A Social History of Middle-Period China

Drawing on a wide range of sources, this book discusses the social history of China in the period 960–1279, comparing the different ethnic cultures of Song 'China' and its neighbouring empires. This valuable reference work for our understanding of the Song, Liao, Western Xia and Jin dynasties presents recent Chinese research in English translation for the first time, exploring topics including material culture, food, technology, ritual, religion, medicine, gender, family and language.

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A Social History of Middle-Period China

The Song, Liao, Western Xia and Jin Dynasties

Zhu Ruixin, Zhang Bangwei, Liu Fusheng,
Cai Chongbang and Wang Zengyu

With an introduction by Peter Ditmanson

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Introduction to the English Edition

Peter Ditmanson

From the tenth to the thirteenth century, East Asia saw the emergence of new social and political orders, after an extended period of flux that began in the late eighth century with the fracturing of the vast Tang Empire (618–907). Tang cosmopolitan cultural and political influence had stretched from the Japanese islands and the Korean peninsula to Afghanistan, but after the tenth century, a much different configuration prevailed. The Song Empire (960–1279) was much smaller than the Tang and it was hemmed in by powerful neighbours: the Tangut Xixia state (982–1227) to the northwest and the Khitan Liao empire (907–1125) to the north and northeast, eventually overtaken by the Jurchen Jin (1115–1234) that wrested the north China plain away from the Song in 1127. Tibetan peoples lay to the west, and in the southwest were the Dali (937–1253) and Dai Viet kingdoms (1054–1225). Largely cut off from the peoples of Central Asia and the traffic of the Silk Route, the culture of the Song marked a shift away from the cosmopolitan tastes and sensibilities of the Tang. The cultural centre of the empire gradually shifted southward to the rich Jiangnan region to the south of the Yangzi River. As the Song court established an examination-based bureaucracy, a scholastically-oriented civil culture rose to prominence, far removed from the expansive aristocratic and martial world of the Tang. This transformation had a durable impact, reshaping the vectors of Chinese culture for the next millennium. Across the north, the Tangut, Khitan and Jurchen states blended elements of their own cultural and political orders with institutions derived from the Tang and the Song. The Liao and the Jin (and the Mongols after them) found innovative ways to govern the multicultural regions and diverse economies under their control. In this new world order of shifting geo-political tensions, the memory of the sprawling transcultural Tang empire retained an iconic presence, with each of the contending states in the region asserting its place as the legitimate successor. When the dynastic histories of Song, Liao and Jin empires were compiled in the mid-fourteenth century, the editors left this question of succession unresolved.

This new and different world left a wealth of source materials from which the authors of this volume have gathered and ordered an impressive array of topical studies on the social history of this era. While some of this material is

archaeological, most is textual. With great erudition and resourcefulness, the authors have mined a remarkably wide range of sources to provide exhaustively intricate portraits of daily life in this period. The level of detailed information in these chapters would not be possible for earlier times in Chinese history. Improvements in printing led to a greater proliferation of texts across much of East Asia. In the Song, amidst the fevered scholastic competition of the *literati* elite, writers asserted their place by taking up topics far beyond the knowledge of the classics and the histories that dominated the curriculum of the civil service examinations. For a readership that prized broad worldly knowledge and first-hand observation, writers offered up pieces that give us detailed descriptions of places, events, people and customs. The gazetteers, reports, essays, poems, diaries, letters, travel records, manuals and guides that proliferated portray day-to-day life on an unprecedented scale. One of the most celebrated of Song genres was the *biji* or 'brush notes', notebooks filled with casual and miscellaneous observations, a resource used extensively in the chapters in this collection. And as the volume and diversity of Song writings dramatically increased, a burgeoning readership created markets for reproducing these works through printing and hand-copying on a larger scale than in previous centuries. By the end of the Song, books had been published in over ninety prefectures.[1]

While Tang writings were largely absorbed with aristocratic life at the capitals, Chang'an and Luoyang, Song writers take us much further afield, introducing us to urban and rural life in greater detail. And while these writers were overwhelmingly focussed on elite *literati* lives and concerns, we do occasionally encounter figures further down the social ladder. While we have lush descriptions of the banquet delicacies at feasts of the highest echelons, we also have accounts of peasants surviving on millet gruel and chaff. Scholars wrote on topics affecting all levels of society, producing extensive manuals on the technological innovations of the day in agriculture, mining and sericulture. The modest fluidity of Song society created a market for descriptive accounts and how-to manuals on etiquette for different levels of society, with information on the proper way to be a refined person: how to dress, communicate and maintain proper ritual decorum. The iconic twelfth-century handscroll, *Along the River at the Qingming Festival*, painted by Zhang Zeduan, offers us a panorama of life in the city, with details of river traffic and street markets, inns and pubs, theatre stages and street performers, scholar-officials, merchants and farmers all going about their business. The scenes depicted here and in contemporary writings tell us much about life at that time in the largest urban centres on the globe.

