State, Literati and Neo-Confucians: an Analysis of Literati Social Network in 1160-1241

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Abstract

This paper uses formal techniques in social network analysis to reconstruct the social space in which leading philosophers of Neo-Confucianism were embedded. By examining the network structure and statistics, it tries to give a new interpretation about the development of Neo-Confucianism and its dissemination among the literati in Southern Song Dynasty.

1 Neo-Confucianism in History

Neo-Confucianism, with its ample meanings and influences in later centuries, has been an important subject for researchers in philosophy, history, sociology as well as the political science. The last century of the Song Dynasty had witnessed the development of Neo-Confucianism, from the time when Zhu Xi, Liu Zuqian, Zhang Shi and Lu Jiuyuan were developing their theories in parallel, to the ascendancy of Zhu Xi’s idea. It had also encountered with suppressions from the government, as well as the final recognition among the authorities in 1241. (Liu, 1989, p148) How can we trace its history in this critical periods? ¹

Most of "pure philosophy" study of Neo-Confucianism will focus on the main figures who contributed most to the development of "universal ideas" in Neo-Confucianism. However, this kind of view could be a misleading illustration of the development of Neo-Confucianism, because to select whom to include in the research is based on the accumulated fame of the philosopher in later centuries, with the assumption that works of philosophers contain "dateless wisdom" which can transcend the historical process of fame gaining. (Skinner, 1969)

I think the genesis of the development of Neo-Confucianism should follow the eyes of contemporaries of philosophers, instead of the canons of philosophy, which rely on the accumulated fame of the philosopher. The recent research in both the study of the internal development of Neo-Confucianism and its external relationship with state and society will challenge the pure philosophical research of Neo-Confucianism.

Hoyt Tillman offers a great example of putting Neo-Confucianism in historical background to trace its internal development. (Tillman, 1992) He convincingly reconstructs the world of Zhu

¹To be more precise, I have restricted the period to 1160 to 1241, for around the former most influential Neo-Confucianism philosophers died, like Hu Hong(1159) and Zhang Jiucheng(1159). Zhu Xi, Zhang Shi and Lü Zuqian are the new leader of Neo-Confucianism. The latter is the year when Emperor Lizong has recognized Neo-Confucianism as the state orthodoxy.
Xi’s contemporaries and his interactions with other leading philosophers: Lü Zuqian, Zhang Shi, Lu Jiuyuan and Chen Liang. Instead of taking Neo-Confucians as a coherent social group for granted, he discusses the inner dispute among the philosophers and in the process Zhu Xi gained his prominence.

For the external side, Neo-Confucians had never been ”pure” philosophers. Their works were filled with the discussions of practical problems about the state and society. Hence Bol’s work gives another example for the study Neo-Confucianism in this approaches. He perceives Neo-Confucianism as a ”social movement” that transformed the way people understand the world, which further influenced the social institution and political orthodoxy in later dynasties. Neo-Confucianism is thus not only a school of thought, but rather a ”rhetorical position”, a ”identity” and a ”social movement”, which implies the penetration of Neo-Confucianism idea to the rural society, in aspect of ritual, family organization and ideology of the lower class. (Bol, 2008, p108)

Bol believes that the Neo-Confucian movement is a competition between government, who would like to expand their political authority, and local elites, who wished to be build a decentralized society, in which a shi would be the representative of rural society.2 Hence the ”local voluntarism” between local elites would diminish the value of serving in central government, whereas the idea to invent a new local literati community was their main concerns. (Bol, 2008, p246)

However, there are some shortcomings in both studies. Tillman restricted his research to several stars —Zhu Xi, Lü Zuqian, Zhang Shi, Lu Jiuyuan and Chen Liang—in the history of philosophy. However, he has himself noted the limitation of excluding those ”unimportant figures” in tracing the genesis of Neo-Confucians.3 Thus my analysis will extend Tillman’s research into a larger group.

On the other hand, I believe that Bol largely treats Neo-Confucians as a cohesive group, i.e. a ”unity”.4 However, there were contentions between Zhu Xi, Lü Zuqian, Zhang Shi and other intellectuals. It was through the struggle for the ”transmission of the Way”(道統) inside the group that finally demarcate Neo-Confucianism with other thoughts. As Bourdieu has pointed out, a group’s presence or absence in the official classification depends on its capacity to get itself recognized, (Bourdieu, 1984, 480), while the ”transmission of the Way” exactly played as a separating line here. The inner contentions are somehow indispensable for this process. (Collins, 1998)

My analysis of Neo-Confucians, on the contrary, will lay somewhere between Tillman and Bol. I will mainly focus on the process of Neo-Confucianism gaining its prominence, as a school of thought.

