

The Social Significance of the Quota System in Sung Civil Service Examinations*

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One of the important distinctions of the Sung from its predecessors in imperial China is the rapid rise in the number of educated people who made up the majority of Sung bureaucracy. Many historians have interpreted this phenomenon as a result of the opening up of the civil service examinations which created an unprecedented opportunity for commoners to move up the social ladder.¹ This interpretation appears to me to have oversimplified the picture: it obscures the fact that the monopoly of traditional aristocrats of the Chinese government had been in the process of dissolution since the eighth century;² it also fails to take into account other factors that contributed to the rise of the educated populace, such as the widespread use of printing technology. But above all, the argument based on the apparent effect of

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1. See, for example, statements like this:

The most outstanding feature of Sung examinations since the T'ai-tsu was the efforts Northern Sung emperors put in to recruit the poor or helpless students and to suppress the descendants of aristocratic or ranking official families. On this account, the Sung Society which was a commoners' society was completely different from the T'ang which was an aristocratic society.

From Araki Toshikazu: *Sōdai kakyō seido kenkyū* (Tokyo: Dobosha, 1966), p.11. Similar views are shared by Miyazaki Ichisada (see his *China's Examination Hall*, tr. by Conrad Schirokauer, New York: Weatherhill, 1976, p.116), Edward A. Kracke, (see his "Family vs. Merit in Chinese Civil Service Examinations under the Empire", in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol.10, p.103) and Ping-ti Ho (See his *Ladder of Success in Imperial China*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1962, p.260).

2. Denis Twitchett: "The Composition of the T'ang Ruling Class", in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett ed.: *Perspectives of the T'ang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp.47-86.



the civil service examinations on the opportunity of commoners to receive education implying that the civil service examinations could indeed fulfill the modern social ideal of "equal opportunity" obscures the very nature of the examination system.

Sung rulers had repeatedly made the point that they would like to see the examination system be conducted in such a way as to make it indeed "*kung*" (public or impartial). There was no doubt that Sung rulers had indeed desired to establish a respectable institution in that not only all candidates were to be examined on equal footing, but the candidacy could also be widely based. This desire could have been deeply selfish, but it partook the outlook of the kind of "*kung*" we today may interpret as "equal opportunity".

It is the purpose of this paper to examine this appearance by studying the social implications of one aspect of the Sung civil service examinations, the quota system, to see whether the examination system as practiced by the Sung government could indeed achieve that modern social goal of equal opportunity, or whether the system was actually designed to exercise some political or social control. I shall proceed by analyzing the pattern of social ascent just before the founding of the Sung dynasty and point out that the civil service examination system as practiced by the Sung government helped to create a new kind of local elites who were awarded with chances of official privileges and who supplemented the government in its local administration. To effect this new arrangement, the government had to interpret the idea of "*kung*" by introducing geopolitical considerations, as seen in the mechanism of assigning quotas of successful candidates. In the end, the examination system as such, by sacrificing the simplistic ideal of awarding equal chances to individuals, achieved a "greater *kung*" of perfecting social stability.

I

The materials on the purposes behind the founding of the examination system invariably show the Sung rulers as nearly obsessed with how to make the system capable of achieving social justice by promoting into officialdom candidates of only those who were qualified, no matter from what family ground they came. As early as 962, the third year of the dynasty, Emperor T'ai-tsu clearly spelled his desire to recruit, especially, those talented candidates of lower family background. He was quoted as saying that the civil service examinations were designed "to recruit officials and appoint them to the public government and to prevent candidates from receiving nepotistic favors from powerful families, so that bad habits and corruption could be done away with".³ The ideal thus expressed seems to have become the key

3. *Sung hui-yao chi-kao* (SHY hereafter), 1936 reprint of the Yung-lo ta-tien edition, *hsuan-chü* section (hc hereafter), 3/1b-2a,



explanation for justifying the system as such. In 985, in the palace examination, Emperor T'ai-tsung deliberately failed four candidates merely because they were the sons of eminent statesmen in the government. They were: (1) Li Tsung-o (964-1012), the son of Li Fang (925-996), who was then chief counselor; (2) Lü Meng-heng, the nephew of Lü Meng-cheng (946-1011), who was assisting civil counselor of state; (3) the son of a commissioner of salt and iron; and (4) the son of a commissioner of funds. The emperor commented on his surprising decision by saying: "This (system) allows the powerful and the poor to compete against each other. Even though I will only recruit those who are truly talented, others could well accuse me for being biased".⁴ While this might be an exceptional case, it nonetheless indicates the degree the emperor and his contemporaries had wanted to go to curtail the power of the established big families.

The same idea was echoed by Chen-tsung (998-1022) who repeatedly said that the examination system was "to recruit the poor",⁵ "to be absolutely impartial so as to promote the poor who are talented",⁶ "to open up the routes for the poor (to move up)",⁷ or "to curtail favoritism and to promote the talented poor".⁸ On two occasions, he even intervened to ensure that the ideal of "promoting the poor" be realized. Once was in 1008. Forty children from families of ranking officials were recommended for passing, but they were accused of having performed badly in the tests. Chen-tsung immediately ordered a re-examination, which significantly showed that these candidates were actually well qualified. The decision on Chen-tsung's part reflected his concern about possible abuses on the examinations by powerful officials.⁹ Another example occurred in 1015. A certain Ts'ai Ch'i passed first in the palace examination. After the announcement of the grading, the emperor asked the chief examiner if he knew who Ts'ai Ch'i was. When told that nobody in the court then knew this first candidate, Chen-tsung commented with relief: "Nobody knows him, [We are] truly recruiting the poor".¹⁰

Examples like these are found in many Sung writings,¹¹ and they appear to suggest that, at least during the Sung, the rulers had wanted to have a reliable social

4. Li T'ao *Hsü tzu-chih t'ung-chien ch'ang-pien* (HCP hereafter), Chekiang shu-chü 1881 edition, reprinted in 1964 with supplementary materials from *Yung-lo ta-tien* (Taipei, Shih-chieh, 1966), 26/2a.

5. SHY, hc, 19/2b.

6. HCP, 67/15b.

7. SHY, hc, 3/8b.

8. HCP, 67/17ab.

9. Ma Tuan-lin: *Wen-hsien t'ung-k'ao*, Palace edition (1795), ch. 30, p.287.

10. HCP, 84/9a.

11. See Araki Toshikazu: *HōkuSō kajo ni okeru kanshyun no tekitei*, in *Tōhōgaku*, 34 (1967), pp.1-15.

machinery capable of achieving meritocratic ideals. Nonetheless, their comments also suggest that they did not simply wish to be impartial, but were also apprehensive about the continuation of the social structure that was a continuation of an aristocratic one of the previous dynasties. What then were the Sung rulers aiming at? Since a system as important as the promotion of an extremely small number of subjects into the powerful and privileged elite stratum could not but be interpreted as having political significance, I believe that early Sung rulers did take personal interests in the system as such.

First of all, in the late T'ang and Five Dynasties period, there started to emerge a new pattern of means for social ascent. In the past, historians have constantly failed to appreciate the significance of this change and have simply believed that the civil service examination system caused the social transformation.¹² However, a study of this period shows that the new pattern of social mobility actually arose before the civil service examinations could have had any impact on the social structure. In the following, I will try to show the process of the emergence of this new pattern and then I hope to show how Sung rulers used the civil service examination system to promote and stabilize this new pattern.

Let me first go back to the interesting story of T'ai-tsung who dismissed the sons of prominent statesmen in his court for no apparent reason other than his refusal to permit them to squeeze out candidates from poorer backgrounds. According to another version of this same story, the son of Li Fang was warned of T'ai-tsung's desire and withdrew voluntarily from taking part in the palace examination.¹³ We know that no apparent conflict existed between T'ai-tsung and Li Fang at this juncture of time. Quite on the contrary, Li was then the most prominent official in the government. Also, T'ai-tsung's action was equally applied to three other less influential figures. It is therefore only fair to say that the Sung ruler was aiming at a general social group, hoping to restructure the socially prominent stratum by applying "impartial" standards in the examination system. While the first three emperors all uttered a similar concern for a fair recruiting system, it was T'ai-tsung who single-handedly raised the examination system to a place of unprecedented importance. Throughout T'ai-tsu's reign (r. 960-976), a total of only 187 *chin-shih* were recruited, that is, 11 *chin-shih* were recruited each year. These figures contrast sharply with those during T'ai-tsung's reign. In the first examination ordered by T'ai-tsung (in 977), a total of 109 *chin-shih* graduates had already been recruited and throughout his rule (976-997), the candidates passed amounted to 1441, with an annual average

12. This point is also raised by David G. Johnson in his *The Medieval Chinese Oligarchy* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977), pp.148-152, although in different context.

13. Yeh Meng-te: *Shih-lin yen-yu*, Pi-chi hsiao-shuo ta-kuan edition, 5/1b.



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of nearly 66.¹⁴ This fact shows that if the examination system did in fact contribute to the rearrangement of social elite, the turning point came in the third and fourth decades of the Sung dynasty.

