

Changes in Political Space Between the Northern Song and the Southern Song : Centering on Wei Liaoweng's "Sealed Memorial in Response to the Edict"

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Changes in Political Space Between the Northern Song and the Southern Song: Centering on Wei Liaoweng's "Sealed Memorial in Response to the Edict"

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Explanatory Note

With respect to scholarship on Song China (960–1279), there have existed two theories concerning the nature of its political system. On the one hand, the Song has been considered to be a period of autocratic government, when the highly developed centralized bureaucracy enabled a system in which the emperor had the final decision-making power. On the other hand, due to the phenomenon of constant political dominance by powerful grand councilors in the late Northern Song, there has also been a view that the Song was a time when the power of grand councilors was strengthened. These two ways of understanding differ in that the former focuses on political changes at the macro level, while the latter tends to capture those political changes from a relatively microscopic perspective. This article attempts to use an approach that integrates the aforementioned two arguments by examining changes in political space between the Northern (960–1127) and Southern Song (1127–1279). More concretely, through an analysis of Wei Liaoweng's "Sealed Memorial in Response to the Edict," it investigates changes in the relations between the emperor and his officials, as well as changes in the nature of policy making, which are closely related to the emperor's power.¹ The conclusions drawn from the analysis are as follows.

Wei Liaoweng's "Sealed Memorial in Response to the Edict" reveals the following political changes: having experienced the New Policy reforms during the years of Xining (1068–1077) and Yuanfeng (1078–1085), the Southern Song further moved towards an era of autocratic grand councilors, such as Qin Gui, Han Tuozhou, and Shi Miyuan. Wei regarded this period as a major change. According to Wei's memorial, power became concentrated in the hands of certain grand councilors or in institutions connected to the grand councilors. Correspondingly, the various functions of the "attendant officials," "censors and remonstrators," "Classics Colloquium," "proclamation drafters," "auditors," and so forth declined, and thus the system that connected the bureaucracy to the emperor weakened. In other words, the shrinking space for the emperor's participation in politics resulted in the dominance of powerful grand councilors.

This change was clearly demonstrated in the form of officials' audiences with the emperor. The ceremony of "overseeing of the court," where the emperor dealt with government affairs, was comprised of the "regular court" (i.e. the *qiju*, a ceremony held every five days in which court officials greeted the emperor) and the "auditing government" (a meeting in which the emperor made decisions based on discussions with his officials). From the second half of the Tang Dynasty, these two had tended to become increasingly separate, and the importance of the "auditing government" ceremony (i.e. the court audiences) increased. While the Song court continued the practices of the late Tang, it developed a system in which the emperor moved among several palaces to hold audiences with various officials and hear their "debates." This system in turn can be divided into "memorializing in separate groups" and "memorializing in a combined group." In the first half of the Northern Song, the development of audiences called "memorializing in separate groups" (in which several different groups of officials took turns reporting to the emperor) allowed the emperor to listen to ideas of many different officials. During the Yuanfeng reforms of the bureaucratic system in the 1080s, however, "memorializing in a combined group" (in which officials would report to the emperor in a single group) was established. While rigorously excluding other officials, this type of meeting tended to strengthen the ties between the emperor and grand councilors, and especially between the emperor and certain grand councilors. In a similar fashion, from the end of the Northern Song, the practice of "imperial handwritten edicts" was developed, in which the

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1. Wei Liaoweng (1178–1237), also known by his style name, Heshan (the crane mountain), was a Southern Song Neo-Confucian scholar and official.

emperor and grand councilors made policies through the exchange of documents. The “imperial handwritten edicts” replaced the traditional form of document processing that had centered on Three Departments and Six Ministries with a mechanism of decision-making involving only the emperor and grand councilors.

Based on the description above, below we attempt to reconcile the two arguments introduced in the beginning of this note: imperial autocracy versus the rising power of grand councilors. If we take the macroscopic perspective of looking at the political system, in terms of field administration, it changed from the Northern Song “Kaifeng System” into the Southern Song “Hangzhou system.” The former refers to a centralized system, where the military and financial systems were concentrated in the imperial capital of Kaifeng; and the latter refers to a decentralized, lower-level government system, where the military and financial power were dispersed in several places including the capital Hangzhou, and where circuit officials were endowed with considerable authority. At the higher level of the system of imperial autocracy, however, there was not much change between the Northern Song and the Southern Song. On the other hand, however, if we take a microscopic perspective, changes took place in nature of the relations between the emperor and officials, as well as in the methods of policy making, which were closely connected to imperial power. In this sense, some aspects of the political system of imperial autocracy failed to function fully, and thus led to the monopoly of power by grand councilors.

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I. Introduction

With respect to the dynamics of change in pre-modern Chinese society, Song (960–1279) historians have set out on their research from two different directions. One group takes a macroscopic perspective and focuses on the changes in political or economic systems. For example, historical materialism, as Marx and Engels propose, suggests that based on the changes in relations of production, all societies in the world follow the same steps of evolution: from ancient slave society, to medieval feudalism, and then to modern capitalism.² The theory of oriental despotism proposed by the Association of Chinese History in Japan emphasizes that throughout Chinese history, from the Qin Dynasty (221 BC–206 BC) and Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD) to the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, the state system experienced no significant changes (Adachi 1998). In this system, self-employed small farmers had a wide presence, and power was concentrated in the hands of the emperor. Alternatively, in Japanese scholarship, there is an influential theory of periodization proposed by Naitō Konan and Miyazaki Ichisada: that is, the “Tang-Song Transition.” It proposes significant changes in politics, the economy, society, and culture between the Tang (618–906) and the Song. With respect to politics, the aristocratic politics of the Tang (a system in which the emperor consulted with aristocrats about politics) evolved into the monarchical autocracy of the Song (a system in which the emperor exercised the ultimate power built on a highly developed and centralized bureaucracy). In recent years, the appearance of rubrics such as the “Northern-and-Southern-Song transition,”³ the “Song-Yuan-Ming transition,” and the “Late-Ming-Early-Qing transition” demonstrate that scholars have moved beyond looking at the changes between Tang and Song, to consider changes between the two parts of the Song, the transitional Song, Yuan, and Ming periods, and even beyond toward the transition of the late Ming and early-Qing periods.⁴ All of the above research, however, focuses on changes in the systems at the macro level, such as politics and the economy.

The “political system” that I refer to in this article is a comprehensive entity that includes lower-level government systems such as civil administration, finance, military administration, and transportation. It is reasonable to explore the changes in political systems over the course of the Song by considering how the “Kaifeng System”

2. Meanwhile, Marx does point out that there is a model of “Asian relations of production” that distinguishes itself from the European one. This idea led to Karl August Wittfogel’s argument (1991) and the arguments of the scholars of the Association of Chinese History in Japan.

3. The Song Dynasty, which began in 960 and continued until 1279, is divided into two distinct periods: the Northern Song (960–1126) and the Southern Song (1127–1279). In 1126 the Song lost control of northern China to the Jin Dynasty (1115–1234). Meanwhile, the Song court retreated south of the Yangtze River and continued the dynasty. Because the capital was relocated in Hangzhou, this part of Song was dubbed the Southern Song by people after the Song, while the first half of the dynasty (prior to 1126) became known as the Northern Song. (translation note)

4. For the periodization mentioned, see Hirata (2004; 2006) and Kishimoto (2012).

evolved into the “Hangzhou system.”⁵ The former refers to a system that functioned through the centralized bureaucracy of the Northern Song, and that was based on a country-wide system of logistics connecting the northwestern borderlands (military), the imperial capital (politics), and the lower Yangtze River area (sources of revenue). The latter refers to the Southern Song system, a regional regime relying on very close military, political, and economic connections within the restricted territories, after the loss of north China with the fall of the Northern Song (Miyazawa 1988; Chap. 1; Nagai 2000).⁶ For example, in the Southern Song, there appeared regional administrations, such as the offices of overseer-general (*zongling suo*), the offices of director-general (*zongdu fu*), the pacification commission (*xuanfu si*), and the offices of military commander (*zhizhi si*). They took charge of both the military and financial administration of jurisdictions covering large areas. They held more remarkable power than circuit officials⁷ did in the Northern Song, which indicated a decentralized structure of the system. I have studied this topic mainly from the perspective of the transmission of official documents (Hirata 2007; 2009). For reasons of space, I will not repeat my findings here, but merely point out the direction of this research.

The second main approach that Song historians have taken is one that explores changes from a microscopic perspective. It is difficult to understand changes in the political or the economic system at the macro level within a short period of time. Nevertheless, it is equally important to discover and discuss relatively small changes. Let us take the topic of political changes for example. The American political scientist Harold Dwight Lasswell (1959) defines politics as social relations in which power is exercised. In this dynamic view, politics can be boiled down to: “Who gets what, when, how.” Lasswell’s research model examines politics from a structural perspective, such that politics is comprised of complex relations of certain subjects, time, space, and means.⁸ To investigate political changes in accord with this model, the changes in the relationships between the emperor and ministers and the changes in the forms of decision making that are closely related to the imperial power become important topics.

In order to explore the patterns of policy making in the Song, it is necessary to consider two types of political space: the space where state councilors⁹ proposed, examined, and discussed policies; and the space where the emperor made final decisions based on these proposals, examinations, and discussions of policies. The theory of “monarchical autocracy” raised by Naitō Konan and Miyazaki Ichisada can be seen as emphasizing the second space mentioned above. Miyazaki (1963) clearly stated: “the extremely multi-faceted direct contacts between the emperor and ministers like this was a characteristic of rule from the Song on, and imperial autocracy was developed and consolidated thereby.” On the other hand, judging from the fact that from the late Northern Song on autocratic grand councilors continuously came to power, there is another argument that describes the Song as a period when the power of grand councilors got strengthened (Wang 1995). These two arguments are contradictory at the first sight. But if the aforementioned generalization makes sense, we can see the theory of “monarchical autocracy” as focusing on macro political changes, while the strengthening of grand councilors’ power, or the continuous emergence of autocratic grand councilors, reflects political change at the micro level. Focusing on the micro political changes, particularly changes in political space, this article will attempt to reconcile these two theories.

5. Kaifeng was the imperial capital of the Northern Song, while the Hangzhou was that of the Southern Song after 1132. Kaifeng is located along the Yellow River and in current Henan Province. Hangzhou is located south of the Yangtze River, in current Zhejiang Province. (translation note)

6. The Southern Song established four Offices of Overseer Commander, in Zhenjiang, Jiankang, Ezhou, and Lizhou Prefectures respectively. Wei Liaoweng discussed the importance of the four strategic sites bordering with the Jurchen Jin, Tangut Xixia, and Mongols in his memorial “On selecting people to lead the garrisons in four strategic sites in preparation for the Jin and Xia barbarians” in *The Complete Collected Works of Wei Liaoweng [He Shan Xian Sheng Da Quan Ji]*, vol. 16.

