CHAPTER EIGHT

China Among Equals: Song, Liao, Xia, and Jin (907–1279)

The Song (sung) Dynasty did not dominate East Asia the way the Tang Dynasty had, or even rule all areas occupied largely by Chinese speakers. Northern Vietnam defended its independence. The Khitan Liao (lyow) Dynasty held territory in the northeast down to modern Datong and Beijing, and the Tangut Xia Dynasty held a smaller territory in the northwest. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Song had new northern rivals, the Jurchens and then the Mongols, who took even larger parts of China proper. The Song period is, as a result, conventionally divided into the Northern Song (960–1127), when the Song capital was in Kaifeng (ky-fuhng) and Liao was its chief rival, and the Southern Song (1127–1276), when the capital had been moved to Hangzhou (hahng-joe) and it confronted Jurchen Jin and later Mongol Yuan on its northern border.

Modern historians have been fascinated by the evidence that Song China was the most advanced society in the world in its day, and many have drawn attention to all that seems progressive during this period: the introduction of paper money, the spread of printing and increases in literacy, the growth of cities, the expansion of the examination system, the decline of aristocratic attitudes, and so on. These successes naturally raise questions. Why couldn't Song China turn its economic might into military might? How did the increasing importance of the examination system in elite lives affect the operation of the bureaucracy? Why was factionalism such a problem? Because printing led to many more works surviving from the Song than had been the case for earlier periods, historians have also been able to ask questions they could not ask for earlier periods because of lack of sources. What can we learn of daily life among different groups—elite and commoner, men and women, peasants and townsmen? How does Song society, economy, or culture look from the local level?

THE FOUNDING OF THE SONG DYNASTY

The founder of the Song Dynasty, Zhao Kuangyin, was a general whose troops put him on the throne when their previous ruler was succeeded by a child. Known as Taizu (r. 960–976), he set himself the task of making sure that no army would ever again be in a position to oust the rightful ruler. He retired or rotated his own generals and assigned civil officials to supervise them, thus subordinating the armed forces to the civil bureaucracy.

Curbing generals ended warlordism but did not solve the problem of defending against the Khitans' Liao Dynasty to the north. During the Five Dynasties, Liao was able to gain control of a strip of land in north China (the northern parts of Shanxi and Hebei) that had long been considered part of China proper (and was referred to by Song as the Sixteen Prefectures). Taizu and his younger brother Taizong made every effort to defeat Liao. They wanted to reclaim the Sixteen Prefectures because this area included the line of the Great Wall, the mountains and mountain passes that had been central to Chinese defense against northerners since before the Han Dynasty. However, although the Liao ruled over a population tiny by Chinese standards, their horsemen were more than a match for the Chinese armies. After a Liao invasion of 1004 came within a hundred miles of the capital Kaifeng, the Song settled with Liao, agreeing to pay tribute to Liao in exchange for Liao's maintaining the peace. Each year Song was to send Liao 100,000 ounces of silver and 200,000 bolts of silk. (In 1042 this sum was increased to 500,000 units.)

The payments to the Liao and Xia probably did not damage the overall Chinese economy. Even after the tribute to Liao was raised to 500,000 units, it did not result in an increase in Liao's bullion holdings since Song exports to Liao normally exceeded imports by a large margin, which meant that the silver sent to Liao found its way back into China as payment for Chinese goods, a little like foreign aid today. At the time, however, the pro-war irrendentists felt humiliated by these treaties and thought it only common sense that payments to Liao and Xia helped them and harmed Song.

The pro-peace accommodationists, however, could justly point out that tribute was much less costly than war. During the reigns of the first three emperors, the size of the armed forces increased rapidly to almost 1 million by 1022. By that time, the military was consuming three-quarters of the tax revenues. By contrast, even counting the expenses of the exchange of embassies, the cost of maintaining peaceful relations with the Liao consumed no more than 2 or 3 percent of the state's annual revenues. Arguments about cost-effectiveness also led Song to give up trying to regain northern Vietnam. Just as Silla was able to prosper under the Tang peace, Northern Song was able to prosper under the peace of its agreements with Liao.

SONG'S RIVALS: LIAO AND XIA

The Khitan were a proto-Mongol people originally from the eastern slopes of the mountains that separate Mongolia and Manchuria. There they raised cattle and horses, moving their herds in nomadic fashion. They had been in regular contact with the Tang and with other sedentary societies, such as the multiethnic kingdom of Balhae (Bohai; see Chapter 6) in southern Manchuria. They knew of the wealth of cities to the south and the strategies used by the Uighurs and others to extract some of it by exerting military pressure.

In the early tenth century, Abaoji (d. 926), of the Yelü (yeh-lyew) clan, united eight to ten Khitan tribes into a federation and secured control of the steppe. The political institutions he set up drew on both Chinese traditions and tribal customs. Abaoji set aside the traditional Khitan practice of tribal councils' electing chiefs for limited terms and in its place instituted hereditary succession on the Chinese model to ensure that his son would succeed him. The ruling Yelü clan married exclusively with the Xiao clan, and these two clans dominated the higher reaches of the government. In 926, Abaoji advanced southward toward Hebei and destroyed the kingdom of Balhae.

The Liao administered their Chinese territories differently from their Khitan territories. The southern section was governed on the basis of Chinese traditions, using a civil bureaucracy modeled on the Tang, complete with a civil service examination system. In contrast to the Tang, however, counties and even prefectures were granted to Khitan imperial relatives and high-ranking officials as fiefs over which they had full jurisdiction. The central city of the southern region was the Southern Capital, Yanjing, located at modern Beijing, thus beginning the history of that city as a capital. (See Map 8.1.) The southern section generated the bulk of Liao tax revenue.

The northern section of Liao was huge but sparsely settled. The government there was mobile, with the ruler and his chief officials moving from place to place

Map 8.1 Northern Song, Liao, and Xia, ca. 1050

in different seasons. To keep records in the Khitan language, a script was created with characters resembling Chinese characters (a language still not deciphered). This dual form of administration allowed the Khitans to maintain their tribal organization and resist sinification. Although the ruling elite became culturally dual, adept in both Khitan and Chinese languages and customs, ordinary Khitans in the north maintained their traditional social and military organization.

To the west of the Liao territories another non-Chinese state established itself during this period: the Xia, or Xi-Xia (Western Xia). It was founded by Tanguts, who spoke a language related to Tibetan. In Tang times, under pressure from the expanding Tibetan kingdom, the Tanguts had moved north and east from the Qingtang (ching-tahng) region into northern Shaanxi and Gansu (gahn-soo). In 881 the Tang court appointed a Tangut chief as military governor of the region, and this office became essentially hereditary. By the end of the ninth century, after the collapse of the Tibetan and Uighur empires, the Tanguts gained control of the important trade in horses with the Chinese.

During the tenth century, the Tanguts were largely outside the struggle for power in north China and were able to consolidate their state. Under Yuanhao (ywan-how) (r. 1032–1048), a script was adopted for writing the Tangut language and the dynastic name Xia was adopted. When Yuanhao demanded that the Song Dynasty recognize Xia as a sovereign state, the Chinese sent an army. The fighting went poorly for the Chinese, however, and in 1044 a treaty was reached in which the Song agreed to make payments to Xia much as it did to Liao, though in lesser amounts (200,000 units altogether).

The political institutions of Xia drew on Tang, Song, Liao, Tibetan, and Uighur models. There was a perennial tension between the imperial clan and the ministerial-consort clans, who often were able to dominate the court. Elements of Confucian statecraft were adopted, but Buddhism was firmly entrenched as the state religion. Xia was sometimes at war with Liao but also concluded treaties with it, recognizing Liao as the superior party.

A NEW ERA

The pace of change was rapid from the late Tang into the early Song period, and by the mid-eleventh century, China in many ways was a much more modern society, with cities and commerce transforming its economy and printing and examinations transforming elite culture.

The Medieval Chinese Economic Revolution

In 742, China's population was approximately 50 million, a little lower than it had been in 2 C.E. Over the next three centuries, with the expansion of rice cultivation in central and south China, the country's food supply steadily increased and so did its population. Song population reached about 100 million in 1102. China was certainly the largest country in the world at the time; its population undoubtedly exceeded that of all of Europe (as it has ever since).

