

Introduction

Toward a Dynamic Historiography of the Song Dynasty

The Qing period is renowned as a pinnacle of Classical scholarship, but they could never match the Song scholars in historiography.

Chen Yinke (1890–1969)

Over the past two decades scholars in China have made remarkable progress toward a “living” history of Song political institutions. At a Hangzhou conference in 2001 to review the past century of scholarship on Song and to chart a path forward, Deng Xiaonan critiqued prevalent research that treated these institutions as autonomous units, boxes with labels on organization charts, frozen in time and place. She proposed to study institutions as dynamic, living organisms shaped by ever-changing historical “processes” and linked to each other and larger society through complex networks of “relationships.”¹ Twenty years later, the continuing fruits of this new scholarship have transformed our understanding of the dynasty and its place in the larger history of China. This volume attempts to build upon this research and to apply similar concepts to the study of the Song historical sources themselves. This attempt at “living historiography” treats historical works as ever-changing, dynamic creations continually shaped by social and political processes and intersecting relationships among compilers, editors, copyists, printers, and readers. In this process, I hope to demonstrate the depth of Chen Yinke’s insight that the Song era marked a pinnacle in the development of Chinese historiography, or, as I have written elsewhere, a “maturity” whose achievements the scholarly world has yet fully to recognize.²

The Making of Song Dynasty History: Sources and Narratives has grown from a series of individual studies I began in the late 1990s to describe each of the principal primary sources for Song history. However, I had written only two articles when I began to doubt that the single-work-per-article format would enable me systematically to address larger issues that I had come to realize

¹ Deng Xiaonan, “Zouxiang ‘huo’ de zhidushi.”

² Hartman, “Chinese Historiography in the Age of Maturity.” For the quotation from Chen Yinke see his “Preface to the Reprinting of *Westerners and Central Asians in China under the Mongols*,” *Chen Yinke xiansheng lunwenji*, 1:683, cited in Chia-fu Sung, “Between Tortoise and Mirror,” 1.

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affected all the works I proposed to study.³ For example, neither book I had written about had survived in its original format. A combination of forces related to the intellectual and political movement known as the Learning of the Way (*daoxue* 道學) and the proliferation of commercial printing had drastically transformed both works. Modern readers were not reading what the reputed Song authors of these works had originally written. A static historiography of titles, authors, dates, and editions would hardly suffice to describe these supposedly primary sources, much less enable modern scholars to access their contents with confidence.

A vital task for the historian of Song is to see through and work around the coloration that these forces, especially the *daoxue* movement, have painted upon the primary source collections. This book will describe these colors in detail and attempt to account for the painters and their motives. Although this *daoxue* influence arose in the late twelfth and peaked in the mid-thirteenth century, this process of historical coloring is closely related to another, older phenomenon – the inseparable nature of history (what happened) and historiography (writing about what happened) in Song. The Song period experienced an especially close identity between the makers of political history and the shapers of its historiographical record. Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086), and Zhao Ruyi 趙汝愚 (1140–1196), for example, were senior statesmen and historians. The great historians Li Tao 李燾 (1115–1184), Li Xinchuan 李心傳 (1167–1244), and Lü Zhong 呂中 (*jinshi* 1247) labored privately, but also worked as officials in the dynasty’s formal historiographical operation to interface their own private and the state’s official historiography. This book attempts to unravel this complex nexus of processes and relationships that intertwined politics, history, and both private and official historiography in Song.

Because Song history and Song historiography are so closely linked in these ways, they must be studied together to be delinked. The dynasty’s history cannot be understood without first understanding the nature and origin of the surviving historical texts; yet these texts cannot be understood without first understanding Song political and intellectual history. My solution to this chicken-and-egg conundrum is to focus on the rhetoric of the texts as evidence of the political processes from which they grew. In my view, Song history emerged from a historiographical process in which successive politicians/historians used rhetoric to reorganize facts they culled, often for contemporaneous political purposes, from an already existing and ever-growing corpus of political and historical records. Thus, I read historical documents not to

³ Hartman, “Bibliographic Notes on Sung Historical Works: *Topical Narratives from the Long Draft Continuation of the Comprehensive Mirror That Aids Administration* by Yang Chung-liang” and “Bibliographic Notes on Sung Historical Works: *The Original Record of the Way and Its Destiny* by Li Hsin-ch’uan.”

