

## Introduction

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### Contending Visions

Over a century has elapsed since the Japanese journalist and historian Naitō Konan 内藤湖南 (1866–1934) formulated the concept of a “Tang–Song transition,” positing the Song dynasty (960–1279) as a major turning point in the development of “modern” China. And forty years has now passed since Robert Hartwell rejuvenated and refined Naitō’s hypothesis, thus laying out, at least in the West, the contemporary framework for understanding this crucial “middle period” in China’s history.<sup>1</sup> Yet, despite the appearance of excellent specialized studies over the past several decades, the scholarly community still struggles to achieve a consensus on the fundamental nature of Song dynastic governance. The general disinclination of social and intellectual historians to consider the state a significant player in their recreations of Song society has prolonged this struggle. Accordingly, a sense of the dynasty’s place in the longer sweep of Chinese history remains elusive. A recent controversy over whether the Song represented a “peak” in the history of Chinese civilization reflects this lack of consensus. In his controversial book *Chinese History Revisited*, the amateur historian Xiao Jiansheng 蕭建生 argued in 2009 that the Song represented a pinnacle in the history of Chinese civilization: its flourishing culture supported a benevolent government whose political institutions facilitated a vigorous and open pluralistic society that enjoyed an unprecedented and robust commodity economy and material culture. Xiao maintained that these accomplishments merit recognition as major contributions to Chinese and to world civilization.<sup>2</sup> He framed the Song dynasty as prime evidence to support his larger premise that Chinese civilization has fared better during periods of political disunion than under its great centralizers and empire builders – a thesis not without contemporary implications. Accordingly, Zhang Bangwei 张邦炜, a senior professional historian of Song, countered with an article entitled “There Is No Need to Beautify the

<sup>1</sup> Hartwell, “Demographic, Political, and Social Transformation of China, 750–1550.” For an extended description of Naitō Konan’s ideas see Miyakawa Hisayuki, “An Outline of the Naitō Hypothesis.” For a brief summary see Hartman, “Sung Government and Politics,” 19–24.

<sup>2</sup> Xiao Jiansheng, *Zhongguo wenming de fansi*, 155–98.

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Song.” He refuted in detail Xiao’s positive conclusions about the size of the Song economy, the prosperity of its people, the moral caliber of its officials, the benevolent character of its governance, and its receptivity to pluralism and free expression.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the ease with which, in this case, the professional historian brushed back the amateur, the notion of a “Song peak” has long percolated among leading professional historians. For example, Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 (1890–1969), the prominent historian of Tang, held that the Song had marked a pinnacle in the development of the “culture of the Chinese people.” Prefacing Deng Guangming’s 鄧廣銘 1943 study of the *Song History* monograph on officialdom, Chen observed that the resurgence of scholarship during the Song dynasty had distilled the essence of China’s past and shown the way toward a better future for the Chinese people, even if the full potential of that path had never been realized.<sup>4</sup>

Some recent Chinese scholarship on Song indeed infers, usually implicitly, that the Song experience may contain useful models for China’s future. This scholarship often highlights the rise of Confucian literati in the eleventh century and the political strategies they employed to restrain the unlimited power of the monarch. These scholars advance a positive conception of the Song as a dynasty that perfected “literati governance” (*shidafu zhengzhi* 士大夫政治) wherein monarch and literati engaged “to some degree in what may be described as liberalized or ‘democratized’ decision-making.”<sup>5</sup> Some scholars then expand this notion of “shared governance” (*gongzhi tianxia* 共治天下) into an explanatory theoretical model of Song government in which authority over policy formation was divided three ways among the monarch, his chief councilors, and the remonstrators.<sup>6</sup>

Scholars at the opposite end of the spectrum, often economic historians, reject such notions of Song exceptionalism. Echoing twelfth-century critics of the state such as Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), Chen Liang 陳亮 (1143–1194), and Ye Shi 葉適 (1150–1223), they argue that the early Song founders, in their efforts to unite the country, created an overly centralized system of governance that concentrated too much regulatory authority over administration, personnel, finance, and the military in the hands of the monarch and his personal agents. This excessive statist centralization then created an ever-proliferating plethora of regulations that stifled innovation and, in turn, spawned corruption

<sup>3</sup> Zhang Bangwei, “Bubi meihua Zhao Song wangchao – Songdai dingfeng lun xianyi.”

