

scribed how iron was produced at one of the major smelters supplying the capital in northern Jiangsu near Xuzhou. Over three thousand men worked full-time at thirty-six different foundries, owned by very wealthy families whom Su Shi calls "the great surnames" without specifying the source of their wealth. The scale of production, some tens of thousands of tons, was so great that the forests in the immediate area, the source of fuel for the smelting, were stripped bare by 1100. With wood no longer available, the smelters were forced to burn coke in blast furnaces, an innovation occurring in Europe only in the early eighteenth century.

Outside the capital, local demand for iron was limited to implements needed by blacksmiths and farmers, and production remained small scale. Bao Cheng (999–1062), an official so famous for his honesty that he later became a legendary magistrate in the underworld, wrote a report in the 1050s about the iron industry in the province of Shandong near Qufu. All the smelting, gathering of fuel, and mining took place in the winter when no farming could occur. Such time was limited, and Judge Bao wrote, "I pitied each and every household of the Jiang and Lu clans. Indeed they were poverty-stricken. Year after year they had no leisure time from agriculture to begin smelting."² The men who worked in the mines and smelters came together for a month or so at the time of iron production. The rest of the year they farmed the land because the market network of Shandong was not sufficiently developed to allow them to engage in full-time work. If the men could collect sufficient fuel, they could support a small blast furnace. If not, they had to forge wrought iron into tools.

We owe this glimpse of Song iron production to two men, Bao Cheng and Su Shi, who typified the officials who governed in the first one hundred years of the Song. Both passed the civil service examinations before being appointed to their posts.

THE FOUNDING OF THE SONG

The founder of the Song, Zhao Kuangyin (reigned 960–976), himself a general, was particularly aware of the dangers the military posed to stable regimes. He had served under one of the successor regimes to the Later Tang, the Later Zhou, whose capital was also at Kaifeng, and in 960 he overthrew the boy ruler on the throne. He then proceeded to unify the empire, taking the middle Yangzi in 963, Sichuan in 965, Guangdong in 971, Anhui, Jiangxi, and Hunan in 975. After he died in 976, his younger brother succeeded him and conquered Jiangsu and Zhejiang in 978, and Shanxi in 979.

One of the first challenges the Song faced was regularizing the various currencies in use throughout its new empire. Copper, iron, and lead coins of varying weights and composition circulated in different regions. When the Song unified China, it established a standard for copper coins and then began to issue coins in large quantities. The unit of currency was the string, with originally one thousand coins per string, but more often seven or eight hundred in practice. Over time, the Song also lowered the amount of copper in each coin from a high of 83 percent to a low of 46 percent.³

The varying number of coins per string and the varying ratios of copper, lead, and tin in each coin make direct comparisons uncertain, but Song production of coins was of a different order of magnitude from production during the Tang. The Tang generally produced from one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand strings per year, with the annual average somewhere around ten coins per head. In contrast, the number of coins minted annually in the Song ranged from 1,000,000 to 1,500,000 in the first half of the eleventh century, and reached a high of 6,000,000 strings in 1080.⁴ These figures break down to 60 coins per head, and by the year 1080, had increased to an average of 200 coins per head.⁵ This output of coinage would not be matched by succeeding dynasties, testifying to the rapid growth of the Song money economy.

By the eleventh century, some 6,000,000,000 coins had been cast, yet the insatiable demand for coinage continued, largely because the coinage was not stable. Song-dynasty monetary officials failed to see that, each time they issued coins with a lower percentage of copper, they enhanced the value of the previous generations of coins. Consumers, who could test the coins to determine their metallic composition, melted down the older coins or hoarded them. By continuously lowering the amount of copper in the bronze coins, monetary officials undermined the currency system—this during an age of economic growth when the populace desperately needed a stable currency.

Once the empire had been reunified, the second Song emperor tried to recapture the area around Beijing from the Liao, a powerful nomadic state (described in the next chapter), but two successive campaigns failed. These losses set a precedent that all Song rulers would struggle with. Unable to defeat these powerful nomadic peoples, they had to buy peace, for which the nomadic peoples charged a high price. In 1004, the first of many peace agreements was signed, requiring the Song to pay 100,000 ounces of silver and 200,000 bolts of cloth each year to the Liao. The Liao demanded tribute in silver, whose value was fixed, and not in uncertain

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bronze coins. Over the course of the next three centuries, although different northern peoples fought and defeated the Song, tribute payments to the north continued. The government was hard-pressed to meet these financial obligations, but they probably served as a stimulus to the economy, since many of the northern peoples used this money to buy goods from Song merchants.

When the Song founder took power in 960, it was the fourth change of rule since the Later Tang had been overthrown in 936. The new emperor realized the threat his own military posed to the stability of his regime. Accordingly, he persuaded the generals who supported him to retire in exchange for generous pensions, and he structured his government so that the military were subordinate to civilian officials, not separate from them as they had been in the Tang and the successor states of the Five Dynasties. The military governors, who had become so powerful after 755, were replaced with civil officials.

