

Playing the System:
Food Supplies, Political Communication, and Local Governance in Southern Song China, 1127–
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Abstract

This dissertation tells stories of local officials' interactions with bureaucratic rules and other actors in the governmental system in Southern Song China (1127-1279). Focusing on local sustenance, I try to explore two questions: how did local officials strive to achieve their administrative and personal goals? What do their actions reveal about state operations and the political culture of the Southern Song period? My findings show that local officials adopted informal and even illegal means to optimize food supplies in their own jurisdictions and to balance their double identities as local care-takers and the central state's agents. Their actions shaped the operation of the state from the bottom up and, paradoxically, contributed to the flexibility and effectiveness of the state as a whole.

The dissertation is comprised of four chapters, each of which examines a strategy that local officials adopted to expand their control over local food supplies. Chapter one explores how local officials exploited the Confucian moralistic rhetoric of nourishing the people to effectively defend their use of state-owned resources without authorization. Chapter two investigates how local administrators employed personal connections to increase food supplies under their control. Chapter three examines how local officials imposed illegal blockades of food circulation to preserve local grain and analyzes how conflicts over these blockades, in turn, stimulated negotiations over the redistribution of resources. Chapter four describes the rise of local granaries controlled by local officials outside the purview of the central government and the consequent redistribution of power between the center and local governments.

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Introduction

Local officials, serving as mediators between the state and local society, played a critical role in asserting state power and shaping people's lives on the ground in Southern Song China (1127–1279). In this dissertation, I tell the stories of Southern Song local officials' endeavors to get things done and the broader consequences of their actions. At the heart of my research are two questions: how did local officials interact with bureaucratic rules and other actors in the governmental system? What do their actions reveal about state operations and the political culture of the Southern Song period? The project originated from my encounter with governmental documents and personal letters that depict conflicts and even fights among Southern Song officials themselves. Fascinated by the means—often informal and sometimes illegal—that these officials adopted to defend themselves and pursue their goals, I went on to further explore the meanings and implications of their actions.

My work focuses on one aspect of local officials' actions—local sustenance. Feeding the people, or at least ensuring that the people could feed themselves, had always been a primary task of a legitimate state in imperial China. Local sustenance was not only dependent on food supplies but also related to taxation policies—how and how much the state took from the people. Therefore, a significant part of local officials' work revolved around balancing extraction and provision. In order to achieve a workable balance, local officials constantly communicated, competed, and negotiated with other actors in both the state and social sectors. Moreover, Song scholars and officials well recorded their interactions regarding local sustenance as it was such a crucial issue to them. Abundant records on the issue of local food supplies found their way into governmental documents, gazetteers, and literati's collected works. This extant body of documents offers rich information for exploring how Southern Song local officials got things

done. In order to better understand local officials' endeavors surrounding local sustenance discussed in the following chapters, it will be helpful to get a glimpse of the historical backdrop against which these local officials acted.

I. Historical and Historiographical Contexts

State, Society, and Local officials in Song China

Song China (960-1279) witnessed an unprecedented growth of population and economy. In the Southern Song, the social-economic developments, in combination with the geopolitical change following the transition between the Northern Song and the Southern Song, shaped the way that the state functioned and how it interacted with society. The Southern Song pattern of governance and state-society relations profoundly influenced that of subsequent dynasties.

Scholars have argued that this was a period when the imperial Chinese state's capacity started to decline and the state gradually ceded control over local society to non-official powers. William Skinner was among the earliest scholars to propose such a long-term decline of the administrative power of the central government based on the changes in numbers of administrative units at the lowest and medium levels.¹ This argument was supported by Robert Hartwell, who historicized and fleshed out the decline of state power by depicting a localized turn of elites between the Northern Song and Southern Song. Hartwell depicted a shift of elite development strategies from participation in the government to investment in localities.² Developing this argument, scholars have, in different respects, argued about a restraint of state activism accompanied by the growing power of local elites in society. Robert Hymes argues for a retreat of the state in the Southern Song, which left a space for non-official elites to lead local

¹ William Skinner, "Introduction" in *The City in Late Imperial China*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), 21.

² Robert Hartwell, "Demographic, Political, and Social Transformations of China, 750-1550." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 42(1982), 365-442.

society independently from the state.³ Peter Bol and Linda Walton both point out that the intellectual identities and social practices of literati, especially those associated with *Daoxue* 道學, represented a growth of societal power which overshadowed state power in localities.⁴ Paul Smith sees a gradual decline in the economic activism of the state from Northern Song to Southern Song, which constituted part of the shift “from a mercantilist to a provisioning political economy” in late imperial China.⁵ This scholarship has demonstrated that in the Southern Song, non-official elites became increasingly powerful in local governance.

Nevertheless, these varied arguments about diminished impact of the state have been challenged by some scholars who have highlighted the significant role that the state continuously played in offering prestige to elites.⁶ Furthermore, recent research has complicated this picture of Southern Song state-society relations by demonstrating that local officials as state agents still played active roles in deciding local affairs. Sukhee Lee has proposed to replace the zero-sum view of power competition between the state and society with one that emphasizes power negotiations between local officials and local elites. He has analyzed how local officials strove to govern localities through various forms of interaction with local elites, including cooperation,

³ Robert P. Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen: The Elite of Fu-Chou, Chiang-Hsi, in Northern and Southern Sung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). See especially chapters 7-8. This argument has been further articulated in *Ordering the world: approaches to state and society in Sung Dynasty China*, ed. Robert P. Hymes and Conrad Schirokauer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). See especially “Introduction.”

⁴ Peter Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008); Linda Walton, *Academies and Society in Southern Sung China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999).

⁵ Paul Smith, “State Power and Economic Activism during the New Policies, 1068-1085: The Tea and Horse Trade and the ‘Green Sprouts’ Loan Policy” in *Ordering the World*, 76-127. See especially 123-127.

⁶ See Richard Davis, *Court and Family in Sung China, 960-1279: Bureaucratic Success and Kinship Fortunes for the Shih of Ming-Chou* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1986); Beverly Bossler, *Powerful Relations: Kinship, Status, and the State in Sung China (960-1279)* (Cambridge, Mass: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1998); Song Chen, “Managing the Territories from Afar: The Imperial State and Elites in Sichuan, 755-1279,” Ph.D. dissertation (Harvard University, 2011).

delegation, coercion, and negotiation. Lee's analysis has conveyed a vivid picture of local officials as active caretakers of the places they governed.⁷ Lee has also pointed out in his research that the ways in which local officials asserted their authority and influence in local society were closely connected to their role as state agents. Indeed, as I will show, local officials' initiatives and endeavors in local governance were both enabled and restricted by their positions in the bureaucracy. Their ability to engage with local populations was thus shaped by their ability to navigate the governmental system, and *vice versa*. Although the interactions between local officials and local elites have been well examined, how local officials navigated the governmental system has not been fully explored.⁸ This is what my chapters attempt to analyze.

Local Officials' Challenges

The governmental system presented local officials with various challenges, ranging from bureaucratic obstructions and contradictory goals to ideological dilemmas. The difficulties of local sustenance that Southern Song local officials encountered stemmed from the financial condition and structure of the state. As existing studies have pointed out, despite the growing economy, throughout the Song the state was often haunted by financial stress due to its excessive expenditures on the military and the maintenance of a large bureaucracy.⁹ The financial situation deteriorated markedly in the Southern Song period. Although the state's tax income decreased as the Song lost half of its territories to the Jurchen Jin, its investment in military defense and

⁷ Sukhee Lee, *Negotiated Power: The State, Elites, and Local Governance in Twelfth- To Fourteenth-Century China* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014).

⁸ This topic has not been explored by scholars writing in English or Japanese. A recent book in Chinese that investigates Song local politics by Jiang Fangfang includes a depiction of various ways in which local officials treated their superiors, colleagues, and subordinates. Jia's discussion lays out a general picture of how local officials behaved, but she has not analyzed the negotiations these officials engaged in, the strategies they adopted, and the implications of their actions. See Jia Fangfang 贾芳芳, *Songdai difang zhenzhi yanjiu* 宋代地方政治研究 (Beijing: renmin chubanshe, 2017).

⁹ Wang Shengduo 汪圣铎, *Liang Song caizheng shi* 两宋财政史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995).

maintenance of the bureaucracy increased. According to Wang Shengduo's research, even during the decades with most robust finances between the mid-twelfth century and early thirteenth century, Southern Song officials still complained about financial shortages in central and local governments.¹⁰ The financial crisis deepened in the thirteenth century as the state became more active in launching military campaigns against the Jurchens.¹¹ What was worse, from the second half of the twelfth century on, many parts of south China experienced a chronic agricultural decline due to natural disasters and epidemics.¹²

Hand in hand with this financial stress were the centralization of finance and exploitation imposed onto lower levels of administration. Bao Weimin has observed that, starting from the late Northern Song, the central government had been expanding its claim on various local incomes that used to belong to local governments, leaving very limited revenue at local officials' disposal. Moreover, by the Southern Song, the central government had drastically increased financial demands from local governments. In the process, governments at each administrative level strove to take more financial resources from the next lower level.¹³

¹⁰ For example, Lou Yue 樓鑰 (1137–1213), a secretariat drafter in charge of the revenue section during the years of the Shaoxi reign period (1190–1194) complained that in his days, “circuit commissioners are always subject to reprimand [for the shortage of tribute tax], while the Ministry of Revenue is constantly concerned with the deficit” 監司例被督責，版曹日憂不足. See Lou Yue, “Jiao fengzhuang ku qu jinyin” 繳封樁庫取金銀, *Quan Song wen* 全宋文, ed. Zeng Zaozhuang 曾棗莊 and Liu Lin 劉琳 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2006), 263:5934.266 [henceforth abbreviated *QSW*].

¹¹ Wang Shengduo, *Liang Song caizheng Shi*. In 1268, for instance, Huang Zhen (1213–1281) 黃震, then serving in the Historiography Institute at the court, urged the emperor to supplement the funding of the Ministry of revenue with reserves from the imperial treasury: “otherwise, the Ministry will have no choice but to press prefectures and counties to fulfill their need in time, while prefectures and counties will also have no choice but to squeeze the people to accomplish tribute” 否則，大農不得已，迫州縣以應宣限，州縣亦不得已，刻百姓以辦綱解. See Huang Zhen, “Wuchen lundui zhazi (I)” 戊辰輪對劄子 (一). *QSW*, 347: 8029.322.

¹² Joseph McDermott and Shiba Yoshinobu, “Economic Change in China, 960–1279,” in *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 5, Part Two: Sung China, 960–1279*, eds. John W. Chaffee and Denis Twitchett (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 410–418.

¹³ Bao Weimin, *Songdai difang caizheng shi yanjiu* 宋代地方财政史研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), 49–128.

Furthermore, as Ruth Mostern has argued, local governments usually could not depend on other jurisdictions for resource transfers in order to solve their deficits. Horizontal resource-sharing, including selling, giving, and transporting resources from jurisdictions with surplus to those in scarcity, was very rare in the Song system, and each jurisdiction operated as a self-financing unit. Even the central government lacked an effective mechanism to enforce horizontal transfers to save poor jurisdictions from fiscal deficits.¹⁴ Indeed, as we will see in the following chapters, local officials in charge of different jurisdictions were not only reluctant to share resources, they fiercely competed for critical resources to benefit their own jurisdictions.

The financial decrease, the extraction of local resources from higher authorities, and ineffective coordination of resources among jurisdictions all placed great challenges on local officials' endeavors to assure local sustenance. Local officials were therefore trapped in a predicament: on the one hand, they had to meet the demands made from above so as to fulfill their duties as state agents; on the other hand, if local officials wanted to fulfill the quotas demanded by the superiors, they would inevitably compromise the wellbeing or even the sustenance of the people.¹⁵ At the same time, local sustenance was such a primary responsibility of local officials that it also played a critical part in their career success. Therefore, local officials had to resist excessive exploitation of the people from their superiors and also restricted themselves from extracting revenue from the people. Moreover, the ability to ensure local sustenance was closely connected to the Confucian concept of "nourishing the people," an ideology upheld by both scholar-officials and the Southern Song state. Failing to live up to this ideology would not only risk poor evaluation by the state, but potentially ruin one's reputation

¹⁴ Ruth Mostern, *"Dividing the Realm in Order to Govern": The Spatial Organization of the Song State (960–1276 CE)* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), 44–51.

¹⁵ See Chen Zao 陳造, "Kuan zhouxian zhazi" 寬州縣劄子. *QSW*, 256:5751.110.

and self-esteem. How, then, did local officials respond to these conflicting priorities? The following chapters address the question by examining the strategies that local officials adopted to expand their control over local resources. Such discussions inevitably involve analyses of the relationship between the central and local governments.

Centralization, Decentralization, and the Flexibility of the State

A significant amount of research on the centralization-decentralization model has contributed to our understanding of the relationship between the central and local governments from various aspects, such as personnel administration, financial structure, the structure of field administration, and military organization.¹⁶ These studies effectively track the institutional changes that shaped the power distribution between the central and local governments. In general, the scholarship has depicted the loosened control by the central government over local administrations in the Southern Song, on the one hand, and demonstrated that the court did not give up restricting the growth of local autonomy, on the other. Still other studies go beyond traditional institutional history to investigate how the adjustment of institutions took place. Ruth Mostern has complicated the “centralization-decentralization” model by showing that the Song state revised the spatial organization of territorial administration— i.e. merging, dividing, expanding, or abolishing counties and prefectures— according to changing needs of the central and local governments over time. Her work illuminates how the interactions between different actors in the political system shaped the Song spatial organization. More importantly, Mostern’s work demonstrates a way in which the state flexibly dealt with “the contradiction between the

¹⁶ For a review of studies on this topic, see Zhao Dongmei 赵冬梅, “Jin shinian lai Songdai ‘yang-di guanxi’ yanjiu yuedu biji” 近十年来宋代“央一地關係”研究閱讀筆記, *Chūgoku shigaku* 中国史学, 21 (2011).

ideal of centralization and the reality of local fiscal autonomy.”¹⁷ In a similar manner, I will show in the following chapters other ways that the Southern Song state functioned with flexibility. In particular, I show that local officials’ pursuit of their administrative and personal agendas paradoxically enabled the state as a whole to balance contradictory objectives, accommodate diverging interests of its members, and respond timely to local contingencies.

II. Sources and Southern Song Political Culture

The sources for piecing together the stories of local officials’ actions and thoughts in this research include memorials, gazetteers, commemorative records, officials’ handbooks, and especially their letters in various genres. Read together, these sources provide information about the same cases in various respects and from different perspectives. Memorials and petitions that local officials sent to higher authorities allow me to examine how local officials pleaded for tax reduction, extra resources, latitude in using state property, and authorization of other initiatives to optimize local resources. Although I am not always able to find out how the higher authorities responded to these local petitions, some of the replies were preserved in *Song huiyao* 宋會要, in officials’ biographies in *Song shi* 宋史, or in their funerary inscriptions. Occasionally, I also find evidence of responses in local officials’ collected works, where they themselves included the information in the endnotes to their memorials. In still other cases, although without direct information about the replies, I am able to learn from gazetteers whether the officials carried out certain initiatives on the ground. Whenever the comparison of the petitions and responses is possible, it allows me to analyze the views, rationales, and discourses adopted by each side of the negotiations. Equally beneficial for the research has been reading local officials’ memorials and

¹⁷ Ruth Mostern. *Dividing the Realm in Order to Govern*, 45.

petitions against their letters dealing with the same cases. Written to their friends, colleagues, and superiors as individuals (as opposed to the governmental offices these superiors served) in various genres, letters contain rich information about local officials' additional efforts besides submitting official petitions. For example, sometimes I see in local officials' letters that they asked for help from superiors who happened to be their friends; in other cases, they told their friends in letters what strategies they had tried in bargaining with superiors. In some cases, I find officials' most candid views about certain cases and relevant individuals in their letters to trustworthy fellows. My research also draws on commemorative records of tax exemption, local granaries, and other projects for local sustenance. These records, composed by local literati or local officials, often engraved in local steles and preserved in gazetteers, were publicly displayed to a different audience and also served different purposes from petitions or letters. Whereas the petitions were phrased to negotiate with higher authorities, the commemorative records connected local officials' actions and achievements with local politics—commemorating local officials' contribution and also obligations to their constituents. These records provide me with information about local officials' endeavors in the local context and from a local perspective.

These various documents have allowed me to investigate the actual processes of politics, especially the exchange of information, courses of political negotiation, and the implementation of policies. Also curious about how local officials engaged with the political ideals and operating norms of the state, I ask the sources about the attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments that underlay these officials' actions. I use officials' handbooks to get some insights into the common themes that concerned average local officials and the unwritten norms they developed in everyday politics. Furthermore, I analyze the language and rhetorical discourses used in other sources produced by scholar-officials to explore their more detailed and complex views about their

actions. These sources also allow me to investigate Southern Song literati's relationship with the state. Scholarship on literati-state relations has enriched our knowledge of literati's means to acquire power and status,¹⁸ their efforts to build and maintain an intellectual community with a shared identity,¹⁹ and on factional struggles during their participation in politics.²⁰ But I am more curious about another question: How did literati who assumed official positions understand and act to balance their dual identities as officials and practitioners of Confucian moral principles? This question is especially important for our understanding of scholar-officials who were associated with Neo-Confucianism. Rather than looking at how Neo-Confucian scholar-officials attempted to transform the officialdom according to their moral principles, I use the sources to investigate how they dealt with practical administrative challenges and used moral justifications to make sense of their actions.

III. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is comprised of four chapters. Chapter one examines local officials' unauthorized use of state-owned resources for local welfare. These officials often successfully defended themselves by exerting the rhetorical power of the Confucian ideology of "taking care

¹⁸ For discussions on the acquisition of elite status, see Robert P. Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen*; Richard Davis, *Court and Family in Sung China, 960-1279: Bureaucratic Success and Kinship Fortunes for the Shih of Ming-chou* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1986); John Chaffee, *The thorny gates of learning in Sung China: a social history of examinations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); Beverly Bossler, *Powerful Relations*; Song Chen, "Managing the Territories from Afar."

¹⁹ For the maintenance of literati culture and literati community, see Wenyi Chen, "Networks, Communities, and Identities: On the Discursive Practices of Yuan literati," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2007; Chang Woei Ong, *Men of Letters within the Passes: Guanzhong Literati in Chinese History, 907-1911* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008); Hilde de Weerd, *Information, Territory, and Networks: The Crisis and Maintenance of Empire in Song China* (Harvard University Press, 2015).

²⁰ Some representative research on Song factionalism includes Shen Songqin 沈松勤, *Bei Song wenren yu dangzheng: Zhongguo shidafu qunti yanjiu zhi yi* 北宋文人与党争: 中国士大夫群体研究之一 (Beijing: Ren min chubanshe, 1998); Shen Songqin, *Nan Song wenren yu dangzheng* 南宋文人与党争 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2005); Ari Levine, *Divided by a Common Language: Factional Conflict in Late Northern Song China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

of the people.” But as the chapter will show, the potential competition for the claim of moral authority between the central state and local officials intensified in the Southern Song. When political struggles tapped into this tension, the rhetorical implication of officials’ unauthorized actions on behalf of the people could backfire.

Chapter two discusses how local administrators forged direct communication with powerful figures to facilitate their endeavors to optimize local food supplies. They did so to circumvent obstructions they would encounter in following standard bureaucratic procedures. These direct communications usually took informal forms and were often heavily reliant on personal connections. Significantly, the informal forms of communication were used in addition to the exchange of official documents through standard official channels. The use of the dual channels of political communication helped local officials to govern as they desired. It also reveals a political culture with a porous divide between the realms of “official” and “personal.”

Chapter three investigates how local officials imposed illegal blockades of food circulation to keep grain within the borders of their jurisdictions. It reveals the internal conflicts of the politically unified Southern Song state. Competition for resources divided the state into various interest groups along the lines of geographical boundaries and levels of administration. The chapter also analyzes how conflicts over grain blockades stimulated negotiations over the redistribution of resources. It illuminates how the *ad-hoc* negotiations initiated by local officials helped the state as a whole accommodate and balance diverging interests within the political system.

Chapter four traces the rise of local granaries funded and managed independently by local officials. It demonstrates a series of interactions between the court and local government regarding what role local officials should play in local welfare. These ongoing interactions

shaped the constant adjustment of power distribution between the central and local governments. The result was while local officials acquired more latitude in mobilizing and managing local resources, the central government was able to co-opt local officials' activism to enhance the effectiveness of the state without extra investment.

These four chapters investigate local officials' interactions with colleagues, superiors, and the imperial court to offer a bottom-up insight into how the Southern Song state actually functioned. Together, they illuminate the Southern Song political cosmos by analyzing how a critical group of players—local officials—shaped it while acting and thinking within it.

Chapter One. On Behalf of the People: Unauthorized Actions and the Power of Moralistic Rhetoric

Since the beginning of the Song Dynasty, the central government had been developing sophisticated institutions and bureaucratic rules to secure its control over local administrative behaviors and financial resources. Local officials who sought to take financial initiatives in favor of their people faced not only time-consuming bureaucratic procedures but also obstructions imposed by other interest groups in the government. To overcome these obstacles, some local officials took actions on their own authority. As this chapter will show, such officials frequently defended themselves by exploiting the rhetorical power of the concept of “acting on behalf of the people,” a concept that both the Song central government and individual scholar-officials upheld. The rhetoric of “acting on behalf of the people” not only empowered local officials to circumvent bureaucratic procedures but also helped them justify their challenge to bureaucratic hierarchy.

Part I: Regular Procedures and Bureaucratic Obstructions

Local officials who wanted to use stored resources or give tax relief to their people had to go through interminable procedures of application, verification, and authorization. The bureaucratic procedures, which involved considerable paperwork and a series of transmissions of information (as Chart I illustrates)¹, were not only time-consuming but also susceptible to manipulation. Memorials from local officials were sent to the Memorial-forwarding Office (*tongjin si* 通進司), which would transmit memorials to the emperor (if they were *zouzhuang* 奏

¹ The chart is translated from Hirata Shigeki 平田茂樹, “Seiji no butai sato o yomu—Sodai seiji shi kenkyū jo” 政治の舞台里を読む—宋代政治史研究序, *Chishikijin no shosō: Chūgoku Sōdai o kiten to shite* 知識人の諸相—中国宋代を基点として, eds., Ihara Hiroshi 伊原弘, Kojima Tsuyoshi 小島毅 (Tokyo: Bensei Shuppan, 2001), 31–49. The diagram is on page 39. Special thanks to Professor Hirata Shigeki for permitting me to use the chart.

狀) or the grand councilors (if they were *shenzhuang* 申狀). The emperor usually picked the most important ones to read and sent others to the councilors. Both these *zouzhuang* and the *shenzhuang* sent to the councilors were forwarded to the Department of State Affairs, where the responses to the memorials would be drafted. In order to come up with a draft, the department would further send the memorials down to the relevant offices of the Six Ministries. The ministries would then conduct investigations into the facts and present preliminary drafts of responses to the Department of State Affairs. The drafts approved by the councilors would be submitted to the emperor for final decisions. Once endorsed by the emperor, the drafts would then be made into imperial edicts by the Secretariat, double-checked by the Chancellery, and put into execution by the Department of State Affairs. Local officials usually had to wait for a few months after submitting their applications to receive responses from the court. By that time, too often, it was too late.

Besides the late responses, the regular bureaucratic procedure also allowed The Six Ministries to sabotage local proposals to protect the interests of their own offices. Most relevant to the cases under discussion here, the Ministry of Revenue was able to subvert local officials' proposals that might cause the loss of revenue. The Ministry of Revenue was able to do so by hiding information and declining the proposals in the decision-making process. As discussed earlier, most memorials sent to the emperor were forwarded first to the councilors, and then further down to relevant ministries of the Department of State Affairs for tentative responses. Indeed, due to the large number of documents the councilors needed to deal with, the tentative responses made by the Ministries would usually be adopted. This bureaucratic obstruction is illustrated in the following case of Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101). In 1090, Su Shi, then the prefect of Hangzhou, memorialized the emperor to reduce levies in his prefecture. However, Su did not

receive any response for half a year. Su, therefore, memorialized again to urge for a response. Three months later, Su received a note from the Department of State Affairs claiming that the court never received the first memorial and that he should resend it. Su soon resubmitted the memorial but never heard back.² Two years later, in 1092, Su (by then the prefect of Yangzhou) brought up this case again in another memorial about cutting levies for his people in Yangzhou. Su lamented that his repeated memorials during the previous years had been either lost or ignored, which indicated that some ministers at the court were unwilling to approve the reduction. At the same time, Su sent a *zhazi* 劄子 memorial to the emperor. *Zhazi* were memorials to the throne in a special genre, resembling personal letters to the emperor himself. According to the regulations, this genre should only be used for transcripts of imperial audiences or used by officials at the highest ranks. It was almost guaranteed that *zhazi* memorials would be read by the emperor himself.³ In his *zhazi* addressed directly to the emperor, Su warned that “if [your Majesty] forwards [the memorial] as a routine document [to the councilors], has [them] present a tentative response, and sends [the presented response] to the Ministry of Revenue for discussion as usual, [the proposal] will by no means be implemented” 只作常程文字降出，仍卻作熟事進呈，依例送戶部看詳，則萬無施之理。⁴

Furthermore, even in the cases where the emperor read local proposals and agreed to implement them, he would leave it to the ministries in the Department of State Affairs to design how to implement the policies: the ministries would compose detailed orders and instructions of

² Su Shi 蘇軾, “Lun jiqian liushi bing qi jianhui yingzhao suolun sishi yichu xingxia zhuang” 論積欠六事并乞檢會應詔所論四事一處行下狀, *QSW*, 87:1879.107–08.

³ See, Wang Huayu 王化雨, “Songdai junzhu yu zaofu de zhengwu xinxi chuli guocheng: yi zhangzou wei li” 宋代君主与宰辅的政务信息处理过程:以章奏为例, in *Wenshu, zhengling, xinxi goutong: yi Tangsong shiqi weizhu* 文书、政令、信息沟通:以唐宋时期为主, ed. Deng Xiaonan, Hirata Shigeki, Cao Jiaqi (Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2012), 307–67.

⁴ Su Shi, “Zai lun jiqian liushi sishi zhazi” 再論積欠六事四事劄子, *QSW*, 87:1879.111–12.

operation and issue them to local governments. Therefore, the ministries could also subvert undesirable policies during the implementation process. In the 1072 memorial mentioned above, Su Shi also complained that the Ministry of Revenue had disrupted an official's efforts to forgive back taxes in Zhexi circuit. Although the tax remission had been endorsed by the emperor, the Ministry refused to implement the remission as proposed. Instead, the Ministry cited a precedent and designed an order that minimized the forgivable back taxes. Su observed that "obviously, the emperor wanted to implement what the official proposed, but the Ministry of Revenue did not. Although [the proposal] was endorsed and sent down, it was the same as if it had not been [endorsed]" 顯是聖慈欲行其言，而戶部不欲，雖蒙行下，與不行下同. Su therefore commented: "Without a special edict from the imperial court, the Ministry of Revenue will by no means implement [requests for tax remission]" 若非朝廷特賜指揮，即戶部必無施行之理.⁵

The obstruction from the Ministry of Revenue was so notorious that local officials often expressed their reluctance to follow the regular bureaucratic procedure.⁶ In 1138, Zhang Shou 張守 (1084–1145), the military commissioner of Jiangxi circuit, memorialized the emperor about rehabilitating the circuit in the aftermath of an uprising. Zhang reported that the key to preventing rebellions in this impoverished circuit was to cut down the excessive levies. He made detailed requests in the memorial, including forgiving back taxes and deducting additional levies in textiles. Nevertheless, Zhang observed:

⁵ Su Shi, "Lun jiqian liushi bing qi jianhui yingzhao suolun sishi yichu xingxia zhuang," *QSW*, 87:1879.109.

⁶ There are more examples of the obstruction from Ministry of Revenue. For instance, Zhang Jiucheng (1092–1159) 張九成, the prefect of Wenzhou 溫州 in 1156, lamented that the Ministry of Revenue only cared for revenue and thus had subverted an imperial edict reducing taxes in response to a bad omen. See Zhang Jiucheng, "Hui Sun shangshu shu (I)" 回孫尚書書一, *QSW*, 184:4032.17–18. Zhou Bida (1126–1204) 周必大, the grand councilor in 1181 also observed that the Ministry of Revenue was in severe deficit and thus usually responded to local applications for tax reduction perfunctorily. See Zhou Bida, Yu Shen Quzhou zhazi 與沈衢州劄子, *QSW*, 229:5106.393.

If [Your Majesty] forwards [these requests] to the Department [of State Affairs] for investigation and judgment, the bureaucracy [i.e. the Ministry of Revenue], so stingy with expenditures, will surely refuse to establish a long-term plan for a circuit government [i.e. approve these requests].⁷

若下省部勘當，有司出納之吝，必不肯為一路分朝廷建悠久之計也。

Local officials who sought to take financial initiatives in favor of their constituents needed to not only overcome the delay resulting from time-consuming bureaucratic procedures, but also had to find a way to circumvent obstructions imposed by the Ministry of Revenue. In response to these obstacles, some local officials took actions on their own authority, and then exploited the rhetoric of “acting on behalf of the people” to defend themselves.

Part II. Taking Unauthorized Actions

According to Song laws and regulations, local officials needed permission from higher authorities before taking actions that would affect the revenue and resources claimed by the central state, such as taxes, court-endowed funds earmarked for particular purposes, and locally stored state reserves. Without approval, if one used state resources for famine relief, he committed the crime of “[inappropriately] distributing official property” 放散官物, which “refers to those selling and appropriating official property but still using the property for official purposes” 謂出用官物有所市作，並謂官物還充官用者。⁸ The law ruled that violators should be punished in the same way as those “being implicated in corruption” (*zuozang* 坐贓).⁹ However,

⁷ Zhang Shou, “Cuozhi Jiangxi shanhou zhazi” 措置江西善後劄子, *QSW*, 173:3786.316 [henceforth abbreviated *QSW*].

⁸ Dou Yi 竇儀, collated by 岳純之, *Song xingtong jiaozheng* 宋刑統校證 (Beijing: Beijing da xue chubanshe, 2015), 208.

⁹ “Being implicated in corruption refers to [the charge of] those who are not the heads of governmental offices but received money for what their offices have done. [They] are convicted of corruption due to the business [of their offices] and this is thus called conviction due to implicated corruption” 坐贓者，謂非監臨主司，因事受財，而罪由此贓，故名坐贓致罪. Convicted officials would be sentenced to flogging or exile up to three years, based on the amount of bribes they received.

some officials developed a discourse that celebrated this kind of self-sacrifice: to violate bureaucratic rules in the interest of the people. This discourse of worthy officials was reportedly started by the great Northern Song minister, Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989–1052). Various *biji* and magistrate’s handbooks record that Fan once said: “In serving as an official, one should not avoid committing public crimes, but must not commit private crimes” 做官公罪不可無，私罪不可有。¹⁰ According to the interpretation of Lü Benzhong 呂本中 (1084–1145), committing no public crime usually indicated that one was overcautious about making mistakes and thus made no initiatives to help the people.¹¹

Furthermore, in practice, local officials enjoyed some freedom to take expedient actions on their own. This freedom was not only useful for enhancing state efficiency but also legitimized by the Confucian ideology of taking care of the people, an ideology embraced by Song officials and the state. Throughout the Northern Song, the court had frequently exonerated local officials who took unauthorized actions for local famine relief.¹² For example, in 1011, Prefect Zhang Fu 張傅 of Chuzhou 楚州 applied to use the tribute grain tax (*shanggong* 上供) for famine relief. Not receiving any response, Zhang went ahead and lent the grain to the starving people, declaiming: “The people are fleeing and dying in ditches, how [can I] still wait for approval” 民转死沟壑矣，报可待邪? Zhang soon reported himself to the court and waited for punishment.

See *Song xingtong jiaozhen*, 345–46.

¹⁰ Chao Shuizhi 晁說之, *Chaoshi keyu* 晁氏客語 (*Si ku quan shu* edition), 22a; Lü Benzhong 呂本中, *Guanzhen* 官箴 (*SKQS* edition), 8b; Shi Decao 施德操, *Beichuang zhiguo lu* 北窗炙輠錄 (*SKQS* edition), 1/80b; Zhang Ci 張鎡, *Shixue guifan* 仕學規範 (*SKQS* edition), 25/1b.

¹¹ Lü Benzhong, *Guanzhen* 官箴, 8b.

¹² For a list of Song local officials’ unauthorized actions see Yang Yuxun 楊宇勳, *Xian gongyu ho sijia: Songchao zhenzai cuoshi ji qi guanmin guanxi* 先公庾后私家：宋朝賑災措施及其官民關係 (Taipei: Wanjuanlou tushu gufen youxian gongsi, 2013), 209–210. The Southern Song part of Yang’s list, however, needs to be supplemented.

The court, however, responded with an edict rewarding him for saving people's lives.¹³ Similarly, Fu Chuazheng 傅傳正 (1057 *jinshi*), the granary commissioner of Kuizhou circuit in 1085, cut taxes by seventy percent without court authorization, claiming that “[I], your humble servant, dare not to sit by and watch the suffering and crisis amongst the people” 臣見民間困急，不敢坐視。 Although Fu impeached himself for “acting presumptuously without authorization” 專輒, the emperor not only exonerated him but promised to appoint him to a better position when he completed his tenure.¹⁴ By the Southern Song, there seemed to have been formed a pattern of taking unauthorized actions, in which local officials acted, reported themselves to confess their violation of the law, and acquired exoneration. Although unauthorized actions were never legitimized by the law, local officials had evidently come to a consensus that these actions, justified by the need to nourish the people, would not cause them severe punishment.

In 1196, Chen Zao 陳造 (1133–1203), then vice prefect of Fangzhou 房州 in Jingxi-south circuit 京西南路, beseeched Fiscal Commissioner Xu 許 of his circuit to lend the “Ever-normal capital” (*changpin-qian* 常平錢) to his people after a crop failure. Chen well understood that “this fund was registered with the court and could only be used after application [for permission]” 此錢籍在朝廷，候奏報乃行。¹⁵ Nevertheless, Chen observed that the procedure of application would take a few months and the people could not survive the wait time. He therefore implored Commissioner Xu to start giving loans while waiting for the court's reply. Chen argued that violating the state rules in such a situation did not go against the interest of the state as a whole, nor was it against the will of the emperor fundamentally. Chen interpreted this unauthorized action in terms of the Mandate of Heaven. He maintained:

¹³ Tuotuo 脫脫, ed. *Song shi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 300.9975.

¹⁴ *Song huiyao*, “shihuo” 食貨, 57/9 [henceforth abbreviated *SHY*].

¹⁵ Chen Zao, “Yu Xu yunshi lun huangzheng shu” 與許運使論荒政書, *QSW*, 256:5752.127.

[I] once peered into Heaven through the people. Naïve as they appear to be, they are whom heaven loves. Those whom Heaven loves are those whom the Son of Heaven particularly loves, and whom the worthy cannot help but love.... Therefore, I once argued that the hardship during years of famine was precisely where the key to maintaining the healthy foundation of the state for a hundred million years was located.¹⁶

.....嘗即民而窺諸天，是雖蚩蚩者，天所甚愛也。天所甚愛，故天子尤愛之，而賢者不容不愛.....故某嘗謂凶歲之艱，正國家所以衍億年慶基者在是。

Chen connected the interests of the people to the will of Heaven and the fundamental legitimacy of the imperial court. In such a rhetorical context, officials who dared to violate the rules for the people seized the moral high ground. While this interpretation integrated local officials' virtuous deeds into the benevolence of the imperial court, it also implied that the rhetoric was constraining the central state: even the emperor and his ministers could not easily invalidate the efforts of officials who claimed to be taking care of the people.

To strengthen this point, Chen cited the example of Ji An 汲黯, a receptionist of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty.¹⁷ On his way to investigate a fire disaster as an imperial envoy, Ji found a severe famine striking the Henan area. He immediately feigned an imperial order to open local governmental granaries to feed the people. Not until he returned to the capital did Ji confess his action to the emperor. The emperor, praising Ji as a worthy official, exonerated and promoted him.¹⁸ This example of Ji An was often cited by proponents of unauthorized actions. These proponents, like Chen, interpreted Ji's example to make two points: they celebrated the courage of officials who risked their careers or even lives for the people; they also expected the emperor to grant local officials enough flexibility to respond to the people's needs, as Emperor Wu did. Chen observed that even Emperor Wu, who had never hesitated to heavily punish officials,

¹⁶ Chen Zao, "Yu Xu yunshi lun huangzheng shu," *QSW*. 256:5752.127.

¹⁷ Receptionist refers to officials with functions resembling those of butlers, masters of ceremonies, ushers, messengers, stewards, etc. See Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 577.

¹⁸ *Shi ji* (Beijing: zhonghua shuju, 1959), 120.3105-07.

exonerated Ji; certainly no less could be expected of the current emperor who was “wise and generous” 聰睿博愛 and the grand councilor who was “the first to worry about the troubles across the land” 憂先天下. Chen thereby assured Commissioner Xu that “even if [we are] criticized, our sage and enlightened court will definitely not go so far to severely punish [us]” 聖明之朝決不至重報.¹⁹

Unfortunately, the sources do not tell us if Commissioner Xu followed Chen’s advice. Nevertheless, this case reveals a local official’s belief in the power of “loving the people”— the rhetoric could be used to justify actions that challenged bureaucratic rules and hierarchies. This confidence in the rhetorical power of “acting on behalf of the people” is likewise demonstrated in the following case of Qiao Lingxian 譙令憲 (1155–1222), the judicial commissioner and acting supply commissioner of Zhedong circuit in 1208. In that year, Shaoxing 紹興 prefecture of this circuit suffered a serious famine after a flood. There were barely any stocks in the Shaoxing Ever-normal Granary, whereas the central state had 10,000 *dan* of “Harmonious-Purchase rice” (*hedi-mi* 和糴米) stored locally.²⁰ Commissioner Qiao immediately had the rice sold cheaply to the people in need. He reported to the court only after the sales had started and argued in his memorial that “the people’s suffering is already extreme. [I] should not stick to the regular rule and wait for the court approval” 民病已亟，不當拘常文竢報可. Although claiming he was awaiting punishment for overstepping his authority, Qiao seemed very confident about

¹⁹ Chen Zao, “Yu Xu Yunshi lun huangzheng shu.” *QSW*, 256:5752.127.

²⁰ Despite its name, “Harmonious Purchase” had by the Southern Song become the semi-coercive grain purchase implemented by local officials according to the quotas assigned by the court and their superiors. For an introduction to the “Harmonious Purchase,” see Shiba Yoshinobu 斯波義信, “Sōdai shiteki seido no enkaku” 宋代市糴制度の沿革 in *Aoyama Hakushi koki kinen Sōdai shi* 青山博士古稀紀念宋代史論叢 (Tokyo: Seishin Shobō, 1974), 123–59; Wang Zengyu 王曾瑜 and Zhu Jiayuan 朱家源, “Songchao de hedi liangcao” 宋朝的和糴糧草, in *Wenshi* 文史, No.24 (1985): 127–156. I will discuss local officials’ resistance to orders of “Harmonious Purchase” in the following chapters.

the legitimacy of his action. Indeed, soon after his post-facto confession to the court, Qiao continued to take further unauthorized action despite repeated reprimands from the Ministry of Revenue. Besides changing the sale of the relief grain to free distribution, he also issued tax waivers and reductions to the affected counties in the prefecture. It turned out that the court did not punish Qiao for his unauthorized actions. Moreover, Qiao received a raise in his honorific rank and a new assignment as the vice fiscal commissioner of Jiangdong.²¹

Local officials' confidence about the rhetorical power of "acting in the people's interests" was so strong that those who successfully took unauthorized actions even urged their superiors and colleagues to act in this way. Chen Mi 陳宓 (1171–1230), the prefect of Nankang in 1217, on his own authority expended 10,000 cash from tribute tax funds to purchase relief grain for his prefecture and yet was exonerated by the court.²² Four years later, in 1221, when responding to impending food shortages in Fujian circuit, Chen, then the prefect of Nanjianzhou 南劍州, supported his superior's plan to appropriate central government funds for giving relief. In his letter to Feng Duofu 馮多福 (1193 *jinshi*), the judicial superior of the circuit, Chen proudly cited the exoneration for his own unauthorized action in Nankang to encourage Feng to promptly proceed with the unauthorized plan.²³ Moreover, Chen also encouraged Prefect Chen Yuxing 陳與行 (1190 *jinshi*) of his hometown, Xinghua *jun* 興化軍, to use state resources without authorization. By citing his own example, Chen Mi assured Prefect Chen that this effective strategy was also safe.²⁴

²¹ Zhen Dexiu 真德秀, "Qiao dianzhuang muzhiming" 譙殿撰墓誌銘, *QSW*, 314:7194.146.

²² Chen Mi 陳宓, "Yu Feng tixing Duofu zha (III)" 與馮提刑多福劄(三), "Yu xiangshou Chen Guobo Yuxing shu" 與鄉守陳國博與行書, *QSW*, 305:6961.97, 110.

²³ Chen Mi, "Yu Feng tixing Duofu zha (III)," *QSW*, 305:6961.97.

²⁴ Chen Mi, "Yu xiangshou Chen Guobo Yuxing shu," *QSW*, 305:6961.110.

In all the cases analyzed above, local officials bypassed regular procedures, violated bureaucratic rules, and even challenged superior authority to carry out their initiatives. Despite the fact that their unauthorized actions remained unlawful they did not get into trouble for what they did. They justified their actions by invoking the rhetoric that the Song state upheld—the imperative to take care of the people.

Part III. Controversy over Unauthorized Actions

We have seen that local officials who took unauthorized actions were able to defend themselves with the rhetoric of “acting in the interests of the people.” Still, these unauthorized actions were subject to contested interpretations. Although local officials themselves claimed that they were benefiting the people on behalf of the imperial court, their opponents could interpret such actions as fishing for personal reputation or abusing the rhetoric of “on behalf of the people” to undermine the central government’s authority. The following cases show how the power of rhetoric in legitimizing unauthorized actions was potentially circumscribed by other forces in the political system, such as financial demands and factional struggles. Even in these cases, however, the moralistic rhetoric still helped to preserve local officials’ policies and even empowered them to push back against criticism.