It is a well-known fact that most of the early court coterie surrounding the founding emperor had been powerful military men who also served in the Late Chou dynasty (951-959). What is even more significant is the fact that the early Sung social structure reflected that of the "Five Dynasties" period. By the Five Dynasties period, the traditional "big families" of medieval China were already in decline.¹⁵ The political confusion of the late T'ang followed by the disruption of central governmental power, created not only great difficulties for travelling, but also changes in conceptions of family loyalty. A good number of late T'ang people, after having migrated, were forced by circumstances to cut off relations with their original clan members. As clan loyalty weakened, they seemed to be content to register the new towns as their homes. In a short but interesting article discussing the genealogies of prominent Sung officials from Szechwan, Aoyama Sadao points out that most of these officials claimed to be descendents of late T'ang or Five Dynasties immigrants.¹⁶ But very few of them could trace clearly their lineage lines back to their ancestors. In other articles on different areas, Aoyama further shows that many prominent officials actually chose to abandon the claim of being descendants of prominent T'ang clans; they were nearly all registered in new localities and actually made little effort to identify themselves with their former ancestral bases.¹⁷

The Li family from Ching-chao (Ch'ang-an, Shenhsi) offers a good example. This family made its name during the Five Dynasties by producing a good number of military men and civil officials. Among them were, notably, Li T'ao (898-961) and Li Huan (?-962). Their biographies suggest that they were descendents of Li Wei, son of Emperor Ching-tsung (r. 825-826) of the T'ang.¹⁸ In T'ang practice, Li T'ao and Li Huan would have been identified as being from the famous Li clan of Lung-hsi. However, these two brothers were content to be recognized as the Li's of Ching-chao. In a more or less similar case of the Li's of P'u-chou (of Shan-tung), we see

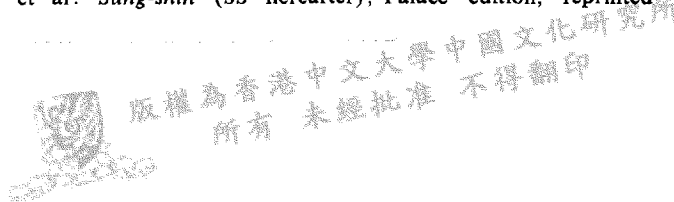
14. For these figures, check the table compiled by Araki Toshikazu in his *Sōdai kakyō seido kenkyū* (Tokyo: Dobosha, 1966), pp.450-461.

15. David G. Johnson: *The Medieval Chinese Oligarchy*, pp.121-152.

16. Aoyama Sadao: "Sōdai ni okeru Shisen kanryō keifu ni tsuite no ichi kōsatsu", in *Wada hakushe koki kinen Tōyōshi ronsō* (Tokyo, kodansha, 1960), pp.37-48.

17. Idem: "Godai Sō ni okeru Kōsei no shinkō kanryō", in *Wada hakushe kanreki kinen Tōyōshi ronsō* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1951), pp.19-37; "The newly-risen bureaucrats in Fukien at the Five Dynasty-Sung period, with special reference to their genealogies", *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Tōyō Bunko*, no. 21 (1962), pp.1-48.

18. T'o-t'o et al: *Sung-shih* (SS hereafter), Palace edition, reprinted by I-wen (Taipei), 262/9b.



that its earliest prominent member, Li Ti (971-1047), was clearly identified as being from the famous clan of Chao-chün (of Ho-pei), but the biography also recorded that his ancestors had moved away from that ancestral base and that Li should, as the biography clearly implied, be properly called a P'u-chou native.¹⁹ The descendents of Li Ti are without exception recorded as natives of their new homes.²⁰

There is no need for more examples. The point is that the T'ang habit of tracing oneself to one's ancestral base had declined and that the new practice of identifying oneself as a native of one's new home was becoming standard. Again, there is nothing new in this fact. What I wish to emphasize is that the size of the "clan" itself consequently had to be shrinking.²¹ The inconvenience in communication caused by pre-Sung disorders resulted in less effort being made to relate to distant clan members. The influence of a "powerful" family was greatly curtailed and probably confined on a fairly local level. In a few generations, two branches of the same clan might cease to have any meaningful contact, unless they resided very close to each other. And even if they lived very close, contacts were infrequent at best. For example, in the late Five Dynasties, the Ma family of Lin-tzu (of Shan-tung) rose in prominence by engaging in commercial activities, and produced as many as twenty *chin-shih* degree-holders in the 970's. What is intriguing is that in Pei-hai (Wei-hsien, Shantung), a town not more than fifty miles from Lin-tzu, there was also a Ma family. According to a meticulous study by Hajime Otagi, the Ma's of Lin-tze were related to the Pei-Hai Ma's.²² What Hajime could have said is that very little communication apparently existed between these two branches, despite the fact that the Ma family of Lin-tzu had risen to such prominence in early Northern Sung. The same could be said of the Li family of Ching-chao which I referred to briefly

19. *SS*, 310/1a.

20. See, for example, the case of Li Ch'eng-tz, a nephew of Li Ti. He was recorded as a native of Chien-ch'ang. *SS*, 452/24b.

21. I have not attempted to make distinction between a clan and a lineage as such an attempt is nearly impossible when dealing with Sung Chinese historical sources. David Johnson, in his *Medieval Chinese Oligarchy* (Boulder: Westview, 1977), has come to very much a similar conclusion. It is indeed important to arrive at a precise definition of what traditional Chinese people understood as a "chia-tsu", in order to measure the extent and significance of its influence. But since the Sung was quite in a transitional stage in terms of lineage or clan organization in Chinese history, it probably will be quite difficult for us to discover a suitable conclusion. On the other hand, it is perhaps also right to say that locality was a rather important factor in the identity and cohesiveness of a "chia-tsu", as already mentioned above. At the same time, "chia-tsu" cohesiveness grew in proportion to the number of people it would produce to succeed in the civil service examinations, so much so that one might suggest that the more prominent a "chia-tsu" was, the stronger its physical energy would become, and therefore its inclusiveness of different branches of the descent group. At least, this probably was true in Sung times. More researches are needed to clarify this problem.

22. Hajime Otagi: "Godai Soshō no shinkō", in *Shirin*, Vol.57, no.4 (1974), pp.57-96.

above. Li T'ao, after surrendering to the Sung, served in a local government office for a brief period in the south, and left a son in Nan-K'ang. In only four generations, however, the Li's in the north (now residing in Chi-nan) seemed to have cut off meaningful communications with the Li branch in Nan-K'ang, or at least this appeared to be the case in the opinion of Wang Ming-ch'ing (1127-?), the famous author of *Hui-chu lu*, who happened to be well versed in the genealogies of quite a number of renowned Sung politicians.²³ Thus, the power of eminent families had indeed been restricted and accompanying this decline we can well imagine a rapid decrease in the extent of their sphere of influence.

Naturally, big lineages continued to dominate local affairs. What emerged with the shrinking of lineages was the increasing limitation of their sphere of power and influence to a fairly local level, possibly congruent with the territory of a sub-prefecture (*hsien*). This must have been especially so during the Sung when effective local administration was trusted to the prefects whose subordinates, the sub-prefects, had to delegate their power to the wealthy people in their administrative districts.²⁴ In any case, it is most likely that during the so-called "transitional era" of the late T'ang, Five Dynasties and Northern Sung periods, the influence and power of prominent clans or lineages was becoming limited and localized.

Professor Miyazaki Ichisada has suggested, meanwhile, that many lineages rose to prominence through engaging simultaneously in three major activities — the accumulation of land, ventures in commerce and sending their sons to take the civil service examinations.²⁵ I do not wish to investigate this argument in depth here, but it is important to point out, nonetheless, that with the decline of the cohesive power of clans or lineages in this tumultuous age, while many people succeeded in accumulating phenomenal power or wealth, few families were able to sustain success over several generations. In the first place, the circumstances of the age were such that power rarely passed to civil officials. It has variously been asserted that it was primarily military men who were able to summon the necessary power to exercise political influence. It has also been shown that only these men had sufficient resources to undertake commercial adventures. After investigating officials engaging in commerce during the Five Dynasties, I have come to the conclusion that a degree in the civil service examinations did not have any particular significance, unless one

23. Wang Ming-ch'ing: *Hui-chu lu* (Shanghai: Chung-hua, 1961). Second (*ho*) part, chi.2, p.106.

24. Brian E. McKnight: *Village and Bureaucracy in Southern Sung China* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971).

