

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY
OF CHINA

General Editors

DENIS TWITCHETT AND JOHN K. FAIRBANK

Volume 7
The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, Part I

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Volume 7
The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, Part I

edited by
FREDERICK W. MOTE and DENIS TWITCHETT



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GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

When *The Cambridge History of China* was first planned, more than two decades ago, it was naturally intended that it should begin with the very earliest periods of Chinese history. However, the production of the series has taken place over a period of years when our knowledge both of Chinese prehistory and of much of the first millennium B.C. has been transformed by the spate of archeological discoveries that began in the 1920s and has been gathering increasing momentum since the early 1970s. This flood of new information has changed our view of early history repeatedly, and there is not yet any generally accepted synthesis of this new evidence and the traditional written record. In spite of repeated efforts to plan and produce a volume or volumes that would summarize the present state of our knowledge of early China, it has so far proved impossible to do so. It may well be another decade before it will prove practical to undertake a synthesis of all these new discoveries that is likely to have some enduring value. Reluctantly, therefore, we begin the coverage of *The Cambridge History of China* with the establishment of the first imperial regimes, those of Ch'in and Han. We are conscious that this leaves a millennium or more of the recorded past to be dealt with elsewhere, and at another time. We are equally conscious of the fact that the events and developments of the first millennium B.C. laid the foundations for the Chinese society and its ideas and institutions that we are about to describe. The institutions, the literary and artistic culture, the social forms, and the systems of ideas and beliefs of Ch'in and Han were firmly rooted in the past, and cannot be understood without some knowledge of this earlier history. As the modern world grows more interconnected, historical understanding of it becomes ever more necessary and the historian's task ever more complex. Fact and theory affect each other even as sources proliferate and knowledge increases. Merely to summarize what is known becomes an awesome task, yet a factual basis of knowledge is increasingly essential for historical thinking.

Since the beginning of the century, the Cambridge histories have set a pattern in the English-reading world for multivolume series containing chapters written by specialists under the guidance of volume editors. *The*

Cambridge Modern History, planned by Lord Acton, appeared in sixteen volumes between 1902 and 1912. It was followed by *The Cambridge Ancient History*, *The Cambridge Medieval History*, *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, and Cambridge histories of India, of Poland, and of the British Empire. The original *Modern History* has now been replaced by *The New Cambridge Modern History* in twelve volumes, and *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe* is now being completed. Other Cambridge histories include histories of Islam, Arabic literature, Iran, Judaism, Africa, Japan, and Latin America.

In the case of China, Western historians face a special problem. The history of Chinese civilization is more extensive and complex than that of any single Western nation, and only slightly less ramified than the history of European civilization as a whole. The Chinese historical record is immensely detailed and extensive, and Chinese historical scholarship has been highly developed and sophisticated for many centuries. Yet until recent decades the study of China in the West, despite the important pioneer work of European sinologists, had hardly progressed beyond the translation of some few classical historical texts, and the outline history of the major dynasties and their institutions.

Recently Western scholars have drawn more fully upon the rich traditions of historical scholarship in China and also in Japan, and greatly advanced both our detailed knowledge of past events and institutions, and also our critical understanding of traditional historiography. In addition, the present generation of Western historians of China can also draw upon the new outlooks and techniques of modern Western historical scholarship, and upon recent developments in the social sciences, while continuing to build upon the solid foundations of rapidly progressing European, Japanese, and Chinese studies. Recent historical events, too, have given prominence to new problems, while throwing into question many older conceptions. Under these multiple impacts the Western revolution in Chinese studies is steadily gathering momentum.

When *The Cambridge History of China* was first planned in 1966, the aim was to provide a substantial account of the history of China as a benchmark for the Western history-reading public: an account of the current state of knowledge in six volumes. Since then the outpouring of current research, the application of new methods, and the extension of scholarship into new fields have further stimulated Chinese historical studies. This growth is indicated by the fact that the history has now become a planned fifteen volumes, but will still leave out such topics as the history of art and of literature, many aspects of economics and technology, and all the riches of local history.

The striking advances in our knowledge of China's past over the last decade will continue and accelerate. Western historians of this great and complex subject are justified in their efforts by the needs of their own peoples for greater and deeper understanding of China. Chinese history belongs to the world not only as a right and necessity, but also as a subject of compelling interest.

JOHN K. FAIRBANK
DENIS TWITCHETT

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PREFACE TO VOLUME 7

The Chinese is romanized according to the Wade-Giles system, which for all its imperfections is employed almost universally in the serious literature on China written in English. There are a few exceptions, which are noted below. For Japanese, the Hepburn system of romanization is followed. Mongolian is transliterated following A. Mostaert, *Dictionnaire Ordos* (Peking, Catholic University, 1941), as modified by Francis W. Cleaves, and further simplified as follows

č becomes ch
š becomes sh
γ becomes gh
q becomes kh
j becomes j

The transliteration of other foreign languages follows the usage in L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming biography* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1976).

Chinese personal names are given following their native form—that is with surname preceding the given name, romanized in the Wade-Giles system. In the case of Chinese authors of Western-language works, the names are given in the published form, in which the given name may sometimes precede the surname (for example, Chaoying Fang). In the case of some contemporary scholars from the People's Republic of China, we employ their preferred romanization in the Pinyin system (for example, Wang Yuquan), and for some Hong Kong scholars, we follow the Cantonese transcriptions of their names under which they publish in English (for example, Hok-lam Chan, Chiu Ling-yeoung).

Chinese place names are romanized according to the Wade-Giles system with the exception of those places familiar in the English-language literature in nonstandard postal spellings. For a list of these, see G. William Skinner, *Modern Chinese society: A critical bibliography* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), Vol. I, Introduction, p. iix. The two areas around Peking and Nanking under the direct control of the court are referred to in

Chinese as Pei Chih-li and Nan Chih-li respectively, and in English as the Northern and Southern Metropolitan Regions. And finally, although Peking should properly be referred to as Pei-p'ing (The North is Pacified) from 1368 to 1420, in the interest of clarity it is anachronistically referred to as Peking throughout the text, except in those places where the history of the city's name is under discussion.

Ming official titles generally follow those given in Charles O. Hucker, *A dictionary of official titles in imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), with the following modifications regarding the terms *Secretariat* and *grand secretariat*. For the period until 1380, the term "Secretariat" is employed. After that date, we employ consistently the form "grand secretariat" to translate *nei-ko*, to underline the unofficial character of that institution. Its members are referred to with the title "grand secretary." Charles O. Hucker's earlier translation of "National University" for *Kuo-tzu chien* has been preferred over "Directorate of Education," and the translation "Protector of the State" has been preferred over "Regent" for the term *chien-kuo*, since the Ming dynasty did not strictly speaking institute any provisions for a regency. An exception is made in the case of the short-lived provisional regimes of the Southern Ming (see Chapter 11), when normal government was no longer feasible.

Emperors are referred to by their temple names during their reign and by their personal names prior to their accession. The reign title of "Ch'eng-tsu" is romanized in the form "Yung-lo," which has become conventional in English-language literature, rather than in the form "Yung-le." The dates for an emperor's reign refer to the years when the regnal title was formally instituted. Because the regnal title remained in use after an emperor's death until the end of the lunar year in which he died, in most cases, emperors ascended the throne during the year prior to the institution of their regnal titles. For example, the Ch'eng-hua emperor ascended the throne in February 1464, but his regnal title was not used until the beginning of the next lunar year, and hence the first year of his reign is traditionally given as 1465.

Dates have been converted to their Western equivalents in the Julian calendar until 1582 and the Gregorian calendar thereafter, following Keith Hazelton, *A synchronic Chinese-Western daily calendar 1341-1661 A.D.*, Ming Studies Research Series, No. 1 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). The reader should remember that when Chinese sources refer to a year alone, this year does not correspond exactly to its Western equivalent.

The ages of individuals are sometimes cited in the Chinese form of *sui*. Conventionally a person was one *sui* at birth and became two *sui* on the

New Year following. Thus in Western terms a person was always at least one year younger than his Chinese age in *sui* and might be almost two years younger if he were born at the end of the Chinese year. In attempting to give dates for individuals where birth or death dates are not available, the form *cs.* (*chin shih*) is used to indicate the year in which the individual passed the highest civil service examination.

The maps are based on the recent historical atlas of Yüan and Ming China, which appears as Vol. 7 of the series *Chung-kuo li-shih ti-t'u chi* (Shanghai: Chung-hua ti-t'u hsüeh-she, 1975).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The editors of this volume owe thanks first of all to the worldwide community of Ming scholars, a large percentage of whom attended the Ming History Workshops held at Princeton through the summers of 1979 and 1980, where planning and writing for this volume and Volume 8 were begun. All of us who have written chapters here have benefited from all those other colleagues not present as authors in ways that go well beyond the debts acknowledged in the footnotes. The National Endowment for the Humanities generously supported those workshops and subsequent coordination of the work on this volume and the forthcoming Volume 8. The Mellon Foundation through the Committee on Studies of Chinese Civilization of the American Council of Learned Societies provided grants to students attending the two summer workshops; their presence added much to the quality of those exploratory activities. We are grateful for those kinds of support, as for that generously provided by the Program in East Asian Studies of Princeton University.

Foremost among individuals who must be accorded special words of gratitude here is Dr. James Geiss, who has coordinated the Ming History Project through the years. In addition to writing two chapters in the present volume, his scholarly editing has contributed substantially to the continuity and quality of the volume as a whole. Others whose help has proved invaluable are Professors Wang Yuquan (Peking) and Hsü Hong (Taipei), who during periods of residence at Princeton and since have given generously of their extensive knowledge and their critical advice; Professor Ray Huang, who throughout all stages of the work has contributed stimulus and wise counsel, drawing on his penetrating analyses of Chinese civilization; Dr. Philip de Heer, who offered invaluable advice on mid-fifteenth-century political history; Dr. Keith Hazelton, who devised the computer supports and ensured that they worked; Nancy Norton Tomasko, whose considerable command of Chinese language and scholarship has contributed to her meticulous editing and skillful indexing; and Dr. Howard Goodman, who prepared the drafts for all the maps and

tables in this volume. Cooperative scholarship has never been better served. For all the delays in completing this volume and for its shortcomings, we of course are alone responsible.

F.W.M.

D.C.T.

ABBREVIATIONS

BIHP	<i>Chung yang yen chiu yüan li shih yü yen yen chiu so (Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica)</i>
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
CKL	<i>Cho keng lu</i>
CNW	<i>Chung-kuo nei luan wai huo li shih ts'ung shu (alternately Chung-kuo chin tai nei luan wai huo li shih ku shih ts'ung shu)</i>
CSL	<i>Ta Ch'ing li ch'ao shih lu</i>
DMB	<i>Dictionary of Ming Biography</i>
ECCP	<i>Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period</i>
HJAS	<i>Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JAS	<i>Journal of Asian Studies</i>
KC	<i>Kuo ch'üeh</i>
MC	<i>Ming chi</i>
MCSYC	<i>Ming Ch'ing shih yen chiu ts'ung kao</i>
MHY	<i>Ta Ming hui yao</i>
MS	<i>Ming shih</i>
MSCSPM	<i>Ming shih chi shih pen mo</i>
MSL	<i>Ming shih lu</i>
MTC	<i>Ming t'ung chien</i>
MTCTS	<i>Ming tai chih tu shih lun t'sung</i>
MTSHCCS	<i>Ming tai she hui ching chi shih lun ts'ung</i>
TMHT	<i>Ta Ming hui tien</i>
TW	<i>T'ai-wan wen hsien ts'ung k'an</i>
YS	<i>Yüan shih</i>

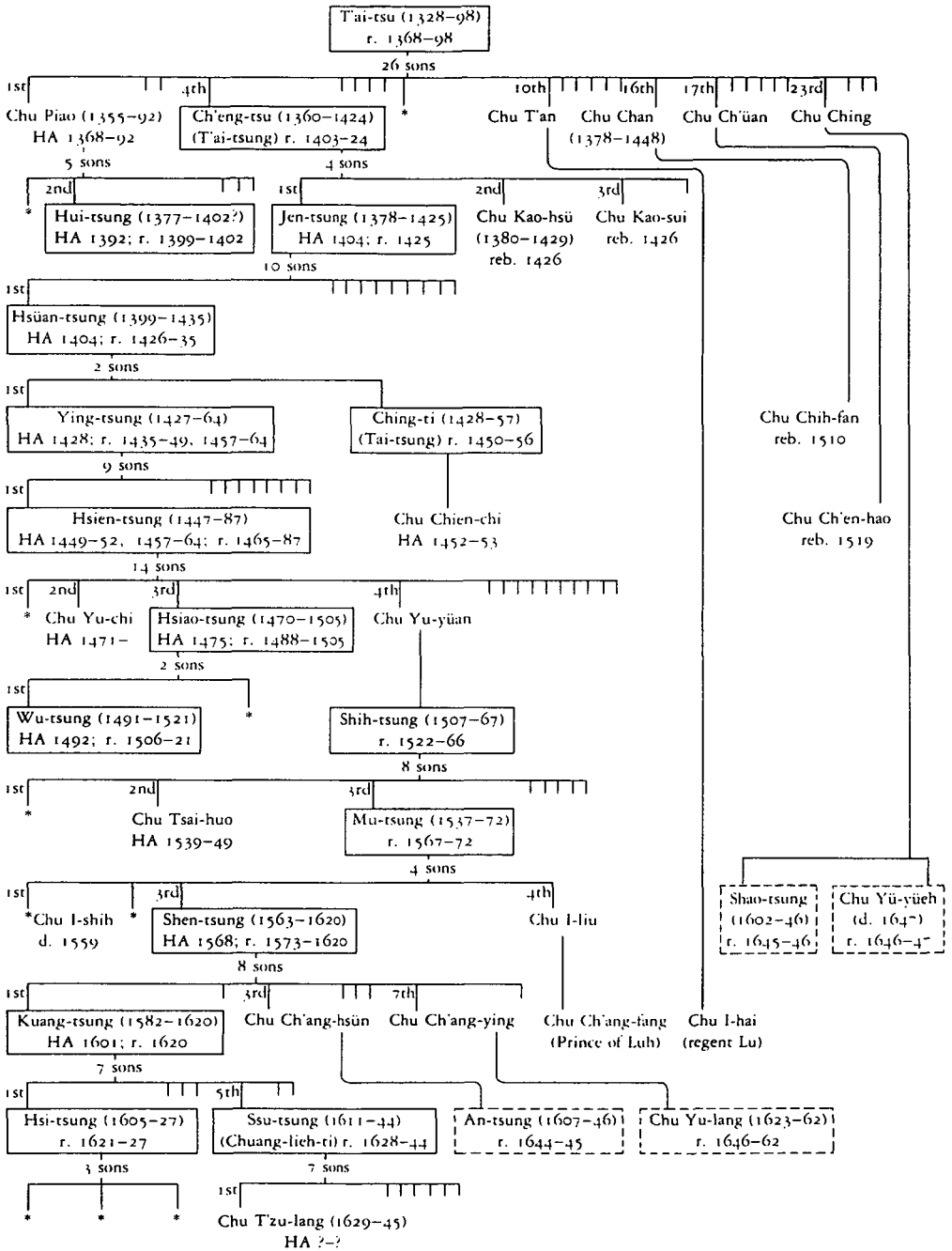
MING WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

I. Length	1 <i>ch'ih</i>	= 10	<i>ts'un</i>
		= 12.3	inches (approx.)
	1 <i>pu</i> (double pace)	= 5	<i>ch'ih</i>
	1 <i>chang</i>	= 10	<i>ch'ih</i>
	1 <i>li</i>	= 1/3	mile
II. Weight	1 <i>liang</i> (tael)	= 1.3	ounces
	1 <i>chin</i> (catty)	= 16	<i>liang</i>
		= 1.3	pounds (approx.)
III. Capacity	1 <i>sheng</i>	= 0.99	quart (approx.)
	1 <i>tou</i>	= 10	<i>sheng</i>
	1 <i>shihltan</i> (picul)*	= 10	<i>tou</i>
		= 99	quarts
		= 3.1	bushels
IV. Area	1 <i>mou</i> (<i>mu</i>)	= 0.14	acre
	1 <i>ch'ing</i>	= 100	<i>mou</i>

Note: The Chinese measurements sometimes mentioned in these chapters derive from a bewildering variety of sources and from regions where standard units varied. They do not imply a dynasty-long or empirewide standard and are to be treated only as approximations.

*The *shihltan* was properly a measure of capacity. It is, however, frequently used also as a measure of weight equivalent to 100 *chin*.

GENEALOGY OF THE MING IMPERIAL FAMILY



* = Sons who died before maturity (selected). r. = Reign period as emperor.
HA = Male heir apparent. reb. = Rebelled. Dashed box = Southern Ming emperors

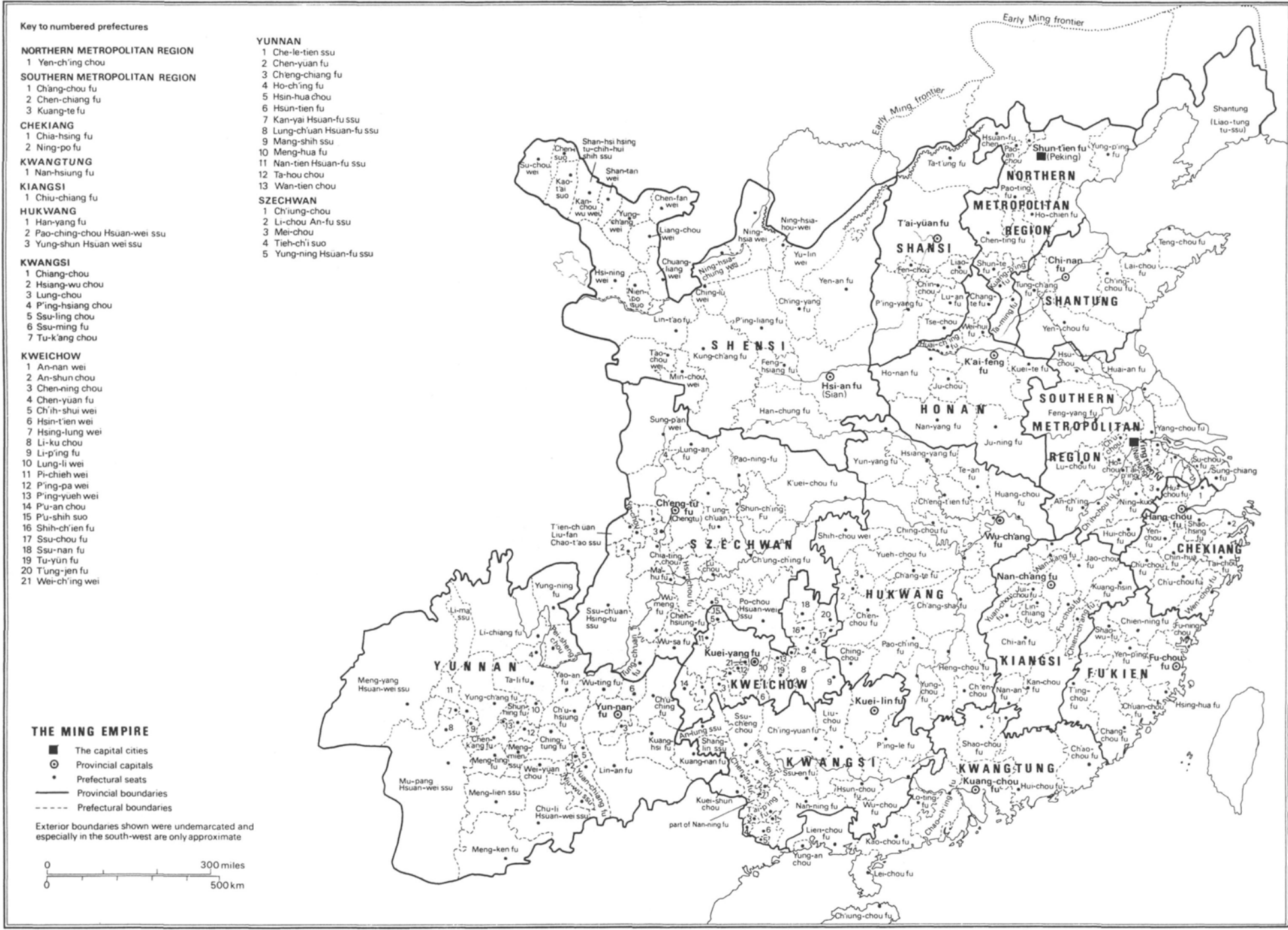
Note: Table shows only male members of the Chu imperial family who were significant in the line of imperial succession, who were important rebels, or who were forebears of such men. The numbers of sons and generational placement of certain individuals follow data in the "Pen chi" and "Chu wang hsi piao" sections of the *Ming shih*, corroborated closely in *DMB* and *ECCP*. Other sources may vary on account of criteria for establishing "legitimate" sons, etc.

MING DYNASTY EMPERORS

<i>Given name</i>	<i>Reign name</i>	<i>Temple name</i>
Chu Yüan-chang	Hung-wu (1368–98)	T'ai-tsu
Chu Yün-wen	Chien-wen (1399–1402)	Hui-ti, Hui-tsung
Chu Ti	Yung-lo (1403–24)	T'ai-tsung, Ch'eng-tsu
Chu Kao-chih	Hung-hsi (1425)	Jen-tsung
Chu Chan-chi	Hsüan-te (1426–35)	Hsüan-tsung
Chu Ch'i-chen	Cheng-t'ung (1436–49)	Ying-tsung
Chu Ch'i-yü	Ching-t'ai (1450–56)	Tai-tsung, Ching-ti
Chu Ch'i-chen	T'ien-shun (1457–64)	Ying-tsung
Chu Chien-shen	Ch'eng-hua (1465–87)	Hsien-tsung
Chu Yu-t'ang	Hung-chih (1488–1505)	Hsiao-tsung
Chu Hou-chao	Cheng-te (1506–21)	Wu-tsung
Chu Hou-ts'ung	Chia-ching (1522–66)	Shih-tsung
Chu Tsai-hou	Lung-ch'ing (1567–72)	Mu-tsung
Chu I-chün	Wan-li (1573–1620)	Shen-tsung
Chu Ch'ang-lo	T'ai-ch'ang (1620)	Kuang-tsung
Chu Yu-chiao	T'ien-ch'i (1621–27)	Hsi-tsung
Chu Yu-chien	Ch'ung-chen (1628–44)	I-tsung, Ssu-tsung, Huai-tsung, Chuang-lieh-ti

Southern Ming

Chu Yu-sung	Hung-kuang (6.1644–6.1645)	An-tsung
Chu Yü-chien	Lung-wu (8.1645–10.1646)	Shao-tsung
Chu Ch'ang-fang	regent Luh (6.1645)	
Chu Yu-lang	Yung-li (12.1646–1.1662)	
Chu Yü-yueh	Shao-wu (12.1646)	
Chu I-hai	regent Lu (8.1645–1653)	



Map 1. Political divisions of Ming China

INTRODUCTION

This volume and the following volume are devoted to the history of the Ming dynasty. The present volume offers a narrative account of political developments from the rebellions of the mid-fourteenth century that ended the Mongol Yüan dynasty's control over China—and from one of which the new Ming dynasty was formed in 1368—until the last Ming remnant, called the Southern Ming, was extinguished in Burma in 1662. That was almost twenty years after the new Manchu Ch'ing dynasty had proclaimed the success of its conquest of the Mandate of Heaven, and of China, in Peking in the spring of 1644.

That period of roughly three centuries from the 1340s until the 1660s, or more closely defined, the 277 years from 1368 until 1644 during which Ming rule formally prevailed, is the only segment of later imperial history from the fall of the Northern Sung capital to the Jurchen invaders in 1126 until the Revolution of 1911 ended the imperial era during which all of China proper was ruled by a native or Han Chinese dynasty. The actual impact of that alternation of native and conquest dynasties on Chinese life was, to be sure, of varying significance, and at its most destructive it probably never threatened to interrupt the cultural continuity of Chinese development. Nonetheless, the success of the Chinese in regaining control over their own government is an important event in history.

In Ming times and even more so in the recent nationalistic-minded century, the Ming dynasty has been seen as an important era of Chinese resurgence. The life of that resurgent society in social, intellectual, economic and other dimensions is surveyed in Volume 8. There we see much evidence that the Ming period witnessed the growth of Chinese civilization, the filling out of the realm, and, if one may indulge in biological metaphor, the maturing of the traditional Chinese civilization in that last phase of its relatively secure intramural isolation and splendor. We can see steady if undermeasured population increase, a significant increase in literacy, and the growth of learning throughout sub-elite levels of society, accompanied by a flourishing of sub-elite as well as elite cultural forms. We observe the filling out of the system of urban networks, reflecting the expansion of

productivity and of exchange. The growing importance of the maritime southeast provinces and the centrifugal forces that propelled many of the region's hardy residents into lives abroad preceded Europe's era of mercantile expansion and might have rivaled it. The absorption of China's inland southern and southwestern provinces during the Ming also is evidence of the age's expansiveness. The boundless energies of Ming society must be kept in mind as the political history of the age is recounted.

What should be the final assessment of Ming government? Was the Ming an era of strong government, or merely one in which the throne and its accessories could intimidate the civil government in awesome displays of willful violence? Was it an era of effective administration, or one in which the practical limitations imposed by the milieu seriously limited political accomplishment? Was domestic administration the tool through which the imperial institution in this period of its long history more perfectly than before realized its potential to govern, or was it in fact the vehicle by which class interests and local interests in society achieved their counter purposes? Such questions, perhaps themselves framed in misleading terms, have long been asked. The reader here will want to ask his own questions of this material. It may help to identify some of the components of Ming political history that have led to so broad and contradictory a set of questions about it.

Outwardly at least, the Ming dynasty appears to be a period of very powerful government. Its founder made it a strong, assertive, highly centralized regime. But are those appearances misleading? It can be argued that the early emperors' will to centralize and to assert the supremacy of their will over all acts of governance was never in fact as effectively institutionalized as those rulers intended and perhaps deceived themselves into believing it was. Professor Ray Huang, here and elsewhere, argues that the Chinese preference for ethical over technical solutions to all social problems created limitations in the working style of government that deflected the exercise of power. His arguments have compelling force—but the aura of great power cannot be dispelled. For evidence, one need only look at China's enhanced position in East Asia in Ming times.

Several military-minded early emperors reestablished China's dominance not only in Inner Asia, whence China's conquerors traditionally had come, but also throughout the sea lanes of Asia. A previous era of diplomatic reciprocity between China and the other Asian land powers was succeeded by an era of a sinocentric world order based on the Chinese presumption of Chinese centrality and superiority and at least nominally acknowledged by many other states, great and small, through the vehicle of the tribute system. Domestically also there was again a structure of centralized control and supervision—the thousands of local and regional administrators, as well

as the central government's officials, were recruited by merit and appointed directly through agencies of the central government. Even more than in model early dynasties, the Ming attempted to regularize the exercise of political power and to make uniform the patterns of bureaucratic behavior so as to correct what early Ming rulers saw as the lenient, slipshod, and corrupt mismanagement that had been imposed by a succession of alien dynasties. Above all the early Ming state, for better or for worse, sought to consolidate its power by stimulating a uniform ideological basis for private and for bureaucratic behavior. The resulting "revised" neo-Confucian ethos was in many ways a new Ming achievement, and it had profound consequences for political life.

Despite those strong beginnings, the political history of the Ming is not one of consistent achievement. The chapters that comprise this volume often focus on political weakness. *Ming government* has been described by some modern scholars as the great achievement of Chinese civilization. It also has been seen as proof of ineradicable anomalies of forms versus actualities, as a working system ever in need of patching up but never susceptible to thoroughgoing rational correction. Reflections of both points of view will be encountered here. Yet whatever criteria assume the greater significance for these authors, one must conclude that the governing of Ming China was a vast undertaking, grand in its assumptions, lofty in its professional ideals, and exhaustingly intricate in the interplay of ideal and actual patterns that marked its daily existence.

If those fundamental characterizations of the quality of Ming government remain inconclusive, some long-range trends in the development of governing modes seem clear enough. Despite the rigidly prescribed norms and procedures made binding on all his heirs by the autocratic dynastic founder, Ming government was not unchanging. Trends become discernible over the course of these three centuries. It may serve a useful purpose here to point out some of those trends.

A most intriguing feature of Ming political history is the trend from direct rule by a highly competent (in his own eyes, omniscient) founding emperor toward the evolving system of shared authority, whether properly delegated or usurped. Ming emperors were the capstone in an authority structure that could not function without them. They were the ritual heads of state and society within a civilization in which ritual possessed a scope of functional significance scarcely comprehensible to us today. Ming emperors also, however, were the executive officers of a system that required their daily participation in deciding and validating routine acts of governing. In the absence of that, some not-strictly-acceptable substitute for the emperor's own ruling actions was required.

Implicit in that system is the impractical notion that emperors could and would make informed decisions on a very broad range of matters of state from routine appointments for all the thousands of offices to be filled by ranked civil and military officials to vast or trivial modifications of policy. True, that would in most cases mean merely reviewing and approving prescreened lists of candidates for most offices, as worked up by the Ministry of Personnel, or making no more than minor alterations in the course of approving action proposals submitted for his notation of “accepted” and his seal. Yet no actions or appointments were possible without at least the seal, and in all matters of higher import the emperor was expected to have digested analyses and arrived at his own judgments. Although that scope of competence and function was inherent in the Chinese conception of monarchy, it was operationally institutionalized in Ming times to a degree hitherto unknown. From the fall of the dynasty in the seventeenth century onward, historians have judged that to have been the crucial weakness of Ming government and have blamed the founding emperor for abolishing the offices of chief ministers of state and their supporting secretarial and advisory staffs in 1380.

The reorganization of government stemming from that “abolition of the prime ministership,” removal of the top level of authority in the outer court, and the resulting assumption of those support functions by the ruler and his inner court, gave a new shape to the structure of Chinese central government that would last through all of Ming and Ch’ing times until the revolution of 1911. In reality, the intention of the Ming founder was modified already in his own reign and was reshaped by cumulative accretions and conventional adaptations in every reign thereafter according to the current conditions and the age, competence, and commitment of the successive rulers. The suspicious-minded founder’s fear, of course, had been that his professional bureaucrats in senior roles as advisors and administrators would bend the acts of governing to serve their own interests or might even attempt outright usurpation. He also feared that the same breed of scholar-officials in lower-ranking roles as local magistrates would misuse their authority.

Some scholars have seen genuine benefit to the farming masses from the founder’s emphasis on improving the conditions of rural society and tightening up the norms of local government, whether he did that out of simple altruism or was shrewdly cognizant of the state’s interests, or both. If his suspicion of bureaucrats was in that matter constructive, at the higher levels of the complex political machinery, corrosive suspicion backed up by unfathomable terror was profoundly destructive, the more so because once institutionalized, it continued to influence the long range of history. One

can argue that as a political leader of China's fourteenth century he had no choice but to build a government reliant on the services of cultivated men who would proclaim their neo-Confucian commitment. The contradiction lies in his acknowledging that necessary condition of governing Chinese society, while remaining deeply suspicious of its consequences; he institutionalized his officialdom's constant intimidation and distanced the throne from the kinds of rational administrative supports that the bureaucracy itself should have best provided. That was to build a regime with serious weaknesses.

It is fascinating, then, to observe reign by reign through the chapters comprising this volume the range and cumulative effect of the institutional adaptations that were made in the effort to overcome that basic administrative flaw. We do not know much about the second emperor (1398–1402), but it seems clear that he greatly upgraded the advisory functions of his principal scholar-mentors, because the impropriety of having done just that was one of the excuses given for the usurpation. The usurper who held the throne from 1402 until 1424 in a reign of great vigor and high competence was not bound by the principles he claimed to defend. Because his interests lay in solving border problems away from the court, he began to create the inner court institutions that would free him from the drudgery of governing.

Most pertinent was his plan to select top examination graduates for elite careers in the Hanlin Academy, leading to the posts that in time came to constitute the *nei-ko*, or grand secretariat. At the same time he assigned larger roles to eunuchs, even insisting that numbers of them be formally educated in government practices and precedents. That, of necessity, led to intricate forms of cooperation between civil bureaucrats and their eunuch counterparts, even as each group contested for emperors' support and the increase of its own powers at the expense of the other. Mostly, it must be noted, that practice worked smoothly enough, but the recurrent failures were spectacular, as when eunuchs managed to become all-powerful dictators who manipulated emperors and defied the norms of bureaucratic government.

The first such case came in the 1440s in the reign of the boy emperor Ying-tsung. The flamboyant abuses in half a dozen such cases to the end of the dynasty are what come to mind immediately in relation to eunuchs in Ming government. If most of the tens of thousands of eunuchs who were in civil or military service at any one time from the late fifteenth century onward were more or less routine performers and not flamboyant abusers of power, nonetheless it is likely that in some of their regular functions— notably as managers of international trade along the inland frontiers and at the maritime entrepôts, and as procurers of supplies and special revenues

for the imperial city—they probably performed very badly most of the time.

The loss in 1380 of the chief ministerships and the isolation of the emperor from responsible senior advisors having their proper place at the head of the outer court thus can be seen as the starting point for the development of both the grand secretariat and the regular bureaucracy's counterpart eunuch bureaucracy, both elements of the Ming inner court. The interplay between these irregular, though eventually highly regularized, elements of Ming government is the major focus of political history throughout the dynasty. Some emperors worked well within the system, sometimes adding to it significantly. Others, as these chapters show, seriously defaulted or resisted the norms, with varying consequences. From our modern point of view, it is all too understandable when the reader of history feels oppressed with frustration that the system's obvious irrationalities could not be overcome by generation after generation of acute-minded and devoted statesmen-bureaucrats.

The dismal account of political failures can perhaps assume too large a place in our consciousness as we read this volume. There is another side to the story that must not be lost sight of. The world's largest society, spread across an area as large as Western Europe, truly flourished under this fallible system of governing, and the flow of well-prepared, committed officials-expectant never diminished. In each decade there was a new group of able persons eager to make careers in government service. Whenever one group's energies and enthusiasms were dissipated by the frustrations of service, eager replacements were at hand to carry on. There was a freshness and energy in the civil service under this dynasty that is not matched in later times, even though governing often faltered.

Was Ming China, then, poorly governed? The Ming government's strengths were simultaneously its weaknesses; for example, its heavy emphasis on cultivation, on learning, and on ethical obligations bound it to limited responses that accepted the primacy of precedent, of compromise, and of face saving. It had the weaknesses and the strengths of a massive stability. We might better ask whether any of the Ming state's contemporaries throughout the world (and none faced problems of Chinese scale) was better governed. In most historians' minds, such a question probably does not embarrass China until well into post-Ming times. Given the scope of the Ming government's tasks in maintaining the unity and sense of shared destiny throughout so large a territory and in providing enough self-renewing features to keep the society flexibly if slowly changing, usually at peace and in order, its achievements are impressive. Moreover, Ming government allowed those Chinese people who could attain more than mere subsistence to employ their resources mostly

for the uses freely chosen by them, for it was a government that, by comparison with others throughout the world then and later, taxed the people at very low levels and left most of the wealth generated by its productive people in the regions where that wealth was produced. Inequities abounded. But the society remained open, and it offered people at all levels a wider spectrum of choices than they have known more recently. The government of Ming China is not to be dismissed out of hand.

Other trends encompassing change from the fourteenth century to the seventeenth can be followed through successive reigns of Ming history. One is apparent in the defense posture of the Ming state. The stable element in that is the obsession with the threat posed by the neighboring Mongol nation to the north, understandably so, since the dynasty came into being by resisting and then expelling China's Mongol conquerors; it had to guard against their resurgence until another northern neighbor, the Manchu, superseded the Mongols early in the seventeenth century as the enemy to the north. If that focus on the Mongol enemy was the enduring part of the situation, what long-range trend of change emerges? It is one of retrenchment. At first the new Ming state met the Mongols in their kind of warfare on their home ground; before the middle of the fifteenth century, that had changed to a defense policy of withdrawal behind fixed barriers along the line marking the northern extent of Chinese-style sedentary life. The founding emperor planned to maintain garrisons far out into the steppe. The usurper, the Yung-lo emperor in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, repeatedly campaigned in the steppe, but failed to make the forward garrisons viable parts of an active defense by offense. He withdrew the garrisons to more readily defended, fortified strategic passage points. Despite that consolidated defense line, the Mongols invaded, disastrously for China, in 1449 and again in 1550, and raided constantly. By the 1470s China had begun to connect the fortified barriers with long walls supported by towers and bastions. The fabled Great Wall, more accurately a series of long walls, came into being. For the rest of the dynasty, wall building and the garrisoning of the wall defense zone became the preoccupation of the Ming state. The Inner Asian frontier became a stifling burden.

Frontier problems can be the source of great stimulus to a nation. The Inner Asian frontier had been that for China in earlier dynasties such as the Han and the T'ang, but in Ming times the consequences seem to have been wholly negative. Far greater opportunities for Ming China's involvement with the rest of the world—whether with Japan and Korea, or with the maritime states to the south and beyond, or with the European powers whose first ships to reach China were those of the Portuguese who sailed from Goa and Malacca into the estuary of the Pearl River below Canton in

1517—were neglected. Early fifteenth-century Ming China had sent out the largest and farthest-ranging flotillas in world history up to that time; they had gone as far as the Persian Gulf and the coast of Africa. Whatever promise that might have held, it all passed from the scene, in part surely because the obsession with the Great Wall left no time for the Ming state to look elsewhere and assess other opportunities in positive terms.

The revealing counterpart to that trend of retrenchment and passivity in the north and the consequent failure of the Ming state to expand in other directions is the trend of increasingly imaginative and bold participation in maritime commerce by private interests—in defiance of government sanctions—all along China's eastern seaboard, particularly from the Yangtze Delta south to Canton. What might that have accomplished if, like its counterparts in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it had gained state sponsorship and support? Even without state sponsorship, Chinese merchant and craftsmen colonies, and eventually agricultural settlements as well, came into existence from the Philippines through Southeast Asia, and mostly date from Ming times. The boundless energies, ingenious entrepreneurship, aggressive risk-taking, and creative leadership within the society seen within this Ming maritime expansion is at curious variance with the retrenchment and managerial failures of the state in its northern defense posture.

Less striking perhaps, but another trend of great significance, is the expansion of the Chinese population throughout the border provinces of the south and southwest, the displacement or absorption of non-Han minorities, and the extension of Chinese administration to the borders of modern Burma, Laos, and Vietnam. The earliest of the Ming emperors lent the full force of the state's military resources to that; Yunnan was conquered and absorbed for the first time under Chinese rule (although Khubilai had conquered the region in the 1250s and had set up a somewhat attenuated Mongol administration there); Kweichow was organized as a province; Annam was warred upon and unsuccessfully absorbed in the 1420s. The "pacification" of tribal peoples throughout the southwest is also a recurrent theme throughout the chapters of this volume. Eventually, however, the state's role became less aggressive. Cultural assimilation continued, but now the impulse for further assimilation came from trade and mining and Chinese population growth pressing into the richer valleys of the region.

The interesting counterpart to that growth in the south and southeast is the striking trend of shrinkage and decline in the northern defense zone and particularly in the far northwest. Climatic change may have lowered the margin in agriculture throughout that marginal zone, but social factors also contributed. The siege mentality that descended on the region as the

defense zone buildup developed through the second half of the dynasty was crippling enough. Trade diminished. The movement of goods and of people was decreased as much by economic decline of the region as by the restrictive military conditions. The normal concerns of civil government were secondary to the military administration. Finally, the state's policy of underpaying or abandoning its defense garrison soldiers, especially the undertrained and overaged, drove them into banditry. All these forces working together induced increasingly unstable conditions within this narrow band of the northern and northwestern frontier. It is not surprising that the region's endemic disorder, although quite atypical of late Ming society in general, should spawn the two large movements of roaming banditry that became a peril to the rest of China in the 1630s. One of these, dignified as the "rebellion" of Li Tzu-ch'eng, plundered at will through North China and, quite fortuitously, found an unguarded moment when it could breach the gates of Peking. That formally terminated the dynasty in 1644.

These are some of the trends obvious to the reader of Ming history. Also apparent throughout this volume is the richness of detail that can be reconstituted in many aspects of this history.

The procession of the sixteen incumbents of the throne between 1368 and 1644 and the several would-be successors who fought on against the Manchus from the far south until 1662 are a gallery of diverse types whose lives beg for fuller reconstruction. There is no full political biography of any of them in a Western language. Even though Chinese emperors are among the most elusive of subjects in Chinese historiography, much could be done to remedy that lack. But beyond those imperial figures (and countless others of the imperial clan), there is a wealth of documentary evidence for lives, for places, and for actions of all kinds. There are countless volumes of Ming writings—poetry and belles lettres, serious scholarship in many fields, religious and philosophical studies, plays and stories and other entertainment writings, reports written by officials on all governmental subjects, and the writings of Ming historians beginning the task of putting their history in order. No scholar can know more than a fraction of all this vast sea of words, comprising more printed books in existence at any time during this dynasty than in all the rest of the world together. Many large aspects of the field have been virtually unstudied in the present century, during which the total volume of relevant materials has been greatly augmented by facsimile printing, archeology, and archival labors.

During most of the present century Ming history has not been a widely studied subject in China, in Japan, or in the West. The vast array of traditional historical materials, ably described by Wolfgang Franke in

Chapter 12 of this volume, now attracts the attention of a generation of new scholars, and the world of scholarship begins to appreciate how important the history of these centuries must be in the larger frameworks of Chinese and of world history. The authors and editors have undertaken the effort of compiling this volume with a certain confidence that it carries scholarship some modest steps forward, but in greater confidence that the field will quickly move beyond it in larger steps. I am confident that a number of these authors will be present to contribute to the early retirement of this work, as they move forward to supersede it. I hail their present achievement and look forward to their early success in surpassing it.

CHAPTER 1

THE RISE OF THE MING DYNASTY, 1330–1367

INTRODUCTION

The character of the Yüan dynasty, through which the Mongol conquerors from Khubilai Khan onward ruled China, has been interpreted in many ways and at present is still much at issue among scholars.¹ Nonetheless, one fact about it is unambiguous. Its ability to govern – to maintain order in society, to administer provincial and local government, and to collect taxes – was eroding well before the middle of the fourteenth century. Chu Yüan-chang (1328–1398), the founder of the Ming dynasty, was born into a family of desperately poor tenant farmers in the Huai River plain of modern Anhwei province on 21 October 1328. He never experienced the normal conditions of China's stable agrarian society until, as emperor forty years later, it fell to him to rule over the empire and to guide its rehabilitation. The Ming dynasty was spawned during a half-century of intensifying chaos, an age of breakdown in which throughout most of the country the conduct of daily life increasingly depended on direct recourse to violence. It provides a classic example of the gradual militarization of Chinese society and, because of that, of the struggle among potent rivals to succeed the Mongol regime by imposing, through military force, a successor regime that could claim the Mandate of Heaven. Despite the traditional Chinese penchant for subsuming this into the stylized pattern of breakdown and regeneration provided by their dynastic cycle theory, the way the Yüan dynasty disintegrated and the Ming dynasty emerged is by no means typical of the dynastic changes that punctuate imperial Chinese history. The middle half of the fourteenth century is an extraordinary age. Chinese society in chaos reveals much about its latent potentialities and its normally less-exposed structural framework. This period thus displays aspects of the character of Chinese civilization that are not so readily discernible in times of peaceful, orderly civil government. And the violence of this period left its enduring mark on the Ming dynasty. It richly merits the historian's thoughtful attention.

¹ The history of the Yüan dynasty forms part of Volume VI.

DETERIORATING CONDITIONS IN CHINA, 1330–1350

The Yüan court

Factionalism is endemic to politics and was present throughout the Yüan dynasty; it became a crippling factor in government early in the fourteenth century. After Khubilai's long reign (1260–94), cliques of courtiers representing conflicting interests of his grandsons and their heirs often engaged in murderous intrigues to control the throne. Some scholars see two competing policies at the crux of the continuing struggle among factions. The one was a Mongolia-based policy (and faction) with an orientation toward Mongol interests in the Inner Asian steppe, represented by the traditions of the Chagatai Khanate. The roots of this policy are traced all the way back to the rivals of Khubilai, especially Khaidu of the line of Ogödei, who had warred against Khubilai throughout his reign. The other faction is identified with what have been called the "Confucian" concerns of governing from a China-based throne using bureaucratic means to achieve its statist ends. This provided a fundamental and irreconcilable split within the Mongol political leadership over the means and goals of governing China.² The latter group engineered a coup in 1328 that "restored" the line of Khaishan, who had reigned 1308–12, and is known by his posthumous title as the emperor Wu-tsung. His two sons, Khoshila and then Tugh Temür, were placed on the throne in 1328. The former was assassinated by partisans of the latter, who is known as Wen-tsung and who reigned until 1332. He was succeeded by his two young sons. First was the younger, Irinjinbal, who died as a child of six after a reign of two months. Upon his death, in perhaps suspicious circumstances, his older brother Toghön Temür came to the throne in 1333 at the age of thirteen. The last Mongol ruler over China, he was driven from his capital at Ta-tu (Peking) by Ming armies in 1368 and died in the steppe in 1370. Toghön Temür is known in Chinese history by his posthumous titles Shun-ti, granted him by the Ming founder, or Hui-ti, the title bestowed by his refugee court in Mongolia. His reign of thirty-five years to 1368 contrasts with the average of about five and one-half years for the seven reigns from the death of Khubilai to 1333, a period marked by plots, coups, and regicide. The length of his reign does not signify, however, that a new stability in Yüan rule had been achieved. Instead, the factional infighting had shifted from coups aiming

2 This interpretation of the late Yüan politics has been most forcefully stated by John W. Dardess in *Conquerors and Confucians: Aspects of political change in late Yüan China* (New York, 1973).

at control over puppet emperors to struggles among Mongol holders of regional military power for control of the court through its chief offices, the posts of chancellor of the right and of the left. That in itself signified no improvement in the quality of government.

The reign of Shun-ti corresponds roughly with the period of the Ming dynasty's emergence. The last Mongol emperor is described in many contemporary Chinese sources and by early Ming historians as having been a monster of debauchery, surely an exaggerated depiction, but it is difficult to determine to what extent it is exaggerated. Some contemporary writers praised him. In either case, he mattered very little in the events that saw the dynasty's once vaunted power crumble and disappear. Chinggis Khan, military genius, leader of vast purpose and of superhuman energies, had in this seventh-generation descendant yet another successor of at best mediocre qualities. It is comment enough to note that the history of his reign turns on larger personalities and on problems largely made and met by others.

The decline of Yüan military power

The Yüan government's military forces had been in decline since the end of the thirteenth century. Following the conquest of the Southern Sung in the 1270s, the main body of Mongol and Inner Asian troops within China had been deployed at garrisons on the Yellow River plain to shield the capital at Ta-tu (Peking). Special units of Mongol forces were dispatched to points of strategic importance as needed, but they were not distributed throughout the provinces to police the empire on a regular basis. Armies of Chinese professional soldiers, both those who had been subject to the Jurchen Chin dynasty before its fall to the Mongols in the 1230s, and those who had surrendered during the conquest of the Southern Sung in the 1270s, comprised the principal elements in the garrisons stationed elsewhere.

This pattern persisted until the end of the dynasty; that is, the main Mongol garrisons and the imperial guard forces were stationed in the north, close to the capital, while Chinese units, sometimes under Mongol or Western Asian commanders, guarded the central regions, the south, and the southwest. These provincial garrisons were not evenly distributed, but were concentrated in the lower Yangtze region. Yang-chou, Chien-k'ang (Nanking), and Hangchow were the most strongly garrisoned bastions of Yüan power outside the capital region. This was to protect the rich region at the southern end of the Grand Canal that supplied the capital with revenues, especially with the tax grains. Elsewhere smaller concentrations of troops were placed at regionally important locations in Szechwan, in Yunnan, the central Yangtze, and the southeast coast.

The Yüan military garrisons were poorly administered. One scholar has written that even by the end of the thirteenth century, mismanagement was causing breakdowns of the military system, and by the 1340s it had been repeatedly demonstrated to be incapable of repressing local rebellions and banditry. Even the imperial guards based at the capital, who were occasionally sent into the field in major campaigns, were by that time no longer held to be invincible.³ From the early fourteenth century onward, a geographic correlation between the regional distribution of the main Yüan military might and relative freedom from rebellious activity is obvious; even more obvious is the correlation in time between the sharp decline of Yüan military effectiveness everywhere by midcentury and the progressive increase in rebel activity. The Yüan dynasty's capacity to coerce the Chinese, whether by relying on Inner Asian military units (including the Mongol forces based within China proper) or by using the Chinese professional soldiers and conscripts from the civilian population, rapidly diminished through these decades. More important, that fact was becoming widely recognized throughout the Chinese population.

As society became disorderly and unsafe, on the one hand local leaders in government or in private life assumed initiatives in organizing local defense forces and building defense installations. On the other hand, bandits took advantage of disorder to form ever larger and bolder organizations. Both local self-defense leaders and local bandits could assume illicit political roles by declaring themselves independent of the legitimate arms of government in order to maximize their freedom of movement and their claims on support. Those genuinely interested in local defense, often representing or linked to the local elite but not necessarily stemming from elite backgrounds, tended to remain susceptible to reimposition of government controls, although often negotiating continuations of their freedoms of initiative and enhancement of their leaders' status. Other autonomous movements representing some stage of banditry expanding into open rebellion also could use their military power as a negotiating point in securing legitimation with ranks and titles in exchange for cooperation with a desperate government. Still other groups using folk religion and secret doctrine as their cohering element and their justification for rebellion were mostly, in their eyes and in those of the government, beyond such compromises.⁴

3 Hsiao, Ch'i-ch'ing, *The military establishment of the Yüan dynasty* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), pp. 62–63, 46–47.

4 Examples of all these patterns are the subject of the next section, "The disintegration of central authority."

The degenerative process, starting from the administrators' failure to maintain law and order and leading to the various kinds of organized dissidence, has special relevance for the subject of military power in the late Yüan. That process led to the weakening of the normative controls throughout society on which social order fundamentally depended and to their replacement by direct recourse to force. It induced a comprehensive change from a pacific society to a militarized one. Arms, usually not present in village households, came to be universally present. As many males came to possess and to understand arms, those most successful in their use became military leaders. Each village might produce several, from corporals to captains, all striving to become generals. In the competition for military supremacy that ensued from the 1330s onward, a very large number of competent and a few brilliant military leaders were produced from the most humble backgrounds. Most of those remained outside the government's military establishment in the service of one or another of the rebellions.

A society once so militarized could only be demilitarized and restored to unified, civilian management by a long process in which all the competitors for national leadership but one were eliminated. In military terms, that is the process that dominated the life of China from about 1330 until the completion of Chu Yüan-chang's reunification in the 1380s. As military history, it is described by Edward L. Dreyer in Chapter 2 of this volume.

Elite and government

The middle decades of the fourteenth century provide a curious spectacle in the history of later imperial China's scholarly and social elite. To some it was a period of hope, largely unfulfilled, that time-honored Chinese ways might at last prevail over the alien conquerors' disruptive impact. After completing his conquest of central and south China in the 1270s, Khubilai Khan had taken some essential steps toward acknowledging the superiority of Chinese political institutions for governing the Chinese, and transforming the one-sided reliance on the Mongol military machine into a full partnership with civilian, bureaucratic government. He had patronized Chinese (and sinified Inner Asian) scholar-officials and had heeded their counsel. In 1271 he ordered eminent scholar-officials to design a full complement of Chinese ritual forms for the conduct of his court, while retaining, as the *Official history of the Yüan* says, Mongol customs and rituals for affairs involving the imperial clan and the Mongol nobility.⁵ He had spurred the recruitment of

⁵ Sung Lien et al., eds., *Yüan shih* (1369–70; rpt. Peking, 1976), 67.

Chinese scholars for official appointment by recommendation. But, pointedly refusing the most important request of his Chinese advisers, he had not instituted civil service examinations to recruit officials.

In 1313 his great-grandson Ayurbarwada, known to history as the emperor Jen-tsung (1312–20), announced that commencing in 1315 the examinations would be reinstated on the Sung model, and would designate as orthodox the classical exegeses of the Chu Hsi (1130–1200) school. This aroused a great surge of hope and satisfaction throughout the Chinese population. When Tugh Temür, Jen-tsung's nephew, came to the throne in 1328, that aroused further hope. In his years as Prince of Huai, residing at Chien-k'ang (Nanking), he had associated with eminent literati and men of arts. Given the posthumous title Wen-tsung (the cultivated), he appears to be the Mongol emperor with soundest claims to having been fully literate in Chinese. In addition, he attempted to write classical Chinese poetry (two examples survive), to paint, and to produce reasonably satisfactory Chinese calligraphy.⁶ The command of Chinese civilization that Kubilai's son and heir, Prince Chen-chin, might have brought to the throne had he not predeceased his father in 1285, now after six mostly disappointing reigns had found a second imperial incarnation. Moreover, as noted above, the coup that placed Wen-tsung on the throne represented the success of the "Confucian" faction in Mongol politics, the one that stressed the rulers' interests in a well-run Chinese state.

One of Wen-tsung's first acts as emperor was to establish in the capital a new academy of Chinese learning and art as an office of the inner court, called the K'uei-chang ko.⁷ At the same time, there were at court several highly placed nobles like Majartai. His son, Toghto, was to become the leading advocate of Chinese ways of governing during the final reign of the dynasty. Majartai was avidly developing contacts with leading Chinese scholars, hiring them to tutor his sons, and sponsoring Chinese learning at the court.⁸ By the fourteenth century many of the privileged Central and Western Asians (*se-mu jen*) had become learned, cultivated members of the Chinese cultural elite, demonstrating the power of Chinese values to assimilate aliens. At this time, during the decades from the 1320s to the 1340s, a number of leading classical scholars and literary figures from the central Chinese heartland of high cultural development served at the Yüan court, mostly by recommendation and direct appointment, but also by the

6 Herbert Franke, "Could the Mongol emperors read and write Chinese?" *Asia major*, NS 3 (1952), pp. 28–41.

7 Chiang I-han, *Yüan tai k'uei chang ko chi k'uei chang ko jen wu* (Taipei, 1981).

8 John D. Langlois, Jr., "Political thought in Chin-hua under Mongol rule," in *China under Mongol rule* (Princeton, 1981), esp. pp. 169 ff. See also Langlois, "Yü Chi and his Mongol sovereign," *Journal of Asian studies* 38, No. 1 (November, 1978), pp. 99–116.

newly opened examination route. Throughout, young men had continued to train in classical learning in preparation for scholar-official careers, unable to believe that the great norms of their civilization would not again prevail. During the first half of the fourteenth century private academies, through which the elite assumed enlarged responsibilities for maintaining such education, flourished. A number of important regional and local centers of learning emerged: Chin-hua in northern Chekiang emphasized classical learning in the support of statecraft and produced scholars eager to find activist, positive roles in government. Many figures prominent in that school during the final decades of the Yüan went on to serve prominently at the early Ming court and to dominate early Ming learning and statecraft.⁹

The significance of this discussion of elite attitudes and activities is that the Chinese elite in general accepted the legitimacy of Mongol rule and strove to maintain traditional patterns of government participation. They never achieved full acceptance from their Mongol overlords. Even Wen-tsung had reigned only four years, and ineffectually. Many discouraging signs of failure in government were all too obvious and were blamed on incomplete adoption of traditional methods and values. Yet the Confucian urge to make that more complete, to assume public responsibility and to serve constructively, remained strong in many of the elite, though many also suffered frustrating rebuffs and characteristically then withdrew into seclusion to devote their energies to family and locality in a wide spectrum of private pursuits. They were increasingly passive in the final years of the dynasty. Failure to make the honored and highly rewarded link to public service also impoverished many of the elite, forcing them into alternate careers as clerks, teachers, professional writers, monks, businessmen, and the like. This gave the learned sector an atypical relationship to society at large.

The elite, thus, by and large were not subverted, dissident, or eager to defy the ailing regime by joining the rebellions. They accepted the legitimacy of the Yüan, ever hopeful of reform, and when faced with the inescapable failings of government still were anxious to preserve an orderly status quo in their localities. If the Yüan gained less and less from them as the natural leaders of society, neither did the many rebels against Yüan rule, especially those with no pretense of maintaining traditional social norms, gain their large-scale spontaneous cooperation. Some modern historians charge the mid-fourteenth-century elite with a shameful lack of nationalist spirit. Given the opportunity to assist in throwing off the alien yoke and to rebuild native rule, they were hesitant and passive, quite lacking in patriotic fervor. Even more shamefully, once the Mongols had

9 See Langlois, "Political thought in Chin-hua under Mongol rule," and Chapter 3 of this volume.

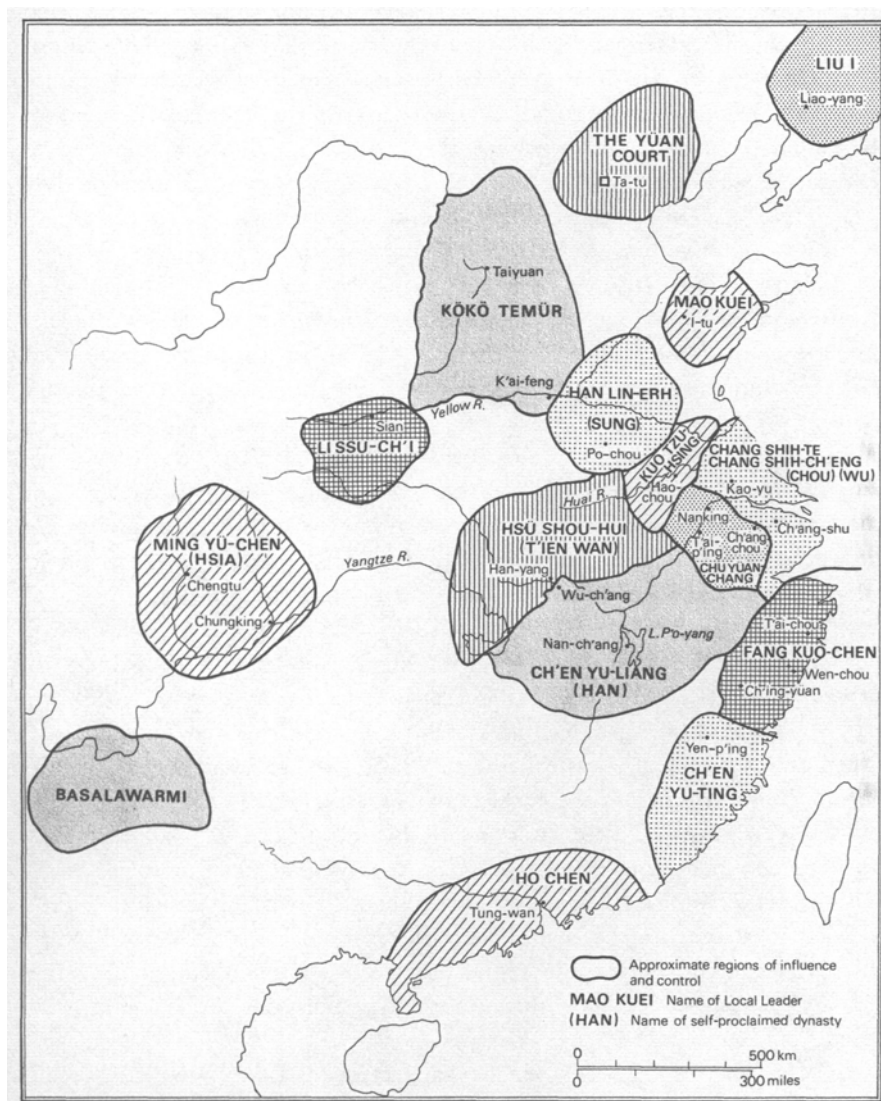
been expelled, some of the elite continued to write favorably about their earlier years as associates or subjects of the Yüan. That of course is to judge the late Yüan–early Ming elite anachronistically by issues that were not part of elite, or indeed of plebeian, consciousness in that era. It serves us better to delineate the issues and the forces that did have meaning for people in that age.

THE DISINTEGRATION OF CENTRAL AUTHORITY

A simple typology of political defiance and rebellion in the mid-fourteenth-century period of Yüan decline provides the following distinct forms that political dissidence assumed:

1. *Yüan regional leaders* as de facto warlords. Such leaders often alternated between genuine allegiance to the throne and a nominal allegiance or even declared autonomy when repudiation of the central authority better served their self-interest.
2. *Local leaders* in government or in private life who assembled limited local resources in order to maintain relatively small, unauthorized defenses.
3. *Bandits*, most notably smugglers utilizing well-established organizational bases; as the government was increasingly unable to keep their depredations in check, some expanded their operations to become regional military powers aspiring to political legitimacy. Some arrogated to themselves titles and claims or had such bestowed on them by the Yüan government in a desperate attempt to earn their cooperation.
4. *Sectarian movements* having popular participation. These were loosely Manichean within folk Buddhist religion and were millenarian in their impulses. They defied the normal sources of authority and displayed capacities for conspiratorial cohesiveness and for uncompromising relations with the government, thus making their behavior more extreme than that of conventional rebels. All the important movements of this kind in this period have been loosely grouped under the designation of the Red Turban (*Hung-chin*) rebellions.

These defining criteria are not to be taken as static descriptions of rebel movements. All had the capacity to evolve, as the rebellion that formed the Ming dynasty most clearly illustrates. That rebellion first emerged as a sectarian movement, but during a period of about fifteen years was transformed into a “Confucian” dynasty, eager for legitimacy and restoration of tradition. Nonetheless, in recounting the events of the 1350s and 1360s, this classification of types serves as a useful starting point.



Map 2. Regional powers, ca. 1350-1360

Yüan regional leaders

The most interesting, and in the history of the Ming dynasty's emergence certainly the most important, of the regional leaders serving the Yüan was Kōkō Temür (ca. 1330?-75). His story begins with the career of his

stepfather, Chaghan Temür (d. 1362). Chaghan was the fourth-generation head of a leading Naiman Turkic clan that had settled in Shen-ch'iu district on the eastern border of Honan. Their status had been secured ever since Chaghan Temür's great-grandfather assisted in the Mongol conquest of Honan in the early thirteenth century. Although officially classified as Central Asians (*se-mu jen*) in the Yüan dynasty's system of managing its population in China, the Naiman were highly Mongolized; by the fourth generation, the family appears to have been assimilated into both Mongol and Han Chinese culture. Chaghan Temür had sat for the Chinese civil service examinations but did not earn the *chin-shih*, or highest degree. He sometimes used the Chinese surname Li. As Li Ch'an-han he probably sat for the examinations in the special quota favoring Mongols and Central Asians.

In any event, his abilities and ambitions were more military than civilian. In the disorders that ravaged the North China plain, spreading from modern Anhwei into adjoining Honan from the late 1340s onward, he began to build a military force to protect his locality. He went on to suppress the Red Turban movement, then trying to establish a regional base in Honan, with its capital located variously along the Anhwei-Honan border, and for a time in 1358 and 1359 in K'ai-feng itself. Taking his private army of several hundred personal followers into the field first in 1352, he won a string of victories at a time when the Red Turbans were overrunning the prefectures of western Anhwei and central Honan virtually without opposition from the government's regular forces. The court accordingly gave Chaghan Temür rank and titles, encouraging him to expand his military command and permitting him to dominate the entire province. His early successes were achieved in conjunction with Li Ssu-ch'i, a like-minded local bravo of Lo-shan district in southern Honan. The two typify the new phenomenon of the regional warlord, nominally upholding the dynasty's authority while building bases of power not dependent on the court.

By the end of the 1350s Chaghan Temür was the most powerful regional leader in the Mongols' service and head of the Honan provincial government with influence spreading into Shansi, Shantung, the metropolitan province, and even to Shensi. His protégé, Li Ssu-ch'i, had achieved a dominant position in the northwest, based in Shensi. After intrigue and factional conflict led to the dismissal in January 1355 of chancellor Toghto, then campaigning successfully against the rebel Chang Shih-ch'eng (1321–67) at Kao-yu (in modern north Kiangsu), the court had deprived itself of its last competent civil and military leadership. It foundered in vicious struggles to exercise the diminished remnants of

imperial power. Chaghan Temür had rivals in the provinces who took their causes to the court; in this situation his regional leadership might have led to control over the dynasty's fortunes had he possessed that ambition. But he detested court politics and probably felt more secure in possession of the rapidly expanding civil and military government he was building on the North China plain. Nonetheless, both the other regional military leaders throughout North China and certain elements at the court were jealous of his growing power. Most important of his enemies was the Mongol Bolod Temür, (d. 1365), father of the empress and the regional commander in Shansi, who sought to deny that region's important grain surplus to Chaghan Temür. His struggles first to overthrow Chaghan Temür and subsequently to destroy Kōkō Temür dominated the court and paralyzed the government until Bolod's death in 1365.

Chaghan Temür clearly usurped imperial authority in order to protect his own interests, ignored directives from the court, made appointments and moved troops at will—all this to outmaneuver Bolod Temür and expand his powerful military machine. Yet we must conclude that he did not harbor any intent either to control the court or to displace the dynasty, even though his actions were at times ambiguous enough to arouse genuine suspicion about his aims. T'ien Feng and Wang Shih-ch'eng, two Yüan generals based at Chi-ning in southwest Shantung and on whom the defense of the province then rested, surrendered to the Shantung rebels early in 1361. Later that same year they accepted Chaghan's offer of amnesty. He invited them to return their allegiance to the dynasty and come under his command as he spread his power eastward, and he awarded them positions of trust. Late in the summer of 1362 they again conspired with the rebels still holding out against Chaghan at I-tu, an important prefectural city east of Chi-nan, the provincial capital. After he had captured Chi-nan and was pressing on toward I-tu, they assassinated Chaghan, claiming somewhat plausibly that they had become disillusioned about the depth of his commitment to the dynasty's interests. Then they fled—not to serve the court in whose name they had committed his murder, but to join the rebels at I-tu!

If emperor and court were secretly relieved that this powerful figure had been eliminated, Chaghan nonetheless was granted the highest posthumous honors, and the emperor quickly acceded to the wishes of the slain man's staff associates in naming his adopted son as his successor in all his civil and military posts. Thus Kōkō Temür came on the scene, heir to Chaghan's powers, interests, and enmities.

Kōkō was the son of Chaghan's sister and a Chinese of the surname Wang. His childhood name, Wang Pao-pao, is about all we know of his

identity as a Chinese. Chaghan, who had no heirs, had adopted him as a young child and reared him as his own son, equipping him as he himself was equipped with both Chinese education and Mongol military training. Like his stepfather, Kōkō was of heroic build and temperament, drawn more to the steppe warrior ideal of his dual cultural heritage than to that of the Chinese statesman. In 1361 Chaghan had dispatched him to conduct a shipment of much needed grain to the capital. He was received by Toghōn Temür, the reigning emperor, who bestowed the Mongol name Kōkō Temür upon him. That meeting is said to have “erased all doubts” about him; in other words, he was accepted as a Mongol despite his Chinese father, thus challenging him to be a loyal servant of the dynasty. Throughout his life he was under heavy pressure to measure up to the steppe ideal and to deny a Chinese identity that drew taunts from his enemies. This adds great interest to the understanding of his personality and of his career.

Upon the death of Chaghan Temür, his staff officers in the field, reeling from the sudden loss of their leader, sought to maintain their cohesiveness and momentum by turning to Kōkō. That influenced the court to invest him with impressive titles and duties. Kōkō saw as his first obligation the successful completion of the military sweep of Shantung. He turned immediately to the task of capturing the now isolated rebel base at I-tu, a task his stepfather had seemed in no hurry to accomplish. After besieging the city for some months, he brought it down by tunneling under its walls. Two hundred of the rebel leaders were sent off to the capital to be executed, but the two turncoat generals, who had assassinated Chaghan, T'ien Feng and Wang Shih-ch'eng, were retained for Kōkō's own purposes. He cut out their hearts and sacrificed them to his stepfather's spirit. North China, from the Shantung peninsula all the way to Shensi in the far northwest, was now secure and more or less under his control.

Bolod Temür, however, continued to plot at the court with a faction that sought to remove the heir apparent, Prince Ayushiridara, a son not of Bolod's daughter, the empress, but of the emperor's favorite concubine. Bolod also continued to denounce Kōkō, the heir of his old enemy Chaghan. This made it impossible for Kōkō to remain aloof from court factionalism. Warfare between Bolod's forces and Kōkō's, centering on the control of Shansi, turned to Kōkō's favor in 1363 and drove Bolod to flee to the capital and to seize control of it himself in 1364. Fearing assassination at the hands of Bolod, Prince Ayushiridara fled and put himself under Kōkō's protection. Bolod's oppressive control of the court at last moved the passive emperor to order his assassination. An axe was planted in Bolod's skull as he was on his way to the court in August 1365, and his head was then sent in a box to Ayushiridara to convince him that it would be safe to return to

the capital. Kökö escorted him back and remained at the capital for a short time. He received the title of Prince of Honan and was then given the charge to clear the Yangtze region of rebellion. Kökö might well have remained at the court and dominated the government, but like Chaghan some years earlier, he expressed his distaste for court politics by returning to Honan, and to the enlargement of his civil and military powers as the master of North China.

Kökö was given command over some of the warloads of the northwest; others, notably Li Ssu-ch'i, resented the stepson of Chaghan as a junior upstart to whom no allegiance was owed. This led to civil war again, this time between Kökö and the four Shensi warlords (in addition to Li-Ssu-ch'i, these were Chang Liang-pi, Törebeg, and K'ung Hsing, the latter three all former associates of Bolod). This effectively prevented Kökö from carrying out the command to clear the Yangtze of rebellion, a task that in any event he may not have wished to undertake. To have led his troops south at this point would have exposed his Honan base to the incursions of the northwest warlords, who rightfully should have been his colleagues in bandit and rebel suppression.

Again, we see here the great weakness of the late Yüan: the court could not impose discipline and obedience on those who should have been its principal servants. From the early 1360s until his death at Ayushiridara's court in Outer Mongolia in 1375, Kökö Temür was the most powerful, the most successful, and ultimately the most loyal of the fading dynasty's military leaders. However, his own self-interest forced him to devote as much energy to fighting internal plots and enemies as external ones. His career amply illustrates the complexities of service to the Yüan cause by its regional leaders during the final two decades of the dynasty.¹⁰

Other Yüan regional leaders who were cut off from the North China plain by the rebellions that had spread across central China were less readily involved in court politics. Two such careers illustrate variant patterns.

Ch'en Yu-ting (ca. 1330?–68) was an orphaned, physically stalwart, illiterate farmer's son in Foochow prefecture of Fukien who, in the unsettled conditions of the early 1350s, was drawn to the military life. Recruited by a local official, he was first given charge of a police detachment, and in ordinary times that might well have established the boundaries of his entire career. Drawn into military operations against the southern Red Turbans invading the province from Kiangsi, however, he repeatedly dem-

10 Kökö Temür's career is recounted in useful detail by Dardess, *Conquerors and Confucians*, in Chapter 6 and the Epilogue.

onstrated superior military qualities and was promoted with the extraordinary rapidity that disorderly times made the norm. From a minor district official he became chief of the provincial government within little over ten years. During the course of those years he cultivated scholars and attempted to acquire the rudiments of learning, but he was not transformed into a Confucian gentleman.

His temperament was that of a dictator; he was given to draconian measures and met such leadership problems as honest differences of opinion among his underlings with violence. His two outstanding virtues were a genuine ability in military matters and a fierce and unswerving loyalty to the Yüan regime. His harshness drove many of his associates to defect. When captured by the Ming armies in 1368 and sent to Nanking, Chu Yüan-chang, the new Ming emperor, charged him with such crimes as executing Ming emissaries sent to offer him surrender terms, but Chu nonetheless appeared ready to pardon Ch'en and offer him some honorary title; the Ming founder admired brave adversaries. Ch'en, however, his loyalty to the fallen Yüan unshaken, bellowed at the Ming emperor: "The state is demolished and my family is gone. I shall die; what more is there to talk about?" Infuriated, the emperor immediately ordered the execution of Ch'en and his one surviving son, who had volunteered to accompany his father on this last journey.

In neighboring Kwangtung, the career of Ho Chen (1322–88) was somewhat different. He too was orphaned when young, but was from a family that could provide him an education. As a swashbuckling young man who in the tradition of the cultivated bravo could wield both a sword and a calligraphy brush with flair, he had the self-confidence and the ambition to seek service in disorderly times. He held office briefly in local government and was cashiered. Then, as a private citizen, he like many others received permission to organize and lead a local self-defense corps. As leader of that private force he succeeded in recapturing the prefectural city from bandits. Now having become indispensable, he was rewarded with office in the prefectural government. Continuing success in building the prefectural defense forces and leading them in battle led to higher appointments in local government. In 1363, after leading the provincial armies now under his overall command to recapture the city of Canton from coastal pirates, he was promoted first to the auxiliary position and then in 1366 to the head of the provincial government, which his military power had already put under his dominance. He was thus the only figure among thousands of local private self-defense leaders throughout the nation to rise all the way from that status to one of a Yüan regional leader.

In the summer of 1368 as the Ming armies approached, this heretofore

intrepid bandit queller and rebel fighter surrendered easily to the new dynasty. He was sent to Nanking for an interview with Chu Yüan-chang; the new emperor was so pleased with him that he awarded Ho Chen high honors and posts in provincial government. On his retirement at the age of sixty-five in 1387, he was made hereditary earl in the nobility of military merit, with a title bearing the name of his home region in Kwangtung. His biographers comment on his scholarly interests and refined temperament; he was in several ways the opposite of the crude but fiercely loyal Ch'en Yu-ting.

The careers of other Yüan regional leaders bore less directly on the emergence of the Ming dynasty. The Mongol Prince of Liang, Basalawarmi, who headed the government in remote Yunnan, committed suicide when the region fell to the Ming armies in 1382, but Yunnan played no part in the maneuverings of the 1350s and 1360s. Another Mongol leader, Naghachu (d. 1388), was among the defenders of T'ai-p'ing, the Yangtze crossing point captured by Chu Yüan-chang in 1355. He was released in the vain hope of earning Mongol goodwill at a time when Chu Yüan-chang was adapting his policies to new perceptions and needs. Thereafter Naghachu served in the Mongol military establishment in Liao-tung, eventually becoming an important independent regional leader on the Manchurian-Korean border in the years after 1368.

Other Yüan regional leaders were eliminated by Chu Yüan-chang's rivals before his forces came into conflict with them. Several are important in late Yüan history, if not here. The leaders discussed here establish the range and characteristics of the Yüan regional leadership phenomenon as an element in the rise of the Ming.

Local leaders

Accompanying the weakening of the Yüan government throughout the early fourteenth century, and stemming from problems lying deep in the Yüan pattern of rule, one can observe a gradual loss of normative controls and consequently a drift to more direct reliance on force. As the government's ability to apply coercive sanctions waned, it lost its monopoly on the means and on the use of force. At all levels of society, people took to arming themselves in order to maintain the minimum security necessary for daily life, usually without repudiating the Yüan government. These abstract statements can be vividly brought to life by quoting from fourteenth-century materials that illustrate the dilemmas faced by the leaders of local society in an age of growing disorder.

Banditry grew from the level of the occasional local nuisance to that of a

general threat; this had already happened before the major rebellions broke out in the 1340s. A brief notice in T'ao Tsung-i's *Ch'o keng lu* (pref. 1366), carries a weighty message:

Even before the Red Turbans arose in the Central Plain there was the bandit gang of Hua-shan led by one Pi Ssu, a mere thirty-six persons in all. Among them was a woman of exceptional bravery and cunning. They took over a Taoist temple at Mount Mao [near Hua-shan, also in Chü-jung district east of Nanking] and made it their base, from which they sallied forth on all sides unopposed, without the slightest restraint or fear. For a period of more than three months government forces from three provinces were sent out against them but were unable to take them captive. Then the court issued a command to salt-field workers Ch'en and Chu [or Ch'en Chu?] to bring in their following who, in one fell swoop, captured the bandits. From that time on all the people of the realm came to look upon the government forces as being useless. Within a mere three to five years the entire region south of the Yangtze was filled with bandit uprisings; it was as if predestined.¹¹

Salt-field workers were noted for their fierceness and their independence; they emerge again as the saviors of Hangchow, in an account quoted below, and they were as often on the other side, as the career of the bandit Chang Shih-ch'eng shows. Here the government called upon a private and probably illicit organization among them to do what its armies could not accomplish. In most cases, however, the threatened community could not wait for help from an ineffectual government. Spontaneous defense stratagems emerged, often under the leadership of the local elite, the natural leaders of society.

Hsiao Ching-mao was a man of Ko-chou village in Lung-hsi district of Chang-chou prefecture in [in coastal southern Fukien]. He was learned and deeply cultivated, much trusted in his locality for his prudent and generous spirit. During the Chang-chou uprising of the later Chih-yüan reign period [1355–40], Hsiao led the people in his locality to construct fences and barriers for their protection. Those were so stout they could not be breached. Yet it happened that someone from a neighboring village guided the bandits through by a devious route. Hsiao Ching-mao was taken captive. The bandits ordered him to bow to them. He responded: "You are bandits. How could I bow to you?" The bandits' intent was to force him to surrender in order to impress the people. Hsiao cursed them: "Traitorous bandits, what wrong of the state could justify your treachery? Your clans, your villages, what have they done to deserve the evil consequences of your acts?" The bandits said to each other, "We have killed many of the government's army officers and civil officials. Brought to our strongholds, they have all covered in fear and begged for their lives. Never have we seen anyone as stubborn and unbending as this tough old devil."¹²

11 T'ao Tsung-i, "Hua-shan tsei," *Ch'o keng lu* (Preface 1366; rpt. Peking, 1959), p. 28.

12 "Chung lieh," *CKL*, 14; *YS*, 193, p. 4388, in a less colorful account, dates the event in 1338.

They murdered him, brutally.

The four chapters in the *Official history of the Yüan* of brief biographies of persons who exemplified "righteous loyalty" are made up almost entirely of accounts of those who suffered similar deaths in the period from 1330 to the end of the dynasty.¹³ Thousands of others who responded similarly to the need to organize defenses at the village level did not die, or were not recorded, and many of those did not come from the elite stratum of society. An example is Ming Yü-chen (1331–66).

After Hsü Shou-hui (d. 1360) rose in rebellion at Ch'i-shui [southern Hupeh], Ming Yü-chen and the village elders talked over ways to escape the hazards of that warfare. The elders said to him: "You have always been resolute and just, and you can assemble the strong and the brave; to secure the safety of our locality and our villages is what we all hope for." Thereupon [Ming] Yü-chen called up the men of the locality, assembling a force of over one thousand. They set up camp at Green Mountain and built a stockade to fortify it. They made [Ming] Yü-chen their leader by acclamation.

When Hsü Shou-hui sent him a sternly worded summons to join his Red Turban rebellion, this account states that Ming Yü-chen had no desire to rebel: "[Ming] Yü-chen was fearful, but at the same time he was committed to protection of his home locality; having no choice therefore, he joined Hsü Shou-hui's uprising."¹⁴

The Chang-chou bandits who captured the learned Hsiao Ching-mao failed to make him acknowledge them, so they killed him. This event typifies the way bandit-rebels of this era learned and applied techniques of domination. Even the lowest of them are often seen trying to make persons of high standing in society grovel before them, either to gain psychological gratification or, more practically, to demonstrate their intimidating power to the community. Spontaneous self-defense organizations became the lowest units of the society's new structure; and a leader of vision, no matter what cause he was serving, sought to incorporate them. Hsü Shou-hui, in a different kind of situation, intimidated Ming Yü-chen, a humble person whose prestige would not count for much, but who commanded a thousand fighting men.

Rebels of all kinds, from ambitious bandits to Red Turban leaders, as they aspired to larger political goals, learned to spare the likes of Hsiao Ching-mao and, if possible, to enlist men of learning and prestige by dignified inducements. Winning over the local society by coopting its

¹³ The four chapters in the *Yüan shih* are those entitled "Chung i lieh chuan," ch. 193–196.

¹⁴ *Ming shih lu, T'ai-tsu shih lu* (1418; rpt. Taipei, 1961), 19 pp. 265–70, biography of Ming Yü-chen; quoted in Ch'ien Ch'ien-i, *Kuo ch'u ch'ün hsiung shih lüeh* (ca. 1630; rpt. Peking, 1982), 5, pp. 1a–b. Ch'ien dates this event in 1352 or 1353.

natural leaders came to be seen as the most effective means of realizing quickly the benefits of rapid territorial expansion. Local leaders had to be very cautious, however. There are many recorded instances of rebel leaders having behaved with decorum, offering dignities to persons in office or in private life, only to have the region again change hands, leaving those who had become tainted by collaboration with them to suffer severe consequences. T'ao Tsung-i records a most revealing instance of this under the heading "Punishments and rewards wrongly dispensed":

In the autumn of *jen-ch'en*, the twelfth year of the Chih-cheng reign period [1352], bandit followers of Hsü Shou-hui from Ch'i-shui and Huang-p'i [in Hupeh] fought their way through the Yü-ling Pass into Yü-hang district and then, on the tenth of the eighth month, entered the city walls of Hangchow. The rebel commanders, Hsiang Ts'ai and Yang Su, made their headquarters the one at the Ming-ch'ing Temple and the other at the Miao-hsing Temple by the north gate of the city wall. Proclaiming that the Maitreya would appear in the world of men, they deluded the common people. . . . These bandits neither killed nor raped. They appealed to the people to come over to them, entering their names and identifications in a register. They carted away all the gold and valuables in the prefectural treasury. On the twenty-sixth the Western Chekiang regional investigation commissioner led salt-field workers across the river from Shao-hsing and, in conjunction with government forces from the Lo-mu garrison, retook the city; the bandit forces broke up and fled in disorder. . . . [Government troops and officials who had ignominiously fled without attempting to defend the city now returned and took over. As one Mongol officer led his army back into the city from Hu-chou, where he had been hiding from the bandits] he set fire to the city, leaving utter desolation in his wake. Those who had submitted to the bandits to assume bogus official appointments from them, such as district magistrate Fan, and others, were immediately and summarily executed. Such local magnates as Shih Tsun-li and Ku Pa, both members of the government army who had welcomed the bandits, were dismembered in the market place, their property confiscated by the district. The Ming-ch'ing and Miao-hsing temples were similarly treated. All provincial and municipal civil and military officials [who had remained in the city] were charged with responsibility for its loss and were cashiered and denied future appointment, while the provincial officials [who had fled without resisting] resumed their former offices [without prejudice]. The standards of the court having been so debased and its punishment and rewards so wrongly dispensed, any hope that the realm might enjoy peace was no longer to be regained.¹⁵

Local leaders of the types discussed throughout this section, responding to the need for safety that the government could no longer provide, mostly did not have political ambitions. But they often took authority into their own hands and sometimes misused it, combining laudable self-defense efforts with plunder, private vengeance, or other unworthy acts. The *Off-*

15 "Hsing shang shih i," *CKL*, 28, p. 355.

cial history of the Ming, completed in 1735, comments perceptively on the quite unusual career of Ch'en Yu-ting:

At the end of the Yüan, bandits arose in all places. Among the common people volunteer forces were formed to protect village and locality. Those who called themselves commanders of such forces were too numerous to count. The Yüan government granted them official ranks and titles at the drop of a hat. Thereafter some would go off to become bandits; others served the Yüan cause but without resolve. Ch'en Yu-ting and his son, however, died for righteousness. People of the time praised them for that consummation of their principles.¹⁶

If he had not gotten such unusual opportunities because of increasingly important responsibilities thrust his way, Ch'en Yu-ting would have sunk below the view of history, as did thousands of other local leaders. Their kind seldom achieved enough prominence to earn even the passing comments of historians. But in the attempt now, six hundred years later, to understand the range of responses to the abnormal circumstances induced by social breakdown, one must grant fundamental importance to the innumerable nameless leaders who appeared in all places and at all levels of society. They created potentialities for social action that normally did not exist.

Bandits

In traditional Chinese historical materials, the words translated bandit (*tsei, fei, k'ou*, and so on) were applied to any person who defied legitimate authority, from petty thieves and robbers to leaders and followers of massive rebellions, even to future founders of dynasties before they succeeded. Here, however, "bandit" is used in the more conventional Western sense to mean lawbreakers who organized gangs for plunder, smuggling, and piracy. As stressed earlier, such bandits appeared everywhere throughout society; some were able to seize provincial capitals or dominate districts for long periods. Yet only two leaders who started out in banditry achieved the stature of competitors for state power in the era of the *ch'ün hsiung*, the group of competing leaders who had divided China among themselves for a dozen years before one of their number, Chu Yüan-chang, pressed his claim for supremacy to ultimate success in 1368.

These two outstanding bandit leaders from the *ch'ün hsiung* era were Chang Shih-ch'eng and Fang Kuo-chen (1319–74). Chang is by far the more important of the two. His remarkable career fully merits the full-length study modern historians have not yet produced.

¹⁶ Chang T'ing-yü et al., *Ming shih* (1736; rpt. Peking, 1974), p. 3717.

Chang Shih-ch'eng

Chang Shih-ch'eng was a boatman from the market town of Po-chü ch'ang (Ch'ien Ch'ien-i and others say "in T'ai-chou prefecture") in the coastal region of northern Kiangsu, where government monopoly salterns produced sea salt. This salt was moved on inland waterways to Yang-chou, T'ai-chou, and other cities of the region where franchise holders took delivery, paid the government tax, and redistributed it to assigned market areas and where unregistered salt was sold by smugglers to merchants who bought it without tax and sold it illegally. In 1329, a year for which we have comprehensive figures, the twenty-six salt fields of northern Kiangsu (the Liang-Huai fields) produced over 40 percent of the nation's salt, which in turn earned about one-third of the empire's tax revenues. The government's stake in this region thus was very great, which accounts for the concentration of army garrisons there. But as government control deteriorated in the late Yüan, salt profits became the object of intense competition among corrupt officials, thieving merchants, embezzlers, smugglers among the transport workers, and ordinary bandits. Salt transport was a highly organized activity in which clandestine gangs had long played a large part; smuggled salt was often carried on the same boats with the taxed and controlled product. Chang Shih-ch'eng came out of that background, one of profitable lawbreaking and gang loyalties.

As a youth Chang was known as a ruffian of powerful build, strong temper, martial skills, and a generous-spirited gregariousness that served him well in a setting where strong personal relationships functioned beyond the law. He and his three younger brothers were often cheated by the rich merchants to whom they delivered illegal salt and insulted by their soldier guards. In 1353, when he was thirty-two, Chang took sudden and violent revenge on a chief tormentor, killing a guard and setting a fire that burned through an entire community. Then, with his brothers and a group of only eighteen young bravos, he fled to a hideout in an adjoining district to recruit a following and turn his leadership capacities to organized banditry.

Within a few weeks, Chang had recruited "more than ten thousand followers," according to his early biographers; he led them to plunder T'ai-chou and other cities of the region. After feeble efforts to oppose him, the Yüan government offered him amnesty and official appointment, their standard response in these decades to such crises. Chang established a pattern that was to continue to the end of his career. He dallied with the offers and in this, and many cases, appeared to be about to accept, then murdered the envoys bearing the appointment before going his own way. By the end of 1353 he was in possession of the important prefectural city of

Kao-yu, twenty-five miles north of Yang-chou, and was thus astride the Grand Canal, where he could intercept grain and other supplies.

This is a simplified account of a story that otherwise reveals links to various smuggling groups, to bands of salt workers who resented government exploitation and who were eager for revenge, to former bandits who had accepted official appointments, and to rich clans on the fringes of the corrupt salt monopoly system. All those interactions are normal for the place and the time. The extraordinary element in Chang Shih-ch'eng's story is his grandiose pretensions. Once in secure possession of Kao-yu, he proclaimed himself King Ch'eng of the Great Chou dynasty and announced a reign period, T'ien-yu (Sustained by Heaven), to begin with the new year of 1354. He began to appoint a complement of civil and military officials and played the role of frog-pond emperor with great relish. The southern Red Turban leader Hsü Shou-hui in Hupeh had been proclaimed emperor of a T'ien-wan (Heaven Consummated) dynasty in 1351. Moreover, as early as 1341 the northern Red Turban leaders claimed that their figurehead, Han Lin-erh, was a descendant of the Sung rulers but did not announce a restoration of that dynasty until 1355. Both were supported by large movements. Chang's dynastic pretensions were supported by a very small territory and a limited population. Thus, he was unique among contemporary rebels.

In the summer of 1354 Mongol forces set out from Yang-chou, the major garrison in the region, and attempted to dislodge him. Failing that, the court quickly offered better terms of amnesty and higher ranks and titles. Again Chang played his game: receiving the distinguished envoys, retaining them as if hesitating in his decision, and in the end murdering them cruelly.

The Yüan court responded with force. Its most powerful and capable figure, Toghto, chancellor of the right, resolved to eradicate Chang and other rebels. Late in 1354 he took to the field with an immense army—the last great military effort launched by the Mongol regime in China—and laid siege to Kao-yu on 24 November. Between 28 November and 12 December he defeated Chang's forces repeatedly in battles under the walls of Kao-yu. In each instance Chang was forced to withdraw into the fortified city. Meanwhile, detachments of Toghto's army were defeating Chang's adherents in nearby district cities and were clearing the region of other dissidents. On 7 January 1355 an imperial edict that had been issued at the court in Ta-tu (Peking) on 24 December reached Toghto's camp. To his shock and surprise, this edict ordered him to turn his military command over to others, to surrender all his civil and military posts, and to go into exile. His army disintegrated, many of its units taking up banditry. One

year later, in exile on the Yunnan frontier, he was poisoned by agents of his enemies who, in his absence, now dominated the court. By engineering Toghto's dismissal, they had at once destroyed the government's last credible leader, saved Chang Shih-ch'eng (and other rebels), and guaranteed the collapse of the dynasty.

The court again offered Chang amnesty and a high appointment. This time he was convinced, by his miraculous escape from destruction at Toghto's hands, that fortune favored his cause. In the summer of 1355 he dallied with the appointment envoys, then murdered them. He immediately went on the offensive to regain his lost holdings in northern Kiangsu, which was seriously affected by famine and epidemic. In the fall a rebel leader from Chiang-yin, on the south bank of the Yangtze, fleeing a quarrel and rivals there, sought Chang's protection at Kao-yu. He persuaded Chang to turn his attention to the vastly richer and more populous, and up to that time relatively peaceful, region of the delta stretching from Soochow to Hangchow. Chang was suspicious. Northern Kiangsu had been distinct in language and history, and he felt no affinity for Wu, as the region to the south was called. Nonetheless, at the end of 1355 he sent his most capable younger brother, Chang Shih-te, to cross the Yangtze with an army and to explore the possibilities on the south bank. On 11 July Chu Yüan-chang had meanwhile crossed the Yangtze at T'ai-p'ing, one hundred miles to the west, and later attempted to seize Nanking. Chang Shih-te captured his first major city, Ch'ang-shu, in February 1356 and in March took Soochow. On 13 April Chang Shih-ch'eng arrived in Soochow from Kao-yu and moved into a large Buddhist temple that had been hastily converted into a temporary royal palace. Soochow was to be his home for the next eleven years.

During the following months most of his fighting forces were transferred to the south bank. Under Chang Shih-te's vigorous and skilled leadership, they began to take over prefectures east of Ch'ang-chou and south into northern Chekiang. Chang Shih-te even entered Hangchow late in the summer of 1356 but was soon forced to withdraw. Chang's kingdom of Great Chou was becoming a significant regional power. His important enemies were Chu Yüan-chang's new and potent rebel base, the southernmost extension of the northern Red Turbans at Nanking, which Chu had at last captured in mid-April 1356 and the most important base of Yüan power left in east-central China, the provincial capital at Hangchow. To the north of the Yangtze, Chang also had a common boundary with Chaghan Temür's territories, but their interests did not conflict. Chu Yüan-chang was by far the most dangerous of the threats to Chang.

In the summer of 1357, as Chang's and Chu's forces fought over a

strategic river defense point (Fu-shan harbor in Ch'ang-shu district, north of Soochow), Chang Shih-te was captured and taken to Nanking.¹⁷ Chu tried to use his captive to bargain for Chang Shih-ch'eng's surrender or cooperation. Chang Shih-te sent a letter secretly to his older brother telling him never to cooperate with or submit to Chu Yüan-chang, but if circumstances so directed, to surrender to the Yüan instead. Then he starved himself to death in prison, stubbornly defying his captors.

Chang Shih-te's death was a great blow. He was the most aggressive and competent of Chang Shih-ch'eng's field commanders and the most disciplined and vigorous of his political aides. Without him, Chang's organization began to change character. Moreover, the pressure grew on both fronts, from Chu in Nanking and from new elements strengthening the Yüan provincial government's forces in Hangchow. Chang sent word to Yüan officials in Hangchow that he would surrender under conditions that the provincial authorities found almost too arrogant. Dash Temür, the senior official there, had previously been stationed at Yang-chou when Chang was based at Kao-yu; he considered Chang too devious to be trusted. Nevertheless the need was great, and late in 1357, the terms having been slightly modified and agreed upon (in place of Chang's request to retain his princely title he settled for that of grand marshal), the Yüan government in Hangchow sent high officials with patents of appointment. This time they survived the ordeal. Chang's brothers and all his court, staff, and other officials were given offices and titles at provincial and local levels, but Chang was allowed to retain the actual structure of his government and all his authority over it. Thus his territory, his armed forces, and his accumulated wealth were undisturbed. Other than playing the role of a loyal servitor of the Yüan dynasty, his only real obligation was to ship a million or more piculs of rice each year to Ta-tu by the sea route, but the capital never received more than 15 percent of that amount.

Chang Shih-ch'eng gained a great deal from the arrangement offered to him by the weakened Yüan government. His most important gain was the legitimacy his new status gave him in the eyes of Chinese society, especially in the eyes of the elite. They were not deceived by his turncoat loyalty, yet there was now less danger in taking office under him and in associating with his officials. And there was also the hope that he would be susceptible to elite guidance, would govern according to their standards, and uphold Confucian and literati ideals. This in fact he did to a greater extent than any other regional political leader in China at that moment, loyalist or rebel. The rich southeast had been relatively untroubled and had drawn

17 See P'an Ch'eng-chang, *Kuo shih k'ao i*, (ca. 1660; rpt. Taipei, 1967), 1, p. 6, citing Ch'ien Ch'ien-i's arguments on date and place.

scholar-elite types from all over China. Soochow and Hangchow and the other rich delta cities shared a comfortable, refined, even extravagant life, while most of the rest of China suffered hardship.

Chang now had a great opportunity. With potential revenues from the salt fields in northern Kiangsu plus the grain surplus of his rich agricultural domain south of the Yangtze, Chang was by far the best supplied of the regional leaders. The population under his effective control probably matched or exceeded that of his largest rivals, for his area was more compact and under closer control. Moreover, he was not handicapped by identification with repellent sectarian movements, as were the powerful leaders of the Red Turbans. Such assets would seem to have made him a likely candidate for the kinds of support that might have projected him into legitimate possession of the mandate to rule. That it was not he, but one of the least likely of his rivals who claimed that mandate makes his case of particular interest. A definitive analysis of his failure is not possible at this time; historians today must still rely on the excellent materials and critical studies put together by seventeenth-century historians.¹⁸

To conclude Chang's story, he again repudiated the Yüan government in the autumn of 1363, as had long been expected. This time he declared himself Prince of Wu and took control of Hangchow and much of northern Chekiang, which he had in any event dominated since 1358. Earlier in that year he had launched initiatives to enlarge his territories north of the Yangtze, attacking Chu Yüan-chang's flank in Anhwei, while Chu was caught in war against the central Yangtze Red Turban kingdom of Ch'en Yu-liang (1320–63).

By the end of 1363, however, Chu had triumphed over Ch'en and was free to turn his attention to the east. Throwing down the gauntlet, he announced that as of the new year of 1364 he too would bear the title Prince of Wu.¹⁹ He sparred with Chang for almost two years, but neither undertook a major campaign. Then, late in the autumn of 1365, Chu took up the offensive in a final effort against Chang. Prefecture by prefecture, Chang's domains fell to Chu's aggressive armies. Soochow itself was surrounded and placed under a tight siege on 27 December 1366. Its defenses finally collapsed on 1 October 1367, providing a classic example of the horrors experienced by a starving and helpless population locked into recently rebuilt and very stout city walls that now became a death trap. At the very end, Chang's wives and concubines loyally climbed into a tower

18 Particularly Ch'ien Ch'ien-i and P'an Ch'eng-chang; see bibliographic note for Chapter 1.

19 Chu, however, did not change his calendar to "the first year of Wu" until 1367; cf. Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming pen chi chiao chu*, (Shanghai, 1948; rpt. Hong Kong, 1967), p. 91.

filled with fuel, which his principal wife ignited before slashing her own throat. Chang hanged himself in the main hall of his court but was cut down and resuscitated by the conquering armies. He was promptly carted off in a cage to Nanking, where a few days later, at the age of forty-six, he hanged himself in his prison cell.

Why did Chang fail? After Chang Shih-te's death, his generals with one or two exceptions became less aggressive, and discipline in his army became as loose as that of the Yüan. It was said at the time that when Chang's captains were ordered into the field, they would claim to be sick, and then demand gifts of money and property before accepting orders to fight. They would abandon their positions whenever a battle turned against them, knowing they would not be punished for failure. His administration, rigorous and legalistic at the beginning, grew lax. It was dominated by his youngest brother, Chang Shih-hsin, and his son-in-law, P'an Yüan-shao, whose irresponsibility, avarice, and ostentatious ways damaged the morale of army and government.

They surrounded themselves with literary figures, artists, and musicians, patronizing them generously, but failed to earn the respect of the more serious scholar-officials who by and large would not serve Chang's regime. He had no corps of advisors truly committed to the cause of helping him become the emperor of China, no inner cabinet of plotters and planners driving the machinery of his government. Most important, Chang himself lacked the ambition. He changed from an intense, active, angry young man to one who at forty took his pleasures at a leisurely pace, expecting others to maintain daily government routines. He might have outwaited certain of his rivals, including the self-destructive Yüan regime, and this patience might have allowed him to seek the emperorship. His principal rival, however, did not allow him that luxury. Chu Yüan-chang was an obsessive perfectionist, a driving manager, ever intent on the large prize, and he eventually shed his Red Turban identity and acquired a brain trust of Confucian intellectuals equally intent on steering him to his ultimate goal. This is a highly plausible explanation. Until we know more, we may credit it with a fair measure of accuracy. In any event, it sums up the Ming historians' by no means impartial assessment of the contest between Chu and Chang, and it is also the common view among modern historians.²⁰

²⁰ The most perceptive modern analysis of this is Wang Ch'ung-wu's short essay, "Tu Kao Ch'ing-ch'iu 'Wei-ai lun'," *BIHP*, 12 (1947), pp. 273–82. For a very useful, sympathetic history of Chang's career, see Chih Wei-ch'eng et al., *Wu-wang Chang Shih-ch'eng tsai chi*, 5 vols. (Shanghai, 1932).

Fang Kuo-chen

Fang Kuo-chen (1319–74) was a native of Huang-yen district on the coast of central Chekiang. His family were local shipowners and sea traffickers of some means, though Fang remained illiterate; he was tall and of imposing demeanor, a natural leader of fighting men. He and his family undoubtedly were deeply involved in illicit coastal trade, perhaps in piracy. He was catapulted into rebellion when he killed a prominent man who had accused him, perhaps falsely, of being in collusion with a notorious pirate. Having committed the crime of murder, in 1348 he, with one older and two younger brothers and some cohorts from a neighboring village, took to the sea in their own ships, hiding out among the offshore islands long a favorite haunt of pirates. Fang proceeded to build a pirate band that lived by plundering coastal cities and towns.

Succeeding as a pirate, Fang was alternately pressed by Yüan military forces or else offered generous terms for surrendering, which he did repeatedly in 1349, in 1353, and again in 1356. The Yüan court was particularly eager to enlist his aid in transporting grain by the sea route to Ta-tu. When he surrendered for the last time in 1356, he was offered command of a sea transport myriarchy, and his brothers some lesser titles and military offices. His fleet at that time is said to have numbered over a thousand vessels of all kinds; with it he crushed the government's naval forces and made himself the master of the sea lanes. Ashore he controlled the three coastal prefectures of Ch'ing-yüan (in modern Ch'u-chou, Chekiang), T'ai-chou, and Wen-chou, and almost the entire coast of modern Chekiang from Ningpo south into northern Fukien. In addition, he held de facto control over much of Ningpo and Shao-hsing on the shores of Hangchow Bay. High if nominal posts in the provincial government did not prevent him from encroaching further on areas under its administration. By the late 1350s he was the regional leader of coastal Chekiang and the adjoining seas. His naval forces entered the mouth of the Yangtze to fight Chang Shih-ch'eng. His pressure contributed to Chang's decision to surrender to the Yüan late in 1357, and thereafter for several years, despite their enmity, his ships transported Chang's grain to Ta-tu.

So far, this account of Fang Kuo-chen's career appears to be analogous to the account of Chang's career. Yet he was quite a different sort of man. He lacked the self-importance that led Chang to award himself royal titles and to compete for the emperorship. On the other hand, he was more attentive to his own interests. His base ashore was not an incipient state in his eyes; he came to dominate and even to govern the three prefectures because they were essential to his maritime activities. He utilized the instruments of

diplomacy more seriously, and more skillfully, than did Chang. His envoys were constantly going back and forth to Ta-tu, Nanking, and Hangchow bearing lavish gifts and presenting ingeniously contrived diplomatic communications composed for him by literary assistants. He even sent a son as hostage to Chu Yüan-chang as early as 1359, his prescience winning Chu's approval. Yet in the following exchanges he deviously avoided the matter of acknowledging Chu's overlordship and to Chu's chagrin continued to use the Yüan calendar. When Chu's envoy returned to Nanking in 1360 with reports on Fang's evasiveness, Chu responded: "We shall leave him alone for the time. After I have conquered Soochow, even though he then wants to acknowledge us, it will be too late."

At the end of 1367 Chu's forces, recently victorious over Chang Shih-ch'eng, pressed near Fang's domain. Fang was able to manage a surrender on favorable terms, in part because his large navy and his small but crack army were immediately needed for Chu's lightning campaign to conquer the southeast coast. Fang was taken to Nanking in 1368. He was well treated by Chu, who was perhaps feeling unusually magnanimous in the first year of his reign as the founder of the new dynasty. Moreover, Fang had been among the earliest to acknowledge Chu as a rising star in the late 1350s; he had never attacked him, nor had he ever firmly defied him. Offices, military titles, and incomes were given to him and his family members. He was retained in Nanking, where he died of natural causes in 1374.

Fang Kuo-chen thus parlayed his particular assets—his seafaring and organizational skills—into status that transcended his bandit-pirate origins. He became a regional leader and an independent factor in the wars and rivalries out of which the new dynasty emerged. While Chang Shih-ch'eng squandered his large assets, Fang Kuo-chen may be said to have realized full return on his markedly smaller ones.

Sectarian movements

The vast Red Turban rebellion that, so far as we know, first appeared in Kiangsi and Hunan in the 1330s spread within a dozen years throughout half of China. It was not like the equally vast T'ai-p'ing rebellion of the nineteenth century; the T'ai-p'ing movement was created in one place, produced one unified corps of leaders, and spread from its point of origin by force of arms across many provinces, like a fierce storm cutting a great swath as it moved. In contrast, promoters of Red Turban doctrine moved clandestinely into several provinces, especially those that were then suffering from famine and epidemics. Their religious teachings spontaneously

generated the formation of local sects with broad popular followings. The practices of those sects, especially their suspicious-looking (but probably not orgiastic) nocturnal gatherings of men and women to burn incense and worship the messianic figure of the Buddha Maitreya, were looked upon by government and elite society as heterodox and socially dangerous. That forced them to adopt forms of conspiratorial, underground organization. Various politically motivated leaders may have been waiting for this development. They were now able to take over, making these forms the vehicle for achieving their goals. Thus, the Red Turbans were from the start a many-headed movement, and in each place they developed strong local color.

Eventually there resulted two large, broadly organized wings of rebellion. There were what we may call the southern (or western) Red Turbans, centered originally in southern Hupeh. Expanding from this base, they came to dominate the central and upper Yangtze regions. The other wing was the northern (or eastern) Red Turban rebellion, centered in the Huai River drainage of modern Anhwei province. This movement spread eastward into southern Hopei, Shantung, and northern Kiangsu, and westward into Honan. These two main arms of the rebellion shared a doctrinal identity but lacked organizational integration; eventually they warred against each other as Chu Yüan-chang, an offshoot of the northern wing, came into conflict with Ch'en Yu-liang of the southern branch.

Furthermore, within each wing there were separate groupings, retaining features of their distinctive local origins and often hostile to each other. The Red Turban phenomenon was thus complex and varied, some of its branches eventually different enough to stand as independent sectarian movements, like that of Ming Yü-chen in Szechwan. But there were other doctrine-inspired rebellions or local uprisings that appear to have had distinct characteristics and different origins. Those have largely sunk from view, in part because traditional historians, generally sympathetic neither to folk religions nor to rebellions, have tended to apply the Red Turban label to all of them indiscriminately (and have even extended it to nonsectarian rebels in some instances).

Here our concern is with those large and important movements that truly belong to authentic Red Turban history. The broader title "sectarian movements" is used for this section as a reminder that the Red Turbans were not the only sectarian rebels on the scene in fourteenth-century China.

In recent years historians of China, seeking a folk hero in the great popular rebellions of the fourteenth century, have resurrected a shadowy figure from the margins of history and have credited him with having founded the Red Turban movement and led its armies. He is P'eng Ying-yü, a Buddhist

monk from Yüan-chou prefecture (in modern Kiangsi, on the Hunan border), who is credited with having turned the centuries-old Maitreya cult of the White Lotus sect into a potent movement of social action.²¹ However far-fetched that may be as social history, this strained search for the roots of abortive class warfare in the late Yüan period has turned up valuable new information on the Red Turban rebellion. Whether P'eng himself was the individual responsible for welding together elements of folk religion and for disseminating a uniform doctrine throughout several provinces from the central Yangtze to Anhwei remains unclear, yet something like that in fact happened.

P'eng first appears in 1338 as the doctrinal leader of an uprising in Yüan-chou. At this time a rebel leader, Chou Tzu-wang, was proclaimed emperor; he was quickly apprehended by the regional authorities and executed. P'eng fled northward to the region along the Huai and the lower Yellow rivers, where he is said to have been concealed in the homes of humble people for several years, and where he spread the teaching of the forthcoming descent to earth of Maitreya, the Buddha of wealth and the great king of radiance, who would bring the millennium to the suffering earth.²² Red Turban doctrines appeared in many places in the Huai region from 1340 onward. In 1341 alone, "bandit uprisings by poor farmers" were reported in more than three hundred places in Hunan and Hupeh, Shantung, and southern Hopei.²³ The following decade was turbulent, particularly in the two regions of the central Yangtze and the Huai where the Red Turbans were on the rise.

In 1351, 150,000 workers were mobilized from among the poor farming population to perform labor on a vast project to rechannel the Yellow River and to reopen the Grand Canal where the two intersected in western Shantung. (That was the great engineering triumph of Chia Lu, hydraulics expert, general, and governor.) Han Shan-t'ung was a long-time sectarian leader of Luan-ch'eng (in modern northeast Hopei). His grandfather is identified as a White Lotus sect leader who had "burned incense and deluded the masses," for which crimes he was exiled to the southern tip of Hopei. There, two generations later, we find his grandson a prominent Red Turban leader, the presumption being that the White Lotus family heritage had merged with the similar, but politically more focused, doctrines of

21 For a representative item see: Ch'iu Shu-sen, "Yüan mo Hung-chin chün ling hsiu P'eng Ying-yü hsi sheng ti shih chien ho ti tien wen t'i" *Yüan shih chi pei fang min tsu shih yen chiu chi k'an*, 1 (July 1977), pp. 25-28.

22 For the content of these teachings see Hok-lam Chan, "The White Lotus-Maitreya doctrine and popular uprisings in Ming and Ch'ing China," *Sinologica*, 10, No. 4 (1969), pp. 211-33.

23 Wu Han, *Chu Yüan-chang chuan* (1949; rev. 1965; rpt. Peking, 1979), pp. 8, 86ff.

P'eng Ying-yü. Han Shang-t'ung had acquired a political advisor, Liu Fu-t'ung, who was to become the driving force in the northern Red Turban insurrection. Liu plotted to recruit followers from among the large assemblage of disgruntled, disaster-afflicted workers on the Yellow River project. He was very successful. An explosive spread of Red Turban activity is observable from 1351. Han Shan-t'ung was captured and executed, but his wife and young son, Han Lin-erh, dubbed the "Young Prince of Radiance" but also held to be a descendant of the Sung emperors, escaped in Liu Fu-t'ung's custody. As the protector of the figurehead leader of the revolt, Liu established a "capital" at Ying-chou, in modern western Anhwei at the Hunan border, proclaiming it the center of the Red Turban rebel government.

The southern Red Turbans, 1351–1363

During that same summer of 1351, P'eng Ying-yü or his principal military follower, Tsou P'u-sheng, found the figurehead leader for a new Red Turban uprising in the person of a complacent cloth peddler of heroic stature and mien and safely lacking in other leadership qualities; his name was Hsü Shou-hui. Several reports of P'eng Ying-yü's capture and death date from the end of 1348 to late in 1352, and one says he was killed by Ch'en Yu-liang (see below) in 1358.²⁴ All the accounts are impossible to verify on the basis of information currently available. It is difficult to believe that he was not the authority figure who anointed Hsü Shou-hui for the role of T'ien-wan emperor, but the facts are obscure.

In September the insurgents, led by Tsou P'u-sheng, captured the southern Hupeh district city of Ch'i-shui and proclaimed it the capital of a Red Turban dynasty called T'ien-wan (Heaven Consummated), with the imposing peddler as its emperor. A new calendar was devised, using the reign name Chih-p'ing (Equable Governing). The new rebellion expanded to the south and briefly held Han-yang and the neighboring cities of Han-k'ou and Wu-ch'ang in 1352, and then was driven off. Tsou P'u-sheng was succeeded as the rebels' military leader in 1355 by a considerably more aggressive generalissimo, Ni Wen-chün, who retook Han-yang early in 1356 and moved the seat of the rebel government there. From its base at this strategically important city at the confluence of the Yangtze and the Han rivers, the T'ien-wan dynasty's territories now expanded rapidly. Late in 1357 Ni Wen-chün plotted unsuccessfully to assassinate Hsü Shou-hui and take his place; as a consequence he was murdered and succeeded by a new military leader for the entire southern Red Turban rebellion, Ch'en

24 Sun Cheng-jung, *Chu Yüan-chang hsi nien yao lu*, (Hangchow, 1983), p. 28.

Yu-liang. Under Ch'en's vigorous leadership, the territories were expanded eastward into Anhwei and Kiangsi and northwest up the Han valley. Another commander, Ming Yü-chen, led the rebel armies into Szechwan, campaigning through the Yangtze gorges upriver to capture Chungking. Within less than two years Ming Yü-chen held all of Szechwan.

Ch'en Yu-liang, like Ni Wen-chün, was unwilling to remain the actual power under a useless figurehead like Hsü Shou-hui. In 1360 he succeeded in assassinating Hsü and seizing his throne. He renamed the southern Red Turban dynasty the Han and changed the reign name to Ta-i (Great Righteousness). He then immediately launched an attack on Nanking, but was repulsed and returned to his capital at Wu-ch'ang across the Yangtze from Hsü's former capital at Han-yang. (Today the three cities of Han-yang, Han-k'ou, and Wu-ch'ang form the municipality of Wu-han.)

Under Ch'en Yu-liang, a ruthless and restlessly brilliant leader, the southern Red Turban state grew rapidly and gained great military power. Expanding relentlessly downriver toward Chu Yüan-chang's growing but smaller base at Nanking, Ch'en finally challenged him in 1360. Defeated then and ejected from his Kiangsi base the following year, he made his ultimate effort in 1363. Ch'en moved an immense armada of fighting ships and large armies down the Yangtze and into Lake P'o-yang at Nan-ch'ang, just west of the lake's southern tip. There, after a long summer's battle to which Chu brought most of his water and landborne forces from Nanking, Ch'en was defeated, somewhat by chance, and was killed during the battle, leaving a child as heir and a leaderless state. Chu Yüan-chang still adhered to the northern Red Turban leadership of the Sung dynasty of Han Lin-erh, the "Young Prince of Radiance," who had been Chu's ward since the capture and death of Liu Fu-t'ung. Chu controlled the entire Yangtze drainage from the gorges west of I-ch'ang in Hupeh all the way to Ch'ang-chou, halfway between Nanking and Soochow. The southern arm of the Red Turbans had been eliminated.²⁵

The Hsia state of Ming Yü-chen in Szechwan, 1357-1371

Ming Yü-chen had taken the southern Red Turban banner into Szechwan in 1357 and conquered that rich, semi-isolated region from incompetent Mongol defenders and bandit remnants of the northern Red Turban armies.

²⁵ See Edward Dreyer, "The Poyang campaign, 1363: Inland naval warfare in the founding of the Ming dynasty," in *Chinese ways in warfare*, ed. Frank A. Kierman, Jr., and John K. Fairbank, (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), pp. 202-42; and Chapter 2 of this volume.

He remained loyal to Hsü Shou-hui and did not acknowledge the usurper, Ch'en Yu-liang. He declared Szechwan the independent Red Turban kingdom of Hsia but came under the strong influence of a learned Confucian scholar-official named Liu Chen, who for some years dominated his political establishment, guiding it into curiously antique institutional adaptations. The history of the Hsia state has been little studied; its guiding spirit seems to have remained essentially Buddhist. Ming Yü-chen reigned until 1366, when he died of an illness at the age of thirty-five. He had governed prudently, had recruited learned scholars to serve him, and had won the confidence of the people. But he failed to set into motion any long-range plans for the expansion of his state. An attempt to conquer Yunnan from the Mongol overlords there failed because it was undermanned and poorly planned. After his death he was succeeded by a nine-year-old son, Ming Sheng. His regime then lost all semblance of forceful, unified leadership, and existed passively until it readily surrendered to invading Ming armies in 1371.

The northern Red Turban rebellion, 1351–1367

The narrative of Red Turban activity must now return to Han Lin-erh and Liu Fu-t'ung at Ying-chou in 1351. In comparison to the southern arm, the northern Red Turban movement retained a stronger ideological content and a larger measure of nominal adherence to its figurehead emperor. Han Lin-erh was declared the emperor of a restored Sung dynasty at Po-chou (modern Po-hsien in western Anhwei) on 16 March 1355, adopting the reign title Lung-feng (Dragon Phoenix). His northern rebellion was also able to retain a more secure hold over its followers than did the southern branch. One plausible reason is that Liu Fu-t'ung, the mastermind of the movement, retained ideological control for eight years, whereas P'eng Ying-yü had disappeared from the scene in the south. Another is that the ideologically symbolic child-emperor survived until 1367; its claim to be a Sung restoration lent a kind of legitimacy and credibility in the common mind as well as a deeply felt anti-Mongol focus to the movement. The southern Red Turbans projected vaguer ideological and political claims, and the cynicism induced by the successively attempted and ultimately successful assassination of Hsü Shou-hui, causing defections and factional struggles, further weakened its psychological coherence.

On the other hand, Liu Fu-t'ung was not successful as a dictator; he could

not impose a tight organizational integration on the northern Red Turbans. He clung instead to the ideological unity deriving from Han Lin-erh's multiple claims as the Sung successor, fourth-generation White Lotus leader, Red Turban emperor, and "Young Prince of Radiance," the forerunner of the soon to be incarnated Maitreya Buddha who represented powerful Buddhist and Manichean folk religious elements. Liu Fu-t'ung did not wield strong military control and was only briefly successful militarily. On 11 June 1358 he led his army in capturing K'ai-feng. From 960 until it fell to the Jurchen in 1126, this city had been the capital of the Northern Sung dynasty, from whose penultimate emperor Han Lin-erh claimed to be the tenth-generation descendant. In a surge of support following the victory, he was able to order commanders loyal to him to take important targets in Anhwei and Shantung and to launch an offensive under Mao Kuei against Ta-tu. But on 10 September 1359 Chaghan Temür's counteroffensive in Honan recaptured K'ai-feng. Liu and his Sung court were driven back first to their previous capital, the peripheral and strategically unimportant district town of Po-chou, and later to An-feng (both in modern western Anhwei). They remained there until Chang Shih-ch'eng sent an army against An-feng in 1363.

The expansive phase of military activity directed by Liu Fu-t'ung from a central capital of the northern Red Turbans thus had more or less come to an end by 1359. After that, despite the widely acknowledged sovereignty of Han Lin-erh among the rebels, military and political leadership was fractured and never again effectively integrated. Important leaders and bases claiming to share the Red Turban banner, constantly warring among themselves, existed in many locales throughout the Huai region until the late 1350s: at Hsü-chou in northern Kiangsu, under Sesame Seed Li, until 1352; in northwest Honan and Shensi from 1356 to 1359 until Chaghan Temür pushed them on into Szechwan; at I-tu in Shantung from 1357 to 1362; and in Chahar and Manchuria from 1358 to 1362 in the aftermath of Mao Kuei's unsuccessful campaign against Ta-tu. In short, in the early 1350s they created a line from Shantung southwest to the Anhwei-Honan border cutting North China off from the Yangtze. At times they expanded north from that line until Chaghan Temür checked them between 1358 and 1362. After that, the important development for history, and particularly for the emergence of the Ming dynasty, is the collapse of Red Turban power along that geographic zone, and the rise of the semi-autonomous southward extension of its power into the lower Yangtze region, centered at Nanking from 1356 onward. For that story, we must turn to the career of Chu Yüan-chang.

THE CAREER OF CHU YÜAN-CHANG, 1328–1367

His rise to power

That Chu Yüan-chang is the only founder of an imperial Chinese dynasty born into a household of destitute farmers, thus coming from the bottom layer of Chinese society, is one of the best known facts of Chinese history. Born on 21 October 1328 at Chung-li village in Hao-chou district (modern Feng-yang district of central Anhwei, just southeast of the important railroad intersection and industrial city of Peng-pu), his earliest years were ones of great hardship. His parents and grandparents were tax defaulters who had fled from place to place in the Huai region, seeking a place to scratch a meager livelihood from the drought- and epidemic-ridden land as tenant farmers. He was the youngest surviving child among four sons and two daughters. All but the eldest son had been adopted out or married off because the family could not feed them. By the 1330s the Huai region had become the cradle of the Red Turban rebellion, its messianic doctrines drawing support from the increasing misery experienced by hard-pressed people. It was believed that at the moment of greatest darkness and desolation, the light of Manichean reversal would reappear, and the Maitreya Buddha would come from the Western Paradise to rule in the world, bringing a dramatically utopian reversal of men's fortunes. The young Chu Yüan-chang's maternal grandfather, a fortuneteller and veteran of the Chinese army that had resisted the final phase of the Mongol conquest in the 1270s, had filled the boy's ears with wonderful stories about magical happenings and high adventure. Such was the environment of his earliest years.

In 1344, when Chu was sixteen, an epidemic accompanying a summer of locusts and drought carried off most of his family—his father, mother, and married oldest brother still living at home—within the space of three weeks in May and June. His sister-in-law and her young son and one married brother away from home were the only other survivors. The survivors were too poor to bury the dead properly, let alone to provide for Chu Yüan-chang. Late in October, therefore, he was offered to a nearby Buddhist monastery as a novice to do menial work in fulfillment of a vow made by his father when he had been a sickly infant. In the meantime he had become a tall, sturdy youth, notable for a rugged pockmarked face dominated by a jutting jaw, features so strange that they aroused awe and were seen to portend unusual qualities. Those he undoubtedly had, yet his rise from destitute, illiterate farmer's son to occupant of the imperial throne as the founder of a great new dynasty is a story that would seem unreal as fiction.

Within a few weeks, in December of 1344, the monks at the Huang-chüeh Temple (or Yü-chüeh Temple, as it possibly was then known)²⁶ were forced to send all the novices out to beg for their food. Chu, so far as we know, wandered through the Huai region as a mendicant monk for three years from 1345 to 1347, but it is also probable that he became familiar with aspects of military life and may have served for some time in an army, possibly a Mongol army. Moreover, it is certain that he came to know intimately the circumstances of rebellion and of its suppression. In 1347 or 1348 he returned to the temple, remaining there from about age twenty to twenty-four. At this time he seems to have been introduced to literacy and to the simple study of Buddhist scriptures. He had a good mind and a powerful memory.

By 1352 rebellion was everywhere in the central Huai, taking many forms, albeit mostly Red Turban. The district city of Hao-chou, the next town west of Chung-li village, was captured and held by a group of Red Turban adherents on 16 February 1352. Kuo Tzu-hsing (d. 1355), a leader of the insurgents, was the son of a fortuneteller and the blind daughter of a rich man; the family is described as having been skillful money-makers. Kuo was considered a courageous and able fighter, but a man of rash temper who did not get along well with others. Believing the Maitreya doctrine, he was convinced that the troubled times portended great change. He had prepared for that by spending liberally in order to gather a following of like-minded spirits and loyal fighters. Proclaiming themselves commanders-in-chief, Kuo and four companions led their followers against Hao-chou. Kuo may have been the nominal leader, but the others soon became defiant. The relations among them were unstable from the beginning.

The Yüan authorities did not immediately attempt to retake Hao-chou. Instead, they sent out undisciplined army units to raid innocent villages, burn Buddhist temples, and capture ordinary people whom they branded as Red Turbans in order to gain credit for their operations. Chu's rural temple lay in the fighting zone; it was burned and plundered by one side or the other in February 1352. Chu and the other monks and novices fled, but then returned to the damaged buildings, having nowhere else to go. He later wrote about the experience, saying that he received repeated messages from friends within the rebel forces warning him of danger and urging him to join them. On 15 April the young monk, still six months from his twenty-fourth birthday, presented himself at the gates of nearby Hao-chou and asked to join Kuo Tzu-hsing's command. That was a fortuitous turning

²⁶ Sun Cheng-jung, *Chu Yüan-chang hsi nien yao lu*, p. 26.

point in his life. He quickly became a favored follower, trusted aide, corporal of a guard squad, and member of Kuo's household. Kuo had two wives, the older the mother of two sons about Chu's age. The younger wife persuaded Kuo to attach this able young man more securely to their family fortunes by marrying him to an adopted daughter. That young woman, then nineteen, was the daughter of a close friend named Ma who shortly before his death had entrusted his only child to Kuo. She was to become the future empress Ma. Chu's relationship with the younger wife of Kuo Tzu-hsing was to become very important; eventually she sided with him in disputes with Kuo's sons, and he took her daughter as his concubine.

Yüan forces sent by the court attempted to clear the central and eastern Huai River region of rebels in 1352 and 1353. Toward the end of 1352 they drove Sesame Seed Li from his base at Hsü-chou in northern Kiangsu, and early in 1353 two of his generals took refuge at Hao-chou, crowding the already strained resources of that small city. They used the title of prince (*wang*) and arrogated to themselves seniority over Kuo and his fellow commanders-in-chief. Factions developed. Kuo sided with one and was taken captive by the other. Chu Yüan-chang, returning from an expedition in the field, discovered the situation. Taking Kuo's younger wife and her children, he went to the camp of the other faction's leader and was able to bring help that saved Kuo's life.

From late in the winter of 1352 until June 1353, Hao-chou was surrounded by Yüan forces sent from Hsü-chou. The death of the Yüan field commander, the famed hydraulic engineer Chia Lu (who in 1351 had directed the Yellow River project) caused the siege to be lifted and saved the Hao-chou base. Subsequently Chu left to return to his village, where he recruited a force of over 700 men led by twenty-four former friends and childhood companions, including his future chief of staff, Hsü Ta. This military leadership group formed the core of his personal following for the next twenty years. Throughout the following months he continued to participate in wide-ranging sorties and field commands, practicing generalship and forming his own tactical sense. In the fall of 1353 Kuo Tzu-hsing gave him an independent commission, allowing him to escape the oppressive factional struggles at Hao-chou. This was the beginning of his independent career; he bore the title of guard commander.

During the campaigns that followed, he first captured the district town of Ting-yüan to the south. Proceeding even farther south, he gained along the way large numbers of conquered or defecting soldiers and won several important victories. By the end of the year he was in possession of Ch'u-chou (near the Anhwei-Kiangsu border) and neighboring districts on the north bank of the Yangtze. He remained there through 1354 and into

the first half of 1355. It became his base camp, where he built his own loyal army, said now to number 30,000, and began to assemble a local governing staff. Li Shan-ch'ang (1314–90), the first of his advisors with a rural elite and Confucian background, joined Chu in 1354 and began to impress the lessons of history on the eager young learner. He served as the head of Chu's secretariat.

After successfully defending Ho-yang (or Ho-chou, on the north bank of the Yangtze in modern Ho-hsien) against besieging Yüan forces through the first months of 1355, Chu began to look to the richer south bank. Most important was the great city of Nanking, then called Chi-ch'ing, which dominated that portion of the lower Yangtze region. Kuo Tzu-hsing had died at Ho-yang early in 1355. Kuo's sons considered themselves their father's heirs and successors; Han Lin-erh, the Red Turban Sung emperor, confirmed Kuo's elder son and one of Kuo's former officers, his brother-in-law Chang T'ien-yu, in those superior positions, and named Chu their second in command. But Chu in turn was surrounded by his twenty-four companions, to whom were added several important military leaders who had defected from other rebellions; it was Chu's personal reputation, not the Red Turban banner, which drew them to him. Among these was Ch'ang Yü-ch'un, his most aggressive general in the years that followed and second only to Hsü Ta in his trust. Also volunteering to join him were commanders of the important forces along the Anhwei inland waterways, namely Liao Yung-an and Yü T'ung-hai. Their fleets of small boats and barges gave Chu the means to cross the river and to fight on broader fronts with both land and water forces.

The long-anticipated crossing of the Yangtze was carried out on 10 July 1355. A first attack on Nanking then followed in mid-August. It was not successful, but Chu's armies remained, vanquishing the surrounding smaller towns. Late in October, in a second attack on Nanking, Kuo Tzu-hsing's elder surviving son and Chang T'ien-yu were killed, removing Chu's court-appointed seniors. The entire command now came under his sole control.

The founding of the dynasty

On 10 April 1356, after repeated engagements, Chu Yüan-chang at last overcame Nanking and immediately made it his new capital, quickly renamed Ying-t'ien (In Response to Heaven). In that same week Chang Shih-ch'eng moved across the Yangtze to proclaim Soochow his capital. Earlier that year Ni Wen-chün established Hsü Shou-hui as emperor of the southern Red Turban state of T'ien-wan in a new capital at Han-yang

on the Yangtze. The following month Han Lin-erh named Chu head of the new province of Kiangsi, and Kuo Tzu-hsing's remaining son became his second in command. This son plotted insurrection, was found out, and was executed. Chu now was the unchallenged leader of the northern Red Turban base on the Yangtze and the defender of the figurehead emperor of the entire northern arm of the rebellion. He had emerged as one of the *ch'ün hsiung*, the group of leaders competing for the mastery of the realm.

At this point in his career, it is possible to observe a transformation of Chu Yüan-chang from leader of a populist sectarian revolt to leader of a political movement aspiring to traditional legitimacy. This has been fully discussed by modern historians and need not be argued at length here.²⁷ It may be useful, however, to review briefly some aspects of that transformation.

It has been noted that Chu acquired Li Shan-ch'ang, his first literary assistant, during the year 1354. At that time he was on his way to the capture of Ch'u-chou and was breaking free from the oppressive bickering among ineffectual Red Turban leaders at Hao-chou. In other words, Chu was setting out to establish himself. Li Shan-ch'ang was from a landlord household of Ting-yüan, the first district city captured by Chu on that southward campaign. Li was at best only marginally to be identified with the traditional scholar-elite. He was a person of no attainment in learning, but he was clearly quite different from Chu's other associates up to that time. He could converse with Chu about history and ritual, the twin pillars of Chinese statecraft, and he was qualified to head a secretariat, needed by any leader who sought both to conquer and to govern. He remained Chu's chief civil official, and was eventually named the first prime minister of the new dynasty in 1368.

Li was the first of a growing circle of civil officials who were eagerly recruited thereafter. At the capture of each administrative town, local literati, either officials in the service of the enemy or in private life, were interviewed and often appointed to office. This practice was undertaken, for example, at T'ai-p'ing in 1355, when Chu first crossed the Yangtze and gained the services of the eminent T'ao An. With the capture of Nanking he enlisted a dozen more scholar-officials and placed them in his new civil administration for the city and the newly conquered districts close by. Chu

27 Wang Ch'ung-wu, "Lun Ming T'ai-tsu ch'i ping chi ch'i cheng ts'e chih chuan pien," *BHP*, 10 (1948), pp. 57–71; Wu Han, *Chu Yüan-chang chuan*, chapters 4 and 5; Romeyn Taylor, "Social origins of the Ming dynasty," *Monumenta serica*, 22, No. 1 (1963), pp. 1–78; John Dardess, "The transformation of messianic revolt and the founding of the Ming dynasty," *JAS*, 29, No. 3 (1970), pp. 539–58; Dardess, *Confucianism and autocracy: Professional elites in the founding of the Ming dynasty* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1983); Edward L. Dreyer and John D. Langlois, Chapters 2 and 3, respectively, of this volume.

was remarkably free of bias against those who served the Yüan, as well as against his "class enemies" in the elite. For these reasons, he has been a difficult subject for Marxist historians.