In 1128, in response to the agricultural and sericulture failures of Yuezhou 越州, Zhai Ruwen 翟汝文 (1076–1141), the prefect and concurrent military commissioner of the circuit, reduced the “Harmonious Purchase” (*hemai* 和買) of textiles for low-ranking households in his jurisdiction.²⁵ Zhai did so before submitting an application to the court. In his post-facto

²⁵ Although named “Purchase,” the “Harmonious Purchase” was actually a type of extra tax levy. See Li Xiao 李晓, *Songchao zhengfu goumai zhidu yanjiu* 宋朝政府购买制度研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin chubanshe, 2007).

memorial, Zhai justified the reduction by citing Emperor Gaozong's own words about relieving the people's burdens:

The amnesty issued in the first year of the enthronement of Your Majesty ruled: "The taxes in textile and other kinds during the reigns of Emperor Taizu and Taizong had fixed amounts. After the years of Xining, officials who presented profit-driven proposals memorialized to request the increase and expansion [of these levies]. It is extremely harmful. [We should] discuss a reduction, in order to relieve the financial burden on the people." The edict issued on the first day of the sixth month stipulated: "The levies are heavy; [we should] boldly reduce them."²⁶

陛下即位元年赦書：“祖宗上供物帛悉有常數。熙寧已後獻利之臣奏請增擴，不勝其弊。其議裁損，以紓民力。”六月甲子制詔：“賦斂之厚，其痛蠲除。”

Zhai further claimed that he had reduced the quotas because he “understood the sincere compassion in the amnesty and edict” 體赦勅惻怛之意, and that he was trying to implement the “concrete grace of the father-like ruler [i.e. the emperor] and make people all know to love and esteem [Your Majesty]” 敷君父實惠，使百姓咸知愛戴.²⁷ As Zhai expected, his forceful exercise of moralistic rhetoric brought him a court ratification of the reduction. Probably feeling empowered by the moral justification and encouraged by the tolerance of the court, Zhai went on to reduce local taxes by as much as 400,000 cash before receiving any imperial authorization. Before long, the fiscal commissioner of the circuit, Wu Fang 吳昉 (1109 *jinshi*), protested to Zhai that his reductions had undercut the military supplies of the circuit. Zhai dismissed Wu's critique and threatened to impeach Wu for obstructing his efforts to carry out imperial benevolence. Zhai maintained:

[According to] the amnesty of enthronement [of Emperor Qinzong] in the seventh year of Xuanhe [i.e. 1125], “If there are liabilities that should be reduced in the prefectures and counties, the military commissioners of various circuits are allowed to implement and

²⁶ Zhai Fan 翟繁, “Sun Fan chongkan Zhaishi Gongxun maiming” 孫繁重刊翟氏公異埋銘, Zhai Ruwen 翟汝文, *Zhonghui ji* 忠惠集 (SKQS edition), appendix: 1.10b–11a.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

report afterward.” Now [you,] the fiscal commissioner dare to challenge the imperial order, though I have not wanted to impeach you.²⁸

宣和七年登极赦文：“应州县有合宽恤事，许逐路帅臣一面施行乞奏。”今来漕司乃敢故违抗拒君命，未欲奏劾。

Finally, Wu reported Zhai to the court. As a result, the court degraded Zhai’s official title by two ranks (but kept him on in his position) for “inappropriately citing edicts and disrespectfully humiliating [Fiscal Commissioner Wu]” 妄引詔書，猥相侵辱.²⁹ It is noteworthy that this demotion was a light punishment, as Zhai himself acknowledged; more importantly, nowhere in the edict were Zhai’s unauthorized tax reductions *per se* targeted or even mentioned. The fact that the court did not openly associate Zhai’s punishment with his tax reductions seems to have signaled an imperial acknowledgment that Zhai’s unauthorized actions were morally legitimate.

The power of Zhai’s moralistic argument is even more apparent when we contrast this court acquiescence with Emperor Gaozong’s true feeling about Zhai’s actions. In fact, the emperor resented Zhai’s initiatives for undercutting the state revenue. Even twenty-seven years later, in 1155, the emperor could not help but get angry when recalling Zhai’s behavior. He lamented:

[When] prefectures present [ideas about] what is beneficial and what is harmful, [they] should make sure that both the state and the people have sufficient [resources]. Only in this way can they be called competent. For example, during the years of Jianyan (1127-1130), when times were hard and revenue was insufficient, Zhai Ruwen governed Yuezhou. He exempted all the “Harmonious Purchase” and pre-purchase [of textiles imposed on low-rank households], as well as the governmental taxes of the prefecture. [He] did not care about state revenue but particularly intended to seize reputation. How could the state rely on people like this!³⁰

²⁸Li Xinchuan 李心傳, *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu* 建炎以來系年要錄 (SKQS edition), 7.10b

²⁹ Wang Zao 汪藻 (1079–1154), “Zhai Euwen jiang lianguan zhi” 翟汝文降兩官制, *QSW*, 156: 3365.351. “Inappropriately citing edicts” probably referred to the fact that the amnesty that Zhai cited was issued by the previous emperor, Qinzong; the new emperor, Emperor Gaozong, had not proclaimed officials’ freedom to cut taxes without permission.

³⁰ *SHY*, “Zhiguan” 職官, 47/31.

守臣陳獻利害，當令國與民皆足，乃為稱職。如建炎間，時方艱難，財用匱乏，翟汝文知越州，乃盡放散和預買及鑑湖官租，不恤國計而專欲盜名，如此等人，國家何所賴也！

Given his resentment, why did the emperor acquiesce and not publicly criticize Zhai for his tax reductions? A hint is found in Zhai's "memorial of gratitude" (*xiebiao* 謝表). Indeed, when receiving the demotion, Zhai himself attributed the light punishment he received to his good intentions—to spread benevolence on behalf of the emperor. Zhai reflected that at the beginning of the restored dynasty, when it was still unstable, the state needed to take particular caution against uprisings resulting from over-taxing the people:

I easily forgave the taxes of the prefecture because I took seriously [the need] to secure the imperial rule of the territories. [How] could I dare to [ignore people's suffering] like the Qin residents sitting by and watching the Yue population suffering from the infertility of the land?³¹

臣所為輕捐州郡之租賦，乃以重保朝廷之土疆。敢若秦人，坐視越人之瘠。

Zhai hinted at the very practical constraints in the early stages of the restoration: failing to relieve the people's financial burdens would risk losing legitimacy or even causing an uprising. But the need to pacify the population was in tension with the state's demands for revenue. The emperor's critiques suggested that he was very sensitive to the tension and deeply concerned with the issue of revenue. Nevertheless, in the early, fragile stages of his reign, the emperor could not afford to upset the people by criticizing an official who claimed to act on their behalf. After all, it was the emperor himself who had promised a benevolent state that would "give up profits to help the people prosper" 捐利興民;³² to heavily punish an official acting in the interest of the people would undermine the positive image of the restored state. The practical needs for restricting financial extraction from the people to avoid revolts reinforced the rhetorical power of

³¹ Zhai Ruwen, "Yuzhou xie jiangguan jiangzhi biao," 越州謝降官降職表, *QSW*,149:3211.146.

³² Zhai Ruwen, "Yuzhou xie jiangguan jiangzhi biao," *QSW*,149:3211.146.

“nourishing the people” to which Zhai resorted to defend himself. Although alarmed that Zhai’s policies had undercut the state revenue, the emperor at the time chose to avoid any public statement against Zhai’s favors to the people.

Once Zhai had connected his unauthorized actions with the welfare of the people and the stability of the state, the punishment he received became a hallmark of his self-sacrificing contribution to the state. Zhai forged this image of self-martyring heroism in his “memorial of gratitude.” He compared himself to a Han martyr, Chao Cuo 晁錯, who helped design the central government’s effort to undermine the feudal kingdoms but who was executed to appease the seven kingdoms that plotted rebellion against the central authority.³³ Observing that “having stabilized [the rulership of] the Lius, the Chaos’ danger should be expected 既安劉氏，理知晁氏之危，” Zhai implied that his demotion was the price he paid for the great cause— “to violate the order out of the loyalty to the emperor 違命而愛君.”³⁴

In a similar fashion, at lower levels of local administration, the moralistic rhetoric similarly also empowered magistrates and prefectures to compel their superiors to acquiesce in their initiatives on the people’s behalf. For example, in 1181, Wang Yihe 汪義和 (1141–1200), the magistrate of Xinjian county 新建 (Longxing *fu* prefecture 隆興府), confronted the prefect and defended an unauthorized tax reduction for his county. According to Song law, peasants could report crop failures to local governments and receive tax reductions based on the degrees of the failure. Once county magistrates received applications from the people, they were supposed to send inspectors to verify the degree of crop failure and report the results to the prefectural

³³ *Shi ji*, 101.2745–49.

³⁴ Zhai Ruwen, “Yuzhou xie jiangguan jiangzhi biao,” *QSW*, 149:3211.146.

government for further verification and decision.³⁵ Nevertheless, many magistrates and prefects refused to reduce taxes in order to avoid a decrease in revenue. Such attempts to minimize the loss of tax revenue were even encouraged by the Ministry of Revenue.³⁶ The prefect of Longxing shared this reservation about tax reduction. In 1181, the prefect entrusted Magistrate Wang with the investigation of the degree of crop failures in the prefecture. Knowing that the investigation result would decide the amount of tax reduction, the prefect sent a messenger to deliver his words to Magistrate Wang: “Hopefully [you] will take the prefectural budget into account” 幸以郡計為念. The prefect was suggesting that Wang should restrict the tax reduction to save prefectural revenue. Wang, however, did not obey. Instead, without informing the prefect, he went ahead to announce an eighty-percent reduction of taxes. Apparently, Wang took this action promptly and secretly to prevent the prefect’s obstruction. The prefect’s message about “taking the prefectural revenue into account” had warned Wang that he would not easily approve a large tax reduction. Indeed, the prefect scolded Wang for the reduction so severely that Wang was led to exclaim: “My head can be cut off, but my promise [to cut the tax] cannot be broken” 某頭可斷，言不可食! Wang also justified his unauthorized actions from the perspective of the state:

The farmers had been suffering and were about to be starved to death. Where could the levies come from? To clearly proclaim the amount of tax reduction, [so that] each household knew it, could maintain people’s faith. If [I had] insisted on waiting until the

³⁵ It appears that the institute that made the final decision on the percentage of tax reduction varied over time and by case. Li Huarui argues that, until the middle of Emperor Zhenzong’s reign, the State Finance Commission (*sansi* 三司) made the final decision about how much to reduce taxes. From then on, the Fiscal Commission of each circuit assumed the responsibility to decide tax reduction. Only when other officials accused these Commissions of cheating would the central government send envoys to verify the cases. However, it seems that in the Southern Song prefectural governments could decide how much to be forgiven, and the Fiscal Commissions only supervised them. See Li Huarui 李华瑞 and Chen Chaoyang 陈朝阳, “Songdai jiuhuang zhong de jiantian zhidu” 宋代救荒中的檢田制度, *Anhui shifan daxue xuebao* 安徽师范大学学报 29, No. 5 (2011), 587–96.

³⁶ Chen Mingguang 陈明光, “Tang Song tianfu de miansun yu zaishang jianfang lungao” 唐宋田赋的免损与灾伤检放论稿, in *Zhongguo shi yanjiu* 中国史研究, 2003, No.2, 99–116.

case was reported [and approved by you, the prefect,] it would have been too late to solve the crisis.³⁷

農民已困，將為餓殍，賦安從出？明示以所減數，俾戶知之，猶足以繫其心。必待稟明，緩不及事。

Wang connected the moral meaning of his initiatives to the practical needs of the state: defending the livelihood of the people was critical to defusing the social crisis and maintaining the stability of the state. This justification and Wang's self-sacrificing claim placed him on the moral high ground in this battle with the prefect: how could the prefect attack Wang's endeavors, at the cost of his own career and even life, to relieve people's suffering and keep their faith? Ultimately, according to Wang's funerary inscription, the prefect "reluctantly approved [Wang's policy]" 黽勉從之.³⁸ It is a pity that we don't have other sources about this case to verify the reasons for the prefect's "reluctant approval." Nevertheless, the way in which this quarrel was recorded and narrated indicated that an emphasis on the rhetorical power of "acting on behalf of the people" was shared by Wang's contemporaries.

We have seen that local officials could defend themselves with the rhetoric of "on behalf of the people." Yet, when brutal factional struggles were involved, the power of ideology could be dwarfed by that of political affiliation. For example, Huang Hao 黃灝 (1160 *jinshi*), a practitioner of Neo-Confucianism and political enemy of the dominant grand councilor, Han Tuozhou 韓侂胄 (1152–1207), was attacked by his enemies for acting without authorization. When Huang had served as the granary commissioner of Zhexi circuit in 1195, he had been alarmed to see officials still squeezing the people in Haiyan county (in Xiuzhou prefecture) for taxes during a famine. Huang lamented that the extraction of taxes contravened "the imperial

³⁷ Yuan Xie 袁燮, "Shi yushi zeng tongyi dafu wanggong muzhiming" 侍御史贈通議大夫汪公墓誌銘, *QSW*, 281:6386.390.

³⁸ Yuan Xie, "Shi yushi zeng tongyi dafu wanggong muzhiming," *QSW*, 281:6386.390.

intention of benevolence” conveyed in a recent amnesty, which had allowed local officials to postpone the tax in localities suffering from droughts. Claiming to extend this benevolence further, Huang applied to the court for the forgiveness of the autumn tax for the county. Nevertheless, as his anxiety grew, Huang went ahead to announce a tax waiver before hearing back from the court. Before long, partisans of Han Tuozhou, described in the sources as “those who made comments” 言事者, impeached Huang for “presumptuously acting on his own 專輒.”³⁹ By this time, Councilor Han had won the emperor’s trust and started his persecution of the supporters of his major political enemy, Zhao Ruyu 趙汝愚 (1140–1196). Huang was one of Zhao’s partisans being purged.⁴⁰ The court sentenced Huang to a suspension and house arrest in Yunzhou 筠州.⁴¹ This severe punishment was later replaced by a downgrading of two ranks.⁴² Despite punishing Huang for taking unauthorized actions, however, the court upheld his tax policy.⁴³ This separation between the punishment of Huang as an individual and the endorsement of his policy indicates that even in the middle of a factional struggle, the rhetorical power of acting in the interest of the people was still significant. Although the ideology failed to shield Huang from the political purge, it protected the tax relief that Huang had striven to achieve. The ideology of benevolent governance continued to constrain political actors at the court. If in the cases examined above, the power of moralistic rhetoric took effect hand in hand with practical needs on the ground, in the following case, local officials were able to push back against factionalist challenges to their actions by manipulating the rhetoric skillfully.

³⁹ Du Fan 杜範, “Huang Hao zhuan” 黃灝傳, *QSW*, 320:7353.264.

⁴⁰ See *Song shi*, 398.12106.

⁴¹ Du Fan, “Huang Hao zhuan,” *QSW*, 320:7353.264.

⁴² Yu Duanli 俞端禮, the state councilor of the time, who was in a more neutral position, tried to defend Huang. His help might have contributed to the change of punishment. See Yu’s biography in *Song shi*, 398.12106.

⁴³ Du Fan, “Huang Hao zhuan,” *QSW*, 320:7353.264.

Part IV. Competing for Moral Superiority: Debates on Zhen Dexiu's Unauthorized Actions

In 1215, one of the worst droughts in the Southern Song struck Jiangdong circuit. The four commissioners of the circuit respectively took charge of the famine relief of prefectures close to them. Zhen Dexiu, the fiscal commissioner, was responsible for the prefectures of Jiankang 建康, Taiping 太平, and Guangde 廣德.⁴⁴ Among these prefectures, Guangde suffered the worst from the disaster. Zhen managed to acquire some 48,000 *dan* of grain for this prefecture and had most of the grain distributed for free to households that were too poor to purchase relief grain from the government.⁴⁵ By the last month of 1215, Guangde prefecture had run short of grain for continuing the distribution. Zhen, therefore, applied to the court for another 30,000 *dan* of rice. Nevertheless, the court only approved 20,000 *dan* and demanded that the grain be sold and the payment be submitted to the court.⁴⁶ Dissatisfied with this decision, Zhen soon beseeched the court to approve free distribution. The court, however, declined Zhen's requests. Determined to start another round of free distribution as scheduled, Zhen repeatedly appealed, only to find the court insisting on the sale of relief grain. About one month after Zhen's third request, the Department of State Affairs sent him another rejection. This "Department Note (Shengzha 省劄)" criticized Zhen for spending too much grain on free distribution: among the large amount of rice

⁴⁴ Hu Gui 胡概, the temporary military commissioner (and concurrently overseer general of the Huaidong region) worked with Zhen for the famine relief of these three prefectures. Li Daochuan 李道傳, the supply commissioner, took care of the prefectures of Ningguo, Chizhou, and Huizhou. Qiao Xianling 譙令憲, the judicial commissioner, took care of people in the prefectures of Raozhou, Xinzhou, and Nankang. See, Zhen Dexiu, "Zou qi fenzhou cuozhi huangzheng deng shi" 奏乞分州措置荒政等事, *QSW*, 312:7148.246–49.

⁴⁵ Zhen had grain distributed to rural households from the third to the fifth ranks and urban household of the fifth rank. For other households, Zhen had grain sold cheaply to them. See Zhen Dexiu, "Shen shangshusheng qi zai bo Taiping Guangde jitiao mi" 申尚書省乞再撥太平廣德濟糶米, *QSW*, 312:7148.354–56.

⁴⁶ Zhen Dexiu, "Shen shangshusheng qi zai bo Taiping Guangde jitiao mi," *QSW*, 312:7148.356.

allocated to Guangde, the rice for distribution had exceeded by twenty times that for sale.⁴⁷ This critique and repeated rejections, in Zhen's view, were the result of the manipulation by his political enemies in the Department of State Affairs.

According to Zhen, by 1216, rumors had circulated saying that “the drought [in Jiangdong circuit] was actually light. But the commissioner was keen for reputation and thus gave overly generous relief” 旱傷本輕，監司好名，賑贍太優.⁴⁸ Zhen did not make it clear who “the people forging lies to mislead the court” 為諛詞以欺廟堂者 were. Zhen's official biography in *Song shi*, however, recorded that Hu Ju 胡榘 and Xue Ji 薛極 in the Secretarial Office of the Department of State Affairs had spread the rumors to subvert Zhen's famine relief.⁴⁹ Hu and Xue, who were “sons of Confucian families but studying law and regulations” 以儒家子習于文法, had had intense conflicts with Zhen when he served at the court.⁵⁰ In 1213, Zhen had protested against the policy initiated by the Department of State Affairs to confiscate the property of commoners who violated the newly implemented law of paper money. Due to Zhen's persistent remonstrance, the court finally decided to repeal the punishment and gradually returned confiscated properties to their owners. What Zhen did, however, made “the current grand councilor [i.e. Shi Miyuan 史彌遠 (1164–1223)] upset and [the officials in] the secretarial office

⁴⁷ Zhen's note attached to “Shensheng disan zhuang” 申省第三狀, *QSW*, 312:7155.362–63.

⁴⁸ Liu Kezhuang 劉克莊, “Xishan Zhen Wenzhong gong” 西山真文忠公, Liu Kezhuang, *Liu Kezhuang ji jianjiao* 劉克莊集箋校 [henceforth *Liu Kezhuang Ji*], collated annotated by Xin Gengru 辛更儒 (Beijing: Zhonghu shuju, 2011), 168.6502–06.

⁴⁹ *Dusi* served as the secretarial office of the Department of State Affairs. Officials in these offices often came up with suggestions on responses to the memorials submitted from local officials and sent the suggestions together with original memorials to the state councilors for further decision. For details about *dusi* and *dusi* officials' roles in the processing of official documents, see, Gu Liwei 古麗巍, “Beisong Yuanfeng gaizhi ‘chongsu’ shangshusheng de guocheng” 北宋元丰改制“重塑”尚书省的过程, *Zhongguo shi yanjiu*, 2015.2, 69–87; Zhang Yi 张祎, “Zhongshu shngshu sheng zhazi yu songdai huangquan yunzuo,” 中书、尚书省劄子与宋代皇权运作, *Lishi yanjiu* 历史研究, 2013.5, 50–66.

⁵⁰ Ye Shaoweng 葉紹翁, *Sichao wenjian lu* 四朝聞見錄 (*SKQS* edition), 3/48b–49a.

of the Department of State Affairs gnash their teeth.” 時相始不樂，都司又切齒。⁵¹ Furthermore, after the Jin Dynasty moved its capital to Kaifeng in 1214, Zhen had insisted on a tougher foreign policy, which was at odds with the conciliatory attitude advocated by officials in Department of State Affairs under the leadership of Shi Miyuan. Having recently ascended to the councilorship, Shi desired to distinguish himself from his predecessor, the notorious Han Tuozhou. He sought to enhance the public image of his leadership by gathering reputable scholar-officials like Zhen to work for him at the court. Nevertheless, despite Shi’s attempt to entice Zhen with promotions, Zhen still disagreed with him over personnel and foreign policies. Zhen even chose to leave the court to show his dignity as a dissident.⁵² Zhen’s political enemies at the secretarial office of the Department of State Affairs castigated him as a “pedantic Confucian” (*yuru* 迂儒), who would “surely fail if tested with [practical] tasks” 試以事必敗. They, therefore, looked for opportunities to embarrass Zhen.⁵³ In his own notes to his memorials preserved in his collected works, Zhen recalled that arranging for court rejections to Zhen’s repeated applications was part of their scheme against him.⁵⁴ Apparently, the contention over free distribution of grain in Guangde was no longer a matter of policy-making, but a case of factional conflict between the “pedantic Confucian” officials represented by Zhen (and his *Daoxue* cohorts) and their enemies at the court.

In reaction to the obstruction at the court, Zhen decided to act without permission. He proceeded to distribute all the grain and sent a fourth memorial to the court only after the distribution had started. In the post-facto memorial, Zhen also cited the example of Ji An and justified his own, similar action as relieving people’s suffering on behalf of the “benevolent and

⁵¹ Liu Kezhuang, “Xishan Zhen Wenzhong gong,” *Liu Kezhuang ji*, 168.6502–06.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Song shi*. 437.12959–60.

⁵⁴ Zhen’s note to “Di er zou daigu” 第二奏待辜, *Xishan wenji* 西山文集 (*SKQS* edition), 7/29b–30a.

lenient court with brilliant judgment.” 仁明寬大之朝.⁵⁵ Zhen’s unauthorized action finally received an endorsement from the court. Note that Zhen’s application had failed three times. It was through transgression—taking action without approval and soliciting post-facto ratification—that he carried out his initiatives, which would otherwise have been killed by his political enemies. Like his predecessors and contemporaries, Zhen understood that to reverse the policy or to punish officials for their heroic actions would tarnish the reputation of the court. Although he begged to be punished for acting without authorization, Zhen was confident about the safety of doing so. He even observed in one of his memorials to the emperor that, in view of his genuine loyalty to the court, he was positive that the court would not badly punish him for his justifiable action.⁵⁶

Debates about the legitimacy of Zhen’s actions

Zhen’s victory, however, was temporary. A couple of months after Zhen received the endorsement from the court, he was shocked to find his unauthorized actions had backfired.⁵⁷ According to Zhen, his enemies in the Department of State Affairs had instigated Wei Xian 魏峴, the prefect of Guangde, to attack him for abusing moralistic rhetoric and belittling the court. In the sixth month of 1216, Wei impeached the prefectural school instructor of Guangde, Lin Xiang 林庠, for overstepping his authority to intervene in famine relief and for insulting Prefect Wei. This attack, however, was actually targeted at Zhen. Wei claimed that Zhen had authorized Instructor Lin to act in this presumptuous way because Lin had curried favor with Zhen: Lin had not only asked the locals to hold an ostentatious reception for Zhen, but had also served as Zhen’s mouthpiece to threaten Wei into agreeing to the free distribution of grain. Wei then raised

⁵⁵ Zhen Dexiu, “Shensheng di si zhuang” 申省第四狀, *QSW*, 312:7155.364.

⁵⁶ Zhen Dexiu, “Di er zou qi daizui” 第二奏乞待罪, *QSW*, 312:7148.255.

⁵⁷ Zhen’s note to “Di er zou daigu,” *Xishan wenji*, 7/29b–30a.

his impeachment to new heights by arguing that Zhen's unauthorized distribution of grain challenged the authority of the court and hijacked people's gratitude to the state. He maintained:

If the subordinates are so powerful and obstructive, colluding with one another, abusing Mencius' theory that "the people are the most important" to justify their misbehaviors, then the hierarchy of authority will erode gradually, [and the problem will grow] from minor to prominent. Isn't it alarming?⁵⁸

倘或尾大衡決，內外相達，假孟軻氏“民為重”以文其說，則上下陵夷，從微至著，寧不甚可畏哉？

The theory of Mencius to which Wei had referred states: "People are the most important element in a nation; the spirits of the land and grain are the next; the sovereign is the lightest" 民為貴，社稷次之，君為輕。⁵⁹ Wei's accusation capitalized on the hidden tensions inherent in the use of the moralistic rhetoric of acting on behalf of the people: if the people were more important than the emperor, when local officials claimed to act on behalf of the people, they could reverse the power dynamics by compelling the central state to make compromises as they expected.

Wei also exploited the potential competition for moral superiority between the central government and local officials. He claimed that Lin "wanted [people's] gratitude to go to the one who knew him [i.e. Zhen Dexiu] while channeling the people's grudges to the court" 恩欲歸於知己，怨必萃於朝廷。⁶⁰ Wei was clearly pointing his charge at Zhen. Indeed, Wei included a note in his memorial, begging for a new position to evade revenge from his superior (obviously, Zhen Dexiu). Whereas Zhen himself relied on the rhetoric of benefiting the people to defeat his political enemies in the contention for free distribution of grain, his enemies now tried to trap him by questioning the legitimacy of Zhen's use of the rhetoric. The potential competition

⁵⁸ Zhen's note to Di er zou daigu," *Xishan wenji*, 7/26a.

⁵⁹ Mencius, "Jinxin xia" 盡心下, *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三经注疏, ed. Li Xueqin 李学勤 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), 11:14a.387.

⁶⁰ Zhen's note to "Di er zou daigu," *Xishan wenji*, 7/26a.

between the central government and its local agents in asserting moralistic rhetoric left room for this controversy.

Intriguingly, the court made an ambivalent response to this controversy. On the one hand, the court endorsed Wei's report by deposing Instructor Lin and reappointing Wei to a better prefecture.⁶¹ On the other hand, the new order did not criticize Zhen or his unauthorized grain distribution at all. Indeed, even when informed of Lin's dismissal, Zhen did not initially know that he himself was the target of Wei's impeachment. The court's apparent ambivalence was its response to a potential tension—now brought to the fore— between the ultimate authority of the court and the rhetorical power of the Confucian moral principle. If punishing Lin, Zhen's surrogate in the unauthorized grain distribution, served to assert the ultimate authority of the court, the decision to leave Zhen and his policy intact was likely an attempt to maintain the benevolent image of the state. Note that Grand Councilor Shi had wanted to enhance his reputation by making a welcoming gesture to *Daoxue* people, so this ambivalent order may also have been designed to balance out and retain control over official factions at court, that is, to placate enemies of *Daoxue* officials without provoking a major reaction from *Daoxue* adherents.

The ambivalent message from the court, however, upset Zhen when he finally read Wei's memorial. Zhen claimed himself “shocked and perturbed every day, and too ashamed to show his face” 震悸累日，无地自容。⁶² In his memorials in defense of Instructor Lin and himself, Zhen adopted the same language that was repeatedly used by local officials to justify their unauthorized actions: he claimed his efforts were to “consolidate the foundation of the state,

⁶¹ Although the order was nominally made by the emperor (“奉聖旨”), the decision was not necessarily made by the emperor himself. See Zhang Yi, “Zhongshu shengshu sheng zhazi yu songdai huangquan yunzuo.”

⁶² Zhen Dexiu, “Di er zou qi daizui,” *QSW*, 312:7148.255. Apparently, Wei's memorial was circulated among officials within and beyond Zhen's circuit. Li Daochuan, the supply commissioner of this circuit and Yuan Xie, Chancellor of the Directorate of Education, both read this memorial.

spread the benevolent intention, and thereby exalt the court” 固邦本、布德意，所以尊朝廷。 Zhen observed that the court’s post-facto approval of his action had acknowledged his efforts as representing the “benevolent intention” of the state; but the court’s positive response to Wei’s memorial, on the other hand, seemed to indicate that the court had “stepped back to criticize the earlier distribution [of grain] to the people as inappropriate, [which implies that] his Majesty’s exoneration of his servant [i.e. Zhen] was wrong” 追尤前日予民之不當，是陛下之赦臣者亦非也。 Zhen demanded the court make a clear judgment about whether or not he was guilty of acting in the interest of the people.⁶³ Zhen was calling out the court on its even-handed stance and using the ideology of “on behalf of the people” as leverage to pressure the court to take a stand for him and the *Daoxue* group he championed. Now the legitimacy of acting on behalf of the people was associated with the righteousness of *Daoxue* officials, while the impeachment against the unauthorized actions was connected to officials critical of the *Daoxue* group. The defense of Zhen’s unauthorized action was an effort to claim the superiority of the moral-oriented mode of governance represented by *Daoxue* people.

Zhen’s supporters joined forces to fight this battle. Shortly after Wei’s memorial was disseminated among officials, Li Daochuan 李道傳 (1170–1217), the granary commissioner of Jiangdong circuit, came to Zhen’s defense. Similar to Zhen, Li also equated the post-facto approval with a message of the state’s embrace of the ideology of benevolent rule. Wei’s false accusation, Li claimed, went against this message; if not repudiated, it would weaken people’s faith in the state. In his letter to the grand councilor, Shi Miyuan, Li pointed out that the Guangde locals were getting anxious when they heard that Zhen might be criticized for distributing rice to them. The ambiguous stance of the court, Li claimed, “would change the people who were once

⁶³ Zhen Dexiu, “Di er zou qi daizui,” *QSW*, 312:7148.255.

grateful for the grace of the emperor and the Grand Councilor into those who talk suspiciously [about the court]” 反使前日感激君相恩德之民，變為疑惑之言。Li, therefore, demanded a clear statement by the court in support of Zhen and against Wei, in order to “dissolve people’s doubt and meet people’s expectation” 以釋民疑，以慰民望。⁶⁴ Li probably well understood Councilor Shi’s desire to posit himself as a virtuous leader of the government and thus skillfully played the card of “people’s expectation” to compel Shi to take their side.

Ultimately, Zhen and his friends won the case.⁶⁵ The final edict proclaimed that Zhen had done nothing wrong at all, that Instructor Lin would be reappointed as the office manager of the Fiscal Commission, and that Prefect Wei would be demoted. Ironically, in confronting the court, Zhen and Li did precisely what Wei had accused Zhen of: using Mencius’ theory that “the people are the most important” to compel the court to agree with them. There did exist a potential tension between the assertion of moral authority by the court and that by local officials empowered by moralistic rhetoric. Essentially, Zhen and his friends not only defended the legitimacy of local officials’ use of moralistic rhetoric but also exerted it to win a battle against their factional enemies.

It is notable that the sources for piecing together this case were mostly produced by Zhen himself and his supporters, such as Li Daochuan, Yuan Xie 袁燮 (1144–1224), and Liu Kezhuang 劉克莊 (1187–1269). These moralist officials had long been dissatisfied with Shi Miyuan’s use of pragmatists in the Department of State Affairs. For instance, in 1212 Li Daochuan had complained:

⁶⁴ Li Daochuan, “Qi bianming Wei Xian he Zhen Dexiu shizou” 乞辨明魏峴按劾真德秀事奏, *QSW*, 304: 6937.38.

⁶⁵ Yuan Xie also wrote to the grand councilor in defense of Zhen, see Zhen’s note to “Di er zou daigu,” *Xishan wenji*, 7/29a–29b.

Now [the court led by Grand Councilor Shi Miyuan] values Confucian officials in name but recruits pragmatist bureaucrats in fact. People who are exploitative, cruel, mendacious, and treacherous have entered [the court].⁶⁶

今名优儒臣，实取材吏，刻剥残忍、诞漫倾危之人进矣。

Given these *Daoxue* moralists' hostility against the officials at court, the conflicts between Zhen and his enemies at the court should not be oversimplified as virtuous local officials fighting against malicious court officials for the interest of the people.⁶⁷ In fact, the conflicts between these groups of officials may have resulted from their different priorities and approaches to statecraft in response to the state's contradictory objectives—to first fulfill the state's financial needs or to prioritize the welfare of the people. Indeed, as Yang Yuxun has pointed out, Zhen may have used more-than-needed resources in his famine relief, and his conflicts with Xue Ji and Hu Ju may essentially reflect the conflict between “pragmatist bureaucrats” 才吏官僚 and “Confucian officials.” 儒臣官僚.⁶⁸ Essentially, in defending their legitimacy to violate rules for the people, Zhen and his friends were fighting a political-and-ideological battle. They attempted to secure their claim of moral authority and secure a definitive triumph over the morally flawed “pragmatist bureaucrats.” In this specific battle, Zhen and his moralist friends won. Liu Kezhuang proudly recorded that “the court came to realize the truth” 朝廷悟 after the forceful defense by Zhen and his friends.

In fact, the role Shi Miyuan played in making the compromise should not be ignored. As mentioned above, after seizing political power, Shi desired to co-opt the Neo-Confucian

⁶⁶ *Song shi*, 436.12946.

⁶⁷ Charles Hartman argues that this narrative of Confucian gentleman (and especially *dao*xue literati in the Southern Song) fighting against villains in the official history of the Song Dynasty was the result of a long-term and collective project to compose a “Grand Allegory” from the middle of the Northern Song to the early Yuan. Hartman, “*Song History Narratives as Grand Allegory*,” unpublished manuscript shared by the author.

⁶⁸ Yang Yuxun, *Xian gongyu hou sijia*, 230–240.

luminaries. Shi was a friend to Lü Zuqian 呂祖謙 (1137–1181) and a student of Yang Jian 楊簡 (1141–1226), and reportedly had a record of Confucian learning. Similar to Hu and Xue, Shi was also a Confucian-turned pragmatist. Shi had been attempting to window-dress his leadership by honoring famous scholars. Regarding Shi's attitude towards Zhen, Liu Kezhuang recorded that "[Zhen] was respected by the current grand councilor for his integrity and sincerity. Despite the repeated defiance, [Shi] did not alienate or exclude him" 以忠實懇惻為時相所重，雖積忤未至疏斥。⁶⁹ It is thus not surprising that Shi took a more neutral and ambivalent position from the beginning of this struggle. During the crisis, Li Daochuan and Yuan Xie both wrote to Shi in defense of Zhen. After receiving the final edict of support, Zhen wrote a letter of gratitude to Shi. It is very likely that Shi played a significant role in concluding the fight with court support of Zhen. What motivated Shi Miyuan to support Zhen's group was very likely his desire not to alienate Zhen and *Daoxue* supporters and to uphold the moral image of the government he led.⁷⁰

Overall, this case resulted from and in turn exposes a complexity of conflicts within the bureaucracy, including factional struggles, contradictory goals of the state, and officials' different approaches to governance. Yet all these conflicts unfolded around the use of moralistic rhetoric. While Zhen used the rhetoric to pursue his administrative agenda, his political enemies accused him of abusing the rhetoric. Moralistic rhetoric was powerful, and yet its empowerment of individual officials could be controversial. It was even more so when those exercising the rhetoric were *Daoxue* scholar-officials, who had been known for claiming moral authority independent from, or even superior to, the imperial court.⁷¹ This competition for moral authority

⁶⁹ Liu Kezhuang, "Xishan Zhen Wenzhong gong," *Liu Kezhuang ji*, 168.6502–06.

⁷⁰ Yang Yuxun argues that Shi's gesture to welcome *Daoxue* officials and his attempts to maintain a decent relationship with *Daoxue* people exempted him from being vilified in history as his predecessors and successors. See Yang, *Xian gongyu hou sijia*, 234.

⁷¹ Peter Bol, *Neo-confucianism in history* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008).

had reached its peak when the ban on *Daoxue* merged with political purge during the years of the Qingyuan 慶元 (1195–1202) reign period. In the political-and-ideological campaigns against *Daoxue*, “reputation” was singled out as an issue of contention. In 1195, the court had issued an edict that launched the attack on *Daoxue* and *Daoxue* related officials. This edict criticized officials affiliated with Zhao Ruyu and *Daoxue* as “defying the sentiment of honoring the ruler and respecting the superiors...and openly acting as defiant and arrogant to fish for reputation...mixing up praise and blame and confusing right and wrong” 蔑尊君親上之誼……陽詭僻險傲以釣聲譽……使毀譽是非棼然殽亂.⁷² The *Daoxue* luminary, Zhu Xi, was castigated in 1196 as “practicing corruption and stealing reputation, fooling the ruler and deceiving the world” 汙行盜名，欺君罔世.⁷³ In 1201, Zhu’s supporter Zhou Bida was accused of “advocating false [thoughts], cultivating factions, deceiving the world and stealing reputation” 倡偽植黨、欺世盜名. Fishing for reputation had become a political crime, a behavior that challenged the authority of the central state. Although in 1215, the ban on *Daoxue* was lifted and Han Tuozhou’s factional purge repealed, the court’s caution against *Daoxue* partisans’ claims of moral authority was still embedded in issues regarding reputation. In Zhen’s case, by accusing him of abusing moralistic rhetoric to belittle the court and hijack people’s gratitude, his enemies brought the smoldering contention to the fore.

To defend themselves, Zhen and his friends did not simply confront the court by asserting moralistic rhetoric but also skillfully made spurious statements that, they, as governmental officials, did so in line with the interests of the state. This attempt is most clearly demonstrated in

⁷² SHY, “zhiguan,” 79/11.

⁷³ SHY, “zhiguan,” 73/67.

Li Daochuan's defense of Zhen. Li disputed the alleged conflicts between imperial authority and local officials' reputation:

Acting on one's own would of course be counted as a crime in an official, yet to allow [officials] flexibility to take expedient action is the supreme power of the ruler. Hijacking gratitude should certainly be something a worthy man feels ashamed about, but [Wei's] accusation that [Zhen and Lin] induced a grudge against the emperor is like a fallacy in the end of the world...When Your Majesty's servant takes Your Majesty's orders and uses Your Majesty's rice to nourish Your Majesty's people, how could that not be Your Majesty's grace [to the people]?⁷⁴

自專固人臣之罪，而許以從宜者，乃人主之大權。掠美固君子所羞，而為君任怨者尤末世之邪說……以陛下之臣，奉陛下之命，散陛下之米，活陛下之民，何往而非陛下之德澤哉？

Li emphasized the integration of local officials' endeavors and the effective rule of the imperial court. Li further criticized an alarming tendency among bureaucrats to evade suspicion from the court by minimizing their initiatives:

I am afraid that from now on officials in various positions, overcautious about being suspected of overstepping and hijacking gratitude, will only stick to the regulations for their own security. In that case, who will undertake tasks [and accomplish them] for the emperor?⁷⁵

恐自今分職授任者以自專掠美為嫌，便文自營，誰任陛下事者？

Li even went further to suggest that the emperor focus on the fact rather than the motivations for officials' deeds— “[In the case of] officials serving the emperor, officials should be held accountable for the substance [of their work], and it is not necessary to ask whether they seek for reputation or not” 臣之事君當責其實，而求名與否不必問也。⁷⁶ By depicting themselves as agents of the central state and aligning their efforts with the benefit of the court, Li tried to defuse the competition for moral authority between the court and local officials (especially *daoxue* officials). This reconciliation of *Daoxue* people's sense of moral responsibility with the political authority of the court may have helped Zhen and his friends protect themselves in this

⁷⁴ Li Daochuan, “Qi bianming Wei Xian he Zhen Dexiu shizou,” *QSW*, 304: 6937. 38.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

case and even safeguard *Daoxue* development, especially at a time when the dominant grand councilor was striving to improve the court's moral image and strengthen the legitimacy of his leadership.

Conclusion

As we have seen from the cases of unauthorized actions discussed above, “on behalf of the people” was not merely an empty phrase that the state used to window-dress its rule, nor was it a moral principle that only constrained those who believed in it. Rather, the rhetoric was used as a tool to serve pragmatic needs. Local officials exploited the power of moralistic rhetoric to overcome bureaucratic obstructions they encountered. By defending their unauthorized actions as being “on behalf of the people,” they were able to justify their challenge to bureaucratic rules and hierarchies. Sharing this Confucian ideology, the central government often exonerated these officials despite their violation of the law. The use of moralistic rhetoric allowed local officials to increase their autonomy and meet local needs. Their unauthorized actions justified by the rhetoric, in turn, enhanced the flexibility of the Song government.

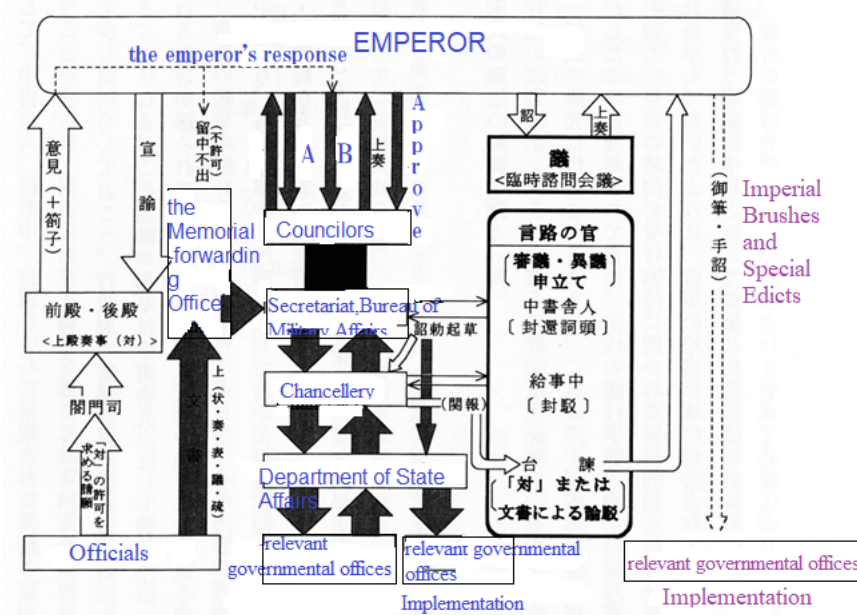
On the other hand, the power of the moralistic rhetoric could be countered by other forces in the bureaucracy, particularly political struggles. Political enemies could reinterpret local officials' unauthorized actions and accuse them of abusing moralistic rhetoric to defy superior authorities. In those situations, the rhetoric was turned into a weapon in political struggles. Even in the middle of factional struggles, however, the moralistic rhetoric was so powerful that it still constrained decision makers at the court: to uphold the moral image of the state, they were obliged not to reverse unauthorized policies that contradicted their interests or harshly treat political enemies who claimed to act in the interest of the people. This use of rhetoric was especially effective in historical moments when rulers were looking for rhetorical resources to

legitimize their authority, such as the beginning of the restored Southern Song and when grand councilors were eager to contrast their commitment to morality with the corruption of their predecessors.