25. Hajime Otagi: *Ibid.*, Miyazaki Ichisada: "Godaishi jō no gunbatsu shihonka", in his *Ajishi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Tōyōshi kenkyūkai, 1963).

was related in some way to the authority *per se*. The *yin* protection system seems to have continued to play a far more consistent role in perpetuating a family's prominence in the political arena. But above all, it was military strength which safeguarded wealth as well as influence. Secondly, it is necessary also to remember that wealth and pedigree controlled by military men in this age rarely passed to their descendants. Often the wealth was dispersed in one or two generations. Mi Hsin, who served as an imperial guardsman in the Late Chou, rose to a position of prefect and simultaneously made a fortune by engaging in cloth commerce. But his wealth was dispersed within one generation.²⁶ Similarly, Sang Wei-han, who happens to have risen to officialdom by acquiring a *chin-shih* degree, was able to accumulate a surprising fortune.²⁷ And yet, his wealth did not even pass to his son. Instead, his property was taken over in force by Chang Yen-tse, a military adventurer, who in turn lost it to the Khitans.²⁸ Another case is Li Shih-chao (?-922), the adopted son of Li K'e-jou, the brother of the Late T'ang (923-935) founder. Li's wife, nee Yang, was an exceptionally enterprising woman who built up a fortune (probably by using the influence of her husband, a military general) for the family. But the wealth and achievement did not last. Li's seven sons vied fiercely over the property and the competition and struggle which ensued ultimately claimed the life of six of the brothers. The last son inherited the fortune but the energy of the family had dwindled and as a result it fell into oblivion after only one more generation.²⁹

More examples can be culled from contemporary sources, and to obtain a conclusive picture, statistical analysis may be necessary. But for the time being, it is reasonable to draw some tentative conclusions about the pattern of rising to social prominence during the late-T'ang and Five Dynasties period from the above cases.

First of all, wealth (especially that attained from commercial activities), military strength, and to a much lesser extent, a civil service examination degree and the accumulation of land were the means to power.³⁰ Secondly, it was extremely difficult to transmit power, as well as status and wealth, wielded by one person to descendants for more than a few generations.

Moreover, the political upheavals, migrations, and changes in the social structure led to the disruption of genealogies and genealogical studies. Many Sung people

26. *SS*, 260/10a-11b, Shang-kuan Jung: *Yu-hui t'an-ts'ung*, in *Shuo-fu*, Shangwu edition, 40/1b-2a.

27. Hsüeh chü-cheng: *Chiu wu-tai shih*, Palace edition, reprinted by I-wen yin-shu-kuan, 89/1a-9a.

28. *Ibid.*, 89/7b-8a.

29. *Ibid.*, 52/1a-8b.

30. For lack of space, I have left out the discussion on the importance of land in the pattern of social ascent. Please refer to the article by Miyazaki cited in note 25.

had great difficulties tracing their genealogical origins and *Sung-shih* historians seem to have paid little attention to preserving the records of genealogies of many eminent Sung people. This poses a problem for social historians who wish to use the *Sung-shih* to study social mobility.³¹ One has only to recall the painstaking efforts of Han Ch'i (1008-1075), the great Northern Sung statesman, to ascertain his genealogy in order to comprehend the consequences of the social changes which occurred during the Five Dynasties period.³²

The pattern of social mobility which emerged as outlined above continued throughout the Northern Sung. Naturally, in the process of dynastic consolidation, chances for military exploitation decreased rapidly. But the tendency for military generals in particular and officials in general to engage in commercial activities continued.³³ From the rulers' viewpoint, the wielding of military power and wealth by generals could be dangerous, but, as I have already pointed out, since their influence was localized and posed no immediate threat to the throne, T'ai-tsu did not resort to any measures aimed at reducing their position beyond discouraging generals from possessing powerful military forces.³⁴ In the courts of T'ai-tsu and even T'ai-tsung, a great number of prominent officials were descendants of military men. According to the study of Sun Kuo-tung, from 889 to 998, as many as 32.4% of prominent people belonged to this group. This contrasts sharply with the 9% of the previous period from 756 to 888 and to the 8.7% of the following period from 998 to 1126.³⁵ Sun's statistics are imperfect and thus can be subject to criticism, but they do indicate the sharp rise of the importance of soldiers; they also show that the rise leveled down and ebbed quickly after the eleventh century.

In order to stabilize the family's position, many people started to send their sons to take the civil service examinations, even though the *yin* protection system continued to play a far more important role in prolonging a family's fortune.³⁶ This trend

31. Among the 1953 Northern Sung people having biographies in the *Sung-shih*, 471 (55.12%) are not recorded of any of the names of their immediate forebearers.

32. Han Ch'i: *An-yang chi*, Ssu-k'u ch'uan-shu edition, 46/1a-12b.

33. See Ch'üan Han-sheng: "Sung-tai kuan-li chih ssu-ying shang-yeh", in Chung-yang yen-chiu yüan: *Li-shih yü-yen yen-chiu suo chi-k'an*, no.7 (1926), now included in his *Chung-kuo ching-chi shih yen-chiu* (Hong Kong: New Asia Research Institute, 1976), vol.II, pp.1-74.

34. This is to say that T'ai-tsu sought to continue the prestigious status of the generals but succeeded in reducing their actual power. The process does not concern us here. See Nieh Ch'ung-ch'i: "Lun Sung t'ai-tsu shou ping-ch'ü n", in his *Sung-shih ts'ung-k'ao* (Peking: Chung-hua shu-ch'ü 1980), pp.263-282.

35. Sun Kuo-tung: "T'ang, Sung chih chi she-hui men-ti chih hsiao-jung", in *Hsin-ya hsiieh-pao*, Vol.4, no.1 (1959), pp.211-304. This study treats all figures whose genealogies are not recorded in the *SS* as rising from non-official families. This was, of course, not the case. For example, Ou-yang Hsiu, whom Sun classifies in this category, actually was the son of Ou-yang Kuan, an official, though died when Hsiu was only three.

36. See genealogical charts in appendix.

started to grow during T'ai-tsung's reign. In the first place, T'ai-tsung issued an edict to forbid officials from illegally engaging in commercial activities.³⁷ Since this was among the first edicts he issued, his intention to curtail commercial enterprises of officials was clear from the outset. This desire to subdue the wealth and, accordingly, the power of high officials or military men became a constant theme in the Northern Sung, even though the temptations of commercial profit continued to attract officials.³⁸ In any case, random cases show that there were intermittent efforts to restrict commercial activity. When a man grew too wealthy, he could easily incur governmental displeasure. For example, in 985, a certain Li I was prosecuted and his property confiscated, because he possessed undue influence in local affairs. Li was an official in charge of wine-brewing in a sub-prefectural office in Ch'in-chou (T'ien-shui, Kan-su). His fortune was reputed to have been large enough to afford a household of "several thousand servants and slaves".³⁹ The Ma family of Lin-tzu to which I referred above, offers another example of an influential family which was suppressed and quickly declined.⁴⁰

Although one should not generalize too much from these random and relatively minor cases, we can conclude that steps must have been taken to transform the pattern of the attaining of social eminence through successful commercial activities which emerged beginning with the late T'ang.

This is to say that during the Sung, the importance of the civil service examinations was greatly promoted to further change the means of social ascent. As a result, many formerly powerful and wealthy families now were forced to compel their sons to secure civil service degrees. On the one hand, the examination system was directed against the established social elite which often rose to power from military adventure, commercial entrepreneurship and, possibly, accumulation of land; it was hoped that this pattern of social ascent could be changed. On the other hand, the established social elite also promptly responded to the desire of the ruler, and many of them chose to advance not by *yin* protection, but rather to earn a degree.⁴¹

To recapitulate, the examination system does not seem to have directly caused the decline of the big families. By the late T'ang, it had become very evident that few families or clans could remain socially prestigious for more than a few generations. Rarely could the influence of a clan exceed the boundary of a subprefectural

37. *HCP*, 18/1b.

38. See the action taken by Jen-tsung to ban merchants from dressing luxuriously in *SHY*, *hsing-fa*, 2/21b. See also Ch'üan Han-sheng: *op. cit.*

39. *SS*, 257/3a.

40. Hajime Otagi: *op. cit.*

41. Edward Kracke: *Civil Service in Early Sung China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), pp.54-72.

or at most prefectural district. To elevate the status of a family, one often resorted to speculations in land and commerce in addition to creating a military base. But most of these newly risen strong or wealthy people could not maintain or transmit their position.⁴² In the early Sung, the government first made efforts to deprive the local elite of their military power. Commercial activities were also discouraged, if not with equal success. The examination system was employed then to stabilize the trend of diminishing clan influence on the one hand, and to serve as an approved means for social ascent on the other. Naturally, people quickly comprehended the implications of the reunification and the significance of the promotion of the examination system as an impartial recruiting machinery. The result was therefore a system constantly subject to the changing shapes of the geo-political power structure until it finally succeeded in creating a permanent stabilizing force on local level. This leads to our second issue — the quota system in the prefectural examinations.

