men and women developed innovative strategies and practices that allowed them to survive and succeed in the unfamiliar world under Mongol rule. Although the Yuan dynasty brought political unity to China and facilitated north-south communications after conquering the Southern Song in 1279, north China continued to differ significantly from the south. These differences persisted after the collapse of Mongol rule in 1368. After that date, northern and southern China had different historical trajectories partly because of their very different experiences of Mongol rule.