The development of Neo-Confucianism in 1160-1241 can be projected upon two dimensions: its internal evolvement, which is a long process of struggle for the ”transmission of Way” (Dao Tong 道統) between philosophers, as well as the external side, which will be the intellectually perception of Neo-Confucianism by other literati and society, from heterodoxy to orthodoxy. The inner debates among philosophers and their followers has promoted the theory of Neo-Confucianism to a new height. (Collins, 1998)

On external side, it is through long negotiation and contention with other literati that Neo-Confucianism at last shaped their self-identity. The social perception of Neo-Confucianism can be split into two intersecting processes: the diffusion among the literati as well as among the rural

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2Bol, Neo-confucianism and Local society, pp.282-283.
3See the conclusion part of Tillman: Confucian discourse and Chu Hsi’s ascendancy.
4Bol, Neo-Confucians in Local Society, pp.251-254.
society. Neo-Confucianism were first diffused among literati, due to its relative dominant position in the social network of intellectuals, and then transmitted into the illiterate by gentry families. The force from bottom up would further influence the practises of Neo-Confucianism in the lower class. (Szonyi, 2002) The state had actually played an important role in the penetration of Neo-Confucianism into the lower class, by legislating Neo-Confucianism as the orthodoxy. The state and local elites were not a zero-sum game, but rather a alliance with controversies. (Lee, 2009) In contrast to the assumption that state had lost its attractiveness to the local elites, (Hymes, 1986) Neo-Confucians were tightly bound to the state.

The two intersecting dimensions—internal evolvement and external boundary—in the historical line, altogether shaped the development of Neo-Confucianism in the historical context.

My definition of Neo-Confucians will be a border sense rather than the realm of Biographies of Neo-Confucianism in Song Shi.\textsuperscript{5} Lü Zuqian, Zhang Shi, Lu Jiuyuan and Chen Liang, together with their students and followers, are also included in my research.\textsuperscript{6} I have included not only the leading philosophers, but also their students, followers and intellectual rivalries.\textsuperscript{7}

It will be clumsy to label one as Neo-Confucians, for the so called Neo-Confucians actually shared many intrinsic characteristics with other literati. However, in the dimension of academic field, those philosophers did perform as a certain unity, in the view of other literati.\textsuperscript{8} I judge the identity of Neo-Confucians by whether the individual is included in relevant volumes of Song Yuan Xue'an. However, I will show in later sections that this label is just one dimension of the life of Neo-Confucians, while we cannot obscure the fact that the life of Neo-Confucians were constituted by other dimensions in the social space.\textsuperscript{9}

To sketch such a large group which contains hundreds of members, some analytic techniques need to be equipped, instead of selecting some “representative” figures in the group, for the intentional selection of certain figures will easily follow the preconceived ideas in the study of philosophy. Thus the social network analysis (SNA) would be a useful tool here. (Wasserman, 1994) However, besides a technique of quantitative research, I will argue the SNA will further bring about a relational mode of thought, which implies a new paradigm for the study of social history.

2 Research methodology and data

2.1 Shortcoming of attribute-based research

Since the path-breaking work of Hartwell and Hymes, (Hartwell, 1982; Hymes, 1986) the study of the Song history has witnessed the turn to localist paradigm. (Bol, 2004) Numerous scholars choose a certain area as a case study. (Davis, 1986; Hymes and Schirokauer, 1993; Huang, 2006; Clark, 2007) The individuals, who were attached to the area for some reason—hometown, living

\textsuperscript{5}In this volume Lü Zuqian, Lu Jiuyuan and Chen Liang were excluded from the Dao Xue philosophers, for they had deviated from Zhu Xi’s theory.

\textsuperscript{6}Which is also the leading philosopher of Tillman’s analysis.

\textsuperscript{7}Tillman has himself discussed the name of Neo-Confucians, for which he denoted as Dao Xue. As I will include some figures that are social context of leading philosophers, I will still use the concept of Neo-Confucianism in its border sense, which include Lü Zuqian, Zhang Shi and so on.

\textsuperscript{8}Tillman, Confucian discourse and Chu Hsi’s ascendancy, see its introduction.

\textsuperscript{9}The concept of social space come from Bourdieu’s analysis see (Bourdieu, 1984)
or burial place, will receive the concerns of scholars. The localist paradigm may find its root in the study of European history. (Clark, 1991, p1)

As a general theoretical sketch, determining the research scope presumes a setting of social boundary, for who should be included or excluded in the research. The social boundary will then serve as a demarcating line which defines the membership of certain of certain social categories. The process of boundary making is in parallel with the formation, development and decay of the social categories. In case of studies of local history, the spatial trajectory of a certain figure—birth, living, traveling and burial place—are used to define the social group to be studied. Two individuals with the common hometown are often presupposed to form an alliance, as a strategy to maintain their leadership in the locale.

A conventional doubt for this approach would be that whether the conclusion of an area could be a universal type of the whole nation. (Bao, 2005) In effect, those studies can hardly challenge the prevalence of Hartwell and Hymes’s conclusion. Using another prefecture or a special group like the grand councilor to refute the conclusion of Hymes’s case study is deficient logically. However, another problem would emerge. Spatial attribute is by and large one dimension of one’s life, while society is constituted of agents, by complex dynamics between different attributes. (Bourdieu, 1984) Each social agent have multiple attributes to designate his identity, e.g. his birthplace, posting, degree in civil examination, social and economic status, supporter of New Policies or Neo-Confucianism. Countrymen will not necessarily be homogeneous in other aspects, while the attribute-based selection will be deficient in dealing with multiple identities of social agents.

The group which is demarcated by its attributes will be an intellectual reconstruction of the ancient society, while the predefined labels are deficient to reflect the reality.10 Scholars believe that they are glancing at ancient figures in a bird’s-eye view, hence they can reconstruct the social boundaries and assign those figures into different social groups, as a ”working definition of research”. However, the groups per se have deviated from the very start from the presumed neutral position of scholars.

