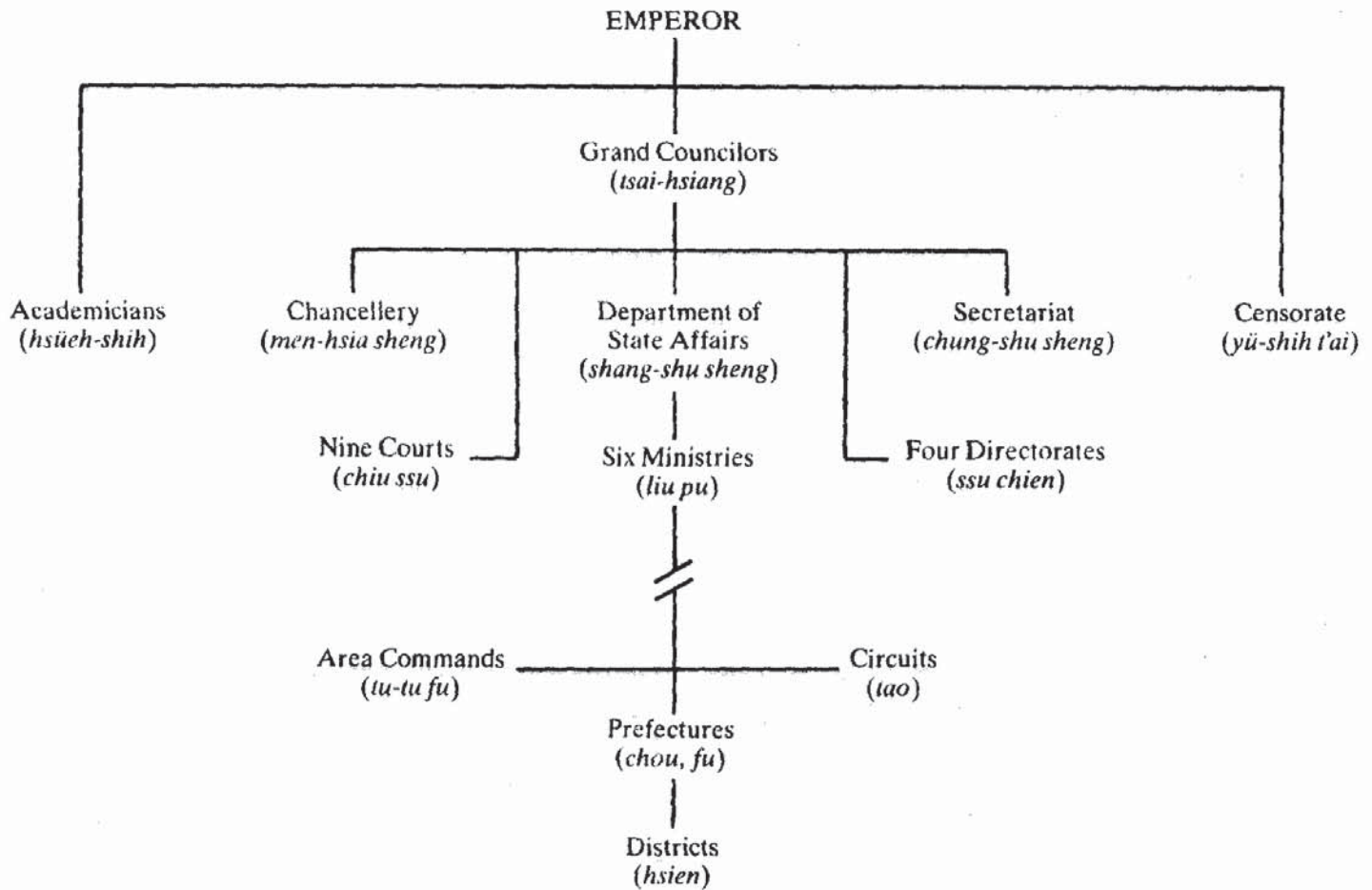


T'ang

618-907



The T'ang government, culminating centuries of institution-building by the Northern Dynasties and Sui, was an effectively centralized one under which China attained political unity, international influence, and cultural grandeur to an extent not attained even in Han times. Heredity continued to be more important than ability in gaining entry to government service, but recruitment became more open, and personnel administration more sophisticated and bureaucratic. Although T'ang government was the model to which almost all subsequent dynasties aspired or claimed to aspire, it was stably centralized for less than a century and a half. After the famed rebellion of An Lu-shan beginning in 755, the