How did China's economy sustain such growth? Agricultural prosperity and denser settlement patterns fostered commercialization of the economy. In many regions, farmers found that producing for the market made possible a better life; therefore, they no longer aimed at self-sufficiency. Peasants in more densely populated regions with numerous markets sold their surpluses and bought charcoal, tea, oil, and wine. In many places, farmers purchased grain and grew commercial crops, such as sugar, oranges, cotton, silk, and tea. The need to transport these products stimulated the inland and coastal shipping industries, creating jobs for shipbuilders and sailors. Marco Polo, the Venetian merchant who wrote of his visit to China in the late thirteenth century, was astounded by the boat traffic on the Yangzi River. He claimed to have seen no fewer than fifteen thousand vessels docked at a single city on the river. (See Color Plate 7.)

As more goods were bought and sold, demand for money grew enormously, leading eventually to the creation of the world's first paper money. The late Tang government had abandoned the use of bolts of silk as supplementary currency, which increased the demand for copper coins. By 1085 the output of currency had increased tenfold since Tang times to more than 6 billion coins a year. To avoid the weight and bulk of coins for large transactions, local merchants in late Tang times started trading receipts from deposit shops where they had left money or goods. The early Song authorities awarded a small set of shops a monopoly on the issuance of these certificates of deposit. In the 1120s, the government took over the system, producing the world's first government-issued paper money.

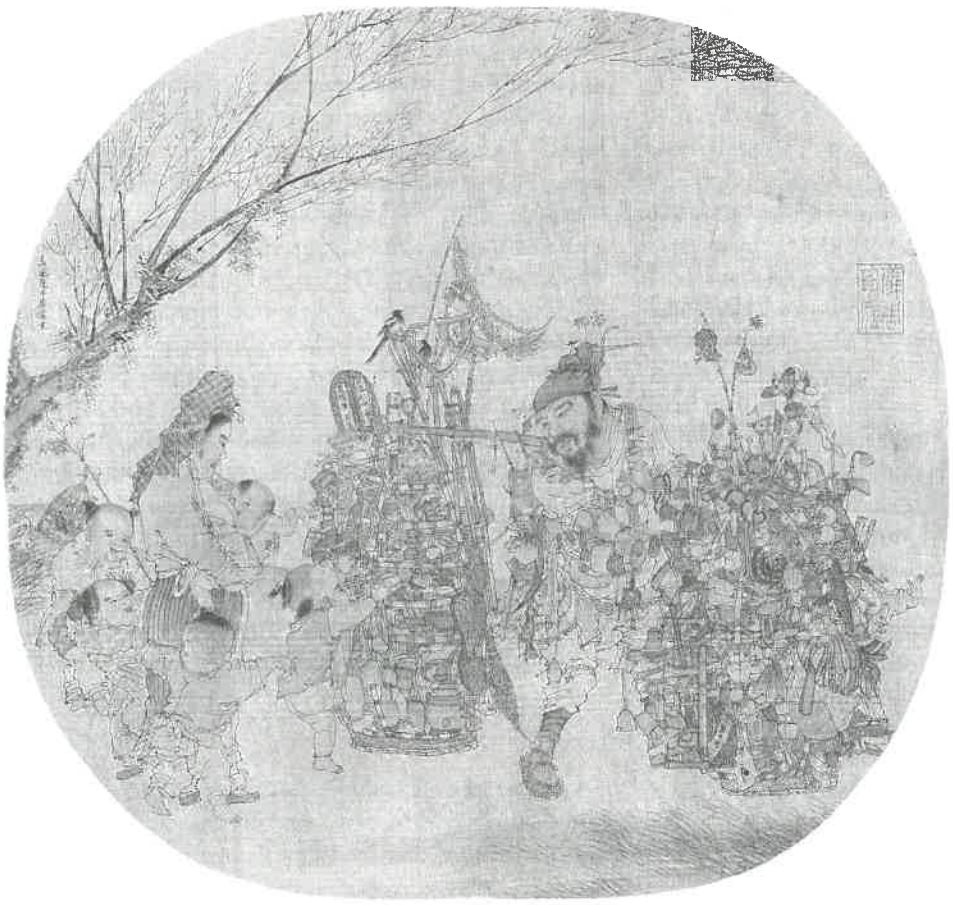
With the intensification of trade, merchants became progressively more specialized and organized. They set up partnerships and joint stock companies, with a separation of owners (shareholders) and managers. In the large cities, merchants were organized into guilds according to the type of product sold; they periodically set prices and arranged sales from wholesalers to shop owners. When the government requisitioned goods or assessed taxes, it dealt with the guild heads.

The Song also witnessed many advances in industrial techniques. Papermaking flourished with the demand for paper for books, documents, money, and wrapping paper. Heavy industry, especially iron, grew at an astounding pace. With advances in metallurgy, iron production reached around 125,000 tons per year in 1078, a sixfold increase over the output in 800. At first, charcoal was used in the production process, leading to deforestation of parts of north China. By the end of the eleventh century, however, bituminous coke had largely taken the place of charcoal.

Much of this iron was used for military purposes. Mass-production methods were used to make iron armor in small, medium, and large sizes. High-quality steel for swords was made through high-temperature metallurgy. Huge bellows, often driven by water wheels, were used to superheat the molten ore. The needs of the army also brought Chinese engineers to experiment with the use of gunpowder. In the wars against the Jurchens in the twelfth century, those defending a besieged city used gunpowder to propel projectiles at the enemy.

The quickening of the economy fueled the growth of great cities, especially the two capitals, Kaifeng and Hangzhou. The Song broke all earlier precedents and did not select either Chang'an or Luoyang as its capital, but a city that had prospered because of its location near the northern end of the Grand Canal. The Tang capital, Chang'an, had been a planned city, laid out on a rectangular grid with the walls built far out to allow expansion. Kaifeng, by contrast, grew over time as its economy developed. The city did not have the clearly demarcated wards of the Tang capital, and officials found themselves in frequent contact with ordinary city residents. The curfew was abolished in 1063, and from then on, many businesses in the entertainment quarters stayed open all night.

The medieval economic revolution shifted the economic center of China south to the Yangzi River



Knick-knack peddler. Song court painters sometimes portrayed life among ordinary people, as in this scene of a woman with several children eager to buy toys from the itinerant peddler who carries hundreds of items on a shoulder pole. (*National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan/Cultural Relics Press*)

drainage area. Rice, which grew there, provides more calories per unit of land than wheat or millet does and therefore allows denser settlements. Moreover, the milder temperatures of the south often allowed two crops to be grown on the same plot of land, one after the other. The abundance of rivers and streams in the south facilitated shipping, which reduced the cost of transportation and thus made regional specialization more economically feasible.

International Trade

During the tenth through thirteenth centuries, trade connected all the states we now classify under China (Song, Liao, Xia, Jin), the less politically important Dali state in the region of modern Yunnan, the oasis city-states of Central Asia, and the other major countries of East Asia, notably Korea and Japan. Maritime trade routes also connected these places to Southeast Asia and the societies of the Indian Ocean.

Trade between Song and its northern neighbors was stimulated by the indemnities Song paid to them. These states were given the means to buy Song products, and the Song set up supervised markets along the border to encourage trade. The Song government collected tariffs on this trade, and the trade itself helped sustain Song China's economic growth. Chinese goods that flowed north in large quantities included tea, silk, copper coins (widely used as a currency outside China), paper and printed books, porcelain, lacquerware, jewelry, rice and other grains, and ginger and other spices. The return flow included some of the silver that had originated with the Song and the horses that Song desperately needed for its armies, but also other animals such as camels and sheep, as well as goods

that had traveled across the Silk Road, including fine Indian and Persian cotton cloth, precious gems, incense, and perfumes.

