In the Chinese popular imagination and in survey histories, the Song dynasty (960–1279) is commonly envisioned as an age of military and political weakness. The Song court is frequently referred to as “the small court” (小朝廷 xiao chaoting) in titles of and subheadings in academic histories, especially in discussions of the second half of its three-hundred-year rule, after it had signed a diplomatic settlement with the Jurchen Jin court (1115–1234), in which it agreed to relinquish all claims to the Chinese territories north of the Huai and Yangzi Rivers. The derogatory label was not the invention of later scholar-officials celebrating the reunification of the Chinese territories under Yuan (1279–1368), Ming (1368–1644), Qing (1644–1911), or republican rule. Rather, it was directly adopted from one of the more vociferous Song critics of the policy of appeasement with the Jin court.

In 1138 Hu Quan 胡銓 (1102–80) ended a fiery memorial he had written in opposition to Qin Gui’s 秦檜 (1090–1155) scheme to have Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127–62) assent to Jin demands with the following words: “How would it be possible to seek life in the position of a minor court [小朝廷]!”1 Hu Quan swore it would be better to end one’s life rather than accept the terms proposed by the Jin court. In an ironic twist of history, Hu Quan’s phrase became

1. Wang Mingqing, Huizhu lu (Zhonghua shuju ed.), 2.208. The first number refers to the number of the installment; Huizhu lu was published in four installments.
an epithet for the Song dynasty in modern historiography. Closer analysis of the original context reveals that his incendiary antiforeign rhetoric and his demands for the execution of the main peace advocates and the immediate mobilization of Song troops were not intended as an admission of weakness. Nor were these comments a descriptive statement about a change in the political status of the Song polity on the part of a Song official. Rather, they read and were read as a call to arms to defend and restore Song territory. This call reportedly caused a stir in the streets of the Song capital and continued to be celebrated in notebooks and histories throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Hu Quan’s memorial and its special place in Song as well as later Chinese history testify to the maintenance and continuity of imperial traditions in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Song China.

The question of how empire is maintained is the central focus of this book. Rather than regarding the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as a period of political weakness and division and great cultural and intellectual but “inward-turned” achievement, I propose that these centuries should assume a prominent place in an account of the remarkable continuity of empire in Chinese history. The continuity of empires is crucially dependent on how they are maintained and revived in times of crisis. The geopolitical crisis of 1127 initiated the final period, in which core Chinese territories became an object of lasting contention among multiple states. By focusing on the sources and channels of information that kept the imperial vision alive during the last 150 years of Song rule, I aim to highlight commonly overlooked factors that were critical in the revival and maintenance of empire in the last millennium of Chinese history.

The Problem of Empire in Chinese History

Some years ago a colleague in Chinese history observed, “The Chinese did not have an empire; only the British had one.” The statement was offered in response to my discussion of the construction

2. Bi Yuan, Xu zizhi tongjian (Zhongguo jiben guji ku digital ed.), 121.10a.
of a political imaginary in twelfth-century Chinese atlases and maps and readings thereof (see chapter 3). Further discussion led us to the conclusion that at best “the Chinese had a problem with empire.” This latter statement expresses a sentiment that many Chinese historians share about the application of a Western category like “empire” to pre-nineteenth-century Chinese dynasties and their polities.

One widely observed problem, and the one that my colleague was referring to, is that many Chinese politicians as well as Chinese subjects had a problem with imperialist policy. Imperialist policy is commonly associated with Western imperialism and, in particular, the expansionist regimes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that competed among one another for control over the non-Western world. “Imperialism” and “imperialist” imply an expansionist will to empire, a drive toward territorial expansion, the deliberate exploitation of new territories, and the subjugation of peoples and states. And, indeed, throughout Chinese history, we find that at times when expansionism was advocated and in evidence (e.g., under Emperor Wu of the Han in the second century BCE or under the Song emperor Shenzong in the late eleventh century) many cautioned against it. They did so for political and for cultural reasons. Political advisors and critics since the Han dynasty had warned that expansion was not sustainable and would cause the reigning dynasty to become stretched out too far and collapse. Historically minded policy advisors such as Sima Guang added that dynastic collapse had time and again resulted in multistate rule. Critics of territorial and economic expansionism also relied on an argument of cultural difference: Chinese dynasties ruled by nonviolent means, by attracting others to enter voluntarily into the orbit of civilization and by engaging them in an economy of tributary relations, or else by keeping others at bay in order to maintain civilizational differences. By and large expansionist agendas did not persist over time.

There is, however, a critical difference between “imperial” and “imperialist” policy and practices. The former refers to policies and practices that help form and maintain empires but is not necessarily associated with military, economic, or cultural expansionism. Historically, early empires emerged without the strategic and expansionist
vision that imperialism implies. They also tended to be more concerned with the core, whereas imperialist regimes became more closely involved in the periphery.3

Throughout this book I use “empire” as an analytical category and not as a translation of any Chinese term in particular. “Empire” here stands for a type of political formation, relatively large in size, in which a political core (the emperor, the court, and the central bureaucracy) exerts control over vast territories and diverse populations through the mediation of elite brokers who assist the core in the extraction of resources in the form of revenue, corvée labor, and military service.4 Elite brokers engage in unequal relations with the core and tend to be segmented. Distinctions are maintained between political, economic, and religious elites in the provinces and in frontier zones, and different compacts bind different elites to the core so that their authority is negotiated via the center. Empires thrive on relationships of inequality and difference and, in that sense, they are theoretically distinct from nation-states.

In Chinese history, successive dynasties kept religious elites out of the examination system and certified them through mechanisms that bestowed limited authority on them but also kept them out of the regular administration. They also attempted to incorporate frontier elites, especially local leaders in non-Han communities, through compacts that differed from those concluded with political and local elites in the Chinese heartland. From the twelfth century onward, lower-level degree holders, alongside others whose status was not recognized through the granting of privileges, became more visibly involved in the management of local welfare; the scope of these intermediaries’ involvement in the running of the empire was also subject to negotiation and renegotiation with the core. Even though Chinese empires may at times have been less ethnically diverse and less segmented than Western Asian empires such as the Abbasid or Ottoman empires, the strategies and processes of negotiation with intermediary elites in evidence in Chinese history

3. Münkler, Empires, 8, 152; Motyl, “Is Everything Empire?” 244.
4. Barkey, Empire of Difference; Burbank and Cooper, Empires in World History; Doyle, Empires; Münkler, Empires; Eisenstadt, The Political Systems of Empires.
can (and ought to) be compared with the intermediary levels of negotiation that were critical in the formation and maintenance of empires elsewhere.

