

The Dual Interaction Between the Taijian System and the Monarch's Self-discipline Consciousness Theory in the Song Dynasty

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Abstract. There have been numerous studies on the Taijian system in the Song Dynasty. While a few scholars have mentioned the monarch's self-discipline consciousness, hardly any have paid attention to the dual interaction between the monarch's self-discipline consciousness and the Taijian system. Furthermore, very little attention has been given to the unique role it played in the politics of the Song Dynasty. This paper takes the monarch's self-discipline consciousness as its entry point to examine the Taijian system of the Song Dynasty. It adopts methods such as literature research, comparative analysis, and case studies to systematically elaborate on the definition of the monarch's self-discipline consciousness theory, the reasons for its emergence, as well as its manifestations and influence in the Song Dynasty. Then, the paper delves into the operational basis, particularity, and the role of the Taijian system in Song dynasty politics. The paper argues that there existed a dual interactive relationship between the particularly heightened sense of self-discipline in the Song Dynasty monarch and the reasons for the establishment and operation of the Taijian system. This relationship had a profound impact on the centralized political structure of the Song Dynasty. The findings of this study provide new perspectives and reference value, addressing gaps in the study of the Song Dynasty political system.

Keywords: Song Dynasty, the Taijian system, monarch, self-discipline consciousness.

1. Introduction

Not long ago, the Chinese Academy of History published the top ten research hotspots in history for the year, and ancient Chinese state governance and system construction was among them. Within the realm of ancient state governance and institution building, the Taijian system holds a unique and valuable position. The term "taijian" collectively refers to the supervisory organisation known as the Censorate and the supervisory official affiliated with the Remonstrance Bureau.

Currently, research findings related to this system are quite abundant. Some articles discuss the construction of the system itself, such as Yu Yunguo's "Study on the System of Formal Admonition in the Song Dynasty" [1]. Others focus on the system's influence on the political development of the Song Dynasty, exemplified by Shen Songqin's work titled "The System of Formal Admonition in the Northern Song Dynasty and the Party Controversy" [2]. However, a limitation exists in that fewer scholars have studied the underlying logic and operational foundation of the system. Except for Wang Ruilai, who explicitly addressed the monarch's sense of self-discipline in "Imperial Power Revisited" [3], most Chinese scholars have scattered their focus across treatises on its relationship with physical power and the political history of the Song Dynasty.

There are very few articles that analyse the relationship between the Taijian system and the monarch's self-discipline consciousness. Nevertheless, the authors contend that the monarch's self-discipline consciousness theory constitutes one of the underlying elements that underpin the operation of the Taijian system in the Song dynasty. The binary interaction between them is a topic of paramount significance within the context of the Song Dynasty's political dynamics.

Therefore, this paper focuses on the interaction between the Taijian system and the monarch's self-discipline consciousness theory, aiming to address the existing gaps in the academic community's understanding of the fundamental mechanisms governing the operation of the Song Dynasty's Taijian

system. The paper contributes to the study of the Song dynasty political institutions. It seeks to fill the current gaps in the scholarly understanding of the operation of the Song Taijian system and, in doing so, advance a more in-depth study of the Song political system.

2. Overview of the Monarch's Self-Discipline Consciousness Theory

2.1. Definition and Origin

With regard to the concept of the monarch's self-discipline consciousness, no clear definition has been given in the academic circles, also few scholars have conducted in-depth research on it. From the viewpoint of why the monarch's self-discipline consciousness emerged in the Song Dynasty, the authors argue that the monarch's self-discipline consciousness can be defined as a form of self-awareness of the relative constraints of the ruler's power within the monarchical autocracy. This awareness arises when the ruler's authority is not significantly constrained by the established system and is influenced by two key factors: the ruler's own inherent power and external factors. In the Song Dynasty, especially in the Northern Song period, the monarch's self-discipline consciousness was particularly high, mainly due to the joint promotion of internal motivation and external pressures.

2.1.1 Internal motivation

The internal motivation for this conscious awareness and self-restraint of the Song emperors stemmed from various sources. Firstly, a significant influence was the top-level political culture of the Song dynasty, known as the "ancestral law". This concept represented the core ideology of governing the rule of the Song dynasty's founding emperors. It encompassed a dynamic and cumulative set of principles that not only guided governance strategies but also reflected the attitude towards governance. Its core content was the prevention of wrongdoings through the separation and distribution of power, prioritizing moral pursuits over material wealth to proactively safeguard political stability and the ruling order.