These materials give witness to a world of transformation, as writers noted the social, economic and political changes that were taking place across the realm. One frequent refrain was the vast gulf between their society and that of previous ages. Earlier periods in Chinese history had seen change, but never

had these changes been so well-documented, analysed and debated. Song writers were deeply conscious that they lived in a world of flux. Change was rapid and observable within a lifetime. A scholar like Lu You (1125–1210) could note that chairs had once been an object of derision in a *literati* home, but were now a common item. The increased monetisation of the economy brought greater fluidity to the social order, and accumulated wealth presented challenges to sumptuary regulations, marriage negotiations, the etiquette of celebrations, and, of course, fair scholarly competition in the examinations. Emperors were compelled to ban the giving of birthday gifts as the practice seemed to descend into open bribery among officials. Song narratives on social customs and practices often reflected the anxiety and emphasised a strong sense of the precariousness of their social world.

The *literati* elite of the Song formed a broad community that had become increasingly integrated across the empire by the common curriculum of the civil service examinations and the widespread circulation of texts. Personal letters now travelled by government post at unprecedented speed. For those who served in the bureaucracy, travel was an integral part of their duties as they took up office in distant prefectures. These scholars were deeply aware, however, of the contrast between their own shared culture and the significant diversity of social practices across the empire and they wrote in detail about the unique ways in which people ate, dressed, spoke and practiced their beliefs in different places. Anecdotes of southern soldiers who died of starvation because they could not cope with northern millet were perhaps exaggerated, but they remind us that despite the sophisticated networks of trade, transportation and communication, the culture of the Song was not as unified as it is often portrayed.

Song scholars also wrote about the cultures and polities beyond their borders. In this sense, this world of the Song and its neighbours – the Tangut, Khitan and Jurchen, as well as other groups to the south and west – is one of lopsided sourcing and perspective. Textual materials in the languages of these peoples were more limited, or in some cases non-existent. This imbalance in our sources makes this kind of comparative study in social history challenging and calls for innovative approaches. The Tangut dictionary, *The Sea of Characters*, for example, has been skilfully mined in these chapters as a source to interpolate social practices and beliefs. Song scholars provide much important information on these peoples, but their writings were often skewed with chauvinism, fear and misunderstanding. Accounts of baby-eating customs in Lingnan, or reports of burning the feet of Yao children to make them better walkers reflect no small degree of exoticism of non-Han peoples. To what extent can we accept these accounts at face value? The Song faced innumerable humiliating defeats against the forces to the north, and defined their own cultural and social identity against that of these enemies. In Song eyes, descriptions and comparisons of the social order, gender and family relations and

material culture of their neighbours were part of a broader discourse on the boundaries of civilisation and barbarism.

The writings of this period also tell us much about the shifting and expanding role of the state in people's lives from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries. Each of these societies saw considerable innovation and change in their political institutions and structures. Song bureaucratic expansion and reform of the education system, the agricultural sector and its military institutions brought much-debated upheaval to the lives of scholars, farmers and soldiers alike. The civil service examination system, for example, was one of the most important social institutions of the last millennium of Chinese history. The examinations reshaped male gender identity in Song society, and as the chapter on marriage practices points out, the system had a dramatic impact on marriage strategies and practices among the elite clans of the realm. At the Tangut, Khitan and Jurchen courts, attempts by rulers to add Han-style institutions presented new opportunities and challenges in these societies, transforming the daily lives of families and individuals. With the establishment of the new Jin dynasty, for example, sartorial regulations were drawn up to reflect new social hierarchies, dramatically transforming Jurchen patterns of dress. And in the all of these states, large-scale court-sponsored publishing projects and initiatives made available extensive knowledge of Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist doctrines, as well as a range of technical knowledge in medicine, agriculture and other fields.