Still, the controversies over unauthorized actions discussed in this chapter reveal conflicting priorities inherent in the Southern Song state—between people’s wellbeing and state revenue, in this case. The use of moral rhetoric empowered local officials to define their administrative priorities and respond to the state’s contradictory objectives on their own terms. Moreover, the contention regarding the legitimacy of using moralistic rhetoric also reveals the hidden competition for moral superiority between the imperial court and individual local officials. Possibly influenced by the rise of *Daoxue* and *Daoxue* officials’ claims of moral superiority over others, this tension was extremely intense in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. It was reflected in the criticism of officials’ pursuit of reputation. Throughout the Song, this criticism was not rare. But the nature of the criticism seems to have evolved. Before the late twelfth-century, seeking reputation appears to have been considered as an administrative or moral failure of officials, in that officials sought for undeserved reputation at the expense of the efficacy of governance. After the anti-*daoxue* campaigns, the criticism took on another aspect: officials’ pursuit of reputation also became politically controversial; officials were charged with monopolizing reputation to challenge the authority of the central government. In Zhai Ruwen’s case, the emperor suspected that Zhai desired to earn his own reputation at the expense of state revenue. The emperor seems to have criticized it as a moral and administrative failure on Zhai’s part. Whereas in Zhen Dexiu’s case in 1215, Zhen’s enemies had been treating the pursuit of reputation as a political transgression. Their accusations of abusing moralistic rhetoric to defy higher authorities and hijack people’s gratitude resonated with the accusations against *Daoxue*

people during the Qingyuan period. Zhen and his friends found themselves obliged to defend the legitimacy of their actions, their assertion of moral authority, and ultimately their political-and-ideological movement. In their justification, they aligned the power of moralistic rhetoric with the political authority of the court and, in turn, used this alignment to compel the court to explicitly support them. This reconciliation could be seen as part of the efforts of the third-generation *Daoxue* scholars, such as Zhen Dexiu, to make the teaching more compatible with politics. This strategy of alignment was not unique among *Daoxue* scholar-officials, nor did it come from vacuum; it was developed from a common experience of local officials who had long been using moralistic rhetoric to defend their unauthorized actions.

Chart I



- A: the emperor forwarded to the councillors his opinions regarding memorials he had read
- B: the emperor forwarded unread memorials to councillors

*The flow of the documents that went through the Memorial-forwarding Bureau and those conveying the ideas of the emperor (marked with \rightarrow) followed the order as shown below. The underlines mean routine meetings of certain central governmental offices for discussion governmental affairs.

Documents \rightarrow the Secretariat-Chancellery \rightarrow the Department of State Affairs \rightarrow the Six Ministries (the six constituent units of the Department of State Affairs) \rightarrow Various constituent bureaus (belonging to the Six Ministries) [They were ordered to examine the memorials, and then conduct investigations and inquiries with relevant governmental offices] \rightarrow the Six Ministries (formulate drafts of responses) \rightarrow the Department of State Affairs \rightarrow Discussions among the councillors (report) \rightarrow The emperor (approve) \rightarrow the Secretariat (draft the edicts) the Chancellery (review the edicts) \rightarrow the Department of State Affairs (implement) \rightarrow relevant governmental offices

Chapter Two. Pulling Strings: Personal Connections and Local Governance in Southern Song China

As depicted in the previous chapter, local officials' political communication with the central government was characterized by interminable bureaucratic procedures and was mediated by various governmental offices. Following the regular procedures, local proposals were vulnerable to neglect, delay, and even subversion. Similarly, communication between local officials and higher levels of regional administration was also susceptible to restrictions by paperwork. As Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139–1193) observed in 1190, when he served as the prefect of Jingmen 荊門: “If prefects and county magistrates cannot make contact with the circuit commissioners and make use of their influence, then there are many [ways] that official paperwork can tie their hands” 郡縣非得使家相知聞，相假借，則吏文之能掣肘者多矣。¹

To smooth the way for their administrative endeavors, local officials sought to forge direct communication with individuals who could effectively influence local policies. These interactions often took place outside regular channels of communication and decision making. Through direct communication, local officials were able to circumvent bureaucratic procedures or to overcome obstructions imposed by other interest groups in the bureaucracy. This chapter examines how local officials managed to forge such direct communication. It shows that by using personal connections, in the forms of correspondence or even meeting in person, local officials were able to get themselves heard and supported by superior authorities, including the emperor himself. In turn, the use of personal connections could refresh, renew, and strengthen one's personal networks. The use of the dual channels of communication—both through regular

¹ Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵, “Yu Zhang Yuanshan (II)” 與張元善 (二), *Lu Xiangshan quanji* 陸象山全集 (Beijing: Zhongguo shu dian, 1992), 16.135.

bureaucratic procedures and personal interactions—allowed individual members of the bureaucracy, especially those at the lower levels of the bureaucratic hierarchy, to increase their latitude in governance and even assert their will in the bureaucracy. Moreover, by discussing local officials' use of personal connections for official purposes, this chapter reveals a “grey zone” between the official and personal action, and between private and public agendas. This “grey zone,” I propose, characterized the political culture of the Song Dynasty.

Part I. Getting around “the Bureaucracy”: Forging Direct Communication with the “Imperial Court”

“Miaotang” versus “Yousi”

In Song officials' political language, there was a clear distinction between two sectors of the state in dealing with governmental affairs: “the bureaucracy” (*yousi* 有司) and “the imperial court” (*miaotang* 廟堂). “The bureaucracy,” generally referred to the whole executive section of the government, headed by the Six Ministries at Department of State Affairs. Officials often connected “the bureaucracy” with rigid procedures, routine, inertia, and even bureaucratic obstruction as described in the previous chapter. On the contrary, “The imperial court,” referred to the core group of policymakers, particularly, “the emperor and councilors” (*junxiang* 君相). Officials often looked up to this core group as arbiters who could go beyond vested interests of individual offices, bypass bureaucratic procedures, and get policies implemented efficiently and effectively.

This sentiment to distinguish “*miaotang*” and “*yousi*” was clearly spelled out in the following case of Zhou Bida 周必大 (1126–1204). In 1176, Emperor Xiaozong issued multiple amnesties in response to excessive rainfall. Zhou, then the vice minister of war, took this opportunity to criticize the ineffectiveness of routinized amnesties. Zhou pointed out that,

although meant to effectively address people's sufferings, these amnesties often followed formulae. Although the six ministries would present each item to the emperor, the proposed items were "nothing more than routines and trivia" 不過常事末節.² As The Sacrifice to Heaven in the Southern Suburb (*nanjiao she* 南郊赦) was approaching, Zhou suggested that the emperor do some research on issues most relevant to people's wellbeing, keep the ideas to himself, and include them in a personal edict (*qinzha* 親劄) in addition to the amnesty designed by "the bureaucracy."³ It seems that the proposal was not implemented. Three years later, then the Minister of Rites, Zhou Bida brought up this issue again before the Rite in the Hall of Enlightened Rule (*mingtang-li* 明堂禮). In this memorial, Zhou again attacked the formalist amnesties designed by six ministries: "Although verbose, few [of the items] are feasible" 文詞雖繁，卓然可行者少. Zhou reiterated his advice on issuing a special edict "to address the hidden sufferings of the people below" 下恤人隱. He proposed:

[I] hope now [your majesty can] make up your sage mind to secretly order the three departments and the Bureau of Military Affairs to deliberately discuss critical affairs and how to implement them within these two or three months... [and then] include them in an edict to be issued together with the amnesty.⁴

望今茲出自聖意，密諭三省樞密院，就此三兩月間，詳議政事施設之大者.....數為詔旨，與赦俱下。

It is noteworthy that in both proposals Zhou emphasized that the information-collecting and decision-making processes should be managed by the closed group of the emperor and his ministers; "the bureaucracy" should be excluded because it merely reproduced the ineffectiveness brought by routine. This negative view of "the bureaucracy" is demonstrated in

² Zhou Bida 周必大, "Qi yin jiuyu qinzha tong she xumin zhazi" 乞因久雨親札同赦卹民劄子, *QSW*, 228:5061.44–45.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Zhou Bida, "Lun xiangyi mingtang sheshu zhazi" 論詳議明堂赦書劄子, *QSW*, 228:5061.82–83.

another request Zhou made regarding the central government's response to information from local officials. Zhou regretted that many valuable proposals made by new prefects to improve the livelihood of their people were either dismissed or sabotaged while being reviewed by the six ministries. Zhou beseeched the emperor to "order the ministers to present them [to the emperor], and wait for imperial edicts to get them implemented" 命大臣表而出之,取旨行下.⁵ Zhou took the opportunities of issuing amnesty to urge the emperor to break through the inertia of the bureaucracy. Only in this way would the court be able to flexibly address local problems with specific policies. Zhou celebrated the direct communication and flexible responses as "the exceptional grace of the ruler, not what the bureaucracy can achieve" 人主殊常之恩,而非有司所能及也.⁶ It is this "exceptional grace" that local officials sought to acquire in order to carry out their initiatives.

Getting Special Decrees from the Emperor

The distinction between "the court" and "the bureaucracy" essentially represented two channels of political communication between local officials and the central government: one directly connected to the emperor, and the other mediated by "the bureaucracy," especially the Six Ministries. Whereas the mediated one was the regular channel for local officials to negotiate with the central government not only about their initiatives but also how to implement them, the emperor's special orders or edicts (e.g. *neijiang* 内降, *yubi* 御笔, and *shouzhao* 手诏) provided a fast track for getting proposals advocated and implemented.⁷ Therefore, some local officials sought to facilitate their initiatives by acquiring support from the emperor himself.

⁵ Zhou Bida, "Lun xiangyi mingtang sheshu zhazi," *QSW*, 228:5061.83.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Li Quande 李全德, "Tongjin-yintaisi yu songdai de wenshu yunxing" 通进银台司与宋代的文书运行, *Zhongguo shi yanjiu*, 2008.2, 119–34. See especially 130–31.

In 1157, Ye Yiwen 葉義問 (1098–1170), a court censor and the former fiscal commissioner of Jiangdong circuit, took the opportunity of a face-to-face conversation with the emperor to push through a tax reduction he had failed to acquire during his tenure in Jiangdong. According to Ye, in 1156 he submitted an application for cutting the taxes of Jiangdong in the aftermath of a crop failure. The emperor forwarded it to the Ministry of Revenue for discussion, but the proposal remained unapproved even after Ye’s tenure ended. Therefore, at his audience with the emperor in 1157, Ye took the opportunity to beseech the emperor to “endow [Jiangdong] with a special exemption” 特與除放. This time, Ye’s request was approved by the emperor himself and implemented right away.⁸ Ye’s personal communication with the emperor successfully revived a policy that had been ignored or declined by the Ministry of Revenue. Nevertheless, this brief record of Ye’s successful negotiation obscured the painstaking efforts that a local official had to make to acquire special decrees from the emperor. The following case of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) illustrates the challenging process of forging direct communications with the emperor to circumvent “the bureaucracy.”

Upon his arrival in Nankang as the prefect in 1179, Zhu Xi was concerned that the levies of Xingzi 星子 county in this prefecture had exceeded the people’s ability to pay. Zhu decided to help his people cut the tax quota. Probably aware of the bureaucratic obstructions he might encounter, Zhu sent a *zhazi* 劄子 to address this issue to the emperor directly. As mentioned in the previous chapter, *Zhazhi* in this case was a special form of memorial to the emperor. It was regulated such that no officials other than former councilors or ministers of the Secretariat and the Chancellery could memorialize the emperor with *Zhazhi*. Exceptions would only be given to

⁸ *SHY*, “shihuo” 1.10–11.

local officials sending secret and emergent military intelligence.⁹ Note that not all the memorials sent to the emperor would be read by him in person; many would be forwarded to the councilors and then “the bureaucracy.” Memorials in *Zhazhi* form could more easily catch the emperor’s attention.¹⁰ Zhu Xi’s use of *zhazhi* was very likely an attempt to ensure that his proposal would be read by the emperor himself. Indeed, Zhu “was criticized by the opinions at the court” for overstepping his authority to make requests in the form of *Zhazhi*.¹¹ Nevertheless, Zhu’s efforts to directly communicate with the emperor were effective. The emperor approved Zhu’s proposal and forwarded it to the Department of State Affairs to make a detailed plan of execution.

However, the Ministry of Revenue bogged down the implementation of the tax cut.¹² The Ministry first required the fiscal commissioner of the circuit to verify what Zhu had described. After receiving the verification, however, the Ministry still ordered the Fiscal Commission to assess whether Zhu’s prefectural government had other sources of income to compensate for the deducted tax. The idea was that the total amount of the tribute tax to the court should not be compromised. This inquiry deeply upset Zhu. He observed: “the bureaucracy [i.e. the Ministry of Revenue] is stingy to the extent to have this kind of inquiry, then there seems to be no more hope for the grace of tax reduction” 今有司之吝乃至以此為問，則蠲減之恩似已無復可望。¹³

Nevertheless, Zhu decided to further follow the procedure as much as he could. He convinced the fiscal commissioner, Wang Shiyu 王師愈 (1122–1190), to send an official report that

⁹ Zhu Xi, “Zihe buhe yong zhazhi zoushi zhuang” 自劾不合用劄子奏事狀, *Zhu Xi ji* 朱熹集, eds. Guo Qi 郭齊 and Yin Bo 尹波 (Chengdu: Sichuan jiaoyu chubanshe), 2:22.908.

¹⁰ See, Wang Huayu, “Songdai junzhu yu zaofu de zhengwu xinxi chuli guocheng: yi zhangzou wei li.”

¹¹ Zhu Xi, “Da Lü Bogong” 答呂伯恭, *Zhu Xi ji*, 3:34.1468.

¹² The Ministry of Revenue was part of the Department of State Affairs, the central government's executive core. The Ministry of Revenue therefore was the start point of the execution of central policies regarding population and land censuses, assessment and collection of taxes, and storage and distribution of government revenues. The Ministry fleshed out the policies, making them operational orders and instructions assigned to local governments.

¹³ Zhu Xi, “Qi baoming jian xingzi xian shui zhazhi” 乞保明減星子縣稅劄子, *Zhu Xi ji*, 2:20.832.

confirmed the financial crisis of Xingzi county and implored the Ministry to approve the tax reduction unconditionally.

At the same time, Zhu sought to acquire an unmediated order from the emperor himself. He submitted a memorial that addressed the emperor, bitterly criticizing the Ministry for obstructing the benevolent policy. Zhu pointed out that the Ministry demanded compensation before granting any tax reduction and that this hypocritical policy was “no more than cutting a piece of flesh to cure a wound, which was to deceive Heaven and the people” 不過剝肉補瘡，以欺天罔人. Zhu claimed that the hypocritical inquiry was surely not made by the emperor but by court officials who failed to carry out the imperial benevolence. He beseeched the emperor to “particularly issue a wise edict” 特降睿旨 that would “directly endow [Xingzi county] with the reduction” 直賜蠲放施行.¹⁴ Zhu urged the emperor to make a different, right decision and expected the decision of the emperor himself to overcome the obstacles set by the Ministry of Revenue in regular bureaucratic procedures.

Concerned that the Ministry of Revenue would manipulate the procedures of transmitting and processing memorials to stifle his request, Zhu continued to seek other opportunities to get himself heard by the emperor. In 1180, when the emperor invited circuit and prefectural officials to contribute advice on improving the people’s livelihood, Zhu actively responded. He discussed the pending tax reduction in Xingzi county as an example of desirable efforts to relieve people’s burden. Only if the emperor endowed the county with tax reduction, Zhu argued, would the impoverished and exhausted people be able to survive.¹⁵ Nevertheless, this memorial failed to bring a positive response from the emperor, because Zhu’s moralistic critiques of the emperor’s

¹⁴ Zhu Xi, “Qi juan xingzi xian shuiqian di er zhuang” 乞蠲減星子縣稅錢第二狀, *Zhu Xi ji*, 2:16.622–23.

¹⁵ Zhu Xi, “Gengzi yingzhao fengshi” 庚子應詔封事, *Zhu Xi ji*, 2:11.451.

personal life and his personnel decisions in the same memorial annoyed him.¹⁶ Zhu, however, did not give up on direct communication with the emperor.

Three months later, a drought struck Zhu's circuit, and the emperor issued an edict of "imperial brush" (*yubi zhihui* 御筆指揮) to encourage officials to please Heaven by taking good care of the people. Zhu took this opportunity to address the emperor about the tax reduction again. He submitted to the emperor a memorial "to elaborate on the 'imperial brush'." In this memorial, Zhu emphasized that the key to eradicating the drought resided in relieving the people's burden, and that Xingzi county was still waiting for such relief. He further suspected that "if [this tax cut were] subject to the procedures of the bureaucracy, [the Ministry of Revenue] would try every means to obstruct it" 格以有司之法，必是多方沮難. Zhu again implored the emperor to bypass "the bureaucracy" and directly cut the tax.¹⁷

Zhu's suspicion of the Ministry of Revenue proved to be accurate. His request remained unanswered. For the rest of the year, Zhu's proposal was ignored. His efforts to directly communicate with the emperor also seemed ineffective. In early 1181, when Zhu was about to leave his position, he brought up the issue again in his summative report of the tenure to the emperor. He beseeched the emperor to revoke the demands for compensation made by the Ministry of Revenue and grant the tax reduction directly and unconditionally.¹⁸ Nevertheless, this report received no response for another five months.

Zhu seized every opportunity to write to the emperor, hoping that the emperor would get to see his proposal and reply with a tax cut of "exceptional grace." However, it is very likely that

¹⁶ Shu Jingnan 東景南, *Zhu Xi nianpu changbian* 朱熹年譜長編 (Shanghai: huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2001), 1:664–68.

¹⁷ Zhu Xi, "Zou tuiguang yubi zhihui er shi zhuang" 奏推廣御筆指揮二事狀, *Zhu Xi ji*, 2:16.630.

¹⁸ Zhu Xi, "Jiaona Nankang renman zoubing shijian zhuang" 繳納南康任滿合奏稟事件狀, *Zhu Xi ji*, 2:16.638–39.

Zhu's later memorials, not written in the eye-catching genre of *zhazi*, failed to catch attention from the emperor as his *zhazi* in 1179 had. Zhu himself surmised that the Ministry of Revenue had refused to change the previous decision and thus sabotaged his efforts.¹⁹ Zhu's persistent attempt to get permission from the emperor finally succeeded in an imperial audience in late 1181. This time, Zhu had the chance to discuss the tax reduction with the emperor in person, make his request face to face, and acquire a prompt permission.²⁰

From the very beginning of his dogged endeavors to cut the tax, Zhu strove to circumvent the obstruction from the Ministry of Revenue by forging direct communication with the emperor. But even when his policy had already received the emperor's endorsement, the Ministry was able to impose obstacles in the course of its implementation. Zhu continued striving to get himself heard by the emperor through all forms of memorial to the throne. However, not all of them managed to reach the emperor; only the one in the special *zhazi* genre, which in some sense functioned as a personal letter to the emperor, successfully caught the emperor's attention. The most effective communication with the emperor nevertheless took place when Zhu Xi met the emperor, explained the case, and made the request to him in person. No matter through writing or meeting, Zhu's intention was always to rely on the emperor to overrule "the bureaucracy." Whereas the transmission of information through bureaucratic documents was still subject to obstruction or neglect, face-to-face communication made one's request more straightforward and forceful: it was difficult for the emperor to decline or dismiss a request about people's livelihood.

Sometimes, the effect of face-to-face communication could fade away when officials stopped meeting the emperor in person. In order to keep themselves heard by the emperor, local officials needed to rely on the mediation of influential court officials who had opportunities to

¹⁹ Zhu Xi, "Yanhe zouzha (VI)" 延和奏劄六, *Zhu Xi ji*, 2:13.528.

²⁰ Zhu Xi, "Yanhe zouzha (VI)," *Zhu Xi ji*, 2:13.528–29; Zhu Xi, "Zou junjian Shaoxing fu hemai zhuang" 奏均減紹興府和買狀. *Zhu Xi ji*, 2:18.716.

meet with the emperor. In 1201, Wang Wanshu 王萬樞 (1143-1205), the newly appointed prefect of Xingguo *jun* 興國軍, determined to seize the opportunity of his departure audience with the emperor to remove a chronic financial burden from his jurisdiction. This extra tax started as an expediency to provide military garments when the Southern Song was defending its frontiers along the Huai River against the Jin in the 1130s. The expediency, however, remained even after the wars ended, because the Ministry of Revenue had claimed this extra tax as a part of its regular income. This convention was so entrenched that Wang's ten predecessors had been unable to challenge it. Wang, however, proposed to the emperor in person that the tax be abolished. To keep this discussion with the emperor going, Wang persuaded a court censor to continue lobbying the emperor about this tax remission after Wang departed for office. Wang's efforts finally won a court approval to reduce half of the tax quota. Two years later, however, the Ministry of Revenue, citing the old policy, attempted to re-impose the abolished tax. Fortunately, Wang was still serving in the Xingguo prefecture. According to the composer of Wang's funerary inscription, Wang "forcefully insisted on what he proposed earlier [in the imperial audience], and eventually, the [plan of the Ministry of Revenue] was killed and not implemented" 力持前奏，竟格不行。²¹

Wang was wise to bring up this case in his meeting with the emperor in person; otherwise, his proposal would have been silenced in the bureaucratic procedure. The Song court required new prefects to submit "reports of five issues benefiting the people (*bianmi wushi* 便民五事)" shortly after arrival at their jurisdictions. Technically, these reports allowed local officials to make proposals about critical local affairs. Nevertheless, these reports were "usually sent to the [six] ministries for investigation and discussion, [but] it is rarely heard that they were

²¹ Liu Zai 劉宰, "Gu zhi Jizhou Wang gong muzhiming" 故知吉州王公墓誌銘, *QSW*, 300:6851.227.

implemented” 尋常例付曹部勘當，鮮聞施行。²² If Wang had waited until arriving at the prefecture to make the proposal, it likely would have been ignored or declined. Similar to Zhu Xi, Wang also sought to carry out his initiatives through persuading the emperor himself in person. Moreover, Wang was also acute enough to ask the court censor to continue his petition to the emperor. Liu Zai 劉宰 (1167–1240), the composer of Wang’s funerary inscription, precisely summed up this case:

Had the lord [i.e. Wang] not proposed it before leaving for his appointment, [the people] could count on nothing to awaken the emperor; had Wang not insisted on this policy when he governed the prefecture, [the people] could rely on nothing to prevent [the reversion of the tax cut] in the future.²³

非公言之於臨遣之初，則無以悟上意；非公持之於治郡之日，則無以杜方來。

The key to Wang’s success was being present and keeping his ideas heard (sometimes with the help of others influential court officials) in each step of the process that his proposal went through.

In all the cases about reducing levies of these officials’ current or previous jurisdictions, personal communication with the emperor played a critical role. The direct communication allowed these officials to eventually break obstructions imposed by the Ministry of Revenue, which manipulated regular bureaucratic procedures to pursue an opposite goal—securing revenue. Through special genres of documents, imperial audiences, or the mediation of court officials who could talk to the emperor, local officials were able to forge a personal communication with the emperor and win over this arbiter to support their endeavors. Direct communication was not only important in negotiation between local and central governments. It was also crucial in local officials’ negotiations with their immediate superiors.

²² Zhou Bida, “Lun xiangyi mingtang sheshu zhazi,” *QSW*, 228:5061.83.

²³ Liu Zai, “Gu zhi Jizhou Wang gong muzhiming,” *QSW*, 300: 6851.227.

Part II. Personal Correspondence and Dual Channels of Communication

In 1191, Lu Jiuyuan, then prefect of Jingmen *jun* in Jinghu-north 荆湖北 circuit, implored his friend and superior, Zhan Tiren 詹體仁 (1143–1206), the Huguang overseer general, to introduce him to the newly arrived fiscal commissioner for the circuit. Only with this connection, Lu concluded, could he realize his “sincere ambition to nourish [the people in my charge]” 區區牧養之志.²⁴

Lu pointed out how bureaucratic paperwork could hinder local officials’ administrative endeavors. He implied that to make contact with superiors had become a common strategy for local administrators of his time to enhance the efficiency and efficacy of their work. Indeed, Lu exemplified how a local administrator supplemented the official channel of communication with personal and personalized correspondence with his superiors. The use of the dual channels of communication helped local officials to govern as they wanted.

Ever since he arrived at his office in Jingmen prefecture, Lu constantly used personal letters to make contacts with his superiors. The fiscal commissioner of Hubei of the time, Xue Shusi 薛叔似 (1141–1221), had long been a friend of Lu’s.²⁵ A *Daoxue* scholar of the Yongjia

²⁴ Lu Jiuyuan, “Yu Zhang Yuanshan (II),” *Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 16.135.

²⁵ Even during Lu’s retreat in Mt. Xiangshan 象山 in Jiangxi, he kept up letter exchanges with Xue. They discussed current politics and evaluated other officials. Regarding introducing worthy people to Xue, Lu observed that “Although I am now living in seclusion, [I] may not necessarily not go out from the mountain for you.” 吾雖屏居，未必不為足下出山爐也。See Lu Jiuyuan, “Yu Xue Xiangxian” 與薛象先, *Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 13.113. In another letter to Xue, Lu addressed him “elder brother (*xiong* 兄).” Although using “elder brother” was a very common way to show politeness, it does indicate a certain degree of closeness. See, Lu Jiuyuan, “Yu Xue Xiangxian (I)” 與薛象先 (一), *Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 15.127. In addition, Lu frequently mentioned Xue in his personal letters to Zhan Tiren 詹體仁, always addressing him by his courtesy name, “Xiangxian,” rather than official title; so did Lu address Zhan Tiren in his letters to Xue. The tone of these letters suggests close connections among these three. See Lu Jiuyuan, “Yu Zhang Yuanshan (II),” *Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 16.135; Lu Jiuyuan, “Yu Xue Xiangxian (I),” *Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 15.127.

school, Xue championed the *Daoxue* officials' striving for political power.²⁶ Lu and Xue's shared dedication to the Learning of the Way most likely contributed to their close connection. As soon as he settled in, Lu sent a letter to greet Xue and tell him about the current fiscal condition of Jingmen. Lu felt lucky that Xue's application to leave his position had not been approved and thus he would stay in the circuit for a bit longer.²⁷ Having acknowledged that having Xue in charge was fortunate for the prefectural governments under him, Lu went on to make a request. Lu expressed hope that Xue would allow Jingmen to turn in "the horse fodder fees" 馬草錢 in *huizi* paper money, rather than in copper as per the regulations. This request was closely related to Lu's recent initiative in Jingmen.²⁸ Since Jingmen was located close to the Jin-Song border, the Song court had banned the circulation of copper in Jingmen and made iron and paper money the currency in the prefecture. Nevertheless, the taxation system did not change accordingly; Jingmen residents still needed to pay miscellaneous taxes in copper, which had been banned from circulation. Therefore, the people had to turn to the prefectural government to exchange *huizi* paper money for copper, paying a thirty-percent fee for each transaction. Lu lamented that this unfair policy could only harm the people and enrich the corrupt clerks. He abolished the exchange fee.²⁹ This change meant that the prefectural government now had to suffer a significant financial loss—it had to pay for all the costs of purchasing and shipping

²⁶ For Xue's biography, see *Song shi*, 397.12091–95; Xue supported *Daoxue* officials in their struggles with the anti-*Daoxue* faction led by the grand councilor, Wang Huai (1126–1189) 王淮. Xue's impeachment helped depose Wang in 1188. For the struggles between the *Daxue* officials and the anti-*Daoxue* faction during the 1170s and the 1190s, see Yu Yingshi 余英時, *Zhu Xi de lishi shijie: Songdai shidafu zhengzhi wenhua de yanjiu* 朱熹的歷史世界：宋代士大夫政治文化的研究 (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua shiye gufen youxian gongsi, 2003), 1:441–95; 2:131–48.

²⁷ Lu Jiuyuan, "Yu Xue Xiangxian (I)," *Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 15.127. Xue left Hubei in 1192.

²⁸ Yang Jian 楊簡, "Xiangshan xiansheng xingzhuang" 象山先生行狀, *QSW*, 276:7241.24.

²⁹ Lu Jiuyuan, "Yu Xue Xiangxian (II)" 與薛象先書 (二), *Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 15.128.

copper from other areas.³⁰ In order to reduce the financial burden, Lu implored Xue to accept payment in *huizi* paper money. Lu explained to Xue that Jingmen was the only prefecture in the circuit that suffered this problem, and that the compromise Xue made for Jingmen would not be too burdensome for the Fiscal Commission. Lu chose to make the request in a personal letter probably because he understood that the request, if approved, would shift the revenue loss from his prefectural government to Xue's Fiscal Commission. Lu hoped to evoke their friendship to smooth the way for this negotiation. However, Xue did not approve his request. Lu immediately sent Xue another letter. Lu commented that Xue may "have not considered it thoroughly" 未之深察 and added that he expected Xue to "make a judgment based on righteousness" 斷之以義.³¹ Whether Xue finally helped Lu is unclear, although the sources do record and celebrate Lu's success in Jingmen's currency reform.³² In any case, this example shows that Lu used personal letters as an important means, if not *the* means, to propose and defend a policy directly with a superior who happened to be his friend.

Lu's reliance on informal channels of communication went even beyond the circuit. He was also able to acquire help from Zhan Tiren, the overseer general of the Huguang region. Zhan was a native of Jianning prefecture (in Fujian) and had studied with Zhu Xi when he was young. It is possible that their shared interest in *Daoxue* drew Zhan and Lu closer than regular superiors and subordinates. It is evident that Lu frequently exchanged letters and messages with Zhan through Fiscal Commissioner Xue Shusi (because Zhan and Xue's offices were in the same prefecture and they had meetings occasionally).³³ In a personal letter to Zhan, Lu thanked him

³⁰ Lu Jiuyuan, "Yu Xue Xiangxian (I)," *Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 15.127.

³¹ Lu Jiuyuan, "Yu Xue Xiangxian (II)," *Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 15.128.

³² Yang Jian, "Xiangshan xiansheng xingzhuang," *QSW*, 276:7241.24.

³³ It is evident from Lu's letters to Zhan (two were preserved in Lu's collected works) that they maintained regular correspondence. In the beginning of this letter discussed in this paper, Lu mentioned

for freeing Jingmen from “Harmonious Purchase” and enabling him to build local stocks for future famine relief:

[I am] particularly touched and grateful that you have approved all [my] requests... The Harmonious Purchase was able not to reach my humble prefecture; this can be said to be a great favor... [Recently,] the precipitation has been sufficient. If there is at least a mediocre harvest, my humble prefecture would like to purchase a little rice privately, storing it in the countryside, in preparation for times of need. If this plan is successful, it will all be owing to your grace.³⁴

事皆得請，尤用感服.....和糴一事，得不及敝邑，可謂大惠.....雨澤霑足，倘得中下熟，敝邑欲自措置，私糴少米，貯之鄉間，以為異時之備。此謀或遂，皆門下之賜也。

It is noteworthy that Lu’s prefecture was exempted from purchase quotas even when it had recently enjoyed adequate rainfall and was expecting reasonable harvests.³⁵ Lu’s plan to build local grain stocks was outside the central state’s purview and compromised the central government’s control over local grain. The personal and direct communication between Lu and Zhan was key to Lu’s success in this endeavor. Even Lu himself acknowledged this plan as “private,” as opposed to the “public” orders from the central state. It was Zhan’s “grace” that enabled Lu to take this “private” action outside the purview of the central government. The tone of Lu’s personal letter of gratitude indicates that his friendship with Zhan was an important reason for this great favor.

It is evident that Lu also forged direct communication with the military commissioner, Zhang Sen 章森, who had not yet been his friend. Frequent direct communications, however, very likely helped to improve cooperative relations or even personal trust between them.

he had “opened three letters [from Zhan] in a row” and was touched by Zhan’s humble and solicitous language, which compensated for the troubles of letter deliveries. See Lu Jiuyuan, “Yu Zhang Yuanshan shu (II).” In another letter to Zhan, Lu explained that he had not written to Zhan for a while, because the timing of letter delivery was not good for him, but he always asked Commissioner Xue Shusi to send his regards to Zhan. See, “Yu Zhang Yuanshan shu (I).” Finally, when Lu died, Zhan also composed a eulogy for him. See, Zhan Tiren, “Ji xiangshan xiansheng wen” 祭象山先生文, *QSW*, 280:6353.257.

³⁴ Lu Jiuyuan, “Yu Zhang Yuanshan (II),” *Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 16.135.

³⁵ Lu Jiuyuan, “Yu Zhang Demao (III),” *Lu Xiangshan qianji*, 16.131.

Although Zhang was a patron and mentor of Lu's son, Chizhi 持之 (1169–1225), Lu did not have frequent personal interaction with Zhang until he realized that Zhang had included his name in a memorial of recommendation.³⁶ Lu subsequently wrote a letter of gratitude to Zhang, in which he regretted that he had not corresponded with Zhang as much as he should have. Lu confessed:

Regarding the official business that should be reported [to you], although there have been *official reports*, [I] should have also provided *reporting letters* [to you]. [But I] figured that [you] were diligent in hearing and reading [official reports] and [I] presumed on the intimacy of [your] favor, such that [reporting letters] were never sent and didn't reach you (emphasis added).³⁷

職事所當控聞者，雖有公狀，亦合更具稟劄。慮勤聽覽，且恃照臨之密邇，皆缺弗致。

It is notable that Lu pointed out a type of documents called “*bingzha*” (translated as “reporting letters” above) and juxtaposed them with “*gongzhuang*” (translated as “official reports” above). The juxtaposition Lu made indicates that the “*bingzha*” that he had failed to send to Zhang were distinct from formal bureaucratic documents.

Lu's letter to Commissioner Zhang reveals that it was considered as an informal norm, or a protocol, for a local official like Lu to discuss official business with his superiors through dual channels— both official reports and non-official letters. Lu's regret about his lack of personal correspondence with Zhang and his apology for neglecting the norm of the dual channels of communication indicate that personal correspondence was understood to be important for fostering and maintaining close relations between local officials and their superiors. In addition, as Lu's explanation for not sending personal letters suggested, supplementing official reports with personal letters allowed local officials to get the reported cases quickly known, dealt with,

³⁶ Zhang's interactions with Lu's son was indicated in Lu's own letters to Zhang. See Lu Jiuyuan, “Yu Zhang Demao (I), (III), (IV)” 與章德茂（一）、（三）、（四），*Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 16.130–31.

³⁷ Lu Jiuyuan, “Yu Zhang Demao (II)” 與章德茂（二），*Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 16.130.

or even endorsed by their superiors. After this letter of gratitude, Lu frequently exchanged personal letters (*shu* 書) with Zhang to reply, report, and explain official affairs.

From Commissioner Zhang's side, the personal channel of communication also enabled him to collect information and carry out his work more easily. For example, during a drought in the circuit in 1192, Lu sent Zhang a detailed letter in response to a handwritten letter (*shouzha* 手劄) from Zhang that had checked in with Lu about the situation of Jingmen and the effectiveness of Lu's prayers for rain. Lu observed at the end of the letter: "[I] assume that with a deep concern for the people, [you] want to know about it [i.e. the situation of Jingmen] immediately, so [I] have discussed it in detail" 竊惟軫憂斯民之深，所欲亟聞，故詳及之。³⁸ The personal nature of this communication was underscored by the fact that Lu's son personally delivered the letter to Zhang on his way to an examination. In another personal letter to Zhang, Lu responded to a bureaucratic document that had inquired about rumors about two county governments under Lu embezzling grain intended for the military.³⁹ The correspondence enhanced the personal relationship and trust between Zhang and Lu. For example, in the face of a reportedly false accusation by litigious locals against Lu and his subordinates, Lu successfully defended himself and his subordinates thanks to Zhang's trust in him. According to Lu, after his explanation to Zhang, this crisis "was completely solved just as ice thaws" 渙如冰釋。⁴⁰

Lu probably understood from his experience that the effectiveness of the dual channels of communication was highly dependent on personal connections. Therefore, in order to continue capitalizing on the effectiveness of the dual channels of communication, Lu attempted to

³⁸ Lu Jiuyuan, "Yu Zhang Demao (III)," *Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 16.131.

³⁹ Lu Jiuyuan, "Yu Zhang Demao shu (IV)," *Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 16.131–132.

⁴⁰ See Lu Jiuyuan, "Yu Zhang Demao (IV)," *Lu Xiangshan qianji*, 16.132; Yu Zhang Yuanshan (II)" 與張元善 (二), *Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 16.135.

maintain, update, and expand connections to his superiors. This attempt motivated Lu to ask Overseer General Zhan to introduce him to the new fiscal commissioner, the request with which this section opened.⁴¹

Lu Jiuyuan was far from the only Song official who maintained dual channels of communication. Indeed, Southern Song officials often sent *bingzha* (sometimes called *zhazi* 劄子) to superiors in addition to the bureaucratic documents they submitted to these superiors' offices. *Bingzha* were distinguished from regular personal letters for their usually government-related content and relatively formal language. But *bingzha* also differed from bureaucratic documents in that *bingzha* were addressed to individual officials rather than to the governmental offices in which these officials served; in other words, these letters were written in a more personalized way than bureaucratic documents. The distinction between the personalized *bingzha* and regular bureaucratic documents can also be seen in Zhu Xi's communications with his superiors during his tenure as Nankang prefect.

In 1180, Zhu used both bureaucratic documents and personalized *zhazi* letters in negotiations about a tax cut with his friend-and-superior, the assistant fiscal commissioner of Jiangdong circuit, Wang Shiyu 王師愈 (1122–1190). Wang, an Wuzhou native and a student of Yang Shi's 楊時 (1053–1135), had received his *jinshi* degree in the same year as Zhu, and Zhu “respected him as a senior” 視公為前輩.⁴² Before coming to Nankang, when Zhu felt pessimistic about being a local official and was reluctant to accept his appointment, Zhu's friends all convinced him that Wang would assist him in taking care of the people.⁴³ Indeed, Zhu

⁴¹ This new fiscal commissioner will succeed Xue Shusi.

⁴² For the details of Wang's relationships with Yang Shi, Lü Benzong, and Zhu Xi, see Zhu Xi, “Zhongfeng dafu zhi Huanzhang ge Wang gong shendaobei ming” 中奉大夫直煥章閣王公神道碑銘, *Zhu Xi ji*, 8:89.4571–81.

⁴³ Zhu Xi, “Yu Jiangdong Wangcao zhazi” 與江東王漕劄子, *Zhu Xi ji*, 3:26.1111–1112.

did work with Wang on a few issues. Zhu even consulted with Wang about whether to submit fake ledgers to the court for review.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, Wang was not the only leader of the Commission—he was co-leading the office with a vice commissioner, Chen Sun 陳損 (1151 *jinshi*)—and the primary responsibility of their office was to assess, collect, and transport taxes under the direction of the Ministry of Revenue. The policies made by the Fiscal Commission were not always favorable for Zhu Xi, and Zhu frequently found their orders obstructing his efforts to give relief to his people. For example, in 1180, Zhu applied to the fiscal commissioner and the overseer general of the Huaidong region for a tax reduction of 3,000 *dan* (approx. 201,000 liters) for the residents of Jianchang county 建昌, who had suffered a severe crop failure in the previous year. Both offices approved Zhu’s application and agreed to deduct the 3,000 *dan* of grain from the tribute tax for that year. The Fiscal Commission, however, soon reversed the approval, demanding that the Nankang prefectural government should pay for all the tax reduction out of its own pocket and cause no extra loss of the tribute tax. We do not know whether Associate Commissioner Wang or Vice Commissioner Chen was responsible for the decision, but Zhu sent an official appeal about the case to the Fiscal Commission, accompanied by two personalized *zhazi* letters to the two senior officials.⁴⁵ For unknown reasons, only the one sent to Wang is preserved in Zhu’s collected works. In this personalized letter, Zhu expressed his disappointment at the decision,

⁴⁴ Zhu Xi, “Yu caosi huayi zhazi” 與漕司畫一劄子; “Yu Wang Yunshi zhazi” 與王運使劄子, *Zhu Xi ji*, 3:26.1113–1114; 1114–1115.

⁴⁵ Zhu Xi, “Yu Jiangdong Wang cao zhazi,” *Zhu Xi ji*, 3:26.1112. The letter was titled “*zhazi*” 劄子 in Zhu Xi’s collected works. Lik Hang Tsui has discussed *zhazi* as a sub-genre of personal letter developed from bureaucratic documents. Tsui also reminds us not to decide the sub-genre of letters by their titles in the collected works. See Lik Hang Tsui, “Bureaucratic Influences on Letters in Middle Period China.” *A History of Chinese Letters and Epistolary Culture*, ed. Antje Richter (Brill, 2015), 363—397. This *zhazi* letter dealt intensively with governmental affairs—and thus cannot be taken strictly as a personal letter; yet it was written as if Zhu was addressing Commissioner Wang in person. It is based on the tone of the letter and the way Zhu expressed his opinion that I classify the letter as a personal one, or at least a personalized one, which was distinct from regular bureaucratic documents.

which “was especially not what one would expect from a benevolent gentleman [like Wang]” 尤非所望於仁人君子者。⁴⁶ Zhu also strongly questioned their friendship. He lamented that despite his trust of Wang, Wang had failed him: “On the contrary,” Zhu pointed out to Wang, “Supervisor [of Foundries] Yao had never known me, but even he could condescend to listen to my foolish words and memorialized [the emperor] to reduce the ‘charcoal fees’ of my prefecture by 2,000 strings. I don’t know whether you ever heard about it” 而姚提點平生不相識，乃能俯聽愚言，一奏減本軍木炭錢二千貫，不審亦嘗聞之否？ Zhu further asserted his demand by threatening to quit his job if Wang decided that his request “could definitely not be accommodated” 決不可行。⁴⁷ By writing Wang a very emotional letter, Zhu attempted to change the official order from the Fiscal Commission by influencing the actions of Wang as an individual and a friend.

At the same time, Zhu complained about the issue to his patron and friend, Chen Junqing 陳俊卿 (1113–1186), who was not only the military commissioner of the circuit but also a former grand councilor.⁴⁸ Zhu forwarded Chen a copy of the personalized letters he had sent to the two senior officials of the Fiscal Commission and asked Chen to “put in a word about it” 一言及之。⁴⁹ Note that the issue of tribute tax was usually outside the duties of a military commissioner. Zhu was relying on his connection to Chen and Chen’s personal influence as a prestigious political figure to intervene in the decision making by the Fiscal Commission. Both

⁴⁶ Zhu Xi, “Yu Jiangdong Wang cao zhazi,” *Zhu Xi ji*, 3:26.1112.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Chen was also a native of Fujian. For Chen’s biography and his interaction with Zhu Xi, see Zhu Xi, “Shaoshi Guanwen dian da xueshi zhishi Weiguogong zeng taishi shi Zhengxian Chen gong xingzhuang,” 少師觀文殿大學士致仕魏國公贈太師謚正獻陳公行狀, *Zhu Xi ji*, 8:96.4903–47. For Chen’s patronage of Zhu Xi, see Conrad M. Schirokauer, “Chu Hsi’s Political Career: A Study in Ambivalence” in *Confucian Personalities* ed. Arthur F Wright and Denis C. Twitchett (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 162–88.

⁴⁹ Zhu Xi, “Yu Chenshuai huayi zhazi” 與陳帥畫一劄子, *Zhu Xi ji*, 3:26.1109.

Zhu's bargaining with Wang and the mediation that Zhu expected from Chen fell outside the formal official channels of negotiation and were conducted through personalized letters addressed to these individual officials.

Quite possibly due to these interpersonal negotiations, Wang did modify his decision: he instructed Zhu to send an application to the Department of State Affairs, and apparently, he promised to endorse it when the court forwarded the case down to the Fiscal Commission for verification.⁵⁰ Although he did apply to the court as Wang instructed, Zhu found this procedure too time-consuming—bureaucratic documents needed to go back and forth between the court and the Fiscal Commission before the final decision could be made and sent down to Nankang.⁵¹ In order to shorten the process, Zhu sent yet another personalized letter to Commissioner Wang and suggested that he “directly apply for [the tax deduction] from the side of the Fiscal Commission” 徑從使司申請.⁵² It is hard to imagine that, without personal connections with Wang, Zhu would have felt confident to ask his superior to bypass the regular bureaucratic procedures.