His background was genuinely that of the poorest level of the "oppressed masses." His education was rudimentary, and he shared no common ground with the traditional governing stratum. But he was convinced by his early literati assistants that he too, on the model of the founder of the Han dynasty at the end of the third century B.C. (whose origins, although not as humble as Chu's, made him a close model), could become a sage emperor. That Chu strove earnestly in these years to acquire such qualifications displays his remarkable educability; that his elite advisors sincerely guided him toward that development displays their commitment to the ideals of the open society.

Some recent historians, however, charge him with having "sold out" his humble class background, because he turned his back on the popular sectarian doctrines that launched his career. Yet not to have done so would have prevented the integration of the social forces needed to turn rebellion into government. The doctrinal shift was taken cautiously, since he recognized the force of sectarian ideas in the minds of his military followers and among the people in some of his conquered regions. Nevertheless, he was gradually able to effect compromises. By the time he actually proclaimed a new dynasty, he could openly denounce Red Turban ideology as foolish heresy that deluded the minds of simple people. Yet to the end of his life he spoke and wrote proudly of his humble beginnings as a poor farmer's son from the disaster-ravaged Huai region, and eventually he grew scornful, even bitterly resentful, of those who had known only the refined, comfortable life of the elite. In these years from the Yangtze crossing in 1355 until the proclamation of the new dynasty late in 1367, however, he appears as the ever-eager open-minded learner, constantly broadening his horizons.

The military history of that period is recounted in the chapter that follows. Military tasks ensuring the survival and growth of his incipient state dominated those years. At the same time, Chu was creating the full range of governmental institutions needed to launch a new dynasty. A brief discussion of those steps concludes this chapter.

Chu is depicted as having observed with revulsion the senseless destruction of warfare and as having attempted strenuously to impose troop discipline in order to win the goodwill of conquered populations. From as early as 1354 and the years thereafter come many anecdotes revealing his compassion for the suffering people and his insistence on rigorous military discipline, a theme running counter to the general conduct of war in that

time. These anecdotes have been challenged.²⁸ It has been shown that they are in some measure later interpolations designed to buttress one of the claims put forth by the dynasty's historians to demonstrate the proper working of the mandate: "Heaven sees as the people see; Heaven hears as the people hear." In principle the Mandate was to be granted to the claimant who best embodied the ideals of compassionate governance. Chu's benevolence undoubtedly was exaggerated in later tellings. Nonetheless, his earliest literati advisors, from Li Shan-ch'ang in 1354 and T'ao An in 1355 onward, constantly lectured him on that theme. That probably bore some fruit in the attention he gave to rehabilitating the lives of ordinary people in the farming villages. Especially in these early years, he strove to create the image of a wise future ruler, granting tax remissions to war-ravaged regions, punishing looters among his own troops, and rewarding loyal, altruistic service to the Yüan as well as among his own followers. He was able to contrast this image, accurate or not, with the unrestrained or at best unconcerned behavior of the Mongol authorities and of most of his rivals.

Chu greatly honored the virtue of loyalty in those who served his enemies. He never challenged the legitimacy once possessed by the Mongol Yüan dynasty, noting only that by his time the Mongols deserved to lose it. Nonetheless, when enemy military leaders died resisting his forces or when civilians compromised by capture committed suicide rather than submit to him, he granted them honorable burials and frequently established shrines to venerate their memories. This undoubtedly was effective as propaganda and in bridging the gulf between himself and the local elite throughout society. It was a policy surely urged upon him by his literati advisors and adopted by him in a cynical combination of pragmatism and idealism.

It has been forcefully argued that Chu did not actually believe in the doctrines of folk religious leaders—that is, at least at the level of what we might today label as gross superstition.²⁹ Nonetheless, he did not dissociate himself from a large number of hangers-on who had assumed the guise of venerated prophets, successful magicians, mad monks, or other more conventional religious leaders. Such men lent his cause an aura of divine assistance in the minds of ordinary people. This created problems within his circle of literati-advisors and scholar-officials, who would have preferred

28 Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming pen chi chiao chu*, especially Wang's critical notes on pp. 30–31, 38, 44–45, 53–54.

29 See Hok-lam Chan, "Chung Chung and his prophecy: The transmission of the legend of an early Ming Taoist," *Oriens Extremus*, 20, No. 1 (1973), pp. 65–102; and "The rise of Ming T'ai-tsu: Facts and fictions in early Ming official historiography," *JAOS*, 95, No. 4 (1975), pp. 679–715.

a cleaner break with all heterodoxy. That he followed his own instincts in handling such matters is evidence of his independence, his strength of will, and perhaps that his understanding of popular psychology was sounder than theirs.

Chu's final break with the Red Turban Sung dynasty was delayed much longer than his scholar-advisers would have preferred. In 1363 Chu was deeply involved in the upcoming final campaign against his strongest rival, Ch'en Yu-liang. In February his enemy from the other direction, Chang Shih-ch'eng, sent an expeditionary force to attack An-feng in western Anhwei. This place was headquarters for Han Lin-erh and the Sung regime's mastermind, Liu Fu-t'ung. It was a double embarrassment to Chu, the loyal protector of that last remnant of northern Red Turban authority, because that moment he was also seriously overextended. Against the stern advice of Liu Chi (1311–75), his principal scholar-adviser on strategy and statecraft, he nonetheless detached a portion of his field command and led it in person (with Hsü Ta being sent ahead to conduct the actual battles) to rescue Han Lin-erh. According to most accounts, Liu Fu-t'ung was captured by Chang's army and killed. Chu then had to move the Sung court of the Young Prince of Radiance to Ch'u-chou, across the Yangtze west of Nanking, where the by now militarily insignificant Red Turban court could continue to exist in safety.

The risks of this diversion were very great; it was an error of his enemies not to have taken greater advantage of it. Nonetheless, the move probably was necessary to ensure the commitment of Chu's military leaders while he was under challenge from the southern Red Turbans. Even his most intimate companions from his youthful days appear to have felt the necessity of defending their source of legitimacy. Chu continued to use the Sung state's Dragon Phoenix reign period as his official calendar until Han Lin-erh was drowned in a crossing of the Yangtze in January 1367, the last lunar month of the previous year by the Chinese calendar. But despite his convenient release from older forms long associated with the Young Prince and his now terminated claims, one year later Chu chose to name his dynasty the Ming (Radiant). The word had Manichean denotations suggesting that not all the links to sectarian doctrines had been broken.

Throughout, we observe the many-sided difficulties of this transition from popular cultural affinities to those of the great tradition and also the skill with which Chu traversed the somewhat devious path from one to the other. None of his rebel rivals displayed similar sensitivity to this complex of problems.

The first chapter of the *Basic annals* of the Ming founder's reign in the *Official history of the Ming* covers these years before 1368, providing an

outline of the steps taken in the late 1350s and 1360s in creating a government at Nanking (in 1356 renamed Ying-t'ien [In Response to Heaven]). At that time he was beginning to claim that the Mandate of Heaven was shifting, perhaps even to himself. One entry for 1356 states:

On the twentieth of July, T'ai-tsu was acclaimed Duke of Wu by his generals and he established the Kiangnan Branch Secretariat. He assumed personal charge of its affairs and appointed officials to assist him and handle documents.³⁰

Here Chu, while still alive, is referred to by his posthumous temple name, T'ai-tsu, sometimes translated Grand Progenitor; that is conventional Chinese historiographical usage. The rest is seriously faulty. "Branch secretariat" is the name used in Yüan times for the provincial-level administrative organs of civil governing. This branch secretariat, or province, was a new creation of the moment: "Kiangnan" meaning loosely the lower Yangtze region was not the name of a Yüan province. Chu's base at Nanking controlled small territories north of the Yangtze that then were part of the Yüan province of Ho-nan ("south of the Yellow River") and several districts in Yüan Chiang-Che (comprising modern Kiangsu south of the Yangtze plus modern Chekiang and Fukien). This new rebel province ambitiously called Kiangnan was one of five founded between 1356 and 1359 by the northern Red Turban rebellion to control the outward expansion of its territories from its capital, in those years either at An-feng (in modern Anhwei) or at K'ai-feng. From the point of view of that rebel Sung government, Chu Yüan-chang was but one of the senior leaders on the scene in their newly formed province at Nanking; he was first named co-commissioner of the province's regional military commission and later was promoted to the second-ranked post in the provincial administration. Had he been named Duke of Wu, it would not have been by acclamation of his generals, but by appointment from the Sung rebel capital, as actually happened five years later, in 1361.³¹

In short, the new province was not yet an independent rebel base commanded by a future emperor already clearly anticipating the bestowal of the Mandate of Heaven. It still was part of the later-discredited sectarian rebel movement from which Chu received his status and authority. Nonetheless, Chu clearly was the rising personality there, and as soon as he could eliminate his nominal superiors—his old mentor Kuo Tzu-hsing's sons and son-in-law—as he did by the middle of 1358, the Sung rebel regime

³⁰ Romeyn Taylor, trans., *The basic annals of Ming T'ai-tsu* (San Francisco, 1975), p. 38.

³¹ Although scholars continue to debate this point, 1361 clearly is the correct date, as demonstrated by P'an Ch'eng-chang in his *Kuo shih k'ao i*, 1, no. 5, which has not been superseded. Cf. also Sun Cheng-jung, *Chu Yüan-chang hsi nien yao lu*, p. 46.

gradually acknowledged his regional leadership and acquiesced in his initiatives. When the Young Prince of Radiance, the rebel Sung regime's figure-head emperor along with the northern Red Turbans' organizing figure, Liu Fu-t'ung, were driven out of K'ai-feng and forced to flee back to An-feng late in the summer of 1359 by Chaghan Temür, the power of the northern Red Turban rebellion quickly waned and all of its provinces were thrown on their own resources. Except for Chu Yüan-chang's Kiangnan, none survived beyond 1362. Gradually, Chu in fact achieved the independence and stature prematurely attributed to him in most of the traditional sources.

As Chu Yüan-chang gradually became his own master on the scene in Nanking in the late 1350s, he was, we must conclude despite all suspicions about the record, unusual among regional rebel leaders in the seriousness with which he sought to implement an increasingly full-scale government. Visiting places newly conquered by his rapidly advancing armies, he often spoke to community leaders and village elders to reassure them, sent his representatives to urge them to resume their peaceful, productive ways, and promised, as a poor farmer's son who understood their needs, to implement a benevolent government. In March 1358 he appointed K'ang Mao-ts'ai, one of the ablest of the former Yüan officials who had surrendered to him after the capture of Nanking, to an office in his Kiangnan provincial secretariat that he thought needed upgrading; that was the Superintendency of the Office for Hydraulic Works and agricultural matters (*Tu-shui ying-t'ien ssu*). In his charge to K'ang, Chu said:

During the recent disturbances of warfare, dikes and embankments have fallen into disrepair, so that the people have had to give up their agricultural labors. For this reason I am establishing this superintendency of [hydraulic works and] agriculture, so that dikes and embankments will be built and repaired and to hold particular oversight over water-control works (*shui-li*). Just now military concerns are pressing, and supply needs are urgent; in the ordering of fiscal affairs agriculture commands the highest priority. As the spring plowing now gets under way, there are worries that untimely droughts and floods will harm the farmer's work. For this reason I am appointing you to this office to travel and inspect in all places and to ensure that uplands will not suffer drought nor lowlands be harmed by floods. That all depends on keeping water storage and run-off in proper balance. Above all this office is established for the good of the people; it is not to be a burden on the people. Should it ensue that officials were engaged in enlarging and adorning their quarters and in rushing to and fro to welcome and send each other off, causing disturbance and trouble wherever they go, they would be of no benefit to the people but on the contrary would be of harm. My intent in delegating you to assume these duties is that such consequences should not ensue.³²

32 As quoted in Sun Cheng-jung, *Chu Yüan-chang hsi nien yao lu*, p. 54.

It is obvious that Chu Yüan-chang was quite pragmatic in observing that “benevolent” attention to the farming population’s well-being helped resettle displaced and ungovernable people, allowed them to be productive, and assured his government the grain and taxes needed to support armies. This altruism was not cynical; it corresponded to the facts of life. Whether this shrewd, poor commoner’s understanding of base-level society guided him or whether these pronouncements and actions showed that the conventional ethics and statecraft of his new-found Confucian advisors had prevailed is really a moot point: in such matters as these there was no basic conflict there. In any event, his political consolidation through the late 1350s and the 1360s shows him to have been more successful than his rivals in making civil government function broadly for his cause. A few further examples will serve to illustrate this. In 1360 he established new bureaus to levy taxes on wine and vinegar and to improve the management of the salt monopoly, even though he still did not control the important salt-producing regions lying farther to the east. In 1361 he began minting copper coins, and by 1363 his mints are said to have turned out 38 million coins in one year. A new tea distribution monopoly soon followed. In 1362 customs offices were set up to collect the traditional taxes on commercial goods in transit.

The scope of his Kiangnan provincial administration, in fact his entire government in the late 1350s, expanded as territories adjacent to Nanking on the east, south, and southwest were conquered by his remarkable team of generals. When large blocks of northern Chekiang fell to his forces in 1358 and 1359, he set up a “subprovincial” government and military headquarters at Wu-chou (modern Chin-hua), over two hundred miles southeast of Nanking and less than a hundred miles southwest of the great Yüan bastion of Hangchow that recently had come under the domination of Chang Shih-ch’eng. Chu traveled to the region and spent the first half of 1359 surveying its problems and directing, but not leading, further campaigns to extend his holdings. He actively recruited, one might almost say courted, many of the eminent scholars for which the region was at that time particularly famous. He courteously invited them to dine in his headquarters, asked them grave questions about how to obtain guidance from the Confucian writings, and sternly (and publicly) warned his generals to avoid unnecessary bloodshed and plunder. He returned to Nanking in June 1359; the following April a group of the most eminent scholars, headed by Sung Lien and Liu Chi, finally responded to his heavily pressured invitations to accept appointments, and reported to Nanking for assignment. We read in the *Basic annals*:

On the twenty-fifth of June, T'ai-tsu founded the office of Confucian Academies and appointed Sung Lien as education intendant. He then sent his eldest son, Chu Piao, to receive instruction from Sung in classical studies.³³

Chu Piao, the future heir to Chu's future throne, was then eight years old. Although he did not live to occupy the throne, this event foretells the important relationship that was to develop between the Chin-hua scholars, with their particular tradition of Confucian statecraft, and the Ming state.³⁴

Following his decisive defeat of Ch'en Yu-liang during the summer and autumn of 1363 in the four months' campaign at Lake P'o-yang in Kiangsi,³⁵ Chu Yüan-chang declared a new title for himself and his government to begin with the new year of 1364. He proclaimed himself the Prince of Wu (*Wu wang*), the same title that his remaining strong rival in the lower Yangtze region, Chang Shih-ch'eng at Soochow, had taken for himself the previous October. Chu, however, continued to use the Lung-feng calendar of his nominal overlord Han Lin-erh, even though this pitiful figure was now his ward, under his protection at Ch'u-chou just across the Yangtze from Nanking. As the head of a princely state, despite continuing but quite nominal subservience to the northern Red Turban movement, he established a fuller structure of offices to which he could appoint his own chief counsellors, chief administrators, directors of bureaus that functioned like a central government's executive ministries, and regional military commissioners.

Titles and ranks all were adopted from the current forms of Yüan administration and gave precedence to the right (chief minister of the right, the civilian Li Shan-ch'ang, outranked chief minister of the left, the great general Hsü Ta), in the Mongol fashion. Chu's ever more imperial sounding pronouncements to his newly appointed officials warned against bureaucracy and the administrative laxness that he saw as the cause of Yüan failure. He made such statements as: "Rites and laws (*li fa*) are the network (*chi-kang*) sustaining the state. . . . When a state is being newly established, they constitute the first order of priority."³⁶ Thus the establishment of a state and, implicitly, a state of larger claims and pretensions than the provincial princely state of Wu he had just proclaimed, clearly was in Chu's mind by this time. Moreover, it has been remarked by historians, the formal establishment of his own princely state was an important step in

33 Taylor, *The basic annals of Ming T'ai-tsu*, p. 42. 34 See Chapter 3, pp. 111, 116, 164.

35 For details see Chapter 2, pp. 82–88.

36 See the discussion of these and Chu's other statecraft concepts in Dardess, *Confucianism and autocracy*, especially pages 196 ff.

formalizing a new pattern of depersonalized, regularized relations with his old comrades-in-arms, as well as with new military and civil leaders still coming over to his side. They now were all fitted into better-defined positions, with regulated duties, obligations, and privileges. They were no longer just his personal associates. This was an important step in achieving a more systematic and readily expandable structure of government.

Eventually Chu's Wu principedom included provincial governments (that is, in Yüan usage, *hsing chung-shu sheng* or branch secretariats) for the following areas: Chiang-Che, reorganized in 1366 to supersede his previous Kiangnan branch secretariat, absorbed the subprovincial headquarters established at Wu-chou in 1358; Kiangsi, more or less modern Kiangsi, established in 1362; Hu-kuang, more or less modern Hupeh and Hunan, set up in 1364 to absorb Ch'en Yu-liang's central Yangtze Han state; and temporarily, one for Chiang-huai with its administrative center at Lu-chou (modern Ho-fei in Anhwei) to back up the military campaigns between the Yangtze and the Huai in 1364 and 1365, leading to the recapture of An-feng, the old Red Turban capital, in May 1366. That permitted Chu Yüan-chang to make a sentimental journey back to his home village to have dinner with remaining distant kin and former neighbors and to visit his family graves. Shortly thereafter, the final campaign to exterminate the downriver state of Chang Shih-ch'eng was launched, and as the future problems of administering the whole nation appeared somewhat closer, the Chiang-huai provincial government was abandoned.

In 1358, while traveling behind his advancing armies in northern Chekiang, Chu Yüan-chang had sought out the noted Confucian scholar Chu Sheng and gone through the formality of seeking his counsel. The old scholar could see that Chu Yüan-chang had long-range considerations in mind and so gave him three terse sentences of advice: "Build the walls high [around Nanking]; store up grain bountifully; proclaim yourself the ruler slowly."³⁷ Chu Yüan-chang appears to have followed that advice. He methodically consolidated his base region for a full decade, accumulated means to ensure his final victory, and was in no haste to proclaim his own new dynasty. At the end of the lunar year corresponding with 1366–67 (actually in January 1367), as has been noted above, one of Chu's trusted military aides was sent to bring Han Lin-erh to Nanking, and in crossing the Yangtze a mishap occurred that caused the boat to overturn and the Young Prince of Radiance to be drowned. Historians have mostly assumed that the accident was planned; its consequences could not have been more convenient for Chu.

With the long-defunct rebel Sung dynasty out of the way and with

³⁷ *MS.* p. 3692.

conflicting loyalties dissolved, Chu could now proclaim his own Wu calendar for the new year that began on 31 January. Yet curiously he still did not proclaim his new imperial dynasty, waiting until the siege of Chang Shih-ch'eng's last bastion, Soochow, succeeded on 1 October 1367, and the campaign against the Mongols in the north was announced. He had not begun the reconstruction of Nanking in the form of an imperial capital until 1366 and only in 1367 announced the establishment of civil service examinations to recruit officials and a Hanlin Academy to regularize the roles of scholar-advisors in his inner court. A shrine to his ancestors was built in the capital in the proper relationship to the front gates of his new palace city. Such imperial gestures as granting amnesties based on signs and portents from nature and building the Round (Heaven) and Square (Earth) Altars of State also were undertaken. His first law code, prepared by a commission of learned experts, was promulgated in December 1367, and a second new calendar, this time called that of the Great Ming dynasty, was promulgated for the new year that began on 20 January 1368. On the twelfth of January, after three ritual rejections, he announced that he had accepted the demand of his court that he ascend the throne of his own new Ming dynasty. These were all carefully prepared steps, undertaken in full consideration of traditional forms to meet time-honored criteria of legitimacy.

This remarkable dynastic founder's path from the plague-ridden, starving hamlet of Chung-li in the 1340s to the imperial throne in Nanking in 1368 had been powerfully forced—by his own driving ambition and expanding awareness—into a reasonable semblance of those traditional forms. He had mastered the means of achieving imperial rule. As emperor thereafter he was to adapt those means to suit his obsessed vision of the imperial enterprise. The political peculiarities that followed during 270 years of Ming rule will be seen in the chapters that follow to have stemmed in large part from the personal characteristics of this strange and powerful man.

CHAPTER 2

MILITARY ORIGINS OF MING CHINA

INTRODUCTION

The founding of the Ming dynasty was the end product of the anti-Yüan peasant rebellions of the 1350s. The rebellions themselves were the final stage of a long history of Chinese resentment against Mongol rule, expressed at the elite level by reluctance to serve in the government and at the popular level by clandestine sectarian activity. The occasion for the rebellions was the failure of the Yüan regime to cope with widespread famine in the 1340s. By the time those occurred, paradoxically the Yüan ruling elite had largely come to an accommodation with the native Chinese political tradition.

The rebellions inaugurated a period of political flux whose ultimate outcome might have been a divided China rather than a reunified state. The original rebel movement destroyed the foundations of Yüan authority without being able to erect a stable successor regime. The improvised militia armies which then destroyed the main body of the original rebel movement in the North China plain and in the central Yangtze, together with the principal rebel survivors of this destruction, mostly became the nuclei of regional warlord regimes after 1353. Chu Yüan-chang, the future Ming founder, gained a decisive victory in 1363; he exploited his victory by conquering and consolidating his control over the middle and lower Yangtze regions, a process completed by the capture of Soochow in 1367. Afterward Ming military expeditions rapidly conquered the rest of China proper. Szechwan was annexed in 1371. In 1372 a serious Ming defeat at the hands of the Mongols marked the end of the rapid phase of Ming expansion north of the Great Wall. The conquest of the southwest in 1382 marked the end of the military consolidation of the Ming state.

THE REBELLIONS OF THE REIGN OF TOGHÖN TEMÜR

The breakdown of centralized Yüan authority, with the consequent militarization of Chinese society, the fragmentation of regionalized political

power, and the widespread emergence of rebellious movements have been described in Chapter 1. Against that rapidly changing background, the Yüan government's attempts to recover its authority and to restore order throughout Chinese society led to military policies largely ad hoc in nature and dependent on the shifting personalities dominating its government at Ta-tu (on the site of present-day Peking).

Since 1340, the chancellor dominating the Yüan central government had been Toghto of the Merkid tribe of the Mongol nation; he had come to power in a coup supported by the emperor Toghön Temür (r. 1333–70). Intellectually, Toghto supported Confucian concepts of the state in the contest between them and traditional Mongolian values. In the context of the "Confucian" statecraft of that time, Toghto stood for vigorous government action "to benefit the people and profit the state." As chancellor, he attempted to carry out a program of repairing and extending the Grand Canal, which would have permitted the capital, Ta-tu, to be securely supplied with the surplus grain grown in the Yangtze delta and shipped by either the canal or the coastal sea route. The failure of the project as first initiated and the disorders and natural disasters accompanying it allowed Toghto's regime to be severely criticized by those who adopted the alternative Confucian perspective of opposition to such programs. Faced with this opposition, Toghto resigned in June 1344.

In the summer of 1344 the Yellow River began to shift its course, breaking through the dikes into the areas of west and northwest Shantung and eventually establishing a new course flowing into the sea north of the peninsula. Previously the Yellow River had joined its waters with the Huai. After the change of course in 1344 repeated droughts afflicted the Huai River valley in northern Honan, northern Anhwei, and Kiangsu, while to the north of the afflicted region flooding made the Grand Canal impassable.

The area affected by drought was a center of popular resistance to Yüan rule. This region had been devastated by the Chin invasions of the 1120s. A century later it was exposed to the full force of the Mongol conquest, thus deriving little benefit from the more moderate course introduced between the 1260s and the 1290s by Khubilai Khan as he completed the Mongol conquest of China. It was again subjected to destructive warfare in Khubilai's suppression of Li T'an's revolt in the 1260s. While the Chinese literary elite sulked and the clerks and soldiers collaborated, the farming masses could express their resentment of Mongol rule only through the traditional routes of banditry and secret society activity, organized around heterodox religious expression mixed, in this case, with subversive advocacy of the restoration of the Sung dynasty.

Toghto's resignation in 1344 had been prompted by popular resistance to his Grand Canal project, but the succeeding conservative regime dominated by Berke Bukha had no program for dealing with the drought, flood, and famine of the following years. In 1348 a more immediate crisis claimed the court's attention. With the Grand Canal abandoned and unusable, the capital depended on grain transported by the sea route from the Yangtze delta. These shipments had reached a high of 3.3 million *tan* (piculs) in 1329, only to drop to 2.6 million in 1342 and still less in following years. The Mongols had always been dependent on conquered and allied peoples for their naval operations. In 1348 Fang Kuo-chen rebelled in Chekiang (see Chapter 1). Fang interdicted most of the grain shipments with his pirate fleet and defeated all the government expeditions sent against him. The Berke Bukha regime tried to influence him by allowing him to "surrender" nominally, with high official titles, but Fang retained control of his fleet, his offshore island bases in the Chou-shan archipelago, and his stranglehold over the grain shipments.

After a year-long campaign denouncing the Berke Bukha leadership, in August 1349 Toghto returned to power, once again with the active support of the emperor Toghōn Temür. For a time there was no change in the government's treatment of Fang Kuo-chen, despite the use Toghto had made of that issue in bringing down Berke Bukha. Toghto's basic policy, however, was to outflank Fang Kuo-chen by reviving and finishing the Grand Canal project. The times were now less propitious, in view of what the Huai region had suffered since 1344, but something clearly had to be done; and even the conservative opposition now favored rebuilding the Grand Canal.

In April 1351, Toghto finally felt strong enough to announce his own, more comprehensive plan for accomplishing this. From then until December, 20,000 troops and 150,000 commoners from the Huai area worked on the diking and dredging under the direction of the brilliant water conservancy expert Chia Lu. This time their efforts were successful, confining the Yellow River in its new course north of the Shantung peninsula and dredging out or bypassing the Grand Canal sections that had become filled with silt. Toghto's conservative critics had pointed out the danger of popular rebellion if so many peasants were assembled for public works, especially in an area already known as a center of antidynastic agitation. They were correct. Rebel armies seized the opportunity to rouse large popular followings in the Huai region. They put on the symbolic red turbans and came to be known as the Red Armies or as the Incense Armies, from their Buddhist-derived folk rituals.

Initially, the Yüan regular forces were outnumbered and their com-

manders were surprised by the scale and ferocity of the Red Turban outbreak. Even so, they might have been able to cope with the rebellion had they been able to hold the prefectural cities. Here the consistent Yüan policy of allowing city walls to deteriorate and not repairing breaches in the walls of cities originally taken by assault played them false. Temporarily invincible, the rebel armies overran city after city. In 1352 one column from the southern T'ien-wan Red Turban revolt in Hu-kuang marched west, taking Wu-ch'ang, Han-yang, and other cities farther upstream; another force conquered most of central Kiangsi, starting from Chiu-chiang, leaving only the provincial capital of Lung-hsing (Nan-ch'ang) in Yüan hands. Liu Fu-r'ung's armies overran southern Honan. P'eng Ta and Chao Chün-yung rebelled at P'ei in north Kiangsu and captured Hsü-chou, thus cutting the Grand Canal. By the end of 1352 the area originally influenced by the White Lotus underground movement was in rebellion and out of central government control. Even though the White Lotus movement was unable to convert its temporary success into a firm territorial base for a unified alternative to the Yüan, in the end the reestablishment of local control based on refortified prefectural cities did not benefit the Yüan, but instead provided the basis for the various regionalist regimes, all of which were either avowedly rebellious or only nominally loyal.

In addition to the White Lotus rebel movement itself, two other types of militarization arose out of the disorder in South China in the early 1350s. Locally disaffected elements not previously connected with the White Lotus found this a convenient time to rebel, while locally dominant forces, including the Chinese literati elite, raised militia units to defend their immediate areas against rebels. In practice this secondary militarization tended to be swept up into the main rebellion, and it added to the fragmentation of the Yüan empire.

After the initial rebel victories, newly raised Yüan armies were able to defeat the rebel movements and suppress most of them. In 1353 Yüan troops recovered Hangchow and the lesser prefectural cities of Chekiang and Kiangsi. Other Yüan armies recaptured Ch'i-shui, Wu-ch'ang and Han-yang, thus turning Hsü Shou-hui and the T'ien-wan leadership into fugitives in rural Hupeh. The original Red Turban movement on the North China plain also suffered setbacks, eventually losing everything but its capital, which had come to be located at the city of Po-chou in extreme northwestern Anhwei.

The new Yüan armies that accomplished these feats were composed chiefly of Chinese, recruited and led at first mainly by Mongols and Central Asians (*se-mu jen*) long settled in rural China, together with their Chinese collaborators. The Chinese literati elite felt bound to support the dynasty

against a movement like the Red Turbans, but their support was passive and lukewarm. The commanders of the new irregular armies were rewarded when they succeeded and not punished when they failed, in contrast to the dynasty's regular military officers, who could expect punishment if they were defeated. The danger of regional fragmentation among the pro-Yüan forces was offset, for the time being, by Toghto's own success in dominating the new armies, many of which were led by his relatives and protégés.

Toghto himself led the army directed against the main objective, the recovery of the Grand Canal. In October 1352 he recaptured Hsü-chou; P'eng Ta and Chao Chün-yung escaped and fled south to Hao-chou, where their careers eventually intersected with the early phase of Chu Yüan-chang's rise to power. Toghto spent all of 1353 increasing and reorganizing his army and restoring routine administration. Late in 1354 he moved against Chang Shih-ch'eng; within weeks Toghto had Chang penned within the walls of Kao-yu, which he waited to starve out. The forces of the dynasty were poised to deliver the death blow to the rebel movement.¹

Spontaneous local militarization, directed at maintaining order and security, had been a widespread response to the outbreak of the Red Turban rebellion. In one city, Hao-chou (Feng-yang) in central Anhwei, this response had more than a local significance because of the role played in it by the Ming dynastic founder. In the spring of 1352 Kuo Tzu-hsing, Sun Te-yai, and three others, with some support from the local elite, raised militia forces and took control of the city. The arrival of the Hsü-chou White Lotus rebel leaders P'eng Ta and Chao Chün-yung, in flight from Toghto's offensive and quarrelling with each other, associated Hao-chou still more clearly in Yüan eyes with the general Red Turban movement. Kuo attached himself to P'eng, while his four colleagues looked to Chao for leadership. Cities ruled by such unstable military coalitions would be common in China until 1368.

On 15 April 1352, as described in Chapter 1, Chu Yüan-chang came to Hao-chou. Chu soon recruited a force of twenty-four childhood companions, all of whom were to become important Ming commanders. By early 1353 Chu had expanded this force to 700 men and had become Kuo's most trusted subordinate.

Chu's early career offers a glimpse of the lower end of the process of army formation then going on throughout China; he was exceptional only in having few relatives. Armies were held together at the lower levels by

1 John W. Dardess, *Conquerors and Confucians: Aspects of political change in late Yüan China* (New York, 1973), esp. pp. 95–109, 119–122.

family relationships and at the intermediate and higher levels by bonds of personal loyalty and trust between commanders and their immediate superiors and subordinates. If these personal ties were strained or broken, subordinates might defect with their units. Military planning thus had to deal with essentially political relationships in both one's own and the enemy armies, as well as with more narrowly military considerations. Military command in the basic units tended to become hereditary, while the more important warlords tried to integrate their armies by promoting their own relatives and most trusted original followers to higher positions as larger numbers of troops joined them.

The rivalry between P'eng and Chao led to open fighting among the Hao-chou leadership. Kuo Tzu-hsing was kidnapped by Chao Chün-yung and Sun Te-yai, who held him prisoner. When Chu Yüan-chang returned to the city, he and Kuo's sons raided Sun's house and released Kuo. Kuo became more dependent on Chu as a result. Yüan troops blockaded the city for several months in 1352–53, during which time the Hao-chou leaders had to suspend their quarrelling.

On the broader canvas of Yüan activities against the rebels, Toghto's counteroffensive gathered momentum, and by December 1354 Kao-yu was on the point of falling. By permitting the city to starve rather than taking it by assault, Toghto gave his enemies at court an opportunity to impeach him for dilatoriness. In January 1355 an imperial decree reached Toghto's headquarters. It dismissed him from all his offices and assigned his troops to other generals. His subordinates urged him to rebel, but Toghto obeyed the emperor. The army besieging Kao-yu promptly fell apart, as did the whole Toghto edifice of newly recruited armies.

Why the emperor dismissed Toghto can only be conjectured. The initiative in Yüan politics since 1328 had rested with the chancellors, and Toghön Temür had seemed to accept this fact since coming to the throne. Toghto had been granted nearly every title and honor the emperor could give. Already dangerously powerful, Toghto would have also become superfluous with the suppression of the rebellions. The court, however, was wrong to believe that these had in fact been suppressed. After the dismissal of Toghto the Yüan could no longer control even their own military forces, let alone the revived rebel movement. By the end of 1355 regionalism based on autonomous military power was the order of the day everywhere in China.

His surrender to the Yüan late in 1357 (see Chapter 1) and its immediate consequences stabilized Chang Shih-ch'eng's position. He controlled Soochow, Hangchow, and six other densely populated prefectures south of the Yangtze, and his authority extended north of the river as far as

Shantung, In the 1393 census his former domains had a total registered population of about 10,300,000. He received a high honorific title from the Yüan and agreed to send to the capital an annual grain tribute of 110,000 *tan*. This was transported north in ships of Fang Kuo-chen's fleet until 1363, when Chang severed his connection with the Yüan and proclaimed himself Prince of Wu. (Wu will be used here as a designation of convenience for his regime, which after 1357 acted as a satiated regional power.) Chang Shih-te had been the source of such vision as the Chang family had possessed, and after his death Chang Shih-ch'eng was happy to live as a prince in Soochow, making no serious effort to seize supreme power. There was, after all, little reason to believe that China could soon be reunified. Another brother, Chang Shih-hsin, became generalissimo of the Wu armies; three other generals—Li Po-sheng, Lü Chen, and Hsü I—held the major field commands and are described as the "claws and teeth" of Wu. Despite Chang Shih-ch'eng's passivity, the population under the control of the Wu regime gave it great potential military power. Wu was politically strong as well. Chang's clear lack of White Lotus connections and his surrender to the Yüan, coupled with the promotion of Confucianism by the Yüan dynasty in its last phase, made Wu the preferred choice of the scholar-gentry of south China.

With most of the empire either in outright rebellion or under the control of regionalists like Chang who retained locally generated tax revenues to support their own armies, the Yüan capital became dependent on the grain shipped from the south. Small compared to the amounts shipped from the south during the peak years of the Yüan system, this grain acquired great marginal importance because of the political, and therefore also fiscal, disintegration of the 1350s. The Yüan court's dependence on the grain shipments added to the importance of Fang Kuo-chen. Fang in 1356 established permanent control of three coastal prefectures of Chekiang with a total population of about 2,500,000 in 1393. Each prefectural city was ruled by a brother or a nephew, and the coastal territories provided bases and recruits for the Fang fleet, which continued to be supreme at sea. Fang's Yüan-derived titles eventually rose to Duke of Ch'ü and provincial chancellor of the left. However, Fang's long tenure (1348–68) in his position of coastal and naval influence really rested on the regional power balance in China and on the condition of the Grand Canal, rather than on Fang's own strength. This was evident to the scholar-gentry of Chekiang, who came to regard the court's willingness to promote Fang after repeated rebellions as clear evidence of lack of principle.

The dismissal of Toghto also permitted the T'ien-wan leadership to come out in the open in the central Yangtze region. By this time the principal

leader was a certain Ni Wen-chün, who continued to recognize Hsü Shou-hui as figurehead emperor. Much of Hupeh was reconquered from the Yüan in 1355. Hanyang became the T'ien-wan capital. By 1357 all of Hunan and Hupeh were under T'ien-wan control. In that year a leader named Ming Yü-chen led a T'ien-wan fleet through the Yangtze gorges and conquered Szechwan. Ming Yü-chen remained nominally loyal to Hsü Shou-hui until Hsü's death in 1360, but in fact this was the beginning of the independent Hsia regime that ruled Szechwan until the Ming conquest in 1371. The growth of the T'ien-wan territories made the original group of T'ien-wan leaders headed by Tsou P'u-sheng resentful of Ni Wen-chün's dominance. To secure his own position, Ni attempted a coup to seize Hsü. Ni failed and had to flee from Hanyang. In Huang-chou he was surprised and murdered by a trusted subordinate, Ch'en Yu-liang.

Ch'en came from a fishing family in Mien-yang and was one of five surviving brothers. He was literate enough to become a clerk to Ni Wen-chün when he joined the rebels; this was a steppingstone to the command of troops after he gained Ni's confidence. As a commander he proved to be brave but also impulsive, headstrong, and brutal. He now took over what was left of Ni's forces, ultimately gained recognition from Hsü Shou-hui, and made his base at Chiu-chiang in Kiangsi. From 1357 to 1359 Ch'en concentrated on conquering Kiangsi, remaining autonomous in the manner of Ming Yü-chen. Meanwhile Hsü Shou-hui reigned under Tsou P'u-sheng's tutelage at Hanyang.

Ch'en's troops took both An-ch'ing and Nan-ch'ang in 1358, after which the remaining prefectural cities of northern and central Kiangsi either fell or recognized his rule. A force sent to invade Fukien was defeated by Ch'en Yu-ting, who went on to seize supreme power in Fukien for himself. An attempted invasion of Chekiang also failed. By mid-1359 Ch'en Yu-liang ruled all but the extreme south of Kiangsi as well as eastern Hupeh and the An-ch'ing region of Anhwei. The territories of Chu Yüan-chang and Ch'en Yu-ting blocked his expansion eastward, while marching west would have led to outright civil war within the T'ien-wan "empire." As it turned out, however, the seeds of the great Yangtze River conflict of 1360 through 1365 were sown in An-ch'ing.

The fishing villages of Lake Ch'ao, just north of the Yangtze in central Anhwei, had fought in the earlier phase of the rebellion. Their leader Chao P'u-sheng, commonly called Two-sword Chao, had been a secret society leader even before these uprisings and had known P'eng Ying-yü (see Chapter 1). However, as the Yüan empire began to break up, a local militarist named Tso Chün-pi took control of Lu-chou and put pressure on the Lake Ch'ao fishermen, inducing them to migrate. Some of them

had joined Chu Yüan-chang, and their boats made possible his crossing of the Yangtze in 1355. However, the majority followed Chao P'u-sheng and sailed upstream to join Ch'en Yu-liang and the southern Red Turban rebellion. After capturing An-ch'ing, Ch'en put Chao in command there. Later in 1358 Chao captured Ch'ih-chou on the south bank of the Yangtze in southwest Anhwei and from there attempted to overrun southern Anhwei. This conflicted with Chu Yüan-chang's plans for expansion, and Chu sent his strongest commander, Hsü Ta, against Chao. Hsü recaptured Ch'ih-chou in 1359.

The no man's land between Ch'en and Chu was fully divided between the two warlords, who now had a common frontier. Chu was still looking downstream; his initial successes against Chang Shih-ch'eng had been so considerable that he still hoped to conquer all of the densely populated delta region. Ch'en was also looking downstream toward Anhwei. He intended to expand in this direction, but he no longer trusted Chao P'u-sheng. In September 1359 Ch'en took his own fleet down to An-ch'ing and had his men cut down Two-sword Chao as the latter boarded the flagship for a conference. The Lake Ch'ao men sullenly accepted the loss of their leader and were amalgamated into Ch'en Yu-liang's forces.

Meanwhile, other complicated evolutions ended by placing most of the T'ien-wan territories under Ch'en's control. Hsü Shou-hui had wished to transfer his capital to Nan-ch'ang after that city fell. Ch'en put him off. The motives of Ch'en and Hsü do not survive in the sources; one presumes that Ch'en wished to preserve his freedom of action and that Hsü had some grievance against Tsou P'u-sheng and his supporters in southern Hupeh. In any event, late in 1359 Hsü abruptly left Han-yang with his guards and retinue and sailed downstream. Ch'en received him at Chiu-chiang, but locked his guards outside after Hsü had entered the city gate. Hsü was placed in confinement; Ch'en proclaimed himself Prince of Han and intimidated the other T'ien-wan leaders in Hunan and Hupeh into recognizing his authority, though Ming Yü-chen in Szechwan still held aloof. By 1359 Ch'en controlled or was acquiring control of areas whose 1393 population was over 14,000,000; his regime (Han) was thus potentially stronger than either Chu Yüan-chang's (Ming) or Chang Shih-ch'eng's (Wu). However, Ch'en was a year or two behind the others in the race to consolidate regional power, and his authority was grudgingly conceded by many local commanders out of fear alone. Ch'en needed further victories to keep this fear fresh, but this in turn made it difficult for him to integrate his widespread domains.²

2 Edward L. Dreyer, *Early Ming China: A political history 1355–1435* (Stanford, 1982), pp. 25–31.

The Red Turbans in North China, 1355–1359

The breakup of the Yüan armies after the dismissal of Toghto permitted the Red Turban movement to revive on the North China plain. At Po-chou in 1355 Liu Fu-t'ung proclaimed Han Lin-erh emperor of a restored Sung dynasty. For almost two years the rebel movement was buffeted by the still-powerful fragments of the disintegrating Yüan military system. Liu Fu-t'ung remained the principal Red Turban leader in terms of actual power; in January 1356, under pressure from Yüan forces, he was forced to move the Sung capital 100 miles to the southwest, to An-feng (near modern Shou-hsien). By 1357 the Yüan were without strong defenders, since Toghto's organization had collapsed and the subsequently powerful northern regionalists of the 1360s had yet to consolidate their positions. In the interlude, the Red Turbans overran North China. Liu Fu-t'ung with the main army laid siege to K'ai-feng, while other Red Turban armies conquered Shantung and invaded Shensi and Shansi. One force went north of the Yüan capital, burned the summer palaces at Shang-tu, and then invaded Manchuria. K'ai-feng itself fell in mid-1358, and the Red Turbans indulged their Sung fantasies for a year within its walls.

These spectacular Red Turban success had been based on a temporary military vacuum and on the deliberate Yüan policy of not repairing city walls. The Red Turbans proved incapable of establishing viable local or regional regimes based on the defensive strength of the refurbished walls of their North China plain cities, as was happening in South China. The northern Red Turbans retained the roving bandit mentality for too long and made little attempt to maintain discipline or to establish security and a stable administration. Their specifically anti-Confucian religious origins were a hindrance that might have been overcome by a manifest commitment to maintaining order; Chu Yüan-chang's own career illustrates this possibility, despite the fact that the literati class accepted him only belatedly and reluctantly.

In 1359 the Red Turban position on the North China plain collapsed abruptly as a result of defeats inflicted by the rising militia army of Chaghan Temür. Chaghan and his boyhood friend Li Ssu-ch'i had begun to raise militia armies in Honan after the original Red Turban rebellions. In the wake of the main Red Turban onslaught of 1357, they drove the Red Turbans out of Shensi and consolidated their power there. In 1359 Chaghan marched east through the T'ung Pass back into the North China plain. In the summer he defeated Liu Fu-t'ung in the field, driving him to take shelter within the walls of K'ai-feng. There Liu held out for three months before breaking out in September and escaping to An-feng with

Han Lin-erh and a few hundred soldiers. K'ai-feng then became Chaghan Temür's headquarters for future expansion. Since Chaghan's next goal was Shantung, the Sung court was permitted to linger on at An-feng, a small prefectural city in western Anhwei, until 1363. Nonetheless, after 1359 the Red Turban empire retained a certain importance only because the expanding regional regime of Chu Yüan-chang still adhered nominally to it. The Red Turbans had already fulfilled their historical mission of dominating the North China plain and commanding the attention of the Yüan government for the crucial years from 1355 to 1359, during which the Yangtze regional powers grew to maturity.³

The emergence of Chu Yüan-chang

From 1353 on, Chu Yüan-chang rose to a position of leadership in the Hao-chou regime which came to eclipse that of his former patron Kuo Tzu-hsing. In 1355, the year of Kuo's death, Chu crossed the Yangtze and began to conquer a regional power base in the lands on the south bank. The growth of this proto-Ming regime occurred simultaneously with the rise of Chu's two principal rivals, Ch'en Yu-liang and Chang Shih-ch'eng. Though preserved in greater detail in the sources, the story of Chu's rise to power is typical of the career patterns of the warlord figures of the Yüan-Ming transition period.

Once the Yüan siege of Hao-chou in the winter of 1352–53 was lifted, the Hao-chou leadership resumed their internal quarrels. The death of P'eng Ta left Chao Chün-yung as the strongest leader; Kuo Tzu-hsing and Chu Yüan-chang were henceforth much out of favor with the rest of the leadership. Chao took Kuo and his men with him and marched east down the Huai to attack Hsü-i, hoping ultimately to recover his former base at Hsü-chou in north Kiangsu. Meanwhile, Chao had sent Chu Yüan-chang south, hoping that he would destroy himself and so permit Chao to murder Kuo. Instead Chu captured Ting-yüan, enlisted the men who surrendered there, and went on to take Ch'u-chou on the near north bank of the Yangtze. He now commanded over 20,000 men. He somehow got word to Kuo Tzu-hsing, who extricated his 10,000 men from Chao's army and came to join Chu at Ch'u-chou. Kuo was Chu's father-in-law and former patron and outranked Chu in the system of the Red Turban regime, but Chu commanded more men.

Relations became strained. Chu wished to move farther south and take Ho-chou on the Yangtze; like Chang Shih-ch'eng at the same time, he was

³ Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 31–33.

hoping to leave the ravaged lands of the Huai region to seek both security and opportunity south of the river. Kuo agreed to this strategy early in 1355, but sent his own men to take Ho-chou. Chu then sent reinforcements under his boyhood friend T'ang Ho, who took control of Ho-chou in a bloodless coup. Yüan forces counterattacked and blockaded Ho-chou for three months. After they withdrew, Chu admitted Sun Te-yai, then in flight from the fighting in the north, to the city. Sun had been a consistent enemy of Kuo in the Hao-chou days, so this act added to Kuo's resentment. Kuo Tzu-hsing's death at this point probably prevented an overt clash between the two. Following the hereditary and family-centered nature of military organization in this period, the Sung court at Po-chou, in response to a visit from Kuo's brother-in-law Chang T'ien-yu, duly confirmed Kuo's older son as his successor, with Chang his senior and Chu his junior deputies. The sources for the next year, although probably altered in Chu's favor, represent Chu as being in overall command immediately upon Kuo's death. Most of the army had in fact been recruited by Chu and took orders from him, regardless of the technicalities of the chaotic Red Turban regime. It is likely that Chu was responsible, as alleged, for the crucial decisions to cross the Yangtze and take Nanking.

Chu's intent was to take an army across the Yangtze to build a regional base on the south bank, which was still, in 1355, untouched by serious warfare. To do that he needed a fleet. The fleet of the Lake Ch'ao rebels was now under pressure from Tso Chün-pi, who was associated with the T'ien-wan rebels in Hupeh and now controlled the Lu-chou region of central Anhwei. Yü T'ung-hai from the Lake Ch'ao fleet visited Chu at Ho-chou in early July 1355, and at some personal risk Chu paid a return visit. When the fleet left Lake Ch'ao, most of it followed Chao P'u-sheng (Two-sword Chao), who ultimately joined Ch'en Yu-liang and met his fate at An-ch'ing in 1359. But considerable elements of the fleet led by the Yü and Liao families came to join Chu at Ho-chou.

Late in July these combined land and naval forces left Ho-chou, crossed the Yangtze, and landed at Ts'ai-shih. Marching south, they captured the prefectural city of T'ai-p'ing (modern Tang-t'u). When the local Yüan commander, Ch'en Esen, attempted to retake T'ai-p'ing, he was himself captured and submitted to Chu Yüan-chang. Two months later, Kuo Tzu-hsing's elder son and others loyal to him went off with Ch'en Esen's army to attack Nanking. Ch'en betrayed them at a critical point, Kuo's son and brother-in-law were killed, and Ch'en Esen himself was mysteriously murdered soon afterward. Chu Yüan-chang's role in this is not clear, but the outcome strengthened his authority.

Kuo's elder son and successor and Kuo's brother-in-law Chang T'ien-yu,

deputy commander in the hierarchy established by the Sung court at Po-chou, now were both dead. Soon thereafter Chu had Kuo's younger son executed on a charge of violating military discipline. These developments enhanced Chu's authority over his army, but he could not feel secure against challenges from his generals until after the great 1363 victory. And most of his generals still were devoted to Han Lin-erh and the religious promises of the Red Turban movement even after 1363. Chu Yüan-chang had to tread carefully.

Meanwhile he expanded the area he controlled from T'ai-p'ing. In March 1356 his forces defeated the Yüan river flotilla of Manzi Khaya at Ts'ai-shih. Chu now felt strong enough for another attempt on Nanking. When his army arrived in the vicinity of Nanking, Ch'en Chao-hsien, the Mongol commander who had inherited the military authority of his deceased uncle Ch'en Esen, surrendered with his 36,000 men. Nanking, inadequately garrisoned for its size, was now vulnerable, and after a day of fighting, Chu's soldiers broke into the city on 10 April. Most of the defenders surrendered. Chu Yüan-chang changed the city's prefectural name from Chi-ch'ing to Ying-t'ien, the name it retained throughout the Ming and Ch'ing. (From this point onward, Chu's regime will be called the Ming, although it was not given that dynastic title until 1368.)

Nanking had been the repository of the dying imperial hopes of the Six Dynasties which had ruled south China from 220 to 589 and of the Southern T'ang in the Ten Kingdoms period. The area it dominated was not as populous as that around Soochow and Hangchow, and strategically it was not as well situated as nearby Yang-chou. Squeezed between the Yangtze River to the north and west and the Purple Mountain overlooking the city from the east, Nanking nonetheless deserved its reputation as a mighty fortress in times of adversity. Ts'ao Ts'ao and other northern rulers in the early third century had often pitched their tents on the north bank of the Yangtze, but Nanking itself had usually eluded their grasp. With its half-million people in the fourteenth century it was a major acquisition, making Chu Yüan-chang an important figure in the then impressive-seeming Red Turban Empire.⁴

China had never been conquered by a power based on the Nanking area, but Chu Yüan-chang in 1356 had little reason to look so far ahead. The buildings of the Yüan dynasty's former Kiangnan Branch Censorate became his official residence as head of a provincial government. He began to appoint and promote officials and military commanders on his own authority and gave them titles and seals, but he continued until 1367 to use the

⁴ The special place of Nanking under the Ming is discussed in Edward L. Farmer, *Early Ming government: The evolution of dual capitals* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), esp. pp. 51–55.

Red Turban calendar. Also on 28 July Chu created a branch secretariat–chancellery (*hsing chung-shu sheng*) and a branch bureau of military affairs (*hsing shu-mi yüan*), both of which he headed personally as the highest civil and military agencies of his province-size regime. For the most part, however, the Ming administrative apparatus at this time was military. Chu's army was now approaching the 100,000 mark; his two dozen original companions, as well as a smaller number of Lake Ch'ao leaders, had risen to become the divisional generals of this army. The divisions themselves were called wings (*i*) after the standard practice of Yüan irregular forces. The army at Nanking itself consisted of eight wings, and there was usually another in each conquered prefectural city, whose commander (*yüan-shuai*) wielded both civil and military authority at this time.⁵

Throughout the remainder of 1356 and much of 1357 the Ming regime expanded toward Soochow at the expense of Chang Shih-ch'eng's territorial ambitions. Ming armies captured Chen-chiang, Ch'ang-chou, Ch'ang-hsing, Chiang-yin, Ch'ang-shu, and finally Yang-chou. Hsü Ta commanded in most of these operations. Ming expansion in the delta area ended with the capture of Yang-chou. From then until the Ming general offensive of 1366, the Ming–Wu frontier in Kiangsu remained relatively stable, defined on both sides by well-fortified and strongly garrisoned walled cities that were consistently able to resist enemy siege operations.

Southern Anhwei and Chekiang were still open to conquest. Chu Yüan-chang at the head of his army captured Ning-kuo on 12 May 1357. Allegedly 100,000 troops surrendered and joined the Ming on this occasion. Three months later, Ming forces under Hu Ta-hai took Hui-chou, and on 13 November Ch'ang Yü-ch'un captured Ch'ih-chou. The capture of Ch'ih-chou began the sequence of events leading to the great war between Chu Yüan-chang and Ch'en Yu-liang, but for the time being the Ming had already won the contest for the control of southern Anhwei.

In 1358 an expeditionary force was formed under Hu Ta-hai's overall command to invade Chekiang. Teng Yü captured Yen-chou. The main body under Hu blockaded Chin-hua, the principal inland city, in November; Chin-hua held out until January 1359. Chu Yüan-chang took personal command at Chin-hua in November 1359 and established the Che-tung Branch Secretariat there in December. Hu Ta-hai had captured Ch'u-chou from the Yüan general Shih-mo I-sun on 3 December 1359. This completed the partition of Chekiang among the Yüan empire's successor states. The Ming had to content itself with the four relatively poor inland prefec-

5 Romeyn Taylor, "Social origins of the Ming dynasty," *Monumenta Serica*, 22, No. 1 (1963), pp. 1–78; and Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 33–39, discuss the organization of the proto-Ming state at this time.

tures, while the four rich northern coastal prefectures remained tightly under Chang Shih-ch'eng's control, despite the Ming general Ch'ang Yü-ch'un's unsuccessful attempt to storm Hangchow. Fang Kuo-chen and his fleet continued to dominate the east coast of Chekiang.

As 1360 opened, Chu Yüan-chang's Ming regime controlled part of Kiangsu and all of Anhwei south of the Yangtze, plus inland Chekiang. These territories had a population of about 7,800,000 in 1393; both Chang Shih-ch'eng's Wu and Ch'en Yu-liang's Han were potentially stronger. Before 1360 the major Yangtze regimes had expanded at the expense of Yüan irregular forces and one-city local powers similar to the Hao-chou regime at its start. In general these local forces did not cooperate with one another and so failed to prevent the snowballing expansion of the three major warlord powers. After 1360, however, no regime in South China could expand further in this manner. Han, Ming, and Wu between them divided up the Yangtze drainage basin from the gorges down. Most of the rest of South China was under the control of lesser regionalists, including the already mentioned Fang Kuo-chen and Ming Yü-chen (Szechwan), as well as Ch'en Yu-ting (Fukien), Ho Chen in the Canton area, and the Mongol prince Basalawarmi in Yunnan, the latter three of whom were Yüan loyalists. These five had established essentially one-province regimes that were not strong enough to challenge the major powers but could put up a good fight in defense of their own territories. Each of the smaller regimes was too strong to be destroyed except by a major effort by one of the great powers, which the other two great powers could not be expected to permit. The population balance among the great powers made it even more unlikely that any one of them could destroy the other two. China seemed headed for a situation reminiscent of the tenth century, of a regional balance of power in the south while northern warlords fought for control of the imperial dignity.

THE MING-HAN WAR, 1360–1363

The Ming-Han war, whose critical phase lasted from 1360 to 1363, destroyed the balance of power in the Yangtze basin. Chu Yüan-chang's upset victory led to the annexation of Ch'en Yu-liang's territories and the incorporation of the survivors of his armies. This gave Ming the numerical preponderance needed to overcome Wu, and the conquest of Wu in turn permitted Ming to expand rapidly in all directions in 1368. Beyond that, his conclusive victory in the P'o-yang campaign of 1363 gave Chu Yüan-chang the prestige and stature he needed to overcome the remaining centrifugal tendencies in his own regime, which were a feature of the

personal character of military authority throughout China during this period. Chu Yüan-chang thus had to lead his troops to victory in a struggle in which purely military considerations were paramount (but it also settled the rivalry between two heirs of the Red Turbans) before a Ming empire with distinctive institutions and policies could come into existence. Similar constraints affected his arch-rival Ch'en Yu-liang.

The terms of the military contest had changed considerably since the outbreak of the rebellions in 1351. Socially and organizationally, the armies of 1360 and after were still the displaced peasants of the earlier period, but operationally they had advanced to a much higher level. By 1360 city walls had generally been repaired, and cities could be conquered only by long blockades or costly assaults. The cities, especially those of prefectural or higher status, were nevertheless the principal military objectives. Each city dominated its surrounding rural hinterland; in this period, forces dependent solely on the countryside were certain to be chased from one area to another, worn down, and destroyed unless they could capture a city as a base. Yet both sieges and field operations were being carried out by larger armies whose transport and supply were most conveniently provided by boat throughout the interconnected watershed of the Yangtze. Fishing and other communities dependent on the waterways had played important roles in the original rebellions. By 1360, true fighting fleets had developed. They not only transported armies to sieges, but also battled each other on the water to deny the water lanes to the enemy.⁶

Ch'en Yu-liang attacks Nanking, 1360

In 1360 Ch'en Yu-liang risked his personal army and fleet, on which his authority ultimately depended, in an attempt to destroy Chu Yüan-chang at one blow by capturing Nanking. While the sources imply that Ch'en's attack was carried out in a rash and impulsive manner, it should be noted that Ch'en had a better appreciation of the potential of inland naval power than his contemporaries; swift moves aiming at strategic surprise were the best way to employ his much stronger river fleet. Unfortunately for Ch'en, he fell into a trap at Nanking, losing a large number of men and the majority of his ships. Chu's enlargement of his navy through the capture of an intact fleet from Ch'en allowed him to dominate the central Yangtze

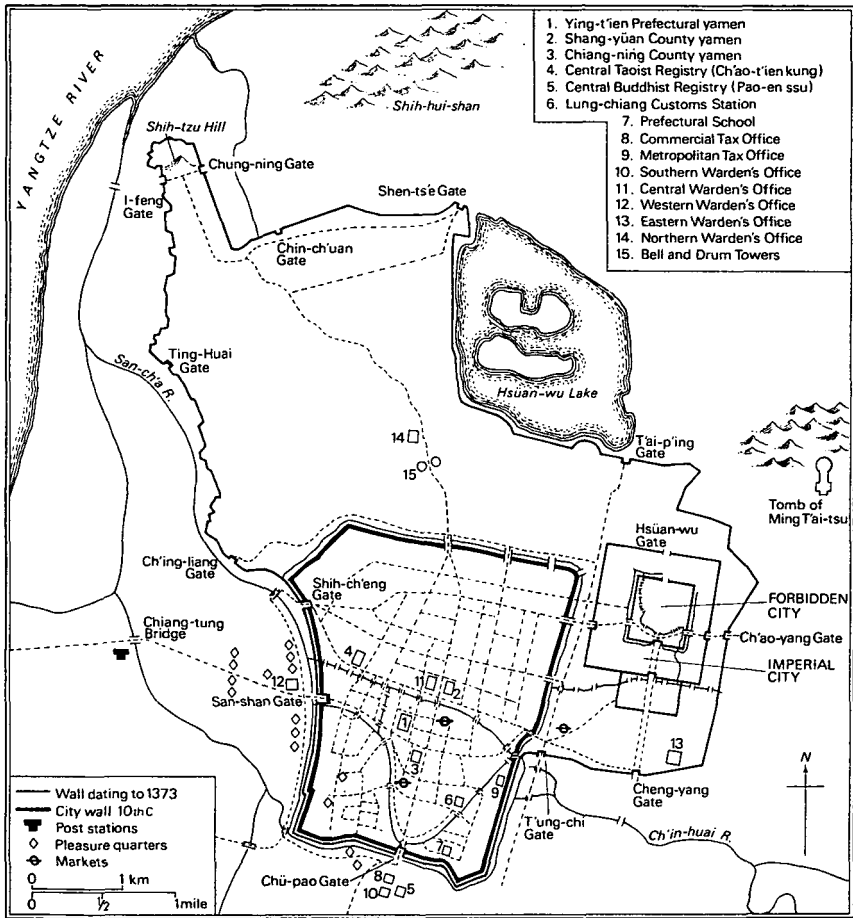
⁶ For further discussions of these background factors, see Edward L. Dreyer, "The Poyang campaign, 1363: Inland naval warfare in the founding of the Ming dynasty," in *Chinese ways in warfare*, ed. John K. Fairbank and Frank A. Kierman, Jr. (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), pp. 202-42; Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 39-52; and Romeyn Taylor, "The Yüan origins of the wei-so system," in *Chinese government in Ming times: Seven studies*, ed. Charles O. Hucker (New York, 1969), pp. 23-40.

waterways during the following two years. How this happened is an interesting story.

After murdering Chao P'u-sheng, Ch'en Yu-liang was poised for immediate expansion eastward into the Ming territory of southern Anhwei. Ming spies were keeping Nanking informed of Ch'en's movements. Presumably these informants came from those among the Lake Ch'ao contingent discontented by the murder of Chao P'u-sheng; otherwise it is difficult to explain how Ming intelligence was so comprehensive in 1360 and so poor afterward. When the Ming army under Ch'ang Yü-ch'un captured Ch'ih-chou (November 1359), Ch'en Yu-liang planned a surprise attack to retake it. Chu Yüan-chang found out about this, sent Hsü Ta to Ch'ih-chou, and ordered Ch'ang Yü-ch'un to abandon his demonstration in front of Hangchow, which had lasted three months with no result, and join Hsü. The two Ming generals ambushed the invaders and took 3,000 prisoners; Ch'ang Yü-ch'un killed most of them, sending a few back to Ch'en to tell the tale.

This episode provoked Ch'en Yu-liang to attack the Ming with the forces he had at hand. These amounted to about 100,000 men, a large force, but not larger than the Ming Nanking army and representing only part of the total military potential of Ch'en's territories. Ch'en's fleet sailed downstream and reached T'ai-p'ing on 11 June 1360. The Ming commandant Hua Yün, with a garrison of 3,000 men, refused to surrender. For three days Ch'en's men tried to storm the landward walls of the city without success. Ch'en then thought to bring the bigger ships of his fleet flush against the riverside wall, which his soldiers then mounted from the ships' high sterns. Once on the wall, they easily overcame the weak Ming garrison. Hua Yün, captured, refused to submit and earned a martyr's death. Ch'en was elated with his victory; the technique could be applied throughout the Yangtze watershed. Sailing farther downstream, on 16 June he moored his fleet by the jetty at Ts'ai-shih, site of the Ming river crossing in 1355. There he had the puppet T'ien-wan emperor Hsü Shou-hui beaten to death and proclaimed himself emperor of the Han dynasty. The ceremonies, conducted in the courtyard of a temple commandeered for the purpose, were interrupted by a summer rainstorm. The new emperor then sent an envoy to Chang Shih-ch'eng, urging him to attack Nanking from the rear, and prepared to take his fleet there himself.

The Ming leadership learned of the fall of T'ai-p'ing on 18 June. Even though they had about as many men as the Han, their fleet still was only about one-tenth as large, most of their expansion since 1355 having been overland. The Han could sail at will on the river, striking vulnerable riverbank cities similar to T'ai-p'ing, including Yang-chou (north of the river on the Grand Canal), Chen-chiang, and Chiang-yin by the Wu fron-



Map 3. Nanking and its environs

tier. If the Ming army pursued them on land, they risked exhausting themselves and leaving themselves open to a Han attack. Chu Yüan-chang's generals offered essentially desperate counsel, some advising an overland march to T'ai-p'ing while the rest proposed abandoning Nanking and holding out on the Purple Mountain east of the city.

Chu disregarded these proposals and instead put into effect a scheme concocted by Li Shan-ch'ang and K'ang Mao-ts'ai, which involved luring Ch'en Yu-liang to land at a predetermined point where he could be ambushed. K'ang had served with Ch'en before surrendering to Chu in 1356; he had a servant who was a double agent, reporting to Ch'en but coming back to the Ming with intelligence on Han affairs. Evidently his

loyalties were to K'ang. K'ang used him to carry a letter to Ch'en in which K'ang offered to defect and admit Ch'en's fleet up to the walls of Nanking via the Ch'in-huai River by removing the wooden Chiang-tung Bridge on the San-ch'a River leading from the Yangtze to the west wall of Nanking. The servant returned with word of Ch'en's agreement, at which Chu Yüan-chang, according to the sources, ordered Li Shan-ch'ang to rebuild the bridge overnight in stone. Chu thus deliberately wrecked his own plot, but he had already figured out Ch'en's contingency plan in the event that K'ang did not defect, and this opened up the possibility of a more decisive ambush.

Chu had previously stationed Yang Ching at Ta-sheng Pass, K'ang Mao-ts'ai at the Chiang-tung Bridge, and Chao Te-sheng at the mouth of the Hsin-ho; these three forces were to guard against the Han fleet gaining access to the walls of Nanking via the network of narrow streams and canals leading out to the Yangtze along its western walls. Sharpened stakes called "lotus flowers" had been driven into the banks to prevent ships from landing troops. While the ambush by the Chiang-tung Bridge was being set up, Ch'en's younger brother Ch'en Yu-jen had sailed downstream with 10,000 men. He landed at Lung-wan (Dragon Bay), north of the mouth of the Hsin-ho, surprising and capturing the Ming force under Shao Jung stationed there just north of the city. He then built a stockade and waited.

Lung-wan was a much better site for an ambush than the Chiang-tung Bridge, since the open plain between Lung-wan and the Hsin-ho would permit most of the Han army to debark, while the Ming ambush force remained covered by the Shih-hui Hills north of the plain, ready to strike the Han army in the rear and cut it off from the river if things went well. Chu Yüan-chang gambled that Ch'en Yu-liang would debark at Lung-wan if K'ang's defection did not take place. He sent 30,000 men under Ch'ang Yü-ch'un to wait in ambush in the Shih-hui Hills, put Hsü Ta's corps outside the south wall of Nanking, where he could march to the aid of Yang Ching and K'ang Mao-ts'ai if necessary, and placed the reserve under his own command at what was then called Lu-lung Hill (better known as Lion's Hill, Shih-tzu Hill) northwest of the city walls, from which he had an overview of the river and the entire battle area. Chu ordered that red flags would signal the arrival of the enemy, while a yellow flag from his command post on Lu-lung Hill would order the Shih-hui Hills force to attack. The Ming naval force was sent downstream, while the land forces reached their assigned positions and waited for dawn.

On the morning of 23 June Ch'en Yu-liang sailed downstream with his fleet and attacked Ta-sheng Pass. The channel there was too narrow to be useful, especially against Yang Ching's stiff resistance. Ch'en broke off the

action and sailed to the Chiang-tung Bridge. He saw that the bridge was made of stone and that K'ang Mao-ts'ai failed to appear in response to his call. Fearing a trap at the bridge, he sailed back into the Yangtze and on to Lung-wan. There the Han soldiers left their ships and drew up on the plain. Chu Yüan-chang watched them from atop Lu-lung Hill. He ordered his own men to eat and drink and rest in preparation for battle.

The afternoon weather was hot and humid; when a thunder shower occurred, Chu had the red flag raised and sent his own force north across the plain in the direction of the Han stockade. In response, the Han army moved toward them and away from the Yangtze; Ch'en was seizing what appeared to be another isolated division of the Ming army. When the rain stopped, Chu ordered the drums beaten to sound the attack and had the yellow flag raised. The troops of Ch'ang Yü-ch'un and Feng Sheng fell on the rear of the Han deployment and won the battle quickly; the Han line fell apart and groups of Han soldiers struggled to escape. Those who reached the river found that the tide had gone out and that many of their ships were stuck in the mud.

The Ming thus captured over 100 large ships and several hundred smaller craft, possibly over half of the Han fleet. These ships provided the Ming with the margin of superiority in the river wars of 1361 and 1362. Ch'en Yu-liang and the majority of his men escaped by crowding onto those craft that could be launched; most of them reached Chiu-chiang despite Ming pursuit. The Han left 20,000 dead on the battlefield and there were 7,000 prisoners, most of whom were Chao P'u-sheng's followers, men glad to rejoin their comrades under Chu Yüan-chang's command. Ch'en Yu-liang's position in Kiangsi had been shaken by his defeat and the loss to his personal forces. The initiative had passed to the Ming. While the Lung-wan campaign was in progress, Hu Ta-hai had invaded Kiangsi from Chekiang, seizing and holding the prefectural city of Kuang-hsin. This move opened up the prospect of further Ming overland conquests in Kiangsi.⁷

Chu Yüan-chang attempts to conquer Kiangsi, 1361–1362

Still preoccupied with his long-standing conflict with Chang Shih-ch'eng, Chu Yüan-chang waited until mid-1361 before attempting to exploit his 1360 victory over Ch'en Yu-liang. Chu's upstream expedition in 1361

⁷ See Edward L. Dreyer, "The *Chi-shih lu* of Yü Pen: A note on the sources for the founding of the Ming dynasty," *JAS*, 31 (1972), pp. 901–04, for an analysis of the source problems affecting the 1360 campaign.

succeeded in evicting Ch'en from Chiu-chiang and blockading the remnants of his forces in Wu-ch'ang. Chu Yüan-chang then spent the winter of 1361–62 securing the surrenders of the Kiangsi cities. Full integration of Kiangsi into his territories would have decisively altered the balance of power in Chu's favor. However, Chu miscalculated badly. He left Nanch'ang before Kiangsi was completely secured and could only suppress the ensuing rebellion by withdrawing his forces from the Wu-ch'ang area. While he was away from Nanking, rebellion broke out in Chekiang, followed by treason among his highest commanders. As a result, Ch'en Yu-liang was free to rearm and attack a badly shaken Ming regime.

Ch'en successfully reasserted his authority after his return to Chiu-chiang, but his defeat had badly diminished his prestige. Chu Yüan-chang meanwhile returned to his preoccupation with Wu. The forces he was willing to spare for Kiangsi were not sufficient to disrupt the Han regime. Hu Ta-hai appointed his adopted son Hu Te-chi as garrison commandant at Kuang-hsin, and together they repelled a Han attempt to retake the city. Teng Yü caused the district town of Fou-liang in central Kiangsi to defect to the Ming, but the prefectural cities would not follow suit; their leaders remained nominally loyal to Ch'en Yu-liang, even though they gave him no support in either 1360 or 1361. By mid-1361 it had become clear that these cities would never surrender unless the Ming main army appeared among them in force. Then, on 24 August 1361, the Han general Chang Ting-pien recaptured An-ch'ing in a surprise attack. The Ming commandant Chao Chung-chung escaped and fled to Nanking; Chu Yüan-chang executed him and transferred his position and his Lake Ch'ao followers to his younger brother Chao Yung. An-ch'ing had fallen to the Ming as a result of the Lung-wan battle. Its recapture was a major setback, which finally persuaded Chu Yüan-chang that a full-scale expedition against Han was necessary, despite the danger of Wu attacks while the main Ming army was engaged away from Nanking.

On 11 September 1361 Chu Yüan-chang took his fleet upstream from Nanking. They reached An-ch'ing on the nineteenth and destroyed or captured the Han ships anchored there. They failed to take the city itself, but bypassed it and continued upstream, reaching Hu-k'ou, the entrance to Lake P'o-yang, on the twenty-third. Word of the Ming fleet's arrival caused further tremors in the already shaky Han power structure. In mid-voyage two Han commanders, Ting P'u-lang and Fu Yu-te, defected with their squadrons to the Ming. Han patrol ships spotted the Ming fleet off Hu-k'ou and reached Chiu-chiang with the news in time for Ch'en Yu-liang to deploy his fleet into the river and offer battle. The superior Ming fleet outflanked the Han line at both extremes; after losing over a hundred ships and craft,

Ch'en withdrew the remainder of his fleet into the natural haven formed by the lakes south of Chiu-chiang. During the night he embarked most of his men and came out again, eluding the Ming fleet. He went upstream to Wu-ch'ang, where his authority was still unchallenged.

The next day Ming troops stormed the walls of Chiu-chiang from the river, using assault ramps mounted on the ships' sterns. Probably the ships so equipped were originally Ch'en's and had been outfitted in the previous year to assault T'ai-p'ing. Chu Yüan-chang then detached a fleet under Hsü Ta to pursue Ch'en Yu-liang. Hsü failed to prevent Ch'en from reaching Wu-ch'ang and so anchored off Han-yang, which he assaulted but failed to capture. However, from this position he kept Ch'en blockaded until April 1362.

Chu Yüan-chang kept the main Ming body with him at Chiu-chiang while he conducted an essentially political campaign to force the defection of the Kiangsi prefectural cities. By 2 October Nan-k'ang, Jao-chou, and Chien-ch'ang had sent envoys recognizing Ming authority, as had three cities in eastern Hupeh. Chu did not attempt to place his own troops in these cities at this time, since that would have discouraged further surrenders. He continued to negotiate for the surrender of Nan-ch'ang, the provincial capital and major city. Waiting was becoming dangerous; Chang Shih-ch'eng was finally showing signs of activity, sending an army to besiege Ch'ang-hsing on the southeast edge of Lake T'ai, and in December Ch'ang Yü-ch'un had to be sent to the rescue. By trying simultaneously to hold off Chang Shih-ch'eng, hold down Ch'en Yu-liang, and seize Kiangsi, the Ming armies had become dangerously overextended.

When Teng Yü captured Fu-chou (modern Lin-ch'uan, only 60 miles southeast from Nan-ch'ang in Kiangsi) on 9 December, the Han commander-in-chief at Nan-ch'ang, chancellor Hu Mei, finally asked for terms. His principal demand was that his forces, on joining the Ming army, be kept together as a unit under his own command. Chu Yüan-chang allowed him to keep most of his troops, on the condition that he give up Nan-ch'ang and serve in the Ming main body. Hu Mei agreed and later received a title of nobility under the Ming, but he was not able to persuade all his subordinates. Chu Yüan-chang entered Nan-ch'ang with the main body of the Ming army on 10 February 1362. During the following month Yüan-chou, Chian, and several smaller cities in Kiangsi also recognized Ming authority.

By occupying Chiu-chiang and Nan-ch'ang, Chu Yüan-chang had in effect seized Ch'en Yu-liang's former leading position in Kiangsi, with all its drawbacks. The commandants of the other prefectural cities were products of the process of local militarization during and after the T'ien-wan rebellion. Each had to be left in control of his city and dependent districts

when he “surrendered,” or else there would be no further surrenders. Such treatment really guaranteed that they would wait out any crisis, as they did in both 1361 and 1363. Chu Yüan-chang was not yet powerful enough, nor did he have the time, for the sort of enforced reshuffling of troops between his main army and the garrisons of individual cities that was necessary to integrate the Ming army and bring the prefectural cities under central control. He had been away from Nanking too long already, and set sail to return on 11 March 1362. While he was on the river, his authority nearly collapsed.

On 24 December 1361 Ch'ang Yü-ch'un had broken up the siege of Ch'ang-hsing under the Wu general Li Po-sheng and had then returned to Nanking. Wu was dormant once again, and inland Chekiang seemed securely held by the army of its Ming conqueror Hu Ta-hai. However, the Miao irregular soldiery under Yang Öljei had grown extremely restive for reasons that do not survive at all in the sources but that seem to have affected all the Miao troops as an ethnic group. These troops, in Yüan service prior to the Ming conquest of Chekiang, were mostly in the garrisons of Chin-hua and Ch'u-chou. While Chu Yüan-chang was away upstream, the Miao troops exchanged messengers and planned a concerted rebellion. On 3 March 1362 the Miao troops at Chin-hua rebelled and killed Hu Ta-hai, and four days later those at Ch'u-chou rebelled and killed the city commander, Keng Tsai-ch'eng. With two out of four of the prefectural cities in the hands of rebels who might have been incited by Wu, the whole Ming position in Chekiang was endangered.

Once back in Nanking, on 16 March Chu Yüan-chang appointed his nephew Li Wen-chung, then commanding the Chekiang prefectural city of Yen-chou, to be Ming commander-in-chief in Chekiang. Li quickly recaptured Chin-hua, but the Miao troops there escaped and went to join Chang Shih-ch'eng. The latter sent his brother Chang Shih-hsin with a large army to attack the outlying Ming fortress of Chu-ch'üan. Li resorted to considerable subtlety to counter both invasion and rebellion. Chu Yüan-chang had sent an army under Shao Jung to recapture Ch'u-chou; Li could expect no further reinforcements from Nanking. Despite his reverse in the Lungwan campaign, Shao Jung was the highest-ranking Ming general, above even Hsü Ta and Ch'ang Yü-ch'un. Li then spread the rumor that the allegedly formidable Shao Jung was marching to relieve Chu-ch'üan, while actually sending Hu Te-chi there with his Kuang-hsin troops. By the time the latter arrived at Chu-ch'üan, Chang Shih-hsin and his men were so rattled by the propaganda that they were easily scattered by a combined attack of the garrison and the relief force. Meanwhile, Shao Jung recovered Ch'u-chou.

While Chekiang was being pacified, Kiangsi went up in flames. Chu Yüan-chang had left Teng Yü with an inadequate garrison at Nan-ch'ang, raking most of the surrendered army back to Nanking. He had ordered Chu Tsung and K'ang T'ai, two of Hu Mei's subordinate commanders, to take their squadrons upstream to reinforce Hsü Ta off Han-yang. Only after the Ming main body had left Nan-ch'ang, did Chu Yüan-chang discover that Chu Tsung and K'ang T'ai had opposed Hu Mei's surrender to the very end and planned to rebel. The two commanders turned around on the river and appeared before the walls of Nan-ch'ang with their fleet on the evening of 12 April. Taking the defenders by surprise, they destroyed the Hsin-ch'eng Gate with cannon fire and overran the city. Teng Yü escaped and rode alone to Nanking. Chu Yüan-chang now had to permit Ch'en Yu-liang to rebuild his power in Hupeh and Hunan in order to recover the Ming position in Kiangsi. He ordered Hsü Ta to abandon the blockade of Wu-ch'ang and come downstream. Hsü reconquered Nan-ch'ang on 13 May. Meanwhile, Ch'ang Yü-ch'un repaired the walls of An-ch'ing, now once again under Ming control. An-ch'ing might shield the Ming heartland against another Han attack, but it was necessary for the Ming forces to strengthen their hold on Nan-ch'ang if they wished ultimately to win real control of the resources of Kiangsi. Chu Yüan-chang appointed his other surviving nephew, Chu Wen-cheng, to command Nan-ch'ang, with Teng Yü as his deputy. The garrison was increased, and the walls were strengthened and moved back from the river so that they could not be scaled from ships.

Chu Yüan-chang might have risked another campaign against Han as early as 1362 had it not been for Shao Jung's treason in midsummer. Although Shao Jung was among Chu's original companions and held high rank as a senior Ming general, he is not prominently mentioned in the recorded campaigns. His reconquest of Ch'u-chou from the Miao was his first independent campaign in several years. When he received no recognition for his victory, he grew resentful and plotted a coup along with Chao Chi-tsu, another discontented general. The conspirators arranged to have their own contingents at the head of the column when the Ming army marched back into Nanking on 3 August after a military review. They planned to shut and hold the gates after their own units had followed Chu inside and kill him during the confusion. The plot miscarried. The wind blew a banner around Chu's body, and this omen caused him to enter the city by a different gate. Informants later revealed the conspiracy, and Shao and Chao were arrested and sentenced to death. Then Chu Yüan-chang hesitated and asked advice from his other generals. Ch'ang Yü-ch'un spoke up and insisted that Shao and Chao be killed, which was done. However,

the result of this episode was to leave Chu Yüan-chang dependent on the free consent of his senior generals for more than a year afterward.

The P'o-yang Campaign, 1363

Having assembled a new fleet, Ch'en Yu-liang resumed the offensive in 1363, attempting as in 1360 to conquer the Ming territories from the rivers. Instead, after becoming bogged down in a three-month siege of Nan-ch'ang, Ch'en was engaged and destroyed in a naval battle fought mainly on Lake P'o-yang in Kiangsi. Chu Yüan-chang's victory here was the critical turning point in his rise to power; never again would he face an equal or superior adversary. Chu's conquest of Kiangsi and Hu-kuang after the P'o-yang victory gave him the numbers needed to defeat Chang Shih-ch'eng, and annexation of Chang's territories in turn permitted the rapid Ming expansion in and after 1367.

As we have seen, by the end of 1362 treason and rebellion had deprived the Ming of the initiative gained by the 1360 victory and had threatened the conquests of 1361. Unknown to the Ming, Ch'en Yu-liang was assembling his great armada in Wu-ch'ang, while Chang Shih-ch'eng was behaving in an increasingly threatening manner. The only bright place on Chu's horizon was North China, which had lapsed into turmoil once again following the murder of Chaghan Temür on 6 July 1362. Chaghan's murder meant that there was to be no combination among the Yüan loyalists of force sufficient to destroy the Ming as late as 1363.

That year opened with a surprise thrust by Wu against the emotional center of the Red Turban movement. On 16 February 1363 Lü Chen, one of the three principal Wu field commanders, broke into An-feng, killing its effective ruler Liu Fu-t'ung and capturing the figurehead "Sung" emperor Han Lin-erh. The entire Sung empire had by now been reduced to the Ming regime plus this one insignificant city in the midst of a largely depopulated area of the Anhwei–Honan border. Chu Yüan-chang's followers now included influential persons who wished to put some distance between the Ming and the Red Turbans, notably Liu Chi and his fellow Chekiang literati. These now voiced strident and well-reasoned objections, on military rather than intellectual grounds, to dividing the Ming forces for a campaign to recapture An-feng. But the veneration still felt for Han Lin-erh by much of the Ming army made a relief mission unavoidable.

In March Chu Yüan-chang led the Ming main body north to An-feng. Hsü Ta and Ch'ang Yü-ch'un attacked the city and expelled Lü Chen, somehow recovering Han Lin-erh alive in the process. Chu and his troops thereupon returned to Nanking, while An-feng, abandoned by all, was

occupied by Yüan troops. Unfortunately this did not end the campaign. Tso Chün-pi, the warlord of Lu-chou who in 1355 had driven the Lake Ch'ao contingent away from their home area, had sent a force to aid Lü Chen's invasion. The Ming generals insisted that he be punished, and Chu Yüan-chang was unable to override them despite Liu Chi's trenchant counterarguments. The result was that Hsü Ta and Ch'ang Yü-ch'un spent April to August 1363 fruitlessly besieging this prefectural city, while Ch'en Yu-liang carried out his invasion of Kiangsi undisturbed.

Ch'en Yu-liang had mobilized all the able-bodied men of Hupeh and Hunan and built a new fleet. The sources are silent as to how he accomplished this, but clearly the withdrawal of Hsü Ta's blockading squadrons aided Ch'en, and he was able to keep his preparations secret from the Ming. The main body of his new fleet consisted of very large red-painted, three-decked galleasses with iron-sheathed turrets for archers and sterns high enough to overtower any city's walls. One source claimed that each of these ships could carry two to three thousand men. Accompanying the great ships were boats and craft of every kind. Ch'en's operating style had always stressed personal leadership of his main forces; he was now staking everything on the creation of an army-fleet large enough to overcome any possible opposition, but whose defeat would mean the inevitable loss of his territorial base.

Putting his troops and their families, horses, and supplies aboard his ships, Ch'en came downstream in the spring when the rivers were in flood. The sources credit him with 600,000 men; about half that number would be credible. The Han armada was again much larger in size and number of ships and men than the Ming main body. Ch'en's plan called for multiple repetitions of his capture of T'ai-p'ing in 1360; he would take the major riverine prefectural cities by assault from the sterns of his ships. On 5 June 1363 the Han fleet appeared at Nan-ch'ang. If Nan-ch'ang fell, Ch'en could reasonably hope that the city commanders elsewhere in Kiangsi, most of whom had once acknowledged his authority, would defect back to him. Such a development would have reestablished the territorial situation of late 1359; this time, judging from his measures in Hu-kuang, he would have taken pains to extract all the military potential from Kiangsi before again moving in force against the Ming.

The rebuilding of Nan-ch'ang's river walls in 1362 made it impossible to take the city by assault from his ships, and this upset Ch'en Yu-liang's timetable. He was forced to blockade Nan-ch'ang and subject it to more conventional assaults. The Ming garrison repelled all the Han attacks, apparently at great loss to the attackers, and inflicted further losses through sorties. On 9 June the Han troops demolished a section of wall over 300

feet long, but Teng Yü's men held them off with firearms while a crescent was built behind the collapsed section. On 19 June an attack on the Hsin-ch'eng Gate was disrupted by a Ming sortie. On 24 July assaults on the water gates failed. As the siege continued, the seasonal low-water level of rivers and lakes was approaching, and the strategic initiative was slipping from Ch'en Yu-liang's hands. Nonetheless, attrition and hunger were weakening Nan-ch'ang's defenders. Even if he did no more in 1363, the reconquest of Nan-ch'ang would have permitted Ch'en to resume the war on very favorable terms in the following year.

After 24 July the Ming commanders at Nan-ch'ang obtained a truce by agreeing to surrender at an unspecified later date. They also sent a messenger who slipped through the Han blockade and reached Nanking. His arrival in Nanking on 4 August is the first intimation in the sources that Chu Yüan-chang was even aware of the situation in Kiangsi, even though Nan-ch'ang had been besieged for two months and the interruption of communication should have told Chu something. In striking contrast to 1360, Ming intelligence failed badly in 1363. As of June–July 1363, Chu Yüan-chang's hands were still tied by the siege of Lu-chou, which refused to surrender, and by the rebellion on 8 June of Hsieh Tsai-hsing, Ming commandant of the fortress of Chu-ch'üan in Chekiang near the Wu border, whose clandestine dealings with Wu had come to light. Once again Hu Te-chi led his army on the long march from Kuang-hsin to Chu-ch'üan, which Hu besieged but failed to retake for the Ming. By 6 August Hu had broken off the siege and returned to Kuang-hsin. On that date, possibly because of the urging of the Liu Chi, who had strongly opposed the Lu-chou operation, Chu Yüan-chang finally asserted himself against his senior generals. He ordered Hsü Ta and Ch'ang Yü-ch'un to break off the siege of Lu-chou and reassemble their troops at Nanking and sent Hu Te-chi overland from Kuang-hsin to relieve Nan-ch'ang.

The Ming fleet carrying the reassembled main army left Nanking on 15 August. If it was approximately the "thousand ships and 100,000 men" stated in one source (indeed, most say 200,000),⁸ then it was about the same in manpower (though much more numerous in ships) as the Ming main body in 1360. Presumably the accretions to the Ming armies since 1360 had gone into the Chekiang army, the Nan-ch'ang garrison, and reinforcements for the permanent garrison at Nanking. Here again Ming intelligence and planning were questionable. Even after his losses in the siege and his detachments for operations in central Kiangsi, Ch'en Yu-liang still had a large numerical advantage over the Ming expeditionary force.

8 See Dreyer, "The Poyang campaign," p. 217, and note 30, p. 358.

Also, the Ming could not match the huge Han warships, whose height, although designed for assaulting cities, was a considerable advantage in a battle fought largely by closing and boarding. At least the water level had dropped, and the Ming naval leaders believed that would help them. Even so, they were still engaged in a two-front war, and by sailing upstream against a superior enemy (in contrast to 1361), the Ming had undertaken a desperate gamble.

The fleet reached Hu-k'ou on 24 August. The Ming troops built fortified positions at Ching-chiang k'ou on the north bank of the Yangtze opposite the mouth of Lake P'o-yang and at Nan-hu tsui along the narrow stretch of water leading from Lake P'o-yang proper to Hu-k'ou on the Yangtze. It was hoped that these would inhibit the departure of Han ships from the lake. If Ch'en Yu-liang had posted any patrol ships downstream from Hu-k'ou, they had failed to warn him of the Ming approach, and he was now trapped within the lake. However, the main Ming objective at this point was the relief of Nan-ch'ang, so instead of merely waiting at Hu-k'ou, the Ming fleet sailed south and entered the lake on the twenty-eighth. On the same day Ch'en Yu-liang lifted the siege of Nan-ch'ang, embarked his troops, and sailed north into the lake. Late on 29 August the two fleets met off the island of K'ang-lang shan. They waited for sunrise to open the battle.

In the four-day naval battle that followed the Ming inflicted grievous losses but failed to destroy the Han fleet or gain numerical superiority over it; in the end the Ming had to abandon the lake. On the morning of 30 August Chu Yüan-chang deployed the Ming fleet in eleven squadrons. The heavier ships were in the center under the command of Hsü Ta, Ch'ang Yü-ch'un, and Chu himself, while the lighter ships on the two wings were under Yü T'ung-hai and Liao Yung-chung, experienced naval commanders from the Lake Ch'ao component of the Ming leadership group. The Ming line advanced and attacked; Yü T'ung-hai's squadrons gained the windward and fired flaming projectiles from catapults which destroyed "over a score" of Han warships. In the center, however, the towering Han warships drove the Ming line back. Chu Yüan-chang's flagship was attacked several times, and Hsü Ta's was badly damaged. The Ming fleet fell back into a shallow area where the Han ships could not follow and thus was able to disengage, though some of the ships ran aground. The men of the Ming fleet were disheartened with the results of this first day's battle. During the night, Chu sent Hsü Ta back to Nanking with the damaged warships.

The following morning the Ming commanders were very reluctant to engage the Han battleships, which "seemed like mountains." After summarily executing several subordinates, Chu Yüan-chang got his line to

advance, but the Ming fleet was driven back once again, with the loss of several prominent men. The Ming could not win the kind of ship-to-ship battle they had been fighting until now. Prompted by the success of Yü T'ung-hai's fire attack the previous day and by observation of the extreme closeness of the Han battle array, Chu ordered Ch'ang Yü-ch'un to prepare boats for deliberate use as fireships. Ch'ang took seven fishing boats and filled them with bundles of reeds stuffed with gunpowder. When during the afternoon the wind shifted and blew the Ming toward the Han, these boats, manned by specially chosen "dare to die" crews, were sailed into the closely massed Han fleet and ignited. The tight Han array had maximized the effectiveness of the large Han warships in the close-and-board battles, but left them correspondingly vulnerable to fireship attack. In the resulting conflagration several hundred Han ships and craft were destroyed and some 60,000 Han soldiers were killed, against reported Ming losses of 7,000. Two of Ch'en Yu-liang's brothers were killed, along with several squadron commanders, which confirms the extent of Han losses. But the Ming had also suffered damage, and both fleets spent the following day resting and making repairs.

Fighting resumed on the morning of 2 September. The Han fleet was still stronger despite its losses, though its relative superiority was much diminished. This time the Han deployment was open, which prevented a repetition of the fireship attack, but also permitted groups of smaller Ming craft to surround and destroy isolated ships. At one point in the battle a squadron of six Ming ships penetrated the Han line and sailed around one end of it to rejoin the Ming fleet. Nevertheless, this action was not obviously tending to any decisive result, and so around noon Chu Yüan-chang yielded to the pressure of his commanders and ordered disengagement and withdrawal from the lake. Yü T'ung-hai, the chief proponent of withdrawal, had argued that the shallow water of the lake hindered the movements of the Ming ships. A prolonged battle of attrition against a still-stronger Han fleet offered little prospect of a decisive Ming victory and much danger of defeat; obviously, the Ming could not hope to repeat the tactical surprise of their fireship attack. The Ming had originally sailed into the lake with the objective of relieving Nan-ch'ang. By now Chu had probably heard that Hu Te-chi's army had relieved Nan-ch'ang by marching overland from Kuang-hsin. This development permitted the Ming to abandon the battle and shift to a strategy of blockading the Han fleet in the lake.

On the night of 2 September, with a lantern mounted at the stern of each ship, the Ming fleet sailed in single file toward the mouth of the lake. The Han fleet followed after daybreak. Having failed to destroy the Ming

fleet in the lake battles, Ch'en Yu-liang was now trapped by the consequences of his earlier failure to hold the mouth of the lake. The Han leaders wrangled over whether to try to force the mouth of the lake with their ships or to abandon the ships and march overland to Wu-ch'ang. Two divisional generals defected to Chu Yüan-chang, who sent insulting letters to provoke the notoriously intemperate Ch'en into attacking, meanwhile waiting for Ch'en's provisions to run out. Even at this point some Ming commanders lost their nerve and wanted to return to Nanking, but Ch'ang Yü-ch'un once again was instrumental in upholding Chu Yüan-chang's authority. The Ming fleet remained together, and there was no repetition of the events of 1362, when the Ming had been forced to release their grip on Ch'en at the eleventh hour.

Ch'en Yu-liang waited about a month before breaking out. His fleet stormed by the Nan-hu tsui position easily, appeared off Hu-k'ou on 30 October, and then turned upstream into the Yangtze in an attempt to reach Wu-ch'ang. Chu Yüan-chang had positioned the Ming fleet upstream from Hu-k'ou against this very contingency and had fireships ready. When the fireships were set adrift, the Han fleet promptly scattered downstream, and the Ming ships pursued. By late afternoon clusters of ships locked in combat had drifted down as far as Chin-chiang k'ou, where the Ming force stationed there joined the fight. At this stage in the battle Ch'en Yu-liang was killed, struck in the eye by an arrow while crossing from ship to ship in a small boat. News of his death swept among the fighting fleets, encouraging the Ming and destroying what was left of Han morale. During the night, the Han fleet fell apart. Chang Ting-pien escaped with his squadron, carrying a young son of Ch'en Yu-liang, Ch'en Li, whom he acclaimed as Han emperor on his return to Wu-ch'ang. The rest of the Han fleet, 50,000 men in all, surrendered the following morning. On 8 October Chu Yüan-chang took his fleet and his prisoners back to Nanking.

This concluded the decisive phase of the Ming-Han war, which itself was the crucial link in the chain of events leading to the foundation of the Ming dynasty. The death of Ch'en Yu-liang and the destruction or capture of most of his fleet gave Chu Yüan-chang the total victory which had slipped from his hands in the 1362 setbacks. Heretofore, Ming forces had been waging war with Han forces which were either actually or potentially superior, while simultaneously facing the danger of a Wu attack from the east. Now, with Ch'en Yu-liang eliminated, the Ming could proceed with the immediate incorporation of Kiangsi and the eventual conquest of Hunan and Hupeh. With the Ming population thus tripled, the prospect of an enduring balance of power in the Yangtze region, which had seemed so likely in 1360, was precluded.

The number of people under Ming control from 1364 on permitted the Ming to raise armies twice as large as the armies of Wu, and the conquest of Wu became the next Ming objective. The Ming had in fact become the strongest regional power in China, with troops to spare for multifront wars whose outcome swelled its power even more. Also, the P'o-yang campaign gave Chu Yüan-chang enhanced authority within his own regime. Some among the literati were still reluctant to serve him, and the soldiers still clung to their warm regard for Han Lin-erh, but both groups could now see Chu Yüan-chang as a likely future emperor. September 1363 was the last time Ming officers attempted to defy Chu Yüan-chang's wishes; afterward, his enhanced prestige and his power to distribute captured troops and to assign commands in conquered territories, among other factors, allowed him to bend his generals to his will. By 1364 the Ming regime had emerged as the obvious heir to the Yüan empire, though several years of fighting were needed to confirm the inheritance.⁹

THE MING CONQUEST OF CHINA, 1364–1368

While the critical phase of the Ming–Han war was being fought out, Chang Shih-ch'eng remained avowedly hostile to the Ming but failed to exploit the repeated opportunities presented to him while the Ming main body was engaged elsewhere. The half-hearted Wu offensives of 1362 and 1363 both failed to do serious damage. It is not clear when Chang Shih-ch'eng became aware of the extent of the Ming victory in the P'o-yang campaign, but it is clear from his subsequent actions that he saw the downfall of Ch'en Yu-liang as the overture to a showdown between himself and Chu Yüan-chang. Now, in contrast to 1356, Chang made no attempt at accommodation with Chu. Chang suspended his grain shipments to the Yüan capital, claiming he would need the grain himself, and on 5 November proclaimed himself the Prince of Wu, a direct challenge to Chu Yüan-chang, who responded at the New Year (4 February 1364) by proclaiming himself Prince of Wu.

The lesser regionalists reacted to the Ming victory in various ways. Ch'en Yu-ting became actively hostile and invaded Chekiang from Fukien, while Ming Yü-chen wrote from Szechwan offering an alliance. Fang Kuo-chen spotted a winner and offered tribute, which the Ming accepted on the condition that he surrender a fixed number of days after the Ming capture of Hangchow.

9 Dreyer, "The Poyang campaign," esp. pp. 202, 239–40.

Ming absorbs Han, 1364–1365

During 1364 and 1365 Chu Yüan-chang devoted his primary effort to the absorption of Ch'en Yu-liang's former territories in Kiangsi and Hu-kuang. He attained this objective largely because of the inability of Kōkō Temür and Chang Shih-ch'eng, the strongest remaining regionalists, to unite effectively against him. Integration of the new territories into his power base gave Chu Yüan-chang control of a population perhaps twice as large as that controlled by any other rival. Sheer numerical preponderance, rather than qualitative superiority, was to be the major factor in the subsequent Ming victories, which had a snowball effect culminating in the conquest of all China.

Two weeks after the successful conclusion of the P'o-yang campaign, on 23 October 1363, Chu Yüan-chang again took his fleet upstream, this time to Wu-ch'ang. He besieged Wu-ch'ang for two months without result and then returned to Nanking, leaving Ch'ang Yü-ch'un in command. This was the beginning of the systematic conquest of the former Han territories. He returned to Wu-ch'ang two days before Chang Ting-p'ien surrendered on 22 March 1364. This brought formal declarations of surrender from the remaining prefectural cities of Hunan and Hupeh. Chu did not occupy them at this time, but left a garrison at Wu-ch'ang under Yang Ching and brought the rest of the army downstream. On 15 May Hsü Ta and Ch'ang Yü-ch'un resumed the siege of Lu-chou; Tso Chün-pi fled to An-feng and joined Kōkō Temür, but Lu-chou held out under Tso's subordinates until 15 August. Both Lu-chou and Wu-ch'ang had been centers of outright defiance to the Ming, and their capture was an essential preliminary to the next stage, that of actual military occupation of already surrendered or wavering cities in Kiangsi and Hu-kuang.

Hsü Ta's army went to Hu-kuang. Hsü's reputation for maintaining strict military discipline was intended to persuade the commandants of former Han cities to admit Ming troops within their walls peacefully. Obviously, a single reported instance of Ming troops getting out of control on such an occasion would cause the remaining cities to resist. In late October 1364 Hsü's army was admitted to Chiang-ling, I-ling, and Ch'ang-sha without incident. Most of the Han commanders and aboriginal chieftains opened their gates without resistance after that, and Hsü Ta was able, on his return to Nanking in April 1365, to report Hu-kuang as pacified.

Ch'ang Yü-ch'un's army went first to Nan-ch'ang, where they were joined by Teng Yü and part of the garrison. Ch'ang's assignment was to conquer central and southern Kiangsi. The city commanders in the extreme

south had never surrendered; those elsewhere had submitted in 1361 but had done nothing to help the Ming in 1363. Ch'ang and Teng took Chi-an on 3 September 1364 and then pushed farther up the Kan River to lay siege to Kan-chou, under the control of Hsiung T'ien-jui. Hsiung had never really been under Han control, but he had been using his continued attachment to Han as a pretext for attacking other city commanders who had submitted to the Ming in 1361. While the main Ming–Han war played itself out, he had extended his control from southern Kiangsi into northern Kwangtung. He now resisted the Ming stoutly, and Kan-chou did not fall until February 1365. Ch'ang Yü-ch'un occupied the city without bloodshed and disorder, much to Chu Yüan-chang's amazement.

Meanwhile a minor pro-Han rebellion had broken out in central Kiangsi, and Chu Wen-cheng had sent troops from Nan-ch'ang to suppress it. The incident provided the occasion for a major shakeup in the Ming army. Chu Yüan-chang ordered the trusted T'ang Ho, who had been commanding Ch'ang-chou since 1357, to take some of his own troops to Kiangsi to help in suppressing the rebellion. On 16 February 1365, as T'ang's army approached Nan-ch'ang, Chu Yüan-chang suddenly appeared there and summarily dismissed his nephew Chu Wen-cheng from all his military positions. Chu Wen-cheng was accused of kidnapping and raping women, ornamenting his bedchamber with dragons and phoenixes, and plotting to surrender to Chang Shih-ch'eng. The charges ranged from venial to improbable. Chu Wen-cheng was popular in the army; other generals interceded, and he was finally punished with supervised exile. Chu Yüan-chang obviously feared something from his nephew, as is shown by the elaborate preparation of his coup, but his actual concerns cannot be discovered from the surviving sources. Teng Yü succeeded to the command at Nan-ch'ang.

Back in Nanking by 23 April, Chu Yüan-chang, along with Hsü Ta and Ch'ang Yü-ch'un, planned the next stage of the war. Ch'ang captured An-lu and Hsiang-yang in the Han River valley in mid-June. Since the Han River flows out of southern Shensi, the Ming were now in a position to cooperate with Kōkō Temür's enemies in that province. Kōkō, frustrated in his attempts to reassemble all of Chaghan Temür's power structure, could do nothing to prevent further Ming expansion, this time at the expense of Chang Shih-ch'eng.

By the late summer of 1365 all the former Han territories were integrated under Ming control, and the surviving Han soldiers had been amalgamated into the Ming armies. City garrisons had been relieved by reliable Ming troops, with the surrendered Han soldiers going into the reserves from which future expeditionary armies would be formed. This

reshuffling required a reorganization of the Ming military system, accompanied by an enumeration of the troops in each unit, a process that further centralized the administration of the Ming army and increased Chu Yüan-chang's authority within it. Late in 1363 Chu had become angry with one of his generals upon discovering at a parade that that general did not know how many men he had under his command. That was natural under the circumstances: military units were composed of subunits loyal to their immediate leaders, unit sizes and nomenclatures were not standardized, and higher commanders could not easily interfere in the administration of their subunits.

In 1364, soon after he became Prince of Wu, Chu imposed a standard table of organization on his armies. The various wing commander headquarters (*i yüan-shuai fu*), heretofore the principal field units, were redesignated guards (*wei*) and given a uniform troop strength of (at first) 5,000 men. Each was divided into five battalions of 1,000 men (*ch'ien-hu so*), in turn divided into ten companies of 100 men each (*po-hu so*). Smaller field headquarters (*tsung-kuan fu*) became independent battalions (*shou-yü*), also of 1,000 men in ten companies. A new series of rank designations for officers was introduced, keyed to the new organization; unit commanders then had to submit to having their men counted, giving up their old ranks and titles and receiving new ranks according to the number of men they commanded. Having thereby attained a much greater degree of control over the internal administration of the various units, Chu Yüan-chang was in turn willing to confirm the officers in their positions hereditarily. Posts from guard commander on down were made explicitly hereditary, with succession subject to the approval of the prince, thereby regularizing a long-standing practice that, like the decimal units of the guards, had been the norm of the Yüan military organization.

This reorganization was the occasion for a redistribution of troops, which was designed both to reward Ming commanders by giving them larger forces and to separate newly surrendered soldiers from their native areas and original units. The soldiers longest in Ming service, the main body Chu Yüan-chang had led in person in the 1360 to 1363 period, was divided into 17 guards. Older men in this group were allowed to retire completely, while the rest went into garrison duty, cultivating military farmlands in the Nanking area. Chu himself retired from active military command and remained at Nanking, cultivating a traditional imperial posture. The unstated but primary purpose of the Nanking garrison was to provide a military *ultima ratio* against any possible opposition from within the field armies to Chu's eventual rise to imperial status. Other soldiers, considered reliable but with shorter Ming service records (such as those who had joined

during the Ming conquest of southern Anhwei and central Chekiang), were sent west to garrison the cities of Hunan, Hupeh, and Kiangsi or to serve in the regional field armies based at Nan-ch'ang and Wu-ch'ang. The ex-Han soldiers and newly recruited troops from the former Han territories were brought to Nanking and brigaded with the remaining Ming veterans to form the expeditionary armies which Hsü Ta and Ch'ang Yü-ch'un later led against Wu. Before 1363 commanders who surrendered to the Ming were able to insist that their troops be kept together under their own command; afterward, troops that surrendered had to be content with their lives and whatever favorable treatment they received.¹⁰

Ming conquers Wu, 1365–1367

Between 1365 and 1367 Chu Yüan-chang's troops conquered Chang Shih-ch'eng's territories in a straightforward sequence of operations, beginning in the outlying regions of Wu and culminating in the successful siege of Soochow. The fall of Soochow in 1367 did not interrupt the momentum of Ming expansion; Chu launched expeditionary forces to the north and to the south before the end of the year.

Chang Shih-ch'eng's only hope after 1367 was an all-out offensive before the Ming regime could fully develop the military potential of the new conquests. Chang made the attempt, but the Wu armies were not equal to the task. In November 1364 Chang Shih-hsin tried to capture Ch'ang-hsing, but the following month was driven away with heavy losses by T'ang Ho's army from Ch'ang-chou. In March 1365 Li Po-sheng, the Wu general who had previously failed to take Ch'ang-hsing, led 200,000 troops to Chu-ch'üan in Chekiang, whence he proceeded to besiege Hsin-ch'eng, the fortress the Ming had built to mask Chu-ch'üan after Hsieh Tsai-hsing's defection to Wu in 1363. Li Wen-chung went with the Ming Chekiang army to break the siege. On the morning of 12 March 1365, he defeated the Wu army in the field with a cavalry charge which he led in person. As the Wu army retreated past the gates of Hsin-ch'eng, a sortie from the garrison routed them. This fiasco marked the end of Wu offensive attempts. In addition to Chang Shih-hsin, Chang Shih-ch'eng's one remaining brother, the Ming had defeated Li Po-sheng and Lü Chen, while Hsü I, the third of the Wu "claws and teeth," later on refused to fight at all.

The Ming leadership committed itself to an offensive strategy of "clipping the wings" of Wu, which meant first conquering the Wu territories

¹⁰ Taylor, "Yüan origins;" Dreyer, "The *Chi-shih lu* of Yü Pen," and his *Early Ming China*, pp. 76–80, all attempt to place the reorganization of 1364 in context.

north of the Yangtze and then the Wu portion of Chekiang, before striking at the Wu heartland in the Soochow area. In December 1365 Hsü Ta's army took T'ai-chou (in Yang-chou prefecture, Kiangsu) and then went on up the Grand Canal, capturing Kao-yu on 24 April 1366. Hsü then moved north swiftly along the canal and surprised and destroyed Hsü I's fleet. This led the Wu commandant at Huai-an, Mei Ssu-tsu, to surrender, followed soon after by the north Kiangsu commandants at Hao-chou, Su-chou, and Hsü-chou. Hsü Ta himself went west and captured An-feng on 29 May. Kōkō Temür was ordered to intervene, but once again opposition from Chaghan Temür's erstwhile subordinates prevented him from doing so. The postrebellion class of Yüan "loyalists" all remained blind to the growth of the Ming power that would soon destroy them and so failed to cooperate in their own defense. The surrendered Wu troops were, as usual, absorbed into the Ming armies, which remained inactive during the summer farming season.

When the fighting resumed, Chu Yüan-chang insisted on continuing the strategy of "clipping the wings," which meant striking next at Hu-chou and Hangchow in northern Chekiang. The main army of 200,000 under Hsü Ta and Ch'ang Yü-ch'un laid siege to Hu-chou, while Li Wen-chung's Chekiang army blockaded Hangchow. When Hu-chou surrendered on 8 December 1366, the Wu commandant at Hangchow, P'an Yüan-ming, saw the light and followed suit a week later. The Ming armies then proceeded directly to Soochow, which was completely invested by 27 December.

The siege of Soochow lasted for ten months. Soochow was not famous as a great fortress, but its walls had been stoutly rebuilt. Further, Chang Shih-ch'eng was fighting for the life of his regime after a decade of torpor, and the gentry who had rallied to his support saw the war as one fought for the defense of social and cultural legitimacy. Chang refused all exhortations to surrender, even though the Ming leaders had by now given enough proofs that they would keep any promises they made. Chang led his troops in person and tried to break up the siege by leading sorties from the walls. On the Ming side Hsü Ta was in overall command, while Ch'ang Yü-ch'un and eight other generals who later became either dukes or marquises each blockaded a specific section of the wall. Soochow was surrounded by an unbroken wall of earthenworks built by the Ming army in the course of the siege. From specially constructed platforms severed heads, rotting corpses, and other items were catapulted into the city. Flaming arrows and rockets were used for incendiary purposes, while cannon of a more standard cast battered the walls.

On 1 October 1367 the walls were breached, and the Ming armies

poured into Soochow. Chang Shih-ch'eng fell back into the interior of the city. In his palace he tried to hang himself, but the Ming soldiers cut him down. He refused food, refused to submit, and in the end apparently succeeded in killing himself after being taken to Nanking. As of 1393 Soochow was the most populous prefecture in the Ming empire, and its wealth was taxed at a special high rate that reflected Chu Yüan-chang's lasting hatred for the gentry of the region. Soochow's fall in 1367 ended Wu resistance and added 250,000 experienced soldiers to the Ming armies, which now stood poised for further conquests in both north and south.

North China on the eve of the Ming conquest

While the Yangtze powers were fighting for supremacy in the south, North China had witnessed the rise of Chaghan Temür, his murder, and the attempts of his successor Kökö Temür to put his machine back together. As related before, Chaghan had raised militia as a response to the sudden reemergence of the Red Turban "Sung" empire after the dismissal of Toghto. Until mid 1357, Chaghan and Li Ssu-ch'i operated their local militia units under the direction of Dash Badalugh, the principal Yüan militia organizer in Honan.

When the Red Turbans invaded Honan in 1357 and captured K'ai-feng, Dash Badalugh's organization fell apart. It became difficult for Chaghan and Li to remain in Honan, so when the rebels next invaded Shensi, Chaghan and Li accepted the invitation of the Yüan government and transferred their operations there. They drove the rebels out of the Wei Valley and were rewarded with suitably high titles by the Yüan court. They then used this court recognition as a lever to usurp control of the administration and the regular military forces stationed in Shensi. By the end of 1358, Chaghan had gained a similar position in south and central Shansi after defeating the rebels in the valley of the Fen River.

Chaghan, like the other post-Toghto militia commanders, was essentially a warlord regionalist, despite his consistent posture of loyalty to the Yüan. The Yüan court grudgingly acquiesced to his territorial expansion by granting him titles and formal authority in Shansi and Honan, hoping that Chaghan's desire for still more promotions would leave them some leverage over him. Li Ssu-ch'i remained in Shensi. Chaghan meanwhile held civil service examinations on his own authority in Honan, and in the summer of 1359 he gave the main body of the northern Red Turban empire the coup de grace by capturing K'ai-feng.

Confronted once again by a great minister who had become too powerful through fighting against avowed rebels, the Yüan court attempted to main-

tain its own authority by curtailing Chaghan's. It could do this only by using another regionalist, Dash Badalugh's son Bolod Temür, whose territorial base was in Hopei and northern Shansi. Chaghan was ordered to transfer central Shansi, then vital as a source of provisions for his armies, to Bolod. Chaghan flatly refused and resisted by force, until both Bolod and the court backed down. This very public dispute revealed Chaghan as a regionalist rather than a true loyalist, but the same was true of all the other pro-Yüan commanders. The court, which only a few years before had been able to destroy Toghto with a decree, was now condemned to watch helplessly while North China underwent the same process of disintegration followed by regional empire-building that had already been completed in the south.

Chaghan now turned against Shantung, whose cities were the last remaining Red Turban holdouts in North China. The Shantung campaign developed into a sequence of sieges and was consequently prolonged. Then, while besieging I-tu on 7 July 1362, Chaghan was murdered by two recently surrendered subordinates, one of whom was an ex-Red Turban leader, the other a former Yüan general. The murderers cited Chaghan's hypocrisy, in that he was actually concerned only with his own regional power despite his pretended devotion to the Yüan, as justification for their act. Whatever their motives, Chaghan's death set back the trend toward the unification of North China.

The Yüan court now ordered Chaghan's nephew, Kōkō Temür, to succeed to his dead uncle's titles and offices. But Chaghan's henchmen in other areas, notably Li Ssu-ch'i, and the autonomous Yüan regionalists elsewhere, notably Bolod Temür, refused to acknowledge that Kōkō had any overriding authority over them, so that Kōkō was still fighting to gain supremacy when the Ming invaded the north in 1367. In general, contemporaries throughout China had failed to grasp the significance of the rise in Ming power since 1363. In all of China's imperial and pre-imperial history the south had never conquered, and rarely invaded, the north, and one is left with the strong impression that after the collapse of the Red Turban movement, a certain complacency had come over the northern warlords.

In May 1364 Bolod Temür siezed control of Peking, partly in response to the attempt of the Yüan crown prince Ayushiridara to take control of Bolod's army. Ayushiridara then fled to Kōkō Temür's camp. In August 1365 emperor Toghōn Temür contrived the assassination of Bolod Temür and then granted Kōkō command over all the North China armies, with orders to suppress the rebels in the south. This attempt to impose unity by imperial decree naturally backfired. Bolod's former supporters in Shansi and Shensi joined forces with Li Ssu-ch'i and others of Chaghan's old compan-

ions, and all of them forcibly resisted Kōkō's pretensions. The emperor perhaps had a better grasp of the danger posed by the Ming, who had after all been responsible, directly or indirectly, for the suspension of all grain shipments from the south. He therefore ordered Kōkō to put aside the war in the north and attack the Ming. Kōkō, of course, placed his own regional interests first and ignored the imperial order. By February 1368 Toghōn Temür was provoked enough to dismiss Kōkō from all his offices and cities and to order the other northern warlords to crush him. However, Kōkō won the subsequent battles and remained the strongest power in a divided north.

The formation of the Ming empire, 1367–1368

In November 1367 Chu Yüan-chang sent an army to invade the North China plain. By mid 1368 this army had captured Peking and expelled the Yüan imperial court to Inner Mongolia. Meanwhile a naval expedition, combined with overland invasions, subdued Kwangtung, Fukien, and the Chekiang coast. While these campaigns were in progress, Chu announced the creation of the new dynasty with the beginning of the New Year in 1368.

The planning of the northern expedition revealed some disagreements between Chu Yüan-chang and his generals. Ch'ang Yü-ch'un, always somewhat stereotyped in his impulsiveness and overconfidence, proposed marching directly to Peking; the Ming armies could destroy any opposition as easily as "splitting bamboo." Chu did not approve, imposing instead a four-stage plan of operations under which each conquered territory would be fully secured before the Ming armies moved on to the next. The conquest of Shantung was the first stage, to be followed by Honan, including the vital T'ung Pass into Shensi, then the Peking area, and finally Shansi and Shensi. Militarily it would have made more sense to strike for the major enemy army, but for Chu and his contemporaries securing territory came first, and Chu had followed a similar strategy in conquering Wu. This time, however, the result was that the Ming armies destroyed Kōkō Temür's rivals and drove the Yüan emperor into Kōkō's hands; Kōkō survived and took his essentially intact army into Mongolia, whence he posed a severe threat to the Ming empire in the 1370s.

Before launching their major military operations, however, the Ming first moved against Fang Kuo-chen, who had failed to honor his promise to surrender after the fall of Hangchow. An army under Chu Liang-tsu marched overland and took T'ai-chou in Chekiang in October and Wen-chou the following month. Meanwhile, the approach of a powerful fleet

under T'ang Ho drove Fang himself to leave Ning-po and go to sea, after ordering his underlings to surrender. Fang himself also surrendered in December.

On 13 November 1367 Chu Yüan-chang issued formal orders for the Ming northern expedition and the conquest of the south. Hsü Ta and Ch'ang Yü-ch'un as usual commanded the 250,000-strong main army that was to conquer the north, while simultaneously Hu Mei invaded Fukien overland and the fleet under T'ang Ho and Liao Yung-chung sailed down the China coast, attacking Fukien and Kwangtung from the sea.

It was "as easy as splitting bamboo." Hu Mei's army captured Shao-wu (28 December). The fleet arrived at Foochow (18 January 1368), captured it, and then sailed up the Min River to receive Ch'en Yu-ting's surrender (17 February), which completed the conquest of Fukien. Liao Yung-chung and Chu Liang-tsu then took most of the fleet farther south. They reached Canton on 18 April and Ho Chen, who had held Kwangtung for the Yüan for over a decade, promptly surrendered. Sailing up the Hsi River, the Ming force took Wu-chou on 26 May. The issue in Kwangsi was never in doubt after this, though another two months of campaigning, including an overland expedition from Hu-kuang under Yang Ching, was necessary before the province was finally secured.

In the north Hsü Ta and Ch'ang Yü-ch'un took Chi-nan on 28 December 1367 and spent the next two months methodically reducing resistance in Shantung, a process completed by the fall of Tung-ch'ang on 1 March 1368. Then, while Teng Yü invaded Honan from the south, taking Nan-yang, Hsü and Ch'ang marched in from the east. They surrounded K'ai-feng, which surrendered on 16 April. After being defeated in the field near Lo-yang on the twenty-fifth, K'ökö withdrew and Lo-yang also fell. Yüan resistance, often fierce, was ineffective because it was uncoordinated. Feng Sheng's capture of T'ung Pass on 13 May concluded the second phase of the northern expedition according to schedule.

The Ming armies rested or worked during the spring planting season. Chu Yüan-chang, who had by now proclaimed himself emperor, came north to K'ai-feng to confer with his generals regarding the next phase of the northern expedition. However, he made no changes of plan, and the Yüan attempted no counteroffensive during the pause in operations. In August, after the harvest was in, the Ming armies crossed the Yellow River. Hsü Ta entered Peking on 20 September, as usual earning Chu Yüan-chang's praise for maintaining discipline and preserving the city intact. Toghön Temür, Ayushiridara, and some of the court escaped barely in time and fled into Inner Mongolia. Chu Yüan-chang changed the name of the city from Ta-tu (Great Capital) to Pei-p'ing (The North is Pacified) to

symbolize permanently the triumph of the southern-based Ming regime. Two weeks later, the Ming armies marched into Shansi.

Meanwhile Chu Yüan-chang had been formally acclaimed emperor of the Ming dynasty on the fourth day of the lunar new year (23 January 1368). In a bizarre deviation from a calendrical usage over fifteen centuries old, 1367 had been designated the “first year of Wu.” Since the adoption of a calendar was the clearest sign of political allegiance in the Chinese world order, the effect of this step was to signal to Chu’s contemporaries the need for an emperor to emerge. Obviously there was no alternative to Chu at this point, and at the prompting of his civil officials he went through the formal rites of accession. Most of his soldiers were away from Nanking. He designated 1368 as the first year of Hung-wu (Overflowing Martial Accomplishment), a name that alludes to the feats of arms leading up to the founding of the dynasty.

By mid-1368 the Ming empire had become a credible claimant to the succession to the long Chinese imperial heritage. The Mongols were yet to be expelled from Shensi and Kansu, Szechwan was not conquered until 1371, and—of the non-Chinese components of the former Yüan empire—Yunnan was not conquered until 1382. The extension of Ming influence came much later to Manchuria and never, despite Ming attempts, to Mongolia proper. Nevertheless, most of China proper acknowledged Ming rule, expressed throughout Ming territory by provincial military governors and by city commandants who were also military men. Despite the wars still to be fought, the main phase of the military unification was over, and the Ming was in the anomalous position of having conquered China without having established a clear identity. It had emerged out of a rebel movement based on the Chinese secret society tradition and alien religious forms. In rebelling against the Yüan empire, it had to some extent adopted the world view of its hereditary and militaristic Mongol and *se-mu* ruling class. Only later had it attempted to win over the literati and come to terms with the Confucian tradition. The tension between these three traditions would take time to resolve.¹¹

THE ARMY AND THE FRONTIERS, 1368–1372

The capture of the Yüan capital and the proclamation of the Ming empire in 1368 symbolized another major change in the wars Chu Yüan-chang had been waging since 1352. He was no longer fighting for political and personal survival (as before 1363) or waging an all-out effort to conquer

¹¹ Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 52–64.

China proper. Warfare, while still important, was increasingly confined to the frontiers, and other military-related problems were coming to the fore. These included gaining full acceptance for Chu's imperial status from his army and creating a peacetime military system that permitted economies but avoided the social strains of large-scale demobilization. And, of course, the new emperor was most concerned during this period with the many and complicated problems of organizing an effective civil government (as discussed in Chapter 3).

Despite these other concerns, the years 1368 to 1372 nonetheless saw military action that significantly influenced the future course of Ming history. Three provinces were conquered: Shansi, Shensi (including the Kansu corridor), and Szechwan. Against the Mongols the Ming were forced by defeat to accept a military stalemate and the need for a permanent frontier garrison system. A peacetime posture for the military did emerge, and the military nobility and officer class began to shed their civil functions to the growing body of civil officials.

The conquest of Shansi and Shensi, 1368–1370

The elimination of the Yüan presence in Shansi, Shensi, and the contiguous areas was the first Ming military objective after the fall of Peking. The new Ming emperor ordered his armies to invade Shansi in September 1368. To secure the Ming rear, Ch'ang Yü-ch'un first took Pao-ting and Chen-ting (modern Hopei, southwest of Peking), while Feng Sheng and T'ang Ho captured Huai-ch'ing (west of K'ai-feng) and invaded Shansi from the south. In January 1369 Hsü Ta invaded Shansi from the east and took T'ai-yüan in March. In April the Ming generals overran the Wei Valley in Shensi. Kōkō Temür had failed to resist the Ming invasion of Shansi effectively, and he now retired with his army to northern Kansu. To the end the Shensi warlords refused to cooperate with Kōkō, and now they were destroyed in succession by Hsü Ta, who overran most of Shensi's prefectural cities before the end of the year.

Once again Ming operations had been aided by the failure of nominally Yüan forces to cooperate. Kōkō Temür raided the Ming frontiers energetically during the autumn and winter, but despite his efforts, the Ming conquest of Shansi and Shensi made the position of the refugee Yüan court at Ying-ch'ang in Inner Mongolia (on the Dalai Nur, 230 miles directly north of Peking) more vulnerable. It had also become more difficult for the Yüan remnants to come to the aid of the independent regimes in Szechwan and Yunnan in the event that the Ming should attempt to conquer them.

In 1370 the Ming launched a major offensive against the Yüan from two

directions. From Peking Li Wen-chung (who had taken command of Ch'ang Yü-ch'un's troops after Ch'ang's death in August 1369) and Feng Sheng led an army north through Chü-yung Pass on the Great Wall to attack the Yüan emperor, while Hsü Ta, Teng Yü, and T'ang Ho led an army from Sian against Kökö Temür.

Li Wen-chung's army captured Hsing-ho and went from there to Chaghan Nor, where they defeated and captured a large Mongol force. The Yüan emperor Toghon Temür died at Ying-ch'ang on 23 May 1370, and his son Ayushiridara succeeded him. Meanwhile Li Wen-chung was leading his army with his usual speed and skill to Ying-ch'ang, which he surprised and stormed on 10 June. Ayushiridara escaped and fled across the Gobi to Outer Mongolia, accompanied by only a small retinue. His son Maidiribala and over 50,000 Mongol warriors were captured. The arrogant language of Li Wen-chung's victory memorial annoyed his uncle the emperor, but Li was right to value his victory highly, as it led to over three decades of Ming military dominance in eastern Inner Mongolia.

Hsü Ta's army groped for Kökö Temür and on 3 May found him at Ting-hsi near Kung-ch'ang in what is now eastern Kansu. The Mongol army was more numerous than expected, and the Ming troops took up a defensive position in which part of their front was covered by a stream and the rest by field works put up by the soldiers. The Mongols attacked strongly and outflanked the southwest wing of the Ming line. The Ming commander there, Hu Te-chi, lost control of his men. Panic and rout were averted only by the personal intervention of Hsü Ta, who removed Hu Te-chi from command and put him in chains. The following day the Ming counterattacked successfully and won a great victory. Kökö Temür escaped, but allegedly lost 86,000 of his troops. Kökö survived as a formidable desert power, as Hsü Ta learned to his sorrow in 1372, but the Ting-hsi battle confirmed Ming rule over the agricultural sectors of Shensi and the Kansu corridor. Hsü Ta spent the rest of the season in mopping-up operations.

The conquest of Szechwan, 1370–1371

The victories of 1370 permitted the Ming to carry out the conquest of Szechwan in the following year without fear of interference from the Mongols. After taking power in Szechwan, Ming Yü-chen had failed in his attempts to conquer new territory, notably in Yunnan, and had become reconciled to simply holding on to Szechwan. He had refused to recognize Ch'en Yu-liang as emperor in 1360, instead defending the Yangtze gorges against Ch'en's local forces and later proclaiming himself emperor of the Hsia dynasty. Following Chu Yüan-chang's P'o-yang victory in 1363, the

two regimes had exchanged embassies and in their letters had made the inevitable comparisons of themselves to Liu Pei and Sun Ch'üan of the third century. The Szechwan leader's use of this metaphor was another instance of failure to see just how decisive the Ming victory had been.

Ming Yü-chen died, perhaps assassinated, in 1366, and his young son Ming Sheng succeeded him as figurehead Hsia emperor under the regency of the empress-dowager. The ramshackle Hsia state started to fall apart as local military commanders tried to establish their autonomy. Concurrently the Ming forces were expelling the Mongols from North China, and from 1370 on were poised to invade Szechwan from the north as well as by the more difficult eastern route through the Yangtze gorges. The Ming emperor sent Yang Ching, since 1365 his governor of Hu-kuang, to Szechwan with the usual decree offering favorable terms in return for surrender, but the Hsia government made no reply.

Making his arrangements for the 1371 campaign, Chu Yüan-chang ordered Hsü Ta to station himself at Peking in command of the army left behind to guard the northern frontier. Teng Yü was sent to Hsiang-yang to manage the transport of military supplies up the Han River into Shensi, where a field army under Fu Yu-te was assembling to invade Szechwan from the north. T'ang Ho and Liao Yung-chung commanded the Ming river fleet, which was to invade through the Yangtze gorges.

The actual invasion went fairly easily in the north, but suffered setbacks in the Yangtze area. Early in the summer Fu Yu-te moved rapidly; he took Chieh-chou (modern southeast Kansu) and several lesser places and then proceeded down the Chia-ling River valley. The Hsia had concentrated most of their forces on the Yangtze front, where they expected the major attack. Despite their last-minute attempts to redeploy, Fu's army took Han-chou (25 miles north of Chengtu) on 13 July. On the Yangtze front, the Hsia had erected suspension bridges across Ch'ü-t'ang Gorge, on the eastern boundary of Szechwan, on which they had placed catapults to fire at ships (and their towpath crews) attempting to break through. The intensity of the resistance was such that T'ang Ho, after one unsuccessful assault, refused to attack again. Liao Yung-chung was eventually able to destroy the suspension bridges with cannon fire, after which he forced the Ch'ü-t'ang position and went on west to take nearby K'uei-chou. Ming Sheng's government surrendered when the combined Ming fleets reached Chungking on 3 August. A month later, Fu Yu-te completed operations on the northern route by capturing Chengtu. Szechwan became a Ming province, and Ming Sheng was sent to Nanking to join Ch'en Li, Ch'en Yu-liang's young son, in comfortable confinement. Both were later exiled to Korea.

War with the Mongols, 1370–1372

The completion of the conquest of Szechwan allowed the Ming to turn their forces once again to the Mongols. The Ming victories over the Mongols in 1370 had been exceptionally decisive, restoring Chinese rule up to the Great Wall line for the first time since the early tenth century. Afterward the Ming government had waged a diplomatic offensive against the Yüan remnants in Mongolia. The goal was to get the Mongols to acknowledge the Ming succession to the Mandate of Heaven which, by implication, had previously been held legitimately by the Yüan. An early step in this direction had been the swift preparation of the *Official history of the Yüan* (1369), whose flattering account of Chaghan Temür was evidently designed to appeal to the still powerful Kōkō. The capture of prince Maidiribala, Ayushiridara's heir, gave the Ming a potentially useful lever against the new Yüan emperor. On two occasions in 1370 the Ming court sent letters to Ayushiridara exhorting him to submit to the new imperial dynasty and threatening invasion if he did not comply. None of this diplomacy had any effect. Kōkō had defied Ayushiridara in the past, but was not willing to abandon his loyalty to the Yüan dynasty as such, and Ayushiridara did not even reply. With Szechwan conquered, in 1372 the Ming emperor set in motion a major sequence of military operations designed to crush the Mongols.

This time Kōkō Temür's army, reputedly 100,000 strong, was the main objective. The formidable and heretofore undefeated Hsü Ta assembled a cavalry force of 150,000 and received orders from the emperor to exit via Yen-men Pass in Shansi and march 750 miles northwest across the Gobi Desert to Khara Khorum. Smaller armies were placed under Feng Sheng and Li Wen-chung. Feng's assignment was to conquer the still-unsubdued western prefectures of the Kansu corridor. Li was to march from Ying-ch'ang to subdue still more of the Mongols of Inner Mongolia and Manchuria. To support Li's operation, Wu Chen supervised the transport of provisions by sea to the Liao-tung Peninsula.