Beyond local history paradigm, There is also some research which aim to study social groups delimiting by other attributes. Bossler’s study focuses on the grand councilors. (Bossler, 1998) Chaffee has studied lives and careers of members of imperial clan. (Chaffee, 1999). ”Neo-Confucian” is also a such label for an individual. Scholars treat Neo-Confucians as a unity to build local society, promote local affairs and lead the country to a more decentralized society. Those studies had also set the boundaries of research using other personal attributes. The deficiency of the attribute-based research, as discussed above, still applies here. The attributed-based criteria oversimplifies complex dimensions of society.

It is not to deny the possibility to trace the boundaries of social groups. Social actors are inherently partitioning themselves into different social groups. (Bourdieu, 1984; White, 1992; Tilly, 2005) However, as Latour has stated:” Group delineation is not only one of the occupations of social scientists, but also the very constant task of the actors themselves. Actors do the sociology for the sociologists and sociologists learn from the actors what makes up their set of associations”. (Latour, 2005, p32) Bourdieu has also stated that:”The social agents whom the sociologist classifies are producers not only of the classifiable act but also of acts of classification which are themselves classified”. (Bourdieu, 1984, p467) Hence the boundaries of social groups should follow the eyes of Song contemporaries, rather than sociologically constructed boundary, based on attributes.

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10This phenomenon has been noted by Bruno Latour, in his actor-network theory. (Latour, 2005, 27-31).
Neo-Confucians shared a common identity of being followers of Neo-Confucianism, while they spontaneously belonged to the larger intellectuals group. The boundary between them and other literati was a mental or cognitive one. The mental boundary will also be translated into a physical one. For instance, the banishment of Neo-Confucianism in Qingyuan (1195-1200) gave a list of Neo-Confucians to be punished, which would be an objectified label for the identity of Neo-Confucian, and which further solidified the mental identity. The physical and mental boundaries of the group are inseparable. The study of Neo-Confucians should pay more attention to the continuous process of boundary making and classification scheme in their eyes, which delimit members of the group with "the others". The process of boundary making is accompanied with the formation, development and decay of the Neo-Confucianism. The formation of Neo-Confucianism might erect the criteria for the group boundary against other literati; the development of Neo-Confucianism was in parallel with the growth of the boundary; the decay of Neo-Confucianism was thus indicating the wane of the boundary. The identity of Neo-Confucian should not be a fixed list of individuals who constituted a cohesive community, but rather a fluid social aggregation, while Neo-Confucians may be analogous in philosophical ideas and distinct in other aspects.

Is it possible to reconstruct changing boundaries of Neo-Confucians against the other literati, according to minds of Southern Song individuals? I will give an example in later sections.

2.2 Introduction to relational sociology

I will explore a new way to trace the boundary of Neo-Confucians against other literati. In contrast to the attribute based research, I will stress a "relational perspective" within sociology, which holds that relationships—rather than attributes—should be the fundamental unit in the analysis of society. (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1994; Emirbayer, 1997; Mische, 2011) The social ties of an individual shape his identity, which may further define his perception of society. (White, 1992; Tilly, 2005) I believe relational thinking differ from conventional attribute-based study in following aspects:

• Social agents are viewed as interdependent rather than independent.

• Relation ties between social agents are the channels for information and resource, thus the more "central" a person in a network of social relation, the more social capital will he possess and the more important he will be in society. (Wasserman, 1994, chap 5) (Borgatti et al., 1998)

• The social network of agents are viewed as the social structure in which actors are embodied. (Burt, 1982; Wellman, 1988)

For the research of China, the relational perspective seems to be more appropriate. China is believed to be a Guan Xi-based society, (Gold and Guthrie, 2002) especially for the transitivity of relationship is salient between social agents. (Yang, 1994; Yan, 1996; Gold and Guthrie, 2002) Many scholars have also noted the historical origin of Guan Xi, largely based on interpretations of classical texts. (King, 1991) However, besides those interpretations, quantitative analysis is still necessary for research of social relationships in ancient China.

For the history of philosophy, Collins has also given an example of reinterpretation of philosophy in a relational perspective. (Collins, 1998) Collins’s analysis on developments of philosophies
around the world has offered a general theory about intellectual changes. He argues that the principle determining the intellectual network are central to the development of philosophical ideas. Hence the philosophy of history is considerably the history of philosophers’ networks, rather than the history of genius or intellectual-heroes. He gives a chapter to discussion of Neo-Confucianism to validate his theory.

The relational perspective does not inherently pose an superiority between quantitative and qualitative research, while social network analysis does offer a quantitative method to analyze the social relationships. Social network analysis views social relationships in terms of graph theory and algebra. The social network analyst will argue that society is constituted by interactions between social actors. Hence we can describe it in a formal mathematical way—a network which is composed of nodes and edges—where nodes are individuals and edges are connections between those actors. (Scott, 1988) It encompasses a complete system of methods, from data collection, data analysis to the graph representation of network, while the use of mathematical and computational models is an intrinsic characteristic. (Wasserman, 1994) (Breiger et al., 2003) (Carrington et al., 2005) Social network analysis has also shown its application in various fields of discipline.11

The debate over whether formal social network analysis should be a method or a theory began from its emergence. In recent decades, there has been growing agreement that it is a pragmatic way of research. (Wellman, 1988) (Burt, 1982) (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1994) Since then the relational sociology and formal social network analysis has shown the tendency to converge. The relational sociology may encompass both the interpretive-oriented research or quantitative techniques in formal network analysis, while both approaches agree on the relational mode of perception and construction of society. My analysis of the development of Neo-Confucianism from 1160 to 1241 will then be a practise of the relational perspective.