7. Counties (*xian*) were the basic formal unit in the hierarchy of territorial administration throughout imperial history. Prefectures (*fu/zhou/jun/jian*) were the key units of territorial administration overseeing several counties, headed by prefects. Circuits refer to the largest territorial administrative jurisdictions in the Song: circuits were clusters of neighboring prefectures. Each circuit was headed by one or more Circuit Supervisors. Circuits served as the coordinating link between prefectures and the central government (Hucker, 1985). (translation note)

8. Concerning Lasswell’s understanding, see Miyazawa (1994).

9. “State Councilors” was a collective term referring grand councilors and vice grand councilors, that is, the highest officials of the state. (Hucker 1985). (translation note)

II. Features of Imperial Audiences during the Song

In this article, I use the term “imperial audiences” (*gozen kaigi*; lit. “meetings in front of the emperor”) for an analysis of political space. Admittedly, this term was not used during the Song dynasty. Regarding Song contemporary terms, perhaps the most appropriate one is “overseeing the court” (*shichao*), as used in the item “overseeing the court in the Chuigong Palace” (*Chuigong dian shichao*) in the first section on “ceremonial procedure,” (*yizhi I*) in the *Song Dynasty Manuscript Compendium* (*Song Huiyao Jigao*).¹⁰ Moreover, elsewhere I have discussed Song political space through the examination of the term “consultations,” (*dui*) which refers to an institution where officials directly reported to the emperor (Hirata 1994). In my opinion, to clarify the circumstances of “imperial audiences” through employing the frequently used Song terms, such as “audiences” and “discussion” (*yi*), is likewise an effective way to study Song political space.

The reason to use the term “imperial audiences” in this article is that the direct interactions between the emperor and officials can clearly demonstrate the features of the political space at that time.¹¹ Examples of imperial audiences can be found in modern Japan. On August 9 and 14, 1945, two imperial audiences with the emperor were held in order to discuss whether to accept the Potsdam Declaration proposed by the Allies. The agreements reached in the audiences included accepting the Potsdam Declaration, which led to the end of the war on August 15, 1945.¹² In the Japanese language, the term “imperial audiences” refers to “meetings concerning important and emergent national affairs, held by senior statesmen and ministers with the emperor’s attendance, under the Meiji constitution” (*Wide garden of words* 2008). In Japan under the constitutional monarchy, the number of the imperial audiences held during the reign of the Showa Emperor was surely not large. By contrast, in China under absolute monarchy, it goes without saying that imperial audiences played a significant role in policy making. Moreover, in addition to “overseeing the court,” other occasions where the emperor directly interacted with officials included various forms of audiences, such as “consultations after the Classics Colloquium”¹³ and “night consultations at the Hanlin Academy.”¹⁴ This article broadly defines “imperial audiences” as discussions between the emperor and officials, including all the forms of audiences and consultations mentioned above.¹⁵

The following part of this section will briefly discuss the features of imperial audiences. Li You’s *Facts of the Song Dynasty* (*Songchao Shishi*), volume three, “Sacred learning” (*shengxue*) records:

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10. Sometimes, Chinese scholars use the word “*juece*” (decision making) as an alternative. For example, Zhu (1996: chap. 3) discusses “The system of central policy-making” under the categories of “Memorializing in a combined group and in separate groups of the Two Administrations (i.e. the Secretariat-Chancellery and the Bureau of Military Affairs);” “Memorials and audiences of officials,” “Individual audiences of ministers,” “The official business of censors and remonstrators,” “Memorializing by the Four Circuit Supervisorates and Military Commissions,” “Discussions of the lecturers of the Classics Colloquium,” and “Petitions from scholars and commoners.”
 11. Japanese scholars such as Matsumoto (2006) have used the word “imperial audiences” in the analysis of Chinese history.
 12. Ōe (1991) discussed the fifteen audiences during the Second World War.
 13. The Classics Colloquium refers to a gathering of the Emperor with eminent civil officials of the general administrative agencies in the capital, including the Hanlin Academy, the Directorate of Education (*guozhi jian*) etc., for the reading and discussion of classical and historical texts. The Hanlin Academy was a loosely organized group of litterateurs who did drafting and editing work in the preparation of the more ceremonial imperial pronouncements and the compilation of imperially sponsored historical and other works (Hucker, 1985). (translation note)
 14. Lü Zhong’s *Lectures on Major Events of the Imperial Dynasty* (*Huangchao Dashiji Jiangyi*), Vol. 2, “memorialization and audiences” records “According to the tradition of the imperial dynasty, [memorialization and audiences include] summoning of councilors, discussions with Attendants, consultations after Classics Colloquium, night consultations at the Hanlin Academy, audiences with the Two Scribes on duty, summoned consultations with officials, sequential consultations with the various officials, farewell audiences with circuit commissioners, sealed memorials of the Three Institutes, special invited audiences with minor officials, [underline added] petitions of officials and commoners through the petition box, memorials of local administrator sent through official post stations, and memorials send by post stations in the capital. Therefore, there was not a single day when it was impossible to have audiences, and there was not a single person who could not express his ideas.” The underlined parts are various types of audiences. Therefore, it is evident that the emperor had many other chances to contact directly with officials besides “overseeing the court.”
 15. I have discussed this topic elsewhere and only provide some summaries of my research here. For detailed discussion, see Hirata (2010; 2012a).

After his succession, Emperor Zhenzong [i.e. the third emperor of the Song Dynasty, r. 997–1022], every morning sat in the front palace, where officials of Secretariat-Chancellery, Bureau of Military, State Finance Commission, Kaifeng Prefecture, and Judicial Control Office, as well as officials who requested for audiences, took turns to memorialize. After the hours of dragon [7am–9am], [the emperor] entered the inner palace for breakfast and soon went out to sit in the back palace, reviewing military affairs until noon. In the evening, [the emperor] summoned the reader-in-waiting and expositor-in-waiting [of the Hanlin Academy] for advice on government affairs. Sometimes [the emperor] returned to his resting palace late at night. From then on, this [schedule] became regular.

This is “memorializing in separate groups,” (*fenban zoushi*, a form of audience in which several different groups took turns presenting memorials to the emperor), which will be discussed further below. On these occasions, groups of officials, principally heads or deputy heads of governmental offices, went to discuss with the emperor one after another. Given the intrinsic limits of space, we cannot imagine this as an occasion where all the officials gathered together in front of the emperor to discuss government, as in “the ceremonial audience of all officials” (*baiguan da qiju*). Moreover, with respect to the number of groups, in the first half of the Northern Song there were five, but in the latter half this was changed to two. Accordingly, those who could carry out “consultations” with the emperor were gradually limited to officials of the state-councilor level.

In addition, “consultations” can be divided into four types based on the frequency of meetings with the emperor: (1) Consultations with grand councilors. As the heads of all officials, grand councilors needed to attend the audiences with the “five groups” or “two groups.” Besides that, they enjoyed a privilege other officials did not have, that is, certain grand councilors could stay for “individual consultations” (*liushen dudu*) with the emperor after regular audiences; (2) Consultations with ministers of the Six Ministries (*shangshu liucaos*) or censors-and-remonstrators (*taijian*). Being the heads of major governmental departments, the six ministers enjoyed opportunities for audiences second only to state councilors. Meanwhile, censors and remonstrators, as the officials who supervised the government and made remonstrations, were endowed with opportunities for “consultations” equal to those of the ministers of the Six Ministries. Even in the period when audiences were limited to “two groups,” censors and remonstrators were still allowed to have audiences before others, because their memorializing was considered to be “public business”; (3) Consultations with attendants (*shicong*) and lecturers of the Classics Colloquium (*jingyan guan*). Serving as the councilors of the emperor, attendants “discussed their thoughts and contributed ideas” (*lunsi xianna*) and thus enjoyed the privileges of consultation second only to categories (1) and (2). In addition, after the Classics Colloquium, certain officials participating in the Colloquium would be asked to stay for “consultations after the Classics Colloquium” (*jingyan liudui*). In other cases, Hanlin Academicians and lecturers of the Classics Colloquium on night duty would be summoned to the inner palace for the “night consultations with the Hanlin Academy” (*Hanlin yedui*); (4) The “farewell audiences (*ruci*, shortly before an official left to take up his position),” “periodic audiences (*rujian*, when a local official was summoned to the court during his current tenure),” and “acknowledgement audiences (*ruxie*, when a local official finished a tenure)” of important local administrators. Circuit-level officials and prefects of major prefectures were allowed “consultations” before their departure to their posts or after they finished their tenures. This category also includes the “rotating consultations” or “sequential consultations” (*zhuandui* or *lundui*) available to all court officials. Approximately every five days, at the time of “ceremonial audiences in the inner palace” (*neidian qiju*), one or two officials who wanted to have audiences with the emperor were selected to meet with him.

In terms of the locations of imperial audiences, they can be divided into audiences in the front palace (the Chuigong Palace) and those in the back palace (Chongzheng Palace or the Yanhe Palace). First of all, grand councilors, the six ministers, and the heads and deputies of major governmental offices took turns having “consultations” in the front palace. Then censors and remonstrators were also specially permitted to have “consultations” there. An audience in the front palace was a very formal occasion, where the emperor dressed up in “court dress” (*chaofu*) when meeting officials. In most cases, when “consultations” took place, eunuchs and imperial diarists were expected

stay away so that the emperor and his officials could have confidential conversations.¹⁶ Concerning the Tang-Song transition, it is noteworthy that during the Tang Dynasty, officials were offered seats, served with tea, and discussed governmental affairs with the emperor in a relaxed manner. That was based on the traditional ideal of “sitting down and discuss the Way” (*zuo er lun dao*). From the Song Dynasty on, officials had to stand during audiences.

Shortly after the audiences in the front palace, the emperor would take a short rest in the inner palace before he started the audiences in the back palace, where the emperor could wear more comfortable clothes while meeting his officials. On these occasions, on the one hand officials who had not finished their “consultations” in the front palace could continue their conversations with the emperor. On the other, those who were excluded from audiences in the front palace now had the chance to “consult” with the emperor. Other audiences that took place in the back palace included the “farewell audiences,” “periodic audiences,” and “acknowledgement audiences” of local officials, “sequential audiences” of all court officials, or the “presentation audiences” (*yindui*), where promoted officials were presented by the Ministry of Personnel and Office of Military Commanders to meet the emperor. It was recorded that the Office for Audience Ceremonies presented relevant officials to the emperor for “rotating” and “sequential consultations.” It is therefore possible that on occasions like this, the personal attendants of the emperor were also present. In addition to audiences in the back palace, “consultations after the Classics Colloquium” and “night consultations at the Hanlin Academy” in the inner palace were also held in a relaxed format—officials were permitted to sit and were offered tea. For example, scholars have argued that during the reign of Emperor Xiaozong (1162–1189), the emperor often held “inner invitations” and “night consultations” in the Xuande Palace, which thereby became an important alternative to the official “overseeing the court” as a space for audiences (Wang 2012a).