determine reliable facts but to detect traces of the initial rhetorical construction and subsequent reconstruction of the stories they present. Often, the visible traces of this linguistic manipulation enable us to observe a story that is very different from and usually truer than the “facts” that that history purports to contain.⁴

Of course, the idea of history as a rhetorical construct is basic to Western postmodern theories of historiography. Two ideas are fundamental. First, most of what many scholars accept as historical “fact” is actually a subsequently created image or projection of earlier events. Second, because these post hoc images were created with and transmitted by language, they are literary artifacts; and these artifacts can be changed as time moves on. Although my earlier studies were undertaken independently of these theoretical considerations, this book is the first major study to reference contemporary deconstructionist theories to analyze the dominant rhetorical features of Song historiography. However, readers will quickly realize that this book does not systematically impose these postmodern perspectives on the sources; rather, the sources, when read as literary artifacts, readily confirm their own history of rhetorical manipulation. And my reading of Song sources relies upon methodology derived largely from traditional sinology, not postmodern theory.

Sources

Since the four works of Song history writing I will examine in this book are all products of official Song historiography – and chosen for that reason – we may begin with a brief description of that operation. Song historians, like their counterparts in the modern West, conceived history as a sequence of “events” (*shi* 事). Unlike the Western historian, however, whose task was first to define and mark off his primary events from the undifferentiated flow of time, the Song historian found his events already predefined by a bureaucratic process in which he himself was not the initiating agent.⁵ Government interagency communications in Song required the authoring official to define at the beginning of his document the “event” about which he was corresponding, something like the topic line of a modern interoffice memo. If the event did not originate with him, he was to restate the “event” as he found it already defined in prior documentation on the issue.⁶ The official Song historiographical process

⁴ For a more extended discussion and application of these principles see Hartman, “The Making of a Villain: Ch’in Kuei and *Tao-hsüeh*”; also Cai Hanmo [Charles Hartman], *Lishi de yan-zhuang*, 2–97.

⁵ Veyne, *Writing History*, 34–36, views reality as an infinitely dividable series of sub-events from which the historian selects and then orders into meaningful plots. See also White, “Historical Text as Literary Artifact,” in *Tropics of Discourse*, 90–93.

⁶ Sima Guang, *Shuyi*, 1.1b–2b; Xie Shenfu, *Qingyuan tiaofa shilei*, 16.234–35.

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began when records of these “events” were transmitted to the court history office. When this system was inaugurated in 983/8, the monthly submissions from the Secretariat and from the Bureau of Military Affairs were simply called “events sent to the history office.”⁷ Thus, in Song, the bureaucratic process of government defined the constituent elements of history – yet another twist on Étienne Balazs’s famous axiom that in China, “history was written by officials for officials.”⁸

The Song founders inherited the institutions and procedures of an earlier court-based historiographical operation that had evolved in Tang, had survived the tenth century, and, although slow to be revived in early Song, had evolved by the mid-eleventh century into a mature and politically important institution of Song government.⁹ As is well known, the basic operation processed routine administrative documents through multiple and lengthy stages of manipulation and compression. Modern scholars, based on a passage from the Southern Song encyclopedist Zhang Ruyu 章如愚 (*jinsi* 1196), describe a three-stage process of transcription, transmission, and transformation.¹⁰ Figure 0.1, organized time-wise from left to right, depicts the entire production process of official historiography from the initial collection of documents (listed on the far left) through to compilation of the official dynasty history (the final column on the right), in this case the *Song History* of 1345.

The process centered on the person of the emperor and his function as chief presiding officer at his “court,” a series of regular audiences and meetings between him and his senior administrators. The initial transcription phase (*jizai* 記載) began with the “Diary of Activity and Repose” (*Qiju zhu* 起居注), a record of the emperor’s actions, as recorded by two official court diarists who accompanied him at audiences and elsewhere; the “records of current administration” (*shizheng ji* 時政記) were monthly summaries, compiled by one of the chief councilors, of their discussions with the emperor. In addition, some government agencies were required to send copies of their actions to the history office; and, finally, families of deceased officials above a certain rank submitted biographical records of their kinsmen for inclusion in the historical

⁷ *SHY, zhiguan*, 6.30a–b.