II

The Sung examination system was composed mainly of a hierarchy of three examinations. Candidates from all over the country were first examined on the local level, often in the prefectural seats. A number of candidates were then recruited (called "*chü-jen*") and "dispatched" (*chieh*) to the capital where they were examined again by the Department of Rites (*li-pu*). Successful candidates from the departmental tests (also translated as Metropolitan Tests) were then sent to the palace, where they were further examined by the emperor. This last examination was generally a formality; all were allowed to pass, and the emperor merely deliberated on the grading of the candidates.⁴³

The number of candidates to be recruited from the departmental examinations was naturally dependent on the needs of the government. However, the numbers of candidates to be recommended by each prefecture varied. The Sung government devised a so-called "Quota" (*chieh-o*) system according to which the number of candidates to be recruited was regulated by the government but there was no strict nationally uniform ratio. The reasons for such inequities in the "quota" method poses a difficult problem.⁴⁴

Interestingly, this quota system had existed in the late T'ang. In 845, the T'ang government issued a list of quotas of local *chin-shih* candidates to be recommended to the capital.⁴⁵ The list shows that there was an evident bias against the *chin-shih*

42. For the composition of the late T'ang elite, see note 2.

43. Edward Kracke: *op. cit.*, Araki Toshikazu: *Kakyo seido*.

44. Most of the sources we have about this system are in *SHY*, hc. 14-16.

45. Wang Ting-pao: *T'ang chih-yen* (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-ho'eh ch'u-pan she, 1957), chi.1, p.2.

candidates in general and those from the south in particular. Commenting on this list, Yen Keng-wang says that it was obviously compiled under Li Te-yü's direction with the purpose of limiting the numbers of *chin-shih* candidates.⁴⁶ We know fairly well that the examination system during the T'ang was still relatively primitive and that in the era before printing very few people acquired enough education to take the examinations. As a result, candidates of the local examinations were rarely actually examined and the prefect usually decided who should be recommended to the capital. A quota system devised as this list indicates therefore was not peculiar and actually was necessary. However, one can not deny that the quota system probably served less the purpose of creating an image of impartiality for the government than that of enabling deliberate official intervention in the composition of the elite, especially inasmuch as this system was associated with a man like Li Te-yü. Given the way Li was viewed by Sung people, one would expect that the system he ordered would have been condemned.⁴⁷ And yet this was not the case.

We do not know how candidates were chosen and sent to the capital during T'ai-tsu's reign. In view of the fact that very few *chin-shih* (and *chu-k'o*) candidates were recruited in these years, and the fact that the examination system was still rather primitive, one can safely conclude that the prefects had the power to decide whom to present and that the central authority normally accepted the people recommended.⁴⁸

The first known discussion about the ratio between successful and failed candidates occurred as late as 997, when the chief councilor, Sung Pai (936-1012), recommended a nationally uniform ratio of 20% for both the *chin-shih* and *chu-k'o* candidates.⁴⁹ The memorial was accepted, but apparently the local authorities did not pay much attention to it.⁵⁰ This ratio was then increased to 40% in 1005, but this was still viewed as too low by Emperor Chen-tsung. He was reported to have commented that to recruit only four-tenth of candidates was to create too keen a contest and could hamper the chances for potentially good candidates to enter officialdom.⁵¹ Chen-tsung's comment shows that despite the efforts made by T'ai-

46. See Yen Keng-wang et al.: *Chung-kuo-nu-n-hua wen-hua wen-hua* (Taipei: Chung-hua wen-hua wei-yüan hui, 1954), Vol.2, pp.50-61.

47. See an essay question composed by Hsia Sung commanding candidates to criticize Li Te-yü in Hsia: *Wen-chuang chi*, Ssu-k'u chüan-shu edition, 15/6a-8a.

48. For an example that the examination system as a whole was still very primitive, see Ssu-ma Kuang: *Su-shui chi-wen*, Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng edition, ch.3, p.26, in which he said that Emperor T'ai-tsu ordered two candidates to wrestle to decide which one should qualify for the first grade.

49. *SHY*, hc, 14/16ab.

50. *SHY*, hc, 14/16b; 14/17b.

51. *SHY*, hc, 14/19ab.

tsung to raise the importance of the examinations and the fact that more prominent people were encouraging their descendants to obtain civil service examination degrees, the civil service examinations were still not attractive to many.

The decision in 1009 to calculate the number of successful prefectural candidates in proportion to the largest number of candidates sitting in the examinations in the previous two examinations (held in the previous five years), and not according to the number of candidates in the examination concerned, probably was the first significant step towards the practice of devising quotas for different districts. According to the 1009 method, no matter how many candidates there were in the current test, the proportion was to be 30% of the largest number of candidates sitting in the previous two prefectural examinations.⁵² The method, though not complicated, was peculiar — why not just 30% of the current candidates?

At about the same time, less important and less frequent special examinations to recruit poets (*tz'u-k'o*) or morally superior classical scholars (*ching-ming hsing-hsiu*) were also ordered. In these examinations, a quota system was freely used. For example, in the 1008 special examination, the government ordered that primary candidates be recruited from prefectural tests held in specially appointed areas. But the method for deciding the number to be sent to take the actual test was based on officially assessed quotas. The list of this year's quotas was simple:⁵³

K'ai-feng	(superior prefecture): 50
Yen-chou	(prefecture): 50
Chün-chou	(prefecture): 48
T'an-chou	(prefecture): 30
P'u-chou	(prefecture): 30

While this list does not seem to indicate that the government was trying to manipulate the distribution of successful candidates, the quota system does serve to strengthen the image possibly desired from the official viewpoint that the government was capable of interfering in the selection process.

Another factor that made the quota system useful was the wish on the part of the government deliberately to increase the chances of candidates from backward areas. The first instance that I have found happened in 1011, when Emperor Chentsung ordered that candidates from the Ho-pei area be given special favor and be encouraged to take the departmental examinations. Ho-pei was then close to the border and was constantly subject to Khitan threats.⁵⁴ Border areas such as Ho-pei and Ho-tung (present Shansi), comparatively backward areas such as Kuang-tung, and

52. SHY, hc, 14/20ab.

53. SHY, hc, 14/20a.

54. SHY, hc, 14/22b-23a.

the exceptional area of Szechwan were frequently given special favors.⁵⁵ The clearest pronouncement of official policy on this matter was made in 1041, when the Shensi border suffered a devastating attack by the Tangut Hsi-Hsia. The edict stated:⁵⁶ "People on the border who were looted by invaders, and relatives, widowers and widows who are related to them should be given relief. Corvee labor services should be spared, whenever possible. Officials who are over zealous in demanding labor services or are too strict and ruthless will be severely punished. *Chin-shih* candidates who have already taken the prefectural tests twice, *chu-k'o* candidates who have already taken thrice, and any candidate who has made the departmental tests (but failed) will be exempted from taking the prefectural tests again. (In addition), those prefectures with an examination quota of less than ten candidates will be given additional five and those with more than ten will be given additional three".

Thus, in early eleventh century, a quota system for the prefectural tests was obviously in formation. Although the way of assessing quotas appeared to be a nationally uniform ratio, the government had evidently determined to exert a certain degree of control over the number of talented people which different areas were entitled to recommend.

Coupled with this decision was the enforcement of the order that candidates should be registered in their native districts and be examined there. The government issued a series of directives forbidding candidates from registering in areas other than their own prefecture.⁵⁷ In one occasion, the government even specifically commanded that when two prefectures shared one examination site (because of the small number of candidates), candidates should be recruited according to the quota of their own prefectures.⁵⁸ These efforts by the government indicate that a certain desire for geographical balance in the distribution of elite seemed to have been in the minds of the policy makers.

The method created in 1009 thus by and large led to a quota system. It must have been revised subsequently once or twice. However, a decree in 1032 indicates that after 1015, the quotas became fixed.⁵⁹ The decree stated that in 1032, the numbers of candidates to be recruited from prefectural tests should be half of the quotas established in 1015. The decree, however, stipulated that in prefectures with a large number of candidates but with a small quota, 20% of the candidates should

55. Sources on exceptional quotas are scattered in *SHY*, hc, 14-16.

56. *HCP*, 131/21ab.

57. *SHY*, hc, 14/27b; 15/3ab, etc. For a study of this problem in K'ai-feng, see Araki: *Kakyo seido*, pp.151-161.

58. Ma Tuan-lin: *Wen-hsien t'ung-k'ao*, ch.31, p.294.

59. *HCP*, 111/9a.

be recommended to the capital.⁶⁰ The quota system was now on its way to being fairly well established.

In the meantime, the government received occasional individual requests to increase quotas for particular prefectures. They generally were made in two fashions: a prefect might request that the quota be increased outright, as in the case of Ying-t'ien fu prefecture which requested in 1025 an increase of three.⁶¹ Or he might bargain for an increase in the quota of *chin-shih* candidates by offering to trade a similar or even larger number of *chu-k'o* quota, as the number of candidates in this category of the examinations had had significantly decreased. This latter case is exemplified in the case of Hsi-chou in 1029 when it suggested to give up thirty *chu-k'o* quota in exchange of additional fifteen *chin-shih* quota. In this case, the government responded in a rather rational way by commanding an increase of the *chin-shih* quota by eight and rejecting the proposed bargaining.⁶² Thus, quotas were subject to frequent if minor changes. Thereafter, as a result of the special consideration for backward areas and the occasionally increases and decreases in response to temporary needs, confusions started to arise. Moreover, as this quota system became less and less associated with the impartial principle, government bias quickly became apparent. In any case, the system was firmly established and there were only inconsequential complaints. In 1045, another adjustment was made to increase quotas; the result was an addition of 359 candidates throughout the empire.⁶³

The hidden bias of the government which appeared to patronize some regions too much was soon exposed. K'ai-feng in particular, and northern China in general, stood to profit from the quota system. As early as 998, it had become evident that K'ai-feng was not only a particularly advanced area in terms of education, but also actually enjoyed a special large quota of successful candidates.⁶⁴ Many candidates therefore sought to register as K'ai-feng natives, legally as well as illegally. The reason that K'ai-feng had a great quota number, besides the special favor the government spared for it, was also because it had the Directorate of National Youth (*Kuo-tzu chien*), the highest national educational institution, which held a separate quota.⁶⁵ These generous quotas subsequently caused controversy and many writers spoke out in protest.