The application of such a definition raises a second problem with empire for Chinese history, namely, the imposition of an analytical framework that could itself be considered imperialist. This problem arises both from the wider debate surrounding the history and contemporary relevance of empires and from issues of translation and the representation of Chinese history in comparative studies of empire. As I have written elsewhere, in their discussion of Chinese history, core monographs in comparative studies of empire reproduce analytical and rhetorical structures that have resulted in the historiographical neglect of key events and structural transformations in imperial Chinese history.5 Analytical features such as the foregrounding of select empires and periods as ideal types (typicality) and the search for divergence have helped perpetuate Eurocentric and Sinocentric analyses.

In this book I focus on an atypical case in the comparative study of empires: the Song Empire after its ruling elite lost control over the northern half of its territory (1127–1276). I examine the individual and collective commemoration of the Jingkang crisis (1126–27) and explain how the reaction of literati to the geopolitical crisis that ensued transformed the relationship between court and provincial elites in the area of political communication. (“Literati” here refers to those who were literate and conversant in the cultural skills requisite of the scholar-official; they form a subset of what twentieth-century scholars regard as the imperial elite, which includes others influential at local, regional, and central levels. The elites referred to in this work are predominantly literati elites.) The first five chapters trace the story of the systematic appropriation of bureaucratic genres associated with courtly textual and graphic production, and the last three examine the articulation of an imperial mission among literati and the scope of literati networks of textual exchange. My study confirms the critical role that literati have been

5. De Weerdt, “Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and the Comparative Political History of Pre-Eighteenth-Century Empires.”
assigned throughout the history of Chinese empires by Shmuel Eisenstadt and others who followed in his wake. However, whereas these scholars assert that literati elites had predominated since the early empires, while other elites were relatively weak, I propose that the literati culture and identity and the structure and geography of communication networks taking hold in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries played a key role in the continuous maintenance of imperial traditions from the twelfth century onward.

A Structural Transformation in Political Communication

Sima Guang and the Problem of Unified Rule

I have thus far established that we can examine the history of the Song (and other) Chinese polities as empires, but that there are several problems with the concept of empire in Chinese history. In addition to those, there is yet another problem that lies at the heart of this monograph, namely, the difficulty of maintaining political unity over all the Chinese territories. It was articulated in exemplary fashion by Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–86), one of the best known historians in Chinese history. In 1061 he presented a memorial to the Song emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1023–63) in which he pointed out that multistate rule had historically been dominant in Chinese history: “In these seventeen hundred or so years [from the move of the Eastern Zhou capital in the eighth century BCE until the foundation of the Song], there have been only five hundred or so in which the realm was united.”6 The transmission history of Sima Guang’s memorial is a powerful indicator of the larger change in political communication that takes place between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.

Sima Guang wrote these words before he started work on Zizhi tongjian 資治通鑑 (The comprehensive mirror for aid in government, 1084), a comprehensive history from 403 BCE until 959, the

year before the founding of the Song dynasty. His observation about the longue durée of Chinese history, articulated in 1061, appears to have been a source of inspiration for the kind of history he set out to write in The Comprehensive Mirror. For, even though he had originally been commissioned to compile a compendium of precedents from previous reigns, he decided to write a longue durée history. Such histories had seldom been written since the days of Sima Qian 司马迁 (145–90 BCE), but it was in Sima Guang’s view a more solid basis upon which to form long-term policy than the administrative encyclopedias that dissected history into bits and lacked a long-term perspective.

The main audience for Sima Guang’s original statement was Emperor Renzong. He impressed upon the emperor the frequent incidences of imperial collapse while urging him to devote himself energetically to the affairs of the imperial state. The history lesson was cautionary and took place in a context of policy debates on the pros and cons of the centralization of state power and relations with Khitans and non-Han peoples along the northwestern and southern periphery of Song territory. Despite his cautionary tone, Sima Guang noted that he was writing during a high point of imperial rule. The memorial continued that Emperor Renzong was in a fortunate position: “Ever since our dynasty pacified the region east of the Yellow River, for more than eighty years, there have been no internal or external disturbances. And so there has been no time of peace more glorious than ours ever since the Three Dynasties [of antiquity].”

Sima Guang’s observation about the longue durée of Chinese history was repeated many times in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but after 1127 its import changed. After the fall of the Song capital of Kaifeng in 1126–27 and the division of the Chinese territories into two halves, the north ruled by the Jurchen Jin dynasty and the south by the Song, Sima Guang’s observation that imperial unity is easily lost materialized once again. The memorial from

8. For examples during the period of division, see Dien, “Historiography of the Six Dynasties Period.”
which the translated passages were taken was included in several anthologies, not only of memorials but also of prose texts more generally, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. A particularly striking example of the greater publicity given to the idea of the prevalence of disunity is a stone stele entitled “Diwang shao yun tu” 帝王紹運圖 (Diagram of rulers in succession). Completed around 1247, the stele traces the succession of Chinese dynasties and their rulers from the beginning of civilization through the Song present, starting with the Yellow Emperor and ending with the reign of Emperor Lizong 理宗 (r. 1225–64). This updated version was based on a similar table drafted by Huang Shang 黃裳 (1146–94) around 1190. Huang Shang drafted the table while serving as tutor to the future emperor Ningzong 宁宗 (r. 1195–1224), but copies of this and other charts he compiled were preserved in his family’s collection in Sichuan. Through the intervention of Wang Zhiyuan 王致遠, who hailed from Eastern Zhejiang and who served in a number of local and regional offices, a stele edition based on Huang’s earlier draft was established in Suzhou Prefecture in the mid-thirteenth century and it remains there to this day. At first glance, the stele embodies the core characteristics associated with genealogies of any kind, family, dynastic, or intellectual. Along a vertical axis 197 rulers are arrayed, suggesting both legitimate succession and continuity over time.

10. The full memorial was, for example, included in Lü Zuqian, Song wen jian (SKQS), 48.15b–27b (1179), Zhao Ruyu, Song mingchen zouyi, 1.5a–17b (ca. 1186), and Lou Fang (SKQS), Chonggu wen jue, 17.9a–12a.

11. Literally, “shao yun” means “to continue operation(s).” I have chosen to translate this as “Diagram of Rulers in Succession,” because alternate names for chronological charts like the one on the stele suggest that chronological sequence and transmission (as opposed to overseeing the natural operation of the realm, which is implied by the choice of “yun”) was the core feature of these charts. See, for example, the chronological chart included in the late Southern Song textbook Ruxue shuyao entitled “Diwang chuantong xi tu” 帝王统系之圖 (Table of rulers transmitting the line). Ruxue shuyao, juan 1.

