spective, even so-called European innovations such as the joint-stock company and state mercantilism appear rather rigid and defensive exigencies. On the other hand, Indian merchants-cum-moneylenders, far from being mere “peddlers,” are portrayed as wealthy and powerful businessmen. For example, Dale shows that their access to huge amounts of cash repeatedly forced the always penurious Russian government to lift its protective policies. Here again, he contrasts the “absolutist” Russian approach to trade against the policy of laissez-faire and free trade on the part of the Safavid and Mughal state. In all this he stresses, in particular, the resilience of the Indian economy which overshadowed its neighbours in terms of its overall size, diversity and sophistication.

Dale’s balancing act against Eurocentrism becomes particularly rewarding when he takes into account the previous work done by Russian scholars. Although he was declined permission to visit the city and district archives of Astrakhan, Dale’s main contribution lies in making Russian sources and secondary literature accessible to a larger circle of scholars. To some extent, he follows in the footsteps of the Indian historian Surendra Gopal, who in his *Indians in Russia in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (New Delhi: ICHR, 1988) translated already a great deal of the document collections edited by K.A. Antonova and N.M. Goldberg (*Russko-Indiiske Otnosheniia*). Recently, another Indian scholar, Muzaffar Alam [in *JESHO* 37.3 (1994)] reminded us of the riches of Turko-Persian sources in places such as Tashkent, Dushanbe and St. Petersburg. Now, Dale’s exciting work again demonstrates the potentialities of the Russian archival holdings.

Obviously, a wide-ranging and stimulating study such as this always suffers from certain imbalances. I feel that two aspects of Eurasian trade stand in need of further elaboration. First, Dale pays more attention to Iran than to Central Asia. Hence, he suggests that, mostly as a result of growing European competition through the Baltic circuit, the India trade with Russia was declining during the eighteenth century. While Indo-Russian trade in Astrakhan took a downturn after about 1700, it appears that a great deal of the trade shifted towards the new Russian colonies in southern Siberia and Central Asia. Although not having a large community of Indian merchants of its own, it was Orenburg, not Astrakhan, which became the major entrepot of the India trade after about 1740. It was only, late, during the eighteenth century that this commerce gradually shifted from long-distance transit trade in luxuries to shorter-distance terminal trade in necessities.

Second, when Dale speaks about “Arab pirates” and “tribal attacks” that interdicted inter-regional trade, he clearly reflects the viewpoint of the sedentary authorities in political capitals such as Delhi, Isfahan and Moscow. Obviously, the mobility of pastoral nomads and other wandering groups often undermined the existing order of the state. At the same time, though, the turbulence of these very groups was the sine qua non of the overland trade between India, Iran and Central Asia. Especially during the eighteenth century, along the frontiers of established empires, “pirates” like the Omanis and “tribes” like the Afghans created their own, mobile, order on the basis of both conquest and trade.

However, these are just a few marginalia that should not distract the reader from the overall impression that this is a pioneering and stimulating study that will clearly set the agenda for future research.

Jos GOMMANS
Kern Institute, Leiden University


John Chaffee’s *Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China* explores the history and social context of China’s civil service examination system through its formative years during the
Sung dynasty (960-1279). Originally published by the Cambridge University Press in 1985, it was one of a series of books on middle period Chinese history to appear in the mid-1980s that were influenced by Robert Hartwell’s seminal study of social change, “Demographic, Political, and Social Transformations of China, 750-1550”3). Among the most significant of these were Pat Ebrey’s commentary on Yuan Ts’ai’s Precepts for Social Life5), Robert Hymes’s dissection of the elite of Fu-chou (Chiang-hsi3), the detailed analyses of the civil service and bureaucratic systems by Winston Lo6) and Umehara Kaoru7), and Thomas Lee’s study of education that is such an important complement to the text in question6).

These works marked a revolution in the study of China’s middle period in the West7). They initiated a departure from the traditional focus on institutional and intellectual history that had dominated middle period studies previously, toward a wholly new line of inquiry focused on questions of society and culture that has been at the heart of middle period historiography in the decade since. In their pursuit of these issues, the authors explored new sources of data such as genealogies (tsu-p’u, chia-p’u, tsung-p’u), local histories (jiang-chih), and collected works (wen-chi) that had been underutilized or even ignored by earlier scholars. The result was to open up heretofore unimagined lines of inquiry in the field and to steer middle period studies in wholly new directions.

Now, in a development that should please all historians of China, Thorny Gates, one of the most widely used and important of these hugely influential studies, has been reissued by the SUNY Press after going out of print at Cambridge. Except for the addition of a new preface, the current volume is unchanged from the original. The preface combines a brief bibliographic review of work on Sung education and examinations as well as some of the more important works on Sung society produced since the original publication with Chaffee’s reflections on his text ten years later.

Thorny Gates, of course, has been reviewed and commented upon before6). A brief summary of structure and comment, therefore, should suffice. The work is divided into three parts. Part I opens with a general introduction to the topic of examinations in Sung culture, including the author’s positioning of his text relative to the extent literature, an issue to which I shall return below. The following chapter is an overview of the several routes of recruitment into the Sung bureaucracy. Much of the brief discussion of process has been superceded by the detailed studies of Winston Lo and Umehara Kaoru mentioned above. Chaffee, however, is more interested in the social context of recruitment than the institutional processes that occupy much of Lo and Umehara, and his discussion of issues such as the position of chu-zen and the growth of the literati, those whose lives focused on education and preparation for the examinations, remains important.

Part II, composed of three chapters, is a chronological survey of the history of the examinations under the Sung. The founding Sung emperors T’ai-tsung (r. 960-76) and T’ai-tsung (r. 976-97) elaborated upon a system of examinations they had inherited from the T’ang dynasty to develop an institution that could function as the primary route of elite bureaucratic recruitment6). Chaffee first recounts the adjustments made to the T’ang system to meet the needs of the court through the first century of Sung rule when many of the basic outlines of the later imperial system were put in place. He then turns to the last two centuries of the dynasty, looking at the accommodation of the literati to the system and their companion attempts to perpetuate advantages to ensure their family’s continued prominence. He first deals with the reform movements of the mid and late eleventh-century, as well as with the spread of government-sponsored and private education. Then he looks at the abuses that crept into the system during the Southern Sung (1126-1279), especially those that favored specific literati groups such as the collateral members of the imperial family, who came to dominate the lists in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The final part, which to this reader is the most interesting and original section of the entire book, looks at geographic patterns of participation and success and the “culture” of the exams. In the discussion of geography, Chaffee is concerned with the development of regional quotas in the examinations and the ability of certain regions to outperform others