



Writing for Local Government Schools: Authors and Themes in Song-dynasty School Inscriptions

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Abstract

A hallmark of the Song dynasty's achievements was the creation of a national network of state-sponsored local schools. This engendered an exponential growth of commemorative inscriptions dedicated to local government schools. Many authors used these inscriptions as an avenue to expound and disseminate their visions of schools and education. Using the methods of network analysis and document clustering, this article analyzes all the inscriptions extant from Song times for local government schools. It reveals a structural schism in the diffusion of ideas between the Upper Yangzi and other regions of the Song. It also demonstrates the growing intellectual influence of Neo-Confucian ideologues that gradually overtook that of renowned prose-writers. Methodologically, this article provides an example of how diverse digital methods enable us to handle a large body of texts from multiple perspectives and invite us to explore connections we might not have otherwise thought of.

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