12. My discussion of the 1247 stele is based on a transcription of the text by Zhang Xiaoxu (“Si da Song bei’ gaishu”).

13. For similar medieval genealogies of rulers, see Grafton and Rosenberg, Cartographies of Time, 34–35.
When read in conjunction with the inscription at the bottom, a tension emerges between the ideal of continuity (which is what it was intended to capture) and history as perceived by the stele’s twelfth- and thirteenth-century authors. The inscription quotes Sima Guang’s memorial at length but ends with the line that there had been only about five hundred years of unified rule; the celebratory words at the end of the original text were left out. Around the time when the stele went on show in Suzhou, Wang Yinglin 王應麟 (1223–96) singled out this one line as a key moment in a historical overview of the administrative organization of Chinese states: “In these seventeen hundred or so years, there have been only five hundred or so in which the realm was united.” Sima Guang’s memorial had now been condensed to one sentence. The historical lesson it conveyed was, by the time Wang Yinglin compiled his encyclopedia, no longer solely or even primarily intended for the emperor. It was recollected by and for literati at large. Sima Guang’s memorial had become part of a repertoire of texts that had once been the exclusive domain of the court and high officialdom but that now moved decisively in the hands of the literati. How this shift in the production of texts regarding the ruling dynasty’s affairs took place, what motivated literati interest in them, and what consequences this shift had for the history of Chinese political culture are the core questions addressed in the chapters that follow.

**Structural Change and the Jingkang Crisis**

The twelfth century has long been regarded as a period of structural change. More precisely, it has been regarded as the culmination of a longer-term process of social change spanning the period from the late eighth to the thirteenth centuries. Even though there are disagreements about the timing, nature, and scope of social change, social and intellectual historians tend to agree that the criteria for elite status changed during the course of the ninth through the eleventh centuries and that local interests were more clearly and more voluminously articulated among elites from the twelfth century.

It is generally accepted that by the thirteenth century, the political elite had changed from the hierarchically defined and capital-based aristocracy of the Tang Empire, to an elite of official servants recruited through examinations and focused on the capital in the eleventh century, and to an elite dominating local society in substantial part on the basis of its educational and cultural credentials thereafter. By the end of the twelfth century, elites living under Song rule had come to accept that learning, however defined, took precedence over other determinants of elite status such as family background. They, moreover, claimed learning not only as the prerequisite for office holding, for, in tandem with the expansion of the role of the civil service examinations in recruitment for office, learning and the demonstration of it through the production and exchange of texts also became a marker of literati status broadly conceived.

Was the investment in local ties among elites in the twelfth century accompanied by changes in political communication between court and provincial elites? What effect did any such changes have on political institutions and political imaginaries? My answer to such questions is that the broadening and provincialization of scholar-official elites coincided with changes in the relationships and structures of information exchange between court and provincial elites. In these chapters I examine how changes in political communication between court and literati and among literati accommodated long-term absence from metropolitan areas and also question, on the basis of literati cultural production and communication patterns, how localized they had become.

15. For an early articulation of the nature of changes between the Northern and Southern Song, see Hartwell, “Demographic, Political, and Social Transformations of China”; Hymes, Statesmen and Gentlemen. For an overview of East Asian and European language scholarship, see Luo Yinan, “A Study of the Changes in the ‘Tang-Song Transition Model.’” Representative examples of different kinds of critiques of the localist turn include Bossler, Powerful Relations; Lee Sukhee, “Negotiated Power.” While most of the debate has focused on the nature of changes during the Song period, the ninth and tenth centuries have recently also come under closer scrutiny; see esp. Tackett, “Great Clansmen, Bureaucrats, and Local Magnates.”

16. The standard articulation of this transition is Bol, This Culture of Ours.
I pursue this shift in the relationship between court and literati in the area of political communication in three ways. At the level of institutional history, I examine how the general trend toward centralization from the tenth through the early twelfth centuries built on and reshaped pre-Song institutions. Throughout the first five chapters it also becomes evident that central institutions such as the court libraries, the archives, the Memorials Office, or the departmental examinations in the capital became the operating ground for elite networks that connected elites in the capital to literati across the Song territories. We also see whether and how the infiltration of elite networks into these institutions affected central control over the circulation of information and knowledge about the administration of the Song Empire. This question is pursued in part through an investigation of the impact of access to court archives and archival modes of operation on elite writing.

Second, at the level of legal history, I document the increasing regulation of publishing in terms of the frequency of regulations and of the more detailed specification of regulations by genre and by means of publication. The stricter regulation of the manuscript and print publication of archival compilations, single-sheet state documents, court gazettes, policy essays, and texts on border affairs is, throughout the first five chapters, interpreted in the context of their growing publication and circulation. One of my central concerns in this monograph is to discuss these two paradoxical trends together: increasing legal control over manuscript and print publication, on the one hand, and the escalation of the private, commercial, as well as local government publication of ephemera and archival and recent historical compilations, on the other. The first aspect, let us call it censorship, has been covered extensively in existing scholarship in East Asian and European languages. Censorship is usually discussed either in comprehensive histories focusing on a continuous history of government intervention in publishing, or in case studies focusing on the often more complex personal and political relationships that led to infamous interventions.\textsuperscript{17} Here the

\textsuperscript{17} See, for example, An Pingqiu and Zhang Peiheng, \textit{Zhongguo jinshu daguan}; Chan, \textit{Control of Publishing in China}; Hartman, “Poetry and Politics in 1079.” On the other
key question is how we can best interpret the ambivalent position of central and local governments toward the dissemination of state documents and political news, an ambivalence that is not only evident in the lack of systematic implementation of existing regulations but also in the issuing of countervailing regulations on appropriate rewards for collectors donating or allowing the copying of forbidden materials. These chapters also discuss the longer-term implications of central and local governments’ ambivalent position for the history of Chinese political culture.

Third, at the level of the cultural history of publishing and reading, I show that a marked shift took place in the production of texts relating to the administration of the Song Empire. In the book’s individual chapters on the publishing and dissemination of court gazettes, archival and historical compilations, maps and atlases, and military and administrative geographies, we see a general shift from the almost exclusive court supervision and publication of these genres toward their widening private and commercial production from the late eleventh and twelfth centuries onward. Such a trend has been observed in the production of some genres (for example, gazetteers, encyclopedias, and examination manuals) in past scholarship. Here, this trend is also correlated to a further burst in the publication of notebooks and the collected works of individuals—these are the most promising sources we have to explore the individual and collective reception of current affairs. Its broader applicability raises further questions. Why did a government whose initial policies of centralization exceeded those of its Han and Tang predecessors retreat to a less interventionist position in the twelfth century? Did the dissem-

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18. See, e.g., Hargett, “Song Dynasty Local Gazetteers”; De Weerdt, “Aspects of Song Intellectual Life” and Competition over Content, esp. chap. 5; Mostern, Dividing the Realm, 90–99.
inovation of bureaucratic genres affect literati identities and political
loyalties? How did literati read and respond to bureaucratic litera-
ture? And, what was the role of woodblock printing, in the eyes of
both Song authors and a modern historian, in literati communica-
tion? This technology too was first used to disseminate all manner of
texts from the late eleventh and twelfth centuries onward.