Similarly, also during his tenure in Nankang, Zhu frequently used personalized *zhazi* letters to make requests to the supply commissioner of the circuit, Yan Shilu 顏師魯 (1119–1193). In these personalized *zhazi* letters, Zhu reminded Yan to respond to a few proposals made in the bureaucratic documents he had submitted.⁵³ In one of his personalized *zhazi* letters to Yan, Zhu reminded Yan to fulfill a promise he made in their previous correspondence. According to Zhu, Yan had approved his request for rice but had yet to issue any official documents to

⁵⁰ Zhu Xi, “Yu caosi huayi zhazi,” *Zhu Xi ji*, 3:26.1113.

⁵¹ For a depiction of the flow of official documents between the local and central governments, See the Chart by Hirata Shigeki, which has been cited in Chapter one of this dissertation.

⁵² Zhu Xi, “Yu caosi huayi zhazi,” *Zhu Xi ji*, 3:26.1113—1114.

⁵³ Zhu Xi, “Yu Yan tiju zhazi (I), (II), (III), (IV)” 與顏提舉劄子 (一)、(二)、(三)、(四), *Zhu Xi ji*, 3:26.1098–1099.

implement this endowment. Zhu requested that Yan officially carry out his words.⁵⁴ It is evident that Zhu even sent his messenger to deliver this letter to Yan. Yan, in return, had the messenger bring back his gift and a handwritten letter to Zhu, in which he agreed to officially endow the rice.⁵⁵

As indicated in Lu Jiuyuan's cases, the effectiveness of the dual channels of communication resided in reliable personal connections. The following case of Huang Gan in Anqing prefecture demonstrates how personal relations were crucial in the use of non-official correspondence. In 1217, soon after Huang Gan 黃榦 (1152–1221) arrived at his prefectural office in Anqing *jun* 安慶軍 in Huaixi circuit, he received an order from the Fiscal Commission. It ruled that Huang should draft some eighteen thousand Anqing locals to transport ten thousand *dan* of rice from the neighboring prefecture of Luzhou 廬州 to Anfeng *jun* 安豐軍. During that time, Huang was mobilizing local labor for building a city wall, and this additional burden on the people was unacceptable to him. Therefore, Huang sent two official reports in succession to the Commission, explaining the local situation and begging that his people be exempted from this labor levy.⁵⁶ These reports, however, were not approved. Instead, the Fiscal Commission even issued another order that increased the amount of rice to be transported by another fifteen thousand *dan*.⁵⁷ Huang, now regretting that he “had not had the chance to personally present a *bingzha* [to the fiscal commissioner]” 未及親布稟劄, sent a *zhazi* letter to the commissioner,

⁵⁴ Zhu Xi, “Yu Yan tiju zhazi (I),” *Zhu Xi ji*, 3:26.1098.

⁵⁵ Zhu Xi, “Yu Yan tiju zhazi (III),” *Zhu Xi ji*, 3:26.1099.

⁵⁶ Huang Gan 黃榦, “Shen Huanxi zhuanyunsi qi mian qifu yunliang shizhuang (I), (II)” 申淮西轉運司乞免起夫運糧事狀一、二. *QSW*, 287:6532.412–13.

⁵⁷ Huang Gan, “Shen Huanxi zhuanyunsi qi mian qifu yunliang shizhuang (III)” 申淮西轉運司乞免起夫運糧事狀三. *QSW*, 287:6532.414.

Qiao Xingjian 喬行簡 (1156–1241).⁵⁸ In this personalized letter, Huang observed that he had been confident that his official applications for the levy exemption would be approved by such a benevolent official as Qiao, and surmised that he had yet to receive the permission because the official applications he had submitted had not reached Qiao. When he again received a call from the Fiscal Commission for rice transport, Huang sent Qiao yet two more *zhazi* letters, “begging with deadly [seriousness] 以死請” for Qiao’s help.⁵⁹ Apparently, these personalized letters took effect. Qiao agreed to cut ten thousand *dan* of rice to be transported.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Huang’s goal was to get his people fully exempted from the labor levy.

While painstakingly negotiating with Commissioner Qiao, Huang was also seeking help from another, even more powerful superior, Li Jue 李玨, the military commander of the Jianghuai region (*Jianghuai zhizhi shi* 江淮制置使). Li had long been an admirer of Huang and had recommended Huang for his position as Anqing prefect.⁶¹ As a patron and ally, Li had been regularly corresponding with Huang.⁶² In one of the personal letters (*shu* 書) from Huang to Li, Huang made his request for the exemption and reminded Li to read and process the bureaucratic report that he had submitted.⁶³ In contrast to Qiao’s reluctant response, Li promptly accepted Huang’s proposal made through the dual channels of communication. Li ordered the exemption

⁵⁸ Huang Gan, “Yu Huaixi Qiao yunpan bian qifu yunliang shi zhazi (I)” 與淮西喬運判辦起夫運糧事劄子一. *QSW*, 287:6529.356–57.

⁵⁹ Huang Gan, “Yu Huaixi Qiao yunpan bian qifu yunliang shi zhazi (II), (III)” 與淮西喬運判辦起夫運糧事劄子二、三. *QSW*, 287:6529.357–58.

⁶⁰ Huang Gan, “Shen Huanxi zhuanyunsi qi mian qifu yunliang shizhuang (IV)” 申淮西轉運司乞免起夫運糧事狀四. *QSW*, 287:6532.414.

⁶¹ Chen Yihe 陳義和, “Mianzhai xiansheng Huang Wensu gong nianpu” 勉齋先生黃文肅公年譜, in *Songren nianpu congkan* 宋人年譜叢刊, ed. Wu Hongze 吳洪澤 and Yin Bo 尹波 (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe), 11:7230–31.

⁶² See Huang Gan, “Yu Li shilang Mengwen shu (I)–(III)” 與李侍郎夢聞書; “Yu Jinling zhishi Li Wengwen shu (I)–(XI)” 與金陵制使李夢聞書. *QSW*, 288:6541.89–118.

⁶³ Huang Gan, “Yu Li shilang Mengwen shu (IV).” *QSW*, 288:6541.99.

of the labor levy for Anqing and other three prefectures. The different effectiveness of Huang's interactions with Qiao and Li was decided by the different relationships Huang had with the two individuals. Indeed, in a personal letter to acknowledge Li for his help, Huang expressed his concern about Commissioner Qiao's reaction to the cooperation between Li and him. Huang observed:

The fiscal commissioner must think [I, Huang] Gan indeed made this request [to Commander Li] for exempting the labor levy. I'm afraid that henceforth he will restrict me even more, [but] there is nothing that can be done about it. Even if I were dismissed, I would be dismissed for the [sake of the] people.⁶⁴

計臺必謂榦實有此請，恐自此相治愈甚，亦無可奈何，便使罷去，亦是為百姓也。

Apparently, Huang's relationship with Qiao was not as reliable as that with Li. Possibly because of Huang, Li soon impeached Commissioner Qiao for incompetence and had Qiao removed from his position.⁶⁵

In his interactions with both Qiao and Li, Huang submitted bureaucratic documents and supplemented them with non-official letters. Nevertheless, Huang used the relatively more formal (yet personalized) *zhazi* letter to negotiate with Qiao, while writing personal letters (*shu* 書) to seek assistance from Li. Although personalized *zhazi* also provided officials with a channel to talk to their superiors as individuals, the key to the effectiveness of this channel was personal relationships.

In summary, in the cases discussed above, local officials adopted personal and personalized letters to make direct contact with their superiors, whose personal influence in their governmental offices could affect local policies. They used these informal or semi-formal forms

⁶⁴ Huang Gan, "Yu Li shilang Mengwen shu (V). *QSW*, 288:6541.100.

⁶⁵ For the record of Qiao's demotion, see *Song huiyao* "Zhiguan" 職官 12.15. The chronicle of Huang's life composed by Chen Yihe during the Song connected Qiao's demotion with the interaction between Huang and Li. See, Chen Yihe, "Mianzhai xiansheng Huang Wensu gong nianpu," *Songren nianpu congkan*, 11:7228.

of communication to supplement the standard bureaucratic one. As members of the bureaucracy, local officials needed to go through the bureaucratic routine of paperwork to initiate or negotiate policies. Meanwhile, they also attempted to accelerate the bureaucratic procedure and intervene in the decision-making process by exchanging personal or personalized letters with relevant superiors. When using the dual channels of communication to serve their official goals, these officials understood the distinction between these two channels and how they played different roles in negotiations. They played with the distinction to get their initiatives implemented faster and more easily.

In these cases of negotiation through the dual channels, we see local officials actively exploit the grey zone between the personal and official realms. On the one hand, both the personalized and personal letters were sent to negotiate official affairs. The “public”/ “governmental” purposes that the correspondence served distinguished it from letters exchanged for “private”/ “personal” purposes. For example, Lu Jiuyuan clearly distinguished correspondence for governmental affairs from that for private purposes. In the letter of gratitude to Military Commissioner Zhang analyzed above, Lu wrote that he would not further bother Zhang with “a private acknowledgment as per the superficial etiquette of the time” 世俗私謝之禮.⁶⁶ The word “si” can sometimes be understood as “self-interested” in terms of motivation and the nature of the behavior, or, as here, can mean personal/private in terms of “arenas or sectors of society.” In Lu’s understanding, things like the etiquette of acknowledgment fell into the realm of “si,” whereas using personalized letters to discuss “official businesses that should be reported” did not belong to the realm of “private”/ “personal” life. On the other hand, Lu and others used personal or personalized correspondence alongside with regular bureaucratic documents, and the

⁶⁶ Lu Jiuyuan, “Yu Zhang Demao (II),” *Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 16.130.

effectiveness of this correspondence relied heavily on personal connections. The personal tone and language of these letters, as well as the way in which they functioned, distinguished them from purely bureaucratic documents.

Local officials themselves were aware of this ambiguity and the fusion of official and personal means, and here it is significant that they did not question the legitimacy of using personal means to get official business done. Zhu Xi took it a matter of course that, as his friend, Commissioner Wang should help him with the fully justified tax cut; Lu Jiuyuan saw the use of personal connections as a necessary part of local administration and his networking efforts as serving his “sincere ambition to nourish [the people].” Huang Gan took his personal communication with Li behind the back of Qiao as part of his endeavors to take care of “his people.” As long as the ends were justified, whether the means were official or not did not bother these officials.

Part III. Navigating the “Grey Zone”: Negotiating Quota Exemptions for Jizhou Prefecture, 1199-1201

Not all local officials were so prestigious and well-connected as Zhu Xi, Lu Jiuyuan, and Huang Gan. Regular local officials often had limited political and cultural capital and seldom had direct connections to powerful figures. Yet, even obscure local officials could find ways to pull strings to get their goals achieved. One strategy such local officials used was to connect with prestigious officials who were natives of or currently residing in their jurisdictions. By maintaining positive interactions with these well-connected figures, local officials could benefit from their personal networks. The following case of the mutually-beneficial interactions between a prefect of Jizhou 吉州 and a well-connected resident of the prefecture demonstrates how local

officials consciously tapped into the “grey zone” between the personal and official realms to fulfill their goals.

In 1201, the vice prefect of Jizhou, Zhao Yancan 趙彥燦, received an order from the Bureau of Overseer General of the Huaixi region to purchase 70,000 *dan* of rice in his prefecture and turn it in. Arguing that his prefecture had barely recovered from frequent droughts and floods in recent years, Zhao beseeched the overseer general, Han Yaqing 韓亞卿, to exempt Jizhou from the purchase quota. Nevertheless, Han only agreed to forgive half of the quota. Upset by the remaining quota of 35,000 *dan* of rice, Vice Prefect Zhao wrote to ask for help from Yang Wanli 楊萬里 (1127–1206), a Jizhou native and a retired official residing in his hometown.

Although Zhao’s letter to Yang has not survived, we can still gather information about their interactions from Yang’s responses, which are preserved in his collected works. Yang’s reply to Zhao makes clear that this was not the first mutually-beneficial interaction between the two—previously, Zhao had promptly addressed a water control issue in Yang’s village upon his request. Yang acknowledged that the villagers—including his own family—felt grateful for Zhao’s positive response.⁶⁷ Apparently, Yang owed Zhao a debt of gratitude. Therefore, when Zhao turned to Yang for help, Yang felt obliged to requite him. Moreover, Yang frankly observed that he felt more than happy to facilitate this exemption, for he would be “one of those who are benefited” 某亦受賜一人之數.⁶⁸ Overall, Yang’s letter to Zhao shows that his relations with Zhao were at least partly built on mutual benefit and that Yang himself had a stake in the issues in which he intervened. Intriguingly, at the end of his letter, Yang urged: “after [you]

⁶⁷ Yang Wanli 楊萬里, “Da Jizhou Zhaocui” 答吉州趙倅, *Yang Wanli ji jianjiao* 楊萬里集箋校, ed. Xin Gengru 辛更儒 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 8:111.4254.

⁶⁸ Yang Wanli, “Da Jizhou Zhaocui,” *Yang Wanli ji jianjiao*, 8:111.4254.

finish reading, order the clerks to seal the letter with wax” 覽畢頤指書吏緘而蠟之。⁶⁹ This reminder suggests that Yang well understood the dubious nature of their mutual help, and he was aware that using personal networks to affect official policies could become a source of scandal. Nevertheless, Yang never hesitated to rely on the effectiveness of personal connections.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, both Yang and Zhao had a decent justification for their actions—to pursue the public interest of the people in the prefecture. Yang adopted exactly that rhetoric when he sent a request for quota exemption to Overseer General Han, who happened to be a trusted friend.⁷¹

The main body of Yang’s letter to Han reads rather formally, even like an official report. Yang explains the needs for the exemption from the perspective of the people who were suffering from food shortage. Yang thus appealed to Han’s compassion for the people—fully exploiting the rhetoric of acting in the interest of the people. Nevertheless, the concluding note and the document attached to the letter expose its personal nature. In the closing note, Yang wrote that he hoped Han would “not forget the people who used to be under his governance” 未忘舊部之民。⁷² Yang then ended by explaining:

⁶⁹ Yang Wanli, “Da Jizhou Zhaocui,” *Yang Wanli ji jianjiao*, 8:111.4254.

⁷⁰ In personal realm, Yang Wanli also never hesitated to use personal networks to solicit recommendation letters for promotions for his son, relatives, and friends. See Wang Ruilai 王瑞來, “Neiju bu biqin: yi Yang Wanli wei ge’an de Song-Yuan biange lun shizheng yanjiu” 內舉不避親——以楊萬里為個案的宋元變革實證研究, in *Beijing daxue xuebao* 北京大學學報, Vol. 49, No.2 (2012): 117-28.

⁷¹ Similarly, the magistrate of Jishui county 吉水 (in Jizhou prefecture), surnamed Qin 秦, also requested Yang help remove a purchase quota assigned by the Overseer General of Huguang, Lin Zuqia 林祖洽. It is evident that Yang had been maintaining a good relationship with Magistrate Qin as well. See Yang Wanli, “he Jishui Qinzai Jiaoge” 賀吉水秦宰交割, “Da Jishui Qin zai qi” 答吉水秦宰啟, “Wei Qin zai” 慰秦宰, *Yang Wanli ji jianjiao*, 5:59.2598; 8:109.4165. Yang wrote a letter to General Lin, but the sources do not allow us to know the result of his request. See Yang Wanli, “Yu huguang zongling Lin langzhong” 與湖廣總領林郎中, *Yang Wanli ji jianjiao*, 8:111.4249.

⁷² Han served as the supply commissioner of Jiangxi circuit during 1197 and 1199. Han was a relative of Empress Han (1165–1200), the Empress of Emperor Ningzong (r. 1194-1224).

Vice Prefect Zhao, knowing that I am well known to you, came to request that I put in a word for the people in my prefecture. [Zhao] has sent [me] a letter of request. [Hereby, I] dare to enclose it for reference.⁷³

趙倅以某受門下之知不淺，來諉某為邦民一言，有書來囑，敢併以呈似。

Yang's earlier correspondences with Han show that they had established a long-term friendship before Han served as the overseer general. The topics of their correspondence included exchanging new year gifts, sending farewell messages, extending congratulations on promotions, and requesting recommendation letters.⁷⁴ To Han, Yang frankly played the card of friendship, exposed his own connection with Vice Prefect Zhao, and showed the personal letter from Zhao. It is very likely that the letter attached was one that contained information about the mutually-beneficial interactions between Yang and Zhao mentioned above. Although full of arguments made on behalf of the people, this letter essentially served as a vehicle for Yang to ask a favor from an old friend. In contrast to the failed efforts of Vice Prefect Zhao, Yang's request for removing the entire quota received prompt approval from Han.

Moreover, shortly after that positive response, Han also sent a messenger to bring Yang a letter with warm regards that strengthened their friendship. Yang soon replied to acknowledge Han's benevolence to the people of the prefecture and also celebrated their friendship:

[I did not] dare to expect your broad kindness [like this]. Having not forgotten [people in] your former jurisdiction, [you] responded immediately and informed [us] the good news...if only [we] could talk to each other arm in arm. [I] miss you but have no opportunity to see [you]. [If only I could meet with you and tell you what is in my heart, [that would be] my good fortune.⁷⁵

⁷³ Yang Wanli, "Yu huaixi Han Zongling" 與淮西韓總領, *Yang Wanli ji jianjiao*, 8:111.4252.

⁷⁴ See, Yang Wanli, "Xie Han tiju hezheng song bixiang jiu bing exiu qi" 謝韓提舉賀正送碧香酒并鵝饑啓; "Da Han yunshi" 答韓運使, "You 又 [Da Han yunshi II]," "You 又 [Da Han yunshi III]"; "Da Han zongling langzhong" 答韓總領郎中, "You 又 [Da Han Zongling langzhong II]," "You 又 [Da Han Zongling langzhong III]"; *Yang Wanli ji jianjiao*, 5:59.2596; 8:107.4052, 4053, 4054; 8:108.4098, 4099, 4100.

⁷⁵ Yang Wanli, "You [Da Han yunshi II]," *Yang Wanli ji jianjiao*, 8:108.4099.

敢意宣慈，未忘舊部，應之如響，報以好音……安得一交臂而談，愛而不見，仰惟丈席下燭寸心，幸甚幸甚。

Yang later sent another short note to Han, conveying regards to his family and observing:

Although this ill body is useless, it is still able to serve you [like Zhang Liang] picked up shoes [for Huang Shi] and [Zhang Shizhi] put on socks [for Wang Sheng].⁷⁶

某病身無所可用，然取履結襪，尚堪為役。

Yang's letters suggest that their friendship significantly shaped Han's decision to remove the Jizhou purchase quota. In turn, through the interactions of making and approving the request, Yang and Han refreshed their friendship. The flattering exchanges in their letters were by no means empty words. Flattery constituted an important part of scholar-officials' social protocol of forging and maintaining relationships.⁷⁷ Through the exchange of this seemingly formalist and meaningless language, officials affirmed and reaffirmed their connections and even friendship.

Similarly, the interactions revolving around the quota exemption also strengthened the relationship between Yang and Vice Prefect Zhao. Having received the exemption, Zhao sent to Yang "a letter of tireless expression of gratitude" 重勤謝幅, and Yang replied: "This is because of you, the benevolent and worthy prefect. [You are] deeply concerned with the people's suffering. Your sincerity was so strong that even metal and stone would be touched. How could I take any credit" 此蓋通守仁賢，深軫民瘼，誠心所格，金石為動，某何力之有?⁷⁸ As in the interaction between Yang and Han, correspondence with flattering language, decorated with the

⁷⁶ Yang Wanli, "You [Da Han yunshi III]," *Yang Wanli ji jianjiao*, 8:108.4100. For the anecdote about Zhang Liang 張良 and Huang shigong 黃石公, see *Shi ji*, 55.2034–35. For the story about Zhang Shizhi 張釋之 and Wang Sheng 王生, see *Shi ji*, 102. 2756.

⁷⁷ Regarding the use of flattery in building scholar-officials' epistolary networks, see David Pattinson, "Epistolary Networks and Practice in the Early Qing: The Letters Written to Yan Guangmin," in *A History of Chinese Letters and Epistolary Culture*, 775-826.

⁷⁸ Yang Wanli, "Da Jizhou Zhaocui," *Yang Wanli ji jianjiao*, 8:108.4094.

rhetoric of benefiting the people, served as the building block of Zhao and Yang's mutually-beneficial relations.

In this case, it was through non-official channels—Vice Prefect Zhao's relationship with Yang, and Yang's friendship with Commander Han—that a less prestigious local official like Zhao himself fulfilled his responsibility to guarantee the livelihood of his people. The interactions between Vice Prefect Zhao and Yang Wanli were not simply based on their pursuit of the public interest of the locality, nor was Yang Wanli's mediation in the quota removal solely motivated by his public spirit. Yang had a vested interest in his cooperation with Zhao, while Zhao also exchanged favors with Yang to increase his own political capital. This official business, in turn, further consolidated the social networks of those who were involved in the negotiations. Letter exchange and the use of flowery epistolary language fortified scholars' networks.

We also see in this case an interconnection of the interests of the people, of Yang Wanli, and of Vice Magistrate Zhao. The communications for the wellbeing of the jurisdiction, for the consolidation of the mutually-beneficial relationship between Zhao and Yang, as well as for the friendship between Yang and Han were indistinguishable. In local officials' building and use of personal connections, the boundary between facilitating official businesses and furthering personal agendas was blurred.

Meanwhile, just as Yang reminded Zhao to keep the letter and their interaction about official decisions confidential, some other officials who used personal connections also felt uneasy about informal communications. For instance, Fang Dacong 方大琮 (1183–1247), the fiscal commissioner of Fujian circuit in 1240, expressed this sentiment. In that year, officials in Fujian found their jurisdiction faced with an impending food crisis, for the court not only

requisitioned the stocks of Fujian's Charitable Granaries, but also demanded a significant amount of local grain through "Harmonious Purchase." The food supplies in Fujian, according to local officials, were "not even enough for local sustenance; how could there be surplus to be sent faraway" 自活猶不足，豈能有餘以及遠乎？⁷⁹ In response to the crisis, both the supply commissioner and the military commissioner of the circuit beseeched the court to rescind the purchase quota and leave the granary stocks in Fujian as they were. Both of them, however, failed to acquire permission from the court. Thereafter, Fiscal Commissioner Fang Dacong actively sought help from his friend, Zheng Fengchen 鄭逢辰, the head of the treasury bureau in the capital.⁸⁰ Zheng, a native of Fuzhou 福州 prefecture in Fujian circuit, happened to be staying in his hometown during a break from his duties. In his letter to Zheng, Fang implored him to use his audiences with the emperor to strive for the preservation of Fujian rice and to include Fujian administrators' petitions in his post-audience memorial to the throne. At the end of the letter, Fang expressed regret that the Fujian circuit commissioners had been unable to benefit their people by formal official means:

People who take charge of the circuit fail to speak [effectively for their people] and have to rely on those who are trusted by the emperor and councilors. This is shameful. [But] if it benefits the people, one's own shame can be disregarded.⁸¹

任一道之寄者不能言，而必賴為君相所信嚮者言之，亦可媿也。苟利於民，己之媿不計也。

Fang Dacong's "shame" seems to have come from his frustration over his inability to accomplish his duties as a local caretaker through formal official channels. He was ashamed that his official business relied on his connection to a political figure who was trusted by even more powerful

⁷⁹ Fang Dacong, "Zheng Jinbu" 鄭金部, *Song zhong hui tie'an Fang gong wen ji* 宋忠惠鐵庵方公文集, Beijing tu shu guan gu ji zhen ben cong kan: 89 北京圖書館古籍珍本叢刊 89 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1988), 17.39b.

⁸⁰ The treasury bureau was one of five bureaus in the Ministry of Revenue.

⁸¹ Fang Dacong, "Zheng Jinbu," *Song zhong hui tie'an Fang gong wen ji*, 17.39b

figures—the emperor and state councilors. Even the notion of trust between the emperor and his high officials that Fang mentions here contains a hint of personal relationship that takes precedence over formal institutional communication. Still, although Fang characterizes the use of personal networks as shameful, he and his colleagues were not reluctant to adopt this informal but effective means to realize their goals—to guarantee local sustenance. Dubious private means were acceptable for legitimate public ends.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates how local officials attempted to forge direct communication with individuals who could effectively affect local policies, including regional superiors and even the emperor himself. By doing so, local officials attempted to bypass or accelerate regular bureaucratic procedures, which were prone to delay, neglect, and obstruction. The effectiveness of informal or semi-formal communication was to a large extent dependent on personal connections between the individuals involved. The importance of personal connections was clearly shown in all the cases analyzed, in which local officials used personal and personalized letters to get superiors' support for their initiatives. Even local officials' communication with the emperor shared this characteristic: Zhu Xi and other officials successfully acquired endorsement from the emperor when they had the chance to meet and convince the emperor himself. Fang Dacong believed that Zheng Fengcheng would be helpful because he was someone “who is trusted by the emperor and councilors.” Whether they admitted it rhetorically or not, in practice, local officials counted on the greater power of individuals over institutions. In the cases in which officials strove for the “exceptional grace” from the emperor himself, they were essentially relying on the supreme power of the ruler to override the power of the whole bureaucratic system. Ironically, the Song scholar-officials had been refining and defending institutions that restricted

the emperors from making decisions on their own. Imperial decrees that bypassed the bureaucratic procedures were often criticized as private, arbitrary, and even not fully legitimate.⁸² Nevertheless, in the cases discussed above, when it came to initiatives that officials found fully justified, they found the formal bureaucratic procedures cumbersome and easily manipulated by certain interest groups (the Ministry of Revenue in this case). Now they celebrated the emperor's ultimate power and decisions on his own as transcending, just, and desirable. At the local level, local officials similarly sought for personal assistance from their superiors to overcome the restriction of interminable bureaucratic procedures and paperwork. It is through the arbitrary use of powerful individuals' influence that local officials were able to find a leeway to break out the bureaucratic routine, to negotiate orders from above, and to assert their influence in the hierarchical political system.

Finally, all these cases reveal to us a “grey zone” between the official and personal realms, where local officials relied on personal connections to further their official pursuits, and where the personal goals of these officials intertwined with the public interests they defended. The “grey zone” was made possible by dual channels of information exchange—through bureaucratic documents and through personal or personalized interactions. As the chapter has shown, local officials were deft in navigating the “grey zone” to further their pursuits. They were aware of the divide between formal and informal means of communication. Even in Zhu Xi's communication with the emperor, he understood his use of *zhazi* to make a request to the emperor was overstepping his authority and violating the bureaucratic rules. Nevertheless, Zhu did not feel guilty; he confessed and impeached himself only after the sound of criticism at the court became

⁸² See Li Quande, “Tongjin-yintaisi yu songdai de wenshu yunxing.”130–31; Yang Shili 杨世利, “Lun beisong zhaoling zhong de neijiang, shouzhao, yubishouzhao”论北宋诏令中的内降、手诏、御笔手诏. *Zhongzhou xuekan* 中州学刊, 2007. No.6. 186–188.

very loud. Similarly, Zhu seems to have had no qualms about using personal letters to ask for support from superiors in his circuit. Zhu refused to draw a line between the personal and official realms, for he had no doubt about the righteousness of his pursuits and was sure that his use of personal means involved no selfish interest. Similarly, Lu Jiuyuan never questioned the legitimacy of building personal connections with his superiors or using dual channels of communication. He saw the use of personal connections a necessary part of local administration that served his “sincere ambition to nourish [the people].”

Still, some officials, like Yang Wanli and Fang Dacong, were more sensitive to the line between personal and official means of negotiation. Yang and Fang both exhibited anxiety about using personal connections to interfere with bureaucratic procedures and effect arbitrary policy changes. Fang Dacong saw the reliance on personal connections as a symbol of officials’ incompetence or even a moral failing of the bureaucracy. Nevertheless, he also assured himself that when used for official purposes and public interests, personal means were not only justifiable but also necessary. Yang Wanli appears to have worried about the dubious implications of his use of personal connections and tried to keep it secret. Although Yang claimed to help Prefect Zhao remove the purchase quota on behalf of the people in the prefecture, he also did so for private interests—to pay back the debt of favor to Prefect Zhao and to reduce the levies that would also be imposed on his own family. In Zhu and Lu’s cases, their certainty about their public-spiritedness when using personal connections erased the line between personal and official realms. In contrast, Yang’s case illuminates that the public interest that officials claimed to serve through using personal connections could be well intertwined with their private goals. Still, no matter how these local officials understood their actions, they show us that Song political culture was characterized by a very porous divide between “personal” and “official”

action, and that local officials consistently exploited that grey zone to fulfill their administrative and personal agendas.

Chapter Three. “Favoring Their Own:” Grain Embargoes in Southern Song China

In 1215, a severe drought struck Southern China and threatened the food security of the circuits of Zhexi, Jiangdong, and Hubei in particular. The fiscal commissioner of Hubei circuit, Wu Rousheng 吳柔勝 (1154-1224), was commemorated in the *Songshi* for “begging to purchase [grain] in Hunan and actively implementing policies of famine relief, which saved the lives of countless people in the fifteen prefectures that suffered from the disaster” 乞糴於湖南，大講荒政，十五州被災之民，全活者不可勝計。¹ This narrative from Wu’s official biography depicts the cross-regional coordination of resources that allowed a competent administrator to handle food crises smoothly. However, the narrative glosses over Wu’s participation in intense inter-regional and intra-regional competitions over grain. In fact, one of Wu’s contemporaries lamented the “jurisdiction-centrism”² of various administrators who safeguarded their own local resources in 1215:

The military commissioners, prefects, and county magistrates, each selfishly favored their own jurisdictions, adopting a beggar-thy-neighbor policy that forbade rice from leaving the borders of their circuits, prefectures, or counties.³

¹ *Song shi*, 400.12148.

² I use “jurisdiction-centrism” (sometimes “jurisdiction-oriented sentiment” in other chapters) in this chapter to distinguish between Song local officials’ “localism” and the “localization” of elites in the Southern Song proposed by Robert Hartwell, elaborated by Robert Hymes, and complicated by Beverly Bossler as well as recently by Sukhee Lee and Hilde De Weerd. What I term “jurisdiction-centrism” refers to local officials’ jurisdiction-centered mentality and actions taken on behalf of their local constituents. Distinct from local elites, local officials were agents of the state. The localities in which they were active were usually not their hometowns or residences, but jurisdictions they governed for no more than three years. Where the “localization” discussed by Hartwell and Hymes essentially dealt with the change of “state-society” relations in the Southern Song, “jurisdiction-centrism” concerns the dynamics and negotiation between the central and local governments, as well as among various local governments themselves.

³ Xu Song 徐松, *Song huiyao jiben* 宋會要輯本 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1964), Xingfa 刑法, 2.140 [Henceforth abbreviated *SHY*]. “Beggar thy neighbor (*yi lin wei he* 以鄰為壑)” originates from a quote from *Mencius*, “Gaozi xia 告子下.” See *Shisanjing zhushu*, 11, 12b.343.

帥臣、守令各私其境，以鄰為壑，禁遏米斛，並不出本路、州、縣之界。

Instead of facilitating the circulation of food between localities in surplus and those in scarcity, local officials imposed grain embargoes (*edi* 遏糴) to keep grain within their own jurisdictions.

Grain embargoes, although in violation of the regulations set by the central government, were frequently employed by Song local officials who were in competition for food, especially in times of bad harvests.⁴ Such embargoes involved prohibiting outsiders (both officials and commoners) from buying grain, forbidding local people from selling their grain outside of the jurisdiction, and sometimes even seizing commercial shipments of grain that happened to be passing through the area.⁵ By the time of the Southern Song, grain embargoes had long been causing conflicts and even hostilities amongst local officials who were in charge of different jurisdictions.

⁴ Regarding the term “state,” I follow the definition put forward by Weber and summarized by Michael Mann. In this definition, the state contains four main elements, being: “a) a differentiated set of institutions and personnel embodying; b) centrality in the sense that political relations radiate outwards from a center to cover; c) a territorially-demarcated area, over which it exercises; d) a monopoly of authoritative binding rule-making, backed up by a monopoly of the means of physical violence.” See Michael Mann, “The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results,” *European Journal of Sociology*, 25.2 (1984): 185–213, esp. 188. By “the Southern Song state” I refer to the whole political system, including the central and local governments, as well as the institutional and personnel systems. The term “central state” refers to the central government, or the imperial court.

⁵ Historians have discussed grain embargoes from the perspective of the state role in social economy. Li Xiao has discussed grain embargoes to elaborate his argument about the limitations of Song governmental purchases in stimulating the circulation of commodities. See Li Xiao, *Songchao zhengfu goumai zhidu yanjiu*, 477–490. Bao Weimin also briefly discussed grain embargoes to support his argument that there was not yet a national market of grain during the Song. See Bao Weimin 包伟民, “Songdai de liangshi maoyi,” 宋代的粮食贸易, *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 中国社会科学 1999.2: 41–56. R. Bin Wong has analyzed grain embargoes in the context of how the patterns of food circulation shaped food riots of the Qing during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See Wong, “Food Riots in the Qing Dynasty,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 41.4 (Aug. 1982): 767–788. Norimatsu Akufumi discussed the local practices of grain embargoes and state reactions to them during the reigns of the Yongzheng and Qianlong emperors. He argues that the state reaction to grain embargoes originated in the declining granary system of the state and its growing dependence on commercial circulation for food supplies. See Norimatsu Akufumi 則松彰文, “Shindai atsuteki kou: yousei—kanryuu jidai ō chūshin ni,” 清代遏糴考：雍正—乾隆時代を中心に *Fukuoka daigaku jinbun ronsō* 福岡大学人文論叢 45.1–2 (September 2013): 173–197.

It is tempting to argue that these administrative conflicts reveal the fragmentation of the Song state, and that officials' mindset of "favoring their own" undermined Song political-institutional unity both rhetorically and administratively. However, when we look more closely at the motivations and justifications of grain embargoes, as well as at how these conflicts unfolded, we will come to a more sophisticated understanding of this issue. My findings show that embargoes actually created flexibility in the interactions amongst the central government and various regional administrations, which contributed to the overall effectiveness of the Southern Song political system. I argue that managing internal rivalries and multiparty negotiations actually helped the Southern Song state accommodate the diverging interests of its constituent localities. The seeming administrative fragmentation and disorder were, paradoxically, central to the longevity and efficacy of the Southern Song governmental system.

Part I. Grain Embargoes: Statutes, Rhetoric, and Practice

In 1091, Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), then the prefect of Yingzhou 穎州 (modern-day Fuyang 阜陽, Anhui), memorialized the court to protest the grain embargoes that had been imposed in the neighboring circuit of Huaixi 淮西. Su's memorial preserves an official proclamation to block grain outflows that had been issued by the judicial commissioner of Huaixi. This valuable document provides us with the details of how local officials implemented such policies:

In the case of commoners crossing the river [to this circuit] and transporting rice back out, if [the amount of rice they carry] is less than one *shuo* (approx. 67 liters), then just let them cross and transport [the rice] at their convenience in the daytime. As for those with more than one *shuo* and up to one *xi* (approx. 167.5 liters), locals should be relied upon to capture them and bring them to the governmental offices, where they will be dealt with according to the law.⁶ Violators [shall] provide one string of award cash [for those who captured them] and add one more string for every single *xi* [that they are caught with]. In the case of commoners who cross at night, [even] if the amount is below one *shuo*, each

⁶ This presumably refers to the regulations designed by the circuit offices.

violator shall pay one string of award cash and one more string for every single *xi*. The confiscated rice shall be carried back to the county and sold in the place where it was purchased. If these rice smugglers are caught by others [i.e. those who outside the districts where the smugglers purchased the rice], the responsible parties in the districts through which they have passed shall also be apprehended, interrogated, and punished.⁷

如有細民過渡，回運米斛，不滿一碩，即勒白日任便渡載外，有一碩以上，滿一席者，並仰地分捉拽赴官，依法施行。犯人備賞錢一貫，每一席，加賞錢一貫。若或夜間過渡，一碩以下，犯人出賞錢一貫，每席加一貫。其所捉來到米數，卻勾欄前來，於本縣元糴處出糴。若係他人捉到，其經歷地分勾當人，并勾追勘斷。

This proclamation shows that all the governmental offices in the circuit participated in enforcing the grain embargoes. These jurisdictions' governments also set up rewards to encourage the locals to help capture outsiders who were taking grain away. Local officials or staff would even face punishment if they let "rice smugglers" pass through their jurisdiction. Furthermore, Su Shi reported that some official households who had farmland in Huaixi circuit but were residing in Yingzhou complained that Huaixi officials even forbade them from taking away the rice that they harvested on their own land.⁸ Irritated by these policies, Su accused the Huaixi officials of prioritizing the interests of their circuit over those of the state as a whole. Indeed, this "jurisdiction-centrism," which Su Shi criticized here, was also targeted in the statutes and discourse against grain embargoes throughout the Song Dynasty.

Statutes against Grain Embargoes

Grain trade, whether driven by the market or directed by the government, played an important role in food circulation during the Song.⁹ Certain areas with poor grain production

⁷ Su Shi, "Zou Huainan bidi zhuang ershou" 奏淮南閉糴狀二首, *Su Shi wenji* 蘇軾文集, ed. Kong Fanli 孔凡禮 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 3: 33.945–947.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Shiba Yoshinobu argues that grain had become an important commodity in Song domestic long-distance trade, and that a national market for grain was emerging during the Song period. See Shiba Yoshinobu 斯波義信, *Sōdai shōgyōshi kenkyū* 宋代商業史研究 (Tōkyō: Kazama Shobō, 1968). Other scholars, however, have complicated this observation and pointed out that administrative intervention (e.g. governmental purchase, state orders that directed or stimulated the grain trade for famine relief or military

regularly relied on either direct imports from producing areas or purchases from merchants who were travelling through.¹⁰ Throughout the Northern and the Southern Song, the court consistently encouraged and attracted merchants to circulate grain in times of food insecurity.¹¹ As early as the Northern Song, the central state was wary of local grain blockages that would undermine the effectiveness of resource coordination and the solidarity of the state as a whole. The imperial court banned grain embargoes in a 1059 edict, stipulating that “those who embargo grain when their neighboring prefectures or circuits have suffered disasters or crop failures shall be indicted for violating imperial directives” 凡鄰路、鄰州災傷輒閉糴者，以違制坐。¹² At least by the 1090s, when Su Shi was serving as the prefect of Yingzhou, statutes had ruled that “even in the face of disasters, [local administrators] shall not prohibit grain trade” 雖遇災傷，不得禁止販賣斛斗。¹³ Despite the repeated prohibitions against grain embargoes that were written

use) was a critical impetus for the burgeoning grain trade in the Song. See Wei Tian'an 魏天安, “Songdai de liangshi shangpin hua ji qi tezheng 宋代的粮食商品化及其特征,” *Zhongzhou xuekan* 中州学刊 1986.2: 110–113. See also Bao Weimin, “Songdai de liangshi maoyi,” 44–50, 55; Li Xiao, *Songchao zhengfu goumai zhidu yanjiu*, 7–10, 465–490.

¹⁰ Bao Weimin points out that there was not yet a national market of grain or regular long-distance grain trade in either part of the Song; rather, grain trade was usually restricted to regional markets, such as between neighboring prefectures. Nevertheless, long-distance grain trade did actually take place, when certain areas suffered food insecurity. Under these circumstances, the central government either required governmental purchase of grain from afar or implemented policies to stimulate long-distance trade by merchants. See Bao Weimin, “Songdai de liangshi maoyi,” 48–51.

¹¹ The Song state was generally supportive in circulating food through markets. The court even regularly issued statutes to exempt taxes on grain trade. These exemptions were repeatedly reasserted in times of food insecurity. For some general introduction to the Song policy of grain circulation, see Lei Jiahong 雷家宏, “Songdai de liangshi tiaoji shulun 宋代的粮食调剂述论,” *Qiusuo* 求索 1993.2: 121–125. Liu Yanwei 刘彦威, “Songdai liangshi zhengce shulue 宋代粮食政策述略,” *Gujin nongye* 古今农业 1994.2: 28–35.

¹² Li Tao 李燾, *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑒長編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 189.4570 [Henceforth abbreviated XCB].

¹³ Su Shi, “Zou Huainan bidi zhuang ershou,” *Su Shi wenji*, 33.947.

into the law and were invoked by officials opposing grain embargoes, local administrators kept on blocking grain circulation throughout the late Northern Song.¹⁴

Grain embargoes became rampant under the restored Southern Song regime. An edict in 1131 reasserted the bans on food blockages, which had obstructed the flow of grain to Hangzhou 杭州, the temporary capital.¹⁵ In 1164, the court ordered the commissioners of various circuits to tighten the prohibition on grain blockages. They were told to “inspect strictly” and report violators to the court for punishment.¹⁶ Throughout the Southern Song, the prohibition was repeatedly reissued, usually threatening severe punishment for those who implemented embargoes.¹⁷ In the 1200s, Dong Wei 董燭 (*jinshi* 1193) was still citing the statute that Su Shi invoked in 1091. Dong claimed in his book on famine relief that “it is thus clear that the statutes and codes prohibit grain embargoes” 則知條敕不許遏糴明矣.¹⁸ As Wang Gangzhong 汪剛中, an investigating censor, pointed out in 1227, the purpose of clearing the obstruction of grain circulation was to “use [the grain of] those with surplus to relieve those who are lacking, so that the hungry ones will not face high prices while farmers can also profit” 惟以其所有餘，濟其所不足，則饑者不至於貴糴，而農民亦可以得利。¹⁹

Rhetoric against Grain Embargoes

Grain embargoes not only violated imperial rules but also went against officials’ political rhetoric that emphasized the unity of the country and the moral duty of administrators. In 1059,

¹⁴ For repeated admonitions against grain embargoes during Emperor Huizong’s reign, see *SHY*, *Xingfa* 2.72; *SHY*, “Shihuo” 食貨 59.8–9, 20.

¹⁵ *SHY*, “Xingfa” 2.102.

¹⁶ *SHY*, “Shihuo” 58.3.

¹⁷ For example, the court issued reaffirmations in 1181, 1187, 1194, and 1215. See Dong Wei, *Jiuhuang huomin shu* 救荒活民書, Congshu jicheng jianbian ed., vol. 54 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshu guan, 1966), 2.32; *SHY*, “Shihuo” 41.18, 26; 58.32; 68.97; *SHY*, “Xingfa” 2.126, 140.

¹⁸ Dong Wei, *Jiuhuang huomin shu*, 2.33.

