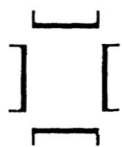




Brian E. McKnight

*Village and
Bureaucracy in
Southern
Sung China*



VILLAGE
AND
BUREAUCRACY
IN
SOUTHERN
SUNG CHINA

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Preface

In premodern China local residents serving as subbureaucratic workers did much of the routine work of local administration. These men were both the agents of the state and the leaders of the people. Our understanding of state and society in premodern China will remain inadequate until we understand these functionaries and the institutions that they staffed. An interest in the problem of these mediators led to the initiation of this study.

Analogous institutions existed from the beginning of the empire in 221 B.C. until its fall in A.D. 1912, but the Sung period (960–1279) has a particular attraction for historians interested in studying the structure and evolution of political institutions in China. It was a time of innovation and rapid change, during which many elements characteristic of later dynasties first appeared. Historians divide the Sung into two periods, the Northern Sung (960–1127) and the Southern Sung (1127–1279). Japanese sinologists have studied, in a preliminary way, the village-level sub-bureaucratic institutions of the Northern Sung, but the Southern Sung situation has been less fully described. This is unfortunate. Although the roots of most Southern Sung institutions and policies can be traced back into the Northern Sung, these institutions and policies frequently reach their full flowering only during the later period. Thus, I have directed my attention to the Southern Sung.

The scope of this book has been determined in part by preexisting interests, and in part by the character of the materials available to me. The most important single repository of primary source materials is the *Sung Hui Yao Chi Kao*, the remaining part of the huge collections of selected documents compiled under imperial auspices during the Sung. The *Sung Hui Yao Chi Kao* consists largely of proclamations and approved memorials, with occasional insertions of commentary. Unfortunately the sections on the village service system end in the 1220s. For this reason the description of conditions during the last fifty years of the dynasty is necessarily rather tentative. Within the period covered it is clear that the documents preserved represent only a fraction of those originally contained in the collections ancestral to the work we have today. Moreover, most of the entries have been abbreviated. There are many cases of miscopying in this work, and some passages appear garbled. And yet, for all its limitations this is still the most important collection of information on the institutional history of the Sung. I have sought to make full use of those sections of this work bearing directly on the subject of this book, and selective use of peripherally relevant sections.

The collected papers of Sung officials (*wen-chi*) rank second in importance as sources of information on the Southern Sung service system. The materials contained are not so abbreviated as those found in the *Sung Hui Yao Chi Kao* but unfortunately are usually undated. The huge bulk of such collections still extant from Sung times prevented me from checking them exhaustively. I have examined the memorials in those *wen-chi* available to me and have used such tools as are available in trying to locate in them other information relevant to my topic.

Thirdly, local gazetteers, annalistic histories, and other miscellaneous works provided a plethora of information on some topics, without providing adequate materials on others.

Taken together, these sources afford a plenitude of information on questions of structure, personnel selection, and the ways in which the government sought to distribute the costs of village services among the people, but they do not adequately depict day-by-day procedures, the actual costs of the services to the people involved, or the relations of the servicemen to their superiors in the offices of the towns.

Both the character of the data and the depth of our present ignorance about Chinese traditional society encouraged me to adopt an institutional rather than a functional approach to my subject. A sociological focus on change, on interrelationships between social subsystems, and on the dynamic roles of institutions would be of great interest, but in the absence of thorough previous studies, and given the types of information available it seemed wisest to devote this study to a descriptive analysis of the institution of village services and to deny myself the pleasure of following my social theories too far beyond the edges of the evidence. I have also resisted the tempting assumption that T'ang or Yüan institutions closely resembled Sung institutions. In many cases the institutions were no doubt similar, but this similarity cannot be assumed. For this reason I have made only limited use of materials not directly concerned with the Sung period.

I am indebted to those Japanese scholars, particularly Sudō Yoshiyuki and Miyazaki Ichisada, who have in a preliminary way surveyed these institutions. Their articles have made my work far easier than it would otherwise have been.