The Bureaucratic Families of the Song

Since the seventh century, the number of officials recruited via the civil service examinations had been increasing steadily. In the Tang, a number of officials were still appointed on the basis of recommendation, but during the Song, civil service examinations became the primary means of recruiting officials, and the practice of appointing officials who had not taken the examinations died out. This shift to recruitment by open examination did not mean that officials came from all social levels. To the contrary, only the wealthiest of families could afford the extensive preparation required by the examinations; accordingly, those who passed the examinations were generally the sons of socially prominent families, many of whom claimed descent from the great clans of the Tang.

The civil service examinations in the Song were structured to benefit those with family ties to officials already in the bureaucracy. The *yin*, or shadow, privilege was granted to the male kin of officeholders. Depending on one's rank, one's sons, grandsons, nephews, sons-in-law, brothers, and cousins could sit for an easier examination with a higher pass rate—often close to 50 percent—than the open examinations. A degree granted on passing these restricted examinations did not have the same prestige as success on the open examinations, but it allowed entry into the lower levels of officialdom. The talented relatives of officeholders could always opt to sit for the open examinations and take the faster route of advancement in the bureaucracy if they were successful, but the

system of the shadow privilege meant they did not have to risk the open examinations unless they wanted to.

For the dynasty's first century, some one hundred powerful families specialized in taking the civil service examinations and pursued various strategies to heighten their chances of success on the exams. To maximize the benefits from the shadow privilege, their sons intermarried with other families in this group, who were then able to confer the shadow privilege on them. If the wife of a man died, he would often marry her younger sister so that he could maintain his ties to her family. These hundred families formed a congenial group, whose members, based in the capital at Kaifeng or the nearby city of Luoyang, saw each other often.

These new bureaucrats developed a nagging sense of growing apart from their less-successful kin who remained at home. Some, like the reformer Fan Zhongyan (989–1052), formed charitable estates, setting aside property and specifying that the income it produced be used to help family members with unexpected expenses, usually connected to births, weddings, or funerals. Others, like the famous writer Ouyang Xiu (1007–1072) and the poet Su Shi's younger brother Su Xun (1009–1066) drew up genealogies in which they listed all relatives descended from their own great-grandfather; these were the family members they were obliged to mourn. Contemporary observers attributed the many mistakes the two men made in their lists to their long absences from the family home. Ouyang Xiu never lived in his ancestral home and visited only briefly for funerals; Su Xun did spend some time at home, but one year after completing his genealogy, he moved away, never to return. Family graveyards played an important role in sustaining the links between prominent family members in the capital and the less successful who remained in the countryside. The grave-sweeping ceremony of the Qingming festival, when relatives gathered at the graves of the dead, gained in popularity during the Song.

These officials behaved like the members of a well-connected club, whose sons regularly took and passed the exams (either open or restricted to those with the shadow privilege), whose daughters married the sons of equally important families, and whose sons succeeded each other in the highest positions of state. Of course, these families had occasional disputes, and factions formed among the bureaucracy, but the disputes were amicably resolved with no lasting animosities until the reign of Emperor Shenzong (reigned 1068–85). At this time the factional disagreement became so violent that it caused the permanent dissolution of this harmonious world.

THE NEW POLITICAL SUPPORTERS AND

The pressure from the steady fiscal pressure, family charges to the state, needed to raise money for men, whose costs were 10 percent of the government's. A new emperor in 1068, who held views of how to rule, were led by the great scholar to incremental reforms. The reforms to restore the

Sima compared a state as the state's foundation and ministers, officials, and the house. Maintaining individual parts, not the whole. Such reforms, Sima felt, immediate predecessor gave. To that end, he compiled the *Mirror for Aid in Government* in simple prose. Sima Gu's interpretations of the differences."

This approach was led by Wang Anshi (1021–1086), equivalent of prime minister, whose policies continued. His stated goal was to return to the early Kings, and the only way was of massive and radical reform over the pace of reform the empire faced. Wang Anshi of creating wealth, and Dao, or his interpretation. He worked to create a new and he thought that the interpretation of the class

more and more disreputable. It was too easy to forget that China's most famous woman poet had both remarried and divorced.

Li makes it sound as if the fall of the north to the Jurchen in 1127 shattered the comfortable world of the bureaucratic families into which she was born. But the dissolution of that exclusive club predated 1127 by several decades and was the result of factional politics. She begins her memoir by saying, "In 1101, in the first year of the Jianzhong reign, I came as a bride to the Zhao household. At that time my father was a division head in the Ministry of Rites, and my father-in-law, later a Grand Councillor, was a vice-minister in the Ministry of Personnel." She does not reveal that her father and her father-in-law were members of opposing factions.

Her father, Li Gefei, was a prominent follower of Su Shi, who opposed Wang Anshi's attempt to impose educational uniformity because it stifled individual freedom of expression. Two years after her marriage, her father was expelled from the capital, along with sixteen other historicists. Although Li wrote poems of protest to her father-in-law, Zhao Tingzhi, the lieutenant of the man who had issued the order, the purge continued. In 1105, the names of 309 historicists were carved on a stone tablet, their writings banned, their kin barred from office. Because the ban on books was difficult to enforce, people continued to read the writings of these men, but not openly and certainly not in school. Far more damaging was the order preventing the relatives of the historicists from holding office. Although it was rescinded almost immediately and Li's father was able to return to Kaifeng, a lasting precedent had been set.