2.3 Social network of Neo-Confucians

How will the arguments of relation sociology, as well as techniques of social network, help our study of Neo-Confucianism? I will first choose some figures as the starting point. For instance, I may choose Zhu Xi, Lü Zuqian, Zhang Shi, Lu Jiuyuan and Chen Liang, who are focal points of Neo-Confucians, according to Tillman. (Tillman, 1992) The initial group will then be expanded into a larger group, which includes social contacts of philosophers in the initial group. For example, Cao Jian(曹建) will be included in the larger group, for he was a famous student of Lu Jiuyuan and Zhu Xi.

The above explanation of the process to build a network of Neo-Confucians is actually following a formal technique in social network analysis, which will be referred as snowball sampling. Snowball sampling has been a common sampling method in the network analysis.12 (Goodman, 1961; Doreian and Woodard, 1992) It starts from an initial node set A, (In our example, A will be the five leading philosophers) and continues following steps:

- find the neighbor of each node in A, which altogether constitute a new node set B
- for arbitrary pair of nodes in set A∪B (union of A and B), if they are associated by some relationships, e.g. friendship, then there will be an edge between them.

11For instance, Padgett’s analysis of rise of Medici family in Florence would be an illustration for the application of social network in history study. (Padgett and Ansell, 1993)

12A brief introduction with illustrations can be found in Kolaczyk’s work. (Kolaczyk, 2009)
This process may be carried for several times. The first round snowball sampling, as described above, will add in the direct social contacts of the initial set, while the second round snowball sampling will include individuals who are indirect social contacts of the initial set, e.g. friend of Zhu Xi’s friend.  

For the members in the initial set, e.g. Lü Zuqian, the network was the social space he was living in. The concept of social space is analogous to the physical space. It is an internalization of one’s physical world, with all attributes attached his social actors, e.g. hometown, officialdom, entry in examination. (Bourdieu, 1989) Those objectified labels will be meaningless if they are not being internalized and perceived by the social actor.

The network expanded from some center points will be a reconstruction of their social space from the eyes of social actors. The network is perceived by the social actors themselves. Researcher just reconstructed the social space of certain individuals, rather than setting a self-made “working definition” of social boundaries. Using relationships instead of attributes as boundaries, as I see it, will be a better illustration for the study of sociology of philosophers, for it will reconstruct the social context of social agents, with their perception of it, rather than the objectified space of attributes.

By examining the social space which philosophers are actually living in, we may give a more accurate picture of the development of Neo-Confucianism. Furthermore, the conventional approach will pick up some representatives of Neo-Confucians and treat all other literati as the opposite. However, those other literati may be too generic and unclear. Some of them might even had no intersection with the Neo-Confucians. Instead of this, we may restrict the generic notation of “other literati” –opposite of Neo-Confucians—intellectuals in the social network, who do not follow the ideas of Neo-Confucianism. The social boundary of Neo-Confucianism was thus between the Neo-Confucians and others in the network. We can examine the expanding or contracting of the social boundary between Neo-Confucians and other literati inside the network, which is essential for the development of Neo-Confucianism.

In following sections, I will start from different philosophers—leading philosophers like Zhu Xi, Lü Zuqian and Zhang Shi, and their students—to explore the social network they were living in. I hope this sociological analysis will unveil some hidden characteristic about Neo-Confucians as a social group. Most of my data come from the CBDB project.

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13 Note this process can hardly be carried for three times, for lack of social meaning. Milgram’s famous result may also tell us that we can reach everyone in the word in just six steps of snowball sampling, while such a large scope definitely surpass anyone’s capability. (Milgram, 1967)

14 The common possession of some attribute may be conduit of establishing connection among its holders. (McPherson et al., 2001) However, the common objectified label—countrymen, Tong Nian, colleague and etc.—would be meaningless, if it is not translated to social ties between actors. For instance, one may be also living in Wu Zhou, as Lü Zuqian does, but the from the co-living place, we can hardly come to a conclusion that he might support Lü’s ideas. While social contacts of Lü Zuqian are thus more likely to be influenced by Lü and behave like Lü does.

15 http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k16229. The database is still under built, while most individuals who are relevant to Neo-Confucianism are included. For instance, volume 48-57 in Song Yuan Xue’an(宋元學案) are mainly records of Zhu Xi, Lü Zuqian, Zhang Shi, Lu Jiuyuan and Chen Liang, with their student, which include most Neo-Confucians in later sections. This ten volumes contain 446 individuals, while 384(86%) of them are included in the current database. Hence the data in CBDB are to some extent available for a fundamental analysis of the ancient social network.
3 Network of Neo-Confucians

Inner controversies were indispensable for the crystallization of Neo-Confucianism. The struggle for the "transmission of Way" (道统) and Zhu Xi’s raise to ascendancy are the main topic of Tillman’s analysis. (Tillman, 1992). Using network graphs of the network around the leading philosophers, this process can be revealed more vividly.

I have expanded the academic network, from five leading philosophers to 88 during 1170 and 1180.\textsuperscript{16} By academic network, I mean academic interactions between intellectual alliances, e.g. Lu Jiuyuan and Lu Jiuling, philosophical rivalries, e.g. Zhu Xi and Chen Liang and teacher-students. Hence the network was mainly constituted by Neo-Confucians. This reduction of ambulant forms of interactions between Neo-Confucians may sound unreasonable. However, I will show that even a simplification like this can exhibit the structure of the academic community of Neo-Confucianism.