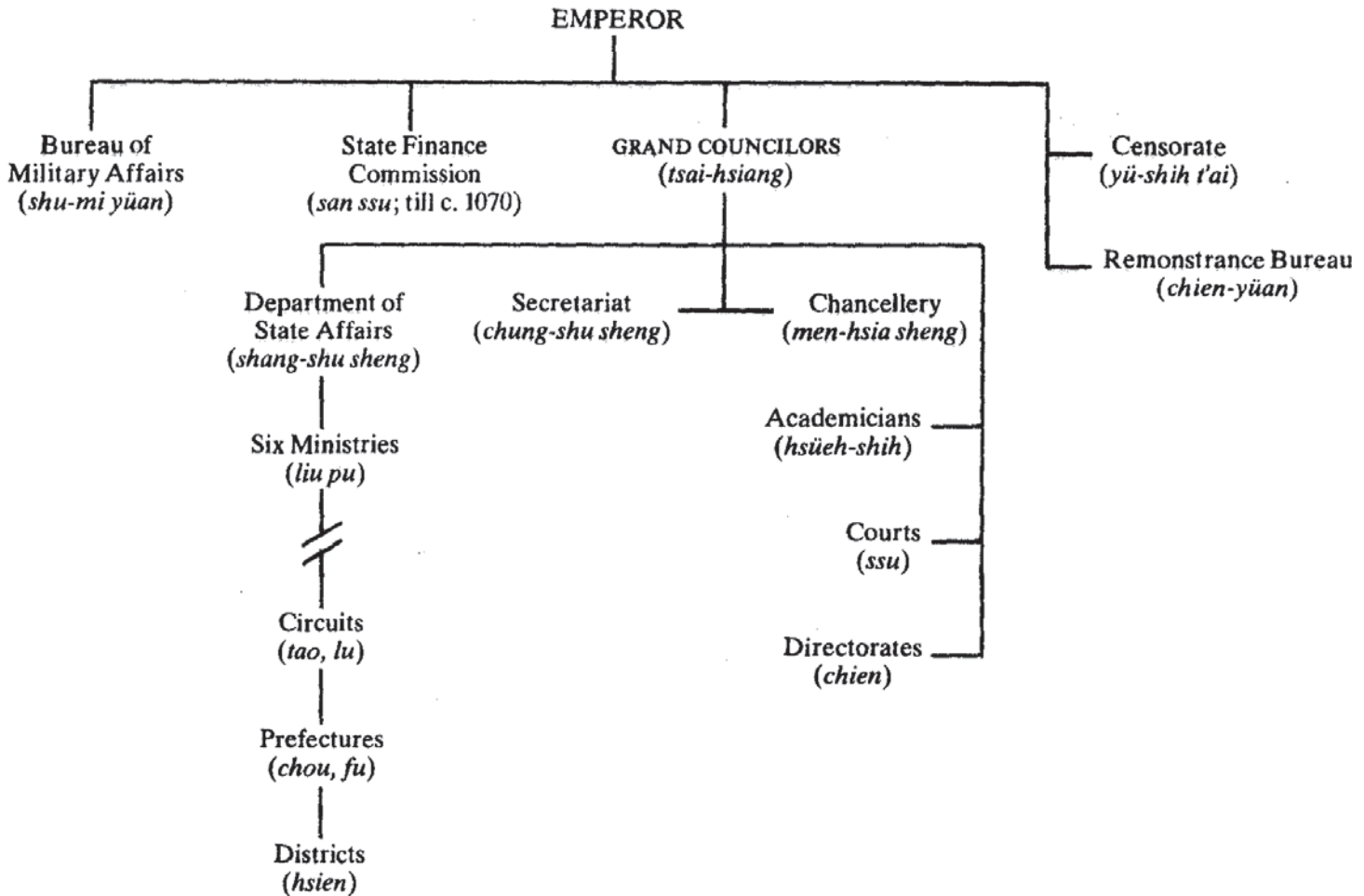
T'ang empire was repeatedly on the brink of becoming a loose patchwork of virtually autonomous satrapies, and the greatly weakened central government was ultimately paralyzed by ministerial factions and dominated by eunuchs.

The Central Government

Like Sui, T'ang maintained its capital at Ch'ang-an in modern Shensi Province. Loyang in modern Honan was an auxiliary Eastern Capital (*Tung-tu* 東都), to which the whole imperial court often moved when supplies ran short in Ch'ang-an. To a greater degree than at any time since Later Han, palace eunuchs (*huan-kuan*