The army under Hsü Ta traversed the Gobi in the early spring and groped for Kōkō Temür's force in Outer Mongolia. On 23 April a Ming division under the brilliant young general Lan Yü caught part of the Mongol army by the Tula River and defeated it. Kōkō then avoided action for over a month. When the two armies met for the decisive battle on 7 June, Hsü Ta suffered a disastrous defeat, losing "several myriads" of troops. The sources provide no details of either the battle or the maneuvers leading up to it, but the circumstances suggest that the Mongols were successfully following their traditional strategy of first exhausting their

enemy by provoking him into fruitless marches and then giving battle at a time and place of their own choosing. Hsü Ta evacuated the survivors of his army in haste from Outer Mongolia.

Li Wen-chung's expedition was also unsuccessful, though less spectacularly so. Li had reached Outer Mongolia by early July. By the Tula River the Chinese army encountered a Mongol force under Manzi Kharajang and pursued it to the Orkhon River, where the Mongols surprised them by turning and counterattacking in unexpected force. The Ming soldiers slaughtered the livestock they had brought along for provisions and defended themselves for three days behind these improvised ramparts. Then the Mongols withdrew, and Li Wen-chung was able to bring his army back to China. With his usual arrogance Li claimed a victory, but his uncle was even less impressed than he had been in 1370. In August T'ang Ho, one of Li's subordinates on this occasion, was defeated.

In Kansu Feng Sheng marched as far west as Tun-huang, winning many victories and capturing much livestock. The corridor remained under Ming rule for the rest of the dynasty.

Even though in the Yung-lo period the Ming emperor led much larger expeditionary armies into Outer Mongolia, the failed campaign of 1372 was really the most significant Ming effort in that direction. Seen against its diplomatic background, it is evident that in 1372 Chu Yüan-chang was attempting to establish himself as the heir to the whole Yüan political tradition, in the nomadic areas as well as in the areas of Chinese habitation. It could be argued that this was the only way to protect China proper against attack from the steppe, and the Ch'ing dynasty emperors would later pursue the same goal successfully. The defeats of 1372 led Chu Yüan-chang to moderate his ambitions and to give up the goal of annexing Outer Mongolia. For the next fifteen years Ming policy on the northern border was one of local defense and sporadic retaliation in the vicinity of the Great Wall. Even with the resumption of large-scale campaigning in 1387, there is no evidence of a renewal of the desire to gain permanent control over Outer Mongolia. In 1374 Chu Yüan-chang sent prince Maidiribala back to his father from Nanking, where he had been held as a favored guest of the state. When Ayushiridara died in 1378, however, he was succeeded by his brother, Toghus Temür, rather than the young prince, who was favorably disposed toward the Ming. The Yüan rulers kept up the claim to be emperors-in-exile of China, but during this time their actual control over the tribal society of Outer Mongolia was weakening steadily.¹²

¹² Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 71–76.

Stabilization of the military system

Despite the persistence of large-scale military operations in the 1370s, the decade witnessed the emergence of a distinct “post-founding” posture for the Ming military system, in which the army ceased to be virtually coterminous with the Ming regime and instead became one component of it, though still a very important one. Analytically this process had three salient aspects. At the level of the basic *wei-so* units, the army became increasingly self-sufficient due to the elaboration of the military farm system. At the level of provincial and local government, the period of military domination came to an end as the civil service grew. And at the highest level, the position of the military command elite was formalized by the creation of a hereditary nobility.

During the wars of the dynastic founding, the Ming armies had expanded by enrolling troops of defeated enemies. The 1364 reorganization that created the *wei-so* system arose from the need to establish regular procedures for processing the large numbers of troops gained this way. New units were created for garrison purposes as the Ming annexed more and more territory, so that the number of *wei-so* units reached a stated total of 326 guards and 65 independent battalions in the general enumeration of 1393. After 1368 the empire probably had more soldiers than it needed, but the demobilization of significant numbers of men whose original livelihood had been uprooted was not socially desirable. Throughout the critical phase of the civil war, Chu Yüan-chang had experimented with using military farms (*t'un-t'ien*) to supplement the provisioning of his troops. City garrison commands were able to use their soldiers to operate military farms on a part-time basis even while the war was on, and some units were able both to provide for their own needs and to produce a surplus.

After the reorganization of 1364, each new *wei-so* unit was assigned military farmlands at the time of its establishment. Under normal circumstances, about 70 percent of the troops in each unit were expected to be farming while the remaining 30 percent performed duties of a military nature. Under the Han and the T'ang, military colonies farmed by soldiers had been an important element in frontier defense, while under the Liao, Chin, and Yüan, state farms operated by civilian peasants had provided for the upkeep of military units whose personnel were usually non-Chinese. The Ming military system borrowed from both traditions but was a radical departure from either. Armies in the 1370s and afterward were formed from detachments from the active-duty components of many different *wei-so* units, leaving the rest of the troops free to farm. Soldiers were under a hereditary obligation to serve. They were placed on a separate service register for the military population (*chün-chi*), with each family having the

obligation to provide an able-bodied male for military service in each generation. The combination of hereditary officers, hereditary soldiers, and farmlands under the control of the military was unsuited to the nature of Chinese society and inefficient in military terms. In the end it destroyed the specifically military nature of the whole system, but it functioned with reasonable effectiveness until the 1430s.

The present-day provincial map of China proper preserves the pattern of the Ming founding of the 1360s. On the Yüan model, each major conquest was organized as a province (*hsing-sheng*) under the control of a high-ranking general. Theoretically, each province had a provincewide military command agency in its Branch Bureau of Military Affairs (*Hsing shu-mi yüan*), renamed Chief Guard (*Tu-wei*) in 1369. However, in practice military men held the highest, nominally civil, positions in the provincial governments throughout the period of the Ming founding. This situation changed during the 1370s, when it became the normal practice to promote ministers (*shang-shu*) of the six ministries in Nanking to leading posts in provincial governments. This left the commanders of the chief guards (*tu-wei chih-hui shih*) as the leading military authorities in each province, and their time came to be taken up more and more with administration of the *wei-so* system rather than with actual field command. The chief guards were redesignated Regional Military Commissions (*tu chih-hui shih ssu*) in 1380, with no change in function.

In 1370 the thirty-four principal generals of the regime were given hereditary noble titles as dukes or marquises, and these titles were placed above the regular nine-rank system, with the men holding them given the special function of commanding the armies in times of war. The men so honored had been the principal associates of Chu Yüan-chang in the civil war years. The six dukes and the fourteen marquises highest on the list were survivors of Chu's twenty-four original soldiers or had joined him very soon after this first group. The next five marquises were leaders of the Lake Ch'ao pirate group whose adherence in 1355 had made the Ming river crossing possible. The remaining nine marquises were former enemy generals who had surrendered at critical moments, thereby aiding the Ming cause. Before 1380 a total of fourteen more marquises had been created, all from the same origins. The dukes and marquises received lands (over which they exercised no control) and salaries appropriate to their rank, but no territorial fiefs as such, in contrast to the early Han. When an expedition was planned, one noble would be placed in overall command, with others assisting him and usually one more placed in charge of transporting supplies. Successful generals came to expect elevation to the nobility as a reward for military achievement.¹³

13 Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 76–87.

While not the most dramatic turning point in Ming history, 1372 nevertheless marks the end of the military phase of the dynastic founding in the strict sense. This was most evident on the northern frontier. There, prior to the 1372 defeats, Chu Yüan-chang seemed to be heading toward the conquest of the entire Yüan empire, including the steppe and desert territories north of the Great Wall. After 1372 the Ming defended an essentially static frontier in Inner Mongolia, backed up by a refurbished wall. Superior Chinese firearms technology gave the Ming a permanent edge, defensively at least, over Mongol armies still wedded to the cavalry tactics of the thirteenth century. To the north of the wall the border defense system was supplemented by external garrisons and diplomatic activity, both designed to inhibit the formation of hostile coalitions among the Mongols. The resumption of active campaigns against the Mongols in 1387 did not mean a revival of the goal of bringing Mongolia under Ming rule, and the withdrawal of the extramural commands early in the Yung-lo period resulted in a severe diminution of the Chinese presence there.

In southern and western China, the conquest of Szechwan was the last Ming territorial gain that could properly be construed as the recovery of a part of the Chinese cultural area. The conquest of Szechwan did not inaugurate an era of peace in the south and west; on the contrary, the Ming immediately commenced a series of pacification campaigns against the non-Chinese nationalities of the region. Yunnan, when it fell to the Ming in 1381–82, was essentially non-Chinese in population, and its extensive Chinese settlement under the Ming was a major factor in incorporating Yunnan permanently into China. In contrast, the Ming ultimately abandoned Vietnam in 1427 after conquering it in the Yung-lo period. Both episodes, along with the endemic small-scale warfare in the south and west, should be seen as part of the process of defining China's frontier vis-à-vis the non-Chinese nationalities of Southeast Asia, a long-term historical process analytically distinct from the Ming founding.

After 1372 military affairs ceased to be the primary concern of Chu Yüan-chang, and the recruitment and growth of the civil service created a new major institution for the generation of policy initiatives. The military leaders who had run the Ming regime during the founding phase were relegated to a diminished, if still important, role. Much later, the Ming would become one of the most civil-dominated regimes in Chinese history. This and other developments were made possible by the remarkable success of Chu Yüan-chang and his generals in conquering their rivals and establishing secure frontiers in the period from 1355 to 1372.

CHAPTER 3

THE HUNG-WU REIGN, 1368–1398

INTRODUCTION

When Chu Yüan-chang¹ proclaimed himself emperor of the Middle Kingdom in January 1368, his main advisers and supporters at court included three men whom he had named dukes during the previous year: the generals Hsü Ta and Ch'ang Yü-ch'un, and the civil official Li Shan-ch'ang.² Hsü, from Hao-chou, Anhwei, had joined Chu's military camp in 1353. Along with thousands of other displaced persons who faced famine and disease, he began to turn against the established authority of the Yüan regime. Ch'ang Yü-ch'un was another Hao-chou native who became a warrior, and he joined Chu's camp in 1355. Li Shan-ch'ang, a native of Ting-yüan, Anhwei, stemmed from landlord stock and joined Chu in 1354. These three men were Chu's most trusted assistants in the years immediately following the establishment of the new regime. They constituted the core of the Anhwei-based group that put together the new dynasty.

During the years following the formation of this group, Chu Yüan-chang drew under his wing many other individuals, including men of arms and of learning. Among the men of learning, none ever received the recognition, status, and emoluments that Chu accorded to his military men. Although he made an effort to establish a credible civil regime based on traditional rituals and the Mandate of Heaven, during these early years the military retained the greater importance. This came about because the dynasty was the product of military campaigns to drive out the Mongol rulers, to establish a new power structure within China proper, and to unify Han Chinese rule over vast territories inhabited by hostile non-Han peoples in the west, the southwest, and the south.

In 1368 China was disputed by a number of competing claimants to

1 For biographies of Chu Yüan-chang, see Wu Han, *Chu Yüan-chang chuan* (1949; rev. ed., 1965; rpt. Peking, 1979); L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming biography* (New York and London, 1976), pp. 381–92.

2 See their biographies in *DMB*, pp. 602–08; Chang T'ing-yü et al., eds., *Ming shih* (1736; rpt. Peking, 1974), 125, pp. 3723–32; *DMB*, pp. 115–20; *MS*, 125, pp. 3732–38; and *DMB*, pp. 850–54 and *MS*, 127, pp. 3769–73, respectively.

supreme authority. The Yüan emperor Toghön Temür still sat on the throne of the Son of Heaven as *khaghan* at Ta-tu (modern Peking). In Szechwan the Hsia dynasty, under the Manichean prince Ming Sheng, was still undefeated, while several lesser claimants to regional autonomy were ready to resist unification with armed force. Despite the continued existence of these rival regional powers, Chu Yüan-chang began to build the foundations of a universal empire during 1367, the First Year of Wu. This new reign year was clearly chosen to proclaim independence from his Red Turban rebel background and to serve as a preparatory stage for the establishment of universal sovereignty over the whole Middle Kingdom. During 1367 the regulations that were to govern the ceremonial activities of the court were carefully drawn up by leading scholars. Palace buildings were planned, and some were constructed; statutes and ordinances were written down and printed; a system for recruitment by examination was instituted; and a Hanlin Academy and a National University were established. Altars to Heaven and Earth, the main religious centers associated with the dynastic destiny, were constructed outside the city; a shrine for the emperor's ancestors of the four previous generations was built, while military campaigns were launched into the North China plain, Shantung, and Hu-kuang. A calendar, called the Calendar of the Great Unification (*Ta t'ung li*), was prepared, and a vernacular explanation of the law code was promulgated.

Chu Yüan-chang, who had taken the title Prince of Wu, offered sacrifices to the spirits of rivers and streams on one occasion and on another to Shang-ti, the Lord-on-high. In the sacrifice to Shang-ti, which was offered in the last lunar month of the First Year of Wu (1367), Chu beseeched the deity to make known whether he, Chu, could serve as the ruler of the empire by making the weather clear or stormy on the day of the offering. He stated that his ministers had pressed him to ascend the throne of the Son of Heaven and that he had reluctantly agreed to do so. The date for this occasion was set for the fourth day of the new year.

The enthronement of Chu Yüan-chang, who would now become the Hung-wu emperor, involved ceremonies that were detailed in advance and recorded in the veritable record of the reign. They included several stages of activities and were designed to establish a level of awe and majesty appropriate for the ruler. The emperor allegedly took the position that the scholars should not cling rigidly to ancient models, but adopt only measures suited to the times. The scholars who planned the accession ceremonies, however, desired elaborate and complex rites.

The accession took place on 23 January 1368.³ It commenced with the

3 For the details of the accession ceremonies, see *Ming shih lu*, *T'ai-tsu shih lu* (1418; rpt. Taipei, 1961), 28A, pp. 433–38; 29, pp. 477–82.

emperor's offering of sacrifices to Heaven and Earth at the separate suburban altars. The proclamation of the accession was then delivered to the spirits, and an announcement of the dynastic title Ming (Bright) was made. The emperor then ascended the throne. Li Shan-ch'ang led the officials and state guests in offering formal congratulations, following which the emperor proceeded at the head of his entourage to the ancestral shrine, where he proffered the patents and seals conferring posthumous temple names on four generations of his ancestors.⁴

Donning the imperial robe and cap, the emperor now went to the Feng-t'ien Hall in his new palace city, where he received a congratulatory memorial from the civil and military officials in an elaborately orchestrated ceremony.

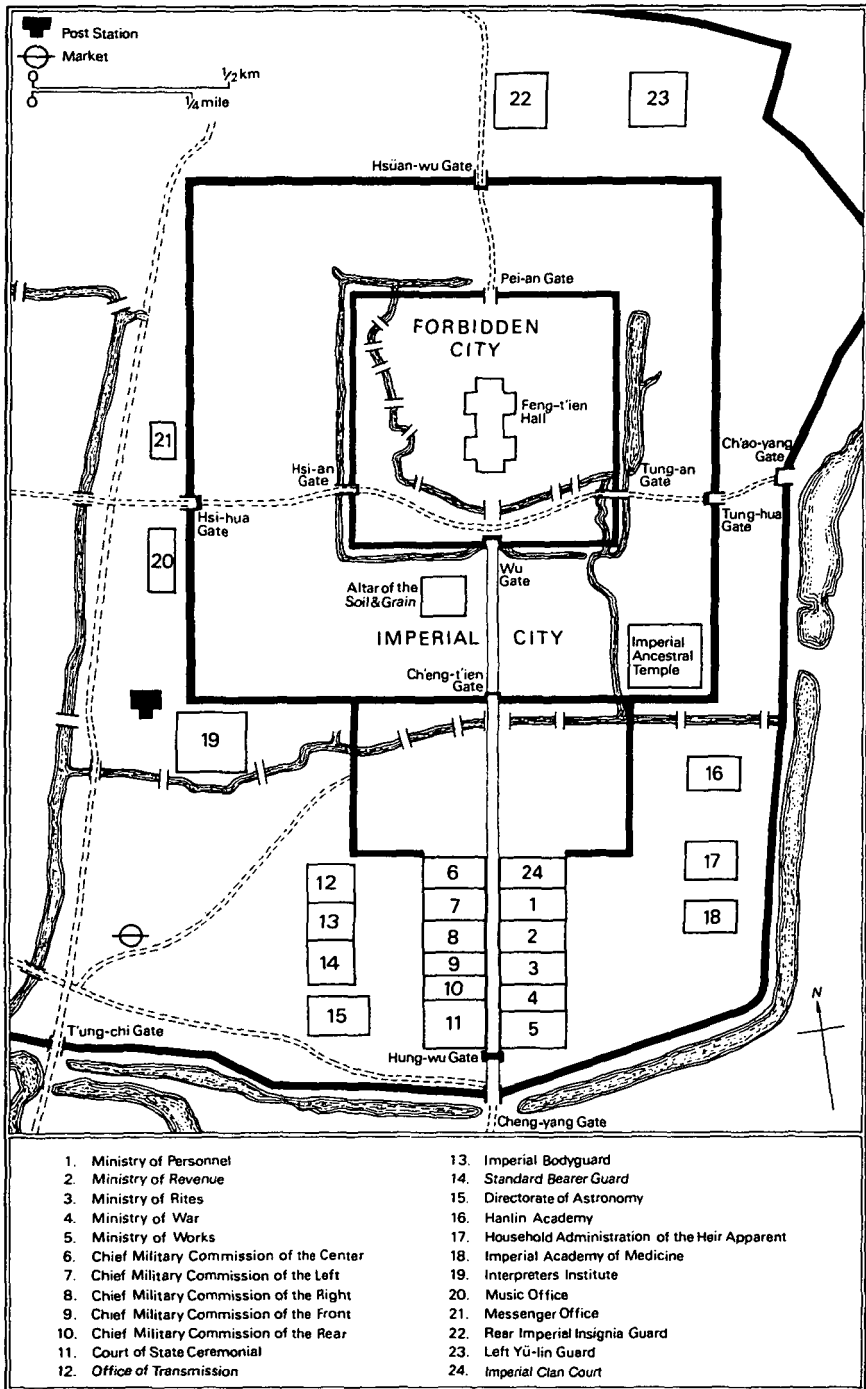
The accession ceremony blended the emperor's two roles in a formal ritual. The emperor was head of the imperial lineage, which he ruled by birthright in perpetuity. He thus performed sacrifices and acts of filial submission to his ancestors in a shrine constructed expressly for this purpose. He was also head of the bureaucracy and the representative of all the empire vis-à-vis the powers of Heaven and Earth. The ceremonies allowed the officials and the emperor to act out symbolically their respective relationships. These dimensions of imperial legitimacy were carefully recorded for all time in the Proclamation of the Accession, an edict that was dispatched to the neighboring East Asian states soon after the enthronement:

We are the ruler of the Middle Kingdom. When the dynastic fortune of the Sung had reached an end, Heaven commanded the immortal [*chen-jen*, referring to Khubilai Khaghan] in the desert to enter the Middle Kingdom and become the lord of the empire. [The throne] was passed from son to grandson for more than a hundred years; but now their dynastic fortune also has ended. Local strongmen in the land vied with local magnates. We stem from common stock of Huai-yu [i.e., Anhwei]. Bearing the favor of Heaven above and the spirits of the ancestors, [we] availed ourselves of "the autumn of chasing the deer" [i.e., a time when there were many contenders for power] to obtain valorous worthies on either side [as helpers in our task]. As for the bandits and raiders in Liang-Huai, Liang-Che, Chiang-tung, Chiang-hsi, Hu, Hsiang, Han, Mien, Min, Kuang, Shan-tung, and the southwestern commanderies of the Man barbarians, [we] repeatedly commanded our military officers to make a rigorous show of our military might. The four quarters were suppressed and settled, and the people have come to rest secure in their fields and villages.

Today the great civil and military officers, the numerous officials, and the masses join in urging us to ascend [the throne], revering us as August Ruler (Huang-ti), thereby making us the lord of the black-haired people.

Reluctantly acceding to the requests of the multitude, on the fourth day of the

⁴ Their actual names were not known to him, since he came from a family of poor illiterate farmers. He went next to the altars of soil and grain and offered sacrifices there.



Map 4. City plan of Nanking

first moon of the second year of Wu [23 January 1368] we offered sacrifices to Heaven and Earth on the south side of Chung Mountain and ascended the throne of the emperor at the southern suburban altar (*nan-chiao*). The title of the empire has been set as Great Ming. The present year has been made the first year of Hung-wu (Great martial power). Respectfully entering the Ancestral Temple (*T'ai-miao*), we have conferred posthumous titles of emperor and empress upon four generations of our ancestors. [We] have erected in the capital a great altar to the spirit of the soil and a great altar to the spirit of the grain. The consort, née Ma, has been made empress, and the eldest son has been made heir apparent.

This shall be promulgated throughout the empire, and all shall be made to know of it.⁵

In this document the emperor is portrayed first as the high priest of all humanity who performs sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, the creative forces of all life. Second, he is crowned the secular king of the earth. Third, he is the filial son who honors his ancestors in the manner befitting only the noblest man of all. And fourth, he is protector of the sources of human sustenance as he offers sacrifices to the spirits of agriculture.

In this document and its accompanying ceremonies we see evidence of the self-conscious manipulation of legitimizing symbols to enhance the new ruler's position. The grandeur of the events was in part an effort to counter the doubts of those whose loyalties were still tied to the Yüan Mongol regime in Ta-tu. Their effect was far from immediate. The Koreans, for example, continued to view the Yüan as the legitimate rulers of the Middle Kingdom for more than a decade.

When the emperor ascended the throne, he proclaimed his wife the empress and his eldest son, Chu Piao (1355–92), the heir apparent.⁶ As a young boy, Chu Piao had been assigned some of the best Confucian scholars as his teachers and advisors. The most prominent of these was Sung Lien (1310–81), a learned Confucian scholar from Chin-hua, Chekiang, who had joined Chu Yüan-chang in 1360.⁷ The emperor placed a high premium on the education and preparation of the heir apparent for his role as sovereign, and thus shortly after the accession he assigned his most important associates to the supervision of the heir apparent's household, known as the Eastern Palace (*Tung-kung*). Hsü Ta, Li Shan-ch'ang, and Ch'ang Yü-ch'un were appointed as his teachers. These were nominal appointments in that Hsü and Ch'ang were then engaged in military actions in the north,

5 Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming pen chi chiao chu* (Shanghai, 1948; facsimile rpt. Hong Kong, 1967), pp. 107–08. This earlier text should be compared with the text in *MSL, T'ai-tsu shih lu*, 29, pp. 482–83.

6 For biographies, see *DMB*, pp. 1023–26, and *MS*, 113, pp. 3505–08; and *DMB*, pp. 346–48, respectively.

7 Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 1225–31; *MS*, 128, pp. 3784–88.

preparatory to the attack on the Mongol capital at Ta-tu. But they signified the importance the emperor placed on the guidance available to the heir apparent, at least symbolically.

Early in the spring of 1368, Ch'ang Yü-ch'un and Hsü Ta led military forces into Shantung to consolidate the territory in the north. The emperor's boyhood friend T'ang Ho (1326–95),⁸ who with Liao Yung-chung (1323–75),⁹ also an Anhwei native, had led a fleet from Ning-po to Fukien earlier in the year, was ordered back to Ning-po to oversee naval supply lines for this northern expedition. On 1 March 1368, Ch'ang Yü-ch'un took Tung-ch'ang (modern Liao-ch'eng) in northwest Shantung on the Grand Canal, and Hsü took Lo-an (modern Kuang-jao) in central Shantung two weeks later. All of Shantung came under Ming control during the next two months, and a branch secretariat (*hsing chung-shu sheng*) was established for Shantung on 10 May. Wang Kuang-yang (d. 1380), a northern Kiangsu scholar who had passed the Yüan civil service examination but had joined Chu Yüan-chang in 1355, was brought in from Kiangsi to serve briefly as Shantung's civil governor.¹⁰ Meanwhile Ch'ang and Hsü moved their forces into Honan and took Pien-liang (modern K'ai-feng) on 16 April. By 8 May Honan was declared pacified, and the emperor prepared to travel to K'ai-feng to make final plans for the subjugation of the north.

The emperor set forth from Ying-t'ien (Nanking) on 11 April, leaving Li Shan-ch'ang and the scholar Liu Chi (1311–75) in charge of the capital. Liu Chi was one of the emperor's first scholar-advisors, having joined his camp in 1360 with Sung Lien and other important literati.¹¹ At this time he held the post of vice-censor-in-chief and served concurrently as counselor to the heir apparent. A Chekiang native, Liu had held office under the Mongols until he recognized that Mongol rule in China was doomed. From the time of his entrance into Chu Yüan-chang's camp in 1360, he had served with great distinction as scholar-advisor, diviner, and tactician. His career has been extravagantly mythologized in popular writings from that time into the present century.

The emperor reached Pien-liang on 6 June after a journey of twenty-six days. Changing the name of the city to K'ai-feng, he summoned his generals Hsü Ta, Ch'ang Yü-ch'un, and Feng Tsung-i (ca. 1300–95) for conferences on strategy. Feng, who is usually referred to by his later name

⁸ Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 1248–51; *MS*, 126, pp. 3751–56.

⁹ Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 909–10; *MS*, 129, pp. 3804–08.

¹⁰ Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 1389–92; *MS*, 127, pp. 3773–74.

¹¹ Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 932–38; *MS*, 128, pp. 3777–83.

Feng Sheng, was a native of Ting-yüan, Anhwei, who had joined Chu Yüan-chang in 1355.¹² He served as assistant to Hsü Ta and Ch'ang Yü-ch'un in the battles leading to the pacification of Honan and the capture of T'ung Pass on 13 May. On 9 June the emperor established a branch of the Secretariat at K'ai-feng and placed Yang Hsien, a native of T'ai-yüan, Shansi, who was executed in 1370, in charge. Hsü Ta spent three days with the emperor going over the plans for the expedition. The design of the expedition was formulated entirely by the emperor, who remained in K'ai-feng until 11 August. Meanwhile he ordered cities in Chekiang, Kiangsi, and Kiangnan to prepare 3 million piculs of grain for shipment north to finance this expedition against the Mongols. On 6 August, when the emperor was preparing to return south to Nanking, Hsü Ta paid him a final visit in K'ai-feng. The emperor instructed him on how to deal with the people of Ta-tu after the city fell. Hsü himself left K'ai-feng on 15 August and led his army north.

The city of Chang-te (modern An-yang, in northern Honan) surrendered to Hsü's forces on 18 August; this was the first major victory on the march north to Ta-tu. Hsü made steady progress along this route: he took Hantan in southern Hopei on 21 August and joined with other forces three days later in Lin-ch'ing on the Grand Canal in northwest Shantung. Ch'ang Yü-ch'un had gone ahead to Te-chou, farther north on the Grand Canal, and took it on 27 August. Hsü Ta had begun to move supplies and men along the canal route, and he reached Te-chou the next day. The major intermediate goal before Ta-tu was the city of T'ung-chou, due east of Ta-tu on the canal approach to the Yüan capital. With hundreds of vessels bearing supplies, Hsü Ta approached the city on 7 September, provoking the Yüan commander of Ta-tu to come forth to defend the city. The defending army was defeated, and the Yüan ruler Toghön Temür fled Ta-tu on the same day, hoping to find refuge in his summer capital at Shang-tu (K'ai-p'ing, or Dolon, in the Mongolian Autonomous Region). T'ung-chou fell on 10 September, and Hsü Ta's forces moved to attack the Mongol capital. They reached Ta-tu on 14 September, whereupon they proceeded to fill in the moat outside the Ch'i-hua Gate and to scale the wall. The city fell quickly and was renamed Pei-p'ing or The North is Pacified, the name it retained until the Yung-lo emperor made it the official capital of the empire five decades later.

As the northern expedition was under way, military activities conducted in the south extended Ming power into Kwangsi. Fukien was pacified at

¹² Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 453-55; *MS*, 129, pp. 3795-99.

this time by Li Wen-chung (1339–84), Chu Yüan-chang's nephew and adopted son,¹³ the groundwork having been laid by T'ang Ho in earlier engagements.

In Ying-t'ien, which the emperor renamed Nan-ching (Nanking, or the Southern Capital), and K'ai-feng (now known also as Pei-ching, or the Northern Capital), the emperor took steps to regularize Taoist and Buddhist religious establishments. During his first month on the throne, he had created two agencies to control the religious orders. These were known as the Buddhist Affairs Academy (*Shan-shih yüan*) and the Taoist Affairs Academy (*Hsüan-chiao yüan*), each headed by a learned cleric. On 18 September he invested the Taoist adept Chang Cheng-ch'ang (1335–78), the reigning celestial master (*t'ien-shih*), with a new title: Great perfected one (*ta chen-jen*).¹⁴ The emperor evidently disliked the notion that a religious leader might enjoy a status superior to that of the Son of Heaven, and this was in effect a demotion. He insisted that the name *t'ien-shih* meant "Heaven's teacher" and that such a title was presumptuous.

It was actually thought for a time that K'ai-feng might serve as the northern capital, and the issue of where the Ming capital should be located remained a matter of debate for two decades.¹⁵ On his second journey there in 1368, the emperor set forth from Nanking on 26 September and reached K'ai-feng on 7 October. He remained there until 11 November, when he returned south. He never again traveled as far north as K'ai-feng, and never in his life did he set foot in North China. This trip to K'ai-feng was undertaken to coordinate the military expeditions of his chief generals into Shansi, Shensi, and Mongolia. The immediate military goals were T'ai-yüan and Ta-t'ung in Shansi, a region largely dominated by the Yüan loyalist Kökö Temür.¹⁶ Kökö Temür, actually a Han Chinese named Wang Pao-pao (d. 1375) who had been reared as a Mongol in the household of an eminent Naiman family, ruled over a large military force that could easily threaten the security of Peking.¹⁷ As the most able military figure among the Yüan loyalists, he had to be eliminated by the Ming at the earliest possible moment. This was the principal objective of the emperor's trip to K'ai-feng in 1368.

During the emperor's absence from Nanking, Buddhist rites were held at the great Ch'an Buddhist monastery on Chung Mountain outside the city. The learned monk Fan-ch'i (1296–1370) participated in the ceremo-

13 Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 881–87; *MS*, 126, pp. 3741–46.

14 Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 44–45; *MS*, 299, pp. 7654–56.

15 See Edward L. Farmer, *Early Ming government: The evolution of dual capitals* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), pp. 40–42 ff.

16 Biography in *DMB*, pp. 724–28.

17 See also Chapter 1, pp. 19–23.

nies, which were held principally in memory of the spirits of people who had died in the wars of conquest. Monetary indemnities to survivors were also distributed at this time. The emperor was sensitive to the impact the strains of war had placed on the loyalty of military men and the general population. This was the first of several large-scale Buddhist ceremonies conducted under the sponsorship of the Hung-wu emperor, who was himself a former Buddhist novice.¹⁸

Hsü Ta and Ch'ang Yü-ch'un took to the field aggressively late in 1368. In November Ch'ang took Pao-ting (modern Hsin-chen in central Hopei) and Chen-ting (modern Cheng-ting in western Hopei), while in December general Fu Yu-te (d. 1394), another of the formidable Anhwei leaders, acting under the command of Hsü and Ch'ang, led a force to take P'ing-ting, which lay just inside the Shansi border on the main route to T'ai-yüan. Although a native of Anhwei, Fu Yu-te was never a real insider, because he had previously served under Chu Yüan-chang's rivals, Ming Yü-chen and Ch'en Yu-liang.¹⁹ But he did perform valuable military services on the emperor's behalf. This maneuver set the stage for the conquest of T'ai-yüan, where Kōkō Temür's forces were then based. Hsü Ta himself left Peiping on 13 December and moved to Pao-ting to supervise the invasion of Shansi. By 26 December he had passed through Chen-ting and taken Chao-chou (modern Chao-hsien, southeast of Shih-chia chuang). Two days later he sent Fu Yu-te with his army to P'ing-ting. T'ai-yüan fell on 9 January 1369, and Kōkō Temür fled to Kansu. Shansi was considered pacified soon thereafter, for Fu Yu-te had moved a force into Shih-chou (modern Li-shih in western Shansi), while Feng Sheng moved south into P'ing-yang. However, Ta-t'ung, the major city in northern Shansi, was not taken by Ch'ang Yü-ch'un until 3 March 1369.

Early in 1369 the emperor took steps to extend imperial power into the supernatural realm. On 7 February he invested all the spirits of walls and moats in the entire empire.²⁰ These spirits, commonly known as the "city gods," were granted titles by the throne, along with formal court ranks. Magistrates everywhere were expected to offer regular sacrifices to these spirits in an effort to obtain the spirits' help in achieving prosperity.

The emperor personally received former Yüan officials who, having been captured by the Ming forces when the Mongol capital Ta-tu fell, were brought to Nanking for an audience with their new master. Among these officials were the scholars Wei Su (1303–72), a native of Kiangsi who had

¹⁸ Biography in *DMB*, pp. 423–25.

¹⁹ Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 466–71; *MS*, 129, pp. 3799–803.

²⁰ Romeyn Taylor, "Ming T'ai-tsu and the gods of the walls and moats," *Ming Studies*, 4 (1977), pp. 31–49.

become a Hanlin Academy bachelor in 1364,²¹ and Chang I-ning (1301–70), also a Hanlin bachelor and a native of Fukien.²² Both men were installed in the Ming Hanlin Academy in Nanking. Wei Su was influential in rescuing from oblivion such important Yüan historical documents as the official records of the court (*shih-lu*) and in preserving them for use by the compilers of the *Yüan shih* (Official history of the Yüan). He was highly regarded as a literary figure by the Hung-wu emperor, who invited him to compose the formal tomb stele inscription for the imperial mausoleum at Feng-yang.²³ At the same time he was scorned as a Yüan turncoat, and in 1370 he was dismissed under humiliating circumstances. His case illustrates the Ming founder's sometimes difficult relations with men of learning.

Late in 1368 the emperor ordered officials under Sung Lien and Wang Wei (1323–74), another literatus from Chin-hua, Chekiang, to compile the official history of the Yüan; they began the project in March 1369.²⁴ Wei Su also joined the staff. The work was hastily completed in 1370 after a brief interruption while the compilers waited for the arrival of complete records for the reign of the last Mongol ruler, Toghön Temür.

As a demonstration of his sincerity, on 25 March 1369 the emperor personally performed the sacred rite of plowing a furrow of soil at the altar to Hsien Nung, a legendary emperor of antiquity who was regarded as the spirit of agriculture. The procedures and rationale for this ceremony had been formulated by officials after a detailed debate. The plowing was performed with two plows covered in azure raw silk fabric and four oxen draped in azure cloth. Not until his twentieth year on the throne did the emperor again perform this rite. The ceremony was carried out with such attention to detail in 1369 partly because the rite had been abandoned during the period of Mongol rule.²⁵

In the spring of 1369, Hsü Ta remained in the north in command of the forces poised to march into Shensi, a province which in Ming times included modern Kansu. The area around P'ing-liang, Ch'ing-yang, and Ning-chou in what is now eastern Kansu, and the area of Shensi north of modern Sian were hotly contested during the Hung-wu period and never completely pacified. To get there, Hsü Ta took his army across the Yellow River into Shensi at P'u-chou (near modern Yung-chi) early in April. He sent Ch'ang Yü-ch'un and Feng Sheng ahead into Sian, arriving there

21 Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 1464–67; *MS*, 285, pp. 7314–15.

22 Biography in *MS*, 285, pp. 7315–16.

23 The text of Wei Su's "Huang ling pei" appears in Lang Ying (b. 1487), *Cb'i hsiu lei kao* (after 1566; rpt. Peking, 1961), pp. 114–16. The text was later disliked by the emperor, who had it rewritten.

The later version appears in *Cb'i hsiu lei kao*, pp. 117–19.

24 For biographies of Wang Wei, see *DMB*, pp. 1444–47; *MS*, 129, pp. 7414–15.

25 Lung Wen-pin, *Ming hui yao* (1887; rpt. Peking, 1956), I, pp. 122–23.

himself on 12 April. Despite the stout resistance of Yüan loyalists when that city fell, Shensi was considered pacified in a technical sense. The chief Yüan military leader in Shensi was Li Ssu-ch'i (1323–74), a native of Honan who ultimately surrendered to the Ming cause. The emperor wrote Li a letter in which he urged him not to defend the alien Mongols; but at first Li chose to ignore it and remained loyal to the Yüan. He fled from Sian to Feng-hsiang, due west of the Shensi capital, where he was pursued by Ch'ang Yü-ch'un and Feng Sheng. On 18 April he was driven from Feng-hsiang and withdrew his forces to Lin-t'ao (modern Kansu, south of Kan-chou).

Hsü Ta at this point left Sian for Feng-hsiang, putting in command Keng Ping-wen (ca. 1335–1404), a Hao-chou native who had long been a member of Chu Yüan-chang's Anhwei group.²⁶ Keng remained the military governor of Shensi until 1390. Hsü Ta moved his forces along the Wei River to Kung-ch'ang (modern Lung-hsi), depending on provisions sent out from Sian by Keng Ping-wen. Kung-ch'ang was just southeast of Lin-t'ao, where Li Ssu-ch'i had concentrated his forces. Meanwhile Feng Sheng laid siege to Lin-t'ao, obtaining the surrender of Li Ssu-ch'i on 21 May. Lan-chou fell to one of Hsü Ta's subordinate generals on 23 May, leaving the way free for Hsü Ta to change his course for Ching-ning chou (modern P'ing-liang). Ching-ning fell to Hsü on 8 June. Over the next three months Hsü Ta fought battles in key cities in the vicinity of modern P'ing-liang, including Ch'ing-yang on the Huan River in the north. Several cities were taken, only later to become the sites of revolts by the former Yüan authorities who had "surrendered" to the Ming. Thus they had to be retaken. But by 22 September, when Hsü Ta subdued Ch'ing-yang, most of Shensi (including modern Kansu) had come under some form of Ming rule.

Prior to Hsü Ta's victories in Shensi, general Ch'ang Yü-ch'un had been ordered by the emperor to march north to participate in the military expedition against K'ai-p'ing, the site of the Yüan summer capital Shang-tu, in Mongolia. Shang-tu was taken by Ch'ang on 20 July 1369, but he died soon thereafter on 9 August, to the great sorrow of the emperor. Ch'ang had not captured the Yüan ruler, who fled farther north toward the old Mongol capital at Khara Khorum. But Ch'ang had pushed deep into Mongolia and subsequently led forces eastward into what became known in later times as Manchuria. His death was mourned by the emperor, who went into seclusion upon hearing about it on 25 August. When Ch'ang's re-

²⁶ Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 713–18; *MS*, 130, pp. 3818–20.

mains were brought to Nanking for a state funeral, the emperor came out of the city to Lung-chiang, the Yangtze River shipyards and military port of the capital, to meet the cortege. On 10 October, the emperor summoned generals Hsü Ta and T'ang Ho to Nanking to attend the funeral rites for Ch'ang, who was buried with great honors.

Kökö Temür remained a cause of grave concern in Shensi and Shansi, and when Hsü Ta and other chief generals were summoned to Nanking for Ch'ang's funeral, Kökö Temür took advantage of the opportunity to harass P'ing-liang and Lan-chou. Lan-chou held out against a siege laid late in January 1370, and thus Kökö Temür was never able to regain any territory. But the area remained extremely unstable. The emperor consequently devoted considerable resources to the destruction of Kökö Temür and other partisans of the Yüan in the northwest during 1370.

In the emperor's vision of imperial power, the princes of the blood were to play key roles. As early as 1369 he had ordered the compilation of a set of rules governing the powers of the princes and assigning to them key military positions on the perimeters of the empire. These rules, known as the *Tsu hsün lu* (Ancestral injunctions),²⁷ were compiled at the emperor's behest in May 1369. This was done in preparation for the investiture of the princes in 1370, although the text of the *Ancestral injunctions* was not ready for promulgation until 1373.

In 1369 there was considerable debate about the location of the Ming capitals. In mid-October it was decided that Lin-hao (modern Feng-yang in northern Anhwei), the emperor's native district, should become the empire's central capital. Located on the southern side of the Huai River, it was believed that it would be an important bastion of the Ming empire, which drew its fiscal resources primarily from the lower Yangtze region. Nanking lay approximately 100 miles to the south. Large-scale construction projects were undertaken at Lin-hao to make the city into a fitting capital, but in 1375 it was abandoned as a capital and the construction projects were halted. From then until the Yung-lo emperor moved the capital north, Nanking remained the only real capital city of Ming China.

In the fall of 1369 the emperor attempted to persuade the Yüan ruler of Yunnan and the ruler of the Hsia state in Szechwan to surrender to him. He did this by means of missives which he dispatched to the respective leaders by envoys specially chosen for the task.²⁸ These efforts proved unsuccessful, and military operations against both powers became necessary.

The emperor revealed his innovative and flexible approach to imperial

27 Literally, The record of the founder's instructions.

28 T'an Ch'ien, comp., *Kuo ch'üeh* (about 1653; rpt. Peking, 1958), I, 3, pp. 399–40, 401.

sacrifices in December of 1369 when he urged his scholar experts to revise the rites for imperial sacrifices to Heaven and Earth. He performed rites to Heaven on the fourteenth day of the eleventh lunar month of that year, the eve of the full moon, a day corresponding to 13 December. At this ceremony the emperor's father, whose posthumous title was Jen-tsu (benevolent ancestor), was honored as the co-recipient of the sacrificial offerings. This was the first time an imperial father was so honored, and this rite in effect elevated the status of the emperor's lineage to an unprecedented degree. A further addition to these traditionally important rites was the construction of a special hall just south of the altar to provide shelter for the emperor in the event of inclement weather. Precedents from Sung and Yüan times were duly if unconvincingly cited by the minister of rites Ts'ui Liang, a native of central Hopei and a former Yüan official who had surrendered to the Ming in about 1360.²⁹

Early in 1370 the emperor drew up plans for the final northern expedition designed to liquidate Mongol power. On 30 January 1370 he appointed Hsü Ta barbarian-quelling generalissimo (*cheng-lu ta Chiang-chün*), a title that made him the supreme commander of the expeditionary forces. Generals T'ang Ho, Li Wen-chung, Feng Sheng, and Teng Yü (1337–77), the last another of the Anhwei group of military leaders,³⁰ were assigned as Hsü Ta's subordinates. The principal objectives of the expedition were to eliminate Kökö Temür as a military threat in Shensi and to destroy the Yüan emperor in the steppe.

The emperor's strategy was to divide his force into two major armies. One, led by Hsü Ta and Teng Yü, was to march directly toward Kökö Temür's force in Shensi by starting out from Sian and passing through Ting-hsi, north of Kung-ch'ang in modern Kansu. The other army, led by Li Wen-chung, was to go north through the Great Wall at Chü-yung Pass near Peking and to pursue the Yüan ruler across the Gobi Desert. In this way the Yüan ruler and Kökö Temür would be unable to assist one another. Teng Yü accordingly drove directly toward Kökö Temür's forces, which were camped near Kung-ch'ang, and routed them. Kökö Temür was not captured—he fled across the desert—but some 84,000 prisoners were reportedly taken by Teng's troops; this victory greatly reduced the potential threat posed by the pro-Yüan forces in the northwest. Teng Yü then pushed farther west to display Ming military might along the upper reaches of the Yellow River.

Meanwhile, Li Wen-chung went north toward Hsing-ho in Mongolia,

29 Lung Wen-pin, *Ming hui yao*, I, pp. 90–91.

30 For biographies of Teng Yü, see *DMB*, pp. 1277–80; *MS*, 126, pp. 3748–51.

north of Shansi. He then marched as far north as K'ai-p'ing, the site of the former Yüan northern capital, Shang-tu; but the Yüan ruler had gone farther north to Ying-ch'ang. He died there on 23 May 1370 and was immediately succeeded by his thirty-two-year-old son, Ayushiridara.³¹ Li Wen-chung eventually caught up with the Yüan court and took the city of Ying-ch'ang on 10 June. Ayushiridara managed to escape, but Li captured his empress, his son Maidiribala, many members of the Mongol nobility, and the Yüan imperial seals. Ayushiridara fled across the desert, pursued by Li's forces. He managed to elude his pursuers and to reach comparative safety at Khara Khorum, where he was joined by the remnant of Kökö Temür's forces.

The emperor's Taoist beliefs were very strong. In 1370 he summoned the Taoist patriarch Chang Cheng-ch'ang from Lung-hu Mountain in Kiangsi and the Taoist sorcerer Chou Yüan-chen to his capital at Nanking to inquire about the nature of the spirits and ghosts. Chang and Chou were entertained at a banquet in the Court of Imperial Entertainments. Another Taoist of importance to the emperor was Chang Chung, a sorcerer and seer who had helped Chu Yüan-chang in the crucial battle against Ch'en Yu-liang on Lake P'o-yang in 1363. The emperor's scholar-advisor, Sung Lien, then serving in the Hanlin Academy, wrote a biography of Chang Chung in 1370 at the emperor's request, using notes that the emperor had kept since 1364.³² Our knowledge of the emperor's high regard for Chou Yüan-chen also stems from a biography of this Taoist written by Sung Lien.³³

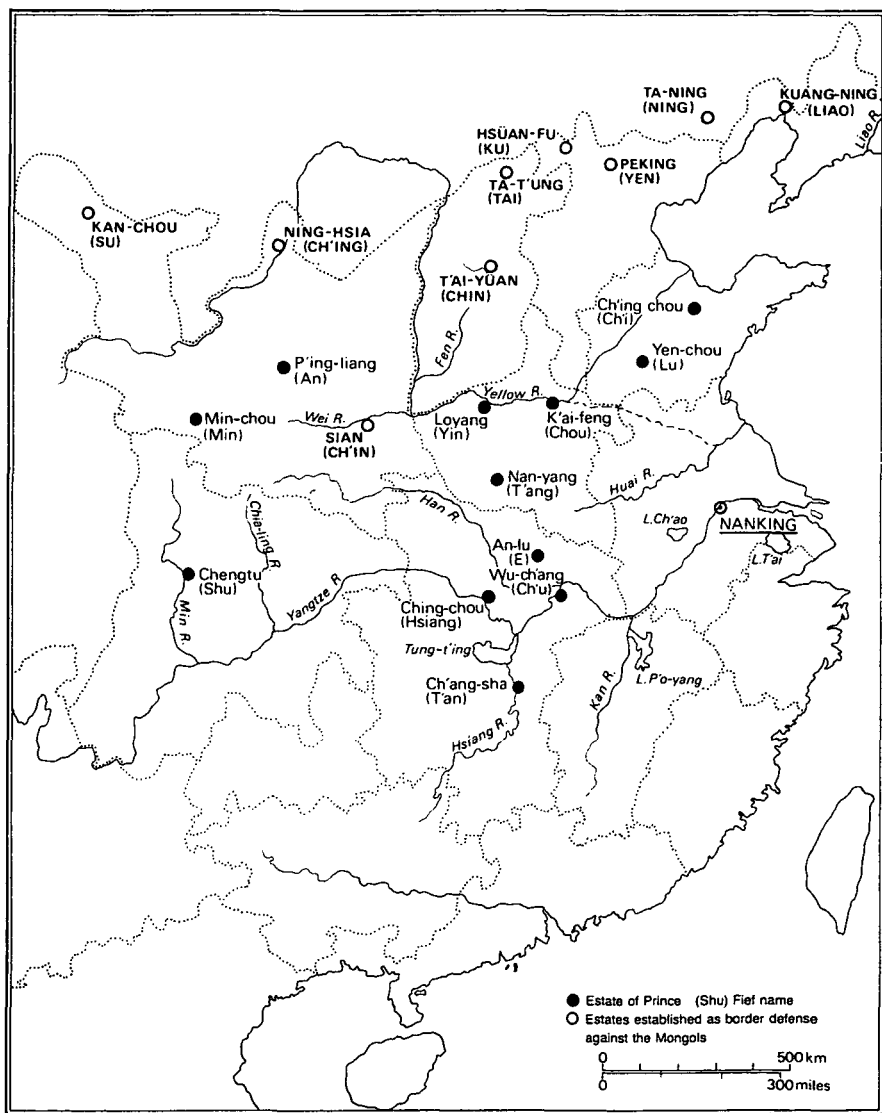
In May 1370 the emperor invested nine of his ten sons—the heir apparent excepted—with princely titles and estates. Although the princes were not to take up residence on their estates for several years, the emperor's plan to assign them major defense responsibilities was becoming clear. The principal sons were the second, third, and fourth: Chu Shuang (Prince of Ch'in, 1356–95), Chu Kang (Prince of Chin, 1358–98), and Chu Ti (Prince of Yen, 1360–1424), who were invested at Sian, T'ai-yüan, and Peking, respectively.³⁴ When these princes reached their maturity a decade later, they were ordered by their father to engage in military confrontations with the Mongols on the frontier. They were all men of great ability.

31 For biographies of Toghön Temür and Ayushiridara, see *DMB*, pp. 1290–93, and *DMB*, pp. 15–17, respectively.

32 Sung Lien, *Sung Wen-hsien kung ch'üan chi* (early Ming; rpt. in *Ssu pu pei yao*, Taipei, 1970) 3, pp. 16b–17b. See Hok-lam Chan, "Chang Chung and his prophecy: The transmission of the legend of an early Ming Taoist," *Oriens Extremus*, 20, No. 1 (July 1973), pp. 65–102.

33 Sung Lien, *Sung Wen-hsien kung ch'üan chi*, 9, pp. 14b–15b.

34 *MS*, 116, pp. 3560–65, on Chu Shuang and Chu Kang. On Chu Ti, see *DMB*, pp. 355–65. For the princes invested during the Hung-wu period, see Table 1 below, p. 171.



Map 5. Estates of the Ming princes

The emperor ordered the reinstatement of the civil service recruitment examinations in June 1370. Until this year, the primary avenue of recruitment had been recommendation by individuals already in government. But this system apparently produced too few qualified individuals for government service, and the emperor therefore reinstated the traditional examina-

tion system to supply talented men for office. An edict issued on 5 June 1370 declared that examinations would be held in the eighth lunar month of that year.³⁵ The emperor directed that the examinations should consist of an initial three parts: (1) the meaning of the classics (*ching-i*) and the Four Books (the *Analects* of Confucius, the *Mencius*, the *Doctrine of the mean*, and the *Great learning*); (2) discourses (*lun*); and (3) political analysis (*ts'ê*). On the fifth day after these examinations, successful candidates were to undergo tests of their skill in archery, horsemanship, calligraphy, and arithmetic, and of their knowledge of the law code (*lü*). The emperor was evidently quite adamant about the importance of archery, for a few days after the issuance of this edict he commanded the students at the National University and local county-level schools to practice it diligently.³⁶

The emperor took the spiritual obligations of his role as Son of Heaven very seriously. A severe drought during the summer of 1370 provoked him to take the extraordinary step of fasting and exposing himself to the elements for three days in the hope of inducing the spirits to bring rain. On 24 June 1370 he ordered the heir apparent Chu Piao and the princes of the blood to fast. At the fourth watch, well before dawn, the emperor donned a plain gown and straw sandals and went on foot to the Altar to Mountains and Rivers outside the palace. There he spread a mat and sat down, exposing himself to the heat of the sun for a full day. Crude farmers' food was prepared for the occasion by the empress and consorts, who personally entered the kitchens for this purpose. The emperor devoted three days to this exposure ritual, after which he returned to the palace to continue his fast. The records say that clouds began to gather five days later on 29 June and that rain fell in torrents on the following day.³⁷

While the emperor played the role of rainmaker, he also took steps to restrict popular religious practices. Late in June 1370 he banned all unorthodox religious sects, particularly the White Lotus and Ming-chiao (Manichean) sects. He even forbade all people in the empire from offering sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, declaring such actions by the people "illicit sacrifices"; he said that only the Son of Heaven himself could perform such rites. The common people were permitted to sacrifice only to their ancestors and to the spirits of the stove at year's end; and in the villages farmers were permitted to offer sacrifices only to the spirit of the soil in the spring and autumn.³⁸

35 *KC*, 4, pp. 415–16

36 Hsia Hsieh, comp., *Ming t'ung chien* (ca. 1870; rpt. Peking, 1959), I, p. 247.

37 *MSL*, *T'ai-tsu shih lu*, 53, p. 1033.

38 *MSL*, *T'ai-tsu shih lu*, 53, p. 1037; Tsukamoto Shunkō, "Kōbutei to Butsu Dō ni kyō," *Gifu Daigaku kenkyū hōkoku (jimbun Kagaku)*, 14 (March 1966), p. 36.

When Maidiribala, grandson of the former Yüan ruler, reached Nanking in July 1370, the emperor conferred a posthumous title on his grandfather: Shun-ti, "the obedient ruler," referring to the fact that the late Mongol ruler of China had obeyed Heaven's mandate to leave China. During a formal audience with the emperor in the palace, Maidiribala was also granted a title and a mansion in Nanking. On 12 July 1370 the emperor reported his victory over the Yüan at the southern suburban altar to Heaven; and on the following day, he made the same report to his ancestors in the imperial ancestral shrine.

During the summer of 1370 policies designed to rebuild the economy in areas that had been hard hit by war were implemented. The middleman (*k'ai-chung*) system was initiated at this time to distribute grain in the depressed and impoverished region of Shansi. This was a voucher system that provided profit incentives to merchants; it induced them to spend their own resources to transport grain to the northwest. In return for their shipments of grain, the merchants were granted salt vouchers (*yin*), which could be redeemed from the government for salt that the merchants could in turn sell for a profit in the retail market. Enterprising merchants discovered that they could hire farmers to plant grain crops in the border regions and thus save the cost of transporting grain from the interior. They still received their salt vouchers, which were calculated on the basis of the distance to the border and the quality of the grain delivered. The system spurred agricultural growth on the frontiers and contributed to relatively stable rice prices during the Hung-wu period.³⁹

Another important measure to consolidate the empire's resources was undertaken in 1370. The emperor ordered the Ministry of Revenue to require all households in the realm to register themselves with the local government and to receive an official household certificate (*bu-t'ieh*) listing the adult males' names and ages and the properties of the household. An extant certificate from Ch'i-men county in Hui-chou prefecture, Anhwei, dated 1371, indicates that the householder held 0.854 *mou* of tilled land, one thatched cottage (*ts'ao-wu*), and one ox (*huang-niu*). The *bu-t'ieh* system thus required the submission and recording of detailed information of interest to the state for fiscal planning.⁴⁰

In an attempt to reinvigorate the economy in his native town of Feng-yang, Anhwei, in July 1370 the emperor ordered some 4,000 households in the lower Yangtze districts of Soochow, Sung-chiang, Hangchow, Hu-

39 See Wang Ch'ung-wu, "Ming tai ti shang t'un chih tu," *Yü kung*, 5, No. 12 (August 1936), pp. 1-15.

40 Wei Ch'ing-yüan, *Ming tai huang ts'e chih tu* (Peking, 1961), p. 19.

chou, and Chia-hsing to move into that area. These were households that owned no land in their native areas, and they were now assigned farmland in Feng-yang. Feng-yang had become depopulated after a series of epidemics struck the region in the 1340s, and the population continued to decline during the Red Turban wars of the 1350s and 1360s.

In the autumn of 1370 the generals of the victorious northern expedition army returned to Nanking to receive honors. Hsü Ta and Li Wen-chung arrived in Nanking on 25 November, and the emperor personally greeted them outside the city at Lung-chiang with a great show of respect. After the obligatory reporting of the victory at the southern altar, the emperor ordered Sung Lien and other literati to discuss in detail the arrangements for a new nobility of merit which the emperor wished to establish. Sung Lien and the emperor spent an entire evening in the Ta-pen Hall, a ceremonial and instruction hall that had been built for the education of the heir apparent, discussing this new system.⁴¹ On 29 November the emperor conferred carefully ranked noble titles on Hsü Ta, Li Shan-ch'ang, Li Wen-chung, Feng Sheng, Teng Yü, and many other leaders.⁴² Li Wen-chung, the third in the hierarchy, was placed in charge of the Chief Military Commission (*Ta tu-tu fu*) a position of great influence in Nanking.

Perhaps the emperor's most significant innovation in 1370 was the building of the Palace of Honoring the Ancestors (*Feng-hsien tien*) inside the palace gate on the east side of the imperial city. The emperor had asked his scholar-advisors about sacrifices to the imperial lineage, noting that the Ancestral Temple (*T'ai miao*) had been built for this purpose. But the sacrifices offered there, he felt, were made in accordance with rigid precedents that did not permit the exercise of daily household observances. He asked what should be done about the dawn and dusk sacrifices that should be made each new and full moon of the lunar months. He told the scholar T'ao K'ai, a Lin-hai (Chekiang) native who was serving as minister of rites, to find an ancient precedent for such observances by an emperor. T'ao could find only a precedent from Sung times, when a Temple of Imperial Filial Piety (*Ch'in-hsien hsiao-ssu tien*) had been constructed. On the basis of that slight authority the emperor ordered the construction of this palace. In this new hall were placed the shrines of his four paternal ancestors. Each day incense was burned, while offerings to the ancestors' spirits were renewed on every full and new moon. Sacrifices were made on the birth and death anniversaries of the ancestors, all in accordance with household rituals

41 Ch'en Ho, *Ming chi* (1871; rpt. in *Ssu pu pei yao*, Taipei, 1965), 3, p. 13a.

42 *DMB*, p. 885; *KC*, 4, pp. 428–31; Romeyn Taylor, "Ming T'ai-tsu and the nobility of merit," *Ming Studies*, 2 (1976), pp. 57–69.

(*ju chia jen li*). Some rites were transferred to the Feng-hsien Palace from the Ancestral Temple.⁴³

The emperor was quite determined to practice fasting on sacrificial occasions in order to set a good example. As an aid in this effort, he ordered T'ao K'ai to cast a copper statue holding a bamboo tablet on which the words observe fast (*chai-chieh*) were inscribed. The emperor decreed that this statue was to be displayed before him on fast days as a reminder.⁴⁴

FROM 1371 TO 1380: CONSOLIDATION AND STABILITY

In 1371 Szechwan was incorporated into the Ming empire. On 19 January the emperor appointed T'ang Ho to head an expedition against the Hsia state, which had been ruled until 1366 by the Manichean leader Ming Yü-chen and was now in the hands of the political schemers who dominated his son's court.⁴⁵ Szechwan suddenly received high priority on the Ming military agenda, for the Hsia state had refused to grant the emperor's expeditions into Yunnan permission to cross Hsia territory. Yunnan was still under Mongol rule at this time, and the Hsia had their own plans for its conquest. Teng Yü was therefore dispatched on 20 January 1371 to lead his army to Hsiang-yang on the upper reaches of the Han River in modern Hupeh and to gather provisions there for a campaign into Szechwan.

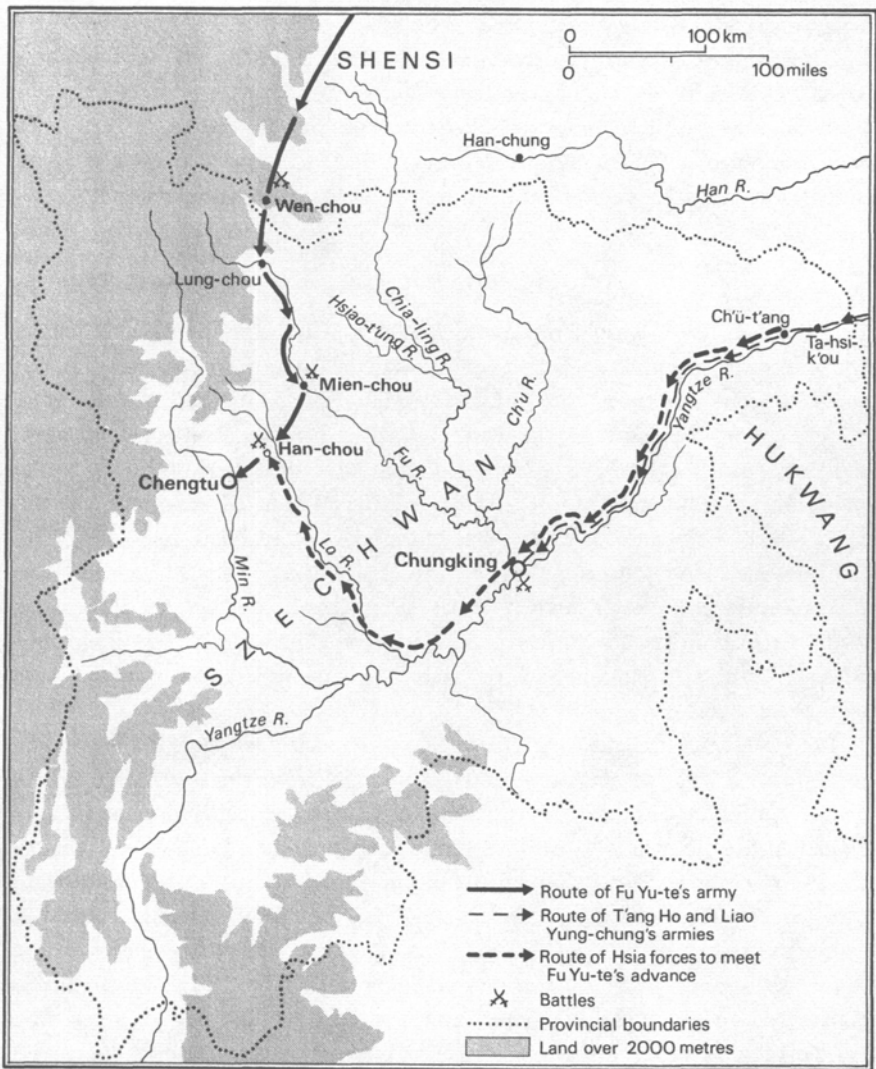
Preparations for the campaign were completed in May, and Fu Yu-te led a force from Shensi to attack the Hsia defenders from the north. Fu's forces took Wen-chou (modern Wen-hsien in southern Kansu close to the Szechwan border) on 18 May and continued south to take Lung-chou (modern Lung-an on the Fu River, Szechwan). From there Fu continued on southward into Szechwan, eventually reaching Mien-chou, 80 miles northeast of Chengtu. His general Lan Yü (d. 1393) engaged the city's defenders in a night battle and forced them to flee across the Lo River.⁴⁶ The Lo River was considered one of the Hsia's major defensive barriers, and the threat posed by Fu Yu-te gave cause for grave concern in the Hsia capital at Chengtu. Fu made preparations to cross the swollen river by ordering the construction of hundreds of rafts. These were ready within several weeks, and a safe crossing was made. Meanwhile the Hsia began to draw in their defensive forces from Ch'ü-t'ang, 200 miles to the southeast, at the gorges near modern Feng-chieh

43 *MHY*, I, pp. 152–53. For T'ao K'ai's biography, see *MS*, 136, pp. 3934–35.

44 *KC*, 4, p. 436.

45 See Chapter 1, p. 41–42, and Chapter 2, pp. 100–101.

46 Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 788–91; *MS*, 132, pp. 3863–66.



Map 6. The Szechwan campaign, 1371

on the Yangtze. This was done to protect Chengtu from the anticipated attack by Fu Yu-te, whose forces now were gathering at Han-chou (modern Kuang-han hsien), a major defensive position 30 miles northeast of Chengtu. Han-chou fell to Fu's army in July 1371, after a battle with the naval forces brought up from Ch'ü-t'ang. Even after these forces had been withdrawn from Ch'ü-t'ang, T'ang Ho's army could not advance beyond Ta-hsi k'ou on

the Yangtze, east of the barrier gorges. Only when Liao Yung-chung's navy arrived did the Ming forces succeed in breaking through into Szechwan by this route. Having accomplished this, the two commanders hastened toward Chungking, Liao advancing by the water route and T'ang overland.

Liao and T'ang reached the Hsia capital, Chungking, on 3 August 1371. The fifteen-year-old Hsia ruler, Ming Sheng, and his mother, née Peng, surrendered. Liao then ordered several sons of the defeated generals to deliver a message to Chengtu, where some leaders of the Hsia government were still holding out. They were ordered to surrender the city to Fu Yu-te. Before the message was delivered, the Chengtu defenders, hoping to rout the Ming army, had decided to send out their trained war elephants. The animals panicked, however, and trampled many of the Hsia soldiers. Once the Chengtu defenders heard of Ming Sheng's surrender at Chungking, they opened the city gates and surrendered to the Ming forces. Meanwhile Ming Sheng was transported to Nanking under guard and reached the capital on 25 August.

That autumn a branch secretariat (*hsing chung-shu sheng*) was established in Szechwan at Chengtu. The emperor publicly executed a Hsia general named Wu Yu-jen in Nanking; the other Hsia generals had chosen to drown themselves at Chengtu rather than be captured alive. Li Wen-chung, the emperor's nephew, was ordered to supervise the construction of a new wall around Chengtu. When that project was completed, Li returned to Nanking, leaving the garrison there under the command of Ho Wen-hui, an adopted son of the emperor.⁴⁷

Important progress in regularizing political institutions was made in 1371. In February the emperor had ordered that district and provincial examinations be held every three years. Provincial examinations were held in March, shortly before the emperor made a progress to the central capital at Feng-yang, near his birthplace in the Huai River region. He remained there only a few days, returning almost immediately to Nanking. Feng-yang evidently did not have the qualities needed to serve as a satisfactory administrative center.

Later in the year, the emperor summoned the Taoist adept Chou Yüan-chen to the palace for instruction on the meaning of thunder. Like the Mongols, the emperor was apparently frightened of thunder, and the Taoist master was able to explain the nature of thunder as an expression of the relations prevailing between Heaven and human beings. Sung Lien recorded these discussions in some detail, for he himself was deeply interested in Taoist thought and lore.⁴⁸

47 Biography in *MS*, 134, pp. 3897–98.

48 Sung Lien, *Sung Wen-hsien kung ch'üan chi*, 9, p. 15a.

Relations with the Japanese took an interesting turn in 1371. In 1370 the emperor had sent an envoy named Chao Chih to the Japanese, who appear in Chinese texts as the Wo. The Japanese prince Kanenaga, head of the Southern Court in northern Kyūshū, nearly had him killed. But eventually Kanenaga agreed to call himself a vassal of the Ming ruler and sent his envoy Sorai, a monk, to accompany Chao Chih and other Chinese prisoners back to Nanking. In response to Sorai's mission, the emperor sent the Buddhist monk Tsu-shan (fl. 1360–73) to lead a mission to Japan in 1372.⁴⁹ Preparations for this were made in 1371, and in the spring of 1372 an elaborate Buddhist ceremony for all souls (*p'u-tu hui*) was held at the T'ien-chieh Monastery in Nanking. The emperor personally took part in the ceremonies, which lasted three days and involved a thousand monks.⁵⁰

The Buddhist ceremonies conducted that March were not the only Buddhist rites carried out by the Hung-wu emperor in 1372. From the thirteenth to the fifteenth day of the first month of the lunar New Year (17–19 February 1372), the emperor was at the T'ai-p'ing hsing-kuo Monastery at Chiang Mountain just outside Nanking to participate in a large-scale Buddhist worship ceremony during which he personally performed obeisance before Buddha's image, listened to sermons by the monk Tsung-lo (1318–91), and received instruction in the Buddhist discipline (*vinaya*) from the T'ien-t'ai monk Hui-jih.⁵¹

Military actions involving the Mongols continued throughout the 1370s. As one leader was neutralized, another took his place, so that the Ming forces in Peking and Shansi were constantly on the move. In March 1372 Hsü Ta was appointed field commander of an expedition against Kōkō Temür (Wang Pao-pao), which was to strike deep into Mongolia and attack the Mongol capital at Khara Khorum. Although his younger sister had married the emperor's second son, Chu Shuang, in October 1371, Kōkō Temür remained a threat to the Ming until his death in 1375. In April 1372, general Lan Yü, acting as the vanguard of Hsü Ta's 400,000-man expedition, defeated Kōkō Temür near the Tula River in Mongolia. But a subsequent attack on Khara Khorum by Hsü Ta and Li Wen-chung was completely routed by the Mongols, who had regrouped their forces at the ancient Mongol capital. Li Wen-chung's column suffered severely from the

49 Biography in *DMB*, pp. 1314–18.

50 Among them was probably the Indian monk Pañḍita (d. 1381), who had also arrived in Nanking in 1371 as head of a group of twelve Indian monks. They had been in China at the Mongol court since 1364. *MSL. T'ai-tsu shih lu*, 68, p. 1282; Ch'en Ho, *Ming chi*, 3, pp. 18b–19a.

51 *KC*, 5, p. 460; Sung Lien, *Sung Wen-hsien kung ch'üan chi*, 7, p. 2b–3b. For Tsung-lo's biography, see *DMB*, pp. 1319–21.

attacks of Mongol cavalry and from the physical hardships of the Gobi Desert. The Ming court never again sent armies so deep into the steppe.

At the same time, forces led by Fu Yu-te and Feng Sheng in Kansu had greater success against the Mongols. Lan-chou and Hsi-liang (near modern Wu-wei, Kansu) were freed of pro-Yüan troops by Fu and Feng, who then moved in July into Yung-ch'ang, in northwestern Kansu, and Etsina (I-chi-nai; also known as Chü-yen), on the edge of the Gobi Desert.

Feng Sheng's army was the only one of the three main forces to penetrate the Mongol's homeland and to achieve military successes there. He captured dozens of Mongol military officers and over 10,000 animals (horses, camels, and goats), and his entire force returned without any serious losses.

Feng, Hsü, and Li were all summoned to Nanking late in 1372, and early in 1373 the emperor decided to send Maidiribala, son of the reigning Yüan ruler, back to his father at Khara Khorum. A letter announcing this plan was sent on 23 January 1373. In the spring of 1373 Hsü Ta, Li Wen-chung, and Feng Sheng were reassigned to head the military garrisons at Peking. From this time on, however, these garrisons no longer had an active offensive role, but functioned primarily as defensive barriers against Yüan efforts to recapture the throne of China. Hsü Ta returned to the north in the autumn, and in September went to Ta-t'ung to forcibly resettle people from the border areas in the vicinity of Peking. In November, Kökö Temür attacked Ta-t'ung, by which time Hsü Ta had moved south to T'ai-yüan. On 29 November, Hsü Ta executed a brilliant attack in the middle of a snowstorm to defeat Kökö Temür's army near Huai-jou (40 miles northeast of Peking).

Maidiribala was not sent to Mongolia until October 1374. Earlier in 1374 Lan Yü had coordinated a series of successful engagements with Mongol forces at Hsing-ho and elsewhere, while Li Wen-chung scored victories at Ta-ning and Kao-chou (in the region of modern Ch'eng-te), capturing various Yüan officers and imperial consorts, as well as many camels and horses. Finally, on 20 October the emperor sent Maidiribala back to the steppe, escorted by two former Yüan imperial eunuchs. He carried a letter to his father in which the emperor urged the father to accede to Ming authority. This letter was ignored, and Mongol policy remained unchanged: Ming power in the steppe continued to be tested by a succession of Mongol leaders.

Yüan military power in the west was weakened when Kökö Temür died in September 1375 at Khara Nokhai, northwest of Khara Khorum in Mongolia. But just as the Western Mongols declined in power, the Eastern

Mongols, led by Naghachu (d. 1388), a former Yüan official, continued to increase their power in the northeast.⁵² Naghachu's base lay in the Sungari River valley: in the 1370s he began to expand southward into Liao-tung, where he remained a source of constant trouble until 1387. Meanwhile, in the area north of Shensi another western Mongol leader, Bayan Temür, renewed the Mongol threat, which had slackened since the death of Kōkō Temür. In February 1376 T'ang Ho, who had established an outpost at Yen-an, was assigned by the emperor to deal with Bayan Temür. T'ang obtained the surrender of the Mongol leader in March; but Bayan Temür was not taken captive, and he revolted again in July. The Ming general Fu Yu-te, who had been left at Yen-an to garrison the region, managed to ambush Bayan Temür and to bring about his involuntary surrender through two of his subordinates.

Although there was no longer any unified, concerted Mongol power threatening the new dynasty, the Mongols were still able to harass the frontier at many points. Thus the Ming military was engaged in defensive maneuvers; no major military excursions into the steppe were mounted by the Ming during the rest of the 1370s. Instead, military problems stemming from Tibet and Yunnan occupied the attention of the administration in Nanking.

In May 1377 Teng Yü and Mu Ying (1345–92), one of the emperor's adopted sons,⁵³ were put in charge of a punitive expedition to chastise a Tibetan chieftain who had refused to acknowledge Ming rule. This expedition went deep into the region of Kokonor in modern Tsinghai, marching as far west as the K'un-lun Mountains. Teng Yü's army pursued the chieftain and his followers relentlessly, killing thousands of them and capturing over a hundred thousand animals. The emperor then ordered Teng Yü to recall his army from this remote region and summoned him back to Nanking. However, Teng died in December on the way back at the age of forty. Mu Ying, having distinguished himself during this campaign, was rewarded with the title of marquis and a generous stipend of 2,500 piculs of rice. He was soon to play an important role in establishing Ming authority in Yunnan.

During the 1370s, the emperor regularly performed the rites to Heaven and Earth on separate occasions each year at separate altars. But at court, preoccupation with ritual gave way to the rearrangement of civil institutions. The Ming founder experimented with and revised the institutions of his dynasty throughout his reign. He attempted to formalize the relation-

⁵² Biography in *DMB*, pp. 1083–85.

⁵³ Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 1079–83; *MS*, 126, pp. 3756–59.

ships between the various positions in government; to this end he ordered the compilation of regulations designed to instruct officials, members of the imperial household, and generals how to behave. As part of his plan to secure the dynasty from domestic problems caused by untoward female involvement in political affairs, in July 1372 he formulated a set of offices to control the palace women.⁵⁴ The emperor laid down taboos and sumptuary codes that restricted the roles which the empress and other palace women could play. Later in the month he promulgated the *Liu pu chih chang* (Rules for six ministries), which was subsequently incorporated into the *Chu ssu chih chang* (Rules for administrators), which set strict standards for the annual merit ratings of officials.⁵⁵

The emperor felt that the heir apparent needed to learn something about actual governance, so in January 1373 he ordered all his officials to address their remarks to the heir apparent when they sent in memorials with suggestions for official policy. In October 1373 the emperor went a step further. He required officials to present their memorials to the heir apparent for a final decision. He noted that the heir apparent, who was a product of sheltered palace life, would otherwise be ill-prepared to rule in the event of his death. This policy, however, was short-lived, for the emperor soon became displeased with his son's decisions and revoked this regulation.⁵⁶

While the emperor was grappling with the problem of training his successor, he was also trying to recruit capable men into the government. But he was not happy with the results of the examination system. The triennial examinations did not yield a sufficient number of capable men; he felt that they produced bookish men unsuited for administrative work. Therefore, in March 1373 he abolished the examination system and ordered a return to the system of recruitment by recommendation. No examinations were held during the next decade.⁵⁷ But the immense talent pool that had built up in the National University (*Kuo-tzu chien*), which comprised several thousand students in the 1370s, provided capable men for many administrative posts.

The emperor also devoted considerable attention to the problem of disciplining the princes of the blood. He envisioned a system in which the ancient model of enfeoffed princes commanding their own military forces

⁵⁴ *MC*, 3, p. 22a.

⁵⁵ *MC*, 3, p. 22b. The *Liu pu chih chang*, under that title, is no longer extant. For the earliest extant version see Chai Shan, comp., *Chu ssu chih chang* (1380; rpt. in vols. 43–50 of *Hsüan-lan t'ang ts'ung shu*, 1940–41; rpt. Taipei, 1981); Wolfgang Franke, *An introduction to the sources of Ming history*, (Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, 1968), p. 178.

⁵⁶ *MC*, 3, p. 23b; *MTC*, I, p. 296.

⁵⁷ *MTC*, I, p. 303.

was combined with the imperial bureaucratic administrative system in use since Han times. Since the princes were to occupy such an important position in the new order, he took pains to ensure that each was provided with Confucian scholars to teach him loyalty, obedience, and statist values. But he soon learned that the princes were arrogant and ill-disciplined. Chu Shou-ch'ien, the son of Chu Wen-cheng, the emperor's nephew, had been raised to princely status in 1370. Like his father, Chu Shou-ch'ien was arrogant and unruly, and in 1373 the emperor reduced him to commoner status. Although he was later restored to his principedom, he was twice subsequently placed under house arrest and detained in Feng-yang.⁵⁸

Responding to such evidence of princely misbehavior, in 1373 the emperor ordered Sung Lien and his minister of rites T'ao K'ai independently to compile records of historical lessons concerning princes of former times. Sung Lien spent twenty-two days on the project, working with Confucian instructors from half a dozen princely households. Then T'ao K'ai's text and that of Sung Lien and his associates were consolidated into the *Tsung fan chao chien lu* (Bright mirror for the feudatories of the imperial clan); this was promulgated to the princes. As Sung Lien explained: "The Son of Heaven is the head, the princes are the hands and feet; they may be called one body."⁵⁹

A more important document known as the *Ancestral injunctions* was promulgated in 1373 after the emperor had worked on it for six years.⁶⁰ The instructions outlined the princes' powers and responsibilities. The emperor constantly revised and refined the *Ancestral injunctions*, and its rules were changed from time to time. The earliest extant version is a manuscript copy that apparently dates from 1381, and consequently we cannot ascertain what rules existed in 1373. In any case, in 1373 the rules had little bearing on the administration of the princely households; the households had not yet been set up as separate estates, and the princes themselves had not left the capital. However, in the early 1381 version of the *Ancestral injunctions* the princes were given virtual sovereignty over their estates. They had a great deal of military authority, and they had the power to try and sentence common people residing in the market towns and villages within their fiefs for crimes involving simple penal matters and lèse majesté. However, suits involving such essential civil matters as money and grain disputes were to be tried by the dynasty's formal judicial apparatus.

The princes also enjoyed the power to recruit military and civil officials for their own staffs, and they could exercise complete judicial authority over their behavior. The princes were encouraged in the instructions to

58 For their biography, see *MS*, 118, p. 3612–13.

59 Sung Lien, *Sung wen-hsien kung ch'üan chi*, 8, pp. 1b–2a; *MTC*, I, p. 305; *KC*, 5, p. 482.

60 As noted below, the earliest extant version is the revision promulgated in 1381.

employ harsh punishments and to force the people to carry out their commands. Princes were permitted to seat themselves in the palace on the occasion of a visit to the emperor; and they could participate in court banquets. The princes were also permitted to pay visits to one another from time to time. When seen in the light of traditional imperial institutions, most of these privileges were dangerous and excessive. Nothing like them had prevailed for a thousand years or more. Before they were ever fully implemented, however, they were substantially curtailed in later versions of the *Ancestral injunctions*.⁶¹

The princes were not the only disciplinary problem facing the emperor at this time, for the new nobility of merit (*kung-ch'en*) also included undisciplined, arrogant men. In 1373 the emperor ordered the Ministry of Works to promulgate rules against malfeasance by members of this nobility. The rules were posted in the form of iron placards. They specified punishments that were to be imposed on the nobles, on members of their households, and on their estate managers for violations that threatened or harmed the livelihood of the people under their jurisdiction or damaged the authority of the imperial government in fiscal and corvée matters. For example, managers of noblemen's estates who used their special standing and power to take advantage of the local people were tattooed, their noses cut off, and their property confiscated, while their wives and sons were banished to penal servitude in Nan-ning (modern Nan-ning in the Kwangsi-Chuang Autonomous Region).

According to the rules, any noble household that unfairly acquired land, buildings, or livestock from the common people through dishonest or unfulfilled contracts would on the second violation (there was no punishment for the first violation) be deprived of half the noble's stipend. Upon a third violation the entire stipend would be halted, and in the event of a fourth violation the noble would be reduced to commoner status. Any noble household that forcibly took over hillside plantations, ponds, tea groves, reed flats, gold, silver, or copper mines, or iron foundries belonging to the emperor or to private people would be forgiven in the event of two violations. Upon a third violation, the sentence of death would be handed down and suspended. But in the event of a fourth violation, the death penalty would actually be imposed.⁶²

These rules in fact allowed the nobility to commit a limited number of heinous crimes without any penalty. Yet they did limit the lawless behavior of the "nobility of merit." These nobles were men who had helped the

61 *MTC*, 1, p. 306; *KC*, 5, p. 485; Huang Chang-chien, "Lun 'Ming tsu hsün' pan hsing nien tai ping lun Ming ch'u feng chien chu wang chih tu," *BIHP*, 32 (1961) pp. 119–37; rpt. in his *Ming Ch'ing shih yen chiu ts'ung kao* (Taipei, 1977), pp. 31–56.

62 Wu Han, *Chu Yüan-chang chuan*, pp. 246–47; *MSL*, *T'ai-tsu shih lu*, 74, pp. 1379–80; Taylor, "Ming T'ai-tsu and the nobility of merit," pp. 62–63.

emperor found the dynasty, and the emperor could ill afford to dispense with them at this time. Later in the Hung-wu reign many such nobles were violently eliminated, but in 1373 that was not yet common.

One of the Ming ruler's first official promulgations was the law code, *Ta Ming lü ling*, published in 1368. This code contained 285 articles of statutes (*lü*) and 145 articles of commands (*ling*), arranged under the six ministries of the government.⁶³ But the emperor soon became dissatisfied with the text of the statutory code and spent several years revising it article by article.⁶⁴ He also ordered the compilation of a simple commentary which was published in 1368 as the *Lü ling chih chieh* (Straightforward commentary on the statutes and commands).⁶⁵ By 1373 the emperor had completely revised the code, and this revised version appeared in 1374. It was arranged quite differently from the first version, for it followed the twelve-part arrangement of the *T'ang lü shu i* (T'ang code with commentary). The 1374 code contained 606 articles, 288 of which were carried over from the first version; 128 were "continuations," presumably expansions, of earlier articles; 36 were commands (*ling*) which had been incorporated in the statutory code; and 31 articles were new additions. Another revision was made in 1376, in which the total number of articles was reduced to 446. After further revisions in 1383 and 1389, the final version of the code, in 460 articles, was promulgated in 1397.⁶⁶

One of the emperor's most impressive intellectual accomplishments was his commentary to the *Tao te ching*, which he wrote in ten days between 5 and 15 January 1375.⁶⁷ As he noted in the preface to this work, he had studied the text of the *Tao te ching* before but had had great difficulty comprehending its full meaning. He sought out commentaries and experts on the subject, but none of these satisfied him. Finally, at this time he

63 Naitō Kenkichi, "Dai Min ryō kaisetsu," rpt. in his *Chūgoku hōsetsu kōshō* (Tokyo, 1963), p. 91; *MS*, 93, pp. 2280–81.

64 *MSL*, *T'ai-tsu shih lu*, pp. 1534–35.

65 Naitō, "Dai Min ryō kaisetsu," p. 98; *MSL*, *T'ai-tsu shih lu*, pp. 431–32.

66 The 1389 edition is said to be preserved in a Korean edition of 1395 entitled *Tae-Myōngnyul chikbae*, comp. Ko Sa-kyōng, and Kim Chi (1395; rpt. Seoul, 1936 and 1964). Actually this text contains 442 articles, whereas the 1389 edition is supposed to have had 460, the same number as in the 1397 version. The commentary in the Korean text is written in Sino-Korean bureaucratic script, called *itu*. The text was reprinted in Seoul in 1936 by the Chōsen sōtokufu chūsūin. A modern edition was published in Seoul in 1964 by the Pōpchech'ō. In this edition, the *itu* commentary has been translated into modern Korean.

67 *KC*, 5, p. 513; Ming T'ai-tsu, *Kao huang ti yü chih wen chi*, ed. Hsü Chiu-kao (n.p., 1535; rpt. Taipei, 1965; rpt. Kyoto, 1973), 15, pp. 1a–2b. For a detailed study of the emperor's commentary, see Liu Ts'un-jen, "Tao tsang pen san sheng chu Tao te ching hui chien," *Ho feng t'ang tu shu chi* (Hong Kong, 1977), 1, pp. 59–224. See also John D. Langlois, Jr., "Three teachings syncretism and the thought of Ming T'ai-tsu," *HJAS*, 43, No. 1 (June 1983), pp. 97–139.

devoted a period to the intensive study of this text to formulate his own conclusions about its meaning. As he noted, he was concerned about the efficacy of harsh punishments. Did they deter people from committing crime or not? His own eyes had provided abundant evidence that they did not, for harsh punishments had not given him the degree of unquestioned authority he had hoped to achieve. The *Tao te ching* stated: "The people are not afraid of death. Why, then, threaten them with death?"⁶⁸ This statement moved the emperor deeply, for it struck directly at the root of his method of rule. During the first years of his reign he had had many people executed. As he noted: "At that time, the empire had just been pacified, and the people were wicked, the officials corrupt. Even though ten were executed in public in the morning, a hundred would be at it again that night."⁶⁹

It may be true that the emperor was appalled that mass executions failed to deter what he considered misconduct. In 1376 he had sent to execution hundreds of individuals who had been guilty of the practice of prestamping fiscal documents to simplify reporting procedures. This case became known as the prestamped documents case (*k'ung-yin an*). Local officials had adopted an old procedure of convenience whereby prestamped but uncompleted report forms, used in reporting tax revenue shipments to Nanking, were sent to Nanking, where the actual amounts were entered after deducting the losses incurred in transit. This eliminated a source of discrepancy in fiscal reporting, since the local officials could not have known in advance what the transit losses would be. But the emperor took an extremely hostile view of the practice. This was in part because of his intense dislike of the bureaucratic abuses that had emerged under the Mongol Yüan regime. He dealt severely with anything that smacked of such abuse. The use of prestamped documents left open a great opportunity for corruption. Not only did he strictly forbid it, he even ordered the execution of all the officials whose names appeared on the prestamped forms. Some sources report that hundreds of officials were put to death in this case.⁷⁰

The emperor himself solicited criticism of his harsh treatment of the officials in the prestamped documents case. Responding to unusual and

68 Wing-tsit Chan, trans., *Tao te ching* [attr. Lao-tzu], ch. 74, in *A source book in Chinese philosophy* (Princeton, 1963), p. 173.

69 Ming T'ai-tsu, *Kao huang-ti yü chih wen chi*, 15, p. 1b.

70 *DMB*, p. 1575; Danjō Hiroshi, "Min ōchō seiritsu ki no kiseki—Kōbu-chō no gigoku jiken to keishi mondai o megutte," *Tōyōshi kenkyū*, 37, No. 3 (December 1978), pp. 12–13; *KC*, 6, p. 542. In his *Chu Yüan-chang chuan*, pp. 256–57, Wu Han mistakenly dates the prestamped documents case to 1382.

inauspicious activity by the stars and planets, in a conventional gesture, he announced on 22 October 1376 that he would accept straightforward criticism of his rule from officials. Yeh Po-chü's response was the most detailed and the most devastating.⁷¹ Yeh was then serving in P'ing-yao, southwest of T'ai-yüan in Shansi. When the emperor read Yeh's criticisms, he became furious and ordered him brought in chains to Nanking. Yeh died of starvation in prison not long afterward. His criticisms dealt with three major problems in Ming rule: the enfeoffment of the princes of the blood and their command of military forces; the emperor's reliance on extremely harsh punishments; and the excessive haste with which the emperor moved to establish the institutions of his rule.

Yeh said that the overzealous enfeoffment of the princes could set the stage for a usurpation by one of them. He effectively predicted the eventual usurpation by the Prince of Yen (see Chapter 4). In his second point, Yeh noted that literati of the day considered it their great good fortune not to be summoned into the emperor's service. They felt that way, he asserted, because they were sure to be sentenced to heavy labor or to be whipped for their efforts. Alluding to the prestamped documents case, Yeh criticized the emperor for placing excessive and inhumane stress on simple bureaucratic honesty at the expense of efficiency, and he blamed the emperor for failing to exhort his officials to exert greater efforts in improving public morals and mores.

The most detailed criticisms of the prestamped documents case came from another scholar, Cheng Shih-li, who also wrote in response to the emperor's call for frank criticism.⁷² He too incurred the wrath of the emperor and was sentenced to hard labor. Cheng argued that the emperor's anger over the use of the prestamped forms was not rational. The forms were used in this way because otherwise the reporting of accurate figures would, for remote counties, take as long as a year. He also noted that there had been no law against the established practice and that it was unfair for the emperor to punish people under laws imposed retroactively. But none of his arguments carried any weight with the emperor—who was, after all, extremely sensitive to any semblance of disloyalty.

A number of key improvements in administrative and ritual arrangements were made in 1376 and 1377. The most important of these changes was the establishment of twelve provincial governments, which replaced the Mongol Yüan branch (or mobile) secretariats. The new provincial administration was called the Office for Transmitting Policy (*Ch'eng-hsüan*

⁷¹ Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 1572–76; *MS*, 139, pp. 3990–96.

⁷² See *DMB*, pp. 1575–76, and the biography in *MS*, 139, pp. 3996–97.

pu-cheng ssu); it paralleled the Regional Military Commissions that had been created in 1375.⁷³

In 1376, after nine years of separate biennial suburban sacrifices (*chiao-ssu*) to Heaven and Earth, the emperor decided to simplify these rituals. He argued that it was unnatural to offer separate sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, just as it would be unnatural to do the same to one's grandmother and grandfather. So he ordered his officials to find precedents for joint ceremonies, and he demanded that a special ceremonial building be constructed for new "great sacrifices." The first such ceremony was held in the eleventh lunar month of 1377, after which the ceremony was held annually during the first lunar month. In 1377 and 1378 the ceremony had to be held in the Feng-t'ien Hall, because the Hall for the Great Sacrifice (*Ta ssu tien*) had not been completed.⁷⁴

The emperor also changed many details in the rituals to the spirits of the soil and grain. He had a simple man's desire to stay out of the rain; in 1368 he asked his officials about the desirability and correctness of building a structure to protect him during outdoor rites in the event of inclement weather. In 1369 he built a Hall for Watching the Sacrifice (*Wang-chi tien*), where he took shelter when he presided over the ceremonies at the altars to the spirits of grain and of the soil. But he went beyond these changes in 1377: he concluded that separate sacrifices to the spirits of grain and the soil (the *she* and *chi* rites) were, like separate sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, entirely unnatural. A scholar quickly proposed the construction of a joint altar outside the Meridian Gate of the imperial palace. This scholar also proposed that these rites, originally of secondary importance in the ritual hierarchy, be elevated to the status of major sacrifices (*ta ssu*). He further suggested that the spirits who served as co-recipients of the sacrifices (in this case Kou-lung and Ch'i of Chou) should be replaced by the spirit of the emperor's late father.⁷⁵

In this way the emperor's ancestors were brought into prominent roles in imperial rituals. The emperor's father had already been given a role in the ritual sacrifices to Heaven and Earth. In 1369 the emperor's father became the co-recipient with Heaven in the rites at the Square Mound; and in 1370 he became the co-recipient at the Round Mound. These moves elevated the imperial lineage to unprecedented heights.

Hu Wei-yung's power began to grow in 1376 and 1377. Hu was a

73 See Lien-sheng Yang, "Ming local administration," in *Chinese government in Ming times: Seven studies*, ed. Charles O. Hucker (New York and London, 1969), pp. 1-21; Charles O. Hucker, *The Ming dynasty: Its origins and evolving institutions*, Michigan papers in Chinese studies, No. 34 (Ann Arbor, 1978), pp. 38-39.

74 *MHY*, I, p. 87; *MTC*, I, p. 180. 75 *MHY*, I, pp. 87-93ff; *MTC*, I, p. 179.

native of Ting-yüan in Anhwei who had joined Chu Yüan-chang's camp in 1355 and who had since 1357 commanded the respect of his leader.⁷⁶ Between 1373 and 1377 he served as junior chief counsellor of the Secretariat, while Li Shan-ch'ang and Li Wen-chung occupied more influential positions. But in 1377 Hu Wei-yung began to win greater and greater favor from the emperor. Li Shan-ch'ang suffered a small setback in his climb to power in 1376, when, as senior chief counsellor, he had been impeached by Wang Kuang-yang for arrogance and disloyalty. Wang Kuang-yang was a Kao-yu native who had served Chu Yüan-chang since 1355; he may have been an alcoholic, and he was certainly jealous of his rival Li Shan-ch'ang. In any event, when Hu Wei-yung, one of Li Shan-ch'ang's followers, was promoted to senior counsellor, Wang Kuang-yang became Hu's junior associate. Factionalism and bureaucratic tensions were thus beginning to influence the conduct of government.

Faced with factional disputes and cut off from his sources of information, the emperor began to extend his control over information gathering and transmission procedures. At about this time he established an office to handle all important administrative communications; this was the Office of Transmission (*T'ung-cheng ssu*), which was supposed to review all commands and to allow "communications into the dark recesses [of the palace]."⁷⁷ For the first time, he ordered censors to begin circuit inspections in the local governments throughout the entire empire; this was done to improve his access to information at the local level.⁷⁸

The first known attack on Hu Wei-yung was launched in August 1377. Hu Wei-yung had moved close allies into positions at high levels and had begun to oust those he felt were not likely to support him. This prompted a censor named Han I-k'o, a native of Chekiang, to attack Hu and two of his allies in their presence before the throne. He charged Hu and the others with disloyalty and with having arrogated to themselves imperial powers; he begged the emperor to have them beheaded. The emperor was angry at this and had Han tried and imprisoned. But the censor was not executed. Despite his rash behavior, he lived to serve the emperor's successor.⁷⁹ The incident is instructive, since only three years later, the emperor became aware of Hu Wei-yung's disloyalty and reacted violently to the allegations that Hu was plotting to seize power.

In 1378 the emperor's second and third sons, Chu Shuang and Chu Kang, were ordered to take up residence on their princely estates at Sian and at T'ai-yüan, respectively. Meanwhile, four other princes, including

76 Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 638–41; *MS*, 308, pp. 7906–08.

77 *MC*, 4, p. 9a; *KC*, 6, p. 552; *MTC*, I, p. 354.

78 *MTC*, I, p. 354.

79 *MTC*, I, p. 354. Biography of Han I-k'o in *MS*, 139, pp. 3982–83.

Chu Ti, the Prince of Yen, were ordered to take up residence in the middle capital at Feng-yang. Feng-yang, in the home region of the imperial clan, was used in these years as a place where princes received the military training that would prepare them to defend the empire's strategic points.

Military campaigns resumed in 1378. When Ayushiridara, the Yüan ruler, died in 1378, he was succeeded not by his son Maidiribala, who had been sent back in 1374 after long years at the Ming court, but by Ayushiridara's own younger brother, Toghus Temür.⁸⁰ Although the Ming emperor sent an envoy bearing a formal message and a posthumous title, the Mongol threat was of course still very real. Yet the Mongols were not the object of the large-scale expedition of 1378; that campaign was directed against Tibet.

In November 1378 Mu Ying, now a marquis with a very large annual stipend, was appointed to lead an expedition to pacify Tibet and western Szechwan. The religious orders in Tibet were in contact with the Ming court, for in December the emperor sent the monk Tsung-lo on a mission to obtain the texts of sutras that had been lost in China. But various hostile groups in the far west had begun to provoke disturbances there, and for this reason the emperor decided to move against them. Mu Ying achieved his first major victory in February 1379 near T'ao-chou in modern Kansu. A T'ao-chou garrison (*wei*) was established by Mu Ying at this time; although T'ao-chou had been taken by Ming forces earlier, the area did not come fully under Ming control until Mu Ying's success there in 1379. Li Wen-chung, who was trusted by the emperor, was assigned to administer the T'ao-chou garrison; he remained there for most of 1379. He distinguished himself in battles against the "eighteen Tibetan tribes," but these were the last military campaigns of his career. Upon the conclusion of his tour in the west he returned to Nanking, where he assumed the duties of the head of the Chief Military Commission (*Ta tu-tu fu*) and of the National University (*Kuo-tzu chien*). By October 1379, Mu Ying had scored major victories against the Tibetans, capturing 30,000 prisoners and 200,000 domestic animals.

1380: YEAR OF TRANSITION AND REORGANIZATION

In 1380, the thirteenth year of the reign, counsellor Hu Wei-yung, his associates Ch'en Ning and T'u Chieh, and thousands of their alleged followers were executed.⁸¹ The Secretariat was abolished along with the

⁸⁰ Biography in *DMB*, pp. 1293–94.

⁸¹ For a study of the documents see Wu Han, "Hu Wei-yung tang an k'ao," *Yen-ching hsüeh pao*, 15 (June 1934), pp. 163–205.

Tribunal of Censors (*Yü-shih t'ai*) and the Chief Military Commission. Power and responsibility were concentrated in the hands of the emperor, who now served as his own prime minister and chief military officer. The details of Hu Wei-yung's alleged coup d'état attempt remain unclear, for the stories and mysteries surrounding the event are unbelievable and contradictory. The emperor himself admitted that some 15,000 people were eventually put to death in the terrible purge that followed Hu's execution.

Aside from the alleged attempt at a coup, various reasons have been put forward to explain these purges. One is economic. During the fourteen years of purges after 1380, more than 40,000 people may have lost their lives. Most were persons of property whose lands were liable to be confiscated by the state. The purges also allowed the emperor to weaken the influence that southerners had come to exert in the government.⁸² But the main reason for the purges appears to have been the emperor's disposition. The case of the prestamped documents revealed in him a deep loathing for even the appearance of disloyalty or corruption; the Hu Wei-yung case reveals this even more clearly.

The "official" version in the dynastic history, which was compiled in the seventeenth century, sums up views of the early Ming in stating that Hu Wei-yung and others had conspired to assassinate the emperor. To this end they had dispatched the commander of the Ming-chou (modern Ning-po) garrison to conspire with the Japanese. At the same time, a certain Feng Chi, whose existence some scholars strongly doubt, is alleged to have been sent with a message to the Yüan ruler, Toghus Temür, requesting military support for the coup. The plot was exposed, however, as a direct consequence of Hu Wei-yung's own arrogance. One day Hu's son fell from his horse in Nanking and was killed beneath the wheels of a passing cart. Hu killed the cart driver in revenge. When the emperor heard about it, he grew angry and ordered Hu Wei-yung to compensate the driver's family. Yet when Hu requested permission to give gold and silk to the driver's surviving relatives, the emperor forbade him from doing so. This made Hu afraid, and so with the censor Ch'en Ning and the vice censor-in-chief T'u Chieh, he plotted the mutiny.

Late in 1379 the state of Champa sent tributary envoys to Nanking. But Hu failed to report their arrival, violating one of the terms of his office as chief counsellor. When their presence in Nanking was finally made known to the emperor, he grew enraged and berated Hu Wei-yung and his colleague, Wang Kuang-yang, the senior censor-in-chief. Hu and Wang

⁸² Danjō Hiroshi, "Min ōchō seiritsu ki no kiseki," p. 6.

blamed the Secretariat. The emperor, now furious, ordered the execution of Wang Kuang-yang and imprisoned the other responsible officials. Early in 1380 T'u Chieh reported Hu Wei-yung's conspiracy to the emperor. After an investigation, the emperor ordered the executions of Hu, Ch'en Ning, and T'u Chieh, even though T'u had informed him of the plot. The investigation continued sporadically for over a decade; eventually even Li Shan-ch'ang, one of the emperor's most trusted Anhwei advisors, was incriminated.

Another account holds that Hu Wei-yung had invited the emperor to his residence on the pretext of showing him a spring that had suddenly begun flowing on the premises. Hu planned to assassinate the ruler, but his plans were frustrated when the eunuch Yün-ch'i rushed up to stop the emperor from proceeding to Hu's residence, which was adjacent to the palace. The eunuch had somehow got wind of the plot, but was so agitated he was unable to speak. The emperor became angry and had the eunuch beaten on the spot, but even though Yün-ch'i's arm was on the verge of being broken, he kept pointing desperately toward Hu's residence. This alerted the emperor, who ascended the palace wall to peer down on Hu's grounds. He spied the troops Hu had concealed in preparation for the assassination and realized that he had almost walked into a trap. Shortly thereafter, Hu was executed in public.

Despite the wild contradictions in the stories, what seems probable is that Hu Wei-yung had used his power to pack the bureaucracy with his followers and had virtually taken over the administration from within.⁸³ Whether Hu had exceeded his legitimate authority to create a responsive and cohesive civil bureaucracy and actually intended treachery, as the increasingly suspicious emperor claimed, is not clear. The emperor responded to this perceived threat by abolishing the Secretariat, which had served as Hu Wei-yung's base of power, as well as the other top-level administrative agencies. These agencies included the Chief Military Commission and the Tribunal of Censors. What remained were the fragmented administrative hierarchies beneath them. The military was now headed by five lower-ranked chief military commissioners, all answering directly to the throne. The censorial system lacked a unified head until 1382, when the Chief Surveillance Office (*Tu-ch'a yüan*) was established. In addition, in 1380 the emperor abolished for a short time the Provincial Surveillance Offices (*An ch'a ssu*). Some of the slack in censorial work created by these changes was

83 Ming T'ai-tsu, *Yü chih wen chi* (undated Ming edition; rpt. in No. 22 of *Chung-kuo shih hsüeh ts'ung shu*, Taipei, 1965), 2, p. 13a; Yamane Yukio, "'Genmatsu no hanran' to Minchō shihai no kakuritsu," in *Iwanami kōza sekai rekishi*, 12 (Tokyo, 1971), p. 50.

taken up by a new Bureau of Remonstrance (*Chien yüan*), but little is known about this agency, which was abolished in 1382.⁸⁴

After the abolition of the Secretariat, the emperor became his own prime minister. This greatly increased the amount of work that fell to him, a condition which was perhaps appealing to the energetic Hung-wu emperor, but not to later, more phlegmatic emperors. Shaken by the alleged plot, the emperor ordered his son Chu Ti, Prince of Yen, to reside in the former Yüan capital (modern Peking). Chu Ti was a capable man, and the emperor hoped thus to secure the northern borders of the empire. To reduce the potential for connivance between bureaucrats and landlords, he adopted a policy whereby southerners served as officials in posts in the north and northerners served in the south.⁸⁵

Then, apparently feeling guilty for previous purges, he issued a general amnesty, taking responsibility in the accompanying edict for having employed evil men whom he ultimately had no choice but to execute.⁸⁶ Yet soon after he began a series of imperial compilations designed to instill in his officials the fear of his wrath. These included the *Ch'en chieh lu* (Instructions to ministers), records of some 212 princes, high officials, imperial relatives, and eunuchs who had disobeyed their rulers,⁸⁷ and *Hsiang chien* (The prime minister's mirror), containing records of eighty-two historical "good" prime ministers and twenty-six "bad" ones.⁸⁸ Both works were printed and distributed throughout the empire in 1380. In the following years the emperor also went to great pains to publish his version of the events in 1380. The *Chao shih chien tang lu* (Revelation of the evil faction) appeared in 1388 and presented the emperor's case against officials who had allegedly connived with Hu Wei-yung. The *Ch'ing chiao lu* (Purification of the [Buddha's] teachings) presented his case against sixty-four monks who had been implicated in the same plot.⁸⁹

To replace the men he had purged from office, in 1380 the emperor ordered his local officials to recommend worthy men for service. By the

84 For discussions of these changes, see Hucker, *The Ming dynasty: Its origins and evolving institutions*, pp. 42–43; Charles O. Hucker, "Governmental organization of the Ming dynasty," *HJAS*, 21 (1958) pp. 27–29, 48–49, 57–58; and his chapter in *The Cambridge history of China*, vol. 8, forthcoming.

85 *MTC*, I, p. 373. 86 *KC*, 7, p. 588.

87 *KC*, 7, p. 591; *MTC*, I, p. 378. See Li Chin-Hua, *Ming tai ch'ih chuan shu k'ao*, Harvard-Yenching sinological index series, supplement No. 3 (Peiping, 1932), p. 12. *Ch'en chieh lu* was originally 10 *chüan*. A photolithographic reprint of an incomplete copy in 5 *chüan* appears in Ming T'ai-tsu, *Ming ch'ao k'ai kuo wen hsien* (early Ming; rpt. in No. 34 of *Chung-kuo shih hsüeh ts'ung shu*, ed. Wu Hsiang-hsiang, Taipei, 1966), I, pp. 415–524.

88 See Li Chin-hua, *Ming tai ch'ih chuan shu k'ao*, p. 12; Ming T'ai-tsu, *Kao huang ti yü chih wen chi* (1535 edn.), 15, pp. 13b–15b, for associated prefaces; and Ming T'ai-tsu, *Ming ch'ao k'ai kuo wen hsien*, II, pp. 585–1218 and III, pp. 1219–78, for a reprint of the Hung-wu edition.

89 *DMB*, p. 640; Li Chin-hua, *Ming tai ch'ih chuan shu k'ao*, p. 12.

year's end over 860 people had been recommended and given posts. Meanwhile, at the top of the hierarchy, the emperor appointed several officials to an ad hoc organization he called for the Four Assisting Offices (*Ssu-fu kuan*).⁹⁰

The "four" referred to the four seasons, the organizing rubric in the ancient *Chou li* (Institutions of Chou) in which three officers were designated for each season. But only the six officers for spring and summer were ever appointed; they were charged with bearing concurrently the duties of the six vacant offices for autumn and winter. As the emperor described their role, it was "to regulate evenly [the tasks appropriate to] the four seasons." But they also assisted him in his judicial tasks as head of state and in handling the paperwork of general administration. Of the nine officers appointed during the two years when the posts existed, all but one were elder scholars without significant political or administrative experience. Several were men from humble farming backgrounds, which may have made them appear unthreatening to the increasingly insecure emperor. Furthermore, in juridical matters memorials passed directly to the throne without going through the hands of the six officers. In this important respect, therefore, the ad hoc "cabinet" had very little power: it in no sense resembled the Secretariat.

In sum, the six officers were restricted to recommending reversals of criminal verdicts, to advising the throne in matters of Confucian governance, and to evaluating the promise of men who had been recommended for office by various constituencies in the government. In one case, when the officers actually reversed the verdict of a legal case, four of them were quickly forced to resign, and one of the four was eventually executed.⁹¹ The vast reorganization following the abolition of the Secretariat in 1380 had all the marks of a hasty job carried out piecemeal through imperial decrees that were issued without concern for the details of government. Only gradually were alternative means found for meeting the daily needs of the government, and those were never fully and rationally achieved.

Despite such real administrative problems at the center of Ming government, in the early 1380s the emperor was able to push his military campaigns in the southwest to a successful conclusion. In 1372 the emperor had sent the scholar Wang Wei (1323–74)⁹² to Yunnan as an envoy to offer terms of surrender to Basalawarmi (d. 1382), the Mongol Prince of Liang who ruled Yunnan. This region was inhabited chiefly by indigenous

90 On the *Ssu-fu kuan*, see *MC*, 4, p. 18b; Huang Chang-chien, "Lun Ming ch'u ti ssu fu kuan," rpt. in his *Ming Ch'ing shih yen chiu ts'ung kao* (Taipei, 1977), pp. 57–119.

91 The *Ssu-fu kuan* was abolished in August 1382. See *MC*, 4, p. 22b.

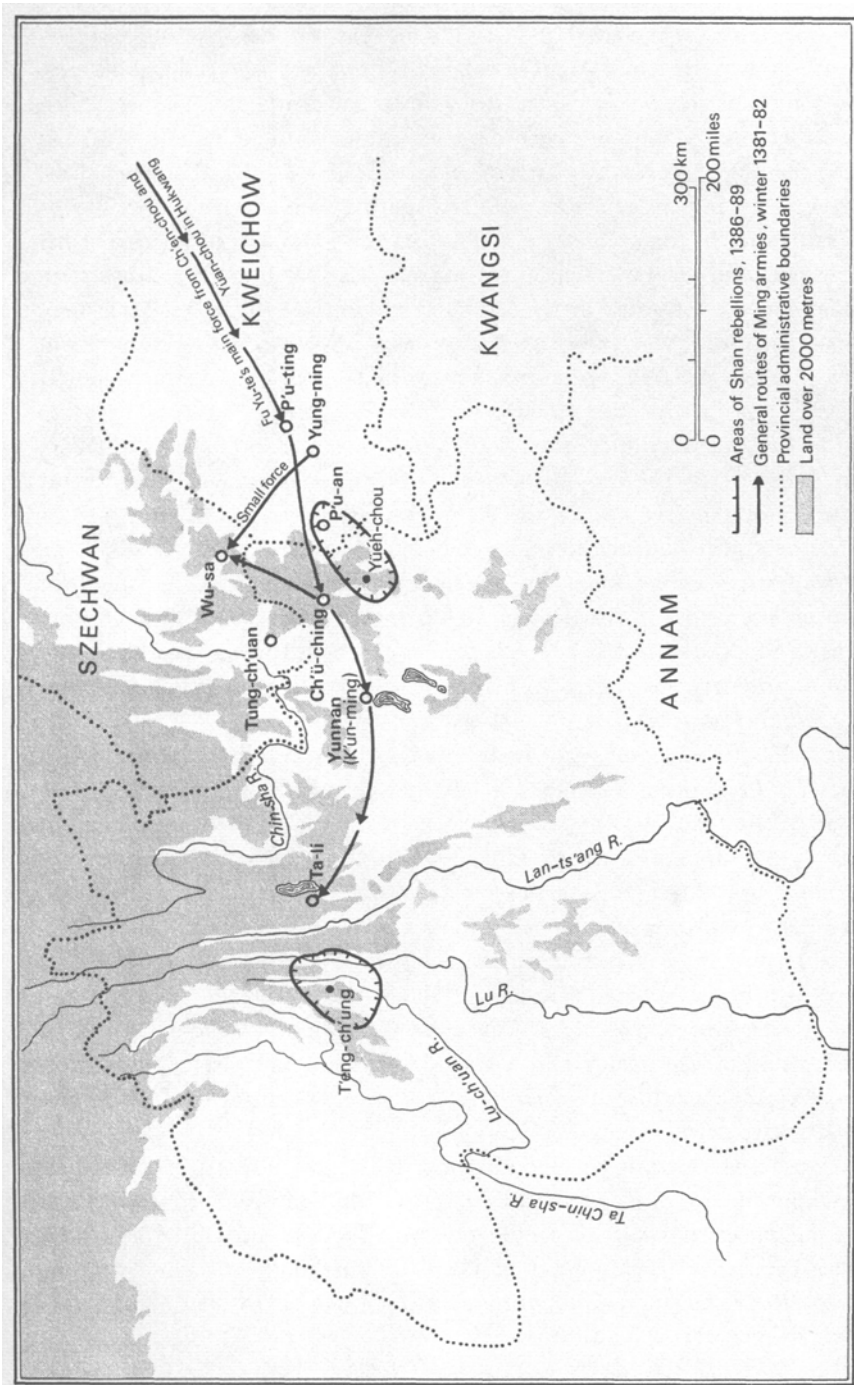
92 Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 1444–47; *MS*, 289, pp. 7414–15.

non-Han, Tibeto-Burman-speaking peoples and still functioned as a loyal province of the Yüan empire. Wang Wei was murdered there in 1374, and this diplomatic effort to annex the region peaceably was followed by another, equally unsuccessful attempt in 1375. Thus in 1381, following the reorganization of his government, the emperor resorted to military force to bring about the submission of the Yunnan peoples and to deny the Mongols control of their southwest base area. At that time the chief cities in Yunnan were K'un-ming, where the court of the Prince of Liang was situated, and Ta-li, the site of the ancient capital of the Ta-li kingdom. Although nominally a province and the seat of a Mongol prince of the blood, the region was ruled not through integrated civil and military administrations, as were other Yüan provinces, but rather through a host of tribal organizations loosely united by the Prince of Liang. Aside from the prince's own ruling apparatus, there was an indigenous one headed by the Tuan family at Ta-li. Both organizations had to be overcome before Yunnan could be incorporated into the Ming empire.

In September 1381 Fu Yu-te was made commander of the Yunnan expeditionary forces, with generals Lan Yü and Mu Ying acting as his assistants. As he had during the northern expeditions, the emperor in this case formulated the basic design of the campaign, leaving the details to his generals in the field. The campaign army comprised 300,000 troops. The emperor ordered the main force to approach the region through Ch'en-chou and Yüan-chou prefectures (respectively, modern Yüan-ling and Chih-chiang, Hunan) in Hu-kuang province and to advance to P'u-ting (near An-shun in Kweichow province). From P'u-ting they were to proceed down "the throat of Yunnan" to Ch'ü-ching, about 125 kilometers northeast of K'un-ming in Yunnan province. A smaller force was to march from Yung-ning (near modern Hsü-yung hsien in Szechwan) to Wu-sa (modern Wei-ning, western Kweichow). The emperor calculated that the main army would take K'un-ming easily while the smaller force to the north would draw off defending forces. After the fall of K'un-ming, the main army was to send relief immediately to the small army at Wu-sa, while the bulk of the main army marched directly to Ta-li, 150 miles to the northwest.⁹³

The plans were realized. The emperor saw off the generals in person at Lung-chiang outside the capital. Fu Yu-te's army reached Hu-kuang in October. In December he sent the smaller force to Yung-ning and Wu-sa, while he led the larger force as planned into Yunnan. Basalawarmi sent 100,000 troops to guard Ch'ü-ching, but Fu Yu-te and Mu Ying captured the enemy general and 20,000 of his troops. Fu Yu-te then quickly led a

93 See *MTC*, I, p. 396.



Map 7. The Yunnan campaign, 1381-1382

smaller force to aid the army at Wu-sa, while Lan Yü and Mu Ying hastened toward K'un-ming. On 6 January 1382, Basalawarmi, who had fled his city, burned his princely robes, drove his wife to her death in a lake, and then committed suicide together with his chief ministers. Lan Yü and Mu Ying moved their forces to Ta-li, which capitulated in April 1382. The head of the Tuan dynasty and his relatives were transported to Nanking.

Meanwhile the Shan chieftain Ssu Lun-fa (d. 1399 or 1400), head of the native Shan state at Lu-ch'uan (near modern T'eng-ch'ung in southwestern Yunnan), was established as the native chieftain (*t'u-ssu*) for the P'ing-mien Pacification Office.⁹⁴ "Native chieftains" were appointed in south and west China in Yüan and Ming times to exercise indigenous administrative power in those areas where the Chinese farming population was too small to provide the tax base for regular local government. Ssu Lun-fa rebelled in 1386 and had to be put down with force. Yunnan remained a difficult military problem throughout the Hung-wu reign. In fact, Mu Ying spent the rest of his life engaged in frequent military actions against the Shan and other minority peoples there, in particular against such Sino-Tibetan ethnic groups as the Lolos. In April 1383 Fu Yu-te and Lan Yü were recalled from Yunnan, but Mu Ying was left in command there as the hereditary military governor to oversee a civil administrative structure that paralleled provincial governments elsewhere.

In 1382 the emperor's apparent favoritism toward Buddhism was attacked by Li Shih-lu, a high official.⁹⁵ Li, a native of Shantung, was a scholar of the Chu Hsi (1130–1200) school. In 1382 he was appointed to head of the Grand Court of Revision (*Ta-li ssu*) which had begun to function again for the first time since 1368. Li Shih-lu felt strongly that the emperor was according undue honors to Buddhist monks. A number of monks had been awarded important positions in the government, and others had been accorded special privileges in the palace. In 1382 the emperor reorganized the imperial agencies that oversaw Buddhist and Taoist activities in the realm and assigned to them the less grandiose new titles, Central Buddhist Registry (*Seng-lu ssu*) and Central Taoist Registry (*Tao-lu ssu*).

In 1382 the emperor ordered that sacrifices be conducted for Confucius throughout the empire—perhaps as a sop to his Confucian critics. Reversing a policy set in 1369, according to which such rites could be held only by the Confucian family head at Ch'ü-fu, Shantung, the emperor now ordered all Confucian temples throughout the empire to offer sacrifices to

94 For Ssu Lun-fa, see the biography of his son Ssu Jen-fa (fl. 1400–45) in *DMB*, pp. 1208–14.

95 Biography in *MS*, 139, p. 3988–89.

the sage in the autumn and spring of each year.⁹⁶ And in June 1382 he allegedly went in person to the National University to deliver talks on three chapters of the *Book of documents* after he had paid his formal respects to Confucius.⁹⁷ Furthermore, in September he reopened the civil service examination system,⁹⁸ which had been suspended during the preceding decade.

Li Shih-lu was not alone in attacking the emperor's favor toward Buddhism. His subordinate in the Grand Court of Revision, the scholar Ch'en Wen-hui, submitted a formal remonstrance reproving the emperor for promoting Buddhists into key positions. The emperor did not heed his criticism, and Ch'en for his part was so frightened of the emperor's wrath that he jumped from a bridge in Nanking and drowned himself.⁹⁹ Li Shih-lu attacked the emperor for abandoning "the learning of the sages and giving honors to alien teachings." In the presence of the emperor he upbraided the ruler for his indulgence toward Buddhism and Taoism; haughtily dashing his court audience tablet to the floor of the palace, he begged permission to retire from imperial service. In a fury, the emperor immediately ordered his military officials to beat Li to death with their bare hands. He died on the steps of the palace.

Li and Ch'en were correct in their view that the emperor favored Buddhists. But he did so primarily out of a syncretic vision that the Three Teachings (Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism) were reducible to one ethical doctrine. In 1382 the scholar Shen Shih-jung, a native of Fukien, was summoned to Nanking. He taught the emperor much about the syncretic way.¹⁰⁰ In 1375 Shen had advised the emperor in the writing of his commentary to the *Tao te ching*, and now he became an advisor in the Hanlin Academy, which had been restaffed to provide the emperor with the literate expertise he so sorely needed in the wake of the abolition of the Secretariat.

The emperor's principal wife, née Ma, died on 17 September 1382. After her death the emperor and the princes became more dependent on the advice of Buddhist monks. The princes of the blood were ordered to Nanking to join the emperor in mourning. The funeral was held on 31 October, when her remains were buried at Filial Piety Mausoleum (*Hsiao-ling*), a mausoleum the emperor had ordered constructed in the eastern suburb of the capital. The emperor directed each of his princes to select a Buddhist monk as advisor in

⁹⁶ *MTC*, I, p. 396. ⁹⁷ *KC*, 7, p. 620. ⁹⁸ *MTC*, I, p. 402. ⁹⁹ *MTC*, I, p. 398.

¹⁰⁰ *MTC*, I, pp. 405–406. On Shen, see Ming T'ai-tsu, "Yü Han-lin tai chao Shen Shih-jung," *Yü chih wen chi* (rpt. Taipei, 1965), 8, pp. 17b–18a. Shen was the author of *Hsü yüan chiao lun*, preface dated 1385 (n.p., 1875 woodblock edn.).

religious matters and to take that monk with him upon returning to his princely estate. The monk Tsung-lo, recently returned from Tibet, advised the emperor on the details of the empress's funeral and recommended learned monks to assist in the recitations of Buddhist scriptures. Among them was Tao-yen, who accompanied the Prince of Yen, Chu Ti, in the ceremonies.¹⁰¹ When the Prince of Yen returned to Peking after the funeral, Tao-yen accompanied him as a clerical advisor. He took up residence in a monastery and advised the prince in various matters both before and after his usurpation in 1402.¹⁰² Chu Ti later bestowed on him the name Kuang-hsiao or "broadened filiality," when he ordered the monk to resume secular life and to serve in the government.

The emperor's first experiment in cabinet rule came to an end in August 1382, when he abolished the Four Assisting Offices. But he soon set up other organizations that performed cabinet duties more professionally. In November he abolished the Bureau of Remonstrance (*Chien yüan*) that he had instituted in July 1380, immediately following the abolition of the unified Censorate. He then created the Chief Surveillance Office (*Tu ch'a yüan*), which had eight senior censors who were responsible for twelve censorial circuits. One of the first senior censors was the scholar Chan Hui (d. 1393), a native of Wu-yüan in Anhwei and the son of the prominent Anhwei literatus Chan T'ung.¹⁰³ Chan Hui had been recommended for a special examination, administered in Nanking by the Ministry of Personnel several months earlier in October 1382. Some 3,700 "budding talents" (*hsiu-ts'ai*) had been brought into government service through this process. Many were assigned to extremely important posts in the administration, including the post of minister. The special examination produced men whose talents fell into the six areas: (1) learned in the classics and cultivated in behavior, (2) expert in written style, (3) penetrating in comprehension of the meaning of the classical books, (4) outstanding in moral qualities, (5) master of the principles of statecraft, and (6) methodical in speech.¹⁰⁴

But for day-to-day administrative advice, the emperor could find no workable alternative to falling back upon an ad hoc group of scholar-advisors who eventually formed an informal cabinet. In December 1382 he established the position of grand secretary (*ta hsüeh-shih*) to offer advice and to review state documents. Grand secretaries were appointed as officials on call at various palaces in the Forbidden City: a typical title would be grand secretary of the

¹⁰¹ Tao-yen's biographies may be found under Yao Kuang-hsiao in *DMB*, pp. 1561–65; *MS*, 145, p. 4079–82.

¹⁰² *MC*, 4, p. 23a; *MTC*, I, p. 405.

¹⁰³ For biographies of Chan T'ung, see *DMB*, pp. 43–44, and *MS*, 136, pp. 3927–29; and of Chan Hui, see *DMB*, pp. 35–36, and *MS*, 136, p. 3929.

¹⁰⁴ *MC*, 4, p. 23a; *MTC*, I, p. 404.

Palace of Literary Splendor. In 1382 the emperor appointed four grand secretaries from the ranks of the Hanlin academicians. Since the grand secretaries, assigned to different halls and palaces, were not clustered in one office, they could offer no unified challenge to the emperor's will.¹⁰⁵

1383 TO 1392: YEARS OF INTENSIFYING SURVEILLANCE AND TERROR

The emperor apparently faced increasingly troublesome disciplinary problems from his high-ranked followers in the 1380s, and as the decade wore on he brutally eliminated them. His nephew Li Wen-chung (1339–84), ennobled as a duke in 1370 with an unusually large annual stipend of 3,000 piculs of grain, was appointed in 1383 to head the National University. His particular assignment was to restore the discipline in the school, for the emperor had concluded that discipline was extremely lax. Li was the emperor's only close relative with any learning, having studied with the Chin-hua (Chekiang) scholars Hu Han (1307–81) and Fan Tsu-kan from 1358 to 1362. But from early times his loyalty to his uncle had been uncertain. Nevertheless, the emperor placed him in extremely important positions. In 1383, when he was asked to serve concurrently as head of the National University, he was already serving as the chief military commissioner. But toward the end of the year he began to grow rather critical of the emperor and to build up a following of individuals who perhaps saw him as a possible claimant to the throne.¹⁰⁶

It was perhaps a warning to Li Wen-chung when the minister of justice K'ai Chi, a native of Lo-yang, was imprisoned and his vice-minister and secretary were executed in January 1384. K'ai Chi had entered the emperor's service after having been examined successfully in the classics in 1381.¹⁰⁷ He was an extremely capable administrator. The records suggest that he was gifted in administering fiscal and penal matters, as well as in managing large public works projects. But in the fall of 1384, K'ai Chi was impeached by an investigating censor for his allegedly malicious and brutal use of the penal system to harm his enemies.¹⁰⁸ He had been trusted by the emperor; in 1382 it was he who had formulated the categories to be tested in the special examination held in Nanking.¹⁰⁹ But in 1384 a censor charged him with misleading the emperor by manipulating memorials sent to the throne. These accusations quickly brought about his downfall.

¹⁰⁵ *KC*, 7, p. 630. ¹⁰⁶ *DMB*, p. 886; *MTC*, 1, p. 424.

¹⁰⁷ Biography in *MS*, 138, pp. 3977–78. See also *MC*, 4, p. 22b.

¹⁰⁸ *MTC*, 1, p. 421; *KC*, p. 638. ¹⁰⁹ *MTC*, 1, p. 403.

Li Wen-chung also fell under a cloud and died under suspicious circumstances in 1384. Li's biographers in the official history say that he had criticized the emperor for relying unduly on palace eunuchs for important political functions, for killing officials, and other matters. Perhaps it was such criticism that provoked the incident, although his criticism seems milder than that offered by other scholars on previous occasions. It is also suggested that the emperor may have ordered the deaths of Li Wen-chung's numerous followers, for apparently he had gathered a large following at his mansion in the capital.¹¹⁰

Li's accusation may have been well-founded, for the emperor himself concluded that the eunuchs had acquired too much influence. In July 1384 he forbade eunuch participation in political affairs.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, as functionaries assisting the emperor in handling the paperwork of government, they were indispensable and growing in importance.

Despite the emperor's claims to orthodoxy and fairness, there were criticisms of his harsh methods. In 1384 the scholar Hsiao Ch'i (1325–96), a native of T'ai-ho, Kiangsi, submitted a lengthy memorial dealing with ten points of governance in which he charged that the emperor had been applying unduly severe punishments.¹¹² He wanted to discontinue the practice of arbitrary and irregular punishments, and he urged that the law code be applied in setting punishments. In 1385 another scholar, Lien Tzu-ning (d. 1402), from Hsin-kan in Kiangsi, offered frank criticism that was equally damning.¹¹³ Lien had passed the metropolitan examination in 1385 and then sat for the palace examination. In his palace examination paper he argued that the human resources of the empire were limited and therefore the emperor should not execute large numbers of people for trivial reasons. He clearly implied that this was in fact what the emperor was then doing. Neither man was punished for his open criticism of the emperor's harsh rule.

Shortly after these remonstrations the emperor severely punished Kuo Huan, the vice-minister of revenue. He was put to death in May 1385, having been charged with embezzling 7 million piculs of grain. Hundreds of people were implicated in his crime and put to death.¹¹⁴ These included such high officials as the ministers of rites and justice and the vice-ministers of war and works. In November 1385 the emperor disclosed far higher figures

¹¹⁰ *MTC*, I, p. 424.

¹¹¹ *MC*, 5, p. 2a. Eunuchs were actually employed on important tasks during this reign. See Huang Chang-chien, "Lun [Huang Ming] 'Tsu hsün lu' so chi Ming ch'u huan kuan chih tu," *BIHP*, 32 (1961) pp. 77–98, rpt. in his *Ming Ch'ing shih yen chiu t'ung kao* (Taipei, 1977), pp. 1–30.

¹¹² *MS*, 139, p. 3874; *MTC*, I, p. 431.

¹¹³ Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 911–12; *MS*, 141, p. 4022–23.

¹¹⁴ *KC*, 8, p. 653. T'an Ch'ien ascribes this harshness to the emperor's lingering hatred for the lax laws and governing procedures of the Yüan period.

for Kuo Huan's embezzlement. The emperor's *Ta kao* (Grand pronouncement) proclaimed that Kuo Huan had actually embezzled 24 million piculs of grain and that the lower figure of 7 million had been announced because the people would never have believed the actual figure. The emperor noted that the corrupt granary clerks who had made this embezzlement possible had been subjected to brutal tortures.¹¹⁵ Still later, in the *Ta kao san pien* (Third installment of the grand pronouncements), published in 1387, the emperor acknowledged that he had used such punishments as severing fingers, cutting off feet, shaving the head, and tattooing. He also admitted that "countless numbers of people" had been killed.¹¹⁶

During the 1380s the emperor repudiated the judicial administration of his early reign. In April 1384 he ordered that all government agencies that administered punishments be removed from the palace and rebuilt outside the city walls to the north of Nanking, in the direction identified with harsh winter, death, and punishment. He relocated the Ministry of Justice, the Censorate, and the Grand Court of Revision in a new compound called Kuan-ch'eng, outside the T'ai-p'ing Gate of the palace city. This took its name from the nine-star constellation (*kuan-so*) traditionally viewed as a celestial prison. The three legal offices were moved to Kuan-ch'eng in December, a move accompanied by a comprehensive winter review of all criminal cases in which the death penalty had been awarded.¹¹⁷

If the relocation of these judicial agencies was meant to signify stricter control of the judicial apparatus, the executions of several high-ranked officials in the spring of 1385 may have reinforced that impression. In May the emperor executed his minister of personnel, Yü Ch'i, and a National University instructor named Chin Wen-cheng for having allegedly slandered the reputation of Sung Na, the head of the National University.¹¹⁸ Wu Yung, the head of the Academy of Judicial Review (*Shen-hsing yüan*), was also executed, accused of accepting false confessions obtained by torture during the Kuo Huan embezzlement case. He was thus held responsible for the wrongful death of many innocent people.¹¹⁹

A metropolitan examination was held in the spring of 1385 and was followed by a palace examination on 10 April. The emperor awarded the metropolitan degree to 472 scholars; among them was Lien Tzu-ning, his outspoken critic.¹²⁰ The emperor wanted to employ these scholars in positions of authority where they would remain personally loyal to him and

115 Ming T'ai-tsu, *Ta kao*, (1385); rpt. in *Ming ch'ao k'ai kuo wen hsien*, 1, pp. 55-56, 77.

116 Ming T'ai-tsu, *Ta kao san pien* (1387); rpt. in *Ming ch'ao k'ai kuo wen hsien*, 1, p. 347.

117 See Ming T'ai-tsu, "Yü hsing kuan," *Yü chih wen chi* (1965 ed.), 8, p. 14b; *KC*, 8, p. 641.

118 *MTC*, 1, p. 436; biography of Sung Na in *MS*, 137, pp. 3952-53.

119 *MTC*, 1, p. 436.

120 *MTC*, p. 432; L. C. Goodrich, "Who was T'an-hua in 1385?" *Ming Studies*, 3 (1976) pp. 9-10.

fight the corruption of vested interests on his behalf. For the first time, the most successful graduates of the palace examination were given appointments in the Hanlin Academy. Aside from the appointments of compiler and examiner (*ch'ien-t'ao*), a few other specially promising and highly ranked graduates called *shu-chi shih* were also given Hanlin assignments. This began a practice that remained important throughout Ming and Ch'ing times.¹²¹ Still other graduates were assigned to observe government (*kuan cheng*) in various agencies in Nanking. In September over 67 metropolitan degree holders were assigned as supervising secretaries (*chi-shih chung*) in the six offices of scrutiny and in the six ministries. They were to serve on probation as bureau secretaries in these offices.