¹⁹ *Song shi*, 178.4343.

the Remonstrance Official Wu Ji 吳及, who persuaded Emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1022–63) to enforce a countywide ban on grain embargoes, observed that :

During the Spring and Autumn Period, hegemony encroached on one another, stole lands, and claimed fiefdoms. Certainly, [these hegemony] did not care about the living beings under heaven. Nevertheless, allied states still held on to the righteousness of helping one another relieve misery and disaster... In the time of the Warring States, the Way of the sage kings lingered on. When there were grain embargoes, *The Spring and Autumn Annals* denounced them.²⁰

春秋之時，諸侯相傾，竊地專封，固不以天下生靈為憂，然猶同盟之國有救患分災之義……戰國之世，王道如線不絕，一有閉糴而《春秋》誅之。

Wu particularly referred to the history of the states of Qin 秦 and Jin 晉. In 646 BCE, when a famine struck the state of Jin, its Marquis turned to its neighbor Qin for help. The Earl of Qin agreed to sell grain to the Jin, and thus saved the Jin people from starvation. In the follow year, the Qin suffered a food shortage and also sought to import grain from the Jin. Nevertheless, the Jin betrayed the Qin by imposing grain embargoes upon them. War broke out between these states and ended with the victory of the Qin. *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋) records that the Earl of Qin “seized” (*huo* 獲) the Marquis of Jin. Wu observed that by choosing the word “seized,” a term that was never used in association with a feudal lord, the historian was expressing his condemnation of the Jin lord’s unrighteous deed.²¹ By recalling the mutual aid between rival states and the historical critique of grain embargoes during times of disunity, Wu fortified his denunciation of Song officials who “favored their own people and overstepped their authority to create orders for grain embargoes” 各專其民，擅造閉糴之令. Wu made a strong point that officials of this unified dynasty should instead “share the weal and woe with the state

²⁰ XCB 189.4570.

²¹ For the original record of this history between the Qin and the Jin, see *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注, ed. Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 344, 348, 352. For Wu’s comments, see XCB 189.4570.

[as a whole] and spread the grace of the ruler [to the whole population]” 同國休戚，而班布主恩。²²

This comparison between grain embargoes during the late Zhou disunity and the Song unity repeatedly appeared in Northern Song officials’ discourse against grain embargoes.²³ The rhetoric against jurisdiction-centered mentality and actions “within one civilization (*yihua zhinei* 一化之內)” was sustained by the Southern Song opponents of grain embargoes.²⁴ They argued that all the people under Song rule should receive imperial benevolence equally. No room should be allowed for “divisions between this territory and that realm, in the manner of the Qin people being indifferent to whether the land of Yue was fertile or barren” 有彼疆此界之分，如秦人視越人之肥瘠而不卹。²⁵

Being indifferent to the suffering of the people beyond one’s jurisdiction did not only undermine the solidarity of a unified polity, but also represented an official’s moral failure. This sentiment was clearly spelled out in Dong Wei’s *A Book for Relieving Famine and Reviving the People* (*Jiuhuang huomin shu* 救荒活民書), distributed in the early thirteenth century. Dong likewise cited examples of ancient feudal lords’ refusal to block grain transport across their borders; as Robert Hymes has summarized, Dong criticized the Song officials who did so as

²² XCB 189.4570.

²³ Lu Kai 陸愷, the prefect of Junzhou 均州 (modern-day Danjiangkou 丹江口, Hubei) in 1121 resolutely declined the locals’ petition for blocking grain outflows to the neighboring prefectures struck by famine. Yang Shi praised him for treating “all under heaven as a single family (*tianxia yijia* 天下一家)” and not rival states like the Qin and Jin. See Yang Shi 楊時, “Lu Shaoqing muzhiming” 陸少卿墓誌銘, *QSW*, 125: 2699.80.

²⁴ Liao Gang 廖剛, “Zhuandui qi jin edi zouzhuang” 轉對乞禁遏糴奏狀, *QSW*, 139: 2994.49.

²⁵ Peng Guinian observed in a memorial in 1193 that grain embargoes were considered shameful even for the feudal lords, let alone in the unified Song, where the emperor “rules all under heaven, treating all the people with equal benevolence.” See Peng Guinian 彭龜年, “Lun HuaiZhe hanliao qi tongmishang reng mian Zonglingsi dimai zou” 論淮浙旱潦乞通米商仍免總領司糴買奏, *QSW*, 278:6299.184.

“falling short of moral responsibility when favoring their own jurisdictions over others.”²⁶ Two interlocking themes stand out in this rhetoric used by Song officials who opposed grain embargoes: that officials should guarantee the livelihood of the people, and that “the people” should include all subjects under Song rule.

Grain Embargoes in Practice

In practice, rather than cooperating with their peers, local officials often calculated what was best for their own jurisdictions. Inter-regional competition was particularly severe in the Southern Song due to the financial stress and financial structure described in the introduction. In response to being pressured to share their food resources with other jurisdictions, Southern Song local officials frequently instituted grain embargoes to ensure that their jurisdictions had enough grain to satisfy their superiors’ demands for grain and to meet local consumption needs.

During the Southern Song, according to their productivity and degree of consumption, several regions regularly played the role of grain suppliers, while others relied on food imports from these surplus regions. For example, the circuits of Jiangxi and Hunan provided grain for Jiangdong circuit, which also imported grain from Zhexi circuit. Zhexi circuit also exported grain to the circuits of Zhedong, Fujian, and sometimes Huainan.²⁷ Hubei circuit had average grain output, but thanks to its relatively small population, various governments sent agents to Hubei to purchase rice for official use or to fulfill court-assigned purchase quotas.²⁸

Paradoxically, it was the grain-exporting areas, especially the circuits of Jiangxi, Hunan, and Hubei, that most frequently blocked grain outflows. They did so even more frequently in the late

²⁶ Regarding Dong Wei’s views on the emperor and officials’ moral obligation in famine relief and the moral critiques of interrupting flows of grain in the private sphere, see Robert P. Hymes, “Moral Duty and Self-Regulating Process in Southern Sung Views of Famine Relief,” in *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China*, eds. Robert P. Hymes and Conrad Schirokauer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 280–309.

²⁷ McDermott and Yoshinobu, “Economic Change in China, 960–1279,” 421.

²⁸ Bao Weimin, “Songdai de liangshi maoyi,” 45.

twelfth century, when these previously net-exporting areas also suffered agricultural decline: Jiangxi in the early 1170s and the 1180s and Hubei between the 1180s and 1210s.²⁹

The division of interests among jurisdictions was so ingrained that officials greatly appreciated the “altruism” of those who permitted the sale of grain to neighboring jurisdictions, sometimes forging powerful friendships amongst administrators in the process. In the late 1180s, during Chen Fuliang’s 陳傅良 (1137–1203) tenure as the prefect of Guiyang *jun* 桂陽軍 (modern-day Hunan) in Hunan circuit, a drought struck Guiyang as well as the neighboring prefecture of Chenzhou 郴州 (modern-day Hunan), upon which the hilly Guiyang prefecture relied for rice imports. To Chen’s relief, Ding Feng 丁逢 (1140–?), the prefect of Chenzhou, was not only able to supply his jurisdiction with enough grain but also generous enough to allow his people to sell their surplus food stocks to the residents of Guiyang. Chen was so grateful that once he was promoted to be the fiscal commissioner of the circuit, he invited the military commissioner and the supply commissioner to recommend Ding for a promotion.³⁰ In another case, Wang Bai 王柏 (1197–1274) highly praised the prefect of Yanzhou 嚴州 (modern-day Jiande 建德, Zhejiang), surnamed Li, for allowing rice surplus to flow upstream to the prefectures of Wuzhou 婺州 (modern-day Jinhua 金華, Zhejiang) and Quzhou 衢州 (modern-day Zhejiang), disregarding that these two prefectures had frequently blocked rice from being exported to Yanzhou.³¹ In these exceptional cases, scholar-officials’ deep gratitude for their peers’ altruism, in turn, reveals the relative rarity of mutual assistance among officials in charge of different jurisdictions.

²⁹ See McDermott and Yoshinobu, “Economic Change in China, 960–1279,” 409–418.

³⁰ Chen Fuliang 陳傅良, “Yu Wang Qianzhong canzheng jian Chen shou Ding Duanshu” 與王謙仲參政薦郴守丁端叔, *QSW*, 267: 6036.370–372.

³¹ Wang Bai 王柏, “Da Li Yanzhou shu” 答李嚴州書, *QSW*, 338:7792.119–120.

Local administrators' efforts to defend the interests of their jurisdictions did not always take the form of competition and struggle. In some cases, local administrators helped neighboring jurisdictions negotiate local food reserves with the court, with their own interests in mind. In the late 1170s, the commissioners of Jiangdong circuit sent to the court a collective memorial, not making any request for their own circuit, but remonstrating against the purchase quota assigned to the neighboring Huaidong circuit.³² This outspoken remonstrance, however, was not simply motivated by solidarity or sympathy with their colleagues but was also based on calculation for their own circuit. The circuit commissioners argued that after a bad drought, their circuit needed to import rice from the neighboring ones, particularly Huaidong circuit. The 100,000-*dan* (approx. 6.7 million liters) quota imposed on Huaidong circuit, they claimed, would lead to grain embargoes in that area and thus cut Jiangdong people off from needed food. At the end of the memorial, they forcefully argued that the court should take care of the livelihood of the people rather than imposing governmental purchases that would undermine it. But “the people” in this memorial referred not only to Huaidong residents but more importantly to those living in Jiangdong circuit. The mutually-connected but potentially conflicting interests of the two circuits bound them together in negotiation with the court.

These cases of grain embargoes reveal the internal conflicts and tensions within the unified Song political system—the state was fraught with diverging interests and competition for resources among its jurisdictions. Although state policy and official rhetoric ruled that various levels and jurisdictions of the state should coordinate in sharing resources and taking care of all the people, in practice, local officials openly sequestered food resources within their own jurisdictions. Why did local administrators persistently impose blockages upon grain circulation?

³² Cui Dunli 崔敦禮, “Dai Jiangdong zhushi lun Huaidong budang hedi zhazi” 代江東諸司論淮東不當和糶劄子, *QSW*, 269: 6068.38–39.

Did the rivalry among different jurisdictions simply represent the inability of the central government to hold its localities together? The following section will examine local officials' motivations and their justifications for blocking food circulation. It argues that local officials chose to do so as a response to their contradictory duties—to their superiors in regional administration and the central government above, and to their subjects below. Local officials' "jurisdiction-centrism" demonstrated how the contradictory goals of the state, interacting with local officials' administrative and personal agendas, played out in the field administration. As the following section will demonstrate, what motivated local officials to "favor their own" was a complex of competing factors that shaped their choices of priorities.

Part II. Motivations and Justifications for Grain Embargoes

Acting on Behalf of the People

Despite the long-established rhetoric against grain embargoes, in many cases local officials felt fully justified in imposing them. Local officials enacting this policy, as well as those who sympathized with them, defended grain embargoes from their own perspective: they were acting in the public interests of the people of their locality. This justification is illuminated in the case of Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139–1193), who associated the imposition of grain embargoes with the "public spirit" (*gongxin* 公心) of local administrators. In 1191, when Lu served as the prefect of Jingmen *jun* 荊門軍 (modern-day Dangyang 當陽, Hubei), a drought struck the entire Hubei-Jingxi region.³³ Although Jingmen *jun* soon received a decent amount of rain, it suffered from the floods of the Yangzi River and the Han River.³⁴ In addition to the preexisting decrease in local grain production, various governmental offices and grain merchants from elsewhere

³³ Lu Jiuyuan, "Yu Zhang Demao (III), (IV)" *Lu Xiangshan qianji*, 16.131.

³⁴ Lu Jiuyuan, "Yu Zhang Demao (III), "Yu Zhang Demao (V)" 與章德茂書 (五), *Lu Xiangshan qianji*, 16.131–33.

continued to purchase rice from Jingmen. As his anxiety grew with the impending food shortage, Lu planned to impose grain embargoes and offer cash rewards for those reporting violations, both of which were strategies that his colleagues in other areas had implemented. Lu's plan, however, encountered repeated remonstrations from the clerks in his office, who observed that grain embargoes violated the statutes and were inappropriate for respectable officials to practice.³⁵ After discussions with his subordinate officials, Lu gave up on the plan. But soon Lu began to vacillate as the food situation continued to deteriorate. Lu noticed that shortages had compelled neighboring Yingzhou 郢州 (modern-day Zhongxiang 鐘祥, Hubei) to strictly block rice outflows. Lu learned that the prefect of Yingzhou even had the family members of a new *juren* 舉人 degree holder arrested for violating the ban. The prefect exonerated them only after the mediation of the fiscal commissioner and having the violators pay a cash penalty. The Yingzhou prefect's unabashed enforcement of embargoes emboldened Lu, who again brought up for discussion the plan of a "ban on the release of rice" 瀉米之禁.³⁶ This time, when the clerks again attacked the policy, Lu and his subordinates dismissed their views and lamented:

This group of people [i.e. clerks] must have relatives or friends trading rice and thus spoke for them. How could [the clerks] have public spirit?³⁷

此輩必有親故厚善之人商販米者，故以此為地耳。豈有公心哉？

It remains unknown whether the clerks really were motivated by a self-interested agenda or wanted to stop a policy they sincerely regarded as unrighteous. In any case, the clerks had legitimate reasons for protesting grain embargoes, from the perspective of either state regulations or official rhetoric. Yet, by reducing the clerks' critiques to a self-interested scheme against the public interest, Lu defined the "public spirit," restricted the "public" to coincide with his own

³⁵ Lu Jiuyuan, "Yu Zhang Demao shu (V)," *Lu Xiangshan qianji*, 16.133.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

jurisdiction, and connected grain embargoes to the defense of the public interest. Lu now decided that the “public spirit” meant not ceding the control of food supplies to greedy grain traders who were colluding with self-interested clerks, but to keep local grain supplies under strict official supervision. Lu insisted that the government should plan to help the ignorant locals learn to help themselves by managing the supply of locally-produced food, rather than sitting idle and seeing them sell out their current reserves and only to starve in the near future.³⁸ Consequently, Lu saw grain embargoes as a necessary evil to safeguard the well-being of the grain consumers in his charge.

The moralistic arguments and terminology that justified grain embargoes are also shown in the following case, in which a local official earned gratitude from local people for his deft use of an embargo. Around 1192, Qizhou 蕪州 (modern-day Qichun 蕪春, Hubei) in Huaixi circuit suffered excessive rains, which resulted in market shortages of food. By implementing tax exemptions, Prefect Wang Zhenggong 王正功 (1133–1203) acquired abundant rice from merchants coming from afar. When the harvest season came, however, Wang beseeched the court to approve the grain embargoes in his prefecture. Wang observed that although the rice that had been harvested in Qizhou was merely enough for local consumption, a number of merchants came to purchase rice in his jurisdiction during the harvest season. Although acknowledging that “grain embargoes admittedly do not fit the teachings of old” 遏糴固非古訓, Wang felt compelled to implement one for the benefit of his people; otherwise, he asked, “who is to carry the blame if [I, the prefect] sit by and watch people run out of food” 坐視民食之空，咎將誰

³⁸ Lu Jiuyuan, “Yu Zhang Demao shu (V),” *Lu Xiangshan qianji*, 16.133.

執?³⁹ Lou Yue included this case in the funerary inscription he composed for Wang as a good example of his competence as an official. According to Lou, people in Qizhou praised Wang for adapting his policies perfectly to the changing local circumstances.⁴⁰

Wang's policy perfectly demonstrates his "jurisdiction-centrism." Wang did what was best for his people in both situations. He did not stick to what the "teachings of old" told officials to do; neither did he consider the interests of those beyond his prefecture. From the perspective of opponents of grain embargoes, Wang had selfishly favored his own people and betrayed the rhetoric of seeing "'all under heaven' as one single family." Nevertheless, the author of Wang's funerary inscription found this case a praiseworthy one to be included in the eulogy: as a prefect, Wang chose to prioritize maximizing of food supplies for his people. Indeed, Lou claimed that Wang's request for blocking food outflows from his prefecture was approved by the court. The approval indicates that the court could acknowledge local officials' endeavors to nourish their people and allow some flexibility for them to constrain outflows of grain.

It is notable that Wang's blockage was imposed in a regular year, rather than when food shortages threatened neighboring areas. Admittedly, local officials enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy in adjusting the amount of grain circulating in and out of their jurisdictions. A common and legitimate means would have been to use the Ever-Normal Granaries (*changping cang* 常平倉), through which the government actively participated in the trade of grain and often competed with merchants.⁴¹ Blocking grain outflows, however, was not a legitimate policy. In

³⁹ Lou Yue, "Chaoqing dafu zhishi Wang jun muzhiming" 朝請大夫致仕王君墓誌銘, *QSW*, 266: 5994.16–20.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴¹ The Ever-Normal Granaries functioned as price-stabilizing mechanisms, in which the government purchased and stored grain in times of harvest at higher-than-market prices and sold it in times of shortages at lower-than-market prices. For a general introduction to the granary and its evolution, see Sogabe Shizuo 曾我部静雄, "Sōdai no sansō oyobi sono ta" 宋代の三倉及びその他, in Sogabe, *Sōdai*

short, it was theoretically legitimate for local officials to regulate, participate, and intervene in the grain market, but not to shut down market exchanges.⁴² In practice, grain embargoes were so commonly used by local officials that they were often tolerated by the central government, especially when the blockage would not cause severe consequences, as in Wang's case.

It is also noteworthy that Wang's choice to implement a grain embargo was not simply motivated by his moral obligation to take good care of the people; he was also being pragmatic, stimulated by fear of the potential outcome that the "people run out of food." Wang did not want to be blamed for his administrative failure to feed the people and maintain social stability; after all, the evaluation for the effectiveness of an official's work was based on his achievements in his own administrative unit, not beyond it.⁴³

This mentality of protecting local resources to maintain local stability, expressed by both Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Zhenggong, is also demonstrated in a 1194 case. In late 1193, a severe drought struck the Lower Yangzi region. In order to prevent food shortages in this region surrounding the capital, the court ordered that grain be extracted from the Hubei, Hunan, and

seikeishi no kenkyū 宋代政経史の研究 (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1974), 465–494. For the problems of using the Ever-Normal Granaries, see Richard von Glahn, "Community and Welfare: Chu Hsi's Community Granary in Theory and Practice," in *Ordering the World*, 222–255, esp. 228–234. For the use of variations of the Ever-Normal Granary mechanism in the Southern Song, see Li Huarui 李华瑞, *Songdai jiuhuang shigao* 宋代救荒史稿 (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 2014), 654–660.

⁴² I find it worth mentioning, although it is not central to the argument here, that both Wang Zhenggong and Lu Jiuyuan were defending official control of the grain market, particularly grain embargoes, from a moralist perspective. Their insistence on grain embargoes represented an interventionist model of the role that officials should play in grain circulation in order to feed the people within their jurisdiction. Wang and Lu's relief strategies were at odds with those that relied upon self-regulating market processes, such as those advocated by Dong Wei above. Dong had a different understanding of how local officials' moral duty could and should be realized. This distinction between Wang and Lu on one hand, and Dong on the other, echoes what Hymes observed as two discourses of famine relief: one centered on duty and shame, and the other driven by the urge for profit. See Hymes, "Moral Duty and Self-Regulating Process in Southern Sung Views of Famine Relief," 294–305.

⁴³ Local officials' evaluations were usually written by their immediate superiors before being reviewed and verified by the central government. See Charles Hartman, "Sung Government and Politics," in *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 5 Part Two: Sung China, 960–1279*, 62–66. Winston Lo, *An Introduction to the Civil Service of Sung China: With Emphasis on Its Personnel Administration* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 172–199.

Jiangxi areas. The court required the officials of Jiangxi circuit not only to divert 100,000 *dan* of their Ever-Normal Granary stocks reserved for local famine relief, but also to purchase another 200,000 *dan* of local grain to be sent to the Lower Yangzi region. Despite its name, “Harmonious Purchase” (*hedi* 和糴) was a semi-coercive form of grain purchase made by local governments to fulfill the quotas assigned by their superiors and the central government.⁴⁴ Wang Yan 王炎 (1137–1218), the prefect of Linjiang *jun* 臨江軍 (modern-day Zhangshu 樟樹, Jiangxi) in Jiangxi circuit expressed his concern about this policy. Wang believed that “the famines in one circuit perhaps should not go so far to disturb other circuits” 一路饑歉似不應至於騷動他路.⁴⁵ Therefore, he wrote an official letter to the Grand Councilor Zhao Ruyu 趙汝愚 (1140–1196), arguing that instead of relying on resources transmitted from afar, the court should seek to resolve the problem within the Zhejiang area: the circuit’s local government jurisdictions should attract grain merchants with generous payments and instruct wealthy local families to sell their surplus to the government.⁴⁶ Moreover, Wang expressed his concern to the military commissioner of Jiangxi circuit, Zhao Gong 趙鞏 (*jinsi* 1172). In an official letter to Zhao, Wang warned of the potential crisis the circuit would face and urged him to stand up for their circuit:

If the Harmonious Purchase cannot be stopped due to the imperial edict, then the calamity of [the people] having difficulties in buying rice will be close at hand...Some hundreds of thousand *hu* (one *hu* equals 33.5 liters) of rice, neither stored among the people in this circuit nor in the granaries of the prefectures, would be suddenly sent to the east [to the Lower Yangzi region]...If there are disasters and bad harvests in the coming years, with no stocks held by the government or among the people, the whole circuit,

⁴⁴ I examine the implementation of harmonious purchase at the local level elsewhere. For an introduction to Harmonious Purchase, among other types of governmental purchase, see Wang Zengyu 王曾瑜 and Zhu Jiayuan 朱家源, “Songchao de hedi liangcao” 宋朝的和糴糧草, *Wenshi* 文史 24 (1985), 127–156; Li Xiao, *Songchao zhengfu goumai zhidu yanjiu*, 310–439.

⁴⁵ Wang Yan 王炎, “Shang Zhaoshuai shu” 上趙帥書, *QSW*, 270: 9096.103.

⁴⁶ Wang Yan, “Shang Zhao Chengxiang shu” 上趙丞相書, *QSW*, 270: 9096.101.

from the rich to the poor, will all be devastated. The weak will be starved to death, and the strong will take refuge, while the violent ones will engage in looting. I am afraid the potential danger of this may be worse than disobeying the Harmonious Purchase order.⁴⁷

夫官之和糴既有朝旨不可住罷，則艱糴之患在於目前...數十萬斛之米不藏於一路之民間，又不蓄於諸郡倉廩，一旦轉而東下...萬一來年或有凶荒之患，公私兩無宿藏，上下俱困，則弱者殍死，壯者流移，強者攘奪，恐事之可憂者或甚於和糴之患耳。

Here Wang clarified the potential conflicts in local administrators' duties: compliance with the central state's coordination of resources versus securing local resources for social stability. Yet, Wang's motivations went beyond solicitude for his people. Apparently, his circuit-centered mindset was motivated by the fear of uprisings and violence. Wang made a clear choice to stabilize the social order within his jurisdiction, which he prioritized over the demands from the court to share resources. Wang's letter to Zhao was shaded with what could be dubbed insiders' empathy. Apparently, Wang made a distinction between "us" (Jiangxi circuit) and "them" (the central government and other circuits). He reminded Zhao to take care of those within their circuit, or else the outbreak of uprisings in the circuit would cost local administrators more heavily than resisting the order of Harmonious Purchase would do.

As we see in the cases above, "the people" whose interests the officials should be defending were ambiguously defined: they could include the whole population of the Southern Song Empire or specifically the residents of certain jurisdictions. This is clearly demonstrated in Peng Guinian's 彭龜年 (1142–1206) abrupt change of attitude towards grain embargoes. During the 1193 drought in the Lower Yangzi region, mentioned above, the impending food shortage alarmed Peng, who was then serving as Minister of Personnel. Peng advised Emperor Ningzong 寧宗 (r. 1194–1224) to exempt the circuits of Jiangxi, Hunan, and Hubei from customs taxes on grain so that merchants would transport food from these harvesting circuits to the Lower Yangzi

⁴⁷ Wang Yan, "Shang Zhaoshuai shu," *QSW*, 270: 9096.103.

region. Wary of the notorious grain embargoes in these circuits, Peng warned that they would impede famine relief in the Lower Yangzi region and undermine the emperor's benevolence towards "all under heaven."⁴⁸ At that time, as a court official striving to relieve food shortages near the capital, Peng expressed his compassion towards the people of the area where food was scarce.

At the end of this year, however, Peng was defeated in a political struggle with the Grand Councilor, Han Tuozhou 韓侂胄 (1152–1207). Peng thus left the court for a new position as the prefect of Jiangling *fu* 江陵府 (modern-day Jingzhou 荊州, Hubei) in Hubei circuit and served concurrently as the military commissioner of this circuit. Soon after his arrival, Peng memorialized the court, but this time he stood for the interests of his jurisdiction, as opposed to those of the Lower Yangzi region. Peng observed that, admittedly, it was munificent for the court to acquire grain from the Jiangxi, Hunan, and Hubei areas to resolve food crises in the Lower Yangzi region. This benevolent policy nevertheless caused trouble for the people in the affected areas: too much governmental purchase of grain severely reduced local food supplies. Peng affirmed that the situation was so bad that "in places in Jiang[xi] and Hu[nan and Hubei] that have had summer harvests, there are nonetheless hungry people without food supplies" 江湖小熟之地，反有飢餓不給之民.⁴⁹ Peng's Hubei circuit, in particular, had received a Harmonious Purchase quota of 100,000 *dan* of grain. Faced with this heavy burden, Peng came up with two measures. He unilaterally stopped the Harmonious Purchase, despite the fact that the court had declined his request for a quota remission in a previous memorial and had not responded to the new one. Furthermore, Peng ordered all the prefectural governments in Hubei circuit to

⁴⁸ Peng Guinian, "Lun HuaiZhe hanliao qi tong mishang reng mian Zonglingsi dimai zou," *QSW*, 278:6299.184.

⁴⁹ Peng Guinian, "Qi quan zhu Hubei hedi shu" 乞權住湖北和糴疏, *QSW*, 278:6300.201.

“persuade” the people to sell their grain surplus only to locals. Although both of these policies risked antagonizing the court and fellow local administrators, Peng unabashedly defended his decision in his memorial to the throne.⁵⁰ Peng described how the depletion of local grain, both through governmental purchase and competition with officials and merchants from outside the prefecture, had devastated the population of his jurisdiction. Although he feared being denounced for imposing grain embargoes, he felt compelled to enforce these policies in the interest of his people.⁵¹

Peng’s contradictory attitudes toward grain embargoes were shaped by the conflicting interests he attempted to defend in different positions. As a court official, Peng had taken it for granted that the harvesting areas were obliged to provide grain for other areas in scarcity. Not until he served in Hubei did Peng experience the disadvantages this area had suffered in the distribution of food supplies. Now being responsible for the people of Hubei, Peng felt compelled to defend his jurisdiction in its competition for scarce resources. Peng’s jurisdiction had conventionally served as a grain-exporting area, where various officials from elsewhere came to compete for grain purchases, where the central government carelessly drained local grain supplies by assigning large purchase quotas, and where grain merchants flocked to refill their barges. In this case, Peng’s unauthorized action of detaining grain within Hubei can be seen as a reaction to his jurisdiction’s adverse position within the existing structure of resource distribution, whether directed by the state or shaped by the market. Significantly, by all appearances the court compromised and acquiesced in Peng’s actions, which indicates that local officials’ refusal to circulate grain could serve as a means to renegotiate resource distribution on

⁵⁰ Peng Guinian, “Qi quan zhu hubei hedi shu,” *QSW*, 278:6300.202.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 203.

an *ad hoc* basis, allowing the state to respond more flexibly to local contingencies. Local officials wielded this flexibility with the court's tacit approval.⁵²

Even as local officials took the initiative in protecting local food supplies, whether they were motivated by responsibility for the people or fear for uprisings, other factors were at play as well. Residents were not passively waiting for their local administrators to work for their benefits. Instead, they significantly influenced local officials' decisions in order to favor their own localities. During the 1193 drought discussed above, a court official reported the endemic grain embargoes in the circuits of Hunan and Jiangxi. He observed that the prefects and county magistrates in these circuits enacted grain embargoes because they "heeded and believed the ridiculous words of urban residents that they should not allow rice to flow out of their borders" 聽信城市之民妄言不可放米出界.⁵³ In 1251, Wang Bai, the aforementioned scholar of Wuzhou in Zhedong circuit, sent a document titled "Presenting the People's Intention" to the new prefect, Cai Hang 蔡杭 (1193–1259), giving advice about preparing for famine relief. He urged the prefect to send capable staff to purchase grain from Pingjiang *fu* 平江府 (modern-day Suzhou 蘇州, Jiangsu) in neighboring Zhexi circuit as soon as possible. Wang sought to maximize the interests of his prefecture in the competition for grain with buyers from other governmental offices. Regarding the threats that Cai might receive from higher levels of the government, Wang observed:

It is important to accomplish the purchase before the Fiscal Commission [of Zhexi circuit] and the Ministry of Revenue start the Harmonious Purchase [in Pingjiang prefecture]. [If we are fast enough,] perhaps the prices will be low and the rice easy to

⁵² Although Peng was soon demoted, it was apparently not because of what he did in Hubei but due to the continued impact of the factional struggles between him and the new Grand Councilor, Han Tuo Zhou. See *Songshi*, 393.11995–11999.

⁵³ *SHY*, "Xingfa" 2.126.

acquire; if [we are] too slow in action, the prices will soar and thus there will be no reason to buy [it].

要在運司大農等未和糴之先趁辦。庶幾價廉而米易得，緩則價穹而無可糴之理。

With regard to their competition with Pingjiang *fu* and those in the vicinity, Wang predicted:

The people in the Suxiu area [i.e. Pingjiang prefecture and Jiaxing prefecture] will [soon] have to cope with the court-mandated Harmonious Purchase; how will they dare to sell grain to other prefectures?

彼蘇秀之民，勢須應副朝廷和糴，豈敢糴與外郡？

Apart from competing with outsiders, Wang also called for Prefect Cai's attention to the potential challenges from other prefectures within their circuit:

In addition, there are also many prefectures suffering drought in Zhedong circuit. If those prefectures all employ this strategy [i.e. to purchase grain in Pingjiang prefecture] as well, then those who arrive late will only have their hands tied.⁵⁴

兼浙東旱傷之州亦多，若他郡皆出此計，則後至者束手。

As a Neo-Confucian scholar, Wang Bai did not bother to critique the burdensome governmental Harmonious Purchases of grain or the jurisdiction-centric grain embargoes.⁵⁵ He was busy designing practical strategies to benefit his prefecture in the multipartite competition for grain. As a member of the Wuzhou local elite, Wang Bai pressured the prefect to act in the interests of his people, and against hesitating to pit his own prefecture against other administrative units.

Fulfilling Contradictory Objectives

Whether they were imposing grain embargoes under pressure from the locals or out of concern for popular well-being and social stability, local officials usually claimed to have done

⁵⁴ Wang Bai, "Shu minzhi" 述民志, *QSW*, 338:7803.293–299.

⁵⁵ For Wang's affiliation to *Daoxue* and his accommodation of *Daoxue* to the local context of Wuzhou, see Sukhee Lee, "Making Sense of the Master: Wang Bo's 'Localization' of Neo-Confucianism in the Late Southern Song," *T'oung Pao* 99.1–3 (2013): 140–172.

so in service of the public interests of their jurisdictions. However, local officials also detained grain within their jurisdictions in order to fulfill the Harmonious Purchase quotas assigned to them by the central state. In the 1180s, Chen Zao 陳造 (1133–1203), a local scholar of Huaidong circuit, lamented local administrators' half-hearted compliance with the prohibitions on grain embargoes—they “banned [embargoes] today but would reverse the policy tomorrow” 今日禁之，明日格之。⁵⁶ Local officials regularly blocked the outflows of local grain to make sure there was sufficient rice on local markets and grain prices were low. In doing so, they could purchase enough local grain at low prices to meet the Harmonious Purchase quotas assigned by the central government.⁵⁷ Indeed, it was very common for local officials to do so, to the extent that their contemporaries highly praised those who were able to achieve their purchase goals without instituting embargoes. In the 1180s, Cai Kan 蔡戡 (1141–1182) recommended Zong Siliang 宗嗣良, the vice-prefect of Hengzhou 衡州 (modern-day Hengyang 衡陽, Hunan), for a promotion, because when assigned a purchase quota of 20,000 *dan*, Zong “did not ever impose grain embargoes but [nonetheless] accomplished the task on time” 未嘗遏糴，而應期了辦。⁵⁸ Ye Shi 葉適 (1150–1223) highly praised Chen Jingsi 陳景思 (1168–1210), the vice fiscal commissioner of Jiangxi circuit in 1206, for performing the same feat.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Chen Zao, “Zuiyan” 罪言, *QSW*, 256:5760.273–279.

⁵⁷ Su Shi in 1090 complained that the famine in Zhejiang during 1074 and 1075 was caused by grain embargoes imposed by the prefectures of Suzhou, Xiuzhou, and Hangzhou to ensure their purchase of grain for the central government. Su also reported that the 1091 grain embargoes in Huaixi circuit were imposed for the same purpose. See Su Shi, “Zou Huainan bidi zhuang ershou,” 33.945–947. Apparently, blocking grain outflows for the purpose of governmental purchase was a persistent problem continued from the Northern Song into the Southern Song, but in the Southern Song, Harmonious Purchases expanded dramatically in both scale and frequency.

⁵⁸ Cai Kan 蔡戡, “Jian Hengzhou tongpan Zong Siliang zhuang” 薦衡州通判宗嗣良狀, *QSW*, 276:6246.121.

⁵⁹ Ye Shi 葉適, “Chaoqing dafu zhuguan Chongyouguan Huanzhang shilang Chen gong muzhiming” 朝請大夫主管冲佑觀煥章侍郎陳公墓誌銘, *QSW*, 286:6505.270–273.

The purchase quotas that compelled local officials to violate the imperial bans on grain embargoes manifested the state's contradictory goals: to guarantee the subsistence of people in various localities and to secure the central state control over food distribution. Accordingly, local agents of the state faced conflicting demands: they were asked to facilitate the circulation of resources to meet the needs of the whole population, which was a principle for running a centralized political system and reinforcing the rhetoric of political unity. More importantly, with no significant increase in food output during the Southern Song, local officials had to deal with yet another administrative challenge: ensuring enough food supplies to prevent turmoil within their own jurisdictions—a vital responsibility upon which their self-respect and career success depended. Finally, they needed to control and extract a large amount of local resources demanded by the central state—a rule they had to obey as bureaucrats.

Fulfilling the purchase quotas was extremely important for local officials, since their performance in purchasing grain for the central government immediately influenced their career paths. In the early years of the Southern Song dynasty, the court implemented a personnel policy in 1159 that linked local officials' promotions or demotions to the efficiency of their purchases:

For the prefectural governments that first fulfill purchase quotas, the names of the prefects and vice prefects are allowed to be reported, awaiting the emperor's decision [for promotion]. If there are some prefectural governments that neglect the [purchase] orders or implement them without reverence, the names of the irresponsible prefectural officials should also be reported and heard [by the court].⁶⁰

諸州收糴先次數足者，許令具守倅姓名取旨；如或慢令弗虔，亦乞具不職官吏以聞。

It is evident that this policy influenced the decisions of Southern Song officials. In 1165, for example, Ge Lixiang 葛立象, the prefect of Jizhou 吉州 (modern-day Ji'an 吉安, Jiangxi), received a promotion because he “successfully fulfilled his official duties” 職事修舉, managing

⁶⁰ SHY, “Shihuo” 62.37.

to purchase 300,000 *dan* of rice and paying for the shipment with savings from the prefectural budget.⁶¹ Similarly, in 1186, the central state gave a promotion to the Overseer General of Huaidong, Wu Ju 吳琚 (1165–1202), because he had first accomplished a purchase of 500,000 *dan* of rice. A month later, Emperor Xiaozong 孝宗 (r. 1162–89) also gave Zhao Ruyi 趙汝誼, the Overseer General of Huanxi, a lesser promotion because “Zhao Ruyi purchased the demanded amount of rice. Although [Zhao accomplished the purchase] after Wu Ju did, [he] did not lag behind too much and thus should also be encouraged.”⁶² Conversely, failing to purchase demanded grain would lead to demotion. In 1206, the Overseer General of Sichuan, Zhao Shanxuan 趙善宣, was dismissed due to his low efficacy in purchasing grain to support the military in Sichuan.⁶³

While fulfilling purchase quotas had an immediate impact on an official’s career success, the ability to feed the local population and prevent uprisings was another key factor in deciding an official’s fate.⁶⁴ Failing to maintain the people’s livelihood and the social order in his jurisdiction could cost an official his career. In 1165, the prefect of Shaoxing *fu* 紹興府, and the magistrates of Kuaiji 會稽縣 and Shanyin 山陰縣 counties (all three units are in modern-day Shaoxing 紹興, Zhejiang) were all dismissed, for they “sat by and saw people starve to death.” 坐視饑民死亡.⁶⁵ In 1181, after a group of hungry people in flood-struck Shaoxing prefecture robbed travelers on the road, the prefect Zhang Ziyuan 張子顏 received a serious demotion to pay

⁶¹ *SHY*, “Shihuo” 40.40.

⁶² *SHY*, “Shihuo” 41.16.

⁶³ *SHY*, “Zhiguan” 74.22.

⁶⁴ For a list of statutes and edicts of awarding officials for effective famine relief and punishing those who failed, see Li Huarui, *Songdai jiuhuang shigao*, 365–375.

⁶⁵ *SHY*, “Zhiguan” 71.10.

for his incompetence.⁶⁶ In the same year, in response to an “astrological disorder” 星緯失次, the central state issued an admonition to local officials to take good care of the people, by preparing famine relief, preventing hunger-driven social disorder, coordinating resource needs with other localities, cutting expenditures, and so forth. It even ordered peer officials to supervise one another and sign reports of mutual responsibility.⁶⁷ In 1192, the prefects of Zizhou 資州 (modern-day Zizhong county 資中縣, Sichuan) and Rongzhou 榮州 (modern-day Rong county 榮縣, Sichuan) were punished with a demotion and a dismissal, respectively. The former was blamed for not making effective efforts to prevent people from starving or becoming refugees, while the latter was impeached for still taking advantage of the people under these devastating circumstances.⁶⁸

In contrast to the high stakes of performing the two official duties discussed above, violating the central government’s prohibitions on grain embargoes rarely caused serious punishment for local officials, especially when they did so to accomplish Harmonious Purchases or in service of the well-being of the people. The Southern Song court’s almost acquiescent attitude towards grain embargoes is demonstrated in a 1216 case. In that year, an unnamed official observed that while the entire Jiangzhe region (the circuits of Jiangdong, Jiangxi, Zhedong, and Zhexi) had suffered a drought, the situation in Zhedong circuit was extremely bleak since food shortages had forced many people to commit robbery. He therefore requested that the court order the prefectures in Zhexi circuit to lift their bans on food outflows to Zhedong circuit. The way this official phrased the request indicates that imposing grain embargoes was

⁶⁶ *SHY*, “Zhiguan” 72.31.

⁶⁷ *SHY*, “Zhiguan” 79.3–4.

⁶⁸ *SHY*, “Zhiguan” 73.10.

understandable: he made the request to lift Zhexi grain embargoes only because the crisis in Zhedong was even worse.⁶⁹

The relatively low risk of getting punished for imposing grain embargoes contributed to local officials' persistent use of this strategy to fulfill the two more important tasks of accomplishing Harmonious Purchase and maintaining local social order. The decisions of local administrators to prioritize the interests of their jurisdictions were shaped by the tradeoffs they made amongst competing agendas, including contradictory administrative obligations, their sense of moral duty, pressures from their people, and their desire for a successful career.

Ruth Mostern demonstrates that the Song governmental system lacked an effective mechanism to enforce horizontal transfers to save poor jurisdictions from fiscal deficits. The discussion of embargoes demonstrates how *de facto* "local fiscal autonomy" even compelled these units to safeguard their resources, by controlling grain flows through trade.⁷⁰ Furthermore, although Mostern seems to suggest that spatial reorganization was the only form of flexibility in the system to adjust resource distribution, my analysis demonstrates another form that was initiated by local administrators rather than the central government. Grain embargoes and reactions to them functioned as local officials' strategies to optimize the situations of their jurisdictions in the multipartite competition for resources.⁷¹

⁶⁹ SHY, "Shihuo" 58.32.

⁷⁰ Mostern, *Dividing the Realm in Order to Govern*, 45. Although citing this phrase, I agree with Robert Hymes' reservations about Mostern's phrase "autonomous jurisdictions." He argues: "most jurisdictions, much of the time, sent up revenue to try to meet central quotas; this is not 'self-sufficiency,' 'independence,' or 'autonomy.'" See Robert Hymes, review of "*Dividing the Realm in Order to Govern*": *The Spatial Organization of the Song State (960–1276 CE)*, by Ruth Mostern. *HJAS* 73.2 (December 2013, 361–377, esp. 364–366). Moreover, I disagree with Mostern's interpretation that the court left local jurisdictions alone and that central resource sharing was rare. See Mostern, "*Dividing the Realm in Order to Govern*," 41–56. At least in the case of famine relief, the court allocated significant amounts of resources to local governments. See Li Huarui, *Songdai jiuhuang shigao*, 400–403, 412–420, 661–669.

⁷¹ Indeed, reactions to embargoes included proposals to adjust the spatial organization of jurisdictions. For example, in response to the chronic problems of grain embargoes imposed by the prefectures of Wuzhou

Part III. The State as Arbiter

So far, we have seen that the Southern Song state was by no means a monolithic system. Instead, it was a network of various competing but interconnected interest groups, divided along the lines of administrative boundaries that were both geographical and hierarchical. The central government did not regulate the administrative practices of various localities effectively through a uniform top-down mechanism. Conflicts amongst these interest groups took place when various efforts to defend diverging interests confronted one another. It is tempting to argue that the central state's ineffectiveness in regulating local officials' actions represents the failure of its authority. Nevertheless, we should not dismiss the fact that officials involved in conflicts over grain embargoes continued to ask the central state for ideological and legal support. Indeed, besides signaling administrative priorities through an incentive structure, the central state also influenced local administration through arbitration. Although local officials first competed and negotiated among themselves over grain circulation, when the negotiations broke down, they had to look to the central government to arbitrate their claims. The central state demonstrated and strengthened its authority by exercising political and rhetorical power as the supreme arbiter, together with its financial power to reallocate resources. My intention here is not to take sides by concluding that the central state was either weak or strong. Instead, I am interested in analyzing the ways in which the central state interacted with various local governments. In the following pages, I analyze two cases to illustrate these mechanisms of negotiation and arbitration that followed bureaucratic infighting over grain embargoes.

and Quzhou against the downstream prefecture of Yanzhou, Wang Bai suggested that the prefect of Yanzhou implore the court to allocate Lanxi county 蘭溪縣 (modern-day Zhejiang) from Wuzhou to Yanzhou. In this way, Wang believed, Yanzhou could not only acquire a decent amount of grain produced in Lanxi county but could also break through the embargoes by seizing this critical traffic point. See Wang Bai, "Da Yan Ling shijun shu" 答嚴陵史君書, *QSW*, 338:7790.98.

Reactivating Statutes and Regulations: Battles against Grain Embargoes

As discussed above, statutes and edicts against grain embargoes did not eradicate these activities in general. The following case of Zhu Xi's successful battle against grain embargoes will demonstrate that these regulations continued to function, albeit selectively. Local officials like Zhu could reactivate the statutes when they invited the central state to directly address those who violated them, admonishing them to obey. This reactivation, however, did not come easily: it was the result of Zhu's dogged negotiations and his tactics of direct political communication with powerful figures at the imperial court.