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent survey of Chen Yinke’s opinions on Song see Wang Shuizhao, “Chen Yinke xiansheng de Songdai guan.”

<sup>5</sup> Cheng Minsheng, “Lun Songdai shidafu zhengzhi dui huangquan de xianzhi.”

<sup>6</sup> Zhang Qifan, “‘Huangdi yu shidafu gongzhi tianxia’ shixi – Bei Song zhengzhi jiagou tansuo.” Deng Xiaonan, *Zuzong zhi fa*, 408–21 adds important context for the origin and meaning of the phrase *gong zhi tianxia* and cautions that the phrase neither questions the unilateral authority of the emperor nor implies shared decision making.

and inefficiency in the increasingly rule-bound and burgeoning civil and military bureaucracies. Successive emperors through 1067 dared not depart from the policies of the founders and thus could not surmount the resulting inertia in the system.<sup>7</sup> Neither the New Policies after 1068 nor the structural reforms after 1082 were able to reverse these trends. This scholarship describes a predatory political system in which a rapacious center had by Southern Song squeezed all resources from the provinces, as higher levels of authority preyed upon the lower and left an impoverished populace as the payer of last resort. In these interpretations, economic prosperity was a chimera, little but the froth spewed up by massive state intervention, both sanctioned and unsanctioned, into markets.<sup>8</sup>

Properly understanding the Song state – especially the relationship between imperial authority and the culture of officialdom – remains a central problem for scholars who embrace either of these contrasting views on the ultimate nature of Song governance. For example, acknowledging the initial vision of Chen Yinke, the late Yü Ying-shih 余英時 presented in his book *Zhu Xi's Historical World* an extended portrayal of the Song literati as purveyors of enlightened governance and models for those contemporary Chinese intellectuals who would pursue similar goals. Yü framed his work around the notion of “political culture,” a concept that also informs other recent Chinese scholarship both on early Chinese literati in general and on Song specifically.<sup>9</sup> As formulated by Gabriel Almond in the early 1950s, the concept of “political culture” attempts to transcend rigid disciplinary confines to describe the entire set of underlying assumptions and attitudes that make up the political ideals and that determine the operating political norms of a given polity – “the manifestation in aggregate form of the psychological and subjective dimensions of politics.” The major topics and problematics of this enterprise include who the principal political actors are, what their functions are, who decides what the issues are, and how authority and legitimacy are defined.<sup>10</sup>

The concept of “political culture” offers an attractive vehicle to surmount the disciplinary boundaries that have long fragmented research on Song into separate silos of political, intellectual, literary, social, and economic histories. A major goal of this book is to establish a new model for thinking about the Song period that will help to integrate these hitherto separately siloed histories. At the same time, our goal is to establish a wider, more inclusive definition of

<sup>7</sup> Wang Shengduo, “Shilun Bei Song qianqi guodu jiquan ji qi yingxiang.”

<sup>8</sup> Bao Weiming, *Songdai difang caizhengshi yanjiu*, 320–23.

<sup>9</sup> Yü Ying-shih, *Zhu Xi de lishi shijie*, 1:28–67. For other examples see Yan Buke, *Shidafu zhengzhi yansheng shigao*, 2–3, 23 n.1; and Deng Xiaonan, *Zuzong zhi fa*, 13–14.

<sup>10</sup> Lucian Pye, “Political Culture.” Additional, more diffuse questions include what is the social status of politicians, how is national identity defined, how are conflicts between public and private interests resolved, and what is the role of trust in politics?

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Song political culture. To achieve this goal, we must first redress the failure of existing scholarship adequately to define the principal actors in that culture. To a large degree, this failure explains the sharply divergent positive and negative assessments of Song history described above.

On the one hand, proponents of the former, more positive model would limit the political class to a small upper echelon of Song officialdom, variously called in Chinese *shidafu* 士大夫 or some variation thereof and described even more inconsistently and imprecisely in English as scholar-officials, gentlemen, the *shi* 士, or the elite. Recent American scholarship, for example, has emphasized the dominant role of upper-level civil officials in Song society and government. In 1988 Patricia Ebrey, reviewing five books on Song history that had appeared in 1985–1986, identified a common focus on what she described as “the dynamics of elite domination in Song China.”<sup>11</sup> Ebrey – and most of the scholars whose works she reviewed – identified the “elite” that had “dominated” in Song as civil-grade literati who entered official service through the examination system. This group then stood at the pinnacle of a much larger social and intellectual class of *shidafu*, “that is, *shih*, educated men, and *ta-fu*, officials.”<sup>12</sup> In 1992, Peter Bol’s influential “*This Culture of Ours*” provided for this class of educated “*shih*” a Confucian pedigree and an internally consistent intellectual history that spanned the Tang–Song transition.<sup>13</sup> This arbitrary constriction of the parameters of political participation then generated a narrative that posits the Song as a period of “peak” Confucian literati dominance over governance.