Particularly noteworthy was the emphasis on prioritizing moral pursuits over material gains. The Song emperors reached the peak of trust and leniency for the scholar-bureaucrats and imperial censors, forming the traditional "family law" of "not killing the scholar-bureaucrats and imperial censors" and "ruling the world with the scholar-bureaucrat community". Peng Baichuan noted that the "ancestral law" represented a meticulously crafted system by the Song Dynasty's founding emperors, addressing various aspects that required advanced consideration and preparation against potential risks, serving as an established guideline for subsequent emperors to follow without transgressing its bounds [4]. The later Song monarchs' respect and compliance to the state-ruling strategies and attitudes played a pivotal role in shaping their monarch's self-discipline consciousness.

Another significant influence on the consciousness and thoughts of the Song emperors was traditional Confucianism, which is regarded as the ideology of feudal rule. In order to build an ideal commonwealth society, Confucianism not only stipulated the daily behaviours of the common people, but also made moral expectations for rulers. *The Analects of Confucius* considers the rise and fall of a state depended on the personal virtue of its rulers [5]. Similarly, *The Words of Mencius* proposes the historical education of ancient China, highlighting the implementation of virtuous governance by a bright ruler [6]. The Song Dynasty attached importance to culture, and the development of Neo-Confucianism led to the further expansion of the social influence of Confucianism, which emerged from the intellectuals and influenced first the scholar-bureaucrat community then politics.

Compared with other dynasties, the Northern Song emperors paid more attention to the construction of their own morality. Emperor Renzong, for instance, was known for his generosity and benevolence. His willingness to seek advice and value the welfare of the people embodied the Confucian ideology of the wise ruler. *The Song History - Renzong Benji* gave a high praise to Renzong, stating: "The human ruler must be merciful, and the emperor harbored no guilt in fulfilling this role" [7]. Confucianism requires the supreme ruler to refrain from introspection and to be a virtuous ruler

who benefits the country and its people. This, in turn, promotes the development and consolidation of the monarch's self-discipline consciousness.

2.1.2 External influences

External influences can be traced to both historical background and social environment. Firstly, since the end of the Tang Dynasty and the Five Dynasties, the Song rulers paid more attention to the stability of the regime. During this period, military generals had a lot of power while the imperial power was relatively weak, leading to rapid dynasty changes. Emperor Taizu of the Song Dynasty, who was born as a military general, sought to avoid the recurrence of the Tang Dynasty's separatist regime and the Five Dynasties' turmoil. To eliminate the unstable factors brought about by the military generals, he centralized military power in the central government and adopted the policy of putting mental pursuits above material arts. This policy also emphasized placing moral pursuits above material gains, fostering a conservative approach to governance in the Song Dynasty. The aim was to prevent the tendency for the imperial power to be too strong or the phantom power to be too heavy. The lessons learned from the split and turmoil at the end of the Tang and the Five Dynasties and the excessive power of the military generals fundamentally constituted an external influence, which was a key part of the rise of the monarch's self-discipline consciousness in the Northern Song Dynasty.

Secondly, the state policy of putting mental pursuits above material arts pushed the society to emphasize and revere literature, promoted the development of the scholar-bureaucrat community and the rise of the status of the scholar-bureaucrat community, thus constituting the basis of the spirit of direct remonstrance of the scholar-bureaucrat community in the Song Dynasty. As mentioned earlier, the social turmoil of the late Tang Dynasty and the Five Dynasties led to a serious cultural disruption and the rise of the scholar-bureaucrat community as a new cultural group. In addition, the Song dynasty promoted literary administration, the rulers emphasized the improvement of the imperial examinations, and the scholar-bureaucrat community continued to expand. At the beginning of the Song Dynasty, Emperor Taizu of the Song Dynasty ordered not to kill the scholar-bureaucrats and the imperial censors, and the policy of honouring the scholar-bureaucrats under the guidance of the "Ancestral law" not only inspired the scholar-bureaucrats to care about the whole world and take the whole world as their own duty, they generally formed a strong national concept and sense of responsibility for the cause, daring to write to say things, taking suggestion in person and argument in court as a job [8], and putting speaking as a priority [9]. This era saw the formation of a new type of monarch-subject relationship in the Song dynasty where "the monarch and the scholar-bureaucrats jointly governed the world". Scholar-bureaucrats were full of self-confidence, always reminding and urging the monarch to pay attention to the cooperation between the monarch and the subject. The spirit of direct remonstrance that characterized the Song scholars influenced the social environment of the time and was important in the formation of external influences.

