

CHRONOLOGY OF TRIAD HISTORY: SECURITY AND POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE EXISTENCE OF CHINESE SECRET SOCIETIES

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ABSTRACT

The history of China is inherently intertwined with the concept of secret societies, whose criminal activities have significantly shaped the social and political climate of Chinese society. Their direct involvement in rebellions and revolutions consequently threatened the security and stability of both state structures and the general population. The earliest historical sources indicate the existence of the White Lotus secret society in the 13th century, during the Yuan Dynasty, whose members were Buddhist monks. According to some authors, they represent the genesis of modern Triads. Their members were involved in numerous rebellions rooted in hardships brought about by drought, unemployment, rising poverty, and corruption. Among the superstitious Chinese populace, these crises signified that the ruler had lost the "Mandate of Heaven," which in turn necessitated a popular revolt. From these uprisings emerged the Triads—secret societies that would over time evolve into the most powerful criminal organizations in China, and subsequently, the world. On one hand, this paper will examine the emergence of rebellions and revolutions that featured secret societies, specifically the Triads, as key actors. On the other hand, it aims to present the chronology of the origin and development of the Triads, as well as the means and methods implemented by the dynasties' political leadership to eliminate this destructive phenomenon.

Keywords: Triads, White Lotus, Hongmen, Tiandihui, secret societies, criminal organizations, revolutions, rebellions.