Structural change tends to come about as a result of longer-term
developments and critical events that offer a sudden opportunity for
a change in power relationships to take hold. In this study, I show
that the events of 1126–27, referred to as the Jingkang crisis, played
a pivotal role not only, as I suggested earlier, in bringing about
longer-term social change but also in consolidating developments
in political communication that had been gaining momentum
since the latter half of the eleventh century. A brief overview of
these events and their impact is presented below.

Between 1125 and 1127 the Song capital of Kaifeng, home to an
estimated population of 1,400,000, repeatedly came under the at-
tack of Jurchen armies. Memoirs of the occupation of the city cir-
culating in the years and decades that followed recollect how the
ransom in gold and silver demanded by the Jurchens led in the first
instance to the impoverishment and oppression of the city’s resi-
dents. When it became gradually clear that the demand for millions
of ounces of gold and silver and tens of thousands of bolts of silk
and heads of livestock could not be met, the city was emptied out
of all valuables and large numbers of its population perished, were
captured, or fled. Thousands of women were handed over in com-
ensation for unmet payments, tombs were robbed, and wooden
buildings demolished when firewood became in short supply dur-
during the snowy winter months. When the occupation came to an
end in early 1127, the Jurchen army escorted hundreds of carts car-
rying not only gold, silver, and silk but also books, paintings, ves-
sels, and other precious objects and antiques. An estimated fifteen
thousand captives followed suit.19

The events of these years were referred to by contemporaries
and later historians as the takeover/disorder/shame/disaster of the

Jingkang reign (靖康之變、靖康之亂、靖康之恥、靖康之難、靖康之禍)—the era name Jingkang or “peaceful prosperity” had been chosen in 1126 in the hope that peace would be restored and the control of the Song over its territories reestablished. In the years and decades that followed, the Song court relocated to the southern city of Hangzhou and agreed to a peace deal that effectively divided the former Song territories into two halves. The northern half, including the former capital, was now ruled by the Jurchen Jin dynasty. Following its downturn, from the 1120s onward, Kaifeng, one of the largest cities in the medieval world, never regained the prominence it had once held. The war with the Jurchens did not lead to an economic downturn, however. The population in both the north and the south recovered (with the exception of some areas, particularly in the new border zone), and judging from the Southern Song state’s fiscal income and sustained urbanization it appears that the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were broadly speaking not a time of socioeconomic crisis. Nevertheless, the loss of the north left an indelible impression on the minds of those who witnessed the events and remained for future generations who lived in the south “a shame to be washed away.” In this sense the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were a time of crisis. I suggest that this event and similar events taking place in other parts of the Song Empire in the 1120s and the longer-term territorial division that followed led to a stabilization of structural transformations in the relationship between court and imperial elites in the south. This transformation in the social sphere and in political communication in turn had long-term effects for the maintenance of imperial rule in later Chinese history.

The Literati Adoption of an Imperial Mission

A significant and often overlooked feature of the twelfth-century surge in literati textual production outlined above is the articulation of an imperial mission. According to Herfried Münkler, “All empires that have lasted any length of time have chosen as their
self-justifying objective a world-historical task or mission that
covers cosmological or redemptive meaning on their activity.” Such
a mission is, in Münkler’s analysis of the Roman Empire, mostly
directed at the political elites at the imperial center and motivates
them to transcend personal interests and to take on duties that can
only be realized in the long term. In early Chinese history the piv-
otal cosmological role of the ruler was theorized and justified in
texts and ritual practice. Cosmological schemes were used to differ-
entiate between the domain of civilization and the boundaries
of non-Chinese social life. More generally, Mark Edward Lewis,
in *Writing and Authority in Early China* (1999), has shown that the
viability of a unified empire in the last centuries BCE depended on its
inscription as an imaginary realm in a classical canon and on his-
torical, administrative, philosophical, literary, and encyclopedic
texts. The scholars and advisors who designed this imaginary

20. Münkler, *Empires*, 84. The emphasis on graphic, historical, and archival texts in
the articulation of the elite mission in this monograph differs from that of Chinese and
comparative studies of empire, which consider ideological factors equally key in the
consolidation and maintenance of empires but tend to define these as broad cultural
orientations—abstract traditions rather than historically experienced identities. Doyle
(*Empires*) emphasizes public legitimacy. Mann (*The Sources of Social Power*) sees ideol-
ogy as a key dimension of social power. And for Eisenstadt (*The Political Systems of
Empires*) “cultural programmes” are an important variable in explaining the different
histories of Eastern and Western polities. Münkler’s approach to imperial mission allows
for greater analytical and historical specificity.

21. Lewis’s work shifted attention from the detection of the formal characteristics of
empire (the military conquest of wide territories and many peoples; the exploitation of
the conquered through taxation, tribute, or conscription; imperial projects; imperial
symbols and institutions; imperial elites and collaborating classes) to the historically
and culturally specific conceptualization of empire as a crucial factor in its formation.
More recent scholarship (Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk*; McMullen, *State and
Scholars in T’ang China*) has highlighted the role of Buddhist, Daoist, and classical/Con-
fucian texts and rituals in the legitimization of Sui and Tang imperial rulership and
in the construction of a political and cultural common ground among the elite. The
standardization of commentarial traditions in *Wujing zhengyi 五經正義* (The correct
meaning of the Five Classics) and other large-scale court-sponsored textual projects
were, as shown in the work of David McMullen, a powerful example of the impor-
tance attributed to shared textual knowledge in the creation of an imperial elite. The
first Song rulers similarly endorsed large-scale textual projects in an effort to generate
realm justified the ruler’s authority and the project of unification, but, in defining the scope of the harmonious sociopolitical order that should prevail, this interpretive elite also staked out a role for themselves and those who followed in their footsteps.

Many of the synthetic, historical, and literary texts compiled in the formative years of the Qin, Han, and Tang empires became canonical and thus continued to exert influence over literati imaginations during the Song and later dynasties. The questions of which of these texts were particularly influential and how they were read are taken up in several chapters and especially in the chapters on the representation of the Chinese territories, borders, and foreign others (chapters 3–5, 8), in which the interest in “The Tribute of Yu” chapter of *The Book of Documents* is highlighted.

