

## FOREWORD

Except for the Bibliographical Note and the Introduction by Denis Twitchett each of the essays in this volume was prepared for the seminar on the T'ang dynasty held at Carleton College during the spring term of 1972. Though the editors began the planning for this seminar in 1970 before they were aware of the conference which led to the excellent publication by Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett entitled *Perspectives on the T'ang* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), they were generously provided with the drafts of these papers by Professor Wright for use by students in their preparatory reading for the seminar. Of the eleven papers given at the Carleton seminar the ones included here were chosen in part because they related naturally to each other. While the seminar itself did deal extensively with literary and artistic aspects of the T'ang, we regret that we were not able to include papers on these areas in the final collection. Financial constraints made it impossible. We are hopeful, nevertheless, that a certain cohesiveness is present in the essays which constitute this volume.

As the title indicates, the focus is upon matters social, political and economic and the interplay among these as seen in the personage of the first major T'ang emperor, the chronic militarism which became part of T'ang affairs after 755, the tribute relationships with Türks and Uighurs at various points throughout the dynasty, and the diverse patterns of provincial autonomy which constituted T'ang political and economic life in the eighth and ninth centuries especially. As many commentators have pointed out about the T'ang, it was not only a period of extraordinary vitality and richness but of very complex forces threatened as well as held together by ongoing tensions both within the imperial court and between the central government and provincial authority. Tensions were also at play within the economic sphere wherein new patterns of land use were fashioned, new forms of financial administration arose, and new sorts of commercial activities developed, inspiring ambivalent attitudes towards them. The overall picture was regularly being complicated by the T'ang's relations both with foreign elements within the realm and with the constant threat

of invasion or harassment on the borders, particularly to the north-west.

The complexity of the T'ang social scene has become increasingly clear through the efforts of scholarship over the past half century. In many respects, scholarly judgment remains tentative and piecemeal. On the other hand, with the discoveries of crucially important documents at Tun-huang and Turfan at the turn of the century and with the impressive work done by Japanese scholars on T'ang social and economic history since World War I, work in Western languages is now contributing significantly to the understanding of this period. The essays in this volume are in part a contribution to that understanding and in part a reflection of it. The volume is designed to be of interest to the specialist and of help to the non-specialist. As with the Introduction, the Bibliographic Note was added with the non-specialist in mind. Its focus is entirely on materials available in Western languages. While original scholarship depends necessarily on materials in Chinese and Japanese, the beginnings of a sophisticated understanding of T'ang social history can be obtained through careful reading of work done in English, French and German during the past couple of generations. With the exception of the Wright and Twitchett volume mentioned above, there are almost no treatments of this subject which both go beyond very general surveys and which are at the same time appropriate to the student of Chinese history who is not a specialist on this period. It was this readership the editors principally had in mind with the publication of these essays.