

CONQUERORS AND RULERS

SOCIAL FORCES IN MEDIEVAL CHINA

BY

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FOREWORD

This is a complete revision of my 1952 book. I have tried to eliminate mistakes, to refine my theories, to express myself more clearly, and to take into consideration new materials which were not available in 1952. Some parts of the book, especially the introductory chapter (Chapter 1), have been published in an earlier form and have been revised; other parts are completely new. As always, my wife, Alide Eberhard, has not only tried to improve upon my style, but has given me valuable criticism and help. Many thanks go to Miriam Dyer-Bennet for her reading the manuscript and correcting errors.

INTRODUCTION

The following chapters are an attempt of a sociological interpretation. From time to time one feels the need to sum up what has been brought forward by research so far, and to provoke a positive or negative reaction. Any interpretation is somehow made one-sided by overstressing certain points and leaving out others. The writer is perfectly aware of the fact that other interpretations of the topic under discussion are possible and necessary. But he believes that a sociological analysis is particularly useful for an understanding of this special and complicated period of Far Eastern history. The more research is done, the more this interpretation will have to be modified or the more substantiated it will be in its essential parts. The questions raised in this book are largely questions that originated in the field of historical sociology—a relatively new field which utilizes sociological insights gained from the study of present-day Western societies. Medieval Chinese society was studied with the question in mind: given that Western society in situations of particular types behaved in particular ways, did China in similar situations behave similarly or differently? And if so, what were the reasons? This kind of approach involves a number of theoretical problems which are the subject of the first chapter.

Chapters of a more theoretical, general character are followed by chapters illustrating the theory by a special example. The tenth century supplied us with two excellent examples for patterns of creation of a dynasty, one dynasty of conquest and one of revolt. The concluding chapter will try to sum up the results of the changes which went on in the turbulent sixty years of the "Period of Five Dynasties".