During Song times, maritime trade for the first time exceeded overland foreign trade. The Song government sent missions to Southeast Asian countries to encourage their traders to come to China. Chinese junks were seen throughout the Indian Ocean and began to displace Indian and Arab merchants in the South Seas. Shards of Song Chinese porcelain have been found as far away as East Africa. Chinese junks were larger than the ships of most of their competitors, such as the Indians and Arabs, and had many technical advances, including waterproofing with tung oil, watertight bulkheads, sounding lines to determine depth, and stern-mounted rudders for improved steering. Some of these ships were powered by both oars and sails and were large enough to hold several hundred men. Also important to ocean-going transport was the perfection of the compass. The way a magnetic needle would point north had been known for centuries, but in Song times, the needle was reduced in size and attached to a fixed stem (rather than floating in water). Sometimes it was put in a small protective case with a glass top, making it suitable for navigation at sea. The first reports of a compass used this way date to 1119.

An early twelfth-century Chinese writer gave two reasons why the ships engaged in maritime trade had to be large and carry several hundred sailors. First, they had to be ready to fight off pirates. Second, high volume was needed so that there would still be a profit after giving substantial "gifts" to the authorities at every port they visited. The most common product carried by the ships, this author reported, was Chinese ceramics.

In 1225 the superintendent of customs at the port city of Quanzhou, named Zhao Rukua (jow roo-kwa), wrote an account of the countries with which Chinese merchants traded and the goods they offered for sale. It includes sketches of major trading cities from Srivijaya (modern Indonesia) to Malabar, Cairo, and Baghdad. Pearls were said to come from the Persian Gulf, ivory from Aden, myrrh from Somalia, pepper from Java and Sumatra, cotton from the various kingdoms of India, and so on. A few decades later, Marco Polo wrote glowingly of the Chinese pepper trade, saying that for each load of pepper sent to Christendom, a hundred were sent to China. On his own travels home via the sea route, he reported seeing many merchants from southern China plying a thriving trade.

Much money could be made from the sea trade, but there were also great risks, so investors usually divided their investment among many ships, and each ship had many investors behind it. One observer thought eagerness to invest in overseas trade was leading to an outflow of copper cash. He wrote, "People along the coast are on intimate terms with the merchants who engage in overseas trade, either because they are fellow-countrymen or personal acquaintances.... [They give the merchants] money to take with them on their ships for the purchase and return conveyance of foreign goods. They invest from ten to a hundred strings of cash, and regularly make profits of several hundred per cent."*

In 1973 a Song ship that had been shipwrecked in 1277 was excavated off the south China coast. It was 78 feet long and 29 feet wide and had twelve bulkheads. Inside them were the luxury objects that the Song imported: more than 5,000 pounds of fragrant wood from Southeast Asia, pepper, betel nut, cowries, tortoiseshell, cinnabar, and ambergris from Somalia.

The Song Scholar-Official Class

The Song period saw the full flowering of one of the most distinctive features of Chinese civilization: the scholar-official class certified through highly competitive civil service examinations. Compared to its Tang counterpart, the Song Chinese scholar-official class was larger, better educated, and less aristocratic in its habits. The legitimacy of the power of this class was enhanced by its Confucian commitment to public service and by the ostensibly fair and objective ways through which its members gained access to ranks and honors.

The spread of printing aided the expansion of the educated class. In China, as in Europe centuries later, printing brought down the price of books. Song scholars could afford to buy many more books than could their counterparts in earlier dynasties. Song publishers printed the classics in huge editions. Works on philosophy, science, and medicine were avidly consumed, as were Buddhist texts. Han and Tang poetry and historical works were used as models by Song writers.

The demand for books was fueled in part by eagerness to compete in the civil service examinations. From the point of view of the early Song emperors, the purpose of written examinations was to

*Cited in Shiba Yoshinobu, *Commerce and Society in Sung China*, trans. Mark Elvin (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1970), p. 33.

The Scholarly Life. This detail of a long hand-scroll by the court painter Ma Yuan (active 1189–1225) depicts a scholar writing a poem as others watch. Behind him is a monk; nearby are female attendants and a few children. *(The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 63-19. Photo: John Lamberton)*

identify capable men. So long as the successful candidates were literate, intelligent, and willing to work hard and obey the rules, the rulers had reason to be satisfied with the results, even if some able men were overlooked. From the point of view of those aspiring to office, however, issues of equity loomed large. Was everyone given an equal chance? Did examiners favor those they knew? Why should skill in poetry be tested when officials did not have to compose poems as part of their jobs? To increase confidence in the objectivity of the examiners, the names of the test takers were replaced with numbers, and clerks recopied each exam so that the handwriting could not be recognized.

The Song examination system recruited four to five times more *jinshi* (jin-shih) "presented scholars," holders of the highest examination degree, per year than the Tang system had. Yet increasing the number of *jinshi* did not lower the prestige of the degree. Rather, it encouraged more men to enter the competition. Early in the eleventh century, fewer than thirty thousand men took the prefectural exams, which increased to nearly eighty thousand by the end of that century and to about four hundred thousand by the dynasty's end. Because the number of available posts did not change, each candidate's chances of passing plummeted, reaching as low as 1 in 333 in some prefectures. Men often took the examinations several times and were on average a little over thirty years old when they succeeded.

Young men whose fathers or grandfathers had risen to high rank in the government did not have to take the examinations to get government posts; they could instead take advantage of the privilege higher officials had of nominating sons and grandsons for civil service appointment. Around 40 percent or more of posts in Song times were filled this way. Men who started their careers through privilege usually had to begin at the very bottom, serving as sheriffs in remote places, and they might well spend their entire careers in county-level posts, collecting taxes and hearing legal cases. It is no wonder, then, that most sons of officials were willing to at least try the civil service examinations.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Western historians stressed the meritocratic side of the Chinese examination system and the social mobility it fostered. Lists of examination graduates showed that only about half had fathers, grandfathers, or great-grandfathers who had served as officials. In recent decades, it has been more common to stress the advantages official families had in placing their sons in government posts and that even those who did not have recent patrilineal ancestors who had served in office might have an uncle or a maternal grandfather who had done so. If the comparison is to other premodern societies, including Korea and Japan, Song China was exceptional in the opportunities it offered to intelligent, hard-working young men without powerful relatives. However, no one should assume that mobility through education occurred with the frequency it does in modern society.

Families able to educate their sons were generally landholders. When the Song elite is looked at from the perspective of the local community, families prominent for generations are more striking than new men. In a county with twenty thousand households, a dozen or so family lines might account for nearly all those who

gained national notice. Still, because property had to be divided among sons every generation, downward social mobility was always a possibility if nothing was done to add to the family's income or property every generation. Yuan Cai (ywan tsy), writing in the late twelfth century, stressed the importance of finding ways to increase the family's holdings. When one brother had private funds from office, he should not convert it into gold and silver in order to hide it, but should invest it so that it would grow:

> *For instance, if he had 100,000 strings worth of gold and silver and used this money to buy productive property, in a year he would gain 10,000 strings; after ten years or so, he would have regained the 100,000 strings and what would be divided among the family would be interest. If it were invested in a pawn broking business, in three years the interest would equal the capital. He would still have the 100,000 strings, and the rest, being interest, could be divided. Moreover, it could be doubled again in another three years, ad infinitum.**

Members of the Song scholar-official class would rarely have spent their entire lives in their home counties or prefectures. Many traveled considerable distances to study with well-known teachers. If they succeeded in the first stage of the examinations, they had to travel to the capital for the next stage, held every three years. A large proportion of those who succeeded began their careers in county or prefectural posts, and over the next ten or twenty years they might crisscross the empire several times, returning to the capital between assignments. Travel to a new post might take a month or more, during which time the official would call on his colleagues in the places he passed. When Lu You left his home county in 1170 to take up an assignment in Sichuan, he spent 157 days on the road and called on dozens of officials, retired officials, and Buddhist and Daoist clergy along the way. He also had the chance to visit many sites made famous by earlier visitors who had written poems or essays about them.