The authors of these chapters have also skilfully explored the limits of the reach of the state and the official doctrines of the realm, showing us the tensions and discrepancies between prescribed social norms and actual practices. In marriage arrangements and funerary practices, for example, fashion, practicality, convenience and economy often won out over regulations and guidebooks. As the section on cremation shows, strong state efforts to ban the practice met with little success. Our traditional portrait of the Song is that of a society in which Neo-Confucian doctrines and practices emerged victorious. As the authors explain in the Introduction, however, the actual influence of these teachings on daily life is a matter of some debate. Moreover, they argue, the writings of even the most doctrinaire scholars, including the great Zhu Xi (1130–1200) himself, reflect some flexibility and understanding of the fast-changing world in which they lived.

The chapters in this volume cover a remarkable array of facets of social life in encyclopedic detail. Several of the chapters offer innovative categories for thinking about social history. Gender dynamics and the lives of women and families, areas of study traditionally poorly represented, are given extensive attention here. There are areas not covered in this book, as the authors admit. They have wisely chosen to omit topics that have been covered in great depth in other scholarship, such as the civil service examination system, or

the religious and intellectual traditions and practices of Neo-Confucianism or Chan Buddhism. These chapters do, however, give us a clearer view of the context of upheaval and discontinuity that these discourses sought to address. The authors acknowledge that their scholarship draws upon a significant body of earlier academic work, a testament to the revolution in historical scholarship that has taken place in China in the last few decades. As the authors admit, a work of this nature and scope is experimental and unwieldy, but the book will nevertheless remain an invaluable resource for scholars in Chinese studies or in comparative fields of social history.

Introduction

The Song, Liao, Western Xia and Jin dynasties represent a period of continued development in ancient Chinese history. Social changes starting from the mid-Tang Dynasty had finally produced positive effects, especially in the territory of Song, and the Liao, Western Xia and Jin societies also demonstrated remarkable progress. Social stratification based on ascription or birth had, during the period of Song, transformed into one based on economic status, and thus the social status of merchants saw a sharp rise. This change in social stratification could find its root in the modification of productive relations within Chinese society. Private ownership of land became more widespread, resulting in more frequent land transactions and transfers of ownership. The state government enacted and enforced laws and regulations to guarantee the private right to land ownership and to transfer such ownership, and took tentative steps towards a unified set of laws related to land purchase, transfer and mortgage. Landlords as a class rent out farmland to peasants and levy land rent from them, thus reducing the physical restraints imposed on peasants and forming a landlord–tenant relationship. All this greatly promoted agricultural production, and provided a solid foundation for the economic and social development of the Song Dynasty. The country made unprecedented advances in terms of agriculture, the handicraft industry, commercial activities and science and technology. During the Song period, China led in both agricultural production technology and annual output of grain, and it was second to none in its output of silver, copper, lead, tin and iron mines. Engraving was widely used to print books, and movable-type printing was invented. Marine compasses and similar devices were used in ocean voyages, and gunpowder, flammable and then explosive, was applied to produce the very first firearms in the world. The invention of the detonator was a precondition for these new weapons, and it also led to the creation of diversified firecrackers and fireworks, a popular source of entertainment. Not only were increasingly more copper and iron coins minted, but the monetary power of silver and gold began to manifest itself, and the world's earliest paper currency was issued during this period. The domestic and international transport systems were considerably enhanced, especially with the

opening of a 'marine silk road', which facilitated the economic and cultural exchanges between China and other countries.

In his *Daily Life in China on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion, 1250–1276* Jacques Gernet detailed his research on the social life of Chinese people at the end of the Southern Song Dynasty. He believed that "the history of China, once the mists veiling its contours have dispersed, will be found to consist, not in continuity and immobility, but in a succession of violent shocks, upheavals and breaks in continuity. Thus, from the sixth to the tenth centuries AD, China went through a period from which she emerged completely unrecognizable". Talking about Lin'an (today's Hangzhou), the capital of the Southern Song, he wrote that in "about 1275, it was the largest and richest city in the world … In many spheres, Chinese civilization was at its most brilliant on the eve of the Mongol Conquest". He pointed out that "a vast fleet of coastwise vessels kept the huge trading centres on the south-east coast in touch with those of the south coast as far as Canton; while the great sea-going junks plied each other, at the monsoons, between China and the main islands of the East Indies, India, the east coast of Africa and the Middle East. In the interior, at the junction of the north–south roadways with the Yang river, permanent markets developed, where the volume of trade far surpassed that of the main commercial centres of Europe at the same epoch". And in the thirteenth century, China was "striking for its modernism: for its exclusively monetary economy, its paper money, its negotiable instruments, its highly developed enterprises in tea and in salt … In the spheres of social life, art, amusements, institutions and technology, China was incontestably the most advanced country of the time. She had every right to consider the rest of the world as being peopled by mere barbarians".[1]