It is one of my key contentions in this monograph that by the beginning of the second millennium different kinds of information contributed to the conceptualization of empire. The imperial vision was no longer solely informed by the coherent and durable knowledge of the classical canon and the large administrative, historical, literary, or medical compendia sponsored by successive dynasties’ founding emperors; it was continually reinforced by historical and current information about the Song polity. On the basis of an investigation into changes in the production and circulation of Song archival and current information, I propose that the relative retreat in the court’s position referred to in the previous section brought with it a strengthening of elite commitment to the imperial state and not, as has been argued, a turn away from the center and imperial government. The Jurchens’ lasting occupation of the northern half of the Song territories questioned the ability of the court and the central bureaucracy to uphold the mission. During this prolonged geopolitical crisis, the mission was stressed more than ever, and political networks dedicated to the recovery of the north spread from traditionally legitimate political actors (those in active service) to those in the provinces anxious about the court’s dedication to the larger project of territorial reunification. Lower-level bureaucrats as

elite support and recruit generations of men schooled in officially sanctioned editions of texts.
well as local elites monitored and studied personnel and policy shifts continually. The recovery of the north did not seem on the immediate horizon for most of the duration of the Southern Song dynasty, and when hopes were raised they were quickly disappointed, as in the costly campaigns of the early 1160s and the early 1200s. The imperial mission can, therefore, not be explained exclusively in terms of direct elite interests; it required the formation of attachments to state and territory that transcended the interests of self, family, and locality.

Did the meaning of the imperial mission change as a result of the broadening and provincialization of the political elite in the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries? Through an examination of the commemoration of territorial loss and its articulation in a wide range of cartographic and geographic work in chapters 3–5, I argue that the enduring occupation of the north led to a prioritization of the recovery of the full extent of the Chinese territories and an attachment to “a normative empire.” The dimensions of this idealized polity were determined on the basis of universal (cosmological, topographical, and classical) grounds as well as historical precedent.

The foregrounding of such territorial concerns in elite commitments in the capital as well as in the provinces finally also raises questions about broader changes in political culture. In particular it raises questions about the role of loyalty (zhong 忠) in the self-perception and behavior of Song literati. Political and intellectual historians have observed that loyalty—a central virtue in Chinese political theory since the Warring States philosophers’ reflections on the relationship between ruler and minister—was defined in more exclusive terms in the eleventh century. James Liu and Naomi Standen have argued that the historiography of eleventh-century politicians such as Ou-yang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–72) and Sima Guang provides clear evidence that attitudes toward loyalty were hardening in the wake of the period of imperial disintegration and contending states covering the mid-eighth through the late tenth centuries. Standen further

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23. James T. C. Liu, Ou-yang Hsiu; Standen, Unbounded Loyalty, chap. 2.
demonstrates that the interpretation of loyalty in historical texts changed from that of a quality of a personal relationship to that of a relationship between a subject and the ruling dynasty. Others have argued that Neo-Confucianism contributed toward the idealization of loyalty toward emperor and dynasty to the extent that it became a litmus test of the literatus and standard feature of late imperial political culture best observed in the dramatic displays of loyalists refusing to serve new masters in the early Yuan, the early Ming, the early Qing, and even the beginning of the republican era.

On the other hand, Jennifer Jay has shown that the significance of loyalty has often been overstated, mostly as the result of twentieth-century nationalist historiography. In chapter 8 I examine some of the contexts and meanings in which loyalty is discussed in the sources examined there. I will also propose there that a sense of empire in a very territorial sense determined the meaning of dynastic loyalty for the majority of the elite who, as Jay conclusively demonstrates, did not take the course of martyrdom or engage in other radical displays of dynastic loyalism. Dynastic legitimacy and thus loyalty to emperor and dynasty alike was for many premised on the dynasty’s dedication to the goal of restoring the normative dimensions of the homeland.

Networks and the Geography of Communication

A second significant feature of the surge in textual production about the affairs of the reigning dynasty is the structure and geographic scope of the networks within which such texts were exchanged and commented upon. Networks, fluid and dynamic configurations of social relationships, cut across the central and local government institutions charged with communication between the capital and the localities. The interaction between institutional frameworks and social networks is a critical concern in this work since access to court news and state documents depended on per-

24. Jay, A Change in Dynasties.
sonnel with institutional affiliations to the central bureaucracy and on broader networks in the capital and in the provinces. Networks were equally critical in both the manuscript and print publication of primary state documents and secondary discourses about them. As private and commercial printing took off in the eleventh and especially the twelfth century, the embeddedness of authors and editors in broader social networks, or their ability to create ties with peers, often determined to what extent their work circulated.

The critical examination of the social networks underlying the publication of specific titles can thus help us better understand access and publication, but in order to explore the structure and the dynamics of networks more systematically those genres in which social relationships were recorded and recalled need to be taken into consideration. Letter collections and notebooks are the sources most suited for this purpose and for a historical examination of the role of elite networks in political communication. They are the best sources we have to read about individual and collective interpretations of Song dynastic history and current affairs and to investigate the reception history of state documents. Judging from the extant record, the sharing and the publication of letters in Song times proceeded on an unparalleled scale in Chinese and world history. Basing his calculations on a tagging of all published personal letters included in a recent edition of all Song prose texts, Chu Ping-tzu has counted 17,957 letters by 611 authors in total. From my review of a wider selection of epistolary materials including more formal genres in the same collection, I estimate the total number of extant letters for the Song period to lie between 20,000 and 25,000. By contrast, less than 1,000 exist for the entirety of the Tang period. Similarly, only a few hundred remain from the Liao and Jin periods.

Bernard Gowers estimates the number of letters surviving from

25. Chu Ping-tzu, “Beyond the Personal.” This number does not include genres of official communication such as qi 启, biao 表, zou 奏, etc.
26. These estimates are based on the letters included in the large prose collections for these periods (and their supplements), Quan Tang wen and Quan Liao Jin wen—in the case of Quan Liao Jin wen, the estimate also includes some of the collections on which it was based. I acknowledge the assistance of Chu Mingkin for the Quan Liao Jin estimate.
twelfth-century Western Europe in the low thousands. A similar unprecedented growth took place in the publication of notebooks, as will be discussed in chapter 6. In this monograph I have opted to start with a case study of a series of notebooks in which the author regularly noted down the source of the written quotations or oral information he chose to discuss. From my analysis of the social and geographical distribution of informants as well as their temporal coordinates (see chapter 7) we can begin to construct hypotheses about the structure and the geographic scope of literati networks in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Such an analysis calls into question prevalent models for understanding political communication in imperial China. Within William Skinner’s macroregional model of Chinese geography, further discussed in chapter 7, political decisions were transmitted from the center and moved down a strictly hierarchical chain of administrative units. Within this chain each lower-level unit was made to fit within one and only one higher-level unit and, so, was effectively controlled by the center. In Skinner’s model, politics also took place in standard- and intermediate-level marketing towns at a remove from the bureaucratic chain of command. Here, local government and local elites intermingled and jointly led a variety of local welfare operations. In such a model there is no room for communication and exchange among elites resident in standard, intermediate, or central market towns that were not adjacent within the central place model of marketing towns. Political communication outside of the bureaucratic hierarchy of administrative places is then limited to local marketing patterns, patterns that were restricted by environmental conditions that divided the Chinese territories up into discrete physiographic regions.

