

A Song Dynasty Historical Gazetteer: Data Modeling for Spatial History Research

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China's Song dynasty (960-1276 CE) was an era of expanding bureaucratic state power and massive economic and population growth; but paradoxically also a time of warfare and political instability. During the 300 years of Song rule, there were over 4000 distinct entities in the spatial administrative system of local and regional government, organized in a four-tier system descending from provinces to markets. The spatial organization of the Song was complex. For instance, many jurisdictions shared both civil and military names, and there were several coexisting ranking systems. There were multiple types of jurisdictions at every level of the administrative hierarchy, corresponding to different expectations for personnel management and taxation structures. Finally, the whole system was highly fluid. There were over 1,000 instances during the Song dynasty when jurisdictions were created or abolished, or were moved from the authority of one parent unit to another. This paper is a practical introduction to a database of Song political geography. We discuss data acquisition and digitization, the development of a comprehensive and sound data model, integration of multiple data sources, georeferencing, and mapping. Finally, we explore the range of historical questions that this resource can elucidate and its implications for historical research.