In summary, according to the Marxist sociological theory of the dialectical relationship between social existence and social consciousness, the authors argue that the "ancestral law", traditional Confucianism and the historical background since the end of the Tang Dynasty and the Five Dynasties marked by division and turmoil, decided the ruling policy orientation, such as putting mental pursuits above material arts and integrating the powers of Censorate and Remonstrance Bureau into one. This ruling policy orientation, in turn, led to the decision not to kill the scholar-bureaucrats and the imperial censors. The relatively loose social environment of a wide range of channels of speech, the social environment in turn reacts to the monarch's self-discipline consciousness and the elements of the courtroom politics, such as the scholar-bureaucrats dared to remonstrate in court.

2.2. The Performance and Influence of the Monarch's Self-Discipline Consciousness in the Song Dynasty

The ancient Chinese social system determined the monarch's crucial position in the governance and development of the country. In the era of feudal imperial power, the monarch's actions affected the rise and fall of the society. From the viewpoint of philology, the original meaning of the character "jun" is "honoured" [10], it means that the monarch is the most honoured leader who holds the power

of the country. Therefore, the monarch's self-discipline consciousness has an inevitable influence on the social development of the Song Dynasty. The authors will analyse the performance and influence of the monarch's self-discipline consciousness in the Song Dynasty from three aspects.

Firstly, the emperor allowed remonstrator to admonish him. In the Song Dynasty, extreme imperial power rarely appeared, and the politics were relatively open. As mentioned earlier, Song emperors focused on self-reflection, took the initiative to pursue a bright government, and often opened up a wide range of opinions, accepting the views of all parties. At the same time, the state policy of putting mental pursuits above material arts also formed a culture of direct remonstrance that was different from that of other dynasties. The emperor's permission and the majority of the scholar-bureaucrat's unquenchable sense of historical responsibility made the Song scholar-bureaucrats dare to judge the emperor and resist the emperor's improper orders. For instance, during the reign of Emperor Zhenzong of the Song Dynasty, Prime Minister Li Hang burned the emperor's edict in front of emissaries in order to express his opposition to Zhenzong's decision to make Liu a highest-ranking imperial concubine. If such an act had taken place in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, when monarchical dictatorship and centralization of power were highly developed, it would have likely resulted in a death penalty the offender's entire family.

Secondly, the emperor intended to create a relaxed atmosphere of speech. Under the Song dynasty court politics, the ministers had the collective deliberations to improve the correctness of decision-making. As mentioned earlier, the emperor of the Song dynasty for the scholar-bureaucrats and imperial censors of trust and leniency reached its peak. This trust was particularly evident in three aspects: first, ombudsman could only base their actions on rumours of cases without disclosing the sources or names. According to the Song Dynasty Ministers official documents, after the implementation of this policy, "Both domestic and foreign affairs are rumoured, and it helps to build wisdom and prevent obstruction" [11]. Second, the emperor openly supported the holders of different views to debate, in order to distinguish between right and wrong. Lastly, the Song emperors established a consistent standard under the guidance of Neo-Confucianism, which was independent of the heaven and the monarch's consciousness. Led by the monarch's self-discipline consciousness, the Song emperors designed the above three aspects as an important part of the speech system, creating a relatively relaxed social atmosphere and courtroom environment, opening up channels for the citizens and ministers to express their opinions, greatly enhancing the efficiency of decision-making.

Thirdly, the monarch's self-discipline consciousness served as one of the important foundations for the operation of the Taijian system. Emperor Taizu once issued a decree to encourage ministers to remonstrate, and reformed the monitor system of the Tang Dynasty. He replaced the right and left Shiyi with the right and left Sijian, which was in fact a strengthening and improvement of the monitor system in the Song Dynasty. The system of integrating the powers of Censorate and Remonstrance Bureau into a single entity also came into being in this historical background of the improvement of the monitor system.

3. The Underlying Logic of the Song Dynasty Taijian System

3.1. The Operational Basis and Peculiarities of Taijian Advice in the Song Dynasty

In ancient China, the system of supervision had been created since the Qin and Han dynasties and continued to be developed and perfected over thousands of years. The system of the Censorate, as a supervisory organ, had already reached a certain scale in the Qin Dynasty, while the system of admonition officers, who were responsible for "picking up the pieces and repairing the queues", was only established as a customised system in the Tang Dynasty.