Li Qingzhao chose not to write about the unpleasant aspects of her world, whether factional infighting or her disastrous remarriage. And few marriages can have equaled Li Qingzhao's in emotional intensity. Her vivid descriptions of the passionate ties binding husband to wife, and of her grief at her husband's early death, are moving even today. In a society in which parents arranged their children's marriages, Li Qingzhao's experience was hardly typical. Her contemporaries, most of whom could only yearn for matches like hers, were drawn to the romantic ideal Li so beautifully evoked in her writings.

REMEMBERING THE NORTH

The loss of the north, so critical in Li Qingzhao's account, loomed large in the mental landscape of all those living in south China after 1127. There, they found themselves in a land of rivers and streams, so differ-

ent from the loess plains of the north. Unlike the silt-filled Yellow River, the Yangzi was navigable, as were its many tributaries. The cost of transporting goods was much lower than it had been in the north, helping market networks to expand dramatically.

An enormous number of people fled to the south at the same time Li did in the early twelfth century. Hundreds of thousands of people, including twenty thousand high officials, tens of thousands of their office staff, and over four hundred thousand military and their families moved to the new capital of Hangzhou and its surrounding towns.¹² The sudden influx of people caused many difficulties. During the first chaotic years of the Southern Song dynasty, the Jurchen troops continued to attack along the Huai River valley and south of the river. As the following tale shows, the government was hard-pressed to keep social order.

In the early 1130s, a native of Kaifeng, the former capital, moved 800 kilometers (500 miles) to the newly designated capital of Hangzhou where he was to take up office. Determined to leave their assigned house in the red-light district, he told his wife to pack their belongings and await a sedan chair, which would take her to their new house in a residential district. When he came back to get her, the landlord said that she already left in a sedan chair. The man could do nothing to get her back. Five years later, at an official banquet in Quxian (Zhejiang), he began to sob at a dinner featuring freshwater turtle, the favorite dish of his missing wife. A servant was sent to console him, and it turned out to be his lost wife. She had been taken away by a broker in women and sold to the host for thirty strings. The man offered to compensate his host, but the man was so embarrassed to have taken someone else's wife as a concubine that he returned her without accepting any payment.¹³

In 1147, another refugee, a writer named Meng Yuanlao, recorded his own personal memories of what life in Kaifeng had been like. He called his book *A Record of the Dream of the Eastern Capital's Splendor*. The book was frankly nostalgic, seeking to depict life in the northern capital before the ravages of 1127. The city had had a population of over one million, not matched by London until the late seventeenth century. All these people were crowded into a space of just over 60 square kilometers (23 square miles). The density was over 2000 people per square kilometer (32,000 per square mile).¹⁴ Meng does not talk about the crowding, the dirt, or the disease that must have been part of city life. His is an idealistic view, and the comparison with Hangzhou always implicit: "People of Kaifeng were kind and friendly. . . . A family newly arrived in Kaifeng would always find their neighbors most helpful: those kindly souls would bring tea and hot water, offer to lend them things or run errands for

them, and give them practical tips."¹⁵ This was a far cry from the experience of the woman kidnapped in Hangzhou!

Meng's real topic is the pleasures available to those who had money in their pockets. Kaifeng had seventy-two large and many more small restaurants, with fancy facades in front and small gardens in back. Unlike Changan, with its evening curfew, the pleasure quarters of Kaifeng were open around the clock, and customers flocked to these restaurants in all seasons. The most elaborate of the restaurants had five different buildings, each three floors high, linked by bridges and passageways. People dined out at restaurants, and they spent money on the various street entertainers. Meng's description of the lantern festival is typical:

In the arcades along the broad avenue entertainers of every description plied their wares cheek by jowl, all displaying ingenious skills and wondrous talents. The singers, dancers, and acrobats caused a din that could be heard miles away. Some of them demonstrated their skill in archery or at kicking balls, others walked on tightropes strung between tall bamboo poles. Wildman Zhao would eat and drink while hung upside down; Zhang Jiuge would swallow an iron sword; Li Waining would pop up puppets with explosives. . . .

The list of performers and their acts goes on. This is a city filled with people deciding where to go, what to eat, or what to watch next. Meng makes little mention of officials or of examination candidates—his workmanlike prose suggests he may not have been a member of the literati. Meng does not belabor the point that all these pleasures are gone. His readers would have known that many of the entertainers had been taken captive by the Jurchen. The simplicity of his description is what makes it so poignant: everything he describes is part of a by-gone existence, and that is why he has recorded it.

City Life as Shown in the Qingming Scroll

The same impulse underlies one of the greatest examples of Chinese art, the hand-scroll of urban life by Zhang Zeduan, *Peace Reigns Over the River*, which is often referred to as the Qingming scroll. Although the scroll is sometimes on display in Beijing's Palace Museum laid out to its full length under a glass case, originally the viewer determined the pace of viewing by unrolling the 5.25-meter-long (5.74-yard-long) scroll section by section. The scroll was painted after the fall of the north, sometime before 1186, and its portrayal of urban life is as frankly idealistic as Meng's. Zhang's cityscape shows none of the discomforts of city life, possibly in order to convey a muted political message—that life under the reigning emperor was not as carefree as it appears on the scroll.

lie outside the wall as within it, suggesting that cities often overflowed their walls. The road goes by a garrison, with dozing soldiers in front of it, and the wall lies equally unguarded. This is an idyllic landscape, with no hint of the actual fortifications northern cities had to have to protect themselves against incursions, and it matches Meng Yuanlao's description: no beggars or poor people here.

