Summary

The Chinese Civil Examination top scholars, better known as zhuang yuan (状元), were a group of elites who had great influence in all aspects of the Song Dynasty (960-1279A.D). Although there were some researches performed on this group of elite, much of their information was not used to discuss issues such as social mobility or Tang-Song Transition. Hence, studies on these groups of elites are important to have a deeper understanding on the nature of the Song Dynasty.

The main objective of this thesis is to explore the changing processes of the zhuang yuan’s geographical location of ancestry, family background & marriage network and their post appointments & promotion opportunities from Tang to Song Dynasty.

Chapter One provides an introduction which highlights the research objective and methodology. It also gives a literature review on the system of the Song Civil Examination and social mobility researches conducted by various scholars since 1950.

Chapter Two gives a thorough examination on the geographical location of ancestry of the Song zhuang yuan. There was a significant trend of population-shift south-ward from Northern Song to Southern Song.
Chapter Three discusses the family background and marriage network of the *zhuang yuan*. In the transition of Tang to Song dynasty, there was a decreasing number of *zhuang yuan* from bureaucratic background. Therefore, it could be gathered that the social mobility in Song Dynasty was much higher in the Tang Dynasty.

Chapter Four carefully examines *zhuang yuan*’s post appointment and promotion opportunities. It was found that the Song *zhuang yuan*’s initial appointment in the court and final post held were much higher than other dynasties such as the Tang, Ming and Qing. Likewise, their promotions were much faster than other dynasties. Therefore, the studies determined that the Song *zhuang yuan* were a group of elites who were well-respected and valued by the Dynasty.

Chapter Five gives a final conclusion.