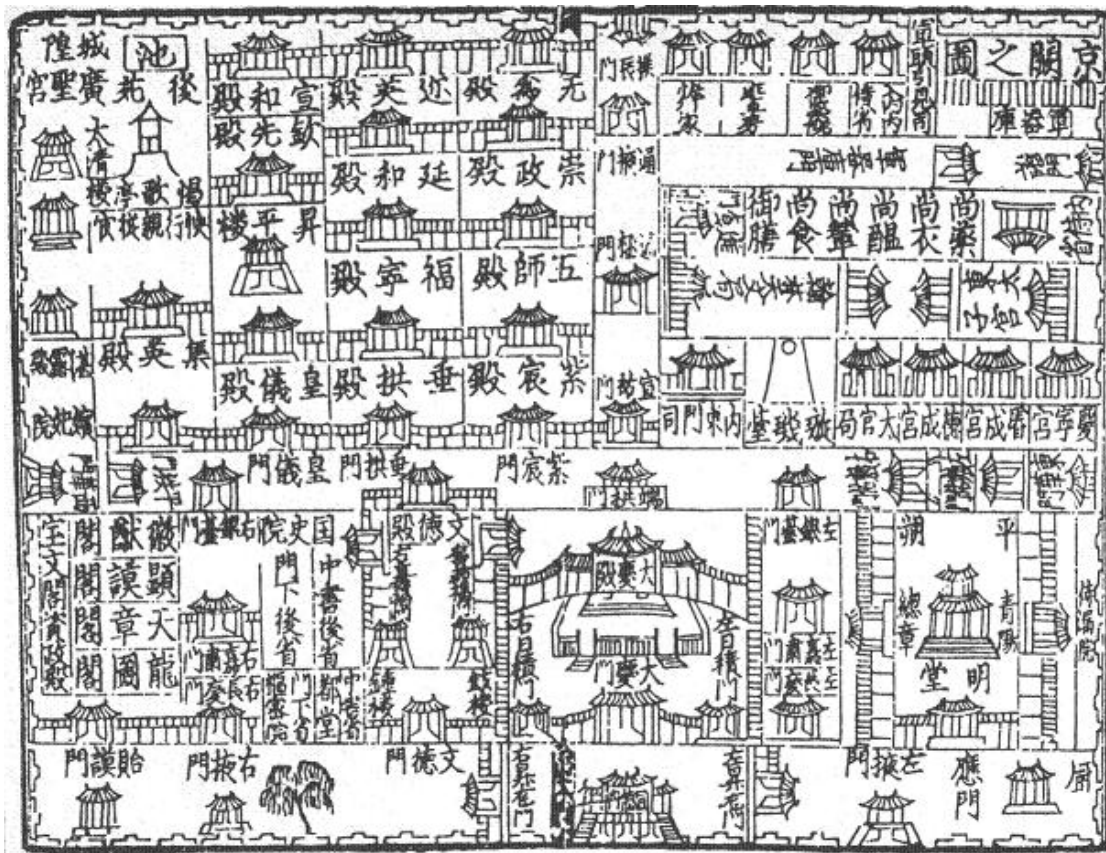
The change from “memorializing in separate groups” to “memorializing in a combined group” is one of the most significant issues in the examination of imperial audiences. During most of the first half of the Northern Song, except when Emperor Renzong specially employed combined audiences for the purpose of discussing problems with the Xixia, imperial audiences generally took the form of “memorializing in separate groups.”¹⁷ In the wake of the Yuanfeng Reforms of the bureaucratic system,¹⁸ however, “memorializing in a combined group” gradually became the regular form of audience—the heads of the Three Departments all together, or joined by the heads of the Bureau of Military Affairs, had audiences with the emperor (Kumamoto 2003; Wang 2012b). I have examined elsewhere the form of “memorializing in a combined group” based on Zeng Bu’s *Preserved Records of Lord Zeng* (*Zenggong Yilu*) (Hirata 2011). I would like briefly to describe this form of audience below.

The practice of imperial audiences began with the “collective memorializing” (*tongcheng*), in which officials of the Three Departments and the Bureau of Military Affairs together had “consultations” with the emperor, after which “follow-up consultations” (*zaidui*), were held individually with these two groups. The issues addressed during the “collective memorializing” included frontier defense, diplomacy with and defense against the neighboring countries of the Liao and the Xixia, judgments made by the Case Review Section, important personnel issues concerning military officials, enfeoffments of vassal states, inquiries after the health of the emperor and the princes, rituals concerning the regency of the empress, the funeral ceremony for Emperor Zhezong (r. 1085–1100), and the restoration of the Yuanyou Empress. In short, “collective memorializing” was basically an occasion when officials of the Three Departments together discussed important military and diplomatic affairs with the emperor. The subsequent

16. When examining the process of policy making, it is necessary to consider questions such as: Were people serving the emperor close by, such as eunuchs and diarists, present on the occasions of audiences? Did eunuchs and maids-in-waiting play any part in the exchange between emperor and officials? For example, in the Edo Shogunate, when the Shogun talked with councils (*rōjū*, Japanese counterpart of grand councilors in China), officials called “lord chamberlain” (*osoba goyō toritsugi*) were involved. Both the direct discussions on policies with the Shogun and communications through official documents had to go through the “lord chamberlain.” As a result, those in this position actually wielded more power than the councilors (Ōishi 1995). Nevertheless, it is evident in the Song sources about audiences that officials particularly requested the emperor to keep eunuchs away, which indicates that audiences were at least principally direct interactions between the emperor and officials.

17. The Xixia (1038–1227), a Tangut regime occupied what are now the northwestern Chinese provinces of Ningxia, Gansu, eastern Qinghai, northern Shaanxi, northeastern Xinjiang, southwest Inner Mongolia. It had constant wars with the Liao and Song and was able to maintain its rule until 1227, when the Mongol put an end to it. (translation note)

18. During the years of Yuanfeng (1078–1085), Emperor Shenzong initiated reforms of the bureaucratic system, claiming them to be on the Tang model of Three Departments and Six Ministries. (translation note)



Picture 1. Map of the imperial palace of Kaifeng in the Song (from *A Comprehensive Record of the Forest of Affairs* (*Shilin Guangji*), the Yuan edition). The street that connects the Donghua Gate and Xihua Gate divided the inner court from the outer court.

“follow-up consultations” were occasions where the Three Departments alone consulted on administrative issues, while the Bureau of Military Affairs alone consulted on military-diplomatic affairs. This form of imperial audiences was described in the seventh volume of *Preserved Records by Lord Zeng*, under the item recording the first day of the fifth month in the second year of Yuanfu (1099):

[After] the ceremonial audience [*qiju*] in the Chuigong Palace, the emperor moved to the Wende Palace for overseeing the court, and then retired. Thereafter, officials memorialized in the Chuigong Palace. In the collective memorializing, Zhang Zi suggested sending armies to the city of Nanmouhui [newly seized from the Xixia] to build military fortifications. The Case Review Section requested the appointment of a prosecutor. The emperor decreed that Ye Zuqia, be appointed, but [the grand councilor Cai] Bian disagreed. The emperor then appointed An Dun. Bian commented: “That would be fine.” [During] the follow-up audience, I [i.e. Zeng Bu, the head of the Bureau of Military Affairs] said: “Bian selected the prosecutor. What is his intention? I have attempted to explain [to your Majesty] that ‘[Jian] Xuchen had many partisans. I’m afraid there will be a number of them who will try to save him.’ [But] your majesty doubted there was anyone who would dare to save him. [Now you see] my words turn out to be not nonsense.” Cao Song beseeched to remove his military power, [but the emperor] declined. Cai Jing and others memorialized to send functionaries [*qinshi guan*] to learn foreign languages, [and the emperor] approved. A non-Han soldier [named] Chiduobu serving in Huanqing Circuit reported people seeking refuge with the Song from the western barbarians [i.e. the Xixia]. Although he should have been exempted [from death penalty] because of the [imperial general] amnesty, [the court decided to] execute him for this special case. The Commander-in-chief of the Palace Command had sentenced Wei Ji improperly. The Kaifeng Prefectural government had already received the imperial order and exonerated him, [and therewith] sent an official document to the palace audience gate informing [the Commander to] thank [the emperor].

I argued that this was inappropriate. The emperor agreed and commanded that the officials of the Kaifeng Prefectural government could be exempted from punishment, but the staffs and clerks of the Palace Command should be sent to the Court of Judicial Review for prosecution. After the audience, [I] informed the Three Departments to set regulations for cases like this. The grand councilor [Zhang Dun] resolutely argued that [officials of Kaifeng prefectural office] should not be simply exonerated.

Since it was the first day of the fifth month, an audience in the Wende Palace was added after the regular audience in the Chuigong Palace. The source records that the imperial audiences started with collective memorializing of the Three Departments and Bureau of Military Affairs concerning issues of frontier defense and the judgments by the Case Review Section. It then continued as the Bureau of Military Affairs reported alone to the emperor in the “follow-up consultation.” After the “follow-up consultation,” Zeng Bu forwarded his conversation with the emperor to the Three Departments for further discussion. The *Preserved Records by Lord Zeng* recorded many examples of the conjunction of imperial audiences and meetings among grand councilors. The two consecutive parts of imperial audiences—the “collective memorializing” and the “follow-up consultations”—shaped the way in which the adjustment of policies was made. This source did not mention the Executive Office of the Department of State Affairs (*dutang*), where state councilors exchanged their ideas and formulated policies. Nevertheless, given the regular process of decision making of state councilors (first court audiences, followed by gathering in the Executive Office of the Department of State Affairs, and then returning to each department and putting policies into execution), it is likely that the exchange of ideas and decision making of the state councilors revolved around the discussions in imperial audiences.¹⁹

The example of *Preserved Records by Lord Zeng* cited above demonstrates that changes in political space, represented by the change from “memorializing in separate groups” to “memorializing in a combined group,” was a major dynamic of political transformation from the Northern Song to the Southern Song. This work depicts constant disputes between Zhang Dun, Cai Bian, and Zeng Bu that took place in front of Emperor Zhezong.²⁰ More specifically, it depicts how the two grand councilors (Zhang Dun and Cai Bian) in charge of the Three Departments, and the head of the Bureau of Military Affairs (Zeng Bu), contested for power through their skillful use of “consultations” with the emperor. As the antagonism between Zhang Dun, Cai Bian, and Zeng Bu indicates, it was actually difficult to reach consensus in meetings of grand councilors. Zeng Bu eventually expressed his opinions through his direct communications with the emperor in “follow-up consultations” and by “staying behind for individual consultation.” This

19. Besides the Executive Office of the Department of State Affairs, there were other places that were frequently used for the meetings of state councilors. For example, *Preserved Records by Lord Zeng* records: “[we state councilors] withdrew the East Palace Gate and got together in the Hall of Grand Councilor [*chengxiang ting*], discussing the issue of the posthumous title of the late emperor’s consort, entitling Prince Shen and, promoting the authorities of the two palaces [i.e. the emperor and the empress dowager], and the issue concerning the empress.” (Vol. 9, the item of “the day of *Xinsi* in first month of the third year of Yuanfu (1100)”). Also it is recorded that “on the day of *Jiayin*, in preparation for the imperial sacrifice to heaven to report the posthumous name of the deceased emperor, [we] fasted and stayed overnight in the Department of State Affairs, gathering in the Hall of Vice Director of the Left [*zuo puye ting*]. [I] met Bangzhi [Li Qingchen], Chongyuan, Yingshu [Jiang Zhiqi] for twice.” (Vol.9, the item of “the day of *Jiayin* in the fourth month of the third year of Yuanfu”). It is therefore evident from the sources that the meetings of state councilors also took place in other locations such as the Hall of Grand Councilor and the Hall of Vice Director of the Left. Moreover, when state councilors left the imperial city, they went back to the “East-and-West Administrations” [*dongxi fu*]. It is very likely that discussions were also held in the “East-and-West Administrations.” For example, *Preserved Records by Lord Zeng* has words such as “later [I] met Chongyuan, and thus talked to him...” (Vol.8, the item of the day of *Dingyou* in the eighth month of the second year of Yuanfu), “later [I] met Shipu [Han Zhongyan] and others, who all argued...” (Vol.9, the item of “the day of *Guiyou* in the fifth month of the third year of Yuanfu”). These texts are very possibly the records of the meetings in the “East and West Administrations.” For similar issues, see *Extended Continuation to Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance* (*Xu Zizhi Tongjian Changbian*), vol. 358, the item of “the day of *Gengxu* in the seventh month of the eighth year of Yuanfeng (1085)”: “The Three Department and the Bureau of Military Affairs said: ‘regarding collective [proposals of] appointments and memorials, those issues that need to go through discussions should be discussed collectively in the Executive Office of the Department of State Affairs beforehand. If [officials] return to the East and West Administrations, allow them to visit one another for discussion through the side door.’ [The emperor] approved.”