Taijian is the joint name of the Censorate and the Remonstrance Bureau, and in the Song Dynasty, because of the overlapping functions of the two, the adjustment of the central organisations, the trend of merging, and other factors, the two were first juxtaposed as a monitoring system in the central political structure. The Song History on the Imperial Palace of Government had the authority on the

clear definition: correcting the official evil, purify the discipline [12]. After the Yuanfeng reform, the duties of the admonition officer were also clear: where the government is wrong, the ministers to the hundred officials were appointed by the wrong person, and the three departments to the hundred departments were in violation of the affairs, all of them had to admonish the correctness [13]. After the Qingli period, both the Censorate and the Remonstrance Bureau had the duty to speak out on various matters [14].” Therefore, Taijian was understood to be the central supervisory system, which was examined in conjunction with the central supervisory system.

As the basic structure of the Song Dynasty’s Taijian system has already been discussed in many academic circles, the section will only discuss the design logic and operation basis of the system. The expansion of the power of the Taijian system began with Emperor Zhenzong, who issued the Tianxi Edict to establish Taijian as a formal and independent central supervisory system. This marked the inception of the Taijian system in the Song Dynasty [15].

There are several elements that make it possible to establish the Taijian system. One was the support of the monarch, whose conscious awareness, as mentioned above, was the fundamental basis for the establishment and normal operation of the system. The second was the change in the central official system during the Song dynasty, where the number of central departments and officials was far greater than in previous generations. This necessitated the Taijian system to carry out all-round and effective supervision of the monarch and the monarch’s subordinates, which inevitably led to an increase in the power and scale of the Taijian system in order to achieve the effect of strengthening the precision of decision-making and the efficiency of administration. Thirdly, under the influence of the national policy and social environment of the Song Dynasty, the expansion of the scholar-bureaucrat community and the unique spiritual integrity of the Song scholar-bureaucrat community had an impact. People in the Song Dynasty claimed that “the scholar-bureaucrat should follow the Way with the world, but not the Way with the world [15].” In the case of Taijian, the Song scholar-bureaucrat believed that Taijian was the system of public opinion [16]. This shows the influence of the spirit of the Song dynasty on the system of Taijian admonition.

The specificity of the system of Taijian admonition in the Song dynasty needs to be viewed in the context of the previous generation. In the Song Dynasty, the system was basically designed on the blueprint of the Tang Dynasty’s Six Tang Codes, which were similar in foundation, but very different in their impact and practical effectiveness. In the Tang Dynasty, there was a clear division of the Censorate and the Remonstrance Bureau, but since the war, the status of Remonstrance Bureau’s counsellors was lower, and their opinions were light, and the Censorate did not have the right to admonish, the monitoring system of the Tang Dynasty went downhill with the destiny of the country. In the Song Dynasty, the status of the Taijian was given more importance by the ruler than that of the Tang Dynasty, and it was recorded in the History of the Song Dynasty that: the days of the Song Dynasty, the rise of the Taijian, and the failure of the Taijian.

While inheriting the Tang system, the Song dynasty perfected its monitoring system. Firstly, the binding power of admonishing the monarch was further enlarged, and in addition to the systematic guarantee, there was also the common influence of the monarch’s self-discipline and the scholar-bureaucrat’s self-consciousness, as well as the atmosphere of the court, and the historical facts that the Taijian admonition officials could all admonish the monarch are endless. Secondly, during the Song Dynasty, the Taijian’s counsellors were allowed to participate in the government, and they were given the right to supervise the decision-making process and to participate in politics. Furthermore, the system of six inspections was introduced to monitor the central administrative organs in a detailed manner, covering almost everything except the Secretariat-Chancellery and military council. This was a major reform and innovation in the construction of the ancient supervision systems, setting an example for subsequent dynasties.

3.2. The Role of the Taijian System in Song Dynasty Politics

In his *Zuoshi jiancao*, Lu Wu, a Song scholar, mentioned that the founding of the Song dynasty was based on the system of Taijian. The attention paid to the system in Song politics and the influence

of its exercise of power on dynasty politics were not as great as those of previous generations. The role of the system in the politics of the Song Dynasty is self-evident, and there are many historians who have written books about it, so the author will only make some elaboration according to the theme.