\textsuperscript{16}The famous longtail phenomenon—famous people tend to have much more social ties than others—also works here. Over 80% nodes only have one tie. Zhu Xi, Liu Zuqian and Zhang Shi may have over hundreds of student, while most of are untraceable today. (Chan, 1982) (Xu, 1990) (Tillman, 1992, chap 2) In the student whom we can know their name, most of them are extant only in documents of Zhu Xi, while we can hardly trace their relationship with other intellectuals. They composed the social network of leading philosophers and contributed much to the prosperity of school, while inclusion of those figures could not help to understand the interaction in the intellectual community. This is not to deny the obvious fact that they after all have their own social network, while the limitation of historical archives restrict the possibility to give a further analysis to them. Thus I have excluded nodes with the degree 1, i.e. they only have one tie in the social network.
Figure 1: social contacts of leading philosophers, 1170-1180. Source: CBDB database and my own supplementary data. The node size is proportional to the number of contacts, which implies the degree centrality of nodes in networks. (Borgatti et al., 1998)

From the graph representation of the social network, we can more clearly perceive the scholarship community of Neo-Confucians. This graph validate Tillman’s analysis in a more vivid way. Zhu Xi, Lü Zuqian and Zhang Shi are the most important nodes in the network. We can still find that the network can be partitioned into several groups, which is analogous to the different school in philosophy. Lü Zuqian, Zhang Shi, Lu Jiuyuan are the core member of their school. The upper-left corner the Yongjia school (永嘉學派).

There is not an evident bridge in the network, which indicate that the social network in this period is robust and has multiple poles. Internal debates between those poles accelerated the development speed of Neo-Confucianism, in both realms of moral philosophy, epistemology and even metaphysics.\(^\text{17}\) Main philosophers in this period nearly all had met each other vis-à-vis, sometimes they paid a special visit to others. The common identity of of being a Neo-Confucian was shaped through continuous debates inside the group, for the common question about the philosophy, e.g. the epistemology, although controversial, evidently differed from other school. Primary concepts, \(Lí(理), Qi(氣), Xìng(性)\) and \(Míng(命)\), with the abundant discussion of them, would distinguish them from other literati. Inner debates helped the crystallization of Neo-Confucianism. The established social network of academic communication, which was formed and evolved in the process

\(^{17}\text{Collins has noted in his comparative study of philosophy around the world that in the prosperous era of a philosophical school, rivalries in the school are a common characteristic throughout the world. (Collins, 1998).}\)
of discussion, would further solidify the social network of other association type—political recom-
mendation, literary composition, social writing—which would serve to be the social, cultural and
political capital of individuals. Different philosophical ideas were continually forming, or put it in
another way, structuring the network structure.

However, besides structural characteristic—multiple poles—of the network, I would stress an-
other important factor which influenced the development of Neo-Confucianism. During 1180 and
1181, Lü Zuqian and Zhang Shi both died at a very early age (44 for Lü and 47 for Zhang Shi).
This was a turning point in the history of philosophy, for the sudden death has broken the balance
between the three centers.18 Zhu Xi occupied a position ”structural hole”, (Burt, 1995) between Lu
Jiuyun and Yongjia school, while he was also the one who possessed most social contacts. Hence
Zhu Xi became a genuine star in the network after 1180.

Just imagine the network after the death of Chen Liang and Lu Jiuyuan (during 1193-1194) The
network will then be like a sun—Zhu Xi—surrounded by satellites(Figure 2). Many students of
Lu then decided to follow Zhu Xi, which diminished Lu’s influence.19 (Hymes, 1989, p432) Zhu
Xi now indeed won the struggle for the ”transmission of the Way” inside Neo-Confucians. I am
not underestimating the rich content of Zhu Xi’s encyclopedical works, but the sudden change of
the network structure was indispensable for his reputation in later dynasties.

Sewell has argued that historical sociology should be eventful, which sees the history as de-
termined by a series of contingent events. (Sewell, 1996) The development of Neo-Confucianism
illustrate the power of social structure, which can be viewed as the academic network among Neo-
Confucians, and events or social processes which implied the efficacy of agency. The dual social
factors of structure and event would give a more detailed interpretation of Zhu Xi’s ascendancy,
rather than the pure philosophical analysis of Zhu Xi’s work.

18 Huang Zongxi(黄宗羲) had noted this in his Song Yuan Xue’an. See (Huang and Quan, 1846, p1678)
19 The same thing occurred to the Lü Zuqian and Zhang Shi. For instance, Xu Kan(徐侃) and Xu Zhuo(徐倬)
are all disciples of Lü Zuqian, while their younger brother Xu Qiao(徐僑) chose Zhu Xi as the teacher. See volume 69 of
Song Yuan Xue’an
4 Neo-Confucians with other Literati

4.1 The struggle for legitimate way

Besides the inner controversies, there were also contentions between Neo-Confucians and other literati. This is not to say that Neo-Confucian philosophers intentionally aimed to win the status of orthodoxy, which be further beget the critique of shaping of "Oriental Despotism". The demarcation between Neo-Confucians and other literati was not a rational strategy of philosophers to win the dominant position in the intellectual society, which a somewhat a misunderstanding under the influence of the modern assumption of homo economicus.