The authors of this book have never met Professor Gernet, and adopted a widely different approach to historical research from his, but it seems that we have reached surprisingly similar conclusions. We firmly believe that the Song period saw an obvious and constant development in virtually every respect in social life; that is, the social environment, lifestyle and folk customs all experienced constant change and growth and manifested many new characteristics, thus were even more colourful and diverse than those of the previous dynasty. The social life of the Song period reflected the spirits of a new era, as well as people's philosophical vision, moral principles, ethnic sentiments and aesthetic experience, and it constituted part of a big picture of Chinese society with a grand historical narrative.

Less developed than the Song as they were, the Liao, Western Xia and Jin societies also developed in the vast areas to the north and west of Song, which

[1] Quoted from Jacques Gernet, *Daily Life in China on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion, 1250–1275*, trans. H.M. Wright (from *La vie quotidienne en Chine à la veille de l'invasion Mongole,1250–1276*) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962).

strengthened the integration between the Han and other ethnic groups. In some arenas of social life, those ethnic groups could even rival the Song, not in terms of abundance and diversity, but in that they all had their respective ethnic features, some of which were borrowed and assimilated into the Han culture of the Song, and became an integral part of the folk culture and customs of the Song Dynasty.

Some scholars argue that the rulers of the Song Dynasty had made Confucian and Neo-Confucian principles the moral and political standard of society, so that the social life and folk customs of the Song were in general complicated and conservative, and people of the era were obsessed with 'recovering antiquity' and cherished the simplicity. These scholars even propose that the 'rise and wide acceptance' of Neo-Confucianism were the logical result of such obsession with 'recovery of antiquity', which in turn served as the theoretical foundation of people's demand for the recovery. The apparel of Song is taken as an example, claiming that at that time people's apparel was formal and conservative, not as colourful and stylish as in the previous dynasty, but simple, clean and elegant. They believe that this largely resulted from the economic, political, moral and cultural conditions of the society, and that the influence of Neo-Confucianism promoted by the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130–1200) could not be overemphasized. It was against this background that the apparel system of the Song Dynasty was modelled on the ancient rites and rituals, and was modified time and again to make it comply with the so-called 'heavenly principles' defined by the imperial rulers. Therefore the apparel system of the Song Dynasty was one seeking classical antiquity and featuring rigid hierarchy based on social and economic status, and it was more complicated than that of any previous dynasty. To illustrate their argument, the scholars outlined the modifications of *mian*[1] and formal dress worn by Emperors throughout the Song Dynasty, claiming that each modification of the apparel system involving the *mian* and the formal dress of the Emperor was basically a kind of revival of the apparel system of ancient times. Here the *mian* and formal dress referred to the *gunmian*[2] worn by Emperors on grand ceremonial occasions, which was – like *jinxianguan*[3] – part of the court dress of officials, seldom worn in everyday life.

The advocates of Neo-Confucianism had their own positions on the social life of their times, but their actual influence on the specific domains of social life was subject to debate. Take Zhu Xi, for example: although a master of Neo-Confucianism, he never proposed that the apparel system of ancient times should be applied to the clothing of his time. On the contrary, Zhu Xi held that hats and clothing should be 'convenient' and 'simple', or they would naturally fall into disuse. He said "I have said that hats and clothing should be convenient in the first place, and even for the ancient people, it was unlikely to define every item of clothing in a strict manner; the apparel

system was modified over time in later ages, making it increasingly more complicated. In order for the apparel system to be practicable, we must consult the ancient apparel system and make it easier by weeding out superfluities. Then it could be embraced by people".[2] And he cited the hat worn in mourning as an example, arguing that when observing mourning, one might "add *die* to the four-feet hat" (*die* [绖] means the linen band attached to the mourning dress) as well. The four-feet hat was "originally a scarf, with the two front ribbons tied at the back of head and two back ribbons tied inversely at the top, as are today's hard hat and *futou*.[4] Later it has become increasingly heavy and complicated and inconvenient. Then people used a band to tie the hat, which seemed to be a good solution, but I knew it must be discarded, and now it is. Actually, it is enough to go out to see people wearing a purple gown or a thin gown, which costs little. Now how much would it cost to add the hat band and black gown! How come a poor scholar could gain so much money to buy all these? Therefore they must be discarded".[3] Thus, we can see that in the first place, Zhu Xi was by no means a rigid proponent of 'recovery of antiquity', but proposed that any item of clothing should be convenient and inexpensive, otherwise it could not last long before being discarded.