Early in 1387 the emperor again publicly displayed his change of heart and renewed concern for justice. The Imperial Bodyguard (*Chin-i wei*), a special bodyguard in the palace that had been given extraordinary powers, was ordered to burn its instruments of torture.¹²² Its brutal interrogations of political prisoners had been notorious and had caused resentment among officials.

The emperor continued this public campaign to restore his prestige and authority by promulgating three of his famous *Grand pronouncements*. In these the emperor made it clear that while he cared deeply for his people and wanted to rule with benevolence, he would resort to the most brutal tactics to bring to an end practices detrimental to the welfare and security of his empire.

The term *ta kao* is an allusion to the various pronouncements made by sage kings which have been preserved in the *Book of documents*. By using this term to describe his own proclamations, the emperor ranked himself with the great rulers of antiquity. The first of these pronouncements was promulgated on 3 November 1385. All schools in the empire were required to test students on its contents. It outlined ten categories of criminal misbehavior and specified that defendants in criminal proceedings who could recite the text would receive automatic reductions of their punishments. The second was issued on 16 December 1386, together with a reprint of the first pronouncement. The third appeared early in 1387.¹²³

121 See Lienche Tu Fang, "Ming ch'ao kuan hsüan lu," preface, in *Ch'ing-hua hsüeh pao*, NS 5, No. 2 (December 1966), pp. 30–119.

122 *MC*, 5, pp. 7a–b.

123 The prefaces to the three pronouncements are dated 3 November 1385, 14 April 1386, and 5 January 1387. The second pronouncement has an appended colophon dated 16 December 1386, in which the emperor notes that the first and second pronouncements were promulgated together on that date. The third pronouncement, the preface of which is dated 22 December 1386, contains an internal reference to the date 17 February 1387 (see *Ta kao san pien*, in Ming T'ai-tsu, *K'ai kuo wen hsien*, p. 400), so it could not have been published before then. See Ch'ang Pi-te, "Yü chieh *Ta kao* ch'ien, hsü, san pien hsü lu," in his *T'an an ch'ün shu t'i shih* (Taipei, 1972), pp. 45–48.

These texts were prepared either by the emperor himself or by officials under his supervision. They present the emperor's concern about corruption in the empire and recount the methods that were to be used to root it out. The emphasis is on crimes committed by officials and clerks in local government offices, including such bureaucratic crimes as skimming tax receipts, extortion by *yamen* runners, inefficiency, and simple incompetence. Bribery was possibly the most common crime, and the emperor outlined four ways to deal with it: (1) by imposing collective liability on parties to bribes, (2) by forbidding contacts between private citizens and local officials and exchanges of stolen goods between them, (3) by punishing both parties to a bribe with equal severity, and (4) by establishing procedures that would allow private citizens to take corrupt officials directly to the capital for trial without following routine judicial procedures.¹²⁴

The first proclamation gave village elders the right to petition the throne directly when local officials were corrupt or incompetent.¹²⁵ In it, the emperor noted that local officials frequently harmed the people by using the community schools (*she-hsiieh*) to fatten themselves. Only the rich, he charged, could afford to get their sons admitted. Officials also extorted money from families with three or four taxable males by forcing them to buy releases from labor service for their sons.¹²⁶ The emperor also detailed numerous abuses by the tax captains (*liang-chang*), wealthy households assigned to collect and remit the grain levies from farming households.¹²⁷ He further attacked by name individual officials like Ju T'ai-su, the minister of finance. He criticized Ju for deliberately exaggerating the amount of his paperwork. Ju T'ai-su, a native of Tse-chou (Shansi), had entered government service in 1371. In 1375 he had submitted a lengthy memorial containing severe criticisms of the emperor's administration. He charged that only one or two percent of the talented men in government were still alive, the rest having lost their lives in various purges. Ju charged that those remaining in government were worthless incompetents. In 1385 the emperor charged Ju T'ai-su with the same incompetence.¹²⁸

In the second pronouncement the emperor dealt with corruption among security forces and *yamen* officials, and displayed a detailed knowledge of events in the counties of the realm. He praised a certain Ch'en Shou-liu, who with three other local men had arrested a *yamen* clerk and taken him to Nanking for trial. They took along a copy of the first proclamation as their

124 See Teng Ssu-yü, "Ming Ta kao yü Ming ch'u chih cheng chih she hui," *Yen-ching hsiieh pao*, 20 (1936); rpt. in Ming T'ai-tsu, *Ming ch'ao k'ai kuo wen hsien*, I, frontmatter, pp. 1-26, esp. pp. 11-12.

125 *Ta kao*, pp. 42, 49-50. 126 *Ta kao*, p. 48. 127 *Ta kao*, p. 63.

128 *Ta kao*, pp. 73-74. For Ju T'ai-su's biography, see *MS*, 139, pp. 3986-87.

authority. The emperor rewarded them with three years' exemption from labor service and threatened to execute the entire clan of anyone who in the future harassed Ch'en and his associates.¹²⁹ The emperor criticized tax captains in Chia-ting county (modern Kiangsu) for inventing eighteen types of irregular exactions.¹³⁰ He noted that countless local policemen had refused to permit village elders to take guilty clerks to the capital for trials. He ordered one such policeman beheaded and had his head exposed in the marketplace, while the clerk in question had a foot amputated.¹³¹ In general, the emperor paid much attention to the operation of prisons and the proper examination of corpses in capital crimes.¹³²

The second proclamation also reveals that he felt some remorse about his severe justice. Harsh punishments did not completely deter people from doing wrong. The emperor repeated what he had pointed out in his commentary to the *Tao te ching*: "The more severe my government, the more numerous the violations." And he noted that "if I am lenient, people say I am muddle-headed, the law ruined and discipline lax; if I am harsh, people call me a tyrant."¹³³ Thus, by this time he had become acutely aware of the limits of his great power.

The third proclamation contains a list of "bad" metropolitan degree holders and National University students (*chien-sheng*).¹³⁴ He prescribed the death penalty for sixty-eight metropolitan degree holders and fifty-three students; exile for five degree holders and two students; penal servitude for seventy degree holders and twelve students. After these lists, which must have discouraged men of learning, the emperor appended an edict. He would put to death any man of talent who refused to serve the government when summoned. As he put it: "To the edges of the land, all are the king's subjects. . . . Literati in the realm who do not serve the ruler are estranged from teachings [of Confucius]. To execute them and confiscate the property of their families is not excessive."¹³⁵ He also noted that in order to deal with the Kuo Huan corruption case, he had had to employ brutal punishments that were not authorized by the legal code.¹³⁶

These strictures must have dismayed literati who faced the possibility of having to serve the emperor. The detailed cases of four censors who had been sentenced to death by slicing and fourteen who had been placed in chains (including the hapless Ju T'ai-su, who was mentioned in the first pronouncement), must have strengthened their resolve to avoid government

129 Ming T'ai-tsu, *Ta kao hsü pien*, 1386, rpt. in *Ming ch'ao k'ai kuo wen hsien*, I, pp. 112–13.

130 *Ta kao hsü pien*, pp. 123–24. 131 *Ta kao hsü pien*, pp. 163–64.

132 *Ta kao hsü pien*, pp. 153–54, 161–62. 133 *Ta kao hsü pien*, p. 219.

134 *Ta kao san pien*, pp. 276–314. 135 *Ta kao san pien*, pp. 343–44.

136 *Ta kao san pien*, p. 347.

service.¹³⁷ One particularly gruesome story, told by the emperor in vivid detail, concerns a seller of poison who had been brought in by the Imperial Bodyguard. The emperor ordered him to take the poison he had been selling and interrogated him about its composition while it took effect. The emperor inquired about an antidote and after hearing details of its preparation, duly had it prepared. He waited until the seller was in deep agony before administering the antidote. On the next day, when the seller had recovered from the poison's effects, the emperor had him beheaded and his head mounted on a pole in a public place.¹³⁸

The emperor used the third proclamation to continue his purge of Hu Wei-yung's supporters. The text presents charges against several individuals whose real or imagined factional ties with Hu had recently been brought to light. Charges against Lin Hsien, a former commander of the guard at Ming-chou (Ning-po), included the allegation that he had acted as Hu's agent and made contact with Japanese military men. Lin Hsien had allegedly exceeded his authority by taking over boats sent by a Japanese lord offering tribute to the Ming ruler. Hu Wei-yung charged him with dereliction of duty in a memorial to the throne, whereupon Lin Hsien was banished by the emperor to Japan. He remained there for three years until Hu Wei-yung secretly sent someone to Japan to fetch him back. Upon his return, he set out to present tribute to the Ming court; but he intended to use his escort of 400 armed Japanese warriors to create a riot in the capital. Before he reached Nanking, Hu Wei-yung had been executed, so the Japanese troops were sent off to Yunnan to bolster Ming defenses there. The emperor noted that he had learned about Lin Hsien's activities in 1386, when Lin confessed the particulars in the course of a trial. The emperor ordered that Lin and his clan be executed. He later noted that on 17 November 1386 Lin Hsien and his son had indeed been taken to Ta-chung Bridge in Nanking and executed, while his wife and concubine were sentenced to slavery.¹³⁹

We cannot be certain how widely the emperor's proclamations circulated, but a poem from the period suggests that they were well known. Hsieh Ying-fang (1296–1392), a native of Wu-chin county (modern Kiangsu) who remained a recluse scholar in the Hung-wu period,¹⁴⁰ wrote a poem entitled "Tu Ta kao hsiang ko" (Village song about reading the Grand Pronouncements). The poem suggests that even farmers were familiar with the texts:

137 *Ta kao san pien*, pp. 403–07. 138 *Ta kao san pien*, pp. 360–63.

139 *Ta kao san pien*, pp. 327–30.

140 Biography in *MS*, 282, pp. 7224–25.

Heaven's [i.e., the emperor's] words are earnest, sure in
guiding men's fortunes.
Wind swirls, thunder is frightening, the spirits are
startled to listen.
Hanging the text on the ox's horns, reading it at the
field's edge,
How delightful that the farmer can also read simple
writing.¹⁴¹

Despite the emperor's brutal tactics in dealing with those he considered disloyal, critics still came forth. In 1388 the most eloquent of all appeared, a young man of twenty named Hsieh Chin (1369–1415). This brilliant and courageous man had received his metropolitan degree in 1388.¹⁴² The emperor, curious about this precocious young man, invited him to present his views to the throne. Hsieh took the opportunity to deliver a cutting attack on the emperor's style of ruling.

While acknowledging the emperor's obvious achievements in unifying the land, restoring the economy, and eliminating wasteful and decadent practices, Hsieh Chin criticized the judicial system. In particular, Hsieh attacked the emperor's habit of incessantly and unpredictably rewriting the law codes:

When commands are frequently changed, the people harbor doubts. Doubting, they lose trust [in the ruler]. When punishments are too numerous, the people grow cynical [about the laws]. Cynical, they are no longer incorrupt. From the beginning of the dynasty until now, some twenty years have elapsed. Never has there been a moment when the laws were not in flux, and never has there been a day on which the people did not make errors. . . . I have heard that your majesty has grown angry and pulled out roots, cut tendrils, and executed evil traitors. I have never heard of an edict praising a single great person. . . . Some people in the morning are esteemed [by the throne], and in the evening they are executed. One moment some people are sentenced, and in the next forgiven.

Hsieh added that no one dared to criticize the throne for these forms of misrule, because all feared the brutal wrath of the emperor: "Everyone wants peace and honor for his parents."

He elaborated on this point:

Remonstrating [the throne] is hard, however, and brings unfathomable calamities to one. If an [official] increases the sentence [of a criminal], some may say he is being impartial, but if a sentence is reduced, they inevitably suspect bribery. Praising one's superiors is easy and brings one honors, but reversing their errors is

¹⁴¹ Hsieh Ying-fang, *Kuei ch'ao kao* (ca. late Yüan; rpt. Vol. 37 of *Ssu pu ts'ung k'an*, 3rd series, Shanghai, 1936), 8, p. 13a; see Lo Ping-mien, "Ming T'ai-tsu ti wen hsüeh t'ung chih shu," *Chung-kuo hsiieh jen*, 3 (1971), p. 40.

¹⁴² Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 554–58; *MS*, 147, pp. 4115–22.

often difficult and brings disaster. And the disasters reach not merely to oneself, for punishment always extends to one's relatives and friends. Who is willing to abandon his parents, throw away his children, in order to pick at the dragon's scales and incur the wrath of heaven?

Hsieh called on the emperor to reform his rule on many points and to halt the use of "intimidating, extralegal punishments." He insisted that the emperor abolish collective responsibility (*lien-tso*) for criminal acts.¹⁴³

Hsieh Chin may have escaped execution because of his youth. The emperor ignored his complaints, and Hsieh eventually became an important scholar-official under the Yung-lo emperor. But Hsieh's criticism summed up the contemporary view of the Hung-wu emperor's rule. A modern historian has noted that it was between 1385 and 1387, when the emperor was rethinking institutional forms and stressing the supremacy of the law, that he used his harshest extralegal penal measures.¹⁴⁴

Preparations for a final assault on the Mongol leader Naghachu began in September 1385, when the senior generals Feng Sheng, Fu Yu-te, and Lan Yü were ordered to head the military garrison at Peking. But other military priorities intervened, delaying for a year and a half the decisive actions against Naghachu. Ssu Lun-fa, the "native chieftain" of the Shan nation in western Yunnan and Burmese state of Ava, revolted in January 1386, and Feng Sheng was dispatched with an army of 100,000 to suppress this insurrection. The Lolo people in the region of Yüeh-chou in Yunnan rebelled in March, and Fu Yu-te had to be sent to quell the uprising there. In the summer of 1386, Fu Yu-te went into western Yunnan to help Mu Ying put down an uprising in Tung-ch'uan. Thus it was only in December 1386 that the emperor actually ordered Feng Sheng to lead an army of 200,000 against the Mongols. Feng Sheng's force went forth in January 1387 with Fu Yu-te and Lan Yü as assisting generals and stopped first just to the east of Peking at T'ung-chou. Their ultimate objective was Naghachu's headquarters at Chin-shan, some 70 miles north of modern Shenyang. The plan for this expedition was drawn up by the emperor.

With the main army halted at T'ung-chou, Feng sent Lan Yü and a cavalry unit to launch a surprise attack on a Mongol force camped at Ch'ing-chou (near Lin-hsi in modern Liaoning). Lan Yü executed this maneuver in the snow, capturing the Mongol governor and many horses and prisoners. Toward the end of March, Feng Sheng led his troops north of the border walls and fortified Ta-ning (northwest of Ling-yüan in modern

¹⁴³ *KC*, 9, pp. 684–86.

¹⁴⁴ Huang Chang-chien, "Ta Ming lü kao' k'ao" *BIHP*, 24 (June 1953), pp. 77–101; rpt. in his *Ming Ch'ing shih yen chiu ts'ung kao*, (Taipei, 1977), pp. 155–207.

Liaoning) and other outposts in the region. A garrison of 50,000 troops was left at Ta-ning while the main force continued northeast. In July Feng Sheng camped to the west of Chin-shan. He then returned to Naghachu his former lieutenant Nayira'u, who had been captured by the Ming forces in 1376. Following his capture, he had been made a minor officer in the Ming army and given a wife, a concubine, fields and a residence. In 1387 Feng Sheng sent him to Naghachu with a letter in which he urged the Mongol chieftain to surrender to the Ming forces and to accept the suzerainty of the new regime in China. Nayira'u's diplomacy led Naghachu to surrender to general Lan Yü in October. Naghachu and over 6,500 of his officers and relatives were sent to Nanking; Naghachu himself was granted a marquissate with a stipend of 2,000 piculs of grain, an estate of public fields in Kiangsi, and a mansion in Nanking. He died near Wu-ch'ang on 31 August 1388, probably from overindulgence in alcohol, and was buried outside Nanking.¹⁴⁵

Feng Sheng, who appeared to be at the height of his glory after this successful campaign, was soon cashiered by the emperor. Perhaps the emperor saw Feng Sheng as a rival to his power and prestige, but it may also have been that the emperor was genuinely displeased with Feng's alleged arrogance and misbehavior. Reports of Feng's disorderly behavior reached the emperor in October. The emperor summoned him to Nanking and withdrew his seals of authority.¹⁴⁶ Feng arrived in Nanking escorting Naghachu and the party of surrendered Mongols, and in November the emperor ordered him to take up residence at the middle capital, Feng-yang. He was dismissed from his military command and deprived of his estate in Honan. This transfer effectively removed him from close contact with the Prince of Chou, Chu Su (1361–1425), who resided at K'ai-feng (Honan).¹⁴⁷ The prince's wife was one of Feng Sheng's daughters; they had been married in 1378 when Feng was stationed there as chief commander of the garrison force. That Chu Su and Feng Sheng were unusually close is suggested by the fact that in 1389 the emperor severely disciplined the prince for making a secret visit to Feng Sheng at Feng-yang. Thus the real reason for cashiering Feng Sheng may have been the emperor's suspicions of a dangerous military alliance between the prince and the general.

Feng Sheng was not the only general to take up residence out of harm's way in Feng-yang in 1387. Even T'ang Ho, the emperor's boyhood com-

¹⁴⁵ MTC I, p. 451; Henry Serruys, (*Sino-Mongol relations during the Ming. I*) *The Mongols in China during the Hung-wu period* (1368–1398), in *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques*, Vol. 11 (Bruxelles, 1956–59), pp. 77, 115; KC, 9, p. 673.

¹⁴⁶ KC, 9, p. 673. ¹⁴⁷ Biography in *DMB*, pp. 350–54.

panion, who returned in December from work on the Chekiang coast where he had fortified and garrisoned the coastal defenses against pirates, went back to Feng-yang at this time to live in voluntary retirement.¹⁴⁸ It is clear that he had wished to retire from active duty. He had a stroke in 1390 and stayed out of state affairs thereafter until his death in 1395.

Lan Yü remained on active duty. In December 1387 he was ordered to pursue the Mongol ruler Toghus Temür and his generals.¹⁴⁹ Lan Yü was now the ranking Ming general in the north. In May 1388 he led an army of 150,000 across the Gobi Desert to Lake Buyur, some 500 miles north of Peking, and routed the Mongol forces. Toghus Temür and his elder son T'ien-pao-nu fled, but Lan Yü managed to capture a younger son, Ti-pao-nu. Toghus Temür was later murdered by a kinsman. With this victory, Lan Yü captured one hundred members of the ruler's family and entourage, some 3,000 princes and their subordinates, 77,000 men and women from the Mongol camp, various imperial seals of office, and 150,000 head of stock.

Following his exploits in Mongolia, Lan Yü was recalled to Nanking. He arrived in the capital on 25 September 1388 and presented himself at court the next day to receive his honors from the emperor; but the praise he received was tempered by a reprimand. The emperor had heard that Lan Yü had taken some former Yüan princesses and palace women for his own concubines; Toghus Temür's son Ti-pao-nu had in fact registered a complaint to this effect. One such woman later hanged herself, presumably in observance of the Mongol custom whereby a ruler's wife would commit suicide upon the death of the ruler. The emperor was very unhappy about these reports and delayed promoting Lan Yü to the rank of duke for several months, until January 1389. Despite the emperor's displeasure at Lan's personal behavior, he was most pleased with his military successes. He heaped lavish gifts on Lan and certain of his subordinates, and honored them with a formal banquet in the Feng-t'ien Hall.¹⁵⁰

Just at this time the emperor promulgated his *Wu ch'en ta kao* (Grand pronouncement to the military officers). Like his other "pronouncements," this work recounts the crimes of corrupt individuals who had been tried and sentenced by the emperor. It differs from the earlier pronouncements in that it is written in vernacular Chinese. The emperor did this, he explained, to ensure that all the military men would understand the text. He deliberately avoided using "the language of the 'budding talents' "

¹⁴⁸ KC, 9, p. 688

¹⁴⁹ KC, 8, 676. Setruys, *The Mongols in China during the Hung-wu period*, p. 81.

¹⁵⁰ KC, 9, p. 690.

(*hsiu-ts'ai chih wen*), the classical prose of the literati. The targets of the emperor's trials, as recorded here, were middle- and low-level military officers in the various garrisons (*wei*) who were using their positions to exploit local people and soldiers.¹⁵¹

To deal with the rebellions in the southwest, Fu Yu-te had been transferred to Tung-ch'uan in the summer of 1386. But early in 1388 the border war against the Shan nation took a turn for the worse at Lu-ch'uan in Yunnan. Ssu Lun-fa attacked in February, but was turned back by forces under Mu Ying. He attacked again with greater numbers in April, this time with 300,000 troops and 100 war elephants. Mu Ying responded with cannons and powerful crossbows, attacking with his troops organized in three columns. The Shan rebels were repulsed after a big battle in May. Ssu Lun-fa lost over 40,000 men and 37 elephants, but the Shan leader himself was not captured.¹⁵² Towards the end of July, Fu Yu-te led an army against the Lolo rebels at Tung-ch'uan. The encounter was indecisive, and Mu Ying had to send additional forces in September. In October Mu Ying joined forces with Fu Yu-te to fight A-tzu, the son of a recently deceased "native chieftain" of Yüeh-chou. In January 1389, A-tzu took P'u-an and held it successfully against a recovery attempt led by Fu Yu-te. After regrouping, Fu Yu-te managed to rout A-tzu from P'u-an, capturing some 1,300 of the rebels. A-tzu fled back to Yüeh-chou, where he eventually surrendered during the following month.

Mu Ying petitioned the court to establish a garrison unit (*wei*) at Yüeh-chou to serve as a Ming defense bastion for that part of Yunnan. During August, Fu Yu-te recalled his army from Yunnan, leaving the field there under the command of Mu Ying. Mu Ying himself came to Nanking at the emperor's command in November. The emperor honored him with a banquet in the palace and with gifts of gold, paper currency, and silk. He reputedly said to him, "You allow me to rest without fears for the south."¹⁵³

The Shan chieftain Ssu Lun-fa surrendered early in December 1389, and Lu-ch'uan was pacified. In January 1390 the emperor bestowed honors on fifty-seven meritorious generals and officials, Fu Yu-te among them.¹⁵⁴

151 The preface is dated the twelfth month of the twentieth year of Hung-wu (10 January–7 February 1388); the text of the *Wu ch'en ta kao* reproduced in *Ming ch'ao k'ai kuo wen hsien*, I, appendix, pp. 1–44, is apparently an early twentieth-century manuscript copy of a printed edition held by the Peking Library. See Chang Wei-jen, comp., *Chung-kuo fa chih shih shu mu* (Taipei, 1976), I, p. 134. The editor of *Ming ch'ao k'ai kuo wen hsien* provided no information on the text's provenance. Tan Ch'ien dates promulgation of the text to 16 August 1388. See *KC*, 9, p. 689.

152 *MC*, 5, pp. 10a–b.

153 *MTC*, I, p. 467; *MC*, 5, p. 16b; *MTC*, I, p. 474; *DMB*, p. 1081.

154 *KC*, 9, p. 700.

Shortly afterward, Fu was sent to Peking to assist the Prince of Yen in forthcoming military expeditions into Mongolia.

Chu Ti, the Prince of Yen, and Chu Kang, the Prince of Chin, had not yet tested their military skills in actual battles on the frontier. Early in 1390 the emperor ordered them to join forces in an attempt to eliminate the former Yüan chancellor Yao-chu and his officer, Nayir Bukha. Fu Yu-te was directed to accompany Chu Ti at the head of the Peking army, while general Wang Pi was sent to accompany Chu Kang and the Shansi army.¹⁵⁵ Wang Pi was a Lin-huai (Anhwei) native who had accompanied Fu Yu-te and Mu Ying in the expeditions into Yunnan in 1381 and Feng Sheng in the 1387 campaign that had led to Naghachu's surrender.¹⁵⁶ In 1388, when Lan Yü made his brilliant drive to Lake Buyur, Wang Pi had served as the leader of his vanguard. His daughter was married to Chu Chen (1364–1424), Prince of Ch'u, who had taken up residence at his fief at Wu-ch'ang in 1381.¹⁵⁷ Fu and Wang, two experienced generals with many years of military service, were ordered to obey the commands of the two princes. In February another prince, the emperor's seventh son, Chu Fu (1364–1428), the Prince of Ch'i, who had taken up residence at his fief at Ch'ing-chou (Shantung) in 1382, was also ordered to lead his personal guard north to assist Chu Ti.¹⁵⁸

While these three princes were engaged in military duties on the northern frontier, a fourth prince, Chu Ch'un (1371–1423), began to involve himself in the affairs of his fief. Chu Ch'un, the Prince of Shu, was at Chengtu. He was a man with strong literary talents and intellectual interests. He resided in Feng-yang from 1385 until 1390, when he was ordered to Chengtu by the emperor. When the Tibetans launched an incursion into Szechwan in 1390, the prince asked the emperor to dispatch the Szechwan regional military commissioner Ch'ü Neng, a native of Ho-fei (Anhwei), to put it down. Ch'ü was duly dispatched, and he went into action in the spring under the command of Lan Yü.¹⁵⁹ Thus, although the prince had not yet personally involved himself in military endeavors (and in fact remained primarily a scholar prince), he too was acquiring a knowledge of command responsibilities. The first generation of Ming imperial princes was reaching maturity, and members of that generation were beginning to assume individual importance in the life of the empire.

155 *MC*, 5, p. 18b; *MTC*, I, p. 476. 156 Biography in *MS*, 132, pp. 3862–63.

157 *MS*, 116, p. 3570. 158 *MC*, 5, p. 18b; *MS*, 116, p. 3573.

159 *MS*, 117, p. 3579. While in Feng-yang between 1385 and 1390, he employed Su Po-heng (1329–92?), a Chin-hua scholar, as an advisor; and after he moved to Chengtu, he associated with Fang Hsiao-ju (1357–1402), Su's friend and a fellow disciple of Sung Lien. For Su, see *DMB*, pp. 1214–16; *MS*, 285, pp. 7310–11; for Fang, see *DMB*, pp. 426–33; and *MS*, 141, pp. 4017–20.

In April 1390 Chu Ti and Chu Kang crossed the border and marched into Mongolia, searching for Nayir Bukha. Hearing that he was camped at I-tu Mountain, Chu Ti marched quickly through a snowstorm and obtained the surrender of both Nayir Bukha and Yao-chu. Nayir Bukha later rebelled against Ming rule, but Chu Ti's performance on this campaign evidently impressed the emperor deeply. The emperor credited him for the victory and for securing the Gobi Desert. He permitted Chu Ti to retain the surrendered Mongol troops in his own garrison, which greatly increased the prince's military power and gave him a strategic edge in the civil wars of 1399–1402. The sources state that Nayir Bukha and Yao-chu surrendered with 10,000 subjects.¹⁶⁰

However, not all was well with the princes. In April 1390 Chu Tzu (b. 1369), the emperor's eighth son, and his wife, née Yü, took their own lives. The prince's wife was the daughter of a military officer who had been implicated in Hu Wei-yung's plot. The purge of the Hu faction was revived in 1390; many people were tried and executed. The emperor summoned his son Chu Tzu and his wife to report to Nanking from the prince's estate at Ch'ang-sha, where the prince had taken up residence in 1385. Fearing the emperor's wrath, they took their own lives in Ch'ang-sha, and the emperor thereupon abolished this principedom.¹⁶¹

The second purge of the Hu Wei-yung faction involved even Li Shan-ch'ang, who had long served as a civil official under the emperor.¹⁶² Li's nephew was married to Hu Wei-yung's elder sister, and when Hu's treason plot was uncovered in 1380, there were charges that Li Shan-ch'ang was involved. The emperor did not act on those charges at the time, for he apparently felt that they were unfounded. Charges against Li were renewed in 1385, but as before, the emperor was not inclined to act on them. Nevertheless, in June 1390 a censor impeached Li, alleging that in 1379 he had sent a letter by messenger to the Mongols on behalf of Hu Wei-yung. According to the impeachment, Lan Yü had captured that messenger in 1385 when campaigning against the Mongols in the north. But the censor alleged that Lan Yü's report of the matter to the emperor had been concealed by Li Shan-ch'ang. Charges were also leveled against Li's younger brother and his two sons. The presiding judge at the trial was Chan Hui, an enemy of Li's who soon became minister of justice and concurrently censor-in-chief, a combination of positions that gave him great power at court.

¹⁶⁰ *MTC*, I, p. 479; *MC*, 5, pp. 19a–b; Serruys, *The Mongols in China during the Hung-wu period*, p. 116.

¹⁶¹ *KC*, 9, p. 705; *MC*, 5, p. 19b; *MS*, 116, pp. 3574–75.

¹⁶² *KC*, 9, p. 707; *MC*, 5, p. 20a.

Li Shan-ch'ang was forced to commit suicide in July 1390. His wife, relatives, and over seventy members of his household were executed. Li had "confessed" to his crimes after many unfavorable revelations had been brought to light and many witnesses had testified against him. Among those who lost their lives with Li Shan-ch'ang in this extension of the Hu Wei-yung purge were a number of marquises. To conclude the case, the emperor wrote in his own hand a third version of the *Revelation of the evil faction*.¹⁶³

The Li Shan-ch'ang trial did not pass without criticism from certain members of the literati class. Hsieh Chin, who had earlier submitted a memorial highly critical of the emperor's management of the state, wrote another memorial severely condemning the injustice done to Li Shan-ch'ang. The memorial was drafted on behalf of a bureau director in the Ministry of Works and submitted under the minister's name. But the fact that it had actually been written by Hsieh Chin was not concealed. The emperor did not take offense at Hsieh's argument, which claimed in essence that the case against Li was completely implausible. Hsieh charged that Li had no motive to commit the crimes of which he stood accused; he would not have benefited by them, and therefore the case against him made no sense. But as the Ming historian Chu Kuo-chen (1557–1632?) has pointed out, Hu Wei-yung's crime was treason: he aimed to carry out a coup d'état. Chu argues further that Li Shan-ch'ang was probably just trying to keep his options open, which was a crime in and of itself.¹⁶⁴

Persecution of Hu Wei-yung's followers continued over the next few years. In 1392 Chou Te-hsing, a military leader from Anhwei, was executed on account of his son's misbehavior; his son may have been involved in the Hu Wei-yung affair.¹⁶⁵ Yeh Sheng, from Ho-fei (Anhwei), a man of great military achievements, was also put to death.¹⁶⁶ In 1392 the minister of works, Ch'in K'uei, was incriminated in the Hu Wei-yung case and committed suicide.¹⁶⁷ Aside from executions of persons involved in the Hu affair, many others of high rank and distinction were killed in the early 1390s.

These brutal aspects of political life were criticized in 1392 by a student in the National University. Chou Ching-hsin, from Shantung, submitted a memorial that criticized the emperor's harsh conduct of government. He claimed that the dynasty would not endure long unless the emperor changed his practices. He noted the years of greatest repressions: 1371,

163 *KC*, 9, p. 708. 164 *KC*, 9, p. 716. 165 *Biography in MS*, 132, pp. 3861–62.
166 *Biography in MS*, 131, pp. 3855–56. 167 *Biography in MS*, 138, p. 3974.

when all officials and clerks in the empire were examined; 1380, when the Hu Wei-yung faction was condemned; 1386, when officials who were held to have been sources of chronic injury to the people were arrested; and 1390, a year of mass slaughter of officials and commoners on the basis of trumped-up charges.¹⁶⁸ It is said the emperor agreed with Chou's observations, once again displaying his unpredictable temperament.

Chu Piao, the heir apparent, died unexpectedly on 17 May 1392 after a short illness. He had been sent to Shensi in September 1391 on a mission to "tour and soothe" the people there and to determine whether Sian was a suitable location for the Ming capital. The emperor had felt that Shensi was the most secure region in the empire and thus far more suitable than Nanking as the empire's capital. Arguments to this effect had also been advanced by at least one censor in the government. The heir apparent returned to Nanking in December and presented maps of Shensi and a memorial containing his report on Sian and other cities that were being considered; his recommendations, if any, are not known. He fell ill in January and died that spring. The emperor went into mourning for twelve days, during which time he discussed the succession with his chief advisors.¹⁶⁹

A natural contender for the succession would have been the next son of empress Ma, Chu Shuang. But Liu San-wu (1312–99), a native of Hu-kuang who had joined the emperor's government in 1384 as a member of the Hanlin Academy, recommended that Chu Piao's son be named successor,¹⁷⁰ for this would keep the succession in Chu Piao's line. At issue was the nature of the monarchy. Chu Piao had been groomed as a literate and "civil" ruler, whereas Chu Shuang, like his brother Chu Ti, was a man of arms. Chu Shuang and Chu Ti were by now men of the northern frontier, with many Mongols in their employ; Chu Ti himself may have been the son of a Mongol consort of the emperor. Chu Piao, on the other hand, had been educated by leading literati, including Sung Lien, the leading intellectual of early Ming times. Chu Piao's son, Chu Yün-wen (1377–1402), was much like his father—clearly a man of letters, someone who would prefer to rule by "civil" techniques of moral suasion and indoctrination than by harsh, repressive techniques characteristic of "martial" rule.¹⁷¹ Chu Yün-wen was designated heir apparent on 28 September 1392, five months after the death of his father.

In February 1391 General Fu Yu-te had been ordered to Peking to

168 *MC*, 6, p. 7b; *KC*, 9, pp. 734–35; biography in *MS*, 139, pp. 3998–99.

169 *MC*, 6, pp. 2a, 3b; Farmer, *Early Ming government*, pp. 93–94.

170 *MC*, 6, p. 5a. 171 Biography in *DMB*, pp. 397–404.

reinforce the garrisons under the command of the Prince of Yen. Soon after his arrival there Ajashiri, the former Yüan Prince of Liao, revolted. Ajashiri had surrendered to the Ming in October 1388 and had been transported to Nanking along with a number of other surrendered Mongol officers. In the summer of 1389 he had been installed as the head of T'ai-ning commandery in the territory of the Uriyangkhad (probably near modern T'ao-nan on the Manchurian Plain in Kirin). At T'ai-ning, Ajashiri resumed authority over his own people, although now in the name of the Ming. However, he rebelled against the Ming in May 1391, whereupon Chu Ti and Fu Yu-te were compelled to march against him. They evidently scored a victory over Ajashiri, for he once again acknowledged Ming authority.¹⁷²

When the Hung-wu emperor proclaimed his various great pronouncements between 1385 and 1387, he regarded them as equally binding as the laws embodied in the *Ta Ming lü* (Great Ming code). The code had been revised extensively in 1389, but the final version was not compiled until 1397. In the meantime, the *Grand pronouncements* served an important judicial function. Thus from time to time the emperor took steps to see that his *Grand pronouncements* were widely circulated and made known to the populace. In November 1391, he reiterated his command that the entire empire study the pronouncements and the law code which were then circulating. At the same time, some 193,400 common people were honored in Nanking for their ability to recite the entire text of the pronouncements.¹⁷³

In 1392 political events in Korea, where trouble had been brewing for several years, came to a head. Yi Söng-gye unseated the Koryö ruler, Wang Yao, and established the Yi dynasty, which ruled Korea until 1910. With the founding of the Yi, Korean–Chinese relations entered a period of relative stability.¹⁷⁴

In 1372 the emperor had issued an edict to the Koryö king in which he praised the Koreans for their knowledge of the Chinese histories and classics and for their cultural affinity to China. He commanded the Korean king to follow the ancient Chinese custom of visiting the court of the Son of Heaven once every three years, bearing tributary gifts.¹⁷⁵ At the same time,

172 *MTC*, I, p. 486; Serruys, *The Mongols in China during the Hung-wu period*, p. 285.

173 *KC*, 9, p. 724. On the question of the *Ta Ming lü kao* as a joint compilation, see Huang Chang-chien, "Ta Ming lü kao' k'ao," pp. 77–101; Yang I-fan, "Hung-wu san shih nien Ta Ming lü k'ao," *Hsiieh hsi yü ssu k'ao*, 5 (1981), pp. 50–54.

174 For a thorough discussion, see Donald Neil Clark, "Autonomy, legitimacy, and tributary politics: Sino-Korean relations in the fall of Koryö and the founding of the Yi," Diss. Harvard University, 1978. See also the biography of Yi Söng-gye in *DMB*, pp. 1598–603.

175 *MSL*, *T'ai-tsu shih lu*, 76, p. 1401; Wu Chi-hua, "Ming tai chien kuo tui wai ti chi pen t'ai tu chi chüeh ts'e," *Tung fang wen hua*, 16, No. 1–2 (1978), pp. 184–93, esp. p. 187.

he ordered the Secretariat to explain the rules of tributary relations to the ambassadors from Champa, Annam, Java, Brunei, Srivijaya, Siam, and Cambodia.

Early in his reign, the Ming emperor had proclaimed a noninterventionist policy toward the states to the east and south. All foreign states, he held, were equal to one another but less than equal to the Middle Kingdom. Therefore the Ming court would not attack them unless compelled to do so for defense. At the same time, the court had clear interests in the stability of bordering states in Korea and Annam. The basic foreign policy of the reign was summed up by the emperor as follows: "Those [foreign states] that do China no harm must not be hastily invaded." The Mongols posed the only substantial threat from abroad that he recognized.¹⁷⁶

In the early 1370s Koryŏ tribute missions to Nanking had been frequent, far outnumbering missions from the Ming court to P'yŏng-yang, the capital of Koryŏ.¹⁷⁷ In 1373 the emperor took steps to reduce the frequency of these missions, perhaps in an attempt to obtain from the Koryŏ rulers concessions that would enhance Ming military security in the northeast. The emperor limited the missions to one every three years and in doing so provoked a mild rupture in relations between the two states.

The Mongols continued to present a serious threat in the northeast. Centered at Shen-yang, the Eastern Mongol power base lay astride the land route to the Koryŏ capital. After the assassination of the Koryŏ king in 1374, the Koreans maintained diplomatic relations with both Nanking and the Mongol Yüan rulers at Khara Khorum. This was unacceptable to the Chinese, who imprisoned all the Koryŏ envoys sent to Nanking between 1375 and 1377. The Koreans had adopted the Yüan reign title for their calendar to signify their loyalty to the Yüan ruler, whom they still regarded as the Son of Heaven. But in 1377 the Koryŏ ruler replaced the Yüan reign title with that of the Ming and used this in his formal communications. This important symbolic gesture placated the Hung-wu emperor somewhat, although he remained uncertain of the Korean ruler's loyalty.

Between 1379 and 1385 the Koreans sent eighteen costly embassies to Nanking; they persistently sought good relations with the Chinese and requested a formal patent of investiture for their king. Such a formal investiture by the Ming court would have bolstered the weak legitimacy of

176 Ming T'ai-tsu, *Huang Ming tu hsün lu* (1373); rpt. in *Ming ch'ao k'ai kuo wen hsien*, III, p. 1686; *MSL, T'ai-tsu shih lu*, 68, p. 1278; Wang Gungwu, "Early Ming relations with Southeast Asia: A background essay," in *The Chinese world order: Traditional China's foreign relations*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 34–62, esp. pp. 52–53, translating the *MSL, T'ai-tsu shih lu*.

177 The discussion here follows Clark, "Autonomy, legitimacy, and tributary politics."

the Koryŏ rulers. Ming tributary demands were very costly, however, and a number of missions were flatly rejected by the Chinese because the kinds and amounts of tribute offered were deemed inadequate. Only in 1385 did the Hung-wu emperor deign to invest the Koryŏ king and award a posthumous title to his predecessor, even though the king was merely a puppet of local warlords.

Following the surrender of the Eastern Mongol leader Naghachu in 1387, the Mongol threat in the northeast became less serious. The emperor began to take steps to stabilize the Ming–Koryŏ border region in the vicinity of the Yalu River. In 1388 the Koreans asserted claims to territory north of the river in Liao-tung, misreading Chinese intentions there. Korean mismanagement and a mutiny by the Korean warlord Yi Sŏng-gye doomed the effort. Yi marched on the Koryŏ capital at Kaegyŏng (modern Kaesŏng), took over the city, and claimed the position of right chancellor of the state. Meanwhile, Ming control over the disputed territory in the Yalu region was assured.

Four years later, in 1392, Yi Sŏng-gye usurped the Korean throne, ending the Koryŏ dynasty. During the years just prior to this move, Yi had instituted a program of land reform and moved to establish a state-sponsored Confucian ideology that encroached on the interests of the Korean Buddhist establishment. Both moves were made with an eye on ultimate approval from the Ming ruler. The day after his usurpation, Yi Sŏng-gye sent an envoy to Nanking to request investiture. Shortly afterward he requested the Ming emperor to decide between two suggested names for the new state in Korea, one of which was the old Chinese term Ch'ao-hsien (Chosŏn in Korean). The Hung-wu emperor chose this title, and it was formally adopted in March 1393.

Between 1392 and 1394 the Koreans repeatedly sought to establish regular tributary relations with the Hung-wu court. But the Ming emperor took a high-handed attitude towards these requests. Envoys were repulsed; one was even beaten at court for failure to perform the kowtow properly. The Chinese in general made few efforts to inform themselves about political conditions at the Chosŏn capital city, Seoul. Only after a highly flattering, obsequious Korean mission to Nanking in 1394, in which the Ming court was formally informed that the Chosŏn state had established a new moral order in Korea, did the Ming emperor permit regular tributary relations. Even then the Koreans angered their Chinese counterparts on several occasions by insufficient flattery in their formal communications to the Chinese throne and by alleged faults in the literary style of the documents. The Chinese position was that the Chinese would not intervene in Korean politics or society and that relations would have to be conducted entirely on Chinese terms or not at all.

Ming foreign policy was formally enunciated by the emperor in 1395 when he issued the *Tsu hsün* (Ancestral injunctions), which included a list of countries “not to be invaded” by the Ming.¹⁷⁸ The *Ancestral injunctions* also restricted tributary relations to three of the states named on the list: Greater Liu-ch’iu (Ryūkyū), Cambodia, and Siam. This reflects the Hung-wu emperor’s growing desire to constrain foreign relations, a desire that intensified after his discovery that Hu Wei-yung had intended to employ Japanese military power in his plan for a coup. It also reflects the emperor’s general disinclination to develop overseas contacts.

Naval fleets led by Wu Chen (1328–79)¹⁷⁹ and Liao Yung-chung (1323–75)¹⁸⁰ had played important roles in the battles leading toward the establishment of Ming power on land.¹⁸¹ But they were never directed toward the establishment of seapower in its own right. This is not to say that naval forces were ignored. Between 1370 and 1394 the emperor issued numerous commands to the naval garrisons to increase their tonnage. In 1370, for example, he created twenty-four naval garrisons (*wei*) along the coast, each supposedly maintaining 50 vessels and 350 sailors. In 1372 he commanded nine naval garrisons in Chekiang and Fukien to construct 660 oceangoing vessels in order to strengthen defenses against pirate attacks along the coast. But these moves were elements in a defensive policy that placed the priority on constructing dry-land fortifications against the pirates. The court also offered bounties for pirates captured dead or alive, and a few expeditions were launched to capture pirates. In 1373 Liao Yung-chung was sent on one such expedition, and in 1374 Wu Chen led a fleet from four lower Yangtze garrisons to the Ryūkyū Islands.

The cornerstone of Ming maritime policy was the ban on maritime traffic issued on 2 February 1372 and probably experimented with earlier. But the policy of control, typified by the restrictions on Korean tributary relations, was not readily applied to maritime matters. Thus the edict of 1394 that barred Chinese from using “foreign spices and foreign goods”

178 These counties are arranged in the text by region: *Northeast*: Ch’ao-hsien (i.e., Chosŏn, Korea). *East and slightly north*: Japan. *South and slightly east*: Greater Liu-ch’iu (Ryūkyū); Lesser Liu-ch’iu. *Southwest*: Annam; Cambodia (Chen-la kuo); Siam (Hsien-luo kuo); Champa (Chan-ch’eng kuo); Samudra (Su-men-ta-la kuo, i.e. Sumatra); West Ocean (Hsi-yang kuo, Indian East Coast and Hormuz); Java (Chua-wa kuo); Pahang (P’en-heng kuo, on the Malay peninsula); Battak (Pai-hua kuo, identification uncertain); Srivijaya (San-fo-ch’i kuo, Palembang); Brunei (Po-ni kuo, Borneo). See Ming T’ai-tsu, *Tsu hsün* (1395); rpt. in *Ming ch’ao k’ai kuo wen hsien*, III, pp. 1588–91. See also Lo Hsiang-lin, “Ming tai tui Tung-nan Ya ko kuo kuan hsi chih yen pien,” *Nan-yang ta hsieh hsieh pao*, 1 (1967), pp. 119–25. On Srivijaya, see O. W. Wolters, *The fall of Srivijaya in Malay history* (Ithaca, 1970).

179 Biography in *MS*, 131, pp. 3840–42.

180 Biographies in *DMB*, pp. 909–10; *MS*, 129, pp. 3804–08.

181 For a survey, see Ch’en Wen-shih, *Ming Hung-wu Chia-ching chien ti hai chin cheng ts’e* (Taipei, 1966), pp. 27–34 ff.

was largely unenforceable.¹⁸² The emperor appears to have been driven in these moves by a fear that his subjects might ally with people outside China in order to challenge his rule. He believed that Srivijaya had sent spies to China, and so it was excluded from tributary relations. Such bans were supported by the control exerted by the Maritime Trade Intendancies (*Shih-po ssu*).¹⁸³

Maritime Trade Intendancies had been established by the emperor in accordance with practices initiated during the Sung and Yüan dynasties. In 1367 he established offices at T'ai-ts'ang and Huang-tu (in modern Kiangsu). These were closed in 1370 and replaced by offices at Ning-po (Chekiang), Ch'üan-chou (Fukien), and Canton (Kwangtung); but even these were apparently abolished in 1374. At the ports the trade officials, in conjunction with local officials, would verify the formal tallies designating authorized tributary missions. Then the cargoes would be examined. Official "tributary articles" would be cleared for transshipment, while additional private commodities for trade and sale would be taxed. Officials had first choice of the goods. Nonofficial persons could make purchases only under the watchful eyes of designated inspectors; wholly private and unsupervised sales were considered illicit smuggling.

During the Yüan dynasty the trade intendancies in the ports had not been responsible for channeling the tributary gifts from foreign states. It was the Hung-wu emperor who for the first time merged the trading system with the tributary system. The heart of the new system was negative, for it rested on a ban on all trade except that which was conducted expressly under the auspices of the tributary framework. This policy was not easily enforced, and there is reason to suspect that it drove many merchants into covert activity. Driven by real economic pressures, traders in some hard-pressed coastal regions were eventually forced into smuggling. The spread of piracy in the fifteenth century can be explained in part by the emperor's negative policies toward maritime trade and interstate relations.¹⁸⁴

The Lan Yü case

During 1393 and 1394, the balance of power shifted again. The precipitating event, or perhaps simply the most obvious symptom of the shift, was the execution of Lan Yü on 22 March 1393. It was accompanied by the

182 Chang Wei-hua, *Ming tai hai wai mao i chien lun* (1955; rpt. Shanghai, 1956), p. 17.

183 The following discussion follows Chang Wei-hua, *Ming tai hai wai mao i chien lun*; and *MS*, 75, p. 1848.

184 See Kwan-wai So, *Japanese piracy in Ming China during the sixteenth century* (East Lansing, Mich., 1975).

appointment of several princes to key defensive positions on the northern borders and by the cashiering of other generals who had participated in the building of the dynasty since the 1360s.

The details of the Lan Yü case are not clear, for the extant records are not complete.¹⁸⁵ In December 1392 Lan Yü scored an important military victory over Orlug Temür, the Mongol leader of a group of rebels in Chien-ch'ang and Kansu in the west. Lan captured the leader and sent him to Nanking, where the emperor ordered him executed. At that point he pressed the emperor for authorization to establish military garrisons in the Szechwan border region and to inaugurate military farming. That was approved, and Lan further asked for permission to recruit local farmers in preparation for a military incursion farther west. But the emperor rejected this proposal for reasons that are not clear, perhaps believing that the expedition would have required a very large force. This was something he was unwilling to permit. The emperor instead ordered Lan Yü to call in his army from the field and dismissed him from his command.¹⁸⁶

Early in January 1393 the emperor assigned Lan Yü, Feng Sheng, Fu Yu-te, and other important men to formal positions on the staff of the new heir apparent, Chu Yün-wen. The reasons for this are not stated in the sources; perhaps the emperor was attempting to give dignified positions to the generals and to keep them out of harm's way, under the watchful eyes of the heir apparent's staff. Or perhaps he was trying to build up the heir apparent's military position vis-à-vis the other princes. Huang Tzu-ch'eng and other prominent literati were appointed as lecturers to the future emperor at this time.¹⁸⁷

Shortly afterward, on 28 February 1393, the emperor ordered four more of his sons to take up residence in their fiefs in the north. The first to be assigned had been sent out in 1378 and 1380 (see Table 1). In this case the princes were dispatched to supervise military commands left vacant by the sacking of the generals. Three of the princes had to use temporary quarters until their mansions were completed, but they all went forth in one way or another to their princely estates.¹⁸⁸ The fact that three of them departed for their estates prior to the completion of their mansions reflects the haste with which their departures were arranged. The four were: Chu Ying (d. 1419), Prince of Su, whose capital was at Kan-chou but who took up temporary residence at P'ing-liang;¹⁸⁹ Chu Chih (d. 1424), Prince of Liao, whose capital was at Kuang-ning (in modern Pei-chen county, Liaoning),

185 See *DMB*, pp. 790–91. 186 *KC*, 9, p. 735.

187 *MTC*, I, p. 502; *KC*, 9, p. 736. For Huang Tzu-ch'eng's biography, see *MS*, 141, pp. 4015–17.

188 *KC*, 10, p. 738. 189 *MS*, 117, p. 3585.

TABLE I
Ming princes in the Hung-wu period who went to fiefs

Son No.	Prince's Name		Fief Title	Went To Fief (Place) In (Year of Hung-wu)	
2	Shuang	(1356-1395)	Ch'in	Sian	11 (1378)
3	Kang	(1358-1398)	Chin	T'ai-yüan	11 (1378)
4	Ti	(1360-1424)	Yen	Peking	13 (1380)
5	Su	(1361-1425)	Chou	K'ai-feng	14 (1381)
6	Chen	(1364-1424)	Ch'u	Wu-ch'ang	14 (1381)
7	Fu	(1364-1428)	Ch'i	Ch'ing-chou, Shantung	15 (1382)
8	Tzu	(1369-1390)	T'an	Ch'ang-sha	18 (1385)
10	T'an	(1370-1390)	Lu	Yen-chou, Shantung	18 (1385)
11	Ch'un	(1371-1423)	Shu	Chengtu	23 (1390)
12	Po	(1371-1399)	Hsiang	Ching-chou	18 (1385)
13	Kuei	(1374-1446)	Tai	Ta-t'ung	25 (1392)
14	Ying	(d. 1419)	Su	Kan-chou	26 (1393)
15	Chih	(d. 1424)	Liao	Kuang-ning chou (went first to P'ing-liang)	26 (1393)
16	Chan	(1378-1438)	Ch'ing	Ningsia (went first to Wei-chou)	26 (1393)
17	Ch'üan	(1378-1448)	Ning	Ta-ning	26 (1393)
18	P'ien	(1379-1450)	Min	Yunnan (went first to Min-chon)	28 (1395)
19	Hui	(1379-1417)	Ku	Hsüan-fu (modern Hsüan-hua, Hopei)	28 (1395)

but who took up temporary residence just north of the Ta-ling River;¹⁹⁰ Chu Chan (1378-1438), Prince of Ch'ing, whose capital was at Ningsia but who took up temporary residence nearby at Wei-chou;¹⁹¹ and Chu Ch'üan (1378-1448), Prince of Ning, whose capital was at Ta-ning.¹⁹²

On 14 March the emperor ordered Chu Kang, Prince of Chin, who was based at T'ai-yüan, to lead Shansi and Honan troops through the Great Wall to strengthen fortifications and to build up military colonies (*t'un-t'ien*) in modern Inner Mongolia.¹⁹³ On 17 April, shortly after Lan Yü's death, Chu Kuei (1374-1446), Prince of Tai, whose capital was at Ta-t'ung, was ordered to lead his guard through the Great Wall to join the Prince of Chin and to follow the latter's command.¹⁹⁴ Thus the deployment of imperial

¹⁹⁰ *MS*, 117, pp. 3586-87. ¹⁹¹ *MS*, 117, pp. 3588-89.

¹⁹² *MS*, 117, pp. 3591-92; biography in *DMB*, pp. 305-07.

¹⁹³ *MTC*, I, p. 506.

¹⁹⁴ Chu Kuei, Chu Ying, and Chu Chih had all been reinstated in new fiefs on 1 April 1392. Their earlier appointments had not been at these important border areas. *MS*, 3, p. 49. For Chu Kuei's move through the Great Wall, see *KC*, 10, p. 741.

princes at critical frontier defense points and the recall of several of the most successful generals all occurred as the Lan Yü trial was taking place.

Lan Yü's trial was brought about by a commander in the Imperial Bodyguard named Chiang Huan, who reported that Lan Yü had been plotting a mutiny. Other grievances were lodged as well. These included the abuse of his official privileges as a military officer; illegal disciplinary sanctions imposed on his officers and troops; and the maintenance of excessive numbers of household servants, slaves, and retainers. Sources suggest that Lan Yü had been angered by what he considered a lowly appointment in the heir apparent's staff and that he had decided on account of this to strike at the emperor's power.

At his trial Lan Yü allegedly confessed to treason, and in the course of his confession he implicated a number of marquises, as well as minister of personnel Chan Hui. Chan Hui, who had presided over Li Shan-ch'ang's trial in 1390, was ordered by the emperor to preside over this trial as well. But Lan Yü's testimony implicated Chan in the conspiracy. In the end, both men lost their lives. Lan Yü was publicly dismembered on 22 March 1393, while many others—perhaps as many as 20,000—were executed that spring. Generals Feng Sheng and Fu Yu-te, who had been assigned to the heir apparent's staff and who were in Nanking at the time, may have been there to observe the execution.¹⁹⁵ They were sent out of Nanking a month later on 22 April to serve under the command of Chu Ti in Peking.¹⁹⁶

Many members of the nobility of merit (*kung-ch'en*) lost their lives in the Lan Yü purge; this gave rise to speculation that the purge was carried out to eliminate powerful and prestigious persons who might have posed threats to the succession. To justify his actions and present his own side of the story, the emperor promulgated the *Ni ch'en lu* (Record of the treasonous ministers), a record of the cases against sixteen noblemen implicated in the Lan Yü case. These included one duke, thirteen marquises, and two earls.¹⁹⁷ Intent on concluding the Lan Yü and Hu Wei-yung purges, on 7 September 1393 the emperor issued an amnesty to all surviving members of the Hu and Lan factions.¹⁹⁸ This was reiterated on 15 October when he issued an edict to this effect, acknowledging that some 15,000 persons had lost their lives in the Lan Yü purge alone.¹⁹⁹

The ten most important princes went to the capital in the autumn of 1393, perhaps to consult with the throne about the political situation in Nanking. They went in groups of five: the princes of Ch'in (Chu Shuang), Chin (Chu Kang), Yen (Chu Ti), Chou (Chu Su), and Ch'i (Chu Fu)

195 *DMB*, p. 454; *KC*, 10, p. 739. 196 *KC*, 19, p. 741.

197 *MC*, 6, p. 9b; *MS*, 3, p. 51. The date was 26 March 1393, only four days later. For a bibliographic note on *Ni ch'en lu*, see Li Chin-hua, *Ming tai ch'ih chuan shu k'ao*, p. 18.

198 *KC*, 10, p. 744. 199 *KC*, 10, p. 757; *DMB*, p. 791.

reported to Nanking in September; and the princes of Tai (Chu Kuei), Su (Chu Ying), Liao (Chu Chih), Ch'ing (Chu Chan), and Ning (Chu Ch'üan) reported in October.²⁰⁰ Obviously concerned about a possible coup d'état by a prince, early in January 1394 the emperor promulgated to the princes a work entitled the *Yung chien lu* (Record of the eternal mirror), which recorded the histories of princes who had rebelled against their rulers and had as a result brought ruin to their kingdoms.²⁰¹

In addition to the two works just mentioned,²⁰² the emperor had other works compiled, works in one way or another directly inspired by the Lan Yü purge. The *Chi chih lu* (Study of institutions), compiled in 1393 and promulgated three years later, was prompted by the emperor's discovery that Lan Yü had not observed the sumptuary regulations for the nobility of merit. This work set forth detailed regulations on dimensions of nobles' dwellings, the decoration of their sedan chairs, and the like.²⁰³ The *Shih ch'en tsung lu* (Comprehensive record of the ministers of the ages), compiled and distributed to officials in 1393, was a didactic collection of the records of evil and good ministers.²⁰⁴ Finally, in 1394 the emperor ordered Liu San-wu to supervise the compilation of an expurgated edition of the works of Mencius. Passages conveying what some have called "the right of rebellion" were deleted from the text. In all, some eighty-five passages were expurgated, leaving about 170 entries in the text. The emperor forbade schools and examination halls from testing candidates on the expurgated passages. But complete editions of the works of Mencius were not prohibited from circulation.²⁰⁵

Three of the most important generals in the empire were eliminated in 1394 and 1395. The first was Fu Yu-te, the general from northern Anhwei who had served the emperor since 1361. He died on 20 December 1394, either by execution or by his own hand at the emperor's command; the sources conflict. His son had married a princess, and his daughter had become the consort of the heir to the principedom of Chin.²⁰⁶

The second was Wang Pi, who died on 1 January 1395. He was a Lin-huai, Anhwei, man who had served the emperor since the 1350s. In 1388 he had accompanied Lan Yü on the expedition to Lake Buyur, performing with valor and brilliance. In 1392 he had joined Fu Yu-te and Feng

200 MC, 6, p. 10b.

201 MTC, p. 512. For a bibliographic note on *Yung chien lu*, see Li Chin-hua, ed., *Ming tai ch'ih chuan shu k'ao*, p. 18.

202 *Ni ch'en lu* and *Yung chien lu*.

203 KC, 10, p. 742. For a bibliographic note on *Chi chih lu*, see Li Chin-hua, *Ming tai ch'ih chuan shu k'ao*, p. 18.

204 KC, 10, p. 747. For a bibliographic note on *Shih ch'en tsung lu*, see Li Chin-hua, *Ming tai ch'ih chuan shu k'ao*, p. 18.

205 Li Chin-hua, *Ming tai ch'ih chuan shu k'ao*, pp. 19–20.

206 MC, 6, p. 12a; KC, 10, p. 752; DMB, p. 470.

Sheng in training troops in Shansi and Honan, and in the following year he had been summoned back to Nanking with those two generals. Wang was a marquis when he was either executed or ordered to commit suicide.²⁰⁷ No records attest to the cause of the emperor's unhappiness with him.

The third was Feng Sheng, who died on 22 February 1395.²⁰⁸ The actual circumstances of his death are not clear: some sources say that he committed suicide, while others say that he was executed. All observers agreed on one point: the emperor probably eliminated these men in order to secure his control—and that of his heir—over the military. One general he did not have to worry about was T'ang Ho, who had retired in 1388 and had suffered a debilitating stroke in 1390. He died of natural causes in Feng-yang on 22 August 1395.²⁰⁹

While the emperor could simply eliminate the generals, control of the princes was a far more delicate matter. He had begun to think about this problem as early as 1369 in conjunction with his plan to make the princes serve as custodians of reserve military power for the throne and as defensive feudatories on the frontiers. On 3 October 1395 he distributed a revised version of the *Ancestral injunctions* to his officials, and on 12 November he issued copies of the final text to the princes. At the same time, he announced reductions in the annual stipends paid to princes.²¹⁰ The maximum stipend was reduced from 50,000 *tan* of rice to 10,000 (disregarding supplemental allowances). The *Ancestral injunctions* contained important changes in the regulations governing the princes. Of the emperor's 26 sons, 17 took up residence in their fiefs during the emperor's lifetime, while two of them died in 1390—one by suicide, the other from Taoist elixirs (see Table 1).²¹¹

207 *KC*, 10, p. 754; *MS*, 132, p. 3862.

208 *DMB*, p. 454; *KC*, 10, p. 755. 209 *KC*, 10, p. 759.

210 *KC*, 10, pp. 760, 761; Li Chin-hua, *Ming tai ch'ih chuan shu k'ao*, p. 5.

211 For biographical information about the Ming princes in the Hung-wu period who went to fiefs, see the following sources: (The number before the name of the son corresponds to his rank in the order of births of the emperor's sons.)

2 Chu Shuang: *MS*, 100, pp. 2502–06; 116, p. 3560.

3 Chu Kang: *MS*, 100, pp. 2521; 116, p. 3562.

4 Chu Ti: *MS*, 5, p. 69–70, p. 105; *DMB*, pp. 355–65.

5 Chu Su: *MS*, 100, pp. 2546–47; 116, pp. 3565–66; *DMB*, pp. 350–54.

6 Chu Chen: *MS*, 101, pp. 2607–08; 116, p. 3570.

7 Chu Fu: *MS*, 101, p. 2620; 116, pp. 3573–74.

8 Chu Tzu: *MS*, 101, pp. 2622–23; 116, pp. 3574–75.

10 Chu T'an: *MS*, 101, pp. 2623–24; 116, p. 3575.

11 Chu Ch'un: *MS*, 101, pp. 2643–44; 117, pp. 3579–80.

12 Chu Po: *MS*, 101, pp. 2659–60; 117, p. 3581.

13 Chu Kuei: *MS*, 101, pp. 2660–61; 117, pp. 3581–82.

14 Chu Ying: *MS*, 101, pp. 2685–86; 117, p. 3585.

15 Chu Chih: *MS*, 101, pp. 2694–95; 117, pp. 3586–87.

16 Chu Chan: *MS*, 102, pp. 2715–16; 117, p. 3588.

17 Chu Ch'üan: *MS*, 102, pp. 2727–28; 117, pp. 3591–92; *DMB*, pp. 305–07.

18 Chu P'ien: *MS*, 102, pp. 2737–38; 118, p. 3602.

19 Chu Hui: *MS*, 102, pp. 2755–56; 118, pp. 3603–04.

In the preface to the *Ancestral injunctions*, the emperor specified that the laws contained therein were to serve as the unchanging constitution of the state and were to be upheld as such by his descendants. As the emperor observed, with the benefit of twenty years of experience in an age of chaos (*luan*), he and his officials had come to understand the necessity of enacting “the laws of the state” (*kuo-fa*), meaning principally the law code (*lü*). With the *Ancestral injunctions*, however, he was issuing what would serve as “the laws of the house” (*chia-fa*), or the laws of the imperial family. This body of laws, he noted, had to be observed by his descendants; they could not “try to be smart and throw my established laws into chaos.” “Not one law may be changed,” he wrote. Heaven, earth, and the ancestors would ensure blessings for those who upheld the founder’s instructions, he claimed.²¹² There was no close precedent for an elaborate “house law” of this kind in earlier imperial dynasties.

Initially the princes had been granted virtual sovereignty in their territories. But their independence was much curtailed in the later version of the *Ancestral injunctions*. The emperor had recognized that the princes might become too powerful and unruly and that they might on occasion be able to challenge imperial authority. The scholar Yeh Po-chü had warned against this possibility in 1376. In his criticisms of the policy to establish armed princedoms, Yeh argued that the emperor had gone too far and had created a situation that would have “a great tail that cannot be moved about” (*wei ta pu tiao*).²¹³

In the 1381 version of the *Ancestral injunctions*, the princes had the power both to try and to sentence common people residing in their market towns and villages in cases of ordinary penal violations or lèse majesté,²¹⁴ while suits over money and grain matters were to be handled by imperial judicial agencies. But princes enjoyed the power to recruit military and civilian officials and clerks for their staffs, and they could exercise complete judicial authority over their household staffs.

These powers were sharply curtailed during the following years, and the 1395 version of the *Ancestral injunctions* reflects this. By 1395 the princes had been deprived of the power to recruit whoever they pleased for their staffs. Instead, all appointments had to be approved by the throne. The princes still retained judicial authority over their civil and military staffs, but all sentences had to be arrived at and carried out in strict compliance

212 *Tsu-hsün*, preface, in Ming T'ai-tsu, *Ming ch'ao k'ai kuo wen hsien*, III, pp. 1579–81.

213 *KC*, 6, pp. 540–42; *DMB*, pp. 1573–75; *MS*, 139, p. 3990. For the expression *wei ta pu tiao*, see *Tso chuan*, 11th year of Duke Chao, trans. James Legge, in *The Chinese classics* (1870; rpt. Hong Kong, 1960; rpt. Taipei, 1969), V, p. 635.

214 For the dating and analysis, see Huang Chang-chien, “Lun [Huang Ming] ‘Tsu hsün lu’ pan hsing nien tai,” in his *Ming Ch'ing shih yen chiu ts'ung kao*, pp. 31–56.

with the *Ta Ming lü* (Great Ming code).²¹⁵ Such brutal punishments as tattooing, amputation of limbs, cutting off the nose, and castration were banned in the 1395 text.²¹⁶ That text also stipulated that whenever an official or a common person has committed a crime, it is necessary to set the punishment openly and justly, and it is not permitted to poison them.²¹⁷ This provision did not appear in the 1381 text. By contrast, the earlier text encouraged the princes to apply severe forms of punishment in order to enforce compliance with their commands.²¹⁸ In addition, in the 1395 text the princes were not granted the authority to sentence on their own any individual accused of *lèse majesté*. Such cases had to be transmitted to the imperial court for interrogation and if the facts warranted it, punishment.²¹⁹

Other minor changes reduced the power and prestige of princes of the blood. In 1381 a prince was allowed to seat himself in the palace on the occasion of a visit to the emperor; and if his visit coincided with an imperial banquet, he was permitted to join it. The 1395 revision of the *Ancestral injunctions* forbade these practices.²²⁰ In 1381 a prince could summon a physician into his palace to attend the ill; this was forbidden in 1395.²²¹

Despite these changes in the princes' powers, from 1381 to 1395 they remained the only centers of military power that were not completely under court control. An ingenious institutional arrangement provided two military forces for each principedom: a garrison army (*shou-chen ping*) and an escort guard (*hu-wei ping*).²²² The prince commanded the escort guard himself, but the garrison army had its own regular staff commander sent from the capital. The prince had no direct authority over the garrison army. In fact, its commander was required to report any secret commands issued to him by the prince. The emperor devised this system to prevent a takeover by military officials or other persons at court. Through this system he could also rally support in the event of a takeover attempt. As he described it, "In the event that at court there are not correct [i.e., loyal] ministers, and within the palace there are evil ones [i.e., eunuchs] . . . , the Son of Heaven shall secretly command the princes of the blood to lead their garrison armies and chastise them."²²³

According to the *Ancestral injunctions* of 1395, if the court wanted to deploy troops from the prince's garrison army, it had to dispatch one letter

215 Huang, "Lun [Huang Ming] 'Tsu hsün lu' pan hsing nien tai," pp. 34–35; *Tsu hsün*, p. 1628.

216 *Tsu hsün*, p. 1585. 217 *Tsu hsün*, p. 1631. 218 *Tsu hsün lu*, p. 1680.

219 *Tsu hsün*, p. 1629. 220 *Tsu hsün*, p. 1617. 221 *Tsu hsün*, p. 1636.

222 *Tsu hsün lu*, p. 157; *Tsu hsün*, p. 1658. 223 *Tsu hsün lu*, p. 1718; *Tsu hsün*, p. 1633.

fixed with the imperial seal to the prince and an identical letter to the garrison commander. Only when the commander had received both the emperor's letter and a command from the prince was he permitted to dispatch the troops. Without the prince's command, the emperor's letter by itself was insufficient authority for dispatching troops.

The emperor was even more explicit about his checks on the princes' power in an edict recorded in the *Veritable record* under 16 October 1392.²²⁴ Directed to the Chief Military Commission of the Right Army (*Yu-chün tu-tu fu*), the edict included the following statement:

The princely establishments (*wang-fu*) maintain escort guards (*hu-wei*) as well as Regional Military Commissions (*tu-ssu*) precisely for the purpose of guarding each other. The regional military commissions are the local agents of the court; but if they receive an imperial command to deploy troops, they may do so only if they inform the prince and obtain his permission. If the prince issues a command that is not supported by a command from the court, he may not deploy troops on his own authority. If a secret imperial command [is issued to the regional military commission] and the prince is not informed, action may be taken only after a memorial has been presented [requesting confirmation]. The structure of the state is such as this.

Many princes used their escort guards as attack forces and built up these units without authorization from the emperor. In 1392 the prince of Ch'in had a personal bodyguard of 500 men and had not been awarded an actual escort guard. But he had in fact augmented his bodyguard from the regional military commission, the very body intended to check the power of a prince's escort units.²²⁵

On many occasions the princes of Ch'in, Chin, and Yen employed their escort guards in maneuvers on the frontiers, leaving their garrison armies to defend their principdoms in their absence. As a result, the princes—especially Chu Ti, prince of Yen—were able to build up the strength of their guards and garrisons.

The princes' positions were hereditary; succession followed the principle of primogeniture and was restricted to the sons of the principal consort. This rule, one of the "house laws" governing the imperial clan, naturally applied as well to imperial succession. The *Ancestral injunctions* specifically stated that no son of a secondary wife was eligible to succeed.²²⁶ These "house laws" discriminated against sons of secondary wives in other ways too—for example, in the rules governing the princes' annual attendance at

224 Huang Chang-chien, "Lun [Huang Ming] 'Tsu hsün lu' pan hsing nien tai," p. 43, gives the date as 14 October, but in *MSL*, *T'ai-tsu shih lu*, p. 3236, the date is as given here.

225 From the edict of 16 October 1392, cited above; not quoted by Huang Chang-chien.

226 *Tsu hsün*, pp. 1633–34.

court in Nanking.²²⁷ The *Ancestral injunctions* thus ruled out the Prince of Yen as a candidate for the succession when the first heir died in 1392, for the prince was the son of a secondary consort. After Chu Ti usurped the throne, he destroyed the records of his birth and fabricated new ones that made him a son of the empress Ma, the emperor's principal consort.²²⁸

From 1396 to 1398 Chu Ti engaged in a number of military maneuvers north of the border wall and became, with his brother Chu Kang, a leading power in the north. In April 1396 he was ordered to patrol the Ta-ning area, and in the process he engaged a Yüan loyalist army led by Bolin Temür. He captured Bolin and pressed far north into the Uriyanghad territories before turning back.²²⁹

Chu Shuang, the Prince of Ch'in, died in 1395. Although he was succeeded by his heir, the heir did not have his predecessor's experience and ability. The princes of Liao and Ning, both very young men, also held important positions in the border defense command. In February 1397 both princes were ordered to graze horses and practice maneuvers in the steppe north of the Great Wall and in so doing "demonstrate the power of the Ming" to the nomads.²³⁰ But neither prince could challenge Chu Ti's dominant position in the north.

To remind the princes of their subordinate status with respect to the future heir apparent, in September 1396 the emperor issued strict regulations governing the conduct of princes when visiting the heir's palace in Nanking. Formal rules proposed by the emperor's officials and approved by the emperor required the princes to observe strict etiquette when calling on the future heir. Since many of the princes were older than the heir, who had been born in 1377, the new rules provoked some resentment.²³¹

The emperor's attention to the details of government was manifested again in 1397, when he promulgated the final version of the *Great Ming code*. The text is said to have incorporated revisions demanded by his successor, Chu Yün-wen. Some seventy-three articles were revised in response to the heir apparent's complaints that they were excessively harsh.²³² The *Great Ming code* of 1397 was published together with selected articles from the *Grand pronouncements*, for the emperor believed that the *Great Ming code* and the *Grand pronouncements* should form the principal bodies of law for the realm.²³³

In the summer of 1397 a dispute arose over the issue of the civil service recruitment examinations. Liu San-wu had presided over the Nanking me-

227 *Tsu hsün*, p. 1615. 228 *DMB*, p. 356, and sources cited on p. 364.

229 *KC*, 10, p. 765. 230 *MC*, 6, pp. 15a–b.

231 *KC*, 10, p. 767. 232 *MS*, 93, pp. 2283–84.

233 *KC*, 10, p. 773; see the discussion of this in Huang Chang-chien, "Ta Ming lü kao' k'ao."

tropolitan examination and was blamed for the fact that not a single successful candidate came from the north. The emperor grew furious when he heard about this; he ordered an official to re-read the papers. When the official did not find any grounds on which to impeach Liu, the emperor charged the official with deliberate falsification. He read the examination papers himself and awarded metropolitan degrees to sixty-one candidates, all of whom were northerners. He then punished the officials he held responsible for the original abuse. Liu San-wu was not executed; he was sentenced instead to ordinary exile. But the others were dismembered in public. Liu and those accused of being his associates were charged with ties to the Lan Yü faction, in part to justify the harsh actions taken against them.²³⁴

Other killings were ordered by the emperor at this time, and they reflect the mind of a man who had perhaps long since become paranoid. His son-in-law, Ou-yang Lun, was ordered to commit suicide for relatively minor infractions, including selling tea illegally.²³⁵ In July the left censor-in-chief Yang Ching (cs. 1385) was ordered to commit suicide. Yang was only in his late thirties and had a reputation for excellence and fairness as a judge. But he was slandered by someone who thought he had been unjustly treated, and so a censor impeached him. The emperor was enraged by the accusations against Yang and ordered his death.²³⁶

It is difficult to know in any detail the emperor's state of mind at this time. He unveiled an innovative "placard" announcement early in 1398, which reveals that in some respects he was in full possession of his faculties. This *Chiao min pang wen* (Placard of instructions to the people) outlined a rather idealistic vision of village life under his enlightened rule.²³⁷

The emperor had earlier established systems for resolving rural disputes through village elders.²³⁸ In the *Placard of instructions to the people* this system was formally sanctioned by the emperor's writ. The system amounted to a restructuring of rural power relations. The placard also contained the emperor's "six instructions" (*liu yü*) and required that each local district (*li*) prepare special bells to be used by village elders or other select persons as they made their rounds through the village byways shouting the "six instructions."

In the placard, the emperor deplored the breakdown of formal judicial

234 *KC*, 10, p. 774; *MC*, 6, p. 16a.

235 *KC*, 10, p. 776; *MS*, 121, pp. 3664–65.

236 *KC*, 10, p. 777; *MC*, 6, p. 16b; biography in *MS*, 138, pp. 3969–70.

237 Text in Ming T'ai-tsu, "Chiao min pang wen" (1398); rpt. in *Huang Ming ch'ih shu*, ed. Chang Lu (1523–98) (1579; rpt. Tokyo, 1966–1967). For a translation, see George Jer-lang Chang, in "The village elder system of the early Ming dynasty," *Ming Studies*, 7 (1978) pp. 63–72.

238 See George Jer-lang Chang, "The village elder system," pp. 63–72, and the sources cited therein.

institutions that had been brought about by the practices of corrupt clerks and dishonest scholar-officials. The people had at times responded to such corruption by bringing their legal complaints to the throne. To remedy this situation, substututes had been issued as interim measures. These ruled that such minor judicial matters as suits over household and marital matters, land, assaults, and fights should be adjudicated by the local elders (*lao-jen*) and village communal groups (*li-chia*). Serious matters, however, such as adultery, robbery, fraud, counterfeit, and loss of life were to be reported to the authorities for trials. The emperor prescribed severe punishments for anyone who disrupted this vision of social order. Any official or clerk who disrupted it would be executed, and any common person who did so would be exiled with his or her family to a region outside China.

The emperor believed that this system for the resolution of local disputes was practical and that it would remain relatively free of abuses. This was because the dwellings of the elders and of the *li-chia* administrators were side by side with those of the common villagers, and their fields were contiguous: "They had complete knowledge of their [i.e., the villagers'] everyday disputes and good and bad deeds," he wrote, and their adjudications would therefore be just. Trials would be heard by the elders and district heads in conference. Light instruments of torture were permitted in interrogations; these included the bamboo and the light stick. If an elder committed a crime, he would be tried by the other elders and the district head. If the crime was relatively minor, they could sentence the criminal themselves. If it was serious, they would be required to report the facts to the local officials and deliver the elder under custody to the capital. The officials were not permitted to intervene or take over the adjudication process. If the local authorities intervened in such a case involving an elder, the other elders could report them in a memorial to the throne, and the officials would automatically be implicated in the crime committed by the elder under question.

The placard required local elders to memorialize the throne at regular intervals with the names of moral persons in their locales and their deeds and to report the same information to the local government officials. In turn, the local government officials were also supposed to transmit that information to the court. Thus a double track of reporting was established. Under the rules outlined in the placard, if the local government failed to report the information and the elders themselves memorialized it, the officials were liable for punishment.

The placard also required each village and *li* to assign to an elder the task of chanting the "six instructions" in the streets. This person could be a disabled person, someone of advanced age, or a blind person, or someone

with a handicap. He would be led along his routes by a young boy. He would ring a copper bell with a wooden clapper and cry out the "six instructions": perform filial duties to your parents; honor and respect your elders and superiors; maintain harmonious relationships with your neighbors; instruct and discipline your sons and grandsons; let each work peacefully for his own livelihood; and do not commit wrongful deeds.²³⁹

The Prince of Chin, Chu Kang, died of illness on 30 March 1398, leaving Chu Ti as the senior prince in the north. The emperor, who became seriously ill for the first time in December 1397, sent an edict to the prince on 20 April 1398, detailing his border defense strategies. He warned Chu Ti not to be deceived by Mongolian war bonfires and urged him to coordinate the forces of the princes Liao, Tai, Ning, and Ku (based respectively at Kuang-ning, Ta-t'ung, Ta-ning, and Hsüan-fu) in an overall defensive perimeter.²⁴⁰ Another edict to the Prince of Yen, dated 29 April, pointed out the obvious fact that in the wake of the deaths of his brothers Chu Shuang and Chu Kang, he remained the oldest and wisest of the surviving princes. In this edict the emperor called on Chu Ti to assume command of the forces in the north and to defend the empire. He wrote: "For repelling the foreign [threats] and keeping secure the interior, who is there but you?"²⁴¹

The emperor fell ill again on 24 May and became seriously ill on 22 June. He died in the western palace on 24 June 1398. In his last edict, promulgated posthumously, he ordered that the princes remain in their fiefs and not come to the capital to mourn. And he directed that the entire empire should acknowledge Chu Yün-wen as his legitimate successor. He also ordered all of the escort guard units to obey strictly the princes' commands.²⁴²

In view of the emperor's hatred of Mongol corruptions of Chinese norms, it is curious that thirty-eight of the emperor's forty concubines gave up their lives, apparently following the Mongol practice whereby a ruler's wives took their lives upon his death.

Chu Yün-wen ascended the throne on 30 June 1398 and proclaimed a general amnesty throughout the realm. He also announced that commencing with the lunar new year (6 February 1399), the reign title would be Chien-wen (The establishment of civil virtue).

239 Identical to the six maxims of the Ch'ing emperor Shun-chih, which are translated by Hsiao Kung-ch'üan in *Rural China: Imperial control in the nineteenth century* (Seattle, 1960), p. 186; this translation is copied by George Chang without acknowledgment in "The village elder system," p. 66.

240 *KC*, 10, p. 782. 241 *KC*, 10, p. 782.

242 The complete text is found in a manuscript collection of the emperor's edicts: Ming T'ai-tsu, *Hsiao ling chao ch'ih*, (after 1398); rpt. in *Ming ch'ao k'ai kuo wen hsien*, IV, pp. 1939-41. Cf. *KC*, 10, pp. 783-84.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHIEN-WEN, YUNG-LO, HUNG-HSI, AND HSÜAN-TE REIGNS, 1399–1435

INTRODUCTION

The period from 1399 to 1436 spans the reigns of four descendants of the founding emperor. The short Chien-wen reign (1399–1402) which was ended precipitously by usurpation, preceded the Yung-lo reign (1403–25), an era of imperial consolidation and expansion; the Hung-hsi reign (1425–26), which lasted only nine months, was followed by a period of stability and retrenchment during the Hsüan-te reign (1426–36). There were, then, two short interludes separating the three major reigns of the early Ming.

Despite the disorder brought about by the civil war of 1399–1402, there are more continuities with the past than discontinuities in the political, social, economic, intellectual, and cultural developments that occurred during these thirty-seven years. That is to say, institutional arrangements and policies under these four Ming emperors were largely shaped by the vision of the dynastic founder and by the policies he set in motion to realize it. Changes in earlier policies and systems did occur, particularly during the reign of the Yung-lo emperor; but under his successors certain of these were curtailed or abandoned, and what further changes did occur were for the most part moderate adjustments carried out within the framework of established institutions and traditions. This style of government established a tradition of conservatism at court early in the dynasty; at the same time it fostered dynastic stability and preserved intact both the lands and the spirit bequeathed by the founder of the dynasty.

The transfer of the imperial capital from Nanking to Peking under the Yung-lo emperor remains the most significant institutional change of this period. Although the Hung-hsi emperor attempted to return the court to Nanking, Peking became the imperial capital once again in the following reign, and it remained thereafter the capital of the Ming empire. Another major change occurred in the office of the grand secretaries: to fill the gap that existed between the throne and the imperial bureaucracy—a gap

created when the founding emperor did away with the secretariat in 1380—the grand secretaries began to advise the throne on matters of policy. These measures did not repudiate any of the founding emperor's basic institutional designs; rather, they served to remedy shortcomings in existing institutions and to accommodate new political realities. Yet they became regularized in the functioning of an emergent grand secretariat (*nei-ko*) of imperial, inner court assistants. This became an important new institution of later imperial government.

Under the Yung-lo emperor the forceful manner of the founding emperor continued to be evident in the measures taken to secure the empire's northern frontiers and to extend its political hegemony. This was displayed in the several major campaigns against the Mongol hordes, in the restructuring of the Great Wall line of defense, in the restoration of tributary relations with Japan and Korea, in the annexation of Annam, and in the eunuch Cheng Ho's expeditions through the South Seas and the Indian Ocean to Africa and the Persian Gulf. Some of these activities initiated by the Yung-lo emperor in fact represent departures from attitudes and policies set down by the founder. Moreover, the scale of these activities placed a great burden on the empire's fiscal resources; hence his more expansive undertakings were much diminished under his immediate successors, and still more so by later Ming rulers. Yet the policies aimed at containing the nomadic tribes to the north and at maintaining imperial influence overseas through the tributary system continued to be carried out.

These early successors of the Ming founder also continued to implement the social and economic policies of the first emperor, policies designed to establish peace and stability in a vast agrarian economy. Under the two broad divisions of civil and military, the entire population was categorized by occupation. Specific obligations allotted to great civilian households, to farmers, to artisans, and to merchants were then duly exacted as taxes and services, while nominally at least, military obligations remained the fixed, hereditary duty of select households. The system of land and population registration, of tax and labor service requisition, the commitment to a self-sufficient army fed by military farming colonies, government monopolies over trade in certain commodities, and the prohibition against private overseas trade, all remained imperial policy.

Some measures were enacted to ease the fiscal burden occasioned by the aggressive policies of early Ming rulers, for these had led to rising prices and rising administrative and military expenditures. The measures included an expansion of the total taxed acreage in the empire, tax reductions and remissions for distressed populations, and the introduction of various relief

measures and welfare programs in times of crop failure and natural calamity. Such new measures were only adjustments, and sometimes improvements, in the existing fiscal structure; all were in accord with established practice and past policy.

While these emperors devoted much time and attention to Buddhism and Taoism in their private lives, in public they consciously promoted the neo-Confucian tradition of orthodoxy. This is seen, for example, in the compilation and publication of neo-Confucian syntheses (the several *Ta ch'üan*) and anthologies under the auspices of the Yung-lo emperor, in the prescription of the normative classical commentaries by Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi for the civil service examinations, and in the general advancement of these teachings as the basis for moral values and ethical behavior. They saw some advantage in promoting neo-Confucian doctrine, because it stressed social harmony over discord and reverence for the authority of the emperor over all other authorities.

This imperial patronage of a narrowly focused neo-Confucian learning not only shaped the political ideology of the dynasty, but also affected the intellectual and cultural milieu of all those who attained high literacy through its impact on education and on the examination system, and spawned a measure of latent criticism among some Ming intellectuals. No new schools of thought emerged to challenge this orthodoxy until the end of the fifteenth century. Conformity to orthodox interpretations in scholarship and to classical models in poetry and prose persisted; and while innovation and originality were not altogether absent, writers and teachers did not exhibit any remarkable unorthodox or individualistic tendencies in their thought or in their writings.

THE CHIEN-WEN REIGN

The Chien-wen emperor's accession

Chu Yün-wen, the second emperor of the Ming dynasty, was born on 5 December 1377, the tenth year of his grandfather's Hung-wu reign era. The young prince was described as precocious, filial, and upright, and his grandfather was said to have been quite fond of him. He would have remained in obscurity but for an unexpected turn of events. In February 1368, the Hung-wu emperor began a dynastic tradition by installing as the heir apparent Chu Yün-wen's father, Chu Piao, nominally and perhaps actually born to his principal consort, the empress Ma. His purpose was to establish a regular principle of legitimate succession to the throne in the hope of avoiding future succession disputes. Chu Piao was unlike his father

in most respects: he was a temperate and cultivated man with little physical prowess. Even though greatly impressed by the military abilities of his fourth son Chu Ti, the first emperor considered Chu Piao, for dynastic interests, to be his proper successor.¹

Much to the emperor's dismay, Chu Piao died prematurely on 17 May 1392 at the age of thirty-seven. However, the order of succession was clear: Chu Piao's eldest son, born to his principal consort, had died ten years earlier. The emperor therefore designated the next grandson in line, Chu Yün-wen, Chu Piao's eldest surviving legitimate son, as heir apparent. The appointment of an untried boy not yet quite fifteen, who was in no way comparable to his grandfather or his uncles, was an affirmation of the principle of primogeniture. Although Chu Ti later claimed that he himself would have been chosen but for the meddling intervention of Confucian advisors, the first emperor had in fact never considered appointing another of his own sons.

Chu Yün-wen ascended the throne in Nanking on 30 June 1398, at the age of twenty-one, a few days after his grandfather's death. He designated the following year as the first year of the Chien-wen (The Establishment of Civil Virtue) reign and elevated his mother, a secondary consort née Lü (died 1402), to the rank of dowager empress.² Few verifiable facts about his real character or about domestic developments during his reign still exist, because after his death the record of his reign was tampered with or destroyed. Documents and court diaries from the reign suffered wholesale destruction, and surviving private accounts were proscribed.

During his successor's reign, court historiographers wrote distorted, highly critical accounts of the Chien-wen emperor's conduct to justify the Yung-lo emperor's seizure of power. They accused the Chien-wen emperor and his advisors of profligacy and immorality, depicted the emperor as unfilial, evil, and lascivious, and charged him with neglecting his duties and with committing acts of treason. Later scholars sympathetic to the deposed emperor produced contradictory, laudatory accounts of the reign, presenting the emperor as a filial son and a benevolent ruler, a paragon who followed the advice of Confucian scholars and ameliorated the harsh administration of the dynastic founder. They condemned the Prince of Yen for his

1 Meng Sen, *Ming tai shih* (1957; rpt. Taipei, 1967), pp. 89–90; Wu Han, *Chu Yüan-chang chuan* (1948; revised 1965; rpt. Peking, 1979), pp. 297–98; L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, ed., *Dictionary of Ming biography* (New York and London, 1976), pp. 346, 397; David B. Chan, *The usurpation of the Prince of Yen, 1398–1402* (San Francisco, 1976), pp. 1–2.

2 Wang Ch'ung-wu, ed., *Feng t'ien ching nan chi chu* (Shanghai, 1948), pp. 11–16; Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming ching nan shih shih k'ao cheng kao* (Shanghai, 1945), pp. 46–48; Chan, *The usurpation*, pp. 6–8, 14–21; DMB, pp. 347, 397–98.

treasonable and violent usurpation.³ These defective, conflicting sources require the most careful scrutiny. The truth about many aspects of the Chien-wen reign will always remain obscure.

Bookish and gentle, the young Chien-wen emperor had inherited his father's moderate, reflective temperament. He appeared meek and inexperienced in state affairs and possessed none of the assurance, the forceful character, or the ability of his ambitious uncles, let alone of the former emperor. His moderate character and Confucian education led the young emperor to feel real concern about the effect his grandfather's repressive administration had had on the common people, and he was attracted to an ideal pattern of benevolent rule. Thus, he strove to bring about major changes in the tone and conduct of government, and these changes brought disastrous consequences.

The Chien-wen emperor took into his confidence three Confucian tutors: Huang Tzu-ch'eng, Ch'i T'ai, and Fang Hsiao-ju. These older men exerted a powerful influence on his concept of the emperor's role. Huang Tzu-ch'eng (d. 1402) was a respected Confucian scholar who had been ranked first in the metropolitan examinations of 1385. He had served under the first emperor in several capacities and was appointed a Hanlin academician and counsellor on state affairs by the Chien-wen emperor. Ch'i T'ai (d. 1402), who also received his metropolitan degree in 1385, was an accomplished classical scholar who specialized in ritual and military affairs. Charged by the Hung-wu emperor on his deathbed to guard his grandson and heir, he became minister of war and counsellor on state affairs under the new emperor. Fang Hsiao-ju (1357–1402), already a prominent scholar though only in his early forties, well known as a writer and political thinker, had never received an examination degree and began his official career late in life. He became an expositor-in-waiting in the Hanlin Academy after the accession of the Chien-wen emperor.⁴

These three Confucian scholars influenced the emperor in various ways. Huang Tzu-ch'eng and Ch'i T'ai, who became the emperor's confidants, tutored him in Confucian theories of statecraft. They were responsible for developing and putting into practice new policies designed to reorganize the imperial administration and to consolidate imperial authority. Fang

3 For a thorough discussion of these historiographical revisions, see Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Feng t'ien ching nan chi chu*, intro. and pp. 16–22; Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming ching nan shih shih k'ao cheng kao*, pp. 28–42. See also Hok-lam Chan, "The Legitimation of usurpation: Historiographical revisions under Emperor Yung-lo," paper presented to the Conference on the Legitimation of the Chinese Imperial Regimes, Asilomar, Monterey, Calif., June 1975, sec. 3.

4 For a biographical note on these prominent Confucian advisors, see Wu Chi-hua, "Lun Chien-wen shih ti tsai fu chi ch'i tui Ming tai cheng chü ti ying hsiang," in his *Ming tai chih tu shih lun ts'ung* (Taipei, 1971), Vol. I, pp. 159–66; *DMB*, pp. 224, 426, 911.

Hsiao-ju, a specialist in the *Chou li* (Institutions of Chou), the canonical description of a utopian government, perceived what he saw as the shortcomings of autocratic rule and advised the emperor to put into effect a benevolent administration based on ideas and forms derived from the ancient classics. All three were men of courage, integrity, and idealism. But they were bookish men who lacked practical sense, experience of public affairs, and the ability to lead; their analysis of problems was often theoretical rather than realistic.⁵

Political developments and institutional innovations

After his accession, the Chien-wen emperor, following the advice of these Confucian tutors, initiated political and institutional changes that appear to have been intended to depart significantly from the arrangements made by the dynastic founder. The central administrative organs that had been eliminated with the abolition of the Secretariat in 1380 were partially restored, and institutions were modified to strengthen the civil administration and to foster a less despotic style of government.

To effect these changes, the emperor elevated Huang Tzu-ch'eng, Ch'i T'ai, and Fang Hsiao-ju to positions of executive authority. After the Secretariat was abolished in 1380, the first emperor had decided all matters of state and had himself acted as the chief executive. Hanlin academicians and ministers thus had only advisory or administrative roles in government. This situation came to an end when the new emperor summoned these three scholar-officials to make state policy (*ts'an kuo-cheng*). If reconstructions of the events are more or less accurate, these advisors did not simply hold sinecures, but actually managed the government. This would have marked a radical departure from the system established by the first emperor, for now imperial advisors were put in an executive position over the six ministries. They formulated and executed policies in much the same way that a chancellor (*ch'eng-hsiang*) would have done in earlier dynasties; they lacked only the chancellor's title. Withholding that was but a formal gesture toward the first emperor's *Ancestral injunctions*, which strictly forbade the appointment of chancellors.

The emperor also introduced a series of changes that shifted the seat of power within the imperial government and allowed him to carry out his new policies. The exact nature of these developments is difficult to define because most records of the changes were destroyed. A compendium of

5 On Fang Hsiao-ju's political thought, see Robert B. Crawford et al., "Fang Hsiao-ju in the light of early Ming society," *Monumenta Serica*, 15 (1956), pp. 308-18; Shen Kang-po, "Fang Hsiao-ju ti cheng chih hsüeh shuo," *Ta lu sha chih*, 22, No. 5 (March 1961), pp. 1-6.

institutes and statutes from this reign, the *Huang Ming tien li* (1400), and several later compilations still survive, however, and these enable us to gain some general idea of the innovations in government made or planned during this period and to assess their significance.⁶

Late in 1398 the new emperor, following Fang Hsiao-ju's advice, raised the ranks of the six chief ministers from the second to the first civil service rank and created the new office of palace attendants (*shih-chung*) between the ministers and assistant ministers. These institutional changes raised the six ministers to the same rank as the military commissioners, who since the abolition of the office of chancellor had held higher rank than any civil official. Thus, in a conscious attempt to place the government firmly under civil dominance, the status and authority of the six ministries was increased.

There were also changes in the size and number of administrative offices and in the set establishment of officials. The bureaus in the Ministries of Revenue and Justice were reduced from twelve to four; the two chief censors of the Censorate were combined into one position; and the offices and personnel of the National University and the Hanlin Academy were substantially upgraded and expanded. These last changes show the emphasis placed on Confucian education and on the advisory role of the Hanlin scholars in government. New positions were also created in the Household Administration of the Heir Apparent in order to give Hanlin scholars a greater role in the education and training of the heir apparent and of the young princes.⁷

Various modifications in the organization of ministries and bureaus, alterations in the titles of officials and imperial servants, and changes in the names of official buildings in Nanking were made to conform to the archaic models found in the *Institutions of Chou*. These changes were not simply symbolic restorations of archaic models, or as Chu Ti and his historians would have had it, willful violations of the dynastic tradition. They were purposeful reforms designed to establish a new institutional setting in which power would be delegated to the emperor's trusted advisors and civil authority strengthened at the expense of the generals and the imperial princes.

To implement the policies which they designed, Huang Tzu-ch'eng, Ch'i T'ai, and Fang Hsiao-ju were raised to positions of unprecedented

6 Huang Chang-chien, "Tu Huang Ming tien li," in his *Ming Ch'ing shih yen chiu ts'ung kao* (Taipei, 1977), pp. 120–41.

7 Sakakura Atsuhide, "Kenbuntei no seisaku," *Jimbun ronkyū*, 27, Nos. 3–4 (1978), pp. 10–14; Mao P'ei-ch'i, "Chien-wen hsin cheng ho Yung-lo 'chi t'ung,'" *Chung-kuo shih yen chiu*, 2 (April 1982), pp. 41–42.

authority, in a sharp departure from the institutional pattern laid down by the dynastic founder. They played an extraordinary role in state affairs, standing as they did in the place of the emperor. They were immediately responsible, if not essentially so, for the civil war, because their dominance of the court and the changes they were effecting gave the Prince of Yen a pretext for his rebellion. He claimed it was a punitive campaign against those advisors, carried out in loyalty to the dynasty.⁸ With the demise of the Chien-wen court, all these political changes and institutional innovations were done away with. They were remembered only as abortive attempts at archaic restoration and reactionary departures from ancestral customs—the silly pastimes of a bookish emperor and his unworldly and idealistic, or ambitious and seditious, advisors.

Domestic policies and internal crises

The Chien-wen court was notable for other domestic policies and measures that deviated from the established arrangements of Hung-wu times. The first measure was an amelioration of the harsh system of laws enacted by the dynastic founder. The Hung-wu emperor had promulgated a set of codified laws to provide legal norms for the whole empire. He occasionally supplemented this code with pronouncements (*kao*) and sometimes published model cases in the form of notices (*pang-wen*). The notices first appeared in the *Grand pronouncements* which were compiled, revised, and expanded between 1385 and 1387. These appeared in the 1397 edition of the *Ta Ming lü* (Great Ming code), which incorporated the pronouncements and notices in an appendix. The Chien-wen emperor considered parts of his grandfather's statutory codes too harsh, in particular those punitive provisions set forth in the pronouncements and notices. He had reportedly encouraged the Hung-wu emperor to eliminate seventy-three such clauses from his codes during his lifetime. Upon his own accession, he forbade trial verdicts based on the pronouncements and suspended posting of the notices, skillfully concealing what was in fact a repudiation of his grandfather's injunctions by formally observing the statutory code. These changes were later rescinded by the Yung-lo emperor, who reinstated the legal force of all the founder's harsh pronouncements and notices.⁹

In the fiscal field too, the Chien-wen court devised new measures to mitigate certain excesses of the previous reign. The most significant of

8 Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming ching nan shih shih k'ao cheng kao*, pp. 8–27.

9 Huang Chang-chien, "Ta Ming lü kao' k'ao," and "Ming Hung-wu Yung-lo ch'ao ti pang wen chün ling," in his *Ming Ch'ing shih yen chiu ts'ung kao*, pp. 187–90, 258–59, respectively; Mao P'ei-ch'i, "Chien-wen hsin cheng," pp. 38–41.

these were the reduction of the inordinate land tax in Kiangnan and in particular in the rich prefectures of Soochow and Sung-chiang. These tax reductions continued a policy of relief begun in the Hung-wu reign, but went far beyond any previous measures. The Kiangnan region, rich and densely peopled, had been heavily taxed since the dynastic founding and provided a major source of revenue. The original tax levies were intentionally punitive. In April 1380 the Hung-wu emperor had decreed a 20 percent reduction of taxes, but even after this the land tax remained exorbitant. For example, in 1393 Soochow alone was taxed 2.81 million piculs of grain per year, or 9.5 percent of the empire's total land tax of 29.4 million piculs. The inequity was extreme: Soochow accounted for only one-eighty-eighth of the registered cultivated land in the empire. Because of these excessive demands, local people often failed to meet the tax quota, particularly during bad harvests; they deserted their lands and became vagrants, further burdening the taxpaying residents and reducing annual revenues.¹⁰

Early in 1400 the Chien-wen emperor acted on a complaint about the tax inequities of the Nan Chihli and Chekiang regions and ordered a reduction of the land tax in these prefectures to the uniform rate of one picul per *mou*. He also lifted the Hung-wu emperor's prohibition of the appointment of Soochow or Sung-chiang natives to the post of minister of revenue, a measure designed to prevent natives of these wealthy prefectures from gaining control of the fiscal administration and granting special favors to their native place at the expense of the state treasury. It is very doubtful whether these new measures were ever implemented; by 1400 the Chien-wen court was already deeply embroiled in military campaigns against the Prince of Yen.

Another fiscal reform restricted the amount of tax-exempt land that could be held by Buddhist and Taoist establishments. The policy was directed specifically against the Buddhist and Taoist clergy in those Kiangnan prefectures where, under the Hung-wu emperor's patronage, they had seized large amounts of rich, productive land and become powerful landowners. Their wealth aroused resentment because the religious orders not only enjoyed exemption from land tax and corvée labor, but also imposed illegal obligations on the local people by appropriating their lands and their labor services. Two memorials submitted by court officials proposed a restriction on the size of Buddhist and Taoist landholdings, and the Chien-wen emperor issued a decree in August 1401 endorsing

¹⁰ Wu Chi-hua, "Lun Ming tai ch'ien ch'i shui liang chung hsin chih chien shui pei ching chi ying hsiang," in his *Ming tai she hui ching chi shih lun ts'ung*, Vol. I (Taipei, 1970), pp. 76–81; Chou Liang-hsiao, "Ming tai Su Sung ti ch'ü ti kuan t'ien yü chung fu wen t'i," *Li shih yen chiu*, 10 (October 1957), pp. 63–64.

their recommendations. The new order permitted each member of the Buddhist or Taoist clergy to possess no more than five *mou* of tax-exempt land; the remainder was to be distributed among needy people. This policy also provided the prince with another example of how his nephew had violated the *Ancestral injunctions*; it further justified his "punitive actions" against the emperor.¹¹

It is unlikely that these orders were put into effect, since the Chien-wen court fell shortly afterward. But inasmuch as they attacked the vested interests of the Buddhist and Taoist clergies, these policies doubtless alienated the religious orders, particularly the Buddhists. It is no accident that many Buddhist clerics, led by the usurper's advisor, the monk Tao-yen, who had been in the prince's service since 1382 (later known as Yao Kuang-hsiao, 1335–1418), rallied to the cause of the rebel Prince of Yen.¹²

Reduction of the princes' power

Some changes were also made in the administration of the principedoms: the posts of guest guardians (*pin-fu*) and readers-in-attendance (*pan-tu*) were created to allow Hanlin scholars to counsel and instruct young princes in the Confucian tradition of government. Princes were further ordered to stay out of civil and military matters, an order that clearly contradicted provisions in the *Ancestral injunctions*. These new rules, which tightened imperial control over the princes, were part of a general strategy designed to liquidate the semi-autonomous feudatories.¹³

The policy of reducing hereditary principedoms grew from a concern about potential treats from the emperor's ambitious uncles, particularly from Chu Ti, the Prince of Yen. After 1370 the founding emperor had enfeoffed in succession nine of his older sons, including Chu Ti, as hereditary princes on the northwestern frontiers and in the central Yangtze region; these principedoms were to serve as strongholds against Mongol invasions and rebel uprisings. The princes received substantial annual stipends and extensive privileges; and although legally they possessed no direct administrative authority over the common people in their areas, they each commanded three auxiliary army units of between 3,000 and 15,000 men.¹⁴

11 Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Feng t'ien ching nan chi chu*, pp. 22–23.

12 This point is suggested by D. Chan in *The usurpation of the Prince of Yen, 1398–1402*, pp. 36–38. For Yao Kuang-hsiao's biography, see *DMB*, p. 1561.

13 Huang Chang-chien, "Tu Huang Ming tien li," in *MCSYC*, pp. 122–27.

14 Wu Han, *Chu Yüan-chang chuan*, pp. 160–62. D. Chan, *The usurpation*, pp. 9–11; Edward Dreyer, *Early Ming China: A political history 1355–1435* (Stanford, 1982), pp. 148–52; see also Chang I-shan, "To kuo hou ti Ming Ch'eng-tsu yü chu fan wang kuan hsi k'ao," *Wen shih che hsüeh pao*, 31 (December 1982), pp. 44–51.

To ensure his control over these princedoms, the founding emperor laid down a series of rules and regulations governing the conduct of the princes in his *Ancestral injunctions*, promulgated first in 1381 and later revised in 1395. One of these rules stipulated that princes should not come to court within a three-year period following the accession of a new emperor, but should remain in their fiefs. If, however, “wicked officials” held sway at court, the princes were to prepare their military forces, wait for the new emperor to summon them to “rectify disorder,” and having accomplished their duty and driven out the evildoers, return to their fiefs.

An important rule laid down the principles of legitimate succession, applicable equally to the succession of princes and of emperors. The major principle was the succession by the eldest son born to the principal consort. Where this was not possible, the next youngest brother born to the same consort was to become the legitimate successor.¹⁵ To maintain these family rules in perpetuity, the first emperor issued stern warnings to his descendants forbidding the slightest change in his instructions, and he exhorted the princes to undertake punitive action against any violators, even against the person of the emperor himself.¹⁶ The founder’s conception was quite unrealistic; institutional adjustment was inevitable. The new emperor’s attempt to scale down the power of the princes brought him into open conflict with his uncles, in particular with Chu Ti, the Prince of Yen. Understandably, however, in their eyes his attempt to strip the feudal princes of their customary rights and privileges was a grave transgression against the *Ancestral injunctions*.

The policy of reducing the feudatories (*hsiao fan*) has traditionally been attributed to Huang Tzu-ch’eng, and Ch’i T’ai, but it may have been the emperor’s own idea. Huang Tzu-ch’eng, this policy’s most ardent advocate, reportedly impressed the importance of this measure on the emperor by reminding him of the rebellion of the seven feudatories against the Han emperor Ching (r. 157–141 B.C.) in 154 B.C. and by alluding in general to the potential danger of powerful, semi-autonomous princedoms.¹⁷ Two courses of action were considered: the outright abolition of the princedoms or their reduction to political and military impotence. The main target of these moves was the Prince of Yen; by this time, the Hung-wu emperor’s second and third sons had already died, leaving the Prince of Yen as the

15 On the rules and regulations in the *Ancestral injunctions* governing the conduct of the princes, see the articles cited in Wang Ch’ung-wu, *Ming ching nan shih shih k’ao cheng kao*, pp. 105–07, 110–11. For a detailed study of the *Injunctions* in reference to the enfeoffment of the princes, see Huang Chang-chien, “Lun [Huang Ming] Tsu hsün lu’ pan hsing nien tai ping lun Ming ch’u feng chien chu wang chih tu,” in *Ming Ch’ing shih yen chiu ts’ung kao*, pp. 31–56.

16 On this point, see also pp. 441–42.

17 Wang Ch’ung-wu, *Feng t’ien ching nan chi chu*, pp. 26–28; and *Ming ching nan shih shih k’ao cheng kao*, pp. 100–102.

oldest and most powerful surviving prince and the ritual head of the imperial clan. After much deliberation, the Chien-wen emperor decided upon outright abolition. This spurred the Prince of Yen to launch his campaign against the throne, ostensibly to restore the institutions of the dynasty and in fact to preserve his own power and influence.¹⁸

The rebellion of the Prince of Yen

The formidable Prince of Yen, Chu Ti, was born on 2 May 1360, probably to one of the Hung-wu emperor's lesser consorts (*kung-fei*), who was allegedly either Mongolian or Korean. He was not born to empress Ma, as he himself later claimed; that claim was an attempt to legitimize his accession on the basis of primogeniture after he had usurped the throne from his nephew. He grew up strong, vigorous, skillful in the martial arts, and is said to have excelled also in the study of the Confucian classics and literature. His literary abilities received mention in the official histories, because such accomplishments suited the public image of a Confucian ruler.¹⁹ In May 1370 the Hung-wu emperor enfeoffed Chu Ti as the Prince of Yen, establishing his fief in Pei-p'ing (modern Peking) to provide internal security for the northern frontier and to guard against Mongol invasions.

The prince, then only ten years old, did not take up residence in Peking until April 1380, after he had reached adulthood. By this time he had received an excellent general education at the hands of eminent scholars and Buddhist monks at court. He had also begun to display military leadership under the tutelage of the dynasty's leading generals, especially Hsü Ta (1332–85), whose eldest daughter he married in 1376 at the emperor's wish.²⁰ While guarding his fief during the next decades, the prince frequently took command of campaigns against the Mongols, ably directing operations under the aegis of the senior generals. He earned the good opinion of his father by his achievements, but also gave cause for worry as

18 Wu Chi-hua, "Lun Chien-wen shih ti tsai fu," in *MTCTS*, Vol I, pp. 166–69; Wu Chi-hua, "Ming tai huang shih chung ti ch'ia ho yü tui li," in *MTCTS*, Vol. II, pp. 281–83; D. Chan, *The usurpation*, pp. 16–19; Sakakura, "Kenbuntei no seisaku," pp. 6–10.

19 For a thorough discussion of the maternity of the Yung-lo emperor, see the following works: Fu Ssu-nien, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu sheng mu chi i," *BIHP*, 2, No. 3 (April 1931), pp. 406–14; Li Chin-hua, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu sheng mu wen t'i hui cheng," *BIHP*, 6, No. 1 (March 1936), pp. 55–77; Wu Han, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu sheng mu k'ao," *Ching hua hsüeh pao*, 10, No. 3 (July 1935), pp. 631–46; S. J. Shaw, "Historical significance of the curious theory of the Mongol blood in the veins of the Ming emperors," *The Chinese Social and Political Science Review*, 20 (1937), pp. 492–98; and Henry Serruys, "A manuscript version of the legend of the Mongol ancestry of the Yung-lo emperor," *The Mongolia Society Occasional Papers*, No. 8: *Analecta Mongolica dedicated to the seventieth birthday of Professor Owen Lattimore* (Bloomington, Ind. 1972), pp. 19–61.

20 Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Feng t'ien ching nan chi chu*, pp. 1–4 Terada Takanobu, *Eiraku tei* (Tokyo, 1966), pp. 34–36; *DMB*, p. 356; for Hsü Ta's biography, see *DMB*, p. 602.

he became more ambitious, arrogant, and independent. It is obvious that the prince was bitterly disappointed when in 1392 the Hung-wu emperor designated his eldest brother's son, Chu Yün-wen, rather than himself heir apparent.²¹

Late in 1398, in the first months of his reign, the Chien-wen emperor began a deliberate attempt to consolidate his authority at the expense of the feudal princedoms and took drastic action against the lesser and weaker of the princes on real or imagined charges. Chu Su (1361–1425), Prince of Chou, was the first to fall, and he was followed by four other princes: Chu Kuei (1374–1446), Prince of Tai; Chu Po (1371–99), Prince of Hsiang; Chu Fu (1364–1428), Prince of Ch'i, and Chu P'ien (1379–1400), Prince of Min. Within a year, five strategic princedoms had been eliminated, and the Prince of Yen became the next target. The court realized that he was an altogether more formidable enemy and moved cautiously; that, however, gave the prince time to gather his forces and to make preparations.²²

It is not certain when the Prince of Yen first decided to confront the court. Some sources suggest that he had considered a confrontation much earlier under the influence of the Buddhist monk Tao-yen (later known as Yao Kuang-hsiao, who had been assigned by the first emperor to his household and had won his confidence. Tao-yen is alleged to have predicted that the prince was destined for the throne after Chu Yün-wen had been designated the heir apparent and to have encouraged him to make plans to further his ambition. When the Chien-wen court began to purge his brothers, the Prince of Yen quickly discerned his own precarious situation and in consultation with Tao-yen, who was now his principal advisor and strategist, took steps to meet the threat.²³ The prince had already increased his forces by incorporating surrendered Mongol soldiers into his army and had allied himself with those eunuchs who were disenchanted with the new emperor. However, he still contemplated no immediate action, since his three sons were being held as hostages in Nanking to ensure his good behavior. Meanwhile, both sides had spies and agents reporting back and forth. The prince resorted to a number of ruses during 1398 and 1399, feigning illness, then madness, while pleading for the return of his sons. It was not until the Chien-wen emperor granted permission for his sons' return in June 1399—a decision historians regarded

21 On the Hung-wu emperor's designation of Chu Yün-wen as heir apparent in 1392, see note 15 above. See also Terada, *Eiraku tai*, pp. 44–46.

22 Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Feng t'ien ching nan chi chu*, pp. 17–20; D. Chan, *The usurpation*, pp. 19–21. For more on the fate of these princes, see Chang I-shan, "To kuo hou ti Ming Ch'eng-tsu," pp. 51–55.

23 Heinz Friese, "Der Mönch Yao Kuang-hsiao (1335–1418) und seine Zeit," *Oriens Extremus*, 7, No. 1 (1960), pp. 158–84; D. Chan, *The usurpation*, pp. 25–39.

as a serious blunder—that the Prince of Yen committed himself to offensive military action.

The outbreak of hostilities occurred late in July 1399, when a military official loyal to the Chien-wen court seized two junior officials attached to the Prince of Yen's fief and carried them to Nanking for execution on the charge of sedition. The prince, taking this as an excuse, grasped the initiative by launching military offensives against several neighboring counties and prefectures on 5 August under the pretext of chastising treacherous court officials. This marked the beginning of a bloody, three-year military struggle between the court and the prince, which later was camouflaged under the name of a campaign to clear away disorders (*ching-nan*).²⁴

In order to justify his rebellion, the Prince of Yen issued several carefully contrived public documents in the following months, including two letters submitted to the court in August and December 1399 and a subsequent manifesto promulgated to the officials and the people. The prince insisted that he was taking righteous action to put an end to internal disorders, actions justified both by the Confucian principle of filial piety and by the articles in the *Ancestral injunctions* governing the duties of the princes.²⁵ He accused the emperor, *inter alia*, of failure to inform him of his father's illness, of preventing him from attending the mourning, and of repudiating the Hung-wu emperor's injunctions by demolishing the palace in which the late emperor had resided.

He also charged that the emperor, acting under advice from his sycophantic advisors, Ch'i T'ai, Huang Tzu-ch'eng, and others, had persecuted the imperial princes and had falsely accused him of making military preparations against the throne. He argued that his actions were taken in righteous self-defense; and he pleaded with the emperor to banish his treacherous and wicked advisors and to restore the laws and institutions established by the first emperor. Furthermore, he declared that he was obliged to undertake this punitive mission because it fell to him as the eldest surviving son born of the empress Ma; he disavowed any interest in the throne, stating only that he set out to eliminate the treacherous court officials according to the provisions set out in the *Ancestral injunctions*.

24 Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Feng t'ien ching nan chi chu*, pp. 2809, 33–48; Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming ching nan shih shih k'ao cheng kao*, pp. 53–58; the name *ching-nan* came from the title of a *post facto* official paper on the civil war, *Feng t'ien ching nan chi* (An account of the campaign "to clear away the disorders in response to Heaven's will"), compiled shortly after the enthronement of the Prince of Yen, written to legitimize his action against the court as well as his accession. For a succinct evaluation of this work, see Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Feng t'ien ching nan chi chu*, Introduction, and Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming ching nan shih shih k'ao cheng kao*, pp. 6–18.

25 These documents are included in Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Feng t'ien ching nan chi chu*, pp. 41–48, 74–78, and 86–92. For a detailed analysis, see Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming ching nan shih shih k'ao cheng kao*, pp. 8–22.

It is doubtful, in the light of evidence provided by modern historians, that any of his charges could be fully substantiated, or indeed, that he could have publicly proclaimed these points until later. Nevertheless, these accusations were vital to the Prince of Yen; eventually they gave justification for his actions against the court and rallied support for his cause. This was also why, in the aftermath of his usurpation, the prince had to tamper with historical records to weed out evidence that contradicted his statements and to substitute versions of history that bolstered his claim to legitimate succession.²⁶

The civil war, August 1399–July 1402

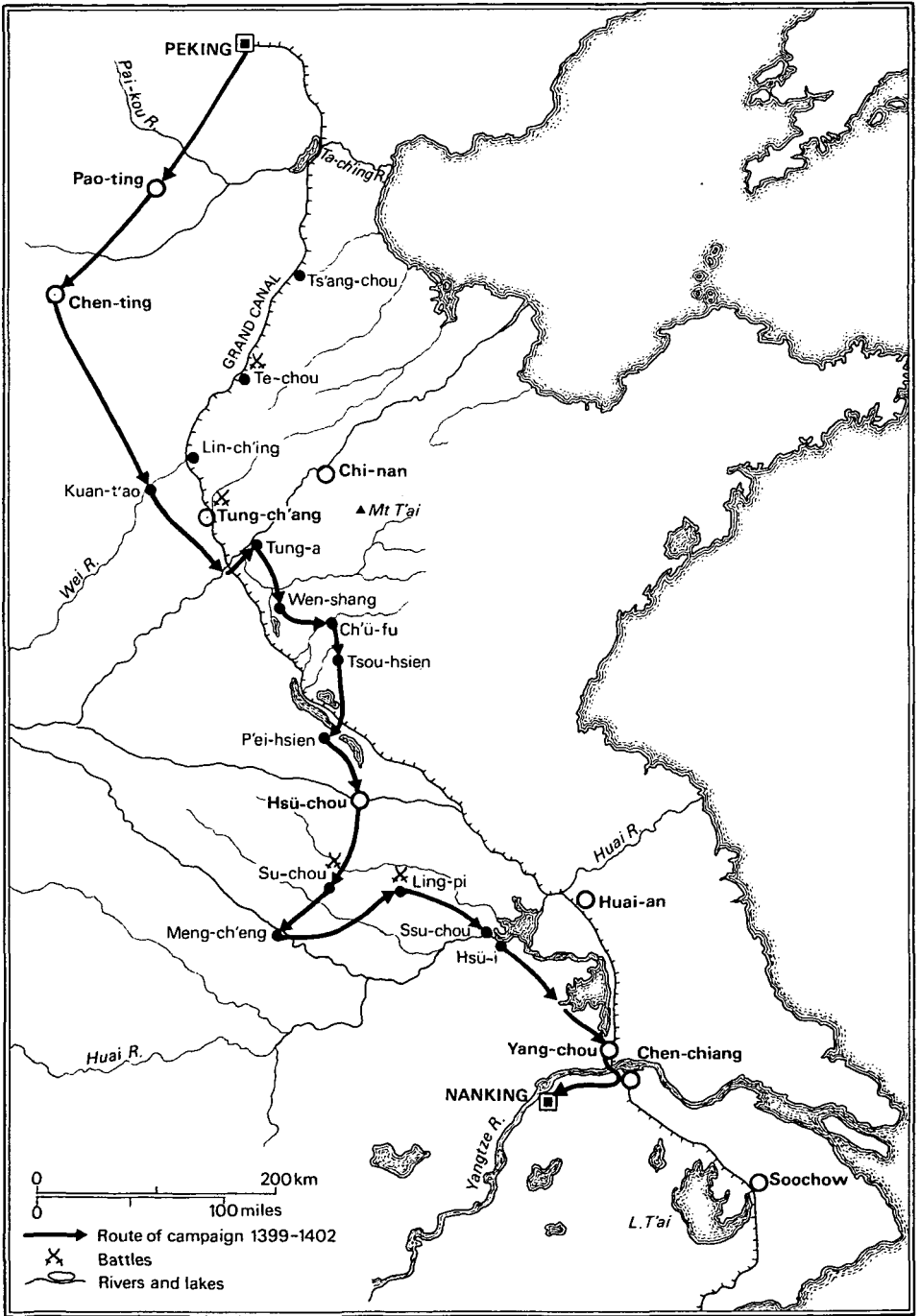
At the start of the rebellion, the Prince of Yen had no advantage in troops. His forces numbered only about 100,000 men; nor did he control any territory beyond his fief in Peking. The Chien-wen court at Nanking maintained a standing army three times the size of the prince's army, possessed abundant resources, and had already eliminated several of the principedoms. But this simple comparison is misleading. The prince's strength lay in his own powers of leadership, in the superior quality of his army—including a large contingent of Mongol cavalry from the Uriyangkhad commanderies, in superior strategy, and in his own unwavering determination to win. By contrast, the imperial forces were handicapped by indecisive and ill-coordinated leadership, and by the court's preoccupation with the much less urgent tasks of government reorganization.²⁷

The initial phase of the war, from late in 1399 to mid-1401, was largely confined to the immediate vicinity of the Peking prefecture and to strongholds in the vicinity of Chi-nan in Shantung. The war formally began late in August when the Chien-wen emperor appointed Keng Ping-wen (ca. 1339–1404), a retired senior military officer, commanding general for the pacification of the rebellion. On 11 September, in an attempt to contain the rebel forces near Peking, Keng deployed an army of 130,000 around Chen-ting, southwest of Peking, but was defeated two weeks later with heavy losses.²⁸ Then Li Ching-lung, eldest son of the late general Li Wen-chung (1339–84), took over the command; but he was equally ineffective. In mid-October, the Prince of Yen left his fief to search for new recruits; Li took advantage of his absence to lead an expeditionary army of troops from

²⁶ This has been discussed in full in Hok-lam Chan, "The legitimation of usurpation," sec. 3.

²⁷ This account of the civil war synthesizes the more critical records of this period based on Wang Ch'ung-wu's evaluation in Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Feng t'ien ching nan chi chu*; Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming ching nan shih shih k'ao cheng kao*, esp. pp. 53–102; Terada, *Eiraku tei*, pp. 71–127; D. Chan, *The usurpation*, ch. 5–8; and Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, ch. 5.

²⁸ For Keng Ping-wen's biography, see *DMB*, p. 718.



Map 8. The Nanking campaign, 1402

the Nanking area against Peking. He laid siege to Peking on 12 November, but the prince soon returned and defeated Li, whose soldiers, mostly southerners, were unaccustomed to the cold weather, and forced him to withdraw to Te-chou in northwestern Shantung three weeks later.²⁹

On 6 December the prince sent another letter to court denouncing Ch'i T'ai and Huang Tzu-ch'eng. As a strategic gesture, the emperor formally dismissed both from their official positions and replaced Ch'i T'ai with Ju Ch'ang (d. 1409). In fact, however, he continued to rely on their advice. In mid-January 1400, the prince launched a new offensive northwest into Shansi where, after capturing a key prefectural city, he proceeded to Ta-r'ung, the provincial capital. Li Ching-lung procrastinated. When his relief force arrived in Ta-r'ung in March, the prince had already returned to Peking, and Li led his weary and frostbitten troops back to Te-chou.³⁰

In May 1400, the two sides met in a major battle on the banks of the Pai-kou River near Pao-ting in central Pei Chihli. This time Li Ching-lung attempted to crush the prince's army in a pincer attack, but he was frustrated on 14 May by cloudbursts and heavy flooding. Four days later the two armies, comprising some 600,000 men, engaged in a pitched battle. Li's army was equipped with explosive weapons; but again he suffered heavy casualties and retreated in disorder first to Te-chou on 30 May, and then to Chi-nan. The prince was now threatened in his turn by a column of the imperial cavalry under general P'ing An (d. 1409); he was saved only by the arrival from Peking of reinforcements led by his second son, Chu Kao-hsü.

On 1 June the prince returned to the offensive, advancing first on Te-chou. He defeated Li Ching-lung's exhausted army en route to the city, to which he laid siege on 8 June. Te-chou was defended by P'ing An and Sheng Yung (d. 1403), one of the most able of the imperial commanders. The prince made little headway against the defenders and suffered several setbacks at the hands of the imperial army, which occasionally sortied out from the city walls to attack his rear. On 4 September, when news reached him that a relief force was on its way from Nanking, the prince lifted the siege and returned to Peking. The imperial army again took control of Te-chou. Dismayed by his performance, the court recalled Li Ching-lung late in June and appointed Sheng Yung as commander-in-chief for the pacification of the rebel forces.³¹ Between the autumn of 1400 and the spring of 1401, the Prince of Yen, taking advantage of information conveyed to him by eunuchs and generals who had fled the court in Nanking, decided to fight a war of attrition. He employed guerrilla tactics,

29 For Li Ching-lung's biography, see *DMB*, p. 886.

30 For Ju Ch'ang's biography, see *DMB*, p. 686.

31 For Sheng Yung's biography, see *DMB*, p. 1196.

launching diversionary attacks and feints in the southern part of Pei Chihli and in western Shantung, while he sought routes to the south that would avoid the fortified strongholds. This began a new phase of the civil war.

On 9 and 10 January 1401, the prince suffered a serious defeat during an attack on Tung-ch'ang, west of the Grand Canal in Shantung. Sheng Yung, the imperial commander, again employed explosive weapons, which took the lives of some commanders as well as tens of thousands of the Prince of Yen's troops. During his retreat to Peking, the prince narrowly escaped capture by P'ing An's cavalry. Elated by news of this victory, the emperor reinstated Ch'i T'ai and Huang Tzu-ch'eng on 31 January. Determined to gain control of southern Pei Chihli, the prince resumed his offensive on 28 February. His army inflicted a severe defeat on Sheng Yung's forces at Chia-ho, north of the Hu-t'o River near Te-chou on 5 and 6 April. Later in the month, the prince routed P'ing An's reinforcements. In despair, the emperor again dismissed Ch'i T'ai and Huang Tzu-ch'eng on 17 April, replacing the former with Ju Ch'ang, who together with the disgraced Li Ching-lung emerged as leaders of the peace faction at court.

This reshuffling fell into a familiar pattern. When victory seemed at hand, Ch'i and Huang were reinstated; when the war went poorly, they were dismissed. This was not simply a symbolic change designed to placate the Prince of Yen; it revealed a serious factional struggle within the imperial circle. Under the new leadership the emperor made some abortive peace overtures to the prince. But he continued to support his two principal advisors, and entrusted them with the organization of militia in the central Yangtze region to aid the imperial cause.

Throughout the summer, the prince continued his surprise raids on the Grand Canal supply routes to Chen-ting and Te-chou, destroying warehouses and transport facilities from southern Pei Chihli to southern Shantung. Early in July 1401, Sheng Yung failed to cut off the prince's supply lines along the canal, which exposed the imperial forces in northern Shantung to great danger. Late in August, P'ing An launched a successful counterattack against Peking from Chen-ting, forcing the prince once again to turn north. But P'ing An and his colleagues were again repulsed late in October, and the prince returned to Peking at the end of November. Meanwhile, the Chien-wen court tried to bolster its strength by importing war horses from Korea, whose king, Yi Pang-won (r. 1400–18), had expressed open support for the emperor's campaign against the prince. But these had no effect on the outcome of the war owing to inept military leadership.³²

32 Wu Han, *Ch'ao-hsien Li ch'ao shih lu chung ti Chung-kuo shih liao* (Peking, 1980), pp. 161–69. See also Wang Ch'ung-wu, "Tu Ming shih Ch'ao-hsien chuan," *BIHP*, 12 (1947), pp. 6–10; Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming ching nan shih shih k'ao cheng kao*, pp. 130–32.

In January 1402 the prince left his fief to launch a new offensive against Nanking. Heeding the advice of the palace eunuchs who had been spying for him, he skirted the fortified strongholds along the Grand Canal and the Huai River in Anhwei and Nan Chihli, concentrating his assaults on poorly defended cities and counties. His forces bypassed Te-chou, crossed the Yellow River, and within a month captured several key points in northwestern Shantung, totally disrupting imperial supply lines to the north. The court at once sent Hsü Hui-tsu, the eldest son of the late general Hsü Ta and brother of the Prince of Yen's consort, to lead reinforcements to Shantung; but he failed to halt the prince's army. The prince pushed farther south, capturing Hsü-chou in northwestern Nan Chihli on 3 March. At this point the imperial armies were withdrawn from the Peking area and Te-chou to defend the Southern Metropolitan Region.

Early in April 1402, the prince marched into Su-chou in northern Anhwei and defeated P'ing An's cavalry troops, which had been sent to intercept him. But he suffered a severe setback on 23 May at Mount Ch'i-men, south of Ling-pi in Anhwei, at the hands of a superior imperial army led by Hsü Hui-tsu. The prince survived this loss, and five days later, taking advantage of Hsü's sudden recall and the arrival of reinforcements, he surprised P'ing An at Ling-pi, capturing him and several other important commanders. His forces then overcame Sheng Yung's defense on the Huai River on 7 June and after skirting the strongly fortified cities of Feng-yang near the Huai River and Huai-an on the Grand Canal (near Lake Hung-tse), moved down the Huai River with lightning speed, capturing Yang-chou on 17 June. On 1 July the prince's army was stopped by Sheng Yung's navy at P'u-tzu k'ou across the Yangtze River from Nanking. Two days later, the assistant chief commissioner Ch'en Hsüan (1365–1433), who was in command of the river fleet, defected to the prince, whereupon his troops gained the means to cross the Yangtze. They quickly did so, and reached the outskirts of Nanking unopposed.³³

Before this, the Chien-wen emperor had recalled his armies from the north and had mustered new recruits near Nanking to defend the capital, but court policy remained unsettled even in the last hours. Ch'i T'ai and Huang Tzu-ch'eng, who had been summoned to return on 20 June, advocated defending the capital at all costs; Li Ching-lung and Ju Ch'ang favored a negotiated settlement. On 9 July the emperor sent Li and Chu Hui (1379–1417), the nineteenth son of the Hung-wu emperor, to Lung-t'an outside Nanking to make an offer of peace to the prince. They returned to report that the negotiations had failed, but apparently they had taken

33 For Ch'en Hsüan's biography, see *DMB*, p. 157.

advantage of their mission to end the war by other means. Five days later, on 13 July, Li conspired with Chu Hui, who was then commanding the defense of the Chin-ch'uan Gate; they opened the city gates without a fight and welcomed the prince.