Many Song men of letters were adept at a wide range of arts and sciences. One of the most versatile was Shen Gua (shuhn gwa), who tried his hand at everything from mathematics, geography, economics, engineering, medicine, divination, and archaeology to military strategy and diplomacy. On an assignment to inspect the frontier, he made a relief map of wood and glue-soaked sawdust to show the mountains, roads, rivers, and passes. He once computed the total number of possible situations on a game board and another time the longest possible military campaign given the limits of human carriers who had to carry their own food as well as food for the soldiers. Interest in the natural world, of the sort Shen Gua displayed, was not as common among the educated elite in Song times as interest in art and art collecting. The remarkable poet and statesman Su Shi (soo shih) wrote glowingly of paintings done by scholars, who could imbue their paintings with ideas, making them much better than paintings that merely conveyed outward appearance, the sort of paintings that professional painters made. His friend Mi Fu (mee foo), a passionate collector, would call on collectors to view and discuss their treasures. Often he would borrow pieces to study and copy. When he came across something that excited him, he made every effort to acquire it, generally by offering a trade.

Reformers and Anti-Reformers

How was the operation of the Song government affected by recruiting a large proportion of its staff through the examination system? Such men entered government service at older ages and after longer periods of study than men who entered in other ways. Did the preponderance of such men alter the dynamics of political life?

One might have thought that *jinshi*, having been through much the same experience, would demonstrate remarkable solidarity with each other. But this did not happen. Exam graduates did not defend one another's qualifications or insist that every *jinshi* was fully qualified to practice government. The examination system did not lead to scholar-officials thinking alike or looking out for each other's interests. To the contrary, they seem to have fought among themselves more viciously than the officials of earlier dynasties.

One explanation for their divisiveness might be that even after passing the examinations, competition continued unabated. Promotions in responsibility, honor, and pay did not come automatically. There were more men qualified for office than posts, so often after finishing one assignment, officials had to wait months or even years before getting their next one. Moreover, to get choice assignments, they often needed high officials to recommend them, adding to the uncertainty they faced.

What did officials fight about? Ostensibly, at least, they fought about how best to run the government. It was very common for younger officials, especially those who had done well in the examinations, to be

*Patricia Buckley Ebrey, trans., *Family and Property in Sung China: Yuan Ts'ai's Precepts for Social Life* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 199–200.

disappointed in the performance of the average official, whom they viewed as morally lazy, unwilling to make any exertion for the dynasty or the common people. Idealistic officials criticized the examination system for selecting such mediocre men. Other areas of tension were military and fiscal policy. If one wanted to push the Khitan out of the Sixteen Prefectures, as many did, one had to be willing to raise revenue somehow, but no one liked to see new taxes.

Those with proposals to make had to find a way to get the emperor's ear and convince other officials to support their ideas. This meant lining up allies and maligning opponents. From the emperor's point of view, such activities were obstructionist. Rather, officials should speak candidly to the emperor about the realms of government they knew. It should be up to the emperor and his chancellors to weigh advice from diverse perspectives.

During the first phase of factional strife in the 1040s, a reform program was initiated by Fan Zhongyan (fahn jung-yen), an idealistic Confucian best known for describing the duty of the Confucian scholar-official as "to be first in worrying about the world's troubles and last in enjoying its pleasures." Fan was an experienced official who had served as prefect of Kaifeng and had managed a successful military assignment against the Tanguts. Once appointed chancellor, he submitted a ten-point memorial calling for reforms of the recruitment system, higher pay for local officials to discourage corruption, more use of sponsorship to base promotions more on competence and character, and the like. His proposals evoked strong resistance from those who were comfortable with the existing system and did not want to see the rules changed in the middle of their careers. Within a year, the program was canceled and Fan replaced as chancellor. Fan's example, however, inspired many idealistic officials who hoped to take up where he had left off.

The one who managed to accomplish this was Wang Anshi (wahng ahn-shih) (1021–1086). After a career largely in the provinces, he submitted a long memorial criticizing the examination system and the state schools. Shenzong (shuhn-dzung), who had just succeeded to the throne at the age of nineteen, made Wang a chancellor and supported his program, called the New Policies.

Wang Anshi was intelligent and hard working and had original ideas. Realizing that government income was ultimately linked to the prosperity of farming families, he instituted measures he thought would help them, such as low-cost loans and replacing labor service with a tax. To raise revenues, he expanded state monopolies on tea, salt, and wine. He also had land resurveyed to make land taxes more equitable. He introduced a local militia to reduce the cost of maintaining a large standing army. The poetry component of the civil service examination was dropped in the hope of recruiting men with a more practical bent. Wang Anshi's own commentaries on the classics became required reading for candidates hoping to do well on the examinations.

The resistance these reforms evoked has led historians to suspect that interests were at stake. Wang and many of the reformers came from the south, but the split was not a simple north–south one or an old elite versus a newly rising one. Personal antagonisms certainly played a role, as did philosophical differences. In the vocabulary of the time, however, the struggle was portrayed as one between men of principle motivated by concern for the common good and misguided or nefarious inferior men who could not or would not see the larger picture. Each side, of course, considered themselves the men of principle and their opponents the inferior men.

From the perspective of Wang Anshi and Shenzong, opposition amounted to obstruction. To put their program into place, they wanted officials who supported it, not ones dead set against it. Yet dismissing all critics would make it difficult for the emperor to learn of unforeseen problems. Usually officials deemed obstructive were assigned offices outside the capital, but when the court wanted to be particularly harsh, it could send them to the far south, the regions where malaria and other tropical diseases were sometimes fatal to those from the north.

The reform program came to an abrupt halt when Shenzong died in his mid-thirties in 1085. His heir, Zhezong, was only nine years old, so his grandmother served as regent. She had never approved the reforms and quickly set about bringing to court opponents of them, led by the senior statesman Sima Guang. Once the anti-reformers were in power, they made sure the reformers suffered the same treatment they had by sending them out of the capital as prefectural officials or worse. The New Policies were canceled wholesale, even measures that many had appreciated, such as the substitution of a tax for often-onerous labor service.

When his grandmother died in 1093, Zhezong began ruling on his own. He reversed his grandmother's policies and brought the reformers back to power. The cycles of revenge and retaliation continued as the reformers banished the anti-reformers. Zhezong succumbed to an illness while still in his twenties and was succeeded by his younger brother Huizong (r. 1100–1125), who also sided with the reformers. His government banned the writings of key opponents of

reform including Sima Guang and Su Shi and elevated Wang Anshi. A statue of Wang Anshi was placed in the Confucian temple next to Mencius, and pictures of him were distributed throughout the country.

THE FALL OF THE NORTHERN SONG AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE JIN DYNASTY

Huizong's interests extended well beyond the reform program. Committed to the cultural side of rulership, he collected paintings, calligraphies, and antiquities on a huge scale and had catalogues compiled of his collections. He took a personal interest in the training of court artists and instituted examinations for their selection. He wrote poetry as well as treatises on medicine and Daoism. He initiated an ambitious reform of court music and court rituals. He appreciated architecture and garden design, created his own distinctive calligraphy style, and produced exquisite paintings.

While Huizong was busy with these projects, the balance of power among Song, Liao, and Xia was radically altered by the rise of a new tribal group in the northeast, the Jurchens. The Jurchens lived in villages and small walled towns, their economy based on fishing, hunting, animal husbandry, and some farming. Jurchens who lived near Chinese, Khitan, or Goryeo cities adopted practices and technologies from these neighbors, leading to a distinction between the "civilized" Jurchens and their "wild" counterparts in more remote areas. The lands the Jurchens occupied were ideal for horse raising, and by the mid-eleventh century, the Jurchens were selling the Khitans about ten thousand horses per year. During the mid- to late eleventh century, the Wanyan clan gradually gained the dominant position among the Jurchens. In the early twelfth century, under the leadership of Wanyan Aguda (1068–1123), the Jurchens began challenging Liao authority. In 1115 their repudiation of Liao overlordship was made explicit by the proclamation of their own dynasty, the Jin (Golden).

States North of Song

Dynasty Name	Ethnic Group
Liao	Khitan
Xia	Tangut
Jin	Jurchen
Yuan	Mongol

The Song heard rumors of what was happening from Chinese defectors from Liao. Huizong's leading general urged making a secret alliance with Jin. After a series of envoys had been exchanged, it was decided that Jin and Song would cooperate to defeat Liao, then divide its territory, with Song promised the recovery of the Sixteen Prefectures.