The most famous case probably was the memorial sent to Emperor Jen-tung

60. *Ibid.*

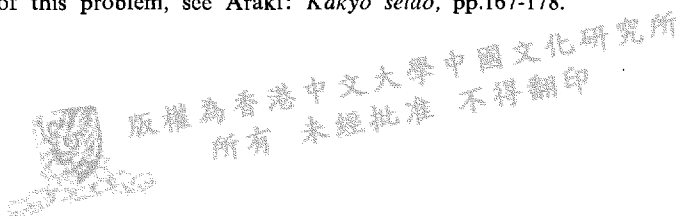
61. *SHY*, hc, 15/5a.

62. *SHY*, hc, 15/7ab.

63. *HCP*, 155/4ab; *SHY*, hc, 15/13ab.

64. *SHY*, hc, 14/17b-18a.

65. For a study of this problem, see Araki: *Kakyo seido*, pp.167-178.



(1023-1063) by Ssu-ma Kuang in 1063.⁶⁶ The substance of the memorial was not related to the quotas of prefectural tests. Instead, Ssu-ma favored a further quota system in the departmental tests. Nonetheless, the memorial pointed out that K'ai-feng was clearly given a disproportionately generous prefectural quota with a result that a good number of graduates of departmental examinations came from there, notwithstanding the claim that the departmental examinations were open. This fact had been variously raised by different officials and clearly not only K'ai-feng but northern prefectures in general enjoyed generous quotas.⁶⁷ Ssu-ma's recommendation was opposed by the famous southerner Ou-yang Hsiu who asserted that a further quota system would only destroy the impartial principle. Ou-yang bitterly pointed out that successful candidates from the south went through much more difficult prefectural selections than their northern counterparts and that this accounted for the greater number of southern *chin-shih* graduates passing the departmental screening.⁶⁸ Ssu-ma Kuang actually did not complain against the large number of southern graduates (rather against that of K'ai-feng graduates) and Ou-yang Hsiu's response therefore serves to indicate the tension that existed then between southerners and northerners.

The debate between these two statesmen also highlights the problem of the quota system. Many authors were particularly concerned with the fact that the K'ai-feng quota was too large. We may generally conclude that the quota system by the mid-Northern Sung was marked by official prejudice and that candidates from K'ai-feng and the so-called "five circuits" appeared to be the favorites of the government. The five circuits were Ching-tung, Ching-hsi, Shensi, Ho-tung and Hopei circuits. According to Lu Tien's estimate, roughly five or six candidates in these five circuits had to compete for one position of *chü-jen*, but in other circuits, especially the south-east, the ratio could run as high as one in every fifty or sixty.⁶⁹

On the other hand, one also has to bear in mind that as far as the government was concerned, the Kuang-nan circuits and Szechwan circuits (including Kuei-chou, Li-chou, Tzu-chou and Ch'eng-tu circuits, though information for Ch'eng-tu circuit is not available) had also to be carefully handled. The result was therefore not so much the favor being given to the northern candidates as an official bias against

66. Ssu-ma Kuang: *Wen-kuo Wen-cheng kung wen-chi*, Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an edition, ch.30, p.262.

67. For two examples, see Chin chün-ch'ing: *Chin-shih wen-chi*, Ssu-k'u chüan-shu edition, 2/3a-7b, Su Sung: *Su Wei-kung wen-chi*, Ssu-k'u chüan-shu edition, 15/14b-20b.

68. Ou-yang Hsiu: *Ou-yang Hsiu ch'üan-chi*, Kuo-hsüeh chi-pen ts'ung-shu edition, Vol.4, pp.265-266.

69. Lu Tien: *T'ao-shan chi*, Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu ed., 4/1a-2a.

candidates from the lower Yangtze Valley. We can use the following table compiled from the data provided by Ssu-ma Kuang and the discussions above to conclude that K'ai-feng stood out as an exceptionally easy place to pass the prefectural tests. Other favored circuits include the so-called "five circuits", and the Kuang-tung circuits. The Szechwan circuits were also given fairly generous quotas. Candidates from the rapidly prospering districts of the south-east were clearly hit the hardest by the quotas.

Prefectural Examination Quotas in Mid-Northern Sung

District	Quotas			Average	Population in 1080 (in thousands)	Quota/Population ratio
	1058	1060	1062			
Directorate	118	108	111	112		
in K'ai-feng					381.09	1.039
K'ai-feng	278	266	307	284		
Hopei	152	?	154	153	1,881.18	0.081
Ching-tung	157	150	?	154	2,546.68	0.060
Ho-tung	44	41	45	43	890.66	0.048
Shensi	?	123	124	124	2,761.80	0.045
Kuang-nan E.	97	84	77	86	1,134.66	0.076
Kuang-nan W.	38	63	63	55	1,055.59	0.052
Tzu-chou	63	?	?	63	1,413.72	0.045
Kuei-chou	28	32	?	30	468.07	0.064
Li-chou	26	?	28	27	648.87	0.042
Ching-hu N.	?	24	23	24	1,212.00	0.020
Ching-hu S.	69	69	68	69	1,828.13	0.038

One has to be cautioned against drawing the overly simplified conclusion that the quotas were established without any practical consideration and thus were made totally arbitrarily. This was by no means the case. Throughout the Northern Sung, there had been times when a return to the simple uniform quota was recommended. We may even conjecture that whenever there was a reassessment of quotas, an empire-wide uniform ratio would first be set up, and then adjustments would be made in connection with the considerations the government felt necessary to take into account. For example, it was reported that during the Yüan-feng era (1178-1185), one out of every seventy candidates was recruited from each prefecture, whereas during the Ch'ung-ning era (1102-1106), one out of every ten would pass.⁷⁰ A more careful check of the source materials, however, shows that at least during the Ch'ung-ning period, a more sophisticated method was actually in use. A record in 1144 indicates that according to the Ch'ung-ning method when applied to a newly created

70. SHY, hc, 16/4b.

prefecture, one would be recruited if there were twenty candidates, and two would pass if there were twenty to thirty candidates. In case there were more than thirty candidates, three would be recruited. The principle of one in ten obviously allowed a good degree of flexibility.⁷¹

Similarly, during the chaotic days of the early Southern Sung, the government had to resort to the simple measure of a uniform ratio. But even so, former quotas continued to be used in the less disturbed prefectures, and even in the prefectures where "uniform ratio" was employed, the government continued to make exceptions. This is seen in the measure decreed in 1130.⁷² The method of determining the number of candidates to be recruited in a looted prefecture was to find out the ratio between the quota of that prefecture and the total number of candidates who actually sat in the most recent prefectural test, which was the one held right on the eve of the fall of the Northern Sung. This ratio would then be used to determine the number of candidates to be recruited in 1130. As a result, the uneven distribution continued.

We can therefore reasonably conclude that the official stance during the Sung was to maintain differentiated treatment for different prefectures in their quotas of successful primary candidates. In general, the quotas were carefully determined and therefore the protests were mild and ineffective.

III

The quota system continued to operate in the Southern Sung prefectural examinations. Two major problems peculiar to the new circumstances seem to me to have constantly caused concern to the authorities. The first involved candidates originally registered in the north. After the loss of the north, candidates who fled to the south had to take the examinations in the prefectures where they resided and thus competed with the native candidates. Controversies quickly arose and the government consequently devised independent quotas for northern candidates. A simple ratio of one in every twenty was established in 1030.⁷³ This was obviously a fair ratio in comparison with the ratio employed in the same year for native candidates in select districts. In three cases, Chien-k'ang, T'ai-p'ing chou, and Kuang-te, one out of 24, 19, and 21 candidates respectively was recruited.⁷⁴ The ratio for immigrant candidates was decreased to one in every fifteen in 1136; a ratio

71. *SHY*, hc, 16/7a.

72. *SHY*, hc, 16/2a.

73. *SHY*, hc, 16/2b.