During the melee that followed the arrival of the prince's armies, the imperial palace compound inside the Nanking city walls was set ablaze. When the fire subsided, several badly burned bodies were produced and declared to be those of the emperor, his wife empress Ma (married in 1395), and his eldest son Chu Wen-k'uei (b. 1396). The true fate of the emperor remains a mystery. It is not certain that he actually burned to death; he may have fled the capital disguised as a Buddhist monk, as later historians sympathetic to his cause have alleged. The official histories had to proclaim that the emperor and his eldest son had perished; otherwise, the Prince of Yen could not possibly have claimed the throne. The emperor's second son, Chu Wen-kuei, then only two years old, was captured along with other surviving members of the imperial family. He was spared and incarcerated with the rest of his kinsmen and did not regain freedom until 1457, when he was fifty-six years of age.³⁴

After ritually declining his supporters' repeated petitions for several days, on 17 July 1402 the prince ascended the throne as the successor not of the Chien-wen emperor, but of the dynastic founder. The following day he ordered a ritually appropriate burial for the charred remains purported to be the bodies of the Chien-wen emperor and his family, but he did not confer a posthumous imperial title on the deceased emperor. He then issued several proclamations to the empire and to foreign states announcing his accession. The remaining months of 1402 were designated the thirty-fifth year of the Hung-wu reign. In this way the new emperor explicitly denied the Chien-wen emperor's legitimacy; he proclaimed the following year the first in the reign of Yung-lo (Lasting joy). All the founder's laws and institutions were restored. In addition, the new emperor ordered the destruction of the Chien-wen archives, save those dealing with fiscal and military matters, and proscribed all writings and discussions on the events of this period.³⁵

The new emperor's most violent measures were reserved for loyal Chien-wen officials like Ch'i T'ai, Huang Tzu-ch'eng, and Fang Hsiao-ju. He had hoped that the incorruptible Fang would now acknowledge the success of his cause and serve him, thereby swinging scholar-official support to his

34 On the fate of Chu Wen-kuei, see *DMB*, p. 403.

35 On the abrogation of the Chien-wen emperor's reign title, see Wu Chi-hua, "Ming tai Chien-wen ti tsai ch'uan t'ung huang wei shang ti wen t'i," and "Ming tai chi nien wen t'i," in his *MTCTS*, Vol. II, pp. 350-55, 366-71, respectively.

cause. Fang indignantly denounced him and along with many others was cruelly executed as a wicked minister who had misguided the emperor. It was a bloody effort to intimidate China's independent-minded intellectuals. In due course, tens of thousands of innocent people related to these former Chien-wen officials were either executed, incarcerated, or banished; the violence of these bloody purges was equaled in its ferocity only by those carried out by the dynastic founder.

The Chien-wen emperor's legacy

Whether he was burned to death or eluded capture disguised as a monk, the Chien-wen emperor met a sad end and lost his imperial status. Vindictively, official histories of the Yung-lo reign covered this period by artificially extending the first emperor's reign for four additional years, from Hung-wu 32 to 35 (1399–1402): this period has since been referred to by historians as the expunged (*ko-ch'u*) period.³⁶ The Chien-wen reign name was belatedly restored by the Wan-li emperor in October 1595 as part of an abortive project to compile a history of the Ming dynasty. However, it was not until July 1644, 242 years later, that the Southern Ming ruler the Prince of Fu (Chu Yu-sung, d. 1646) assigned to the emperor the temple name Hui-tsung (Magnanimous Ancestor) and the posthumous name Jang Huang-ti (Abdicated Emperor). The latter honorific was chosen in response to the popular belief that the emperor did not die in the palace fire, but willingly abdicated the throne in favor of his uncle in order to mitigate the general disaster of the civil war.

The Prince of Fu's one-year reign and its imperial acts were not recognized by the Ch'ing regime. Only in September 1736, when the Ch'ien-lung emperor (r. 1736–96) conferred on him the title Kung-min Hui ti (Reverent, Piteous, and Magnanimous Emperor) was the Chien-wen emperor's imperial status fully restored. Therefore, he is referred to as Kung-min Hui ti in the official history of the dynasty (*Ming shih*, 1736), but simply as the Chien-wen emperor (*Chien-wen ti*) in the earlier draft Ming history (*Ming shih kao*) completed by Wang Hung-hsü (1645–1723) in 1723.³⁷

The emperor and his advisors left an important legacy in their sincere and courageous efforts to promote benevolent civil rule and to advance the welfare of the populace. They abandoned the first emperor's policies and came into conflict with the Prince of Yen because they had come to power

³⁶ See Wu Chi-hua's studies cited in note 35.

³⁷ On these historiographical problems, see Li Chin-hua, *Ming shih tsuan hsiu k'ao* (Peking, 1933), pp. 68, 95, 101. See also Harold L. Kahn, *Monarchy in the emperor's eyes: Image and reality in the Ch'ien-lung reign* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), pp. 44–46.

under different circumstances and professed a different conception of rulership. Unlike the prince, who built his power on the northern frontier and depended on the support of army officers, the Chien-wen leaders had their base in Nanking and relied on the support of the Confucian elite from the lower Yangtze region. They regarded the drift to authoritarian and militaristic rule under the Hung-wu emperor as a great threat to the dynasty and believed it could be corrected only by promoting Confucian values and civil authority at the expense of the powerful, semi-autonomous imperial princes. They failed not because they were inferior to the Prince of Yen in military strength, but because they had little practical experience and lacked resolute leadership, careful planning, and coherent strategy on the battlefield.³⁸

The civil war had ramifications for the dynasty that went beyond this internecine struggle for the throne. The Hung-wu emperor had created a serious threat to dynastic stability by establishing the semi-autonomous principedoms; and the preponderance of military over civil institutions, while serving to bolster authoritarian rule, had inadvertently undermined imperial authority. The Prince of Yen's triumph was not just the victory of a principedom over the imperial court; it was also the triumph of military authority over the civil government. The prince, as the Yung-lo emperor, perpetuated the military legacy of the dynastic founder, a legacy that overshadowed the civil government and brought the empire to the zenith of its power and influence. However, the Chien-wen ideal of civil rule was not totally lost. It was cherished by many former Hung-wu and Chien-wen officials who continued to serve under the Yung-lo emperor; and when the emperor died, they promoted once again the Confucian principles of civil government that saw practical results under the Hung-hsi and Hsüan-te emperors.

In popular history, the Chien-wen reign is remembered through a profusion of legends about the ill-fated emperor—legends generated by popular sympathy for his suffering and by fascination about his mysterious fate. This tradition first took shape as the simple belief that the emperor did not die in the palace fire when Nanking fell, but managed to flee the capital disguised as a Buddhist monk; later it became increasingly complex.³⁹ A

38 For appraisals of the Chien-wen emperor, see Meng Sen, *Ming tai shih*, pp. 83–88; *DMB*, pp. 398–401; Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 170–72; Mao P'ei-ch'i, "Chien-wen hsing cheng," pp. 42–45.

39 For accounts of the various versions of these legends that were transmitted in late Ming private literature and miscellaneous writings, see, among others, Chao Shih-che, *Chien-wen nien p'u*, part 2 (preface, 1636; rpt., Shanghai, 1935); Lun Ming, "Chien-wen hsün kuo k'ao i," *Fu-jen hsüeh chih*, 73, No. 2 (July 1932), pp. 1–62; Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming ching nan shih shih k'ao cheng kao*, pp. 31–42; and Suzuki Tadashi, "Kenbuntei shatsubō-setsu kōshō," *Shikan*, 65, Nos. 6–7 (October 1962), pp. 160–85, and 68 (May 1963), pp. 50–69.

bizarre incident late in 1440 suggests how widely credited this tradition had become. A ninety-year-old monk, exploiting the legend, appeared before the Cheng-t'ung emperor's court, declaring himself to be the former emperor. The imposter was subsequently exposed and executed, but the incident kindled popular fantasy and spurred on the cycle of legends.

The emperor and his martyred followers gradually emerged as tragic heroes in pseudohistorical fiction written on this theme after the sixteenth century.⁴⁰ These works portrayed the emperor as a diligent, benevolent ruler, generous to his uncle, proposing to offer him the throne. They expanded on the story that he had eluded the mutineers when the capital fell to live a long life as a monk and was survived by descendants. They also gave sympathetic accounts of such Chien-wen martyrs as Ch'i T'ai, Huang Tzu-ch'eng, and Fang Hsiao-ju, depicting them as loyal and dedicated officials, and claiming they too were survived by many descendants, despite their persecution. These bizarre legends not only reflected popular sympathy for the Chien-wen emperor and the ideas he espoused; they also reveal suppressed outrage against the injustices of the Yung-lo emperor, resentment of his harsh policies, and rejection of his pretensions to legitimate succession.

The story that the Chien-wen emperor voluntarily abdicated the throne to the Prince of Yen gained increasing popularity; it was even given historical credibility by Cheng Hsiao (1499–1566), who included it in his *Chien-wen hsiün kuo chi* (Account of the abdication of the Chien-wen emperor, ca. 1566). It thus bolstered popular sentiment for the rehabilitation of the emperor and led to the formal restoration of his reign title in 1595.⁴¹ In the following century, imaginative stories and fanciful anecdotes about the Chien-wen reign continued to appear. These legends became an outlet for popular frustration, a plea for benevolence and justice under authoritarian rule. They not only dramatized heroic deeds and made the emperor a tragic figure; in a further attempt to redress injustice, they condemned the Yung-lo emperor and his supporters as traitors and villains. This popular sympathy for the ex-emperor became widespread, and it was drawn on by late Ming and early Ch'ing rebel leaders who posed as his rightful descendants. It had its counterpart in the scholar-elite's growing tendency from mid- and late Ming times onward to blame the Yung-lo emperor, if only in

40 Chao Shih-che, *Chien-wen nien p'u*, pp. 139–43. For details, see Suzuki, "Kenbuntei," pp. 169–79; Ch'en Wan-nai, *Ming Hui-ti ch'u wang k'ao cheng* (Kao-hsiung, 1960), pp. 59–71.

41 Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming ching nan shih shih k'ao cheng kao*, pp. 31–34; Wu Chi-hua, "Ming tai Chien-wen ti," in *MTCTS*, II, pp. 357–59. For Cheng Hsiao's *Chien-wen hsiün kuo chi*, see Wolfgang Franke, *An Introduction to the sources of Ming history* (Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, 1968), 2.1.1.

veiled terms, for social problems seen by them as the consequences of his authoritarian policies. The imperial decision in 1736 to restore the Chien-wen emperor's legitimate status also resulted in part from such popular and elite sentiment.

THE YUNG-LO REIGN

The Yung-lo emperor has often been called the second founder of the Ming dynasty. This epithet alludes to his restoration of the ancestral institutions and to his repudiation of the preceding reign; it suggests as well that the emperor undertook new initiatives in expanding his empire. Old institutions and statutes were modified to meet the needs of the time, and the dynasty's military power was directed beyond China proper in a series of unprecedented imperial campaigns.

The character of the Yung-lo era reflected the new emperor's political and military background and his personal perception of the imperial institution. Having come to power as a professional soldier, he had great interest in military campaigns and had unquestioned personal support from his followers. Military glory, the security of the northern frontier, and political hegemony shaped his vision of rulership. But he had also received a thorough classical education and had inherited a civil administration able to govern the country well and to sustain his wide-ranging military activities. For practical as well as ideological reasons, he promoted strong civil government and an effective and stable bureaucracy. Otherwise he would not have been able to carry out his grandiose military adventures. During his reign, reforms and changes took place in almost every branch of the civil and military administration. Even the site of the imperial capital was changed.

These developments in civil government were paralleled, and at times overshadowed, by the emperor's preoccupation with military operations and with establishing a firm political hegemony. His expeditions against the Mongols, the annexation of Annam, the establishment of diplomatic relations with some Central Asian states, regularization of trade relations with Japan and other maritime neighbors, and the great expeditions into the southern and western oceans all greatly extended the influence of the Ming state.

It was inevitable that the emperor's twin visions of ideal imperial government and military expansion would come into conflict. The Yung-lo reign was thus riddled with contradictory developments. And although in his own time the emperor was fairly successful in accommodating opposing ideals and programs, his accommodations posed serious problems for his

successors. These conflicting visions of the Ming state's interests provide a key to understanding the Yung-lo emperor's reign and to appraising its place in Ming history.⁴²

Political structure and government administration

The military nobility

After his accession, the Yung-lo emperor needed to consolidate his power quickly. He first reorganized the military leadership to bolster the loyalty of those who had fought with him against the Chien-wen court by creating a new military nobility and showering it with honors and rewards. Similar privileges were later extended to important commanders who earned distinction in the various expeditions against the Mongols and the Annamese.

In October 1402, after awarding posthumous honors to several of his generals who had perished during the civil war, the emperor began to create this new military nobility. He invested generals Ch'iu Fu (d. 1409) and Chu Neng (d. 1406) as dukes; Chang Wu (d. 1403), Ch'en Kuei (d. 1420), and eleven others as marquises, and Hsü Hsiang (d. 1404), Hsü Li (d. 1408), and seven others as earls. Huo-chen (Khorghocin, 1349–1409), one of the many surrendered Mongol commanders who had joined the Ming military, was also made a marquis. In addition, one dukedom and three earldoms were awarded to officials who had defected to the Yung-lo emperor at or shortly after the fall of Nanking: Li Ching-lung, Ju Ch'ang, Wang Tso (d. 1405), and Ch'en Hsüan. In June 1403, marquises and earldoms were created for nine other generals of lesser rank in return for their services during the civil war.⁴³

The emperor continued to award similar noble titles to officers who distinguished themselves in the military campaigns during his reign. In August 1408, he awarded general Chang Fu (1375–1449) a dukedom and Liu Sheng (d. 1437) a marquise for their parts in the pacification of Annam, and created further marquises and earldoms in 1409, 1412, 1419, 1421, and 1422 for various generals who had distinguished themselves in the Mongolian campaigns. The latter included the Mongol generals Wu Yün-ch'eng (Batu Temür, d. 1417), ennobled as a marquis in 1412; Hsüeh Pin (Toghontai, d. 1421), ennobled as an earl in 1412; and Hsüeh Kuei (Toghoci, d. 1440), given an earldom in 1422. These awards suggest that the emperor did not discriminate against his Mongol com-

42 For a succinct account, see Terada, *Eiraku tei*, passim; Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, ch. 6.

43 For the biographies of some of these individuals, see *DMB*, pp. 686, 886, 1127, and 1436.

manders and considered them equally worthy of recognition on the basis of merit.⁴⁴

The emperor thus established a hereditary military nobility which became the foundation of his military establishment and provided the principal leaders for his campaigns. These nobles did not receive particularly high stipends: 2,500 to 2,200 *shih* (piculs) of grain for a duke, 1,500 to 800 *shih* for a marquis, and 1,000 *shih* for an earl; but they held prestigious ranks, which conferred a status probably far outweighing their material benefits. They had the emperor's confidence; they commanded the most important army units as the emperor's deputies; they had no competition from the imperial princes, who had already been conveniently removed under the Chien-wen emperor from their roles in military and civil administration; and they were not subject to any restraint from the civil bureaucracy.⁴⁵

It might appear that this investiture of a military nobility closely paralleled the Hung-wu emperor's policy, but there were major differences. Most of the nobles created by the Hung-wu emperor had been his former comrades-in-arms; they enjoyed high social prestige, had their own followings, and hence had great autonomous power. Eventually they were viewed by the founder as a serious threat to dynastic stability and were ruthlessly purged. The generals ennobled by the Yung-lo emperor had been social inferiors in 1399, and they had gained their new positions as a result of services rendered to the Prince of Yen during the civil war. As a safeguard against insubordination, the emperor did not assign regular army units to their command, but placed these new nobles in command of groups formerly led by generals in the service of the Chien-wen court, or for special missions gave them command of armies assembled from different guard and battalion units (*wei-so*) organized under the military colony system (*t'un-t'ien*). The generals thus could not easily develop strong personal ties with the troops under their command and were prevented from establishing themselves as independent powers who could challenge or undermine imperial authority. They took no part in regional or civil government administration.⁴⁶

Furthermore, the emperor frequently led military expeditions in person, fighting alongside his subordinate officers; this strengthened his relation-

44 For Chang Fu's biography, see *DMB*, p. 64. On these Mongol commanders, see Henry Serruys, "Mongols ennobled during the early Ming," *HJAS*, 22 (December 1959), pp. 215, 224.

45 On the status of the imperial princes under the Yung-lo emperor, see Wu Chi-hua, "Ming tai huang shih chung," in *MTCTS*, II, pp. 282-85; Chang I-shan, "To kuo hou ti Ming Ch'eng-tsu," pp. 60-126.

46 Wu Han, "Ming tai ti chün ping," in *Tu shih cha chi* (Peking, 1956; rpt., 1961), pp. 90-100; Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 174-75.

ship with his military nobility, enhanced their morale, and cemented their personal allegiance to him. In the first two Mongolian campaigns of 1410 and 1414 he employed several generals ennobled in 1402 as his personal deputies, and he constantly honored those who served with merit in similar campaigns until the end of his reign. Thus, these military nobles became closely identified with the emperor, and since they depended on their ruler's favor, they displayed intense loyalty to him and fought bravely in battle, several of them perishing in the Mongolian expeditions. There were only one or two cases of impeachment against military nobles, but these resulted from failures of behavior other than insubordination, and none of these cases led to extended purges like those carried out under the first emperor. In sum, the military nobility significantly bolstered the emperor's authority and power; it also greatly enhanced the prestige of the military and contributed significantly to whatever successes were achieved by the campaigns launched against foreign peoples during his reign.

The civil bureaucracy

In reorganizing the civil administration, the emperor first rebuilt the imperial bureaucracy, which had been thrown into disorder during the chaotic civil war. By reconstituting the imperial bureaucracy, he gained support among scholar-officials, some of whom had served during the previous reign and many of whom may still have resented him as a usurper. These endeavors, which were carried out during his various campaigns, greatly taxed the emperor's attention and energy. But they laid a solid foundation for the civil and military achievements of his reign.

The Yung-lo emperor saw as his primary task the restoration of his father's institutional practices, which had been repudiated under the Chien-wen emperor. While preserving the basic administrative structure inherited from the Hung-wu emperor, this reorganization introduced innovations that redressed shortcomings in earlier arrangements and accommodated changing needs. The first was the formation of a new grand secretariat, which functioned within the inner court as a liaison between the throne and the bureaucracy; this remedied a structural deficiency resulting from the abolition of the outer court's Secretariat in 1380. The grand secretariat soon came to dominate the bureaucracy and to function as the main executive organ of the civil government.

The newly organized grand secretariat emerged shortly after the Yung-lo emperor's accession when he appointed a group of seven scholars to senior positions in the Hanlin Academy, and then employed them as his principal advisors on state affairs. This began with the appointment of Hsieh Chin (1369–1415) and Huang Huai (1367–1449) in August and September

1402. The appointment of Hu Yen (1361–1431), Hu Kuang (1370–1481), Yang Jung (1371–1440), Yang Shih-ch'i (1365–1444), and Chin Yu-tzu (1368–1431) shortly followed. These individuals, all young and all from the south and southeast, were chosen for their literary excellence and administrative experience, even though almost all of them had served at the Chien-wen court. With the exception of Hu Yen, Hsieh Chin, and Yang Shih-ch'i, they had all received their metropolitan degrees during the Chien-wen reign.⁴⁷ During the Hung-wu reign, such Hanlin scholars had immediately been given the title of grand secretary (*ta hsüeh-shih*); under the new emperor, this title was conferred later. And although they enjoyed considerable power and influence, their rank was comparatively low, no higher than 5A. They were assigned exclusively to offices in the Wen-yüan Hall inside the palace compound (at Nanking until 1421 and at Peking thereafter), so that they could be readily available to the emperor. This too represented a departure from the Hung-wu practice, when the grand secretaries were assigned for duty at four pavilions and two halls inside the imperial palace.⁴⁸

These steps led to the evolution of a larger role for the grand secretariat; these highest-ranking Hanlin scholars began to work as the emperor's principal advisors and as the liaison between the throne and the bureaucracy. During the Hung-wu reign, grand secretaries had mainly been assigned to clerical duties in the inner court; these new Hanlin scholars enjoyed personal contact with the emperor, made decisions on matters of state, and took part in the formulation of policy. They often had joint meetings with the heads of the six ministries for deliberation on state affairs, but they gradually came to dominate the ministries of the outer court by virtue of their easy access to the emperor. The emperor generally kept his grand secretaries close at hand wherever he maintained his residence: at Nanking from 1402 to 1409; between Nanking and Peking from 1409 to 1417; and at Peking thereafter.

The emperor even took some of his grand secretaries along on such military expeditions as the Mongolian campaigns of 1410, 1414, 1422, 1423, and 1424. In these cases, the emperor left Chu Kao-chih (1378–1425), the heir apparent and later the Hung-hsi emperor, in control of the government at Nanking and later at Peking, and designated members of

47 For the biographies of some of these individuals, see *DMB*, pp. 554, 627, 641, 665, 1535.

48 For details, see Tu Nai-chi, *Ming tai nei ko chih tu* (Taipei, 1967), pp. 20, 24, 44, 49, 54, 64; Wu Chi-hua, "Ming Jen-Hsüan shih nei ko chih tu chih pien yü huan kuan chien yüeh hsiang ch'üan chih huo," in *MTCTS*, I, pp. 181–88. See also Tilemann Grimm, "Das Neiko der Ming-Zeit, von den Anfängen bis 1506," *Oriens Extremus*, I (1954), pp. 139–77, and Charles O. Hucker, "Governmental organization of the Ming dynasty," *HJAS*, 21 (1958), pp. 8–10.

his secretariat to act as his advisors. This arrangement became common practice in later years of the reign, when the emperor was frequently absent from the capital and the grand secretariat (*nei-ko*) became a sort of governing cabinet. This practice also enabled the heir apparent to develop a close relationship with the grand secretaries, which contributed to the stability of civil government after the Yung-lo emperor's death, for these men continued to serve the throne just as they had before.

The emperor appointed no new grand secretaries after he had chosen these seven Hanlin scholars in 1402. With the exception of Hu Yen, who left office in 1404 to head the National University, they all served for many years, four of them until their deaths. During the first years of the Yung-lo reign, Hsieh Chin was the leading personality among them; but he was imprisoned in 1411 and died in prison four years later as a result of the enmity of Chu Kao-hsü, the emperor's second son, who was maneuvering to have himself appointed heir apparent in place of Chu Kao-chih. Hsieh Chin had backed Chu Kao-chih's appointment and vigorously opposed such a change.⁴⁹

Involvement in the rivalry among the imperial princes also led to the disgrace of Huang Huai and Yang Shih-ch'i, who were imprisoned in 1414 because they defended the heir apparent, Chu Kao-chih, against Chu Kao-hsü's accusation that he had failed to fulfill his duties in conducting state affairs at Nanking during the emperor's absence on campaign in Mongolia. Yang was immediately released, but Huang languished in prison until 1424, being immediately reinstated after the Yung-lo emperor's death.⁵⁰ Hu Kuang became the senior grand secretary (*shau-fu*), after Hsieh Chin's downfall in 1411, and when Hu died in 1418, Yang Jung succeeded to the position. Hu and Yang, together with Chin Yu-tzu, accompanied the emperor on one or more of his punitive expeditions against the Mongol tribes. Yang Shih-ch'i remained with the heir apparent and eventually rose in 1424 to be the senior grand secretary, a position he continued to hold until his death in 1444.⁵¹ This group of grand secretaries remained in office throughout the reign and remained dedicated to the emperor's policies: they were the cornerstone in his reorganization of the civil administration.

The emperor carefully chose the heads of the six ministries for their expertise; and as in the case of the grand secretaries, he gave them long tenures and left the details of administration in his civil administrators' hands to a much fuller extent than had the founder. This practice also

49 See his biography in *DMB*, pp. 556–57.

50 *DMB*, pp. 666, 1536.

51 Tu Nai-chi, *Ming tai nei ko chih tu*, pp. 207–18; *DMB*, pp. 627–28, 1537.

assured continuity and stability in the civil administration. These long-serving ministers included Chien I (1363–1435), minister of personnel from 1402 to 1424; Hsia Yüan-chi (1366–1430), minister of revenue from 1402 to 1421; Lü Chen (1365–1426), minister of rites from 1409 to 1424; Chin Chung (1335–1415) and Fang Pin (d. 1421), ministers of war from 1404 to 1415, and from 1409 to 1421, respectively; Sung Li (d. 1422) and Wu Chung (1372–1442), ministers of works from 1405 to 1422, and from 1407 to 1416, respectively.⁵²

Like the new grand secretaries, these key ministers were all young men in their forties. All proved excellent ministers: Chien I, minister of personnel throughout the reign, was the architect of the civil service; Hsia Yüan-chi, who likewise served as minister of finance until he was imprisoned in 1421, proved a genius with financial administration; Sung Li, minister of works until his death in 1422, oversaw the transfer of the capital to Peking. The only major break in this political continuity came in 1421 when Hsia Yüan-chi, Wu Chung, and Fang Pin jeopardized their careers by protesting against the proposal for a third Mongolian campaign, arguing that it was more important to alleviate the financial burden on the people, and so incurred the emperor's wrath. Fang Pin committed suicide; Hsia Yüan-chi and Wu Chung were imprisoned until after the emperor's death, when they were reinstated.

The only unfortunate appointments were made in the Ministry of Justice and in the Censorate. Lü Chen, the original minister of justice (1405–08), was transferred to the Ministry of Rites in 1409 and was succeeded by Liu Kuan (c. 1385), who served until 1415. Ch'en Ying, appointed chief censor in 1403, was executed in 1411 for abuse of power. Liu Kuan succeeded Ch'en as chief censor in 1415 and served to the end of the Yung-lo reign; he too was eventually accused of corruption, although he did not fall from power until 1428. Liu's successor at the Ministry of Justice, Wu Chung, proved a good minister but was imprisoned in 1421 for protesting against the emperor's third Mongolian campaign, after which the Ministry of Justice remained without a head until the emperor's death.⁵³ Thus, four of the six ministries (personnel, revenue, rites, and works) were controlled for most or all of the reign by a single minister, and some of these ministers continued to serve in the same capacity under the succeeding rulers. This remarkable stability among the principal ministers throughout the fifteenth century reversed the pattern of fragmented author-

⁵² For the biographies of some of these individuals, see *DMB*, pp. 234, 531, 1224, 1483.

⁵³ See Charles O. Hucker, *The censorial system of Ming China* (Stanford, 1966), pp. 260–62; *DMB*, p. 1484.

ity and short tenures in office that had characterized the Hung-wu reign. It assured the administrative continuity of civil government through and beyond the Yung-lo reign.

The stability of the civil administration at the lower levels depended to a large extent on a pool of talented, literate men, selected for office through civil service examinations, who staffed the bureaucracy at various levels. The empirewide examinations were revived in 1404 and 1406, but the palace examination was postponed for five years until 1411 owing to the emperor's prolonged absence during the Mongolian campaigns. After 1412 the examinations were held at regular intervals, and a total of 1,833 metropolitan degrees were conferred during the Yung-lo reign; more of these graduates than in former times were immediately given substantive offices. By 1424 there were enough metropolitan graduates to fill most of the responsible posts in the civil administration down to the level of county magistrate. During these years, the examinations became almost the sole means of attaining high office, and gradually the regulations on appointments, promotions, demotions, and assessment of performance in office were tightened. Many of the graduates turned out to be talented administrators, and they played a major part in the overall quality and stability of the civil administration during the Yung-lo and later reigns.⁵⁴

The eunuchs and the Imperial Bodyguard

After having demonstrated how treachery could topple the throne, the emperor reorganized his surveillance network to safeguard his own position and also to investigate maladministration. For information he relied not only upon the civil bureaucracies' censorial and judicial officials, but also on his own eunuchs and the Imperial Bodyguard.

As the emperor's personal servants, directly under his own command, the eunuchs professed absolute loyalty to the emperor and were ready to carry out any services requested of them. That the emperor placed greater trust in eunuchs and employed them extensively for surveillance tasks is not surprising. Eunuchs had already demonstrated their worth during the preceding reign by faithfully discharging various special services, and it was the eunuchs at Nanking who had leaked secret information that helped turn the campaign against the Chien-wen court. As a result, the emperor took many of the eunuchs who had served the Chien-wen emperor into his confidence, including several of Mongol, Central Asian, Jurchen, or Korean origin, and made constant use of them. The most prominent eunuchs

54 See Yang Ch'i-ch'iao, "Ming ch'u jen ts'ai p'ei yang yü teng chin chih tu chi ch'i yen pien," *Hsin ya hsiieh pao*, 6, No. 2 (August 1964), pp. 365–72, 384–90.

included Cheng Ho (1371–1433?), who led the maritime expeditions to Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean, and Li Ta, Hou Hsien (fl. 1403–27), and Isiha (1409–51), who served as imperial envoys to various foreign countries.

There were also many less well-known eunuchs who discharged extraordinary services for the emperor.⁵⁵ These eunuchs were sent to spy on various individuals, including officials, members of the imperial clan, and common people; as the officials in charge of all procurement for the vast imperial household in its Forbidden City, they were dispatched as special agents to acquire rare treasures and materials for imperial construction projects; and they went on military campaigns and on foreign diplomatic missions. They became most notorious and unpopular, however, for their role in spying on civil and military officials. The eunuchs were given absolute authority both to investigate and to carry out sentences; and while they certainly exposed some corrupt and treacherous individuals, they also frequently trumped up accusations and exceeded their authority, often with tragic consequences. In 1420 a special agency for investigation called the Eastern Depot (*Tung-ch'ang*) was established in Peking; this agency, administered by eunuchs, remained beyond the control of the regular judicial authorities. It became infamous as a security prison, and tales of unjust incarceration, torture, and unexplained deaths in this depot circulated among the public until the end of the dynasty.⁵⁶

To strengthen the security of the throne, the emperor also reinstated the Imperial Bodyguard (*Chin-i wei*) to aid in the investigative work of the eunuchs. The Imperial Bodyguard had first been established by the Hung-wu emperor in 1382 by reconstituting his personal bodyguard, but its police functions were abolished in 1387, when some of its officers were found to have exceeded and abused their authority. In restoring those functions to his Imperial Bodyguard at the beginning of his reign, the Yung-lo emperor recruited many of his trusted military officers as its commandants; these included non-Han commandants—in particular, Mongols and Jurchens who had won his confidence. He entrusted these commandants with various secret investigations, as well as with the arrest and punishment of all individuals who were suspected of challenging his authority.⁵⁷

55 Ting I, *Ming tai t'e wu cheng chih* (Peking, 1950), pp. 338–45; Robert B. Crawford, "Eunuch power in the Ming dynasty," *T'oung Pao*, 49, No. 3 (1961), pp. 126–31. For the biographies of these eunuchs, see *DMB*, pp. 194, 522, 685.

56 On the Eastern Depot, see Wu Han, "Ming tai ti chin i wei ho tung-hsi ch'ang," in *Teng hsia chi* (Peking, 1961), pp. 83–86.

57 See also Henry Serruys, "Foreigners in the metropolitan police during the fifteenth century," *Oriens Extremus*, 8, No. 1 (August 1961), pp. 59–62; Peter Greiner, *Die Brokatuniform-Brigade (Chin-i wei) der Ming-Zeit von den Anfängen bis zum Ende der T'ien-shun-Periode (1368–1464)* (Wiesbaden, 1975), pp. 25–34.

The commandants of the Imperial Bodyguard investigated not only the civil and military officials and commoners, but also members of the inner court and the imperial family. For instance, the emperor used the Imperial Bodyguard to spy on his half-brother Chu Ch'üan (1378–1448), the Prince of Ning, and he even spied on his own eldest son, Chu Kao-chih, who later became the Hung-hsi emperor. The members of the Imperial Bodyguard, moreover, often abused their authority and flouted the law, accepted bribes, and persecuted innocent people. The most notorious offender was the commandant Chi Kang (d. 1416), who had won the emperor's favor for his services during the civil war. He was charged with the most secret security work, but he abused this trust and became notorious for corruption and oppression. It was even alleged that he was plotting against the throne, and he was eventually arrested and executed. As a result, the emperor became wary of the extensive powers he had given the Imperial Bodyguard and realized the danger of relying on it exclusively for investigative work. He turned more toward the eunuchs who, having been placed in charge of the Eastern Depot, came to overshadow the Imperial Bodyguard in covert work, sometimes even directing investigations into the Imperial Bodyguard itself.

During the Yung-lo reign, eunuchs and the Imperial Bodyguard were indispensable to the security of the throne. But they worked for a ruler only if they were kept under tight control, as was the case under such strong monarchs as the Yung-lo emperor and his father. Without such checks, their wide and undefined powers made it easy for them in later reigns to abuse their authority at the throne's expense, causing harm to many officials and undermining their morale. In these instruments of power the Yung-lo emperor created one of the most despicable aspects of Ming despotism.

Imperial legitimacy and orthodox ideology

The legitimation of the imperial mandate

Ever concerned with consolidating his power, the emperor was no less preoccupied with legitimating his mandate to rule. He had come to the throne following a violent rebellion against the Chien-wen emperor. During that campaign, the future emperor had justified his action by a series of accusations against his nephew. Following his accession, he fulfilled his pledge to "clear away disorders" by executing many "wicked officials" and by restoring the ancestral laws and institutions that had been repudiated by the former emperor.⁵⁸ These actions undoubtedly bolstered the em-

⁵⁸ Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Feng t'ien ching nan chi chu*, pp. 214 ff., 226 ff. Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming ching nan shih shih k'ao cheng kao*, pp. 8 ff., 18 ff.

peror's claims to legitimacy, but many of the allegations against the Chien-wen court ran counter to information in historical records. These records would so expose the falsehood of his charges that they could seriously undermine his legitimate status, unless they could be reconciled with his earlier allegations.

During the first decade of his reign, the emperor and his advisors engaged in a series of historiographical revisions to edit the court records to secure legitimacy for his mandate. These efforts resulted not only in a biased counterversion of the coup that showed the emperor in a favorable light; they also led to expurgations and revisions in the records from the time of the Hung-wu emperor which eradicated all material that conflicted with the emperor's claims.⁵⁹ The *Feng t'ien ching nan chi* (ca. 1403), the full official account of the campaign against the Chien-wen court, the *T'ien huang yü tieh* (ca. 1403), the genealogy of the imperial family, and the *T'ai-tsu shih lu*, the veritable record of the first emperor's reign, which was first revised in 1402 and again in the version completed in 1418 (the only extant version), were all commissioned as part of this effort to rewrite the history of the preceding reign. It appears that Yao Kuang-hsiao, the emperor's principal advisor, and Hsieh Chin, his favorite Han-lin academician, played a major role in the writing and completion of the first two works, as well as in the revisions of the *shih-lu*, the veritable record of the founder's reign.⁶⁰

The first of these works compiled to bolster the emperor's claim to legitimacy was the *Feng t'ien ching nan chi*, the official account of the campaign against the Chien-wen court. The court historians who wrote it introduced into their account of events allegations and falsehoods designed to defame the Chien-wen emperor. These included accusations that he had been a depraved and immoral ruler; that he had employed "wicked ministers"; that he had committed treason by repealing his grandfather's laws and institutions; and that he had persecuted the feudal princes by abolishing their fiefs. It falsely claimed that the Yung-lo emperor was born to empress Ma and that as her eldest surviving son he would have been designated the heir apparent in 1392 but for the intervention of certain Confucian advisors. It also claimed that he had reluctantly taken punitive

59 Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Feng t'ien ching nan chi chu*, Introduction; Hok-lam Chan, "The rise of Ming T'ai-tsu (1368–98): Facts and fictions in early Ming official historiography," *JAOS*, 95, No. 4 (October–December 1975), pp. 686–91.

60 On the revision of the *MSL*, *T'ai-tsu shih lu*, and the role of Yao Kuang-hsiao and Hsieh Chin, see Li Chin-hua, *Ming tai ch'ih chuan shu k'ao* (Peking, 1932), pp. 26 ff.; Wu Han, "Chi Ming shih lu," in *Tu shih cha chi*, pp. 180 ff.; and Mano Senryū, "Min jitsuroku no kenkyū," in *Mindai Man-Mō shi kenkyū*, ed. Tamura Jitsuzō (Kyoto, 1963), pp. 11–21. See also chapter 12 in the present volume.

action against the Chien-wen court not to seize the throne, but to carry out the duty enjoined upon him in the *Ancestral injunctions*.⁶¹

Finally, the historians claimed that he had never intended to harm the Chien-wen emperor and alleged that his nephew had been accidentally burned to death in the palace during the fall of Nanking. It was not claimed that the emperor was the legitimate successor to his deceased nephew; rather, the historians held that he directly succeeded the Hung-wu emperor according to the principle of primogeniture, the Chien-wen reign being an illegitimate interregnum. This argument was important, for although the Chien-wen emperor was dead, his heirs survived and the eldest survivor among his sons should by right have become the next emperor. These falsehoods and fabrications were indispensable to the emperor's claim to legitimacy. Since sources contradicting them were systematically destroyed, they have stood as the indisputable record of events.⁶²

False claims and episodes were also interpolated into the records of the founder's reign. The imperial genealogy (*T'ien huang yü tieh*), edited by Hsieh Chin about 1402, depicted the Hung-wu emperor as the progenitor of the imperial clan and as a sage ruler in the Confucian tradition.⁶³ However, the official historians had to interpolate the false claim that the Yung-lo emperor was born to the founder's principal consort, the empress Ma, a statement necessary to establishing his claim to the succession. Two different surviving versions of the genealogy give divergent accounts of his parentage.

The earlier version states that empress Ma bore only two sons: Chu Ti and Chu Su; the other says that she gave birth to five sons—Chu Piao, Chu Shuang, Chu Kang, Chu Ti, and Chu Su. In either form, this provided evidence supporting the emperor's claim to have been born to his father's principal consort. The first version seems to have been later revised, because the claim that empress Ma produced only two sons, neither of whom had been designated the first heir apparent in the founder's lifetime, was patently absurd.⁶⁴ The revised version of the genealogy was subsequently

61 Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Feng t'ien ching nan chi chu*, pp. 1–5; Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming ching nan shih shih k'ao cheng kao*, pp. 6–27.

62 Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming ching nan shih shih k'ao cheng kao*, pp. 103–116. For details see Hok-lam Chan, "The legitimation of usurpation," sec. 3.

63 For a bibliographic note of the *T'ien huang yü tieh* (2.3.7), see Li Chin-hua, *Ming shih tsuan hsiu k'ao*, p. 37, and Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming pen chi chiao chu* (Shanghai, 1948; rpt. Hong Kong, 1967), Preface, pp. 1–10.

64 The "two-son" version of *T'ien huang yü tieh* is preserved in the following two sources: *Chin sheng yü chen chi*, ed. Yüan Ch'üang (1550–1561; photographic rpt. Peking, 1959) [see Franke, *Introduction*, 9.4.1] and *Kuo ch'ao tien ku* editions. The "five-son" version is transmitted in the following two sources: Vol. 12 of *Chi lu hui pien*, ed. Shen Chieh-fu (1617; rpt. Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1938) [see Franke, *Introduction* (9.4.3)] and *Sheng ch'ao i shih*, ed. Wu Mi-kuang (1883) [see Franke, *Introduction*, (9.4.11)]. See also Li Chin-hua, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu sheng mu wen t'i hui cheng," pp. 55–77, and *Ming ching nan shih shih k'ao cheng kao*, pp. 103–04.

distributed among members of the imperial clan. The emperor's claim may have been viewed with skepticism at first, but to have expressed such doubts would have been fatal. As memories faded, these falsifications came to be accepted as evidence in support of his legitimacy.

Concerted efforts to tamper with and falsify the historical record climaxed in the double revision of the veritable record of T'ai-tsu's reign. The veritable record was the authoritative source on imperial activities, intended for transmission to posterity and for use as a major source for the dynasty's history; it therefore had to bear out all the claims subsequently made to justify the Yung-lo emperor's succession. The existing veritable record had been compiled early in 1402 under the Chien-wen emperor and of course presented evidence that contradicted the emperor's claims: it had to be expurgated. The first revision was begun late in 1402, immediately after the emperor's accession, and was finished in July 1403. Completed in haste by compilers who had served during the preceding reign, this version failed to satisfy the emperor and was subsequently destroyed. Late in 1411, the emperor ordered another revision. This was completed in June 1418 and is the surviving text of the veritable record for the founder's reign.

These revisions expunged, distorted, and falsified records to present the Yung-lo emperor both as the favorite son of the dynastic founder and as a legitimate claimant to the throne. The first revision probably aimed at eradicating evidence contradicting these claims and gave a version of history favoring the Yung-lo emperor. The final revision refined this cruder version and presented a more coherent account of events for transmission to posterity. Several modern historians have shown in detail how the court historians altered significant facts and interpolated misinformation in this revision. These distortions included statements that the emperor was born to empress Ma; that the Hung-wu emperor had originally intended to designate the Prince of Yen as heir apparent; that the dynastic founder had exhorted the prince in 1398 to act as regent for the Chien-wen emperor, just as in antiquity the Duke of Chou had assisted the young Chou king; and that on his deathbed the Hung-wu emperor had intended to pass over his grandson in favor of the Prince of Yen.⁶⁵ The dynastic founder was also depicted as a charismatic leader, endowed with supernatural powers and destined by fate to rule; the Prince of Yen was given similar attributes, which when linked with his extraordinary powers of military leadership showed that he was the right person to succeed his father. On the other hand, episodes were concocted showing the deposed Chien-wen emperor

65 Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Feng t'ien ching nan chi chu*, pp. 1-5, 11-15; Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming ching nan shih shih k'ao cheng kao*, pp. 46-48, 96-99.

and his heirs as the least-favored members of the imperial family, suggesting that they did not enjoy the Hung-wu emperor's confidence. This version thus drew a sharp contrast between the winner and loser in the struggle for the throne.⁶⁶

Formation of orthodox ideology

The emperor was as concerned with his image as a Confucian ruler as he was with his legitimacy. His early classical education under Hanlin advisors made him sensitive to this role. He prescribed the Ch'eng-Chu tradition of classical exegesis as the orthodox standard for the civil service examinations in 1404, as had the Yüan dynasty, acknowledging the primacy scholars had long granted to this school of learning.

The strengthening of this orthodoxy remained a preoccupation with him. To secure his reputation as a sage ruler, in 1409 the emperor published a didactic tract called *Sheng hsüeh hsin fa* (The system of the mind-and-heart in the sages' learning). Written by the emperor himself with some assistance from his Hanlin advisors, this work defines the orthodox tradition in the "learning of the mind-and-heart" (*hsin-hsüeh*) first articulated by the "orthodox" Sung scholars, and sets a standard for the ethical conduct of the emperor's subjects and descendants.⁶⁷ In its format and style it drew on two similar works written in Sung times: the *Ti hsüeh* (Learning of the emperors) by Fan Tsu-yü (1041–98), and the *Ta hsüeh yen i* (Extended meanings of the Great Learning) by Chen Te-hsiu (1178–1235). Drawing on material prepared for imperial lectures, these two works provided guidance to emperors who would be sage rulers. The latter in particular was widely considered an outstanding exposition of the "learning of the mind-and-heart" as the basis for ideal government; the Ming founder had greatly valued it.

These works articulated the orthodoxy set forth by Chu Hsi and had been accepted as guides to rulership in Yüan times; they were useful now in the effort to establish this ideology as the orthodox basis of imperial authority and civil government.

In compiling his work, the emperor quoted extensively from early classical texts and Sung philosophical writings, some of which he copied directly from Fan and Chen. Following a Sung practice, he also appended his own comments to many sections to further explicate the "learning of the mind-and-heart." Although the main stress is on the Way of the Ruler, his precepts were intended for the guidance of all his subjects. The first section

66 Hok-lam Chan, "The rise of Ming T'ai-tsu," pp. 689–707.

67 Li Chin-hua, *Ming tai ch'ih chuan shu k'ao*, pp. 32–35; Wm. Theodore de Bary, *Neo-Confucian orthodoxy and the learning of the mind-and-heart* (New York, 1981), pp. 91, 106 ff., 158–68, and *passim*.

treats of those moral virtues and principles that a ruler should exemplify, such as conformity to principle, the restraint of selfish desires, the practice of reverence, and the rectification of the mind. The second section deals with the education of an emperor and emphasizes the same virtues and the obligation to cultivate them by study, practice, and self-discipline. The emperor enjoined his subjects to reverence and obey Heaven, but also stressed the role of the individual's own conscience, which suggests that although he professed to restore the ancestral tradition, he never felt himself bound by such limitations.

In the third section the emperor stressed the vital need for wise counsel, sound teaching, and impartial advice. Although the emperor placed great value on disinterested and honest remonstrance and stressed the need for upright character in his ministers, he made absolutely clear the sovereign's unquestioned authority and the importance of cultivating his own mind to this end. Finally, in the section on the Way of the Minister, he emphasized loyalty and stressed that a minister cannot serve unless his heart is one with his prince's—unless he is singlemindedly committed to the prince and is completely open with him. The emperor did not insist on blind loyalty, but emphasized the mutual exchange of views between a prince and his ministers, so that every matter could be freely discussed.

This work vividly reveals the emperor's image of himself as a sage ruler and his ideal vision of the intimacy possible between a ruler and his ministers, an intimacy based on shared ethics and a common purpose and fostered through cultivation of the "learning of the mind-and-heart." It not only makes clear the emperor's perception of rulership, but also lays down guiding principles for the conduct of his ministers and his descendants. The work greatly enhanced the emperor's image as a sage ruler, while setting forth an imperial ideology derived from the major tradition of Sung Confucian learning that had been declared the orthodoxy of the Ming state.

Late in 1414 the emperor ordered a number of Hanlin scholars to compile all the commentaries on the Five Classics and the Four Books written by Chu Hsi and other Sung masters of his school, and to make selections from their philosophical writings on the subject of human nature. These compilations were completed and presented to court in October 1415 and were officially published as the *Wu ching ssu shu ta ch'üan* (Great compendium of the five classics and the four books) and the *Hsing li ta ch'üan* (Great compendium of the philosophy of human nature) in April 1417. This authorized them as official shortcuts to proficiency in Confucian learning.

Several reasons lay behind the compilation of these works. Foremost was the need for standard commentaries on the Five Classics and the Four Books for use in the schools and in the civil service examinations. Although Chu Hsi's interpretation of classical texts had long been treated as the final word

on the subject, there were different editions of his commentaries, and students needed to know which edition was prescribed for official use. In the case of the Four Books, Chu Hsi had treated the *Ta hsüeh* (Great Learning) as the fundamental synthesis of Confucian learning; it became the first text used in the imperial school curriculum.

There were, however, other equally important reasons for the compiling of these works, and in particular for compiling the *Great compendium of the philosophy of human nature*. The emperor believed that the Sung philosophers had made new contributions, and he was disposed to regard their writings as classics in their own right. Thus in his instructions to the compilers he stressed the “discoveries” of the Sung masters and demanded that their views be incorporated into the classics and commentaries. In this way, the emperor implicitly acknowledged that the orthodox tradition had not been fixed in the remote past, but was open to later expansion and even innovation.

He took strong personal interest in this project because he genuinely believed that the *Great compendium* summed up all true learning and that it was incumbent upon him to make this true learning known to the common people, just as the ancient sage rulers had done in the past. It can also be said that in directing all the students of the realm to prepare for the civil service examinations by concentrating on an approved selection from classical texts and neo-Confucian learning, he was able to exercise a subtle form of ideological control, assuring conformity to his standards. This had the effect of curtailing free inquiry and limiting original and broad scholarship, inasmuch as they became unnecessary for success in the examinations.⁶⁸

The emperor also sponsored several enormous classical and literary compilations, which served both to secure his reputation as a patron of the classical heritage and of the scholarly elite and to provide guidance and ethical standards for the civil servants and for the imperial clan. The most formidable of his literary projects was a compilation bringing together the whole corpus of extant classical literature. In September 1402 the emperor appointed Hsieh Chin, a Hanlin academician, and others to perform this task, which was completed in December 1403. The emperor named the resulting compilation the *Wen hsien ta ch'eng* (Complete collection of literature), but he was dissatisfied with its coverage and ordered a revision on a huge scale. The project was then taken up by Yao Kuang-hsiao and Hsieh Chin: 2,169 scholars from the Hanlin Academy and the National University were appointed as compilers.

68 De Bary, *Neo-Confucian orthodoxy*, passim; Wing-tsit Chan, “The Hsing-li ching-i and the Ch'eng-chu School,” in *The unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary (New York, 1975), pp. 543 ff., 566 ff.

The entire work, completed in December 1407, was called the *Yung-lo ta tien* (Great literary repository of the Yung-lo reign). It contained 22,277 *chüan*, and its table of contents alone ran to 60 *chüan*.⁶⁹ Never published and preserved only in several manuscript sets in imperial libraries, only 700 *chüan* of the *Great literary repository* have survived. But these give some sense of the scope of coverage, the richness of sources, and the time and effort that went into its collection and preparation. Entries included material on classical texts, history, institutions, ritual, codes of law, military affairs, philosophy, Buddhism, Taoism, astronomy, mathematics, geography, medicine, animals, plants, belles lettres, novels, fiction, and drama; the work also incorporated an entire Yüan dynasty encyclopedia, the *Ching shih ta tien* (Great canon for governing the world). This vast undertaking was not without its political benefits; but the importance of this encyclopaedic collection for Chinese literary culture was immeasurable. The rich records of a long classical heritage were brought together in convenient categories and preserved for posterity; this alone enabled seventeenth-century compilers of the still more formidable *Ssu k'u ch'üan shu* catalogue to reconstitute several hundred lost works by culling extensive quotations scattered in the *Yung-lo ta tien*, then still largely extant; the vicissitudes of the nineteenth century are responsible for its ultimate disappearance.⁷⁰

The ideological conformity fostered by these scholarly works made the emperor appear as a sage ruler, a teacher of his people, and a patron of learning. They also made widely available a classical and literary collection useful for the pursuit of scholarship, for the exposition of orthodoxy in matters of ethics and authority, for the civil service examinations, and for the official codification of public conduct. With the exception of the *Great literary repository of the Yung-lo reign*, these other, smaller compendia were distributed in official circles, in imperial schools, and among candidates for the civil service; some were even sent to such vassal states as Japan and Korea to promote orthodox Confucian ideology in foreign lands. In sum, they shaped the intellectual and cultural outlook of the literati class, while laying down the ideological principles for imperial government.

External expansion and military campaigns

The Yung-lo emperor wanted to claim a place in history as a great ruler, and he was attracted to military conquest as one means to this end. He struck out in every direction: to the border regions in the north, northwest,

69 Kuo Po-kung, *Yung-lo ta tien k'ao* (Changsha, 1938; rpt. Taipei, 1962), ch. 1–3.

70 Kuo Po-kung, *Yung-lo ta tien k'ao*, ch. 6–9; L. Carrington Goodrich, "More on the Yung-lo ta tien," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, Hong Kong Branch*, 10 (1970), pp. 17–23.

and northeast; deep into Inner Asia; and through maritime Asia to the lands beyond the Persian Gulf. Everywhere he sought to extend his empire's political, cultural, and economic influence. Not all of these undertakings entailed military confrontation or overt aggression. The emperor also sought to achieve his objectives through diplomatic embassies and by granting trading privileges, which were afforded to foreign states under a tributary system set up by the Hung-wu emperor. Yet when circumstances warranted it, the emperor did not hesitate to use force.⁷¹

The situation on the northern borders during the first years of the reign was relatively stable. On the steppe to the north and west of China, Chinggisid pretenders to the Mongol imperial overlordship had largely been displaced by tribal leaders who were not descended from Chinggis Khan. Several Mongol tribes in northwestern Manchuria that had surrendered to the Ming were incorporated into the military structure of the empire as the Uriyangkhad Commanderies, also called the Three Commanderies (*san wei*); some had fought with the emperor during the civil war and had won his trust. They remained friendly and continued their tributary relations without incident. Other Mongols had submitted to Chinese rule and migrated to North China; many had joined the military and various other imperial services and continued to give their allegiance to the new ruler.⁷²

These developments encouraged the emperor to take account of these loyal Mongol tribes in a new defense strategy for the northern borders which he put into effect in April 1403. He resettled the loyal Uriyangkhad Mongols farther south near Ta-ning in modern Jehol, the former fief of the Prince of Ning, in the hope that their presence would reinforce the frontier defense. To reduce military expenses, he transferred the guard units from the defensive outposts that had been established by the Hung-wu emperor beyond the Great Wall line farther south to the area just north of Peking. At the same time, the emperor also withdrew the Peking Regional Military Commission from Ta-ning in Inner Mongolia to Pao-ting, southwest of Peking. With the exception of the guard units set up in Jurchen settlements in Manchuria, no regular Chinese garrisons (*wei*) were ever again

71 On the Mongolian campaigns, see: Terada, *Eiraku tei*, ch. 5–8, 11; Henry Serruys, (*Sino-Mongol relations during the Ming. II) The tribute system and diplomatic missions, 1400–1600* (Bruxelles, 1967), ch. 1; Wang Gungwu, "Early Ming relations with Southeast Asia: A background essay," in *Community and nation: Essays on Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, ed. Anthony Reid (Singapore, 1981), pp. 47–55; Morris Rossabi, *China and Inner Asia from 1368 to the present day* (New York, 1975), pp. 28–44; Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, ch. 6, *passim*; and Wolfgang Franke, "Chinesische Feldzüge durch die Mongolei in frühen 15. Jahrhundert," *Sinologica*, 3 (1951–53), pp. 81–88.

72 On the official records of relations with the Mongol tribes during the Yung-lo reign from the *T'ai-tung shih lu*, see Haneda Tōru and Tamura Jitsuzō, ed., *Min jitsuroku-shō: Mōkoben*, Vol. 1, in *Mindai Man-Mō shiryō* (Kyoto, 1943–59), pp. 261–557.

stationed beyond the Great Wall line. These new measures, while not without merit at the time, were based on the short-sighted assumption that these Mongol tribes would remain forever loyal. But the changes in defense strategy had a deleterious effect on the defense of the northern frontiers in later times.⁷³

In the west the emperor cultivated the friendship of the Muslim oasis states and towns from Hami and Turfan in Chinese Turkestan along the caravan routes as far west as Samarkand and Herat, which were under the control of the Timurid empire. Diplomatic embassies from the Ming court offered the rulers of these states and cities gifts and titles and invited them to trade with China as tributaries. Many of the states responded. In July 1404, Engke Temür, the ruler of Hami, accepted the title of prince (*wang*) from the Ming court; and in June 1409 three chieftains of the Oirat, the principal group of the Western Mongols far out in Dzungaria, followed suit. Timur (or Tamerlane), the powerful ruler of the Timurid empire, remained the emperor's only adversary in the far west. Timur, who had never liked the Chinese, had executed the Ming envoys sent by both the Hung-wu and Yung-lo emperors. In December 1404 he launched a full-scale invasion against China. But fortunately for China, he died en route in February 1405, hundreds of miles from the nearest Ming outpost, thus obviating a bloody military confrontation.⁷⁴

The Mongols remained the foremost threat to the Ming empire. To the west and north of the Uriyangkhad commanderies, the Mongols of Outer Mongolia consistently refused to acknowledge Ming authority. To the west, the Oirat tribes, whose leaders had accepted Chinese titles, nevertheless frequently fought both with the Ming and the Eastern Mongols. The Eastern Mongols remained generally hostile to Ming rule; they often raided the Ming border and pillaged the frontier areas for grain and livestock. The Oirat Mongols, led by their ambitious chieftain Maḥmūd (d. 1416), also suffered from similar political and economic instability; they not only feuded with the Eastern Mongols, but also constantly raided the Ming frontier for grain and other commodities.⁷⁵ It was under these difficult and complex circumstances that the emperor launched five campaigns between 1410 and 1424 to chastise both the Eastern and the Oirat Mongol tribes,

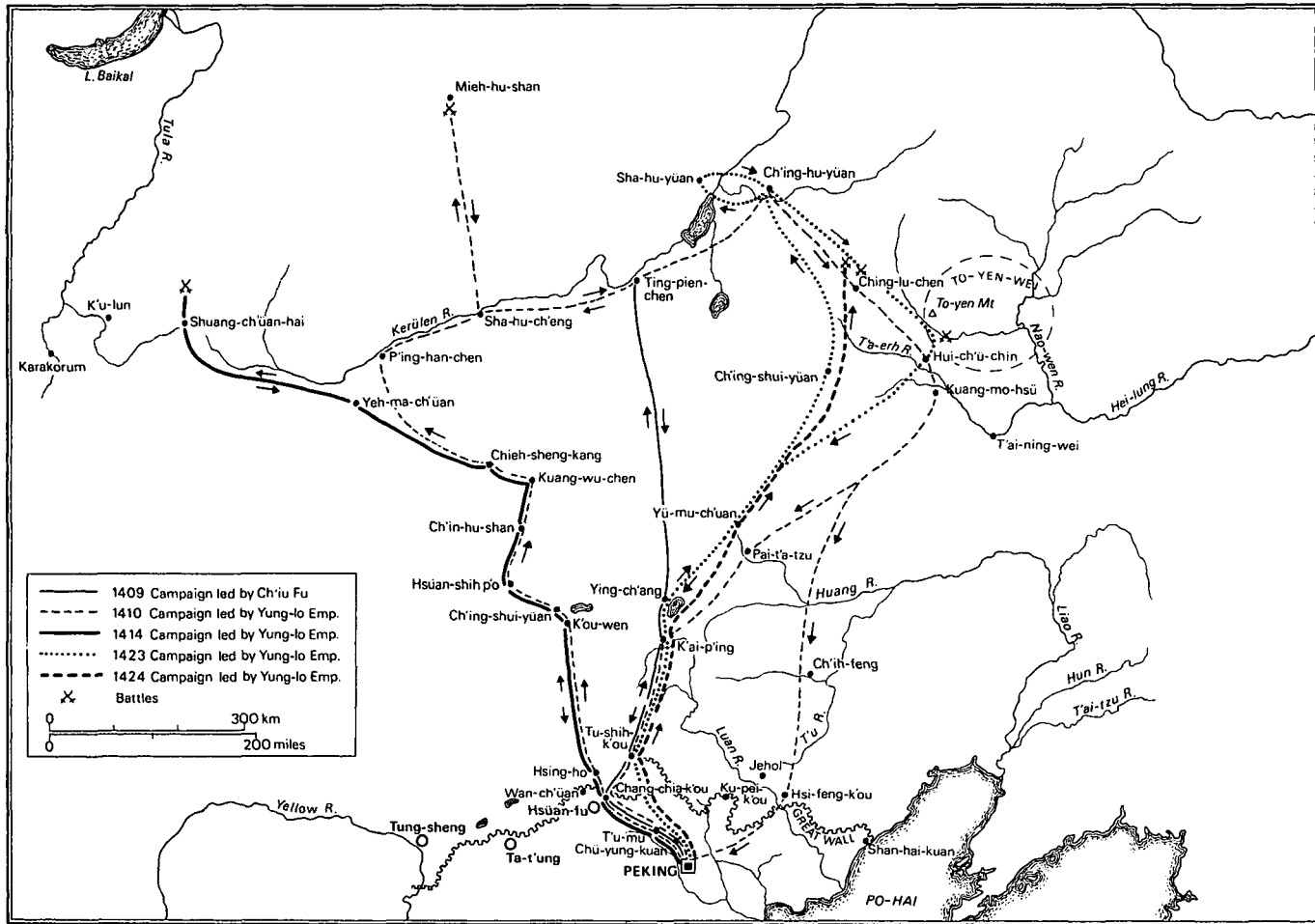
73 See Tamura Jitsuzō, "Mindai no hokuhen bōei taisei," in his *Mindai Man-Mō shi kenkyū*, pp. 82–84.

74 See Joseph F. Fletcher, "China and Central Asia, 1368–1884," in *The Chinese world order: Traditional China's foreign relations*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 209–10.

75 See D. Pokotilov, *History of the Eastern Mongols during the Ming dynasty*, trans. Rudolf Loewenthal, in *Studia Serica*, Ser. A, No. 1 (Chengtu, 1947), pp. 23–29. For the official records on relations with the Oirat Mongols during this time, see also Pai Ts'ui-ch'in, *Ming shih lu Wa-la tsu liao chai pien* (Urumchi, 1982), pp. 17–42.



Map 9. China and Inner Asia at the beginning of the Ming



Map 10. The Yung-lo emperor's Mongolian campaigns
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to stabilize the Chinese relationship with the Uriyangkhad in the Three Commanderies, and to forestall a new domination over the whole Mongol nation by any ambitious emergent Mongol leader.

The Mongolian campaigns

The first Mongolian campaign was launched in retaliation for the execution of a Chinese envoy sent to the Eastern Mongol khan Bunyashiri in 1409 and for the subsequent defeat of a large-scale punitive expedition led by General Ch'iu Fu. Ch'iu and several other senior commanders lost their lives at the hands of Arughtai, the Mongol chief minister, in a battle by the Kerülen River in September 1409. After careful planning, in March 1410 the emperor led a large campaign army in excess of 300,000 men from Peking, marching through Hsüan-fu north to Hsing-ho and up to the Kerülen River. He caught up with Prince Bunyashiri's horde on the banks of the Onon River and, according to Chinese records, on 15 June he decimated it. But the prince survived this defeat and fled west. In July the Ming army pursued Arughtai, Bunyashiri's chancellor, east to the Khingan mountains, which separate Mongolia from Manchuria, and defeated him in a major battle. But once again the imperial armies failed to subdue him completely. At this point, the emperor withdrew from the steppe, returned to Nanking in mid-August, and proclaimed a victory.⁷⁶

The 1410 campaign failed to bring security to the northern borders. The Oirat Mongols in the northwest now posed a new threat. Maḥmūd, a powerful chief who had been invested as a Ming prince in 1409, killed Bunyashiri in the spring of 1412 during his flight from the Chinese army. He then set up a puppet ruler in the old Mongol capital at Khara Khorum and began to move east against Arughtai, with the obvious intent of uniting the entire Mongol nation. The Ming court tried to play these two contenders off against each other. Arughtai was given the title of Prince of Ho-ning in July 1413 and was granted trading privileges under the tributary system. Late in 1413 Arughtai informed the Ming court that Maḥmūd's forces had crossed the Kerülen River, and this led to the emperor's second Mongolian campaign.⁷⁷

The second campaign began in April 1414, after several months of

76 Wolfgang Franke, "Chinesische Feldzüge," pp. 83–85. For Arughtai's biography, see *DMB*, p. 12. For a summary of the contemporary Ming account of this first Mongolian campaign as well as the second, see Li Su-ying, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu pei cheng chi hsing ch'u pien," *Yü kung*, 3, No. 8 (June 1935), pp. 14–22, and ". . . erh pien," *Yü kung*, 3, No. 9 (July 1935), pp. 36–42.

77 Henry Serruys, *The tribute system and diplomatic missions, 1400–1600*, pp. 126–27, 163–65. For Maḥmūd's biography, see *DMB*, p. 1035.

preparation. The emperor again led a large expeditionary army in a concentrated effort to crush the Western Mongols in their move into eastern Mongolia. Driving deep into Mongolia, the Ming force engaged Maḥmūd's horde near the upper reaches of the Tula River. In the ensuing battle, the Ming troops used cannon against the Oirat. Although they suffered heavy losses, the imperial armies forced the Oirat to retreat, and Maḥmūd fled with his ranks greatly reduced. The campaign ended in less than five months, and the emperor triumphantly returned to Peking in August. On his return, he tried to meet with Arughtai of the Eastern Mongols, but Arughtai feigned illness and avoided a meeting. However, he continued to send tribute missions for several years.

Maḥmūd died in 1416, and the consequent dispersal of his hordes temporarily ended the threat from the much less well-controlled Oirat Mongols in the west. This allowed the emperor to turn his attention to the construction of his new capital at Peking. It also encouraged Arughtai to extend his influence westward to the Oirat tribes, and he began to dispute with the Ming court about the reception of his envoys and the amount of his subsidy. By 1421 Arughtai had stopped sending tribute, and his followers launched sporadic raids across the border. The emperor responded by preparing for yet another campaign; but this time he met stiff opposition at court from Hsia Yüan-chi, the minister of revenue, and other senior officials on the grounds of cost. The emperor prevailed: Hsia was imprisoned, and his deputy Fang Pin committed suicide.

In April 1422 the emperor departed from Peking at the head of an army to chastise Arughtai. Arughtai had already captured the fortress of Hsing-ho north of Kalgan and had subdued the Uriyangkhad of the Three Commanderies that protected the Ming northeastern frontier; he planned to keep the Chinese army near the Great Wall line and away from his base. The emperor instead advanced toward Arughtai's encampment near Dolon (To-lun, in K'ai-p'ing wei), while detaching 20,000 men to attack the Uriyangkhad commanderies, which finally surrendered in July. By the time the Ming force reached Dolon, Arughtai had fled with his horde far into Outer Mongolia. The emperor declined to take up an extended pursuit and returned to Peking late in September.⁷⁸

In 1423 the emperor launched his fourth Mongolian campaign against Arughtai to stave off an impending attack on the northern frontier. This was a small-scale expedition, and the emperor did not leave Peking until late in August. After marching through Hsing-ho and Wan-ch'üan, the Ming army failed to make contact with Arughtai's horde. The emperor

78 For Hsia Yüan-chi's opposition and banishment, see *DMB*, p. 532.

learned in October that Arughtai had been defeated by the Oirats and that his forces had been dispersed. So he returned to Peking in December with nothing to show for his efforts.

In 1424 he launched his fifth and final Mongolian campaign. Responding to reports that Arughtai's followers had intruded into K'ai-p'ing and were pressing south toward Ta-t'ung, the emperor massed a large contingent of troops at Peking and Hsüan-fu. Early in April, after inspecting his army, he left the capital at the head of an expeditionary force for the last time. During the next two months, the Ming army marched through T'u-mu and north to K'ai-p'ing, but again failed to meet Arughtai's horde. Some of the commanders wanted a month's provisions for a strike deep into enemy territory, but the emperor, worried that he had already overextended himself, refused and pulled back his armies. He died of illness on 12 August 1424 at Yü-mu ch'uan north of Dolon, leaving the Mongol problem as unsettled as it had been at the beginning of his reign.⁷⁹

During these campaigns, the emperor had neither destroyed the Mongol hordes nor restrained their incursions over the northern borders. This created a major policy dilemma. Abandoning the founder's strategy, the Yung-lo emperor would no longer deploy troops in fortified garrisons beyond the Great Wall line; such deployment would have incurred huge expenses for supplies while tying down the garrisons in permanent defense positions. Consequently, he withdrew several key forward garrisons south of the Great Wall line and redeployed them to strengthen the security of his new capital. One of the withdrawn garrisons, that at Tung-sheng, northwest of Ta-t'ung, became the symbol of Ming retrenchment. Yet when the emperor took the initiative and searched out the enemy wherever he could find him, leading the punitive expeditions in person, and when he pursued a policy of divide and conquer, pitting one rival Mongol leader against another, his plans also came to nought. It was difficult to track down and engage the mobile Mongol hordes, and the policy of divide and rule in the end alienated all parties among the Mongols. These indecisive campaigns also severely strained the economy of the empire and damaged the morale of the army.

His policies inadvertently weakened security along the northern borders. After the Yung-lo emperor died, except for the disastrous campaign of 1449, no more punitive expeditions were organized. The Chinese had lost control over the outlying areas and had to organize their defenses from within the Great Wall line. This was certainly the most negative consequence of the emperor's aggressive frontier policies. The energy and re-

79 On the circumstances of the emperor's death, see note 148 below.

sources squandered on these punitive expeditions led to no long-term advantages.⁸⁰

Intervention in Annam

However ill-conceived the Yung-lo emperor's strategy in Mongolia may have been, the northern frontier was a cause for real concern. The same could not be said of the far south. Annam, the northern portion of modern Vietnam, was a vassal state open to strong cultural influences from China; but it had been politically independent since the tenth century and staunchly opposed to Chinese political interference. Earlier Chinese rulers, well aware of Annam's strategic importance, had attempted to dominate it indirectly through diplomatic and cultural pressures. The first Ming emperor had, in his *Ancestral injunctions* of 1395, included Annam, together with Champa and Cambodia, among the foreign states China was forbidden to invade. The Yung-lo emperor disregarded this injunction in the misguided belief that internal events in Annam threatened the Ming empire's security, and he attempted to incorporate Annam into the empire. This decision led to the worst political and military disaster of the early Ming period.⁸¹

In the 1390s the Trần dynasty lost control of Annam, and Lê Quý-ly (ca. 1335–1407), an ambitious court minister, gradually acquired power. He had already disturbed the status quo by seizing the Ssu-ming district on the Kwangsi border and by invading the frontier of Champa to the south. Taking advantage of the civil war in China, Lê Quý-ly deposed the Trần ruler in 1400, killed off most of his family, proclaimed himself king, and changed his surname to Ho. In 1402 he abdicated in favor of his son Lê Hán-thu'ong (Ho De), although he himself continued to rule. In May 1403 he sent envoys to the Ming court to request Ho (Lê) Hán-thu'ong's investiture, on the grounds that the Trần family line had died out and that his son was a royal nephew. Unaware of the events that had taken place, the emperor duly granted his request.

80 For useful accounts of the emperor's northern policy, see Wu Han, "Ming tai ching nan chih i yü kuo tu pei ch'ien," *Ch'ing-hua hsüeh pao*, 10, No. 4 (October 1935), pp. 937–39; Wolfgang Franke, "Yunglo's Mongolei-Feldzüge," *Sinologische Arbeiten*, 3 (1945), pp. 50–54; Tamura, "Mindai no hokuhen bōei taisei," pp. 82–84; Wu Chi-hua, "Ming tai Tung-sheng ti she fang yü ch'i fang," in *MTCTS*, II, pp. 339–42.

81 For details, see Yamamoto Tatsurō, *Annanshi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1950), I, *passim*; and Jung-pang Lo, "Intervention in Annam: A case study of the foreign policy of the early Ming government," *Tsinghua Journal of Chinese Studies*, 8, Nos. 1–2 (August 1970), pp. 154–182; briefly, see Terada, *Eraku tei*, pp. 162–70; Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 206–12. For Lê Qui-ly's biography, see *DMB*, p. 797, and Émile Gaspardone, "Deux essais de biographie annamite," *Sinologica*, 11, Nos. 3–4 (1970), pp. 101–13.

Then, in October 1404, an Annamite refugee named Trần Thiên-bính arrived at Nanking and claimed to be a prince of the Trần house. He recounted Lê Quí-ly's treachery and atrocities and pleaded with the court to restore him to the throne. The emperor took no action until the Annamese envoy arrived early in 1405 and confirmed the prince's charges. He then issued an edict condemning the usurper and demanding the restoration of the Trần pretender. Lê Quí-ly doubted the pretender's claim; but he chose not to contest it and sent a mission to Nanking confessing his crimes and agreeing to receive the new king. Early in 1406, the emperor sent an envoy with an army escort to return Trần Thiên-bính to Annam. On 4 April, just as the party crossed the border into Annam at Lang-s'on, they were ambushed by the Annamese, and the pretender and most of his Chinese escort were slaughtered. When news of this reached Nanking, the emperor, already angered by the Annamese incursions into Champa, Kwangsi, and Yunnan, became infuriated; he immediately made plans to chastise Annam and to avenge this humiliation.

On 11 May 1406, the emperor appointed Chu Neng, the duke of Ch'eng-kuo, to lead a punitive expedition, with the veteran generals Chang Fu and Mu Sheng (1368–1439), the principal commander of Yunnan, as his deputy commanders. Chu died suddenly in November before reaching Annam, so Chang Fu shared the command of the expeditionary force with Mu Sheng. At the head of an army of 215,000 men, they launched a pincer attack from Kwangsi and Yunnan. The operation was swift and successful. On 19 November the Chinese forces captured two Annamese capitals and several other major towns in the Red River delta. But the Lê leaders escaped by sea and raised new armies in the southern provinces. The war dragged on for six more months until Lê Quí-ly and his son were taken prisoner on 16 June 1407 and sent to Nanking.

The Yung-lo emperor, flushed with his easy victory, now made a disastrous decision. Following a recommendation from Chang Fu, on 5 July Annam was incorporated into the Ming empire as the province of Chiao-chih, the name the area had borne under the T'ang dynasty. Military commissioners were appointed for the new province, while Chang Fu remained to oversee its pacification for another year.

The pacification of Annam presented major and intractable problems. The imposition of a Chinese administrative structure immediately alienated the Annamese, who began to resist the Ming forces everywhere. Chang Fu's army crushed this local resistance, and in 1408 he and his main forces returned to China. In September 1408, Trần Ngụy (d. 1420), a former Trần official, first raised the flag of organized rebellion. He established the kingdom of Đại Việt (Great Vietnam) and captured the prefectural city of

Nghê-an and several other towns. Mu Sheng, who had played an important role in the conquest of Annam, was ordered to lead his troops from Yunnan to quell this uprising. However, Trần Ngụy's forces were familiar with the local terrain and enjoyed popular support; thus they repeatedly defeated Mu Sheng's army. Early in 1409 Chang Fu was sent back to Annam to save the situation. After a well-planned offensive, in December 1409 Chang Fu defeated and captured Trần Ngụy. Chang Fu was recalled early in 1410 to accompany the emperor on his campaign against Arughtai on the northern frontier, leaving Mu Sheng once again in charge in Chiao-chih.

Trần Quí-khoáng, a nephew of Trần Ngụy who now claimed the Trần throne, remained at large and became the leader of Vietnamese resistance. Mu Sheng made little headway against him. The Ming court tried to appease Trần Quí-khoáng and his supporters by offering him the title of administrative commissioner for Chiao-chih; he refused it, and the war continued. Early in 1411, Chang Fu was again sent to Annam with 24,000 men. He won two victories and recaptured Nghê-an, the provincial capital that had been lost in 1408. But the rebels avoided pitched battles, and the rebellion continued for three years until Trần Quí-khoáng was finally taken prisoner on 30 March 1414. Chang Fu was briefly recalled to Nanking in 1415, but again had to return to Chiao-chih to put down other insurrections. This time, however, the resistance was slight, and by the end of 1416 both he and most of the Chinese troops had been recalled.

The peace in Annam was short-lived. When Li Pin arrived to replace Chang Fu in February 1417, the situation had already deteriorated. Annamese resentment was aggravated by increased demands for revenue and timber from the notorious eunuch Ma Ch'i, who was sent to Annam to gather materials for the construction of the new capital at Peking. Several uprisings occurred late in 1417 and early in 1418. The insurgents rallied under Lê Lo'i (c. 1385–1433), a formidable warrior from Thanh-hoá who had been a follower of Trần Quí-khoáng and who now proclaimed himself king. He fought battles with Ming forces in 1419 and 1420 and lost both times. He then continued to resist by guerrilla tactics and won the loyalty of the countryside, where he became a symbol of resistance. Despite a massive commitment of combat troops and administrative resources, the Chinese found it impossible to suppress the rebel movement, and the Annamese war remained a constant drain on the court's resources. At the end of the Yung-lo reign the Chinese had still not suppressed the rebellion. This failure posed serious problems for the emperor's successors. In 1427 the court acknowledged the failure of the Annam policy and withdrew, abandoning the twenty-year effort to create there a province of Chiao-chih.

The maritime expeditions

The emperor also sought to extend his influence over the states and kingdoms of the South Seas, in the Indian Ocean, and in lands farther east. He did this by launching six spectacular maritime expeditions to what was then known as the Western Oceans in 1405, 1407, 1409, 1413, 1417, and 1421. All these expeditions were commanded by the eunuch Cheng Ho and his deputies Wang Ching-hung, later officially known as Wang Kuei-t'ung (d. ca. 1434), and Hou Hsien. These expeditions were organized by eunuchs who conducted foreign affairs and sought out imperial treasure for the emperor. The expense was borne not only by the emperor's privy purse and imperial agencies, but also by the coastal provinces.⁸² The oceangoing vessels were constructed at the Lung-chiang shipyard in Nanking, and the seamen were recruited from Fukien, from whose ports the expeditions set sail. The fleet consisted of vessels ranging in size from nine-masted junks, 444 feet long and 186 feet wide, to smaller five-masted junks, 180 feet long and 68 feet wide. It was manned by a crew of about 27,000, and the cargoes included fine silks, embroideries, and other luxury items for presentation to local rulers during the course of the voyage.⁸³

It is not clear why the emperor carried out these costly expeditions. They were probably not organized to search for the dethroned, perhaps fugitive Chien-wen emperor, as some have suggested; the emperor was more likely looking for allies and perhaps probing new horizons for conquest, although these expeditions had no military objectives. He undertook the expeditions for a number of reasons: to search for treasure—Cheng Ho's vessels were called treasure ships (*pao-ch'uan*), to display his power and wealth, to learn about the plans of Timur and other Mongols in western Asia, to extend the tributary system, to satisfy his vanity and his greed for glory, and to make use of his eunuch staff. In any event, these activities reflected this restless emperor's concept of imperial world order and of foreign relations as applied to the South Seas.⁸⁴

82 For a succinct account, see Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 194–203. There is a substantial literature on Cheng Ho's expeditions. For some recent items, see Cheng Ho's entry in *DMB*, p. 200. The following works are the latest additions: Cheng Ho-sheng and Cheng I-chün, *Cheng Ho hsia Hsi-yang tzu liao hui pien* (Chi-nan, Shantung, 1980), and Hsü Yü-hu, *Ming Cheng Ho chih yen chiu* (Kao-hsiung, Taiwan, 1980).

83 See Pao Tsun-p'eng, *Cheng Ho hsia Hsi-yang chih pao ch'uan k'ao* (Taipei, 1961), pp. 11–63; J. V. G. Mills, trans., *Ma Huan. Ying-yai sheng-lan: The overall survey of the ocean's shores (1433)* (Cambridge, England, 1970), pp. 27–32.

84 For these arguments, see Chang Wei-hua, *Ming tai hai wai mao i chien lun* (1955; rpt., Shanghai, 1956), pp. 32–34; Chu Hsieh, *Cheng Ho* (Peking, 1956), pp. 28–34; Hsü Yü-hu, *Cheng Ho p'ing chuan* (Taipei, 1958), pp. 16–17; J. V. G. Mills, *Ma Huan*, pp. 1–5; Wang Gungwu, "China and Southeast Asia, 1402–1424," rpt. in *Community and nation: Essays on Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, ed. Anthony Reid (Singapore, 1981), pp. 59–61; Morris Rossabi, "Cheng Ho and Timur: Any relations?" *Oriens Extremus*, 20, No. 2 (December 1973), pp. 129–36.

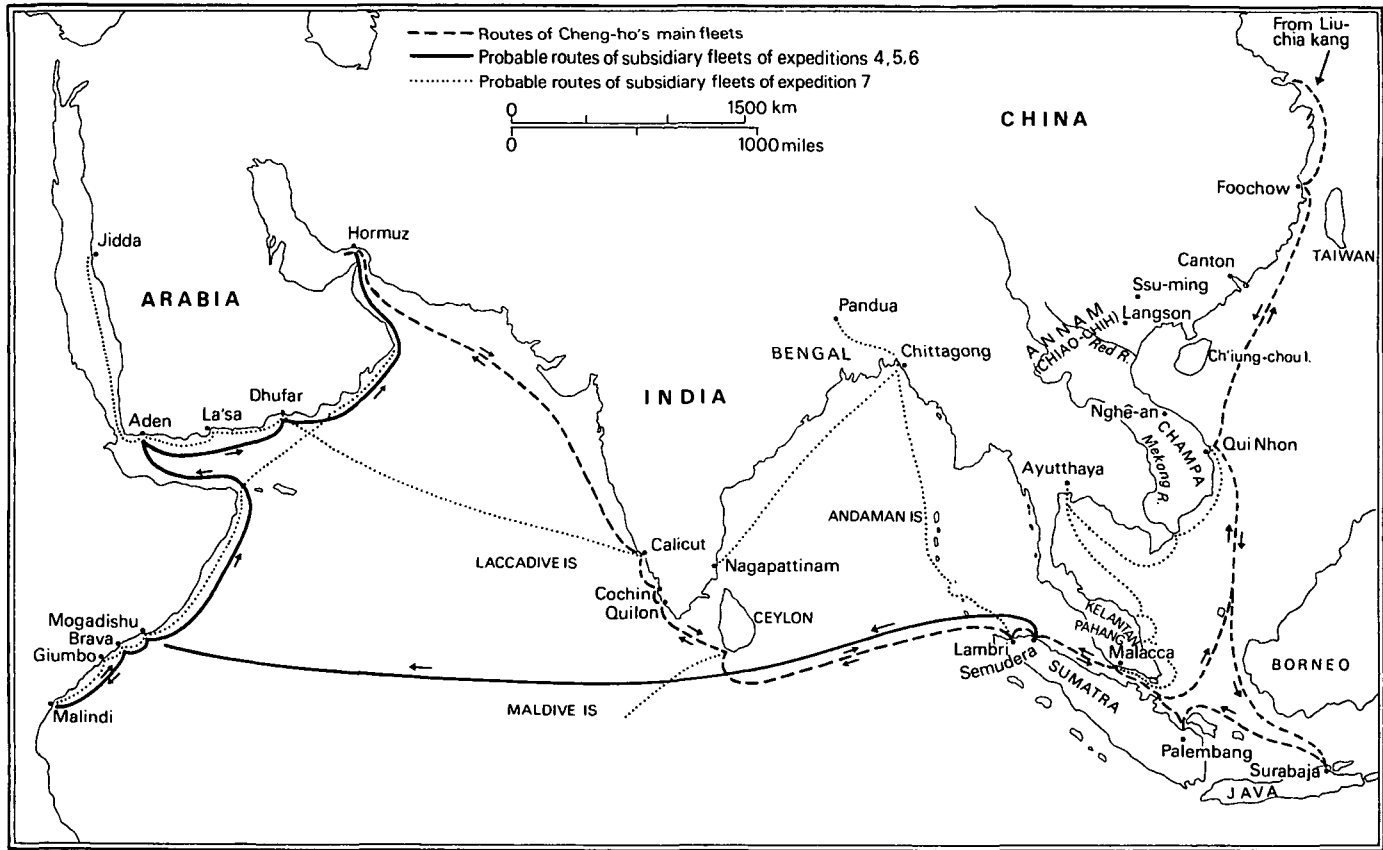
The first expedition, sent out in July 1405 under Cheng Ho's command, comprised 62 large vessels and 255 smaller ones of different types manned by 27,870 men. The fleet assembled at Liu-chia kang, near Soochow, went south along the Fukien coast, and then crossed the China Sea to Champa, Java, Malacca, Semudera, and Lambri in northern Sumatra, and thence to Ceylon, Quilon, and Calicut, the major trading ports on the southwest coast of India. Ambassadors from Calicut, Semudera, Quilon, Malacca, and other states accompanied the returning fleet bringing tribute to Nanking. On the return voyage in 1407, as the fleet approached the coast of Sumatra, it was confronted by the powerful Chinese pirate Ch'en Tsu-i (d. 1407), who had recently seized Palembang and dominated the Malacca Strait. Cheng Ho's fleet easily defeated Ch'en, killed five thousand of his men, destroyed many of his vessels, captured him, and took him back to Nanking, where he was executed in October 1407. This victory secured a safe passage through the straits for the Chinese fleets and impressed heads of state in the region.⁸⁵

The second expedition, on a much lesser scale, was ordered in October 1407; at the beginning of 1408 the fleet set sail and visited Siam, Java, and northern Sumatra and then once again headed into the Indian Ocean, destined for Cochin and Calicut. The envoys carried out the formal investiture of the king of Calicut, where a memorial inscription was erected to commemorate the event. The Chinese titles and gifts given to the king of Calicut and his retinue by the Chinese envoys set a precedent for dealings with many other states during later voyages. On the return voyage, parts of the fleet visited Siam and Java, where Cheng Ho became embroiled in a power struggle between two rival native rulers.⁸⁶ The fleet returned to Nanking late in the summer of 1409.

The third voyage under Cheng Ho's command lasted from October 1409 to July 1411; the fleet is said to have comprised 48 vessels with 30,000 men. It sailed from the coast of Fukien at the beginning of 1410, and following the route of the previous expedition, called at Champa, Java, Malacca, and Semudera, and then sailed west to Ceylon, Quilon, Cochin, and Calicut on the Malabar coast of India. But several detours were made en route. Wang Ching-hung and Hou Hsien briefly visited Siam, Malacca, Semudera, and Ceylon. In Ceylon, Cheng Ho presented gifts to a Buddhist temple, an event commemorated in an inscription in Chinese, Persian, and Tamil dated 15 February 1409. However, on the return from Calicut in 1411, the king of Ceylon, Alagakkonāra, tried to plunder the fleet. After

85 Mills, *Ma Huan*, pp. 10–11; Hsü Yü-hu, *Cheng Ho*, pp. 28–39.

86 Mills, *Ma Huan*, p. 11. On the episode in Java, see Chiu Ling-yeong, "Sino-Javanese relations in the early Ming period," in *Symposium on historical, archaeological and linguistic studies on South China, Southeast Asia and the Hong Kong region* (Hong Kong, 1967), pp. 215–19.



Map 11. Cheng Ho's maritime expeditions

considerable fighting, Cheng Ho's troops won a victory over the Sinhalese forces. The king was taken prisoner and sent with his family to Nanking in July 1411. The emperor released them and allowed them to return to Ceylon.⁸⁷

The fourth expedition lasted from the autumn of 1413 until August 1415. This time a fleet of 63 great ships with 27,670 men sailed far beyond earlier destinations. After visiting Champa, Kelantan, Pahang, Java, Palembang, Malacca, Semudera, and Lambri, it sailed across the Indian Ocean to Ceylon, Cochin, and Calicut, and then continued to Hormuz on the Persian Gulf and to a number of other new places, including the Maldives. A part of his fleet may have sailed on to the Hadramaut coast and Aden. A part of the fleet also sailed to Bengal. At Semudera on the way home, Cheng Ho was once again embroiled in a local power struggle. His orders included a punitive expedition against a local usurper who had murdered the rightful king; the usurper was defeated, captured, and was taken back to Nanking for execution. After this expedition had returned, eighteen states from Champa to Mogadishu and Malindi on the east coast of Africa sent envoys and tribute to the Ming court, an event that marked the zenith of the emperor's influence abroad.⁸⁸

The fifth expedition set out in the autumn of 1417; Cheng Ho was ordered to escort home the envoys sent from these eighteen states, and he returned from his voyage in August 1419. This expedition went even farther afield. For the first time, the Chinese fleet visited various ports on the East African coast. Again Cheng brought back ambassadors who were received by the emperor in August 1419. He also brought back a spectacular cargo of tribute presented to the Ming emperor by the rulers of the various countries the Chinese fleet had visited. These items included lions, leopards, dromedary camels, ostriches, zebras, rhinoceroses, antelopes, giraffes, and other exotic animals. It seems that the returning envoys, who had witnessed the emperor's delight at the first sight of a giraffe, had spread the word of his taste for the exotic.⁸⁹

The sixth voyage was ordered in March 1421, to return ambassadors who had been in China for many years. The fleet comprised 41 vessels. The expedition, like some of the earlier ones, seems to have split up after

87 William Willetts, "The maritime adventures of Grand Eunuch Ho," *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 5, No. 2 (September 1964), pp. 31-35; Chung-jen Su, "The battle of Ceylon, 1411," in *Essays in Chinese studies presented to Professor Lo Hsiang-lin on his retirement*, ed. Department of Chinese, University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong, 1970), pp. 291-96. Willetts' account is less informative than Su's, but the latter is marred by errors.

88 Mills, *Ma Huan*, pp. 12-13; Hsü Yü-hu, *Cheng Ho*, pp. 44-53.

89 See Chu Hsieh, *Cheng Ho*, pp. 59-62; Hsü Yü-hu, *Cheng Ho*, pp. 53-60; Mills, *Ma Huan*, pp. 13-14.

reaching Sumatra. Cheng Ho was back in Nanking by September 1422. Parts of the fleet visited Hormuz, Dhufar, Aden, Mogadishu and Brava on the Somali coast, and the Maldives, as well as Ceylon, Calicut, and Cochin. Once again many envoys accompanied the fleet back to China. Early in 1424 the emperor ordered Cheng Ho to sea again, this time to Palembang, to install a Chinese commissioner. But the emperor died, and the mission was entrusted to another man. For the next seven years China's greatest admiral was a garrison commander in Nanking, and the naval policies were set aside.

To what extent were the objectives behind these expeditions achieved? If they had sought the Chien-wen emperor, they were probably chasing an illusion and failed. If they were launched to extend the emperor's influence to these far-off lands, to demonstrate Chinese military power, to expand Chinese knowledge of the world, to protect the interests of the Chinese, and to bring new people into the tribute system, their objectives were certainly realized, even though the Ming state thereafter failed to follow them up and exploit them. Throughout Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean they "showed the flag" and clearly demonstrated the Ming empire's political and military supremacy. The opportunity for lucrative trade under the tributary system drew foreign envoys bearing tribute from every quarter on an unprecedented scale.

The voyages brought back to China not only all sorts of exotics, but huge quantities of more mundane products, above all spices. The economic impact of these expeditions is difficult to assess, largely because they were organized and paid for by eunuch agencies, which left no accounts of the total costs, despite objections from conscientious scholar-officials.⁹⁰ And while the Ming court had acquired great quantities of treasure and exotic luxuries from these expeditions, they were seen only by the emperor and his court; they rarely entered the marketplace. Those foreign states that sent tribute missions were not only paid handsomely for their tribute, but also given an opportunity to sell private goods in the capital for a handsome profit. But so far as the court was concerned, the political benefits outweighed the economic in these encounters. In less than two decades, Cheng Ho had crossed half the earth and spread the Ming empire's influence to its greatest extent. In the process he carried out the greatest series of maritime explorations in world history prior to the European voyages of discovery at the end of the fifteenth century.⁹¹

90 See Chu Hsieh, *Cheng Ho*, pp. 98–103; Hsü Yü-hu, *Cheng Ho*, pp. 110–14, and the same author's *Ming Cheng Ho chih yen chiu*, pp. 525 ff., 549; Jung-pang Lo, "The decline of the Ming navy," *Oriens Extremus*, 5 (1958), pp. 152–55.

91 See Chang Wei-hua, *Ming tai hai wai mao i*, pp. 32–34; Chu Hsieh, *Cheng Ho*, pp. 98–111; Mills, *Ma Huan*, pp. 33–34; Wang Gungwu, "China and Southeast Asia," pp. 66–67; and Hsü Yü-hu, *Ming Cheng Ho chih yen chiu*, pp. 525 ff., 549 ff.

The new capital and its administration

The strategic considerations that underlay these wars and diplomatic missions also led the emperor to undertake another prodigious task: the transformation by degrees of Peking, his former princely fief, which had once been the Great Capital (Ta-tu) of the Yüan dynasty, into a new capital for the Ming empire. This transformation involved massive replanning and construction in Peking and sweeping institutional adjustments affecting the entire central administration.⁹²

The emperor's motives for establishing a new capital at Peking are only vaguely alluded to in imperial pronouncements and in the remarks and memoranda of court officials. They were certainly linked to the political and military situation at the time of his enthronement. The Hung-wu emperor had been dissatisfied with his capital at Nanking; it was too far from the frontiers of the empire, and toward the end of his reign he had considered moving it to the north. In this respect, the Yung-lo emperor's decision to locate his capital at Peking may be seen as a solution to his father's dilemma. But the decision also reflected the emperor's perception that the north was the seat of his own personal power, where he had spent long years before his rebellion and accession to the throne defending the northeastern border or campaigning against the Mongols.⁹³

His base of power and support lay in the north, not in Nanking, where he was a stranger. And he naturally wanted to select a capital that would facilitate the consolidation of the empire. Nanking, situated in the lower Yangtze Valley, enjoyed overwhelming advantages as an economic center. But it was far from the northern and western frontiers of the empire, which the emperor felt were most vulnerable to attack. It was such considerations that had led his father to think about removing his capital to the north, and the same considerations provided a justification for the emperor's own decision.

Finally, for political and military reasons, Peking surpassed all other sites: it served at once as a bastion against invasions from the north and as a center for all the activities that supported the emperor's expansive policies in the north. Also, at this point in history, it appeared to be the only major

92 See Hua Hui, "Ming tai ting tu Nan-Pei-ching ti ching kuo," *Yü kung*, 2, No. 11 (February 1935), pp. 37-41; Wu Chi-hua, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu hsiang pei fang ti fa chan yü nan pei chuan yün ti chien li," in his *MTSHCCS*, 1, pp. 152-62; Edward L. Farmer, *Early Ming government: The evolution of dual capitals* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), pp. 114-17. For details of the construction of Peking as the principal capital, see Hou Jen-chih, *Pei-ching shih hua* (Peking, 1980), ch. 6; Hsieh Min-ts'ung, *Ming Ch'ing Pei-ching ti ch'eng yüan yü kung ch'ieh chih yen chiu* (Taipei, 1980), ch. 3.

93 Wu Han, "Ming tai ching nan chih i," pp. 919-23; 933-36; Farmer, *Early Ming government*, pp. 134-40.

city on the northern frontier that could be supplied adequately to support a large garrison and a large civilian population. By making Peking his primary capital, the emperor also realized in part his vision of an expansive and outward-looking empire, an empire that embraced the frontier and the interior, the non-Han as well as the Han populations. Thus Peking, which enjoyed a strategic location and had been the capital of two non-Han empires, seemed a practical and logical choice for the new Ming capital.⁹⁴

The transformation of Peking was a formidable task for the emperor and his advisors, and it imposed heavy burdens on the people. Although some of the Yüan city walls and palaces remained intact, the general plan of the city had to be altered and much new construction undertaken to meet the emperor's specifications. Because the region lacked an adequate economic base, the city depended on massive shipments of grain and provisions from the southeastern provinces. The military organization had to be restructured to handle this overall reallocation of economic resources. Above all, institutional arrangements had to be changed; this affected imperial agencies in Nanking and in other parts of the empire. The transfer of the capital to Peking was certainly the most complex and far-reaching imperial project undertaken during the Ming dynasty.

Between 1403 and 1416 some modest institutional rearrangements were initiated and preliminary plans for major construction were drawn up. In February 1403 the emperor formally gave the city the status of Northern Capital (Pei-ching). He sent his eldest son Chu Kao-chih, who later became the Hung-hsi emperor, to administer the new capital. He also established in Peking a branch ministry (*hsing-pu*) to oversee new branch offices of the six ministries, a national university, and a branch chief military commission. He renamed the metropolitan prefecture of the northern capital Shun-t'ien (Obedient to Heaven) prefecture. This change was charged with great symbolic significance, for it linked the emperor to his father, who early in his rise had named the metropolitan prefecture of Nanking Ying-t'ien (Responsive to Heaven); thus the usurper echoed his claim to legitimate succession.⁹⁵

In 1404 the emperor moved 10,000 households from nine prefectures in Shansi to Peking to increase the metropolitan population. In 1405 he sent his younger son Chu Kao-sui to assume the military command of Peking and decreed a two-year land tax remission for Shun-t'ien and the two prefectures adjacent to it. Meanwhile, the construction of new palace buildings got under way. Between 1408 and 1409 a warden's office, a hostel for

94 Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 182–86.

95 Farmer, *Early Ming government*, pp. 115–31.

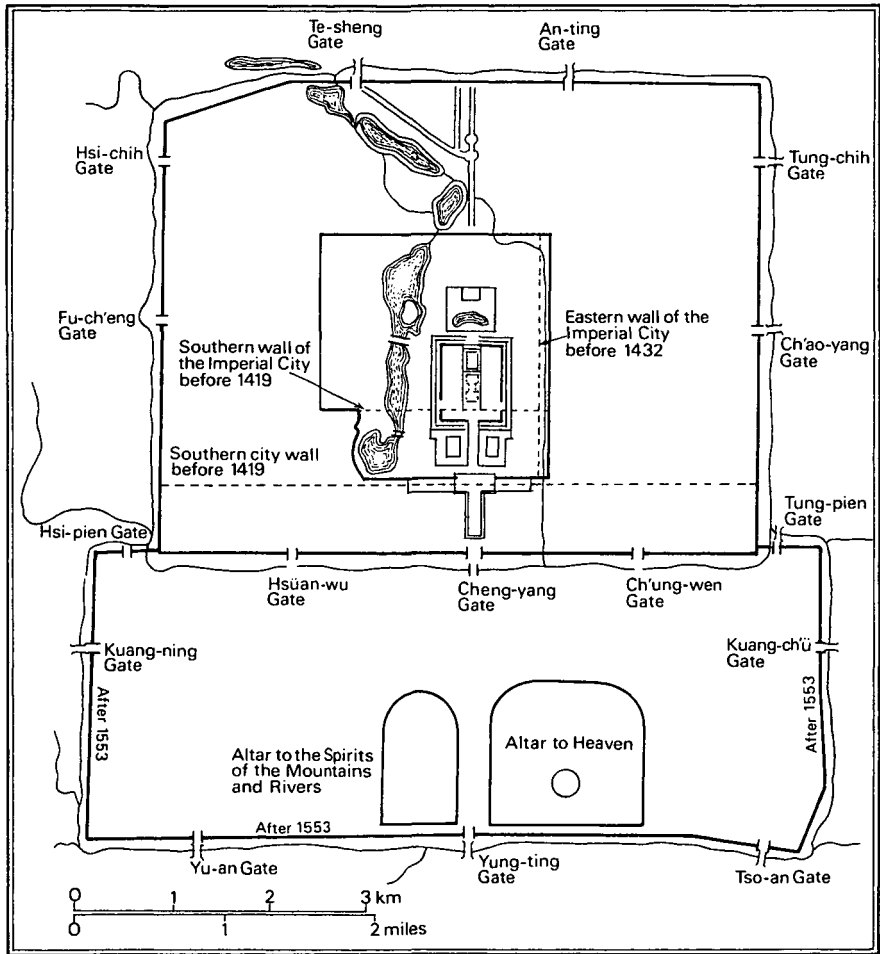
foreign envoys, and a mint were built in the future capital. The emperor still resided in Nanking and issued his orders in the new capital through the heir apparent. He did not himself visit Peking until April 1409, and he stayed there only until the first Mongolian campaign had ended in 1410. Nonetheless, these costly works show that the emperor intended from the first to transfer the imperial capital to Peking, despite objections raised by his court officials.

During this period the physical and economic foundations of the new capital were laid down. Although no really massive construction was undertaken in Peking until 1416, preparations for new palace buildings and for repairs to the city walls began in 1406. In August the emperor ordered Earl Ch'en Kuei, minister of works Sung Li, assistant censor-in-chief Liu Kuan, and others to assemble men and materials at Peking; ostensibly he was responding to a request by senior officials, who thought that a palace should be built for his forthcoming visit. Officials were sent to cut timber in the forests of Kiangsi, Hu-kuang, Chekiang, Shansi, and Szechwan. Others organized the manufacture of bricks in the Northern Metropolitan Region. In 1407 a great work force of artisans, soldiers, and common laborers was recruited from all over the empire; these included over seven thousand Anamese artisans, who had been captured and sent to Peking by Chang Fu. But construction was hampered by an inadequate supply system and a lack of close supervision. Work proceeded slowly, and no major buildings were completed during these years.

To remedy the area's dependence on grain shipments from the south and to strengthen the local economy, between 1412 and 1416 the heir apparent, Chu Kao-chih, granted land tax remissions or relief grain to the inhabitants of the Peking prefectures and to those parts of Shantung and Honan struck by natural calamities. Grain shipments from the rich rice-growing lower Yangtze, the Kiangnan provinces, moved to the north more quickly after the completion of work on the Grand Canal in June 1415, after which grain could be shipped directly from them to Peking. The economic situation of the new capital was now less vulnerable.⁹⁶

After the 1414 Mongolian campaign, the emperor spent over three years in Peking, leaving only once late in 1416 to visit Nanking. Since the Grand Canal had been reconstructed, men and materials had been moved to the north, and the emperor clearly had decided to reside regularly in Peking. In 1417 and 1418 improvements were made on the moats, walls, and bridges of Peking; and the emperor's residence, the Western Palace,

⁹⁶ See Wu Chi-hua, *Ming tai hai yüen chi yüen ho ti yen chiu* (Taipei, 1961), pp. 40–42, 76–82; Hoshi Ayao, *Mindai soun no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1963), pp. 26–31.



Map 12. City plan of Peking

was under construction. In March 1417, shortly before he left Nanking for the last time, the emperor again put Ch'en Kuei in charge of all the imperial construction projects at Peking; Ch'en also took control of the military administration there.

Prior to this, the emperor had requested a court discussion on the construction of his new capital and had received the support of his senior officials. There were some voices of dissent, but they carried no weight. The construction of Peking required massive mobilization of artisans and laborers, often drawn from the ranks of military units or from criminals

sentenced to hard labor, as well as the requisitioning of building materials from all over the empire, even from as far away as Annam, which had recently been annexed. The size of the work force is not known, but it must have numbered hundreds of thousands. The chief architect was an Annamese eunuch named Juan An (d. 1453), who also played a major role in the rebuilding of Peking during the Cheng-t'ung reign.⁹⁷

By late 1417, most of the palace buildings had been completed. Sections of the southern city wall, which had been built under the Yüan, had fallen into disrepair. These were restored in 1420, when the bell tower and the Altar of Heaven were also completed. By 1420, enough of the principal construction projects at Peking were completed to permit transfer of the court. The new city was slightly smaller than it had been under the Mongol rulers. It was smaller from north to south, and the number of city gates was reduced from eleven to nine. The emperor was pleased with the result and lavishly rewarded the officials in charge of the construction. In January 1421 Ts'ai Hsin, director of the Construction Bureau, was promoted to vice-minister of works, and appropriate promotions and rewards were also given to lesser officials and to all categories of construction workers.⁹⁸

On 28 October 1420 Peking was formally designated the principal capital of the empire. From February 1421, all documents were to refer to Peking rather than Nanking as the imperial capital. During the intervening three months, the central government was thoroughly reorganized. However, in 1421 a fire destroyed the three major audience halls in the Forbidden City, and the emperor, observing ancient precedent, had to call for frank criticism of his rule. Some of the censors and Hanlin scholars, notably Li Shih-mien (1374–1450) and Tsou Chi (d. 1422), denounced the economic hardship, abuses, and great inconvenience incurred in moving the capital to Peking. The most vocal critic was a junior secretary named Hsiao I; his remarks were found so abusive that the emperor had him executed.⁹⁹ This alarmed all the critics, and they fell silent. Of course, the emperor had long before made up his mind on this point. The major construction projects had been completed, and all the institutional readjustments had been worked out; everything was ready to be carried forward, and by this time no protest could have altered his decision.

97 For Juan An's role in the capital construction, see Chang Hsiu-min, "Ming tai Chiao-chih jen tsai Chung-kuo chih kung hsien," *Hsüeh yüan*, 3, No. 1 (1950), pp. 53–57; rpt. in *Ming tai kuo chi kuan hsi*, Vol. VII of *Ming shih lun ts'ung*, ed. Pao Tsun-p'eng (Taipei, 1968), pp. 63–69; and *DMB*, p. 687.

98 Farmer, *Early Ming government*, pp. 22–23.

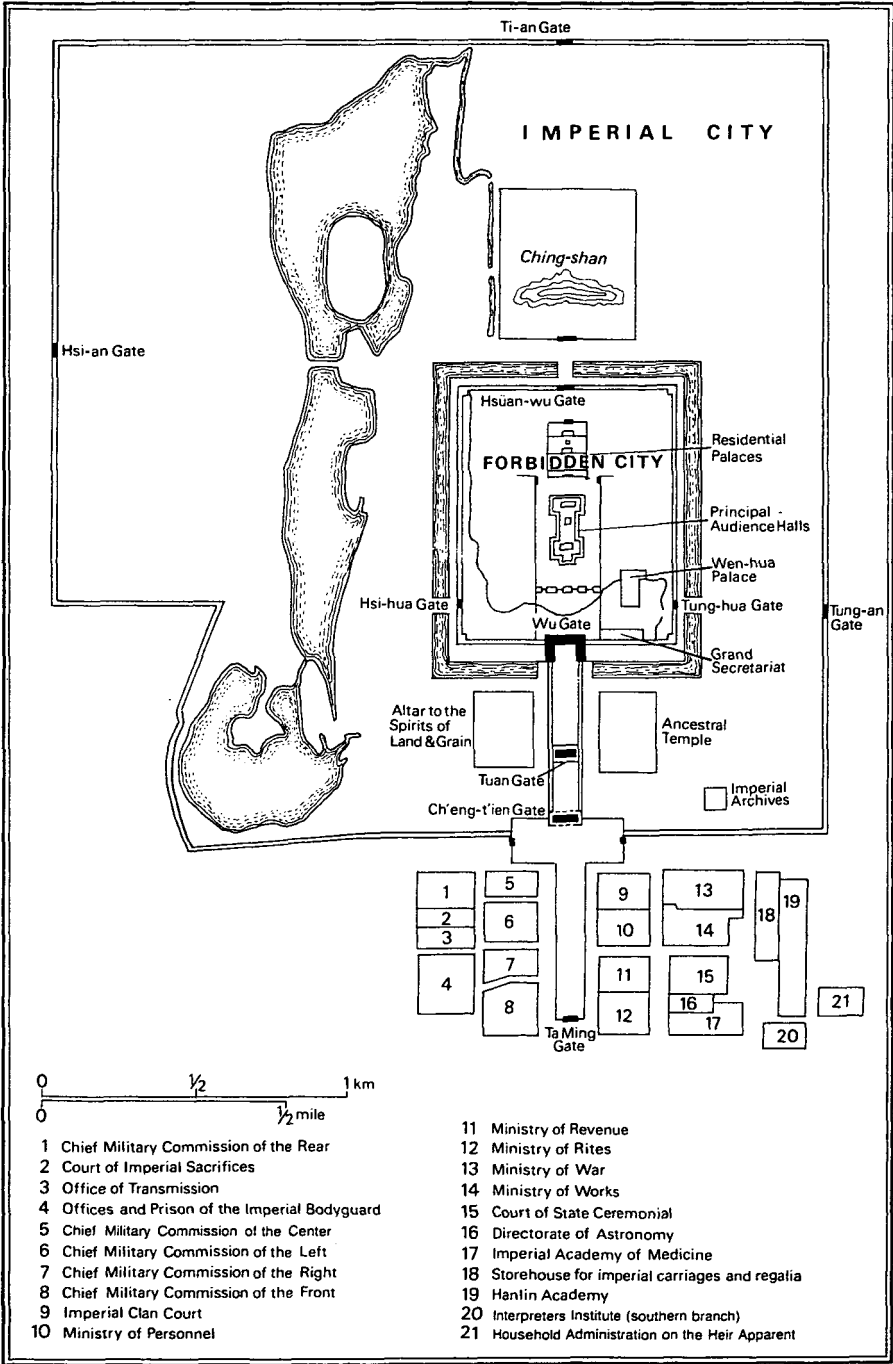
99 Li Shih-mien was imprisoned as a result, but he was released in 1423. See *DMB*, p. 865.

The reorganization of the central government affected the civil and military establishments in Peking and Nanking. First, the seals of government were recast. Prior to 1421, the seals of offices at Peking had borne the characters *hsing-tsai* or residence pro tempore; but when Peking was formally designated as the imperial capital, this prefix was dropped. All the offices and agencies in Nanking were given new seals inscribed with the prefix Nan-ching or Southern Capital to indicate their now subordinate status.¹⁰⁰ These changes in terminology were intended to reflect political reality. However, all the new designations were reversed when the Yung-lo emperor's successor decided in 1425 to return the capital to Nanking; he reinstated the previous titles. But on his death late in 1425 the return to Nanking was halted. Matters remained unsettled. When the Hsüan-te emperor again designated Peking as the main capital, he continued to use the term *hsing-tsai* for its offices, perhaps because he anticipated that the court might eventually return to Nanking. It was not until 1441 that this prefix was finally removed from the titles of all government agencies in Peking.

Nanking agencies became auxiliary branches of their counterparts in Peking. For example, the Peking branch of the rear military commission in Nanking transferred its files to the Chief Military Commission of the Rear in Peking and sent its seal back to the Ministry of Rites to be destroyed. Activities that concerned the security of the new capital itself were reassigned to the Chief Military Commission of the Center. In the case of military units, the uniform command structure was evenly divided: thirteen guard units were assigned to Nanking and thirteen to Peking. The five guard units assigned to the five military commissions were likewise divided to form five new guards in each capital.

The civil administration also underwent a similar but more complex reorganization. Ministries that handled the affairs of Peking were eliminated and their personnel reassigned. The two Peking auxiliary Ministries of Revenue and Justice were integrated into the main ministries. Similarly, the auxiliary censorate was incorporated into the Peking circuit of the main Censorate. The Ministries of War and Works, on the other hand, moved north and took over offices in the new capital, while the National University simply dropped its northern capital designation. At the same time, the prefectures and subprefectures of the Northern Metropolitan Region (Pei Chihli), formerly under the jurisdiction of a branch ministry, were placed under the direct supervision of the capital ministries. In 1425 the new

100 See Hucker, "Governmental organization of the Ming dynasty," p. 6; Farmer, *Early Ming government*, pp. 123–24.



Map 13. Principal offices of the imperial government

emperor reconstituted the Peking branch ministries and the Peking branch of the Chief Military Commission of the Rear. Local authorities in the Northern Metropolitan Region were then required to go through these channels to deal with central ministries or military commissions. However, the procedure turned out to be too cumbersome, and these branch ministries were dissolved in 1428, when jurisdiction was again returned to the regular ministries and commissions.

The emperor had founded a majestic capital in Peking, one far more grand than the capital of the Yüan dynasty and one that rivaled even Nanking in splendor. The period of “dual capitals,” during which both Peking and Nanking functioned as complementary administrative centers, ended in 1441, when the administration of the northern and southern metropolitan provinces was integrated under a single central government. Thereafter Nanking, the residual capital (*liu-tu*), lost much of its political importance; it was no longer under control of the imperial family, and its palaces and altars fell into disuse. Its skeleton administration remained intact, but for the rest of the dynasty, except for a brief, abortive restoration under the Hung-hsi emperor, its ministries usually were staffed by vice-ministers with only nominal authority.

Moving the capital to Peking brought about far-reaching changes in military and economic organization, changes tied to the requirements of the new administration and to the defense of the border regions. The human and material costs of the move and of maintaining a vast metropolitan center so far from the sources of its economic supply remained a constant drain on government revenues and on the population until the end of the Ming dynasty, and until the end of the imperial era.

Military and economic reorganizations

Military transfer and new organizations

Military organization under the Yung-lo emperor involved four major changes in the structure of the armed forces. The first was the elimination of the princely guards (*hu-wei*). The second was the transfer of most of the capital guards (*ching-wei*) at Nanking to the north and the promotion of certain northern units to the status of imperial guards (*ch'in-chün*), which made the capital guards at Peking the largest body of troops in the empire. The third was the creation of the capital training camps (*ying*), in which soldiers regularly rotated from provincial military units to active duty in border defense or expeditionary campaigns, and were drilled and trained. The fourth major change involved the organization of border defense com-

mands along the Great Wall line; this was part of the emperor's new strategy against the nomadic raiders to the north of that boundary.¹⁰¹

The emperor's desire to eliminate the princely guards is readily understandable: under the enfeoffment system set up during the Hung-wu reign, the imperial princes had had far-reaching power. The Yung-lo emperor had used this power to build up his own armies, and that experience led him to disband the princely guards and to remove his own sons from military commands. Both his eldest son and his second son had taken part in campaigns during the civil war. However, after he ascended the throne, he made his eldest son regent while he was away on military campaigns; his second son was arrested in 1417 for scheming against his elder brother.¹⁰² At the same time, just as the Chien-wen emperor had done, the Yung-lo emperor also felt compelled to cut back the power of the remaining imperial princes, who were his own brothers; many were purged on criminal charges and their guard units disbanded.

Therefore, by the end of his reign, only four of the original thirty princely guard units created by the Hung-wu emperor survived intact.¹⁰³ The three guard units that had originally belonged to the emperor when he was still the Prince of Yen, the Yen-shan guards, were incorporated into the guard units that constituted the emperor's personal army in Peking. Some of the remaining twenty-three guards were assigned to different locations. The rest were disbanded and their troops reassembled to form new guard units in the capital. Thereafter, few of the fiefs created for new imperial princes included guards, and fewer than a dozen princely guard units remained in the military establishment until the end of the dynasty.¹⁰⁴

The transfer of military guards to the Northern Metropolitan Region was the most far-reaching of the military reorganizations undertaken during the Yung-lo reign. Under the Hung-wu emperor the forty-one guard units at Nanking were collectively known as the capital guards; these comprised twelve guard units of the emperor's personal bodyguard and twenty-nine other guard units subordinate to the five Chief Military Commissions.¹⁰⁵ When the Yung-lo emperor established Peking as his main capital, he transferred many of these guards at Nanking to the north. By 1420 or

101 For a succinct account, see Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 182–94. On the military organizations, see Wu Han, "Ming tai ti chün ping," pp. 94–111; Wang Yü-ch'üan, *Ming tai ti chün t'un* (Peking, 1965), pp. 42–44. See also, Hucker, "Governmental organization of the Ming dynasty," pp. 57–63.

102 *DMB*, pp. 338, 341.

103 See Wu Chi-hua, "Ming tai huang shih chung," in *MTCTS*, II, pp. 283–86, 321–22.

104 Wang Yü-ch'üan, *Ming tai ti chün t'un*, pp. 33, 50.

105 See Wu Han, *Chu Yuan-chang chuan*, pp. 198–200.

1421, the guards in Peking were comprised of three elements: guards formerly under the Peking Regional Military Commission; former Nanking capital guards; and troops from former princely guards. A few other disbanded units were also moved to Peking from other provinces.

The core of the capital garrisons was formed from the twenty-two guard units that made up the emperor's imperial guards (*ch'in-chün*). They included the three Yen-shan guards, seven of the sixteen guard units formerly under the Peking Regional Military Commission, and the twelve guard units that had been attached to the emperor's bodyguard in Nanking. The twenty-two guard units comprised 159 battalions; these troops nominally totaled 190,800 men (one guard consisted of 1,200 men), but the actual figure could have been substantially lower, since by the end of the Hung-wu reign the regional garrison units stood at roughly only five-eighths of their full strength.¹⁰⁶ Six other units that were incorporated into the emperor's imperial guards remained under his direct Command: three belonged to the former Peking Regional Military Commission, and three were formed from the troops of various disbanded units. These units supplied most of the soldiers engaged in construction projects.

The Nanking military establishment contained twenty-nine other guard units, each under the command of one of the former Chief Military Commissions in the capital. By 1420 about nineteen of these units had been transferred to Peking, and the remaining units were those that specialized in naval affairs. After 1420 the Nanking military establishment was comprised of seventeen guard units attached to the emperor's personal army and thirty-two units under the joint command of the five Nanking Chief Military Commissions. At the same time, the units in the outlying cities of Nan Chihli, which had formerly been under the jurisdiction of the Nanking Chief Military Commission of the Center, were placed under the jurisdiction of the corresponding commission at Peking: this further reduced the authority of the Nanking administration. As the region around Peking became the Northern Metropolitan Region in 1421, the Peking Chief Military Commission of the Rear took command of the area. Henceforth, the Peking chief military commission of the rear commanded sixteen guard units, eleven of which were subsequently assigned to the imperial tombs.

¹⁰⁶ See Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 187–88. Dreyer's estimation of the actual numerical strength of the early Ming military units is based on the figures of the total strength of the army in 1392 and 1393 recorded respectively in *MSL*, *T'ai-tsu shih lu* (1418; rpt. Taipei, 1961–1966), 223, p. 3270, and Chang Ting-yü et al., *Ming shih* (1736; rpt. Peking, 1972), 90, p. 2193. See Wu Han, *Chu Yüan-chang chuan*, pp. 79, 81. Wu Han in "Ming tai ti chün ping," p. 101, estimates the total numerical strength of the army at about 1.2 million after 1393 and around 2.8 million under the Yung-lo reign. However, Wang Yü-ch'üan, in *Ming tai ti chün t'un*, p. 51, says that such a figure for the Hung-wu reign is a bit too modest.

By the end of the Hsüan-te reign, the capital guards at Peking comprised 74 units. Twenty-two were under the emperor's personal command; four units were engaged in raising horses; six units were regularly employed as construction workers; and two units were assigned to guard the tombs of the Yung-lo and Hung-hsi emperors. Nineteen units had been transferred to Peking from Nanking, six units were transferred to Peking from other northern areas, chiefly Ta-ning, and fifteen new units had been formed from the troops of various disbanded units. It appears that the total numerical strength of the army in the empire during the Yung-lo reign well exceeded 2 million.

In the course of this reorganization, a large number of people were moved to Peking and to the area surrounding it. At least 435 battalions, about 25 to 30 percent of the total units in the empire, were stationed in the Peking area, and about 335 of these had been moved there from other parts of the country. If we use the previous estimate the actual strength of these units would total about 251,000 men, but the real figure could have been somewhat higher. In addition, many of the soldiers had families. The census figures for 1393 show that the province had a settled population of 1,926,595. There is reason to believe, therefore, that during the early fifteenth century the population in the Peking province (so called after 1403) may well have been well in excess of 2 million. In any case, after 1422 the troops stationed permanently in Peking formed a substantial portion of the inhabitants of the capital, and this greatly aggravated the problem of supporting a largely dependent population.¹⁰⁷

The structure of the military command and the training procedures in these garrisons were also redesigned. Capital training camps (*ching-ying*) were set up to improve the combat readiness of troops that had by this time come to divide their time between farming and guard duty. The organization of the training camps (known as the three great camps, or *san ta-ying*) began after the second Mongolian campaign, when the emperor decided to expand the scale of these campaigns and to enhance their effectiveness. In 1415 he ordered each of the guards in the northern provinces and in the Southern Metropolitan Region to send a contingent to Peking for combat training. The garrisons at Peking were then divided into three training camps for infantry, cavalry, and artillery. Each of these camps was jointly supervised by a eunuch and two nobles or high-ranking generals, who were assisted by other military officers.

¹⁰⁷ See Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, p. 191. For the population figure of Pei-p'ing province, see *MS* 40, pp. 884–85. On the movement of population to Peking, see Farmer, *Early Ming government*, pp. 148–52.

The three camps were organized alike, but they were charged with different duties. The Camp of the Five Armies (*Wu-chün ying*), which derived its name from the five chief military commissions or the five divisions of the imperial expeditionary armies, drilled inexperienced recruits who came from the provincial guard units. This camp took over the organization and training of combat troops, a task originally performed by the *wei-so* units. Consequently, the quality and morale of the garrisons in the provinces all throughout the empire, which no longer had any real military duties, deteriorated. The Camp of Three Thousand (*San-ch'ien ying*) was formed around a core of three thousand Mongol cavalymen who had joined forces with the emperor during the civil war. They specialized in cavalry training, scouting, and patrolling and made up the signal corps of the army as well. The Artillery Camp (*Shen-chi ying*) trained troops in the use of firearms. Chinese armies had employed firearms before the fifteenth century, but they came to possess superior weapons from Annam during the Annamese campaigns of the early fifteenth century. They also captured one of the leading Annamese firearms experts, Lê Trù'ng (1374–1446), the eldest son of Lê Quí-ly, who was charged with manufacturing their superior muskets and explosive weapons. The Artillery Camp was thus built around these Annamese firearm specialists, who instructed Ming soldiers under the supervision of palace eunuchs.¹⁰⁸

Since all the imperial expeditionary armies included mounted troops as well as soldiers equipped with firearms, the internal organization of all three camps was roughly the same. There was also one other capital training camp that deserves mention. This was the Camp of the Four Guards (*Ssu-wei ying*), so called because it was staffed by soldiers drawn from the four guard units that specialized in raising horses. Its main task was to train horses for the cavalry, and its trainers included many surrendered Mongol horsemen.

Finally, a line of border defense commands (*pien-chen*) was set up along the Great Wall line from Manchuria to Kansu. This new strategy departed markedly from that which had been devised by the Hung-wu emperor. The first emperor had established guards in strategic sites well beyond the Great Wall, so that the Chinese garrisons would be able to counter Mongol raiders before they reached the wall itself. The Yung-lo emperor pulled back most of these garrisons upon his accession, both to shorten the defense line and to reduce military expenses. He then established a number of border commands near or to the south of the Great Wall line at strategic

¹⁰⁸ For Lê Trù'ng's role in the manufacturing of firearms, see Chang Hsiu-min, "Ming tai Chiao-chih jen," pp. 70–75; Émile Gaspardone, "Deux essais," pp. 111–13.

sites in Liao-tung, Chi-chou (east of Peking), Hsüan-fu, Ta-t'ung, Shansi, Yen-Sui, Ku-yüan (Shensi), Ningsia, and Kansu. These commands were placed under the jurisdiction of the regional military commissions in these areas.¹⁰⁹ During the Hung-wu reign, troops in the garrisons beyond the Great Wall were drawn exclusively from nearby *wei-so* units; during the Yung-lo reign, troops that had already been trained in the capital training camps completed their tours of duty in these garrisons. These soldiers served longer terms than expected, and they eventually became the core of a permanent professional army.

The officers who commanded the border garrisons were also selected from among the regular military officer corps. These commanders were given a general's commission, which was usually restricted to the commanders of offensive forces, though their duties were limited to defending the areas under their jurisdiction. They came to be known by their territorial designations—as the regional commanders (*tsung ping kuan*) of certain areas. Each was assisted by one or more deputies and by lesser officers with such titles as local commander (*ts'an-chiang*) or cavalry general (*yu-chi Chiang-chün*).¹¹⁰ Such commissions were usually conferred only for the duration of a single campaign; ranks and stipends were still determined according to an officer's place in the hierarchy of his guard or in the regional or chief military commissions. In the course of time, however, such commissions became fixed; they constituted a hierarchy of tactical commands. By the end of the Hsüan-te reign, these border commands had been formalized into nine permanent defense establishments (*chiu-pien*) on the northern frontier. Those at Chi-chou, Yen-Sui, and Ningsia were created to oversee specified sections of the Great Wall, whereas the other six took on the functions of the regional military commission in their areas. Little changed in either the command hierarchy or in the structure of the border garrison forces after this.¹¹¹

Grain supply and transport systems

Expeditionary campaigns, construction projects, and governmental changes were very costly. Moreover, transferring the seat of government to Peking created a major problem, for the capital, its bureaucracy, and its garrisons

109 On northern border defense in the Yung-lo reign, see Tamura, "Mindai no hokuhen bōei taisei," pp. 78–85; Wu Chi-hua, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu hsiang pei fang," in *MTSHCCS*, I, pp. 162–66.

110 For a list of these officers, see Hucker, "Governmental organization of the Ming dynasty," pp. 62–63.

111 The Great Wall was [re]constructed in subsequent Ming reigns in the form known today, but in early Ming times may have been more of a defended line demarcating China proper and the Inner Asian steppe than a permanent physical barrier. See Arthur Waldron, "The problem of the Great Wall," *HJAS*, 43, No. 2 (December 1983), pp. 660–61.

were in a poor and unproductive region and needed to be supplied from elsewhere. The northern provinces generated little revenue; and although in theory the military should have been able to support itself with the produce from military farms, in practice this never happened. Already during the Hung-wu reign grain was regularly shipped north by sea from the rich rice-growing prefectures of the Yangtze delta to supply the Peking administration and the guard units in Liao-tung and along the northern border. To meet the ever-increasing demand for grain in the north, the Yung-lo court devised three programs that involved massive reallocations of men and materials.

The first attempted to reduce the official demand for grain by converting salaries from payment in kind to payment in currency and silver and by enlarging the military colony farms set up during the preceding reign. In 1402, the highest officials received 60 percent of their salaries in grain, while the lowest officials received only 20 percent. Later officials in the military commissions, in the provinces, and in the princedoms who had received their stipends entirely in rice were paid partially in currency and coin. This scheme worked well when the value of currency was stable; but when inflation set in, the whole salary system degenerated, and officials turned to extralegal sources of income.¹¹²

Military farms (*chün-t'un*) were designed to make the military self-sufficient and to reduce the need for grain shipments to the north. After 1404 a production quota for each military farm was set. The commanders were rated on the basis of their output, and censors were appointed to verify the production figures. In order to determine the median yields, test plots were established and their production was reported annually. However, production was constantly disrupted because soldiers were diverted from farming duties. In 1413, the emperor introduced measures to stop such diversions of manpower and to restore the original quotas for all military farms except those affected by natural calamities; but the yields continued to lag behind the quotas.¹¹³

A second program increased the grain supply to the north through the sale of salt certificates to merchants. Merchants bought the right to sell a certain amount of salt by delivering a fixed amount of grain to the border garrisons. The system, known as the middleman method (*k'ai-chung fa*), had been introduced early in the Hung-wu period, and it was amplified during the Yung-lo reign. In 1403, the emperor ordered that all the rice

112 See Farmer, *Early Ming government*, pp. 53–54. On early Ming official salaries, see P'eng Hsin-wei, *Chung-kuo huo pi shih* (1954; 2nd. ed. Shanghai, 1958), pp. 463, 466.

113 See Sun Yüan-chen, "Ming tai t'un t'ien chih yen chiu," rpt. in *Ming shih lun t'ung*, ed. Pao Tsun-p'eng, Vol. 8 (Taipei, 1968), pp. 15–20; Wang Yü-ch'üan, *Ming tai ti chün t'un*, pp. 39–44.

delivered for salt certificates (with a few exceptions) should be delivered to the Peking area. The ratio of grain-salt exchange was not constant; it depended on supply and demand. In 1412, for instance, few salt certificates were issued at Peking because there was a surplus of rice and a shortage of salt. But in general salt merchants continued to deliver grain both to the northern prefectures and also to the southwest, where they supplied the armies sent to suppress tribal uprisings and to pacify Annam.¹¹⁴

After Peking became the primary capital, taxpayers in the rice-producing provinces of South China were required to send their grain to the north and to bear the additional transportation expenses, which were levied as a variable surcharge. Large extra levies were imposed when grain was scarce. In 1412, for instance, the provincial administrations and Regional Military Commissions of Hu-kuang, Chekiang, and Kiangsi had to ship nearly 3 million piculs of rice to Peking. Several methods were introduced to ease this huge burden. Southern tax payments were permitted to be converted to cash, with which grain could be bought in the north; the quota to be delivered could be shifted to districts closer to the delivery point; and the receiving unit had to defray the transportation costs. These new measures were eventually formalized as the grain transport system.¹¹⁵

This system, which provided the bulk of the grain required in the north, was set up during the Hung-wu reign. At first grain was shipped north both by sea and by overland routes; this system was called joint sea and land transport (*hai-lu chien yüan*).

Sea transport followed the pattern established during the Yüan dynasty. From 1403 to 1415, grain was shipped to the northern provinces from the lower Yangtze prefectures by government troops under two senior military officers, Ch'en Hsüan, commander-in-chief of transport, and Hsüan Hsin, the deputy commander-in-chief. Several hundred huge transport vessels were ordered from Hu-kuang, Chekiang, Kiangsi, and Nan Chihli; local authorities and guard units were called upon to contribute to their construction.¹¹⁶ The grain ships started from granaries at T'ai-ts'ang near the mouth of the Yangtze and sailed north around the Shantung peninsula to the main debarkation point for Peking at Chih-ku on the Pai River. Here the rice was reloaded onto smaller vessels, which sailed upstream to Tientsin and T'ung-chou. In Chih-ku, Tientsin, and T'ung-chou granaries were built for storage and guard units were assigned to them. Some grain was shipped on to Liao-tung. During the first year of operation, when two

¹¹⁴ See Li Lung-hua, "Ming tai ti k'ai chung fa," *Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong*, 4, No. 2 (1971), pp. 373-75, 384-86.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Wu Chi-hua, *Ming tai hai yüan*, ch. 3.

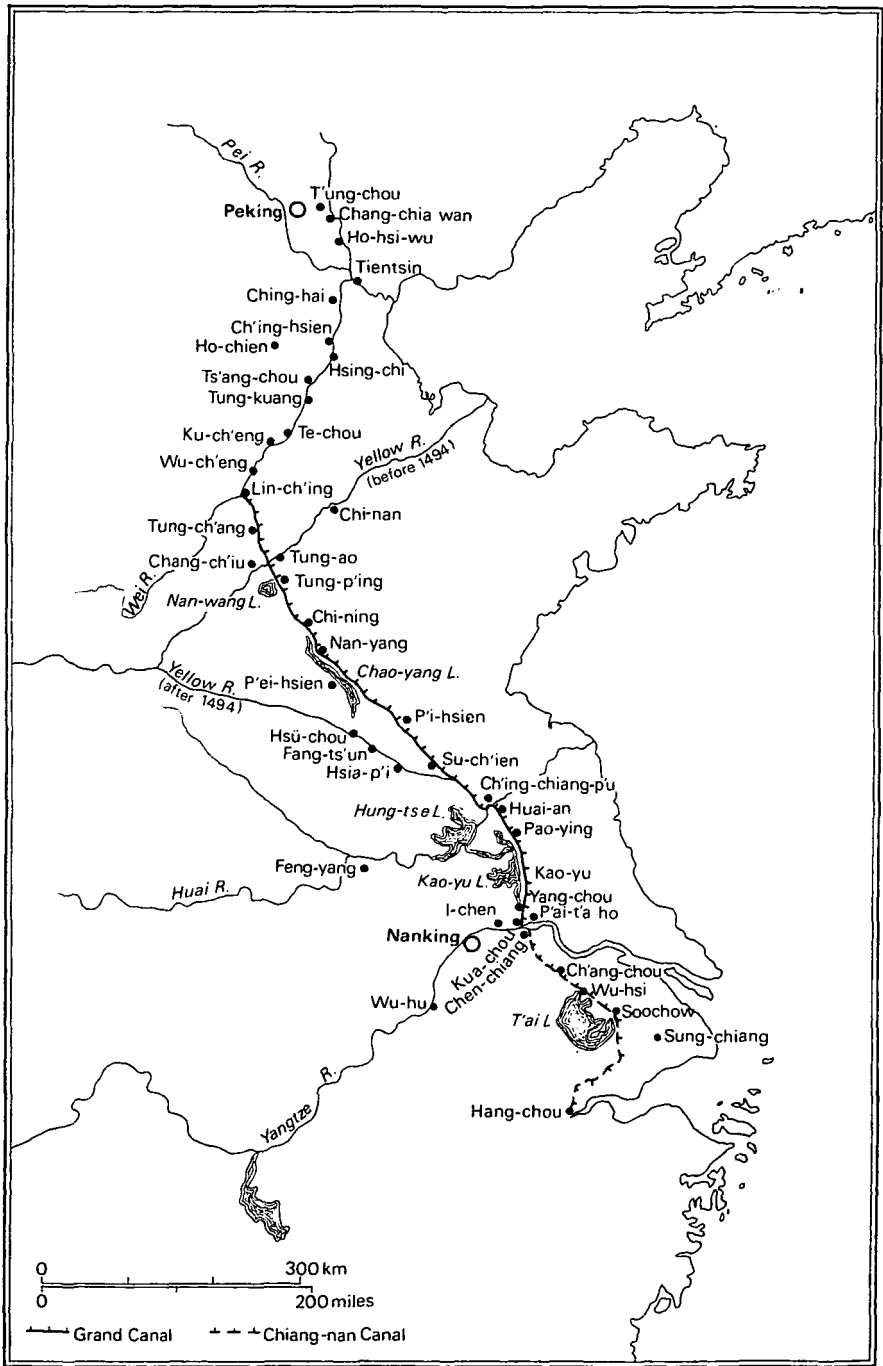
¹¹⁶ Hoshi, *Mindai sōun*, pp. 15-34.

shipments were made, the grain fleet transported a million piculs; thereafter the annual volume fluctuated between 480,000 and 800,000 piculs, with no fixed annual quota.