On the other hand, proponents of the latter model implicitly accept a wider range of political actors, including military grade officials (*wuguan* 武官) and clerks as participants in political culture.<sup>14</sup> Since military expenditures consumed 80 percent of Song state revenue, the recent spate of research in China and the West on the Song military also portends to expand our definition of Song political culture.<sup>15</sup> This broadening then generally supports the negative historical assessments of the economic historians.

One consequence of restricting the major players in Song political culture to the emperor and Confucian literati is that the separate disciplinary histories of Song then spin off narratives that conflict with each other at fundamental points. For example, the conception of Song as an age of Confucian governance

<sup>11</sup> Ebrey, “The Dynamics of Elite Domination in Sung China.”

<sup>12</sup> Ebrey, “The Dynamics of Elite Domination in Sung China,” 501.

<sup>13</sup> Bol, “*This Culture of Ours*”: *Intellectual Transitions in T’ang and Sung China*.

<sup>14</sup> For excellent surveys see respectively Zhao Dongmei, *Wenwu zhi jian: Bei Song wuxuanguan yanjiu* and Wang Zengyu, “Songchao de lihu.” One of the works Ebrey included in her joint review, Umehara Kaoru’s *Sōdai kanryō seido kenkyū*, contains in fact a masterful survey of the entirety of Song officialdom and is not limited to civil grade officials.

<sup>15</sup> For a recent review see Peter Lorge, “Military Institutions as a Defining Feature of the Song Dynasty.”

owes much to the thesis, pioneered by Wing-tsit Chan and Wm. Theodore de Bary in the West, that the Zhu Xi strain of “Neo-Confucianism” represents the dominant trend in Song intellectual history. Separate tendencies in recent Chinese scholarship likewise advance a modern scholarly construct called “Song learning” (*Songxue* 宋學) as an internally coherent Confucian tradition that provided a consistent intellectual foundation for governance.<sup>16</sup> While this construct seems compelling from a *longue durée* perspective, it leads to a conflict between the storylines of Song political and intellectual history: if elite, Confucian literati dominated intellectual life and thus defined the contours of the “Song peak,” then why did their eventual political rise fail to stem the political decline of the Song state? The question, to be sure, does not lack for answers; but the existence of the question itself derives from a failure to define the full range of Song political culture.<sup>17</sup> To cite another example, the history of art, mirroring the history of thought, extols the rise of literati painting as the dynasty’s dominant genre. Yet court paintings vastly outnumber literati paintings in the surviving corpus, and the earliest surviving painting to combine the literati trifecta of image, poem, and calligraphy, all executed (ostensibly) by a single artist, is *The Golden Pheasant*, a quintessential product not of literati painters, but of the painting academy of Emperor Huizong 徽宗 (1082–1135; r. 1100–1125).<sup>18</sup>

This constriction of Song political culture accords an outsize influence to literati “intellectuals” and tends to reduce Song politics to a history of feuding literati factions, each eager to translate its philosophical convictions into policy realities. The peril of this model is that Song political history then degenerates into a stale denouement of the period’s intellectual history and by-passes such mundane yet fundamental concerns of the state as tax collection and the waging of war. For example, the politics of the New Policies become mere fallout from the philosophical differences between Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086) and Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086); and the subsequent history of Northern, and perhaps even Southern, Song devolves then into a protracted tug-of-war between “conservatives” and “reformers,” problematic tags imported from Western political science. Furthermore, this model of Song politics as a history of feuding intellectuals fails spectacularly to explain the politics of those long periods when there was relative intellectual consensus at court, as for example during the early Song, or when there was an enforced consensus, as under the authoritarian councilors of Southern Song.

<sup>16</sup> For works written from two very different perspectives that nonetheless seek to explicate a coherent “Song learning,” see Qi Xia, *Songxue de fazhan he yanbian* and Guan Changlong, *Liang Song daoxue mingyun de lishi kaocha*.