The last stretch of road depicts many different establishments and the full range of Song society. A storyteller at the three-story restaurant, marked by a festive scaffolding, has attracted a crowd of listeners. Across the street sits a man selling religious statues, and next to him men draw water from a well. Three women sit in a doctor's office, behind which is a small garden.

Zhang's figures show how clothing corresponded to social status: the lower the social rank, the scantier the clothes. Peasants and oarsmen have on short tops and rolled up trousers. Townsmen wear kerchiefs, with longer shirts and trousers. Shop assistants are clad in long gowns and simple hats, while the Daoists and the lone Buddhist have robes made with long, draped sleeves. The low-level officials, clerks, students, and examination candidates all sport long gowns with kerchiefs tied over a stiff black form.

This is an artfully constructed scene, rich with human activity, but there are few women. One or two are gathered around the basket with the brooms in front of the restaurant. A woman peers out from a sedan chair, and a braid dangles down the back of a woman on horseback directly behind the Daoists. Three women sit in the doctor's shop. This same imbalance skews the entire scroll: out of the more than five hundred people shown, only about twenty are female. Those with bare heads are at home in their boats or their shops. Otherwise the women are in sedan chairs, on donkeyback or horseback, usually with their heads covered and always accompanied by men. The only women enjoying themselves outside are the women in front of the inn by the brooms.

Women Move Inside: The Spread of Footbinding

Zhang painted this scroll in the twelfth century, just as the practice of footbinding was catching on, and women were increasingly confined to the home. Because paintings of women in the Song do not show their feet, we must look to textual evidence to trace the spread of the practice.

One observer writing in the 1130s commented that Tang poets never wrote about footbinding: "From this one can know [that] flattened feet began only since the Five Dynasties. Before the Xining (1068–77) and

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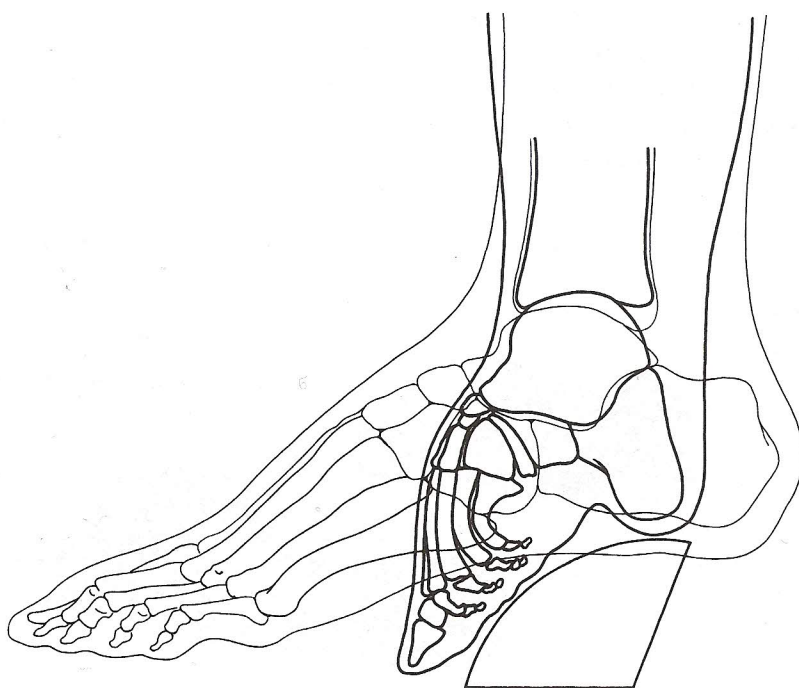
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Yuanfeng (1077–86) reigns, the practice was rare. Recently people have copied each other and no longer feel shame."¹⁷ Most observers thought the practice began with adult dancers binding their own feet in the tenth century, but then mothers began to bind the feet of their daughters, because the feet were more malleable before puberty.

To bind the feet a bandage, about 5 centimeters (2 inches) wide and 3 meters (10 feet) long, was wrapped with one end on the inside of the instep; from there it was carried over the small toes so as to force the toes in and toward the sole. The large toe was left unbound. The bandage was then wrapped around the heel so forcefully that the heel and toes were drawn closer together. This was done over and over again, until the bandage was used up. If it was done skillfully, after the foot healed in two years, the young woman could walk short distances with no pain. If