Sung

(NORTHERN) SUNG, 960-1127
SOUTHERN SUNG, 1127-1279



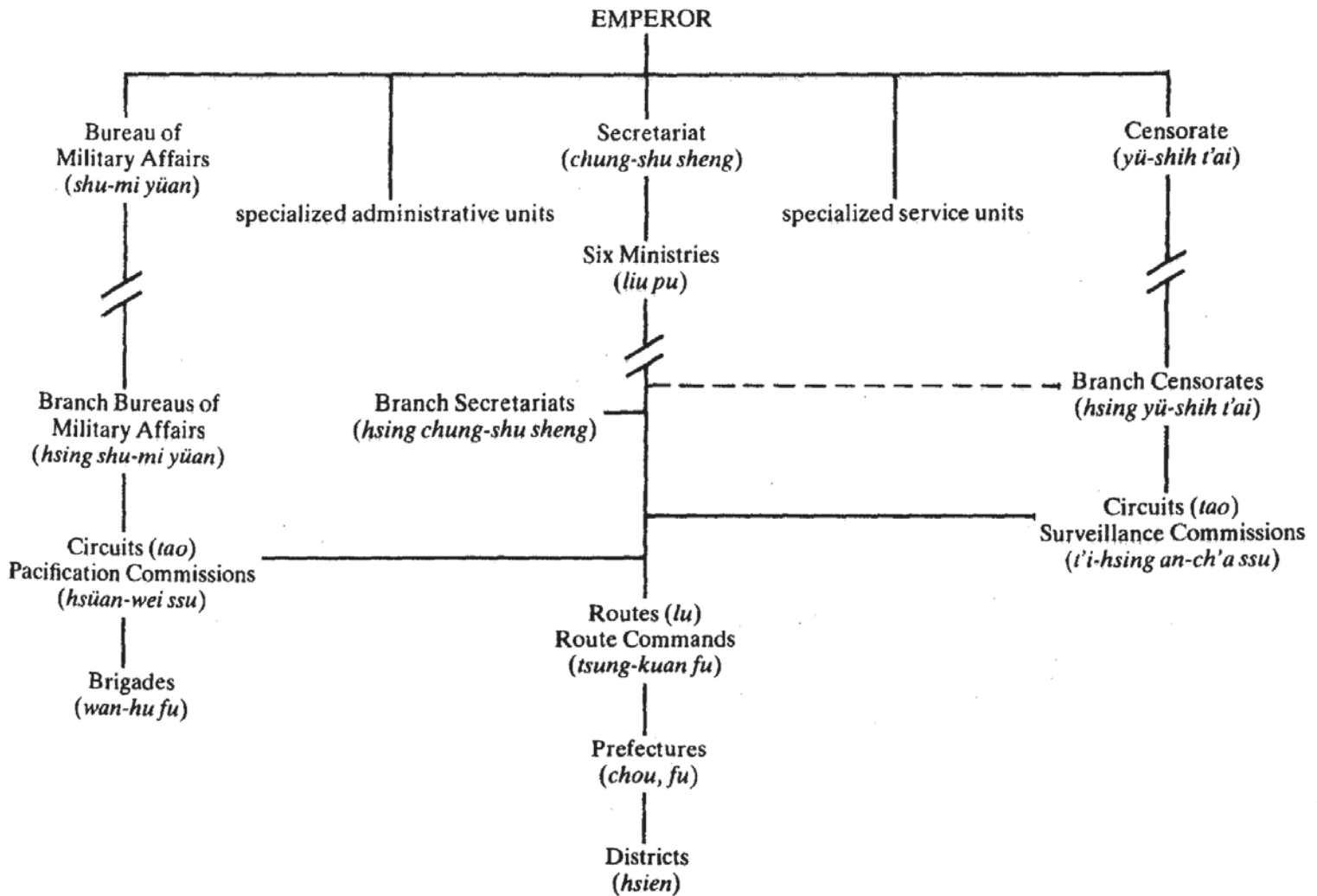
After centuries of disorder and decentralized authority in the late T'ang and Five Dynasties eras, the Sung rulers determinedly consolidated power in their central government and, most particularly, in their own hands. Sung government was consequently more autocratic than government under previous national dynasties had been, establishing a trend that was subsequently to become more pronounced. At the same time, however, the civil service officialdom was esteemed as never before, education and recruitment for the civil service became increasingly open, and government generally became more professionalized and sophisticated. Among the most

professional statesmen of the dynasty was the famous, controversial "reform minister" Wang An-shih (1021-1086; in power 1069-1074, 1075-1076).

In order to centralize government effectively, the early Sung rulers perpetuated many institutional improvisations of the late T'ang and Five Dynasties periods and introduced more of their own. The result was the most complex and confusing pattern of nomenclature of China's whole imperial history. Especially in the first Sung century, what was in name a "regular" structure of governmental agencies and official posts that resembled the early T'ang structure was overlaid