In the process of defeating Liao, Jin discovered that Song was not much of a military threat and attacked it next. Kaifeng was besieged, an enormous ransom paid to escape slaughter, and thousands taken captive, including Huizong, the imperial clan, craftsmen, and female entertainers. Jin went on to establish a stable government in north China and Manchuria. In the beginning, Jin continued the dual government of Liao and employed former Liao officials, both Chinese and Khitan. Jin ruled a much larger Chinese population than Liao had and had to distribute Jurchens throughout north China to maintain control. Gradually more and more Chinese political institutions were adopted and more Chinese officials employed. Jin moved its capital from central Manchuria to Beijing in 1153 and to Kaifeng in 1161. Like other non-Chinese rulers before them, the Jurchens found that Chinese political institutions such as hereditary succession were a potent weapon in their competition with their own nobles. The Jurchen rulers did not adopt Chinese traditions of respect for the dignity of officials, however. Jin emperors had high officials flogged in open court, a brutal violation of the Confucian dictum that officials are to be treated according to ritual and not subjected to corporal punishments.

Because they lived surrounded by Chinese, many Jurchens adopted Chinese customs in language, dress, and rituals. Jurchen generals opposed to sinification assassinated the Jin emperor in 1161, and the succeeding emperor did his best to raise the prestige of Jurchen as a written language. He ordered Jurchens to attend special Jurchen-language schools, had Chinese texts translated into Jurchen, and instituted Jurchen-language civil service examinations. Later Jin emperors largely accepted sinification, viewing the Chinese classics, for instance, as universal texts, not exclusively Chinese ones. In 1191 an emperor even outlawed referring to the Jurchens as "border people," a relatively polite Chinese term, seeing no reason that their country should not be viewed as the Central Kingdom (the common Chinese term for China).

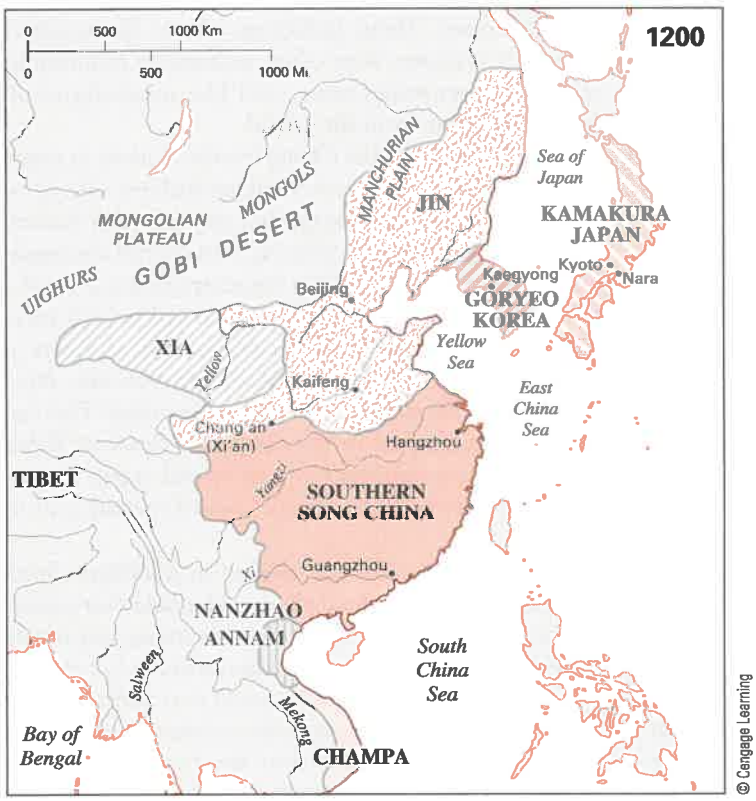
HANGZHOU AND THE SOUTHERN SONG (1127–1276)

One of Huizong's sons was out of Kaifeng when the Jurchens occupied Kaifeng, and after his father and brothers were transported north, Song forces rallied around him and had him installed as emperor (Gaozong, r. 1127–1162). The south had never been held by forces from the steppe, and Gaozong wisely retreated to that region. Still, the military situation remained precarious: the Jurchens not only pursued Gaozong across the Yangzi River but even out into the ocean. To get far from the Jurchens, the Song ended up making its capital Hangzhou, a beautiful city well south of the Yangzi River. (See Map 8.2.)

Gaozong disavowed the New Policies reform program, but this did not end factional strife because other issues emerged around which officials were divided, above all how aggressively to pursue recovery of the north. Efforts to drive the Jurchens out of north China were largely abandoned in 1141, when a peace treaty was concluded with Jin. Song agreed to heavy payments of silk and silver to Jin, much as the Northern Song had made payments to Liao.

Because the economic center of the country had already shifted south, loss of the north did not ruin the Song economy. Sixty percent of the population was still under Song control, along with much of the most productive agricultural land. The government still had to devote a large part of its revenues to defense, but it was able to raise much of its revenue through taxes on commerce. The government's monetary policies in time, however, produced rampant inflation.

Hangzhou itself grew to 1 million or more residents. At the southern end of the Grand Canal, it was a natural center for trade. Fortunetellers, acrobats, puppeteers, storytellers, tea houses, and restaurants were all to be found in the entertainment quarters. There were brokers who had girls and young women available for purchase or hire as rough or refined maids, concubines, singers, or prostitutes. Schools were found throughout the city,



Map 8.2 Southern Song, Jin, and Xia, ca. 1200

which also had many Buddhist and Daoist temples. For banquets and other parties, there were catering companies that provided all the food, tents, tables, chairs, and even decorations. To combat fire, the government stationed two thousand soldiers at fourteen fire stations within the city and more outside it. Poverty was more of a problem in crowded cities than in the countryside, and the government not only distributed alms but also operated public clinics and old-age homes as well as paupers' graveyards. The better-off residents in the city often formed clubs; a text written in 1235 mentions the West Lake Poetry Club, the Buddhist Tea Society, the Physical Fitness Club, the Anglers' Club, the Occult Club, the Young Girls' Chorus, the Exotic Foods Club, the Plants and Fruits Club, the Antique Collectors' Club, the Horse-Lovers' Club, and the Refined Music Society.

SONG CULTURE AND SOCIETY

The Song period was one of advances in many facets of culture, ranging from scientific discoveries to landscape paintings. In addition, because of the spread of printing, more books and more types of books survive from the Song than from earlier periods, providing more glimpses of ordinary people's lives.

The Revival of Confucianism and the Learning of the Way

The scholar-statesmen of the eleventh century, such as Fan Zhongyan, Wang Anshi, Sima Guang, and Su Shi, believed that they were pursuing Confucian agendas of advising the ruler and aiding the common people. Other influential Confucian teachers of the period, notably the brothers Cheng Hao (chuhng how) and Cheng Yi (chuhng ee), were more interested in metaphysics and ethics and argued that moral self-cultivation was more fundamental than service to the ruler. Their explanations of the workings of principle (*li*) and vital energy (*qi*) can be seen as a response to the sophisticated metaphysics of Buddhism. The principle for something could be moral or physical; for example, the principle for wives is essentially moral in nature, that for trees, physical. For either to exist, however, there must also be the energy and substance that constitute things. The theory of principle and vital energy allowed Song thinkers to validate Mencius's claim of the goodness of human nature and still explain human wrongdoing: principle underlying human beings is good, but their endowment of vital energy is more or less impure, giving rise to selfish impulses. Followers of the Cheng brothers referred to their school as the Learning of the Way (Daoxue, dowshwe). In English this movement is often termed neo-Confucianism to stress how different it was from early Confucianism.

After the loss of the north to the Jurchens, the elite lost confidence in the possibility of reform from above and began proposing ways to build a more ideal society by starting from the bottom, reforming families and local communities, establishing schools and academies, and spreading their message by publishing works for diverse audiences. The greatest of these Southern Song Confucian masters was Zhu Xi (joo shyee, 1130–1200). Although he passed the *jinshi* examination at the young age of eighteen, he spent very little of the next fifty-two years in government service. (The government in essence supported his teaching career by regularly appointing him to sinecures with few or no duties.) Zhu Xi taught groups of disciples and led the way in establishing private academies as the institutional basis for the revived Confucianism. These gathering places for teachers and their disciples were often located on mountains, the way monasteries were, and like monasteries allowed a retreat from the world.