In giving translations of titles I have followed the practices established by E. A. Kracke, Jr., in his works on the Northern Sung. In citing dates in the notes and body of the book, I have used Hsüeh Chung-san and Ou-yang I, *A Sino-Western Calendar for Two Thousand Years* (Peking: Hsin Chih San Lien Shu Tien, 1957). In cases where only

the Western year is given I have used that Western year which roughly corresponds to the Chinese year in question.

In quoting Chinese materials I have faced the translator's perennial problem: How literally should a writer render the words of the original? I can only hope that my translations satisfy both the scholar and the general reader.

Finally I would like to express my gratitude to the many friends and teachers who have aided me in my studies, to Professor Charles Peterson, who read the manuscript and offered valuable suggestions, and most especially to Professor E. A. Kracke, Jr., for his constant encouragement and advice.

Abbreviations

<i>CHTK</i>	<i>Chou Hsien T'i Kang.</i>
<i>CPCSPM</i>	Yang Chung-liang. <i>Tzu-chih T'ung-chien Ch'ang-pien Chi-shih Pen-mo.</i>
<i>CTCCC</i>	Ch'en Ch'i-ch'ing. <i>Chia-ting Ch'ih Ch'eng Chih.</i>
<i>CWKCH</i>	Chu Hsi. <i>Chu Wen-kung Cheng Hsün.</i>
<i>CYTC</i>	Li Hsin-ch'uan. <i>Chien-yen I-lai Chao Yeh Tsa Chi.</i>
<i>HAHS</i>	Chu Hsi. <i>Hui-an Hsien-sheng Chu Wen-kung Wen-chi.</i>
<i>HCP</i>	Li Tao. <i>Hsü Tzu-chih T'ung-chien Ch'ang-pien.</i>
<i>HNYL</i>	Li Hsin-ch'uan. <i>Chien-yen I-lai Hsi Nien Yao Lu.</i>
<i>HSCH</i>	Chen Te-hsiu. <i>Hsi Shan Cheng Hsün.</i>
<i>HSWC</i>	Chen Te-hsiu. <i>Hsi Shan Wen-chi.</i>
<i>KCC</i>	Ch'en Ch'i-ch'ing. <i>Kuei Ch'ang Chi.</i>
<i>KCSMC</i>	Mei Ying-fa. <i>K'ai-ch'ing Ssu Ming Chih.</i>
<i>KCSMHC</i>	Mei Ying-fa. <i>K'ai-ch'ing Ssu Ming Hsü Chih.</i>
"KRNB"	Miyazaki Ichisada. "Kyo-ri no baibi o chūshin to shite."
<i>SHY</i>	Hsü Sung. <i>Sung Hui Yao Chi Kao.</i>
"SIFS"	Nieh Ch'ung-ch'i. "Sung I-fa Shu."
<i>SKSK</i>	Sudō Yoshiyuki. <i>Sō-dai keizai-shi kenkyū.</i>
"SSKS"	Miyazaki Ichisada. "Sō-dai shu ken seido no yurai to sono tokushoku."
<i>SZS</i>	Sogabe Shizuo. <i>Sō-dai zaisei-shi.</i>
<i>TITC</i>	Li Yüan-pi. <i>Tso I Tzu Chen.</i>
<i>TSKSK</i>	Sudō Yoshiyuki. <i>Tōsō shakai keizai-shi kenkyū.</i>
<i>YLTT</i>	Yao Kuang-hsiao. <i>Yung-lo Ta-tien.</i>

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The Chinese imperial state, like all states, faced a set of fundamental problems. The preservation of peace and order, the transmission of information between rulers and ruled, and the collection of taxes to finance operations formed an irreducible triad of political functions. Like all polities the Chinese state used a unique style of administration in performing these tasks. The style was a complex resultant of many factors. The myths, reasons, and traditions used to justify the existing political institutions, the relations between the formal state and other social groupings, and the distribution of power all conjoined to form a pattern of politics unique in time and place. Distinctive both in theory and practice, the government of imperial China still seems in many ways curiously modern and familiar. Bureaucratically organized, and dominated by a graded civil service led by men selected through competitive examinations, it was both a model for and a precursor of the complex administrations of our contemporary world. And yet this traditional Chinese government differed from its later counterparts in one most curious way: it was ruled by a handful of professional civil servants.