In response to a rice shortage after a severe drought in 1180, Zhu Xi, the prefect of Nankang *jun* 南康軍 (modern-day Lushan 廬山, Jiangxi) in Jiangdong circuit from 1179 to 1181, sent clerks to purchase rice from Longxing *fu* 隆興府 (modern-day Nanchang 南昌, Jiangxi), the capital of neighboring Jiangxi circuit. Unfortunately, all the rice-harvesting prefectures in Jiangxi circuit had banned food trade with outsiders. Zhu, therefore, wrote a personal letter to Zhang Ziyuan 張子顏, the military commissioner of Jiangxi and concurrent prefect of Longxing, requesting Zhang's order to lift the bans. Zhu prefaced his request by complimenting Zhang for impartially caring for all the people under heaven. He then explained the details of the issue and made his request. At the end of the letter, Zhu warmly acknowledged Zhang for sending him lychee fruit as a gift. This abrupt shift of topic from official business to personal relationship reveals Zhu's intention to appeal to their friendship to seek Zhang's help.⁷²

To Zhu's disappointment, however, Zhang did not lift the bans. On the contrary, the grain embargoes in Jiangxi became even stricter. As a result, Zhu had to send his clerks to buy rice secretly, in an attempt to get around the embargoes. The secretly purchased (that is,

⁷² Zhu Xi, "Yu Jiangxi Zhangshuai zhazi (I)" 與江西張帥劄子 (一), *Zhu Xi ji*, 3:26.1116.

smuggled) rice, however, was detained in Longxing prefecture. Zhu again approached Commissioner Zhang, sending him both an official letter and a personal one, repeatedly beseeching him to allow the food outflow to Nankang. To add more weight to his words, Zhu also wrote to Qian Dian 錢佃 (*jinsi* 1145), the fiscal commissioner of Jiangxi, begging him to help persuade Zhang. Nevertheless, no evidence shows that either Commissioner Zhang or Commissioner Qian responded positively.

Frustrated by Zhang and Qian, Zhu Xi soon turned to other powerful figures. One of them was Chen Junqing 陳俊卿 (1112–1186), a former Grand Councilor and at that time the military commissioner of Zhu's circuit. According to Zhu, this was not the first time that he had reported the grain embargoes in Jiangxi to Chen, but Chen had not taken any action. Chen's reluctance to react suggests that grain embargoes had become such a common policy among officials that Chen did not want to get into a conflict with his colleagues over it. Unable to bear this situation any more, Zhu in this second letter urged Chen to take a firm stand against the grain embargoes. Zhu accused the Jiangxi officials of acting selfishly: even when their circuit had quite a few rice-harvesting prefectures, they had detained the ships Zhu sent to purchase rice and blocked rice merchants passing through. Zhu pointed out that Jiangxi officials had not only violated the statutes but also betrayed official protocols when they ignored Zhu's repeated official requests for buying rice from Jiangxi. He insisted that Chen should not only immediately send an envoy to convey his official warning to the Jiangxi officials but also beseech the emperor to reassert the long-existing ban on grain embargoes. To encourage Chen's efforts, Zhu cited the example of Liu Gong 劉珙 (1121–1178).⁷³ According to Zhu, when serving in Chen's position in 1175, Liu had managed to acquire support from the central government to punish the officials of the

⁷³ Zhu Xi, "Yu Chen shuai shu" 與陳帥書, *Zhu Xi ji*, 3:26.1110.

upstream districts who had imposed grain embargoes. Liu was therefore able to purchase 3,000,000 *dan* of rice for this circuit.⁷⁴ Zhu suggested that Chen follow Liu's suit, so that "rice can be acquired, and the whole circuit will be benefited" 米皆可致而一路受賜亦。⁷⁵

In addition to Chen, Zhu also wrote to his friend Zhou Bida 周必大 (1126–1204), then serving as a state councilor. Zhu explained in one of his letters to Zhou that he had decided not to report this issue through the regular official channels, that is, to memorialize the emperor and the Department of State Affairs. Instead, he chose to secretly discuss it here with Zhou, because he believed Jiangxi officials would be irritated if they knew he had reported them to the throne and would seek revenge on him by increasing the obstacles to grain circulation.⁷⁶ Zhu implored Zhou to persuade Emperor Xiaozong to make another proclamation. The specific proclamation would require the circuit commissioners of Jiangxi and Hunan to facilitate the free circulation of rice and encourage downstream prefectures to report any violation of the order.⁷⁷

Zhu's multi-channel efforts with regional and court officials turned out to be effective. Chen Junqing protested to the court against grain embargoes in Jiangxi and received an endorsement, and Zhou Bida facilitated another imperial proclamation against grain embargoes.⁷⁸ This time, backed by high officials and the central government, Zhu confidently sent official letters to Jiangxi officials, demanding that they release the ships carrying the rice that his clerks had purchased in Longxing *fu*. Zhu finally succeeded in the negotiations by citing

⁷⁴ Liu's story was also recorded in the funerary inscription for Liu composed by Zhu Xi. See Zhu Xi, "Guanwendian xueshi Liugong shendaobei" 觀文殿學士劉公神道碑, *Zhu Xi ji*, 8:89.4530.

⁷⁵ Zhu Xi, "Yu Chen shuai shu," *Zhu Xi ji*, 3:26.1111.

⁷⁶ Zhu Xi, "Qi shenming bidi zhihui zhazi" 乞申明閉糴指揮劄子, *Zhu Xi ji*, 2:20.836.

⁷⁷ Zhu Xi, "Yu Zhou canzheng zhazi" 與周參政劄子, *Zhu Xi ji*, 3:26.1122–1125.

⁷⁸ In a letter to Zhu Xi in 1180, Zhou Bida commented that the prohibition on grain embargoes was an important regulation, which was frequently ignored by local administrators. Therefore, in response to Zhu Xi's request, he would make sure the prohibition would be reasserted. See Zhou Bida 周必大, "Yu Zhu Yuanhui daizhi zhazi (I)" 與朱元晦待制劄子 (一), *QSW*, 229:5106.376.

three documents in a row— the existing “regulations [against embargoes] issued in the Chunxi era (1174–1189)” (*Chunxi ling* 淳熙令), a “recent imperial proclamation” (*jinjiang zhihui* 近降指揮), and “the excerpt of Chen Junqing’s memorial [cited] in the edict” 聖旨節文江東安撫使陳少保奏.⁷⁹

Zhu’s case demonstrates how local administrators could fight grain embargoes by reactivating existing statutes and regulations. When reasserted by the central authority and targeted specifically at relevant officials involved in grain embargoes, the statutes and regulations against grain embargoes could take effect. In this case, a local official’s conflicts and interactions with others while defending the interests of his jurisdiction fueled the central government’s enforcement of the statutes in localities. The sources show that, in many cases, the court reissued the prohibition on grain embargoes upon the requests from local officials involved in conflicts over grain circulation.⁸⁰ We do not know if the court’s reaffirmation of the prohibition on grain embargoes effectively solved the problem in every case, as it did in Zhu Xi’s case, which is much better documented. Nevertheless, the pattern of local officials’ reactions to grain embargoes—that is, to request that the court reaffirm the statutes and regulations—indicates that local officials expected these rules to work effectively when supported by the central government’s initiative. This locally-initiated action-reaction process allowed the Southern Song state to accommodate the diverging interests of its different localities and their administrators. The central state could enforce its regulations in response to administrative crises in the localities and address conflicting local interests on an *ad hoc* basis. Rather than relying on a top-down and one-size-fits-all approach to ruling and governing the

⁷⁹ Zhu Xi, “Shen zhushi qi xingxia Jiangxi buxi edi” 申諸司乞行下江西不許遏糴, *QSW*, 244:5463.172.

⁸⁰ See Fang Zi’s 方滋 memorial in 1164, Ma Datong’s 馬大同 report in 1187, and an unnamed official’s report in 1216 (*SHY*, “Shihuo” 58. 2–3; 41. 17–18; 58. 32). See also He Chujiu’s 何處久 memorial in 1233 (*QSW*, 323:7422.182).

realm, the central state flexibly responded to local needs when invited to address conflicts over grain embargoes.

The 1215 Food Crisis in Hubei and Beyond

We have seen that local officials repeatedly violated the rules set by the court and competed with one another across different jurisdictions to defend their particular interests and maintain food supplies and social order. These acts of violation and competition, however, often initiated another round of multi-jurisdiction negotiations that involved arbitration by the court. In turn, these negotiations, would bring about a rearrangement of resources that balanced the interests of the various parties involved. This “clash-negotiation” procedure will be illustrated by a 1215 case from Hubei circuit, which demonstrates the intraregional and interregional conflicts and negotiations over food supplies that followed widespread food shortages that year.

1215 was a particularly tough year for Southern Song commoner subjects. A prolonged drought struck the circuits of Zhexi, Jiangdong, and Hubei. Food shortages and soaring grain prices put tremendous pressure on both central and local governments. The drought resulted in competition for grain not only among different circuits of the Southern Song empire but also among different prefectures within these circuits. Before we examine the conflicts and negotiations within one of these circuits, Hubei, let us take a glimpse of the contours of the 1215 crisis depicted from the perspective of Zhen Dexiu 真德秀 (1178–1235), the fiscal commissioner of Jiangdong circuit at the time. In that year, Zhen found his people in a desperate situation: Zhexi circuit, one of their major grain providers, was itself suffering a severe food shortage, while other grain providers, such as Jiangxi and Hunan circuits, had all imposed grain embargoes. In addition, Hubei circuit, located in the Middle Yangzi region, had detained ships carrying rice

from Hunan that were passing through.⁸¹ Helpless, Zhen Dexiu resorted to the court for intervention, only to find his local colleagues stubbornly adhere to their jurisdiction-centric policies. The court finally endowed 300,000 *dan* of rice from the central state's reserve to Zhen's circuit to relieve the food shortage.⁸²

While Zhen was complaining about the grain embargoes in Hubei circuit, that circuit was itself mired in infighting between various governmental offices concerning food distribution.⁸³ Zhao Fang 趙方 (d. 1221), the military commissioner of the Jingxi and Huguang 湖廣 (i.e. Hunan and Hubei) region, enforced grain embargoes in all the prefectures under his charge to prevent food shortages that could cause disturbances in the Song-Jin border region.⁸⁴ Within Hubei circuit, the prefectures on which the policy had the worst impact were Hanyang *jun* 漢陽軍 (modern-day Hanyang, Hubei) and Ezhou 鄂州 (modern-day Wuchang, Hubei), both of which regularly imported rice from the prefectures of Fuzhou 復州 (modern-day Xiantao 仙桃, Hubei) and De'an *fu* 德安府 (modern-day Anlu 安陸, Hubei), located upstream. When these two prefectures refused to sell food to them, Ezhou and Hanyang *jun* experienced a serious decrease in food supplies. In this situation, the fiscal commissioner of Hubei and concurrent prefect of Ezhou, Wu Rousheng, repeatedly implored Zhao to lift the ban on food circulation in Hubei, but

⁸¹ Zhen Dexiu 真德秀, "Zou qi fenzhou cuozhi huangzheng deng shi" 奏乞分州措置荒政等事. *QSW*, 312:7148.248.

⁸² See the imperial edict issued in the seventh month of 1215, cited in the attached note in Zhen Dexiu, "Zouqi bomi zhenji" 奏乞撥米賑濟, *QSW*, 312:7148.245–246. For the details of famine relief in Jiangdong circuit in 1215, see Winston Lo, "Fiscal Intendants in Southern Sung China," *Journal of Asian History* 9 (1975): 128–154.

⁸³ I pieced together this complicated case mostly based on official and personal letters of Huang Gan, Zhu Xi's son-in-law and another *Daoxue* luminary. The reason why this case is so well-documented is that Huang's collected works, like Zhu Xi's, were considered worth saving by their contemporaries and *Daoxue* followers in later periods.

⁸⁴ The military commissioner of the Jingxi and Huguang region was not only responsible for the military defense of the Jingxi, Hunan, and Hubei areas but also involved in civil administration as a superior to circuit officials in this region. See Yu Wei 余蔚, "Lun NanSong Xuanfu he Zhizhishi zhidu" 論南宋宣撫使和制置使制度, *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 中華文史論叢, 2007.1: 129–179.

Zhao resolutely declined. Annoyed by Zhao's policies, Wu wrote a letter to discuss the solution with Huang Gan 黃榦 (1152–1221), the prefect of the other victimized prefecture, Hanyang *jun*. Surprisingly, Huang did not share Wu's hostility to Zhao's bans on food circulation. Indeed, Huang defended Zhao's policy in a personal letter to his friend Li Daochuan 李道傳 (1170–1217), who had also complained about the obstruction. In this letter, Huang even expressed his appreciation for Zhao's decision:

As a military commissioner, what he is concerned with is the frontier defense. If the grain in the border fortresses is depleted and people on the borders begin to starve, banditry will break out here and there, and the [Jurchen] barbarians will watch and wait [for opportunities to attack]; will not the harm be severe?⁸⁵

彼為制帥，所慮者邊防耳。盡空塞下之粟，使邊民告饑，盜賊間作，夷狄窺伺，其利害不既重矣乎？

Furthermore, to Wu's frustration, Huang also justified the grain embargoes that were imposed in Fuzhou and De'an:

[I, Huang] Gan have heard that De'an and Fuzhou are in terrible shape: hungry people are grumbling. Now if one wants to blame them, it is perhaps not appropriate. [When] the ancients spoke of banning grain embargoes, [they] referred to [the situation in which] one area had failed harvests while the other area was harvesting. Now that all the various prefectures have suffered poor harvests due to the drought, how can [the prefects] be blamed [for implementing grain embargoes]?⁸⁶

榦但聞德安、復州亦已狼狽，饑民熬熬矣。今乃專欲咎之，恐未安也。古人言遏糴之禁，謂此凶而彼豐，今數州皆為旱歉，而可咎之乎？

Huang asked Wu to put himself in the shoes of the two prefects who were stuck in a dilemma: should they detain the grain and feed their people but irritate their superior (i.e. Wu), or should they release the grain to please their superior but cause the people to suffer? It is clear that Huang

⁸⁵ Huang Gan 黃榦, "Yu Li Guanzhi bingbu shu (II)" 與李貫之兵部書 (二), *QSW*, 288:6547.189–190.

⁸⁶ Huang Gan, "Fu Wu Shengzhi Hubei yunpan (IV)" 復吳勝之湖北運判 (四), *QSW*, 288:6543.125.

would choose the former, and in fact, he had been using grain embargoes to make sure people in his charge had enough to eat.⁸⁷

Thanks to these policies, Huang's Hanyang prefecture, with its smaller population, did not suffer as much as Wu's Ezhou did. In his letter to Li Daochuan, Huang shared his policies for coping with food insufficiency, among the most important of which were to regulate grain prices and to strictly prohibit the outflows of rice from Hanyang.⁸⁸ Huang even prohibited landowners who lived outside the prefecture from transporting away rice they had produced on their Hanyang lands. When the Zhaos, an official household who lived elsewhere, tried to ship out the rice harvested on their Hanyang lands, Huang had their rice detained and urged them to sell it all to local buyers. After some negotiations that are not described in the sources, Huang decided that the Zhaos should sell half of the rice in Hanyang.⁸⁹ The Zhao family was able to get Fiscal Commissioner Wu to intervene. Even under the pressure from his superior, Huang adamantly refused to release the rest of the rice.⁹⁰ In addition, Huang sent Wu an official letter, in which he strongly condemned the bad example set by the Zhaos, who not only had moved rice away but also attempted to use networks to get their way. Huang insisted that the Commission should never again help absentee landowners who wanted to take their rice from their Hanyang lands; if they wanted their rice, they should move back and live by their own property.⁹¹

To acquire more rice for his prefecture, Huang also intensified his supervision of merchants passing through and took every chance to grab rice from them. In the sixth month of

⁸⁷ Even before serving as the prefect of Hanyang, Huang Gan had embargoed grain to curb the soaring prices after a drought in 1210, when he was the magistrate of Linchuan county 臨川縣 (modern-day Jiangxi). See Chen Yihe, "Mianzhai xiansheng Huang Wensu gong nianpu," 7191–7247. See especially 7216.

⁸⁸ Huang Gan, "Yu Li Guanzhi bingbu," *QSW*, 288:6547.190.

⁸⁹ Huang Gan, "Shen Zhuanyunsi qi zhiyue kezhuang banzai zushuimi shizhuang" 申轉運司乞止約客莊搬載租稅米事狀, *QSW*, 287:6531.388.

⁹⁰ Huang Gan, "Caosi xingxia fang jizhuang mi pan" 漕司行下放寄莊米判, *QSW*, 287:6535.490.

⁹¹ Huang Gan, "Shen Zhuanyunsi qi zhiyue kezhuang banzai zushuimi shizhuang," *QSW*, 287:6531.388.

1215, Huang ordered the arrest of two ship-owners who were dodging customs taxes. Instead of punishing the merchants in regular ways, Huang forced them to sell all the rice in their cargoes, at a price determined by his office.⁹² According to Huang, his hardline policies had saved his prefecture from famine when the 1215 food crisis kicked in.

While Huang was able to keep “the people in harmony (*renwu xixi* 人物熙熙)” in his small Hanyang prefecture despite Commander Zhao’s grain policies, Wu was still struggling to acquire enough food for the more densely populated jurisdiction of Ezhou.⁹³ Wu took two measures: he seized food from Huang’s prefecture and sought intervention from the court to stop Military Commissioner Zhao’s grain embargoes. Wu’s actions intensified the conflicts within Hubei circuit, as well as between Hubei and other regions. Hanyang and Ezhou prefectures, located on opposite sides of the Yangzi River, had long been competing to purchase rice transported along the river. Ezhou prefecture, however, was the seat of the Fiscal Commission of Hubei, and the commissioner usually served concurrently as prefect of Ezhou. Consequently, Ezhou often benefited from the patronage of the fiscal commissioner, even at the expense of its neighboring prefecture, Hanyang. In the face of this 1215 food dearth, Commissioner and Prefect Wu went so far as to intercept rice ships heading to Hanyang and redirect them to Ezhou. Although an old friend of Wu’s, Huang was annoyed that Wu “frequently assumed great airs of power and authority, wanting to steal and possess [the rice from Hanyang]” 多方作威作勢，欲奪而有之。⁹⁴

⁹² Huang Gan, “Shen Zhuanyunsi wei kechuan nishui ji mijia butong shizhuang” 申轉運司為客船匿稅及米價不同事狀, *QSW*, 287:6531.389. What Huang Gan did also follows an approach of famine relief driven by moral duty discussed above in the cases of Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Zhengong.

⁹³ Huang Gan, “Yu Li Guanzhi bingbu shu (II),” *QSW*, 288:6547.190.

⁹⁴ Huang also secretly expressed to Li Daochuan his intense fury about Wu’s policy: “Although appearing to be friendly to him, [I] indeed feel indignant in my heart...Burn [this letter] after you read it.” See, Huang Gan, “Yu Li Guanzhi bingbu shu (II),” *QSW*, 288:6547.190.

In response to Wu's aggressive policy, Huang expressed his dissatisfaction, particularly reminding Wu of his responsibilities as the fiscal commissioner of the entire circuit:

If this is the case, then [it seems that] Hanyang people do not belong to Hubei and would be people beyond civilization. It is acceptable if [policies like this] are enacted by the prefectural government of Ezhou; but if [you] implemented them [when you are also] in the position of the fiscal commissioner, I'm afraid it does not count as treating the circuit impartially.⁹⁵

如此，則漢陽百姓不隸於湖北，而為化外之民矣。在鄂州行之則可，在使臺行之，恐非公視一路之意。

Huang took for granted the rivalry between the two prefectures due to their long-existing competition for resources: it was understandable for a prefect to favor his jurisdiction at the expense of others. But on the other hand, Huang believed that the governments at the higher levels should treat all the units under them equally and mediate their interests.⁹⁶ In his response to Huang's critiques, Wu justified himself by saying that in sending people to guard the riverbank of Hanyang, he had not meant to seize rice from Hanyang but actually intended to forbid the outflow of grain from the larger Hubei circuit.⁹⁷ Ironically, although Wu himself was protesting Commander Zhao's grain embargoes, he was unabashed about his own intentions to detain food within his circuit.

While taking advantage of Hanyang prefecture and dealing with Huang Gan's protest, Wu was simultaneously attempting to subvert Military Commissioner Zhao's grain embargoes. The

⁹⁵ Huang Gan, "Fu Wu Shengzhi Hubei yunpan (I)" 復吳勝之湖北運判 (一), *QSW*, 288:6543.120–122.

⁹⁶ In another letter to Wu regarding the grain embargoes in De'an and Fuzhou, Huang Gan also warned Wu against favoritism for Ezhou. Huang commented that "[You] serve as a fiscal commissioner but desperately strove for the interests of Ezhou alone... [This] undermines the inclusivity and impartiality [of the circuit]." Huang's mindset seems to echo the incentive structure and the pattern of resolving cross-jurisdiction conflicts. He took it for granted that prefects should favor their jurisdictions, because the effectiveness of their governance was measured by their achievements in these individual units. His expectation for the higher levels of administration to treat those below them equally reflects how arbitration and coordination should be carried out in the bureaucracy. See Huang Gan, "Fu Wu Shengzhi Hubei yunpan (IV)," *QSW*, 288:6543.125.

⁹⁷ Huang Gan, "Fu Wu Shengzhi Hubei yunpan (III)" 復吳勝之湖北運判 (三), *QSW*, 288:6543.122–124.

dispute between Wu and Zhao was so intense that it turned into personal hatred. Zhao even sent soldiers to guard along the riverbank and stop the rice from being shipped to Ezhou.⁹⁸ Wu turned to the court to protest Zhao's policies. Instead of completely lifting grain embargoes in Zhao's jurisdiction (which included the circuits of Jingxi South, Hunan, and Hubei), Wu suggested that Zhao should adjust his policy so that food could circulate freely within the fifteen prefectures of Hubei circuit but could not flow outward. Wu's "jurisdiction-centrism" for his own circuit was so evident in this proposal on which Huang Gan commented sarcastically: "In this case, are [other downstream circuits such as] the circuits of the Two Huai (i.e. Huaidong and Huaixi), Jiangdong [and Jiang]xi all countries beyond [our] civilization" 如此，則兩淮、江東西皆化外之國乎？⁹⁹ Similar to his own earlier critiques on Wu's favoritism for Ezhou, Huang's comment reveals his expectation that the higher levels of the state would accommodate the needs of all the localities and balance their diverging interests.

Contrary to Huang's sarcastic comments, however, the court did not find Wu's favoritism for his circuit inappropriate and thus approved Wu's request for the removal of Zhao's grain embargoes. Nevertheless, Commander Zhao stubbornly refused to obey the court's order even then.¹⁰⁰ It is worth noting that in the previous year, the Jin dynasty had moved its capital south to Kaifeng, which had increased the military tensions in the Jin-Song borderland.¹⁰¹ Commissioner Zhao had good reasons to refuse an order that would endanger food control near the frontier. As it turned out, even though Zhao did not revoke the embargo, he was not punished for his refusal

⁹⁸ Huang Gan, "Da Pan Qianzhi" 答潘謙之, *QSW*, 288:6543.135–136; "Yu Zhen Jingyuan zhiyuan" 與真景元直院, *QSW*, 288: 6546.180–181.

⁹⁹ Huang Gan, "Yu Li Guanzhi bingbu shu (II)," *QSW*, 288:6547.190.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Richard L. Davis, "The Reigns of Kuang-tsung (1189–1194) and Ningsung (1194–1224)," in *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 5, Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907–1279*, 817–820.

to obey.¹⁰² Here we see the conflicting agendas of an administrative official and a military commander that pushed the negotiation into a stalemate. This inter-agency rivalry was inherent in the Song bureaucratic structure, which was full of checks and balances amongst levels of regional administration, and it became more salient in the Southern Song when more overlapping offices were created for military purposes.¹⁰³ The court's acquiescence to Zhao's action indicates that its overriding priority was military security. Still, Zhao's insistence on his policies did not mean that he completely dismissed the arbitration of the court. In the end, Zhao endowed 40,000 *dan* of rice belonging to his commission to Ezhou prefecture.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, Zhao ordered Huang Gan's Hanyang prefecture not only to send some 3,000 *dan* of newly purchased rice to Ezhou, but also to stop buying any rice coming to the shore of Hanyang, leaving the rice for Ezhou to purchase.

Huang Gan, meanwhile, was well aware that the interests of his jurisdiction were being sacrificed in the negotiations between his two superiors, Zhao and Wu.¹⁰⁵ Indignant about the backroom deal they had made, Huang sent Zhao an appeal written in an uncompromising tone. He denied there was any grain surplus in his jurisdiction and described in detail how his people were struggling to tide themselves over in the aftermath of the drought:

Now [you] demand that my prefecture no longer purchase rice from merchants. This is to sit by and watch people starve to death. Officials, clerks, soldiers, and commoners in this prefecture count day and night upon various governmental offices to pity this small prefecture and generously grant relief with commiseration. Now [you] unexpectedly want

¹⁰² According to Zhao Fang's biography in *Songshi*, he continued serving in this position until not long before his death in 1221, and he was celebrated for his military achievement in this position. See *Song shi* 403.12203–12205.

¹⁰³ The checks and balances built in the Song bureaucracy, especially at the circuit level, are discussed in detail in Winston Lo, "Circuits and Circuit Intendancies in the Territorial Administration of Sung China," *Monumenta Serica* 31 (1974): 39–107.

¹⁰⁴ Huang Gan, "Shen zhisi zai qi geimi zhuang" 申制司再乞給米狀, *QSW*, 287:6531.393–394.

¹⁰⁵ Huang Gan, "Da Pan Qianzhi," *QSW*, 287:6543.136; "Yu Zhen Jingyuan zhiyuan," *QSW*, 287: 6546.181.

to move the grain out of this prefecture and forbid this prefecture from purchasing [rice]. [I] don't know in what position [you] are putting the people of this prefecture?¹⁰⁶

今欲本軍自此不糴客米，則是坐視百姓之餓死也。本軍官吏軍民日夜仰望諸司哀憐小郡，痛賜賑恤。今乃反欲移本軍之粟而禁本軍之糴，不知置一郡軍民於何地耶？

Huang flatly claimed that given the size of the population of Ezhou, even if they exhausted the food reserves of Hanyang to feed Ezhou people, it would last for no more than ten days.

Huang observed that he had to try his best to save the lives of the people in his jurisdiction, for he had been “specifically appointed by the court to protect this territory” 奉朝廷之命專守此土.

Huang, therefore, refused to obey the order from Zhao and deployed the heroic rhetoric of sacrificing himself for the people:

Admittedly, [one who] disobeys the order from superiors should be dismissed; [one who] sits by and watches the people starve should be dismissed as well. [Since] they equally [lead to] dismissal, [I] would rather be dismissed for the sake of the people.¹⁰⁷

違上司之命固當罷，坐視百姓之餓死亦當罷，等罷耳，寧為百姓而罷也。

Huang identified himself with the interests of the people of his jurisdiction when faced with contradictory expectations: his direct superiors expected him to meet their demands for grain from Hanyang, while the court demanded that he, as a local administrator, must maintain the stability of the prefecture. It is evident, however, that Huang finally found another way out of this conundrum.

The sources do not preserve the details of how these multipartite struggles came to an end. Nevertheless, according to Wu Rousheng's biography in *Songshi*, with which I began this chapter, he saved the people of the fifteen prefectures of Hubei from famine by “begging to

¹⁰⁶ Huang Gan, “Shen Jinghu Zhizhisi bian Hanyang jun dimi shizhuang” 申京湖制置司辨漢陽軍糴米事狀, *QSW*, 287:6531.391–393.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 393.

purchase [grain] from Hunan.”¹⁰⁸ It appears that this solution originated from Huang Gan’s advice. Huang proposed to Wu that instead of taking rice from the equally grain-deficient Hanyang prefecture, he should request court permission to buy the “reserved rice” (*zhuangji mi* 椿積米)—stored in local governmental granaries but at the disposal of the central state—from the circuits of Jiangxi and Hunan. If the court agreed to sell the reserved rice stored in Jiangxi and Hunan to Hubei, the burden of rice purchase would be shifted to these two rice-providing circuits. Local officials of these circuits would need to purchase enough grain to make up for the rice shipped to Hubei. By advising Wu to seek grain beyond their circuit, Huang adopted a beggar-thy-neighbor strategy by attempting to transfer the intraregional tensions within Hubei to the interregional competition between Hubei and other circuits, and to shift the conflict between him and his superiors to bargaining between Wu and the court. Huang saw the court’s redistribution of resources among circuits as the solution to the food and administrative crises in Hubei. Apparently, Wu followed Huang’s advice, and the court allowed Wu to purchase the grain reserves in Hunan.¹⁰⁹

The conflicts between Wu and Zhao, as well as those between Wu and Huang, are invisible in Wu’s biography. After all, his actively competing for resources and favoring his jurisdiction at the expense of others were both too inappropriate to be included in the biography of a respectable official. The words “begging to purchase from Huguang” in Wu’s *Songshi* biography, which even indicate interregional cooperation, masked the intense competition for rice that pushed prefectures within a circuit and circuits within the state into multipartite conflicts and consequent negations. These conflicts over resources were finally solved through the

¹⁰⁸ *Song shi*, 400.12148.

¹⁰⁹ Despite the unpleasant interaction with Huang, Wu ultimately wrote a report of recommendation for Huang, highly praising him for having accomplished famine relief impressively during his tenure in Hanyang prefecture. See Chen Yihe, “Mianzhai xiansheng Huang Wensu gong nianpu,” 7225–7226.

intervention of the central government: not by invoking statutes or regular rules but by reallocating resources from some jurisdictions to others. As this case shows, the clash-negotiation procedure, which was initiated by local officials, invited central intervention, and concluded with resource sharing, helped to adjust the distribution of food supplies and accommodate diverging interests on a case-by-case basis.

Conclusion

The analysis of grain embargoes reveals internal splits within the centralized Southern Song governmental system. It demonstrates that along the boundaries of circuits, prefectures, and counties, “jurisdiction-centrism” divided the “one civilization” of the Song Empire into various interest groups, each of which contained additional diverging interests. Local administrators, frequently acting almost independently, openly favored their jurisdictions at the expense of others. These local agents of the central state habitually violated the central government’s prohibition on grain embargoes. What we see here is not the unitary political entity envisioned in official rhetoric, but rather a state characterized by multipartite conflicts and negotiations over resources between the central and local governments, and among various levels and jurisdictions of local governments.

The checks and balances built into the system, incentive structures to award officials for their achievements in single administrative units, the responsibility of each unit to self-finance, and the contradictory goals imposed on local administrators all contributed to inter-regional and inter-agency competition for food resources. In response, local officials had to arrange their administrative priorities in such a way that their official responsibilities, moralistic ideals, and career success could ideally be balanced. Their choice was to “favor their own.” This was

especially true when recurring crop failures diminished food output, and when state extraction kept on expanding at the central and local levels in the Southern Song.¹¹⁰

Importantly, however, the internal conflicts that were manifested in inter-regional and inter-agency rivalry did not invalidate the ideological, political, or financial authority of the central state. Rather, local officials on all sides of the competition for grain frequently turned to the central state for support. Their multipartite negotiations often concluded in embargoes to which the central state acquiesced, or solutions that were authorized on an *ad-hoc* basis, such as reactivating statutes and allocating resources from the central reserves. Consequently, the central state significantly shaped local policy-making and implementation. Nevertheless, the tensions within the state structure, as shown in the above scenarios of grain embargoes, were not solved by top-down or systematic methods of resource coordination. Instead, it was through the initiative of local administrators, in the form of bureaucratic infighting, petitions to the court, and multipartite negotiations, that the distribution of resources was tested and adjusted to fit local conditions. These locally-initiated efforts to address the problems of resource distribution reveal the action-reaction mode by which the Southern Song central state interacted with its various local governments and vice versa. The seeming disorganization of field administration paradoxically contributed to the flexibility of the governmental system, which helped the Southern Song state muddle through deteriorating finances and increasing administrative challenges from the late twelfth century onwards.

¹¹⁰ For a general depiction of the increasing financial extraction by the central and local governments of the Southern Song, see Bao Weimin, *Songdai difang caizheng shi yanjiu*, 164–195. For a case study of how the state economic activism in Sichuan tea trade degenerated from bureaucratic entrepreneurship into “confiscatory taxation” in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, by which the state “was draining far more out of the economy than it was contributing to society as a whole,” see Paul J. Smith, *Taxing Heaven's Storehouse: Horses, Bureaucrats, and the Destruction of the Sichuan Tea Industry, 1074–1224*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Council on East Asian Studies, 1991), 227–245, 305–318.

Chapter Four. Seeking Autonomy: Building Local Granaries

In 1221, Yue Ke 岳珂 (1183–1243), the fiscal commissioner of Jiangdong, memorialized the court about a granary he had built and funded with financial surplus he had accumulated. This granary was used to sell relief grain at a lower-than-market price in times of food insecurity. In the same memorial, Yue explicitly requested that the court acknowledge the granary's independence of funding from the central state and his autonomy to use it. This request was approved by the court.¹ By 1249, granaries of this kind “existed everywhere [in the country]” 在有之, allowing some local officials to carry out timely relief on their own and others to line their own pockets.²

This chapter examines Southern Song local officials' initiatives and activism in building and running this kind of granary. It demonstrates how local officials used this new institution to enhance their autonomy in pursuing their administrative and personal agendas. The discussion of local officials' pursuit of autonomy further reveals how they understood and balanced their dual identities as local care-takers and agents of the central state. My analyses of the interactions between the central and local governments over these local granaries also reveal a dynamic process of power distribution between within the state.

Part I. The Growth of Official Activism at the Local Level

In order to guarantee local sustenance, local officials not only needed to resist excessive extraction of resources from higher authorities and compete for supplies with other jurisdictions, as we have seen in earlier chapters. They also had to establish and maintain long-term systems to prepare for recurrent seasonal food shortages. During the interim period between harvests, the

¹ *Jingding Jiankang zhi*, 景定建康志, *Songyuan Fangzhi Congkan* 宋元方志叢刊 vol.2, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 23.5b–7b.

² *Jingding Jiankang zhi*, 23.8a.

grain supplies of peasants were rather limited, since part of the grain yielded the previous autumn had been paid for the taxes, and the new grain was not ready for harvest. Quite often, peasants had to buy grain in the market to tide them over. Unfortunately, as Von Glahn has pointed out, “as a consequence of the inelastic demand for rice, the paucity of alternative food crops, and the long months of spring and summer during which the peasant household’s supply of rice steadily diminished, the price of rice fluctuated violently according to the seasonal undulations of consumers’ needs and the available supply of food.”³ Poor peasants who were unable to pay for the too-expensive grain therefore suffered from a dearth of food. The shortage of food became more tragic in years of bad harvest. Severe hunger could present the state with the danger of bandits, riots, and political instability. Therefore, since early imperial China, the central government had developed various institutions for famine relief, which can be characterized as “normative systems of state welfare.”⁴

During the Song, “normative systems of state welfare” were represented by Ever-normal granaries (*Changping cang* 常平倉) and charitable granaries (*Yi cang* 義倉). Ever-normal granaries were designed to stabilize the grain prices through state intervention in the grain market. Theoretically, when there was a harvest and the price was so low that it harmed the peasants’ interests, the Ever-normal granary would purchase the grain at a slightly higher-than-market price; when there was a dearth of food and the price of grain was too high, the granary stocks would be sold at a lower price. In practice, in the Song dynasty, these granaries were used more as a famine relief instrument than a price adjusting mechanism. The government would sell granary stocks to farmers during times of food dearth. In contrast, charitable granaries “provided

³ Richard Von Glahn, “Chu Hsi’s Community Granary in Theory and Practice,” *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China*, ed. Robert P. Hymes and Conrad Schirokauer (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), 224.

⁴ Van Glahn, “Chu Hsi’s Community Granary in Theory and Practice,” 227.

interest-free loans and direct subsidies” to poor farmers in the countryside.⁵ Grain to replenish the stocks of the granaries was collected from people as a surtax along with their regular Twice-a-Year taxes. Both of these systems were created, funded, and regulated by the central government. Moreover, although they were designed for different purposes, “their funds often were used interchangeably, resulting in administrative disorder and fiscal insolvency.”⁶ These systems suffered two major flaws. One was that local officials did not have enough latitude in using the granary stocks—they had to apply for permission from higher authorities through interminable bureaucratic procedures. Another problem was that the granaries were usually located at the prefectural or county seat, and thus far away from needy villages deep in the countryside. This meant it was often difficult to provide relief where it was most needed. Moreover, due to corruption and mismanagement, by the Southern Song period, both granary systems had seriously declined in their grain stocks and their effectiveness in ensuring local sustenance.⁷ By 1234, these state granaries “still existed in name 犹存其名,” but “they were seriously decayed and debased 甚凋陋.”⁸

By the Southern Song, drawbacks in the normative systems had stimulated various reform proposals by officials and literati elites. At first, these attempts were focused on reforming and resuscitating charitable granaries. Eventually, the varied efforts were synthesized and realized in community granaries that were advocated by Zhu Xi and later promulgated by the central state. These community granaries, designed to rely on voluntary management by local elites, ended up

⁵ Von Glahn, “Chu Hsi’s Community Granary in Theory and Practice,” 229. See also Sogabe Shizuo 曾我部静雄, “Sōdai no sansōyobisono ta” 宋代三倉の及びその他, in *Sōdai seikeishi no kenkyū* 宋代政経史の研究 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1974), 465–94.

⁶ Von Glahn, “Chu Hsi’s Community Granary in Theory and Practice,” 230.

⁷ For a more detailed discussion of the decline, see Von Glahn, “Chu Hsi’s Community Granary in Theory and Practice.”

⁸ Liu Kezhuang, “Huating xian jian pingdi cang” 華亭縣建平糴倉, *Liu Kezhuang ji*, 88.3769–70.

stimulating local officials' activism in building local granaries under their own control, to increase their autonomy in mobilizing and using local resources.

The Promulgation of Community Granaries and Rise of Local Official Activism

In 1168, Zhu Xi, [already] a prominent Neo-Confucian scholar and a resident of Jianning prefecture in Fujian circuit, successfully acquired grain from local officials to build a community granary at Kaiyao canton in Chong'an county of that prefecture. The local officials entrusted the management of the granary to local scholars including Zhu himself. The granary lent grain to people every year at a twenty percent interest rate in regular years and ten percent in bad years. In 1181, Zhu proposed this model to Emperor Xiaozong (r. 1162-1189), who issued an edict calling for the promulgation of community granaries countrywide. It was stipulated that local volunteers who wanted to run community granaries could either apply to borrow the capital from Ever-normal granaries or use their own funds, and that they should take full charge of the giving and collecting of loans; local officials should do no more than guide and accommodate local volunteers' establishment and management of community granaries. Although the institution developed slowly, by the 1200s, community granaries had spread all over the country.⁹

The development of community granaries reflected a long-term concern of ruling elites—both official and nonofficial—with food sufficiency in the countryside. Indeed, Zhu himself and many of his contemporaries saw this institution as a revival of Sui-Tang charitable granaries, which had been scattered in the countryside to give timely famine relief.¹⁰ As mentioned above,

⁹ For a list of community granaries built in the Southern Song, see Liang Gengyao 梁庚堯, “Nansong de shecang” 南宋的社倉, in *Songdai sh hui jingji shi lunji* 宋代社會經濟史論集, ed. Liang Gengyao (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua shiye gufen youxian gongsi, 1997), 447–452.

¹⁰ For example, when Lü Zuqian visited Zhu Xi's Community Granaries in Chong'an county in 1175, he praised them as equivalent to “the policy of accumulation in the Zhou and the institution of Charitable Granaries in the Sui and Tang” 周官委積之法，隋唐義廩之制. See Zhu Xi, “Wuzhou Jinhua xian shecang ji” 婺州金華縣社倉記, *Zhu Xi ji*, 7:79.4125. Zhu himself also contextualized his community

the Song system of charitable granaries had failed to supply timely relief to hungry villagers. Therefore, many scholars and officials even before Zhu Xi had proposed to fix the existing system.¹¹ For example, in 1139, Liu Yizhi 劉一止 (1078–1160), a secretariat drafter, had lamented that the existing state-run charitable granaries were located in prefectural sites and grain was turned in thereto. When grain was distributed in years of famine, people living far away could not share the benefits. Liu suggested that the stocks of charitable granaries be stored in granaries built in villages, and that the collection, storing, and distribution of the grain should all be conducted in these granaries, under the instruction and supervision of county magistrates.¹² Similarly, Zhao Ruyu 趙汝愚 (1140–1196), the prefect of Xinzhou prefecture in 1174, had complained of the inaccessibility of famine relief for people in the villages and proposed to set aside half of the annually collected grain for charitable granaries in granaries built in the rural districts of each county. Two people from better-off households would administer the grain collection and distribution, and the local government would replace them with another two annually. The associate magistrate would supervise the administration of the granaries and punish any who violated the rules. Like the proposals of Liu Yizhi and Zhao Ruyu, Zhu Xi's project was also rooted in the persistent concern for food supplies in local society and was a response to the ineffectiveness of the existing systems of welfare. Instead of reforming the existing system as previous officials had attempted, Zhu designed an alternative one that would fulfill the same goal but rely on voluntary service of the local elites. The central government decided to promote Zhu's scheme countrywide.

granaries as an outgrowth of the evolution of charitable granaries between the Sui-Tang and the Song periods. See Zhu Xi, "Jianning fu Chong'an xian wufu shecang ji" 建寧府崇安縣五夫社倉記, *Zhu Xi ji*, 7:77.4052–53.

¹¹ For an overview of the evolution of charitable granaries by the Song contemporaries, see Xiong Ke 熊克, *Zhong xing xiao li* 中興小歷, *Skqs* edition, 34.15a–16b.

¹² Liu Yizhi 劉一止, *Tiao xi ji* 苕溪集, *Skqs* edition, 14.10a–10b.

The central government's promulgation of Zhu Xi's community granaries had two key features: first, the central government supported and encouraged the building of new local intuitions outside "the normative systems of state welfare," giving a large amount of autonomy to these locally-run granaries. Second, the court adopted Zhu Xi's vision of a limited governmental role in community granaries. Nevertheless, in their response to the state promulgation, local officials fully exploited the first aspect while neglecting the second. Despite the restricted role envisioned by Zhu and endorsed by the central government, local officials actually actively initiated, participated in, and intervened in the building and management of community granaries. As Toda Yuji notes, the existing sources show that more than half of the Southern Song community granaries were built by local officials; among the privately built community granaries, half of them were highly dependent on the government for their maintenance and prosperity. The original plan to rely on local volunteers to expand social welfare ironically spurred official initiatives and active participation in building local granaries that enjoyed autonomy.

