

THE TOYO GAKUHO
(REPORTS OF THE ORIENTAL SOCIETY)

Vol. 47, No. 1

June 1964

Kung shih ch'ien 公使錢 in Sung Period

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Kung shih ch'ien 公使錢 was a special fund set aside for the use of local offices at the *Chou* 州, *Chün* 軍 and higher levels, as well as of the imperial families and high officials. The money was used for such local purposes as repairing *Yamen* 衙門 (county offices), buying stationery, receiving guests and foreign missions, and giving rewards to military men. *Tsa shou ch'ien* 雜收錢 and various petty taxes supplied the bulk of this fund. However, the Sung policy of financial centralization, especially after the war against *Hsi hsia* 西夏, resulted in steady transference of the money from the local to the central government. Since *Kung shih ch'ien* was kept at *Kung shih k'u* 公使庫, which in turn was managed by *Ya ch'ien* 衙前, or corvée labourers, they had to make up for the loss of revenue. Many of them were ruined as a result.

In the reign of *Shen tsung* 神宗, *Wang An-shih* 王安石 took charge of state affairs as the leading court minister. He promulgated his *Hsin fa* 新法 (New Policies) and tried to reconstruct local finance. First he placed *Kung shih k'u* under the supervision of *Ssu nung ssu* 司農寺 (Court of agriculture), not *San ssu* 三司 (Finance commission of the central government). He then transferred the management of *Kung shih k'u* from *Ya ch'ien* to hired military men and thus lightened the burden of civilians. He also re-adjusted the allotment of *Kung shih ch'ien* to *Chou* and *Chün*. Consequently, the amount to *Kung shih ch'ien* was increased as a whole.

After the resignation of *Wang An-shih*, the conservatives came back to power. They rescinded many of the New Policies, and reduced the amount of *Kung shih ch'ien*. The subsequent rotation of political power between the reformers and the conservatives resulted in constant change in this amount. At the beginning of the Sung, the money was spent legally and adequately. Due to the corruption of bureaucrats, *Kung shih ch'ien* could not continue to fulfil its primary functions. However, it is worth mentioning that during the Sung period, local finance played an important role in central government policy.