At the same time, under a plan submitted in 1403 by the minister of revenue Yü Hsin (d. 1405), grain was also transported overland by a combination of land and water routes. A circuitous route to the west bypassed the difficult waterways between the Huai River and the Yellow River. Large vessels that could carry 300 piculs of rice went up the Huai into the Sha River and then to Ch'en-chou; there the grain was reloaded onto slightly smaller vessels for the passage north into the Yellow River basin. The grain was again transferred to larger vessels that sailed along the Yellow River to various ports in Honan. Local troops then hauled it overland to the Wei River, and from there the grain was shipped to Peking. In 1403, 1,500,000 piculs of grain were delivered to the north under Ch'en's supervision. A series of transport offices and granaries was established along the Wei River and around the capital to manage the transport. In 1409 the total grain shipments under the joint sea and land transport system reached 1.8 million piculs and rose to between 2 and 2.4 million between 1410 and 1414. In 1415, the last year of operation, one source says that total shipments reached 6.4 million piculs, although elsewhere the figure is 3 million.

The joint sea and land transport system was far from satisfactory. The coastal route was dangerous and the losses high, the river and land route long and burdensome. The system gradually changed with the opening of the Grand Canal. The Yüan had completed a system of canals linking Peking with the lower Yangtze in 1289, although constant silting of the channels and the difficulty of maintaining a head of water delayed completion until 1325. The canal system had never functioned efficiently under the Yüan, and coastal transport gradually replaced it as the main form of grain transport. In the early fifteenth century large sections of the Yüan Grand Canal were dilapidated, silted up, and inoperable.

The Yung-lo emperor decided to repair and renovate the Grand Canal and to reopen canal transport as an alternative route for southern grain supplies to Peking, since the need for grain had greatly increased after the capital was moved to the north. The Grand Canal was repaired in two stages. The dredging and reconstruction of the northern section began in July 1411 under the supervision of Sung Li; the project involved clearing 130 miles of channel and the construction of 38 locks. It employed about 300,000 *corvée* laborers for 100 days. The southern section from the Yellow River to the Yangtze was opened in July 1415. Ch'en Hsüan had four locks built west of Huai-an to provide access to the Huai River. The canal



Map 14. The Grand Canal

system was now navigable all the way from the lower Yangtze drainage area to Peking; it became the main artery of commerce between the north and the south.¹¹⁷

In 1415, when the canal system had been completed to Peking, the joint land and sea transport system was abandoned. Over three thousand flat-bottomed barges were built to transport tax grain north along the canal to Peking, and the amount of grain reaching the north increased markedly. It rose from 2.8 million piculs in 1416 to 5 million in 1417 and 4.6 million in 1418. It then fell to about 3 million in 1421 and 1422, and to 2.5 million in 1423. The high figures for 1417 and 1418 reveal the great amount of grain required by the emperor's grandiose military ventures and construction projects.

The operation of the new transport system made heavy demands on civilian and military manpower, thus incurring additional expenses. The system established in 1415 was called the relay transport (*chih-yün*) system, and it required taxpayers to handle the first stage of transport. For example, people in areas south of the Yangtze had to deliver their tax grain to the Huai-an granary; people living between Huai-an and the Yangtze delivered their tax grain to various granaries set up along the canal. Four times a year, the grain was shipped from these granaries to Peking by government troops. After 1415 the system was adjusted to reduce the number of soldiers involved, because troops were urgently needed for construction projects and military campaigns.

In 1418, the civilian transport (*min-yün*) system was introduced. Now taxpayers had to ship the grain all the way to Peking at their own expense. In 1423 Ch'en Hsüan suggested that the annual shipment for Peking be reduced; eight years later, after the Yung-lo emperor's death, he put into effect the transfer transport (*tui-yün*) system. Taxpayers delivered grain to various granaries on the canal and paid a transport fee; from these granaries, the army moved the grain to the capital. This system was formally adopted in the Hsüan-te reign, to the great relief of taxpayers.¹¹⁸

These sustained demands for grain to support the court in the north certainly placed a heavy burden on the people. The land tax was the largest single source of state revenue. During the Hung-wu reign, tax quotas were set for the entire empire. The quotas for 1393 totaled 29.4 million piculs. The distribution of the land tax was uneven; the quotas for several large provinces were between 2 and 3 million piculs, while the quota for just ten wealthy prefec-

117 For a succinct account, see Chu Hsieh, *Chung-kuo yün ho shih liao hsüan chi* (Peking, 1962), pp. 71–77.

118 Wu Chi-hua, *Ming tai hai yün*, ch. 4, sec. 1.

tures south of the Yangtze River was almost 6 million piculs, about 20 percent of the quota for the whole empire. After retaining a set portion of the tax revenues to defray local administrative expenses and to supply the imperial household at Nanking, each district sent the rest to the north by various transport systems. Under this arrangement, the taxpayers had to fill their tax quotas and bear the additional cost and labor of transportation.

During the entire Yung-lo reign, the annual land tax in grain received by the state fluctuated between 31 and 34 million piculs; the quota, at an annual average of more than 32 million piculs, was thus at least 10 percent higher than in the previous reign. This placed a heavy burden on the populace, in particular on taxpayers in those ten prefectures south of the Yangtze that had paid such a disproportionate amount of the annual land tax during the Hung-wu period. The drain was greatest in Soochow and Sung-chiang, which together paid almost 14 percent of the total land tax.

According to Ray Huang, a land tax quota in units of piculs of grain was in fact only a relative index. This is because the Ming system demanded that taxpayers deliver their grain to the designated state granaries; but since that was not always feasible in practice, the government imposed a series of surcharges and additional taxes to cover handling and transportation costs. The situation was further complicated as a result of commutation, when grain payments were converted to silver, cotton cloth, and other commodities. The state rarely took into consideration the prices of commodities when deciding the conversion rates; as a consequence, there were arbitrary fluctuations. This is shown in Huang's estimates of the varying land tax payments of the Soochow and Sung-chiang prefectures during the later sixteenth century. According to these estimates, the same picul of grain in the original assessment could be split into so many classes of payments that the net costs to the taxpayer differed from the highest to the lowest by 7.3 times!¹¹⁹

In the wake of poor harvests and natural calamities, this burden became unbearable. To ensure future productivity, the emperor was frequently forced to remit taxes and disburse relief grain to people in areas afflicted by flood and drought. For instance, Kuo Tzu (1361–1433), who was the minister of revenue in 1422, reported that of the land taxes due in the fiscal years from 1419 to 1421, less than 23 million piculs of tax grain (out of an average annual quota of more than 32 million piculs) had been

119 For details, see Wu Chi-hua, "Lun Ming tai shui liang chung hsin ti ti yü chi ch'i chung shui chih yü lai *MTSHCCS*, I, pp. 37–45; and Ray Huang, "Administrative statistics in *Ming T'ai-tung shih lu*: An illustration of Chinese bureaucratism as criticized by Dr. Needham," *Ming Studies*, 16 (Spring 1983), pp. 51–54. See also Huang's *Taxation and governmental finance in sixteenth-century Ming China* (Cambridge, England, 1974), p. 101.

delivered to the imperial granaries. In Sung-chiang the tax arrears between 1422 and 1428 reached several million piculs. There is no comparable figure for Soochow during the Yung-lo reign, but between 1431 and 1433, its tax arrears reached almost 8 million piculs. This situation caused such concern among the fiscal administrators that it led to a reduction of the excessive tax quotas for these prefectures under the Hsüan-te emperor.¹²⁰

Foreign relations

The Yung-lo emperor has already been revealed, in his personally conducted military expeditions into Mongolia and in his quick-tempered responses to the Annamese crisis, as an active ruler inclined toward expansive involvement in foreign affairs. In the less warlike sphere of diplomacy and international trade, as the grandiose maritime expeditions of Cheng Ho show, he was equally expansive, equally undeterred by lack of precedent or specific authorization in previous Ming practice. Indeed, his activities in these spheres are virtually unique in all of later imperial history. Subsequent Ming rulers were much more passive and conventional, allowing his initiatives to lapse and permitting the foreign affairs of the Ming state to stagnate and shrink. Private and often illicit maritime trade and overseas commercial settlement in Southeast Asia did begin to grow rapidly, albeit without government approval or protection, in the latter half of the dynasty.

Intriguing questions arise about the significance of the Yung-lo era in opening the way for much of the later private development and about what might have happened had later emperors continued the expansive policies. The Ming state's foreign relations are the subject of chapters in Volume VIII; here it must suffice to review the particular forms of this emperor's personal contribution to the Ming empire's management of its external affairs and to reveal his sense of rulership and his concept of the Ming state's potential for a broadened influence among its neighbors in Inner, East, and Southeast Asia.

Inner and Central Asia

The early Ming state was conscious of the implications of the trade and diplomacy extending as far as Central Asia (Transoxania and beyond, then under the Timurid empire) because it was part of the hostile Mongol

¹²⁰ See Wu Chi-hua, "Lun Ming tai ch'ien ch'i shui liang chung hsin chih chien shui pei ching chi ying hsiang," in *MTSHCCS*, pp. 83–85. For Kuo Tzu's report and analysis, see Ray Huang, *Taxation and governmental finance*, p. 50.

world. But divisions within the Mongol empire had rendered that world distant and relatively unimportant. The Ming court had little understanding of Timur's rise and vast ambitions.

Relations with Inner Asia, particularly with the oases of the Tarim Basin in what would be modern Sinkiang, were of greater importance. The nearer, predominantly Uighur oasis states such as Hami, Turfan, and Bishbalik (Beshbalig) were eager to reassert their independence in the wake of Mongol breakup, and the Yung-lo emperor encouraged them to do so, partly because they could help to secure China's northwest frontier against the Oirat Mongols farther north in Dzungaria and partly because they controlled the trade routes to the west. Despite military probes in the Hung-wu reign and the sack of Hami by the Chinese in 1393, the Ming did not attempt a permanent conquest so far from sources of supply or to reestablish a Chinese military presence, as had the Han and the T'ang dynasties, in the Tarim and Dzungarian basins. At most, it attempted to organize some of the non-Chinese peoples of the region into nominal *wei* garrison units, over which it had no effective control.¹²¹

The Yung-lo emperor opted for actively interventionist diplomacy. In 1403 he sent an embassy to Hami to announce his accession, and the ruler reciprocated with a mission presenting horses to the Chinese court in December 1404. The emperor rewarded him and his envoys with fine silk robes, silk, silver, and paper money, and established a guard on Hami's border to ensure stable relations. From this time onward Hami sent tribute missions to the Chinese court almost every year, sometimes several times a year, for the rest of the reign. The missions brought much-needed horses and sometimes also camels and sheep, and such minerals as sal ammoniac, jade, and sulfur; the envoys received in return silk and paper money that could be used to purchase Chinese goods. The close relations with Hami opened up a mutually profitable trade and also secured for the Chinese the eastern terminus of the northern caravan trade across the Tarim Basin to Central Asia. The Chinese government attempted to keep this trade firmly in official hands, and in 1408 prohibitions against private persons dealing with foreign merchants were twice issued in Kansu. Nevertheless illicit Chinese trade went on, and there are reports of Chinese merchants as far west as Aksu, beyond Bishbalik.

Once good relations with Hami were established, the Yung-lo emperor also sent a mission with gifts of silk to the ruler of Turfan, an oasis state on the northern Tarim trade route that controlled an important pass leading

¹²¹ See Morris Rossabi, "Ming China and Turfan, 1406-1517," *Central Asiatic Review*, 16, No. 3 (1972), pp. 206-22; Rossabi, *China and Inner Asia*, pp. 23-31.

north (to modern Urumchi) into Dzungaria and the Oirat Mongol state. The latter sent a return embassy with jade as tribute gifts, and once again regular tribute relations continued until the end of the Yung-lo reign, though not with the frequency of the missions from Hami. Bishbalik, another very important trading city farther along on the northern Tarim route to Central Asia, had had trouble with China during the Hung-wu reign which had ended by its leaders seizing a Chinese envoy, K'uan Ch'e and throwing in their lot with Timur. The Yung-lo emperor sent presents to Bishbalik's king soon after his accession, and the latter, hoping that with Chinese backing he might be able to profit from the troubles in the Timurid empire following Timur's death, willingly accepted a tribute relationship. The Yung-lo emperor had sufficient influence in Bishbalik to prevent its ruler from invading Oirat territories in 1411 and 1412. However, in 1418 a cousin of the king usurped the throne. The emperor acquiesced in the change of regime and did not attempt to restore the ruler he had recognized. Once again, however, the Ming was able to prevent an attack by the new king on Turfan.¹²²

In each of these cases, the rulers accepted the symbolic status of Ming vassal in order to profit from close commercial ties with China. For this privilege they were willing to accept inferior status. They knew that the Ming court could not effectively interfere in their internal affairs, because they were too far away for a large-scale military invasion.

The Timurid empire

When the Yung-lo emperor ascended the throne, China faced a new foreign peril from Central Asia that, but for a stroke of good fortune, might well have plunged it into a major confrontation with the non-Chinese world. The new threat came from the rise of Timur (Tamerlane 1336–1405), who from his base at Samarkand had since the 1360s established an empire embracing Transoxania, Khorassan, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kwarazm, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia. In addition to these conquests, he had launched devastating invasions into Syria, Ottoman Turkey, India, and southern Russia. To the peoples of the Middle East and Central Asia, he must have seemed like a new Chinggis.

"Tribute missions" from Timur's capital at Samarkand arrived at Nanking in 1389 and in 1394, the latter bearing a letter, purporting to be from Timur but almost certainly a fabrication, which acknowledged the preeminence of the Ming emperor. The emperor, who had previously returned to Samarkand some hundreds of merchants captured during his

¹²² See Morris Rossabi, "Two Ming envoys to Inner Asia," *T'oung Pao*, 62, No. 3 (1976), pp. 15–31.

battles with the Mongols, now sent an embassy comprising 1,500 men, headed by Fu An and the eunuch Liu Wei, to express gratitude to Timur for his "loyalty." The embassy arrived in Samarkand in 1397. Timur, enraged by the letter carried by Fu An, which addressed him as a Chinese vassal, detained the Chinese envoys.¹²³

Following the Hung-wu emperor's death and during the civil war of 1399–1402, the attention of the Chinese court was focused elsewhere. But Timur began to plan an invasion of China and its conversion to Islam. In 1404 an army of 200,000 was assembled at Ortrar in readiness to advance on China through Bishbalik. News of this did not reach Nanking until March 1405, and orders were then issued to prepare the frontier defenses as though this were some tribal foray. Luckily for the Chinese, their outposts in the northwest were never put to the test, for Timur had already died at Ortrar on 18 February, and the invasion had been canceled. Timur's death led to a struggle for succession. At first his young grandson Khalil Sultan seized the throne at Samarkand on 18 March 1405. He released Fu An and the survivors of his embassy, who were escorted back to China and reached Nanking on 25 July 1407. Another detained envoy had been returned to China some time previously.

The Yung-lo emperor sent an envoy back to Samarkand with Khalil's ambassadors to offer condolences on the death of Timur, but by the time the embassy arrived in Samarkand, Khalil had been dethroned by rival princes and replaced by Shāhrukh, Timur's fourth son. He was to rule from 1407 until 1447, and proved to be quite a different ruler from Timur. He was an enlightened monarch and noble patron of culture. During most of his reign, he was embroiled in the constant internecine disputes between the Timurid princes who ruled the western parts of Timur's empire. As a result he moved his capital to Herat, leaving his son Ulugh Beg as his viceroy in Samarkand. All threat of an eastward expansion of the Timurid empire had passed.

In 1408 and 1409 Shāhrukh sent envoys to Nanking, and in 1409 and 1410 Fu An and others returned to Herat with presents from the Chinese court. In March 1410 yet another embassy from Herat arrived, and the Chinese ambassadors who traveled to Herat in return took with them a letter from the emperor in which he claimed a lord-vassal relationship with Shāhrukh. Shāhrukh replied in equally haughty terms, counseled him to embrace Islam, and refused to acknowledge Chinese suzerainty. This contretemps, however, did not interrupt the flow of embassies, and it is interesting to see that both rulers' letters, for all their differences, stress the

123 See J. Fletcher, "China and Central Asia," pp. 209–15.

need for commerce, as did a further letter from the Ming ruler sent in July 1416.

The ambassadors who had brought back Shāhrukh's sharp reply were escorted home by the emperor's chief experts on foreign affairs, Ch'en Ch'eng (d. 1457), Li Hsien, and the eunuch Li Ta, who also escorted other Central Asian envoys who had arrived in China earlier in the year to their respective countries. This mission was of great importance. It left China on 3 February 1414 bearing lavish gifts of fine textiles for various local rulers, and arrived in Herat late in October. Altogether the mission visited seventeen states, from Hami and Turfan to Samarkand and Herat. On their return, Ch'en Ch'eng and Li Hsien submitted two accounts of their travels with details about the topography, products, and customs of the places they had visited. These documents provide the most detailed information available about conditions in Central and Inner Asia during the fifteenth century, and gave the Ming court a new source of information about the western regions.¹²⁴

In July 1416 Ch'en Ch'eng was again sent with another eunuch to escort home envoys from Shiraz, Samarkand, and Herat and to take lavish gifts to Shāhrukh and his son Ulugh Beg. This embassy returned to Peking in January 1418. In October of that year, the emperor sent the eunuch Li Ta on another embassy to Herat. Li carried a personal letter from the emperor, as well as the usual sumptuous gifts. This letter, the Persian text of which survives, treated Shāhrukh as a political equal, calling him an enlightened and perceptive ruler, and abandoned the pretense that the Ming emperor was Shāhrukh's suzerain. A pleased Shāhrukh in turn dispatched the most elaborate embassy ever sent from Central Asia, which arrived in Peking on 14 December 1420.¹²⁵

The embassy was lavishly received, although at the Chinese capital it followed all the normal ceremonials of deference to the Chinese throne expected under the tributary system. Whatever concessions the emperor was willing to make in correspondence with the Timurid ruler, at the Chinese court there was no compromise with the pretense of the ruler-vassal relationship. The embassy remained in Peking for almost six months. It was received by the emperor several times and participated in the ceremo-

124 For details of Ch'en Ch'eng's missions, see Rossabi, "Two Ming envoys," pp. 17–25. Ch'en's two travel accounts are entitled *Hsi yü hsing ch'eng chi* and *Hsi yü fan kuo chih*, both early fifteenth century; in *Hsiieh hai lei pien*, ed. Ts'ao Jung, 1831; photographic rpt. No 33 of *Ssu pu ts'ung k'an san pien*, Taipei, 1975 (see W. Franke, 7.4.1). The latter has been translated by Rossabi in "A translation of Ch'en Ch'eng's *Hsi-yü fan-kuo chih*," *Ming Studies*, 17 (Fall 1983), pp. 49–59.

125 For a Persian account of this embassy written by Shāhrukh's court historian, see the translation by K. M. Maitra, *A Persian embassy to China, being an extract from Zubdatul Tawarikh of Hefiz Abru* (New York, 1934; rpt. New York, 1970).

nies inaugurating Peking as the new Ming capital. One of the Persian envoys, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Naqqāsh, kept a very detailed, if occasionally faulty, account of the embassy, which survives.

Ch'en Ch'eng was not on hand to witness this occasion, for in July 1420 he had been sent off at the head of yet another embassy to Central Asia. Little is known, however, about this last embassy to the western regions.

Thus we see that the Yung-lo emperor made a great effort to cultivate relations and perhaps even more to promote trade with the states of Central Asia. During his reign the court received 20 missions from Samarkand and Herat, 32 from the various oasis states of Central Asia, 13 from Turfan, and 44 from Hami. These missions were all occasions for lavish gifts and trade. They brought and presented at court such commodities as precious metals, jade, horses, camels, sheep, lions, and leopards; they were rewarded with fine silks and other textiles, silver, paper money (with which they bought Chinese goods), and other luxury items.¹²⁶ It is clear from the correspondence on both sides that the maintenance of commerce was the paramount motive behind these exchanges. In their eagerness to promote trade, the Chinese authorities and the emperor were willing to turn a blind eye to sham "tribute missions" and even to discard the pretense of universal suzerainty. The Central Asian states, for their part, were equally anxious to maintain trade and were willing to go through the forms of the tribute system at Peking in order to preserve their trading privileges.

Tibet

As early as 1207, envoys from Chinggis Khan had arrived in Tibet, and the Mongols developed a relationship with Tibet by which the Tibetans accepted Mongol protection and suzerainty and provided the Mongol rulers with spiritual guidance. Tibetan lamas remained very influential at the Yüan court. Under Khubilai, the Mongols treated with the heads of the Sa-skyapa order, whom they recognized as viceroys (*ti-shih*) over the thirteen provinces of Tibet. Their position was challenged by a rival religious order, the 'Bri-khung, who had the backing of the Ilkhan Mongols in Iran. The 'Bri-khung were completely defeated only in 1290. Meanwhile another Tibetan religious order, the Karma-pa, continued to have strong religious influence at the Yüan court. The Yüan emperors tried to bring Tibet under a centralized administration, but real power remained with the monasteries and the noble families that provided their hereditary lines of patriarchs.

The internal power struggle continued. As Mongol power began to

¹²⁶ For a list of these tributary missions, see Rossabi, "Ming China and Turfan," pp. 221–22, and Rossabi, "Two Ming envoys," appendix, pp. 29–34.

decline, so too did the influence of the Sa-skyapa. The main opposition came from Byang-chub rGyal-mtshan, a former Sa-skya monk, and a local lord from Yarlung. After a long series of campaigns from 1332 onward, this monk gradually gained control of Tibet. In 1351 he was acknowledged by the Yüan as viceroy in place of the Sa-skya hierarch. Byang-chub rGyal-mtshan was not simply another religious hierarch; his aim was to re-create the old Tibetan kingdom of T'ang times, to rebuild Tibetan nationalist sentiment, and to remove all traces of Mongol suzerainty. He and his successors, the Phag-mo-gru-pa kings, attempted to maintain the idea of a universal king of all Tibet and remained the chief temporal power of Tibet until the 1480s.¹²⁷

At the time the Ming came to power, religious rivalries between the monastic orders in Tibet frequently led to open warfare; there was a deep split between religious and political authority. It is by no means clear how much of this was understood in Nanking. The first emperor is said to have been anxious to prevent a recurrence of the sort of trouble with the Tibetans that had happened in T'ang times. He did not, however, establish contacts with the Phag-mo-gru-pa kings, but with the Karma-pa abbots who controlled much of the nearer Kham region and southeastern Tibet. The emperor sent an envoy asking the former holders of office under the Yüan to come to Nanking for reinvestiture, and the first mission arrived in the winter of 1372–73. The head of the order at that time was the fourth Black Hat reincarnation of Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje (1340–83), who had been at the Yüan court from 1359 to 1363. He himself never accepted the emperor's invitation to Nanking, but he sent envoys until shortly before his death.¹²⁸

His successor De-bzin-gségs-pa (known to the Chinese as Halima, 1384–1415) was famous as a miracle worker, and his reputation had reached the Yung-lo emperor while he was still Prince of Yen. After his accession to the throne in 1403, the new emperor sent a mission to Tibet led by the eunuch Hou Hsien, later to be much employed as a diplomat, and the monk Chih-kuang, a disciple of the famous Indian monk Pañḍita, who had been greatly honored at Nanking by the first emperor. The mission invited De-bzin-gségs-pa to Nanking. After first sending a tribute mission, De-bzin-gségs-pa came in person to the Ming court in April 1407 and was lavishly received. Asked to perform religious ceremonies on behalf of the emperor's deceased parents, it is recorded that he performed many

127 Briefly see Hugh Richardson, *A short history of Tibet* (New York, 1962), pp. 33–41; Josef Kolmas, *Tibet and imperial China: A survey of Sino-Tibetan relations up to the end of the Manchu dynasty in 1912* (Canberra, 1967), pp. 18–30; Rolf Stein, *Tibetan civilization* (Stanford, 1972), pp. 77–79.

128 For the Chinese official accounts of such contacts, see Lo Hsiang-lin, ed., *Ming Ch'ing shih lu chung chih Hsi-tsang shih liao* (Hong Kong, 1981), esp. pp. 5–8, 19–22, 23–43.

miraculous feats, producing visions of various deities, apparitions of cranes and lions, flowers falling from the sky, sweet dew, and so forth for twenty-two days. Richly rewarded, he and members of his retinue were granted resounding official titles and proceeded to Mount Wu-t'ai, the important Chinese Buddhist center in Shansi province, where he performed further ceremonies before returning to Tibet. He exchanged gifts with the Ming court on at least three subsequent occasions.¹²⁹

Missions arrived from his successor Mthong-ba-ldon-ldan (1416–53) down to the end of the 1440s. The Ming court apparently was not aware of De-bzin-gségs pa's death and believed that these missions still came from him. After 1446, relations with the Karma-pa hierarchs were broken off. According to the Tibetan sources, during his stay in Nanking, De-bzin-gségs pa persuaded the Yung-lo emperor not to attempt to reestablish Chinese control over Tibet. There is little evidence that this was ever the emperor's intention; every indication is that De-bzin-gségs pa was invited to the Ming court in his role as a religious figure with spectacular powers. But his visit prompted the Yung-lo emperor to establish relations with various other religious leaders in Tibet. In 1413 the hierarch of the Sa-skyapa, about whose magical prowess the emperor had also heard reports, arrived in Nanking in response to his invitation. He too was treated lavishly and sent home in 1414 escorted by eunuchs. After this the Sa-skyapa abbots continued to send missions to China until the 1430s.

The emperor also tried to bring to the Ming court the greatest religious figure in Tibet at this time, Tsong-kha-pa (1357–1419), founder of the dGe-lugs-pa, the Yellow Hat sect of Lamaistic Buddhism. By the beginning of the fifteenth century, Tsong-kha-pa's advocacy of a new and stricter monasticism was attracting much attention, and in 1407 the Yung-lo emperor invited him to court. He refused. In 1413 the invitation was repeated, and Tsong-kha-pa sent one of his chief disciples, Sha-kya Yeshe, to Nanking in his place. He remained in Nanking from 1414 to 1416, when he was allowed to return to Tibet with lavish gifts. The dGe-lugs-pa too continued to exchange gifts and send missions to the Ming court until the 1430s.¹³⁰

Other Tibetan religious leaders were also brought into contact with the imperial court. It seems that the Yung-lo emperor, while no doubt partly motivated by curiosity about these impressive religious leaders, also deliberately refused to give exclusive Chinese patronage to any one Tibetan leader who might use it to establish political hegemony. Thus, as elsewhere on China's borders, he encouraged political fragmentation. In this context,

129 See Halima's biography in *DMB*, pp. 481–82.

130 See Tsong-kha-pa's biography in *DMB*, pp. 1308–09.

the failure to recognize or open relations with the nominal temporal ruler of the country, the Phag-mo-gru-pa king, was probably part of a calculated policy to keep Tibet divided.

Mongolia

The emperor sought to achieve peace on the northern borders by dividing, rewarding, and pacifying recalcitrant Eastern and Oirat (Western) Mongols in Outer Mongolia and the Uriyangkhad tribes to their south, in eastern Inner Mongolia. While he was campaigning against the rebellious chieftains Arughtai and Maḥmūd (see above), he also sent embassies with gifts inviting all to trade under the tributary system. The Ming court used this system for several purposes. It enhanced the court's prestige; it kept the nomads quiet without recourse to arms; and it provided a supply of horses for the Ming cavalry. The Mongol tribes accepted such arrangements because they wanted to obtain Chinese goods, although they often raided the frontiers when their needs were not met through trade.

The Ming court established elaborate regulations governing the frequency and size of Mongol tribute missions, the routes and points of entry, the protocol for their presentation at court, the prices to be paid for tribute products, and the gifts for chieftains and their envoys. For instance, the Uriyangkhad commandries were allowed to send two missions every year, each comprising 300 men, on the occasion of the emperor's birthday and the Chinese New Year. But such regulations were never strictly enforced, nor did they apply to the more distant Eastern and Oirat Mongols.¹³¹ The Mongol missions usually presented horses and domestic animals as tribute products and requested payments, gifts, investitures, and trading privileges in return. The court rewarded chieftains and their envoys with paper money, silver, silk, textiles, and official ranks and titles, paid handsomely for the tribute products, and allowed the Mongols to trade in designated localities. For example, two horse markets were established at K'ai-p'ing and Kuang-ning in 1404 and 1406 for the Jurchen and for the Uriyangkhad tribes. However, officials sent by the court, usually eunuchs, frequently altered the scale of gifts given to the Mongols and the amount to be paid

131 The standard work on this subject is Henry Serruys, (*Sino-Mongol relations during the Ming. I) The Mongols in China during the Hung-wu period (1368–1398)* (Bruxelles, 1959); (*Sino-Mongol relations during the Ming. II) The tribute system and diplomatic missions, 1400–1600* (Bruxelles, 1967); (*Sino-Mongol relations during the Ming. III) Trade relations: the horse fairs, 1400–1600* (Bruxelles, 1975). For briefer accounts, see the same author's "Mongol tribute missions of the Ming period," *Central Asiatic Review*, 11, No. 1 (March 1966), pp. 1–83, and "Sino-Mongol trade during the Ming," *Journal of Asian History*, 9, No. 1 (1975), pp. 34–56. They draw extensively on extracts of the *T'ai-tsung shih lu* collected in Haneda et al., eds., *Minjitsuroku-shō: Mōkoben*, Vol. 1 in *Mindai Man-Mō shiryō*, pp. 261–557.

for their tribute products out of expediency. This often led to disputes and raids on the border.¹³²

Mongols from the three Uriyangkhad commandries of T'ai-ning, Do-en, and Fu-yü, who had been resettled in the Liao-tung peninsula, sent the most regular tribute missions during the Yung-lo reign. This was because they depended on Chinese gifts, subsidies, and regular trade as a means of livelihood, while the court wanted to maintain good relations with them to ensure the security of the northern border. According to the *Veritable record*, the Uriyangkhad came to court as a formal group in certain years (such as 1403, 1406, 1413, and 1414), but usually the envoys were identified as individuals and presented tribute more often than was allowed. Their tribute goods consisted mainly of horses; on one occasion, in 1414, they brought about 3,000. Their tribute missions were interrupted in 1410, 1411, 1418, and from 1422 to 1424. The interruptions came about when they joined in the rebellions of Arughtai or the Oirat, as they did in 1422; in that instance they were subdued by Arughtai and forced to join his cause. However, when peace was restored, the Ming court continued to accept the Uriyangkhad missions and even tolerated occasional border raids in order to maintain peace.¹³³

Under Arughtai, the Eastern Mongols continued tributary relations with the Yung-lo court. Frequent minor outbreaks of hostility were tolerated by the Ming ruler because he sought to maintain peace on the borders. Arughtai is known to have sent a mission to court as early as 1408, but only after his defeat in the 1410 Mongolian campaign did he begin to send regular tribute missions. Between 1410 and 1424, Arughtai sent twenty-seven missions to the Ming court, more than the regulations allowed, and in two consecutive years (1413 and 1414), he sent a total of eleven missions. The tribute consisted mostly of horses. In return, the Ming court rewarded him and his envoys with paper money, silver, silk textiles, and supplies, gave them official titles, and paid handsomely for the tribute products as well. No tribute missions came in 1421, 1422, 1423, or 1424, during the emperor's campaigns against Arughtai. But once the war was over, the court again accepted his missions without recrimination, and two of them arrived shortly after the emperor's death in August 1424.¹³⁴

The Oirat Mongols also maintained tribute relations with the Yung-lo

132 See Serruys, *The tribute system and diplomatic missions, 1400-1600*, pp. 119-20, 152-53; and Serruys, "Mongol tribute missions," pp. 16-22.

133 Serruys, *The tribute system and diplomatic missions, 1400-1600*, ch. 9 and 10 *passim*; Serruys, "Sino-Mongol trade," pp. 38-43. On the establishment of the horse markets, see Serruys, *Trade relations: The horse fairs, 1400-1600*, pp. 92-93.

134 See the summary in Serruys, "Mongol tribute missions," pp. 16-22.

court, while on several occasions raiding the borderlands for loot. In October 1408 Maḥmūd sent his first tribute mission with horses for the Ming court; he was enfeoffed and awarded a royal seal. Similar rewards were given to two other Oirat chieftains in 1409. The Oirats sent regular tribute missions to China every year except 1414, 1416, 1420, and 1422. These missions usually came from Maḥmūd, but a few were also sent by other chieftains. The tribute goods were mainly horses. The Oirat missions were discontinued in 1414, when Maḥmūd rebelled, but they resumed in 1415. In April 1418, two years after Maḥmūd's death, his son Toghon arrived at court with two other chieftains asking to inherit his father's rank. The request was granted, and Toghon sent tribute missions nearly every year until the end of the Yung-lo reign.¹³⁵

This tributary system was designed to solve the Mongol problem—but did it? If the tribute system was designed to placate the Mongols and to prevent border disturbances, then the Ming court achieved only limited success. Despite the costly gifts and payments made by the Chinese court, tribute trade also failed to meet the Mongols' broader needs. The system thus did not deter Mongol raids, but to the Ming court it seemed the only alternative to even more costly continuous warfare. It displays a fundamental incapacity of the Chinese state to deal rationally with this enduring issue. Neither through war nor with the instruments of trade and diplomacy was the Yung-lo emperor successful in meeting early Ming China's principal national defense problem, though it had absorbed his most vigorous efforts. Despite its shortcomings, the system did bring some years of peace to the northern borders; but it was effective only when strong military defense existed to deter raiding and warfare.

The Jurchen

The emperor also sought to draw the Jurchen tribes in Manchuria into the tributary system. The Jurchen tribes comprised the sedentary Chien-chou and Mao-lien tribes, who lived northwest of the Yalu River and south of the Ch'ang-pai mountains; the semi-agricultural Hai-hsi Jurchen, who resided near the Sungari and A-shih Rivers; and the warlike Wild Jurchen, who hunted and fished along the Amur and Ussuri Rivers. The emperor had four main objectives: to maintain peace in Manchuria so that he could concentrate his attention on the Mongol threat; to eclipse Korea as the

135 See David M. Farquhar, "Oirat-Chinese tribute relations, 1408–1446," in *Studia Altaica, Festschrift für Nikolaus Poppe*, ed. Julius von Farkas and Omeljan Pritsak (Wiesbaden, 1957), pp. 60–62; Rossabi, *China and Inner Asia*, pp. 50–55. For the official records, see Pai Ts'ui-ch'in, ed., *Ming shih lu Wa-la tzu liao chai pien*, pp. 19–42.

dominant influence in Manchuria; to promote trade in such products as horses and furs; and to spread Chinese culture and values among the more developed Jurchen tribesmen.¹³⁶

The court took the initiative in relations with the Jurchen tribes by sending diplomatic embassies, presenting gifts to their chieftains, and inviting them to trade under the tributary system. As early as 1403 the emperor began to court the Chien-chou Jurchen by dispatching to their ruler A-ha-ch'u an embassy that was well received. In December the emperor created a Jurchen guard (*wei*) in Chien-chou and presented a seal and gifts of paper money, silk, garments, and supplies to the Chien-chou envoys. In less than a year five other guards were created in Jurchen territory. During the remaining years of Yung-lo's reign, 179 guards and 20 battalions were established in Manchuria to ensure Jurchen submission and to facilitate tribute trade. In due course many of the Jurchen chieftains, given titles and ranks and trade privileges, abandoned their links with Korea and declared their allegiance to the Ming court.¹³⁷

The Wild Jurchen had responded to a Chinese embassy of 1403 with a return mission, but they remained unreliable. Early in 1409 the emperor sent the eunuch Isiha, a Hai-hsi Jurchen captive who had joined the Ming service, to lead a special mission to the Wild Jurchen territories. In 1411 he left with twenty-five ships and over a thousand men for Nu-erh-kan, a remote part of northern Manchuria, where he met with little opposition. He generously rewarded the local chieftains, established a regional military commission, and persuaded the chiefs to send a tribute mission to accompany him on his return. Thereafter, Isiha led three more missions to Nu-erh-kan, the last in 1432, and the Ming court established a line of postal stations to facilitate communications with the Jurchen in the far north. Border markets were set up for the Jurchen, and a few groups were allowed to settle within or adjacent to the Chinese frontiers in Liao-tung and to the north of Peking. The settlers were provided with gifts and provisions, and some of the chieftains also received minor military ranks and titles. They in turn regularly presented local tribute to the Ming court.¹³⁸

The emperor was thus able to achieve satisfactory relations with the Jurchen tribes without recourse to arms. After establishing good relations with the major Jurchen groups, he was able to concentrate his armies on the Mongol campaigns. At the same time, by the creation of defense guards

136 See Serruys, *Sino-Jürted relations during the Yung-lo period, 1403-1424* (Wiesbaden, 1955), ch. 3; see also Rossabi, *The Jurchens in the Yüan and Ming* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1982), pp. 16-36.

137 Serruys, *Sino-Jürted relations*, pp. 25-28, 42-71.

138 For a succinct account of Isiha's missions, see Rossabi, "Two Ming envoys," pp. 6-12. For his biography, see *DMB*, p. 685.

and the use of the tributary system, he satisfied certain economic and status needs of the Jurchen chieftains, who sent tribute missions to China to get gifts of gold, silver, silk, grain, and other supplies and enjoyed the opportunity to trade there. The Ming court, for its part, gained access to such valuable commodities as horses, fine furs, and to such drugs as ginseng, which could not be obtained within the empire.

Korea

The Chosŏn kings of the new Yi dynasty, founded in 1392, which displaced the long-waning Koryŏ kingdom, proved receptive and compliant. Ming policy toward Korea served several ends. The court sought to undermine Korea's influence among the Jurchen and to secure China's borders against Mongol invasion. The Korean rulers valued not only the protection against the northern tribes, but also their political and cultural ties to the Ming empire, for in their eyes such ties bestowed authority and legitimacy on the ruling house.

In September 1402 the Yung-lo emperor dispatched Yü Shih-ch'i (d. 1435) to inform the king of Korea, Yi Pang-wŏn (r. 1400–22), of his enthronement. In November the king sent an embassy to request a new seal and investiture; he sent another mission in 1403 to ask for medicine to cure his father's illness. Both requests were granted and they marked the beginning of a regular exchange of embassies, sometimes two or three a year. The Koreans sent such local tribute products as ginseng, lacquerware, leopards, and seal skins; but until 1429, the heaviest burden was the annual tribute of 150 ounces of gold and 700 ounces of silver. In return, the emperor bestowed lavish gifts on the Korean king and his envoys—silks, fine clothes, medicine, books, and musical instruments; he also granted honorific titles to the Korean king and to his heir apparent.¹³⁹

However, the Ming court frequently made exorbitant demands on the Koreans; these are only briefly mentioned in Chinese sources, but they are discussed at length in the Korean records. For instance, the emperor constantly wanted horses and oxen for military use, and the Korean king responded by sending over 1,000 horses in 1403, 10,000 oxen in 1404, 3,000 horses in 1407, and another large supply of horses in 1410 to support the first Mongolian campaign. There were also special demands. In 1403, 1406, 1407, and 1411, the emperor sent his senior eunuch Huang Yen to Korea to obtain bronze Buddhist images, relics (*śarīra*), and paper for printing the Buddhist scriptures.¹⁴⁰ The most notorious demand was for

¹³⁹ See Wu Han, *Ch'ao-hsien Li ch'ao shih lu*, pp. 176 ff., 187 ff., 237 ff.; *DMB*, pp. 1595–97.
¹⁴⁰ Wu Han, *Ch'ao-hsien Li ch'ao shih lu*, pp. 185, 187, 199, 218, 224, 227, 242, 251.

Korean beauties to fill the emperor's harem. In 1408 Huang Yen was sent to procure virgins for the harem, and the king reluctantly complied. Five virgins were chosen from among the 300 sent to Peking; one was a beauty named Kwōn (d. 1410). She became Yung-lo's favorite consort, and members of her family received lavish gifts and honors. The request for virgins was repeated in 1409. The Koreans bore a heavy financial burden and suffered some humiliation to meet these persistent demands; but for what he regarded as pressing political reasons, the king of Korea had to oblige the Ming emperor.¹⁴¹

Japan

Diplomatic relations with Japan had been severed in 1380 because the Hung-wu emperor suspected that the Japanese had colluded with his disgraced minister Hu Wei-yung in an attempt to usurp the throne. Relations were first restored in 1399 by the third Ashikaga shōgun, Yoshimitsu (1358–1408), who had just established his authority over western Japan. This spendthrift shōgun, whose admiration for Chinese culture was fostered by the Zen monks around him, was eager to restore diplomatic relations with China, in part to profit from the immensely lucrative China trade. In 1399 he sent an embassy to the Chien-wen court with a laudatory letter and tribute products; the embassy was well received. Yoshimitsu's second mission arrived in Nanking late in 1403 with a letter in which the shōgun called himself "your subject, the King of Japan," an extraordinary and controversial event in Japanese history. This was the first foreign embassy to appear before the new emperor.¹⁴²

The Yung-lo emperor perceived a rare opportunity and responded favorably. He was delighted that the Japanese shōgun appeared to recognize his suzerainty and had agreed to regulate mutual trade and to cooperate in ending Japanese piracy on the Chinese coast. In September 1403 the court reopened the Maritime Trading Intendancies at Ning-po, Ch'üan-chou, and Canton to Japanese traders and sent a minister, Chao Chü- jen (d. 1409), to Japan to conclude a commercial agreement. Under this agreement, establishing forms of recognized and controlled trade under what became known as the tally system, the shōgun's representatives were permitted to trade at Ning-po when they presented special tallies (*k'an-bo* or *kangō*), which matched those kept by Chinese officials in the Maritime Trading

141 Wu Han, *Ch'ao-hsien Li ch'ao shih lu*, pp. 232–34, 237–41; see also Wang Ch'ung-wu, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu Ch'ao-hsien hsüan fei k'ao," *BIHP*, 17 (1948) pp. 165–76.

142 See Kimiya Yasuhiko, *Nisshi kōsū shi* (Tokyo, 1926–27), II, pp. 287–96; Wang I-t'ung, *Official relations between China and Japan, 1368–1549* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), pp. 21–24, 34–53; Cheng Liang-sheng, *Ming shih Jih-pen chuan cheng pu* (Taipei, 1981), pp. 228–66.

Intendancies. The trade missions were to consist of not more than two ships and 200 persons, were not to carry weapons, and were to be sent only every ten years, although this last provision was ignored during the following decade of heavy, regular trading.

Between 1404 and 1410, China and Japan exchanged frequent trade and diplomatic missions. This cordial relationship was facilitated by Yoshimitsu's goodwill; he fulfilled his promise to arrest Japanese pirates and to present them to the Ming court. When Yoshimitsu died in 1408, the emperor exhorted his successor, Yoshimochi, to continue suppressing the pirates. But in 1411 Yoshimochi refused to accept the Chinese mission and for the next six years severed relations with the Ming court. The new shōgun had dissociated himself from the Zen monks who had surrounded his father and pursued an isolationist policy. In November 1417, after capturing some Japanese pirates on the China coast, the Chinese emperor again tried to establish diplomatic relations with Yoshimochi. However, the shōgun declared that the gods of Japan forbade dealings with foreign countries and that his father had been misguided by his advisors. Thus the official door was again closed to China, although private trade through southern Japanese ports continued.

Southeast Asia

Ming China's influence in Southeast Asia reached its apex during the Yung-lo reign; the region was one of the emperor's primary concerns. Cheng Ho's exploratory voyages brought most important Southeast Asian states into the Ming political sphere. These voyages were undertaken to promote the Ming empire's influence through peaceful means, to enhance the security of its southern borders, and to monopolize the overseas trade by preventing private individuals from taking control of seafaring activities. Foreign states responded to these overtures not only because they feared military reprisals if they refused, but also because they saw great commercial benefits in relations with China.¹⁴³

Between 1402 and 1424 the Ming court sent 62 missions to various Southeast Asian states and received 95 missions in return, excluding those to and from Annam, which came under Ming rule between 1406 and 1427. The missions established contacts with most of the important countries from the Philippines to the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, and the

143 On the Yung-lo emperor's official monopoly of maritime trade and prohibition against private seafaring activities, see Chang Wei-hua, *Ming tai hai wai mao i chien lun*, pp. 22–24, and Ch'en Wen-shih, *Ming Hung-wu Chia-ching chien ti hai chin cheng ts'e* (Taipei 1966), pp. 93–95. For the official records on relations with Southeast Asia from the *Tai-tsu shih lu*, see Chao Ling-yang et al., ed., *Ming shih lu chung chih Tung-nan Ya shih liao*, I (Hong Kong, 1968), pp. 67–249.

east coast of Africa.¹⁴⁴ The emperor began relations with Southeast Asian states by sending envoys bearing rescripts announcing his accession; when these states responded, he sent frequent missions with gifts for their rulers, which included calendars, silk and brocade textiles, porcelain wares, and copper coins. The emperor also wrote inscriptions and poems for the rulers of two Southeast Asian states, for the king of Malacca in 1405 and for the king of Brunei in 1408. These were inscribed on stelae, to bear witness to the emperor's influence in those states and to his special relationship with their rulers.¹⁴⁵ In return, foreign rulers sent regular tribute missions to China bearing such native products as precious metals, spices, and exotic animals; and for all these items they received handsome repayment.¹⁴⁶

The range of patterns within the more important and enduring relationships can be seen in the cases of Champa, Siam, Malacca, Java, and Brunei. China professed a special relationship with Champa during this period because of their mutual involvement in Annam. After 1414, however, when the Chinese refused to return the land taken from Champa by the Annamese, relations were strained. Chams frequently attacked diplomatic missions to their country and harrassed Chinese in Annam, yet never departed from regular participation in the tribute system. Siam was both the most powerful state in the Southeast Asian peninsula and one of China's oldest tribute states. Chinese interest lay in restraining the Siamese from encroachment in Malacca, and the Siamese court heeded Chinese pressures because it profited from its almost annual tribute missions to China.

Malacca was important because of its location astride the spice trade routes. The Yung-lo emperor sent an embassy there in October 1403 to open relations and accorded it special status. Three of the Malaccan kings led their state's delegations to China, greatly flattering the Yung-lo emperor. In his relations with Java, the emperor sought to prevent its expansion into Malacca and to keep the straits open to trade between the South Seas and the Indian Ocean. Yet the Chinese inevitably became involved in the wars between the kings of East and West Java. During Cheng Ho's second expedition in 1408–09, 170 of his men were killed by the king of

144 The missions from and to China included: 14 missions to Champa and 18 in return; 3 missions to Cambodia and 7 in return; 11 missions to Siam and 21 in return; 9 missions to Java and 7 in return; 3 missions to Brunei and 9 in return; 11 missions to Malacca and 12 in return; 9 missions to Samudra and 11 in return; for useful background, see Wang Gungwu, "Early Ming relations with Southeast Asia: A background essay," pp. 48–55, and Wang Gungwu, "China and Southeast Asia," rpt. in *Community and nation: Essays on Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, pp. 70, 74.

145 On these inscriptions, see Chao Ling-yang et al., ed., *Ming shih lu chung chih Tung-nan Ya shih liao*, 1, pp. 67–249. For a discussion of their significance, see Wang Gungwu, "China and Southeast Asia," pp. 67–69.

146 See Wang Gungwu, "China and Southeast Asia," pp. 76–78; Liu Tzu-cheng, "Ming tai Chung-kuo yü Wen-lai chia wang k'ao," *Ming shih yen chiu chuan k'an*, 5 (December 1982), pp. 7–9.

West Java when they landed on shores claimed by his rival, forcing Cheng to intervene militarily. The Chinese accepted payment and apology and restored diplomatic relations, but used succeeding voyages to keep Java under surveillance. Brunei was at that time relatively insignificant, but its king was the first foreign ruler to visit the Yung-lo court, thus making a strong impression on the emperor. It was granted more generous treatment than its size and power might have justified.¹⁴⁷

The emperor showed flexibility in his diplomatic relations with South-east Asian states; he was willing to use various means to achieve his political, military, cultural, and commercial objectives. The response of foreign states was contingent on the nature of Ming diplomatic initiatives, on their distance from the center of Ming power, and on their concern for security and trading opportunities. The imposing appearance of Cheng Ho's vast fleets throughout the decades from 1405 to 1421 expanded the image of Chinese power throughout the region, with lasting impact on trade and diplomacy. It is also apparent, however, that as Chinese diplomatic activity in this region slackened after 1413, when the court became preoccupied with affairs in the north, these states were able to improvise within the prescribed sovereign-vassal relationship set out in the tributary system.

The Yung-lo emperor's legacy

The emperor died at Yü-mu ch'uan, north of Dolon, on 12 August 1424 at the age of sixty-four, while returning from his last Mongolian campaign. The exact circumstances of his death are not recorded in the official histories, which simply state that he succumbed to illness. Private records and foreign accounts indicate that the emperor had suffered several strokes during his last years and that he died as a result of these. One scholar has suggested that the emperor had suffered from partial paralysis since 1417 and that he occasionally failed to attend court, at times for more than a month. The nature of his paralysis is not known, but to alleviate it the emperor habitually took a stimulant drug made of musk or barus camphor, as well as Taoist elixirs prescribed by some members of his entourage. This elixir relieved his paralysis temporarily, but it proved harmful and addictive, and it led to sporadic outbursts of violent temper.¹⁴⁸

147 See Wang Gungwu, "China and Southeast Asia," passim; Hsü Yü-hu, *Ming Cheng Ho chih yen chiu*, pp. 525–44.

148 On the circumstances of the Yung-lo emperor's death, see Wu Han, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu Jen-tsung Ching-ti chih ssu chi ch'i t'a," *Wen shih tsu chih*, 2, No. 2 (March 1942), p. 76; Wang Ch'ung-wu, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu yü fang shih," *Chung-kuo she hui ching chi shih chi k'an*, 8, No. 1 (1949), pp. 12–16; Terada, *Eiraku sei*, pp. 152–54; DMB, p. 360.

The emperor may have been suffering from the effects of this elixir when he punished several officials who remonstrated against his Mongolian campaigns and against the transfer of the capital to Peking. The effects of the elixir were cumulative; the emperor may have been slowly succumbing to chemical poisoning for some years, for the elixir also contained arsenic, lead, and other metals. Thus, when he suffered another stroke while marching in a state of exhaustion through the harsh Mongolian plain, he was already in very poor health, and his death is not surprising.

The emperor's body was immediately encased in a coffin and brought back to Peking for burial. His eldest son, Chu Kao-chih, was subsequently enthroned as the Hung-hsi emperor. The Yung-lo emperor was posthumously canonized as Wen huang-ti (Cultured Emperor), with the temple name T'ai-tsung (Grand Ancestor). His mausoleum, called Ch'ang-ling (Longevity Tumulus), was built in the most lavish and grandiose style to bear witness to his majestic achievements.¹⁴⁹ The emperor's temple name was changed to the more elevated title of Ch'eng-tsu (Accomplished Progenitor) in October 1538 by the Chia-ching emperor.

The Chia-ching emperor wished to elevate his own father, Chu Yu-yüan (1476–1519), who had never reigned, to a posthumous imperial rank so as to establish him as the progenitor of a new line of imperial successors.¹⁵⁰ Thus the change of the Yung-lo emperor's temple name from ancestor (*tsung*) to progenitor (*tsu*), which implied that the emperor also inaugurated a new line of succession when he unseated his nephew, was apparently designed to bolster the legitimacy of the Chia-ching emperor's own father. The choice of the character *ch'eng*, which means perfection, completion, or accomplishment, suggests that in the eyes of his successors, the Yung-lo emperor was regarded as the consolidator of Ming rule and that he merited recognition as the second founder of the dynasty who brought to completion the work of the Hung-wu emperor.

The emperor first married general Hsü Ta's eldest daughter, who became the empress Hsü (1362–1407) and who is best remembered for her Confucian virtue and her moral precepts for women. The emperor had invested two of his palace ladies as senior consorts (*kuei-fei*): a Korean beauty née Kwōn and a lady named Wang (d. 1420) from Soochow. After consort Kwōn's death, Lady Wang alone enjoyed the emperor's favor. She also became the guardian of the imperial family, but she did not survive the emperor.¹⁵¹ The emperor had four sons and five daughters. The eldest son, Chu Kao-chih, who became the Hung-

¹⁴⁹ Terada, *Eiraku tei*, p. 271; *DMB*, p. 355.

¹⁵⁰ On this episode, known as the *Ta-li* i or "Great rites controversy," see below, Chapter 8, pp. 443–50, 457–61.

¹⁵¹ See Empress Hsü's biography in *DMB*, p. 566; Wang Ch'ung-wu, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu Ch'ao-hsien hsüan fei k'ao," p. 166.

hsi emperor; the second, Chu Kao-hsü (Prince of Han), and the third, Chu Kao-sui (Prince of Chao), were all born to empress Hsü. The youngest son, Chu Kao-hsi, who did not live to maturity, was born to an anonymous consort. The empress is also known to have raised four of the five princesses; they were all married to ennobled generals or their sons. Some of these imperial sons-in-law suffered impeachment for unsavory conduct, and some lost their lives in military campaigns.¹⁵²

In retrospect, the emperor's ultimate temple name awarded in 1538, Ch'eng-tsu, seems a fitting tribute. It epitomizes the civil and military virtues ideally associated with a good emperor in traditional theories of statecraft. The Yung-lo emperor has been hailed as an ingenious, vigorous campaigner who enhanced the achievements of the dynastic founder through his punitive campaigns and foreign expeditions and brought Ming China's power and influence to its zenith. He has also been acclaimed as an energetic, dedicated ruler who restored Confucian statecraft in government and revived ancient institutions; and as the person who integrated the northern and southern spheres of the empire and thus laid a new foundation for the dynasty.

However, his policies were also criticized. His abrogation of the Chien-wen emperor's reign name and his violent purges against Chien-wen officials were decried by intellectuals, while broad resentment among the common people took form in legends about the deposed emperor, in which he survived and his descendants eventually worked revenge on the usurper by bringing the dynasty to an inglorious end. The great expense incurred by his domestic programs and foreign adventures drew sharp disapproval in official circles. Contemporary critics shied away from explicit condemnation of his usurpation; it was convenient to hold that the event was not exclusively the fault of the emperor. The criticism of his domestic policy was more vocal. His Mongolian campaigns and the transfer of the capital of Peking were repeatedly attacked. But later Ming historians generally condoned these excesses as necessary stages in the founding of a vast empire. Contemporary opinion thus stressed the emperor's positive achievements and played down their negative consequences. But a strong undercurrent of criticism was expressed by later Ming scholars, especially by those who blamed his tampering with classical education for the decline of scholarship and intellectual vigor. Altogether it is a mixed evaluation in which the official praise for a vigorous ruler dominated Ming and Ch'ing historiography.¹⁵³

¹⁵² *DMB*, pp. 338–41, 332, 568.

¹⁵³ For appraisals of the Yung-lo emperor and his reign, see Meng Sen, *Ming tai shih*, pp. 105–14; Terada, *Eiraku tei*, pp. 9–12; Farmer, *Early Ming government*, pp. 128–33; Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 173, 180, 200, 211, 220; Lin Jen-ch'uan, "Lun Yung-lo ti," *Pei fang lun ts'ung*, 4 (December 1982), pp. 96–100.

This conventional appraisal is not germane to an impartial assessment of the period. It is more useful to ask how and why events in the Yung-lo reign unfolded as they did; how expensive it was to carry out the emperor's grandiose enterprises; and finally what effects the policies laid down during this reign had on the subsequent course of Ming history.

Above all, it was the emperor's own perception of empire that molded the character of his reign. Having risen to power as a military commander and having taken the throne by force, the emperor did not consider himself subject to any restraints, not even to the *Ancestral injunctions* laid down by his father. He exercised imperial power without constraint to further his ends. His experience with the Mongol tribes on the northern border had instilled in him a new vision of empire that far surpassed the perceptions of his father, yet led to strategic decisions that did not prove successful in the long run. He not only integrated the border territories with the heartland by attempting to extend uniform control from the north to the south, he also looked beyond his proper borders to extend his hegemony in every direction – to overwhelm the world from its true center. This new vision of empire directed the emperor's foreign and domestic policy. Once he had set these policies in motion, there was no turning back. The emperor was determined to achieve his goals despite the contradictions in his domestic and foreign policies, and he left unresolved dilemmas to his less vigorous successors.

The emperor's domestic programs and foreign campaigns were expensive and wasteful; they imposed an extraordinary financial burden on the state and on the people. It was the cost of these programs that drew criticism from such court officials as Hsia Yüan-chi, who opposed the third Mongolian campaign and the Cheng Ho voyages, and from Li Shih-mien, who opposed the construction of an imperial capital in Peking. Voices of dissent were also raised against the strain on human and fiscal resources brought by the pacification campaigns against Annam, the management of the grain transport system, and other domestic programs and foreign adventures.

It is not possible to ascertain the amount of money spent on these undertakings, because the records do not contain accurate or complete figures. The Ming government did not develop a consolidated budget; it took a piecemeal approach to state finance and fiscal management. A certain item of income was designated to cover a certain item of expenditure. Moreover, the figures of the various tax quotas were only relative indexes, because on top of these the state received unpaid services in the form of conscripted labor and military farming, and also made irregular demands for grain and construction materials from the common people. In various ways, the common people made up any operational deficits in ongoing projects.

Therefore, though the court appeared to have taken in more revenue

than it expended, this is an illusion. In effect, as Ray Huang has speculated, the actual costs of all the Yung-lo emperor's undertakings, which were only sparingly revealed in the records, may have exceeded the state's normal income by two or three times. These fiscal demands undoubtedly did deplete the treasury, which usually held only one additional year of reserves, and did weaken the state's fiscal administration. They also imposed a burden on the people, who fell heavily into debt to make up tax arrears. In the long term, these policies diminished the state's revenues by impoverishing more and more taxpayers. It was indeed a high price to pay for empire building and hegemony.¹⁵⁴

The Yung-lo emperor bequeathed a mixed legacy to later Ming rulers. They inherited an empire with commitments in distant lands, an extended line of defense along the northern borders, a complex civil bureaucracy and military organization that embodied many anomalies, and a majestic northern capital that required an extensive grain transport system for its survival. These could be maintained only under a vigorous leader driven by the vision of building an empire, who could ignore the cost, and who was willing to delegate power to civil servants to maintain routine functions of government. None of the Yung-lo emperor's immediate successors possessed such heroic qualities, but they remained committed to his vision of empire and to the institutional foundations that he laid down.

Subsequent emperors, who did not share his perception of empire and who recognized the cost of maintaining his policies, began to retrench and to reconsolidate the imperial administration. Nevertheless, they could not resolve the inherent contradictions between the state policies they accepted and the institutions through which they had to rule. While the civil administration was strengthened and government expenses were reduced, a costly military organization, the northern capital, and the grain transport system still had to be maintained. Military retrenchment inadvertently weakened the border defense and thus created many problems for later rulers. In all these respects, the Yung-lo emperor had a larger impact on the subsequent course of Ming history than did the founder of the dynasty.

THE HUNG-HSI REIGN

The death of the Yung-lo emperor, who was returning in August 1424 from his last Mongolian campaign, marked the end of vigorous military

¹⁵⁴ For further discussions of these aspects of the Ming fiscal administration, see Ray Huang, "Fiscal administration during the Ming dynasty," in Volume 8; and a more thorough treatment in the same author's *Taxation and governmental finance*, ch. 1, 2.

expansion and the beginning of an era of internal reform. These new governmental attitudes were institutionalized in the succeeding reign by the Hung-hsi emperor. Though on the throne for less than a year, the effects of his Confucian idealism would nevertheless be felt throughout the following century.

The Hung-hsi emperor (Chu Kao-chih) was the eldest son of the Yung-lo emperor by his principal consort, née Hsü. He was born on 16 August 1378, when his father, then Prince of Yen, was only eighteen. During his boyhood he received a standard education in the martial arts and in Confucian studies. But although he developed some skill in archery, he generally showed little flair for the military. Instead, to the great delight of his tutors, he occupied himself with the classics and literature—so much so, in fact, that it may have contributed to his poor physique and bad health.¹⁵⁵

Chu Kao-chih's grandfather, the Hung-wu emperor, paid personal attention to several of the prince's sons and was pleased by the future emperor's modest character and keen interest in government. When on one occasion he sent the lad to review troops at dawn, there came a surprisingly quick report back with the explanation that the early morning was too cold and the review should wait until the soldiers had had their breakfast. On another occasion, the Hung-wu emperor asked him to examine some official memorials. He meticulously separated the military ones from the civilian and reported accordingly. His grandfather was repeatedly impressed by his literary and administrative ability.

His father, however, treated him differently. Being himself a seasoned commander, the Yung-lo emperor preferred his two younger, more military sons, Chu Kao-sui and Chu Kao-hsü, and often took them along on campaigns,¹⁵⁶ enabling the eldest to pursue a different type of education. Thus in these early years Chu Kao-chih spent much time on Confucian studies, guided by scholars of his father's choosing. They included, among others, Yang Shih-ch'i, Yang Jung, Yang P'u, and Huang Huai, all of whom cultivated his friendship and assumed important administrative roles after his accession.¹⁵⁷

From 1399 to 1402, Chu Kao-chih became directly involved in regional government and demonstrated that when necessary he could be more than bookish. While his father was leading troops in the rebellion against the

155 See Meng Sen, *Ming tai shih*, pp. 119 ff.; DMB, p. 338; Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 221 ff.

156 For an account of Chu Kao-hsü and Chu Kao-sui, see Meng Sen, *Ming tai shih*, pp. 121–24; DMB, pp. 340–43.

157 For their biographies, see DMB, pp. 1535, 1519, 234, 665, respectively. See also Charles O. Hucker, *The censorial system of Ming China*, pp. 115–17. The first three in this group comprise the Three Yangs, referred to below.

Chien-wen emperor, Chu Kao-chih and his advisors took charge of the Prince of Yen's fief in Peking. In November 1399, with only 10,000 soldiers, he skillfully organized the defense of the city and rebuffed an assault by the imperial general Li Ching-lung. This display of responsibility and sound judgment helped modify opinions about him,¹⁵⁸ and in May 1404 his father, now the Yung-lo emperor, at the urging of grand secretaries Hsieh Chin and Huang Huai and obviously to the displeasure of his younger brothers, installed him as heir apparent. Thereafter, Chu Kao-chih lived either in Nanking or Peking, acting as regent during the emperor's absences. His performance in this role won him the respect of his tutors, most of whom were Hanlin scholars, and he gained invaluable practical experience of administration.

Yet during the following years Chu Kao-chih became the victim of plots aimed against him by his brothers' supporters. In September 1414, upon the Yung-lo emperor's return to Peking from the Mongolian campaign, Chu Kao-hsü slandered his elder brother for failing to carry out certain duties on behalf of the emperor. The emperor reprimanded Chu Kao-chih and imprisoned two of his closest advisors, the grand secretaries Yang P'u and Huang Huai. Chu Kao-hsü was eventually eliminated as a direct threat after his exile in 1417. In the end Chu Kao-chih bore him no grudge; on his accession, he actually increased the prince's stipend and bestowed noble titles on his sons. Unfortunately, Chu Kao-hsü never recanted.

Chu Kao-chih did not get word of the Yung-lo emperor's death until 25 August 1424, when imperial representatives arrived in Peking with the succession documents. He immediately consulted with minister of personnel Chien I and grand secretaries Yang Shih-ch'i and Yang Jung. He ordered tight security in the capital and sent the senior eunuch Wang Kuei-t'ung (known earlier as Wang Ching-hung) to Nanking as grand defender (*chen-shou*). The next day he released the former minister of revenue Hsia Yüan-chi, who had been imprisoned by the Yung-lo emperor in April 1422 for raising objections to the third Mongolian campaign. On 7 September he formally ascended the throne and issued a general amnesty, designating the following year as the first year of Hung-hsi (Vast Splendor). The same day, following Hsia Yüan-chi's advice, he canceled Cheng Ho's scheduled maritime expedition, abolished the tea and horse trade on the frontiers, and the gold and pearl missions to Yunnan and Chiao-chih (Annam). He restored Hsia Yüan-chi and Wu Chung, another disgraced official, to their respective ranks as minister of revenue and minister of

158 Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Feng t'ien ching nan chi chu*, p. 67; *DMB*, pp. 338–41; Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 221–26.

works. With these actions, the emperor began to dismantle and reorient his predecessor's administrative policy.¹⁵⁹

The emperor started organizing his new government by restructuring the grand secretariat, by conferring high honorific ranks on certain of his close advisors, and by staffing the executive offices with prominent Hanlin scholars and capable officials. Many of the new appointees had served him when he was regent at Nanking or Peking, and some had taken his side during disagreements with the Yung-lo emperor, resulting in their punishment. Thus, Huang Huai, cashiered in the 1414 affair, and Yang P'u, incarcerated at the same time, were appointed Hanlin academicians and concurrently grand secretaries. Yang Shih-ch'i, his former tutor and his closest adviser, became senior grand secretary and junior tutor; Yang Jung and Chin Yu-tzu were also retained as grand secretaries.

To counterbalance their previous dishonors, each was awarded the exalted first-grade rank and received a concurrent second-grade post. For instance, Yang Shih-ch'i held a supernumerary title as minister of war, Yang Jung as minister of works, and Huang Huai as minister of revenue. Thus they could intervene directly in the administrative business of the regular ministers and wield political influence.¹⁶⁰ Because of his background, the emperor had a close relationship with these senior court officials; unlike his successors, he frequently summoned them to regular meetings and asked them to submit their opinions or recommendations in sealed memorials before he made decisions on important matters. In this way, the grand secretariat ceased to be a perfunctory advisory body, as it had been under the earlier Ming rulers, and the grand secretaries became intimately involved in decision-making. This collective leadership was vital to the emperor's efforts to dismantle his father's unpopular programs and to establish a regular civil government throughout the empire.

During the remaining months of 1424 the Hung-hsi emperor devoted much of his time to reforming the administration. Nonessential officials were dismissed and others were ordered to retire at the age of seventy; officials failing in their duties were demoted and those with demonstrated abilities were promoted to more important positions. To secure frank evaluations and uncover corruption, on 18 October the emperor gave grand secretaries Yang Shih-ch'i, Yang Jung, Chin Yu-tzu, and at a later date Hsia Yüan-chi each a silver seal inscribed with the motto: "rectify faults

¹⁵⁹ DMB, pp. 197, 338–40, 533, 1365, 1483.

¹⁶⁰ See Wu Chi-hua, "Ming Jen-hsüan shih nei ko," in *MTCTS*, I, pp. 184–85, 187; Tu Nai-chi, *Ming tai nei ko chih tu*, pp. 22, 218–19; Charles O. Hucker, *The Ming dynasty: Its origins and evolving institutions* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1978), pp. 89–90; Hucker, *Censorial system*, pp. 148–49.

and shortcomings" (*sheng yen chiu miu*). He instructed them to use the seal for submitting secret memorials regarding cases of peer, or even imperial, malfeasance. Censors were sent all over the empire to investigate official performance and to search out people of suitable caliber for bureaucratic appointment. The emperor frequently exhorted his ministers to speak up without fear of reprisal; and though he sometimes would rebuke or punish a few tempestuously, he often relented and asked forgiveness.

In making official appointments, the emperor placed special emphasis on Confucian mores and personal behavior. An example was Ch'üan Ch'in, a minor official admitted in 1425 to the grand secretariat solely because of his extreme filial piety. Similarly, the emperor appointed many talented and disciplined individuals to local administrative and judicial positions.¹⁶¹ However, pragmatists were not ignored. In February 1425 the eunuch-admiral Cheng Ho, recently deprived of his latest command, was appointed grand defender of Nanking. Historians have pinpointed this act as marking the rise of eunuch influence, but throughout the Hung-hsi reign eunuchs were actually kept under close scrutiny.¹⁶² In order to make the bureaucracy more efficient, the emperor made changes in the civil service examination system. Believing that the system was biased in favor of southerners, he instituted a quota guaranteeing northerners 40 percent of all metropolitan degrees; this policy, with only slight modifications, endured throughout the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties.

As part of this same reform, the Hung-hsi emperor attempted to correct the judicial abuses of the previous reign. He was concerned that many of those condemned to capital punishment might have been victims of trumped-up accusations. In November 1424 he ordered the grand secretaries to join the judicial officials in their case reviews. Later he proclaimed that in some criminal cases even his own judgments could be ignored and reversed, if they were believed to have been made in anger or in ignorance of the facts.¹⁶³ Furthermore, twice during his reign he pardoned the families of such officials as Ch'i T'ai, Huang Tzu-ch'eng, and others, who had been executed in 1402 for their loyalty to the Chien-wen emperor. The pardons freed them from slavery and returned their confiscated property.¹⁶⁴ In April 1425, shortly before his death, the emperor issued a decree further exhorting the judicial authorities to impose sentences according to the law and to review the charges carefully before pronouncing a verdict, especially in capital offenses. In addition, he forbade arbitrary corporal punishment of

161 On Ch'üan Ch'in, see briefly Tu Nai-chi, *Ming tai nei ko chih tu*, pp. 69, 218.

162 *DMB*, pp. 197, 340; Tu Nai-chi, *Ming tai nei ko chih tu*, p. 161 ff.

163 Tu Nai-chi, *Ming tai nei ko chih tu*, pp. 106.

164 See Meng Sen, *Ming tai shih*, p. 104.

convicts and the inclusion of criminals' relatives in their punishment, except in the case of high treason. These practices, he asserted, were in gross violation of the Confucian principle of benevolence and the ethics of filial piety.

Of greatest concern to the Hung-hsi emperor was the financial plight of the people, caused by his father's expensive programs. During his short reign he issued several decrees annulling imperial requisitions for such commodities as lumber, gold, and silver; instead he employed a fair-purchasing system. He also exempted populations afflicted by natural calamities from land tax payment and offered them free grain and other relief provisions.¹⁶⁵ In particular he was distressed by the high incidence of vagrancy, brought on by the inability of farmers to pay taxes and meet requisitions—a serious problem in the last years of the Yung-lo reign. Vagrancy resulted in significant revenue losses in the late Yung-lo years. In February 1425 the emperor issued a special decree summoning the runaways to return home, granting them remission of the taxes owed, and also exempting them from similar taxes and labor services for two additional years after reregistration in their locales.¹⁶⁶

Furthermore, the Hung-hsi emperor dispatched a special commission headed by Chou Kan, the provincial administrative commissioner of Kwangsi, to investigate tax burdens in various prefectures. These included Ying-t'ien, Soochow, Sung-chiang, Chia-hsing, and four other prefectures in Nan Chihli and Chekiang. The emperor did not live to see their report, but it became the basis of the tax remission program implemented by the Hsüan-te emperor.¹⁶⁷ The emperor also was greatly concerned with supplying immediate relief; on several occasions he burst out in anger over the tardy response of his ministers. In one case of local famine, he rebuked the Ministry of Revenue officials for proposing to give the people only loans of grain instead of free distribution. At another time, he angrily overruled the grand secretaries' request for prior consultation with the Ministries of Revenue and Works and ordered immediate distribution of relief grain and tax remissions in certain disaster areas.

These incidents attest to the strenuous burden placed on the populace during this time, a burden made necessary in great part by the previous costly foreign policy. The Hung-hsi emperor took steps to curb Ming expansionism. He had already shown his tendency toward retrenchment and consolidation in foreign affairs when, upon enthronement, he canceled

165 See Wu Chi-hua, "Lun Ming tai ch'ien ch'i shui liang chung hsin chih chien shui pei ching chi ying hsiang," in *MTSHCCS* I, pp. 87–88; Hucker, *Censorial system*, pp. 112–13.

166 These tax arrears came from the report of minister of revenue Kuo Tzu; see note 120 above.

167 See pp. 294–98 below.

Cheng Ho's voyage. During his reign he was content to have capable military officers guard the northern outposts against the Eastern Mongols and to continue tributary relations with states in Central Asia and in the South Seas. His major concern, however, was Annam, which though annexed for several years, had not yet been pacified. He yearned for peace, suggesting the possible recognition of Lê Lo'i's regime; but because the time was not right for this, he followed his father's policy of inducing Lê Lo'i to surrender. He decided Huang Fu was too weary to continue in Annam as administration and surveillance commissioner and replaced him with Ch'en Chih, the second Earl of Jung-ch'ang. Ming troop strength, however, was not reinforced,¹⁶⁸ and at the end of this short reign the situation remained unchanged. Historians have faulted the emperor's recall of Huang Fu, who had great experience in local administration and who had won the respect of the natives, as the main source of the Chinese failure in Annam.

Finally, a month before his death, the Hung-hsi emperor took the most drastic step in the reversal of his father's policies by transferring the primary capital back to Nanking. This was said to have been strongly urged upon him by Hsia Yüan-chi and other senior court officials as part of the strategy to divert resources away from the northern frontiers. It is clear that the emperor had contemplated this step since his enthronement; at that time, he had created the post of grand defender of Nanking and sent his trusted general and eunuch to take command. The Hung-hsi emperor had not been impressed by his predecessor's aggressive northern campaigns, nor did he enjoy Peking; furthermore, having served as regent at Nanking, he was knowledgeable about the southern capital and felt more comfortable there. In addition, he was concerned with the expenses of supporting a northern capital, which gravely taxed not only the southeast, but also various government agencies.

On 16 April 1425 he designated all government offices in Peking as temporary (*hsing-tsai*), as in the period from 1403 to 1420. Two weeks later, he sent his heir apparent Chu Chan-chi to Nanking to visit the tomb of the first emperor and to remain in charge. Despite reports of an earthquake in the Nanking area, the return of the emperor and his court to the south was imminent. The emperor, however, died before realizing this move. Furthermore, the plan was not shared by his heir, the Hsüan-te emperor, who had been close to the Yung-lo emperor and less antagonistic to pro-northern

168 See Yamamoto, *Annanshi kenkyü*, pp. 678–86; Jung-pang Lo, "Policy formulation and decision-making on issues respecting peace and war," in *Chinese government in Ming times: Seven studies*, ed. Charles O. Hucker (New York, 1969), p. 57.

policies. Peking remained the primary capital, and Nanking was again made subsidiary.¹⁶⁹

The Hung-hsi emperor passed away unexpectedly in his palace in Peking on 29 May 1425, at the age of forty-seven. There were various speculations on the cause of his sudden death: lightning, poisoning, and even excessive sexual activities. The basis for the latter may have been that a few days before his death, the emperor severely punished the Hanlin academician Li Shih-mien, whose memorial criticized, among other things, the emperor's intimacy with his concubines during the mourning period for the Yung-lo emperor. However, a chief eunuch reported that his death was due to a heart seizure. The latter is more credible, considering the emperor's obesity and foot troubles.¹⁷⁰

The Hung-hsi emperor was canonized as Chao Huang-ti (Luminous Emperor) and given the temple name Jen-tsung (Benevolent Ancestor). His tomb, called Hsien-ling (Exemplary Tumulus), was built in an austere, simple fashion to match his style of rule. The emperor had ten sons and seven daughters; nine of the sons and four of the daughters reached maturity. The eldest, Chu Chan-chi, was born to his principal consort, empress Chang. Chu Chan-chi had been designated heir apparent in November 1424 and eventually succeeded his father as the Hsüan-te emperor.

The empress Chang was a key figure in the imperial family and in the political fabric of the court during this entire period. She lived until 1442, surviving both her husband and son, in whose reign she assumed the position of empress dowager. Later she was to become regent to her grandson, the Cheng-t'ung emperor, and in the boy ruler's first decade on the throne she played her most important role in government. The empress's brothers, Chang Ch'ang (1374–1428) and Chang Sheng (1379–1444), were awarded the hereditary title of earl. The former was a distinguished general in his own right, and the latter rose in the ranks to become a general officer.

History lauds the Hung-hsi emperor as an enlightened Confucian monarch who, like certain of his ancient models, adhered to ideals of simplicity, kindness, and earnestness. He has invariably been hailed for his efforts in consolidating the empire and ameliorating the harsh and unpopular economic programs of the Yung-lo period. Many of his policies and measures reflected an idealistic, Confucian perception of rulership, but they

169 See Farmer, *Early Ming government*, pp. 123, 130–31, 175.

170 Wu Han, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu Jen-tsung Ching-ti chih ssu chi ch'i t'a," p. 76; Wang Ch'ung-wu, "Ming Jen-tsung Hsüan-tsung shih chi," p. 194. On Li Shih-mien's case, see *DMB*, pp. 340, 866. *Censorial system*, pp. 148–49.

were also a personal reaction against the trends of the previous reigns.¹⁷¹ The emperor was sometimes criticized for his irascibility and impulsiveness, as when occasionally he reprimanded and punished officials who showed indecisiveness or spoke out too provocatively. Nevertheless, he had grace enough to recognize his own faults and apologize. Whatever his mistakes, they were counterbalanced by his benevolence and his sincere eagerness to serve the public interest.¹⁷²

Untimely death intervened before the Hung-hsi emperor had realized all his goals, but in spite of that his legacy remains apparent. Aside from humanitarian social acts, he contributed to the Confucian political ideal of a morally erect emperor ruling with the counsel of learned ministers. During his reign much trust was accorded the Hanlin academicians, who were elevated to positions of great responsibility and authority. This evoked the memory of his cousin, the ill-fated Chien-wen emperor, but the precedent was not sustained in later reigns. Nevertheless, the Three Yangs leadership of the grand secretaries continued to provide stability during the years following his death; and the grand secretariat, despite certain weaknesses, retained a paramount role in perpetuating civil government. The Hung-hsi reign therefore saw the beginnings of an important change of emphasis in Ming government.

THE HSÜAN-TE REIGN

The accession of the Hung-hsi emperor's eldest son did not bring about any strong political or governmental reactions: the new emperor resembled his father in character and shared his idealistic, yet conservative vision of the emperor's role. The Hsüan-te emperor was a man of letters and a patron of the arts, and his reign was distinguished for its political and cultural achievements.

During the first two years, the emperor was faced with the rebellion of his uncle, Chu Kao-hsü, and hard pressed by the continued Annamese resistance to Chinese occupation. These problems were swiftly resolved—the former by military suppression and the latter by diplomatic means. For the rest of his reign the northern frontiers remained unusually peaceful, since the Mongols and their allies had been fragmented, while good relations with the states in Central, East, and Southeast Asia continued. The relative absence of internal disorder and external threats thus spared the

171 See Meng Sen, *Ming tai shih*, pp. 127–28; Wang Ch'ung-wu, "Ming Jen-tsung Hsüan-tsung shih chi p'ang cheng," *Chen li ts'a chih*, 1, No. 2 (March–April 1944), p. 194. *DMB*, p. 340.

172 Hucker, *Censorial system*, pp. 113, 148.

empire unnecessary financial burdens and enabled the court to recover fully from the expense incurred during the Yung-lo period and to implement policy reforms of its own. These included various changes in political and military institutions, fiscal reorganization, and the development of social relief programs.

The accession of the Hsüan-te emperor

The Hsüan-te emperor, or Chu Chan-chi, was born on 16 March 1399, the eldest son of Chu Kao-chih (then the heir to the Yen principedom) and his principal consort, née Chang. Chu Chan-chi practiced the martial arts and also studied Confucian letters under the guidance of Hanlin academicians. Although he shared with his father a talent for classical learning and literature, as a young man he excelled most of all as a warrior. His precocity attracted the Yung-lo emperor's notice. The emperor favored military virtues and often took Chu Chan-chi on hunting trips and military inspection tours away from Peking and his family.¹⁷³

Once his father had been designated heir apparent late in 1411, Chu Chan-chi was formally installed by the emperor as imperial grandson. He was given further instruction in the Confucian classics and the principles of government, this time mostly under the direction of Hu Kuang. These lessons were considered so important that they were continued even while he was on missions with his grandfather. Whereas his father had suffered from weak health, Chu Chan-chi grew up robust and vigorous. When he was only fifteen years old, he was taken by the Yung-lo emperor on the second Mongolian campaign. In addition to the close bond with his grandfather, he was deeply attached to his father, often defending him against the attacks of his father's brothers Chu Kao-hsü and Chu Kao-sui. All this served to alert his other uncles, who were impressed by his strong character and by the favor he enjoyed with the emperor.

On 1 November 1424, shortly after his accession, the Hung-hsi emperor installed Chu Chan-chi as the heir apparent. During the next months Chu Chan-chi spent most of his time in Peking, but the following April his father sent him to Nanking to help prepare for the transfer of the capital. When the Hung-hsi emperor fell ill on 28 May the heir apparent was summoned back to Peking, but by the time of his arrival the emperor had already died. Thereupon, at the age of twenty-six, he became the new emperor. He formally ascended the throne on 27 June 1425, inaugurating

173 See Meng Sen, *Ming tai shih*, p. 120; DMB, pp. 279–80; Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 178, 223, 226.

the reign of Hsüan-te (Propagating Virtue). He abandoned his father's plan to return the court to Nanking and retained Peking as the imperial capital, probably because he had grown up there and shared the Yung-lo emperor's deep concern for the northern frontiers.

Government structure and personnel

The Hsüan-te emperor retained the existing structure of government and kept the services of many distinguished officials. However, he did introduce certain modifications in political institutions and administrative practices. This is evident both in the changed role of the grand secretariat and in the participation of eunuchs in the exercise of executive power.

As a result of the Hung-hsi emperor's reorganization, the Hanlin-staffed grand secretariat now came to enjoy immense prestige. Originally an advisory council, known since the Yung-lo reign as the *nei-ko*, it now began exercising more real executive and deliberative power. The Three Yangs, Chin Yu-tzu, and Huang Huai were all reappointed to their respective positions in it. They not only received first-grade rank with a special palace title, but concurrently held ministerial ranks in the outer court.¹⁷⁴ For instance, Yang Shih-ch'i retained the title minister of war, Huang Huai the title of minister of revenue, and Chin Yu-tzu the title of minister of rites. All enjoyed the respect and trust of the new emperor not only because they had been his tutors, but also because of their meritorious service under the previous emperor. They were assisted by such senior officials as minister of personnel Chien I and minister of revenue Hsia Yüan-chi, who, though not a member of the grand secretariat, participated in the decision-making process. However, other than these men, few additions to the grand secretariat were made during the Hsüan-te reign.¹⁷⁵ The founding emperor's prohibition against bestowing the title of chancellor upon this kind of advisor did not prevent their steady growth in influence, especially since they enjoyed the unwavering support of the throne.

The grand secretaries' prominence was also enhanced by a new executive procedure: regular meetings with the emperor to discuss the more pressing government affairs. Following the Hung-hsi emperor's precedent, they were asked to submit sealed memorials directly to the throne for appropriate action. Furthermore, the emperor introduced a regular procedure

174 See Wu Chi-hua, "Ming Jen-Hsüan shih nei ko," in *MTCTS*, I, pp. 186–97; Tu Nai-chih, *Ming tai nei ko chih tu*, pp. 22–24, 86–87, 219–23. See also briefly, Grimm, "Das Neiko der Ming-Zeit," pp. 139–77; Hucker, "Governmental organization of the Ming dynasty," pp. 28–30.

175 See *DMB*, pp. 235, 533, 666, 1537; Hucker, *The Ming dynasty*, pp. 89–90; Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 234–35.

known as *t'iao-chih*, or *p'iao-i*, in which the grand secretaries reviewed memorials submitted by officials and suggested appropriate responses by pasting on each a draft rescript for imperial approval. The emperor usually adopted their recommendations and sent the rescript to the respective ministry for implementation; he did not convene his counsellors for further deliberations unless the topic appeared controversial.¹⁷⁶ Thus the grand secretariat came to be a buffer between the emperor and the six ministries and more of a decision-making force than previously. Its leaders were now able to make recommendations without consulting the respective ministries, and their own decisions would automatically be enforced whenever the emperor chose to acquiesce in them.

While this to some extent made executive action swifter and more efficient, it also facilitated the rise in power of the eunuchs. Since the dynasty's founding, they had been performing crucial assignments as the emperor's personal representatives. In the reign of the Hung-wu emperor the eunuchs in the Directorate of Ceremonial (*Ssu-li chien*), who had been in charge of imperial documents, were forbidden to communicate with agencies in the outer court to prevent eunuchs from meddling in government business. Both the Chien-wen and Yung-lo emperors, aware of the possible abuses, followed this practice and kept a close watch on eunuch activities.¹⁷⁷

The Hsüan-te emperor's attitude was the same, but he departed from the earlier pattern by providing the eunuchs with a formal literary education in the imperial palace. In 1426 and again in 1428, the emperor appointed Hanlin scholars to teach in a palace school for eunuchs (*nei shu-t'ang*) so that they could handle documents and communicate formally with court officials. Although the formal education of the eunuchs had never been actually prohibited, as alleged in some unofficial sources, this was nonetheless a reversal of custom. The main reason was the emperor's need for trusted servants to handle his personal paperwork. No other group could provide such loyalty and confidentiality.¹⁷⁸ Their critical function was emphasized whenever the emperor did not simply accept the decisions suggested by the grand secretaries; then the eunuchs at the Directorate of Ceremonial were expected to take appropriate action on his behalf. Furthermore, because the ministries did usually not meet with the emperor to discuss and review the eunuchs' recommendations, the eunuchs who handled the transmission

176 See Meng Sen, *Ming tai shih*, pp. 127–28; Hucker, "Governmental organization," pp. 64–65; and Hucker, "The Ming dynasty," pp. 89–90.

177 See Ting I, *Ming tai t'e wu cheng chih*, pp. 334–36, 338–41; Crawford, "Eunuch power in the Ming dynasty," pp. 119–20, 130–32.

178 Ting I, *Ming tai t'e wu cheng chih*, pp. 6–11; Hucker, *Censorial system*, pp. 111–12, 115–17.

of documents were able to prevail in matters without the emperor's knowledge. Ultimately they gained an unprecedented opportunity to abuse imperial prerogatives.

The rise of the eunuchs during the Hsüan-te reign was the culmination of earlier administrative developments. The Three Yangs have been criticized by modern historians for failing to warn the emperor against employing eunuchs in the way he did, but the eunuchs' ability to usurp imperial authority depended ultimately on the disposition of the emperor himself. In the case of the Hsüan-te emperor, the sovereign seems to have been able to control them. Not only did he issue repeated notices to curtail eunuch procurement and such eunuch-directed activities as logging, shipbuilding, and so forth, but he executed and inflicted severe punishment on those who committed grave offenses. However, by providing formal education and employing them in handling official documents, he had inadvertently opened the way to abuses of power. These became most serious when an emperor chose to neglect or to withdraw from his official duties. In such circumstances, the eunuch staff ended up at the pinnacle of a bureaucratic system without an effective head and in which the lines of authority were confused. Consequently, they have borne a large part of the blame for the deterioration of later Ming government.¹⁷⁹

Internal rebellion and external crisis

Shortly after his enthronement, the Hsüan-te emperor was confronted with a serious threat to his authority. His uncle Chu Kao-hsü, then Prince of Han, sought to topple him by armed rebellion. This uprising was in many ways similar to that of the Prince of Yen against the Chien-wen emperor, except that it was quickly suppressed. Chu Kao-hsü enjoyed the Yung-lo emperor's favor because of his military successes. Bitter disappointment followed, however, when in 1404 his elder brother, the future Hung-hsi emperor, was designated heir apparent. Chu Kao-hsü repeatedly disobeyed imperial instructions and in 1417 finally incurred the wrath of his father and was banished to the small fief of Lo-an in Shantung. Though treated cordially when his brother finally ascended the throne, his resentment eventually boiled over with the accession of his nephew.¹⁸⁰

On 2 September 1425 Chu Kao-hsü formally initiated his campaign, establishing imperial-style army designations and official titles. Five days later, he dispatched a subordinate to court with a list of complaints to

179 Tu Nai-chih, *Ming tai nei ko chih tu*, pp. 60–61.

180 See Meng Sen, *Ming tai shih*, pp. 121–24; DMB, pp. 341–42; Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, p. 232.

justify his action. He charged the emperor with violating the rules of the Yung-lo and Hung-hsi emperors by investing civil officials with titles of nobility. He also blamed the emperor for poor judgment in the selection of officials. These accusations seem largely to have been a repetition of those earlier made by the Prince of Yen against the Chien-wen emperor. But in the present case, they drew no response.¹⁸¹

Upon hearing of the uprising, the new emperor at first hesitated. But on 9 September, at the urging of grand secretary Yang Jung and others, the Hsüan-te emperor took personal command of a punitive expedition. Led by the veteran general Hsüeh Lu (1358–1430), an imperial vanguard of 20,000 soldiers besieged Lo-an on 21 September. After failing to induce the rebel prince to surrender, they stormed the city on the following day. Chu Kao-hsü surrendered to the emperor and was taken to Peking with his retinue. He was reduced to commoner status and died after gruesome torture, either at the end of this same year or some time later—the sources do not clearly fix the date. More than six hundred civil and military officials who had collaborated with the rebel prince were put to death, and another twenty-two hundred were banished to the frontier. Subsequent investigation revealed that Chu Kao-hsü's brother Chu Kao-sui, the Prince of Chao, and another prince were also involved in the plot. But the emperor, being concerned with dynastic stability, ordered no further prosecutions. The dismal failure of the rebellion shows the level to which the power of the imperial princes had sunk.

The Hsüan-te emperor faced another serious problem, one held over from previous reigns: the continued Annamese resistance to Chinese attempts at annexation. In the beginning, the emperor vacillated between retreat and continued attempts at pacification, but finally, after serious deliberation, he ordered a complete withdrawal of the Chinese occupying armies. This ended the Chinese occupation of Annam and restored its independence after twenty-seven years of Chinese intervention.

The Chinese position in Annam had deteriorated since the eve of the emperor's accession, when Ch'en Chih's forces were defeated because of lack of supplies and unfamiliarity with the region. On 8 May 1426 the Hsüan-te emperor reshuffled the command, appointing general Wang T'ung as commander-in-chief, but could not yet decide on a course of action. Consequently, on the following day he summoned his close advisors and expressed his desire to end the war and grant autonomy to Annam. The emperor referred to the admonishments in the *Ancestral injunctions* against

181 On Chu Kao-hsü's false accusations, see Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming ching nan shih shih k'ao cheng kao*, pp. 135–40.

offensive wars and to the Yung-lo emperor's ostensible original intentions in Annam: not annexation, but the restoration of the legitimate Trần rulers. He received divergent responses. Ministers Chien I and Hsia Yüan-chi pleaded for further military action, whereas Yang Shih-ch'i and Yang Jung favored withdrawal. The emperor had at least partial support for his own wishes, but the time was still not right for a final decision.¹⁸²

In the winter of 1425, Lê Lo'i launched a series of large-scale assaults on the Chinese garrisons, inflicting 20,000 or 30,000 casualties on Wang T'ung's forces. On 23 January 1427 the emperor appointed Liu Sheng to head an expeditionary army to go to his relief. At the same time, after further consultation with the grand secretaries, the emperor recalled the retired commissioner Huang Fu to his former position in Annam to explore the possibility of a truce. On 30 September 1427, when Liu Sheng's army reached the border, Lê Lo'i unexpectedly gave him a letter for transmission to court. It said that he had located a descendant of the Trần line, a certain Trần Cao, and that he would acknowledge him as king if the Chinese would grant Annam autonomy. A few days later Liu Sheng suffered a crushing defeat, losing 70,000 men in the vicinity of Lang-s'on. When told of this disaster, Wang T'ung unilaterally agreed to Lê Lo'i's terms, and on 12 November, without awaiting instructions from Peking, he pulled out his troops. Although his action did not have official sanction, it proved the final turning point in the Chinese occupation of Annam.¹⁸³

The Ming court did not receive Lê Lo'i's letter until 16 November, more than a month after Liu Sheng's disastrous defeat. The following day the emperor met with his ministers, and the division of feeling remained the same. Three days later the emperor announced that he would accept Lê Lo'i's proposal and appointed a commission to negotiate a truce. Upon reaching Annam, however, the commissioners were rebuffed by Lê Lo'i, who was fresh from his victories and now refused to step down, claiming that Trần Cao had died. He also turned down the proposed repatriation of the Chinese administrators and troops. The emperor tried to stick to his original terms; in 1428 and again in 1429 he sent envoys to demand the restoration of the Trần line. This was to no avail, but after receiving a conspicuously humble letter on 15 July 1431, the emperor reluctantly granted Lê Lo'i a commission and seal, allowing him to "administer the affairs of the state of Annam," but did not confer on him the status of king. It was only in November 1436, two years after Lê Lo'i's death, that

182 See Yamamoto, *Annanshi kenkyū*, pp. 721–58; Jung-pang Lo, "Policy formulation and decision-making," pp. 57–60; Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 226–29.

183 *DMB*, pp. 794–95.

the Cheng-t'ung emperor would grant his son the title king of Annam, recognizing him as its legitimate ruler.

The withdrawal from Annam grew out of a realistic assessment of the national interest in the face of a policy that had proved disastrous. The Ming government had suffered both military and diplomatic humiliation at the hands of a much smaller neighbor. To the Chinese, wounded national pride was offset by the removal of the serious financial and military burden these futile operations had imposed on the empire. But to the Anamese, the two decades of Ming occupation left a permanent scar on their relations with the Chinese rulers and on their attitude toward Chinese civilization.¹⁸⁴

Administrative changes and institutional development

As a part of his program of internal political and social reform, the Hsüan-te emperor attempted changes in three major areas of government: the Censorate, local administration, and the military. The emperor inherited a corruption-plagued Censorate; consequently, he instituted several reforms and created for it new tasks. In August 1428, the honest and incorruptible Ku Tso (d. 1446) was appointed censor-in-chief to replace the notorious Liu Kuan, who was sentenced to penal servitude for numerous crimes committed during his tenure of office (1415–28). During the following months, forty-three members of the Peking and Nanking Censorates were dismissed for incompetence and their replacements appointed on strict probation. General procedures and organization were regularized, and the responsibilities of the censorate were expanded.¹⁸⁵ The two major additional duties of the censorate were the renewal of the military rosters and the inspection of the frontier provinces. Between 1424 and 1434 a number of censorial surveillance commissions were set up ad hoc, to be institutionalized later. They included the inspection of military farms, construction projects, and the training divisions at the capital and also the supervision of tax collection in Nan Chihli and of tax grain transport to Peking via the Grand Canal.

The censorate penetrated all areas of Ming administration at the central and local levels and both the outer and inner courts; its activities encompassed the civil, military, fiscal, and judicial spheres. It played a most important role in supervising the working of the administration and also in remonstrating to the throne on policy. Between 1424 and 1434, the cen-

¹⁸⁴ See briefly, John K. Whitmore, "Chiao-chih and Neo-Confucianism: The Ming attempt to transform Vietnam," *Ming Studies*, 4 (Spring 1977), pp. 71–72.

¹⁸⁵ See Hucker, *Censorial system*, pp. 113–19, 147–51. For Ku Tso's biography, see *DMB*, p. 747. On Liu Kuan's crimes and punishment, see Hucker, *Censorial system*, pp. 63, 117, 118.

sors were responsible for the demotion of more than 240 officials and for the appointment, recall, or promotion of others. They also submitted 247 memorials of impeachment denouncing at least 659 officials and 17 other persons, as well as presenting 251 other memorials offering counsel and remonstrance to the emperor.

In general, after the purge of 1428 the censors became both more competent and more outspoken in their criticisms. They also provided forthright counsel, although hesitatingly, for fear of condign punishment, in those cases touching the personal conduct of the emperor. Although the emperor displayed respect toward them, he could be harsh to censors who ignored their duties or abused their office. Such men were demoted, imprisoned, or banished; the death sentence was not imposed.

In local administration, the most important institutional development under the Hsüan-te emperor was the inception of a quasi-formal system of provincial governorship. Under this system, officials were appointed to local provinces to serve as *hsün-fu*, literally meaning “touring pacifier”; the title has been more conventionally rendered as “grand coordinator” because the duties of such an official were to coordinate the functions of the three provincial offices (*san-ssu*)—the Provincial Surveillance Office, the Provincial Administration Office, and the Regional Military Commission. The institution of this system of provincial governing represented a transformation of the ad hoc “touring pacifiers” appointed by the central government for temporary duties in local provinces in earlier reigns. The term *hsün-fu* had already been used in a more generic sense by the Hung-wu emperor when in 1391 he sent the heir apparent Chu Piao to Shensi on similar assignments. The Yung-lo emperor in 1421 similarly sent twenty-six high-ranking court officials on pacifying and soothing (*an-fu*) missions concerning both troops and civilians. Not only had eminent officials been commissioned ad hoc with either of the terms as title, but also imperial princes, including the Hung-hsi and Hsüan-te emperors before their accessions.¹⁸⁶

Following these precedents, the Hsüan-te emperor, concerned with popular welfare and the workings of local administration, in September 1425 ordered two high-ranking officials to “tour and pacify” the Southern Metropolitan Region and the province of Chekiang. The formalization process continued when, in 1430, senior officials with indefinite tenure were commissioned to “tour and pacify” the civil, judicial, and military administrations in Honan, Shensi, and Szechwan; five years later, such commissions were extended to include vital areas of defense on the northern

¹⁸⁶ See Hucker, “Governmental organization of the Ming dynasty,” pp. 39–41.

frontiers from Kansu to Liao-tung. In assuming such large areas of enduring jurisdiction, the commissioners had in effect institutionalized what was only later to be known as the post of grand coordinator.¹⁸⁷

Grand coordinator, however, was never recognized as a substantive appointment, but was a special deputation of authority and responsibility to officials concurrently holding a regular appointment in the central government. Such officials were usually vice-ministers in the six ministries, particularly the Ministry of War. Later they were given nominal titles as senior censorial officials. In addition, the grand coordinator was designated concurrent superintendent of military affairs or concurrent associate in military affairs (*chien t'i-tu chün-wu* or *tsan-li chün-wu*). This became more common when military affairs grew increasingly important for the administration and marked the growth of civilian control over military affairs as the military organization itself deteriorated. The grand coordinator system evolved into a type of governorship known in later times as *tsung-tu* or supreme commander, which denoted a civil service coordinator delegated to deal with military problems affecting more than one jurisdiction.

The official term *tsung-tu* itself was first used in the sense of "supervising" when Chou Ch'en (1381–1452), an assistant secretary in the Ministry of Works, was appointed in October 1430 to oversee the collection and transport of tribute grain from the Yangtze Valley to Peking. This precedent became institutionalized during the next reign when one of these commissioners assumed the role of grand coordinator and supreme commander with clear military responsibilities.¹⁸⁸ Both the grand coordinator and the supreme commander systems matured in the time of the Cheng-t'ung emperor; they became important components of Ming administrative hierarchy and were in turn adopted by the Manchu rulers in their effort to strengthen control in China.

The Hsüan-te emperor tried to root out military corruption in his endeavor to establish civilian rule. During campaigns, corrupt officers had mobilized the poor and sold exemptions to the rich, and when requisitions were levied, imposed excessive demands upon the people. They illegally employed soldiers as their own private servants, robbed them of their monthly wages and rations, and withheld the issue of their winter uniforms. Such unlawful exactions and poor treatment demoralized the soldiery and encouraged desertion, thus undermining the entire military organization and seriously reducing the effectiveness of the troops.¹⁸⁹

187 Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 230–31.

188 On Chou Ch'en's mission, see Wu Chi-hua, "Lun Ming tai ch'ien ch'i shui liang," in *MTSHCCS*, I, p. 91.

189 See Hucker, *Censorial system*, pp. 126–28; *DMB*, p. 284.

In order to eliminate these abuses and restore discipline to the military establishment, in 1426 and 1428 the emperor dispatched censorial teams to inspect and reform military conditions in the provinces. One aim of these investigations was to investigate the military rosters in order to ascertain the real number of soldiers in each military unit and the salaries and rations required, and thus to eliminate a major source of corruption. Such missions, known as troop purification (*ch'ing-chün*), henceforth became regular assignments for the censors.¹⁹⁰ In addition, in March 1428 the emperor issued new rules governing the conscription of soldiers and the apprehension of deserters, increasing the number of articles from eight to nineteen; in October 1429, he added twenty-two more articles designed to eliminate further malpractices. Late in 1429, to demonstrate his concern for the military and to boost the army's morale, he conducted one of the dynasty's most impressive public military reviews on the outskirts of Peking. Training units at the capital regularly accompanied the emperor on tours of the northern frontiers and on great hunting expeditions.¹⁹¹

Yet despite all this attention, the military establishment continued to suffer maladministration, declining morale, and ineffectiveness. The underlying causes, it seems, lay in the failure of the military farming colonies to provision the armed forces and the anomalies (for Chinese society) inherent in a hereditary military system. The armies were no longer constantly on campaign as they had been under the Yung-lo emperor and had little experience in the field. A contributing factor to the general malaise was the emperor's persistent leniency toward military officers who committed offenses. He asserted that they lacked education and hence should not be evaluated by normal standards.¹⁹² The incompetence of the Ming armies grew ever greater; that would be fully exposed in the disastrous defeat suffered at the hands of the numerically inferior Oirat Mongols at T'u-mu in 1449. Despite subsequent reforms, the basic weakness in the Ming military system remained uncorrected to the end of the dynasty.

Fiscal reforms

The third important internal development during the Hsüan-te era was fiscal reorganization and the introduction of relief measures, particularly in such lower Yangtze prefectures as Soochow and Sung-chiang. As noted above, these prefectures had borne a grossly inequitable tax burden. The

190 Hucker, *Censorial system*, pp. 75–77, 111, 253.

191 Hucker, *Censorial system*, pp. 140–43.

192 Wu Han, "Ming tai ti chün ping," pp. 112, 114, 119, 134; Wang Yü-chüan, *Ming tai ti chün t'un*, pp. 217, 231, 235, 238.

Hung-wu emperor, who had deliberately imposed punitive tax levels in this area, had subsequently ordered a tax reduction and remission; but even as late as 1393 the quota for Soochow alone remained at 2.81 million piculs, almost a tenth of the estimated total land tax for the whole empire. Sung-chiang, with but a quarter of Soochow's land, was levied almost half as much land tax, amounting to 4.14 percent of the empire's land tax receipts.¹⁹³ During the Yung-lo reign, the average annual land tax receipt was increased about 10 percent to meet the enormous expenses of moving the capital to Peking and the various foreign campaigns and overseas expeditions. The new quotas of land tax for Soochow and Sung-chiang are not recorded, but it is reasonable to assume that they were increased proportionately. These heavy tax demands caused a huge accumulation of arrears and debts, which in turn resulted in mass exodus and impoverished farmers, especially when natural calamities struck the region, as had happened in the later years of the Yung-lo reign.

Between 1422 and 1428 the tax arrears in Sung-chiang totaled several million piculs annually. The Hsüan-te emperor's court at the northern capital was dependent both on the land tax as revenue and on the grain shipped from the Yangtze Valley to feed Peking. These shipments were estimated at 2.39 million piculs in 1426. Just two years later they had more than doubled, to 5.48 million piculs.¹⁹⁴ Thus the tax arrears and the flight of farming families, which had reduced production in this crucial region, became a matter of still more vital concern. The introduction of various tax reduction and remission schemes in these prefectures had a dual purpose: to maintain the flow of revenue to the state and of grain to the capital. They were also rooted in the belief that the strength and wealth of the empire depended on the well-being of its farming population.

The severity of the tax burden in the Yangtze delta region was made vivid to the emperor in the report of imperial commissioner Chou Kan, who had been sent there to investigate the fiscal situation. His memorial, dated August 1426, drew a gloomy picture of desertion, excessive tax arrears, and the resulting serious effect this had on the local residents and on the collection of revenues. He proposed reducing the tax quota on government land, eliminating corruption on the part of the tax collectors, and ending maladministration by local officials. He implored the court to appoint capable officials to manage fiscal matters in these prefectures and to dispatch special commissioners to oversee their operation.

193 See Chou Liang-hsiao, "Ming tai Su Sung ti ch'ü ti kuan t'ien," pp. 64-65; Wu Chi-hua, "Lun Ming tai shui liang," in *MTSHCCS*, I, pp. 41-45.

194 For these figures and their significance, see Wu Chi-hua, *Ming tai hai yün chi yün ho ti yen chui*, pp. 102-04.

The emperor's attention was captured by this situation. Discussions took place at court over the next four years; the grand secretaries supported tax reduction, while the Ministry of Revenue officials opposed it for fear of its impact. In May 1430 the emperor ordered tax reductions on all imperial lands. Then in October the emperor sent several fiscal administrators as grand coordinators into the area to supervise (*tsung-tu*) the grain tax collection. Chou Ch'en, then assistant secretary in the Ministry of Works, was given charge of the administration of Nan Chihli, including Soochow and Sung-chiang prefectures. During the next several years, he and K'uang Chung (1383–1443), an equally capable administrator and fiscal expert who was made prefect of Soochow in June 1430, played important roles in the reforms of this reign.¹⁹⁵

Chou Ch'en and K'ung Chung faced formidable tasks in their new duties. Particularly in Soochow and Sung-chiang, they found not only huge tax arrears and discrepancies between the tax quotas on government and private lands, but also large-scale flight of farming families escaping the heavy tax burdens. Chou Ch'en noted, for instance, that in T'ai-tsang county of Soochow, in the forty years between 1391 and 1432, the taxpaying households had dwindled by 90 percent to a mere 738 units, while the tax quota for the county remained unchanged. But K'uang Chung and Chou Ch'en did not simply implement the reductions ordered by the emperor in spite of the Ministry of Revenue's continued obstruction. They also initiated a series of measures eliminating tax irregularities and corruption by the revenue collectors.

Chou Ch'en was credited with at least five important fiscal reform measures in the region under his jurisdiction:¹⁹⁶

1. The standardization of the unit of measure for the collection of grain. This would prevent the collector from cheating and keeping the excess grain.
2. The establishment of warehouses in each county to store the tax grain collected under the supervision of local administrators. This would prevent the tax captains from hoarding the grain in their private quarters.

195 See Wu Chi-hua, "Lun Ming tai ch'ien ch'i shui liang," in *MTSHCC*, I, pp. 88–92; Wu Tan-ko, "Ming tai chung yeh ti fu shui kai ko ho she hui mao tun," *She hui k'o hsüeh chan hsien*, 4 (November 1979), pp. 168–71. For details of the career of Chou Ch'en and K'uang Chung, see Chiang Hsing-yü, *K'uang Chung* (Shanghai, 1981), pp. 34–42, 72–76, and passim; for K'uang, see also briefly his biography in *DMB*, p. 751.

196 For a succinct account of Chou Ch'en's and K'ung Chung's fiscal reforms in Soochow and Sung-chiang, see Chou Liang-hsiao, "Ming tai Su Sung ti ch'ü ti kuan t'ien," pp. 69–71; Wu Chi-hua, "Lun Ming tai ch'ien ch'i shui liang," in *MTSHCCS*, I, pp. 98–105.

3. The introduction of a surcharge called leveling grain (*p'ing-mi fa*) on the grain tax payable on both government and private lands. This was to be used to pay for transporting the grain up the Grand Canal to the capital, and any surplus was to be put in storage as an emergency reserve. The people were to deliver their tax grain to a convenient locality on the canal, and in return for a special surcharge, soldiers would then ship the grain to its destination. This would bring relief to those who had been required to undertake shipment themselves.
4. The establishment of a relief granary (*chi-nung ts'ang*) in each county of those prefectures. It would store spare grain collected during abundant years by local authorities through the "normal purchasing system" which could be distributed in times of natural disaster or poor harvest.
5. The institution of a system of paying the grain tax at a periodically adjusted special conversion rate either in "gold flower silver" or cotton cloth. This system, of great convenience to the people and the government alike, would also directly stimulate the money economy and the textile industry in the southern prefectures.

The court approved most of these recommendations, but their implementation was often obstructed by the Ministry of Revenue and by local administrators. Not until 1433 did Chou Ch'en and K'uang Chung obtain imperial approval to grant the full tax reduction they had requested for Soochow, amounting to more than a quarter of the former quota. Proportionate reductions were enforced in other prefectures, but most of Chou Ch'en's other proposals were successfully opposed by the Ministry of Revenue.¹⁹⁷

Nevertheless, Chou's reforms survived his own lifetime. Other schemes of his were adopted after the accession of the Cheng-t'ung emperor early in 1436. Still others later provided the model for Chang Chü-cheng's (1525–82) fiscal reforms in the lower Yangtze provinces.¹⁹⁸ The records show that the average annual land tax revenues during the Hsüan-te reign had fallen to 30,182,233 piculs, 8 percent less than that of the Hung-hsi reign and 5 percent less than the Yung-lo reign. This amount was cut by a further 10 to 15 percent during the Cheng-t'ung period, and the average revenues in tax grain collected during all subsequent Ming reigns remained around 25 to 28 million piculs per year.¹⁹⁹

197 See Wu Chi-hua, "Lun Ming tai ch'ien ch'i shui liang," in *MTSHCCS*, I, pp. 100–01, 106–11.

198 Wu Chi-hua, "Lun Ming tai ch'ien ch'i shui liang," in *MTSHCCS*, I, pp. 94–95; on the impact of Chou Ch'en's fiscal measures on the Single Whip reform in the Wan-li reign, see Ray Huang, *Taxation and governmental finance in sixteenth-century Ming China*, pp. 101–04.

199 Wu Chi-hua, "Lun Ming tai ch'ien ch'i shui liang," in *MTSHCCS*, I, p. 113. For an understanding of the implication of such land tax cuts to the fiscal structure, see Ray Huang's comments cited on pages 255–56 and in note 119.

Interpretation of these figures is no simple matter, because we have no reliable data on the acreage cultivated or on the real numbers of taxpaying households; further, no itemized lists of state income and expenditure exist. Indeed no state “budget” ever existed during the Ming. Generally, however, it seems that during the Hsüan-te reign the farmers benefited from an overall reduction of taxation, while the state was also able to withstand the reduction of revenues thanks to greatly reduced expenditures. In later reigns, however, the situation changed. Because of soaring administrative and military expenses, the government was forced to impose surcharges to supplement insufficient tax receipts. These in turn created serious new fiscal problems that eventually necessitated the Single Whip tax reforms under Chang Chü-cheng in the late sixteenth century.²⁰⁰

Relief measures

The Hsüan-te emperor responded promptly to the reports of droughts, floods, and locust plagues that affected large parts of China. Working within the normal institutional network, he introduced various remedial measures to the stricken areas, granting tax remissions of one to two years, reducing land taxes by 20 to 40 percent, and distributing free grain and other provisions to induce refugees to return. To ensure the desired results, the emperor encouraged local officials to fulfill their duties and often dispatched imperial commissioners to the disaster areas in order to oversee operations. Historians generally praised the emperor for his devotion to the well-being of his people.²⁰¹

Foreign relations and the tributary system

The Mongols

While in earlier decades Ming China had been constantly harassed by the Mongol tribes, during the Hsüan-te reign it enjoyed relative peace on its northern borders. This lull occurred because the uncontested leadership of Arughtai over the Eastern Mongols had been shattered by the Yung-lo

200 For a brief background to Chang Chü-cheng's Single Whip tax reform, see Ray Huang, *Taxation and governmental finance in sixteenth-century Ming China*, pp. 294–305.

201 According to the *MSL*, *Hsüan-tsung shih lu*, these measures were implemented in one form or another in calamity-stricken areas like the Northern Metropolitan Region in 1427, 1428, 1432, 1433, and 1434; Southern Metropolitan Region in 1427, 1432, 1433, and 1434; Shantung in 1426, 1433, and 1434; Shansi in 1427, 1428, 1430, 1432, and 1434; Honan in 1427, 1433, and 1434; Shensi in 1427 and 1433; Hu-kuang in 1433 and 1434; Chekiang in 1432 and 1434; and Kiangsi in 1433 and 1434. See *DMB*, pp. 282–83.

emperor's relentless campaigns. As a consequence, bitter rivalry existed among the chieftains. By the time of the Yung-lo emperor's death, Arughtai was already in a bad position as the rejuvenated Oirat, under the leadership of Toghon (d. 1439 or 1440), repeatedly penetrated his territory, forcing him to move east. Thus the Mongol federation was split in two: Arughtai led the Eastern Mongols and Toghon the Oirat tribes of the west. The two were engaged in continuous warfare.²⁰²

Arughtai's leadership was also challenged by the Mongols of the Uriyangkhad commanderies under his control. During the Hung-hsi reign, they had fruitlessly sought Chinese assistance against him. Faced with these threats, Arughtai again sought harmonious relations with the Ming court, and his offers were warmly reciprocated. Shortly after the Hsüan-te emperor's enthronement, Arughtai began sending annual tribute missions with horses and other gifts to Peking, and the Chinese responded with precious silks, satins, and other presents. The Ming court hoped that he would assist them in case of an Oirat attack, but Arughtai remained too weak to be an effective ally. Encouraged by his impotence, the Uriyangkhad Mongols sporadically threatened the Chinese border. In October 1428, just as such a band launched a raid on Chinese territory, the emperor, commanding 3,000 cavalry, happened to be inspecting the frontier in the area and personally repelled the intruders.

Some changes were subsequently made in the frontier defenses. South of the strategically important K'ai-p'ing guard, Chinese troops under general Hsüeh Lu constructed defenses at a number of cities. After their completion in May 1430, Hsüeh recommended the concentration of the border defense there and the abandonment of the forward garrison at K'ai-p'ing in order to shorten supply lines. This decision was later regarded as a serious strategic mistake, because it exposed several hundred square miles to the Mongols while confining the Chinese armies to an increasingly defensive posture.²⁰³

Meanwhile to the west the Oirat had grown strong and defeated Arughtai early in 1431. This encouraged the Uriyangkhad to rebel again, unsuccessfully. Finally, in September 1434, at the battle of Mount Mu-na, the Oirat under Toghon overwhelmed Arughtai and killed him. The Oirat were now unquestionably the dominant force in Mongolia. After this victory, Toghon maintained friendly relations with the Ming court. The situation changed

202 For official accounts in *MSL*, *Hsüan-tsung shih lu* on Sino-Mongol relations during this period, see Handea et al., ed., *Mindai Man-Mō shiryō: Mōkoben*, II, pp. 41–336. Briefly, see D. Pokolotov, *Eastern Mongols*, pp. 35–39.

203 The defenses constructed under Hsüeh Lu's direction were at Ch'ih-ch'eng, Tiao-hsiao, Yün-chou, Tu-shih k'ou, and T'uan-shan. See D. Pokolotov, *Eastern Mongols*, pp. 36–37. The K'ai-p'ing location was that of the former Mongol capital, Shang-tu. On the significance of the abandonment of the K'ai-p'ing guard, see Tamura, "Mindai no hokuhen bōei taisei," pp. 82–85.

completely when his ambitious son Esen (d. 1455), upon succeeding to leadership of the Oirat in 1440, tried to establish their hegemony in the Mongol heartland.²⁰⁴

Japan and Korea

During the Hsüan-te reign the Ming court actively sought to promote relations with Japan and Korea. The emperor restored formal relations with Japan which, because of the hostility of the Japanese shōgun Yoshimochi, had withered in the Yung-lo period. In 1426 and 1427 the emperor took steps to encourage relations by unilaterally reversing the Sino-Japanese agreement of 1404 on tribute missions. He increased both the number of ships and the number of persons permitted to come to China every ten years to trade. But Yoshimochi continued to stand in the way of any agreement.

His successor Yoshinori (r. 1429–32), on the other hand, expressed great interest in the resumption of relations; in February 1432, the Hsüan-te emperor sent the eunuch Ch'ai Shan to Ryūkyū with an imperial rescript addressed to Yoshinori proposing the restoration of relations and an increase in the amount of trade permitted. This rescript was transmitted to Japan through the good offices of the Ryūkyūan king. Yoshinori was pleased with the terms, and in September he appointed a monk of Chinese origin, Ryūshitsu Dōen, to head an embassy that arrived in Peking in June 1433 bearing tribute presents of horses, armor, swords, and other local products. In July the Chinese emperor responded by dispatching an emissary to escort the Japanese mission back home; the Ming embassy was warmly received in Japan.²⁰⁵

These reciprocal actions restored official relations between China and Japan, which, despite occasional ruptures, lasted until 1549. The reason for this was self-interest on both sides. The shōgun and his successors cooperated because the Japanese were eager for trade under the new and more favorable system and profited greatly, despite sporadic disputes. The Ming court hoped to solicit the shōgun's help in suppressing Japanese pirates (*wo-k'ou*, Japanese *wakō*) along the Chinese coast. Their failure to do so was seen by the Chinese as a halfhearted response to their own generosity. But in actuality the shōgun had little control over the pirates.

204 For the Chinese official accounts on relations with the Oirat Mongols up to 1440, see Pai Ts'ui-ch'in, *Ming shih lu Wa-la tzu liao*, pp. 46–77. On Esen's career, see his biography in *DMB*, p. 416.

205 See Kimiya, *Nisshi kōsū shi*, II, pp. 319–27 and ch. 9 and 11; Wang Yi-t'ung, *Official relations between China and Japan*, pp. 60–64 and ch. 4 and 5, passim; Cheng Liang-sheng, *Ming shih Jih-pen chuan cheng pu*, pp. 367–81.

China's relations with Korea remained cordial while the Hsüan-te emperor and King Yi To (r. 1418–50) both reigned, with regular exchanges of embassies and gifts. In February 1426 the emperor ordered a eunuch to head the first mission to Korea. He presented the king with silks and satins to reciprocate the tribute-bearing embassies sent to China earlier that year. In the following year another embassy with gifts was sent to Korea; this time the emperor requested 5,000 horses for military purposes. The demand was quickly met. Late in 1429 the Ming throne twice sent notes to the Korean king, urging him not to send as tribute gifts of vessels of gold and silver which his country did not itself produce, nor any unusual animals other than those requested—an admonition repeated in 1432. At the end of 1433 the emperor, after declining the Korean king's request to send students to attend the imperial university, bestowed upon him sets of Confucian classics and historical works. This was the last official embassy to Korea during the Hsüan-te reign.²⁰⁶

From Ming sources it appears that the Hsüan-te emperor's desire to promote relations with Korea was for the express purpose of extending Chinese influence and securing war horses. But the Korean records, *Yijo sillok*, reveal that the emperor, like this grandfather the Yung-lo emperor, frequently had more personal motives. In 1426 virgins and eunuchs were requested for the imperial harem, as well as female cooks to satisfy the emperor's appetite for Korean delicacies. Later the Chinese demanded falcons, hunting dogs, and leopards for the emperor. King Yi To personally chose seven virgins who, with ten cooks, sixteen maids, and ten youthful eunuchs, left Seoul in August 1427 and arrived in Peking two weeks later. In November another girl renowned for her beauty was also sent upon demand to the Ming court. In 1429, the emperor asked for and received eleven more cooks, as well as large amounts of fish and pickles; similar requests continued as late as 1434. Not until April 1435, two months after the Hsüan-te emperor's death, were fifty-three Korean women, who had been in China for a decade and wished to leave, sent back home. The incidents reveal another side to Ming foreign relations, one that aroused deep Korean resentment.²⁰⁷

Southeast Asia

In continuing his father's policies of retrenchment, the Hsüan-te emperor maintained only routine contact with South and Southeast Asian countries that had regularly sent tribute during the Yung-lo reign. They included, in

206 See Wu Han, *Ch'ao-hsien Li-ch'ao shih lu*, pp. 330, 334, 348, 365; see also Wang Ch'ung-wu, "Ming Jen-tsung Hsüan-tsung shih chi p'ang cheng," *passim*.

207 Wu Han, *Ch'ao-hsien Li-ch'ao shih lu*, pp. 329, 331, 335, 348, 383, 386; see also Wang Ch'ung-wu, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu Ch'ao-hsien hsüan fei k'ao," pp. 171–76; *DMB*, p. 288.

order of frequency, Champa (8), Java (6), Siam (6), Sumatra (4), and, one time each: Brunei, Bengal, Lambri, Cochin, Ceylon, Calicut, Aden, Arabia, and others.²⁰⁸ While maintaining these relations, the emperor also continued the earlier prohibition against overseas voyages by Chinese, either for settlement abroad or to engage in commerce. The objectives were to strengthen coastal security against pirate harassment and to retain the official monopoly on all foreign trade. These unrealistic prohibitions failed because of the insuperable difficulties of enforcing them.²⁰⁹

Amid these low-key relations, there was a brief revival of imperially sponsored maritime voyages. In June 1430 the Hsüan-te emperor ordered Cheng Ho to take command of the seventh and, as it happened, last voyage to the South Seas. The reassembled fleet did not leave Fukien until a year and a half later. Their mission, as the emperor conceived it, was to reinvigorate the tributary relationships promoted by the Yung-lo emperor. The fleet revisited a score of states on the familiar routes and proceeded as far as the coast of the Arabian peninsula and northeastern Africa. As before, they brought back foreign embassies bearing such gifts as precious stones and exotic animals. Cheng Ho, now in his sixties, returned in June 1433 and did not visit every state in person. Some of the subsidiary missions were delegated to his aides. The eunuch Hung Pao went from Calicut to Mecca, and Wang Ching-hung, with part of the fleet, sailed to Sumatra and Java in 1434, after Cheng Ho himself had returned with the main fleet. The year 1433 saw another high tide of seaborne embassies to Peking, including fifteen from the South Seas, the Persian Gulf, and northeastern Africa.²¹⁰

Why the emperor reactivated and then discontinued Cheng Ho's voyages remains obscure. Various explanations have been offered: the huge drain on national resources, ministerial opposition by Yang Shih-ch'i and Hsia Yüan-chi, the increased concern for defense on the northern frontiers, and the decline of the Ming naval establishment after the Yung-lo emperor's death. Certainly a combination of these factors contributed to the outcome. It was obvious that the Hsüan-te emperor disregarded court opinion when he ordered a resumption of the voyages. His decision, which followed shortly after the death of Hsia Yüan-chi, their loudest opponent, may have been made with the aim of counterbalancing the Chinese fiasco in Annam and restoring Chinese prestige among tributary vassals. But the opposition

208 This estimate is based on the entries in the *MSL*, *Hsüan-tsung shih lu* dealing with relations with the Southeast Asian states collected in Chao Ling-yang et al., eds., *Ming shih lu chung chih Tung-nan Ya shih liao*, II, pp. 263–340.

209 See Chang Wei-hua, *Ming tai hai wai mao i chien lun*, pp. 23–24; Ch'en Wen-shih, *Ming Hung-wu Chia-ching chien ti hai chin cheng ts'ê*, pp. 94–95.

210 See Chu Hsieh, *Cheng Ho*, pp. 62–66; Hsü Yü-hu, *Cheng Ho*, pp. 63–74; J. V. G. Mills, *Ma Huan*, pp. 14–19.

aroused by these ventures remained, and no further expeditions were seriously considered by his successors.²¹¹

Though the Ming court had its own good reasons for discontinuing overseas expansion, the repercussions were far-reaching. The decision seriously affected the strength and morale of the naval establishment and reduced its coastal defense capacity. This in turn precipitated further deprivations by Japanese pirates in the ensuing century. Ultimately, the Ming withdrawal from the Indian Ocean and the South Seas cut China off from the rest of the world at the very time the European powers were first entering the Indian Ocean. This reign marks not only the end of Chinese dominance in Asiatic waters, but also the beginning of the Ming empire's isolation from international affairs.

The Hsüan-te emperor's legacy

The Hsüan-te emperor died unexpectedly on 31 January 1435 at the age of thirty-six, following a short illness. He had reigned only ten years. He was canonized as Chang Huang-ti (Distinguished Emperor), with the temple name Hsüan-tsung (Penetrating Ancestor). He was survived by two sons and two daughters, and by his original principal consort, née Hu (d. 1443), a secondary consort, Madame Sun (d. 1462), and his mother, empress dowager Chang (d. 1442). On his deathbed, the emperor designated the eight-year-old Chu Ch'i-chen, who had been appointed heir apparent in May 1428, as his successor: the boy reigned as the emperor Ying-tsung. The grand empress dowager Chang headed the regency which ruled the empire until her death in 1442.²¹²

The official records of the reign, written under the supervision of the Three Yangs, portrayed the Hsüan-te emperor rather idealistically as a Confucian monarch excelling in the arts and literature and dedicated to benevolent government. This seems to have been justified. Not only had he tried to live up to his Confucian principles, he handed them down to posterity by composing a guide to emperorship, *Ti hsün* (Imperial injunctions, 1428), and a similar manual of instructions for officials, *Kuan chen* (Admonitions to bureaucrats, 1432).²¹³

In conducting government, the emperor knew both how to delegate authority and how to exercise leadership. He often deferred to the Three

211 For details, see Hsü Yü-hu, *Cheng Ho*, pp. 118–119; Ch'en Wen-shih, *Ming Hung-wu Chia-ching chien ti hai-chin cheng ts'e*, pp. 85–86; Jung-pang Lo, "The decline of the Ming navy," pp. 151–54; Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 232–33.

212 *DMB*, pp. 279, 287; Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, p. 236.

213 These two works were incorporated in full in the *MSL*, *Hsüan-tsung shih lu*. For a bibliographic note, see Li Chin-hua, *Ming tai ch'ih chuan shu k'ao*, pp. 41–42.

Yang before making a decision and tended to accept and endorse the recommendations of his grand secretaries and ministers. Nonetheless, he displayed vigorous leadership in the strengthening of administrative institutions and the imperial authority. The Hsüan-te emperor acted decisively and responsibly when crises arose, such as in the uprising of Chu Kao-hsü and the need for a final decision to withdraw from Annam. Furthermore, he was deeply concerned with the administration of justice. Though usually harsh toward delinquent civil officials, he rarely imposed the death sentence, except in punishing eunuchs. He frequently presided over important trials. He consistently ordered reviews of serious criminal cases, and such retrials resulted in the acquittal of thousands of innocent individuals during his reign.²¹⁴

In sum, the reign was a remarkable period in Ming history, with no overwhelming external or internal crises, no partisan controversies, and no major debates over state policy. The government operated effectively despite the eunuchs' increasing involvement in the decision-making process. Timely institutional reforms improved the functioning of the state and nourished the welfare of the people, basic requirements of good government. Not surprisingly, in later times the Hsüan-te reign was remembered as the Ming dynasty's golden era.²¹⁵

214 On the Hsüan-te emperor's concern for administration of justice, see Hucker, *Censorial system*, pp. 114–15, 132–34, 260–61. See also the official records cited in Huang Chang-chien, "Ta Ming lü kao' k'ao," in *MCSYC*, pp. 195–98.

215 For modern historians' appraisals of the Hsüan-te emperor, see Meng Sen, *Ming tai shih*, pp. 125–57; Wang Ch'ung-wu, "Ming Jen-tsung Hsüan-tsung shih chi," pp. 201–03; Wu Chi-hua, "Ming Jen-Hsüan shih nei ko," in *MTCTS*, I, pp. 193–97; *DMB*, pp. 279–88; and Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 226–36.

CHAPTER 5

THE CHENG-T'UNG, CHING-T'AI, AND T'IEN-SHUN REIGNS, 1436–1464

THE FIRST REIGN OF YING-TSUNG, 1435–1449

The centers of power

The death of the Hsüan-te emperor at the early age of thirty-seven *sui* in January 1435 and his succession by a boy emperor Chu Ch'i-chen (posthumous title Ying-tsung, 1427–64) only eight years old brought into the open many problems implicit in the political institutions established in early Ming. Although the succession was a perfectly regular one and Chu Ch'i-chen, the elder of the Hsüan-te emperor's two sons, had been designated heir apparent, the succession to the Ming throne had already caused problems. There had been one successful usurpation by Chu Ti, and another attempt at a usurpation by Chu Kao-hsü, the uncle of the Hsüan-te emperor, had failed in 1426.