20. Regarding political history during the reign of emperor Zhezong, see Yang (2012). This book examines the topic in detail. It reveals the networks of the factional group of Zhang Dun and Cai Bian. Nevertheless, this book does not effectively examine the system of policy making. It does not fully answer questions such as: “By what means did Zeng Bu singlehandedly, almost without any personnel support, manage to make Zhezong take him words and thus exert his political influence?” I would like to point out that the imperial audiences comprised of “collective memorializing,” “follow-up audiences,” and “individual audiences” should be the key to this question.

tendency was already evident when Wang Anshi²¹ served as the grand councilor in 1070s.²² Is it possible that the development of the institutions of “imperial endorsements” and “handwritten edicts” (*shouzhao*), which strengthened the direct connection between the emperor and grand councilors from Emperor Huizong’s reign (1100–1125) on, represent the documentary institutionalization of the “individual consultations” that allowed the emperor to communicate with certain grand councilors individually?

Furthermore, Kumamoto (2007) points out that after the Yuanfeng reforms of the bureaucratic system, the disparity of power between the grand councilors and vice grand councilors intensified, and grand councilors dominated the “memorializing in a combined group.” In other words, when “memorializing in a combined group,” it was easier for the more powerful grand councilors to express their political opinions.

The next section of this essay examines Wei Liaoweng’s “Sealed Memorial in Response to the Edict” that Emperor Lizong (r. 1224–1264) issued on the first day of the first month in the first year of Duanping (1234). The edict stipulated that “all officials, no matter whether they are civil or military, court or local, or senior or junior, shall submit sealed memorials discussing the successes and failures of the court government, and the gains and losses within and without [the regime], without reservation.”²³ Through the examination of Wei’s memorial, I will elucidate my understanding of the various issues discussed above.

III. Changes in Political Space Between the Northern Song and the Southern Song

Wei Liaoweng (1178–1237; courtesy name Huaifu; studio name Heshan) was born in Qiongyang county in Xiang prefecture, Sichuan, southwest China. He received the *jinshi* degree²⁴ at the third place in 1199, and then served as prefect of Han, Mei, and Lu prefectures. During his stay in Sichuan for about seventeen years, he built the Heshan Academy to spread Neo-Confucianism. In the first year of Baoqing (1225) of Emperor Lizong’s reign, Wei was sentenced to house arrest in Jing prefecture due to impeachment by Zhu Ruichang. Nevertheless, he returned to the court after the death of the autocratic grand councilor Shi Miyuan, and then served as the Academician of Duanming Palace, notary of the Bureau of Military Affairs, inspector of the armies in the Jinghu region, and so forth. He was celebrated as a representative Southern Song writer and philosopher. The eightieth volume of *Major Schools*

21. Wang Anshi (1021–1086) was the grand councilor between 1069 and 1076 during Emperor Shenzong’s reign. In faced with the state financial crisis, Wang attempted major socioeconomic reforms. These controversial reforms and political purges against those against them divided officials into majorly two factions: the reformists led by Wang Anshi, and the conservatives, surrounding around another statesman, Sima Guang. (translation note)

22. It is evident in “Lü Hui’s memorial to Emperor Shenzong about Wang Anshi’s ten fraudulent behaviors” (*Memorials of Various Officials in the Song Dynasty* [*Songchao Zhuchen Zouyi*], vol. 109) that Wang Anshi made use of “staying for individual audiences” to make his ideas heard by the emperor. Individual audiences therefore could have been used as a political means to carry out new policies. In addition, Xu Du’s *Quesao Bian* records: “According to the history of the Tang, Yao Chong did not get along with Zhang Yue when he was the grand councilor. One day, during the imperial audience, Yao Chong dragged as if he was sick. The emperor therefore asked him to stay and talk with him. When Jiang Sheng served as the Hanlin Academician, the emperor liked and trusted him very much. One day, when his ideas interested the emperor, he was asked to stay for three times. [The emperor then] said: ‘From now on I would not have individual audience with you anymore.’ Sheng was confused. Before long, he was appointed Jointly Manager of Affairs with the Secretariat-Chancellery. Therefore it is clear that Tang grand councilors could not have individual audiences. In our dynasty, state councilors collectively memorialize. When an official has secret issues to report, he must apply to the Office for Audience Ceremonies, having them send the request to the emperor. After the collective memorializing, this official could alone stay. This is called staying for individual audiences, slightly different from the Tang forms.” Apparently, if a single grand councilor wanted to memorialize to the emperor, he needed to send “secret notes” to the emperor through the Office for Audience Ceremonies, and then stayed for individual audiences after the regular audiences. Individual audiences provided grand councilors great opportunities to convince the emperor with their words. Nevertheless, gradually autocratic grand councilors excluded other state councilors from staying for individual audiences (Hirata 2008).

23. The “Sealed Memorial in Response to the Edict” was preserved in Wei Liaoweng’s *Complete Collected Works of Wei Liaoweng* (*Heshan Xiansheng Daquan Wenji*), vol. 18. Among various editions of this book, the *Si Bu Cong Kan* edition said to be better. However, this article used the text from Zeng Zaozhun and Liu Lin eds., *Complete Literature of the Song* [*Quan Song Wen*] (Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe and Anhui Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2006), vol. 7057 “Wei Liaoweng 5,” pp. 115–138. In addition to Wei Liaoweng’s “Sealed Memorial in Response to the Edict,” there were sealed memorials submitted by other officials around the same time, such as Zhen Dexiu’s “Sealed Memorial in Response to the Edict [submitted in] the Second Month of the Year of Jiawu (1234),” *Collected Works of Zhen Dexiu* (*Xishan Xiansheng Zhen Wenzhonggong Wenji*) vol.13.

24. *Jinshi* means Presented Scholar conferred on successful candidates in the highest-level regular civil service recruitment examinations, qualifying them for appointment to government office (Hucker 1985). (translation note)

of *Song and Yuan Confucians* (*Song Yuan xue'an*) contains a chapter devoted to him and his disciples (“Heshan xuean”).²⁵

The biography of Wei Liaoweng in *the History of Song* described his purpose in submitting the “Sealed Memorial in Response to the Edict”:

Within a few months, all the neglected tasks were undertaken. [After Shi] Miyuan died, the emperor started to rule independently. He promoted [Wei Liaoweng] to the position of Edict Attendant of the Wenhua Hall [*wenhua-ge daizhi*], and awarded him the golden belt. Liaoweng worried that after consecutive autocratic grand councilors, who abused the political power of the state and changed the social ethos, the morality of the country had degenerated, and the laws and regulations had slackened; corrupt people served in the government and cheated in official business, making it difficult to purify [the state]. [Wei] therefore memorialized about ten issues in response to the edict, beseeching [the emperor] to promote new order by restoring traditions.

In short, Wei’s sealed memorial was a proposal of political reforms in the wake of the death of Shi Miyuan, the grand councilor who had long dominated politics, and at a time when Emperor Lizong set out to rule by himself.

According to the sealed memorial, Wei observed the general political evolution from the Northern Song to his own time as follows:

The rather urgent issues for the present are to recover the traditions built in the reigns of Emperor Taizu and Emperor Taizong [i.e. the first two emperors of the Song Dynasty]. The traditions were roughly changed during the years of Xining [1068–1077], only partly restored in the years of Yuanyou [1086–1094], and hugely destroyed from the years of Chongning [1102–1106] and Daguan [1107–1110] on. They were then resumed during the periods of Jianyan [1127–1130] and early Shaoxing [1131–1162], and gradually completed during the time of Qiandao [1165–1173], Chunxi [1174–1189], and Shaoxi [1190–1194]. These traditions, however, declined again from the years of Qingyuan [1195–1200], Jiatai [1201–1204], and Kaixi [1205–1207] on. Now Your Majesty is beginning to rule independently, and has called upon various worthies [to assist]. [It is the time for officials, up from] the Steward-bulwark of State and attendants down to administrators in various government offices, to embrace changes with open minds. [If we] miss this chance and do not restore the traditions, then [the traditions] will be alienated and forgotten as time goes by. When will there be another chance?

Wei Liaoweng indicates that the system designed by Emperor Taizu and Emperor Taizong was changed by Wang Anshi’s New Policies during the years of Xining. Although the system was later partly restored in the Yuanyou period, it fell apart under the dominance of the new reformers during the years of Chongning and Daguan. Not until the early Southern Song (years of Jianyan and early Shaoxing) was it resumed. During Xiaozong’s reign (years of Qiandao, Chunxi, and Shaoxi), the system was gradually recovered, but again went through a major collapse during the rule of the so-called autocratic grand councilors, such as Han Tuozhou and Shi Miyuan (during the years of Qingyuan, Jiatai, Kaixi, and thereafter). Throughout this long-term historical evolution, the political model of the Yuanyou period was Wei Liaoweng’s ideal. As he commented in the sealed memorial:

Your humble servant [Wei Liaoweng, thinks that] in the imperial dynasty there was no period more prosperous than the years of Yuanyou. Formerly, when Your Majesty ascended the throne, I had analyzed for you the magnificence of the personnel of the first year of Yuanyou: “At that time, the grand councilors included Sima Guang, Wen Yanbo, and Lü Gongzhu, and the vice grand councilors included Lü Dafang, Han Wei, Liu Zhi, and Fan Chunren. The censors and remonstrators included Su Zhe, Sun Kuan, Liang Tao, Fan Zuyu, Chuyu Shen, Zhu Guangting, Fu Yaoyu, and Lü Tao. The Hanlin Academician was Su Shi. The proclamation drafters included Fan Bailu, Zeng Zhao, Liu Ban, and Su

25. To know more about Wei Liaoweng as a philosopher, see Hu, Liu, and Su (1997). As for Wei Liaoweng as a writer, see Zhang (2008).

Zhe. The lecturers of the Classics Colloquium included Fu Yaoyu, Han Wei, Fan Zuyu, and Zhao Yanruo. The recitation tutor was Cheng Yi. The first year [of Yuanyou] set the example [of personnel], and thus from the second year [of Yuanyou on], [the personnel arrangements during the Yuanyou period] were roughly the same. I do not [need to] name them all.” I explained like this, and Your Majesty commented in your august words: “Yuanyou talents were like this.” Your humble servant recalled memorializing in person: “This [Yuanyou model] should be followed today when appointing officials. It was because [the court used] Sima Guang as the grand councilor that talents like those mentioned above were invited and introduced. Regardless of others, [personnel arrangements] such as Su Shi in the Hanlin Academy and Cheng Yi at the Classics Colloquium should by no means be questioned.” Your Majesty nodded repeatedly.²⁶

The following part of this article examines the content of each section of Wei’s sealed memorial.

To begin with, the first section “On restoring the tradition of the Three Departments to empower the Six Ministers” reads:

The imperial dynasty followed the Tang model and established the Three Departments: the Secretariat that received edicts [from the emperor], the Chancellery that reviewed [the received edicts], and the Department of State Affairs that implemented [the imperial orders]. All official documents forwarded from the emperor [to the Secretariat-Chancellery], as well as memorials submitted [by officials] to the Secretariat-Chancellery from the four directions, were [processed and then] sent to the Department of State Affairs. It then sent documents down to the Six Ministries that would further pass them down to various sections. Once the reports about relevant issues were ready, they were submitted to the Department of State Affairs, and then to the Secretariat, which would present them to the emperor and wait for imperial orders. When [the Secretariat] received the imperial orders, they again forwarded the orders to the Chancellery for review. When the orders passed [the review], they were transcribed and sent to the Department of State Affairs, and then to the Six Ministries, for execution. This was roughly the mechanism of the Three Department system. Since people complained that [the process] was interminable, it was acceptable to combine the Secretariat and the Chancellery into one, as happened from the Yuanyou period on. However, in the Xining period the grand councilor Wang Anshi particularly established the Secretariat Examiners to encroach on the power of the Three Departments’ officials. In the years of Yuanfeng, the Left and Right Offices replaced [the Secretariat Examiners]. Once these precedents were set, and the power resided in grand councilors, and the subordinates of the grand councilors became an arena where [grand councilors] seized and abused political power and authority.