Furthermore, what these local officials had learned from community granaries was not the granaries' form, but the idea of building new local institutions to fulfill their administrative and personal agendas. Some officials took the opportunity for building community granaries to deal with specific social problems in their jurisdictions. For example, in the mountainous areas of Fujian, infanticide and child abandonment were notorious social evils that the government had long aimed to eliminate. In response, Zhao Ruyu, the military commissioner of Fujian circuit in the 1180s, promoted a model of "foundling granaries (*jizi cang* 舉子倉)" to provide stipends to poor families with young children.¹³ Influenced both by this model and by Commissioner Zhao's

¹³ Zhao Ruyu 趙汝愚, "Shenqing juzi cang shi shu" 申請舉子倉事疏, *QSW*, 274:6188. 13–15. For the

call for community granaries in Fujian, Zhang Xin 張訢 (1196 *jinshi*), the magistrate of Guangze county 光澤縣 (Shaowu prefecture) in 1193, built and used a community granary creatively to address the social problems in his county. This county was among those most notorious for infanticide. In addition, local grain consumers suffered unstable prices between harvests. Targeting these two particular local problems, Zhang built a cluster of welfare programs centered around a community granary. He spent official funds to purchase 1,200 *dan* of rice to be stored in the community granary, and had the rice sold cheaply in summers and refilled at the market price in autumns. Zhang further attached to the community granary some land purchased or confiscated by the government and distributed the 300-*dan* annual output of the land to help poor families raise their children. In addition, Zhang had four lodgings built next to the community granary to accommodate sick and poor travelers passing through the county.¹⁴ In these cases, the central state policy to promote community granaries countrywide stimulated local officials' activism in building multi-function systems—albeit under the name of community granary—to accommodate the particular needs of their jurisdictions.¹⁵

Moreover, as community granaries spread, local officials turned the granaries into an apparatus of local governance.¹⁶ Some used these granaries to supplement or even substitute for the ineffective state-owned granaries in their jurisdictions. For example, Prefect Yuan Xie of Hongdu prefecture built community granaries to “serve as a supplement to Ever-Normal

debates between Zhu Xi and Zhao Ruyu regarding the use of Community Granaries, see Von Glahn, “Chu Hsi’s Community Granary in Theory and Practice,” 239–243.

¹⁴ Zhu Xi, “Shaowu jun guangze xian shecang ji” 邵武軍光澤縣社會記, *Zhu Xi ji*, 7:80.4137–38.

¹⁵ It is evident that in the four prefectures notorious for infanticide—Jianning, Nanjianzhou, Tingzhou, and Shaowu—the community granaries featured giving loans and using interests of the loans as stipends for raising children. See *Song huiyao*, “Shihuo” 62.

¹⁶ Richard Von Glahn has examined the operation of famous community granaries in practice and showed the bureaucratization of community granaries. See Von Glahn, “Chu Hsi’s Community Granary in Theory and Practice.”

Granaries” 為常平之輔; Magistrate Che Ruoshui of Huangyan county “used community granaries to work concurrently as Ever-Normal Granaries” 以社倉兼常平.¹⁷ Other local officials used this new apparatus for less charitable purposes. Yu Wenlong 俞文龍, the County Defender of Kuaiji County in the 1240s, told his brother that the community granaries under the control of the prefectural government had become a tool to extract more revenue.¹⁸

The original vision of community granaries was that they would be operated by nongovernmental volunteers in local society with limited intervention by the government. As local officials actively participated in community granaries, they developed those granaries into a semi-autonomous means to meet the needs of their jurisdictions and themselves. Their activism served the very practical purpose of overcoming the restrictions set by the normative bureaucratic systems. This activism stimulated by the promulgation of community granaries—although deviating from the intentions and instructions of the central government—helped give rise to other local institutions independent from the central state, especially Even-selling granaries (*pingtiao cang* 平糶倉).

The Emergence of Even-selling Granaries

Even-selling granaries, sometimes called by other names such as “Even-purchasing granaries” (*pingdi cang* 平糶倉)¹⁹ sold relief grain to the people, a mechanism resembling that used in Ever-normal granaries. But like community granaries, these new institutions stood

¹⁷ Yuan Xie 袁燮, “Hongdu fu shecang ji” 洪都府社倉記, *QSW*, 281:6376.226; Che Ruoshui 車若水, “Huangyan xian shecang ji” 黃巖縣社倉記, *QSW*, 346:7994.199.

¹⁸ Yu Wenbao 俞文豹, *Chui jian lu wai ji* 吹劍錄外集, *Skqs* edition, 39b.

¹⁹ The “Even-selling granaries” discussed in this chapter include granaries under other names that shared the same features as those named “Even-selling.” They were all granaries built by local officials with funding independent from the central state, were run by local officials or their delegates, and sold relief grain to the people in their jurisdictions. There were also many granaries built by local officials to sell relief grain under the name of “community granaries”; they have not been counted as “Even-selling granaries” in this chapter. But as discussed in this section, there was a connection between this type of “community granaries” and Even-selling granaries.

outside the “normative systems of state welfare” and were free from the control of the central government. Even-selling granaries first appeared as a variation on and a supplement to community granaries. As their contemporaries observed, regular community granaries suffered certain shortcomings: first of all, the maintenance of loan-giving granaries was highly dependent on the borrowers’ solvency. If people were unable to pay back their loans, the granaries risked bankruptcy. For example, in 1181, soon after the state endorsed Zhu Xi’s promotion of community granaries, Lu Jiuyuan pointed out this drawback to the local officials of his hometown, who had entrusted Lu’s brother with the management of a community granary.²⁰ Lu thereby proposed to supplement the community granary with a self-sustaining “Even-purchasing granary.” In his proposal, Lu summarized the mechanism to be used:

In times of abundance, make grain purchases to obviate the problem of a fall in grain prices that might harm the farmer; in times of dearth make grain sales, so as to abort the schemes of rich people to shut up their granaries and drive up prices. The purchased grain would be divided into two shares, one of which would always be saved, in preparation for shortages [in the stocks] of the community granaries in years of bad harvests.²¹

豐時糴之，使無價賤傷農之患；缺時糴之，以摧富民閉廩騰價之計。析所糴為二，每存其一，以備歉歲代社倉之匱。

Lu was basically calling for an additional institution that combined the reliable method of operation of Ever-normal granaries and the autonomy enjoyed by community granaries, while avoiding the shortcomings of both of them.

Granaries selling relief grain also overcame another shortcoming of the regular community granary—limited coverage: only landowners could take out loans and the landless poor were left without aid. By the 1190s, community granaries had been widely built in Zhu Xi’s home prefecture, Jianning *fu*. The county of Jianyang, however, was left out, because “the

²⁰ Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵, “Yu Chen Jiaoshou” 與陳教授, *Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 8.70.

²¹ Lu Jiuyuan, “Yu Chen Jiaoshou,” *Lu Xiangshan quanji*, 8.70.

county had no landed farmers and thus none could take out loans; therefore no [community] granaries were built” 縣無耕農不可貸，故弗置倉。The residents of Jianyang had to rely on the governmental sale of relief grain to survive. Nevertheless, the already decayed Ever-normal Granaries in the prefectural seat could not help this county out. Officials of the county had to coerce the rich to sell their grain to the poor. But due to the corruption in the process of the coerced sale, “the little people were not all fed while the households of medium rank and above suffered first” 細民未遽飽而中家以上先病矣。In the face of this challenge, the magistrate in 1196, surnamed Chu 儲, built a “Relief Sale Granary” 賑糶倉 to sell cheap grain to the locals when grain prices soared.²² The connection between the “Relief Sale Granary” and community granaries was celebrated by the magistrate in 1227, Liu Kezhuang, who expanded the granary and observed that “it embodies the intention of Wengong [i.e. Zhu Xi] and the grace of Magistrate Chu.”²³ Zhen Dexiu, when serving as the prefect of Tanzhou in 1223, also adopted this type of granary to give relief to the landless poor in both rural and urban areas.²⁴ By the beginning of the thirteenth century, granaries selling relief grain had become a very important variation on community granaries.²⁵

By the 1200s, this variant form of community granary had grown into a separate type of granary—that is, the Even-selling granary—which was widely built by local officials in addition to both the state systems of welfare and community granaries in the countryside. At least by the 1240s, “The worthy among the head officials of prefectures and counties often hastened to

²² Zhen Dexiu, “Jianyang xian fu zhentiao cang ji” 建陽縣復賑糶倉記, *QSW*, 313:7185.443–44.

²³ Zhen Dexiu, “Jianyang xian fu zhentiao cang ji,” *QSW*, 313:7185.444.

²⁴ Zhen Dexiu, “Zou zhi huimin cang zhuang” 奏置惠民倉狀, *QSW*, 312:7149.270; “Quan li yilin wen” 勸立義廩文, *QSW*, 313:7162.21–22.

²⁵ See Liang Gengyao, “Nan Song de shecang.”

accumulate grain stocks to build granaries to sell [relief grain]” 州縣長吏之賢者多趨積糴本置糴倉。²⁶ By the 1250s, Even-selling granaries “existed everywhere [in the country].”²⁷

Apparently, local officials’ activism in building community granaries stimulated their initiative to building other local granaries to make up for the insufficiency of the existing institutions. Like community granaries, Even-selling granaries were free from the restrictions that the state-owned granaries were subject to; they also supplemented community granaries as they were easier to manage and were built in both the cities and the countryside, aiding both farmers and landless people. The Even-selling granaries inherited from community granaries the idea of overcoming the reliance on resources from higher authorities and circumventing their control. Many local officials built Even-selling granaries as institutions belonging to local governments and customized to serve local contingencies. For example, between 1219 and 1221, Prefect Song Ji 宋濟 of Huizhou 徽州 built an Even-purchasing granary. Song explained that he built this granary to overcome the constraints in using the state-owned Ever-normal granaries:

Although there is grain in the Ever-normal [granaries], [to use it, the prefect has to] apply to the court and report to the commissioners, which is easily subject to obstruction. [Therefore,] famine relief is not timely.²⁸

雖常平有粟，然請於朝，告於部使者，率坐阻絕，賑卹不時。

In 1222, Zhen Dexiu, then prefect of Tanzhou 潭州, adopted the same type of granary to supplement the normative systems that were both lacking in stocks and subject to strict control:

The stocks of the Ever-Normal [Granary] and charitable granary were already insufficient. In addition, the official laws that restricted [the use of them] were rigid. [Prefects] dare not to apply to use them for sale unless the famines have become severe.²⁹

²⁶ Fang Dacong, “Xiang xue zhi” 鄉學職, *Tie’an ji*, 13.27a

²⁷ *Jingding Jiankang zhi*, 23.8a.

²⁸ Cheng Bi 程秘, “Huizhou pingdi cang ji” 徽州平糴倉記, *QSW*, 298:6793.116–17.

²⁹ Zhen Dexiu, “Zou zhi huimin cang zhuang,” *QSW*, 312:7149.270.

常平、義倉之儲，本自無幾。加以法禁嚴重。非饑荒已甚之歲不敢輒請發糶。

Similarly, Liu Kezhuang highly evaluated the Even-selling granary established by Prefect Zeng Yonghu 曾用虎 of Xinghua *jun* in 1233 because it circumvented the flaws of the Ever-normal granaries:

Ever-normal Granaries were in the charge of commissioners. Commissioners are far away from the people and thus cannot dispense [the grain] in time, whereas the prefects and county magistrates are close to the people but they dare not to dispense [the grain without permission.] This granary [i.e. Even-selling granary] belongs to the prefecture and thus is not under the purview of the commissioners....Isn't this why [it] supplements the Ever-normal Granary?³⁰

常平以使者典領，使者去民遠而不時發。郡縣去民近而不敢發也。是倉屬於郡而不屬於使者也……輔常平之不及，不在茲乎？

Apparently, local officials treated Ever-normal granaries and charitable granaries as properties that they temporarily managed for the central state; these granaries embodied control by the center. In contrast, they saw the Even-selling granaries that they built as institutions belonging to their localities and permitting their autonomy in governing their jurisdictions. These differing views represented a subtle tension between local officials' role as agents of the central state and their identity as governors of their particular jurisdictions. As local governors and leaders, officials were concerned with local contingencies and their ability to flexibly respond to local needs. That ability was nevertheless often constrained or compromised by the uniform rules of the governmental system they served. Building Even-selling granaries at their disposal and apart from normative systems, therefore, served as a strategy to enhance local officials' power as local governors without undermining their role as state agents.

This sense of dual identity was clearly shown in cases where local officials claimed to use Even-selling granaries to better fulfill their obligation to take care of their people on behalf

³⁰ Liu Kezhuang, "Xinghua jun chuang pingtiao cang" 興化軍創平糶倉, *Liu Kezhuang*, 88.3759–60.

of the state. For example, in 1223, Prefect Lin of Changde *fu* built an Even-selling granary to avoid spending the central government's resources for famine relief, on the one hand, and to avoid exploiting the locals, on the other. Lin observed:

As for famine relief, [the prefectural government] cannot avoid using the stocks from the Ever-normal [Granaries]. When the Ever-normal [stocks] were insufficient, then [the prefectural government] would exhort the well-to-do households to sell their grain. Therefore, the stocks of Ever-normal [granaries] were daily depleted, so that there was a loss of the public [i.e. the central state's resources]. The harassment of the well-to-do households caused by the coerced purchase grew daily worse, which was harmful to the private [i.e. the commoners].³¹

賑荒一事，不免取之常平；常平不足，則勸分於產戶。故常平所積之數日耗，則有虧於公；產戶科糶之擾日甚，則有病於私。

Prefect Lin clearly posited the Even-selling granary as an alternative to both state-owned institutions of famine relief and extraction from local elites. Lin seems to have seen his prefectural government as operating in a middle realm between the “public” (*gong*—the state as a whole) and the “private” (*si*—the people), taking care of the interests of both sides. On the one hand, Lin's prefectural government sought to prevent the resources claimed and controlled by the central state from being exhausted for local causes; on the other hand, he needed to restrain the local government from extracting resources from the people. Lin's Even-selling granary helped him fulfill his dual roles. Still, by situating his prefectural government in between “*gong*” (the state as a whole) and “*si*” (non-governmental sector of society), Prefect Lin appears to have treated his local government as a special mediator connected with but distinguished from both sides.

This distinction from both sides can also be illuminated in the following case of Huating county 華亭縣 in Jiaxing *fu* 嘉興府 of Zhexi circuit. In 1234, the new magistrate, Yang Jin, 楊瑾 regretted that this poor county had no Ever-normal Granaries or charitable granaries. In times

³¹ Zhao Shishu 趙師恕, “Pingdi cang ji” 平糶倉記, *QSW*, 304:6948.253.

of food shortage, he had to “extract [grain] from various local wealthy families, which caused shame in my [Yang’s] heart” 斂於諸豪，吾心愧焉。³² Yang’s shame appears to have come from his understanding of the proper role of the state and local officials: the state should take the full responsibility for securing the people’s livelihood, and a decent local official should carry out the mission on his own rather than exploiting locals. Luckily, Yang’s superiors at the prefectural and circuit levels soon fixed the charitable granary in this county and endowed it with 5,000 *dan* of grain. Although grateful for this benevolence from higher authorities, Yang was still dissatisfied because “the power to collect and dispense [grain] is not [solely] in control of the magistrate” 斂散之權，令不得專. He thereby cut expenses and used the surplus of the county budget to build an Even-selling granary directly under the country government’s control. Apparently, Yang saw the state-owned charitable granary as an essentially external institution controlled by outsiders; he wanted an institution at his (and ideally his successors’) disposal to serve the county. In other words, Yang treated his county government and local society as a “we-group.” Although he saw it as the state’s responsibility to take care of the people, Yang emphasized the autonomy of the local as opposed to central state, as it could better respond to local needs.

This sense of being “insiders” versus “outsiders” was also manifested in local officials’ attempts to free their jurisdictions from the reliance on and restraints by others. Jia Sidao 賈似道, when serving as the military commissioner of Zhedong and the concurrent prefect of Yangzhou, built an Even-selling granary to prepare his jurisdiction for food shortage. Jia observed:

Weiyang [i.e. Yangzhou] usually relies on Zhexi for food. But governmental offices in each circuit, after all, have a sense of division between Qin and Yue [i.e. between their

³² Liu Kezhuang, “Huating xian jian pingdi cang,” *Liu Kezhuang ji*, 88.3770.

own jurisdictions and others] Shouldn't it be argued that we should hold its [i.e. Yangzhou's] fate by ourselves?³³

維揚固亦仰浙西之食者，然各路官司終有分秦越之心……獨不曰我當自執其柄乎？

This sentiment echoed the “jurisdiction-centered” mindset reflected in grain embargoes examined in the previous chapter. Whereas grain-providing jurisdictions tried to retain as much food as possible, grain-importing regions strove to build a local mechanism to save themselves from being victimized by other jurisdictions’ pursuit of self-interest.

As we have seen so far, the development of Even-selling granaries grew out of local officials’ activism in building local granaries to overcome the ineffectiveness and restraints set by the normative systems of state welfare. Here we again see a “jurisdiction-centered” sentiment among local officials: they identified with their jurisdictions as interest groups that were distinguished from other jurisdictions and from the top-down state system as a whole. Where the previous chapter revealed “jurisdiction-centralism” in the context of competition among jurisdictions, here we see another facet of that sentiment: that local officials should acquire some independence from uniform rules imposed by the central government, so as to meet particular local needs. By building Even-selling granaries at their own disposal, they attempted to “hold the fate” of their jurisdictions in their own hands. Significantly, this “jurisdiction-centered” mindset is different from “localism” as proposed by Hartwell and Hymes. An important aspect of this mindset was local officials’ dual identities as both state agents and local caretakers. They acquired autonomy from the central state to enhance their ability to assert their leadership as state agents in their local jurisdictions.

³³ Jia Sidao 賈似道, “Weiyang pingdi cang zouzhuang” 維揚平糶倉奏狀, *QSW*, 349:8064.59.

Part II. Practicing Autonomy

The most critical factor that contributed to the independence of Even-selling granaries from the normative systems was its independent funding. Local officials acquired funds from various local sources to build the granaries. They also managed to separate the funding and stocks of these granaries from regular governmental revenue. With independent funding, local officials enjoyed the autonomy to use these resources. Still, independent funding and autonomous management do not mean these local institutions were completely severed from the central state. Rather, local officials looked up to the court for acknowledgment and supervision, with the hope that their successors would maintain these local granaries.

Acquiring Independent Funding

Most of the local officials who built Even-selling granaries claimed that they had saved “the surplus outside of regular accounts” 於版賬外斥其餘 to fund their projects and that they had done so by “cutting unnecessary expenses” 撙節浮費.³⁴ For example, in 1242, the Huizhou prefect, Zheng Chong 鄭密, “from the entertainment expenses of touring and sightseeing, delicacies of cuisine, and social activities in festivals, took pains to cut the expenses and accumulate wealth. (He thereby) saved ten thousand cash and used it as the capital of the Even-selling [granary]” 游觀之娛，厨傳之飾，歲時交隣之聘，苦積酌損，得十萬緡。揭以為平糴本。³⁵ Some local officials used additional income of their governmental offices to fund the granaries. This income usually originated in *ad-hoc* surcharges imposed by local officials, passed on by their successors, and then acknowledged by the central government as additional revenue belonging to the budgets of local governments. In 1223, Zhen Dexiu built a granary for selling

³⁴ Wu Jibo 吳驥伯, “Lianjiang xian pingdi cang ji” 連江縣平糴倉記, *QSW*, 346:7996.234.

³⁵ Fang Yue 方岳, “Huizhou pingdi cang ji” 徽州平糴倉記, *QSW*, 342:7908.356.

relief grain to urban residents in Tanzhou prefecture. He filled the granary with prefectural revenue named “rice conversion” 折糴. According to Zhen, this was a surcharge that the people paid to the prefectural government, which had been registered with the court. The surcharge was usually paid in cash, but the prefectural government had occasionally demanded grain payment to deal with grain shortage.³⁶ Zhen proposed to have people pay in rice and permanently endow this rice to the granary. He requested that the court approve his action by “writing it into a decree” 著為甲令. Zhen’s purpose in getting the decree was to effectively earmark this funding for the granary he built, protecting it from being claimed by the central government or appropriated by local officials for other purposes. The court soon responded positively and praised Zhen for his solicitude for his people and for “not calculating the ‘rice conversion’ as the profit of the prefectural government” 不較折糴以為郡計之利.³⁷ In other words, Zhen paid for the granary with independent revenue acknowledged by the central government, and this self-reliance was appreciated by the court. Similarly, He Mengxiang 何夢祥, the magistrate of Sheng county 嵯縣 in 1253, built an Even-selling granary with funds saved from “the [*ad-hoc*] incomes [of the county government] that had been recorded in the account books” 例冊之所入.³⁸ Although officials claimed that they acquired funding by legitimate means, it is very likely that many of them increased extraction from the people to obtain the funds. Yu Rong 余嶸, the military commissioner of Jiangdong and concurrent prefect of Jiankang *fu* in 1223, memorialized the court about building a grain-selling granary in his jurisdiction. In the report, Yu emphasized that he had accumulated the capital by cutting expenditures rather than through any form of

³⁶ Bao weimin has demonstrated that in the Southern Song the central government loosened its regularization of local financial administration while local governments developed and imposed miscellaneous extra taxes to increase their incomes. See Bao, *Songdai difang caizheng shi yanjiu*.

³⁷ Zhen Dexiu, “Zou zhi huimin cang zhuang,” *QSW*, 312:7149.270

³⁸ Sun Dezhi 孫德之, “Shengxian pingdi cang ji” 嵯縣平糴倉記, *QSW*, 334:7695.177.

exploitation—be it surcharges on the regular taxes or increases in various commercial taxes.³⁹

The fact that Yu felt obliged to clarify the sources of his funding indicates that it was not rare among his colleagues to extract from the people to fund their granaries.

In other cases, local officials attracted donations from local elite members of the community. This source of income was particularly important for officials at the county level, since “all the money and grain of a county was handed in to the prefecture, which was the case for all the counties under heaven” 盖竭一縣財粟盡輸之州，通天下之縣皆然。⁴⁰ Ma Guangzu 馬光祖, when serving as the magistrate of Yugan county 余干縣 in 1230, encountered an insufficiency of funds when attempting to build an Even-selling granary in his jurisdiction. Besides the money he saved from the official budget, Ma encouraged local wealthy families to help fund the project and received four thousand *hu* of grain from “people who shared my intentions” 我心之同然者. The donation accounted for half of the capital needed.⁴¹ In 1251, the painstaking efforts of Magistrate Ren to expand the Even-selling granary of Jianyang county stimulated two local elite members to endow some of their lands to the granary.⁴² In these cases, county magistrates took the leadership in sponsoring local granary building and mobilized local elites to help fund the projects outside the purview of the central state. Note that encouraging donations from local elites had been a significant means used by local officials to fund community granaries. Local officials’ active participation in community granaries shaped how they built this new form of local granary.

³⁹ *Jingding Jiankang zhi*, 23/5a.

⁴⁰ Liu Kezhuang, “Huating xian jian pingdi cang ji,” *Liu Kezhuang ji*, 88.3769.

⁴¹ *Jingding Jiankang zhi*, 23/11b.

⁴² Liu Kezhuang, “Jinyang xian zeng mai zhentiao cangtian ji” 建陽縣增買賑糶倉田, *Liu Kezhuang ji*, 90.3847–48.

Nevertheless, as in the building of community granaries, not all local officials obtained funding for Even-selling granaries from local people on a voluntary basis. Some local officials funded the granaries they initiated at the expense of certain members of the local community—often members who held considerable resources in local society and who were in potential power competition with local governments. For example, in Xinghua *jun* 興化軍, where Buddhism was prevalent and monasteries played important roles in local economic and social life, Prefect Zeng Yonghu 曾用虎 took land from temples that he proclaimed defunct and attached it to the Even-selling granary he built in 1233.⁴³ Magistrate He Mengxiang of Sheng county supplemented the capital of the granary he built with lands confiscated from defunct temples and from local strongmen who had tried to evade land taxes.⁴⁴ Zhao Chongfang 趙崇倣, the deputy prefect of Fuzhou in 1253, also built an Even-selling granary filled with some 7000 *dan* of rice from the prefectural budget. With the support of the granary commissioner of the circuit, Zhao used property confiscated from local clerks who had violated the law to purchase more stocks for the granary.⁴⁵

Still other local officials funded their granaries through sheer exploitation. As Cheng Bi 程秘 observed in the 1240s:

Nowadays there are occasionally prefectures and counties that build them [i.e. even-selling granaries]. But [if we] examine the origins [of the funding], [it turns out that the local officials] either extracted [funds] from the rich people or [obtained them] from legal penalties. If they did not collect additional charges for the summer tax, they would surely extract extra for the autumn tax. They took advantage of the people's trust to enhance their own reputations. Although this was not often the case, it cannot be said that there were no such cases.

⁴³ Liu Kezhuang, "Xinghua jun chuang pingtiao cang," *Liu Kezhuang ji*, 88.3759–60.

⁴⁴ Sun Dezhi, "Shengxian pingdi cang ji," *QSW*, 334:7695.177.

⁴⁵ Bi Yunsheng 畢允升, "Fuzhou fu tijusi benzhou pingtiao cang ji" 撫州府提舉司本州平糶倉記, *QSW*, 333:7684.444.

今之州縣亦間有為之者。然察其所由，不歛諸富民，即罰諸束矢。不取贏於夏賦，即掠羨於秋租。披民之心，腴己之名，雖不曰繁，亦不謂無也。⁴⁶

According to Cheng, some local officials built Even-selling granaries not for the people but solely to seek good reputation, and they managed to do so by extorting from locals.

So far, we have seen that local officials made full use of available local resources to fund Even-purchase granaries outside the purview of the central government, for both public and private interests. Having striven to build and fill the granaries through local funding, local officials also attempted to keep these financial resources free from the claims of the central government. As described in the opening of this chapter, in 1221 the fiscal commissioner of Jiangdong circuit, Yue Ke, restored the Even-selling granary built by Zhen Dexiu in 1215 and expanded the institution all over the circuit. Although there is little information about the granary originally built by Zhen, we fortunately have more details about Yue's granary system from the inscription of an edict issued by the court. In this edict, Yue's memorials to the court were cited and the court's replies were preserved. In his first memorial to the court, Yue reported that during his tenure, he had worked hard and taken pains to cut any unnecessary expenses, so that by the time he memorialized the court, the finances of his commission had significantly exceeded the amount that he had inherited from his predecessor. Yue therefore asked the court for a permission to use the money he had saved to establish Even-selling granaries in all the prefectures within his circuit. In this memorial, Yue particularly distinguished between the finances he had saved and the regular budget of the Fiscal Commission, which was registered with the court. Shortly after the first memorial, Yue sent a second one to further ask for financial independence. This time, he explicitly requested that the funding of the granaries be kept independent from the state reserves stored locally. Yue commented:

⁴⁶ Cheng Bi, "Fuyang xian chuang fengben cang ji" 富陽縣創建豐本倉記, *QSW*, 298:6793.117.

Undoubtedly, the finances of the whole circuit all belong to the court. Nevertheless, I'm afraid that if the prefectural officials see that the rice and money are calculated into the state account, the property of which can only be used with central approval, they would not dare to sell rice in the transition between spring and summer, nor would they dare to purchase rice in the seasons of harvest... (Therefore) I beg to exempt the stores of the Even-selling granaries from being counted into the state budget. All the capital should be separately stored and used by the circuit. Without restriction as to the time of sale or purchase [of grain], the responsibility [of sale and purchase] is all that of the prefects and vice prefects. The capital should be permanently preserved.⁴⁷

一司財計，本皆朝廷之物。却恐諸州于春夏之間爲見係已入朝廷帳內，須欲申審，不敢擅行支糶，及至冬間，粒米狼戾，又不敢再以元錢趁時收糶。上下牽掣，橫生顧慮.....乞免附朝廷樁管。文用從本司令項拘樁，不拘糶糶月日，責在逐州知、通。常要本錢存在。

To Yue's relief, the court approved his request. More importantly, by authorizing the independence of the funding, the court also acknowledged the local officials' autonomy over the use of the granary stocks.

The granary Yue built in Jiankang prefecture, however, decayed after a couple of decades. In 1249, Shu Zi 舒滋, the fiscal commissioner of the time, recovered the stocks and also had them "stored as a separate budget" 另項拘樁.⁴⁸ The independence of the budget seems to have been interrupted by Wang Ye 王埜, the fiscal commissioner in 1253, who had the stocks registered as state reserves stored locally. Nevertheless, the independence of the granary stocks was regained by Ma Guangzu 馬光祖, the fiscal commissioner in 1265. By 1266, Ma had expanded the stocks to a hundred thousand *dan*. Ma then particularly counted the grain separately from the three-thousand *dan* of rice that had been registered with the court during Wang's tenure, because "[Ma] did not want [his stocks] to be mixed with them" 不欲混此數.⁴⁹

In this half-century of ups and downs of the Even-selling granary of Jiangdong circuit, fiscal

⁴⁷ *Jingding Jiankang Zhi*, 23/7a-7b.

⁴⁸ Shu Zi 舒滋, "Fu zhi pingdi cang zou" 復置平糶倉奏, *QSW*, 343:7937.398; *Jingding Jiankang zhi*, 23.7b-8b.

⁴⁹ *Jingding Jiankang Zhi*, 23.11a-12a,13b-14a.

commissioners—although with an interruption by Commissioner Wang Ye—built and maintained the granary as the property of their jurisdiction and strove to keep the granary funding free from the claim of the central state.

In a similar fashion, two years after Yue Ke built his granaries under the control of The Fiscal Commission, in 1223, Yu Rong, the military commissioner of the circuit and Jiankang prefect mentioned above, also built a granary in the prefecture to sell cheap grain when food prices soared. Yu also made sure that the capital he endowed to the granary “will not further be counted as the budget of the court 更不申作朝廷之數.”⁵⁰ According to Liu Zai 劉宰, who composed the commemorative record of the granary, this granary was “not registered with The Ministry of Revenue, nor was it led by [other] circuit commissioners...the power of collection and expenditure [of the grain] was concentrated [in the hands of the Military Commission]” 不籍於大農，不領於使者.....權一而斂散可專.⁵¹ It is intriguing that Yu built this granary despite the fact that Yue Ke had built one in this same prefecture. Apparently, Yu was not satisfied with having an Even-selling granary claimed by the Fiscal Commission. He wanted his jurisdiction to have a granary not only independent of the court but also under the full control of his own governmental office. The cases of the granaries built and owned by the Fiscal Commission and the Military Commission of Jiangdong circuit both demonstrate the jurisdiction-centered sentiment discussed above.

At lower levels of local government, officials also strove to maintain the independence of the special budgets of Even-selling granaries. In 1224, Magistrate Fang of the county of Jingde 旌德 built a reserve for selling rice cheaply in case of food insecurity. He particularly “had [the rice] stored in a separate granary, which had absolutely no interference from the collecting and

⁵⁰ *Jingding Jiankang Zhi*, 23.1a–5b.

⁵¹ Liu Zai 劉宰, “Jiankang pingzhi cang huishui ji” 建康平止倉免回稅記, *QSW*, 300:6844.120.

expending of the public (*gongjia*) revenues, so as to make it [i.e. the stocks] flow in and out in endless cycles” 貯以別倉，與公家常賦出納絕不相干，蓋將使之循環無有窮已。⁵² Fang treated the granary as a property of his jurisdiction but separate from “*gongjia*”—the state system as a whole: this local granary functioned without the sponsorship of the central government; it should not be used for other purposes as regular county revenue would. As in the case of Prefect Lin of Changde *fu* discussed earlier, Magistrate Fang seemed to have situated the granary in a space centered on his jurisdiction and apart from the state system as a whole.

This subtle line between *gongjia* and specific local jurisdictions was also evident in the language used to record the building Even-selling granaries. In 1227, Liu Kezhuang built an Even-selling granary when he served as the magistrate of Jianyang county 建陽縣. Zhen Dexiu, who composed a commemorative record for this granary, praised Liu for “never having a deficit of the state (*gongjia*) [revenue] and still having extra [ability to fund] this granary” 公家未嘗以匱告，餘力猶能及是倉。⁵³ Zhen was making a distinguish between Liu’s financial management for *gongjia* and that for the local granary. By the same token, You Yisu 游義肅, the magistrate of Lianjiang county 連江縣 in 1248, treated the Even-selling granary he built as standing between the state and the people:

Once the people (*min*) faced any difficulties in acquiring food, the [county] government (*guan*) would sell the grain at fair price set by it.... [The Even-selling granary] disburses [the grain] before the Ever-normal granary so as to assist the state (*gongjia*) with what it could not achieve.⁵⁴

民食稍艱，則用官直之平以散之...先常平而發，有以佐公家之不逮。

⁵² Zhao Bifa 趙必法, “Pingtiao cang ji” 平糶倉記, *QSW*, 323:7421.160–61.

⁵³ Zhen Dexiu, “Jianyang xian fu zhentiao cang ji,” *QSW*, 313:7185.443–44.

⁵⁴ Wu Jibo, “Lianjiang xian pingdi cang ji,” *QSW*, 346:7996.234.

This description depicted three parties: *min* (the people), *gongjia* (the state as a whole), and *guan* (the [county] government). Compared to the people, the county government was official (“*guan*”); as opposed to the government as a whole (“*gongjia*”), the local government was closely tied to local society. The clear separation between the local official-built granaries and the regular governmental system—dubbed as “*gongjia*”—in these cases reveals local officials’ attempt to govern their jurisdictions by means outside the regular system; but the distinction they made between local governments and the non-governmental sectors of the localities indicated their identity as state agents.

Running the Granaries Independently

Using Granary Stocks

Unlike the “normative systems of state welfare,” which were subject to uniform regulations imposed by the central state, Even-selling granaries allowed local officials the autonomy to manage the resources in accord with their own judgment. In 1200, Prefect Li Chen 李訖 of Yuanzhou built a “Prefectural Relief Rice Granary” 州濟米倉 to sell cheap grain in times of food shortage. With this granary, the prefectural government was able to “disburse it [i.e. the stocks] on its own” 州得自專發此.⁵⁵ According to Teng Qiangshu 滕強恕, the 1220 prefect who revived this granary, the stocks were “like things in a suitcase, which could be easily obtained as soon as one reached for it. [The prefectural government] could get them whenever they wanted them, and surely did not need to wait to apply to the court and the circuit commissioners to obtain them” 如篋中物，隨取即獲，固不待有請於朝、部使者而後得之.⁵⁶

Indeed, it was very common among local officials at various levels to set and enforce the rules of their granaries. To name a few, in the 1210s, Magistrate Guan Jin 關嶠 of Jianyang

⁵⁵ Li Zhijie 李直節, “Zhouji mi cang ji” 州濟米倉記, *QSW*, 294:6707.369.

⁵⁶ Teng Qiangshu 滕強恕, “Yuan zhouchu cang ji” 袁州儲倉記, *QSW*, 297:6762.29.

county restored an Even-selling granary built by his predecessor in 1196 and designed the regulations of the granary. By 1227, however, only one fifth of the stocks remained. The new magistrate, Liu Kezhuang, again restored the granary and revised the regulations.⁵⁷ Liu's regulations were passed down to his successors who continued to expand the granary in the following three decades.⁵⁸ In 1234, Chen Rong 陳瑑, the vice prefect of Quzhou 衢州, designed the regulations of the Even-selling granary he built.⁵⁹ Bi Yunsheng 畢允升, the granary commissioner of Jiangxi circuit in 1253, built an Even-selling granary in Fuzhou prefecture. Bi not only designed the regulations of the granary but also applied them to other Even-selling granaries that he sponsored in this circuit, "making the whole circuit follow and implement [the regulations]" 俾一道遵而行之.⁶⁰

For some officials, the latitude in running the granaries helped to increase their means to extract from the people in a legitimate guise. Within a decade after the building of the Xinghua Even-selling granary, the prefect He Shiyi 何士頤 received complaints about the granary from Fang Dacong, then a retired official living in his hometown. Fang told Prefect He that some local scholars had visited him and expressed their disappointment at the Even-selling granary in Xinghua Prefecture. Some of them had even called to abolish the institution. Among other flaws, Fang noted:

This granary was originally built for the people. [Nevertheless, I] don't know where the food that the [prefectural] government prepared for the army is, [since the government] appropriates [grain] from here [i.e. the granary] every year. [I] don't know on what [the prefectural government] relies to supplement the insufficient paper money, [since the government] constantly appropriates the capital of the granary for this purpose. Once the capital for purchasing grain was appropriated, [the government] would shut down a

⁵⁷ Zhen Dexiu, "Jianyang xian fu zhentiao cang ji," *QSW*, 313:7185.443–44.

⁵⁸ Liu Kezhuang, "Jianyang xian zeng mai zhentiao cangtian ji," *Liu Kezhuang ji*, 90.3847–48.

⁵⁹ Yuan Fu 袁甫, *Mengzhai Ji* 蒙齋集, "Quzhou Pingtiao Cang Ji 衢州平糶倉記 (Record of the Even-selling Granary in Quzhou Prefecture)", Skqs edition, 12.19a-20a.

⁶⁰ Bi Yunsheng, "Fuzhou fu tijusi benzhou pingtiao cang ji," *QSW*, 333:7684.444.

temple in the following fall and confiscate its land rent to make up for the lost amount of grain. Under these circumstances, was this granary originally built for the people or the government? The monks are suffering while the government is profiting. While the clerks and runners both are benefited, how many people have enjoyed concrete benefits?⁶¹

此倉本為民設。不知官所擬以為軍糧者安在，而歲那給於是；不知所資以秤提者何謂，而時借兌於是。糴本既有移動，而連秋罷一剝，掩取其租，以為填補之數。則此倉初意果為民乎？為官乎？僧受其害，官受其利。吏與卒皆有利，而民之霑實惠者幾何？

According to Fang, this Even-selling granary ended up benefiting the local government in the sense of offering it a backup coffer, where local officials could appropriate resources to meet other financial needs. Indeed, it was common to see local officials abuse Even-selling granaries they built to take advantage of locals. In an edict responding to Fiscal Commissioner Shu Zi's report regarding rebuilding Even-selling granaries in Jiankang in 1252, the emperor described the corruption revolving around the use of Even-selling granaries:

In recent years, Even-selling granaries have been established everywhere. The original intention was always to benefit the people. Often [their failure to do so] is because the officials and clerks [in charge] are not [the right] people, and thus hundreds of disadvantages and misbehaviors appear. Some misappropriate [the capital]; some falsely report the natural depletion [of the stocks] and urge the commoners to pay and refill [them]. [These granaries] end up causing harm to the people.⁶²

平糴倉近年以來在在有之。始意未嘗不欲惠民。多因官吏非人，弊倖百出。或移易他用，或妄稱折欠，監平人補納，反為民害。

Their autonomy allowed local officials to use Even-selling granaries to achieve a variety of objectives, from addressing local subsistence to increasing usable revenue, and even gaining personal profit.

Managing the Granaries

In most cases, local officials either directly controlled the granaries or delegated the management to local people and kept them under the local governments' supervision. Delegation

⁶¹ Fang Dacong, "He panguan (Shiyi)" 何判官 (士頤), *Tie'an ji*, 20.22b–26a.

⁶² *Jingding Jiankang zhi*, 23.8a.

to local managers could not only avoid the potential for corruption among clerks but also save local officials the trouble of everyday chores of management and the costs of administering the granaries. Just as they used local elites in running community granaries, local officials exploited the human and economic capital of local elites to run their Even-selling granaries. In 1251, for example, the acting magistrate of Xiangxiang county 湘鄉縣, Linghu Lidao 令狐立道, established a local granary system for selling relief grain. Linghu designed the granaries to function such that “the county [magistrate] set up the outlines, the assistant magistrate administered the details, and the people took charge of the actual transactions” 縣總其綱，丞治其詳，民任其寔. Specifically, the county government endowed cash to twenty-three wealthy households chosen by the county officials. These households, each registered with the vice magistrate, were responsible for building rice reserves in their homes. In times of food insecurity, these households would transmit their rice to the assistant magistrate’s office, where people qualified for cheap rice would come to trade with these rice providers. Before the sale began, the assistant magistrate would investigate the market prices and discuss with the magistrate to decide the price of their relief grain, “in order to [keep the price] slightly lower than the private [i.e. market prices] but not to deplete the capital” 務在稍平於私而無耗於本.⁶³ During the transactions, the registered households would collect the payment by themselves and bring the money back home. They could decide how to use the money— “The county government would not ask about the ins and outs of it [how the capital was used], only demanding rice when the time came” 官毋問其出入，第及期責米而已.⁶⁴ In fact, although county officials characterized this mechanism as a cooperation and mutual supervision between the official and non-official

⁶³ Gao Side 高斯得, “Xiangxiang xian pingji cang ji” 湘鄉縣平濟倉記, *QSW*, 344:7952.234.

⁶⁴ Gao Side, “Xiangxiang xian pingji cang ji,” *QSW*, 344:7952.234.

members of the local community, they essentially shifted the burdens of maintaining the capital and guaranteeing the rice reserves to the local wealthy families. Although moderated, this form of delegation essentially resembled the “exhortations for share” (*quanfen* 勸分) policy, in which local governments encouraged, urged, or even coerced local rich families to sell their surplus grain cheaply to local consumers.⁶⁵ In both forms, local officials were actively asserting the state’s coercive power to run their local state apparatus.

Of course, not all the local rich were happy with this kind of delegation. Around the time of Linghu’s building of the granary system in Xiangxiang county, Magistrate Tu Youchun 塗幼醇 of Liuyang county 瀏陽縣 in the same prefecture built an Even-selling granary that functioned in a similar way. Before long, students and instructors of the governmental school pointed out to the magistrate the flaws in this mechanism:

To purchase [grain] cheaply is what the poor want, but what the rich are unhappy about. Now [you] have people who are unhappy [about the policy] undertaking the government’s [lit., the public’s] order. Initially, [these local rich] may accept reluctantly; ultimately, [they] will definitely obstruct [the policy].⁶⁶

糴賤者貧人之所願，富人之所不樂也，今以不樂之人而承公命，始雖勉強，終必沮撓。

The students and instructors thereby suggested that Magistrate Tu use the capital to purchase land and sell the land output as relief grain. The payment, in turn, could be used for expanding the land. Magistrate Tu accepted this proposal and thus took the management of the granary back into the hands of the county government. In these cases, the Even-selling granaries, as part of

⁶⁵ *Quanfen* refers to a policy of famine relief, in which the government encouraged local well-to-do families to sell their surplus at fair prices to villagers in need or to sell the government which would redistribute the grain. Sometimes local well-to-do families sold grain voluntarily in exchange for an honorific official title, but very often, local wealthy families were coerced by local governments to sell their grain. For discussions of *quanfen* in the Song, see Li Huarui 李华瑞, “*Quanfen yu Songdai jiuhuang*” 劝分与宋代救荒, *Zhongguo jingji shi yanjiu* 中国经济史研究, 2010.1, 51–61.

⁶⁶ Gao Side, “*Liuyang xian pingtiao cang ji*” 瀏陽縣平糶倉記, *QSW*, 344:7952.246.

local state apparatus, also became a means by which local officials could more actively and effectively engage with local powers and assert their influence on local society.