Second, talking about the origin of apparel of the Song period, Zhu Xi made it clear that "what we people wear nowadays is largely barbarian apparel, such as the collar gown and boots, and thus the headdresses and apparel of the ancient Emperors had all been cast off. The apparel system of the Central Plains had fallen into disorder since the Jin (晋) Dynasty and Sixteen Kingdoms of Five Barbarian Peoples, and the disordered system was then inherited from one dynasty to another. Until the Tang (唐) Dynasty, what people wore was largely barbarian clothing". The black shoes, for example, "were originally horse-riding shoes, and were later worn by Han people and even became a part of court dress". Zhu Xi then pointed out that the official dress of Song originated from the Sui (隋) period: "When Emperor Yang of Sui[5] went on a sightseeing tour, he ordered that all officials shall wear the military dress, with those of the fifth rank and above wearing purple, those of the sixth and seventh rank, crimson, and of the eighth and ninth, green. It became an established system and remained unchanged since then." During the Tang Dynasty, the military dress of the former dynasty became 'casual dress', also called 'informal dress', and then in the Song Dynasty it was called the 'official dress'. Earlier in the Tang Dynasty, the sleeves of the later 'official dress' were quite narrow, "all in the

[2] Li Jingde (黎靖德, ?–*c.*1270), ed.: 'Rites, Part 6: On the Capping and Wedding Ceremonies and Funerals – Funerals' (礼六·冠昏丧·丧), Volume 89, *Thematic Discourses of Master Zhu* (朱子语类).

[3] 'Rites, Part 1: On Amending Books of Rites' (礼一·论修礼书), Volume 84, *Thematic Discourses of Master Zhu*.

barbarian style", "in the mid-Tang it became wider, and even wider in the late Tang period", "nowadays it is still worn by people, and the sleeves are even wider than they were in the past". Zhu Xi indicated that the *guan* worn by officials of the Song Dynasty was actually "*futou*, with a round top and soft feet", which was part of the court dress of officials during the Tang period. As for the apparel worn by scholar-officials, "in the last year (1125) of the Xuanhe[6] era under Emperor Huizong's[7] reign, scholars-officials "in the capital still wore the informal dress and cap. During the time the court was crossing the Yang river and moving southwards in the warfare, people began to dress in white thin gown. This remained the trend among the literati during two decades of the Shaoxing[8] period, and later when warfare again became frequent, it was changed into the purple gown; that is, all scholar-officials were dressed in military uniforms". What about the apparel of the ancient people? Zhu Xi said: "in general, [the ancient people] were dressed like today's Taoist priests", and "it is proper for Taoist priests to wear *guan* instead of *jin*, or scarf". With his detailed research on the evolution of apparel worn by people in the Central Plains, Zhu Xi asserted, quite straightforwardly: "Nowadays it is impossible to recover the clothing of ancient people, and we shall distinguish the clothing of Han people from that of barbarians."[4]

Third, what *did* Zhu Xi propose to do with the apparel and apparel system, if he did not suggest 'recovering antiquity'? Actually, seeing the "disordered apparel system with no clear distinction between different social and political orders", Zhu Xi proposed to "adjust the apparel system from time to time" if it was impossible to "establish an entirely new system", believing minor adjustment was better than doing nothing with it. And his suggestions of such adjustments included "the short gowns shall be of the same colour as the official gowns of officials of different ranks; that is, officials who wear purple official gowns shall wear purple short gowns; those who wear crimson or green official gowns shall wear crimson or green short gowns, and for those wearing white official gowns, their short gowns shall also be white; all petty officials shall be dressed in black. All other items of clothing shall be adjusted like this, so as to make a clear distinction between different official ranks".[5]

Therefore we can see that Zhu Xi never insisted that the Song Dynasty should adopt the ancient apparel system. Even if a few other advocates of Neo-Confucianism had expressed their support for reviving the ancient clothing, they could not represent all philosophers of this school, and it is even more unreasonable to see it as a notion of Neo-Confucianism.

