



THE STATE, THE GENTRY, AND LOCAL INSTITUTIONS: THE SONG DYNASTY AND LONG-TERM TRENDS FROM TANG TO QING *

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Summary

Historians have long aspired to see beyond the rise and fall of dynasties to the *longue durée* and the major changes over time in Chinese society. The five empirically rich and theoretically sophisticated books discussed in this essay all share this goal. While they make distinct contributions, they have in common close attention to the relationships between the state, the elite, and local institutions between the late Tang and Qing periods. Reading them together encourages rethinking the state-and-society issues that historians have been debating for a generation. In this essay, after a brief summary of each book's major contributions, I suggest ways they help us conceptualize the long-term processes of continuity and change from the late Tang to the Qing.

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