74. *SHY*, hc, 16/3b.

substantially higher than those in the most prosperous areas, but close to those in less developed or war-torn areas.⁷⁵ In 1156, when a large scale re-determination of quotas was ordered, the problem of the quotas for immigrant candidates was raised. Suggestions were made that they be tested along with native children and an overall quota be established to recruit both. These suggestions were rejected.⁷⁶

The problem was finally solved by gradually admitting immigrants into the category of natives. Once one had resided in a district for more than seven years, he could register with his new home and be tested as a native.⁷⁷

The second problem is an even more serious issue of dealing with candidates flocking to areas with generous quotas. This had been already common in Northern Sung times and K'ai-feng was clearly the most attractive place. In the Southern Sung, this problem grew to an alarming extent and measures had to be taken, on the one hand, to warn candidates to return to their native prefectures, and, on the other hand, to create exceptional quotas for these "wandering candidates" (*yu-shih*).⁷⁸ The quotas set up for them was, without an exception, extremely small.

The following is a table of the numbers of these "wandering candidates" in Lin-an and their chances for being recruited.⁷⁹

Year	<i>chü-jen</i>	candidates	ratio	note
1144	?	?	1/30	
1156	8	428	1/53.5	
1174	1	87	1/87	
1177	2-3	400+	1/200	roughly
1189	10	1311	1/131.1	
1192	10	1562	1/156.2	
1198	5	1667	1/333.4	
1201	5	1449	1/289.8	
1204	5	1389	1/277.8	
1207	5	1384	1/276.8	
1210	4	1069	1/213.8	
1213	7	1924	1/274.9	
1216	6	1671	1/334.2	
1219	7	1993	1/284.7	
1222	10	2493	1/249.3	

From this table we can have very little doubt that for all the advantages of education in Lin-an, non-natives had very little chance of succeeding in the prefec-

75. *SHY*, hc, 16/5a; 16/7a; Hung Mai: *P'an-chou chi*, Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an edition, 51/2b-4b.

76. *SHY*, hc, 16/9b-10a.

77. *SHY*, hc, 16/22a.

78. *SHY*, hc, 16/7ab; 16/11a; 16/19ab, etc.

79. *SHY*, hc, 16/7b; 16/11a; 16/19ab, etc.

tural examination there. Unlike the Northern Sung, Lin-an had an extremely small quota for its prefectural examination candidates. As late as around 1265, a quota of only 17 was assigned to Lin-an, in drastic contrast to a quota of 100 assigned to Fu-chou.⁸⁰

Even this extremely narrow quota set up for outside candidates was an exception. In other prefectures, they were not given separate quotas. Instead, they often had to present forged certificates or documents.⁸¹ Occasionally, these candidates might choose to invoke the "seven year residence" rule set up for immigrant candidates from the north who were supposed to be registered in the prefectures where they wished to be examined. The latter method was quite legitimate, but even so, natives frequently put up strong resistance to the intruders.⁸² All these factors added to the complicated problem of quota system and caused persistent misgivings.

Let me first sum up the main features of the quota system as it was practised in the Sung.

First, the quotas were subject to revisions from time to time. There were infrequent empire-wide revisions, but individual quotas were constantly revised.

Secondly, built-in official bias was visible and generally the bias was accompanied by legitimate considerations such as giving backward or war-torn areas more generous quotas.

Thirdly, geographical considerations stood out as the most essential concern for the government. We may conclude that the quota system was created with a simple but significant purpose to arrest candidates' horizontal mobility or, more accurately, to achieve geopolitical stability.

IV

The quota system appears, perhaps because of the last concern, at once awkward and unfair. The system tarnished the government's desire to achieve an image of impartiality. Complaints were frequent, but not serious. How did the system contain the dissatisfactions?

It is interesting to see that there were indeed few serious complaints raised against the quota system as such. Throughout the Southern Sung, Yeh Shih (1150-1223) seemed to have been the only one who questioned the very concept of the quota system as such and memorialized Emperor Ning-tsung that an empire-wide

80. See the information recorded in the *Yü-ti tu*, now in the possession of Rikkokan in Japan. Reproduced by Aoyama Sadao in his *Tō Sō jidai no kōtsū to chishi chizu no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1963).

81. See note 57.

82. *SHY*, hc, 16/35ab.

uniform ratio be used.⁸³ His suggestion was not accepted. Why were there very few serious protests?

The answer to this, as I see it, has to be related to the social status of examination candidates who failed to actually succeed in being appointed to offices. Successful candidates from the primary, prefectural examinations who failed to succeed further in the departmental examinations were, by definition, also called *chü-jen*. Before they made another attempt at the departmental tests, they normally would stay home. Being the educated persons in the community, these people were looked upon with respect and had some influence over local affairs. Quotas affected the numbers of them. If the *chü-jen* had been awarded with special legal prerogatives, then competition for quotas would indeed become very keen — quotas could only very indirectly affect the ultimate geographical distribution of graduates of the departmental examinations, but could directly affect the number of *chü-jen* a prefecture or a sub-prefecture could have — but, at least during the Northern Sung, there was in law no provision to accord the *chü-jen* with any formal privileges.⁸⁴ During the Southern Sung, although recommendations were made to give successful candidates some nominal privileges, these again were so inconsequential that a *chü-jen* status virtually meant very little, economically as well as legally. Circumstances being so, it is understandable that there was no serious attempt to destroy the system.

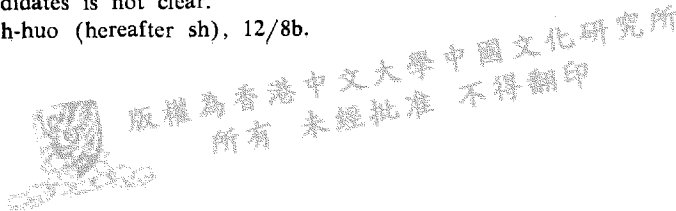
Having made this observation, one has to remember that after all it was the purpose of the quota system in particular and the civil service examinations in general that created the group of elite *chü-jen*, who would serve to supplement the local government as a stabilizing force. To achieve this goal, the government ultimately decided to award the *chü-jen* with certain privileges, so that they could derive respectable status in their own communities. The first recommendation to give *chü-jen* special privileges was made in 1133.⁸⁵ The government accepted by ordering that *chü-jen* should be exempted from both *ting* (male adult) taxes and labor services (*i*).

The provision, however, was revised in 1137 when the government decided that *chü-jen* should continue to be exempted from *ting* taxes but in the case of labor services, they should hire replacements. This order was applicable to all who had passed the prefectural tests including those who had taken the departmental tests

83. Yeh Shih: *Yeh Shih chi* (Chung-hua, 1961), p.790 (Ch.12 of *Shui-hsin pei-chi*).

84. A Northern Sung provision to exempt lower class students of prefectural schools from performing labor services in person, middle class students from all the labor services and to let upper class students qualify the status of official households was enacted in 1095, but presumably did not last long. See Huang Tao-chou: *HCP Shih-pu* (included in Li T'ao: *HCP*), 25/3b-4a; *SS*, 157/6b-7b. Whether and how this regulation was related to prefectural examination candidates is not clear.

85. *SHY*, shih-huo (hereafter sh), 12/8b.



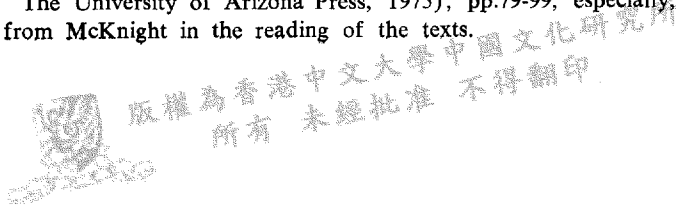
but failed (retaining the *chü-jen* status).⁸⁶ The 1137 order was further modified to allow a *chü-jen* who was the only male adult in the family to be at once exempted from *ting* taxes and labor services. The provision was also elaborated specifically to include the people who obtained their *chü-jen* qualification through special imperial favors. They were “to be given the privilege to hire replacements (for labor services), and not to have to show up in person, in accordance with the directive already made”.⁸⁷ These privileges were insignificant; I have indicated that the lack of legal importance of a *chü-jen* qualification accounted for the mildness of the protests.

Nonetheless, the geo-political implications of a quota system immediately surfaced. In the first place, the repeated commands made by the government to ban candidates from taking tests away from their native prefectures and the measures taken to settle candidates in their new homes all had the implication that one was to be recognized by the place where he grew up rather than by the family or lineage he belonged to. The quota system, was, of course, not the only measure that was designed to achieve this end, but it did serve to highlight and indeed to promote the evident desire on the part of the government to localize the influence of individuals and their lineages or clans.

The method of determining quotas shows, aside from the overall prejudice against the candidates from the Yangtze Valley, the desire on the part of the government to achieve regional balance in the production of political elites. I have already made this quite clear and it appears that, were it not because there was an unchallengeable principle of fairness, a further quota system in the departmental tests might have already been established. In any case, this principle of regional balance was used quite arbitrarily, apparently at the pleasure of the ruling monarch. As a result, it became inevitable for prefectures to compete for more generous and preferential treatment, and conflicts between native candidates and intruders consequently became increasingly serious and more frequent. Antagonism directed against other regions was eventually organized and expressed by the local elite now composed of mainly *chü-jen*. To protect candidates of their own district, local elite had to organize, though perhaps informally, and work together to win official support. In any case, by a fairly deliberate quota system, while the government sought to achieve regional balance, in reality its activity inevitably led to the pitting of prefectures against each other.