Wei Liaoweng argues that official document processing was conventionally carried out by the Three Departments and Six Ministries. Nevertheless, the Secretariat Examiners who were directly affiliated with the grand councilors became the center of document processing during the period of Wang Anshi’s New Policies; so did the Left and Right Offices of the Department of State Affairs that were established during the years of Yuanfeng. Both of them undermined the power of the Six Ministries. Kumamoto (1988, 1990, 2007) has shown that Wang Anshi and Emperor Shenzong (r. 1067–1085) attempted to use the subordinates of the grand councilors (*zaiyuan*), such as Secretariat Examiners and the Left and Right Offices of the Department of State Affairs, to build a policy making system that was different from the conventional system of the Three Departments and Six Ministries, which had revolved around the emperor-grand councilors connections. It is therefore clear that the system of Three Departments and Six Ministries changed essentially after Wang Anshi’s New Policies reform.

The second section, “On restoring the tradition of the Two Administrations to collect ideas from the multitude [of officials],” says:

The imperial dynasty imitated the Tang model, assigning different responsibilities to the Three Department and the Bureau of Military Affairs, and having them memorialize in separate groups—only concerning major issues would

26. Similar ideas can be seen frequently in *The Complete Collected Works of Wei Liaoweng*; for example, “On following the Yuanyou model and listening to public opinion when appointing officials” in vol. 16.

they memorialize together. Therefore, there were the memorializing of the Secretariat-Chancellery, the memorializing of the Bureau of Military Affairs, the memorializing of the Three Departments, and the collective memorializing of the Three Departments and the Bureau of Military Affairs... In the restoration²⁷ period, there were still five or six officials in the Three Departments. When Qin Gui dominated the politics, there was only one deputy serving in each of the Two Administrations [i.e. the Secretariat-Chancellery and the Bureau of Military Affairs]. In the early Qingyuan period, [the grand councilor] Han Tuozhou attempted to appoint himself concurrently as the Military Affairs Commissioner [i.e. the head of the Bureau]. Some told him that [this method] would not concentrate the power [in his hands], and that he would be better off giving up the title but assuming de-facto power, so that nothing would be excluded from [Han's] rule. Later, the supervisor of the Public Pharmacy, Xia Yunzhong, catering to [Han's] will, cited the precedents of Wang Dan, Lü Yijian, and Wen Yanbo, and proposed [to use the title of] the Manager of National Security Matters [*pinzhang junguo-shi*]. The vice grand councilors were all astounded and indignant, and this proposal was abolished. A few years later, it was eventually implemented, but then there were grand councilors and vice state councilors in the Two Administrations. From the years of Jiading on, grand councilors concurrently served as the Military Affairs Commissioners. [The Two Administrations] were then again combined into one.

We can see from this description that the form of imperial audiences changed from memorializing in separate groups (the Three Departments and the Bureau of Military Affairs reporting separately) to memorializing in a combined group. Moreover, the number of state councilors diminished, and in the Southern Song, sometimes grand councilors even served simultaneously as Military Affairs Commissioners.

In the first half of the Northern Song, imperial audiences took the form in which officials of the Secretariat-Chancellery, the Bureau of Military Affairs, the Three Fiscal Agencies, Kaifeng Prefecture, and the Judicial Control Office took turns to memorialize the throne. The heads and vice-heads of the Secretariat-Chancellery and the Bureau of Military Affairs were state councilors. Thus, by the reign of the third emperor of the Song, Emperor Zhenzong, ministers of the Secretariat-Chancellery and the Bureau of Military Affairs were memorializing in different groups. During the reign of Emperor Renzong, however, in order to cope with military affairs on the frontiers, the Two Administrations started to memorialize in a combined group. By the time of the Yuanfeng reforms of the bureaucratic system, “memorializing in a combined group” had become the regular form of imperial audiences (Zhu 1996: 134–138). Thereafter, the number of state councilors constantly declined. During the wars against the Jin²⁸ and Mongols in the Southern Song period, grand councilors even served as the Military Affairs Commissioners concurrently. Therefore, the practice of “memorializing in separate groups,” which could provide the emperor with differing opinions and intelligence, ceased to function.

The third section, “On restoring the tradition of the Executive Office to enhance the significance of the state councillorship,” observes:

In the prime of the imperial dynasty, the Department of State Affairs served as the outer department [*waisheng*] that received official documents from the four directions. The Executive Office was located within the imperial city [*jinzong*], serving as the place for state councilors to get together. [State councilors] all gathered in the hall, sat together, and discussed all the opinions from governmental offices and the memorials turned in by the clerks of the various administrations. A few quarters of an hour after the sunset, when the bell rang, [they] ate together, and thereafter went home in an orderly fashion. Nevertheless, during a hundred years, no residence was built [in the complex of the Executive Office], and [state councilors] lived close to commoners' residence zones, which were usually far away from the imperial city. Therefore when state councilors left the imperial city [and went home], clerks had to take official documents and visit the various residences, which frequently resulted in delays or even the release [of confidential information]. Emperor Shenzong saw these problems and thus had [residences built] in the area southwest of the

27. This refers to the restoration of the Song Dynasty in south China after the loss of northern China to the Jin Dynasty in 1126. (translation note)

28. The Jin Dynasty (1115–1234) was founded by the Wanyan clan of the Jurchen people. It overthrew the Khitan Liao dynasty in 1125. Soon after that, the Jin declared war against the Song Dynasty and conquered much of northern China. The Song was forced to flee south of Yangtze River. It eventually fell to the Mongols in 1234. (translation note)

[palace] gate. The residences were divided into the east and west parts, and each of the Two Administrations had four residences, in order to keep strictly the confidentiality of business [of each administration]. [The east and west parts], however, were adjacent to one another, enabling people in each part to hear conversations in the other part. Grand councilors who abused power to seek private gain found it inconvenient. Therefore, [autocratic grand councilors] publicly [took official business] back to their private residences, ignoring their fellow [councilors]. This [phenomenon] has been passed down since Cai Jing.

Wei Liaoweng points out that state councilors originally discussed policies in the Executive Office located in the imperial city. However, since state councilors resided far away from the imperial city, they were unable to deal with emergencies once they left the imperial city. For this reason, during the reign of Emperor Shenzong, the court established the East and West Offices, where state councilors met and exchanged ideas. Furthermore, after the time of the autocratic grand councilor, Cai Jing, the grand councilor's residence endowed by the emperor became an important place for policy making. Thereafter, throughout the periods of Qin Gui, Han Tuo Zhou, and Shi Miyuan, autocratic grand councilors seldom went to the imperial city for business. By contrast, it became common practice for officials to bring relevant documents to visit a grand councilor in his place, or for visitors to wait in line outside the residence of the grand councilor. Kinugawa (1984) has attempted to explore the changes in autocratic grand councilors' power through the examination of the distance between their residences and the imperial city. Indeed, the last autocratic grand councilor, Jia Sida, was endowed with a house located in the Ge Ridge along the West Lake.²⁹ Before him, Qin Gui, Han Tuo Zhou, and Shi Miyuan at best had been allowed to build their houses surrounding the Imperial Ancestral Temple. The connections between power and the location of residence is a topic worthy of attention (Hirata 2008).³⁰

The fourth section, "On restoring the tradition of Attendants in order to acquire sincere advice," comments:

In the imperial dynasty, attendants, ranging from the Grand Academician of the Guanwen Palace to the Academician Awaiting Instructions, have various responsibilities. Nevertheless, the essence of their duties is the same—to discuss thoughts and contribute. The Supervising Secretary and the Secretariat Drafter both remonstrate about [inappropriate] orders already issued. That censors and remonstrators are officials contributing suggestions goes without saying. Hanlin Academicians and the heads and deputies of the Six Ministries, although not in the position specifically for making suggestions, should not withhold giving advice in special cases. Imperial edicts during the years of Xining criticized attendants for not speaking up. When Sima Guang rejected the position of vice Military Affairs Commissioner, he also observed that there was nothing attendants should not comment on. Therefore, important issues, such as appointing the imperial heir, rectifying the imperial inner quarters, debating the posthumous title of Prince Pu, debating the New Policies, flood prevention, and frontier defenses, were all decided after collective debates and discussion among attendants. Even after crossing the river to the south [i.e. the establishment of the Southern Song], this political custom did not die down... After the second year of Qingyuan [1196, however,] the official morale suddenly declined, and [officials] gradually got used to keeping silence. When [Han] Tuo Zhou initiated the campaigns of military expansion, only Xu Bangxian, summoned back from Chu prefecture, strongly argued against it. "In the morning he memorialized, and in the evening he was cashiered." A censor, Xu Nan, attacked him because of his comments. The Vice state councilor, Qian Xiangzu, was put to residence under surveillance in Xin prefecture. I witnessed all of these events personally. Although [I am] an insignificant figure, I also had some words [against Han's scheme] prior to these two ministers [i.e. Xu Bangxian and Qian Xiangzu]. Alas, with regard to such a major issue of the country, nobody but these three people spoke up... Since the years of Jiading, although [the court] claimed to have a major reform, [the problem of] not paying attention to this [lack of dissident opinions] was even aggravated. [It has been bad] to the extent that scholar-officials

29. There was a lake to the west of Hangzhou. Ge Ridge was located on the north of the lake. (translation note)

30. Wei Liaoweng's note to this section of his memorial pointed out that temples in front of residences of autocratic grand councilors became places for officials to wait to visit the grand councilors, and thus served as places for bribery. Moreover, in the period when Shi Miyuan dominated politics, the Monastery of Great Kindness (*daci-si*) in Ming Prefecture, which was built to make sacrifices to Shi's mother, became a place for Shi to make money.

mock and insult [attendants by saying that] the attendants have no ideas to discuss but do have contributions. When they say “have contributions,” they satirically refer to bribery.

In the second volume of *Assorted Important Issues of the Government and Society (Chaoye leiyao)*, the author defines the attendants as “the Hanlin Academicians, the Supervising Secretary, the Six Ministers, and the Eight Vice Directors. In addition, the Secretariat Drafter, the Left and Right Scribes are called junior attendants.” The range of “the attendants” was fairly wide, but the most important were the Hanlin Academicians, the Supervising Secretary, and the Secretariat Drafter, who were responsible for drafting and reviewing imperial edicts. According to Wei’s memorial, obliged to “discuss thoughts and contribute ideas,” attendants worked with speaking officials³¹ in advising the emperor. The issues they addressed included “appointing the imperial heir” (deciding the crown prince during Emperor Renzong’s reign), “rectifying the imperial inner quarters” (dealing with women in politics during Emperor Renzong’s reign), “debating the posthumous title of Prince Pu” (debates concerning the posthumous honorific title of Emperor Yingzong’s biological father during Emperor Yingzong’s reign), “debating New Policies, flood prevention, and frontier defenses” (during Emperor Shenzong’s reign), the rites of hosting the Jurchen envoy during the Shaoxing peace negotiations with the Jin Dynasty, Emperor Xiaozong’s favoritism for Long Dayuan during the years of Shaoxing and Qiandao, the issues of Zeng Di, and Zhang Yue’s appointment during the years of Qiandao. Many officials were at first able to express different opinions. When Han Tuo Zhou seized power, however, he took the repression of Zhu Xi’s teaching in the second year of Qingyuan as an opportunity to shut down free expressions of ideas. Therefore, on the eve of the military campaigns against the Jurchen Jin during the Kaixi period (1205–1207), Wei Liaoweng was one among the only three dissenters. Therefore, by the time of Emperor Lizong’s reign, people all criticized the attendants for merely “contributing” (referring to bribing) while not “discussing their thoughts” (referring to remonstrating). In other words, Wei Liaoweng argued that the dominance of autocratic grand councilors, such as Han Tuo Zhou and Shi Miyuan, almost put a halt to the attendants’ function of “discussing their thoughts and contributing ideas.”