The accession to the throne of a child emperor produced new problems and stresses, for under the system established by the Ming founder, all authority was vested in the emperor, who had himself to decide state affairs with the aid of secretaries and ministers. No formal provisions had been made for the succession of a minor. A child emperor left the absolute monarchy without a head, and although nobody could formally become regent, a *de facto* regency had to be set up to conduct state affairs. Such a situation, and it was to recur later in the dynasty, could easily lead to the establishment of illegitimate dictatorial powers and inevitably undermined the stability of the central leadership.

The Hsüan-te emperor had died unexpectedly after a short illness, and the *de facto* regency was led by Lady Chang, the grand empress dowager (*t'ai huang t'ai-hou*). She occupied, both ceremonially and in reality, the most respected position at court. She had, moreover, already taken some share in political decision-making during the previous reign, as empress dowager. Originally a commoner, as the daughter-in-law of the Yung-lo emperor, the wife of the Hung-hsi emperor, and the mother of the Hsüan-te emperor, she represented the maintenance of some semblance of

dynastic continuity and legitimacy. One source maintains that she first advised the enthronement of the late emperor's brother, her own son Chu Chan-shan, Prince of Hsiang (1406–78), as a mature member of the imperial clan, rather than her grandson, the child Chu Ch'i-chen. But the standard account says that she was instrumental in the latter's enthronement. In either case she would have been assured a powerful position, and she remained very influential until her death in 1442, when she was approaching sixty.

The grand empress dowager was joined in the regency by the three grand secretaries and three eunuchs. The grand secretaries, like Lady Chang, represented continuity with the early Ming regime. They were the Three Yangs, Yang Shih-ch'i (1365–1444), Yang Jung (1371–1440), and Yang P'u (1372–1446), who were not related to one other, although all three came from the South. They had served together since the accession of the Hsüan-te emperor in 1426, and Yang Shih-ch'i and Yang Jung had served successive emperors since the beginning of the Yung-lo emperor's reign. They were experienced, highly competent, and extremely powerful.

The eunuch members of the regency were the chief officials of the Directorate of Ceremonial, the office with the highest prestige within the palace eunuch hierarchy. They were Wang Chin (to 1451) and Fan Hung (to 1449), already well entrenched in power under the previous emperor, as was Chin Ying (to ca. 1450). But the dominant voice soon came to be that of Wang Chen (?–1449), one of the earliest chief eunuchs to have had a thorough literary education and administrative training in the palace school for eunuchs (*nei shu-t'ang*) that had been established in 1426 in direct contravention of the founder's policy of preventing both the education of eunuchs and their participation in politics.

According to one late Ming source, Wang Chen was one of a group of Confucian teachers whom the Yung-lo emperor had persuaded to volunteer for castration in order to instruct the palace ladies, in which case he would have entered the palace school with great advantages; that could explain his rapid rise in influence. Wang Chen was a northerner (from Shansi), as was the grand empress dowager. He was also a young man, probably in his mid-thirties, when he was appointed to the Directorate of Ceremonial in the autumn of 1435, very much younger than the other members of the regency. He also had been the child emperor's first teacher and had established a powerful personal dominance over him.

Such then was the regency, a three-to-three council of grand secretaries and eunuch directors of ceremonial, with the grand empress dowager Chang as arbiter. From the beginning of the new reign the veritable record (*Ying-tsung shih lu*) constantly refers to statements on political issues from

"the junior guardian, honorary minister of war and grand secretary Yang Shih-ch'i and others" laying down policy as though a fully active emperor were in command of the court and government.

Another influential figure representing dynastic continuity was Chang Fu, the Duke of Ying (1375–1449), the senior military figure of the time. The brother of one of the Yung-lo emperor's concubines (not related to the grand empress dowager) and son of one of Yung-lo's supporters in his usurpation of the throne, he came of a distinguished family of soldiers. He had led invasions of Annam in 1406–08, where he served until 1416, and accompanied the Yung-lo emperor on his last three campaigns in Mongolia. He was entrusted by the Yung-lo emperor with his dying testament to ensure the succession of the heir apparent and in 1426 was a key figure in suppressing Chu Kao-hsü's attempted rebellion. At the court in the late 1430s and 1440s, although little more than a figurehead, he was a trusted and respected elder statesman, a living witness of the great days of the child emperor's great-grandfather, when China had dispersed the Mongols and captured Annam.

The political situation changed radically with the grand empress dowager's death on 20 November 1442. The emperor was now sixteen *sui*, had been married on 8 June to Lady Ch'ien, and had for the first time attended to court business in his own right only two days previously on 18 November. Yang Jung had died in 1440, leaving only two grand secretaries: Yang Shih-ch'i was now seventy-five and Yang P'u nearly seventy. The stage was set for a significant change in politics, the beginning of the total political dominance of Wang Chen, who at forty was now in his prime. The old grand empress dowager had anticipated the danger of Wang's achieving political power and late in 1437 had considered ordering him to commit suicide. But her youthful grandson the emperor and some of the court officials had interceded to spare his life. It is significant for later Ming history to see the steps by which Wang Chen built up a new type of power structure.

First of all, he established a personal dominance over the emperor. The eunuch had been the boy's first teacher before he ascended the throne. Later, when the imposing septuagenarian Yang Shih-ch'i took over the new emperor's studies of the classics and surely represented the weighty affairs of state and empire during his hours of teaching, the quick-witted eunuch still continued to be the dominant personal influence as his first teacher, leading the boy to see the more interesting training grounds of the Peking garrisons. For the child emperor, the eunuch remained simply the master (*hsien-sheng*).

Secondly, he needed allies. Among the political adherents the eunuch director was able to win over were Hsü Hsi, minister of war; Ma Shun and

his nephew Wang Shan, commander and deputy commander of the Imperial Bodyguard; and Wang Yu, a vice-minister of works. Later on he was able to add the powerful minister of war, Wang Chi (1378–1460), who had also been associated with the young emperor before he came to the throne, when at the behest of the Hsüan-te emperor he had organized an “army” of boys placed under the young heir apparent’s command. Since the military played such an important role in the Ming state, while the Imperial Bodyguard was perhaps one of the most efficient and effective instruments of imperial power, engaging in military as well as intelligence and judicial work, it is not difficult to see how Wang Chen, controlling a classic combination of political and executive power, came to exercise such easy dominance.

While the grand empress dowager was alive and still in a position to ruin him, Wang Chen had been circumspect and deferred to the senior grand secretaries. But after her death he persuaded the old grand secretaries to withdraw from active participation in politics and to leave the burdensome duties of drafting edicts to others, in an attempt to gather the responsibilities of the grand secretariat into his own hands. During the early forties the only active secretary was a young man, Ts’ao Nai (1402–49), who had a reputation for his strong character. His colleague Ma Yü (1395–1447), although also a distinguished graduate, remained a routine bureaucrat. Three other grand secretaries participated in the drafting of edicts in the late forties, after the deaths of Yang Shih-ch’i in 1444 and Yang P’u in 1446: Kao Ku (1391–1460), Ch’en Hsün (1385–1462), and Miao Chung (1370–1450?). All were hand-picked protégés of Yang Shih-ch’i, but all were also mediocrities who staffed the grand secretariat ineffectually while the problems of the empire grew apace. None was capable of standing up to the skillful manipulation of power by the eunuch director, who was soon an effective dictator.

The court paid him homage, obeisance, and flattery largely because the young emperor continued to admire and defer to his erstwhile teacher. But the older court officials also must have respected him as a competent official, if lacking in experience. He is said to have been clever, alert, and a man of considerable personal charm. They also must have feared him as a political manipulator. After a time, certainly by the mid-1440s, he clearly began to develop a certain megalomania (hardly avoidable in the circumstances), thinking himself to be a second Duke of Chou, arbitrarily deciding great issues of state, overriding criticism, and even wantonly killing his adversaries.

As so often happened in court politics during the Ming, a eunuch upstart would sooner or later begin to use the emperor’s power as his own,

even while he remained totally dependent on the emperor's will and whim. Wang Chen was the first example of such a man: intimidating even the highest officials, jailing those who obstructed him, and in some cases bringing about their deaths. This alliance between the Son of Heaven himself, his eunuch assistants and counsellors, and the Imperial Bodyguard, which was to become a typical alignment of power during the Ming, was now brought into existence for the first time.

Popular unrest

The regency thus seems to have established a viable system of government that kept the central authority functioning smoothly, in spite of the lack of a mature emperor, at least until the 1440s. In the country at large, however, there were many signs that things were not so well. The Hsüan-te emperor had had a reputation for his "conscientious concern for the welfare of his people and for effective administration." But his solicitude had not been able to prevent social unrest arising from natural causes, nor to eliminate arbitrary government policies that contributed greatly to provoking unrest. The memory of the revolt in Shantung during the 1420s, when thousands of armed rebels had confronted the government, was still vivid in the minds of the court.

One of the major causes of unrest was the way in which the system of corvée labor was implemented. Corvée labor was primarily needed on a large scale in Nanking, where much construction continued, but especially in Peking, where building on a massive scale continued as the city was transformed into the "center of the world." Moreover, corvée labor provided a wide range of goods and objects needed by government and the palace and the manpower for many essential services. The implementation of such services was not simply burdensome; they were often applied so harshly as to provoke resentment that could easily have been avoided by an administration more effective and more sensitive to popular feeling.

The result of overburdensome demands was widespread evasion. In 1438, for example, several thousand artisan-craftsmen either evaded service or had to be forcibly rounded up to perform their duties. In some areas great numbers of people simply fled their land, becoming fugitives. In 1438 more than half the registered population of Fan-chih in Shansi province had simply disappeared, while in I-ch'eng in the same province it was reported that more than a thousand had absconded, leaving their lands to grow wild. In 1440 it was reported that bands of vagrant squatters numbered in the hundreds were to be seen camping along the roads, trying to sustain themselves on wild plants and the bark of trees. In 1445, in

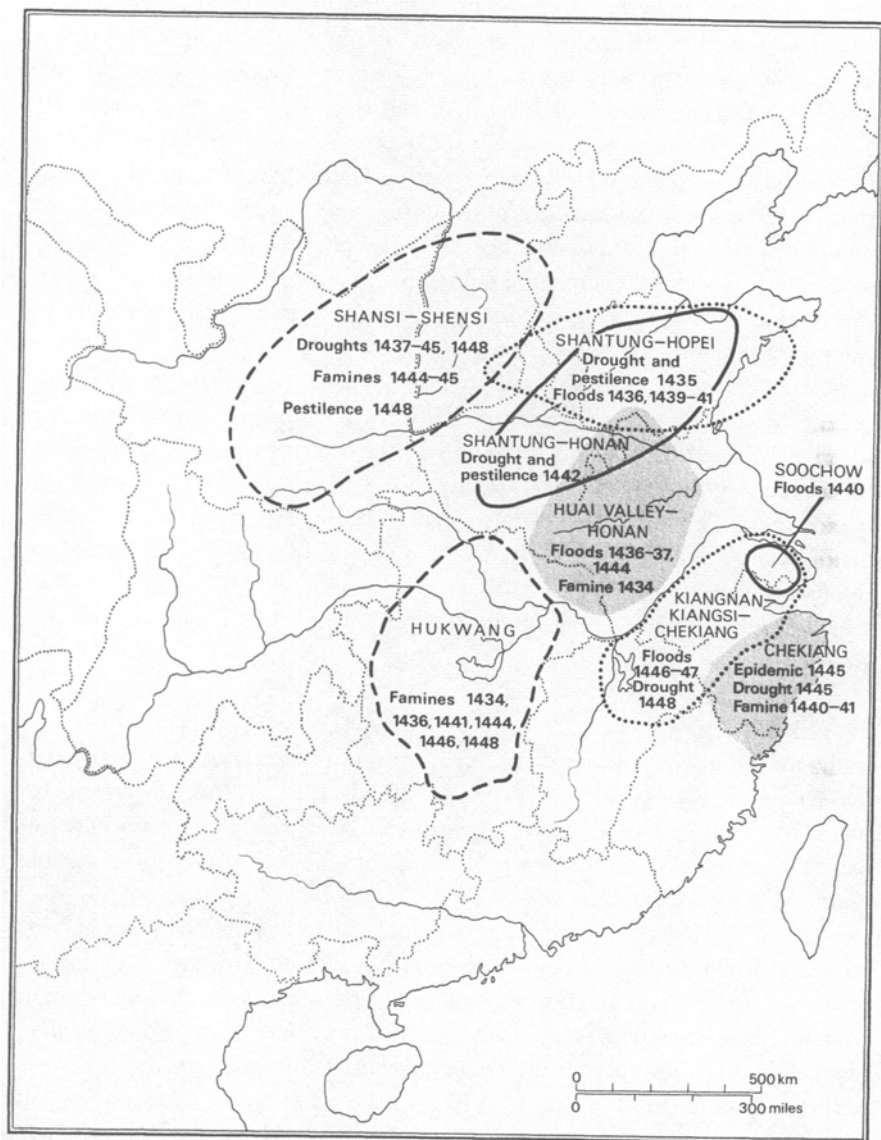
famine-stricken districts of Wei-nan and Fu-p'ing in Shensi, we are told that "doors were closed and houses shut up, while the people had disappeared in the search for food." Such wholesale desertion did not occur only in the poverty-stricken northwest. In 1441 it is said that Chin-hua in Chekiang had lost 40 percent of its registered households, while in parts of neighboring T'ai-chou only a third of the households remained. Similar conditions affected Fukien, where in 1449 in Yen-p'ing and other inland prefectures for a thousand *li* along the roads all was deserted, the people hiding, fields abandoned, taxes unlevied.

Such local dislocation, the result of a bare subsistence standard of living leaving no margins to meet hard times and shortages aggravated by the demands of the landlord or the tax collector and the *corvée* system, was a constant and recurring threat to the stability of the rural order.

It would, however, be quite unfair to attribute all this suffering to oppressive government policies. The early reign of Ying-tsung was a period of repeated natural calamities. The northwestern provinces of Shansi and Shensi suffered a terrible series of droughts after 1437, culminating in 1444 and 1445 in massive famine. Huge amounts of grain had to be diverted from granaries in Honan to relieve the suffering. Yet another drought and locust plague struck the northwest in 1448. Another area constantly susceptible to famine was Chiang-pei, from Hsü-chou south to the Huai Valley and the Yangtze. Here famine struck in 1434. There was serious flooding in 1436, 1437, and 1444, and in 1447 there was again widespread famine.

The North China Plain and Shantung suffered drought and locust plagues in 1435, and floods in 1436 and 1439, when both the Yellow River and Grand Canal burst their dikes, causing severe flooding and much loss of life, in 1440 when the Yellow River again flooded, and in 1441. In 1442 droughts and locusts hit Shantung and Honan, causing many people in Shantung to abandon their lands. Another severe outbreak of flooding which began in 1448 is dealt with below. The central Yangtze province of Hu-kuang, a major grain-producing region, suffered local famines in 1434, 1436, 1441, 1444, 1446, and 1448. Even the fertile and productive Kiangnan region and Chekiang were affected: serious floods struck Soochow and neighboring cities in Kiangnan in 1440, and there was famine in Chekiang in 1440 and 1441. In 1445 in Chekiang there was a severe drought and what was probably an epidemic of plague, bringing a high mortality. Floods affected Kiangnan in 1446–47 and were followed by drought in 1448.

The government did not simply stand by passively; tax remissions on a huge scale were authorized—in the famine of 1447 1.5 million *tan* of tax



Map 15. Areas affected by calamities and epidemics, 1430-1450

grain were remitted from Kiangnan alone. Moreover, the government, especially in the period before the death of the grand empress dowager, who took a personal interest in these matters, was quick to give relief to the victims of disaster, often at great cost.

In 1448 the government was faced with a natural disaster on a grand scale. The Yellow River burst its dikes to the northeast of K'ai-feng, its waters taking an easterly course to flow into the Yellow Sea not far from modern Tung-hai. Another breach of the dikes in 1449 led part of the Yellow River's waters to flow into the Kuo River and then into the Huai River and thus to the sea somewhat farther south. Apart from the inundation of great areas, widespread destruction, heavy mortality, and displacement of population, this flood also seriously affected the Shantung section of the Grand Canal. There were successive breaches of the Sha-wan Dikes, where the Yellow River and the canal met in western Shantung, and the canal lost much of its water supply.

Since Peking depended heavily on goods and grain transported by the canal, the capital was in danger of being cut off from its southern source of supplies. These floods and inundations continued in the 1450s and required an energetic program of conservation work that would last for years. These are described below. Although thereafter there are no reports of further major calamities for many years, the flooding of the Yellow River, and the constant conservancy work required to contain it, would continue to be a major concern until the end of the Ming.

A major uprising in Southeast China

Different strands of popular discontent, impoverishment, overtaxation, onerous corvée demands, and the excessive exploitation of tenant farmers combined to produce two separate but interrelated uprisings in the mountainous regions of northern Fukien and neighboring areas of Chekiang and Kiangsi in the late 1440s.

One of these related rebellions was originally a revolt of silver miners working in the Chekiang–Fukien border mountains. Silver was, of course, crucial to the Ming government, and silver mining was under government control. This was normally exercised by local officials, who demanded excessively high production quotas and imposed the death penalty for thefts from the mines. In about 1444 Yeh Tsung-liu, a former subaltern official in local government from Ch'u-chou in southern Chekiang, who had turned to stealing from government-controlled silver mines, began to lead a growing band of discontented miners and to “work” mines on the Fukien–Chekiang border illegally. Three years later, in 1447, Yeh openly rebelled, attracted a considerable following from among the miners and villagers of the surrounding district, and began to organize and train them militarily.

Somewhat later, in March 1448, a group of tenant farmers from the northwest of Fukien and the Kiangsi border, who had belonged to newly

established local security forces, also rebelled. The basic reason for the rising was the excessive exploitation of tenant farmers by local landowners, who obliged them to make seasonal gifts to their landlords in addition to their regular rents. Two brothers, Teng Mao-ch'i and Teng Mao-pa, refused to comply and encouraged their fellow villagers to refuse these extra payments. Clashes with the local militia resulted in easy successes for the rebels, who had already received military training and who had access to local arsenals in addition to their intimate knowledge of local terrain and conditions.

In the second half of 1448 and early 1449 both risings grew in numbers and affected ever larger areas. Yeh claimed for himself the title of king of his insurgent followers, while Teng Mao-ch'i announced himself King of Fukien (*Min wang*). Heretical scriptural texts are said to have been circulated and blood oaths taken to swear in the rebels of both groups—moves typical of the first stages of a serious major uprising. Although the two movements were never combined, they were in communication and sometimes acted in concert.

The fighting and pillaging were concentrated in northern inland Fukien. Teng Mao-ch'i's uprising began in the neighborhood of Sha-hsien and then spread northeast to Yen-p'ing. The provincial forces had some difficulty in locating the rebels and striking at them. The insurgents operated in difficult terrain, and their leaders had considerable tactical skill and won a number of early successes. When in September 1448, after six months, the court ordered a punitive expedition, it appointed as commander the associate censor-in-chief Chang K'ai (1398–1460), a timid and ineffectual man who proved to be a most inept general. At first his army, collected in northeastern Kiangsi, was prevented from striking at Teng Mao-ch'i's forces by the rebel bands of Yeh Tsung-liu, who had occupied the border region between Kiangsi and Fukien south of the mining town of Ch'ien-shan. After long hesitation the government troops defeated Yeh's forces, killing Yeh in December 1448 (one source says he died in an internal brawl among the rebels). But under new leaders his rebels retreated into the mountains, defeated their pursuers, and moved back into their old territory in southern Chekiang, where they besieged Ch'u-chou before finally being crushed in August 1449.

Meanwhile Teng's rebels found the tide turning against them. In January 1449 they were heavily defeated at Chien-yang. In February the Teng brothers were betrayed by a defecting rebel headman, ambushed, and captured. They were sent to Peking and publicly executed. But new leaders, the most important of them Teng Po-sun, took over the remaining bands of insurgents, who continued to roam the northwest of Fukien. In May

1449 government forces captured the new leaders near Sha-hsien, but bands of rebels continued sporadic pillaging in these difficult border areas until 1452. Remnants of Yeh Tsung-liu's rebels also remained active for some years.

In spite of their initial successes in attracting followers among disgruntled miners and impoverished tenant farmers, neither rebellion ever succeeded in gathering a mass following. The insurgents never reached the stage of controlling territory or capturing county towns, and in spite of the grandiose titles claimed by their leaders, they remained bands of roaming bandits. One basic reason for their lack of success was the promise of local officials in the region to grant the rural population exemption from *corvée* labor for three years. The disaffection of the miners was also quelled by a reform of the regulations for mining, the lowering of excessive output quotas, and the abolition of the death penalty for theft. This showed how simple the pacification of such rural unrest could be, if only official corruption and mismanagement were eliminated and harsh government policies ameliorated, notwithstanding the abuses and pressures generated in the rural areas by the age-old problems arising from inequalities in land distribution and the harsh relations between landowners and cultivators.

The southwestern border: The Lu-ch'uan campaigns

During the 1440s the Ming armies were continually involved in a series of remarkable and somewhat mysterious campaigns in the far southwest, along the ancient Burma Road that ran from Ta-li through Yung-ch'ang to present-day Bhamo and then either down the Irrawaddy into Burma or west via the Chindwin River valley into northeastern India. The Mongols had conquered the Yunnan plateau in 1253 and some thirty years later invaded the Burmese basin. But here their conquests were limited and short-lived. At the end of the Yüan period the Shan peoples, who inhabited both western Szechwan and upper Burma, became the dominant force in the area. The Shan ruled the major Burmese state of Ava; other independent states in northern Burma included Meng-yang (Mohnyin) and Lu-ch'uan, an area roughly corresponding with present day Te-hung Autonomous Chou and its neighboring areas in southwest Yunnan. During the last years of the Yüan and the early Ming, Lu-ch'uan consolidated its territories in upper Burma and in 1385–87 unsuccessfully invaded Yunnan. Eventually a settlement was reached by which its ruler accepted Chinese protection.

In 1413 the Lu-ch'uan state came under the rule of an ambitious and aggressive ruler, Ssu Jen-fa (Thonganbwa), who gradually increased his territories and raided Chinese territory. In spite of requests from Yunnan

for a campaign to suppress him, the Chinese court, not believing the expense would be justified, refused to act until 1436, when he threatened Chin-ch'ih (Yung-ch'ang). In 1439 Mu Sheng, governor of Yunnan, was ordered to attack him with troops drafted from Kweichow and Hu-kuang. After a fierce and inconclusive campaign, Ssu Jen-fa sent a tribute mission to court in 1440. But fighting continued, and in 1440 Chinese forces suffered a heavy defeat.

The court was now forced to take more drastic measures. The Yunnanese armies were built up and reinforced with troops from Szechwan, Kweichow, and Hu-kuang. Early in 1441 they were placed under the command of Wang Chi, a close associate of the eunuch director Wang Chen. In 1441–42 Wang Chi's army heavily defeated the Shan tribesmen and took Ssu Jen-fa's headquarters, though suffering severe losses. Ssu Jen-fa took refuge in Ava. Late in 1442 Wang Chi returned to Yunnan and attempted to negotiate a settlement with Ava and with other Shan kingdoms, especially Mu-pang (Hsenwi), which claimed the Lu-ch'uan area. His attempts proved futile, and in 1443–44 Wang Chi attacked Ava's territory, without any conclusive result. In 1444 the court threatened to destroy Ava if it did not surrender Ssu Jen-fa. In 1445 Ava gave in to Wang Chi's forces: Ssu Jen-fa had already committed suicide.

Ssu Jen-fa's son, Ssu Chi-fa, had meanwhile gained control of Mohnyin and had sent tribute missions to court. He refused, however, to come to Peking himself. The king of Ava asked the Chinese to conduct a joint expedition against Mohnyin. Wang Chi mounted this new campaign in 1448–49 with a large army. Together with forces from Ava and Hsenwi, he crossed the Irrawaddy, and Ssu Chi-fa was routed. Wang Chi is said by some sources to have occupied Mohnyin. But in the end Ssu Pu-fa, Ssu Chi-fa's younger brother, was allowed to retain control of Mohnyin, and Wang Chi made a compact with him by which the Shan were never to cross the Irrawaddy. Ssu Pu-fa and his successors remained in control of the territory west of the Irrawaddy and continued to send tribute to Peking until the sixteenth century. In 1454, as part of a general territorial settlement between themselves, Hsenwi, and the Chinese, Ava finally handed over Ssu Chi-fa, who was executed in Peking.

These lengthy and expensive campaigns may have impressed the local peoples in upper Burma, as the sources claim. But the area was not pacified permanently. Tribal wars broke out once more among the Shan peoples in 1474, and troubles continued in northern Burma until the mid-sixteenth century. The expensive campaigns of Wang Chi did, however, achieve one end. They finally consolidated the Chinese possession of Yunnan for the remainder of the Ming and indeed to the present.

The man behind this "march toward the tropics" was undoubtedly

Wang Chen, who has rightly been accused of instigating and continuing the southwestern campaigns for his own personal aggrandizement. Great numbers of troops were involved. However, they were local armies from the southwest, which were of little significance in the paramount defensive strategy of the era, the defense of northern China against the Mongols. True the campaigns must have wasted considerable funds, and experienced generals like the eunuch Ts'ao Chi-hsiang and Chiang Kuei would have been better employed in the north. But for the moment, the northern border defenses remained intact and capable of repelling any threat from the steppe. For Wang Chen, as the central figure at court, reports of victories in the far southwest helped to bolster his reputation as a statesman, and the victories could be had with little real cost to the defense of the empire. Contemporaries and later historians alike have used the story of his blunders in becoming embroiled in these campaigns in the southwest to help explain the later and infinitely more serious blunder he made on the northern border, which led to vast losses and the capture of the emperor. The cases were, however, quite different, as we shall see below.

The perennial problem of the "Mongol menace"

Throughout the Ming, the Chinese and the court retained a fundamental apprehension of the Mongol "threat," which was a heritage of Chinese experiences during the Mongol conquest and the Yüan dynasty. The menace of the Mongols remained the dominant problem in the foreign relations of this period and continued to overshadow defense thinking until the latter half of the sixteenth century. The Mongol tribes that had returned to their steppe pastures had left behind in China great numbers of their countrymen, thousands of them as officers in the new Ming army. They themselves retained the memories of past glories and vague hopes that somehow the great khanate of the Mongols might be reestablished. But after the Yung-lo emperor had several times routed or at least dispersed the Mongol forces in their own home territories, three separate Mongol groups came to settle along the Chinese borders: the Uriyangkhad in the northeast, the Tartars or Eastern Mongols who later formed the Khanate of Chahar in the center, and the Oirats, who lived far to the northwest of Mongolia.

Among these groups there was constant rivalry and an ever-shifting balance of power. As long as Arughtai (A-lu-t'ai), the Mongol chief minister whom the Yung-lo emperor had failed to subjugate, was active, he could hope to subdue and reunite the various Mongol tribes, although he was

involved in constant warfare with various groups. However, in 1434 he was killed in battle during one of the internecine campaigns against the Oirats. His son surrendered to the Ming, and the Oirats rapidly became the most powerful group among the tribes and began to reunite the Mongols under their own leadership. Their leader Toghon, who had defeated Arughtai, had already united the Oirat tribes and married his daughter to the young khan of the Eastern Mongols. After his death his son Esen (Yeh-hsien) began encroaching on Ming territory. In 1443 and 1445 he attacked Hami and by 1448 was in effective control there. He also repeatedly attempted to subvert the Mongol guards defending Sha-chou and Ch'ih-chin in western Kansu. In the northeast he extended his power over the Uriyangkhad guards in Manchuria, so that his authority extended from modern Sinkiang to the borders of Korea.

The socioeconomic factors in Sino-Mongol relations

In the constant rivalry and internal unrest both between the various tribes themselves and between the Chinese and Mongols there were obvious economic factors—namely, the constant search for and maintenance of waters and pastures and the desire for patronage of trade. The impetus to establish smoothly functioning relations with the Ming empire was also economically conditioned—the tea-horse markets of various places along the northern border, and especially that at Ta-t'ung in Shansi, existed to fulfil this function. It was not simply tea that attracted the Mongol envoys, but also silk of various kinds, luxury wares, and a wide variety of goods, especially iron goods. The Mongols sent more and more envoys to these border markets: by the late 1440s over two thousand were sent in a single year. Since the Chinese hosts were compelled to feed and quarter this large group of armed horsemen in addition to paying for the purchase of the horses they brought to trade, such “tribute missions” came to be a form of barely concealed coercion and placed a considerable burden on the treasury, besides offering a lingering menace to China's border security.

Relations between Chinese and Mongols were close. After the Hung-wu and Yung-lo emperors had more or less subdued the restive Mongol tribes, relations were at first normalized on the basis of neighborly intercourse. Huge numbers of Mongols lived on Chinese soil, were an important part of the Chinese army, intermarried with Chinese families, and took Chinese names. Chinese merchants, on the other hand, penetrated the steppe regions to trade with Mongol chieftains, whom they found receptive and anxious for gain and personal comfort.

Mongols living close to the borders of Chinese settled society became increasingly dependent on the availability of agrarian produce from China. They even started to cultivate buckwheat and barley to improve an otherwise precarious livelihood largely derived from flocks of sheep. Now and again a Mongol chieftain would petition the Chinese government to grant him lands that would provide his people livelihood more secure than nomadic existence in the wide but precarious steppe. The Mongols, with their highly mobile warrior tribes, attempted constantly to gain access to the wealth generated by China's stable society, either by more or less lucrative forms of submission or vassalage or by brute force. The principal aim of Mongol relations with the Ming was no longer world conquest, it was sheer survival and consolidation for the vulnerable steppe economy.

The tea–horse markets

The most vital strategic need of the Chinese was for a sufficient supply of horses for the huge standing armies. China produced few horses itself, and those were of poor quality. After the expulsion of the Yüan–Mongol armies from China in the late 1360s, the urgent and constant need of the Ming armies for horses was met at first by bartering various monopolized commodities like tea, salt, and textiles for horses in China's southwest, in Szechwan, Yunnan, and Kweichow. This dependence on the southwest was, however, shortlived, lasting only until about 1387, when the northern provinces, especially Shansi, became the more important source for the procurement of horses. The change in policy was partly the result of the resumption of trade between China and the steppe peoples, but was accelerated by the move of the imperial capital from the south to Peking in the 1420s. Moreover, during the various Mongolian campaigns of the Yung-lo period, the Chinese forces were able to augment their stocks of horses after victorious battles and as a result of the capture of frontier grazing lands.

However, these were accidental gains. The steady, regular procurement of horses on the northern frontier was largely conducted by bartering monopolized tea for horses, and it was explicit policy to keep this tea–horse trade under strict government control. This barter trade was conducted not on the Mongol frontier, but in the northwest of Shensi (modern Kansu) at three places, Hsi-ning, Ho-chou, and T'ao-chou, where there were special tea–horse trade offices. Barter was conducted once every three years, and it was done on a considerable scale. The official trade quota laid down that at every such market a million *chin* (1.5 million pounds) of tea would be exchanged for 14,000 horses. The horses were mostly raised by the nomadic tribes of the Tsinghai region, whose chieftains were given insignia in

the form of gold tablets. Half of these were kept by the court and the matching half by the tribal chieftains, qualifying them to trade.

In 1449 the T'u-mu incident (see below) stopped this official border trade for some time. It was resumed after the T'ien-shun reign (1457–64). During the interval, horses were procured by barter trade with other countries—with Korea, Japan, and even the Ryūkyū Islands. A comparatively small-scale official horse trade with Korea had already been carried on in the early years of the century, and during the twenty years from 1407 to 1427 Korea had been able to deliver some 18,000 horses. After 1450 this trade was resumed; more than 2,000 horses were delivered, the Korean tribute envoys receiving five rolls of silk per horse, together with unspecified quantities of silver and gauze. The Ryūkyūan government also occasionally bartered horses for silk, porcelain, or iron goods.

After 1470 the frontier horse trade was resumed, but it was now more and more in the hands of private merchants. New tea districts had grown up in Han-chung (southern Shensi), and this area's production was offered by private merchants in direct trade. By 1500 about 60 percent of the tea-horse barter trade was conducted by private merchants. That this situation was allowed to continue throughout the sixteenth century shows the importance of the horse trade in maintaining the Chinese army's capacity as a striking force. A long-term solution to the shortage was eventually seen in developing a new horse-breeding system within the Chinese agrarian economy.

The military situation

In the light of the general pattern of Chinese foreign relations in the early fifteenth century and of the strategic problems that arose from them, it is clear that during the 1430s and 1440s defense policy, particularly in the crucial northern frontier zone, was seriously deficient. The very considerable victories achieved during the Hung-wu and Yung-lo campaigns against the Mongols had led to a certain degree of exhaustion and a reluctance to undertake interventionist action beyond the border, and perhaps most dangerously, to a quite unrealistic complacency over what had actually been accomplished. Already before the death of the Yung-lo emperor the government began to concentrate border garrisons around the new northern capital of Peking, as if the military leadership had some forebodings of future danger. After the Yung-lo emperor's death, both the frontier generals and members of the grand secretariat warned of the shortcomings of the frontier defenses, but their protests went unregarded. Minor changes to the frontier defenses—the blocking of one strategic pass and the strengthening of

guardposts—were made in 1435 and 1438. But otherwise things were allowed to continue unchanged until 1449.

Not only was there a lack of any new strategic thinking, the whole military establishment set up in the early Ming had become seriously run down since the Yung-lo reign. The *wei-so* garrison system of territorial armies had by 1438 lost half of its original manpower of about 2,500,000 men: a million and a quarter soldiers had fled the hereditary ranks and had not been replaced. At the same time, the whole system of military colonies (*t'un-t'ien*) along the frontiers, designed to support the armies, had been allowed to deteriorate. The grain was sold off privately, and the lands themselves misappropriated or sold off. The officers tended to become landowners, and their soldiers became farm laborers. This threw the whole system of a locally sustained army establishment into confusion and necessitated the transportation of great quantities of grain to the frontiers from the inner provinces, with serious repercussions on the economy. By the mid-fifteenth century the system provided adequately for neither the manpower needed for the army, nor the logistic support of the armies, nor the training and military prowess of the troops.

This overall deterioration after the Yung-lo emperor's reign should not, however, be seen as a sign of the beginnings of a general dynastic decline. It was the result rather of an age-old Chinese tradition, rooted in the agrarian structure of the state, of a peculiar style of army, a peasant army whose troops were treated more as *corvée* laborers than as professional soldiers, as conscripts rather than volunteers, and which included even criminals sentenced to military service as a punishment. Such troops were brought in rotation to the northern frontiers from all over China and lived unwillingly under such poor conditions that they had no will to fight. Given the opportunity, they would rather desert the ranks to return to their homes, flee to seek a new life in the southern provinces, or even take refuge in Mongol settlements safe from the Chinese authorities. Their officers were little better; they were quite happy to draw the pay and provisions due to soldiers who had deserted or absconded and to make a handsome personal profit from the situation. The whole military setup derived from a fundamentally bureaucratic attitude to the army. So the situation in the mid-fifteenth century arose not from dynastic decline, but from deep-rooted ideas and practices in the framework of Chinese social organization and economic conditions.

The actual defenses of northern China at this time had taken shape toward the end of the Yung-lo reign. The repeated campaigns into Mongolia, although victorious, had in fact been inconclusive, and the Mongol forces had not been obliterated. The withdrawal of Chinese garrisons north

of the line of the Great Wall and the concentration of the defensive system around Peking had therefore some sound reasons. It must be remembered that at this time the border itself was marked only by a line of beacon fires which had been extinguished since Yung-lo times and was simply patrolled by Chinese cavalry. There was no Great Wall until the 1470s; the only solidly built wall protecting Peking was the brick-faced city wall itself which, with its nine fortified gates, had been completed only in 1445.

The defense system north of Peking was based on two great garrison cities, Hsüan-fu and Ta-t'ung in northern Shansi. Hsüan-fu was the main garrison center, with some 90,000 troops. About 35,000 of those were on actual defense duty, and 55,000 were in training. Of these troops, 25,000 were cavalry, and Hsüan-fu's garrison was well supplied with firearms: 3,000 each of heavy mortars, light hand guns, and the signal guns in addition to some 90,000 light hand rockets. Hsüan-fu was essentially a fixed garrison blocking the approaches to Peking from the northwest. Ta-t'ung's natural defenses were far less secure than those of Hsüan-fu. Its armies were stronger in cavalry. Its command group included two generals in control of mobile strikes (*yu-chi Chiang-chün*), and its forces included 35,000 horses, 10,000 of them kept within the walls. Ta-t'ung had always been a danger spot on the Shansi border, and the logistical costs of maintaining such an army in an unproductive region were very great. Sufficient grain supplies for the garrison and fodder for such numbers of horses meant a constant stream of supply wagons coming into this sparsely peopled region. The third leg of the defensive triangle was Peking itself, in the vicinity of which some 160,000 troops were garrisoned. Farther back still, the garrisons in the rest of northeastern China (Shantung, the Northern Metropolitan Region, Honan) were kept in reserve.

The first line of defense was a chain of frontier guard battalions, which it was assumed would have to hold and delay the enemy until a striking force could be sent out from one of the major garrison headquarters. In Hung-wu times the outer line of garrisons, which had been quartered beyond the line of the Great Wall at Tung-sheng, Wan-ch'üan, Kuang-ning, and Ta-ning, had been invaluable both as an outer line of defense and for intelligence gathering. But these frontier posts had been drawn back. The frontier headquarters in Dolon, for example, had by the 1440s been drawn back to Tu-shih k'ou, near modern Kalgan. The frontier buffer zone was abandoned. Hsüan-fu, the general headquarters of the east-central section of the perimeter, was only 100 miles from the capital. The whole defensive system was lacking in depth, and the actual border garrison posts were in fact (for reasons already explained) far below strength and much weaker than the headquarters in Hsüan-fu or Peking believed. The whole strategy depended

upon quick and efficient counterstrikes in case of an enemy attack, a feasible scheme perhaps under an efficient command structure and competent leadership, but fraught with danger without it.

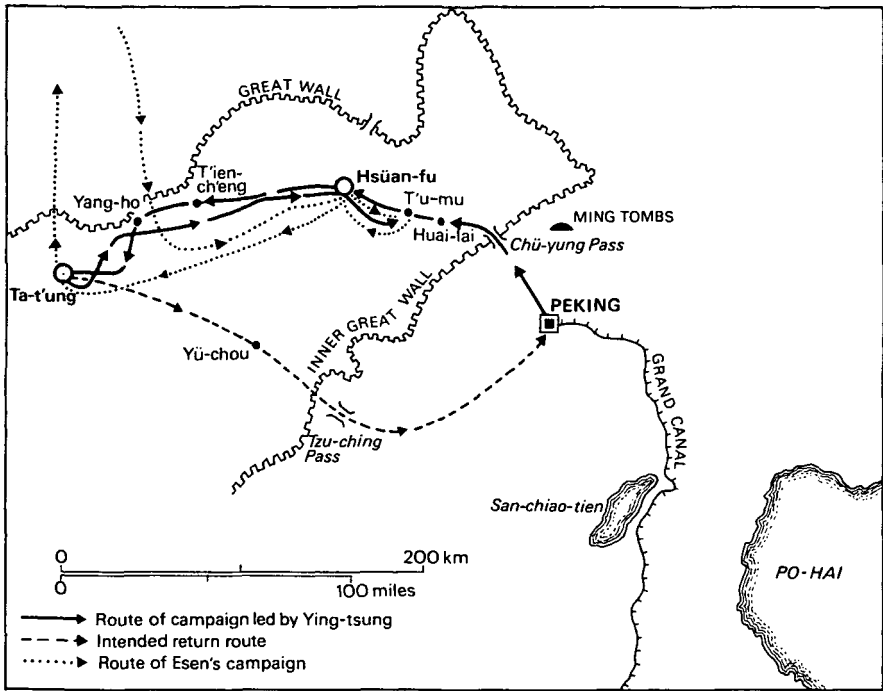
In 1449, when an attack actually came, neither of these requirements was met.

The T'u-mu debacle

We have already seen how Esen had reunified the Mongol banners and established his authority along the whole northern Chinese frontier zone from Manchuria to Hami. The Ming court had taken no effective measures against him and certainly underestimated both his authority among the Mongols and his military power, still treating the Eastern Mongol khan Toghto Bukha as the real ruler. In 1448 the Ming court received an Oirat tribute embassy, which was rebuffed by Wang Chen when it tried to obtain inflated payment for the horses it had brought. To underline this insult, according to some accounts, some interpreters had suggested without any official authorization that Esen might marry his son into the Ming imperial family. When Esen tried to open negotiations for a dynastic marriage, the court, which knew nothing of these unofficial suggestions, flatly refused him.

Whatever the truth of these reports, in July 1449 Esen launched a large-scale invasion of China. He mounted a three-pronged attack: Toghto Bukha was to lead the Uriyangkhad banners in a raid into Liao-tung; his own subordinate, the *chih-yüan* A-la, was to besiege Hsüan-fu; and he himself advanced against Ta-t'ung. His army crushed a badly supplied and led Chinese army at Yang-ho northeast of Ta-t'ung and advanced toward Ta-t'ung itself. The court now took an extraordinary and totally irrational decision. The emperor, only twenty-two years old, was encouraged by Wang Chen to lead his own armies into battle against Esen's forces. Perhaps, in the aftermath of reports of victory from the southwest and of the successful suppression of the rebels in Fukien, the emperor and his advisors alike overestimated the strength of the armies. Perhaps the emperor himself, who had been encouraged to play at military exercises with his own guards as a child, believed himself capable of commanding an army in the field. Perhaps Wang Chen, whose reputation had been enhanced by the southern campaigns, believed the Ming armies would be invincible.

The court was astonished at this decision and protested that the emperor should not endanger himself. But these protests went unregarded in the face of Wang Chen's encouragement. On 3 August the emperor appointed his half-brother Chu Ch'i-yü as regent for the duration of the campaign, and a huge army (sometimes said to contain half a million men) was hastily



Map 16. The T'u-mu campaign, 1449

put together. Its command, under the emperor, comprised twenty experienced generals and a large entourage of high-ranking civil officials, with Wang Chen acting as field marshal. The massive army was ill-prepared, ill-provisioned, and incompetently led. The expedition was to develop into the greatest military fiasco of Ming times.

The emperor left Peking on 4 August. The objective was to march west to Ta-t'ung, passing through the line of the inner wall at the Chü-yung Pass toward Hsüan-fu. It was then planned to lead a campaign into the steppe from Ta-t'ung and to return to Peking by a less exposed southerly route through Yü-chou and the Tzu-ching Pass (see map). This return route was planned partly to avoid ravaging the countryside through which the huge army was to march twice in a single season and partly because the eunuch commander Wang Chen's home and estates were near Yü-chou. The army is said to have had rations for a month's campaign; the strike into the steppe would have to be short and sharp.

Everything went wrong from the start. The march was mired down by constant heavy rain. Dissident opinions were constantly raised among the

civil officials and generals who wished to halt, first at Chü-yung Pass and then at Hsüan-fu, and to send the emperor back to Peking. Wang Chen responded by ever more dictatorial displays of arrogance and rage. On 12 August some of the courtiers seriously discussed assassinating Wang, withdrawing the imperial entourage to Peking, and leaving the generals to lead the troops on to Ta-t'ung; but the conspirators lacked the courage to carry out their plan. On 16 August the army came upon the corpse-strewn battlefield of Yang-ho, where the Mongols under Esen had decimated a force from Ta-t'ung led by one of Wang Chen's eunuch protégés on 3 August. When the emperor reached Ta-t'ung on 18 August, reports from this eunuch and other garrison commanders persuaded Wang Chen that a campaign into the steppe would be too dangerous. It was therefore decided to return to the capital, the "expedition" having been declared to have reached a victorious conclusion.

On 20 August the army set out toward Yü-chou, but by then the troops were becoming more and more restless and undisciplined. Wang Chen, fearing that if they passed through his home district they would do irreparable damage to his estates, now took yet another disastrous decision: to strike northeast and return by the same route, which was of course exposed to Mongol attacks. By 27 August the totally disordered army reached Hsüan-fu. On 30 August the Mongols attacked the rear guard east of Hsüan-fu and wiped it out. A powerful new rear guard of cavalry was sent to guard the imperial entourage. Its commander, an elderly and incompetent general, Chu Yung, led it straight into a Mongol ambush at Yao-erh-ling: this force too was annihilated. The Mongols were now only 15 miles behind the main army. On 31 August the army camped at T'u-mu post station. The walled county town of Huai-lai was only eight miles farther on, within easy reach, and the officials urged the emperor to take refuge in the city. But Wang Chen again refused, since this would have meant abandoning his own huge baggage train, and overruled the ministers.

The soldiers set up camp at T'u-mu on a site without water for men or horses. Esen sent a party to prevent their getting access to a river south of the camp and gradually surrounded the Chinese army. On the morning of 1 September the Mongols first prevented the army from breaking camp and proceeding to Huai-lai and then offered to negotiate. Wang Chen ignored their overtures and ordered the army to move toward the river. At this point the Chinese army was in utter confusion. The Mongols now attacked in force, and the Chinese troops panicked. The army was destroyed: in all about half of the original force were lost, and enormous amounts of arms, armor, and war materiel were abandoned on the battlefield. All the high-ranking Chinese generals and court officials (including the veteran marshal

Chang Fu and two grand secretaries, Ts'ao Nai and Chang I) were killed. Wang Chen, according to some accounts, was killed by his own officers. The emperor was captured and on 3 September was sent to Esen's main camp near Hsüan-fu.

Thus ended Wang Chen's, and the emperor's, dream of glory. The whole expedition had been unnecessary, ill-conceived, and ill-prepared, and Wang Chen's irresponsible decisions had led it into total disaster. Esen for his part was quite unprepared either for the scale of his victory (according to some sources the battle of T'u-mu was won by an advance guard of only 20,000 Mongol cavalry) or for the quite fortuitous capture of the emperor. Peking now lay before him, open and undefended. What he might have done had he pressed home his advantage is incalculable. As it was, he decided to keep the emperor hostage as a bargaining counter and to turn back with all the booty his men could carry to regroup his own forces.¹

THE DEFENSE OF PEKING AND THE ENTHRONEMENT OF A NEW EMPEROR

Esen at first attempted to use the captured emperor to raise a ransom from the Ming court or from the frontier garrisons and to gain possession either of Hsüan-fu or Ta-t'ung and thus of the strong points controlling the frontier. Though ransom was raised from the court and from Ta-t'ung, Esen was determined to hold on to his captive, even though the frontier fortresses steadfastly refused to open their gates to him.

There seems little doubt that the emperor, for his part, was willing to enter into discussions of a dynastic marriage with Esen—though he wisely postponed the wedding until he should be restored to Peking. His eunuch aide Hsi Ning, who had been captured with him, apparently went over completely to Esen's cause, giving him political and strategic advice and helping formulate his objectives.

In Peking, the news of the disaster at T'u-mu and of the emperor's capture threw the court into confusion. The emperor's mother, empress dowager Sun, and his empress Ch'ien immediately raised a ransom in jewels and sent it off to secure the emperor's release. The court was at first inclined to follow the counsel of Hsü Yu-ch'en (1407–72), a man with a reputation for his knowledge of strategy, who strongly urged that since the garrison forces around Peking were now reduced to less than 100,000, and while the fate of Ta-t'ung and Hsüan-fu were still in the balance, the court

¹ For a fuller account, see F. W. Mote, "The T'u-mu incident of 1449," in *Chinese ways in warfare*, ed. Frank A. Kierman, Jr., and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), pp. 243–72.

should retreat to the south. This was what the Sung had done in 1127, when the Jurchen took their capital at Pien-liang (K'ai-feng). He backed up his arguments with powerful astrological reasons for retreat. Some officials had already begun to evacuate their families and belongings to the south.

But his arguments were countered by the vice-minister of war, Yü Ch'ien, who answered that those who advocated retreat should be executed. Since Yü Ch'ien was the senior military figure in Peking (his minister had perished at T'u-mu), his voice carried weight, and he was supported by the court eunuchs Chin Ying, Hsing An, and Li Yung-ch'ang, by the grand secretary Ch'en Hsün, the minister of personnel Wang Chih, and the minister of rites Han Yung. Li Yung-ch'ang won over the empress dowager Sun, and Yü Ch'ien's party won the day.

The decision to remain in Peking and resist having been made, the problem of the dynastic succession became pressing. A new emperor had to be enthroned as an embodiment of the Ming dynasty's heavenly mandate to provide stability and give courage to army and population alike. Because the emperor's eldest son was an infant, the obvious choice had to be Chu Ch'i-yü, Prince of Ch'eng (1428–57), the august younger brother (*huang-ti*), the half-brother of the emperor who had been appointed Protector of the State when the emperor left to lead his troops to war. As soon as Yü Ch'ien's party had clearly established its ascendancy, the empress dowager Sun instructed the Prince of Ch'eng to take charge of government affairs as regent, while the emperor's one-year old son was made heir apparent.

Immediately upon his assuming the regency, it became clear that the court would need more stable control. The chief censor presented a lengthy and damning denunciation of Wang Chen and his followers. When the regent showed himself indecisive the officials rioted, turned on some of Wang's eunuch associates, and beat them to death. The frontier officials, who were now being approached by the Mongols in the name of the captive emperor, were instructed that in future negotiations "only the nation was to be considered important," and that "orders" issued in the name of the emperor were to be rejected. One of the frontier commanders now reported that Esen planned to marry the emperor to his sister and escort him back to his throne in Peking.

On 15 September, with the empress dowager's assent, the Prince of Ch'eng was urged to ascend the throne in person, since the emperor was a captive and his infant son incapable of ruling. He at first refused, since he felt this would confuse the dynastic succession. Only the empress dowager's approval and Yü Ch'ien's advocacy of the urgent national need for leadership eventually persuaded him. A day before he took the throne, a Nanking

Hanlin scholar memorialized that he remain Protector of the State (*chien-kuo*)—an attempt at a compromise that would have preserved the regular imperial succession. But the enthronement of a new emperor was now an inescapable step, since it would immediately reduce the value of Esen's imperial hostage. The Prince of Ch'eng had to give in. On 23 September, only three weeks after the emperor's capture, he was enthroned with a minimum of ceremony, and a new reign title, Ching-t'ai (Bright Exhalation), was proclaimed as beginning from the next year (1450). The captive emperor was given the title of retired emperor (*t'ai-shang huang-ti*). A short explanation of the constitutionally improper move was promulgated which claimed that the captive emperor had himself encouraged the change.

Only one courtier dared protest, and he was summarily killed. Orders were issued to the garrisons that any attempts by the Mongols to issue "orders" through the deposed emperor were to be ignored. Envoys were sent to the former emperor informing him of what had been done. He assented and warned the envoys of Esen's intention to attack again.

This change of ruler immediately reduced the value of the former emperor to his Mongol captors and gave the government in Peking a freer hand and some breathing space. But it nevertheless left a legacy of problems. That, in a crisis, political and strategic national needs had been allowed to override ritual order and propriety in a succession case to some degree upset the dynasty's stability and claim to a legitimate line of succession. This was exacerbated by the fact that the former emperor survived. The lingering throne crisis between the two imperial brothers that poisoned the court in the mid-1450s had its source in this very necessary decision.

Since these events were all set in motion by military developments and the pressing needs of defense, it was inevitable that the new regime would be a militarized one. The erstwhile vice-minister of war Yü Ch'ien (1398–1457) was promoted to minister and with the full backing of the young emperor assumed authority over all civil and military officers. The most pressing need was to reinforce the defenses of Peking. Some 80,000 troops from Hsüan-fu led by Yang Hung were withdrawn to the capital, and other forces were brought back from Liao-tung. To bring the Peking armies up to strength, soldiers from the training corps, coastal guards, and transport units were sent to Peking and rigorously trained. Reserves were mobilized from Pei Chihli, Shansi, Shantung, and Honan. By the time the enemy eventually approached Peking in October, the losses suffered at T'u-mu had largely been made good, and the garrisons again numbered some 220,000 men. At the same time manufacture of weapons was stepped up, grain stocks in the city were built up, and measures were taken to defend the huge granaries at T'ung-chou on which Peking relied.

The command structure within Peking was reorganized on the basis of the various city gates, with Shih Heng (d. 1460), commander of the northwestern Te-sheng Gate, as supreme commander. Both he and Yü Ch'ien as minister of war commanded shock troops under seasoned generals who confronted the approaching enemy outside the walls. A cavalry colonel was placed in command of the imperial palace, and a censor-in-chief was given administrative powers over the whole city population, civilian and military. In general the military officials took charge of troops outside the walls, while the civil officials commanded forces manning the wall itself.

A multitude of memorials proposing sound reform policies were submitted. The minister of revenue Chin Lien and the Honan tax commissioner Nien Fu worked together to provide adequate finance for Peking's defense. There was a high level of common concern, confidence, and excellent morale throughout the city. It was, perhaps, Peking's finest hour.

Meanwhile Esen had been massing forces, and his assembled chieftains pledged themselves to restore Ying-tsung to the throne. Their first assault was on Ta-t'ung. Once again the emperor was brought before its gates, and the Mongols explained their aim of restoring him to the throne. The defenders refused, however, and Ying-tsung himself told a secret envoy from the garrison not to give in. After meeting another rebuff from the garrison at Yang-ho, Esen abandoned the plan of striking at Peking through the Chü-yung Pass and struck southeast to take the alternative route through the Tzu-ching Pass, southwest of the capital. Here the defenders were able to hold up the Mongol advance for several days, but were eventually overwhelmed. Two days later, on 27 October, the Mongol forces were outside Peking. At first Esen repeated his "diplomatic" approach, but the envoys he sent were attacked by the Chinese. Military operations began. The Mongols were rebuffed, and Esen, urged on by the renegade eunuch Hsi Ning who had been captured at T'u-mu, invited the Chinese to send leading officials to escort Ying-tsung back to the capital, hoping to take more high-ranking hostages. But the Chinese sent only two low-ranking officials, who immediately confirmed that it was a trap.

A series of battles, some on quite a large scale and involving artillery, followed. After having surrounded Peking for only five days Esen, whose army of 70,000 was outnumbered three to one by the defenders and whose eastern column had been successfully prevented from coming to his aid via the Chü-yung Pass by its defender Lo T'ung, realized that he had no chance of success and withdrew his troops, pillaging and looting the countryside but taking no walled cities. The Ming armies rapidly mopped up the remaining groups of Mongols in North China.

The crisis for the Chinese was past, but for Esen it marked the begin-

ning of the end. He had been egged on by Hsi Ning to such grandiose aims as conquering at least part of North China and installing a puppet emperor in Peking; however, as soon as his failure was apparent, his control over the always restive Mongol tribes gradually began to slip away. Within days of his retreat from Peking, his overlord the Mongol khan Toghto Bukha was sending a tribute mission to the Ming court. Nonetheless Esen's forces were still powerful and intact, and Hsi Ning continued to put forth one after another new grandiose schemes for conquest before Esen. He suggested attacking through the northwest to take Nanking, setting up Ying-tsung as a rival emperor, and other equally impractical schemes. Esen's forces continued to make raids, sometimes in considerable strength along the frontier north and northwest of the capital. Against such raids the Chinese steadily strengthened the strategic passes, while Chinese cavalry again began regular sweeps of the inner steppe from Ta-t'ung and Hsüan-fu, although this active policy produced few results and placed a great strain on the logistic services, since the area had been devastated by the Mongol invasion of the preceding autumn. These measures were personally planned by Yü Ch'ien, who effectively silenced all protest.

Early in 1450 Hsi Ning was sent by Esen as an envoy to the Chinese. He was promptly captured, tried, and executed. Esen, now deprived of his expert on Chinese affairs and the architect of his great invasion plans, retired into the steppe. Sporadic warfare continued along the frontier.

The court, which had been preoccupied with survival and the urgent tasks of defense, now began to give serious thought to the future of Ying-tsung, who was by now living in considerable hardship, his remaining entourage having mostly deserted him during the attack on Peking. The Mongols repeatedly tried to open negotiations, but the Chinese probably rightly suspected that Esen would use the issue of Ying-tsung's return as a pretext for a fresh attack. Some courtiers protested that steps should be taken to ensure his return, but the court refused to open the issue. The new emperor too was gradually consolidating his position at court. Ying-tsung's mother was promoted to the exalted but powerless rank of supreme venerable empress dowager and his empress removed to a separate palace, while Ching-ti's mother and wife became empress dowager and empress. It was becoming obvious that Chu Ch'i-yü, now the emperor Ching-ti, who had so reluctantly accepted the throne and proved so indecisive in his first days, was now determined to retain his power, and the return of his predecessor loomed more and more as a potential embarrassment.

When eventually in August 1450 a mission was finally sent to the Mongol camp, the ambassador, vice-minister of rites Li Shih (1413-85), was amazed to find that the letters with which he was entrusted made no

mention of Ying-tsung. Ching-ti was clearly not in any hurry to have his half-brother back in Peking. Li Shih, finding the former emperor living in very poor conditions and wishing to return to China even as a commoner or as a keeper of the imperial tombs, advised him to send a letter expressing his repentance for his former policies and guaranteeing that he would not lay any claim to the throne. When shortly after another embassy was sent, led this time by Yang Shan (1384–1458), the censor-in-chief who had formerly served under Ying-tsung and had escaped from T'u-mu, the instructions once again included no order to negotiate the former emperor's return. Esen, however, apparently saw no advantage in keeping his captive any longer: Yang Shan had to take responsibility himself for ransoming Ying-tsung. Esen agreed to release his captive so long as tribute relations were reinstated as soon as possible, even though the gifts offered him (which Yang Shan had had to purchase out of his own pocket) were insultingly meager.

Esen arranged a splendid farewell for his hostage, and Yang Shan took him back, still closely guarded by an Oirat escort, to Chinese territory. Ching-ti continued his churlish and suspicious treatment of the deposed emperor. After delays on the road caused by the emperor's orders and wrangling over the ritual details of his reception, Ying-tsung finally arrived back in Peking on 19 September, having renounced all claims to the throne. Welcomed by the emperor, he was quickly escorted to his new home in the Southern Palace precincts. Three days later his happy return was announced in the imperial Ancestral Temple (*T'ai-miao*), and an imperial mandate was promulgated confirming the incumbent emperor on the throne. Outwardly, at least, the T'u-mu disaster had come to a happy ending.

The consequences of the T'u-mu crisis

The consequences of the T'u-mu incident are often referred to in Chinese as the *T'u-mu chih pien*. The term *pien*, "to turn," designates some important turn of events in China's history, be it a coup d'état in the central sphere, a dramatic outburst of peasant unrest with national consequences, or a major foreign invasion. The first and third of these categories certainly do refer to the events at T'u-mu. The Mongol leader Esen's strike on Peking had led to the capture of the Cheng-t'ung emperor and thus initiated a general shakeup of the Chinese government and the military organization. So far at least, the traditional term *T'u-mu chih pien* is apt. But although the border defense system was badly shaken and the combat forces sent from Peking had been defeated with enormous losses, many units having been annihilated, the strongly fortified city of Peking stood fast.

The Ming were not driven from their new capital and showed their determination to maintain their position in northern China. This response appears all the more firm and determined in the light of other earlier events. The Ming had just concluded the long-drawn-out campaigns in Lu-ch'uan, extensive rural uprisings in the Fukien-Kiangsi-Chekiang border area had only just been suppressed, and the rupture of the Yellow River's dikes near K'ai-feng had caused massive inundations and disrupted the Grand Canal. The Oirat invasions and the crisis around the throne which the emperor's capture caused came on top of these other troubles. But the multiple crisis seems to have worked as a stimulant on Ming China's institutions and on political morale. Firm, determined political and military leadership emerged. There is ample evidence of continuing bureaucratic stability and a determination to undertake necessary reforms in the military and civil spheres, even in the capital, the scene of the main events. The provinces themselves were hardly involved. The relative stability of Ming China during the rest of the fifteenth century resulted to a large extent from the shock of T'u-mu and the bold and competent measures taken to meet the crisis by Peking's new leadership.

It should also be remembered that the T'u-mu crisis must be assessed in terms of the weakness of the enemy. Esen was no Chinggis Khaghan, and the Oirat did not represent a threat in any way comparable to that of the Mongols in the early thirteenth century. The real interest of the Mongols in Esen's time was not territorial conquest, but the maintenance of close and economically favorable relations with the Chinese empire, and their leaders were well aware of the fact. Esen's failure to follow up his victory and his generally friendly relations with the Ming court after his release of the former emperor arose partly from such considerations and partly from his own weakness and his insecure position among the Mongols. When in 1453 he finally proclaimed himself khan, internal conflict soon broke out and led to his death in 1455.

But Mongol weakness and internal division is not the whole explanation. China remained comparatively well governed during the fifteenth century, with good political and economic institutions that were easily able to confront its varied internal and external problems.

The Ching-t'ai political regime

The Ching-t'ai period, the reign of Ching-ti (1450–57), is generally judged to have been one of renewed stability, effective government by competent ministers, reasonable reforms, and adequate defense policies for Peking and

the northern frontiers. For traditional historians too, its government has been praised by comparison with the sorry mismanagement of affairs by evil and incompetent eunuchs in the preceding decade. But the new regime was not simply a transition from eunuch rule to a restoration of the powers of officialdom. During the first years of Ching-ti's reign at least, the new reforms were supported as enthusiastically by the high-ranking eunuchs led by Hsing An as they were by any bureaucrat or general. The strength of the new regime must be seen rather as a consequence of the "national awakening," the general consciousness of a need for thorough renewal, that followed the T'u-mu disaster.

The new regime had something in common with the former regime of the three grand secretaries in the 1430s before Wang Chen had risen to power, and this continuity was personified above all in the elderly Wang Chih (1379–1462), the minister of personnel. Since 1443, when he had been appointed by Yang Shih-ch'i, Wang Chih had been one of the chief counterweights to Wang Chen, one of the chief opponents of the emperor's expedition against Esen, and one of Yü Ch'ien's major collaborators in handling the crisis in Peking after the T'u-mu disaster. When the question of Ying-tsung's return came under discussion in 1450, Wang Chih was one of the main advocates of sending a mission to the Mongols. In 1451, when he was already seventy-two and wished to retire, he was retained at court as an elder statesman, still minister of personnel, but with a co-minister. From 1451 to 1453 Ho Wen-yüan (1418–57) also served as minister of personnel, followed in 1453 by Wang Ao (1384–1467), a censor-in-chief who had been a highly successful defense commissioner, first of Liao-tung and later of Kwangtung and Kwangsi, and who was supported by Yü Ch'ien.

Both Wang Chih and Wang Ao remained in office at the crucial Ministry of Personnel for very long periods (1443 to 1457 and 1453 to 1467, respectively), and their excellent judgment of men and choice of officials were reflected in the general quality of administration in the third quarter of the fifteenth century. Stability among the holders of high office marked the Ching-t'ai administration. The ministers of revenue Chin Lien, of rites Hu Ying (1375–1463), of justice Yü Shih-yüeh, of works Shih P'u, and of war Yü Ch'ien himself (with co-minister Shih P'u from 1455) all remained in office throughout the reign. The chief personnel of the Censorate—Ch'en I (appointed 1445, retired 1454), Yang Shan, Wang Wen, Hsiao Wei-chen, and Li Shih—also remained unchanged, as did the top command of the army, which comprised men of such high quality as Shih Heng and the eunuch generals Ts'ao Chi-hsiang (d. 1461) and Liu Yung-ch'eng (1391–1472).

Although Wang Chen had been killed at T'u-mu, and in spite of the torrent of criticism unleashed against his memory in 1449–50, the new regime did not mean an eclipse of eunuch power. Among Yü Ch'ien's most important supporters in rallying the court to defend Peking after T'u-mu were the chief eunuchs Chin Ying and Hsing An. Chin Ying had been very powerful in the 1430s but had lost his former dominance of the eunuch establishment to Wang Chen. He now again became director of ceremonial. However, his constant support of the captive Ying-tsung brought his trial and imprisonment late in 1450. He was succeeded by Hsing An, who had been a comparatively minor figure before 1449 but now became the undisputed head of the eunuch establishment, playing a major role in the negotiations for Ying-tsung's release and in the appointment of a new heir apparent in May 1452. He was also renowned for his lavish patronage of Buddhism. His dominance at court lasted throughout the Ching-t'ai reign. Eunuch power also remained strong among the military, the main figures being Ts'ao Chi-hsiang, a general who had fought in the Lu-ch'uan campaigns and against the Fukien rebels, and Liu Yung-ch'eng, who had long service on the northern frontiers. Both were instrumental in the reform of the military organization in 1453.

This stable ruling group is comparable to later groups of great ministers and generals like those that dominated government in the early Chia-ching or early Wan-li periods, but continuities both of personnel and policies with the earlier regime of the Three Yangs are equally striking. In one important respect, however, the Ching-t'ai regime was very different. The grand secretaries Ch'en Hsün and Kao Ku were ineffectual, and although the membership of the grand secretariat remained almost unchanged until 1457, it played no major role in policy making.

Unfortunately the new regime did not remain truly unified for long. It was constantly shadowed by the presence of Ying-tsung in the Southern Palace. In 1451–52 Yü Ch'ien, the undoubted leader of the regime, began a series of quarrels with the ambitious Shih Heng, originally his closest and most important collaborator, over the corrupt misuse of power by Shih and his family. The emperor missed the opportunity to solve this quarrel by returning the resignations offered by both Shih and Yü. In 1454–55 Yü Ch'ien fell seriously ill and never fully recovered his personal drive. This tension continued to grow and perceptibly affected the atmosphere in court and government. Another factor in the growing unease among the officials was the way in which Hsing An, the eunuch director of ceremonial, began to overstep his powers. Moreover, as we shall see below, the continued presence of the former emperor and the lingering problem over the succession also undermined the unity of the court on policy questions.

Reforms in defense

Obviously, in the aftermath of T'u-mu the overriding need was for a total reorganization of the Ming army. When he had established the imperial capital at Peking, the Yung-lo emperor gathered combat troops from imperial garrisons throughout the empire in the Peking area, forming three army camps for infantry, cavalry, and artillery; from these camps he drew the core of his campaign armies. Armies subsequently raised to support an emperor's personal campaigns were always drawn from among these troops. Thus, the army that Ying-tsung led against Esen, the army that was utterly destroyed at T'u-mu in 1449, was comprised of combat troops drawn from these camps. In 1451 Yü Ch'ien, then minister of war, began to reconstitute a new garrison, first selecting from the remaining troops 100,000 combat soldiers, whom he organized into five drill units (*t'uan-ying*); in 1452 the strength of the garrison was raised by 50,000 men and reorganized into ten drill units. In the process of recruiting the garrison, Yü Ch'ien also completely reorganized the command structure of the capital garrisons.²

Control of the garrisons had formerly been divided between members of the nobility and the palace eunuchs; each camp in the garrison was completely autonomous, separately trained, and under the command of its own field marshal. This led to great confusion on the battlefield when troops from all the camps had to fight together. Under Yü Ch'ien's plan, each drill unit was placed under a field commander, and the entire garrison was then placed under the control of a field marshal selected from among the commanders. Supervision of the garrisons, which had hitherto been the exclusive responsibility of eunuchs, was extended to the capital bureaucracy. In sum, he created a unified command and increased the role of the capital officers in the oversight of the garrisons.³

Water conservancy and the control of the Yellow River

Another notable achievement of the Ching-t'ai reign was the efficient management of repairs to the breaches in the Yellow River dikes that had been made during the autumn of 1448. The control of the Yellow River had repeatedly caused problems since the end of the previous century, and the

2 Chang T'ing-yü et al., ed., *Ming shih* (1736; rpt. Peking, 1974), 170, p. 4545; Hsia Hsieh, comp., *Ming t'ung chien* (ca. 1870; rpt. Peking, 1959), 26, pp. 1049–50. The figures given in the treatise on military affairs in the *Ming shih* are wrong; cf. *MS*, 89, p. 2177. See also L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming biography* (New York and London, 1976), p. 1609.

3 Wu Han, "Ming tai ti chün ping," *Tu shih cha chi* (1956; rpt. Peking, 1961), pp. 106–07; *MS*, 89, p. 2178.

course of the river was clearly unstable.⁴ The floods of 1448 had caused the lower course of the river to divide into two, the main southern course discharging through the Ying River and the Huai to reach the sea south of the Shantung peninsula. The northern branch of the river burst its banks and inundated an area in western Shantung, where it joined the Grand Canal. The inundation of 1448 not only flooded vast tracts of farmland as innumerable floods had done before; this time the damage was more serious because it had deprived a crucial section of the Grand Canal of its water supply, causing frequent holdups and stoppages. In 1449 the vice-minister of works who was sent to effect repairs found himself unable to do so and diverted some of the water into the sea north of Shantung. Renewed floods occurred each year; in 1452 Shih P'u, minister of works, rebuilt the dikes, but these again collapsed as soon as the autumn floods began.

In 1453 Hsü Yu-chen, who had been out of favor since advocating the withdrawal of the court from Peking in 1449, after which he had been assigned to minor posts, presented a detailed plan for water control. He was appointed assistant censor-in-chief and dispatched to undertake repairs. He proved to have great administrative talent in dealing with a vastly complex problem affecting a wide area.

After making extensive reconnaissance trips in a small boat to identify the major trouble spots, he organized a complex program with many separate labor gangs working at different places and on different time schedules, eventually employing 58,000 laborers working for more than 500 days. His scheme did not simply repair the damaged dikes; a canal almost a hundred miles long was dug leading the waters of the Yellow River into the Ta-ch'ing River and thus past Chi-nan fu into the sea. To preserve the Grand Canal, he had several collecting ponds and reservoirs built along the canal, with modern locks to maintain a regular supply of water. In addition, he organized an irrigation system for watering some two million acres in northern Shantung. The whole scheme was finished in 1455 and was completely successful. It withstood a disastrous flood in 1456 and lasted for thirty-four years. Hsü Yu-chen was richly rewarded and made vice censor-in-chief early in 1457.

Popular unrest and natural disasters

Although traditional historians have tended to see the Ching-t'ai period essentially as one of political tension based on the lingering conflict between the two emperors, Marxist historians have been quick to stress the underly-

⁴ On this and the following see Ts'en Chung-mien, *Huang-ho pien ch'ien shih* (Peking, 1957), pp. 468 ff.

ing class tensions of the middle and late fifteenth century as more fundamental issues. The official records of the period are full of evidence on the growth of landlordism, problems over corvée labor, peasant riots and uprisings, and eunuch arbitrariness, and some scholars have claimed that such tensions presented an imminent peril to the Ming autocracy.

However, during the Ching-t'ai period, at least as seen from Peking, the fundamental problem was one of restabilization. We have already seen how the army reforms had restored stability on the frontier. The borders, however, were only one threat to China's integrity. The 1450s saw a constant chain of military operations in the interior provinces. In Kwangtung and Kwangsi, long troubled by banditry and local unrest among the non-Chinese population, a centralized command was first set up under Wang Ao, who had earlier consolidated the northeastern frontier defenses and later had become minister of personnel. In 1449 and 1450 there had been the large-scale uprisings in Fukien and problems in Kweichow. From 1450 to 1452 the Yao and Miao minority peoples in Kweichow and Hu-kuang provinces had to be suppressed, there was a serious disturbance in Kwangtung, and peasant unrest continued in the Fukien-Chekiang border region. In 1453 there were further uprisings in Fukien and Hu-kuang, in 1454 uprisings in southern Szechwan, and in 1455 uprisings in Kwangtung and Chekiang. In 1456 the Miao peoples in Hu-kuang were the object of a punitive expedition.

This unrest was mostly confined to the aboriginal areas of the south. It was clearly divided between the uprisings of deprived Chinese peasants and miners on the one hand and uprisings of minority peoples on the other. The "pacification" of these restless minorities and dissident groups which twentieth-century historians might represent as "ruthless suppression" was, from the central government's point of view, a necessary aspect of imperial consolidation and the establishment of orderly government and Han Chinese dominance. As a counterargument to those who see the rebellions of the 1450s as part of a groundswell of rural unrest, it is worth noting that there is very little evidence of widespread dissidence in the heavily populated areas of northern and central China, in spite of the fact that the Ching-t'ai period was one of serious natural disasters.

In 1450 there was famine in Shantung. In 1452 heavy rain and serious flooding affected the Yellow River and Huai River valleys in Honan, the Northern and Southern Metropolitan regions, and Shantung, and special measures had to be taken to give relief in Chiang-pei. The wet weather continued into 1453 and 1454 and was made worse by an exceptionally cold winter in 1453–54, with very heavy snow in Shantung, Honan, the Southern Metropolitan Region, and Chekiang. The sea off the mouth of

the Huai was icebound, and the Huai Valley was particularly badly affected, tens of thousands dying of cold in the area. In Kiangnan at the beginning of 1454 a heavy snowfall lay for more than forty days, and countless people died of cold and starvation in Soochow and Hangchow. Even as far south as Heng-chou in southern Hunan there was continuous snow, which killed off many draft cattle. In 1455 there was widespread drought affecting the Southern Metropolitan Region, Hu-kuang, Kiangsi, Honan, Shantung, Shansi, and Shensi. The next year, 1456, was another abnormally wet year, with continual rain through summer and autumn, which caused loss of crops and immense damage in the Northern Metropolitan Region, Shantung, Honan, and the Southern Metropolitan Region, while the Yangtze Valley, Chekiang, and Kiangsi suffered serious droughts. All these disasters were not only destructive and costly in human lives and suffering, but seriously affected the state through diminished revenues and vast sums paid out in relief.

The succession problem and "forcing the gate"

There can be little doubt that the problems arising from the succession continued to overshadow the court. The situation, difficult enough in itself, had been made far worse by Ching-ti's reluctance to negotiate with the Mongols over the former emperor and his grudging acceptance of his brother's return—as well as by the series of petty actions he took against him after his return, such as refusing him permission to celebrate his birthday, to receive envoys from the Oirat, or to participate in the New Year celebrations. Although the emperor succeeded in excluding the former Ying-tsung from all public affairs and in gradually isolating him, some prominent officials, chief among them Hu Ying, the long-serving minister of rites, had spoken out openly on behalf of the former emperor both before and after his return. At the same time, the terms on which Ching-ti had accepted the throne had implicitly provided that his accession was provisional, for Ying-tsung's eldest son (Chu Chien-shen, the future Hsien-tsung, 1447–87) had been proclaimed heir apparent at the same time as Ching-ti became regent, and continued to be heir apparent after Ching-ti ascended the throne. It was thus assured that the succession would eventually revert to the legitimate line of Ying-tsung.

Ching-ti, however, was determined not only to hold on to the throne, but to maintain the succession in his own line. On 20 May 1452 the emperor accepted a memorial suggesting the appointment of a new heir apparent, in spite of the opposition of his grand secretaries (who were promoted to ensure their compliance) and many prominent officials. Ying-

tsung's son was demoted to be Prince of I, and Ching-ti's only son, Chu Chien-chi (1440?–53), was appointed heir apparent in his place. At the same time the new heir's mother, Lady Hang, was installed as empress in place of Ching-ti's principal consort, the empress Wang, who had been named empress in 1450.

This move, blatant in its self-interest, did nothing to improve Ching-ti's popularity or prestige; and whatever advantage he may have gained was lost when, after little over a year, the new heir apparent died. The new empress also died in 1456. There were no other imperial sons to serve as heir, and Ching-ti named no successor. When some officials suggested the reinstallation of the former heir apparent, Chu Chien-shen, they were imprisoned and brutally treated, several being flogged to death.

These events seem to have turned dissatisfaction with the emperor into positive opposition. In the absence of strong leadership the court split into factions, and a conspiracy to replace him came into being. Needless to say the conspirators were not motivated solely by high ideals or by moral scruples about the emperor's conduct. The general Shih Heng, whose relations with Yü Ch'ien had steadily deteriorated since 1452, was not only ambitious, but grasping and avaricious. His troubles with Yü had first arisen both over his own corrupt practices and, more especially, over those of his relatives and hangers-on. Chang Yüeh, commander of the capital garrison, was his close associate. Similar ambitions held true for the eunuch general Ts'ao Chi-hsiang, who saw himself as a new Wang Chen and who was to prove extremely corrupt and untrustworthy in the years to come. He too was surrounded by corrupt relatives and associates. Hsü Yu-chen had never forgotten that he was snubbed after T'u-mu; and he was sufficiently ambitious to take advantage of the restive mood of the court to try to gain supreme power. There was also Yang Shan, the censor-in-chief who had brought Ying-tsung back from captivity and had never received his due reward.

Their opportunity came early in 1457, when the emperor fell severely ill. He was unable to hold audience, and the New Year celebrations were canceled. The eunuchs, led by Hsing An, tried to conceal the seriousness of the emperor's condition, but the news leaked out and reached the conspirators. With the military machine under Shih Heng, Chang Yüeh, and Ts'ao Chi-hsiang in their hands and the Censorate under Hsü Yu-chen and Yang Shan on their side, the conspirators collected some 400 Imperial Bodyguards and hurried them to the ex-emperor's residence in the south of Peking, put the astonished Ying-tsung into a sedan chair, and brought him into the palace. Here they "forced the palace gate," sat him on the throne, and summoned the high officials. After their astonishment had cooled down, the newly enthroned emperor held audience.

This act, the "forcing of the palace gate" (*to-men*), was to become the coup d'état par excellence of Ming history and would be considered yet another grave violation of ritual propriety. It was, of course, a far worse violation than the enthronement of Ching-ti in 1449. That had been a move dictated by the desperate military crisis following T'u-mu. The change of ruler in 1457 was a simple coup d'état. While the installation of Ching-ti had led to the stabilization of the state in a moment of confusion and supreme danger, the coup of 1457 was an act of political opportunism that unleashed a flood of profiteering and office seeking. Thousands of civil and military officials benefited by promotion, and the chief among them would provide the ruling clique of the next reign.

Meanwhile the former emperor Ching-ti, downgraded to Prince of Ch'eng, died on 14 March 1457, according to some accounts strangled by one of the palace eunuchs. The takeover of power, at first proudly called "forcing the palace gate," was within a few years renamed the "restoration of the throne" (*fu-pi*), the returning of the throne and the succession to the correct legitimate line.

YING-TSUNG'S SECOND REIGN: THE T' IEN-SHUN PERIOD, 1457-1464

The events of few reign periods can have so utterly belied their name as those of the T'ien-shun (literally Obedient to Heaven) era. Having begun with a well-planned and expeditious coup d'état, the first order of business was a settling of old scores. Revenge and hatred seem to have been the dominant motives of the new regime. The well-entrenched leadership of the preceding reign was thoroughly and brutally purged. Yü Ch'ien, whom Chinese historians with good reason laud as the savior of the Ming, was indicted for high treason, an unjust accusation embodying the hatred and fear of his enemies, who even wanted him to suffer the death by slicing. In the end, however, the emperor reduced his sentence; he was publicly beheaded on 16 February, together with the grand secretary and minister of personnel Wang Wen and four chief eunuchs (Wang Ch'eng, Wang Chin, Chang Yung, and Shu Liang). The senior grand secretary Ch'en Hsün, the minister of justice Yü Shih-yüeh, the minister of works Chiang Yüan, the grand secretaries Hsiao Tzu and Shang Lu, and others were stripped of office, some sentenced to military service on the frontier. Chang Feng, minister of revenue, and other ministers were transferred to powerless posts or, like Hu Ying, minister of rites, Shih P'u, minister of war, Kao Ku, the last remaining grand secretary, and the chief eunuch Hsing An, forced into retirement shortly afterward. The aged Wang Chih, who had opposed the

change of heir apparent and remained an elder statesman at Ching-ti's court, was at last permitted to retire. The only minister to retain his post was Wang Ao, the minister of personnel.

Even at the time there was widespread consternation at the flagrant injustice of the deaths of Yü Ch'ien and Wang Wen: China too recognizes its martyrs. It took only nine years for Yü Ch'ien to be posthumously restored to his former titles and his name cleared of all reproaches. Centuries later, students entered for the metropolitan examinations would go to the shrine built in the eastern part of Peking in his honor to invoke Yü Ch'ien's spirit to give them some indication of whether they would succeed.

Rebuilding another "new regime"

After such a far-reaching purge of the holders of high office, the coup d'état led to a great number of promotions and changes of post. Hsü Yu-chen, the chief strategist of the coup, was appointed head of the grand secretariat and also concurrently minister of war and ennobled as the earl of Wu-kung; the leading general Shih Heng got a dukedom entitled Chung-kuo (Loyal to the State). His notoriously corrupt nephew, the general Shih Piao, was made a marquis; Ts'ao Chi-hsiang, the eunuch general, was made director of ceremonial and thus became chief of the eunuch establishment as well as commander-in-chief of Peking's capital garrisons. His adopted son, Ts'ao Ch'in, was made an earl, and several nephews were given high military commands. Other participants in the coup also received their expected rewards. The censor Yang Shan was appointed minister of rites; Wang Chi was enfeoffed as a hereditary earl and served briefly as minister of war before he retired; Chang Yüeh was enfeoffed. In addition to these prominent figures, a host of minor collaborators and followers demanded and received honors or positions on a scale that roused widespread indignation at court and throughout the bureaucracy.

The reaction came quickly. Hsü Yu-chen soon overreached himself. Only four months after the coup, on 28 June 1457, he was arrested, charged with "improper assumption of authority," demoted, and eventually banished thanks to the machinations of his co-conspirators, notably Ts'ao Chi-hsiang. Three years later, in November 1459, Shih Heng, whose personal extravagance had become a public scandal and whose arrogance had finally lost him the emperor's support, was ordered to retire because of his implication with Shih Piao in a case of corruption. But as more offenses came to light, he was committed for trial and died in prison on 8 March 1460. His nephew Shih Piao and other relatives were executed. Ts'ao Chi-hsiang, who had been implicated with Shih Heng in a notorious case of

misappropriation of lands in 1457 but had turned the case to his own advantage, now began to feel his position threatened—particularly since the commander of the Imperial Bodyguard, Lu Kao, in charge of criminal investigations, belonged to a rival group. In 1461 he and his nephews and adopted son Ts'ao Ch'in, who between them controlled the entire garrison system of Peking, planned a rebellion.

The uprising was to take place on 7 August and to be led by Ts'ao Ch'in, but the plot was leaked to two loyal generals, Sun T'ang and Wu Chin, who informed the emperor. Ts'ao Chi-hsiang was arrested. Ts'ao Ch'in killed Lu Kao and tried to storm the Imperial City; but although his troops killed Wu Chin and destroyed one of the gates, they failed. By daybreak, loyal troops had defeated the rebels, and the rebellion was over. Ts'ao Ch'in committed suicide. Ts'ao Chi-hsiang was executed with his nephews and supporters, and his immense properties were confiscated. With the death of Ts'ao Chi-hsiang on 10 August 1461, the leading group in the coup d'état of 1457 had themselves all been neatly extinguished.

The emperor's ruthless reaction to his restoration and its aftermath is to some extent a manifestation of that strong streak of egocentric willfulness that appeared so often in the rulers of the Ming. But Ying-tsung, who was still only thirty when the coup unexpectedly restored him to the throne, had had experiences ample to explain his autocratic actions. He had, after all, come to the throne as a child and lived through captivity, dethronement, and the death and subsequent denigration of his mentor Wang Chen and his supporters. He had then suffered the shame of exclusion from public life under his brother. It is not surprising he took strong measures to ensure stability and his own authority. Once his brother's supporters had been rooted out as enemies of the state, Ying-tsung seems to have taken steps to appoint to key positions in the administration a group of competent officials who would restabilize the court and government, while those who had engineered the 1457 coup on his own account had been disposed of as soon as they showed signs of exceeding their authority.

After the first few months of his restoration, there was remarkably little change among the ministers and chief court officials. After 1458, no major minister was dismissed from office during the reign, and all changes in the main ministries resulted from retirement or death. The same was true of the grand secretariat where a gifted trio, Li Hsien (1408–67), P'eng Shih (1416–75), and Lü Yüan (1418–62) remained in office throughout the reign (or in Lü Yüan's case until he died in 1462). Ying-tsung came to depend on three men for the guidance of the administration: Li Hsien, the chief grand secretary; Wang Ao, the elderly minister of personnel, for whom Ying-tsung had particular respect and affection; and Ma Ang

(1300–1476), the minister of war who was appointed in 1460. In addition, the ministers of revenue, especially Nien Fu who was appointed in 1460, were very successful.

The fall of Shih Heng and Ts'ao Chi-hsiang's abortive rebellion did little to disturb the regular functioning of government. It affected mostly their relatives and the many adherents of the two generals among the military.

CHAPTER 6

THE CH'ENG-HUA AND HUNG-CHIH REIGNS, 1465–1505

THE EMPERORS

Chu Chien-shen, posthumously known as the emperor Hsien-tsung, was born on 9 December 1447 and came to the throne on the death of his father, the restored emperor Ying-tsung, on 23 February 1464; he proclaimed the reign title Ch'eng-hua to begin on the next New Year, almost a full year later. He died on 9 September 1487, three months before his fortieth birthday, having reigned for twenty-three years. His eldest surviving son, Chu Yu-t'ang, then came to the throne at the age of seventeen, having been born 30 July 1470, and under the reign title Hung-chih reigned for eighteen years, dying just a month short of his thirty-fifth birthday, in June 1505. He is known to history by his posthumous temple name of Hsiao-tsung.

Of the sixteen Ming emperors who reigned between 1368 and 1644, only five passed their fortieth birthdays, and none of those occupied the throne in the century from 1425 to 1521. Yet those short-lived rulers did not die in battle or from accidental causes—unless we accept the quite plausible speculation that several Ming emperors accidentally shortened their lives by taking longevity drugs containing such toxic elements as mercury compounds. Whether that can ever be fully proved, an unhealthy atmosphere enveloped the Ming imperial institution through much of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Throughout the middle years of the dynasty China was ruled by feckless young men whose brief lives tended to be dominated by their consorts, their mothers and grandmothers, and their eunuch servants. The most notorious of the latter were more or less the age of the emperors they served. The scholar-officials who staffed the court and central government, in contrast, were mostly graybeards. Those eminent enough to be in regular contact with the ruler, from the time he began to be tutored by them until he died on the throne some years later, were almost always men of the emperor's father's and grandfather's generations. Distance and mistrust increasingly characterized the relations between throne and officialdom in mid-Ming times.

The two reigns under discussion here illustrate aspects of those generalizations. Generally speaking, they represent a calm interlude during which no great national crises occurred. Indeed, the second of these two reigns traditionally has been known as an era of good feeling and harmonious relations between ruler and courtiers. Closer observation reveals many flaws in that idealized situation and the beginnings of trends in both reigns that intensified subsequently to produce the characteristic political ills of the later Ming.

Reigns mark the formal milestones in Ming political history. Ming emperors were functionally central to the operation of government, and although not public figures like their counterparts in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, within the limitations peculiar to the Chinese scene their personalities and individual qualities were the ultimate reason for the particular tone of government in each reign and for the specific content of many acts of governing. These two imperial personalities thus are a valid focus of attention. But they are no more than the central feature of China's political history. The political arena throughout the mid-Ming displays much intellectual vigor and earnest commitment to public life.

For all the faults and abuses of the political system as such, the vigorous pursuit of political careers by the scholar-official elite of talent and personal achievement reflects a society that was growing richer in variety, in material means, and in promise as the fifteenth century led on to the still more burgeoning sixteenth (to adopt the milestones of our era instead of those by which the Chinese marked historic time). By the turn of the sixteenth century we find many Chinese writers commenting on the vigorous expansiveness of the society and the not always approved of consequences for social change. Here we look at the two late fifteenth-century rulers, at their court and government, and at the larger world of Ming society in its East Asian setting between 1465 and 1505.

Chu Chien-shen, the emperor Hsien-tsung

In his earliest childhood, this eighth emperor of the Ming dynasty suffered painful experiences that left their mark on his temperament. He was less than two years old when his father, the emperor Ying-tsung, was captured by the Oirat Mongols at T'u-mu in 1449. In the ensuing grave crisis of the state, Ying-tsung was succeeded by his half-brother, the Ching-t'ai emperor. A year later Ying-tsung was returned to Peking but was confined for seven years in a detached, carefully guarded section of the Imperial City, denied all honors and comforts. His son was deposed as the heir apparent in 1452 in

favor of the Ching-t'ai emperor's son; he then lived with the deposed empress, not his actual mother, under conditions of physical hardship and bitterness in another part of the Imperial City. The boy was nine when a coup restored his father to the throne in 1457 and eliminated his uncle. He again became the heir apparent, to grow up during the next seven years in a court where lingering jealousy and feelings of revenge had been engendered by the conflicts between his father's supporters and those who had saved the dynasty in the crisis of 1449 by supporting his uncle as emperor.

As a teenager he appears to have been of stocky build, broad of face, stolid and slow to respond, with a serious stutter. His father is said to have questioned his intelligence and capacity to rule, but was convinced by his grand secretaries that dynastic stability would suffer if the legitimate succession were interfered with. When he came to the throne in 1464, he had already taken as his favorite consort the Lady Wan, a palace woman originally in the service of his grandmother. Then thirty-five, she was twice his age. She dominated him, manipulated members of his household and inner court, and exercised a willful and unprincipled influence on government.

He, however, turned out to be a generous-minded man who did not prolong the old factional resentments or seek vengeance. To a certain extent he valued the forthright and able statesmen of his court, yet he also employed unworthy servitors almost indiscriminately and was often indecisive about policy judgments and capricious in favoring and abandoning both good and bad courtiers. Above all he was unwilling to impose a strong hand on the affairs of his consorts, their families, and the baser eunuchs, sycophants, and adventurers who grasped power through them. One cannot say they ever gained control over him, yet neither did he exert himself to hold a tight rein on them.

Somewhat anomalously, we might think, this emperor shared their avarice; thus he left them a free hand in their corrupt practices, ever more flagrant, in the petty interest of enhancing his own income. The sound fiscal basis of the early Ming state had been weakened by the emperor Ying-tsung's foolish military escapades and building projects. By his son's reign the emperor and his household wanted more money. Starting with large holdings taken back from a eunuch who had plotted against his father, he confiscated lands to establish vast imperial estates (*huang-chuang*) from which heavy rents were collected directly for his privy purse. A censor chided him: "All within the four seas is already your majesty's domain; why should you compete for profits with your common people?" He ignored the rebuke, and the practice grew. Hangers-on at the court took their cues from the avarice of the ruler and wheedled grants of tax-exempt imperial (or imperially conferred) estates.

One of the festering problems of Ming government was launched by this mediocre imperial talent without consulting his government's experts on fiscal management or involving the relevant ministries and bureaus. Bypassing the normal channels of administrative action in awarding offices, patents, and imperial favors was a device Lady Wan's cohorts in corruption found for her, and the emperor refused to intervene, no matter how vigorously the statesmen of his court reprimanded. That the all-powerful celestial ruler encouraged the degradation of his own officialdom in order to share in improper profits is one of the revealing anomalies of Ming government.

A Ming emperor's personal life of course could bear directly on the conduct of government; in the case of Hsien-tsung that is seen most clearly in his relationships with the women of his household. His mother, Lady Chou, was a pugnacious shrew. She had been only the emperor Ying-tsung's secondary consort, in status junior to empress Ch'ien, but she had borne the future emperor. When he came to the throne she vociferously demanded empress dowager rank equal to that of empress Ch'ien. Hsien-tsung was caught in the middle between these two widows contesting for status, and he left it to his senior grand secretary, Li Hsien, to devise a compromise that would be ritually correct, yet responsive to both. Both were granted empress dowager rank, with empress Ch'ien's formal title indicative of her seniority and precedence in court rankings, but Lady Chou ignored details of the solution and constantly pressed for further advantage.

The young emperor sought refuge from these fiercely squabbling women in the company of his former nursemaid, Lady Wan, given to him by his grandmother the dowager empress Sun (died 1462) when he was a young child. If not the virago suggested by her delight in wearing men's military garb and leading martial processions within the palace courtyards to entertain him, she was at least an intelligent and strong-willed woman seventeen years his senior who knew how to please him, whether as his boyhood nursemaid or, soon thereafter, as his consort. She bore him a son in 1466 when she was thirty-six for which she was elevated to the status of *kuei-fei* (senior consort, but not empress). That child died within the year and she never became pregnant again, but she kept close watch over other palace women, endeavoring with almost complete success for a decade to ensure that all other pregnancies would terminate in abortions forced by her eunuch agents, or failing that, that neither male offspring nor their mothers would survive.

Upon his accession in 1464 the young emperor took a proper empress, Lady Wu, a girl in her late teens who promptly revealed her resentment of Lady Wan by having her flogged for a display of discourtesy. Within the

month the emperor found a reason for deposing empress Wu, demonstrating to all throughout court and government the fact of Lady Wan's control over him. Empress Wu lived in a remote back courtyard of the Imperial City until her death there forty-five years later; she must have gained a small measure of satisfaction from her part in thwarting Lady Wan by helping to save the life of the first of the emperor's sons to survive, the future emperor Hsiao-tsung. Empress Wang, who was installed as empress Wu's successor later in 1464, was properly intimidated; she had no children, and she survived by deferring to Lady Wan in all things until the lady's death a few months before the death of the emperor in 1487.

The court was deeply concerned about the emperor's failure to produce an heir; statesmen in the capital and in the provinces memorialized urging him to distance himself from Lady Wan in order to have children by other palace women. To such appeals he would answer: "Leave personal matters to me," and Lady Wan would make new displays of her truculence. But the problem also bore on his mind. One day in 1475 while eunuch attendants were combing his hair, the emperor, then approaching twenty-eight, looked into his mirror and sighed sadly that he was growing old and still had no son. One eunuch attendant knelt and said impulsively: "But your majesty does have a son." Startled, the emperor asked where there was a son of his, leading to the disclosure that the Lady Chi had borne a son in 1470.

Lady Chi was a young aborigine, presumably of the Yao nation, who had been submitted to the palace by a eunuch with the forces that campaigned in Kwangsi against the Yao in 1467. Assigned to the palace storehouses, she was encountered by the emperor there one day 1469; he had asked her a question and had been charmed by her manner of answering. He then "favored her," as the euphemism states it, and she became pregnant without his ever knowing it, but not without Lady Wan discovering the matter. The eunuch revealing the existence of the child to the emperor claimed that he had been sent by the Lady Wan to administer the potion that would induce abortion, but knowing the emperor's desire for an heir had instead concealed the lady until she could safely have her child. After the boy was born, the deposed empress Wu learned of his existence and offered to conceal him and his mother in her remote quarters. Thus he had survived to the age of five.

In great excitement the emperor now went to see his son, held him on his knee, and in an emotional scene acknowledged him his son and heir. The court was formally notified at once, and joy prevailed throughout the Imperial City, except in the quarters of Lady Wan. She became ill with

anger and vowed to do something. The emperor had the young boy placed in the safety of the dowager empress Chou's palace. But his mother, the Lady Chi, died within the month, poisoned by an agent of Lady Wan.

The emperor's role throughout these events, and in the years thereafter, is most curious. To be sure, he distanced himself from Lady Wan, no longer regularly residing in her palace, and he succeeded in having seventeen other children in the decade that followed, by a number of palace women. Courtiers in league with Lady Wan supplied him with sex manuals and works of pornography; there are hints that his private life became somewhat debauched. He recognized the need to guard his progeny against her. His mother went so far as to warn her grandson, the young heir apparent in her charge, that when visiting the Lady Wan's quarters he should refuse all food and drink.

Despite this open recognition of Lady Wan's character, the emperor remained devoted to her. He did not attempt to punish or restrain her. On the contrary, he often punished officials who complained about her improper dealings, influence peddling, embezzlement, and extravagant expenditures, giving her clear signals to continue those activities. Thus, if she no longer controlled all aspects of his private life, she came to exert still greater influence on the conduct of government during the eleven years that remained to both of them before their deaths in 1487.

Almost all the degenerative trends in later Ming government that can be traced to Ch'eng-hua period origins must be credited to Lady Wan's influence. Two have been mentioned above: (1) the creation of imperial estates by confiscating lands being worked by common farmer cultivators, making tenants of them and removing the lands from the tax registers; (2) the direct appointment of persons to office by imperial edict issued from within the palace (called *ch'uan-feng kuan*), rather than by the usual procedures of nomination and approval through the Ministry of Personnel. The latter merits further comment. The young emperor himself initiated the practice within a few weeks after his accession when he ordered a eunuch to draw up an edict of direct appointment of an artisan to be associate commissioner of the Crafts Institute (*Wen-ssu yüan*), an office within the Ministry of Works in charge of manufacturing gold and silver plate for palace use.

The post, while minor, should have required the usual qualifications for civil rank and title, and the ministries of the outer court would not have approved an artisan from the eunuch-managed palace staff for a ranked civil service appointment. Clearly this was done in violation of standard procedures to satisfy a whim of Lady Wan or someone in her retinue. Although an insignificant matter in itself, it is noted in all the traditional histories as the precedent for thousands of appointments eventually made in the same

way, mostly to artisans, military men, Buddhist and Taoist clergy, and assorted hangers-on who performed services for the imperial household. It became a pernicious abuse of appointment power in this and several subsequent reigns. Trusted but often untrustworthy eunuchs with access to the imperial seals could draft edicts of appointment in the emperor's name, quite without his knowledge. They also could accept bribes for including a person's name in such an edict, in what amounted to the virtual sale of offices, ranks, and privileges.

The Ch'eng-hua reign period witnessed much abuse of eunuch power at the court and throughout the administration, and in Wang Chih the period had one of the four traditionally labeled the "four evil eunuchs of the dynasty." Yet he never was in as total control of the government as were the others, such as Wang Chen in the 1440s and Liu Chin in the years 1506 to 1510. On the one hand this emperor's cautious and stolid temperament shielded him from being totally manipulated. The sixteenth-century historian Cheng Hsiao wrote of him that he was characteristically magnanimous and reasonable, perceptive and understanding, and that:

in supervising the government as in relations with people he was neither hard nor yielding; he could be now tense, now relaxed. He was not precipitate in advancing the worthy, but he gave them his full confidence; he was not fervent about distancing himself from evil, but he had his own means for exercising control.¹

Written by a historian servitor of the dynasty, this statement is constrained by the necessity to praise whatever virtues can be identified and to veil all criticism. The praise probably seemed justified by the reign's stability and solid achievement in some quarters, but it also exposes Hsien-tsung's ambivalence about the malpractices of those evil persons from whom he was in no great rush to distance himself. Several of his high-ranking eunuchs and some of their worst accomplices were quite notorious in their abuses.

Wang Chih, the most notorious of his eunuchs, was a Yao tribesman castrated as a youth and sent for service in the palace during the campaigns against the Yao in Kwangsi in the 1460s. Attached to Lady Wan's staff, his career prospered under her patronage. But he was an outsider to the established eunuch hierarchy and never commanded the power that went with the eunuch Directorate of Ceremonial. Instead, in 1477 when the emperor authorized the creation of a new police organization called the Western Depot (*Hsi-ch'ang*), modeled on the existing Eastern Depot (*Tung-ch'ang*), Wang Chih was made its director. He quickly made it more feared than the Eastern Depot.

¹ As quoted by T'an Ch'ien in his *Kuo ch'üeh* (ca. 1653; rpt. Peking, 1958), 40, p. 2544.

A eunuch actor who was a talented comedian and a favorite entertainer at the court performed a skit before the emperor humorously pointing out that Wang Chih's passage through the streets of the capital aroused more awe than that of the Son of Heaven himself. The emperor seemed a bit slow to take the point, but finally passed it off in mild laughter, allowing all present to breathe deeply. That event late in 1481 shows that within the eunuch bureaucracy there was effective opposition to Wang Chih. Nonetheless, Wang had terrorized the officialdom and the elite of the capital and in the provinces as had no previous Ming figure, wielding awesome power for half a dozen years. He was finally demoted to a menial position in the eunuch guard unit at the tomb of the founder in Nanking in 1483. The slow-moving emperor had kept Wang away from the court for most of 1482 before he finally withdrew his favor and support and then only after a rival eunuch in the Eastern Depot pressed charges against him and offered to be more useful.

Another notorious eunuch of the Hung-chih reign, Liang Fang, had a more normal career in the eunuch bureaucracy, advancing in the 1470s to the directorship of a division responsible for manufacturing furniture and other wooden items for the palaces and incidentally also for book manufacture. Under Lady Wan's patronage he assembled experts on aphrodisiacs and amusing lore that was then put into books submitted for the young emperor's titillation. Liang expanded those services into control over the procurement of precious materials, and hence over a measure of foreign trade, as well as monopolizing the issuance of certificates to Tibetan and other alien monks and foreign experts on medicines and exotic techniques. His opportunities for profitable speculation, in Lady Wan's and the emperor's interests, were enormous, but he seems not to have amassed great wealth himself. His career was not ended until after the emperor's death, and then he was merely punished by demotion.

Other eunuchs obtained appointments to supervise the collection of special taxes, using their powers to plunder the rich prefectures of central and south China. Still others sponsored the building of temples and shrines at the capital and throughout the provinces. These abuses of eunuch power tended to create models and establish patterns that eunuchs and their unworthy collaborators could revert to in subsequent reigns. Thus the Ch'eng-hua emperor, by his unconcern for such irregularities, allowed the emergence of evil ways that were cumulatively threatening to the dynasty's interests. The abuses drove some able statesmen from the government and forced a measure of passivity on the administration in certain circumstances, but they did not undermine the state and the government. That ponderous machinery could absorb heavy shocks.

Chu Yu-t'ang, the emperor Hsiao-tsung

Lady Wan died in a sudden seizure on 3 February 1487, at the age of fifty-seven. The emperor canceled all meetings of the court for seven full days of mourning, an extraordinary gesture. On 1 September the emperor himself fell ill. On the fourth he ordered his seventeen-year-old heir, Chu Yu-t'ang, to supervise the deliberations of government in the Wen-hua Palace, where the grand secretaries gathered. On the ninth Chu Chien-shen was dead. Chu Yu-t'ang formally ascended the throne on 17 September and proclaimed a new reign title, Hung-chih, to be used commencing with the next New Year in 1488.

A number of the young Hung-chih emperor's first acts reflect both the urgent sense of a need to clean out the defiled court and to repudiate the personal characteristics of his father, who had tolerated, even contributed to, that defilement. The disreputable Taoist sorcerer and expert on aphrodisiacs, Li Tzu-hsing, was denounced and banished and then imprisoned, where he died. The equally rapacious Buddhist monk Chi-hsiao and a few others were executed. Members of Lady Wan's family and her principal eunuch collaborators also were expelled from office, but very few among the prominent scoundrels were executed, despite serious charges that now poured in from a resentful officialdom. The court was forbidden to air the record of Lady Wan herself. Two thousand irregularly appointed officials were summarily dismissed, as well as almost a thousand Buddhist and Taoist clerics who had been patronized by the court.

The young emperor found in his father's quarters a to him particularly shocking sex manual bearing the inscription: "Presented by the servitor Wan An." Wan An was a sycophantic official who had claimed a spurious family relationship with Lady Wan and had used her favor to build a position of power at the court. Eventually he had become the senior grand secretary and as such had drafted the accession edict of the new emperor. Within the first month of his reign, the young emperor went to the unusual lengths of having a chief eunuch of great probity take the book to the hall where the grand secretaries gathered to confront Wan An with it; humiliated, the old man grovelled, speechless, and finally had to be ordered to withdraw. He was never called back to the court and died within the year. Chu Yu-t'ang was signaling that things were to be different.

Father and son were strikingly different physically, psychologically, and intellectually. Chu Yu-t'ang was a small, bright-eyed mouse of a man with a drooping moustache and a wispy beard. The imperial portraits show a different, more southern-appearing succession of emperors from Chu Yu-

t'ang onward; he and his son, the emperor Wu-tsung (r. 1505–21) were descended from the aboriginal Lady Chi. That may show up in their physical appearance, though it would have no bearing on the line after Wu-tsung.

Psychologically, Hsiao-tsung appears to have been everything his father was not. He had married a Lady Chang a few months before his accession; he now proclaimed her his empress. He was completely devoted to her. She bore him his two sons and three daughters, and despite slanderous rumors about Wu-tsung's mother having been a serving maid, he apparently had relations with no other women. Chaoying Fang has speculated that he may have been the only monogamist emperor in all of imperial Chinese history.² He had been reared by his pugnacious grandmother, the empress dowager Chou, in the threatening atmosphere of Lady Wan's domination of his father and of the imperial household; his own mother had been her victim. He must have felt her loss deeply. After coming to the throne, he proclaimed his long-dead mother the empress dowager and sent officials to Kwangsi to seek out her family. Imposters appeared and were exposed, and no kin were ever located. He had memorial shrines constructed both in Kwangsi and in the palace at Peking, and tended the latter with intense devotion.

Intellectually this earnest young man was completely devoted to Confucian teachings and ethical values. No other emperor of the Ming, and perhaps no other emperor in history, accepted that tradition's teachings about the heavy responsibilities of emperorship as sincerely as he did. None strove so hard to live up to those demanding obligations. He was punctilious about meeting his court, about performing all the prescribed ritual acts, about having the classics mat lectures (*ching-yen*) reinstated and faithfully conducted, and especially about appointing worthy exemplars of Confucian conduct to his court and heeding their advice. He was deeply concerned about the welfare of the people. He probed the administration of justice, instituting a study of the penal code and its faltering implementation. This led to an important imperially sponsored work on the code and the precedents called the *Wen hsing t'iao li*.

Although the infamous Western Depot was reopened, he strictly limited its work and that of the parallel Eastern Depot to proper investigative activities. His appointees to direct these two agencies mostly were honest officials, rare indeed for these offices, who came to be admired throughout the government. The same was true of the Imperial Bodyguard, also in the

² L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, ed., *Dictionary of Ming biography* (New York and London, 1976), p. 376.

past an arm of terror in government. He reduced the court's consumption of luxuries and eliminated many of the eunuch-run procurement agencies. Confucian-minded statesmen, never having experienced so tractable a ruler, rewarded him by describing him in their histories as a paragon. He brought a spirit of great hopefulness to the bureaucracy, and some of the vigor and commitment of the early Ming was regained.

He was in fact, however, less than a paragon. He displayed great attentiveness to the empire's problems, but he contributed neither an enlarged vision nor grand leadership to the state. Moreover, his grateful Confucian bureaucrats, understandably enough, concealed his lapses, including his excessive devotion to and dependence upon his empress Chang. She was a foolish and demanding woman, capable of no more than petty faults, but those included a constant desire for expensive objects, credulity about the teaching of the most specious Buddhist and Taoist clerics, and limitless favor for her family, especially her two unrestrainedly venal brothers.

This pair, Chang Ho-ling and Chang Yen-ling, with the unflagging support of their sister the empress and her mother, Lady Chin, made careers of outrageously misusing their fortuitously achieved high position. Their father, Chang Luan, who had been a mere National University student when his daughter was selected for the palace, had been named earl of Shou-ning in 1490. The next autumn his daughter gave birth to a son who was proclaimed the heir apparent in the spring of 1492, securing the Chang family in their privileged position. Shortly after, in the spring of 1492, the empress's father submitted an unseemly memorial requesting elevation to the rank of marquis, and although many high court officials opposed this as without precedent and inappropriate, the emperor granted the higher title. When he died later that year, Chang Luan, then the marquis of Shou-ning, was succeeded by his elder son, Chang Ho-ling. He himself was posthumously elevated still further to the dukedom of Ch'ang-kuo; despite official censure an elaborate tomb, violating the ritual regulations for a man of his rank, was built at public expense. The younger son, Chang Yen-ling, still a teenager, was sometime thereafter given the title earl, and eventually marquis of Chien-ch'ang.

Many other Chang family cousins, uncles, adopted sons, and sworn brothers and all manner of opportunist hangers-on received titles, offices, eventually lands, and opportunities to participate in embezzlement and corruption. No consort clan in all of Ming times received such treatment; it is evidence both of this emperor's dependence on his wife and of his inability to take a firm stand against those closest to him. His distaff relatives were repeatedly charged with specific and serious wrongdoing, but

they were always defended by the empress and her mother, as well as by a eunuch faction and other close courtiers who stood to benefit from affiliation with the Changs. Although they could not manipulate this emperor to intimidate their opponents, they could always make appeals to him that would lead to his simply dropping the charges. Two incidents from the later years of his reign illustrate his sense of dilemma.

The *Official history of the Ming* in its biography of the two Chang brothers and their father tells that on hearing reports of the Chang brothers' seizure of lands from neighboring farming families at their native district south of Peking, the emperor in 1497³ sent a fearless investigator of wrongdoing among the highly placed, vice-minister of justice T'u Hsün, and an equally courageous and upright eunuch, Hsiao Ching, to investigate. They returned with a scathing report that included a daring comment on the damage to the throne stemming from popular resentment in the empress' own home district against her family's behavior. They uncompromisingly demanded restitution to all who had suffered and restrictions against such behavior in the future. The empress was furious, and the emperor, according to the *Official history of the Ming* "also feigned anger." But he accepted the essentials of the report. Later he said in private to Hsiao Ching: "Your words were correct," and presented him with a gift of gold.⁴

Two months before the emperor's death in 1505, the eminent scholar and literary figure Li Meng-yang, then a young secretary in the Ministry of Revenue, submitted a long memorial criticizing many aspects of the court and the government; in particular he pointed out the long-range damage to the dynasty that would come from tolerating Chang Ho-ling's flagrant abuses. Chang himself, his sister the empress, and her mother all submitted furious demands for Li Meng-yang's head. The emperor was truly distraught. As a first step, to conciliate his wife and mother-in-law he ordered Li sent to prison, and then he consulted earnestly and privately with several of his grand secretaries. One suggested that Li's words were "unreasonable," but another said Li had written "courageously and honestly for the good of the state."⁵

The emperor inclined to the latter view and after some hesitation refused even to have Li flogged to please his womenfolk; instead he fined Li three months' salary and had him released from prison, a hero in the eyes of the

3 This date and some details are based on T'u Hsün's necrology; see Chiao Hung, *Kuo ch'ao hsien cheng lu* (ca. 1594–1616); facsimile rpt. No. 6 of *Chung-kuo shih hsieh ts'ung shu* (Taipei, 1965), 44, p. 71b. For Hsiao Ching, see Chang T'ing-yü et al., ed., *Ming shih* (1736; rpt. Peking, 1974), 304, p. 7784.

4 *MS*, 300, p. 7676.

5 Hsia Hsieh, comp. *Ming t'ung chien* (ca. 1870, rpt. Peking, 1959), 40, p. 1530.

court and the capital. Later the emperor asked still another senior official what people were saying about the matter. The reply was that people were greatly pleased and encouraged by the ruler's magnanimity. The emperor said: "I know, but when I asked my eunuchs the same question I got the opposite answer. I am sure they wanted to see Li Meng-yang flogged to death. But would I execute a straightforward servitor just to please my attendants?"⁶

In short, officialdom could trust this emperor as no other in the dynasty to hold the correct attitudes, to restrain his anger, and to be sincere in his commitment to the larger responsibilities of emperorship. They could not, however, always rely on him to take the action those attitudes implied. No matter how severely they criticized current affairs, and by clear implication him, he would patiently hear them out and respond, at the very least, with a grateful commendation for their concern. In some instances he would order the requested corrective actions; often, however, he would table the matter with the comment that their brilliant ideas, so nobly expressed, could not be adopted just at that time. Reading the month-by-month veritable record of his reign one gains the impression that all the ambitious officials, sincerely or merely to attract attention, subjected him to endless reviews of Confucian ethics, of classical and historical precedents, and to their own elaborate exposition of their notions about policy. His government personnel badgered him incessantly. In this reign the risks were small, and such opportunities were not to be missed. In all reigns of the Ming dynasty courageous and occasionally perceptive officials assumed the responsibility to admonish the throne, often suicidally. Under the benign emperor Hsiao-tsung the conditions were quite special; his personal qualities called forth a flood of critical advice.

He was not strong. Frequently during the later years of his reign he had to plead illness and absent himself from court. Even then he was not spared, as in the twelfth month of 1502 (actually in January 1503) when his grand secretaries reproved him for allowing a critical decision on relief measures for flood-stricken Nanking to be delayed. They advised that he be sedulously attentive in formulating decisions in order to stimulate a higher morale in government. The ever-courteous, if exhausted, young emperor thanked them for that good advice.

Yet he had a mind of his own. Along with his wife, he too appears to have been sincerely devoted to Taoist religious beliefs; adepts regularly performed intercessory prayer ceremonies (*chai chiao*) at the court under imperial patronage. Those activities may have been as legitimate a form of

6 MS, 286, pp. 7346-47.

medical practice as then existed, and they did not alienate the emperor from his commitment to Confucian values. Yet his scholar-officials could not conceal their scorn and resentment and often threatened, when reporting on natural disasters, that such deviations from ideal imperial norms could be responsible for the cosmic imbalances reflected in the droughts, floods, plagues, and famines that beset his reign. When in 1504 he granted to a Taoist adept Ts'ui Chih-tuan, chief minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, the honorary title of concurrent (i. e., nonsubstantive) minister of rites, that aroused great clamor. The Ministry of Rites, the very stronghold of Confucian correctness, in the eyes of the court was defiled by this appointment. But the emperor firmly ignored all protests. Ts'ui had been one of the irregularly appointed clerics in Lady Wan's coterie during the previous reign and in the present reign had been patronized by Li Kuang, a "bad" eunuch who strongly favored Taoists and who had been driven to commit suicide in disgrace. We must assume that Ts'ui, about whom there is very little information, was like Li Kuang a favorite of the empress Chang.

During the eighteen-year reign of this unfortunate emperor, natural disasters appear to have been unusually frequent and severe, particularly from the late 1490s until his death in 1505. He approved frequent tax remissions and relief measures for the stricken areas and gives evidence of having been deeply troubled by his people's sufferings. Yet here again we must be on our guard in interpreting the record, because officials throughout the empire unflinchingly used their own reports on the disasters and those of others as excuses for charging this most receptive and conscientious of rulers with responsibility to reform some aspect of his governing in order to restore the cosmic harmony. The more he shouldered his Confucian responsibility, the more they heaped problems upon him.

One recurring disaster was real enough. It was the floods caused from the late 1480s onward by annual breaks in the dikes of the Yellow River in Shantung, where the river and the Grand Canal intersected. One of the several branches of the river that had formed as the dikes deteriorated crossed the canal at Chang-ch'iu (about 80 miles southwest of Chi-nan), endangering many lives and interrupting transport on the canal. This was adjacent to Sha-wan, where Hsü Yu-chen had carried out extensive repair projects in 1453–55. A more fundamental attack on the problem seemed called for this time. In 1493 Liu Ta-hsia, a senior official then serving in the provinces, was recommended by the minister of personnel, Wang Shu, to take charge.

Liu was by no means a man of specialized competence in hydraulic engineering; he was a proven administrator who approached the immense

task as a literatus and generalist. He studied the history of river conservancy projects, recruited the best local experience and skill to be found, and adopted the techniques that had been used by his notable predecessors, especially those of the great hydraulic engineer of the mid-fourteenth century, Chia Lu. Starting well upstream from the breaks, almost as far back as K'ai-feng in Honan, Liu blocked those branches of the river that flowed to the northeast through what would be modern southern Hopei and western Shantung. That turned the main channel to the southeast, to flow toward Hsü-chou in northern Kiangsu and on to the sea in the channel of the Huai River. This changed the main course of the Yellow River to flow south of the Shantung peninsula, a change that endured until the mid-nineteenth century. As many as a hundred and twenty thousand men at a time labored for over two years on the stupendous tasks of blocking, channeling, and diking. Liu Ta-hsia's success in planning and managing the project gained him fame in history and the high favor of the emperor. He served in high positions, eventually as minister of war from late in 1501 to the middle of 1506, when he retired. He became the emperor's closest confidant in those last years, when the young ruler's energies and attentiveness to governing declined.

Some of the previous reign's innovations in bad governing were allowed to reappear during his later years: the creation of imperial estates, direct appointments to office bypassing the responsible ministries, embezzlement in the salt monopoly, and bribery of court officials. None of that approached the scale of corruption in the previous reign. These lapses, of which he was not unaware, detract in some measure from this good, conscientious, hard-working yet somehow ineffectual young ruler's record. His worst legacy to the dynasty was his heir. As Chu Yu-t'ang lay dying in the summer of 1505, not yet quite thirty-five years old, he called his most honored grand secretaries to his bedside and entrusted to them the care of his son, then only thirteen, saying: "He is intelligent, but he is still so young and is too fond of ease and pleasure. . . ."7 As the briefly reigning Cheng-te emperor, that son flamboyantly and cynically flaunted all his father's earnest Confucian idealism, repudiating that paternal model more explicitly than had Chu Yu-t'ang in his troubled turning away from his own father's example eighteen years earlier. The second half of the Ming dynasty did not begin auspiciously. As judged by all the traditional historians, however, in retrospect the Hung-chih reign period was an era to be cherished.

7 *MS*, 181, p. 4813.

ISSUES IN CIVIL GOVERNMENT IN THE CH'ENG-HUA AND
HUNG-CHIH ERAS

The place of the grand secretariat

It has often been noted that the Ming founder did not trust any of his officials enough to allow a responsible grand secretariat system to function. So when he abolished the office of prime minister in 1380, he was in fact merely bringing the institutional realities into line with his ideal conception and with his practice as emperor. During the century that followed his reign, his successors were more willing to delegate authority, but no structural changes could be formalized that would give a constitutional basis for the delegation of responsible executive authority to any chief minister or to any group of high-level advisors. The founder's *Huang Ming tsu hsün* (Ancestral injunctions) to his successors specifically forbade that. As a result, each reigning emperor had to act in innumerable regular acts of governing, and his acts required that he command details of information, and then exercise his judgment accordingly. It was, of course, an unrealistic situation.

The Yung-lo emperor, vigorous, highly rational, and interested only in certain aspects of governing (particularly in the military problems of the northern frontier), had initiated the process of regularly delegating administrative authority to trusted civil officials, including the heads of the senior ministries (Ministry of Personnel and Ministry of Revenue), and particularly to a group of seven young scholars in the Hanlin Academy whom he chose for their learning and intelligence. He also acknowledged his dependence on eunuchs, his household menials, some of whom were literate and technically trained in the paperwork of government. Through what became the Golden Age of early Ming government, his son and grandson in the decade 1425–35 continued to foster that select group of inner court advisors. A pattern of reliance on them, now senior Hanlin officials, emerged quite clearly; all of them eventually held the title grand secretary in the inner court, but also came to hold formally higher concurrent rank in the ministries of the outer court. The three Yangs (died 1440, 1444, 1446), whose tenure in high office stretched from the second decade of the century into the fifth, epitomize that development and symbolized for subsequent Ming government the emergence of an informal grand secretariat (*nei-ko*) system.

It was during their period that the high advisory officials—grand secretaries and their assistants in the Hanlin Academy—began the practice of pasting onto the cover of each memorial under consideration by the emperor a slip of paper on which they summarized its content and proposed the form which the imperial edict responding to it should take. The

emperor Ying-tsung, who came to the throne as a boy of eight in 1435, inherited the aging group of his father's and grandfather's respected advisors. During his minority—a circumstance not provided for by the founder's *Ancestral injunctions*—the system of formulating responses to memorials was carried to further lengths by the grand secretariat, and it became the established practice that memorials would not be forwarded on for administrative action until the advisory officials had discussed them and decided upon a draft rescript.

The real crux of the problem was whether the officials' proposed responses to memorials—that is, the edicts issuing from the throne which constituted the authorization for all administrative action—would prevail or whether lazy, perverse, or otherwise independent-minded emperors would permit other formulations, perhaps orally transmitted by them to their eunuch secretarial assistants or perhaps prepared on the latter's initiative, to supersede them. Or, as eventually came to happen, there might simply be no action, no response at all. A consequence of the system of preparing draft rescripts to be pasted on the cover of those documents demanding imperial action was that emperors no longer had to confer directly with their ministers. Government by court conference, the rule through the first several reigns of the dynasty, was interrupted decisively during the minority of Ying-tsung after 1435.

The piece of paper advising the emperor how to respond was an increasingly acceptable alternative to face-to-face consultations; he and his eunuchs preferred that to decisions reached through the shared understanding of issues worked out by the ruler and his highest policy aides. It thus facilitated the estrangement of the ruler from his court. Eventually the system deteriorated to the point where memorials demanding action by the throne might never leave the imperial study. The emperor or his secretarial eunuchs could simply bury them in the mountains of documents accumulating from the vast paper flow on which Chinese government depended, and no response to them would ever be made, even though the Office of Transmission would have preserved and distributed record copies as incoming memorials were received. Or the throne could respond without giving the grand secretariat and the executive ministries an opportunity to study the matter and recommend a response.

All this potential for the breakdown of orderly procedures resulted from the Ming founder's insistence that each of his successors must function as his own prime minister. Those who could not or would not might simply abandon the great power of the state to the winds of chance, and more often than not the eunuchs at the emperor's side were in the better position to grasp at that.

To go back to the crucial turning point in 1435, even before assuming his direct rule in his mid-teens, the youthful Ying-tsung had come under the influence of Wang Chen, the first of the dynasty's notorious eunuch dictators. Wang was all too happy to see the passing of the respected senior advisors, allowing him to shift the advisory power away from the grand secretariat to the eunuchs closest to the impressionable young emperor. Wang Chen was killed in the debacle of T'u-mu, in 1449. Strong outer court officials led by the vice-minister of war, Yü Ch'ien, then took over and governed forcefully through the crisis, making all the important decisions which the substitute emperor, their creature, duly validated. But with the return of the captured Ying-tsung in 1450 and his eventual restoration to the throne in 1457, Yü Ch'ien's assumption of strong executive authority made him vulnerable to charges of malfeasance. Other hatreds, especially those that had been built up against Wang Chen and his collaborators, also were explosively expressed. A deeply divisive factionalism prevailed.

The aftermath of the T'u-mu incident was more than military crisis; it introduced a time of trial for the imperial government. By then the previously well-evolved system of responsible advising by senior scholar-officials based in the Hanlin Academy had been thrown into flux by Wang Chen's dominance. The restoration of 1457 of the emperor whose youthful folly had caused the crisis of 1449, the emperor's distrust of courtiers, and the factional animosities all threatened to prolong the instability of the grand secretariat system. Senior inner court figures strove to induce the ruler to utilize systematic advice in the last years before Ying-tsung died in 1464, and did so with some success. But a second phase in the development of the Ming grand secretariat system had to await the interactions between court and ruler that emerged under the emperors Hsien-tsung and Hsiao-tsung. By 1505, when Hsiao-tsung died, the system can be said to have reached a new high peak of development.

Hsien-tsung, it has been noted, for all his faults was magnanimous by nature; he quickly succeeded in dissipating lingering resentments, or at least in making it known that opportunistic courtiers could no longer play on those old issues. He worked well with officials of his court in the first years of his reign. Only one basis of factionalism seemed ineradicable at that time, the latent factionalism of northerners versus southerners, and although he preferred northerners, he did not become partisan to the exclusion of southerners. In fact, the influence of southerners increased during his reign. There were three grand secretaries when he ascended the throne: Li Hsien (d. 1467), Ch'en Wen (d. 1468), and P'eng Shih (d. 1475). Li was a northerner; Ch'en and P'eng both came from Kiangsi. Of all the

figures charged with assisting the young emperor to maintain his throne, Li Hsien was undoubtedly the most influential. He had truly dominated the government during Ying-tsung's last years, and he was the overwhelming personality at court during the first three years of the Ch'eng-hua reign.

Li Hsien had filled important offices throughout the government with his nominees, men of ability and good reputation. Although the two emperors, father and son, favored him beyond all other scholar-officials, Li Hsien always urged collegial discussion, in particular insisting that all pending appointments, civil and military, be discussed with the minister of personnel and the minister of war. Thus Li was not resented for his power. But he did not always gain his way with the young Hsien-tsung. He was unsuccessful, for example, in undermining the emperor's confidence in Men Ta, an unscrupulous colonel of the Imperial Bodyguard and Li's implacable enemy at court. Li several times asked to be allowed to retire but the emperor would not allow it, and in fact would not even allow Li to observe proper mourning when his father died in 1466. The emperor's confidence in Li probably stemmed in part from the fact that Li had convinced the dying Ying-tsung that the future Hsien-tsung, his proper heir, must be allowed to succeed and had brought father and son together for an emotional reconciliation at the emperor's deathbed.

For many reasons, then, Li Hsien and the high officials around him were in a strong position to influence the new reign. Li in particular determined to exercise the strongest possible guiding influence. Once in the summer of 1464, shortly after the not yet seventeen-year-old emperor had come to the throne, the fifty-five-year-old Li Hsien—a grandfatherly figure—had a serious talk with him about the meaning to be attached to a storm that had pounded the capital with hail and had uprooted trees at the Temple of Heaven. Li told the youth: "Heaven's majesty is much to be feared. You, Sire, must in profound seriousness intensify your self-examination and determine not to tolerate unworthy persons among your close associates. Trust older and wiser heads and with their help plan what is best for the state."⁸ Historians have commented that this kind of frank and personal advice, given in all solemnity on all possible occasions, had a restraining influence on the young emperor through the early years of his reign and brought the grand secretariat into greater prominence.

Perhaps. But Hsien-tsung also displayed the quality of aloof detachment; he seems never to have committed himself to any group of officials or to any overriding policy. As the three senior grand secretaries of his early reign were replaced and others were added, he brought into his grand

8 *MS*, 176, p. 4676.

secretariat such brilliant scholar-officials as Liu Ting-chih (d. 1469) and Shang Lu (retired 1477). But he also appointed the unprincipled Wan An (d. 1489) and Liu Chi (d. 1493) and others of unsavory reputation. From the late 1470s onward his reliance on the infamous eunuchs Wang Chih (in power from 1476 to 1482) and Liang Fang (in power from 1476 to 1487) and on the crowd of disreputable persons patronized by Lady Wan challenged the influence of upright officials and weakened the deliberative functions of his grand secretariat. Worse, he developed the habit of ignoring his court. He did not have to confer directly with them, so he went for years without ever granting their requests for private consultation.

In contrast, the emperor Hsiao-tsung deferred to the judgment of his grand secretaries in virtually all matters, reserving to his personal discretion only a small range of matters of personal importance to himself. He stubbornly clung to that narrow area of independence and, under the influence of his empress and her family, somewhat enlarged it in his later years. That involved patronage of religion, appointment of favorites, grants of wealth and status, and relatively petty affairs of a few persons. It did not significantly weaken the influence of his grand secretariat, nor did it undermine the high morale of his government.

To summarize the place of the grand secretariat (*nei-ko*) as it developed under these two emperors, one must first define the political problem on which it bears. The basic struggle to control the decisions of government throughout most of Ming times was a struggle between two sets of imperial advisors. The one set was drawn from the scholar-officialdom. Their institutional base was the Hanlin Academy, with its monopoly on appointments to the office of grand secretary. That group was subject to factionalism and to honest differences on policy, but in the minds of most scholar-officials such differences were subsumed in an overarching unity of ethical and intellectual values. The competing group was the emperor's private bureaucracy, the eunuchs, with their institutional base in the twenty-four eunuch offices of palace management headed by the Directorate of Ceremonial (*Ssu-li chien*).

Under the Ming system, after the abolition of the prime ministership in 1380, neither of these groups had a clear, constitutional basis for exercising advisory functions. Both were of the inner court, both were close personal attendants of the emperor, and both gained their authority from their relationship to him. Both groups developed precedents to regularize their functions and to enlarge the bases of their authority. The Hanlin scholars would seem to have possessed overwhelming advantages: they were the recipients of the highest prestige the society could award. They were experts on ritual correctness and on the scholarly foundations of precedent and

tradition. Those were the highest sources of abstract authority in that civilization. Thus they quite naturally reinforced the outer court's scholars and upheld the values of the social elite throughout the whole society. Their social roots, their intellectual outlook, and their ethical commitment all combined to make them the accepted representatives of society at large.

It seems probable that a majority of the 10,000 or more eunuchs in service in the late fifteenth century shared their values and cooperated with the scholar-officials. Those who did not, however, the so-called bad eunuchs, are the ones we are more apt to read about in history. Benefiting from proximity and intimate knowledge, utilizing aspects of the mutual dependence that marked their relationship to members of the imperial household, they knew who was vulnerable to their persuasions and enticements. They could manipulate emperors and empresses, concubines and consort clan relatives to support them against the high officials, for in return they could offer those members of the imperial family crucial personal favors, flattery, procurement of objects, support against the oppressive and restrictive domination of scholar-official norms, and many forms of what must have seemed "freedoms" to the trapped members of a tightly locked-in imperial household group—in short, all forms of personal gratification. That, of course, could affect the emperor's and his government's implementation of policy, but the issues at stake when leaders of the eunuch group strove to extend their control over an emperor were seldom matters of state policy per se. If genuine policy differences often disturbed the harmony of the official group, ambitious eunuchs were more sensitive to the ruler's or his family members' shifts of mood.

