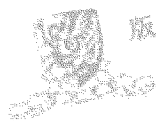


Thomas H.C. Lee. *Essays on Sung Education*. Taipei: Tung Sheng Publishing Company, 1980.

Despite increased interest in the history of the Sung among Western scholars in the past quarter century, publications in Western languages on many aspects of this profoundly complex and significant period in Chinese history remain frustratingly few. Research on the Sung by scholars in both Japan and China, the result of a long tradition of scholarly activity in Sung history and a sophisticated knowledge of the sources, provides a rich body of material that is unfortunately inaccessible to all but specialists with reading knowledge of these languages. Even for Western specialists on the subject, however, the work of many of these historians is often of limited value because of a relatively restricted conceptual approach that narrowly confines both the specific problem studied and the conclusions reached.

Dr. Thomas H.C. Lee, a former student of the late Arthur Wright at Yale University now teaching at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, brings to the as yet largely unexplored subject of Sung education both solid Sinological expertise grounded in a thorough knowledge of the sources and a conceptually sophisticated background in the study of history as understood and pursued by Western scholars. Although this collection of essays on Sung education published by Dr. Lee in Taiwan is clearly not intended to be a unified or comprehensive treatment of the subject, nevertheless these essays are valuable in presenting some results of his research over nearly a decade and suggesting refinements and revisions in our understanding of education during the Sung.

Sung education is a complex and difficult subject, involving not only the relationship between educational institutions and the examination system but also broader problems in intellectual, social, and political history. It is, as Dr. Lee recognizes, a subject that requires a variety of methodological approaches. Theoretical work on education as developed in the West is of little value in approaching this subject and can often be misleading, since much of it is culturally specific. However, the efforts of Dr. Lee to adopt a methodology that integrates social science approaches with the study of history can be a fruitful way of identifying problems and directing research into the study of Sung education. Dr. Lee offers some of his own analytic insights in his first essay, "Approaches to Research in the Study of Sung Education". His comments in this essay on the relationship between the examination system and society during the Sung, particularly with regard to the examination system as an instrument of ideological control, are not new; but his interpretation of this problem is presented in detail in the second essay. Dr. Lee's second point in



the analytic introductory essay concerning the interpretation of Ts'ai Ching's educational reforms reflects his emphasis on the importance of the social aspects of Sung education and is discussed more thoroughly in the third essay on "Problems of Sung Education and the Examination System". The fourth essay, "The Finances of the Northern Sung Directorate of Education and the Imperial University" attempts to make use of economic data as an illustration of the applicability of the methods of economic history to the institutional aspect of Sung education. In the fifth essay, Dr. Lee discusses two particular problems concerning education during the Northern Sung (the relationship between the Northern Sung Imperial University and the Directorate of Education) and the Southern Sung (the supplementary examinations of the Southern Sung Imperial University) as well as sources for the study of Sung education. The sixth and last essay, "Two Phases in Imperial University Policy during the Reign of Sung Shen-tsung" is a study of Wang An-shih's policies with regard to the Imperial University and their implementation, especially the *san-she fa*. The essays are followed by an appendix on Sung sources, of general relevance and not specifically related to education.

These essays do not provide any startling new interpretations, but they should contribute to bringing into better focus some aspects of education during the Sung and thereby furthering the general knowledge of this period in Chinese history. Dr. Lee has previously published articles on Sung education in Western language journals, and the readers of these journals for whom his essays in Chinese are inaccessible will surely welcome the publication of Dr. Lee's forthcoming book in English on this subject. The publication of this book will be of great benefit both to specialists in the Sung and to all scholars with an interest in the intellectual, social, and political history of imperial China.

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