[4] 'Rites, Part 8: Miscellaneous Rites' (礼八·杂仪), Volume 91, *Thematic Discourses of Master Zhu*.
[5] Ibid.

As for their argument that the 'rise and wide acceptance' (we think it would be more accurate to change the term 'wide acceptance' into 'wide spreading') of Neo-Confucianism resulted in an all-round 'recovery of antiquity' of the Song Dynasty, that is even more untrue. First, the Neo-Confucianism of Song – here we refer to the term in its narrow sense, the *lixue* (School of Universal Principles) of the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi – was not as influential as some scholars might have imagined. As is widely known among scholars, *lixue* put forward by the Cheng brothers was indeed disseminated from 100 years after the establishment of the Northern Song (around 1060) until the period of Emperor Shenzong[9] and the Yuanyou[10] era (1086–1094) of Emperor Zhezong,[11] but it did not make a huge impact on society, and during the Shaosheng[12] era (1094–1098) of Emperor Zhezong, especially during Emperor Huizong's reign, Cheng Yi (程颐, 1033–1107) was persecuted for being on the 'Yuanyou coalition register', and was prohibited by the imperial court from 'gathering disciples and lecturing'.[6] And when Wang Anshi's (王安石, 1021–1086) *xinxue* (New Laws) were widespread, it was given that "no book except Wang Anshi's *Three New Commentaries* (三经义, on *Rituals of Zhou*, *Book of Documents* and *Book of Poetry*) and *Explanations of Characters* (字说) shall be put on desks"[7] in schools of all levels. At that time, the Cheng brothers could only lecture on their *lixue* in secret. Zhu Xi was far from constantly successful in his political career. Throughout his 71 years of life, he held office in local and imperial government positions for a total of nine years, with the actual length of time a little more than seven years, and his only court office lasted for 40 days. He was impeached twice during Emperor Xiaozong's[13] reign, and during Emperor Ningzong's[14] reign he was again denounced and driven from office. He died in 1200, still under a cloud that was not lifted until his complete exoneration in the first year (1208) of the Jiading[15] era with Emperor Ningzong's imperial decree, and the next year the Emperor issued an official document to grant the posthumous title 'Venerable Gentleman of Erudition' to recognize Zhu Xi's intellectual worthiness. However, it was not until Emperor Lizong's[16] reign in the late Southern Song Dynasty that the *lixue* of the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi was given full attention and became truly influential in intellectual circles. The authors of this book believe that overemphasizing the influence of *lixue* proposed by the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi would certainly lead to conclusions that are utterly unfounded and misleading.

As is discussed above, the advocates of Neo-Confucianism of the Song Dynasty did not insist on recovering the antique system in all respects of

[6] Li Xinchuan (李心传, 1167–1240): Volume 2, *Record of the Way and Its Fate* (道命录).
[7] Li Xinchuan: 'The Gengzi Day of the Third Lunar Month in the Fifth Year of Shaoxing Era' (绍兴五年三月庚子), Volume 87, *An Annual Record of the Most Important Events since the Jianyan Era* (建炎以来系年要录), hereafter *The Important Records* (要录).

social life. We all know that Zhu Xi had reiterated his view to his disciples: "The rites and music of decorum have been in tatters for more than 2,000 years, which might be a short time seen from a historical perspective, but it is impossible for us to examine those rites and music … the ancient rites and etiquette were so jumbled and complicated, how can we practise them now! And it shall anyway be adjusted over time". And then "it might be inappropriate for today's people to practise ancient rites and etiquette, how about just making some adjustments to the current rites and etiquette so as to make them clear, decent and orderly".[8] Obviously Zhu Xi thought the ancient rites and etiquette were so complicated that even the ancient people "might not necessarily follow them in a strict manner", and it was even more difficult to practise them 2,000 years later in the Song period. Therefore it was better to adjust the rites and etiquette of the times to the needs of "today's people". These constitute evidence against the claim that the masters of Neo-Confucianism of the Song Dynasty proposed to recover antiquity in an all-round manner.