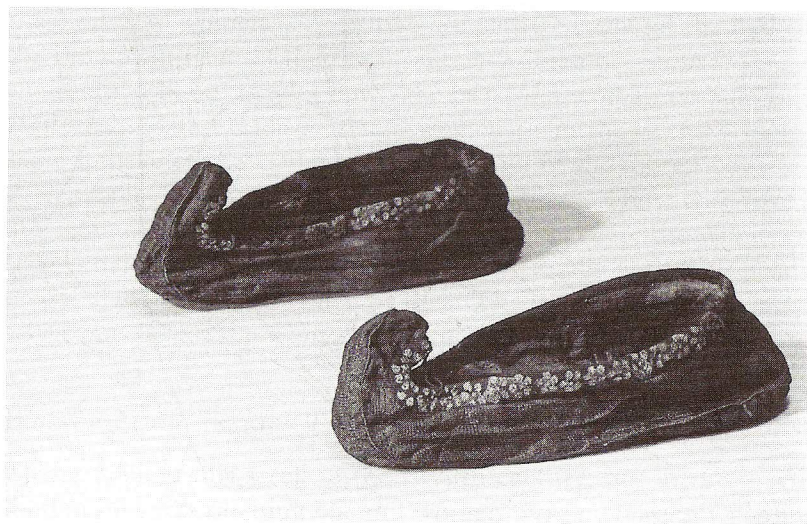
FOOTBINDING

Starting when their daughters were young girls, mothers bound their daughters' feet by wrapping a cloth around the toes and forcing them to grow under the foot. The practice began to spread during the Song dynasty, though some regions never adopted the custom. This diagram superimposes an unbound foot on top of a bound foot, which was about half the size of a normal foot.

done poorly, walking was always painful. Those few writers who commented on footbinding said little about why people found bound feet attractive. Wrapping the feet in long bindings meant that a woman's feet became a private part of her body, viewed only by herself, her mother when she was young, and her husband after marriage. Later sources describe husbands cleaning and sucking the feet of their wives, as though binding the feet had transformed them into sexual objects.

The practice of footbinding spread among women, even those of good families, after the fall of the north. When a wife of a local official, a vice-prefect, died during childbirth in 1274, she was buried with the fetus of her second son. Along with a money-filled purse and many silk clothes were buried six pairs of shoes 18 to 22 centimeters (7 to 8.5 inches) long and 5 to 6 centimeters (1.9 to 2.3 inches) wide. She needed wrappings to maintain such small feet, and they too have been found, 2 meters (6.5 feet) long and 10 centimeters (3.9 inches) wide. She was not a concubine but the wife and daughter of low-ranking officials.

It is always difficult to explain the spread of a fashion, especially one so painful. The practice of footbinding spread during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as a market in women grew. In earlier periods men had taken concubines, usually when wives were unable to bear sons, but



SHOES FOR BOUND FEET

This pair of shoes for bound feet was in the tomb of an official's wife who, in 1274, died in childbirth. The length of the shoes—from 18 to 22 centimeters (7 to 8.5 inches)—shows that during the Song, the practice of footbinding had not reached the extremes it would by the nineteenth century, when shoes 7 or 8 centimeters (about 3 inches) long were common.

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the practice became more common in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Families began to sell their daughters and husbands their wives to make money. Song sources tell of brokers, like the one mentioned earlier who kidnapped the woman in Hangzhou, and of those who bought women legally.

The spread of commercial activity in the Song transformed women into commodities who were bought and sold on the basis of appearance—not married on the basis of family ties as they had been in earlier centuries. By the time of the Southern Song, the market in women had expanded so much that all women, even those from noncourtesan families, were affected. Women of good families still hoped to make good marriages, but they knew they would be rivals of concubines for their husband's attention, and they knew the concubines would have bound feet. Under the circumstances, mothers chose to bind their daughters' feet so as to maximize the girls' chances in the marriage market. They may not have been conscious of the damage they were doing to their daughters. The practice continued into modern times; footbinding died out in the 1930s. Like breast implants in twentieth-century America (which are less common than footbinding was), women bound their feet because other women bound theirs.

LIFE UNDER THE SOUTHERN SONG (1127–1276)

At first, the leaders and subjects of the Song emperor did not realize that they would never recapture the north from the Jurchens. Fighting with the Jin dynasty continued until 1141, when the Song emperor signed a humiliating treaty with his Jin counterpart (see chapter 8, p. 318). Eventually people realized that Hangzhou would have to be more than a temporary capital, and the emperor began to concentrate on the problems of governing an empire that was only half its original size. Although always threatened by the Jin in the north, the Southern Song enjoyed great economic prosperity as the first commercial revolution continued during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Gods and Goods

Like women, popular gods were also affected by the expanding markets of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In addition to Buddhist and Daoist monasteries, each district in China had a group of temples housing local gods. Many of these had been human beings who came to be worshiped after their deaths as gods in their native places. Others were nature deities

who included tree, mountain, and river gods. The Spirit of the Bamboo Grove, to whom the fictional Li Wa and her lover prayed for a child in Tang-dynasty Changan, typified such deities in the period before the Song dynasty. These gods performed miracles suited to the agricultural society from which they sprang. Local people prayed to them to bring rain, or end excessive rains, to keep drought and locusts away, and to protect them from plague, famine, and the dangers of childbirth.

Lay people could consult a host of religious specialists—some affiliated with Buddhism and Daoism and some not—or they could pray directly to deities for assistance. They were looking for someone or some god with the power to perform miracles, which they called *ling*, or efficacy. If someone, whether human or divine, could cure an ill person or make rain come, then people would seek that one's help, regardless of their religious affiliation.