Firstly, under the influence of the monarch's conscious awareness, the improvement of the system of Taijian admonition had a certain regulatory effect on the power of the monarch. Under the active admonition of the Taijian admonition officers, "good advice is the law of the Song family" has become a component of the ancestral law of the Song Dynasty [17]. The advisors remonstrated with the inner-court monarchs, and to a certain extent, they supervised and balanced the power of the monarchs, helping them not to violate the ancestral system and go too far in the monarch's orders. Therefore, the Song Dynasty had a world of more than 300 years, did not appear in the previous and future generations of imperial power unlimited expansion of the situation, the emperor's sense of admonition significantly improved, although criticised for the accumulation of poverty and weakness, but the dynastic politics and therefore the positive factors to maintain a relatively long period of clarity.

Secondly, it was to supervise the administrative power and rope the ministers. The emperor's sense of self-discipline would like to cede part of the rights to the Taijian remonstrators, so that the Taijian admonition are independent of the administrative power (physical power), but not completely dependent on the imperial power, to maintain relative independence. Under this premise, the Formosan formed the principle of "not to undertake the prime minister's wind order" and not to undertake the human master's wind order [18]. In *the History of the Song Dynasty*, it is also common to see the dispute between the power of the prime minister and the power of the remonstrators, and such disputes became more and more extreme, resulting in the outbreak of the Song Dynasty party disputes, which is an example of the inconsistency between the original intention of the establishment and the final result.

The third is the suppression of the hidden dangers common to traditional central dynasties, such as relatives, eunuchs, and powerful officials. In the Song dynasty, there was no case of eunuchs gaining power, and although there was interference by the empress dowager, the chaotic government of the previous dynasty did not occur, and powerful officials were always rare in the Song dynasty, which was closely related to the unique role of Taijian as an independent supervisory power in the court politics.

Fourth, the Song dynasty social opinion on the court politics had a certain impact. In the fourth year of the Xining period, Su Shi submitted a petition to Emperor Shenzong of the Song Dynasty, saying, "Since I was a child, I have remembered and heard the talk of the elders, and all of them said that the words of the Taijian were often accompanied by the world's public opinion and the Taijian, the Taijian also with the public opinion of the public opinion of the attack, the Taiwan also hit the attack [19]." From this, the hearsay under the "public discussion of the world" became one of the sources of the words of the Taijian officials.

To sum up, the discussion of imperial power and phase power in the Song Dynasty has been endless in the historiography. The authors believe that the neutraliser played by the system of Taijian admonition should not be ignored. As a third power that was independent of and not completely dependent on the imperial power, it helped the imperial power to suppress the physical power and advised the imperial power to a certain extent when the imperial power was expanding. At the same time, Taijian was also able to suppress other common unstable factors in the courtroom politics, and maintain political stability and consistency by monitoring and admonishing. Regardless of the dynasty, the foundation and vitality of the monitoring system of Taijian lay in the monarch's sense of self-discipline and the needs of the political landscape. Without the monarch's sense of self-discipline, it would be difficult for the system to take shape, for the imperial power to dominate, and for the system to operate efficiently and play its proper role.

4. The Interaction between the Taijian System and the Monarch's Self-Discipline Consciousness

The above has discussed in detail the causes of the formation of the monarch's sense of self-discipline and the basis of the operation of the Taijian system in the Song dynasty, but what kind of interaction existed between this sense of self-discipline and the operation of the supervisory power represented by the Taijian system? How did these two independent elements profoundly influence the texture of Song central politics? This will be an important proposition to be discussed in the following section.

4.1. Influence of the Monarch's Sense of Self-Discipline on the Taijian Admonition System

The monarch's sense of self-discipline in the Song dynasty was a conscious awareness composed of internal factors and external factors. It reflected in individual monarchs of the Song Dynasty and had a certain universal significance and inheritance of consciousness. However, this sense of self-discipline could not be found in all the monarchs of all dynasties. Its presence was limited by the influence of the times and personal factors. The Song Dynasty, because of its special conditions and historical background, formed a more obvious and far-reaching sense of monarchical self-discipline compared with other dynasties. First and foremost, the Song dynasty's perfect monitoring system, represented by the system of Taijian admonition, carried the profound mark of the monarch's self-discipline since its birth.