The geography of elite communication remains a largely unexplored field, and only a preliminary step can be undertaken here. At a minimum I hope to suggest that cross-regional communication

was a common phenomenon among literati in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As others have suggested with regard to the relative neglect of inter- and supraregional economic exchange in Skinner’s work, political communication and politics similarly cut across the hierarchies of formal administrative organization. This finding raises questions about the correlation between information exchange and other types of relationships. If we grant that elite marriage patterns became geographically more restricted in the post-1127 period and that elites invested more heavily in local ties and local interests, did communication networks similarly contract, or did they, conversely, expand?

The history of communication networks in this monograph is informed by social network analysis. How I have engaged network methodologies and the expanding body of literature in historical network analysis is presented in more detail elsewhere. In addition to social network analysis, the research on which this book is based combines traditional philological and historical methods with the use of prosopographical databases, historical geographic information systems, digital text analysis, and corpus linguistics. In view of recurring debates about digital and quantitative methods in the humanities, I have written a separate and extended explanation of my adaptation of digital methods in this work and the value of such methods for cultural history and humanities research in general.

Finally, I have read the notebooks discussed in this monograph not so much as sources from which relational data can be extracted but as purposeful recollections of meaningful social relationships, conversations, and engagements with the writings of named authors and texts. This implies that political communication was not their sole or even their main aim. Rather, because of the diversity of the concerns and interests addressed, these sources allow us to ask in broader terms how literati identities were shaped and reshaped in the course of the Song dynasty. Through memories of reading and conversation, authors of the period evoked shared concerns and a multiplicity of political and cultural discourses and also articulated

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29. De Weerdt, “Two Frameworks.”
30. De Weerdt, “Digital Interpretations” and “Isn’t the Siku quanshu Enough?”
their position within this context. In this way, notebook authors gave voice to the concrete social relationships and the cultural and political discourses within which individual elite identities were fashioned. My goal here is not to write a biographical narrative on this basis—only a full translation of individual texts would do justice to these sources in this respect. However, by analyzing in the aggregate the recollections recorded in the notebooks of lesser-known twelfth- and thirteenth-century authors I can begin to rewrite the cultural history of literati identities in the process of formation. On this basis we can also question the presumption that elite collaboration with the imperial court can be best understood with reference to overarching ideologies such as Confucianism or, from the twelfth century onward, Neo-Confucianism.

Communication and Information

The question of how the circulation of political information and political communication among officials and other sectors of the population impacts on state formation, imperial integration, and national identity has in recent years received much attention from historians working on various parts of the early modern and modern world. Below I clarify my use of a second set of terms that would have been unfamiliar to Song literati. As in other recent work, I will also seek here to dislodge political information and communication and the technology of printing from a narrative in which they are linked to the formation of the modern nation-state.31

31. In contrast to the limited or nonexistent coverage of communication in general and of the sources and channels of political information in particular in comparative work on preindustrial empires, historians working on various parts of the early modern world have recently explored the dynamics of state formation and imperial integration from the perspective of social and political communication. Areas of research of particular relevance include the relationship between social communication and politics (de Vivo); the role of “information” and printed communication in the creation of a sense of nationhood (Berry, Frankel, and Anderson); the adaptation of statist models in public discourse (Berry and Frankel); and the relationship between local and imperial information systems (Bayly). Berry, Japan in Print; de Vivo, Information and Communication in Venice; Frankel, States of Inquiry; Bayly, Empire and Information.
“Political communication” is a rather malleable term. I use it here in the same broad sense as Filippo de Vivo does in his work on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Venetian politics: “the circulation of information and ideas concerning political institutions and events.” Political communication in this sense is here also considered a political act. In de Vivo’s work, communication was politics in the very concrete sense that it was an arena in which the government’s attempts to preserve secrecy clashed with various social actors’ need for information and alliance building in the wake of the early sixteenth-century military crisis. De Vivo also shows that the tacit recognition of leaking as part of the political process was always challenged. Even though the government condoned and occasionally made use of leaking and pamphleteering, it reassured its policy of secrecy once the political or diplomatic crisis had passed.

A second implication of this definition of “political communication” is that communication implied secrecy. In the maritime empire of Venice in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, a state like the Chinese Empire, with a relatively large ruling class but with strict boundaries defining who could exercise political power, secrecy was to some extent a myth, but it was a myth that was essential for the maintenance of another myth—that of harmony among the top of the administrative hierarchy, and unanimity in political decision making. The city of Venice was imagined to speak in one voice by Venetians and other Europeans alike.

Secrecy had been part of the constitution of Chinese empires ever since the politicians laying the foundations for the establishment of the Qin Empire made it an essential part of political practice. As in early modern Venice, successive imperial bureaucracies were imagined by imperial elites and foreign interpreters alike to carry out the one will of the emperor. Historically, crises of confidence occasioned by military and/or diplomatic defeat revealed a growing tension between the policy of secrecy and elite social and political needs. As in early sixteenth-century Venice, in twelfth-century Song China military and diplomatic defeat led to an outpour

32. De Vivo, Information and Communication in Venice, 2.
33. Ibid.
of publications about current affairs relating especially to personnel issues and military and diplomatic policy.

The implementation of the civil service examinations and the broader cultural impact of them also stimulated demand for current political information. The exponential growth of the number of candidates preparing and sitting for the civil service examinations and the attested role of current information in the examinations led to an increased demand for information about dynastic history and court policy. As will be shown in each chapter of this book, John Chaffee’s estimates of the increase in candidates sitting the lowest level examinations—from 20,000 to 30,000 in the early eleventh century to 79,000 one century later and 400,000 or more for the Southern Song alone by the mid-thirteenth century—correspond with growing evidence of the private and commercial publication of archival materials, state documents, and other types of current information. More widespread publication and use of such materials at each stage counterpointed government protestations of the divisive potential of policy documents and the threat they posed to security and unity should they be disclosed to the Song Empire’s powerful northern neighbors.