Maintaining the Granaries

In contrast to their inaction in the face of the decay of the state-owned welfare systems, most of the local officials who built or rebuilt the granaries were active in preserving the institutions. They saw the granaries as their legacies in the localities they had governed. The maintenance of the granaries, however, was hard. Gao Side 高斯得, the judicial commissioner of Hunan in 1250 and the author of several records of Even-selling granaries in this circuit, pointed out the difficulties of preserving the granary capital:

If [grain] prices are not cut, then the people will not be benefited; [if] they [i.e. grain prices] are cut, then [the amount of the grain] will decline day by day, decrease year after year, and certainly ended up being depleted.⁶⁷

不裁其直，則無益於民。裁之，則日損一日，歲亡一歲，必至於盡耗而後已。

According to Gao, by his time, local officials had tried various means to main these autonomous institutions. Some local officials “entrusted the wealthy families with the responsibility of providing the amount [of grain needed for selling cheaply]” 委之巨室而責其成數.⁶⁸ As we have seen in the example of the even-selling granaries of Xiangxiang and Liuyang counties discussed above, this scheme shifted the burden of maintaining the capital and making up for losses onto the local rich.⁶⁹ The downside, therefore, was resistance and even obstruction from these wealthy locals. From the perspective of local wealthy families, they were actually the victims of the granaries. The prefect of Yongzhou 永州 in the years of Shaoding (1228-1233) 紹定, for example, entrusted wealthy families with the everyday operation of the granary. A few

⁶⁷ Gao Side, “Yongzhou xuhui cang ji” 永州續惠倉記, *QSW*, 344:7951.230.

⁶⁸ Gao Side, “Yongzhou xuhui cang ji,” *QSW*, 344:7951.230.

⁶⁹ Gao Side, “Xiangxiang xian pingji cang ji,” *QSW*, 344:7952.234.

years later, alarmed that the granary was “doing harm to the people,” some sojourning officials bypassed the prefect and directly protested to the granary commissioner of the circuit, who thereby mandated a reform of the granary. The reform was to stop the reliance on the rich families. Instead, the government attached some land to the granary and sold the land output as relief grain.⁷⁰

Still other officials simply “dispensed governmental finance and grain to subsidize [the granaries]” 資官之錢穀而足之.⁷¹ Prefect Zeng Yonghu of Xinghua *jun* in 1233, for example, saved the surplus from the prefectural budget to cover the loss of granary capital. Zeng also donated to the granary 300 cash confiscated from defunct Buddhist temples, in order to help with its operational costs of various types.⁷² This type of support, however, relied on continuous sponsorship from local officials and thus was highly dependent on the continued capability and sense of responsibility on the part of those local officials. The reality, however, was that “not all people can keep themselves honest and upright, nor can they all be determined to take care of the people. If there were corrupt ones, who saw the government treasury as their own, would they [be willing to] cut their flesh to supplement [the Even-selling granaries]” 然人不能皆廉於己、皆志於民。或遇汙者，彼視府庫財如其財，肯剝肉以補之乎？⁷³ Therefore, some local officials came up with creative strategies, each essentially supplementing the granary with a self-sustaining provider of subsidy. For example, in 1251, Ji Xiyan 季晞顏, then the prefect of Yongzhou, reformed the Even-selling granary in the prefecture again. Ji now built a pawnshop with the funding he saved and used its income to help maintain the capital of the granary.⁷⁴ In

⁷⁰ Gao Side, “Yongzhou xuhui cang ji,” *QSW*, 344:7951.230.

⁷¹ Gao Side, “Yongzhou xuhui cang ji,” *QSW*, 344:7951.230.

⁷² Liu Kezhuang, “Xinghua jun chuang pingtiao cang,” *Liu Kezhuang ji*, 88.3759–60.

⁷³ Gao Side, “Yongzhou xuhui cang ji,” *QSW*, 344:7951.230.

⁷⁴ Gao Side, “Yongzhou xuhui cang ji,” *QSW*, 344:7951.230.

1265, Ma Guangzu, the military commissioner of Jiangdong and concurrently the prefect of Jiankang *fu*, set aside two hundred thousand of paper money to build a “bank of assisting purchase 助糴庫;” the bank lent money, and the interest on the loans was used to make up for the loss of the capital of the Even-purchase granary he rebuilt. In one year, Ma increased the capital of the bank to eight hundred fifty thousand. In 1268, Ma built yet another similar bank, and the capital of the two banks amounted to two million. In addition, Ma still used the surplus of his official budget to subsidize the granary.⁷⁵ Although these subsidy providers could theoretically function without further financial investment from local officials, they did require basic administrative support and maintenance.

Whether relying on local elites for maintenance, investing more from local governmental budgets, or establishing self-sustaining capital providers, all these means were exploiting resources from within local jurisdictions. Unlike their treatment of state-owned granaries, local officials took the maintenance of Even-selling granaries as an affair closely tied to their own jurisdictions, as opposed to the routines they performed for the state as a whole. This jurisdiction-oriented mentality is clearer when we examine how local officials strove to persuade their successors to continue preserving the Even-selling granaries they built.

How to motivate their successors to preserve the institutions was probably the biggest challenge faced by local officials who built Even-selling granaries. After all, local officials usually left their jurisdictions when their tenures of no more than three years ended. They had to count on their successors for the maintenance, much less the expansion, of the granaries. Nevertheless, their successors were not always reliable. Officials’ pursuit of private profit was one of the biggest threats to the maintenance of granaries. The anxiety about corruption could be

⁷⁵ *Jingding Jiankang zhi*, 23.11a–12a, 13b–14a.

seen in Liu Kezhuang's admonition, in which Liu warned against officials' violation of the granary regulations to "benefit one person and enrich one family 利一身厚一家."⁷⁶ Their successors' irresponsibility or the potential appropriation of granary stocks for other official purposes also concerned officials who built the granaries. Gao Side, for example, observed that:

Unlike [worthy officials], some would claim that, [preoccupied with] all the paperwork and deadlines, they were too busy avoiding mistakes to [consider] other issues. What is worse, still others would say that, with more than enough stocks, what could the granary be used for in times of harvest? [They would, therefore,] sell the grain, collect the money, and simply use it to cope with [other] urgent [matters.] They allow the granaries to be emptied; they are nothing but traitors to the people.⁷⁷

不然，而曰簿書期會，吾救過不暇其他；又不然，而曰倉不啻足，歲稔何為？糴緡而入，姑將以應急符，物垂囊可也，則是民賊而已矣。

In response to these potential threats, local officials resorted to the power of moralist rhetoric combined with a sense of community. They called upon their successors' sense of compassion and responsibility for the people in their jurisdictions, warning them of the supervision from both scholar-officials and local commoners. These efforts took the form of commemorative records carved in stone steles. In 1227, Magistrate Liu Kezhuang of Jianyang county restored the declining Even-selling granary that had first been built in 1196 and was rebuilt in the 1210s by his predecessors. Liu saw it as his responsibility to revive the granary passed down to him, "which [manifested] the intention of Wengong [i.e. Zhu Xi] and the benevolence of Magistrate Chu [who started the granary]" 此文公之意，儲侯之澤。⁷⁸ With a surplus from the county government budget, Liu restored the stocks of the granary and increased the land attached to it. Liu expected his successors to pass on the sense of responsibility for the people within their jurisdiction as he had done. He wrote this expectation in a couplet on the

⁷⁶ Liu Kezhuang, "Longxi xian fu pingtiao cang ji" 尤溪縣復平糶倉記, *Liu Kezhuang ji*, 89.3787.

⁷⁷ Gao Side, "Liuyang xian pingtiao cang ji," *QSW*, 344:7952.246.

⁷⁸ Zhen Dexiu, "Jianyang xian fu zhentiao cang ji," *QSW*, 313:7185.443-44.

gateposts of the granary: “[I] have preserved a rice bowl for our people for the moment; how could it be that among those who come after there will none to continue the ‘dharma transmission’” [lit. lamp of this heart]” 聊為吾民留飯盃，豈無來者續心燈?⁷⁹ In a commemorative record he wrote for the same granary expanded decades later, Liu recalled his responses to guests who were skeptical about the longevity of the granary:

When I released my seal [i.e. left the position], some guests laughed at me [and asked]: “A magistrate’s tenure is three years, some don’t even reach three years. The opinions of predecessors and successors are not necessarily the same. What can your granary rely upon for its longevity? I disagreed: “Simply rely on this heart. My heart is like the ‘lamp’ in the Zen Buddhism [i.e. Dharma]. There will surely be successors who will pass on the lamp. Just wait [and see].”⁸⁰

余垂解銅墨，客或哂余曰：“令以三年為仕，有不及三年者，前後人意見不必同，子倉何恃而久乎？”余謝曰：“恃此心耳。吾心如禪家之燈，後人必有傳此燈者，姑待之。”

In making this analogy between the continuity of Zen doctrinal lineages and the preservation of the granary, Liu placed himself in a lineage of virtuous magistrates. Liu seems to have envisioned a tradition of compassionate governance in this jurisdiction, manifested in the granary, and passed on by generations of local officials. He linked his predecessors who had contributed to the “rice bowl” for their constituents with his successors who would preserve the “rice bowl” for their people. Still “concerned that those who come after will not continue [this legacy]” 懼來者莫之繼, Liu also invited Zhen Dexiu to compose a commemorative record for the granary. Zhen echoed Liu’s rhetoric of transmitting the “heart.” Interpreting this heart as the “heart of compassion” 惻隱之心, Zhen observed that “[among] the gentlemen coming in the future, there must be those who will take Lord [Liu’s] heart as their own, imitating and continuing it, [so that the granary] can last even without an end” 後之君子必有以侯之心為心者，以似以續，雖至

⁷⁹ Zhen Dexiu, “Jiayang xian fu zhentiao cang ji,” *QSW*, 313:7185.444.

⁸⁰ Liu Kezhuang, “Jiayang xian zeng mai zhentiao cangtian ji,” *Liu Kezhuang ji*, 90.3847–48.

於無窮可也。⁸¹ Indeed, sources show that Zhen and Liu's rhetoric of the power of "the heart" inspired scholar-officials after them. Ma Guangzu, who rebuilt the Even-selling granary of Jiankang *fu* and wrote a commemorative record in 1265, cited Zhen's and Liu's words about transmitting the "heart." He commented that "the heart of compassion is what everyone has. Can we not hope that future people's hearts will be as ours" 惻隱之心，人皆有之。心心相印，得無望于後之人？⁸² Ma thereupon wrote a couplet like Liu's on the gate of the granary. It read: "Everyone eats their fill of the rice of Shengzhou [i.e. Jiankang *fu*]; each generation forever preserves the heart of the old prefect [i.e. Ma himself]" 人人飽喫昇州飯， 世世常存老守心。⁸³ Similarly to Liu, Ma tried to leave a legacy of benevolent governance and preserve it as a local governmental tradition in his jurisdiction.

Back in Jianyang county, Liu Kezhuang's moralistic call did contribute to the preservation and even expansion of the granary. In the three decades following Liu's departure, his successors were able to maintain the grain stocks and endow more land to the granary. By the reign of Magistrate Yang Dalei 楊大雷 in the late 1240s, the land had been expanded to five times that of Liu's day. In 1251, the magistrate, surnamed Ren 任, donated another 3,000 cash of official funds to the granary, which in turn stimulated more donations from two members of the local elite. Magistrate Ren then invited his senior predecessor Liu Kezhuang, now 64 *sui* and retired, to compose a commemorative record for the expansion of the granary. Ren had the record carved on a stone stele erected in front of the granary. By obtaining such a record from Liu, Ren was able to add himself to the lineage of virtuous officials of Jianyang. He presented himself as receiving the "dharma transmission" from Liu and passing it on. It is intriguing that at

⁸¹ Zhen Dexiu, "Jianyang xian fu zhentiao cang ji," *QSW*, 313:7185.444.

⁸² *Jingding Jiankang zhi*, 23.12a.

⁸³ *Jingding Jiankang zhi*, 23.11a.

the end of his record, Liu predicted that Ren “will soon be promoted and appointed as court official” 將進用於朝矣。⁸⁴ Although Liu may have written this sentence simply to conclude the commemorative record in a polite way, it still hints that the potential benefit of accruing moral credit may have motivated Ren to expand the granary. The other side of the moralistic rhetoric of benevolent governance was its practical function—bringing local officials good reputation and increasing their political capital.

The commemorative records discussed above told a story of local officials’ activism in establishing an institution that addressed local needs outside the purview of the central state, functioned under the leadership of local administrators, and was maintained as a local governmental legacy passed on by officials of this jurisdiction one after another. In 1196, it started with Magistrate Chu’s effort to supplement Zhu Xi’s model of community granary, which had failed to nourish the landless poor of Jianyang county. The granary then went through a decline in the following decade until a new magistrate, Guan Jin, restored it. About another twenty years later, in 1227, Magistrate Liu Kezhuang revived the again decaying granary, solicited a commemorative record, and called on his successors to pass on his “heart.” From then on, Liu’s successors inherited his “dharma transmission” and continued to protect and even expand this “rice bowl” for people in this jurisdiction. In this narrative, local officials saw the jurisdiction as a community.

Part III. Catching up with Local Activism

As we have seen, local officials built Even-selling granaries with independent funds, managed them with little court intervention, and maintained them as local governmental institutions outside the purview of the central state. Nevertheless, the autonomy did not mean a

⁸⁴ Liu Kezhuang, “Jianyang xian zeng mai zhentiao cangtian ji,” *Liu Kezhuang ji*, 90.3847–48.

complete severance of connection between the local institutions and the central government. From the beginning of Even purchasing granaries, some granary builders, while emphasizing the independent budget and autonomous management of the granaries, reported to their superiors and the court about the granaries and invited institutional protection from them. Li Chengzhi 李誠之, the prefect of Qizhou 蘄州, built a granary for selling relief grain in the early 1200s. He tried to acquire both institutional acknowledgment and a moral reminder to protect the granary. As soon as the granary was built, Li memorialized the court about his project, and the court ordered circuit commissioners to gather details about the granary. We do not know what the purpose of the information gathering was; but according to Zhen Dexiu, who composed a commemorative record for the granary, both this record and the report to higher authorities were Prefect Li's efforts to prevent his successors from abandoning the granary.⁸⁵ In 1223, Zhen Dexiu himself built a similar granary in the prefectural seat of Tanzhou when he served as the prefect. Zhen requested to register it as a permanent institution of the prefecture and begged the emperor to “particularly issue an edict to the whole prefecture, [asking local officials to] preserve it forever” 特將敕旨行下本州，永永遵守. In this memorial, Zhen Dexiu cited the precedent of Zhang Yong's 張詠 autonomous sale of relief grain in Sichuan, which had also been officially endorsed by the Northern Song court. Apparently, in his attempt to get the granary institutionalized in his prefecture, Zhen asked for both the independence that Zhang Yong had enjoyed and the central state's protection of the granary on the model of other state-owned granaries. The edict praised the granary as a “valuable institution and beneficial intention” 良法美意 that “allows the people to enjoy the grace of purchasing [grain] at a stable price while preserving all the famine-relief reserves of Ever-normal granaries and Charitable granaries” 俾百

⁸⁵ Zhen Dexiu, “Qizhou huimin cang ji” 蘄州惠民倉記, *QSW*, 313:7182.399.

姓歲受平糴之惠，又可保全常平義倉水旱之備。⁸⁶ The connection between Zhen's granary and the court was thus clear.

Following Zhen's suit, in 1227 Prefect Zeng Conglong 曾從龍 expanded the granaries to all the counties in Tanzhou. Zeng even pushed the request for court support further. He beseeched that:

[The court] make a statute for the granaries on the model the Ever-normal granaries. When magistrates and assistant magistrates [were ready to] leave their positions, the prefect would evaluate their contributions and errors based on whether the granary stocks remain. In addition, [the evaluations] should be verified by the granary commissioner.⁸⁷

視常平定為令。令丞去官，郡稽其存否為功過。且俾常平使者察焉。

The effectiveness of the local-official-built granaries even seems to have stimulated a top-down promotion of building Even-selling granaries. As far as the sources show, the earliest court promulgation of Even-selling granaries was made in 1227, modeled on a few successful granaries built by local officials. According to the *Songshi*, a palace censor, Li Zhixiao, proposed to connect local administrators' promotions and demotions to their capability to build such granaries. Li's proposal was made from the perspective of a court official. His idea was essentially to capitalize on local officials' activism to optimize the effectiveness of the state with minimized costs to the central government. Li observed:

Prefectural and county governments have always had no savings and looked to the court [for financial support] in emergencies. This is not how the regime was originally designed. Recently, the overseer general of Huaidong region, Yue Ke, who served concurrently as the financial commissioner of Jiangdong circuit, used surplus saved from [his] regular budget to purchase fifty thousand *dan* of rice and store it in the nine prefectures of Jiangdong circuit. [These granaries] sell relief grain when needed. All the prefectures have benefited from this project. Afterward, Shi Mizhong, the prefect of Raozhou, and Zhao Yanjie, the prefect of Guangde *jun*, each accumulated money to purchase five thousand *dan* of rice on their own. Judging from these examples, if circuit

⁸⁶ Zhen Dexiu, "Zou zhi huimin cang zhuang," *QSW*, 312:7149.270.

⁸⁷ Wei Liaoweng 魏了翁, "Tanzhou wai shi xian huimin cang ji" 潭州外十縣惠民倉記, *QSW*, 310:7104.417.

commissioners, prefects, and magistrates could be frugal and love their people, there would be surplus [in their offices].

侍御史李知孝言：“郡縣素無蓄積，緩急止仰朝廷，非立法本意。曩淮東總領岳珂任江東轉運判官，以所積經常錢，糴米五萬石椿留江東九郡。以時濟糴，諸郡皆蒙其利。其後史彌忠知饒州，趙彥忭知廣德軍，皆自積錢糴米五千石。以是推之，監司、州郡，苟能節用愛民，即有贏羨。

Li, therefore, suggested that the court set regulations to award those who were able to fund their own grain reserves and punish those who faked or failed to do so. This proposal was accepted by the court and promulgated in an edict.⁸⁸

The court endorsement of the proposal signaled that it wanted local officials to rely on themselves to feed their people. The court was catching up with changes that had been made by local officials. Particularly, this idea was inspired by Yue Ke's project in Jiangdong circuit. As discussed earlier, in this case, the court respected the independence of granary finances from the state and the freedom of the prefects of the circuit to use the stocks in accord with their own judgment. Meanwhile, the court also agreed to provide institutional protection as Yue had requested:

If prefectural officials appropriate [the grain] for other uses without permission, please allow the officials of this commission to report their names and impeach them. [I also] beg to punish them according to the punishment for appropriating court reserves without permission.”

如州郡輒緣它用，妄有侵移，許本司當職官具名奏劾，乞比擅用朝廷椿管法坐罪。

It was very likely that the court decision to promote the model was stimulated by the fact that these granaries, requiring no investment from the central government and costing no loss of the regular revenue, could fulfill the state obligations to nourish the people and maintain social order. Even when the decision makers at the court were aware of the possible corruption brought about by the Even-selling granaries, they could not give up supporting the building of these

⁸⁸ *Song shi*, 176/4290.

institutions. In 1249, Fiscal Commissioner Shu Zi of Jiangdong circuit memorialized the court about his plan to rebuild the Even-selling granaries in his circuit. The court response observed that many Even-selling granaries had ended up harming the people due to corrupt or ineffective management by local officials. Even so, the court still highly praised Shu and his project and offered to provide stricter supervision to help Shu maintain the granary.⁸⁹

Throughout the rest of the Southern Song, the court further promoted this model. In 1253, the emperor issued an edict that ordered local officials all over the country to build philanthropic projects, including Even-selling granaries. The emperor proclaimed:

[I] have ordered that all the prefectures under Heaven should build Bureaus of Mercy for Children, Even-selling granaries, and Bureaus of Official Medicine.... Unfortunately, prefects have not carried out the order dutifully. The benevolence was lost. I felt pity (for the people) Orders should be given to the honest and competent commissioners of each circuit, who should strictly supervise the prefects, and to the pacification commissioners, who should strictly supervise army commanders. Both (prefects and army commanders) should follow the earlier order. As for the Bureaus of Mercy for Children, they should make sure there are no children weeping for hunger on the road; as for the Even-selling granaries, they should make sure that the little people do not have difficulties [getting enough] to eat.⁹⁰

嘗令天下諸州建慈幼局、平糶倉、官藥局矣……奈何郡守奉行不謹，所惠失實，朕甚憫焉……可行下各路清強監司，嚴督諸守臣，宣制、安撫，嚴督主兵官，並要遵照元降指揮，如慈幼，則必使道路無啼飢之童；平糶，則必使小民無艱食之患。

The edict reads as if Even-purchase granaries were from the beginning one of the social welfare projects enforced by the central state. But as we have seen in this chapter, when the institutions first emerged, the central government simply acquiesced in and acknowledged them. The trajectory of Even-selling granaries demonstrates the dynamic power negotiations between the central and local governments in the Southern Song, which was characterized by the constant interplay of initiatives at the local level and responses from the top down.

⁸⁹ Shu Zi, “Fu zhi pingdi cang zou,” *QSW*, 343:7937.398.

⁹⁰ *Songshi quanwen*, 35/42a–42b.

Conclusion

Through the case study of Even-selling granaries, this chapter delineates and analyzes the development of local officials' activism in building local institutions to enhance their autonomy. The activism originated in the state promulgation of community granaries, an endeavor to encourage and rely on local elites' voluntary service to cultivate local society's self-reliance for subsistence. This vision by Zhu Xi and the central government ended up stimulating local officials' active building of institutions outside the normative systems of state welfare. As this activism grew in the early thirteenth century, more and more local officials built Even-selling granaries with funds from various local sources, separate from regular official budgets, and free from the claims of the central government. Local officials used these granaries to mobilize and manage local resources with little intervention from higher authorities. In other words, these granaries became local officials' means to tap into financial resources of the local communities they ruled, to overcome the restrictions in using resources set by the regular systems state welfare, and to achieve their administrative and personal agendas.

This chapter also adds further evidence and nuance to local officials' "jurisdiction-centrism" discussed in the previous chapter. It shows that this sentiment simultaneously distinguished local governments from the regular governmental system directed by the central government on one hand, and from the non-official sectors of their districts, on the other. Local officials situated themselves in a mediating space connected to but distinguished from both sides. By calling the regular governmental system as a whole "the public" (*gongjia*), these local officials viewed their own jurisdictions as relatively "private"—with particular needs and interests that they defended. Local officials identified with their jurisdictions as communities in which they acted as the leaders and caretakers. They therefore took the granaries they built as

properties of the communities—and as legacies they left for their jurisdictions when they departed. As local leaders, they resorted to the soft power of a sense of morality and sense of community to urge their successors to preserve their legacies. Still, they were conscious of the state power they carried, which distinguished them from non-official community leaders in localities. They invited the central state to help preserve the institutions they created by providing endorsement and supervision. Local officials simultaneously requested financial and executive independence from the central state on the one hand, and asked for an institutional protection of the court on the other. They acted on behalf of their jurisdictions, identifying with their jurisdictions, while posing themselves as agents empowered by the central government to lead and rule the communities.

Finally, some research has treated the popularity of local official-built granaries for famine relief as a sign of decentralization of state power—power shifted from the central government to local governments.⁹¹ The findings of this chapter suggest instead that the power relationship between the center and the local governments was complex and dynamic. The rise of Even-selling granaries reveals a process of constant adjustment of power distribution based on the interaction between local officials and the central government. Just as it acquiesced in local officials' active participation in community granaries, the central government acknowledged local officials' *de facto* autonomy in running Even-selling granaries. After all, although these granaries could be used by corrupt local officials and clerks to benefit themselves, they could also help fulfill the primary obligations of the state—feeding the people—without extra expenditures of the state revenue. Therefore, about two decades after the spread of this institution among local officials, in 1227 the court officially counted the building of these granaries as a

⁹¹ Li Huarui 李华瑞, *Songdai jiuhuang shigao* 宋代救荒史稿 (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 2014).

standard for evaluating local officials' capabilities. By 1253, the court seemed to have seen Even-selling granaries as another form of social welfare under the central government's jurisdiction. In other words, these local projects initiated by local officials to circumvent restraints in standard systems of state welfare were co-opted and even re-imposed by the central government as a top-down policy. In turn, through building and running granaries independently, local officials acquired more power in mobilizing and using local resources. As this complex process shows, the power distribution between the central and local governments in Southern Song was constantly adjusted as the bottom-up (local-official-initiated) changes interplayed with top-down (central-state-imposed) reactions.

Conclusion

The above chapters have analyzed the informal and even extralegal strategies that Southern Song local official employed to defend the interests of their jurisdictions. The first chapter demonstrated the rhetorical power of the Confucian concept of “taking care of the people.” It revealed that local officials were able to use this rhetoric to justify their use of state revenue for local causes without authorization. Chapter two examined local officials’ efforts to push through their initiatives by forging direct communication and conducting personal negotiations with higher authorities. The informal means of negotiating official affairs reveals the essence of Song political culture, in which the boundaries between the official and personal realms were blurred. Chapter three analyzed the illegal embargoes adopted by local officials to keep critical grain resources within their jurisdictions. It showed that blockades of grain circulation and conflicts over them stimulated multipartite negotiations among the central and various local governments, which finally helped redistribute resources and balance diverging interests within the state. The last chapter delineated the rise of local officials’ activism in building semi-autonomous local granaries for famine relief. These initiatives, although deviating from the court’s original plan to rely on voluntary service by the local elite to solve sustenance issue in the countryside, were acknowledged and later even advocated by the court. During the constant interplay between bottom-up changes and top-down responses, local officials acquired more power in motivating and using local resources, while the central government capitalized on official activism at the local level to nourish the people with fewer expenditures from the central state treasury. Overall, these chapters demonstrate that, paradoxically, local officials’ manipulation of the system to pursue their goals contributed to the flexibility of the state in balancing its contradictory objectives, accommodating various members’ diverging interests, and

responding to local contingencies. How, then, do my findings contribute to our understanding of the big picture of the Southern Song state and, more broadly, the state in late imperial China?

Unified State, Divided Interests

Although some scholars have pointed out the problems of “treating the state as an undivided one,” there has not been empirical research systematically elaborate on this critical view.¹ Existing studies on internal conflicts or fractures within the state have focused on factional struggles. In examining the day-to-day actions of local officials, however, the above chapters have exposed the conflicts over resources among different administrative units. They revealed that Song governance was characterized by contradictory objectives, competing interests between jurisdictions, and diverging visions of asserting state power.

As shown in the introduction, the threat of financial deficiency haunted the state throughout the Southern Song. Competition for resources exacerbated the internal divisions already created by the checks and balance built into the bureaucracy, and this competition was manifested in conflicts among governmental offices assuming different duties, at different levels, and administering different areas. Conflicting agendas sometimes motivated officials to hold back each other’s initiatives. In the first two chapters, we saw that local officials’ efforts to reduce levies on their localities contradicted the Ministry of Revenue’s goal to secure the state fisc. The conflict stimulated the Ministry of Revenue to sabotage applications for tax relief by manipulating regular bureaucratic procedures; in response, local officials adopted informal

¹ Chang Woei Ong, *Men of Letters within the Passes*, 16-17. Sukhee Lee emphasizes the importance of distinguishing offices of different branches and levels. However, due to the different focus of his research, Lee has not looked into the details of the conflicts within the state. Lee, *Negotiated Power*, 9–10. Robert Hymes proposes to see the state as an arena where actors with different vested interests and competing agendas together shaped the final presentation of politics and administration. See Hymes. “‘*Dividing the Realm in Order to Govern*’: *The Spatial Organization of the Song State (960–1276 CE)* by Ruth Mostern (review),” 375–377.

means of negotiation to circumvent the Ministry's obstructions. This competition and mutual-obstruction also pit local officials taking charge of different areas against each other. Chapter three demonstrated the open competition over grain among various local jurisdictions: each circuit stood against others, and even within each circuit, prefectures strove to defend their own grain resources at the expenses of others. Also seen in the case of grain embargoes is a tension between the military administration and civil administration due to the sometimes-conflicting priorities to feed the army or the people. Competition and conflicts between governmental offices horizontally were further complicated by tensions between different levels of administration vertically. The exploitation imposed from the top down, conflicting priorities, and varied perception of local contingencies all contributed to varying degrees of estrangement between superiors and subordinates. As we saw in chapter two, this kind of estrangement frustrated Zhu Xi, to the extent that he lamented that "there was by no means cooperation between the superiors and subordinates." The disconnect between levels of administration was best characterized in an observation made by Wang Yan, the Linjiang prefect in 1203 mentioned in chapter three:

An ancient saying goes: "When the roof leaks above, [the effects are] felt only by those below." Therefore, what is beneficial and what is harmful to circuits cannot be known by the court; what is beneficial and what is harmful to prefectures and counties cannot be completely known by the circuits; what is beneficial and what is harmful to villages cannot be completely known by the prefectures and counties."²

古之人有言曰：“屋漏在上，知之在下。”是故諸路利病，廟堂或不能知；州縣利病，諸路不能盡知；閭閻利病，州縣不能盡知。

This disconnect is also well demonstrated in the last chapter, where we saw local officials so eager to break through the control of higher authorities build local granaries to increase their latitude in dealing with local sustenance.

² Wang Yan, "Shang Zhaoshuai shu," *QSW*, 270:6098.102.

Bottom-up initiatives, Informal Means, and the Dynamic Power Distribution

The internal tensions discussed above were not resolved through a one-solution-for-all, top-down mechanism. Rather, it was through constant central-local negotiations initiated by local officials that the state as a whole was able to balance contradictory objectives and solve crosscutting conflicts on a case-by-case basis. As the above chapters have shown, local officials re-evaluated state objectives on the ground and rearranged priorities based on their political beliefs, visions of effective governance, careerist concerns, and even self-interest. While the central state claimed excessive revenue from localities, individual local officials' skillful endeavors to resist or reduce the extraction of resources within their jurisdictions compelled the higher authorities to balance the competing priorities of revenue extraction and people's wellbeing. Where the court attempted to distribute resources based on its blueprint of the regime as a whole, local officials found ways to reshape the distribution according to the needs of their jurisdictions. These bottom-up and *ad-hoc* processes of adjusting priorities and balancing diverging interests characterized the flexibility of the governmental system, which constituted a critical part of Sothern Song state operation.

Furthermore, the critical role that Southern Song local officials' actions played in shaping state operations has complicated our view of power distribution between the central and local governments. I have suggested in the introduction that discussions of whether the central state or local governments held more power have over-simplified the complex interactions between these two parties. The intervening chapters have shown that power was constantly reorganized in the governmental system. The ongoing adjustment of power distribution between the central and local governments was fueled by each side's endeavors to make the best of their situations. Although both the central and local governments were purposeful participants in the

reorganization of power, as mentioned earlier, local officials often took the initiative in such processes and their actions in defense of their own jurisdictions often undermined the uniformity imposed by the central state. Nevertheless, the locally initiated power negotiation did not mean a lopsided victory by local governments; the central government was not simply forced to give in and cede its power. Rather, the decision makers at the court understood the tensions between the ideal of uniformity (for both administrative efficiency and the assertion of authority) and the reality that ad-hoc decisions were often more efficient. Therefore, the court acquiesced in its local agents' challenge of rules, accommodated changes they made, and made use of local initiatives to enhance the efficacy of the state as a whole. We see the court do this in its tolerance for local officials' unauthorized actions to relieve famine, in its arbitration in cases of grain embargoes, and in its efforts to co-opt local officials' activism in building autonomous Even-purchasing granaries. The dynamic processes of power distribution, initiated by local officials and actively responded to by the central government, characterized the workings of the Southern Song state.

“Jurisdiction-Centralism”

How, then, did local officials make sense of their actions? As seen in chapters one and two, local officials' self-fulfillment, reputation, career success, and even private profits were bound to their achievements in their local jurisdictions. Accordingly, they were very sensitive to the tensions between interests of their jurisdictions and those outside. By late Southern Song at the latest, local officials had developed a sense of being “insiders,” defined along the boundaries of their jurisdictions—dubbed “jurisdiction-centralism” in this dissertation. This mindset was shaped by the growing financial centralization and the competition for resources among administrations of different levels and geographical areas. Officials of each administrative unit—

a county, a prefecture, or a circuit—viewed the unit as an interest group standing against threats from outsiders. All of the chapters have shown that local officials adopted various strategies of negotiation to achieve the same goal— to optimize the available resources of their own jurisdictions in its competition with other jurisdictions and even with the central government. They used personal connections to reduce or resist extraction of local resources from higher levels of administration; they illegally blocked outflows of grain from their jurisdictions into others; they built local food reserves under the autonomous control of local governments. Moreover, local officials at the county and prefectural levels capitalized on the jurisdiction-centrism of the immediate higher administration when trying to resist even higher authority. County magistrates called upon their prefect for solidarity; prefects tried to evoke insiders’ empathy with their circuit commissioners to resist or negotiate orders of the central government. This call for empathy is clearly shown in Zhu Xi’s request for Chen Junqing’s firm stance on behalf of Jiangdong circuit against grain embargoes in neighboring Jiangxi circuit. In similar fashion, Prefect Wang Yan of Linjiang *jun* warned Commissioner Zhao of Jiangxi circuit against the danger of the court order to transmit grain from their circuit to the Liangzhe region. By emphasizing the shared interests of the circuit, these prefects appealed to the jurisdiction-centrism of their direct superiors to defend their own interests.

The divide between “our jurisdiction” and those of others (including the court) even carved out a special category between “*gong*” and “*si*” in Song political discourse. Other scholars have shown that, when used in the context of arenas or sectors of society, the term “*gong*” referred “always to the government,” and “*si*” “applied to the world of individual and household interests and to the commercial.”³ But my work reveals another space envisioned by

³ Robert P. Hymes and Conrad Schirokauer, *Ordering the World*, 51–55.

local officials, which was distinct from both the non-governmental “*si*” sector and a monolithic governmental “*gong*” sector. As discussed in chapter four, at least in the realm of finance, there was a discursive distinction between local jurisdictions and the regular state system as a whole, represented by the use of the term “*gongjia*” (lit. the public). Local officials built local granaries with funding independent from the central state finances and used the grain reserves on their own authority. By the same token, Lu Jiuyuan, on behalf of Jingmen prefecture, thanked Overseer General Zhan Tiren for exempting his jurisdiction from “Harmonious Purchase,” so that his prefecture could “purchase a little rice privately, storing it in the countryside, in preparation for times of need.” Even Lu himself acknowledged this plan as “private” (*si*), as opposed to the “public” orders from the central state and outside the “public” purview of the central government.

Still, jurisdiction-centralism did not create separatism or cut local officials’ attachment to the central state. During local officials’ interactions with other members of the governmental system—their colleagues, superiors, and the court—to take care of local interests, their choices were shaped not only by their concerns about local interests but also their identity as cogs in the machine of the hierarchical governmental system. Local officials’ favoritism for their localities was closely connected to their positions in the bureaucracy, as well illustrated by Peng Guinian’s sudden change of attitudes towards grain embargoes following the switch of his official position. Moreover, local officials still identified themselves as members of the bureaucratic system that recruited, supervised them, and moved them every three years. As Chapters three and four have demonstrated, in cases of major local initiatives and conflicts over resources, they still looked up to the central government for arbitration, as well as financial, institutional, and rhetorical support.

Local Officials and Political Culture in Southern Song China

The place of literati elite in Chinese political culture has concerned scholars for some time. R. Bin Wong has proposed a “continuum of efforts from official to elite,” which characterized the state-society continuum in Chinese history.⁴ Hilde de Weerdts has examined political elite and non-official literati as an integrated group of participants in the “imperial mission.”⁵ Nevertheless, as Sukhee Lee has pointed out, although officials and non-official elites had no fundamental differences in outlook, holding official position or not may affect one’s agenda priorities.⁶ Indeed, as illustrated in my work, local officials were constantly navigating the rules of the game within the bureaucracy. We have seen the choices that local officials made in the context of their interactions with other members of the bureaucracy. I have shown that they had diverse concerns and calculations regarding their duties: some were more preoccupied with their career success, some were inclined to maintain the *status quo* and thus lacked initiative, and still others were ambitious to make a difference or even transform local society by exercising their administrative power. Nevertheless, no matter which types of administrators they were, local officials shared the primary duties to guarantee local sustenance and maintain the stability of their jurisdictions; in various degrees, they had to deal with the tensions between these duties and the numerous tasks of revenue extraction imposed by higher levels of the bureaucracy. It was above all this challenge—how to balance their roles as agents of the central state, caretakers of localities, and men pursuing self-interest—that distinguished local officials from other literati elites.

⁴ R. Bin Wong, “Social Order and State Activism in Sung China: Implications for Later Centuries.” *Journal of Song Yuan Studies*, 26 (1996): 229-50. See especially 239-42.

⁵ See Hilde de Weerdts, *Information, Territory, and Networks*, 18-22.

⁶ Lee, *Negotiated Power*, 11.

Due to the fact that a disproportionate number of surviving Song records were produced by those who had Neo-Confucian affiliations,⁷ many of the sources available for the current research concern those who were associates or supporters of Neo-Confucianism. But in terms of the challenges they faced and the strategies they adopted to get things done, Neo-Confucian officials were not much different from their fellow officials outside the *Daoxue* fellowship. Contrasting to the familiar image of Neo-Confucians as reluctant officials or using the officialdom as an arena of enforcing their ideologies, we have seen in this dissertation that they were pragmatic power players. Like other “ordinary” local officials, these *Daoxue*-oriented officials were also struggling with the realities of local government, skillfully engaging with bureaucratic conventions, and deftly using informal strategies (i.e. manipulating the system!). Their ultimate goals may have differed or even conflicted with those of others, but the practical means to achieve those goals crossed the boundaries of philosophical belief.

It is also worth noting that when local officials worked the system to carry out their official duties, they were not solely motivated by public spirit or sense of responsibility for their constituents. The public interests that local officials defended were often intertwined with their private interests or personal concerns. Besides the most basic form of corruption, in which officials bent bureaucratic rules to line their own pockets, we also see motivations that stretched across the “official/public” and “informal/private” divides—such as the fear or uprising or the desire for reputation as a worthy caretaker of the people. A reputation for benefiting the people was important for scholar-officials in both ideological and pragmatic senses. Private biographies (such as funerary inscriptions) often celebrated officials’ reputation among the people as proof of

⁷ Beverly Bossler has pointed out that the “growing popularity of *tao-hsueh* in the Southern Song and after” significantly influenced the shape of the historiographical record of the Song, in which the works of *Daoxue*-associated scholars were selected to be preserved by their contemporaries and *Daoxue* followers in later dynasties. See Bossler, *Powerful Relations*, 205–7.

their virtue. An official's reputation could also bring him concrete benefits, such as recommendation and promotion. The attraction of reputation, for example, stimulated the prefects of Yuanzhou and circuit commissioners of Jiangxi to preserve the long-standing exemption from "Harmonious Purchase" in that prefecture. The desire for reputation also motivated officials to cut levies on their people, block outflows of food, and build local granaries on their own authority. By challenging bureaucratic rules and hierarchies in the interest of the people, a local official could even forge a heroic image as sacrificing himself for the wellbeing of the people or for the fundamental interests of the state. The aspiration for reputation also played a significant part even in cases of Neo-Confucian officials who were depicted as sincerely caring for people's livelihood and thus prioritizing the people's interests over other agendas. As we saw in the case of Zhen Dexiu in chapter one, Li Xinchuan's suggestion to the emperor—that officials should be held accountable for the effects of their actions rather than whether they sought reputation or not—indicates that he acknowledged and defended the officials' desire for reputation.

Features and Dynamics of Flexibility of the Southern Song Dynasty

Admittedly, any political system, in various degrees, functions with some flexibility. Yet different systems have different dynamics by which the flexibility was triggered and specific forms in which the flexibility unfolded. This case study of the Southern Song has shown that, besides the regular flexibility allowed by standard operational procedures, the state was able to flexibly balance diverging interests and respond to local contingencies on an *ad-hoc* basis. The *ad-hocness* took a bottom-up form, in which local officials' initiatives stimulated the central government to respond with acquiescence, negotiation, arbitration, or advocacy. It was enacted

by local officials' informal means of political negotiation discussed in each of the previous chapters.

Moreover, the flexibility was rooted in the Song—and even premodern Chinese—political culture, where the Confucian ideology of “nourishing the people” empowered local officials to sometimes act at odds with orders imposed from above. The Confucian ideology of taking care of the people had long been advocated by the Song state, but it had little concrete influence on decision making until local officials activated it. In the cases of both unauthorized actions and grain embargoes, for example, local officials adopted the moralistic rhetoric of taking care of the people as a practical tool for defending their actions. Moreover, the rhetoric also justified the reliance on critical figures—including direct superiors, administrators, and even the emperor—to override orders imposed through the standard operational procedure. The arbitrary interference with official affairs was enabled and tolerated in this political culture, in which the divide between the official and personal realms was porous and the use of personal means for official business could be justified in a moral sense—acting in the interest of the people.

Still, the historiographical shape of the Song record has posted some questions I have not yet able to fully answer in this dissertation. The sources available for my research have provided an image in which local officials were full of initiatives to resist or negotiate orders imposed from above. But most of these sources revolve around political luminaries (many had Neo-Confucian affiliation), who did not hesitate to challenge higher authorities and break through routines in the bureaucracy to make a difference in their jurisdictions. Were these initiatives (and determination) to shake the *status quo* common or exceptional in Southern Song officialdom? In other words, would the missing information of the majority of Southern Song local officials, who

were obscure and almost invisible in the available sources, change the picture of state operation I have conveyed here? To push it further, how much did the flexibility depicted in this dissertation represent the Southern Song state operation? Without more new sources, I am unable to provide certain answers.

But as I have mentioned earlier, prominent or obscure, Southern Song local officials were faced with similar challenges to balance competing priorities, and they shared same strategies for pursuing their goals. The limited materials about obscure officials or depicting them on the side allow me to make such an observation: some of them may have been usually less willing and less powerful to overcome the inertia of the system than others, but at the times when inevitable conflicts of objectives put their own interests at stake, they would work the system. Accordingly, I propose that the ways in which local officials interacted with the political system—especially the bureaucratic rules and other members—varied in degrees but not in its nature. Although falling on different parts, their actions were located on the same spectrum.

Overall, the Southern Song state, as we have seen so far, was by no means a top-down or static political system. Constant interactions between various members of the central and local governments, and among different local jurisdictions themselves, shaped the workings of the state as a whole. These interactions took the form of multipartite negotiations initiated by local officials and outside the standard state mechanisms; they increased the flexibility of the state to balance its competing objectives, coordinate diverging interests within the system, and respond to local contingencies properly. No matter how much the flexibility accounted for the workings of the state, it was a critical part, without which the Southern Song state could not function effectively in the face of the deteriorating financial and military conditions.

List of Abbreviations

JYYLXNYL Li Xinchuan 李心傳. *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu* 建炎以來系年要錄.

QSW *Quan Song wen* 全宋文.

QYTFSL Xie Shenfu 謝深甫. *Qingyuan tiaofa shilei* 慶元條法事類.

SKQS *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書

SS Tuo Tuo 脫脫. *Song shi* 宋史.

SHY Xu Song 徐松. *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿.

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