

“

People should accumulate knowledge, and the change of quantity will be turned into the change of quality. In this way your life will take a big step forward.

## Professor blazes a trail in Song Dynasty studies

Wang Lihui and Shen Li

**Z**hu Ruixi is a famous professor and historian specializing in the Song Dynasty (AD 960-1279) studies.

The Jiading native, born in 1938, has loved reading since his childhood. His favorite books were about history and his family encouraged him. He says he has read "The Patriot Yue Fei" many times. The book is a historic novel about the general Yue Fei defending China in the Song Dynasty against the Jin invaders. When Zhu was young, he recalls, his favorite thing was to collect old books, letters and coins.

In 1956, Zhu was enrolled in Fudan University majoring history. It proved to be a pivotal time in his life. While he was uncertain about his future, a classmate of his told him, "People should accumulate knowledge, and the change of quantity will be turned into the change of quality. In this way your life will take a big step forward."

### Hardworking student

At that time, college students were heavily involved in political movements and they often needed to stay up late to study. When other students were chatting in the bedrooms at night, he was busy in the reading room, reading monumental works such as "History as a Mirror" and "The Song Dynasty's Chronicles."

The historian says he even stayed on campus during summer holidays so he would have more time to read without any distractions.

Five years later, Zhu graduated and enrolled in Sichuan University. He became Professor Meng Wentong's assistant for a post-graduate degree. Until today Zhu still can recall the scene when the 70-year-old Meng was giving his lecture in an armchair at his home, with a smoke in his hand.

Meng was a leader in the field of Song studies and was the first Chinese professor to teach the history of the Song. Zhu was one of Meng's last two disciples.

Meng also had a keen interest in Con-

fucius, ancient geography, Buddhism, Taoism and poetry. His versatility inspired Zhu. From morning till midnight, Zhu studied very hard and was later set up as a model of most diligent student in the university.

Around this time, Zhu began to get his own opinions on historic events and started to publish articles in the newspapers and magazines such as "Guangming Daily," "Historical Science Monthly" and "History Teaching."

In 1964, Zhu was selected as the assistant to Fan Wenlan, the then head of the China Institute of Modern History at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. In 1968, famous scholar Mao Dun sent his daughter to Fan and told him to continue compiling the "General History of China." Four volumes had already been completed and the team had stopped further work due to the cultural revolution (1966-76). The fifth volume is about Song, and as the assistant of Fan, Zhu should collect the materials for the works. However, as still in that special time, between 1970 and 1972, Zhu was sent to do manual labor in Xixian County of Henan Province. During this period he had to read voraciously during work breaks and in the evenings.

In October, 1972, he was sent back to the institute. Zhu joined the team and contributed greatly to the fifth, sixth and seventh volumes of the "General History of China."

In 1978, the fifth volume of the series was published. It was the first history book printed in the past ten years, which made a big stir in the publishing circle. The book was warmly welcomed and about 1 million copies were sold.

Later, Zhu made contributions to the works of "The Song Dynasty's History Volume of Chinese History Dictionary" and "The History of the Liao Dynasty (AD 907-1125), Western Xia Dynasty (1038-1227) and Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) in the Encyclopedia of China". The above mentioned three dynasties existed at the same time as Song.

### Contributions

In 1980, Zhu published the book "Studies on the Song Dynasty's Society." As the first book on the subject of Song's society, it has been on the must-read list until today for the post-graduate entrance exam of Taiwan's Tsinghua University.

Zhu also published "The Song Dynasty Volume of the General History of Chinese Political Systems." It is regarded as the first complete book on Song's political systems.

Zhu says Song never unified China. He adds that researchers studying the Song should focus on the details of history but also be able to view events through a larger lens.

"You must try to broaden your vision while studying the history," Zhu's teacher Meng once told him. Having kept the instruction in mind, Zhu also studied the history of the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907), Five Dynasties and 10 Kingdoms period (AD 907-979) and the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).

Now in his 70s, Zhu still spends seven hours a day in his study to read and work. He says he has no special talent just a willingness to work hard and spend time searching for books, taking notes and thinking through problems.



Above: Zhu Ruixi's books about the Song Dynasty

Left: Zhu Ruixi, a Jiading native, is a famous professor and historian specializing in Song Dynasty (AD 960-1279) studies. Now in his 70s, Zhu still spends seven hours a day in his study to read and work.