The members of this upper bureaucracy of civil servants, organized into nine grades (*chiu-p'in*), were said to hold their posts "within the stream" (*liu-nei*). They were distinguished from the rest of Chinese society by dress, by life style, by career expectations, and by a host of other traits.

But perhaps most centrally in Sung times, these graded civil servants were set apart by the presumption that they shared a community of values fitting them for service as the guides of the people and the limbs of the state. These values were enshrined in the Confucian Classics. To ascertain potential officials' mastery over this body of values and attitudes, the Chinese created an elaborate, brilliantly constructed, and wholly voluntary system of political indoctrination and testing—the examination system and its supporting educational institutions. This was not a system of technical training and certification designed to fit a man for the mundane triviality of bureaucratic routine, but rather the most profoundly effective mechanism the world has yet seen for assuring that fellow officials agreed on fundamentals. The system by no means ended partisan strife or personal animosities, but it did mean that in most instances those in positions of power argued their cases in the same language. The high standards of Confucian socialization that examination demanded of graduates largely precluded basic conflicts of value, but this underlying stratum of agreement was bought at a price. The number of those able to pass the examinations was limited. During the Sung, many low-level posts in the graded civil service were filled by men whose orthodoxy had not been formally certified.¹

1. According to figures cited by Kracke, during the thirty years beginning in 1142, examination graduates would seem to have provided between 37 and 44 percent of the average number of needed civil service replacements. Edward A. Kracke, Jr., "Family versus Merit in the Chinese Civil Service Examinations during the Empire," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 10 (1947): 120. Thus, a small majority of men in the graded civil service probably entered without having passed the regular examinations. However, it is clear that men with degrees almost monopolized the higher positions. See Brian E. McKnight, "Administrators of Hangchow under the Northern Sung," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 30 (1970): 205. Two other points are here worth noting. First, although very bitter political disputes did occur within the civil service itself, after the flowering of the examination system in Sung times the most abusive politics arose when power was given into the hands of those who could not be presumed

Furthermore, local control by these graded civil servants was made possible only through their continuing use of two sets of political functionaries not considered to be full members of the civil service—the clerical subbureaucracy and the village officers. The degree to which these two groups shared the values of their superiors could not easily be ascertained. The state, in administering local areas, was therefore faced with a fundamental political problem: How could it feel confident that its policies would be enforced when it could certify the orthodoxy of only a handful of its servitors and had to rely on the administrative activities of many men who did not stand within the circle of the elect?

Different dynasties dealt with this problem in different ways, but in all cases one element in the answer was attention to the balancing of authority and functions. The degree of control sought could in part be assured through the judicious distribution of functions and powers among the parties concerned—the central authorities, the local administrators, the clerks and runners, the village officers, and in the last dynasties the “gentry.” In pre-Sung times, when Chinese society was more aristocratic, there was less emphasis on formal testing of beliefs; greater powers were granted to local officials; and the gulf between civil servants and their helpers was not heavily stressed.² Under the

to share in this community of values; this was particularly true of periods when eunuchs were influential. Secondly, although it is true that during the Sung there was no “orthodox” interpretation of Confucian philosophy (such as was inculcated in Ming and Ch’ing times), the wide areas of agreement on basic values in ethics are sufficient indication that fundamental Confucian assumptions themselves constituted an orthodoxy.

