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## **Literati, Urban Life, and Alternatives to Officialdom**

### **Abstract**

This paper looks at the *literati* outside officialdom who were, for various reasons, obliged to make living — they presumably formed the majority. Although nonofficial employment within the bureaucratic system seems to have been preferable to most, but it was hard to come by and temporal. Outside the system there also was a range of professions which, in public eyes, fitted the *literati* status; ventures such as writing articles and inscriptions, painting, trading antiques, publishing books etc. These professions were linked with city and the demand of its clientele of diverse social background. It should be noted that commoners, too, made use of *literati* skills for living. My paper comes to the conclusion that in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, *literati* professions and services offered in wealthy towns such as Yangzhou, were increasingly infiltrated by commoners. As long as they excelled in their respective field, however, they could easily assimilate into the cultural elite.