The fifth section, “On recovering the tradition of the Classics Colloquium to promote the teachings of the sage,” reads:

The tradition of the Classics Colloquium, although started in the beginning of the imperial dynasty, developed over time, and became fully established in the middle of the dynasty. Prominent people involved included Yan Shu, Fu Bi, Sun Shi, Fan Zhen, Li Shi, Song Qi, Ouyang Xiu, Sima Guang, Lü Gongzhu, Liu Chang, Su Shi, and so forth. Such people need no superfluous praise, nor can they all be fully listed [here]. In addition, there were reputable Confucians who were reclusive and in low positions. They were invited to become lecturers, disregarding their bureaucratic ranks. Not worried that they were hard to invite, [the court] used great courtesy to encourage them to come... Nevertheless, when sometimes the emperor did not take care of state affairs personally, grand councilors appointed people they always favored and trusted to the positions. Perhaps they were concerned that lecturers would cite traditions to criticize contemporary politics; [after all,] when a ruler knows more about classics and histories, he will distance himself from petty persons. This scheme was perhaps similar to that which [the Tang eunuch] Qiu Shiliang used to consolidate the imperial favor. [I cannot imagine] how those who were not devoted to studies could work in such positions [i.e. as lecturers]... Now that [those unqualified people] have taken the positions that were meant for [talented] people, such as [Yan] Shu, [Fu] Bi, [Ouyang] Xiu, [Sima] Guang, [Cheng] Yi, [Yin] Tun, [Zhi] Xi, and [Zhang] Shi, we can easily know that they must constantly fritter away time and simply use mere formality to waste the emperor’s efforts to learn from the lectures.

31. “Speaking officials” was a generic reference to Grand Masters of Remonstrance (*jianyi dafu*), Supervising Secretaries (*jishizhong*), and others whose principal and characteristic function was to monitor the making of policy decisions at court and to recommend or criticize policies (Hucker 1985). (translation note)

This section points out that from the Northern Song to the Southern Song, lecturers of the Classics Colloquium included not only officials of high status and prestige but also recluses or people of relatively low status. From Emperor Lizong's reign on, the court often appointed unqualified people to be the lecturers for the Classics Colloquium. The part after "nevertheless" is particularly noteworthy. It says that when the emperor was not dedicated to governmental affairs, grand councilors would appoint their own subordinates to be the lecturers, because they feared people would criticize current politics. We can compare this part with the record of "exhorters holding concurrent position as lecturers" (*zhengyan jian dushu*) in the first volume of Lü Zhong's *Major Events of the Restored Imperial Dynasty* (*Huangchao Zhongxing Dashiji*):

The places for a ruler's activities are no more than the inner court, the outer court, and the Classics Colloquium. [Grand councilor Qin] Gui colluded with the eunuch physician, Wang Jixian, to secretly detect the emperor's intentions. [He] also put his people in the positions of vice state councilors, censors, and remonstrators, so that they would cover up mistakes for him in the outer court. The Classics Colloquia were the only occasions where the ruler interacted closely with Confucians. [Qin Gui] was afraid that [the lecturers] would say something [to his disadvantage] during the colloquia. Therefore, [Qin] assigned those who were appointed censors and remonstrators to [positions] related to the Classical Colloquium as well, so that he could know the emperor's activities and the contents of the lecturers' speeches. [Qin Gui] even appointed his son Qin Xi the concurrent Reader-in-Waiting, merely to plan for his private gain.

According to the text, the Southern Song autocratic grand councilor Qin Gui placed his subordinates in important positions in the outer court, while colluding with the eunuch physician Wang Jixian to detect political information in the inner court. Moreover, he appointed his son a lecturer for the Classics Colloquium and a remonstrator. By so doing, Qin Gui completely controlled the three spaces of the emperor's political activities. In his discussion of the lecturers of the Classics Colloquium, Wei cited Qiu Shiliang's scheme to consolidate imperial favor. The record of the Tang eunuch Qiu Shiliang's "Strategies to consolidate power and imperial favor" records the following (in *Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance* [*Zizhi Tongjian*], vol. 247, item about the fifth month of the third year of Huichang during Emperor Wuzong's reign [843 AD]):

On the day of Guiyou,³² Qiu Shiliang retired from palace domestic service with the title Left-guard Generalissimo. His partisans accompanied him back to his private residence. Shiliang taught them the techniques of consolidating imperial favor: "The Son of Heaven [i.e. the emperor] should not be left unoccupied. [You] should always entertain him with extravagant things, renewing them every day and upgrading them every month, [so that the emperor] will have no time for other affairs. Thereafter, we can realize our ambitions. Make sure you don't let him read books or get close to Confucians. [If] he sees the rise and fall of previous dynasties and knows to worry, we will be ousted." His partisans thanked him and then left.

Qiu's strategies were to constantly provide the emperor with new forms of entertainment, to distract him from considering governmental affairs, and to keep him from reading and getting close to Confucian scholars. Wei Liaoweng probably believed that Han Tuozhou and Shi Miyuan were practicing Qiu's strategies to consolidate power and imperial favor.

The sixth section, "On restoring the tradition of censors and remonstrators to ensure of the fairness of promotions and demotions," reads:

[According to] the tradition of censors and remonstrators of the imperial dynasty, [a censor and a remonstrator] ordinarily did not see one another, nor did they exchange thoughts before making comments on governmental affairs. Even to their superiors, they did not need to report [before making comments]. Therefore, it happened from time to time that when censors commented, remonstrators disagreed, and that when remonstrators commented, censors were

32. Guiyou is the tenth part of the Chinese sexagenary cycle, the traditional way to date the passage of time. (translation note)

dismissed because they had not spoken up. Even during the years of Jingkang [1126–1127], the conflict between Li Guang and Feng Xie still embodied this idea. From the restoration on, although where censors and remonstrators lived was separated into six residences, they shared one gate, and [people] were able to visit one another on the other side of the wall. This greatly contravened the tradition. The reason why censors and remonstrators in previous reigns were never allowed to interact with one another was perhaps to have them fully express their own opinions without considering the opinions of one another. When Qin Gui dominated the court, he appointed censors and remonstrators all through secret letters, and told them to attack vice state councilors in order to replace them with his people. [They] were generally called censor-and-remonstrators [*taijian*], with no differences in duties. They therefore publicly formed cliques, and people did not take it as problematic...[Han] Tuozhou followed Qin [Gui]’s suit. When the late emperor first ascended the throne, Wu Lie and Liu Dexiu were both appointed to work in the censorate. One was virtuous, the other evil [literally, one was fragrant and the other foul smelling], so when the command [appointing them] came out people realized that the political situation was different [from earlier]. In addition, Han [Tuozhou], who grew more and more powerful every day, backed up [Liu] Dexiu. At the same time, good and honest people were all attacked. Thereafter, [autocratic grand councilors] all appointed their own people as censors and remonstrators. Sometimes [grand councilors] clearly expressed their intentions, and sometimes [censor-and-remonstrators] catered to the wills of [grand councilors]. They dismissed and suppressed public opinion, and the order of the imperial court fell in turmoil... Thereafter, all newly appointed censor-and-remonstrators applied in advance to meet [the grand councilors], treating them with wines and dishes. When [they planned to] make comments on issues, [censor-and-remonstrators and grand councilors] would interact through correspondence. To begin with, [censor-and-remonstrators] would submit complete drafts. If [autocratic grand councilors] agreed, they would allow the comments to be made; otherwise the drafts would be replaced. Because replacement was performed, most of the time it took until the end of the month to decide the ranks of office or dates [of appointment]. People who heard of it did not take it as problematic, and those who commented on it did not take it as shameful. Thenceforth, censor-and-remonstrators [always] told others that comments they recently made were all assigned [to them] from the residences of [autocratic grand councilors]. I doubted it, [but] the other day Li Zhixiao told me that regarding the recent remarks about Hong Zikui and Hu Mengyu, the entire text came from the residence of the grand councilor. If what they said is true, then the [problems] have become even worse than sending drafts for review. Therefore people observe that censor-and-remonstrators are no better than the creatures [of autocratic grand councilors].

We can see from the description that originally censors and remonstrators did not exchange words. They each worked separately on making critiques. In the Southern Song, however, the offices of the two merged, and these two groups of officials interacted with one another. Furthermore, during Qin Gui’s dominance of politics, he controlled the appointments of censor-and-remonstrators through “secret letters” and told them to impeach vice state councilors who opposed him. This situation continued in the periods of autocratic grand councilors such as Han Tuozhou and Shi Miyuan. Not only were censors and remonstrators all subservient to the grand councilors, but their official documents were processed in and sent out from the residences of the autocratic grand councilors. Censors and remonstrators had degenerated to be no more than the creatures of the autocratic grand councilors.³³ In a previous article, I argued that originally a personnel principle stipulated that relatives of state councilors and those recommended by grand councilors should not be appointed censors or remonstrators. The principle was designed to ensure the independence of censors and remonstrators from the executive government led by state councilors, and to enable them to speak against it. This principle, however, gradually decayed during Wang Anshi’s councillorship. Personnel connections between state councilors and censor-and-remonstrators became stronger and stronger (Hirata 1992). Wei Liaoweng’s description shows that these kinds of connections intensified in the periods of Southern Song autocratic grand councilors: the processing of official documents by censor-and-remonstrates were even more closely connected to the grand councilors’ offices or residences.

The seventh section, “On restoring the tradition of making proclamations to ensure the prudence of orders,” observes:

33. There have been a number of studies on the speaking officials in the Southern Song. The most representative one is Liu (1987).

The imperial dynasty followed previous dynasties in selecting personnel to [serve as] proclamation drafters. There were a variety of titles of [proclamation drafters], which cannot be completely listed [here]. Generally speaking, when there were grand proclamations and diplomatic proclamations, inner drafters were allowed to turn in drafts of proclamations [for review]... With regard to appointment proclamations, [the inner drafters] were summoned to be informed of [the appointments] in person, and to contribute their thoughts [about the appointment] properly. [Through] the discussions between the emperor and inner drafters, adjustments were promptly made, in accord with traditional [practice]. When the emperor went out, [drafters] accompanied him, standing by for consultation. If [drafters] requested to have audiences, there were no intervals during their audiences. When memorializing, they used the *bangzi* [format]; when reporting to the Three Departments and Bureau of Military Affairs, they collectively used the *zibao* [format], without signing names. Therefore, those who were called the inner grand councilors were able to discuss with the emperors history and current issues, and to give advice on issuing edicts. This is how significant they were... Outer drafters were assigned to deal with the matters of the Six Offices respectively. They implemented imperial orders, drafting proclamations in the relevant offices. Whenever there was anything inappropriate [in the imperial orders], they were able to take issue and remonstrate. Every morning, they visited the Secretariat, and drafted proclamations in the Ziwei Hall. Only when state councilors had left the office were they excused from duty... Traditionally, no officials started working before receiving their appointment proclamations. Even the proclamations for endowing posthumous titles were not delayed even for one day. Since the restoration, there have been many unseen troubles, and some officials started to take up office before receiving their appointment proclamations. [Behaviors like this] continued for a long time and gradually became a custom, which undermined the original meaning of appointing officials. In these forty years, things have changed day by day. The most important [changes] began with the dysfunction of the inner drafters and was followed by the dysfunction of the outer drafters. Both groups were constrained by the autocratic ministers, unable to exert their influence... Recently, the condition is even more different from [what it was] previously. [With regard to the inner drafters,] usually each of the two academicians [i.e. drafters] composed one draft, and the grand councilors sometimes revised them, taking one of them as the original imperial order and the other as the proclamation in response to the order. This way of working continued for so long that people did not regard it as strange. This is [what I call] the dysfunction of inner drafters. Those serving as the outer drafters, once they received the notices of appointment, immediately planned to cheat. [The delays] that I saw in the years of Jiatai and Kaixi were still limited to only five or ten days. In recent years, however, the delay [of appointment proclamations] has been rather extreme. Those serving close [to the capital] only receive their appointment proclamations half a month or ten days after their arrivals [at the new positions]. Those commissioners and military commanders who served outside [the capital] for were dubbed “newly appointed” even after a year of work in their positions, [because their appointment proclamations were so delayed].

