ABSTRACT

Jia Sidao 贾似道 (1213 - 1275) was the chancellor of Southern Song dynasty 南宋 (1127 - 1279) from 1259 to 1276. As a dominant figure in Southern Song politics towards the end of the dynasty, he had been blamed in traditional Chinese scholarship for the decline and eventual downfall of Southern Song. However, such accusation was considered questionable by some scholars recently, who have examined the factual record of Jia's career in detail. This academic exercise attempts to achieve a more objective appreciation of Jia's role in the fall of Southern Song dynasty.

Chapter one outlines the accusations made by traditional Chinese historians against Jia. It is followed by a general historical background of the dynasty, together with Jia's life and career. Chapters three to six review Jia's performance in certain aspects of his political career. Discussed areas include his economic policies, defence initiatives and diplomacy with the Mongols. Also examined are the way he sought for power, his private life and personality. These aspects are highlighted here because we find in them the major charges on him by traditional historians. The final chapter summarises the findings of the previous chapters.

From the study, it is shown that most of the
accusations made against Jia cannot be well substantiated. Despite all his shortcomings and faults, Jia should not be singled out as the only man responsible for the downfall of the Southern Song dynasty.

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