⁸ Balazs, “L’histoire comme guide de la pratique bureaucratique,” 82.

⁹ For the Tang see Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History under the T’ang*. There is no monograph on official Song historiography in English. See, however, Kurz, “The Consolidation of Official Historiography during the Early Northern Song Dynasty”; Hartman, “Chinese Historiography in the Age of Maturity”; and Sung Chia-fu, “The Official Historiographical Operation of the Song Dynasty.” There are three book-length studies in Chinese. Most comprehensive is Wang Sheng’en, *Songdai guanfang shixue yanjiu*. Song Limin, *Songdai shiguan zhidu yanjiu*, focuses on development of the court historiographical agencies. Cai Chongbang, *Songdai xiushi zhidu yanjiu* offers authoritative accounts of the major works produced.

¹⁰ Song Limin, *Songdai shiguan zhidu yanjiu*, 5–6; Sung, “Official Historiographical Operation,” 191.

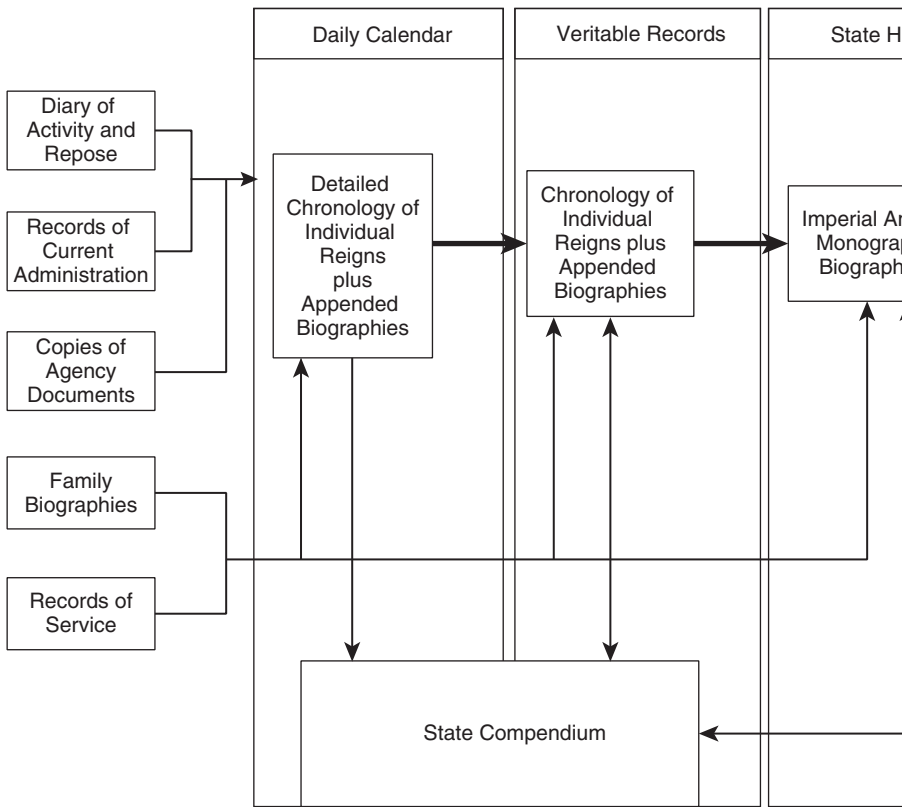


Figure 0.1 The Song official historiographical compilation process
 Sources: Hirata Shigeki, “Sōdai no nikki shiryō kara mita seiji kōzō,” 30; Cai Chong
 Hartman and DeBlasi, “The Growth of Historical Method in Tang China,” 24.

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record. The transmission phase (*bianji* 編集) ensued when the history office processed the assembled documents into a “daily calendar” (*rili* 日歷), a day-by-day chronicle, completed monthly.¹¹ Upon the death of an emperor, which concluded one imperial reign, or one “court,” the transformation phase (*zuanxiu* 纂修) began, and the “daily calendar” was reworked and edited into “veritable records” (*shilu* 實錄), a compressed chronicle of one imperial reign. Periodically, an emperor would order that existing veritable records of several past reigns be combined into a “state history” (*guoshi* 國史). This process involved transforming the veritable records, which followed a day-by-day chronological format, into the tripartite annals–monographs–biographies format that the state histories and the eventual final, dynastic history would assume.