86. *SHY*, sh, 14/27a.

87. *SHY*, sh, 14/30a-31a. See also Brian McKnight: “Fiscal Privileges and the Social Order in Sung China”, in John Winthrop Haeger ed.: *Crisis and Prosperity in Sung China* (Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 1975), pp.79-99, especially, p.92. I take a slight difference from McKnight in the reading of the texts.



Candidates of poorer background were often squeezed out of the examination system by their more wealthy or powerful natives.⁸⁸ This phenomenon did not necessarily have to occur within the quota system. With the examination system firmly established as the most reliable route to political prominence, however, wealthy families certainly sought to have their sons take up all the prefectural quotas. After all, by having one son acquire the status of *chü-jen* at least meant a minimal privilege and the chance of helping the family become part of the local elite group. Although there are few examples to show how poor candidates were actually excluded from the examinations, judging from later developments, one cannot but conclude that this phenomenon must have been already increasing during the Sung. Also, it is likely that the “wandering candidates” were primarily among the poor, disadvantaged people — for they were indeed harshly dealt with.

Combining the geo-political considerations of the government with the inevitable search on the part of the people for social prominence by obtaining examination degrees, we can see that in the long run there was an inevitable tension between official efforts to confine the power of the elite to the local level and the unceasing endeavors of the locally powerful to seek the expansion of their influence. The quota system had the effect of “local control”; the government sought to increase or decrease from time to time the quotas in accordance with the changing local power structures. And yet, the privileges given to “*chü-jen*” also had to be increased so as to make it possible for the local elite to assert its influence and control effectively on the local level. This development can be seen in Ming, and, especially, Ch'ing China.

In the early Sung, the means for social ascent were the engagement in commercial activities, the augmentation of landholding and, above all, the formation of a private army. In general, the extent of individual or clan influence had diminished and was confined to a fairly local level. It appears also that influence based on the use of power and wealth could only last for a short time. The Sung did seek to break the military and commercial means of social advancement. In the process, the examination system was stressed with the effect that the system became firmly established as a reliable means for social ascent. In the meantime, the system was also designed to reinforce the trend of the localization and diminishing influence of the elite families by taking geographical considerations into account in the quota system.

As a result, perpetuation of family power and influence was indeed much more difficult in Sung China than in the T'ang. And yet, the quota system *in reality*

88. *SHY*, hc, 16/36ab.

made the participation of the powerful in the local affairs inevitable. They organized the machinery for competing for more generous quotas and they also sought to monopolize the chances for social ascent of their own prefectures. It thus was inevitable that the local elite would increase their dominance over community affairs. It was also inevitable that they would seek to perpetuate their power over generations. As a result, during the Southern Sung, we begin to see the emergence of a new social elite which we may call the gentry. The developments in later dynasties bear witness to this unavoidable trend.

The conclusion is that the most characteristic feature of Sung society was the emergence of a smaller, locally based, yet relatively wealthy power-elite. This elite was the product of the new social structure which emerged after the decline of the medieval aristocratic families; its power and influence were generally limited and hard to maintain over generations. In theory, the group possessed few privileges and came to social eminence largely through the examination system. Its power, moreover, operated normally on the local level. And yet, it is in this group that we find the source for stability in community affairs,⁸⁹ and eventually, it is also this group which became increasingly self-perpetuating, if their power was still much more circumscribed than the T'ang big families. The quota system in Sung civil service examinations had indeed successfully accomplished its social task lay down by Sung rulers. From a wider perspective, this achievement was one that indeed fulfilled the ideal of "greater *Kung*", so much sought after by Sung people themselves.

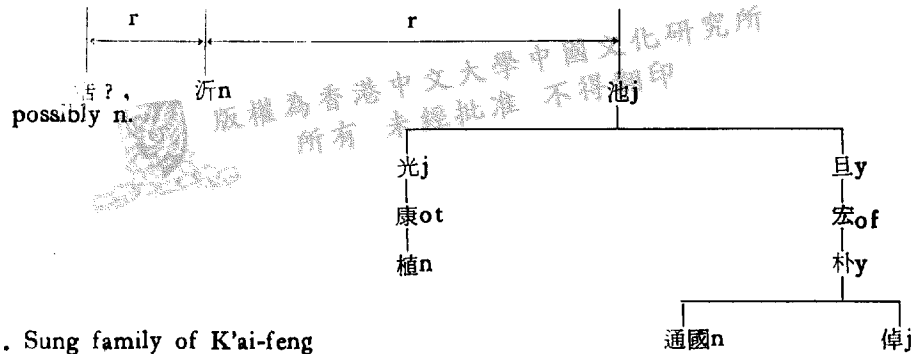
89. See also my "Education and the Civil Service Examinations in Sung China: Toward an Interpretation",

Appendix: Genealogical Charts of Eight Prominent Sung Families

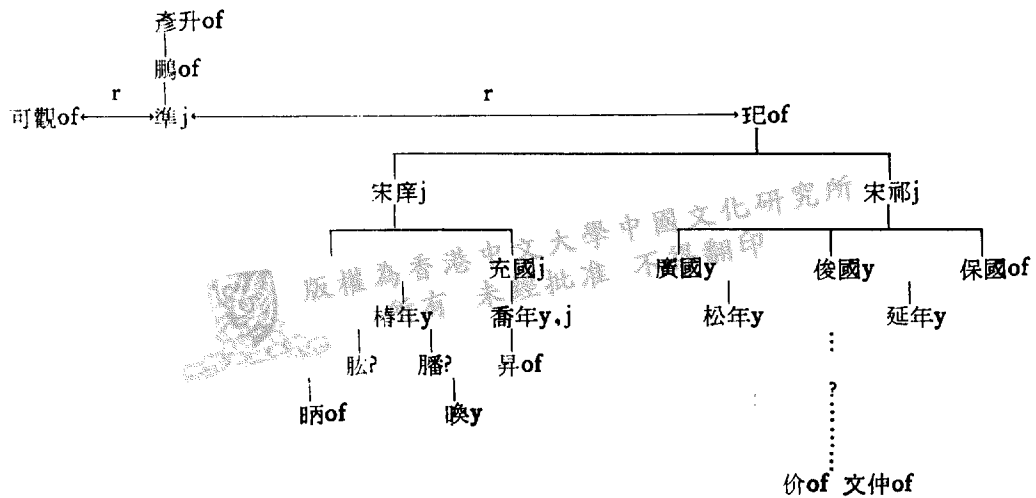
The genealogies are based on the information of Wang Te-i *Sung-jen chuan-chi tzu-liao so-in* (Taipei: Tien-wen, 1974-1976). It is assumed that people's names appearing in this index have some representativeness. A geographical name next to the name of a person means that beginning with this person, the branch of the family started to call themselves natives of the new place.

Abbreviations: y: yin protection. j: chin-shi degree.
 ot: office by other means of entrance.
 of: office, entrance method unknown.
 n: no office. r: related.