With the move of the capital south and the continued increase in market activity, deities assumed new, more commercial powers. A collection of miscellaneous tales records the experience of a merchant who sold mats made of reeds. In 1158 he was traveling by boat with a shipment of mats when he agreed to give a Daoist practitioner a ride on his vessel. After they arrived, the Daoist bade him farewell saying, "I will enable you to get twenty thousand to reward you." At the time, the merchant did not understand.

When he went to market to sell his mats, he found that the demand for them was unusually high due to a shortage in Chengdu, almost 1,600 kilometers (1,000 miles) up the Yangzi River in Sichuan province. To ensure a sufficient supply for imperial sacrifices, the governor of Hangzhou raised the official purchasing price of each mat by two cash. Since the merchant had ten thousand mats, he made an extra profit of twenty thousand cash, just as the mysterious figure had promised him.

This was not a traditional miracle. The hitchhiker, who must have been a deity who assumed human form, did not bring rain or end illness. Instead he manipulated a shortage in Sichuan and twisted the government purchasing system to reward the favor. This miracle hinged on understanding the dynamics of a market stretching all the way from Hangzhou to Chengdu. The tale credits the god with having such an understanding, but the people telling the tale also had to grasp the complexities of the national market that had come into existence during the Song dynasty.

Problems with currency persisted even after the fall of the north when the Song continued to mint debased bronze coins and to print inflated paper money. Because each generation of money differed in value from

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its predecessors, no one could be certain of the exchange rates among the different generations of money. Contracts from the period give prices in paper money, but they specify the year of issue so as to avoid misunderstandings. In one dispute that reached court, one friend lent money to another, who paid him back with several paintings. After the man who received the paintings died, the man's children sued their father's friend, saying he had not paid back the full amount. The judge hearing the case agreed with them and ordered their father's friend to take back the paintings and to repay them in money—but in the currency of the original loan, which had occurred some forty years earlier. The lack of a stable currency may have made trading difficult, but people continued to produce for markets.

As merchants and traders went farther afield to buy and sell goods, they started to take their gods with them. One group of cultivators in Huzhou, the district next to Hangzhou, worshiped a Six Dynasties hero. They grew lotus pods and roots, which they sold at market, and they credited their god with sending rain that swept locusts away from their valuable lotuses. When they put up a stone commemorating their god's accomplishments, they had this to say about themselves:

Many of this district's residents travel by boat to distant places to trade. On the day of departure, the people always pray to the deity and paint his image in their boats. They pray to him morning and night. When they travel on a river or a lake, even when they encounter winds or waves, he provides them with safe passage every time.¹⁸

So they took their god with them on their business trips, and they credited him with keeping them safe, even when they ventured far from home.

The realms of these deities stretched out as their followers traveled ever farther to trade goods and the market networks expanded. A national market came into being, in which goods were traded across all of south China, and even into the Jurchen-controlled north. Most of the goods traded nationally were rare luxuries or special treats, such as tangerines or lichees from Fujian. During famines, grain-poor provinces often purchased rice from distant, more productive areas. People were traveling farther and longer to trade, and the changes in the popular pantheon reflected their contact with other groups.

Shrines to Worthies

Temples to popular deities, with their ever-expanding catchment areas, were not the only religious institutions in the countryside. Alongside the

temples to deities were shrines to worthy men, often located in schools or Confucian academies. Unlike the gods in temples, these were men who had performed good deeds. They were not thought to have any divine powers. Most of those commemorated were statesmen, officials, generals, famous loyalists, or writers who had done something worthwhile during their lives. They were local men, whose memory the community sought to keep alive by putting up a tablet in a shrine to them. Many had been virtuous local officials. The shrines were memorial halls that aimed to inspire the living to emulate the accomplishments of the dead; they were also sites of veneration. At periodic intervals in the schools, students and teachers were to prostrate themselves and offer incense and food offerings as an expression of respect for the honored dead.

The years following the fall of the north saw a change in the type of person worshiped in these shrines. The famous men who had held positions in the central government were joined by less famous men who had even occasionally been rejected by the state. These were intensely learned men, but men whose contemporaries misunderstood them. One such figure, Gao Deng, had joined the thousands of students who urged the emperor to declare war on the Jurchens who had just taken the north. A meeting with the prime minister who made peace with the Jurchens led to Gao's first demotion; his second demotion came after he wrote an examination question critical of that minister. He never served again in the government. Zhu Xi (1130–1200) one of the leading Confucian thinkers of his generation, wrote a text commemorating Gao's virtues, and he said: "The whole day long, like a torrent, he spoke of nothing but being a filial son and loyal minister and of sacrificing one's life in favor of righteousness. Those who heard him were in awe; their souls were moved and their spirits lifted."¹⁹ Gao was able to live a life of virtue and learning, both Confucian values, because he had not served the corrupt government that had failed to win back the north.