2. Aristocracy has been defined as a form of government in which supreme power is invested in the principal persons of a state or in a privileged order. In this sense it would seem reasonable to use the word to describe conditions in China from the Three Kingdoms to the late T’ang. The late T’ang and the Five Dynasties are part of a transitional period to the system that becomes mature only in the Sung.

dynasties that followed the Sung the central government sought to obviate many problems by placing stricter limits on the authority of local officials,³ by bringing a greater proportion of the population into the indoctrinated atmosphere of the examination life,⁴ and by permitting the use of special agents to guard against clerical abuses.⁵ The Sung is therefore revealing as a period of transition between the looser central control of the preceding more aristocratic period, and the near autocracy of the last dynasties with their gentry-dominated societies. And yet this period, although transitional, was no mere admixture of elements of the earlier and later situations. The Sung rural social order resembled the rural social orders of other eras in Chinese imperial history but differed from them in certain critical ways. Its unique character was reflected in a distinctive system of local control in rural areas, marked by a constellation of powers and functions peculiar to the Sung.

In one sense this period from the rebellion of An Lu-shan to A.D. 960 might be included with the Sung as part of the postaristocratic era, since the decline in the power of the great families was already manifest by the middle of the eighth century, and yet this period was certainly marked, as was the earlier era, by loose central control, by a lack of extensive use of examinations for the certification of officials, and by a relatively weak emphasis on the division between the levels of assistants of the principal local political figures. For these reasons I have chosen to regard this period as one part of the pre-Sung era, albeit a peculiar one.

3. For a brief comparison of the powers of local administrators in the various dynasties see Yang Lien-sheng, "Ming Local Administration," in *Chinese Government in Ming Times: Seven Studies*, ed. Charles O. Hucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969).

4. Chang Chung-li, *The Chinese Gentry: Studies on Their Role in Nineteenth Century Chinese Society* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1955). See especially part 3. For a general description of the role of the gentry in supporting control in rural areas under the Ch'ing, see Hsiao Kung-ch'üan, *Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960). Dr. Hsiao's book is easily the fullest description available of those institutions which, during the Ch'ing, performed the functions that in the Sung were handled by the village officers.

5. Ch'ü T'ung-tsu, *Local Government in China under the Ch'ing* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

The clerical workers, one key group in this system of powers, acted as secretaries, accountants, clerks, and miscellaneous functionaries in government offices. These operative personnel, although they were themselves organized in a manner reminiscent of the elite civil service, and although they were in some cases recruited through examinations not wholly unlike those used to select their superiors, were never considered to be full members of the upper bureaucracy. These clerks were not presumed to share fully in Confucian values. Indeed, during much of Chinese history they were presumed not to share them at all; they were stereotyped as dishonest and venal.

The village officers, the subjects of this book, collected taxes, transmitted documents, maintained local order, and provided a number of services to residents and officials within rural areas. Because these men were well-to-do, in the eyes of the government they were presumptively literate. Given the character of traditional Chinese education, where even the primers were expositions of Confucian philosophy, village officers had begun the process of Confucian socialization. They had already taken the first step from the tradition of the peasantry into the set of patterns exemplified by the mandarins. Because of the vital functions they performed, these officers were an irreplaceable link between the country people and the relatively small group of clerks and officials who in theory controlled the rural areas.

The village officers must not be confused with the gentry of the Ming and Ch'ing. The functional roles of the two groups are similar but by no means identical. The gentry supported the moral order and the examination system in ways not characteristic of the village officers, could not properly participate in tax collection, and led militia forces only under unusual conditions. Furthermore their juridical functions were extralegal, if widely accepted. The village officers by contrast collected taxes as a matter of course, frequently led militia units, and were key figures in the