Figure 0.1 and the above paragraph present a theoretical and highly idealized description of official court historiography. Surviving Song writings teem with complaints about non-adherence to established protocols, political interference, favoritism, negligence, lassitude, and corruption at all stages of the operation. Typical are the observations of Xu Du 徐度 (1106–1166), who worked in the court history office during the 1130s. He lamented deficiencies in many of the principal sources of primary documentation. For example, since the court diarists were stationed too far away at audiences to hear discussion of the memorials, officials submitted their own summaries of those discussions; and to save time and evade complications they usually reported that the emperor had said nothing. Beyond the chief councilors’ monthly summaries, agency reports were often the only record of administrative actions, and agencies often neglected to submit copies of their actions as required. Family-submitted biographies were usually nothing more than puffery of dubious historical value. Finally, Xu observed, once composed from these sources, the daily calendar became set and no additions were permitted.¹²

As Xu Du implied, the daily calendar formed the basis of all subsequent stages of compression. But its timely compilation was the exception rather than the norm. Compilation did not resume in early Song until 988, and was suspended from 1007 through 1043 and again from 1054 through 1067. Seldom compiled contemporaneously thereafter, the daily calendar was often not completed until many years later, often in co-ordination with the veritable records. For example, a definitive *Shenzong Daily Calendar* (*Shenzong rili* 神宗日歷), covering the years 1067 through 1085, was not established until 1116, at which point the *Shenzong Veritable Records* (*Shenzong shilu* 神宗實錄) had

¹¹ For an 1162 list of items to be included in the daily calendar see Chen Kui, *Nan Song guan'ge lu*, 4.39–40, translated in Sung, “The Official Historiographical Operation,” 194–95.

¹² Wang Mingqing, *Huizhu lu, houlu*, 1.68–69. *Wenxian tongkao*, 191.5556–57, quotes this passage in the introduction to its section on dynastic histories.

already been through three revisions.¹³ As a result, officials responsible for compiling the veritable records were often forced to reconstruct the calendar decades after the events had transpired. Edicts to compile veritable records, especially in Southern Song, often lamented gaps in needed information and therefore asked the public to submit relevant documentation.¹⁴ The long delays between an event and its final presentation in the state history offered many opportunities for political and personal intrusions into the process. The veritable records were a crucial phase of the operation, essentially the last chance to control the historical record before its final codification into the state history. The veritable records of the Taizu, Taizong, Shenzong, and Zhezong reigns were rewritten multiple times in response to ongoing political change.¹⁵ We will explore in detail in the chapters to follow how these features of “living historiography” have affected the surviving record of Song history.

Contributing to these problems of co-ordination was the somewhat haphazard administration of court historiography, especially in Northern Song. The dynasty inherited a physical building in Kaifeng called the Institute of Historiography (*shiguan* 史館), which Taizong rebuilt; but the location was used as a library and archival storage rather than as working space for court historians. The usual procedure was to appoint ad hoc committees of scholars and officials, usually seconded from other assignments, to work on specific compilation projects. The project was then assigned an allocation of temporary work space somewhere in the imperial city, with an accompanying budget and support staff. To maintain secrecy and security, space was often assigned within the inner court, the private imperial residence where eunuchs provided security, services, and supervision. Thus, before the government reorganization of 1082, temporary staff working in temporary quarters performed most of the court’s historiography. However, after 1082, historiographical operations were concentrated in the new Imperial Library (*Bishu sheng* 秘書省), where they remained until the end of the dynasty. Although the Southern Song Imperial Library was located far outside the imperial city, eunuchs still provided support and were routinely rewarded when the projects were completed.¹⁶

¹³ Cai Chongbang, *Songdai xiushi zhidu yanjiu*, 40–42.

¹⁴ See, for example, Hartman, “The Reluctant Historian,” 101–12, for difficulties compiling the *Qinzong Veritable Records* in 1166.

¹⁵ Cai Chongbang, *Songdai xiushi zhidu yanjiu*, 64–101; Wang Deyi, “Bei Song jiuchao shilu zuanxiu kao.”

¹⁶ Gong Yanming, *Songdai guan zhi cidian*, 148, 256–62; Sung, “Official Historiographical Operation,” 179–90. For the Southern Song Imperial Library see the still unmatched study by Winkelmann, *The Imperial Library in Southern Sung China*, based largely on Chen Kui, *Nan Song guan’ge lu*. To avoid needless detail, I sometimes write in this book “history office” to refer generically to officials and projects connected to court historiography, regardless of the time period.