Zhu Xi extended the Cheng brothers' ideas in many directions. Confucius and Mencius had just said to be good, apparently assuming that anyone who desired to be good could do so. Zhu Xi's letters and conversations show that many of his contemporaries wanted a path toward goodness, with steps to follow and ways to judge their progress. He encouraged his students to master the Four Books—the *Analects, Mencius, Doctrine of the Mean*, and the *Great Learning*. The last two, each a chapter in the canonical *Book of Rites*, stress that improvement of the world starts by improvement of the mind. As the *Great Learning* puts it:

> *Those in antiquity who wished to illuminate luminous virtue throughout the world would first govern their states; wishing to govern their states, they would first bring order to their families; wishing to bring order to their families, they would first cultivate their own persons; wishing to cultivate their own persons, they would first rectify their minds; wishing to rectify their minds, they would first make their thoughts sincere; wishing to make their thoughts sincere, they*

*would first extend their knowledge. The extension of knowledge lies in the investigation of things.**

Zhu Xi and his disciples frequently discussed what was entailed in this "investigation of things." Study, Zhu argued, should be intensive rather than extensive:

Zhengchun said, "I'd like to survey a great many books."

"Don't do that," Zhu Xi said. "Read one book thoroughly, then read another one. If you confusedly try to advance on several fronts, you will end up with difficulties. It's like archery. If you are strong enough for a five-pint bow, use a four-pint one. You will be able to draw it all the way and still have strength left over. Students today do not measure their own strength when reading books. I worry that we cannot manage what we already have set ourselves."†

Even if he urged his disciples to focus their energies, Zhu Xi's own interests were very broad. He discussed with his disciples everything from geomancy to the nature of fossils, the political events of the past century, and perplexing passages in the classics (see **Biography: The Cai Family of Geomancers**).

However much his disciples admired him, many of Zhu Xi's contemporaries found him offensively self-righteous. Near the end of his life, his teachings were condemned as "spurious learning," and candidates for the examinations were forbidden to cite them. Yet, within decades of his death, this judgment was reversed. In 1241 an emperor credited Zhu Xi with "illuminating the Way," and government students had to study his commentaries to the Four Books.

Gender Roles and Family Life

By Song times, sources are diverse enough to see that the old principles that men belong outside the house and women in it, or that men plow and women weave, should not be taken too literally. Song stories, documents, and legal cases show women participating in a wide range of activities never prescribed in Confucian didactic texts. There were widows who ran inns, midwives who delivered babies, pious women who spent their days chanting sutras, nuns who called on such women to explain Buddhist doctrine, girls who learned to read with their brothers, farmers' daughters who made money by weaving mats, childless widows who accused their nephews of seizing their property, wives who were jealous of the concubines their husbands brought home, and women who drew from their dowries to help their husbands' sisters marry well.

Families that could afford it tried to keep their wives and daughters at home, where there was plenty for them to do. Not only was there the work of tending children and preparing meals, but spinning, weaving, and sewing took a great deal of time. Women in silk-producing families were very busy during the silkworm-growing period. Women had to coddle the worms, feeding them chopped mulberry tree leaves and keeping them warm, in order to get them to spin their cocoons.

Women tended to marry between the ages of sixteen and twenty. Their husbands were, on average, a couple of years older than they were. The marriages were arranged by their parents, who called on professional matchmakers (usually older women) or turned to friends or relatives for suggestions. Before a wedding took place, written agreements were exchanged that listed the prospective bride's and groom's birth dates, parents' and grandparents' names, and the gifts that would be exchanged, as well as the dowry the bride would bring. The idea was to match families of approximately equal status, but a young man who had just passed the civil service exams would be considered a good prospect even if his family had little wealth or rank.

A few days before the wedding, the bride's family sent her dowry, which at a minimum contained boxes full of clothes and bedding. In better-off families, it also included items of substantial value, such as gold jewelry or deeds for land. On the day of the wedding, the groom and some of his friends and relatives went to the bride's home to fetch her. Dressed in elaborate finery, she tearfully bid farewell to everyone in her family and then stepped into the fancy sedan chair that carried her to her new home. Musicians were an important part of the procession, alerting everyone on the street that a wedding was taking place. Meanwhile, the groom's family's friends and relatives gathered at his home so they would be there to greet the bridal party. The bride knelt and bowed to her new parents-in-law and later to the tablets representing the family's ancestors. Her husband, whom she was meeting for the first time, shared a cup of wine with her, a classical ritual still in practice. Later the young bride and groom were shown to their new bedroom, where the bride's dowry had already been placed, and people would toss beans or rice on the

*From *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, rev. ed., by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, eds. Copyright © 1999 by Columbia University Press. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.
†Patricia Buckley Ebrey, ed., *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), p. 173.

BIOGRAPHY The Cai Family of Geomancers

Cai Fa (tsai fah, 1089–1152) learned geomancy, the science of "wind and water," from his own father and would later pass it on to his sons. The Cai family lived in Fujian, where geomancy was widely used to locate graves. Underlying geomancy was the idea that the energy (*qi*) in the veins of the earth, in conjunction with the energy of the wind and water, make some burial sites much better than others, and good burial sites can bring good fortune to the descendants of the person buried there. Cai Fa wrote a book on geomancy, which explained it in philosophical terms, such as, "A geomancer examining veins is not different than a doctor examining [the pulse in] veins. A good doctor examines veins' yin and yang to prescribe medicine; a good geomancer examines how veins float or sink to set the grave site." Cai Fa himself was also well versed in medical theory.

Cai Fa taught his son Cai Yuanding (1135–1198) not only geomancy and other sciences but also the ideas of leading Confucian thinkers, including the Cheng brothers. Cai Yuanding never passed the civil service examinations and never served in office, but he found alternative ways to support himself, probably in part by collecting fees for locating graves. He was highly educated and produced a new edition of the classic work on geomancy, the *Book of Burials*, removing twelve of its twenty sections.

Cai Yuanding first visited Zhu Xi when he was twenty-five. Although he asked to be Zhu Xi's student, Zhu Xi considered him already well educated and treated him instead as a fellow teacher. Before long, Cai Yuanding was helping with Zhu Xi's new students and contributing to the books Zhu Xi was drafting. Zhu Xi reportedly enjoyed discussing metaphysical subjects with Cai Yuanding, such as the *Book of Changes* and numerology. One contemporary reported that Zhu Xi had learned about the numbers of heaven and earth, music theory, yin and yang, and geomancy from his friend Cai Yuanding. Eventually Cai Yuanding set up his own study on another mountain, but he and Zhu Xi would meet from time to time.

In 1194 Zhu Xi submitted a memorial to the throne proposing that a new site be chosen for the burial of the recently deceased emperor, drawing on ideas he had learned from Cai Yuanding. He wrote that "all literati and commoners with even modest resources when burying their forebears consult widely among experts and visit famous mountains, comparing one site to the next to select the very best." They did this because being off even slightly could lead to such unfortunate consequences as the extinction of the family line. Zhu Xi particularly recommended geomancers from Jiangxi or Fujian. In his conclusion, Zhu Xi acknowledged that many educated men dismissed geomancy, seeing it as a pseudo-science, and they might ridicule him for his confidence in it. But, he said, he could not bear to think of the emperor's body lying in a bad spot where water, ants, or ground wind would make the body and spirit uncomfortable.

Cai Yuanding was considered so close to Zhu Xi that when Zhu Xi was accused of "false learning" in 1196, Cai Yuanding was also accused of "helping him in his diabolical activities" and banished to Hunan. More than sixty years old, he did not live long after walking all the way there. A few decades later, when the verdict on Zhu Xi's learning was reversed, the court approved having a picture of Cai Yuanding sitting and conversing with Zhu Xi painted on the walls of Cai Yuanding's study.

Questions for Analysis

1. Why would expertise in a field like geomancy be passed down within a family?
2. Is Zhu Xi's confidence in geomancy consistent with other elements in his philosophy?

bed, symbolizing the desired fertility. After teasing the couple, the guests would finally leave them alone and go out to the courtyard for the wedding feast.