Communication could no longer be imagined as a top-down affair in which the court instructs the people: the very genres and channels of official communication became sites of negotiation. Ambivalence about publicity always remained; as we shall see, the same individuals advocating policies that supported the imposition of secrecy were also found to be leaking information or to be benefiting from leaks. By exploring the tensions between secrecy and publicity, this work proposes that secrecy and unanimity proved to be myths worth preserving because they were, alongside the dissemination of the reigning dynasty’s current affairs, contributing factors to the consolidation of empire at a critical moment in Song history.

“Information” here appears in two senses. First, an understanding of information as fragmentary and ephemeral bits is one that has become taken for granted in the world we live in. Under the influence of such disciplines as cybernetics, systems theory, the computer

34. Chaffee, The Thorny Gates of Learning, 36.
sciences, artificial intelligence, and, more recently, information economics, we have come to think of information as something akin to energy: it is characterized by the uninterrupted flow of fragmentary and ephemeral bits.\(^\text{35}\) Even though the speed and flow of information thus conceived are unparalleled, information in the sense of fragmentary and ephemeral bits is not a twentieth-century phenomenon. For example, Mary Berry intentionally refers to seventeenth-century Japanese reference genres as virtual information libraries. She argues that the early modern Japanese library consisted of ephemeral information, detailed and filled with numbers and continually updated.\(^\text{36}\)

This meaning of “information” is also applicable in the context of Song China. Our understanding of the term applies in particular to its bureaucratic operations. The constant movement of reports is the lifeblood or the energy of bureaucracies: reporting information often of an ephemeral and fragmentary nature, adding on to reports and circulating them, and eventually turning reports into archival materials and indexing them for future retrieval are operations that are shared across bureaucracies. Max Weber famously defined bureaucracy as “the exercise of control on the basis of knowledge.”\(^\text{37}\) When leaked systematically from the inner quarters of the bureaucratic world, bureaucratic genres and communication practices also took on a higher profile in literati textual production and political communication, as will become evident in parts I and II.

I will also use “information” in its second and older sense. Before the emergence of the disciplines mentioned above, “information” meant “the imparting of learning.” It was close in meaning to what we refer to as knowledge and learning, with encyclopedic scope, coherence, and durability as attributes. “Information” in this meaning was also part of the Song political and intellectual life, because historical and administrative encyclopedias, notebooks,


\(^{36}\) Berry, Japan in Print.

and prose anthologies brought together state documents and archival materials for both short- and long-term use.

The prolific use of woodblock printing in the dissemination of political information during the Song period, which I discuss in the following chapters, raises the question of how these findings relate to the more voluminous work on the role of information and printing in the creation of a sense of nationhood in early modern and modern times. Communication and publishing were, in Mary Berry’s reading of early modern private Japanese archives, important catalysts in the formation of the Japanese nation.38 Building on a broad review of the plethora of sources of social and cultural information (booksellers’ catalogs and travel guides; maps and gazetteers detailing streets, trades, and products; rosters listing those in power; encyclopedias of the natural world; etc.) available to Japanese of all walks of life, Berry argues that such sources provided the basis for “a sense of nationhood: an integral conception of territory, an assumption of political union under a paramount state, and a prevailing agreement about the cultural knowledge and social intercourse that bound ‘our people.’”39 Even though commercial publishing played a dominant role in the creation of this virtual information library, Berry notes that the state provided the lexicon and the framework for all kinds of bestselling investigative writing as cadastral and cartographic surveys provided the model.40

Oz Frankel similarly conceptualizes government-sponsored printed social investigative reports in nineteenth-century England and America as a print archive that functioned differently from earlier government repositories in that social reports were made available for public use and comment. Frankel also sees the circulation of such reports and other parliamentary papers as a force shaping public discourse in both the content and modes of conversation and steering British state- and American nation-building efforts.41

38. Berry, *Japan in Print*.
39. Ibid., 248.
40. Ibid., 44.
My own study places the political and identity-shaping powers of print publishing firmly in the context of the history of empire. It thus relaxes the connection between print information and nationhood in Berry’s or Frankel’s work or the paradigmatic articulation of the link between print capitalism and nationalism in Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*. It is primarily concerned with the circulation of political information among imperial elites and the role of political communication solidifying the imperial mission at a time of crisis.42

The first three parts of this book are intentionally structured around a typology of places associated with empire: court, borders, and territory. This is not an exhaustive list. The capitals and local jurisdictions were also associated with empire.43 This foregrounding of court, territory, and borders is the result of a research strategy designed to capture the opposite of a contemporary and related development in textual production in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: the expansion and commercialization of information about local places (administrative subdivisions at different levels). Part IV shifts attention to the ways in which oral and written information

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42. Some intellectual and literary historians have found in the xenophobic language of twelfth-century authors the burgeoning of a proto-nationalism. I will argue below that xenophobic language in select, albeit widely circulated, political and literary genres was part of a rhetoric of empire calling for the restoration and maintenance of imperial control over all of the Chinese territories and is not evidence of the acceptance of a de facto multinational world (chapter 8). Tillman, “Proto-Nationalism in Twelfth-Century China?” Modern criticism of the work of Lu You and Liu Kezhuang similarly reads the patriotic tone of some of it as an early manifestation of nationalism. On Lu You and his poetic work, see, e.g., Qi Zhiping, *Lu You zhuan lun*; Qi Minggao et al., *Lu You ping-zhuan*; Guo Guang, *Lu You zhuang*; Zhu Dongrun, *Lu You zhuang*; Li Zhizhu, *Lu You shi yanjiu*. For a critical interpretation of the discourse on the non-Chinese in the work of Ye Shi, see Kondō Kazunari, “Sōdai Eika gakuha Yō Teki no ka-i kan.” In his recent dissertation Yang Shao-yun reinterprets the discourse on the non-Chinese in the work of select Tang and Song intellectuals as a way to focus Chinese identity on morality. Yang Shao-yun, “Reinventing the Barbarian.”

43. Recent articles and monographs in progress by Stephen West, Christian de Pee, Benjamin Ridgway, and Ari Levine will transform our understanding of the cultural history of Song cities. On gazetteers, see especially, Hargett, “Song Dynasty Local Gazetteers,” and Dennis, “Early Printing in China.”
covering all places associated with empire were brought together in notebooks, the logs of reading and conversation kept by increasing numbers of literati that were for the first time circulated in print in significant numbers between 1150 and 1250. Whereas the first three parts of this book thus examine the production and circulation of information about the court, the Chinese territories, and the borders respectively, part IV analyzes notebooks as textual embodiments of communication networks and explores their role in the commemoration of places associated with the Song Empire.

Part I examines the role of the court in the dissemination of current affairs. It explores in two chapters the channels and networks through which the Song dynasty’s archives and court gazettes began to reach wider audiences. Both chapters in part I grapple with the paradox of the court’s imposition of policies of secrecy and its tacit acknowledgment of the diffusion of its archives.