legally established law-enforcement system. They bore burdens which in the Ming and Ch'ing were spread among the gentry, the *li-chia*, the clerks and runners, and the *pao-chia* leaders. Finally, the gentry of the last dynasties were men whose ideological orthodoxy had at least in theory been proved. Gentry status was a question of being an official, an ex-official, a degree holder, or an imperial student, not of merely being rich. But during the Sung the use of the examination system as a means of indoctrinating the higher levels of Chinese society was in its infancy. In the Sung there were men with official status, there were various groups possessed of miscellaneous privileges, and there were the rich, but it seems fair to say that there were no gentry. The more aristocratic society of earlier times in which local political influence tended to remain in the hands of certain families for generation after generation was dead, and the gentry society of later times had not yet been born. As a result the local elite consisted, not of the hereditarily influential or of the indoctrinated gentry, but simply of the rich. During the Sung more than during any other period of pre-modern Chinese history economic position determined membership in the nonofficial segment of the ruling class. Perhaps the most that can be said of the functional equivalence of the Sung village officers who were chosen from the rural rich and the socially active gentry of later times is that in both periods the paucity of officials and clerks necessitated dependence on nonofficial agents in rural areas. A brief examination of the size of the official-clerical group makes the importance of such agents immediately obvious.⁶

6. The use of "gentry" here has no connection with the definition of the term in the various works of Wolfram Eberhard. In the evidence examined there is simply no indication of the existence of the gentry as he defines that term. Rather, I am using the definition accepted (with some important differences in detail) by Ch'ü T'ung-tsu, chap. 10, and Chang Chung-li. This "gentry" group with its center in the *shen-shih* group also corresponds in part to the elite dealt with by Ho Ping-ti in *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962). Ho is concerned with the

In the 1160s, when between 50 and 60 million people lived in the dominions of the Southern Sung, the civil service of regular graded civil officials "within the stream" (*liu-nei*) seems to have numbered only about 12,000 members.⁷ Since our data on numbers of officials is fragmentary, general in character, and often difficult to interpret, this figure of 12,000 must be considered a tentative approximation. Nonetheless, the major sources of our information on such questions make it clear that the graded civil service was tiny when compared with the number of people over whom it was supposed to exercise control.⁸

Most members of this small group of graded civil

group with potential or previous access to office—a group that does not correspond exactly to the "gentry" as defined by the other two authors—and he raises cogent objections to the use of the term "gentry," but, given the wide currency of the word, I have chosen to use it here, though with some reservations.

7. The population figures are for the 1160s. Kato Shigeru, *Shina keizai-shi kosho* (Tokyo: Toyo Bunko, 1952–53), 2: 319, gives population figures for this decade ranging from 11,139,854 households (in 1162) to 12,335,450 households (in 1166). If, to obtain a rough approximation of the population, we estimate that a household averaged between four and five members, we arrive at the figures fifty to sixty million. The estimate of civil service personnel is for the period 1165–73. Kracke, "Family versus Merit," 120. This situation in the 1160s was not unique. In the period 1065–67, when the population of the empire was about sixty million, there were only about 25,000 officials, including military officials. E. A. Kracke, Jr., *Civil Service in Early Sung China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 55 for the civil service estimates, and Kato, p. 318 for the population figures. Such population estimates are of course only approximate. Arriving at acceptable estimates for the population in Sung times is difficult. There is already a considerable literature on the problem of interpreting Sung population statistics. In addition to articles in Kato, see Koiwai Hiromitsu, "Sō-dai kokosu mondai ni kansuru shiken," *Bunka* 22: 641–57; Werner Eichhorn, "Gesamtbevölkerungsziffern des Sung-Reiches," *Oriens Extremus* 4: 52–69; Yüan Chen, "Sung-tai hu-k'ou," *Li-shih Yen-chiu* 3 (1957): 9–46.

8. Some general information on numbers of officials can be found in T'o T'o et al., *Sung shih* (Taipei: Yee Wen Publishing Co., 1956), *chüan* 169; Ma Tuan-lin, *Wen Hsien T'ung K'ao* (Kuo Hsüeh Chi Pen Ts'ung-shu ed.), *chüan* 47; and Wang Ying-lin, *Yü Hai* (Ch'eng-tu Wang Shih ed.), *chüan* 119.