1. Ssu-ma family of Hsi-an

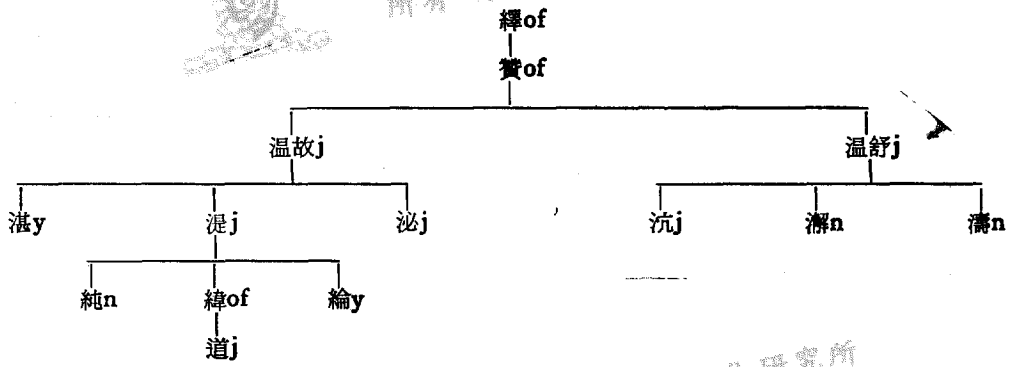


2. Sung family of K'ai-feng

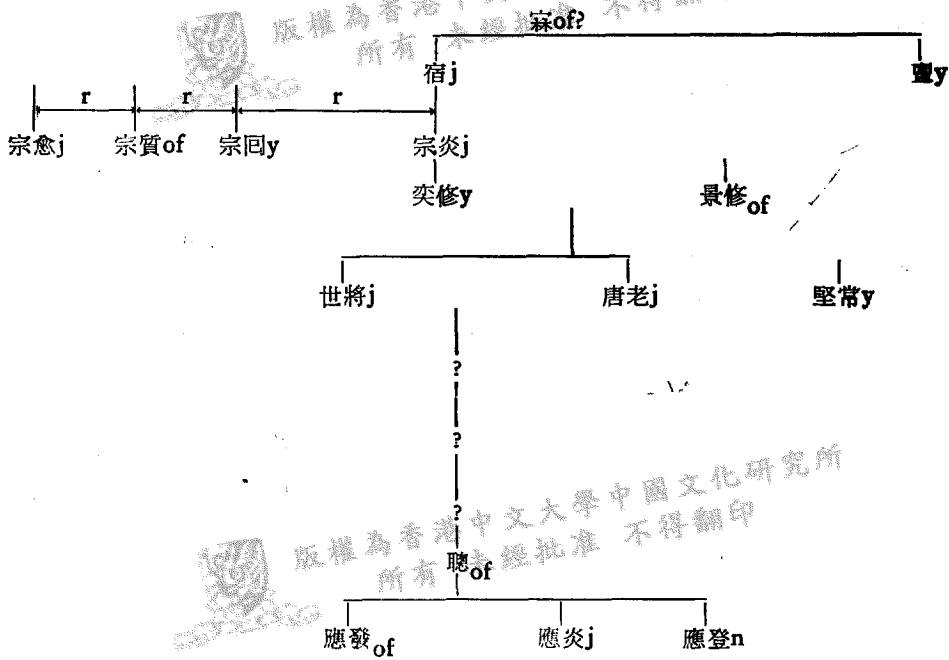


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3. Sung family of Ch'ang-an



4. Hu family of Chin-liug



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GLOSSARY

- Aiashi Kenkyū* アシア史研究
 Aoyama Sadao 青山定雄
 Araki Toshikazu 荒木敏一
 Ch'ang-an 長安
 Chang Yen-tse 張彥澤
 Chao-chün 趙郡
 Chen-tsung 眞宗
 Chi-nan 濟南
 chieh 解
 chieh-o 解額
 Chien-ch'ang 建昌
 Chien-k'ang 建康
 Ch'in-chou 秦州
 Chin Chün-ch'ing 金君卿
 chin-shih 進士
Chin-shih wen-chi 金氏文集
 Ching-chao 京兆
 Ching-hsi 京西
 ching-ming hsing-hsiu 經明行修
 Ching-tsung 敬宗
 Ching-tung 京東
Chiu wu-tai shih 舊五代史
 Chou 周
 chu-k'o 諸科
 Ch'üan Han-sheng 全漢昇
 Chün-chou 鄆州
 Chung-hua shu-chü 中華書局
 Chung-hua wen-hua shih-yeh chu-pan
 wei-yuan hui 中華文化事業出版委員會
Chung-kuo ching-chi shih yen-chiu
 中國經濟史研究
Chung-kuo li-shih ti-li 中國歷史地理
 Ch'ung-ning 崇寧
 Chung-yang yen-chiu yuan 中央研究院
 Dobosha 同朋社
 Godaishi jō no gunbatsu shihonka
 五代史上の軍閥資本家
 Hajime Otagi 愛宕元
 Han Ch'i 韓琦
 Ho-tung 河東
 HokuSō kajō ni okeru kanshyun no tekitei
 北宋科場に於ける寒峻の擢第
 Hsi-hsia 西夏
 hsien 縣
Hsu tzu-chih t'ung-chien ch'ang-pien
 續資治通鑑長編
 hsuan-chü 選舉
 Hsüeh Chü-cheng 薛居正
Hui-chu lu 揮塵錄
 Hung Mai 洪邁
 i 役
 I-wen yin-shu kuan 藝文印書館
 Jen-tsung 仁宗
 K'ai-feng 開封
Ku-tien wen-hsüeh chu-pan she 古典文學出版社
 Kuang-nan 廣南
 Kuang-te 廣德
 Kuo-hsüeh chi-pen ts'ung-shu 國學基本叢書
 kuo-tzu chien 國子監
 Li Ch'eng-ta 李成大
 Li Fang 李昉
 Li Huan 李瀚
 Li I 李益
 Li K'e-jou 李克柔
 Li Shih-chao 李嗣昭
Li-shih yü-yen yen-chiu suo chi-k'an
 歷史語言研究所集刊
 Li T'ao 李濤、李燾
 Li Te-yü 李德裕
 Li Ti 李迪
 Li Tsung-o 李宗勳
 li-pu 禮部
 Li Wei 李暉
 Lin-an 臨安
 Lin-tzu 臨淄
 Lü Meng-cheng 呂蒙正
 Lü Meng-heng 呂蒙亨
 Lu Tien 陸佃
 Lun Sung T'ai-tsu shou ping-ch'uan
 論宋太祖收兵權

- Lung-hsi 隴西
 Ma 麻
 Ma Tuan-lin 馬端臨
 Mi Hsin 米信
 Miyazaki Ichisada 宮崎市定
 Nan-k'ang 南康
 Nieh Ch'ung-ch'i 聶崇岐
 Ou-yang Hsiu 歐陽修
 Ou-yang Hsiu *ch'uan-chi* 歐陽修全集
 Ou-yang Kuan 歐陽觀
 P'an-chou chi 盤洲集
 Pei-hai 北海
 Pi-chi hsiao-shuo ta-kuan 筆記小說大觀
 P'u-chou 濮州
 Sang Wei-han 桑維翰
 Shang-kuan Jung 上官融
 Shang-wu 商務
 shih-huo 食貨
 shih-pu 拾補
 Shirin 史林
 Shu-shui chi-wen 澗水紀聞
 Shui-hsin pei-chi 水心別集
 Shuo-fu 說郛
 Sōdai kakyo seido kenkyū 宋代科舉制度研究
 Sōdai ni okeru Shisen kōryō nitsuite no ichi
 kōsatsu 宋代における四川官僚についこの一
 考察
 Ssu-k'u ch'uan-shu 四庫全書
 Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an 四部叢刊
 Su Sung 蘇頌
 Su Wei-kung wen-chi 蘇魏公文集
 Sun Kuo-tung 孫國棟
 Sung 宋
 Sung hui-yao chi-kao 宋會要輯稿
 Sung Pai 宋白
 Sung-shih 宋史
 T'ai-p'ing 太平
 T'ai-tsu 太祖
 T'ai-tsung 太宗
 T'ang 唐
 T'ang chih-yen 唐摭言
 T'ang Sung chih chi she-hui men-ti
 chih hsiao-jung 唐宋之際社會門第之消融
 T'ao-shan chi 陶山集
 T'ien-shui 天水
 ting 丁
 Tō Sō jidai no kōtsū to chishi chizu no
 kenkyū 唐宋時代の交通と地誌地圖の研究
 Tōyōshi kenkyū kai 東洋史研究會
 Ts'ai Ch'i 蔡齊
 Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng 叢書集成
 tz'u-k'o 詞科
 Wada hakase kanreki kinen Tōyōshi ronsō
 和田博士還曆紀念東洋史論叢
 Wang Ming-ch'ing 王明清
 Wang Ting-pao 王定葆
 Wei-hsien 淮縣
 Wen-chuang chi 文莊集
 Wen-hsien t'ung-k'ao 文獻通考
 Wen-kuo Wen-cheng kung wen-chi
 溫國文正公文集
 Yang 楊
 Yeh Meng-te 葉夢得
 Yeh Shih 葉適
 Yeh Shih chi 葉適集
 Yen Keng-wang 嚴耕望
 yin 蔭
 Yoshikawa kobunkan 吉川同文館
 Yu-hui t'an-ts'ung 友暉談叢
 yü-ti t'u 輿地圖
 yu-shih 遊士
 Yüan-feng 元豐
 Yung-lo ta-tien 永樂大典

宋代科舉中的解額制度及其社會意義

(中文摘要)

李 弘 祺

唐代的門第社會在中唐以後已經凌夷，許多人在遷離本籍之後，一般也就以新住地為籍貫。這種情形反映傳統世族衰落以及其影響力減小萎縮的情形。

五代時，科舉的重要性仍未明顯，社會為軍閥武人或巨商所控制。這個情形在北宋初年猶是如此，因此考試制度之興起必須從這個角度去瞭解。宋初諸帝提拔寒賤，目的即在於壓抑這些武人或經商致富的新貴。

考試制度中一個重要發展就是解額的辦法，解額之辦法若從絕對公正的立場言之並不合理，可見它所以會成立是因為政府必須考慮地緣政治，使政治勢力得能平均分配。既然傳統世族衰落，新的地方上的領袖由考試出身當官的人及其家庭成員所扮演，政府自然須設法維持每一個地域都能多多少少有人由科舉出官，或至少有人能當上「舉人」。

解額僅限於第一級州縣考試（解試），因此對於最後的考試結果沒有直接影響。換言之，只有舉人的數目是受分配。這種情形在宋代還沒有太大的意義，因為宋政府給舉人的權利十分有限。但久而久之，舉人的地位及所受政府的優遇日高，於是解額之爭取就漸受重視。

本文同時也注意到宋政府在分配解額時通常是讓比較落後的地方享受較寬的解額（不一定是較多），即這些地方的舉子比較容易考試出身為舉人。這一點也充份證明解額制度有濃厚的地緣政治色彩。