In chapter 1, I examine how and to what extent the vast Song archives were rendered legible in private and commercial editions. This and subsequent chapters further examine the impact of statist models on elite discourse. I propose that the release of state documents reinforced bureaucratic models of argument that spilled over from political and historical writing into other areas of social activity. Chapter 2 questions why measures proposed to enhance secrecy were not implemented even in the case of the more time-sensitive material in gazettes and takes a closer look at networking needs outside the capital.

Part II examines how literati were taught to situate the Song present in a teleological history and on a normative map and argues that the construction of the transhistorical dimensions of the Song Empire was a crucial component in the fashioning of a literati imperial mission. Chapter 3 analyzes how the Song state was represented cartographically after the 1120s. Through a close reading of a historical atlas that circulated in a handful of commercial editions in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, I explain the systematic and methodical overlay of present and past place names in Song cartography as part of a mission in which present jurisdictions are shown as continually part of a transhistorical empire rather than as elements in a truncated state or as carriers of local memory.
The map became for the first time in Chinese history part of a repertoire of tools of the collective memory. Literate audiences were taught how to produce a normative spatial image of the Chinese territories and a logic for reading it. The discrepancy between the ideal map and the status quo provided impetus to the activation of the imperial mission, as a growing readership of scholars and aspiring officials could now appropriate the symbolic power of the map in its printed form, a power that had once been the prerogative of generals and emperors.

Following the analysis of the representation of the Chinese territories as a whole, part III examines the role of the expanding interest in borders and cross-border relations among literati. Chapter 4 argues that borders had become a central preoccupation among literati on the basis of a bibliographical comparison of works on border affairs before and after the Song dynasty and a survey of the presence of such works in twelfth- and thirteenth-century private collections. This chapter further suggests that literati interest in border affairs was a key factor in the systematization of publishing regulations on state documents. Governmental concern over the public disclosure of interstate and military information was commonly cited as a justification for policies and legislation aimed at the preservation of secrecy.

Chapter 5 takes up the question whether the increased production and circulation of information on border affairs was accompanied by a reconceptualization of boundaries. From a comparison of eighth- and ninth-century descriptions of Tang borders with one mid-eleventh- and one early thirteenth-century rendering of Song borders, this chapter shows how new topographical models were added to a mix of models. Through a comparison between the 1044 description of Song borders in *Summa of the Military Classics* and the post-1127 private survey, this chapter further examines whether and how earlier topographical approaches could be applied to the new riverine border of the Huai River and in what ways the relocation of the border to the central heartland affected the literati’s perceptions of their role in border defense.

The first three parts of this book focus on the formal and informal communication networks through which state archival documents,
court gazettes, diplomatic reports, military texts, and cartographic materials circulated, and through which was upheld and continually reinforced a vision of a unified empire whose existence depended on the participation of elites in the imperial project. These parts are principally concerned with the production and printing of current political information and to a lesser extent, in the case of maps and court gazettes, with its reception history. By following this work further into a systematic analysis of literati communication in notebooks (bijji 筆記) we gain, in the final part IV, a better understanding not only of the reception of court-produced materials or their derivatives but also of horizontal communication patterns among lower-level officialdom and literati operating on the fringes of officialdom.

*Biji* is a form of writing that was characterized primarily by the way in which data were collected and recorded; its authors emphasize that their works were the cumulative result of the personal collecting, recording, and evaluating of information acquired by hearsay and/or reading. Belonging to a genre whose very constitution is based on intertextuality and conversation, *biji* lend themselves particularly well to an analysis of the social and political networks through which information was exchanged and through which ties and identities were fashioned. The first chapter in part IV tabulates the temporal, geographical, and topical distribution of the increasing number of imprints of Song notebooks between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. It further explores the sociopolitical dimensions of the Song *biji* phenomenon by examining the changing social and political backgrounds of those compiling and printing notebooks throughout this period. Even though particular attention is devoted to the circulation of notebooks in print, this chapter illustrates the close connection between manuscript and print publication through a case study of the networks involved in both the manuscript and print publication of Wang Mingqing’s *Huizhu lu* 挥塵錄 (Waving the duster). This case study suggests that the manuscript and print publication of notebooks were expressions of the networking impulse, which always started with a smaller group of personal connections but remained open to the incorporation of empire-wide ties.
Chapter 7 presents a case study of Wang Mingqing’s *Waving the Duster*. I here address the broader question to what extent and in what ways individual notebook compilers participated in an empire-wide network of writers and readers. On the basis of a network analysis of the oral informants cited in Wang’s notebook, I analyze how large, how geographically diverse, and how well connected his network of informants was. This chapter also maps the temporal and topical distribution of the written sources cited in Wang’s notebook; it further examines centrality measures for authors or titles as potential markers of the authority and canonicity of particular types of materials. In this and the following chapter I further inquire into the broader political and cultural discourses articulated in Wang’s notebook and aim thus to throw new light on the cultural history of elite identities in imperial China.

The conceptualization of empire was shaped by texts and conversations about the center, the peripheries, and the totality of the Chinese territories, the experiences of officials in the field, and the reports they and others produced thereof, but a sense of empire was also defined by the representation of the other beyond the imperial homeland. Basing my analysis on Wang Mingqing’s notebooks, in chapter 8 I extend earlier work on early Chinese as well as Song representations of ethnic others. Through a linguistic survey of the diverse representations of the other in the same series of notebooks, we can get a sense of the availability of the diplomatic texts translated and discussed in the work of Herbert Franke, Wang Gungwu, David Wright, and others to literati audiences, and an understanding of the new meanings that traditional ethnonyms discussed by Poo Muchou and Nicola Di Cosmo acquired. We also gain insight into the ways in which the other, specifically the Jurchens, were discussed in relation to the self in contexts including but not limited to the diplomatic and by literati not directly involved in


policy making. This chapter concludes with a discussion of how different representations of the other figured in literati attachments to the imperial mission.

In sum, this book proposes a new answer to the question of the continuity of empire in the second millennium of Chinese history by surveying and analyzing the production, circulation, and, to some extent, the reception of current affairs by literati networks consisting of officials and scholars on the fringes of officialdom. Drawing upon the historical sociology of empire, the history of empire and information, and the cultural history of the book and reading, it addresses such questions as the political meaning of communication and of the use of print, and the role of literati communication networks in the formation and maintenance of an imperial mission. To what extent the formation and expansion of such networks in Song times structured the relations between literate elites and the state in later centuries (or to what extent such networks dissolved) remains to be explored in comparative and longue durée work; in many ways this investigation is just a starting point.