The monarch's sense of self-discipline was one of the fundamental reasons for the rise of the Taijian system, and it was the guarantee for the normal functioning of the Taijian system. Under the monarchical system of government, the policies and attitudes of the monarch towards the Taijian officials were not only the indispensable political guarantee for the Taijian officials' outspokenness, but also played a decisive role in guiding the Taijian officials' behavioural culture. The supremacy of the imperial power was unshakeable under the emperor's system, and therefore the monitoring system like Taijian, which supervised all the officials and remonstrated with the emperor, could only operate effectively under the premise of the monarch's self-discipline.

The existence of the monarch's sense of self-discipline, the root of the Song dynasty monarchs paid special attention to the checks and balances of power and regime stability, and always adhered to the ancestral policy of preventing evils. Over the final three hundred years of Song, the influence of eunuchs, relatives, and powerful prime ministers compared to the successive generations of lighter, the monarchs of self-discipline from the source of the successive generations of such scourges greatly eliminated the impact of the. Under the premise of the existence and embodiment of the monarch's sense of self-discipline, the Taijian system was given greater room for manoeuvre. The Song monarchs attached great importance to internal problems and paid particular attention to the checks and balances of power and the stability of the regime under the influence of the policy of preventing evils. Thus, the Taijian system as a tool not only ruled out the possibility of other powers becoming bigger, but also firmly secured the power in the hands of the emperor alone.

However, after the Song Dynasty's transition to the south, the turbulent times and party disputes in the imperial court, as well as the decline in the quality of the rulers themselves, inevitably led to the gradual decline of this monitoring system, which was extremely sophisticated at the time of its creation. Under the traditional Chinese political system, no matter how sophisticated a system of laws and regulations was, it was difficult to make waves in the face of the corruption of the rule of man.

4.2. Response of the Taijian System to the Monarch's Sense of Self-Discipline

The monarch's sense of self-discipline is the fundamental precondition for the perfection and efficient operation of the Taijian system, while the response of the system to the monarch's sense of self-discipline can be regarded as a kind of institutional feedback to the ruler's sense of consciousness and good governance, which contributes to the reinforcement of the monarch's sense of self-discipline and to the external regulation of the ruler's power.

The rise of the scholar-bureaucrat class in the Song dynasty could not be separated from the basic state policy of valuing literature over the military and the development of the Confucianism, and at the same time, with the rapid expansion of the scholarly group and its integration into the court politics, it further promoted the policy tendency to support the literati and the establishment of the ideology, and such interactions ultimately formed the special political situation and social atmosphere of the Song dynasty. During this period, the idea of “worrying before the world and rejoicing after the world’s happiness” advocated by Fan Zhongyan and the idea of “opening peace for the world” called for by Zhang Zai summed up the spirit of the scholar-bureaucrat in the Song Dynasty.

Under the joint efforts of the scholars, the existence of a “self-awareness of the scholars” outside of the monarch’s self-discipline is evident in the history of the Song Dynasty. Naturally, the appointment of the Taijian officers also came from the best among this group of scholars. The selection of the Song Taijian officers was more stringent than that of previous generations, as they were generally chosen from the ranks of the imperial examinations and required the experience of local officials. Therefore, the elite of the scholarly class acted as the advisors. In line with the dynasty’s ancestral system of “sharing the world with the scholarly class”, the Taijian officers were trustworthy in the exercise of their power and the monarch’s direct advice, which not only guaranteed the effectiveness of the system, but also created a good atmosphere in the courtroom, which also influenced the emperor’s ideology and rule. Under such a scenario, the mutual promotion of the scholar-advocate’s self-awareness and the monarch’s self-discipline had a positive impact on Song Dynasty politics.

The combination of the part-time “Jingyan”, which was a part-time job of the Taijian officers and the daily duty of admonishing the emperor, further promoted self-discipline among the monarchs by integrating education and admonition. The Jingyan system was an educational system of lectures on history and the classics for the emperors, and was formally institutionalised in the Song Dynasty [20]. In the second year of the Qingli era, Emperor Renzong appointed Jia Changzhao, the chief of the Taijian, as a lecturer, setting a precedent for many advisors to become lecturers at sutra feasts. The duties of the advisors and the sutra feasts complemented each other, with the sutra feasts being more important in the emperor’s education, especially for young monarchs.

Through the teaching of the young emperor by the words and examples of the elite scholars, as well as through the inculcation of the relevant systems and the spirit of domination, the emperors were culturally nurtured by the scholars’ group from the time they ascended to the throne. This contributed to the inheritance of the monarch’s sense of self-discipline.