After the guests had all departed, the young bride's first priority was to try to win over her mother-in-law, since everyone knew that mothers-in-law were hard to please. (See Color Plate 11.) One way to do this was to bear a son for the family quickly. Within the patrilineal system, a woman fully secured her position in the family only by becoming the mother of one of the men.

Every community had older women skilled in midwifery who could be called to help when a woman went into labor. In a well-to-do family, a wet nurse might be brought in to help the woman take care of the newborn, though some Song scholars disapproved of depriving another child of milk for the sake of one's own child.

Families frequently had four, five, or six children, but likely one or more would die in infancy or early childhood. Within the home, women generally had considerable voice and took an active interest in issues such as the selection of marriage partners for their children. If a son reached adulthood and married before his mother was widowed, she was considered fortunate, for she would always have had an adult man who could take care of business for her—first her husband, then her grown son. But in the days when infectious diseases killed many people in their twenties and thirties, it was not uncommon for a woman to be widowed before her children were grown. If her husband had brothers and they had not yet divided their households, she would stay with them, assuming they were not so poor that they could not afford a few more mouths to feed. Otherwise she could return to her natal family. Taking another husband was also a possibility, though it was considered an inferior alternative from a moral point of view.

Women with healthy and prosperous husbands faced another challenge in middle age: the husband could bring home a concubine (or more than one, if the family was rich enough). Moralists insisted that it was wrong for a wife to be jealous of her husband's concubines, but many women could not get used to their husband's paying attention to another woman. Wives outranked concubines and could give them orders in the house, but concubines had their own ways of getting back, especially when the concubine was twenty and the wife was forty and no longer as attractive. The children born to a concubine were considered just as much children of the family as the wife's children, and if the wife had no sons, she would often raise a concubine's sons herself because she would be dependent on them in her old age.

As a woman's children grew up, she would start thinking of suitable marriage partners for them. Women whose sons and daughters were all married could take it easy: they had daughters-in-law to do the cooking and cleaning and could enjoy their grandchildren and help with their education. Many found more time for religious devotions at this stage of their lives. Their sons, still living with them, were often devoted to them and did their best to make their late years comfortable.

The social and economic changes associated with the Tang-Song transition brought changes to gender roles. With the expansion of the educated class, more women learned to read. In the scholar-official class, many women were literate enough to serve as their children's first teachers. One of the most accomplished poets of Song times, Li Qingzhao (lee ching-jow, 1084–ca. 1151), was a woman from a scholar-official family. After her husband's death, she wrote of the evenings she and he had spent poring over his recent purchases of paintings, calligraphy, or ancient bronze vessels. Many of her poems have been interpreted as expressions of her longing for him when he was away or her sorrow at his loss:

> Lovely in my inner chamber.
> My tender heart, a wisp; my sorrow tangled in a thousand skeins.
> I'm fond of spring, but spring is gone,
> And rain urges the petals to fall.
> I lean on the balustrade;
> Only loose ends left, and no feeling.
> Where is he?
> Withered grasses stretch to the heavens;
> I can't make out the path that leads him home to me.*

The Learning of the Way is sometimes blamed for a decline in the status of women in Song times, largely because Cheng Yi once told a follower that it would be better for a widow to die of starvation than to lose her virtue by remarrying. In later centuries, this saying was often quoted to justify pressuring a widow, even a very young one, to stay with her husband's family and not marry someone else. In Song times, however, widows commonly remarried.

It is true that foot binding began during the Song Dynasty, but it was not recommended by Confucian teachers; rather, it was associated with the pleasure quarters and with women's efforts to beautify themselves. Mothers bound the feet of girls aged five to eight, using long strips of cloth. The goal was to keep their feet from growing and to bend the four smaller toes under to make the foot narrow and arched. Women with feet shaped this way were considered beautiful. Foot binding spread gradually during Song times but probably remained largely an elite practice. (See **Material Culture: Huang Sheng's Clothing** for an upper-class woman who had bound feet in the late Song.) In later centuries, foot binding became extremely common in north and central

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DOCUMENTS

Tales of Retribution

One of the most common themes in Chinese stories concerns the retribution inflicted on those who commit evil deeds. In these stories, unfilial sons may be struck by lightning, and those who have committed murder often suffer at the hands of the ghosts of those they have killed. In the twelfth century, Hong Mai (hung my, 1123–1202) published hundreds of stories of this sort that he had heard on his travels around the country. In these stories, both men and women are depicted as wrongdoers, as the two stories below reveal.

Retribution for Miss Liu

Gao Junzhi, from Fuzhou, attained the *jinshi* degree and married a daughter of the Tan family. They had a son who, when grown, married a Miss Liu of the same prefecture. Before her husband died, Miss Liu bore two sons and a daughter. Gao Junzhi himself died after reaching the rank of Gentleman for Closing Court. His eldest grandson was dimwitted and the younger one was still young, so they lived with their grandmother Miss Tan and their mother Miss Liu.

Miss Liu was still young, and rather than adhere to her duties as wife, she committed adultery with a monk in her home. When her mother-in-law discovered this, she reprimanded her, infuriating Liu.

Sometime later when her mother-in-law got sick, Miss Liu did not give her medicine, preferring to see her die. She poisoned her mother-in-law's two maids, then before her mother-in-law had taken her last breath, had her encoffined and cremated.

A few months later Liu got sick and every day called the names of the maids she had killed, pleading with them, "My head is extremely painful. Stop pulling my hair!" or "You've already beaten me a lot. Couldn't you forgive me a little?" When her family questioned her, she said, "Mom and the two maids are beating me." Ten days later she died.

Her son gained an office on the basis of his grandfather's rank, but did not do well. Today their house is desolate.

Liang Little Two

Liang Little Two, a commoner of Chixi village in Anyi county, Jie prefecture, came from a family that for generations had been humble but honest and hard-working farmers. Liang was the first scoundrel. He treated his widowed mother

China, eventually spreading to all classes. Women with bound feet were less mobile than women with natural feet, but only those who could afford servants bound their feet so tightly that walking was difficult.

Religion in Song Life

The religious activities of laypeople are much better known for the Song than for earlier periods. The text that has attracted the most attention from historians of the Song is *The Record of the Listener*, a huge book of more than two hundred chapters written by Hong Mai (hung my) (1123–1202). Hong came from a prominent official family in the south (Jiangxi), and his book recorded events that he learned about firsthand or from friends, relatives, and colleagues. Many of these anecdotes dealt in one way or another with the spirit realm and people's interaction with it. (See **Documents: Tales of Retribution.**)

How did people conceive of the spirit realm? They understood that both blessings and misfortunes could be caused by all sorts of gods and spirits. The gods included the nationally recognized gods of Buddhism and Daoism as well as gods and demons particular to their locality. As was true in much earlier times, dissatisfied ancestors were seen as possible causes of illness in their descendants. Like ancestors, gods and demons were thought to feel the same sorts of emotions as people. Demons and other malevolent spirits might extort offerings, acting much like local bullies. Gods were seen as parts of complex hierarchies, much like those in the human world. Some were seen as the rulers of small territories—local kings and lords. Others were seen as part of an

very cruelly. His wife, Miss Wang, was quiet by nature and served her mother-in-law diligently.

During the Huangtung period (1141–1144) of the northern bandits (that is, the Jin Dynasty), there was a famine in Hedong and epidemics spread, so that refugees filled the roads. Liang took his mother, wife, and young child to Dongling in Gushan, where he begged for food for his child. Miss Wang, knowing that her mother-in-law had not eaten in a long time, gave her half the food. Liang got furious when he saw this, so falsely sent his wife ahead carrying the child while he stayed behind with his mother. When the distance between them was about a hundred paces, he dropped his mother on the ground, dragged her to the side of the road, stuffed mud and sand into her mouth, and left.

When he met up with his wife a little bit ahead, she asked where his mother was, and he said, "Old people walk slowly. We should go ahead to beg food from a great house, then wait for her to catch up." When she had not appeared after a long time, the wife suspected that her husband had hurt her, so went back to search for her. She found the body already stiff. She embraced her, cried mournfully, and tried to force a drink down her, but her vital spirit was already gone and she did not revive.