The sense of distinction, in Bourdieu's sense, is inevitable in each social practice. The fate of the groups is bound up with the words that designate them. Neo-Confucians do not intentionally set themselves set apart from other elites, whereas the pursuit of the ideal moral life of Neo-Confucians had implicitly set the life of profit-chasing as the inferior one, in minds of their followers. Other intellectuals also had their own claims of the state and society. (Liu, 1989) The competition for the dominant position in the academic field was thus inherent in the social practice of literati, whether intentionally or unintentionally. The struggle for the dominant position of a certain field, be it literary, academic or political, is actually the embodied principle of social space.  

20For instance, Hilde de Weerdt has discussed about the struggle for the standards and contents of civil examination,
The emergence of Neo-Confucians, from teacher-student ties to a stabilized network of intellectual group, to the further common identity among intellectuals, has exactly proven this process. Only by separating them from other literati, could philosophers and their followers gain social attention and gradually grow to be an influential group. In producing the concepts of philosophies, they produced the boundary of social group. The boundary of Neo-Confucians was both in the process of producing concepts, which would serve as a classification scheme among literati, and the social network of literati.

4.2 The network of social writing

Most literati possessed the ability to fluently read and write classical text. However, the writing can be viewed twofold, internally and externally. The internal analysis of writing focuses on the text, with its content, genres and biographical information which it carries, whereas the external side emphasizes the writing as a social practice. The ability to read and write classical text was neither simply for purpose of examination, nor for literary appreciation in pure aesthetic field. The writings, in genres of epitaphs, biographies, postfaces/prefaces, ritual texts and etc., had been routine activities among literati.

The mechanism of writing, the social interactions between writers and receivers and the sociopolitical context in which the text is produced as well as the social and cultural meaning conveyed by writing shape the practice of social writing. The text, with the social practice bounded on it, will be referred as social writing. Social writing may include different genres. I will describe them in succession.

Epitaphs have been extensively use by historians, for they often carried the biographical information which would be salient for the study of a certain figure. Nivison distinguished “historical biography” and ”social biography”. (Nivison, 1962) The former will serve the ends of the compilation of a gazetteer and even official history, as Twitchett has discussed. (Twitchett, 2002) However, the social aspect of biography writings will be my concern.

Family would usually request their intimate friends or famous literary figures to write biographies. (Nivison, 1962) Some biographies were under request of social associates, as friends, teacher or students, which would be an implication of the underlying social connection between literati families. Consequently, the writing were an reinforcement of the existing network between families, and a established social obligation, for the writing action often circulated among certain elite gentry for generations. It would be the usual case that a teacher wrote a biography for a student’s parents, while the student in turn took the responsibility of writing a biography of the teacher. In some other cases, the family would invite an renowned literary figure to write the biography, hence it would be the responsibility of family to offer the writer a Xing Zhuang (account of conduct), as the main source of biography. The writing responsibility might even be transferred to a friend of writer when he was occupied or in an accident. (Nivison, 1962, p4). However, to be chosen as the biographical writer was evidently a prestige, which may indicate his ”symbolic capital” in Bourdieu’s sense. The writing of biographies was an established social obligation for literati, especially for those renowned literary figures, thus they often followed a fixed format and accompanied with the exaltation of an individual. However, only through this ”habitus” could the recognition of literary competence be judged, and the cultural goods of writing can be classified, which will be

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between emperor, literati intellectuals, editors and publisher. (De Weerdt, 2007, pp.11-22)
an identification of one’s cultural capital. (Bourdieu, 1984) The one with more obligation of social writing is often the one who possess more cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), which will further exert its influence on the person’s social and political status.

Preface and postfaces are like biography and epitaph writing, besides that it will be more individualistic. However, Chen Wenyi has shown that preface/postface, apart from literary genre, also had their social meaning. (Chen, 2007) Prefaces were used as a channel for recommendation, whereas the mechanism underlying the preface writing was more fundamentally for fame among literati, which could be viewed as a symbolic capital in Bourdieu’s sense.

The ability to write classical text were the fundament of both the practice of social writing and the competition of civil examination. The civil examination would be the qualification to the procession of political capital, whereas the social writing would be the social practices of one’s social capital. With the common prerequisite of literary skill, the education, political and social capital could be transformed between different forms. (Elman, 1991; Bourdieu, 1984)

Generally speaking, the practice of social writing, whether epitaph, biography, preface or ritual texts, shared the analogous mechanism of the pursuit of symbolic capital among literati communities. Hence I will reconstruct a social network which is based on the social writing relationships, to explore the interaction between Neo-Confucians and other literati.

I use the snowball sampling and starts from Zhu Xi, Lü Zuqian, Lu Jiuyuan, Zhang Shi and Chen Liang. The first round snowball sampling generates a network with 517 individuals and 1772 edges. Neo-Confucians and other are intertwined in the same social space.

Figure 3: Social contacts of leading philosophers. Nodes in yellow are Neo-Confucians and those in blue are other individuals in the network.
4.3 Social, political and cultural capital status of Neo-Confucians

Leading philosophers, like Zhu Xi and Lu Jiuyuan, often criticized the civil examination, for the classics were treated as a tool, rather than its nature of personal cultivation (修身). Therefore it will be plausible to assume that Neo-Confucians were likely to distinguish themselves by way of quitting examination and escaping office in the central government, both socially and psychologically. (Hartwell, 1982, pp.405-426.) (Liu, 1989) The departure of literati and the state seems to be a prevailing tendency among scholars. (Bol, 2003)

However, a sociological analysis of Neo-Confucianism will challenge this hypothesis.