<sup>17</sup> For some suggestion of the range of answers see, for example, James T.C. Liu, “How Did a Neo-Confucian School Become the State Orthodoxy” and Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*.

<sup>18</sup> Maggie Bickford, “Huizong’s Paintings: Art and the Art of Emperors,” 466–69.

**An Historiographical Prelude**

I have demonstrated that scholarship's failure to acknowledge the full range of Song political culture derives from a fundamental misreading of the major sources for Song history. My preceding book, *The Making of Song Dynasty History: Sources and Narratives, 960–1279 CE*, analyzed four major works of official Song historiography as products of tensions within an extended definition of Song political culture.<sup>19</sup> I concluded that the political discourse that arose from those tensions generated a narrative of the dynasty's history as a multifaceted “grand allegory,” a struggle between contending visions and implementations of governance within the Song state. I labeled one of those visions as “technocratic” and the other as “institutionalist.”<sup>20</sup> The former derived from late Tang and Five Dynasties practice, was embraced by the early Song monarchs, and lived on as the monarchy's preferred mode of governance. The latter arose as a consequence of the Confucian revival of the 1030s and 1040s and was embraced by subsequent generations of committed and activist Confucian officials. These two visions existed in tension, sometimes creative but often destructive, until the end of the dynasty. However, the Confucian literati's command of the rhetoric of political discourse as well as their control over both official and private historiography generated a moralistic metanarrative that touted the triumph of Confucian institutionalism over the more purely technocratic vision. The Yuan historians who compiled the official *Song History* of 1345 codified this narrative, and their formulation has continued to influence scholarship to this day.

Three major clusters of themes make up this grand allegory of Song history: (1) that the character of dynastic governance was based on the Confucian principle of “benevolence”; (2) that this character flowed as conscious policy from the personality of the founding Emperor Taizu 太祖 (927–976; r. 960–976) and by implication from his successors; (3) but that a succession of “nefarious ministers” thwarted the full realization of this principle.<sup>21</sup> *The Making of Song Dynasty History* demonstrated that each of these themes arose at a specific moment, and under a specific set of political circumstances, and then combined only in the thirteenth century to form an integrated master narrative of the dynasty's entire history. Four periods were formative in this process. First, struggles over political reform in the Qingli period (1041–1048) generated a revision of the dynasty's beginnings that foregrounded the first theme of “benevolence.” Second, the reaction against the New Policies in the Yuanyou period (1086–1094) reinforced the first theme and added the second, emphasizing the importance of Emperor Renzong 仁宗 (1010–1063; r. 1022–1063) and

<sup>19</sup> Hartman, *The Making of Song Dynasty History*, 23–142, 172–219.

<sup>20</sup> Hartman, *The Making of Song Dynasty History*, 333.

<sup>21</sup> Hartman, *The Making of Song Dynasty History*, 242–328.

his reign as a moral rejuvenation of Taizu's founding principles. Third, debates in the early (pre-Qin Gui) Shaoxing period (1131–1138) over the politics of the Song Restoration led to a reassessment of Northern Song history that valorized the Taizu–Qingli–Yuanyou axis of political value. Lastly, the failed northern invasion and the assassination of the autocrat Han Tuozhou 韓侂胄 (1152–1207) in 1207 revalorized once again this axis of political value and during the Jiading period (1208–1224) developed the final theme – that a lineage of nefarious ministers had consistently opposed these values and so thwarted their political realization. Each of these eras experienced either defensive or offensive wars that sparked domestic political upheavals that then engendered either a shift or an attempted shift in emphasis from the technocratic to the institutionalist model of governance. These shifts in turn each required a process of historiographical revisionism to bring the dynasty's prior history into alignment with the political goals of the dominant institutionalist coalition.<sup>22</sup>