4.3. Coordination and Balance of Binary Interactions

The monarch’s sense of self-discipline was a fundamental reason for the rise and operation of the Taijian system in the Song dynasty. The Taijian system also contributed to the strengthening of the monarch’s sense of self-discipline and the regulation of the external aspects of the monarch’s power. The duality of these interactions played an important role in coordinating and balancing the politics of the Song dynasty.

Firstly, the pattern of power separation in the centre of the Song Dynasty began to take shape. The “supervisory power” held by Taijian was completely independent of the power of the prime minister, and was not completely dependent on the third power of the imperial power. In *the history of Song Dynasty*, it is said that “if the words are about the emperor’s carriage, the emperor will change his face; if the matter is about the government, the prime minister will be punished.” This demonstrates that the power of Taijian was under the supervision of all officials, and the characteristic of upward admonition of the monarch played its due role in the political practice of the Song Dynasty.

The Song Dynasty, as an era of ancient Chinese history with the significance of the beginning and the end, had a more perfect and sound traditional political system than that of the Han and Tang dynasties. It had not yet been polarised than that of the Ming and Qing dynasties. The central politics formed under these historical conditions highlighted the power of coordination and balance between imperial power and governmental power, as reflected in its design of political structure.

Secondly, in the central politics of the Song Dynasty, under the premise of the monarch's self-discipline, Taijian had a rather special position. As a supervisory power, it could not only help the imperial power to suppress the relative power, but also advise the imperial power to a certain extent when the imperial power was expanding, ensuring the administrative power work well. Therefore, the Taijian officers played a neutralising role in the ancient game of central power between the imperial power and the power of a prime minister.

Therefore, the co-ordination and balance between the monarch's sense of self-discipline and the Taijian's advice helped, on the one hand, the monarch's power to suppress the phantom's power, to monitor the central and local administrations, to maintain the posture of the imperial power as the only one, and to maintain the stability of the regime. On the other hand, it reminded the emperor so that the imperial power would not be expanded to an unprecedented extent, and the phenomenon of personal authoritarianism, which led to the chaos of the imperial government and the failure of the dynasty, would not occur so frequently. At the same time, because of the inevitable conflict between the supervisory power represented by Taijian and the administrative power represented by the ministerial power, party disputes often arose as a result. However, it also prevented the power of Taijian from being extremely inflated. The power of appointing and removing the advisors was returned to the sovereign, which made them the eyes and ears of the emperor and within the control of the emperor.

While the prosperity of the Song Dynasty's Taijian was closely related to the existence of the monarch's sense of self-discipline, the decline of the Song Dynasty's Taijian was also directly related to the loss of the monarch's self-discipline. Under the authoritarian centralised system of power in ancient China, the so-called separation of powers and checks and balances, which are similar to those in the West, could hardly blossom in the soil of ancient China due to the level of development of the productive forces and the historical background. Regardless of how the central political structure was designed, the power of any institution was still always covered by the insurmountable imperial power. The rule of man, represented by the imperial dictatorship, persisted through the history of ancient China. In such an environment, the supervisory power represented by Taijian could only be maintained and be effective when it could constrain the errors of imperial power without any interference from the monarch's errors.

5. Conclusion

The monarch's self-discipline consciousness played a crucial role in the rise and operation of the Taijian system in the Song Dynasty. In turn, the Taijian system also contributed to the strengthening of the monarch's self-discipline consciousness and the external regulation of the monarch's power. The dual interaction between subjective consciousness and objective system had far-reaching implications for the governance of the Song Dynasty. It helped the monarch to suppress the power of the ministers, monitor the central and local administrations to maintain the supremacy of the imperial power, and remonstrated the emperor, ensuring the imperial power of the Song Dynasty unprecedentedly expanded, thus preventing the common issue of personal authoritarianism and the resulting political chaos that plagued other dynasties. This contributed to the special characteristics of the Song Dynasty's political clarity and freedom of speech.

This paper provides a new perspective for the study of the special characteristics of the Song Dynasty's system of Taijian, setting it apart from previous dynasties. Specifically, it focuses on the theory of the monarch's self-discipline consciousness and how it integrated with the actual political system. However, due to its length and limited academic qualifications, the essay may have some limitations. Future research could further delve into this complex interaction and address any remaining gaps in understanding.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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