Table 1: Entry Type in Network of Leading Philosophers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry Type</th>
<th>Confucian</th>
<th>Non</th>
<th>Facilitated</th>
<th>Jin Shi</th>
<th>Prefect</th>
<th>Merit</th>
<th>Yin</th>
<th>Grace</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Facilitated Degree
2 Prefect or provincial graduates.
3 Honorific title based on merit of relative
4 Yin Privilege.
5 Office granted by special grace.
6 Non represent no record.

From the entry type table, we can know that owners of the Jin Shi title constituted over half of Neo-Confucians, while this number drastically drops to one fifth for other intellectuals. In contrast to the assumption that Neo-Confucians quitted the civil examination to pursue their moral ideal, this table may indicate that Neo-Confucians were still more successful in the civil examination than other literati. Modern sociology view the education level, which may be indicated by diploma, would be the indicator of cultural capital one may have. (Bourdieu, 1986) The degree in civil examination thus would definitely indicate one’s cultural capital, for its enduring time of preparation and low rate of admission. (De Weerdt, 2007, p19) (Elman, 1991, 2000) The civil examination, as a channel for the selection of bureaucrats, would be further an political capital. Due to the large number of missing values, this result may be dubious. Many individuals came into our study because they have certain relationship with leading philosophers. A note, diary or letter might record his name, while no traces of his life could be found, thus making a great margin of missing values. However, I believe this is somewhat the more vivid picture of the social space in which Neo-Confucians were embedded. Most individuals were meteors in the history, while it would be lucky for him to be extant today. The large proportion of missing values is just an illustration of this fact.

Furthermore, If missing values are excluded, the percentage of Jin Shi among Neo-Confucians and other literati would be nearly equal, which means that Neo-Confucians at least were equally successful in civil examination with other literati. In general, Neo-Confucians never abandon their successes in examination.
Table 2: Office Type in the Network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office Type</th>
<th>Confucian</th>
<th>Non</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Circuit</th>
<th>Palace</th>
<th>Prefecture</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Non represents no record.
| pref represents position in prefecture.

The occupation of political office is an indicator for the political power. We can see that the percentage of Neo-Confucians who chose to serve at the Court exceeded those of other literati, which indicates that Neo-Confucians never gave their connection to the central government. Neo-Confucians, as a social group, still occupied the dominant position in the field of political power.

Table 3: number of social writing in of network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confucian</th>
<th>0-5</th>
<th>5-10</th>
<th>10-50</th>
<th>&gt;50</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>896</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most notable contrast between Neo-Confucians and others can be found in the field of social writing. Over one third of the Neo-Confucians had over 10 writings that can preserved today, while the number drastically drops to less than 5% for other literati. The social capital accumulated in the action of writing would enhance their promotion of Neo-Confucianism to the local society. Neo-Confucians used it as a way to distinguish members of Neo-Confucianism from others rather than a social obligation which had to be finished. (Nivison, 1962) Zhu Xi refused to write an epitaph to Cheng Liang, which clearly shows that social writing, in the form of epitaphs, was used to identify "self" with "the other". (Tillman, 1992) This demarcation between self and other, are actually indispensable in the consecration Neo-Confucianism . (Bourdieu, 1984) They emphasize the social role of the writing more. Neo-Confucians actually occupied the dominant position in the field of social writing compared with others. The dominant position of Neo-Confucians accelerated the ideas to disseminate into the community of literati.

We can see from above that Neo-Confucians were not departing from the common practise of other literati. Neo-Confucians around the leading philosophers of Southern Song still followed a similar pattern as others. They were an integral part of the literati class. Social writing then

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21 This may due to the bias in the preserve of document between Neo-Confucians and others. However, there are certainly some literary figures who still have many writing preserved. The validation of data need to be further examined.
22 In view of SNA, the number of social writing are exactly the degree centrality of network of social writing. Centrality aims to measure the "importance" of node in a social network. It can be calculated by various forms, while the core idea of it evaluating the power of node in a network. (Borgatti et al., 1998)
served as a demarcating line between Neo-Confucians and others. They dominated the dimension of social writing in the social space.

4.4 Social origins of Neo-Confucians

Table 4: Father and Son’s Office Type of Neo-Confucians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father’s Office Type</th>
<th>Office Type</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Circuit</th>
<th>Palace</th>
<th>Prefecture</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>central</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>palace</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pref</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rank</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>20.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The missing values are omitted, for the information of their fathers are less likely to be recorded, thus the large percentage of missing values may veil the variance in other aspects.
2 Use cell frequency instead of row frequency in aforementioned tables, i.e. the percentage in each cell in now the proportion in all figures.

Table 5: Father and Son’s Office Type of other literati

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father’s Office Type</th>
<th>Office Type</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Circuit</th>
<th>Palace</th>
<th>Prefecture</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>central</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>circuit</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>palace</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pref</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rank</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>16.1</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.7</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The missing values are omitted.
2 Use cell frequency instead of row frequency in aforementioned tables, i.e. the percentage in each cell in now the proportion in all figures.