The result was the emergence of an historical narrative that championed the values of Confucian institutionalism and that framed this axis of positive political value as having proceeded from Taizu through Qingli and Yuanyou and then into Southern Song. At the same time, those who created and embraced this narrative reaffirmed their identity as Confucian institutionalists and high-level academic officials. Their narrative of supposed Northern Song values and structures took shape under the descendants of the Yuanyou administrators in the mid-1130s, was then held in check during the years of the Qin Gui 秦檜 (1090–1155) autocracy from 1138 through 1155, but took definitive form in Li Tao's 李燾 (1115–1184) *Long Draft Continuation of the Comprehensive Mirror That Aids Administration*, composed over a forty-year period between the 1140s and 1183. Thirteenth-century *daoxue* historians then sharpened and popularized this narrative and bequeathed it to their followers in the Yuan. In essence, our received narrative of Northern Song history grew from the political struggles of the Restoration. Later Southern Song historians then wrote the Restoration's own history by plotting its events back onto the earlier model their predecessors had created for the Northern Song.<sup>23</sup> Once this historiographical process has been deconstructed – the goal of *The Making of Song Dynasty History* – one can re-read the same sources as a story of Confucian frustration with a political technocracy that successfully resisted efforts to temper its sharper edges – the goal of this book.

<sup>22</sup> Hartman, *The Making of Song Dynasty History*, 331–33.

<sup>23</sup> Hartman, *The Making of Song Dynasty History*, 329–33 and “*Song History Narratives as Grand Allegory*.”

**The Monarchy and the Political Economy**

The Southern Song historians of Confucian institutionalism reacted against what they perceived as an increasingly intrusive technocratic state, especially after the New Policies. Recent research – among the most fertile in the panorama of the Tang–Song transition – has revealed how drastically Song state intervention expanded the size and sophistication of the economy, leading to what one scholar has described as the world’s first fiscal state.<sup>24</sup> The need to maintain a permanent military defense against the northern Khitan and Jurchen empires gave rise to commercialized warfare that marshalled and enhanced the state’s technocratic capacity to finance, contract, provision, and provide logistics for both defensive and offensive wars. These demands in turn created the need – and intense urbanization the means – to shift from land-based taxes on agriculture to indirect taxation, especially excise. As a result, the proportion of revenue from indirect as opposed to direct taxation rose steadily as the dynasty progressed. Massive issues of state currency fueled this expanding economy, initially bronze coins, then localized paper vouchers (*qianyin* 錢引), and finally in Southern Song a widespread paper currency (*huizi* 會子) that combined aspects of money and negotiable credit instruments. A cohort of specialized bureaucrats staffed a centralized and nationwide network of financial agencies that coordinated and administered these monetary and fiscal systems.

As the commercial economy grew, so did this state’s financial apparatus, and the two grew to become inextricably intertwined, not only economically but also politically and socially. Over time, the social boundaries that had once separated officials and merchants began to erode. Powerful officials, urban merchants, large landholders, and religious institutions invested large amounts of commercial capital to acquire real estate – both agricultural land and urban buildings such as warehouses, hostels, and transport facilities. They also grew their capital by loaning their funds at high interest rates (100 percent per annum was routine), then foreclosing on the collateralized property of peasants and craftsmen. Merchants in the capital and provincial urban hubs, especially those in the coastal trading ports, were better positioned to grow their capital in these ways; and the prosperity of these areas grew at the expense of more remote agricultural areas, creating stark social divides both between rich and poor and between urban and rural. Since merchant profits depended on state connections, wealthy merchants tested via the *jinshi* exams, bought, and married their way into official status. Both merchant and official benefited from these alliances – merchants obtained official “protection” and exemptions from taxes; officials accessed capital and business connections. Developments after 1068 accelerated these trends, as Wang Anshi recruited financiers and businessmen to staff

<sup>24</sup> William Guanglin Liu, “The Making of a Fiscal State in Song China.” See also Paul Jakob Smith, “State Power and Economic Activism during the New Policies,” 76–82.



the economic initiatives of the New Policies. By 1100, 50 percent of all graded officials were servitors minor (*xiao shichen* 小使臣), most of whom worked in excise offices of the state monopoly system, where they labored together and divided the profits with merchants, thus further fusing state and private, official and family financial interests. In short, the growth of commercial capital forged a three-legged stool that brought together official, merchant, and landlord in a political and social union of common financial interest and that proffered perhaps the strongest support for the dynasty among the many segments of Song political culture.<sup>25</sup>