Yüan

1264-1368



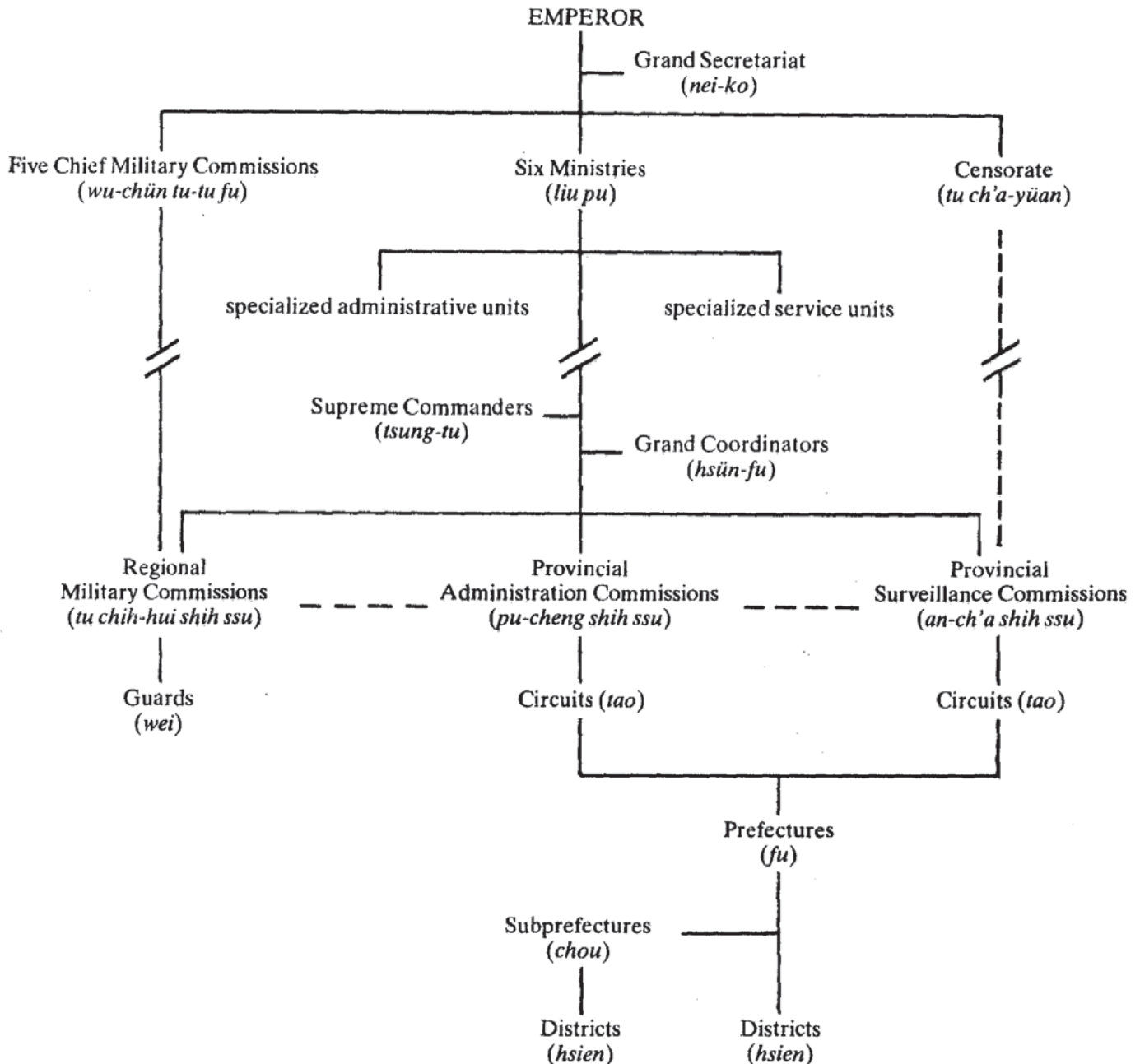
The Mongols, the most successful nomad conquerors of world history and the first aliens to subjugate all Chinese, first assaulted North China in 1212-1213. Thereafter they became overlords of the whole of China in several phases. In 1234 they destroyed the Jurchen Chin regime and won control of all North China. In 1259-1260 Kubilai, suspending his campaign against Southern Sung, returned to the ancestral capital in Outer Mongolia, Karakorum, and made himself Grand Khan. In 1264 he moved his capital to Peking and began a restrained Sinicization of

the Mongol governmental apparatus in China. In 1271, while his generals were still battling Sung armies in the South, he proclaimed the establishment of the Yüan dynasty; and at last, in 1279, his forces wiped out Sung resistance on the south coast, so that China Proper in its entirety was united under one Emperor for the first time since the T'ang era.

Until Kubilai's long reign (1260-1294), the Mongols controlled their subjects in China largely by leaving in place the existing Chin and Sung institutions and superimposing on them varying

Ming

1368-1644



Carrying forward and gradually modifying trends from both the alien tradition that culminated in Yüan and the native tradition of T'ang and Sung, the Ming government became a highly centralized, well-articulated autocracy. Everything was structured so that no one could challenge the au-

thority of the Emperor, and the officialdom was less aristocratic than at any other time in Chinese history. After the earliest Ming years, intellectuals selected for government service in open, competitive, written recruitment examinations were the only significant elite group in both the

Ch'ing

1644-1912

