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**期末考试试卷**

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**Please write an essay about 500-800 words in English, explaining a cultural phenomenon in China. A comparative perspective is encouraged.**

The Economic Center Shift from the North to South in Song Dynasty

The cultural phenomenon of **the economic center shift from the north to south** in Song dynasty is explored from five aspects, namely **process, manifestations, reasons, impacts and inspirations.**

The year of 2020 marks 30th anniversary of the opening-up and development of Pudong, Shanghai. In the past three decades, Pudong has emerged from an agricultural area to a financial hub. The same miracle happened in Shenzhen, the innovative science and technology city. According to the latest news and statistics, the top ten cities in China, in term of GDP, are all in the south except for the capital Beijing. All these actually demonstrate the economic center has again shifted from the north to south. It is not the first time in history that such things happened. As early as in Song dynasty(960—1279AD), the first round of economic center shift has finished. By the end of northern Song dynasty, large population have migrated to the south, especially to Lin an (now Hangzhou), making contribution to the integration of customs, dialects, culture while booming the economic development.

**For the process, there are basically three critical periods in the shift:**

First, Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern dynasties. During this period, the development of the south laid a solid foundation for the shift. According to the Book of Song: 江南之为国盛矣……地广野丰，民勤本业，一岁或稔，则数郡忘饥……丝绵布帛之饶，覆衣天下. That indicates the economic center was still in the north, but agriculture and textile industry of the south was steadily growing.

Second, during the Tang dynasty, the economy in the south had continuously become stronger. According to quotations from Quan Deyu (权德舆), a government official in the Tang dynasty, 江东诸州，业在田亩，每一岁善熟，则旁资数道……赋取所资，漕挽所出，军国大计，仰于江淮. The south and the north were equally strong to some extent.

Third, the end of the Northern Song dynasty and the beginning of the South Song dynasty: the economy of the south has outgrown that of the north, thus becoming the new economic center of ancient China. During the Song dynasty, the economic center moved from the north to the south, the Yangtze river basin. And according to the History of Song, 国家根本，仰给东南. National prosperity all depends on the south region.

**As for the manifestations,** **first of all, the yield of rice in southern region ranked first nationwide and Taihu Lake Basin became the granary.** That’s why in the southern Song dynasty, the saying “as long as Su and Hu have a bumper harvest, there will be enough food for the whole country” was widely circulated. Besides, the planting and cultivation of cotton, tea trees and wheat were also promoted to the Yangtze River Basin, indicating the agricultural development flourished in the south.

**Next indicator was the development of handicraft industry which consisted of two parts.** First was textile industry, including silk industry and cotton industry. In Southern Song dynasty, the silk textile industry developed much better in the south including in Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Sichuan, especially in Sichuan where various quality, exquisite and superb silk fabrics and satin were available. The second was porcelain production. In Song dynasty, the south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River became the center of the porcelain production.

**Because of the prosperity in agricultural and handicraft industries, trade and business in the southern region also began to prosper.** For example, the capital of Southern Song dynasty, Linan, currently Hangzhou area, was very crowded and bustling at that time when all kinds of trade activities and business thrived and there were even morning and night markets.

**The shift resulted from multiple factors** which were summarized as follows:

**Firstly, the significant change of the natural environment resulted in the massive migration of northern people southward.** Since the late-Tang dynasty, China had gone through significant climate change characterized by lower temperature and less rainfall, leading to the southward migration of agricultural and pastoral areas given that the relatively warm and humid southern region was more suitable for agricultural production. Apart from this, the agricultural practices and human activities concentrated in the Yellow River Basin for several centuries had taken a heavy toll on the local environment, causing severe water and soil erosion, soil degradation and even frequent sandstorms. The beautiful northern scenery depicted in the *Book of Songs* gradually disappeared and people were forced to move southward in search of better environmental conditions for agricultural and pastoral production.

**Secondly, the military system reform was a key factor for the decline of military power in the Song dynasty followed by the loss of the national territorial area.** With a view to prevent the national division caused by local independent forces, Zhao Kuangyin, the first emperor of the Song dynasty, implemented many policies to weaken the military forces, which to some extent helped to prevent domestic insurrections, but considerably compromised the nation’s defense capability against external invaders.

**Thirdly, the nomadic groups in the north had grown stronger and established unified regimes such as Liao, Jin and Xixia.** Apart from the formidable military power reinforced by their nomadic traditions and customs, the northern nomadic groups actively learned from the central dynasty about the governance system, advanced technologies and ideas, greatly enhancing their comprehensive strength which empowered them to challenge the central dynast. Besides, the growing national identity recognition within nomadic groups and strong leadership of some nomadic chiefs such as Genghis Khan also contributed to their rapid rising. Along with the expansion of nomadic regimes were years of wars in the north, forcing a large population to move southward as a way to protect themselves from the war.

**And the shift had significant impacts in the following five aspects:**

**Firstly, the shift gave a huge stimulus to the maritime trade.** In Song dynasty, lots of sea lines opened up, and some merchant ships could even sail as far as the Arabian Peninsula and the east coast of Africa. Therefore, the shift had promoted the economic and political exchanges with neighboring countries and played a part in the formation of the communities of Chinese merchants in Southeast Asia.

**Secondly, the shift had a major impact on population distribution.** According to historical data, with the economic center shifting to south, population increased from 50 million in the early Northern Song dynasty to 118 million in 1127.

**Thirdly the shift promoted the shifting of the cultural center.** Zhu Xi, a famous historian and philosopher of the Song dynasty, said that “靖康之乱，中原涂炭。衣冠人物，萃于东南。”which revealed due to the chaos of wars in northern region, most talented people gathered in the south.

**Fourthly, the shift enhanced ethnic relations and national integration.** Although frequent wars brought disasters, they had also fostered exchanges between the ethnic groups, creating prerequisites for ethnic integration and promoting the development of a unified multi-ethnic state.

**Last but not least, apart from the positive impacts mentioned above, the shift had some adverse effects on the southern environment.** Since there wasn’t enough land to cultivate in southeast China, people started to exploit mountains and lakes, leading to the rapid decline of the local environment and making southern areas vulnerable to floods and droughts.

To sum up, the shift has gone through three stages and finished in Song dynasty. It can be reflected in the prosperity of agriculture, handicraft and commerce. Several factors have contributed to the phenomenon, including social, political, economic and environmental ones. For the impacts, such shift has greatly promoted the development of economy, trade and culture in the south and enhanced national integration. However, the overexploitation of some areas in the south has taken a heavy toll on the local environment.

**Taking history as a mirror, we can find some inspirations from the shift. Firstly,** the fact that the northern region is rife with war while the south was relatively peaceful and stable is a key factor for the shift, revealing social stability is the prerequisite for economic development and social progress. **Secondly,** from the economic development of the southern region, we know an important approach to rapid development is to introduce advanced technology and experience and to cultivate or bring in talents. **Last but not least,** the alarming environmental disruption and resource abuse in the south following the shift serves as a reminder that we must strike a balance between economic development and environmental protection. We are supposed to make a rational use of resources and try to promote sustainable economic and social development.