Like the temples of popular deities, shrines to worthy men shed their local character in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They came to be built even in districts to which the deceased had no direct ties. The men commemorated had not been born in, had not served as officials in, and had never even visited the districts housing their shrines. Three men came to have shrines built to them all over south China; Zhou Dunyi (1017–1073), Cheng Yi (1033–1107), and Cheng Hao (1032–1085). In 1181, Zhu Xi wrote a text commemorating the three in his native Wuyuan county in Huizhou, and he did so after registering his initial protest: "It is my view that the Way of the three masters is grand and marvelous. However, this county, Wuyuan, is neither their native home, nor a place

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where they sojourned or served in office." He then explained why he overcame his objections: "In the past decade or so, school officials strove to establish sacrificial halls, their intentions being to honor and offer sacrifices to the three masters. This occurred even in places that were not the masters' native homes, that the masters did not serve or visit."²⁰

Inscriptions to their shrines credited these three men, joined later by Zhu Xi in some shrines, with correctly understanding the Way of Confucius, and his disciple Mencius, the Way that had been lost by the intervening generations. These men "had retrieved and retransmitted the one, true Confucian Way in the Song." Even though these shrines ran counter to the local ideal, they became the most popular of the shrines, far outnumbering those to other worthy men in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The Emphasis on Local Society

In the same centuries that temple, shrine, and market networks expanded, the world of the governing families contracted. In the years before the fall of the north, powerful bureaucratic families had assumed that their sons would pursue careers in officialdom. But the factional infighting between the classicists and the historicists forced them to rethink their strategies. When the classicists banned all the sons of leading historicist families from taking the examinations, they cut off what had been a certain career course—preparation for the examinations, sitting for the exams, and taking office. The powerful historicist families had to devise career paths outside the bureaucracy, and when the tables were turned and the historicists banned the sons of the classicists from taking the exams, they too had to shift gears.

These once prominent families turned away from government service. Instead they lived on their estates and devoted themselves to local society. They donated money to religious institutions, to Buddhist or Daoist monasteries, and popular temples. They sought to help their communities and incidentally to enhance their local reputations by building bridges and roads, distributing grain during famine, and making loans to the needy. They also organized the all-important local militia who tried to keep order.

This shift away from national politics affecting the standing of women in these families. As long as families concentrated on forming political alliances with other prominent families to maximize the benefits of the shadow privilege, daughters, like sons, had an important role to play. If married off successfully, they could bring benefits to their natal family. But as these families' confidence in their ability to place their sons in the

bureaucracy declined, they began to marry their daughters into other local families, and brides found themselves increasingly dependent on their in-laws for their support. If widowed, brides had to secure the permission of their in-laws to remarry, and many continued to live with their in-laws rather than risk the stigma of remarriage. Li Qingzhao's writings and goings after her husband's death and her decision to remarry were seen as practices of a bygone era.

One official, Yuan Cai (1140–90), wrote a manual of advice for his contemporaries. In it, he enumerated the possible careers that sons from good families could pursue:

If the sons of a gentleman have no hereditary stipend to maintain and no permanent holdings to depend on, and they wish to be filial to their parents and to support children, then nothing is as good as being a scholar. For those whose talents are great, and who can obtain advanced degrees, the best course is to get an official post and become wealthy. Next best is to open his gate as a teacher in order to receive a tutor's pay. For those who cannot obtain advanced degrees, the best course is to study correspondence so that one can write letters for others. Next best is to study punctuating and reading so that one can be a tutor to children.

For those who cannot be scholars, then medicine, Buddhism and Daoism, agriculture, trade, or crafts are all possible; all provide a living without bringing shame to one's ancestors.²¹

This is a revealing list. Yuan starts on the assumption that many such sons will have a private income, either from the government in the form of a stipend or from their own landholdings. If they do not, official service offers the greatest rewards. If one cannot pass the civil service examinations, then one can tutor older students or write letters. Yuan suggests that the less able study punctuating and reading, because one can teach those arts to children. Everyone had to learn how to punctuate texts because no text written in classical Chinese was punctuated, and deciding where sentences and clauses ended was the first step to grasping the contents of a text.

All these options would have been open to the sons of good families before the fall of the north. The list with which Yuan closes his advice is new: he advocates that those who cannot be students learn to be doctors, religious specialists, farmers, merchants, or craftsmen. His assertion that none of these careers brings shame hints at the underlying truth: all these professions would have brought shame in the previous century, but the great families of China have had to adjust to a new social reality in the twelfth. Because not all their sons could be officials or even school-teachers, they had to pursue other careers.

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Yuan's list of alternative occupations suggests that the business of educating examination candidates was a thriving one. More and more tutors were needed to prepare the candidates for the examinations. Even as the total population of China—in both the north and the south—remained around one hundred million, the number of men studying for the exams grew dramatically. In some districts after 1200 as many as three hundred men competed for one slot—a far higher ratio than had existed earlier.²² Scholars agree that the increased interest in the examinations must have raised the literacy rate, with some estimating that one in ten men, but many fewer women, could read.

Although more men were taking examinations, more were also exercising the shadow privilege, with the result that the number of positions going to those who had passed the open examinations declined throughout the dynasty. In 1046, 57 percent of new officials had passed the regular, nonpreferential exams; in 1213 only 27 percent did so, with the bulk of the remaining positions going to those who had used the shadow privilege.²³

More competition and fewer slots reduced the chances of any one person considerably, but contemporaries complained more often about other problems. Those taking the exams had to obtain a family guarantee in which the signatory vouched that the exam candidate had lived in the area for so long that his ancestors were not merchants, clerks, or priests. These guarantees meant that only the sons of established families could take the examinations.