Imperial proclamation documents were comprised of inner proclamations (*neizhi*) and outer proclamations (*waizhi*). Hanlin Academicians were responsible for drafting inner proclamations, which included: 1) appointment proclamations (*ceshu*) of empresses, imperial concubines, and the heads of the Three Department military affairs; 2) proclamations (*zhishu*) regarding important military and political affairs, or for the appointments of Vice Directors and Military Commissioners; 3) imperial edicts (*zhaoshu*) appointing Edict Attendants and Surveillance Commissioners; and 4) imperial essays (*yuzha*) used in imperial ancestral sacrifices and for important orders. Hanlin Academicians were directly responsible to the emperor. They used special official documents for memorializing—*bangzi* to the emperor, and *zibao* to the Three Departments and the Bureau of Military Affairs. They were sometimes called Inner Grand Councilors (*neixiang*) and thus their positions were extremely prestigious. When it came to the appointments of grand councilors or significant state affairs, the emperor would summon Hanlin Academicians on duty to the small palace near East Palace Gate at night and gave orders to them in person. Academicians would then return to the Hanlin Academy to draft the proclamations and submit them to the inner court. On the other hand, drafters in the Secretariat were responsible for the outer proclamations that covered all imperial orders other than those conveyed through inner proclamations. These documents were then turned in to the grand councilors (Yamamoto 1968: chap. 10). Besides drafting imperial proclamations upon the orders of grand councilors, drafters in the Secretariat had the

right to “seal and return the notes of orders” (*fēnghuan citou*), that is, to refuse to draft certain proclamations. This was the original form of producing proclamations. During the Southern Song, however, various problems appeared: appointments were announced even before these two drafting groups composed the proclamations; distinctions between the two drafting groups disappeared; official documents produced by the two drafting groups were influenced by autocratic grand councilors; and official proclamations were not issued. Related to this situation, in the Southern Song, it became normal for officials to serve concurrently as Hanlin Academicians, Auxiliary Drafters or in other positions. Moreover, the set number of drafting officials was reduced and the offices were often understaffed. As a result, during the autocracy of Qin Gui, the principles of “remonstration” (*fēngbo*) and “sealing and retuning the notes of orders,” which expressed dissenting opinions to the executive government, indeed stopped functioning.³⁴

The eighth section, “On restoring the tradition of listening to ideas to enable the transmission of information upward from below,” comments:

In the flourishing era of the reigns of Emperor Taizu and Taizong, the emperors held audiences to make decisions sometimes until noon. In cases where the memorializing in a certain audience lasted so long that the rest of the audience groups could not be all received, the emperors would order palace Provisioners [*taiguan*] to serve food in the palace. Sometimes, when the ministers had not withdrawn, food was also served at the palace gate. After eating, the emperors would sit [in the palace] again to receive the rest of the audience groups. In the early years of Emperor Renzong’s reign, as many as nineteen groups of officials were presented for audiences. After that, memorializing in the inner palace never exceeded five groups. An imperial edict stipulated that before the hours of dragon [7 to 9 a.m.], one audience should be regularly saved for censors and remonstrators who had petitioned for audiences. This regulation was continually used, passed on from one reign to the next... When Qin [Gui] and Han [Tuo Zhou] wielded state power, they treated the august spirit [of the imperial dynasty] as stuff in their own cases, which they possessed and controlled. They only worried about people who might have [dissenting] words. [Therefore,] although two audience groups were presented every day, they were frequently interrupted. [To make it worse,] when those audiences started every morning, it was already the beginning of the hours of dragon [around 7 a.m.]. Those so-called attendants never had the chance to accompany the emperor at mealtimes, contributing ideas at leisure. If they wanted to express their opinions, [they had to] apply to the Office for Audience Ceremonies. Even the lecturers of the Classics Colloquium would be asked before [the colloquia] whether they would memorialize or not. The Two Scribes, although allowed to serve on duty [close to the emperor], had also to apply to the Office for Audience Ceremonies before they could have audiences. Those among the two memorializing groups were merely satisfied with formality, hoping to avoid [trouble]. Sometimes, when it came to some officials’ turn to participate in the audience rotations, [they refused to attend,] with the excuses of either promotion or illness. It is said that moral cultivation and lecturing are of the essence in how ministers have assisted rulers since ancient times. Currently, [officials] tell each other that merely speaking of moral cultivation and lecturing, one can still be called upright while not actually criticizing current politics; merely criticizing the emperor personally, one can thus demonstrate to others his integrity while indeed not antagonizing the current grand councilors. Alas, official morality has degenerated to this extent.

The text mentions that, in the dynasty’s most thriving period, the imperial audiences lasted until the hours of horse (i.e. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.). In the early years of Emperor Renzong’s reign, as many as nineteen audiences were held. During this period, the emperor received five memorializing groups at the front palace and ensured that censors and remonstrators had one audience before the hours of dragon, which became a rule.³⁵ During the autocracy of Qin Gui and Han Tuo Zhou, however, the number of audiences remained only two. Meanwhile, the time of audiences was limited to before seven in the morning, and audiences were frequently postponed until the next day. Moreover, officials such as the attendants, lecturers of the Classics Colloquium and the Two Scribes, who had originally enjoyed priority

34. See “On reappointing supervising secretaries and secretariat drafters,” *Major Events of the Restored Imperial Dynasty (Huangchao Zhongxing Dashiji)*, vol. 1.

35. Concerning the issue of “five memorializing groups” during Emperor Renzong’s reign, see Hirata (2012b).

in audiences, now needed to apply to the Office for Audience Ceremonies³⁶ if they wanted to meet the emperor for audiences. Furthermore, officials slated for “rotating audiences” often declined the audiences on the pretext of promotions or illness.³⁷ This was due to the political atmosphere, in which people avoided antagonizing the autocratic grand councilors. The latter half of this section discusses “imperial students’ demonstrations at the palace gate” and the issue of “the Public Petitioners Drum Office.” The court did not accept the students’ petitions and even exiled them in punishment. Petitions put into the mailbox set up in “the Public Petitioners Drum Office” were censored, and the office only took cases that contained no criticism of the government.³⁸

Although this text mainly described the situation under the dominance of Qin Gui, we can see similar descriptions in other sources.³⁹ Officials who had the opportunities for “sequential audiences” tended to avoid attending the audiences on the pretext of disease, while the “sequential audiences” for the officials of the Court of Judicial Review slightly increased. The main reason was that Qin Gui hated to see other people express their opinions to the emperor. It is therefore evident that under the rule of autocratic grand councilors, the opportunities for audiences diminished and officials were subject to strict supervision.

The ninth section “On restoring the tradition of the Three Commands to strengthen the imperial dynasty,” says:

With regard to the tradition of Three Commands of the imperial dynasty, when Emperor Taizu started this dynasty, learning from [the problems] of previous dynasties, [he] selected trustworthy officials to take charge of the imperial armies, numbering some hundred thousand [soldiers]. This was a significant means to strengthen the central forces while weakening the local ones, to guard the imperial household, and to defend the imperial capital. From the mid-Northern Song on, [the imperial armies] gradually became arrogant and lazy, and this situation was exacerbated during the years of Chongning and Daguang. When Gao Qiu was blessed with imperial favor and used [to administer the imperial armies], the discipline slackened, and only thirty thousand soldiers remained. Perhaps the disaster of Jingkang,⁴⁰ the weakening of the imperial capital, and the invasions of the barbarians resulted from this. From the restoration on, [the new court] first learned the lessons drawn from the previous failures. [The court] not only recruited soldiers strictly but also had them intensely trained. Even during difficult times with various troubles, even people as arrogant and stubborn as Xin Qizong and Wang Yuanzhi did not undermine the laws and regulations...Generally speaking, those appointed from the years of Qingyuan all focused on repaying private debts of gratitude and strengthening [their own] power. Those appointed from the years of Jiading on were all simply used to serve [the autocratic grand councilors] and to invite bribery for them. [These changes in the imperial armies] lost Emperor Taizu and Emperor Taizong’s intention to reside in a strengthened center and control weakened local forces.

According to the text, the number of soldiers in the Three Commands, which were the backbone of the imperial armies, declined from a hundred thousand to thirty thousand. Meanwhile, the army discipline slackened. This led to the Jingkang Incident. Learning a lesson from the fall of the Northern Song, the early Southern Song court recruited soldiers carefully and implemented severe punishments to enforce military discipline. During the autocracy of Han Tuozhou, however, appointments to the armies started to serve as a means to repay debts of gratitude or for aggrandizing power. When Shi Miyuan seized power, the armies were used for personal purposes of the grand councilor,

36. In the Southern Song, officials of the Office for Audience Ceremonies played a remarkable part in the documental transmission between the emperors and officials. See Fujimoto (2004).

37. Wei Liaoweng pointed out similar problems in his memorial “On duty regarding six unexplained issues and two theories of the villain and the righteous,” submitted in the fourth month of the first year of Baoqing (1225) when Emperor Lizong ascended the throne. This memorial revealed the situations of imperial audiences between the last years of Emperor Ningzong’s reign and the early stage of Emperor Lizong’s reign.

38. The attached note indicated the problems of “collective discussion (*jijun*)”: this occasion was no longer where officials exchange and discuss their ideas, but where they accepted decisions of autocratic grand councilors.

39. See *Major Events of the Restored Imperial Dynasty (Huangchao Zhongxing Dashiji)*, vol. 2, “resuming officials’ rotated audiences.”

40. This disaster refers to the Jingkang Incident, or the Humiliation of Jingkang. It took place in 1127 during the Jin-Song wars, when the invading Jurchen soldiers of the Jin Dynasty besieged and sacked the Song capital, Kaifeng. The Jin forces abducted Emperor Qinzong, his father Emperor Emeritus Huizong, along with many members of the imperial court. It marked the end of the Northern Song. (translation note)

and corruption was rampant.⁴¹

The tenth section, “On restoring the tradition of Military Commissioners to eliminate private purposes,” observes:

In the beginning of the imperial dynasty, [the court] first eliminated the problems passed down from the late Tang and Five Dynasties.⁴² It replaced military commissioners with prefects and replaced wars with studies of the classics. Within a hundred years, although there were occasional threats on the frontiers, there were never domestic riots. Therefore, although the power of the dynasty was weak, peoples’ support for the state did not diminish. That was because Emperors Taizu and Taizong set up guides and principles and cultivated ethics, so that the foundation [of state power] was rectified and the origin of [state power] was purified from above; former worthies and upright ministers distinguished the virtuous from the villainous and illuminated [the distinction] between righteousness and profit, so that the rules were engrained and discipline was manifested down below. [The court] did not overly amass wealth to undermine the foundation; neither did it abuse military power to invite barbarian viciousness. The ruling model of the dynasty was like this. Although it appeared to be weak, the foundation of the state was strong. Nevertheless, autocratic ministers seized any possible chances, using either peace or war as their strategies for power consolidation. When Wang Anshi seized power, he first assigned himself the tasks of enriching the state and strengthening its military power. Thereafter, he set up a special account book [*pangtong-bu*] to please the emperor, depriving the Three Fiscal Agencies of their power and concentrating it in the hands of the court. Once the state treasury was filled, [he] sent his vicious partisans to fight north and west. They exhausted [the army’s] manpower and wasted money to secure useless places. They exaggeratedly reported victory but covered up defeat to deceive the ruler. Eventually the loss of the armies and the collapse of discipline threatened and alarmed the imperial house.