The monarchy, like the other segments of this political elite, also participated in, and one might even say led, this trend. The first two Song emperors were soldiers and intermarried with other potentially rival military families to secure their young dynasty.<sup>26</sup> But the third emperor, Zhenzong 真宗 (968–1022; r. 997–1022), the first sovereign with no actual military career, elevated as his second empress in 1012 a forty-three-year-old palace courtesan, née Liu. A Sichuan silver merchant had earlier introduced her as a then young woman to Zhenzong while he was still a prince.<sup>27</sup> As empress and later Empress Dowager Liu 劉皇太后 (969–1033; regent 1022–1033), she then arranged a marriage between the silver merchant and the daughter of her chief political ally Qian Weiyan 錢惟演 (960–1034), the aristocratic son of the tenth-century king of Wu-Yue, who had submitted to the Song in 978. She then married a daughter of that union to Ma Jiliang 馬季良, a Kaifeng tea magnate who was influential in the financial administration during her regency.<sup>28</sup> Empress Liu's strategic use of marriage provides an early example of the common political interests among the monarchy, aristocratic landowners, and urban merchants. By century's end, wealthy merchant families routinely married into the imperial clan. Zhu Mian 朱勗 (1075–1126), the son of a Suzhou purveyor of pharmaceuticals, went on to manage state procurement under Emperor Huizong, and secured in the process imperial clanswomen as brides for many of his brothers and nephews.<sup>29</sup> Finally, as we shall have occasion to point out often through this book, Empress Dowager Wu 吳太皇太后 (1115–1197), arguably the most consistently influential figure in the politics of the last half of the twelfth century, was the daughter of a Kaifeng pearl merchant.<sup>30</sup>

As part of this book's goal to broaden the definition of Song political culture, I hope to develop an understanding of the monarchy that goes beyond a simple linear account of the eighteen men from the Zhao clan who served as emperor.

<sup>25</sup> Li Huarui, "Songdai de ziben yu shehui."

<sup>26</sup> Lorge, "The Northern Song Military Aristocracy and the Royal Family."

<sup>27</sup> John W. Chaffee, "The Rise and Regency of Empress Liu," 3–5.

<sup>28</sup> SS, 463.13548–49, 13552–53.

<sup>29</sup> Gong Mingzhi, *Zhong Wu jiwen*, 6.19b; SS, 470.13684–86.

<sup>30</sup> Wang Zengyu, *Songchao jieji jigou*, 354.

Male emperors were but one of three structural components of the monarchy, the other two being its female members and the eunuchs. The former included not only empresses and empress dowagers but also the emperor's other imperial consorts, female palace bureaucrats, and lastly female menials and servants. Dedicated bureaucratic units, run by the women themselves, administered much of the palace and managed their own professional careers. Advancement into the upper ranks of this bureaucracy earned a woman's male relatives special status as "affinal kinsmen" (*waiqi* 外戚). Although these men lived outside the palace, they formed an important element of the monarchy as a larger, empire-wide institution, since their bureaucratic careers and social status depended on their kinswomen's positions inside the palace. Eunuchs, a perennial feature of the Chinese imperium, formed the third component of the Song monarchy.

This composite monarchy was a dynamic institution, remarkably enduring, but constantly changing in response to internal and external pressures. In theory, each of its three segments performed defined duties, as we see codified in normative texts such as the monographs on rituals and officials in the *Song History*. In these accounts, the imperial institution, in the person of the male emperor, presented a unified ritual and political face to the outside world. In actuality, competition within each segment, and among the segments themselves, exposed not only multiple faces but also varied possibilities for interfacing with the outside world. Confucian political theory and official Song historiography depict only one of these possible interfaces as legitimate – the male emperor interacts through ritualized court audiences with his top civil administrators, who then diffuse downward the resulting policy decisions. From this perspective, even sanctioned regencies threatened to generate unacceptable deviations from this normative standard. Yet each of the monarchy's three components possessed its own licit and semi-licit modalities for interfacing with outside administration in the capital and the provinces. As power shifted among the three components, these other modalities often came into play. Thus, at any moment in Song history, the nature of the monarchy's interface with the outer court and with provincial administration reveals the character of its inner power structure at that moment in time.

Three vectors over the course of Song history thus triangulate the focus of this book: (1) the shift toward indirect taxation as a barometer for the growth of the commodity economy and the fiscal state needed to support perpetual warfare, either defensive or offensive; (2) the shift from a military ethos among the founding elite toward an increasingly mercantile perspective; and (3) the shifting face of the monarchy in response to the first and second contradictory and conflicting vectors. Most historians of Song readily acknowledge the first of these vectors; fewer, however, acknowledge the second and third. The more common perspective is to focus on the shift from an initial