This book seeks to incorporate the most accurate and complete historical data to give a well-organized and informative discussion of all aspects of social life of the Song Dynasty, and in doing so we demonstrate that the social life of the Song Dynasty was not so deeply influenced by Neo-Confucian theories, and that the hierarchical system of ancient times was never really followed by people of the Song period. As is detailed above, the apparel of the Song period was subject to constant changes. In choosing their marriage partners, people of Song began to pay more attention to the would-be partner's potential regarding political career and wealth, which was different from the situation in the period prior to the mid-Tang Dynasty, when people thought highly of family lineage. Marriage and funeral rites and rituals became simpler, more flexible and diversified. The government relaxed its restricting rules on the construction of residential buildings, and there were more indoors appliances coming to be used by ordinary people, with the gradual spreading of straight-chairs and cross-chairs even totally changing people's longstanding habit of sitting on the ground. There were more options regarding staple food and ingredients compared to the former dynasty, and with a great many innovations in food preparation and culinary skills there emerged two totally different eating and culinary traditions within the territory of Song, the Northern Tradition and the Southern Tradition, while cooked wheaten food was changing gradually from cakes to noodles.

[8] 'Rites, Part 1: On The Guiding Principles to Examine Rites and Etiquette' (礼一·论考礼纲领), Volume 81, *Thematic Discourses of Master Zhu*.

These are but a few examples to show that during the 320 years of the two Song dynasties, people's everyday life was vibrant and colourful and subject to constant changes. And from this historical information, one cannot draw a conclusion that Neo-Confucian masters proposed to recover antique systems in an all-round manner, nor did such a proposal – if there was one – have any actual impact on the social life of that period.

This book is the first monograph on the social life of the Song, Liao, Western Xia and Jin periods, and the research is basically experimental in nature. However, there were a number of relevant researches published before this book, and the authors of this book hereby express their acknowledgements to the following authors and scholars. There are two Chinese editions of Professor Jacques Gernet's *Daily Life in China on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion, 1250–1276*, namely the one translated by Mr Ma Decheng (马德程) and published in 1982 and the one translated by Liu Dong (刘东, 1955–) and published recently (Overseas China Studies Series, Jiangsu People's Publishing House, 1995). Besides, there is *Experiencing the City Life of the Song Dynasty* (宋代城市风情, Heilongjiang People's Publishing House, 1987) by Yi Yongwen (伊永文, 1950–); 'The Eastern Capital of Kaifeng in the Song Dynasty' (宋代东京开封府, *Journal of Henan Normal University* [河南师范大学学报], Supplement Issue, 1984) and *Research on the Eastern Capital of the Song Dynasty* (宋代东京研究, Historical Research on Song Series, Henan University Press, 1992) by Zhou Baozhu (周宝珠, 1934–); *The Eastern Capital of the Northern Song Dynasty* (北宋都城东京, Henan People's Publishing House, 1984) by Wu Tao (吴涛); *Hangzhou, Former Capital of China in the Southern Song Dynasty* (南宋故都杭州, Zhongzhou Calligraphy and Painting Studio, 1984) by Lin Zhengqiu (林正秋, 1937–) etc.; and *Hangzhou, the Capital of the Southern Song Dynasty* (南宋京城杭州, 1985) compiled and published by the Office of Hangzhou Municipal Committee of CPPCC. On marriage and wedding customs of the Song Dynasty, there is *Research on the Marriage Customs of the Song Dynasty* (宋代婚俗研究, Taipei: Hsin Wen-feng Press, 1988) by Peng Liyun (彭利芸) and *Marriage and Society (Song)* (婚姻与社会（宋代）, Sichuan People's Publishing House, 1989) by Zhang Bangwei (张邦炜, 1940–). On folk customs of the Jin Dynasty, there is *The Social Life of the Jin Dynasty* (金代的社会生活, Chinese Folk Customs Series, Shaanxi People's Publishing House, 1988) by Song Dejin (宋德金, 1937–). And a number of articles on the social life of this period have been published in such journals as *Chinese Literature and History* (文史知识), *Literature and History* (文史), Zhejiang Academic Journal (浙江学刊), *Chinese Cuisine*

(中国烹饪), *Journal of Shanghai Normal University (Social Sciences)* (上海师范大学学报 [社科版]) and *Historical Monthly* (历史月刊, Taipei). Then there were a number of new researches published before the second edition of this book went to print, which are not mentioned individually in order not to make the list too long. Some additions and revisions have been made in the second edition, but we have tried not to make major changes to the book.