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This oversight reflects the fact that the Song founders sanctioned the re-establishment of court historiography only on the condition that they control its contents and productions. In 994 Taizong implemented a system of imperial preapproval for monthly submissions of the court diary. In a procedure known as “submitting to the throne” (*jinyu* 進御), drafts were first submitted for imperial review, and after approval were then forwarded to the history office. This preapproval requirement was eventually applied to the records of current administration, the veritable records, and the state histories. Ouyang Xiu and others objected to the practice, which violated older Tang precedents that precluded the emperor from monitoring the historiographical record, but made little headway in removing the surveillance.¹⁷ As we shall see in the chapters that follow, this tension between the monarchy and Confucian literati over the proper role of history in governance profoundly shaped the contours of the surviving historical record. In essence, history for the monarchy was a vehicle to exert its legitimacy and strengthen political control. For the literati, history was a source of rhetorical precedent for use in political dialogue, and much of that dialogue was directed against imperial expressions of absolute authority.

The result of this tension can be seen in Figure 0.2, a timeline of historiographical production plotted against major political developments over the course of the entire dynasty. Despite the difficulties enumerated above, the Northern Song managed tolerably well to sustain its official historiographical operations. The initial *Three Courts State History* (*Sanchao guoshi* 三朝國史), covering the period from 960 through 1022, was completed in 1030. The early 1080s saw the second installment of the *State Compendium* (*Guochao huiyao* 國朝會要), completed in 1081, followed in 1082 by the *Two Courts State History* (*Liangchao guoshi* 兩朝國史), covering the period 1022 through 1067. Since Emperor Shenzong was still alive, dynastic history was now up to date. However, partisan struggles over the New Policies intensified after his death in 1085 and slowed this progress. Rival political factions produced competing versions of the *Shenzong Veritable Records* in 1091 and in 1096; a failed attempt at a compromise version followed in 1101, another wholesale revision came in 1136, and yet another attempted revision in 1138.¹⁸ The timeline shows only the three completed versions of 1091, 1096, and 1136.

The Jurchen invasions and the relocation to the south in 1127 further derailed the pace of historiographical work. The dynasty lost access to its historical archives in Kaifeng; and, in any case, the daily calendars for the Huizong and Qinzong reigns, covering 1100 through 1127, had not been maintained. Although the 1136 revisions to the *Shenzong Veritable Records* settled to

¹⁷ Wang Sheng'en, *Songdai guanfang shixue yanjiu*, 76–82; on eunuch supervision see 87–89.

¹⁸ Cai Chongbang, *Songdai xiushi zhidu yanjiu*, 82–98.