In this text, regarding the issue of frontier defense centered on Military Commissioners, Wei Liaoweng argues for the consolidation of the essence of the state. The proposed essence was embodied in “setting up guides and principles,” “cultivating ethics,” “distinguishing worthies from villains,” and “illuminating the distinction between righteousness and profit.” This essence would lead the state to the “rule through culture,” which emphasized morality and spirit, and thus distinguished itself from Wang Anshi’s policies for “enriching the state and increasing its military power.” Autocratic grand councilors seized any possible opportunity, calling for either peace or war in order to consolidate their power. Qin Gui and Shi Miyuan represented those who argued for peace, and Han Tuo Zhou was among those supporting wars; in a section omitted here, Wei discusses their methods. Though not discussed in detail here, in a memorial entitled “Memorializing at a special audience in the seventh month of the year of Yiwei [1235]” (*yiwei qiu qiyue teban zoushi*) in *the Complete Collected Works of Wei Liaoweng*, Wei also points out that Military Commanderies were not staffed with experienced officials, and that as the power of Military Commissioners was reduced, it became concentrated on the hands of a few Military Commanders.

At the end of the memorial, Wei Liaoweng explained his purpose in proposing these ten pieces of advice. The most essential part of the section is as follows:

From the spring of the eighth year of Yuanfeng to the summer of the ninth year of Yuanyou, when the reign title was changed in to Shaosheng, Emperor Zhezong waited quietly for ten years before he ruled independently. The excellence of the personnel arrangements in the early Yuanyou period was indeed brought about by the Empress Dowager Xuanren. After the change of reign title, it was nevertheless not as good as before. At his time Fan Zuyu once commented: “Now this time of independent rule is a period when the root of the rise or fall of the Song Dynasty will be planted,

41. According to Wei Liaoweng’s fifth memorial “Of the audiences upon the appointment of Minister of Rites” (*The Complete Collected Works of Wei Liaoweng*, vol. 19), while the numbers of soldiers of the Three Commands declined, armies were continuously sent from the capital to the frontiers, which resulted in the ineffective defense in the capital.

42. Five Dynasties (907–960) was an era of political disunity in China between the fall of the Tang Dynasty and the founding of the Song. During this period, five dynasties quickly succeeded one another in the north, and more than ten independent states were established, mainly in the south. (translation note)

and when the foundation of the stability or instability of the country will be built. It is the beginning of people's joys or sorrows. It is a critical point for inviting or alienating worthies, and for the growth or decline of villains. It is a decisive time for losing or strengthening the mandate of heaven and people's support."

It is clear that Wei Liaoweng consistently believed that the political model of the Yuanyou Era was the most ideal one. When Emperor Zhezong took over and ruled independently, however, he restored the model of Emperor Shenzong's reign. As a result, everything under the Yuanyou model vanished like a burst bubble. Wei Liaoweng intended to make an analogy between the independent government of Emperor Lizong and that of Emperor Zhezong. He also cited Fan Zuyu's remonstrations to Emperor Zhezong at the beginning of his independent rule as a way to express his own views. Probably Wei hoped that emperor Lizong would see the analogy between the historical political situation and the period of Shi Miyuan's autocracy that he had personally experienced, and, as he began his own period of independent rule, would return to pursuing the correct direction.

According to the biography of Wei Liaoweng in Volume 437 of the *History of Song*, "the Emperor was touched when he read [the "Sealed Memorial in Response to the Edict"]. He immediately promoted it and was able to recite it in the Classics Colloquium. Thereafter, all the traditions were restored." Nevertheless, it seems Wei's proposals were actually not put into practice. The biography continues: "[Wei] returned to the court for six months and submitted more than twenty memorials, all concerning urgent issues of the day. The emperor was about to bring him to join the councilorship, but those jealous of Wei conspired to elbow him out, so that his position at court was insecure. State councilors then observed that Wei was the only important official who also knew military affairs and understood the situation of the country. Therefore, Wei was appointed Inspector of the Armies of Jinghu [Jinghu was comprised of the circuits of Jingxi, Hubei, and Hunan], concurrently holding the titles of Academician of the Duanming Palace and co-notary of the Bureau of Military Affairs. Meanwhile, when the Military Commander of Jianghuai, Zeng Conglong, died due to anxiety, the Jianghuai region was also entrusted to Liaoweng." This shows that after his return to the court, Wei repeatedly memorialized. But because of the antagonism from other court officials, Wei's suggestions were not implemented, and he himself was appointed to positions outside the capital.⁴³

In terms of its effectiveness, the importance of the "Sealed Memorial in Response to the Edict" should not be overestimated. Moreover, the wars against the Tangut Xixia, the Jurchen Jin, and the Mongols were tremendously important issues in the Southern Song. The "Sealed Memorial in Response to the Edict," however, did not address them. Nevertheless, one should keep in mind that before the memorial was submitted in the first year of the Duanping era (1234), the Xixia had been eradicated by the Mongols, and Jin was also destroyed by the allied armies of the Mongols and the Southern Song. The Southern Song therefore was able to take a short break from defense issues. Indeed, Wei's collected works preserves memorials that convey his opinions concerning military campaigns against the Jin, the Xixia, and the Mongols, such as "On selecting people to lead the garrison in four strategic sites in preparation for the Jin and Xia barbarians"; "On reclaiming farmland on Sichuan borderland" (the fifteenth year of Jiading [1222], *The Complete Collected Works of Wei Liaoweng*, vol. 16); the fourth and fifth memorials "Regarding the audiences upon the appointment of Minister of Rites" (the tenth month of the first year of Duanping, vol. 19); "Memorializing at a special audience in the seventh month of the year of Yiwei" (the seventh month of the second year of Duanping [1235], vol. 20); "On the three rivers and eight dams in Jiangling Prefecture" (the first month of the third year of Duanping [1236], vol.28); "On missed timing due to the discord of two grand councilors when outside enemies have not been quelled" (the second month of the third year of Duanping, vol. 29); and "Remonstrations on the ten issues regarding envoys reporting on completion of mission" (the fifth month of the third year of Duanping, vol. 30).

Regarding the timing of the submission of the "Sealed Memorial in Response to the Edict," it was before the so-called "entering Luoyang in the year of Duanping," the military campaign to recover the land in north China under-

43. In his memorials, such as, the second memorial "Regarding the audiences upon the appointment of Minister of Rites" (*The Complete Collected Works of Wei Liaoweng*, vol. 19), and "Petition on the repeal of the Imperial Brush protecting Shi Miyuan" (vol. 20), and "The first memorial on allowing Zhao Ruyu to enjoy sacrifices with Emperor Ningzong" (vol. 20), Wei Liaoweng constantly discussed some problems in the early years of Emperor Lizong's independent rule, including the conflicts between two political groups led by the two grand councilors, Qiao Xingjian and Zheng Qingzhi, respectively; and the remaining power of the autocratic grand councilor Shi Miyuan.

taken during the fifth and eighth months of the first year of Duanping. In addition, Zhen Dexiu's "Sealed memorial in response to edicts in the second month of the year of Jiawu" (*Collected Works of Zhen Dexiu [Xishan Xiansheng Zhen Wenzhong Gong Wenji]*, vol. 13) came out almost at the same time. The "second month" in this title indicates that Wei Liaoweng's memorial may also have been presented in the second or third month.

Wei's "Sealed Memorial in Response to the Edict" proposed to reform domestic politics on the Yuanyou model at a time when wars against external enemies were temporarily halted and Emperor Lizong started his independent rule upon the death of Shi Miyuan. This memorial contains proposals presented from the aspect of domestic politics and thus is a useful source for examining the political changes between the Northern Song and the Southern Song. Moreover, the fact that Wei's sealed memorial was often cited in Lü Zhong's *Major Events of the Restored Imperial Dynasty* indicates that the Southern Song people saw Wei's depictions of the historical changes as reliable.

IV. Conclusion

Finally, I would like to make a brief conclusion. The content of the "Sealed Memorial in Response to the Edict" can be summarized as follows: Wei Liaoweng singled out a major transitional period ranging from the New Policy reforms during the Xining and Yuanfeng years of the Northern Song to the era of autocratic grand councilors Qin Gui, Han Tuozhou, and Shi Miyuan in the Southern Song. He delineated the process by which power became concentrated in certain state councilors or in specific institutions connected to state councilors; accordingly, the offices of attendants and censors and remonstrators, the Classics Colloquium, the proclamation drafting office, and the institution of imperial audiences functioned poorly. The system that connected the emperor and his officials declined. In other words, the shrinking space for the emperor's participation in politics resulted in the dominance of autocratic grand councilors. The discussion of imperial audiences in the first section of this article illuminates the essence of this issue. The political pattern allowing different opinions from various officials, a pattern represented by "memorializing in separate groups," was replaced by the practice of "memorializing in a combined group." I argue that the change, by excluding other officials in decision-making, strengthened the ties between the emperor and state councilors, and especially between the emperor and certain grand councilors. In a similar fashion, from the end of the Northern Song on, the practice of "imperial handwritten edicts" was developed, in which the emperor and grand councilors made policies through the exchange of documents.⁴⁴ "The imperial handwritten edicts" replaced the traditional form of document processing, which had revolved around the Three Departments and Six Ministries, with a new mechanism of decision-making involving only the emperor and grand councilors.

At the very beginning of this article, I proposed to reconcile the two arguments of "imperial autocracy" and "the rising power of grand councilors." Based on the discussion above, I argue there is no big discrepancy between these two. If we take a macroscopic perspective to examine the political system, it is clear that while the field administration changed from the Northern Song "Kaifeng system" into the Southern Song "Hangzhou system," the system of imperial autocracy at the higher level did not change much between the Northern Song and the Southern Song. On the other hand, if we take a microscopic perspective, changes took place in the nature of the relations between the emperor and officials, as well as in the methods of policy making, which were closely connected to imperial power. Some aspects of the political system of imperial autocracy failed to function fully, and thus led to the monopoly of power by autocratic grand councilors. The above is my understanding of the debate regarding these two arguments so far. To examine "politics" at multiple levels and from various perspectives should be a task for future studies on Song political history.

44. For my arguments concerning imperial handwritten edicts, see Hirata (2008). Furthermore, Tokunaga (1998) argues that "imperial handwritten edicts" gradually became the center of the official document system between the late Northern Song and Southern Song. Regarding this institution Tokunaga says: "Studies on the institution of imperial handwritten edicts should not neglect its impacts on later dynasties. It presaged a system where the emperor meticulously discussed with grand councilors before making the decisions that were directly sent to administrations under the Six Ministries for execution. It was also closely connected to Ming dynasty institutions such as the Grand Secretariat, eunuchs of Directorate of Ceremonial, and Seal-holding Directors." Tokunaga perceived the institution of imperial handwritten edicts to be the origin of Grand Secretariat's notes in the Ming dynasty.

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