Miss Wang then quickly went to report to the local constable, who seized Liang to take him to the county government. On the road a storm arose. The sky became so dark that people were not visible. Thunder clapped, ghosts and spirits flew around, and weird forms appeared and disappeared. Everyone was so frightened that no one paid attention to where Liang was.

When the sky cleared up a little later, Liang was found lying in a pit. His eyes were burned by the lightning but the rest of his body was unaffected. He could not recognize people or things but he could drink, eat, and talk as before.

Liang regularly told people, "There are three ghosts in charge of me. At each meal I must first make offerings to them before daring to eat." The officials had pity for his wife and child and gave them grain. A few years later Liang was still alive.

Questions for Analysis

1. How similar are the crimes in these two stories? How similar are the consequences?
2. Do you think these stories are simple fiction, or could they be based on real events?

Hong Mai, *Yijian zhi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), pp. 41, 784–785; translated by Patricia Ebrey.

otherworldly government, where gods held specific offices and transmitted paperwork from those below them to those above. Gods were not conceived of as omnipotent, and a god might inform a petitioner that he would have to seek the approval of a higher god.

One way people learned whether particular spirits were responsible for their problems was through divination. Another was through dreams or visions. Once they understood the source of the problem, there were steps they could take themselves, such as trying to gain spirits' favor by making offerings or beseeching them in prayers. But people also often turned to religious experts ranging from ordained Buddhist and Daoist clerics and unordained practitioners of these traditions, to professional fortunetellers, and to the wardens of temples to local gods who acted as spirit mediums or exorcists. In one instance, a man pestered by a ghost first employed a local exorcist. When that failed to solve his problem, he called on a visiting Daoist priest to perform an offering ceremony. He then called on Buddhist monks from the local monastery to recite incantations and conduct an exorcism, which finally brought results.

When medical doctors failed to cure them, people regularly called on religious experts. (See Color Plate 12.) Mediums could induce spirits to descend into the body of a boy, who would then speak in the voice of the spirit. In one such case, the voice of a maid who had died a few years earlier blamed her mistress for her accidental death. After the boy awakened, the medium wrote out a dispatch to send to the City God, who in turn had the spirit of the dead maid sent to purgatory. In this instance, the

MATERIAL CULTURE

Huang Sheng's Clothing

In 1242, at the age of fourteen or fifteen, Huang Sheng (hwang shuhng) married an imperial clansman distantly related to the throne. Her father was a high-ranking official who had earlier served as superintendent of foreign trade in the major seaport of Quanzhou (chwan-joe), in Fujian (foo-jyan). Her husband's grandfather had recently been administrator of the imperial clan in Quanzhou. Her father and her husband's grandfather had become acquainted when they both were studying with a disciple of Zhu Xi.

The year after her marriage, Huang Sheng died, possibly in childbirth. Buried with her was a profusion of items that must have constituted her splendid and costly dowry. In total there were 201 pieces of women's clothing and 153 lengths of cloth, all finely made. Among the objects were several sets of shoes for bound feet. There were also long robes, jackets, vests, wraparound skirts, and various sorts of underwear. Patterned gauzes were very common, perhaps because of the warm climate of Fujian. From these items we can not only imagine how elegantly upper-class women dressed but also see how families passed property to their daughters.

Cultural Relics Press

Gauze Vest. The lightweight, transparent silk gauze of this vest has a woven-in decoration of peonies.

Photo: Patricia Ebrey

Floral Patterns. Many of Huang Sheng's garments were trimmed with ribbons decorated with floral designs, four of which are illustrated here.

City God acted much like a government official in the human world, receiving and dispatching orders.

Sometimes educated men are portrayed by Hong Mai as skeptics. When Liu Zai (1166–1239) served in a low county post, we are told, he was the only official there to ignore a prominent local shrine. In fact, he raised his sleeve every time he went by in order to avoid having to look at the shrine. Before he had been there long, his wife's younger brother died. Then his pregnant wife had an ominous dream: the enshrined god told her that he had taken her brother because of her husband's impudence and would take her next if Liu did not repent. When she too died, Liu went to the shrine to beg forgiveness.

The Song state claimed the power to approve and disapprove local shrines. Occasionally the court ordered the destruction of illicit or excessive shrines, such as shrines whose divinities made extortionate demands on people. Much more common was the government's bestowal of titles on local gods. Local supporters of shrines regularly petitioned the government to confer titles of king, duke, or lord on their gods because of the miracles the god had performed.

SUMMARY

The Song period was one of cultural and economic advance but not geographical expansion. The Song was surrounded by relatively strong states that it could not dominate, including the Khitan state of Liao, the Tangut state of Xia, and later the Jurchen state of Jin and the Mongol state of Yuan. Treaties with Liao, Xia, and Jin made possible periods of relative peace in exchange for substantial payments of silver and silk from Song. The Mongols did not negotiate such an agreement but rather aimed at total conquest of Song, bringing it to an end in 1279.

The loosening of the central government's control of the economy in the late Tang period seems to have stimulated trade and economic growth. From the mid-Tang to 1100, China's population doubled to 100 million, reflecting in part the spread of wet-field rice cultivation, especially in the south. At the same time, the economy became increasingly commercialized. There was a huge increase in the use of money, and paper money was introduced to meet demand. The iron industry expanded sharply, much of the output used for military purposes. Cities grew, and the economic center of China shifted from the north China plain to the south, the region drained by the Yangzi River. Merchants became more specialized, and foreign trade grew. Chinese porcelains were in particular demand in other countries and have been found all around the Indian Ocean.

In the Song period the booming economy and the invention of printing allowed a great expansion in the size of the scholar-official class, which came to dominate the government. The life of the educated class was strongly shaped by the civil service examinations, which most educated men spent a decade or more preparing for, often unsuccessfully. With the copying of exam papers and removal of the candidate's name, men without connections had a better chance to become officials than ever before. Serving in office, however, could involve one in unpleasant factional strife. In the Northern Song the main cleavage was between the supporters and the opponents of the New Policies reform program started by Wang Anshi. The most important intellectual movement of the period was a vigorous revival of Confucianism. Key figures in this movement were the brothers Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi and two generations later Zhu Xi, the great synthesizer. His selection of the Four Books (*Analects, Mencius, Greater Learning*, and *Doctrine of the Mean*) proved especially influential in later centuries. Men in the educated class did not confine their interests to philosophy, however. Many pursued cultivated interests in poetry, painting, collecting antiquities, and even flowers.

The Northern Song came to an end in 1127 after the Jurchen invaded and took members of the court and imperial relatives into captivity. Yet the Song dynasty survived, despite the loss of more than a third of its territory. Its capital, Hangzhou, became just as splendid as the Northern Song capital Kaifeng had been.

Because there were more educated men in Song times, more books were written, and because of the spread of printing, a much greater share of them have survived to the present, making it possible to see dimensions of life poorly documented for earlier periods, such as the lives of women and the religious activities of commoners. People would visit temples to pray to the gods enshrined there, asking the gods to send them sons, cure their ailments, protect them when they travel, and help them in their careers. Women were just as involved in local religion as men were.

Overall, the China of the late thirteenth century was quite different from the China of the mid-tenth century. Its population had nearly doubled. More of the population lived in the south, which had become the undisputed economic center of China. China had become a more commercialized society, with a higher proportion of its farmers engaged in producing for the market. The scholar-official elite of the late Song was very different from the elite of the Five Dynasties or early Song. With the expansion of education, the size of the educated class had grown much larger, and *jinshi* examinations had become a defining element in its culture. The Confucian revival was shifting the focus of literati learning from literature toward the Four Books and Zhu Xi's commentaries on the classics. The Song Dynasty began with a powerful neighbor to the north, but over the course of the next three centuries, the balance of power continued to shift in favor of the north. Jin held more of China proper than Liao had, and the Mongols were a more formidable foe in the mid-thirteenth century than the Jurchens had been in the mid-twelfth. The concept of the Mandate of Heaven—that heaven recognizes a single Son of Heaven ruling over the civilized world—was more and more difficult to sustain. During Song times more than one ruler called himself "Son of Heaven."