Like people taking examinations everywhere, the candidates were most upset by the widespread cheating they felt was taking place. As woodblock printing became more sophisticated, students smuggled "small basted-together volumes with minute fly's head sized characters into the examinations."²⁴ The government ordered bookstores to stop printing and selling these aids, but the stores continued to do so as it was a profitable venture. Smuggling notes into the exams was popular, as was paying others to take the exams on someone's behalf, bribing the officials who graded the exams, and copying others' answers.

By the twelfth century, the idea of anonymity had triumphed. A piece of paper was pasted over the name of those taking the exams and examinations were recopied so that those grading them would not favor someone whose handwriting they recognized. Still, aggrieved candidates complained that members of a faction were able to make themselves known to their examiners by using unusual phrases and terms.

Some of those who had become disenchanted with the civil service examinations contributed money to build local academies where they sent

their sons to be educated in the new approach to the Confucian classics. Starting in 1181, Zhu Xi (1130–1200) taught at the White Deer Academy, where he stressed that the goal of education was moral self-cultivation, not the pursuit of civil service examination degrees. The students studied the Confucian classics, especially *The Analects*, *Mencius*, and two chapters taken from the *Book of Rites*. These texts, *The Four Books*, were felt to offer the best models for those wanting to understand the Way of the ancient sages. Zhu stressed “apprehending the principle in things” (sometimes translated as “the investigation of things”), the cornerstone of his Neo-Confucian teachings. If someone very carefully examined the world around him and the teachings contained in the classics, he could perceive the pattern, or principle, underlying all human affairs.²⁵

Zhu Xi and his followers also encouraged members of the community to help one another without causing the government to intervene, although their plans enjoyed little success. They founded community granaries, which, unlike Wang Anshi’s ever-level granaries, were to be run privately by local people, not government officials. These granaries were to make interest-bearing loans to poor people. They, however, quickly encountered the same problem that Wang had experienced—widespread default; the most successful of them limited loans to famine years only. Some of the granaries ended up distributing grain as a charitable measure rather than insisting that the borrowers pay off the loans. Like Wang Anshi’s Green Sprouts reforms, the private granaries also lost money, and all were defunct by 1308.

The significance of the private academies and community granaries was that they expressed the growing suspicion of government institutions among those who advocated the Confucian revival. Shut out of the examination system, these men chose to dedicate themselves to a new ideal. They wanted to attain sagehood, not by government service but by devotion to the community. From the very beginning, Confucius and his followers had been torn about whether to join government as ministers, and most had not. The students of Zhu Xi and the other Confucian revivalists looked to Confucius himself as a model. They claimed to have a direct line of transmission of the Way from him, and they thought they could best pass on his teachings outside of the government. No wonder they built so many shrines to Zhu Xi’s teachers, Zhou Dunyi and the Cheng brothers.

The three centuries of Song rule—one hundred fifty years of a united China, and one hundred fifty years in only the south—were a time of continuous economic growth as the market expanded and professional specialization increased. The market economy affected people of all social

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strata. The poorest peasants fell deeper and deeper into debt in spite of Wang Anshi's best efforts to save them. The very wealthy, like the couple buried at Baisha, decorated their tombs with the latest in home decorating—including painted screens and chairs—and included detailed contracts specifying the high prices they had spent to purchase their burial plots. People living in Kaifeng spent money to eat in restaurants and to watch various urban entertainments, some of which are pictured in the scroll *Peace Reigns Over the River*. Li Qingzhao and her husband had sufficient disposable income to buy an enormous collection of bronzes and books, only to lose them as they fled south from the Jurchen invasion.

The loss of the north posed a psychic blow to the Song, but in the move south the Chinese were able to use the extensive waterways of the region to foster economic growth. People traveled increasingly large distances to sell goods, bringing their deities with them on their travels. As the economic world of producers and consumers expanded, so too did their religious world. People began to worship deities from other places in addition to their own local deities. Many people embraced the sages of the Neo-Confucian government who were worshiped across all of south China.

The prosperity that opened up the consumers' world had the opposite effect on the bureaucracy. That world contracted as fewer and fewer of the sons of former bureaucratic families were able to get positions in the bureaucracy, and as official life was fractured by factionalism. Disputes over managing the money economy created the conflict between the historicists and the classicists that drove the bureaucratic families out of the government and into the countryside. Even so, when compared with later periods, the Song stands out as a period of civility. Members of one faction might prevent their enemies from holding office, but they did not physically attack them, and no one lost his life for standing up to the emperor. There were no secret police, massive persecutions, or long jail sentences for those who crossed the people in power. Factional infighting, however, did leave the country's economic problems unsolved.

We should not be too harsh in judging the Song officials. They were the first bureaucrats in the world to use paper money, and naturally they succumbed to the temptation to print more money than they could back in an effort to lessen their budgetary woes. The same motive prompted them to make bronze coins with ever lessening quantities of copper. Their constant devaluations undermined the very currency they sought to support, yet the economy still managed to grow, fueled as it was by the expansion of markets. Without realizing the real causes for the chronic shortage of coinage, they blamed the crisis on the huge outlays they made to fight the northern peoples, the subject of the next chapter.