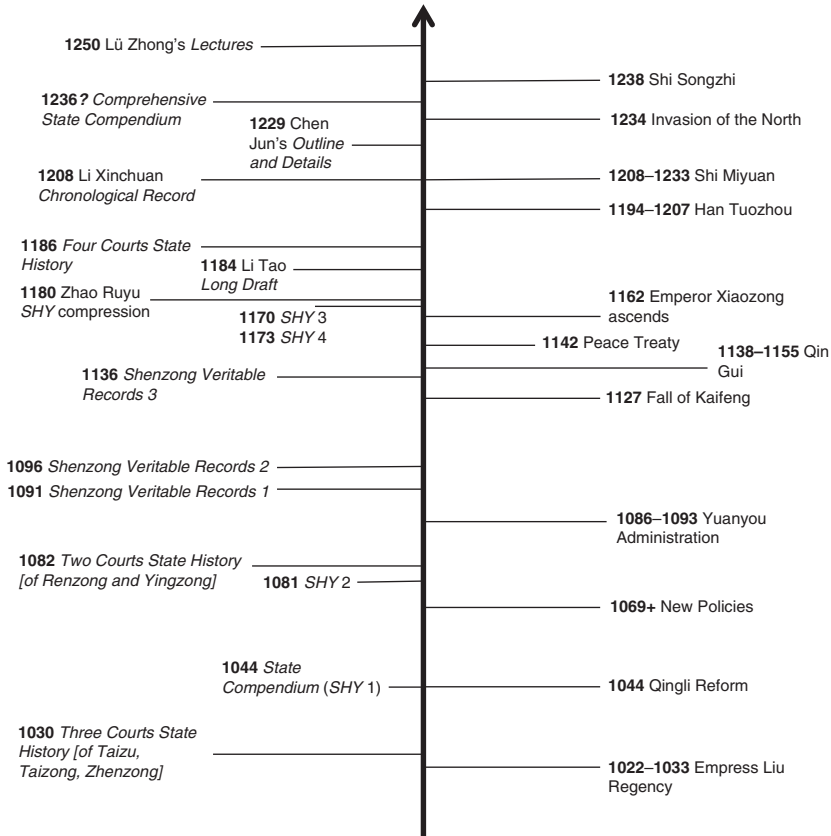


Figure 0.2 Timeline of major historiographical works

some degree the historical stance on the New Policies, the advent of Qin Gui 秦檜 (1090–1155), as sole councilor in 1138 brought yet another setback to the resumption of routine court historiography. To camouflage opposition to his policy of a negotiated peace with the Jurchen, Qin Gui put his son, Qin Xi 秦熈 (d. 1166), in charge of the Imperial Library in 1142; and he remained there until Qin Gui's death in 1155. Qin Xi used the office to compile a highly partisan daily calendar for the period from 1127 through 1142 that provided historical justification and a sympathetic account of Qin Gui's policies; that done, after 1142 he suspended the daily calendar as well as efforts to fill the lacunae for Northern Song history between 1100 and 1127.¹⁹

¹⁹ See Hartman, "The Making of a Villain" 69–74.

Political changes in the wake of another Jurchen invasion, the abdication of Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127–1162), and the ascension of Xiaozong 孝宗 (r. 1162–1189) altered the political climate for court historiography in 1162. Xiaozong had no good opinion of Qin Gui, whose political support came largely from the Jiangnan region in the southeast. Therefore, after concluding another peace with the Jurchen in 1165, he turned to a coalition of Sichuan and Fujian literati to form a new administration. As a result, Li Tao, a Sichuan native with a national reputation for his private work as a historian, was called to the capital and appointed to the Imperial Library with a mandate to rebuild and resume its historiographical operations. The sudden cluster of activity on the timeline between the completion of the third *State Compendium* in 1170 and the *Four Courts State History* (*Sichao guoshi* 四朝國史) in 1186 reflects the influence of Li Tao and the political support he received from the literati coalition. As Chapter 2 on Li Tao will explain, the view of Northern Song history he embedded into his monumental *Long Draft Continuation of the Comprehensive Mirror That Aids Administration* (*Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編) was intended to support the policies his coalition advocated to Emperor Xiaozong. The same political forces also supported efforts, begun by Zhao Ruyu in 1180, to rework the successive state compendia into a single *Comprehensive State Compendium* (*Zonglei guochao huiyao* 總類國朝會要) that would better serve the research and rhetorical needs of his literati allies for political reform.

In fact, the half-century that began with Li Tao's arrival at the Imperial Library in 1167 and extended through the publication by Chen Jun 陳均 (1174–1244) of his *Chronologically Arranged Complete Essentials in Outline and Details of the August Courts* (*Huangchao biannian gangmu beiyao* 皇朝編年綱目備要) in 1229 is the seminal period in the evolution of what I will describe in Part II of this book as the grand allegory, the master narrative of Song history. Although Li Tao was not himself a *daoxue* practitioner, many of his coalition partners were active supporters of the movement, or allied socially and politically to those who were. Chen Junqing 陳俊卿 (1113–1186), the coalition leader from Fujian, was close to Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) and was Chen Jun's grand uncle. As a political leader, Chen Junqing advocated and attempted to practice a form of literati governance that positioned itself against the unilateral exercise of power by the emperor; by his designated proxies such as Qin Gui; or through non-literati actors within the monarchy such as eunuchs, imperial favorites (often referred to throughout this book as “the close,” a direct translation of the Song Chinese term), and affinal kinsmen. Events between 1190 and 1210 – the rise to power of the autocratic affine Han Tuozhou 韓侂胄 (1152–1207), his purge of Zhao Ruyu and his coalition in 1194, the imposition of the Qingyuan-era proscription against *daoxue* in 1196, the disaster of the