

SONG CITIES AND MONGOL CONQUEST
THE SUBURBS: MERCHANTS, SCHOLARS AND DOCTORS

Inside the city gate the activity is frantic. In fact, the level of commercial activity is the same inside and outside the gate. This differs from previous dynasties, where markets were carefully controlled and were only held in fixed places. By Song times shops and peddlers had expanded to every corner of the city, and new walls were often added to enclose the new suburbs. Trade is everywhere, and this combination of wholesalers and retail stores, of shops and stalls, of peddlers with huge wheelbarrows and street vendors with a few strings of candy sweets, is the economic and social indicator of the Song commercial revolution.

In the foreground, a barber is shaving a customer. His stall leans on the rear wall of a small temple. A couple of camels heavily loaded are leaving the city, while the tax collectors examine the bundles and verify the documents of a group of merchants who are either entering or leaving the city. In the middle of the street, a great quantity of donkeys and wheelbarrows, heavily loaded with bundles, suggest a caravan on its way. In the barrel shop nearby a couple of men, probably the safety escorts of the caravan are drawing a bow to its maximum extent. A three-story quality restaurant with fancy decoration has a gathering of customers at its doors. Many sedan chairs are heading towards the restaurant. At the corner of the street a group of people are listening to a story teller. A Buddhist monk, a Daoist priest and a scholar listen together to it: as we said before, this new form of entertainment attracted everybody. A little farther on, a Buddhist monk and a scholar are talking. This religious mixing is seen everywhere too. A wheelbarrow loaded with two wine barrels is crossing the street. Right in the middle of the scene a pawnshop gathers a small crowd in front of it.

There were dozens of pawnbrokers in Song times. These money lenders were needed to ensure the flow of capital for the thriving commercial activity. On the other side of the street three umbrellas protect a display of Buddhist religious objects. Beside it, two men draw water from a well, and further on there is a pharmacy. **The pharmacy owner's name is announced with a label on top of the door**, and two inscriptions advertise herbal remedies for all kinds of illness. The pharmacist is attending two women, one of them holding a small child: by Song

times both obstetrics and child-care were well established branches of Song medicine. Treatments based on a very wide knowledge of medical herbs went along with treatments of a magical nature. At the very end of the scroll stands the house of a high official with its gateway indicated by ornamental eaves. It could be the residence of the high official riding a horse nearby. Civil service entailed great mobility, because nobody could stay in the same post for more than three years.

The high official is either entering or leaving the city, because the scroll ends here. And that's also what we are going to do just now. But keep this city in mind because we'll come back to it, next time **seeing it through traveler's eyes**.