Examining the social origins of Neo-Confucians will give us more knowledge about them. Note that there were less Neo-Confucians whose father had occupied an position in the Court (22.7% compared with 35.6%), while Neo-Confucians were more likely to come from the local official families (22.7% compared with 15%), which may indicate that Neo-Confucians were deeply rooted in local society. (Bol, 2003) However, recall in table 2, a greater percentage of Neo-Confucians chose to stay in the Court than other literati. Although Neo-Confucians were more deeply attached to the local society from the social origins, they nevertheless abandoned some local ties and prestige to stay in the central government. The prosperity of Neo-Confucianism in the time of Zhu Xi
and the raise of the political status were going in parallel, which indicates that the internal development of Neo-Confucianism and external raise of social status are mutually influenced. The Court was still attractive to those gentry, which may contradict Hymes’s conclusion. (Hymes, 1986)

Table 6: Entry Type in Group A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confucian</th>
<th>Father's entry type (^1)</th>
<th>Facilitated (^2)</th>
<th>Jin Shi</th>
<th>Prefect (^3)</th>
<th>Merit (^4)</th>
<th>Yin (^5)</th>
<th>Grace (^6)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The missing values are omitted.
2. Facilitated Degree
3. Prefect or provincial graduates.
4. Honorific title based on merit of relative
5. Yin Privilege.
6. Office granted by special grace.

We can see from this table that the paternal line of Neo-Confucians were less likely to be *Jin Shi* than other literati. This indicates that at least they might not be superior than other in social origin. However, from Table 1 we know that the percentage of *Jin Shi* Neo-Confucians far exceeded those of other literati. (whether including or neglecting missing values) This reflected that the generation of Zhu Xi, Lü Zuqian and Zhang Shi raised their cultural status in the social network. The growth of cultural capital among Neo-Confucians helped the dissemination of Neo-Confucianism to border intellectual communities.

4.5 A new explanation for the development of Neo-Confucianism

Why Neo-Confucianism could transform itself from the banned heterodoxy to orthodoxy? Using above tables, I will try to give a sociological explanation interpretation to it.

According the statistics, Neo-Confucians were occupying a relative dominant position in their own social networks. They were not always the dominant elite in the realm of the whole empire. The network around Neo-Confucian philosophers were just a small part of the whole huge network of literati in that period.\(^{23}\) For instance, in the formation stage era of Neo-Confucianism around Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao, they were just one school of the opinion camp, while the urge for *wen* led by Su Shi and Su Zhe (Bol, 1994), the New Policies advocated by Wang Anshi, as well as the conservative claims of Sima Guang were all attractive to intellectuals. (Liu, 1989) Neo-Confucians never acquired the equal position in the academic field than they were a century later. In the political field, followers of Wang Anshi and Sima Guang had consecutively taken the governance of authorities, while Neo-Confucians were most time outside the central government. Thus Neo-Confucians in the northern Song were by and large the inferior group in the complete network of authorities.

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\(^{23}\) In the jargon of social network analysis, the network around a certain figure or a group is referred as ego-centered network, while the their wide-coverage counterpart, e.g. the whole intellectual network of Song literati, would be called as whole network.
However, It will be reasonable to claim that Neo-Confucian philosophers occupied a more relative central position in the ego-centered network in Northern Song. By the relative advantage against the other literati, Neo-Confucian philosophers could more easily disseminate their ideas to the ”peripheral” individuals in their network.

A manifest doubt would be that other intellectual stars, like Su Shi and Wang Anshi, were doubtlessly central in their own network. What was the difference between them and Neo-Confucianism philosophers? I believe that the emphasis of education of Neo-Confucianism would thus be an important factor for the raise of Neo-Confucianism. (De Bary and Chaffee, 1989) The promotion of local affairs, the scheme of the ritual system, and the design of the family organization would further help Neo-Confucianism to gain support in the local society. However, as a social group, they never ceased their pursuit for the officialdom, the success in civil examination and the fame of social writing. Only by occupying the local dominant position could they gradually gain supports of more regions and more families, and eventually obtain the globally dominant position.

The ascendancy of Neo-Confucianism, in a sociological view, would thus be its rise of political, cultural and social capital from the local, or relative dominant position in their own social network, to the global, or the whole network dominance. The transformation was due to the effort of academy and education, the promotion of local affairs and the urge for local benefits. Under the whole network of literati, there were a growing proportion of sub-networks which were influenced by Neo-Confucians. Neo-Confucians had never given up their dominant position in their ego-centered network, while the diffusion of Neo-Confucianism had promoted it from the local advantage to the global advantage. The translation of the local dominance to the nation-wide dominance in the network of literati would thus be a new interpretation for the raise of Neo-Confucianism. The success of Neo-Confucianism is thus a reproduction of the political, social and cultural capital of Neo-Confucianism philosophers through the social network, from the local level to the nation-wide level.

5 Conclusion

Using the social network of leading philosophers in Southern Song, I examine the development of Neo-Confucianism in internal and external dimensions. Inner debates and alliance between Neo-Confucians accelerated the crystallization process of Neo-Confucianism. For the external side, Neo-Confucians still occupied a dominant position in political, social and especially in cultural fields against other intellectuals, rather than quitting from government and civil examinations. In promoting education and organizing local affairs, they successfully transformed Neo-Confucianism from a dominant idea in a local network to the nation-wide orthodoxy.

24 A more detailed comparative analysis of norther Song would be an equivalent statistical analysis, following the above procedure. However, the data in CBDB are currently not able to carry out an analogous study.

25 This would be the main argument in most of the localist paradigm study.
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