There are vague hints that some of the notorious eunuch dictators had novel ideas about statecraft or that emperors who gave preference to their eunuch assistants over their grand secretaries did so to exercise policy options that officialdom opposed, but such issues seem never to have been central to the conflict between the grand secretariat and the eunuchs for the ear of the emperor. Emperors could give themselves to one kind of advisor or to the other, in varying degree, or could coolly cultivate both and play them off against each other. The dull Hsien-tsung appears to have been the latter type of ruler, although by default more than by design. It is not clear how calculating and purposively manipulative he was; he may merely have lacked a clear sense of how to rule. His son the emperor Hsiao-tsung, however, is the supreme example in Ming times of the ruler who sincerely gave himself to his Confucian advisors and who saw their grand secretariat and court institutions as the responsible counterparts to his own imperial dignity. That is the fundamental reason for the great growth in the authority of the grand secretariat at the end of the fifteenth century. It contrib-

uted a valuable precedent, but it did not create a constitutional basis for the perpetuation of the phenomenon.

The growth of the eunuch bureaucracy

Hsiao-tsung fully and sincerely accepted the advisory role of the scholar-officialdom and in particular the deliberative functions of his grand secretariat, composed of three to five grand secretaries. They, in turn, were reinforced by the best of the scholars selected at each of the triennial examinations for direct appointment to the Hanlin Academy. Once within that select circle, these men made their careers starting as staff assistants; from among them all future grand secretaries would be appointed. Wholeheartedly drawn to the values they represented, even Hsiao-tsung, like his immediate predecessors and all of his successors to the end of the dynasty, nonetheless also fully accepted the idea of a eunuch bureaucracy that already functioned not only within the palace, but in a wide range of civil and military administrative posts throughout the empire.

The Ch'eng-hua and Hung-chih reigns witnessed the further growth of the eunuch bureaucracy. This was without parallel in the preceding Sung and Yüan dynasties and, although agitated officials in the late fifteenth century liked to cite the examples of eunuch abuse of power in Han and T'ang times, the Ming regularization of a vast eunuch administrative establishment is really without parallel even in those eunuch-plagued earlier dynasties. The *Official history of the Ming* states, too piously, that the founder had intended his imperial household to employ only about a hundred eunuchs and that he had forbidden that they be literate, that they have any manner of personal dealings with scholar-officials, and on pain of death that they involve themselves in any way with acts of governing. An iron plaque stating the last of those prohibitions was supposed to have been erected within the palace, only to have been treacherously removed in the 1440s by Wang Chen, the first of the infamous eunuch dictators.

The *Official history of the Ming* blames the Yung-lo emperor for having abandoned the founder's intention during the first quarter of the fifteenth century by assigning eunuchs to a greatly expanded range of duties both within and outside the palaces. A modern scholar has demonstrated that the *Official history of the Ming* has simply repeated what were current fictions about the subject of eunuchs, a subject that Ming historians mostly ignored and about which systematic information is now difficult to assemble.⁹ He

9 Huang Chang-chieng. "Lun 'Huang Ming Tsu hsün lu' so chi Ming ch'u huan kuan chih tu," *BIHP* 32 (1961), pp. 77–98.

shows quite clearly that the Ming founder employed literate eunuchs to whom he gave important assignments in the government outside the palace and that the iron plaque, one of the most tediously repeated of all the myths in early Ming history, never existed. The Yung-lo emperor, indeed, greatly expanded the use of eunuchs. He was not only building on a pattern the founder had initiated, but also, in turning to eunuch assistants to manage the flow of documents demanding imperial attention, he was bowing to a reality over which he had no control. That is, the founder's abolition of the prime ministership left a seriously impaired administrative structure. Eunuch assistance to the throne was one inevitable makeshift response to the destruction of the leadership in the outer court that had provided rulers in earlier dynasties with responsible executive assistance.

Many historians see that as the Ming founder's most serious error of judgment. It affected many aspects of government, and especially it led to the awkward relationship between the grand secretariat and the chief eunuchs as both were called upon to fill the void. The ease with which eunuchs could bend that situation to suit their improper purposes is all too evident throughout most of the reigns of the dynasty. The attention of historians has mostly turned to those spectacular misuses of power at the highest levels; an equally important but unstudied problem is the expansion of the eunuch establishment outside the palaces, in both civil and military postings.

An official of the Censorate in 1485 complained that the number of eunuchs had passed the 10,000 mark and had become a fiscal burden. There were perhaps as many as 70,000 eunuchs in the capital when Li Tzu-ch'eng's bandit armies in 1644 ended the dynasty, and there were many others posted throughout the realm. Whether those figures are precisely accurate, they correctly indicate the trend. They reveal that the eunuch establishment by the Ch'eng-hua and Hung-chih reigns had grown to roughly the number of all the ranked civil service posts in the government of the empire, and soon would pass that number.

The civil service bureaucracy and the eunuch bureaucracy functioned in tandem in governing the empire. The leaders at the top of the two hierarchies could become fiercely inimical to each other when competing to control the emperor and aspects of the power that flowed from him, but much of the time, in most situations, they had to cooperate. Both bureaucracies were highly organized, with specific and objectively judged entrance requirements. Both had their management systems, with established procedures, career ladders recognizing the merit principle, and elaborate hierarchical differentiation into ranks with fixed incomes and statuses, rules, and precedents. The eunuch bureaucracy was considerably the less stable of the

two because any emperor could greatly curb its functions and reduce its size, and gain praise for so doing; that in fact happened under the Chia-ching emperor in the second quarter of the sixteenth century. Yet overall the cumulative growth of the eunuch bureaucracy was far greater than that of the civil service.

Eunuchs had an institutional interest in enlarging the bureaucracy over which they presided and in drawing to it an ever-larger sphere of essential activities that increased the ruler's and the government's dependence on them. Emperors also, in the tradition of the pathologically suspicious founder, had an interest in having their eunuchs function as a surveillance check on officials and as a counterpoise to them. Only a strong outer court headed by prime ministers with clearly delegated responsibilities could have stopped the growth of eunuch power. Seventeenth-century historians, Ming sympathizers reflecting on what had gone wrong in Ming history, produced the view that the grand secretaries had to function as *de facto* chief ministers who were unable to bear that title, and therefore were unable to perform the necessary functions fully. They also produced the observation that the chief ministerial powers so exercised were divided; the grand secretariat base of that makeshift authority could all too easily be eclipsed by the competing base held by the eunuchs in the Directorate of Ceremonial. The expansion of their institutional base made the leaders of the eunuch bureaucracy ever more formidable competitors.

Wang Chih, the eunuch in the service of the Lady Wan to whom Hsien-tsung in 1477 gave the directorship of the newly created Western Depot, has been called one of the four infamous eunuch dictators of the dynasty. Nonetheless, under the emperors Hsien-tsung and Hsiao-tsung of still more importance than the abuse of eunuch power at highest levels was no doubt the regularization of the eunuch bureaucracy's expanded functions. It was during the second half of the fifteenth century that eunuchs came to have an increasingly large responsibility in military matters, supervision of the purchase of horses at the borders and production of weapons and other military essentials; control over most of foreign trade under the tribute system; the management of the great imperial factories for silks, brocades, and porcelain; procurement and transport of domestic products used by the court; and the management of most palace, tomb, and temple building projects; as well as the nationwide secret police investigation, interrogation, and punishment functions for which they are best known. Although eunuchs could not hold ranks higher than grade 4A, the chief eunuchs came to be accepted as the counterparts of the heads of the civil and military services with whom they served on special assignments and on regular commissions.

For example, the grand secretary P'eng Shih (1416–75) has recorded in his well-known memoir that a special council of twelve high-ranking military lords, civil officials, and eunuchs—the latter numbering four of the twelve—was appointed on 24 February 1464, the day following Ying-tsung's death, to deliberate on policy and advise the new emperor.¹⁰ Although none of the official sources records this matter, P'eng himself was one of the twelve, and there seems to be no reason to doubt that such a group was formed. He says this group of advisors was formed on the precedent provided in the case of the emperor Hsüan-tsung's death in 1435, when for the first time in the Ming dynasty a minor succeeded to the throne. That had created a problem because the Ming founder's *Ancestral injunctions* to his heirs, binding them to specific institutional arrangements, had not provided for any form of regency for minor or disabled rulers. An arrangement for having senior officials, principally the Three Yangs, deliberate and advise was therefore worked out with the approval of the empresses dowager. There is, however, no record of eunuchs having been formally appointed to that group of senior counsellors in 1435, even though their de facto control over the seven-year-old Ying-tsung's daily life gave them opportunities to influence events and by the 1440s had given Wang Chen complete domination of the government. By the time of Ying-tsung's death thirty years later, when another such council was needed, four leading eunuchs of the Directorate of Ceremonial were formally appointed to it.

Another example is to be seen in the administration of justice. The Censorate, the Ministry of Justice, and an independent judicial review agency in two capitals called the Grand Court of Revision (*Ta-li ssu*) together were known as the three judicial agencies (*san fa-ssu*). They conducted a review of sentences every autumn, deciding which were doubtful, which could be reduced or excused, and which were serious enough to demand imperial approval of the harshest sentences (corporal punishment or banishment). Since the 1440s eunuchs had on occasion represented the emperor at those reviews. They were conducted in high solemnity, with grand secretaries and the heads of the three judicial agencies displaying their judicial learning. After 1459 these officials were joined by the nobility of merit in the final court review (*ch'ao shen*).

In 1481 the Ch'eng-hua emperor changed that. A routine annual review (*lu-ch'iu*) was continued. But in place of the annual court review he estab-

¹⁰ See P'eng Shih, *P'eng Wen-hsien kung pi chi* (late fifteenth century; rpt. in No. 126 of *Chi lu hui pien*, 1617; rpt. No. 2796 of *Ti'ung shu chi ch'eng*, Shanghai, 1936), p. 14b. *DMB*, p. 299, refers to this as a "council of regents;" that overstates its legal status.

lished a great review (*ta shen*) to take place every five years. This great review was now formally convened by the eunuch head of the Directorate of Ceremonial at the capital (or the eunuch grand defender at Nanking), joined by the heads of the three judicial agencies.¹¹ During his reign his eunuch representatives had been taking an increasingly active role in the annual review, often disagreeing with the decisions of the grand secretaries and forcing their own opinions on the learned experts of the grand secretariat and court. The group now significantly excluded from the review activity comprised precisely those grand secretariat officials, and the judicial review activity became another arena for the exercise of eunuch authority.

It is precisely the shift from increasing actual power to formal recognition and institutionalization of their roles, mirrored in these two cases, that characterizes the changes in the eunuch bureaucracy during the latter half of the fifteenth century. It may be argued that eunuchs performed their administrative and supervisory functions as well as ordinary scholar-officials might have done and perhaps at no greater expense to the society. As for the expense, however, it certainly was no less than the cost of maintaining ordinary civil servants. The higher rank they achieved, the more eunuchs lived in the manner of great officials. They built handsome residences, patronized temples, acquired lands, had personal servants and retainers, and in the manner expected in that society, tried to provide for their families. Many adopted sons, usually nephews, and strove to gain preference for them in the kinds of appointments at court most subject to their influence – the posts of centurion or chiliarch in the Imperial Bodyguard or other capital military units.

The scholar-officials, their competitors as well as the society's upholders of morality, however, did not believe that eunuchs were appropriate holders of power and status. Their prejudice is in some measure well founded. True, the historians among them record warmly the outstanding good eunuchs, meaning those who lived simply, were loyal to the throne, opposed bad eunuchs in the incessant eunuch factionalism, and cooperated with good officials. The *Official history of the Ming* notes that such worthy eunuchs were unusually numerous during Hsiao-tsung's reign. Beyond the occasional noteworthy examples of that kind, scholar-officials denigrated eunuchs categorically and denounced them incessantly. They endlessly submitted memorials calling for punishment of persons who abetted the self-imposed (usually parent-imposed) castration of young males, hoping for

¹¹ This does not emerge clearly from the *shih lu* entry. See *Ming shih lu*, *Hsien-tsung shih lu* (1491; rpt. Taipei, 1961–66), *ch.* 214, or Shen Shih-hsing, comp., *Ta Ming hui tien* (1587; rpt. Shanghai, 1936; photographic rpt. Taipei, 1964), *ch.* 177, 211, and 214; this interpretation follows that in *MS* 94, p. 2307, and *Ming t'ung chien* 34, p. 1307.

tax exemptions and riches should those be accepted into the palace. They asked for reductions in the numbers of eunuchs recruited. They exposed flagrant examples of their misconduct. And they demanded reductions of their roles in the governing of the realm.

Among the most strongly argued of the analyses of eunuch abuses throughout Chinese history, but with particular focus on the Ming experience, is the pair of essays in the critical studies by the seventeenth-century savant Ku Yen-wu.¹² In the first he reinforces his argument by quoting at some length from a memorial submitted in 1464 to the newly enthroned emperor, Hsientung. It came from a group of Censorate officials in Nanking headed by Wang Hui (ca. 1407–ca. 1489) and was one of two they submitted calling for better treatment of eunuchs, but in the context of limiting them severely to inconsequential tasks within the palaces. The concluding lines from the first memorial, submitted early in the summer of 1464, defines the problem succinctly and with force:

Since antiquity good and worthy eunuchs have been few, while treacherous, depraved ones have been the majority. If great power is bestowed upon them it leads to failure and ruin. When then they are punished, it becomes a case of favoring them at the beginning and ending up by executing them. That is not the way to protect and care for them. We hope that the old regulations established by the Emperor Kao [i.e. the Ming founder] will be taken as the norm; that they will not be allowed to participate in administration, to command troops, or to acquire land and establish family properties. Their household members and adopted sons all should be sent back to their native places and registered as commoners. [i.e., they should not be allowed to hold office.] Officials of all ranks must be strictly forbidden to carry on contacts and relations with them. They should be generously paid, however, so that they can live in ease and plenty and develop no further ambitions. This would be a blessing to the state, and it also would be a blessing to the eunuchs.¹³

That memorial was not immediately responded to, but after the emperor later that year demoted and punished the chief eunuch, Niu Yü, who was blamed for the unhappy choice of his first and quickly deposed empress, Wang Hui and his associates were seized and thrown into prison. From prison they then submitted a second memorial saying, in effect, "We told you so," using the fall from grace of Niu Yü as the occasion for repeating their arguments, this time setting those forth in still more telling detail. One passage in particular bears on the awkward relationship between court officials and court eunuchs:

¹² Ku Yen-wu, "Huan kuan," and "Chin Tzu-kung," *Jih chih lu chi shih*, ed. Huang Ju-ch'eng (1872; rpt. Vols. 17–18 of *Kuo hsieh chi pen ts'ung shu*, Shanghai, 1935), ch. 9.

¹³ Both memorials are also quoted in part in Wang Hui's biography in the *MS*, 180, p. 4767–68, and in *MTC*, 29, pp. 1160 and 1163. These translations are based on the former.

Eunuchs are constantly at the side of the emperor. High officials who have no sense of integrity and shame busily engage them in personal relationships, offer them valuable gifts, and obsequiously flatter to curry favor with them. Those [officials] are then accepted [by the eunuchs] as worthies and are praised day and night. But officials who are firm and upright and refuse to pander to them come to be regarded as good-for-nothings; they are slandered and defamed day and night, constantly subjected to criticisms that can scarcely fail to arouse doubts about them. In this way those they praise obtain high positions, while those they slander are rejected and driven away. Gratitude then redounds to the credit of the eunuch imperial attendants, while resentments are turned against the court. This is why the formation of such relationships cannot be permitted.

The emperor was angered. He said the authors were just fishing for fame, and even against the firm support courageously extended to them by many members of the government, he had them all banished to very humble hardship posts in remote places. Eunuchs dogged them for the remainder of Hsien-tsung's reign, preventing pardons and blocking their appointments to better positions. Wang Hui survived until the accession of Hsiao-tsung when, in 1488, he was recommended for appointment to a high court position by the outstanding minister of personnel, Wang Shu; he died shortly thereafter, vindicated if not compensated at the age of eighty-two.

These protestors were but one small group among hundreds whose careers were ruined by their opposition to eunuchs. They remind us that as one other consequence of the growth of the eunuch bureaucracy, we must count its unfortunate impact on the morale of officialdom, especially that of the officials at the two capitals whose careers inevitably were intertwined with the activities of eunuchs. The situations they created often pitted "debased" opportunistic officials who collaborated with them against "upright" incorruptible officials. Yet no high official could be effective unless he achieved a good working relationship with the eunuch leadership. Hsiao-tsung, susceptible to scholar-official guidance, greatly ameliorated that debilitating atmosphere, but he made no structural changes and left the potential for a rapid return to the worst of eunuch abuses under his extraordinary son and successor.

MILITARY PROBLEMS

The military arm of government

The twenty-three years of the Ch'eng-hua reign and the eighteen of the Hung-chih differed from each other both in the kinds of military problems they faced, domestically and on the frontiers, and in their responses. In

brief, Chu Chien-shen identified with his military-minded grandfather and father [the emperors Hsüan-tsung (r. 1425–35) and Ying-tsung (r. 1435–49 and 1457–64)], aspired to their vigorous, even aggressive military postures, and rewarded successful military leaders generously. Chu Yu-t'ang, in contrast, venerated the Confucian pacifist ideal and did not encourage proponents of aggressive policies. During the former's years on the throne, nine earldoms and one marquise were created as rewards for military achievements; during the latter's reign, only one title in the nobility of merit was awarded, and that posthumously to a heroically stubborn old campaigner on the northern frontier who was killed there in 1504. Although throughout both reigns the northern border was the principal and continuing military concern of the Ming state, underlain by a nagging consistency of the basic causes, it presented an ever-shifting assortment of enemy leaders and hostile confederations. (That situation will be discussed under "The northern border wars" below.)

The more aggressive military stance of the Cheng-hua reign reflects three factors: (1) The military threats came from more potent enemies; (2) the emperor's attitude assured an active response from the Chinese; and (3) manipulative officials like the eunuch Wang Chih, recognizing the opportunities for personal gain to be realized from winning, or claiming to have won, victories in warfare, devised more opportunities during that reign for doing so. Unlike most of their predecessors, neither emperor ever campaigned in person, nor did subsequent Ming emperors, except for the mock-heroic displays of the Cheng-te emperor (1506–21).

Hsien-tsung, though favorable to the military, was not personally vigorous; the mild, pacifistic Hsiao-tsung was the most unlikely field commander in the entire Ming dynastic line. Yet he once rather tentatively proposed that perhaps it was his inescapable duty to lead a punitive expedition against the northern enemy. It was near the end of his reign in the summer of 1504 when the border defense zone at Ta-t'ung was again undergoing the almost annual raids. Summoning his grand secretaries in private to discuss this unending problem that probably seemed to him to impugn the moral rightness of his rule, and perhaps thinking of the admirably righteous anger with which King Wu in the twelfth century B.C. smote the evil king of the Shang, he pondered ways of prevailing over the unruly Mongols. In all earnestness, his Confucian sense of responsibility clearly overcoming his distaste for war and stirred by the report of the heroic death of a hopelessly outnumbered valiant regional military commissioner and his battalion, the ever-conscientious Hsiao-tsung paused long, then offered: "Our dynasty's emperor T'ai-tsung [i.e. Yung-lo emperor, Chu Ti] often led campaigns beyond the Great Wall; is there any reason

why We cannot now do the same?" Swallowing the amazement this incongruous suggestion must have aroused, his trustworthy secretary of war, Liu Ta-hsia, with perfect courtier quick thinking replied: "Your Majesty's god-like military qualities certainly are in no way inferior to those of emperor T'ai-tsung, but now our generals and their foot and mounted forces are far inferior." He cited an incident from the Yung-lo reign to prove his point and concluded: "In my judgment the best policy for now would be to maintain a defensive stance."

Liu Ta-hsia's comparison of the early Ming empire's military circumstances with those of a century later could have gone much further; those circumstances had changed profoundly. Historians have noted the gradual decline of the military nobility of merit created under the early emperors and the waning of the close links between the military professionals and the throne. By the mid-fifteenth century control over the military and the monopoly on its rewards was shifting away from the not often competent second- and third-generation titled descendants of the earlier heroic figures to the civilian bureaucracy and to eunuchs in military careers. Increasingly, military policies were determined by civilian bureaucrats. Some of the most effective military leaders late in the fifteenth century, like the more famous Wang Shou- jen (the philosopher Wang Yang-ming) in the early sixteenth, were men from the civil service examination career background who had moved into military leadership from other kinds of administrative posts; prominent examples are Han Yung (1422–78), Wang Yüeh (1426–99), Hsiang Chung (1421–1502), and Ma Wen-sheng (1426–1510).¹⁴ By comparison with them, the hereditary military commanders of highest rank in their times were often bumbling incompetents. Moreover, the throne was no longer occupied by men of military competence who could themselves supervise closely the performance of the entire Chinese military system; the emergence and utilization of superior leaders was haphazard, and the supporting structure was no longer rigorously maintained. Such changes were gradual and in some measure reversible under temporarily more favorable conditions. In general, however, Liu Ta-hsia's judgment that the military means available to mid-Ming emperors were "far inferior" to those of earlier reigns was profoundly accurate.

The military problems that faced the Ming state during the reigns of Hsien-tsung and Hsiao-tsung were those of organization—the recruitment, training, deployment, logistical support, and leadership of the armed forces—and those of urgencies, domestic and international, in which mili-

14 There are biographies of all the persons named in this paragraph, and of most of the others named throughout this chapter, in *DMB*.

tary force had to be employed. Those will be reviewed here briefly, in that order: organizational problems, domestic urgencies stemming from banditry and rebellion, and wars on the borders with other—here Inner Asian—nations.

The organizational structure of the Chinese military system was not substantially altered during these reigns. Its basic element was the more or less five hundred guards (*wei*) and their constituent battalions (*so*) located throughout the empire, each guard nominally numbering 5,600 soldiers and officers, all in theory supplied by hereditary military households, and in fact often by hired replacements. The nominal strength of the empire's guards should have been close to 3 million officers and soldiers, but probably numbered somewhat less than half that by mid-Ming times. They were under the direction of the five Chief Military Commissions, not under a unified central command. In addition there were special imperial guards, similarly organized, numbering over seventy based in and near Peking. Nominally these could have provided close to another million troops, but they too were gravely undermanned, and most of their soldiers did not in fact bear arms but worked as laborers. They had thousands and tens of thousands of supernumerary officers, posts indiscriminately granted to relatives of those with connections at the court.

The Capital Guards were independent of the authority of the five commissions. A special command structure also existed for the Nine Defense Areas (*chiu-pien*) of the northern frontier, segments of the Great Wall line defending China against intrusions from Inner Asia. This arm of the military was somewhat more properly maintained; its actual troop strength at this time was about 300,000, and it was better supplied and trained than the guards throughout the provinces, though subject to the same problems of inadequate leadership. It was the practice to create special military commands for large-scale campaigns, whether to suppress domestic disorders or to defend the border. By the Ch'eng-hua and Hung-chih reigns such emergencies normally required specially recruited militia or specially assembled professional fighting units, for the old guards installations were no longer of prime military significance. Saddled with a system long in decline, these two emperors and their military advisors could only attempt reforms and patchwork improvements.

One such organizational reform, intended to improve the defenses of the capital, was the restoration in 1464 of the integrated training that had been devised by the energetic minister of war Yü Ch'ien in the crisis of 1449 and later abandoned. One of Hsien-tsung's first acts after coming to the throne was to order this system's revival. Twelve "integrated divisions" of 10,000 men each were selected for fitness among the more than 300,000 troops

then comprising the three capital rotation training divisions, one each for infantry, cavalry (essentially manned by Mongols), and artillery. Most of the troops in these three divisions, sent up to the capital nominally on rotation from guards in the provinces close to Peking, were overage and were retained for work as servants or laborers, legally or illegally. Under the newly restored system, the 120,000 best were culled out; the unfit were reassigned or retired. The twelve training divisions so formed are here called "integrated divisions" because their training integrated the functions of infantry, cavalry, and artillery units and unified the command over the three constituents for greater fighting effectiveness.

Sun Chi-tsung, the brother of the emperor Hsüan-tsung's empress, named marquis of Hui-ch'ang for his part in the emperor Ying-tsung's restoration in 1457, was appointed commander of the twelve training divisions, showing the importance the court attached to the reform. The most important military figure involved in it, however, was the remarkable eunuch military commander Liu Yung-ch'eng, then already seventy-three years old and the veteran of many campaigns dating from the Yung-lo reign onward, who bore the actual responsibilities of directing the new training activity. Each of the twelve divisions also had a eunuch military supervisor (*chien-chün*) as its second in command.

The restored system went through a number of subsequent modifications and appears to have been effective for a time. After Wang Chih's rise to power in the middle 1470s, the integrated divisions became wholly a eunuch-directed and eunuch-led operation. At times more than half its assigned troop strength was missing, illicitly serving highly placed military leaders and eunuchs as laborers. In 1487, upon coming to the throne, the emperor Hsiao-tsung restored the leadership of the twelve integrated divisions to civilian officials; his choice for the post of commander was the newly named director for the Censorate (later minister of works, then of war), Ma Wen-sheng, whose outstanding abilities as a military administrator had been proved through long and distinguished service on the northern frontier. The system thereafter had a varied history until it was abolished in 1550, when the crisis of renewed Mongol invasions again demanded organizational reforms.

In 1494 an edict established national norms for the recruitment and utilization of militia, nominally volunteers from among the people who were willing to take up military service. On the borders these were called local troops (*t'u-ping*), in the provinces they were designated people's stalwarts (*min-chuang*). The practice of recruiting volunteer militia from among the people in times of emergency had grown up irregularly since the crisis of 1449; in now regularizing this practice, the inadequacies of the *wei-so* or guards system was further acknowledged. In 1502 it was stated that over

300,000 of the *min-chuang* had been taken into the *wei-so* to help fill out their depleted rosters. With the passage of another fifty years the specially recruited forces tended totally to supersede the *wei-so* garrisons in many parts of the country when emergencies arose.

In the summer of 1496, minister of war Ma Wen-sheng submitted a long memorial detailing aspects of the decline of the Chinese military establishment since the reigns of the founder and the Yung-lo emperor. Responding to that in an edict undoubtedly drafted in consultation with Ma, the emperor accepted a number of reforms, of which the most interesting is an effort to recruit men with "talent for generalship." He mentions that since Hsien-tsung established the military examinations (*wu-chü*), the counterpart to the civil service examinations (announced late in 1464 and expanded in the 1470s), men capable of filling the growing number of military officer posts had been produced, but that the exceptional talents needed for generalship were not being recruited. He urged local officials to identify persons who had mastered tactics and strategy and who had leadership qualities and to recruit them according to the procedures of the military examinations. Soon thereafter he authorized that such exceptional persons be summoned through more dignified direct appointments where their talents truly justified it.¹⁵ But, the historian remarks sadly, no individuals ever responded to the imperial summons.

Rewards and advancements in the Chinese army, for all but the higher-ranking officers, were based on the individual fighting man's record of enemies captured or killed, verified by turning in either the captive or his head. The latter verification was far more convenient and more commonly used. The size of the reward depended on the war zone in which the act occurred. That is, the reward was graded according to the dangers accompanying the action and the fierceness of the enemy. Capture in battle of an enemy general or other commander brought special rewards. Otherwise enemy heads taken on the northern and northeastern frontiers brought the highest rewards, those taken on the western (Tibetan) frontier and in fighting against the southwestern aborigines ranked second, and heads taken from fellow Chinese while fighting bandits or rebels ranked last. In times of special crisis the system was altered to give higher rewards for heads of the most dangerous new enemies of the moment. That system had many critics, especially Confucian, pacifist-minded statesmen who recognized it as an encouragement to victimize the innocent—ruthless commanders were often accused of beheading unfortunate noncombatants in the war zone or even far behind the lines in order to magnify their records.

15 *MSL, Hsiao-tsung shih lu* (1509; rpt. Taipei, 1964), 114, p. 7a; *MTC*, 38, p. 1450.

Antimilitarist censors also often uncovered false claims from commanders who, unlike individual fighting men, benefited from the total number of heads taken by their units when they announced “victories” and claimed rewards. But though often criticized, the system was not changed.

In short, the Chinese military system underwent no substantial structural changes during the Ch’eng-hua and Hung-chih reigns despite a growing awareness of its failings. A noteworthy cumulative change is the growing prominence of eunuchs; they regularly functioned as “military supervisors,” second in command if not in nominal command of strategic garrisons and of field armies. Their authority hierarchy culminated in the leadership of the entire eunuch bureaucracy (Directorate of Ceremonial) and not in the Ministry of War or the five Chief Military Commissions. That did not enhance the prestige of the military profession. The most ambitious attempt to bring about change during these reigns was the revival of the training activity at the capital in the twelve integrated divisions, a rationalization that brought short-term improvement to the fighting capacities of the capital defense region’s troops, strengthened its support systems, and improved morale. Such patchwork improvements, however, could not substantially change the larger realities.

War in mid-Ming times was a blunt instrument of national policies that did not in themselves, in this period, have a crucial bearing on the existence of the state. The military establishment, though the largest and most expensive component of the Ming government, was built on sand. It did not have a sound place in Ming society (as a nominally hereditary system in a merit-oriented milieu) or an honored position in the public mind. Most of the civil service bureaucrats did not believe in the military except as an extreme sanction of their preferred normative ethical instruments of social control. The army’s professional leaders, whether in the hereditary and at highest levels ennobled military careers or in eunuch military service, usually deserved little and enjoyed still less prestige. The army was the military arm of an increasingly pacifist-oriented government having no military goals beyond defense of the borders and maintenance of domestic tranquility. Thus, during mid-Ming times the military’s fundamental organizational weaknesses were perceived by many but given serious attention by only a few unusual statesmen.

Bandits and rebels

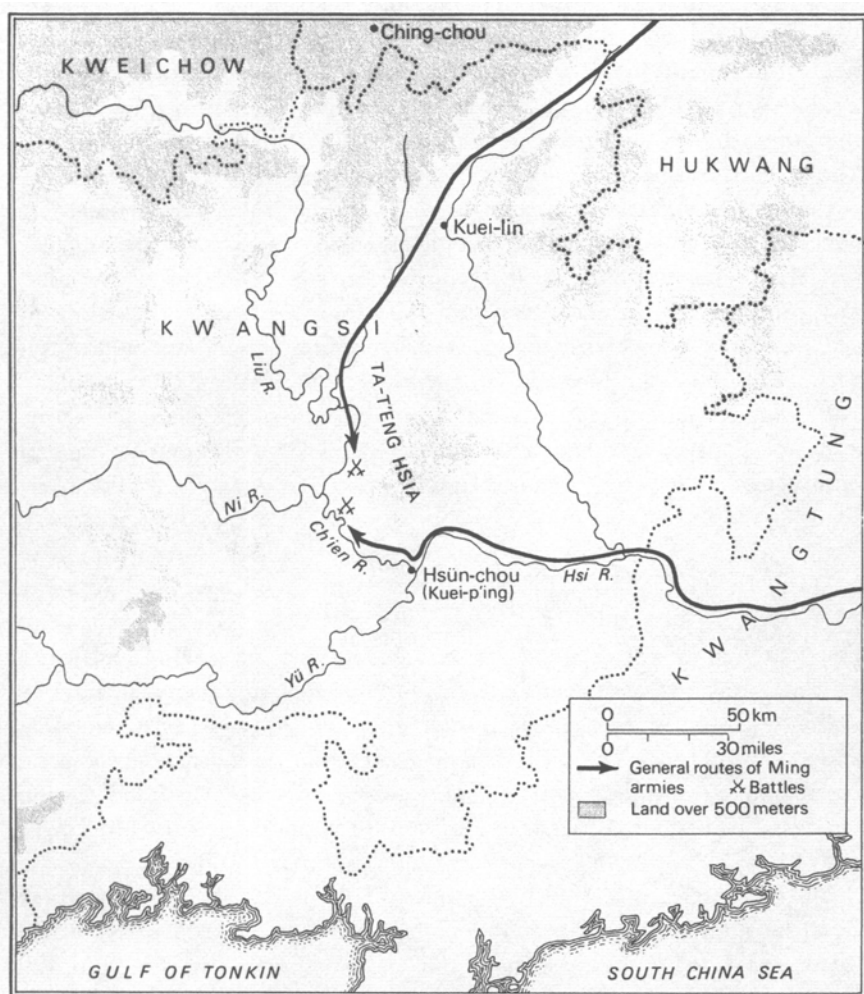
The distinction between banditry and rebellion in the Chinese taxonomy of social disorders is somewhat like that between mice and rats in traditional Chinese zoological taxonomy—they are the same species, but the latter have

grown larger than the former. Terminology overlaps. The critical difference administrators had to discern was that while banditry constituted a hazard to local order and safety, rebellion challenged the state and might threaten it. The early Ch'eng-hua years were plagued by simultaneous outbreaks of the larger and more threatening species, as well as wars on the borders. Those years also had more than their share of localized banditry. When the outbreaks that deserved the designation of rebellion were those of the non-Han aborigines, the tribal peoples who then still dominated much of the territory of the southern and southwestern provinces, that added a level of significance to the issue. As with the problem of the northern frontier and China's relations with the Inner Asian nations, there was much debate within Chinese officialdom about the proper resolution of these problems. The responses alternated between stern military suppression and various forms of political and cultural tutelage. This period allows us valuable glimpses of an enduring historical problem.

*The Ta-t'eng hsia campaign (1465-1466) and other domestic wars
against non-Chinese peoples*

The rebellion of the Yao people in Kwangsi led by an able chief, Hou Ta-kou, head of one of that people's four "great clans," had been festering since the 1450s. It broke out in full force in 1464, just as Hsien-tsung came to the throne. The crisis was heightened for the Chinese governors in the region by simultaneous uprisings of the adjacent Miao and Chuang peoples. The core of the affected region was the drainage of the Hsün River (the Ch'ien River) for seventy-five or a hundred miles northwest of Hsün-chou prefectural city (the modern Kuei-p'ing) in central Kwangsi (now the Kwangsi-Chuang Autonomous Region). This section of the river twists and turns through steep jungle-clad mountains, its gorge so deep and narrow that the natives crossed it on giant rattan vines growing there, hanging like suspension bridges, giving it the name Big Rattan Gorge (Ta-t'eng hsia). That has given the event its name in history.

The rebellion and its suppression efforts spread into the region comprising the four adjoining modern provinces—Hunan, Kweichow, Kiangsi, and Kwangtung—in Kwangtung reaching all the way to the city of Hsin-hui in the Pearl River estuary, at the doors of the provincial capital of Canton. A great shock ran through all of South China when this aboriginal revolt came out from remote border areas to invade the heavily populated coastal zone with its great cities and centers of economic and political power. Hou Ta-kou was captured early in 1466 after less than half a year of campaigning by the expeditionary force, but the pacification of the region required



Map 17. The Ta-t'eng hsia campaign, 1465–1466

several more years, and further rebellions broke out there on into the following century. In fact, the Kwangsi tribal people have been sporadically rebellious up to recent times. Thus the so-called pacification of the 1460s must be placed in a long historical context, but at least it resolved an immediate crisis.

Local forces responded unsuccessfully to the initial revolt in 1464. Early in 1465 the minister of war, Wang Hung, analyzed the situation as one requiring prompt and decisive military action. He felt that provincial

officials had exacerbated the problem by seeking to win over the Yao rebel leaders with offers of amnesty and rewards. This was treating them like spoiled children, Wang felt, and had given them the impression that the state was not prepared to invoke definitive measures. He proposed Han Yung, newly appointed governor of Kwangtung, as the man who combined the civil and military skills needed for the task. A field command was set up under the chief military commissioner Chao Fu, a not very competent but high-ranking officer from the hereditary military officer group. Chao was named regional commander for this campaign with Han Yung as its second in command, with two senior eunuchs as military supervisors (*chien-chün*), censors to check on the claims that would be submitted for rewards, and other civil and military officers. The conduct of the operation was entirely in Han Yung's hands, however; he made all the decisions. Chao Fu and the two senior eunuchs fortunately accepted him as the leader and cooperated with him. That did not always happen in mid-Ming military operations.

Appointed in February, Han Yung by early July had hastened to Nanking to complete the assembling of the field force he would lead on south into the province and to discuss strategy with the staff officers. The scholarly statesman Ch'iu Chün, a native of Kwangtung, had submitted a plan for the campaign in a letter to the chief grand secretary Li Hsien, who passed it on with favorable comment to the emperor. At Nanking Han Yung received an order to adopt Ch'iu Chün's stratagem, which was to divide the armies into two columns, one to enter Kwangtung and clear out all the rebellion that had spread there, and the other to enter the gorge area in Kwangsi, to pin down the Yao in their base, and then to wait out their surrender. Accounts differ on whether Han Yung accepted that plan at that time or rejected it as being too timid. There is no doubt, however, that he made all the decisions in the field.

Thirty thousand soldiers, including one thousand Mongol cavalry archers, much feared for their prowess and their ferocity, made their way to Kwangsi by late summer, joined there by a reported 160,000 local troops. Han quickly attacked the Yao at the edges of the gorge region and earned initial successes that netted six or seven thousand heads and induced some of the Yao to surrender and join the government forces. Against all local advice, Han Yung decided to proceed directly to attack the Yao stockades in the center of the gorge area. In a series of pitched battles in December 1465 and January 1466, two main columns closed on the gorge, entered it, set fire to portions of it, and routed the enemy. Hou Ta-kou and almost 800 of his followers were captured alive and sent to the capital for beheading. Many stockades were destroyed, and more than 3,200 heads were

taken. Never before had Chinese armies been able to penetrate the Yao inner stronghold.

The great rattan vines, several feet thick, were chopped away and, for effect, the name was changed to Severed Rattan Gorge. The follow-up operations were carried out with grim savagery and with intent to intimidate the Yao people. Armies were now dispatched to neighboring provinces to put down the outer fringes of the rebellion. Military and political adjustments designed by Han Yung to better control the region were submitted to the court and accepted. These included the creation of a new subprefecture at the entrance to the gorge, strengthened policing, enhanced coordination of civil and military affairs in Kwangtung and Kwangsi, the two provinces most directly concerned, and the appointment of a number of Yao chieftains as responsible officials in the area. Han Yung himself was required to stay on until late in 1468 to supervise.

The Chuang tribal people, who eventually would become the dominant tribal people in Kwangsi, were singled out for special attention. They were fierce fighters much feared for their poisoned arrows, which “would kill a person instantly.” The Chinese set them against the Yao, recruited over a thousand of their best warriors to man a battalion established at the center of the gorge area, and headed—“according to custom”—by the Chinese officer who had induced them to surrender. Twice before the end of the century, these Chuang tribes also would rebel.

The Ta-t'eng hsia uprising of the Yao nation was the most earth-shaking of the late fifteenth-century tribal uprisings, but only one of many in that period. In its aftermath there were large-scale disturbances caused by the Miao people, who had rebelled with the Yao in 1464 and were suppressed with them the following year. But the Miao nation, spread throughout southwest China, maintained some liaison among their various centers. One such was at Ching-chou in southwest Hunan, on the Kweichow border, to which the Kwangsi disturbances seem to have spread. An uprising there late in 1466 had to be suppressed early in 1467 by a large army led by Li Chen. Li was of the hereditary military officer class and had inherited guard commander rank. He had been fighting the aborigines in the southwest since the 1440s and his name was said to strike terror in their hearts. He had now become grand defender in Kweichow and a principal figure in the southwest defense structure. He represented one end of the spectrum of Ming means in controlling the tribal peoples, the pole of sheer force. He usually achieved rapid and ferocious results, but those seldom were enduring. He announced the pacification of the Miao at Ching-chou in 1467, killing thousands. They rebelled again in 1475, and he again announced their pacification early in 1476, again killing thousands.

A serious rebellion of the Shan-tu-chang tribal people, presumably also Miao, occurred simultaneously on the Szechwan–Kweichow border in the prefectures of Po-chou, Lu-chou, and Hsü-chou. Although at the opposite side of Kweichow, it may have been connected with the rebellions against which Li Chen campaigned. An expedition joined by the newly appointed minister of war, Ch'eng Hsin, campaigned there through much of 1466 and 1467; they reported the rebellion decisively suppressed in midsummer of 1468, when Ch'eng Hsin was recalled to the capital. But there too the Miao and others rebelled again in the late 1470s, requiring three years of warfare that did not end until 1480.

Genuine hardships forced on the aborigines by the Chinese, though not by the intent of the central government, appear to have incited many of the disturbances. Some, however, were simply the product of the aborigines' more violent way of life. A most interesting example of the latter occurred in southwest Kweichow, on the Yunnan border, near the end of the Hung-chih reign. Many of the southwest tribal peoples had female leaders; the Ming court fully recognized the legitimacy of that idea for those societies and confirmed a number of them in their hereditary leadership rights. One of those, a woman named Mi-lu of P'u-an prefecture in Kweichow, led a notorious rebellion in the years 1499–1502. It spread over into Yunnan's Ch'ü-ching prefecture, a stronghold of the Lolo nation, to which she may have belonged. She murdered a number of her husband's family members who might have competed with her for leadership and then took up with one of her husband's subordinates, leading him into both matrimony and open rebellion.

Her following grew and threatened important prefectural cities in the two provinces, and at last a large government force was formed to put down her rebellion. It required government forces from four provinces plus 80,000 local troops, probably mostly tribal soldiers, one of whom after five months of pursuing her finally captured and beheaded her. This fighting caused the destruction of hundreds of the tribal stockades and thousands of deaths. Unlike many tribal rebellions, there seems in this case to have been very little of political-minded rebellion for a cause and nothing more than extraordinary lawlessness in her career.

Throughout the later fifteenth century, as throughout much of the entire Ming dynasty, officials debated the policy issues the court faced in dealing with its often turbulent non-Han population. Scholar-officials from regions with large elements of non-Han tribal people often argued for native chieftainships instead of imposing Chinese forms of organization on them, whether or not staffed by tribal people. Two cases arousing the expression of such ideas merit further discussion.

A quite serious but geographically confined tribal rebellion occurred on Hai-nan Island in Kwangtung between 1500 and 1503, an uprising of its Li people. Resentful of their mistreatment at the hands of a succession of avaricious and ruthless prefectural magistrates, they organized a resistance movement based in the mountain fastnesses of the island's interior. They were led by a respected and able tribal chieftain who assembled fighting bands to strike back at the coastal Chinese communities. At the height of the crisis the court received a memorial from a secretary in the Ministry of Revenue, Feng Yü, himself a Han Chinese native of Hai-nan. The views he set forth gained the court's approbation.

His plan was to recruit sons and grandsons of the Li tribal leaders who had in the past held hereditary office to serve in responsible tribal chieftainships, confirmed by the court and bearing its delegated authority over the Li tribes. These posts had been abolished and replaced by regular Chinese offices. Feng argued that these natural leaders of the Li people should now be allowed to form military units charged with keeping the peace and, where successful, to be confirmed in hereditary possession of the ancestral chieftainships as before the Ch'eng-hua period. That represented a step backward in the assimilation of aborigines into Han-governed Chinese society. But in Feng's view it would give the onus of warring on tribal peoples to tribal peoples, saving the Chinese rulers that difficult task. And, perhaps of more importance in his own mind, he argued that it would protect the Li people from exploitation and would eliminate the source of conflict between the two communities. Although Feng's analysis was approved and ordered adopted, the emergency in Hai-nan was immediate; stronger measures were also employed, and they won quick victories. The Li uprising was suppressed in 1503 with heavy loss of life by Han and Mongol troops brought over from the mainland.¹⁶ The Li in Hai-nan continued to rebel periodically into the present century.

Where turbulent tribal peoples occupied an area of strategic importance to communications and transport between provinces or otherwise directly threatened Chinese governing interests, their uprisings drew immediate attention from the authorities and usually were met with force. An example is seen in the series of uprisings in the 1460s and 1470s in southern Szechwan, referred to above as the rebellions of Hsü-chou, Lu-chou, and Po-chou. That region southwest of Chungking lay athwart the Yangtze at the borders of Kweichow, Yunnan, and Szechwan. While Li Chen was suppressing the Miao in adjoining Kweichow in the late 1470s, the governor of Szechwan, Chang Tsan, was doing the same in this region. His

¹⁶ MSL, *Hsiao-tsung shih lu*, ch. 193 and 201.

reports to the throne referred to the principal rebel group as the "wild" (*sheng*) Miao, and after announcing that they were "pacified" in 1476, he was ordered off to the northwestern corner of his province to suppress a Tibetan uprising, which kept him busy there until 1478. In 1479 the Miao again took up arms, now in opposition to new offices of local administration that had been imposed upon them. Governor Chang hurried back to this old battleground and reported to the court that he must again make war upon them.

In the midst of that crisis, at the end of 1479 the junior vice-minister of rites, Chou Hung-mo, submitted a memorial discussing in interesting and perceptive detail the aborigines of Szechwan.¹⁷ It said, in part:

I am native of Hsü-chou prefecture. I am quite familiar with the tribal people's circumstances in Hsü-chou. In its four counties of Jung, Hung, Yün, and Kao, native chieftainships (*t'u-ssu*) existed as long ago as in the Sung and Yüan dynasties. Tribal peoples governed tribal peoples; they were kept on a loose reign and that was all. The present dynasty replaced that system with regularly appointed civil service officials (*liu kuan*) who could not speak the tribal languages and were uninformed about tribal matters. Their underlings, therefore, were free to engage in unrestrained oppression, inciting uprisings among them. During the Hung-wu, Yung-lo, Hsüan-te, and Cheng-t'ung reign periods (1368–1449) generalissimos were four times dispatched to campaign there; consequently, the tribal peoples were at times in submission, at times in rebellion. At the beginning of the Ching-t'ai reign (1450) they had grown more powerful. When they captured a Chinese, they would bind him to a tree and shoot arrows at him, saying: "You have been a plague on us all too long." During the T'ien-shun and Ch'eng-hua reigns they repeatedly committed detestable acts. At that time I made the statement that we were incapable of suppressing them by force and unsuccessful in making them tractable through kindness, so the only way to attain favorable long-range results is to establish native chieftainships (*t'u-ssu*) through which to govern them. Then the various tribal peoples will all happily submit. The censor-in-chief Wang Hao [who had served in Szechwan before his death, in disgrace, in 1473] falsely claimed rewards for his border region exploits, but he in fact unjustly killed more than two hundred and seventy native chieftains and stockade leaders who were under his protection. The tribal people hated them with all their being, feeling that the government forces had enticed them into their hands only to execute them. Their response was then to pillage and plunder. Thereupon the minister of war Ch'eng Hsin in command of a large army was barely able to overcome them. [See above.] I, therefore, would say that even though we cannot again set up the General Administrators and Pacification Offices of those earlier (Sung and Yüan) times, we should now establish imperial agencies in all the various places that would care for the tribal stockades by having all their people themselves nominate one fair-minded and generous-spirited man in each to be their

17 Actually on January 29, 1480; see *MSL, Hsien-tsung shih lu*, 198, p. 2b ff. for the memorial translated in part below.

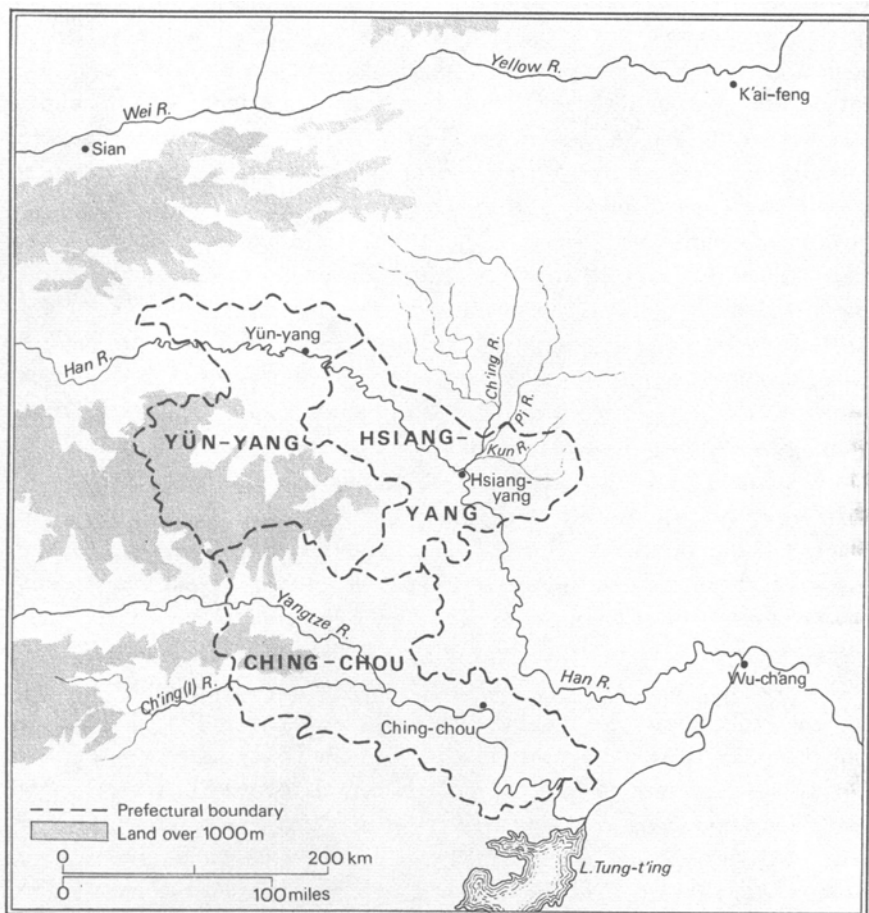
leader, which post was to be hereditary. When one fails to perform properly, then another should be selected to replace him. In this way the Han Chinese will not harass the tribal people, and the tribal people will not look with enmity upon the Han. They shall then coexist in peace ever after.

That advice was approved at highest levels, but not implemented. Peace was restored by military means, to last for a decade or so. But the general restiveness of the Miao people in the southwest provinces, like that of most of the subject peoples, was cause for unending concern. In many places, to be sure, the native chieftainships persisted through the dynasty and into the next, but those were mostly in the most peripheral regions. Where strategic concerns of the Ming state were perceived to be at stake, the relative autonomy of the non-Han minorities, then as later, was made to give way. During the mid-Ming there was still room for aboriginal tribes and nations to cede their ground and move farther on into more remote border regions. Unfortunately the Chinese records tend to identify them, understandably enough, by geographic instead of by precise ethnic designations. Thus the voluminous record of military and political measures to control them leaves the ethnography of south China still difficult to reconstruct. Its complexity and fluidity provide many challenges to the Ming historian.

The Ching-Hsiang rebellion, 1465–1476

The largest rebellion of Chinese people against the Ming dynasty in the fifteenth century and in some ways the most serious social disturbance between the civil war of 1399 to 1402 and the final disorders of the early seventeenth century was the rebellion that takes its name from the two prefectures of northwest Hu-kuang (modern Hupeh), Ching-chou and Hsiang-yang. It is also known as the Yün-yang rebellion from the name of a new prefecture set up there at the end of 1476 to improve the governing of the troubled area. That was one among the political responses to a social problem that lingered for decades; 1476 is arbitrarily taken here to mark the end of the rebellion. The Ching-Hsiang rebellion is best understood, however, when observed in the largest historical framework.

The Ching-Hsiang region is roughly 200 miles square; the new prefecture of Yün-yang at its center measured 150 miles north to south and over 100 miles east to west. The latter thus was about the size of Vermont and New Hampshire together; the former had an area equivalent to that of Scotland. Although mountainous, the area was drained by several large rivers and was fertile. It had been populous and orderly in T'ang and Sung times, when it lay closer to the political center of empire. It is a measure of



Map 18. The Ching-Hsiang rebellions, 1465-1476

the destruction caused by alien invasions from the tenth century onward, and especially during the Yüan dynasty, that by the fourteenth century this region had become a virtually uninhabited wasteland into which refugees from warfare and famine elsewhere fled beyond the reach of regular government. Its dislocated squatter population was ungoverned and easily subject to bandit leadership.

At the founding of the Ming dynasty one of the great generals of the time, Teng Yü, was ordered to clear out the disorderly population in 1369 and 1370 and, inexplicably, to seal it off from further penetration by dislocated people. Perhaps with the general restoration of order throughout

the country the early Ming government was unable to foresee future pressure on desperate people to flee their North China homes, but by the late 1430s it was noted that famine victims from Honan were again moving westward into Ching-chou and Hsiang-yang. A military commander at Han-chung, just west of the region in southern Shensi, warned at that time that serious disorder was sure to break out there again, for illicit authority networks were being created among the growing population to exploit their manpower and productivity, since the government did not formally do so. The court, however, decided to apply gentle persuasion on dislocated people meriting compassion and so did not take firm measures.

By the 1450s and 1460s the unregistered, displaced population that had taken up residence in the region numbered in the hundreds of thousands. A leader, Liu T'ung, emerged in the 1460s; he was aided by the combination of religious and civil advisors typical of a coherent rebellious movement. Liu was famed for having lifted a stone lion said to weigh a thousand catties that rested by the entrance to the district government yamen in his native place, Hsi-hua district in central Honan. For this defiant demonstration of his strength he became known as "Thousand-catty Liu" and was granted the extra quotient of charisma useful to rebel leadership.

Petty bandit leaders in the region were becoming active, vying in their ability to defy the law and lead bands in raiding and plundering. Liu proposed to a number of them that they all become his military lieutenants and that they all work together in a larger cause. They seized a small city, hoisted a yellow flag of imperial pretensions, acclaimed Liu the Prince of Han, and announced the reign title *Te-sheng* (Virtue Victorious). Official posts, mostly military, were created and filled by the various cooperating bandits. Liu's sons headed the main armies of the right and the left, said to have numbered in the tens of thousands. Wang Shu, a native of Shensi and subsequently to become a renowned minister of personnel under emperor Hsiao-tsung, was then serving as vice censor-in-chief and concurrently governor of northwest Hu-kuang, with special responsibility for the vagrant population of the region. He reported on the uprising to the throne and commented that while ordinary distressed people could be handled with concerned supervision, treacherous individuals and inciters of disorder, unless dealt with by military force, would have no fear. The debate about the appropriate means paralleled that which the aboriginal uprisings aroused.

After some months' delay, the court responded with force. As in the concurrent case of Ta-t'eng hsia and other uprisings, a field force was made up headed by a senior career military officer of high rank, in this case the earl of Fu-ning, Chu Yung, who was later to distinguish himself on the

northern borders. Pai Kuei, minister of works and later to be minister of war (1467–74), went along as military superintendent, actually the second in command, with the usual complement of eunuch military supervisors, claims-verifying censors, and others. Military leaders in neighboring provinces, particularly Li Chen, then military commander in Hu-kuang and fresh from recent victories over the Miao aborigines, brought units of provincial military garrisons to make up the large field force. It set out late in 1465 and smashed through to the rebellion's center, capturing Liu T'ung and forty of his principal associates in the midsummer of 1466; they were sent to the capital for beheading. Other leaders and remnants of the rebel army were pursued into Szechwan through the rest of that year.

The essential problem of the region was not altered by the successful military operation. Tens of thousands of unsettled people continued to reside there. The court dispatched officials to provide limited and superficial relief and supervision, but once the rebellion was crushed, it did not appear to recognize a need to do more. It was reminded that the real problem persisted when some former associates of Liu T'ung came forth from hiding to lead a new insurrection in 1470. That was a year of natural disasters throughout North China; reports said that as many as 900,000 new refugees had fled famine in adjoining regions to flock into Ching-Hsiang. The leader of the new insurrection called himself T'ai-p'ing wang or Prince of the Era of Great Peace, an appealing response to the calamitous conditions.

At the end of 1470 Hsiang Chung, then right censor-in-chief at the capital and one of the most remarkable of the period's military leaders of scholarly-official background, was assigned to suppress the new rebellion. He arrived in the province early in 1471 and again, with the help of Li Chen from Hu-kuang, completed the military action by the end of that year. Their combined armies are reported to have numbered 250,000. Their official account claimed that they had forcibly sent back to their places of origin almost a million and a half people and had exiled to the borders thousands considered to have been implicated in the rebellion, in addition to executing hundreds of leaders. Hsiang was quickly sent on to more important northern border assignments before becoming minister of justice and then minister of war in 1474.

For the second time in seven years, the Ching-Hsiang rebellion had been suppressed, the region "pacified." Immediately following the conclusion of the campaign, Hsiang Chung's victory claims were subjected to question, and he was charged with indiscriminate killing of the innocent. True or not, the charges reflected current court politics. He and Li Chen probably were no more wanton in their wasting of human life than were other commanders, and their harsh treatment of the refugees was not contrary to

established policies. He submitted an ably argued defense of his actions, and the emperor, ignoring the impeachment charges against him, promoted him.

The Ching-Hsiang problem had been somewhat changed by Hsiang Chung's forced dispersal of the region's illegal residents. Beyond that action, his proposals for stabilizing the region submitted as a final report and adopted by the government did not go beyond elements of military reorganization and police activities. Even dispersing the people was only a temporary change. In June 1476 the vagrant population that had drifted back again revolted. This time a civilian official of the Censorate, Yüan Chieh, was sent to investigate and to propose political and social means of overcoming the problem. A debate had developed at the court when the new social turbulence was reported; scholar-officials submitted proposals and arguments in memorials and wrote topical essays for circulation in the capital.

Chou Hung-mo, whose memorial, written as a knowledgeable Szechwanese on the aborigine problem in that province in 1480, is translated in part in the preceding section, was also among those who had expressed views on this occasion. He wrote a "Discussion on refugees" (*Liu min shuo*) which forcefully urged social alternatives to the military solutions that had been tried up to this point. He proposed giving the refugees land in the Ching-Hsiang region and settling them in place under a more complete and more sympathetically conducted local government. Other officials wrote in a similar vein. The court was swayed. And, in any event, the new rebellion did not appear to be large. Yüan Chieh's mission was to find the means to implement such a policy, giving Confucian-minded statesmen the opportunity to demonstrate the truth of their basic tenet – that what is good for the common people is good for the state.

Some historians regard Yüan Chieh as the real hero of the entire Ching-Hsiang episode. After arriving in the region, he first traveled through it, thoroughly investigating conditions and explaining the court's benevolent intentions to the people. He told them that they could claim vacant lands which they in some cases had cultivated for years, could and should now register as legal residents of the region, would receive tax reductions until their new fields had been made productive, and might have a voice in the selection of their village heads. More than 113,000 households with a registered population of 438,000 individuals were immediately affected. On his suggestion, a number of districts were detached from their distant prefectural administrative centers and formed into a new prefecture, Yün-yang, late in 1476, planting an important level of administration in the center of the area. Also, a new defense command based in the prefec-

tural city was formed; it was given control over Yün-yang prefecture and adjacent districts, some of which were in other provinces. A substantial measure of stability, with guarantees of social order, was thus quickly brought to the region for the first time in centuries.

After a little more than a year in Yün-yang, Yüan Chieh, exhausted from his labors, was transferred. Later in 1477, en route to his new position, he died at a wayside post station. "When the ordinary people of Ching-Hsiang heard that news, there were none who did not weep," the old historians tell us.¹⁸

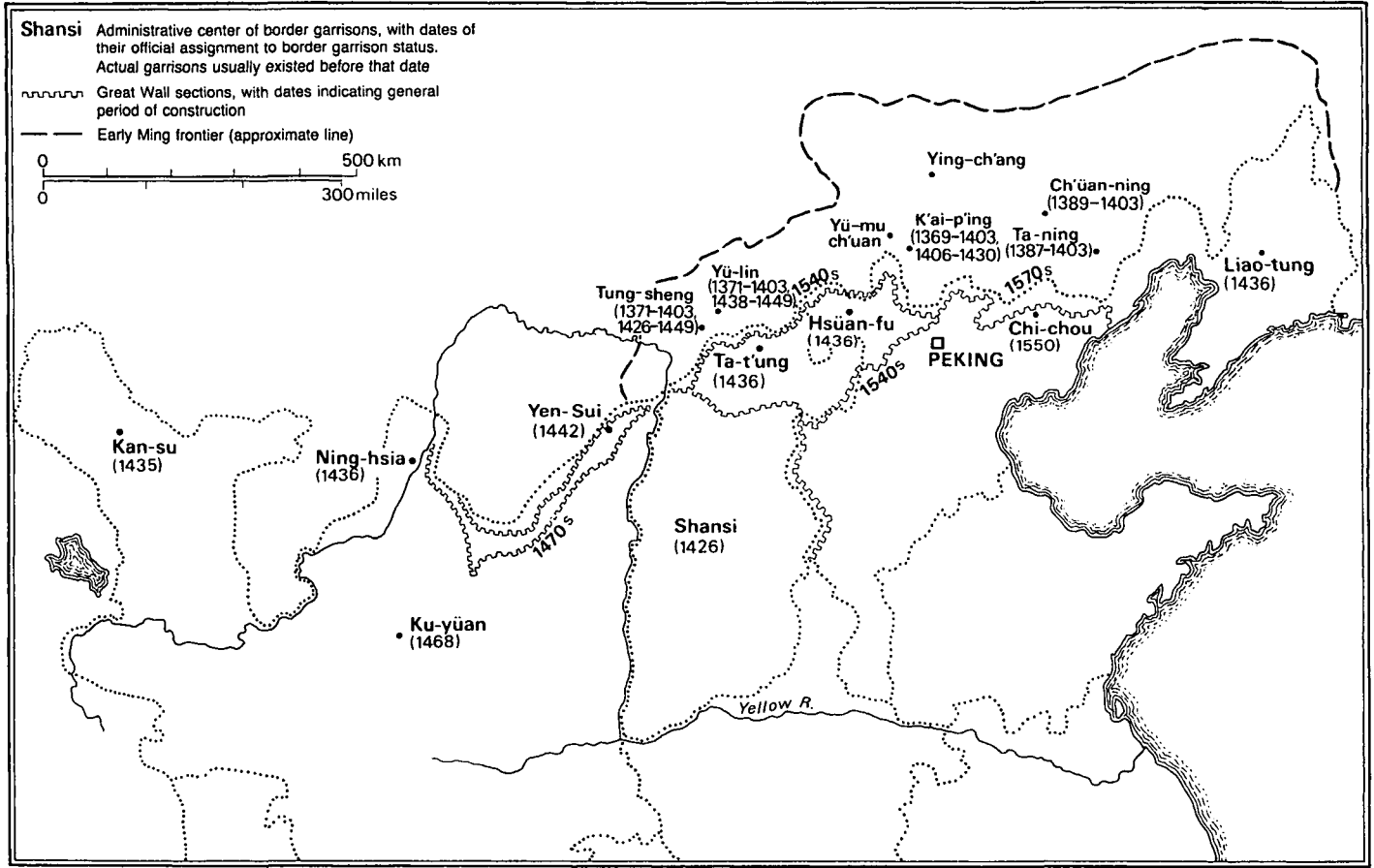
Other instances of local disorders and banditry threatening to assume the proportions of genuine rebellion were relatively few in these two reigns. The enduring military problem was the unending warfare along the northern frontier.

Inner Asian relations

During the Ch'eng-hua reign and to a somewhat lesser extent during the Hung-chih reign, the Ming state attempted to implement a forceful defense stance along its northern borders. It warred successfully against groupings of Mongols, winning substantial victories in the decade from 1470 to 1480, China's first successes against them since its disastrous defeat at T'u-mu in 1449. The Ming state also extensively built or rebuilt the defensive "long walls" (*ch'ang-ch'eng*), what we know as the Great Wall, especially the sections crossing Shensi and on the Shansi border, while enlarging an integrated defense system built on those walls. Ming China also joined with Korea in making war on the three principal Jurchen tribal confederations in Chien-chou, in what would today be eastern Manchuria. They were at least temporarily successful there in limiting the spread of Jurchen influence. That is of historical interest because those Chien-chou Jurchens would supplant the Mongols a century or more later as China's most threatening enemy to the north. In 1644, as the Manchu Ch'ing dynasty, they would invade China to end the Ming era. The Mongol wars of the late fifteenth century will be discussed in the following section; here the focus is broader, to include the larger dimensions of Ming China's relations with Inner Asia.

Through this period the Mongol nation was fragmented into states and tribes distributed from Sinkiang in the west to Manchuria in the east. Those many units, as well as others of the Jurchens, Uighurs, Tibetans,

¹⁸ E.g., Ku Ying-t'ai, *Ming shih chi shih pen mo* (1658; rpt. in *Kuo hsüeh chi pen ts'ung shu chien pien*, Shanghai, 1936; photographic rpt. Taipei, 1956), p. 38.



Map 19. Northern border garrisons and the Great Wall

and other peoples, carried on regular intercourse with the Chinese through the tribute system. Tribute permitted each of the recognized units—nations, states, tribes, and still smaller entities—to bring delegations made up mostly of traders and their military escorts, sometimes numbering in the thousands, to the border crossing points, a few designated passes at defensible points on the Great Wall line. In most instances somewhat smaller delegations, but still made up mostly of merchants, were then permitted to travel on to Peking, to be housed in hostleries for weeks and months as guests of the Chinese emperor.

The tribute bearers from Inner Asia in this period, as was the norm, tried to enlarge the size and increase the frequency of their voluntary missions. Their pressing concern was to obtain trade items from China not available in Inner Asia that were necessary if not to their subsistence, at least to their preferred way of life. Throughout this period the Mongols in particular were often driven to raiding the frontier outposts, strenuously demanding more trading privileges in order to acquire iron, grain, and craft products, as well as luxury goods, intimidating the Chinese, and sometimes forcing them to undertake military responses. It was not at all infrequent for emissaries of groups against whom the Chinese were at war on the borders to appear at Peking as tribute bearers or for leaders to conduct border raids in one month of the year and to come to Peking with tribute in another month of the same year.

From the modern point of view there is an unreal quality to these border relations, and Chinese officials of the time also found the Mongols enigmatic and unpredictable. Commenting on Chinese knowledge about Inner Asian developments in this period, Henry Serruys, who knew Inner Mongolia both on the ground and from the study of its history, has written:

Yet no matter how keenly the Ming government felt the need for information about developments in Mongolia, at times they seem to have been very poorly informed. During the second half of the fifteenth century they had only the vaguest idea of who succeeded whom, and who wielded the most influence in Mongolia. This is the period when the Ming very often did not even know the names of the "Little Kings." This was a very troubled period, and even the Mongol chroniclers are very imprecise and even inaccurate, but these chronicles were not compiled until much later. The point here is that the Ming could be so poorly informed about contemporary events. Generally speaking, we gain the impression that Ch'iu Luan's assertion in 1550 that the Mongols were far better informed about China than the Chinese about Mongolia is valid for most of the Ming period.¹⁹

19 Henry Serruys, (*Sino-Mongol relations during the Ming, II*) *The tribute system and diplomatic missions, 1400–1600* (Bruxelles, 1967), p. 526. The Little Kings (*hsiao wang-tzu*) were a succession of descendants of Chinggis Khaghan who claimed to rule over the Mongol nation.

With incomplete and inaccurate information, then as now, enigmas of Ming–Mongol relations are by no means easy for modern historians to penetrate. They face an incomplete record. They also must deal with myths on both sides. One of the most persistent is a vast misrepresentation, politically useful both then and now, about the scope and significance of the Chinese imperial presence in Inner Asia in Ming times. The truth is that, by and large, Chinese administration stopped at the line of the Great Wall; beyond that line Chinese offices and titles and the administrative structures they imply were more an openly shared myth than they were substance, and the more so the farther one was from Peking.

An exception was the coastal region of southwestern Liaoning. That constituted an administrative zone known in Ming times as Shantung North, or as the Liao-tung Regional Military Commission (*Liao-tung tu-ssu*). It was not contiguous with Shantung (modern Shantung province), under which it was administered. It extended eastward from the capital region, modern Hopei province, beyond the eastern terminus of the Great Wall at Shan-hai Pass. Its easy access from Shantung by sea across a narrow passage in the Gulf of Pohai justified its administrative subordination to Shantung. This narrow coastal strip had been Chinese in population from early imperial times, and through many centuries before the waning of China's power in the tenth century had been administered from China. The Liao-tung Regional Military Commission represented a restoration of Chinese rule over that coastal Chinese population beyond the Great Wall, but its boundaries were greatly extended to the north beyond the old Chinese zone, so that as a directly administered division of China it was part fact and part fiction.

Chinese maps, reflecting lists of offices and titles recorded in Ming sources, do not discriminate between myth and reality. The best Chinese historical atlas for this period clearly gives the false impression that the Ming state's northern and western boundaries were even more extensive than the same atlas claims for the empire at its greatest extent in Ch'ing times and far broader than the boundaries of China today.²⁰ For whatever reasons, it does that by blurring the distinction between those regions of China proper, directly administered by Chinese local and provincial civil and military offices of government, and those still larger territories, mainly on the north and west, in Inner Asia and Manchuria, in which there existed

20 Chung-kuo li-shih ti-t'u chi pien-chi tsu, ed., *Yüan Ming shih ch'i*, Vol. VII of *Chung-kuo li shih ti t'u chi* (Shanghai, 1975), pp. 38–39. This work is in general an excellent achievement in historical and cartographical scholarship. Earlier atlases such as Albert Herrmann's *Historical and commercial atlas of China* (Cambridge, Mass., 1935; new edn., ed. Norton Ginsburg, Chicago, 1966), offer similar, if less exaggerated, failures to discriminate between real and nominal boundaries.

a superficial link between the Chinese government and local power holders—a matter of names, essentially. That is, the hopeful Chinese court had granted titles such as *wang* (king or prince) and *tu-ssu* (military commissioner) on down to *wei chih-hui* (guard commander) for smaller tribal chieftains, literally by the hundreds. The practice was ancient, but the scope of its use in Ming times was new.

The holders of those court-bestowed Chinese titles added those to the substantial titles in their own languages that they would have held anyway. The Chinese titles were not, however, meaningless. In some cases possession of the Chinese title helped to bolster the legitimacy of one among several rival claimants to power, and the Chinese might feel obligated to assist bearers of its titles by diplomatic or military means. In other cases Chinese titles were quite irrelevant to the exercise of power except that they might guarantee to their holders an important economic privilege—the right to participate in the tribute trade. In no cases, however, did such titles beyond the zone of Chinese population have the same significance they possessed within China, where they designated offices within a bureaucratic structure wholly controlled by the central government.

When non-Chinese leaders of independent states and tribes sought Chinese patents confirming them in offices they already held, it was to facilitate their participation in trade and the outpouring of the court's generous ritual gifts. The Chinese court was under great pressure to bestow those (from their point of view) peripheral benefits. It did not have the illusion that it was actually governing distant regions by these means, but hoped it could thereby exercise a measure of restraining influence by flying the Chinese flag, as it were, throughout that far-flung territory.

Some of the westernmost divisions of the Mongol nation had converted to Islam and were deeply involved in the politics of Central and Western Asia. The Oirat (Dzungarian, Kalmuck) Mongol conqueror Esen's efforts to unite all the non-Islamized Mongol people from the far northwest of Inner Asia to Manchuria in the east disintegrated with his death in 1455. A century was to pass before another Mongol leader, Prince Altan (1507–82) from the Ordos, was again to appear who could match or even surpass Esen's brief achievement. In the Ch'eng-hua and Hung-chih periods, the once-feared Oirat scarcely impinged on China, so far had they withdrawn to the west, except that their wars with the Chagatai Mongol state of Moghulistan based in Transoxiana, but extending all the way to Turfan in the direction of China, bore distantly on Chinese efforts to retain some influence in central Turkestan (modern Sinkiang). In the Ch'eng-hua reign China's interests in central Turkestan turned on control over the old Uighur state of Hami with its

capital at the modern city of the same name, some 500 miles northwest of the last Chinese garrison in western Kansu.²¹

Hami (Khamil, Camul) was ruled by a succession of Islamized Uighur princes to whom the Chinese had given the title *wang* and a gold seal of office; it participated regularly in tribute and trade with China. The Uighur princes and elite probably used Mongolian, a related language written in their Uighur script, as an important secondary language of politics. Their ruling prince fell under the influence of and finally was murdered by the Moghulistan Mongol prince who called himself the sultan of Turfan and whose territories bordered Hami on the west. This Mongol prince also warred against the still “pagan” Oirat Mongols to his northwest in the Ili Valley. This produced a succession of disorders in the early 1470s and again in the years 1489 through the 1490s in which the Chinese attempted to intervene militarily.

In both instances, a debate at court, predictably, turned on whether China should invoke military force or handle the problem with civilian measures, meaning in this case cutting off all trade. In 1473 force was first tried. A Chinese general and his campaign staff, with a small contingent of soldiers, was sent to the two largest Mongol military administrations lying between Hami and the Chinese border in western Kansu. The Chinese had given those the names Ch’ih-chin wei (guard) and Han-tung wei, and their guard commanders, actually their tribal princes, held patents of office from the Chinese court. These two Mongol leaders, close to the Chinese frontier and subject to Chinese influence, were willing to help China keep the trade routes through their territories open to Hami and beyond. They placed their troops, said to have numbered 30,000, under the Chinese banner, and all marched off together to Hami. This Chinese-led Mongol army was at the point of taking the city and accomplishing the Chinese purpose of restoring the Uighur princely line when it was learned that the powerful Mongol forces from Turfan were planning not to attack frontally at Hami, but to go directly into the now unguarded base regions of Ch’ih-chin and Han-tung. The Mongol commanders abandoned their commitment to the Chinese general and rushed home to protect their own states. The small Chinese force, stripped of its main fighting elements, now had to withdraw in humiliation; Hami was occupied by hostile Turfanese Mongols until the early 1490s.

The shifting power struggles in Turkestan then seemed again to offer the Chinese opportunities to intervene, diplomatically from 1489 and again

²¹ *MS*, 329, p. 8511, says Hami was 1,600 *li* from Chia-yü Pass, the barrier marking the western terminus of the Great Wall defense system.

militarily in 1495. A Chinese force again made up mostly of cooperating Mongols marched northwest from Kansu. This time the Turfanese retreated, taking the Uighur prince and his golden seal of office with them. Hami was occupied by the Chinese, but briefly and meaninglessly; Turfan's forces reentered it before the end of the year. The Chinese now invoked their other and more powerful weapon. This was midway in the reign of emperor Hsiao-tsung, when the very able Ma Wen-sheng was minister of war. National policy was in the hands of experienced and thoughtful ministers. The Chinese placed an embargo on all trade through the northern Silk Road. By 1497 the difficulties that embargo had created among all the Inner Asian entities normally participating in that crucial trade induced the Turfanese to compromise. They released the Uighur prince and his seals of office, and the Chinese escorted him back to his throne in Hami in 1499. This prince, unfortunately, was incompetent and was hated by his own people, so the political situation there remained very unstable.

The struggle between China and Turfan for control over Hami seesawed through the first decades of the sixteenth century, but China's position steadily weakened thereafter.²² Ma Wen-sheng had served on the northwest frontier for a number of years early in his career; perhaps from that experience he had gained more insight into Mongol politics than other Chinese statesmen usually possessed. He predicted in the 1490s that the Mongols eventually would prevail in Turkestan, where the various inhabitants, he said, had long been conditioned to Mongol overlordship and would not resist it, especially if a genuine descendant of Chinggis Khaghan should emerge to take over. In short, in that setting Mongol imperial symbols were more potent than the competing Chinese ones.

The example of Hami is instructive. Chinese emissaries and armies going there always are described as going out beyond the frontiers (*ch'u-sai*) when they left the last outpost within Chinese-administered territory, Chia-yü Pass at the western tip of the Great Wall line, showing that the line of demarcation between China and Inner Asia was not the one shown on modern maps. To cross the Great Wall line was to leave China. Chinese influence beyond that line, however, was not insignificant. The Chinese relationship mattered to the princes of Hami and to the Mongol leaders between Hami and the Kansu border; that fact was a force in the relationships among states further out. China might form alliances, sometimes successfully, getting states in Inner Asia to fight China's battles and to keep leaders in power who were favorable to China. Also, on rare occasions

22 See Morris Rossabi's biographies of Aḥmad, Hājji 'Alī, and Maṣūir in *DMB*, pp. 1–2, 479–81, and 1037–38, respectively, and the bibliography cited there.

China might use its still stronger weapon, trade, in the effort to coerce distant leaders, just as it normally used trade to entice states on all sides to tolerate the strictures of China's tribute system.

It strikes the modern reader as curious that China did not use its considerable economic power consistently and rationally to support its diplomatic goals. If it had, Serruys and others have argued, it might have eliminated the principal sources of conflict and tension on its northern borders. That China in this period was unable to do that more fully (and this explanation applies to the entire Ming period, but not to its predecessors) may be explained by the fact that Ming trade was managed as an aspect of the tribute system, and not as an independent activity in which the state had an interest. Therefore, it was not subject to fiscal thinking and economic management; its forms were established by the Ministry of Rites as an aspect of the universal ruler's ritual relations with the cosmos.

The trade permitted in conjunction with the tribute—that is, all overland foreign trade legally conducted and managed by the state—was conducted as a prerogative of the imperial household. (By no means all the legal trade existed on the land frontiers only; on the coastal frontiers policies were similarly restrictive and notoriously unenforceable until the maritime trade embargo was lifted in 1567.) Every aspect of trade and exchange beyond ritual gift exchanges was undertaken, in name at least, to procure items for imperial use and enjoyment, except for military horses and weapons, whose procurement was managed by the Ministry of War. Thus all foreign trade was in eunuch hands, managed in the name of the emperor's private concerns, and normally not subject to policy planning by the court. The Mongols thought of Ming China as a nation dominated by corrupt and power-hungry eunuchs; the experience they accumulated from their incessant haggling, scrapping, and warring with China over the very unsatisfactory trade concomitant of their tribute readily explains their distorted view.

In short, China tried to maintain its interests throughout Inner Asia by diplomacy. Yet, as Serruys has noted, Chinese embassies to all the various Mongol states appear to have ceased during the Ch'eng-hua reign period and were not resumed thereafter. China's diplomacy thus became dependent on the one-sided movement of embassies and envoys to Peking which, in Mongol eyes, were occasions principally for demanding rewards and profiting from trade. The sanctions with which China could back up its diplomacy were two: military punishment, largely dependent on Mongols to fight other Mongols, and the manipulation of trade. But the Chinese could not fully utilize the latter, either as a resource or as a weapon, because its erratic and unbusinesslike conduct was in the hands of eunuchs

serving themselves and the inner court. The Ming state's position vis-à-vis Inner Asia was neither as strong as its many advantages should have made it, nor highly rational, nor flexibly adjusted under ever-shifting conditions to serve China's enduring interests.

The northern border wars

Through mid-Ming times, the Mongols were China's national enemy. The Mongol wars on the northern border were the most persistent, the most costly, and the most dangerous. An important development in the northern border warfare can be dated to the Ch'eng-hua reign; it is the new building of the long walls and the reorganization of the defense system to utilize them.

The Mongol groups identifiable from the later fifteenth-century Chinese sources were, from east to west, the following: the so-called Three Commanderies (*san wei*) of the Uriyangkhad; the Tümed Mongol tribes north of Shansi; the Ordos Mongols in the Ordos and north of Shensi; the large, if not always cohesive, groups of Mongol tribes in the old Mongol homeland (modern Outer Mongolia) and extending southward into the Chinese northern defense zone from modern Jehol west to Shensi and Kansu, called by Ming Chinese the Ta-ta (Tartar) Kingdom; various Mongol principalities within and beyond the Great Wall line in the northwest, of which the above-named Ch'ih-chin and Han-tung commanderies are representative.

Uriyangkhad is a Mongol tribal name loosely used; the people governed under the Three Commanderies of the Uriyangkhad were not all Mongols of that tribal background, nor perhaps even all Mongols. The Three Commanderies had been set up during the Hung-wu reign to provide a measure of security and stability for Mongols attempting to withdraw from the civil strife then general throughout Mongolia and under patronage of the powerful new Ming state to retain their autonomy. Their base was on the eastern slopes of the Greater Khingan Mountains in western Manchuria, along the Shira Muren or Hsi-liao River, precisely the original homeland of the Khitan people who created the Liao empire in the tenth century.

What had happened to the Khitans? They probably had been absorbed into the Mongol nation. Their rich grazing lands had been granted to the Do-en, T'ai-ning, and Fu-yü princes who held hereditary titles of guard commanders. In the Chinese sources these Three Commanderies are regarded as the solid pillar of China's defensive alliances in the northeast; they granted the Three Commanderies the status of protectorates with tribute state privileges, hoping to increase their separation from all the Mongols to their west as well as to serve as a screen against the turbulent

Jurchen people to their east. Esen, however, had succeeded in coercing them into at least half-hearted cooperation with his Mongol reunification movement in the 1440s, and the Chinese would always fear that new pan-Mongol movements would undermine their relationship with China. Nonetheless, they were the most stable part of the Mongol world through most of the Ming period, China's Mongol policy working better there than anywhere else.

Administratively, all of the northeast, from the west slopes of the Greater Khingans eastward across Manchuria to the sea and from Liao-tung north to a hazy line in the Arctic, was called the Nu-erh-kan Regional Military Commission. According to the *Official History of the Ming*, Nu-erh-kan included, along with the Three Commanderies, an incredible 384 guards (*wei*, or commanderies), the vast majority being empty titles granted to minor Jurchen tribal chieftains.²³ In the strategic thinking of the time, the Mongols of the Three Commanderies had to be maintained as the reliable core of the region's stability. To the west of Nu-erh-kan, however, shifting circumstances kept the rest of the Mongol world in flux throughout the later fifteenth century. Within its core, called by the Chinese the Ta-ta Kingdom, the fortunes of its so-called Little Kings (who, as lineal descendants of Chingghis Khaghan could claim leadership over all Mongols and about whom the Chinese were quite uninformed) were rising.

This period saw the emergence of the remarkable Batü Möngke (ca. 1464–ca. 1532), who defiantly addressed himself to the Ming throne as Ta-Yüan k'o-han (Dayan-khan, meaning Great Khan of the Great Yüan Dynasty). His eleven sons were to be the progenitors of the important Mongol leaders for generations thereafter, and he was bringing about a resurgence of unified Mongol power. Under his grandson Altan, that movement would reach its peak in the middle of the next century. From 1483 onward, when Batü Möngke became the Little King of the Chinese sources, the Mongols were pressing south against the Great Wall defense line and raided it at will. Sons of Batü Möngke became the khans, or princes, of both the Tümed and the Ordos Mongols, and a strong confederation of all the Eastern Mongols was in the making.

With that as background, it is easier, perhaps, for us than it was for Chinese statesmen and generals of the time to understand how China could win a series of significant victories over large Mongol forces throughout the decade of the 1470s, yet make no progress in quelling the incessant border raids. A related and at times legitimate concern was that those raids by ever more insistently southward-pressing Mongol groups to the north of Shansi,

23 *MS*, 90, pp. 2222 ff.

Shensi, and Kansu would link up with Mongols settled south of the Great Wall line to threaten the northern border defenses from within. That concern intensified the court's responses to the uprising at Ku-yüan in 1468 and 1469 and no doubt contributed to the adoption of the aggressive anti-Mongol stance evident throughout the following decade.

Ku-yüan was one of the nine sectors of the northern defense zone (*chiu-pien*); it was then administered as part of western Shensi, but subsequently was included in the southeastern bulge of Kansu province. It is approximately halfway between Lan-chou and Sian and almost 200 airline miles to the south of Ningsia on the Yellow River, another of the nine sectors. The Mongols of Ku-yüan are called in Ming sources *t'u-Ta* or "native Tartars," a term used for Mongols in several northern provinces who had been settled well within China proper after the fall of the Yüan dynasty and who retained some self-governing rights. The Mongol leader of the Ku-yüan uprising is known in Chinese sources by the transliterated name of Man-ssu (sometimes Man-chün). The hereditary chieftain, he was the grandson or great-grandson of Badan, a prominent Mongol leader who had surrendered to the Ming founder in 1378 and had been allowed to settle with his tribe at Ku-yüan, a region then of very sparse Chinese population.

The Ming hope was that these Mongols would take up peaceful, sedentary ways. In possession of rich grazing lands, however, they had retained their martial skills by raising horses and practicing archery and hunting; much too well off to have been forced to become farmers, they had remained culturally Mongol. It is difficult to determine why Man-ssu rebelled. There are hints that Bolai, the vigorous chief of staff (*taiyisi*) to the Little King of the Tartars, had stirred up "native Tartars" to rejoin their Mongol brethren north of the border. There is also some evidence that reprobate local Chinese military officials were carrying on banditry and blaming the local Mongols to cover their misdeeds. Whatever the pressures that drove him to rebel in May 1468, Man-ssu took a large following into the rugged mountains north of Ku-yüan to a well-fortified stronghold. The local officials rashly attacked, botched their campaign throughout the summer, and were defeated with heavy losses. When this was reported to the court, a field command was constituted, headed by Hsiang Chung (who we encountered above as the victor over the Ching-Hsiang rebels in the early 1470s) and aided by Ma Wen-sheng, then a censor-in-chief serving as provincial governor in Shensi. This army entered Ku-yüan late in 1468, surrounded Man-ssu's mountain stronghold, and starved it out, capturing it early in 1469.

Militarily it was a relatively simple affair, but its political impact was

profound. Alarmist views not only about the possible links to the Mongol nation, but also to the Tibetans to the west caused unease among serious statesmen at the court. That also encouraged an opportunistic war faction seeking opportunities to lead the new integrated capital training garrisons to war in pursuit of promotions, booty, and plunder. On this occasion, grand secretaries P'eng Shih and Shang Lu had to combat the rumor-mongering about crisis in the northwest. They argued that the defeat of the Ku-yüan rebels was well within the capacities of Hsiang Chung and the forces already on the scene. P'eng and Shang placed their careers in jeopardy by betting on Hsiang's success in order to prevent unnecessary enlargement of the military response. More often than not, however, the emperor gave his support to the military faction in the border crises of the next decade. The Ku-yüan affair thus may be seen as a prelude to the wars in the Ordos in the 1470s.

The Ordos, in Chinese the Ho-t'ao or the region within and adjoining the northern loop of the Yellow River where it forms the western, northern, and eastern boundaries of Shensi, had long been an area of Chinese–steppe interaction. Since the beginning of the Ming dynasty the northern half of Shensi, a vacant region of arid rocky hills and desert plains, had been cut off from the more fertile southern half of the province by a line of militarily strategic passes. These were heavily defended garrison points intended to protect the Chinese inhabitants of the southern region from marauders—that is, Mongols—entering via the barren Ordos from farther north. Constituting one of the nine sectors of the northern frontier, that line of defended points dividing the province took its name from the pass at the northeastern edge of Shensi and was known as the Yü-lin sector, or as the Yen-an and Sui-te sector (Yen-Sui) from the names of the two most important prefectures there. The Shansi and Ta-t'ung sectors lay to the east, Ningsia and Ku-yüan to the west.

The Mongols, under their own internal pressures, were steadily moving south into the Great Wall border zone in these decades. The Little King Mar-Körgis and Bolai, his *taiyisi*, raided from Liao-tung in Manchuria to Yü-lin in 1468 and again the following year, when Wang Yüeh, the governor of Ta-t'ung, was sent to Yü-lin at the end of 1469 to repel them. Wang, a man of civilian examination career background, was the most able of the militarist group, and despite his association with eunuchs and discredited courtiers, he was an outstanding field commander and military administrator. He announced a victory early in 1470, the first of a series claimed by himself and other generals during the following summer. Although these, in sum, did not claim large numbers of enemy killed, they were decisive routs of large-scale, stubborn Mongol attacks. They are said

to have greatly raised the morale of the people living within the border region.

Nonetheless, an air of crisis pervaded the court as the enemy's intentions to take up permanent residence in the previously vacant Ordos became evident. Minister of war Pai Kuei, who was an opponent of the war faction and critical of the commanders on the scene, sent Yü Tzu-chün (1429–89) there as vice censor-in-chief and governor. Yü was an able administrator with a remarkable record for supervising large works projects. The stabilization of the Ordos that was accomplished during the following decade was largely the work of two relatively young civil officials who, although representing opposing factions at the court, brilliantly performed tasks of complementary character. Wang Yüeh (1426–99) was one of only four Ming civilian officials to be granted earldoms for military merit. Yü Tzu-chün, a precocious *chin-shih* at age twenty-one, prior to his assignment in the Ordos at the age of forty-one, had already earned fame for planning and supervising a large hydraulic engineering project in Fukien. Wang campaigned brilliantly if ruthlessly; Yü planned and executed the building of 600 miles of walls sealing off the Ordos from the south. Then he served as governor of the province until 1477, consolidating a new defense system based on the walls.

Wang Yüeh, who directed military operations there until 1475, announced substantial further victories in 1471 and 1473, but the Mongols continued to return for new attacks. It was in 1472 that Yü Tzu-chün again submitted a memorial, a previous one having been rejected in 1471, outlining comprehensive plans for his system of walls. The court at first balked at the expense, but finally early in 1474 gave its approval. A work force of 40,000 troops is said to have built in a few months, 1,777 *li*, or about 600 miles, of wall averaging 30 feet in height, along with hundreds of larger and smaller supporting fortifications, signal towers, and stockades. It rested on the crests of the last range of hills before the mountains leveled off into the desert on their north. The walls transformed the character of defensive warfare and led to more extensive wall building thereafter. The ultimate result is the so-called Great Wall as we know it today, mostly built in the sixteenth century.

After a large-scale attack that fiercely tested the wall defense system in the summer of 1482, the defense of the Ordos was considered to have been stabilized. A later historian has written:

At the time Yü Tzu-chün was building his border walls there were some who had doubts, fearing that the walls made of (built on?) sandy earth would easily collapse and could not be relied upon when the raiders would come. Now, on this occasion, when the raiders made their incursion, they were trapped by walls and trenches

and could not escape. Consequently, the raiders were decimated. At that, the people of the border region were made all the more aware of Yü's great achievement.²⁴

Yü's walls in the Yü-lin sector were far from solving the entire northern border defense problems of the Ch'eng-hua and Hung-chih periods. The Mongols continued to test the wall defense system and to press south in the other eight sectors of the defense zone. Neither side won extensive victories after 1475, but raids and suppression campaigns continued throughout the period. If the northern border wars did not truly threaten China's existence, they nonetheless absorbed ever-larger defense budgets and remained a constant problem for emperors, statesmen, generals, and the long-suffering populations on both sides of the northern border.

²⁴ *MTC*, 34, p. 1316.

CHAPTER 7

THE CHENG-TE REIGN, 1506–1521

THE EMPEROR'S FIRST YEARS

On 19 June 1505, eleven days after the Hung-chih emperor's death, his thirteen-year-old son Chu Hou-chao (1491–1521) ascended the throne as the tenth emperor of the Ming dynasty. For the first time in three generations, the legitimate son (and indeed the only son) of the reigning empress succeeded to the throne. Although it was rumored that the boy had been born to a lady in the empress' entourage, this was never proved and was probably untrue. His father was very fond of him and installed him as heir apparent in 1492. He was reported to have been an excellent student, attentive, diligent, and courteous to his tutors. He behaved well in front of his father and was careful to carry out his prescribed duties in person. His favorite pastimes were horseback riding and archery.¹

Immediately upon his accession, the young emperor had to deal with three problems, all part of his father's legacy. First, there was not enough revenue; second, the military garrisons in the northwest could not repulse the Mongols; and third, eunuch and civil officials generally disagreed on how these issues should be resolved. The emperor, who had been raised by eunuchs, was partial to them. It was difficult for his grand secretaries to explain to him their misgivings about eunuch management.

The emperor inherited from his father three grand secretaries, the youngest of whom was fifty-six. He did not particularly like them or the role they envisioned for him. From the first days of the reign, he ignored

¹ Chu Hou-chao is referred to either by his reign title, as the Cheng-te emperor, or by his posthumous honorific temple name, Wu-tsung, which literally means "the martial ancestor." The reign title alludes to a passage from the *Book of documents* which appears in "The counsels of the Great Yü," a collection of maxims about good government attributed to the legendary sage king Yü (c. 2205–2197 B.C.): "Yü said, 'Oh! think of these things, O emperor. Virtue is seen in the goodness of the government, and the government is tested by its nourishing of the people. There are water, fire, metal, wood, earth, and grain, – these must be duly regulated; there are the rectification of the people's virtue, the conveniences of life, and the securing of abundant means of sustentation, – these must be harmoniously attended to.'" The reign title comes from the line "the rectification (*cheng*) of the people's virtue (*te*)." See James Legge, trans., *The Chinese classics* (1870; 2nd ed., Oxford, 1893; rpt. Hong Kong, 1960; rpt. Taipei, 1969), III, pp. 55–56.

their advice. Late in 1505 he began to dispatch eunuchs as military and fiscal intendants, even though such positions had been abolished in the edict of succession that the grand secretaries promulgated in his name.

He stopped living with his consort shortly after she was installed as empress in August 1506. He preferred instead to go about with his eunuch companions, who at first kept him amused with riding, archery, wrestling matches, and music. During the summer of 1506 he also began to leave the Imperial City in disguise and to roam the streets of Peking. He routinely canceled his daily study sessions on the pretext that his mother or his grandmother was visiting him. He was often drunk.

It soon became clear that he did not want to deal with affairs of state himself and that he was inclined to entrust these matters to eunuchs rather than to civil officials. In October 1506 he got into an argument with his grand secretaries because he had agreed to let a eunuch use salt vouchers for a purchase of textiles. Salt vouchers allowed the bearer to claim salt from a specified imperial salt monopoly. Possession of salt in excess of the amount stipulated on the vouchers was a serious offense.² Grand secretary Li Tung-yang (1447–1516) tried to explain the problem. He said that the eunuch would doubtless take extra salt to sell for his own profit. If he were sailing on the canals in a barge flying a yellow banner emblazoned with the characters for “imperial salt,” no official or merchant would dare to interfere with him. The emperor was not convinced. Instead he retorted: “Are all of the affairs of the empire put wrong by eunuchs [alone]? Among ten civil officials there are no more than three or four good men, and [the other] seven or eight are inept. You, sirs, also know this.”³ Although in this instance he finally agreed to give the eunuch some silver bullion for the purchase, he never changed his mind about civil officials.

The most pressing matter that confronted him during the first years of his reign was a lack of revenue. In May 1506 he ordered the Ministry of Revenue to investigate the state of the imperial treasuries. The minister of revenue reported that the quota for revenues in silver was set at 1.5 million ounces per annum, while the quota for disbursements in silver was set at about 1 million ounces. When these quotas were actually met, the T'ai-ts'ang treasury, which held silver bullion, was supposed to contain a surplus of between 2 and 4 million ounces. However, owing to defaults and tax remissions, the anticipated revenues could rarely be collected in full;

2 On the salt administration, see Ray Huang, *Taxation and governmental finance in sixteenth-century Ming China* (Cambridge, England, 1974), pp. 189–224.

3 Wang Shih-chen, *Chung kuan k'ao*, Ch. 90–100 of *Yen-shan t'ang pieh chi* (1590; rpt. No. 16 of *Chung-kuo shih hsüeh ts'ung shu*, Taipei, 1965) 94, pp. 4153–54. Cf. *Ming shih lu*, *Wu-tsung shih lu* (1525; rpt. Taipei, 1961–66), p. 515.

and by the early sixteenth century annual disbursements in silver had reached 5 million ounces per annum.

This situation grew worse when the emperor refused to use any of his personal income to pay for anything. It was customary for Ming emperors to pay for gifts and awards with their own funds. In July 1506 Han Wen (1441–1526), the minister of revenue, complained that the emperor's father had only used 300,000 ounces of silver from ministerial treasuries for gifts awarded on the occasion of his accession, whereas the young emperor had already disbursed over 1.4 million ounces for this purpose alone—all from ministerial treasuries.

Aside from suggesting measures of economy, court officials offered no other proposals for raising revenues. Eunuchs, on the other hand, came up with a number of unusual schemes for raising money. And because he wanted more money, the emperor was willing to implement them, despite objections from his grand secretaries and ministers. For the most part these schemes involved new taxes, usually transit taxes, taxes on pasture and wasteland, and surcharges on imperial estate lands. He routinely approved such measures, but found himself still short of funds.

THE COURT UNDER LIU CHIN

Early in 1506 the eunuch Liu Chin (ca. 1452–1510) began to suggest a number of ways to raise revenues, and the emperor gave him free rein to implement them. Liu Chin held that the decline in revenues resulted from the gross mismanagement and corruption of civil officials. He suggested a general investigation of officials who had been responsible for fiscal matters, with punitive fines to be assessed on those found to have been derelict in their duties.

Liu Chin and seven other eunuchs who had served the emperor when he was still heir apparent were transferred to his personal staff shortly after his accession. Liu Chin was put in charge of palace music, which meant that he was generally responsible for the emperor's entertainments. He excelled at this, providing dancing, wrestling matches, a menagerie of exotic animals, and of course music. It was he who first suggested to the emperor that he might like to roam the streets of Peking in disguise, and the emperor did indeed enjoy this. All these distractions kept the young emperor uninterested in affairs of state, the disposition of which he gradually entrusted to Liu Chin.

In June 1506 Liu Chin was put in charge of the imperial household and given a commission to inspect and supervise the capital garrisons. The grand secretaries were alarmed about Liu's sudden promotion, questioned

the order, and were ignored. The first practical plan to remove Liu Chin was put forward by senior eunuchs who felt directly threatened by Liu's growing power and influence over the emperor. They wanted to have him banished to Nanking. However, the grand secretaries insisted that he be executed, even though it was clear that the emperor was more likely to banish him than to execute him. A plan was finally agreed upon. The grand secretaries and the senior officials in the ministries would jointly petition for Liu Chin's execution, while the senior eunuchs would deliver the petition and urge the emperor to act on it.

On 27 October 1506 minister of revenue Han Wen submitted a petition requesting that the emperor execute all eight of the eunuchs on his personal staff. This was not what had been agreed to; only Liu Chin was to be executed, not all eight of the emperor's favorites. The emperor was willing to consider banishing them, but not executing them. The grand secretaries remained intransigent; they demanded a death penalty, even though minister of personnel Hsü Chin (1437–1510) had warned that this course of action was rash and unlikely to succeed. The senior eunuchs reluctantly agreed to press the emperor to approve the petition. All the court officials were then to ask the emperor to carry out the sentence at the morning audience on 28 October.

However, one of Liu Chin's agents in the court got news of the plot and informed him of it. On the night of 27 October Liu led the seven other eunuchs before the emperor. They knelt and cried and begged for mercy. Liu Chin then told the boy that the entire affair was a conspiracy designed to curtail his movements and that the senior eunuch, the director of the Directorate of Ceremonial, was cooperating with the grand secretaries in this scheme. The emperor believed this and was furious. He immediately put Liu Chin in charge of the Directorate of Ceremonial. The seven other eunuchs replaced Liu Chin's enemies in various important eunuch agencies and military posts. The senior eunuchs who had opposed Liu Chin were dismissed, banished, and later assassinated en route to Nanking.

On the morning of 28 October 1506, when the officials were assembling for the audience, it became clear that something had gone amiss. The capital officials had been especially summoned for some reason. Soon a senior eunuch appeared. He informed the grand secretaries and court officials that the emperor would decide on the fate of the eight eunuchs himself, at his leisure. The matter was closed. All of the grand secretaries but Li Tung-yang resigned at once, and Liu Chin accepted their resignations. Chiao Fang (1436–1517), who had informed Liu Chin of the plot against him, was made a grand secretary four days later.

Liu Chin immediately struck out at the officials who had opposed him.

On 13 December 1506 Han Wen was dismissed from office for malfeasance; Liu Chin had him falsely implicated in a case of fraud. In February 1507 twenty-one officials who had protested the dismissal of the senior grand secretaries were beaten and reduced to the status of commoners. Officials who spoke out against Liu Chin were now routinely beaten, tortured, and dismissed. In March 1507 he began to put high officials who did not defer to him in heavy cages for the most trivial offenses—for riding in a sedan chair without permission, for example. The cage previously had been reserved for serious offenses and was by custom never used on officials. However, Liu Chin now used it whenever he wished, for any offense.

By the summer of 1507 Liu Chin had gained control of the imperial administration in the capital and in the provinces. In March 1507 he issued an edict that in effect made eunuch intendants equal in rank and authority to the highest civil officials in the provinces and gave these intendants the right to investigate any administrative or judicial matter. By this time all important official documents were sent first to him and forwarded to the ministries and the grand secretariat only on his approval.

Liu Chin's principal task was still to raise revenues for the emperor, who was spending without restraint. In September 1507 he withdrew the immense sum of 350,000 ounces of silver from the T'ai-ts'ang treasury to purchase lanterns for the lantern festival. Other funds were taken to pay for the restoration of buildings in the imperial park south of Peking. At the same time, the emperor began to build a private palace outside the Forbidden City.⁴ Construction on this and other nearby palaces and temples continued for years. All of this had to be paid for, and Liu Chin was to see that the necessary money was raised, by whatever means.

In January 1508 a quota of 20,000 ounces of silver per annum was assessed on the silver mines in Fukien and Szechwan, even though local officials had reported that the lodes were exhausted. This was in effect a surtax on the provinces. Liu Chin's agents also interfered in the salt monopoly by selling over the established quotas to raise money. When an official arrested them in April 1508, he was imprisoned. In June Liu authorized the sale of military commissions to anyone who delivered a specified amount of grain to certain garrisons in the northwest.

In the summer of 1508 he began to impose heavy fines on officials who had in any way displeased him. Han Wen, who was not wealthy, was ordered to deliver 1,000 *tan* of grain to the garrison at Ta-t'ung. This

4 The emperor referred to this palace, which was located to the northwest of the Forbidden City, as his new residence (*hsin ch'ai*). It was also known as the Leopard Quarter (*pao fang*). See Mao Ch'i-ling, comp., *Wu-tsung wai chi* (early Ch'ing; rpt. in *I hai chu ch'en*, Chia-ch'ing period (1796–1820); rpt. No. 38 of *Pai pu ts'ung shu chi ch'eng*, Taipei, 1968), pp. 3b–4a.

impoverished his family. Similar fines were imposed on other officials in order to supply grain to these garrisons. Court officials were by now terrified of Liu Chin. Even those generally regarded as highly principled began to bribe him in order to avoid such fines.

Although he dominated the court between 1507 and 1510, Liu Chin did not go unopposed or unchallenged. The eunuch Chang Yung (1465–1529), who had also served the emperor when he was heir apparent, was not on good terms with Liu Chin. The two of them had on at least one occasion come to blows in the presence of the emperor. Chang's skill in military matters kept him in the emperor's good graces, and Liu Chin was unable to remove him from his military commands. When Liu Chin began to expect deference from Chang and the other six eunuchs, they began to resent him.

During the morning audience on 23 July 1508, an anonymous memorandum drafted by eunuchs opposed to Liu Chin was dropped on the imperial causeway. The memorandum detailed Liu Chin's misdeeds. It was picked up by a censor and presented to the emperor. Upon learning of its contents, Liu Chin ordered all the court officials to kneel in front of the audience hall in the main courtyard of the Forbidden City. Liu assumed that some official had done this, and all of them were going to suffer until he found out who it was. After several hours had passed, he let the highest-ranked ministers withdraw. He appeared late in the morning. The Hanlin officials immediately protested their treatment, noting that they were not usually so abused by eunuchs. Liu let them withdraw. Then a censor complained that this sort of treatment contravened the established law of the dynasty. Liu Chin retorted that it was he and his kind who had mismanaged the affairs of the empire and that he had no idea what the laws of the dynastic founder in fact were. The remaining officials were ordered to stand in the positions they had occupied during the audience so that Liu could see who was near to where the document was found.

At this point a eunuch director objected that officials below the fourth degree of rank did not stand in order during the audience. Who would be foolish enough to go back to that spot? Liu ordered them to kneel again. Guards were sent to search their residences for the draft. The same director again objected. He asked whether such an official would have been so inept as to leave a draft at home.

It was now almost noon. The day was hot, cloudless, and still. Several officials had already dropped in their places and been dragged away. Another eunuch in the Directorate of Ceremonial had iced melon passed out to the officials. Liu Chin immediately forged an edict forcing both directors into retirement. In the middle of the afternoon, all the officials

were arrested and taken to the prisons of the Imperial Bodyguard. The next day, when he discovered that the memorandum was the work of a eunuch, he ordered the officials released.

This reign of terror continued. In September 1508 Liu Chin established a new security agency in the palace to investigate eunuchs, scores of whom were subsequently banished to Nanking. During these months he continued to order audits of granaries and treasuries. The high officials who had been responsible for them were fined if even the slightest amount of spoilage was discovered or if the count was short by even a fraction. Liu Chin argued that it was neither fitting nor practical to punish the commoners and lowly officials in charge. First, they had no money to pay the fines; and second, the responsible officials should be called to account. In 1509 hundreds of officials in the western border commands were fined between 300 and 500 *tan* of grain for failing to reach their assigned quotas.

In the summer of 1509 Liu Chin began to investigate the salt administration in the southeast. Again, scores of officials were fined and ordered to deliver their payments to the emperor's private treasury in Peking. In August 1509 he raised the tax quota on land in the western border commands registered as military fields in order to supplement existing revenues. In 1508 he had done away with the custom of supplementing the revenues for these garrisons with annual subsidies from the emperor's personal income. This loss of revenue had to be made up, but the new tax quotas caused great discontent.

During 1509 Liu Chin's agents were dispatched to Shensi, Hu-kuang, Liao-tung, and Ningsia to raise more local revenues for the maintenance of garrisons in these regions. His agents first raised tax quotas and then used other irregular methods of exaction to generate the needed revenues, but not without antagonizing the local military households. Disturbances broke out. In August 1509 two garrisons in Liao-tung revolted in protest, and this rising was quelled only after 2,500 ounces of silver had been distributed to the disgruntled troops. Imperial control over the far west and the northern perimeter of the empire was tenuous. Any attempt to interfere with the status quo led to unrest, and unrest often led to sedition. It was this general dissatisfaction with the imperial administration under Liu Chin that Chu Chih-fan (d. 1510), the Prince of An-hua, used as a pretext for his uprising in May 1510.

THE PRINCE OF AN-HUA'S UPRISING

Chu Chih-fan succeeded to the fief of An-hua (modern Ch'ing-yang hsien) in central Shensi in 1492. He had long thought himself a suitable candi-

date for the imperial throne and had assembled a motley circle of confidants who shared this view: several military commanders, a student, a shamaness, and a handful of soldiers. Nothing came of his aspirations until 1510, when the court official Liu Chin had dispatched to Shensi began to implement the new rate of taxation on military fields and ordered that tax delinquents be arrested and beaten. The tax delinquents were of course also the soldiers attached to the garrisons. They were angry and ready to be stirred up. Conditions were right for trouble, and the prince decided to act.

All the high officials in the region were invited to a banquet at the prince's residence on the night of 12 May 1510. During the banquet, rebel soldiers were ushered in; they slaughtered several officers, officials, and eunuch intendants in their seats. Other soldiers were dispatched to kill the officials who had declined to attend the banquet. Their offices were then looted and burned.

At this point the prince issued a proclamation. He said that he was raising an army to rid the court of the eunuch Liu Chin, whose misdeeds he then detailed. This was sent to various regional commanders from whom the prince hoped to receive reinforcements. The regional commanders, fearful of Liu Chin's power, declined to respond. One of them submitted the prince's proclamation to the court. Although Liu Chin suppressed the document, he could not cover up the incident.

An army had to be raised to punish the prince. Yang I-ch'ing (whom Liu Chin had forced out of office in April 1507) was made supreme commander and the eunuch Chang Yung was appointed inspector of the army. However, before they reached Shensi the uprising had been put down. The prince was captured on 30 May 1510. A cavalry commander who had feigned allegiance to his cause took the rebel leaders by a ruse and then seized the prince himself. The abortive uprising lasted only nineteen days, and Chang Yung had only to escort the prince back to Peking for execution.

During this trip, Chang Yung discussed Liu Chin with Yang I-ch'ing. Chang did not feel threatened by Liu. The emperor had seen Chang off on this trip and given him many tokens of esteem. He said that he had nothing to fear. However, Yang convinced Chang that Liu Chin was going to rebel soon and that Chang himself was in mortal danger. He urged him to blame Liu Chin for the uprising and to request his execution. Chang was reluctant. What if the plan did not work? Yang reassured him and added that once the request to execute Liu had been approved, he should be sure to carry out the sentence immediately. Yang also pointed out that Chang had much to gain by Liu Chin's death. Chang agreed to the plan and set out immediately for Peking.

Liu Chin apparently intended to assassinate the emperor and to install

his own great-nephew on the throne. The alleged uprising was to take place on 17 September 1510. Liu Chin's older brother had just died, and his funeral was set for that day. Liu apparently planned to strike when all the officials were paying their last respects. Chang Yung had petitioned to present the prince to the emperor at the audience on the same day, and when Liu Chin pushed back the date of the presentation, Chang suspected that the uprising was imminent. He disregarded Liu's instructions and rushed into Peking.

On 13 September 1510 Chang Yung presented the prince and the other prisoners at the morning audience. That evening he and the seven other eunuchs were invited to a banquet with the emperor. After Liu Chin had withdrawn, Chang informed the emperor of the plot against his life and told him that Liu had to be seized at once. The emperor, already very drunk, was at first not convinced that his favorite had betrayed him. But Chang and the other eunuchs pressed him to act, and he finally acquiesced. Four guards were sent to detain Liu in his palace quarters, and his property was confiscated.

The next day the emperor showed Chang's indictment of Liu Chin to the grand secretaries. He ordered them to draft an edict. Liu Chin was to be banished to Nanking. His inspectors were to be recalled, his new quotas abolished, and his other administrative changes rescinded. The emperor decided to execute him only after he had inspected Liu's property and had seen with his own eyes the hoard of gold, silver, and valuables; the armor, weapons, and passes to the palace; and the daggers concealed in Liu Chin's fans—daggers purportedly intended for him.

Liu Chin was arrested on 16 September. The emperor ordered that he be publicly questioned before the Wu Gate, the main gate to the Forbidden City. When Liu appeared, the court officials remained silent. Liu asked who among them did not owe him something, who would dare to question him. They drew back. Finally an imperial consort began to castigate him. Why did he have so much armor; why was it hidden in his residence if it was for the emperor's protection? Liu Chin fell silent. The emperor was satisfied that he was guilty, and the case was closed.

His death by slicing began on 27 September and lasted for three days. An illustrated account of the event with a list of his misdeeds was circulated throughout the empire. His reforms were all undone within a month of his death, and most of his partisans were either executed or dismissed from office in October. His confiscated property, which was delivered to the emperor's personal treasury, temporarily eased the monarch's need for revenue.

Whether Liu Chin actually intended to assassinate the emperor remains unclear. The records, which were compiled by the victors in this struggle,

state in certain terms that Liu planned to usurp the throne, but aside from the brief interrogation before the Wu Gate, there was no formal inquisition and the extant documents from the Ministry of Justice contain only circumstantial evidence. Liu Chin never admitted his guilt, even though such an admission was commonly demanded in cases of treason. His death sentence was also carried out with unusual dispatch, so there was no chance for an appeal or review of the charges. What is clear is that Liu Chin's death brought to an end any attempts to reorganize the imperial administration.

Liu Chin had in effect tried to reorganize the administration of the empire so that civil and military officials would be subordinate or equal to eunuch officials everywhere and would be accountable to eunuchs for all fiscal affairs. This was an arrangement unprecedented in the history of imperial China, and because Liu Chin's radical reforms were successfully opposed by the majority of civil officials, the details of his administrative changes can never be fully known. Within days of his death, all traces of his administrative decrees were expunged from the records. The only substantial attempt to change the institutions of the dynasty and to expand the emperor's direct control through eunuch agents was completely frustrated.

THE IMPERIAL ADMINISTRATION AFTER 1510

Liu Chin's attempts to raise money had failed, but other means had to be found. The emperor still wanted more money, and he continued to rely on eunuchs to get it for him. Since civil officials would not cooperate in any administrative reforms, the emperor resorted to outright requisitions. Eunuchs were now given the authority to take what supplies and labor they needed, and civil authorities who refused to cooperate with them were brutally punished.

After Liu Chin's death Wei Pin, another eunuch who had served the emperor when he was heir apparent, was put in charge of the Directorate of Ceremonial. Other eunuchs and favorites on the emperor's personal staff remained in charge of the surveillance agencies and the capital garrisons, and they all continued to wait on him in his palace outside the Forbidden City. It was through one of these attendants that the emperor met his new set of boon companions, a group of military officers from garrisons in the northwest who were involved in the suppression of banditry south of Peking.

Late in 1509 a number of disturbances had broken out in the region south of Peking. Liu Chin's attempt to raise the quotas assessed on military households had caused soldiers to desert their garrisons. These deserters soon banded together with brigands and began to pillage at will in the countryside. By 1510 a large number of them had been organized under a

bandit chief in Wen-an (a city about 80 miles south of Peking) who was planning an uprising. This bandit chief was captured late in 1510, but his subordinates escaped, regrouped, and mounted a revolt. By February 1511 they had gathered a force of several thousand cavalry and were attacking administrative cities. In March a commander was appointed to eradicate these bandit armies, while a contingent from the capital garrisons was sent to patrol the region around the Imperial City.

These forces proved ineffectual. Military discipline and security were lax. The imperial troops preferred to avoid combat, and the civil official in charge of the campaign wanted to negotiate a surrender. In August 1511 several bandit armies laid siege to Wen-an. The capital garrisons were put on alert, and the minister of war requested that 2,500 cavalry troops from border garrisons in the far west be transferred to the interior for the duration of the campaign. This set the precedent for a number of subsequent transfers. At the same time, the official in charge of the operation was recalled for malfeasance. The bandits had surrendered, only to revolt again. The emperor, who was now interested in the campaign, wanted the imperial armies to fight. No victories were forthcoming, and in October 1511 bandit armies burned over a thousand imperial grain barges in transit to Peking. The situation was very serious.

New commanders were appointed in November 1511, but their forces met with little success. In January 1512 bandit armies attacked Pa-chou, an administrative city just 60 miles south of Peking. Officials feared that these armies might even attempt to attack the emperor himself during the sacrifice to Heaven, which had to be conducted outside the city walls of Peking. Security in the metropolitan region was increased. The campaign continued through the spring, without a decisive victory for the imperial forces. In the summer of 1512 the bandit armies in Honan split up, some groups moving south across the Yangtze into Kiangsi, others east into Shantung, and the largest contingent southwest to Wu-ch'ang on the Yangtze river.

From Wu-ch'ang the largest bandit force (which comprised only about 800 men) sailed east on the Yangtze without serious opposition, pillaging along the route. On 28 August the fleet anchored at T'ung-chou, a large administrative city near the mouth of the river, but local forces kept them from coming ashore. That night most of their ships, supplies, and booty were lost during a typhoon. Those who survived the night fled southeast to Lang-shan, a commanding height where they hoped to defend themselves. On 7 September 1512 imperial armies surrounded them and drove them up the hill, where they were finally slaughtered. This ended the campaign. A victory was reported, and the imperial armies were ordered back to Peking.

Large bandit armies comprised of groups that had fled south into Kiangsi remained a problem into the next decade. Banditry was still widespread in Honan, though on a much reduced scale, and also remained a serious problem in central Szechwan. However, the threat to Peking and the canal transport system had been eliminated. Banditry in other regions of the empire could now be dealt with in turn.

When the victorious imperial army returned to Peking in the autumn of 1512, Chiang Pin (d. 1521), a cavalry officer from a military household attached to the Hsüan-fu garrison, managed to obtain an audience with the emperor. He had bribed the emperor's current favorite, Ch'ien Ning (d. 1521), the commander of the Imperial Bodyguard, for this favor. Ch'ien Ning had curried favor with Liu Chin, and came to the emperor's attention through this connection. Skilled at archery (he could shoot with both hands), he soon found favor for his military prowess. He was invited to live in the emperor's quarters and often got drunk with him. Eventually he was put in charge of all imperial inquisitions and became a very powerful person. He retained this favor by pandering to the emperor. He procured his favorite musicians, Muslim women for his harem, and Tibetan monks skilled in the esoteric magic of Tantric Buddhism. Always looking for new entertainments, he agreed to introduce Chiang Pin because he knew that the emperor wanted to meet him.

The emperor had first heard of Chiang Pin in 1511. During a battle against brigands in the Huai Valley, Chiang took three arrows, one of which struck him in the face and came out through his ear. He pulled it out and continued to fight. Upon hearing of this, the emperor was impressed. At the audience he saw the scars on Chiang's face and knew that the story was true. Chiang was a strong, imposing soldier, skilled in martial arts and fond of recounting battle tales. The emperor enjoyed listening to him and so invited Chiang to live in his private quarters. Ch'ien Ning soon found himself competing with Chiang Pin for the emperor's attention. Ch'ien tried to slander him, but was too late. Chiang had already replaced him as the twenty-year-old emperor's favorite companion.

Chiang Pin now wanted to secure his position. Taking advantage of the emperor's fascination with warfare, he suggested that troops from four northern garrisons be rotated to Peking and put under his command. Chiang argued that the capital garrisons had no combat experience and had already proved useless against bandits in the metropolitan region. Border troops, hardened by combat and a spartan life, were better fighters, they could defend the capital. The capital garrisons, on the other hand, needed some real military experience, which they would certainly get on the frontiers. The emperor found the argument persuasive and issued an order to this effect in December 1512.

The order to transfer 3,000 troops from the border to Peking met with immediate opposition. Grand secretary Li Tung-yang raised ten objections. However, even he had to admit that he opposed this primarily because the capital garrisons lacked military experience and were unfit for border duty. They would not be able to withstand the Mongols. He further objected that *border troops would be difficult to control and would interfere with the order of the Imperial City*. He adamantly opposed the idea and refused to draft the requisite edict. The emperor's mind was set; he issued his own edict. In February 1513 Li Tung-yang, the last of the grand secretaries who had served the emperor's father, resigned in protest.

The border troops arrived in Peking in February 1513. Chiang Pin and Hsü T'ai were given charge of both the capital garrisons and the border troops. Hsü T'ai, the commander of the Hsüan-fu garrisons, was Chiang Pin's principal ally and advisor, and many of Chiang's subsequent schemes were in fact thought up by Hsü T'ai. The border troops were organized into four camps and administered by two new offices created for Chiang and Hsü. Buildings in the wards adjacent to the western wall of the Imperial City were torn down to make space for drill fields and barracks. The garrison troops were then quartered inside the city of Peking and trained in the Imperial City. In March 1513 a storage area and stables near the Imperial City were taken over to house the troops from Hsüan-fu, which the emperor began to regard as his personal army.

He now fancied himself a great imperial general like the second founder of the dynasty, the Yung-lo emperor (r. 1403–24), and he wanted to act out the role. His behavior was not just foolishness; he had a *different* attitude toward the Mongols. During his father's reign the grand secretaries had argued that Ming armies were no longer able to match Mongol cavalry. The only practical policy was retreat and isolation; the Mongols were to be held off and as far as possible ignored. The emperor wanted *instead to demonstrate his own military prowess as a warning and a show of strength*. He wanted to let the hordes see that the Ming emperor was as great a war leader as Batü Möngke, who had by this time secured the allegiance of most of the Mongols and had occupied the Ordos, the arid grassland in the bend of the Yellow River. This was at least one of the motives behind both his continued interest in military affairs and his tours of inspection through the northwest. Most of his senior officials disliked this idea and would not cooperate with him, but in Chiang Pin he found a willing partner.

At first the emperor's military adventures were limited to mock hunts and battles staged in the Imperial City. He and Chiang Pin wore identical suits of armor, rode together, and were virtually indistinguishable in the field. In September 1514 the emperor was badly mauled by a tiger during

one of these hunts and was unable to meet the court for over a month while he was recuperating. An official who advised him to take better care of himself was immediately demoted to a minor post far from Peking. The emperor clearly intended to continue hunting, the danger notwithstanding.

His military games caused another accident that resulted in the destruction of the main residential palaces in the Forbidden City. The emperor had been fond of lanterns since his childhood. He often expended great sums to procure novel and elaborately decorated items to hang in the palace courtyards for the lantern festival, which formed part of the New Year's celebrations. Chu Ch'en-hao (1478–1521), the Prince of Ning, knew about his passion for lanterns and sent a great number of exquisite and new shapes for the celebrations of 1514. The prince's servants were dispatched to install the lanterns, which were novel in part because they were affixed to the columns of the buildings and verandas, rather than suspended. The effect was spectacular. The courtyard before the main residential palace was as bright as day.

The emperor had by this time erected yurts at the edges of the palace courtyard, some of which were used to store gunpowder for the mock battles staged in the Forbidden City. On the evening of 10 February 1514, during the lantern festival, there was an accident. The gunpowder exploded and set all the palaces and audience halls in the residential compound on fire. The conflagration lasted through the night, and the residential palaces were completely destroyed. Not long after the fire had broken out, the emperor withdrew to his new residence. On the way he turned to look back at the blaze, which lit the whole sky, and merely remarked in jest that it was "one damn big fire."⁵

About eight months after this fire he ordered the eunuch intendant of Shensi to procure a tent palace of 162 yurts built to his specifications. These were delivered to Peking late in 1515. The yurts, which formed a palace compound complete with gates, residential quarters, courtyards, kitchens, stables, and lavatories, were first set up in the Forbidden City, and the emperor then began to use them whenever he traveled. Even though he now preferred to live in tents, the residential palaces still had to be rebuilt. In January 1515 the Ministry of Works reported that it would cost over 1 million ounces of silver to rebuild the palaces. This was to be exacted at the rate of 20 percent a year for five years in the form of a general surtax. When the ministry asked the emperor to lend half this amount from his personal funds, he refused. In the summer of 1515, 30,000 troops from the capital garrisons and the Imperial Bodyguard were dispatched to work on the project, which was finally completed in 1521, seven years after the fire.

⁵ *Ming shih lu, Wu-tsung shih lu*, p. 2204.

The emperor now simply ignored the protocols of the court; everything was done at his convenience. In January 1515 a court secretary complained that the New Year's sacrifice at the Ancestral Temple was performed late in the afternoon, and the sacrifice to Heaven began so late that the imperial entourage returned to Peking in the middle of the night. Both ceremonies should have begun at dawn. In February grand secretary Yang I-ch'ing complained that the emperor rarely held audiences, and when he did, they began late in the afternoon rather than at dawn, as was customary and proper. The entire court was kept waiting outside the Wu Gate from early morning until late afternoon; the approach to the Forbidden City looked like a marketplace; and when the officials dispersed in the dark, there was chaos.

In July 1515 grand secretary Liang Ch'u (1451–1527) reported that he and the other grand secretaries had heard in the streets that the emperor often slipped out of the Imperial City and spent the night somewhere in Peking. He wanted to know if this could be true. In January 1516 another court secretary congratulated the emperor because he had arrived on time for the sacrifice to Heaven, but at the same time this official noted that court audiences were held in the early evening and were often held during an imperial banquet. And there was no discipline at court; when the officials dispersed after the New Year's audience, a general was actually trampled to death in the melee while foreign ambassadors looked on.

For his part, the emperor wanted to have as little as possible to do with his officials. Complaints about his behavior fell on deaf ears. Almost all imperial business was now entrusted to eunuchs. Whatever their shortcomings, and there were many, the eunuchs never questioned his orders or criticized his behavior. They obeyed.

The case of the lamas was typical. The emperor had been introduced to these magician-monks from Tibet through Ch'ien Ning and found them fascinating. In 1514 a censor criticized him for consorting with lamas, whose company the censor said even other Buddhists eschewed. He recommended that these "ochre-robed ones with bronze rings in their ears" be sent to scare gremlins away from the extreme western frontiers. The emperor was not amused; the lamas stayed.

Late in 1515 he decided to dispatch a eunuch to Tibet to bring back a "living Buddha" whom these lamas had spoken of. The man was in fact a leader of the Karma-pa sect, whose protector, the Prince of Rin-spungs, had occupied Lhasa (the principal religious center of Tibet) in 1498, and he had been acclaimed since childhood as a miracle worker. The Karma-pa monks and their allies were at this time attempting to suppress their main rivals, and the political situation was not stable. It was not very likely that this "living Buddha" would leave Tibet under these circumstances.

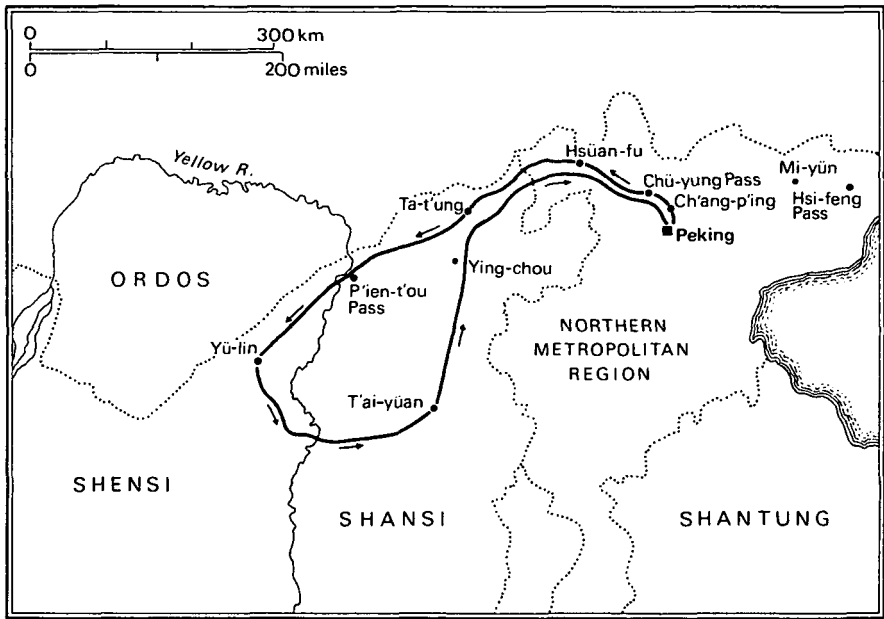
The emperor wanted to see him nonetheless. He noted that eunuchs had been sent to Tibet in earlier reigns; he said that there were precedents. Liu Yün, a eunuch in the palace chancellery, was put in charge of the mission and given the authority to requisition whatever supplies and services he needed en route. Grand secretary Liang Ch'ü protested at once. There was no precedent for sending a mission to a foreign religious leader. Szechwan, through which the party had to pass, had been subject to banditry for years and had only recently been pacified. He feared that irregular and uncontrolled requisitions would give rise to local unrest and possibly widespread uprisings. He refused to draft the requisite order. The emperor issued his own order, and the eunuch left.

Liang Ch'ü was right. The eunuch requisitioned hundreds of ships all along the Yangtze River and conscripted thousands of people to pull his fleet through the rapids of the upriver gorges. By the time he reached Chengtu, the capital of Szechwan province, his entourage required 100 *tan* of rice and 100 ounces of silver per day just for food. He remained in Szechwan for a year while he procured gifts for the mission and finally left with an escort of a thousand cavalry. The mission ended in disaster. When the "living Buddha" refused to leave Tibet, the Ming escort tried to coerce him. The lama's protector launched a surprise raid on the Ming camp, seized all the gifts and valuables, and in the process killed or wounded over half the escort. The eunuch fled for his life. When he finally reached Chengtu several years later, the emperor had already died.

By 1515 the emperor, now in his mid-twenties, was bored with life in Peking and irritated by the constant stream of criticism from court officials. Early in 1516 he began to think about leaving Peking and taking up residence in the garrison at Hsüan-fu, about 90 miles to the northwest. The idea had first been broached by Chiang Pin, who wanted to distance the emperor from his principal rival, Ch'ien Ning. Chiang Pin told the emperor that there were many more musicians and pretty women there than in Peking. Furthermore, there he could see real border skirmishes, which were far more exciting than mock battles in the Imperial City. In April 1516 the censor in charge of the metropolitan region reported that he had heard rumors about a temporary imperial residence in Hsüan-fu. The emperor made his first trip there just over a year later.

THE EMPEROR'S TRAVELS

He began his travels with short excursions. In January 1517 he informed the court that he intended to hunt in the imperial park at Nan-hai-tzu south of Peking after the sacrifice to Heaven. The grand secretaries ob-



Map 20. The Cheng-te emperor's travels in the northwest

jected. Such a thing had never been done before. What if something untoward were to happen to him? On 3 February, immediately after the sacrifice, he made the court officials accompany him to the imperial park south of Peking, where they were kept waiting until late in the afternoon. They were then dismissed and told to await the imperial entourage at the gates of Peking. The emperor arrived about midnight and held an audience. The next day he distributed the spoils of the hunt to select court officials. He hunted again in the imperial park several days later. When no objections were raised, he began to plan a longer trip.

In the summer of 1517 he made his first attempt to reach the garrison city of Hsüan-fu (modern Hsüan-hua). On 17 August 1517 he left Peking in disguise for Ch'ang-p'ing, a city about 20 miles to the north. The next day the grand secretaries (who had heard about his departure in the streets of Peking, where such news traveled fast) caught up with him on the road and begged him to return. He refused. Five days later he reached Chü-yung Pass, about 30 miles northwest of Peking. The censor in charge of the pass ordered the southern gate locked and then took the key.

The censor refused to open the pass. When the emperor ordered the eunuch responsible for the pass to open it, the censor threatened to behead

the eunuch on the spot if he tried to open the gate. The censor then submitted a report in which he said that someone must have forged an edict and that he would open the gate only if he received an order bearing the seals of the empress and the empress dowager as well. Meanwhile, he had threatened to kill one of the emperor's messengers. Unable to get beyond the pass, the emperor decided to return to Peking.

On 8 September 1517 he left Peking again in disguise and rushed to the pass. This time he was successful. He arrived in four days, spent the night in a farmer's house, and hurried through on 13 September while the censor in charge was absent. He left one of his favorites, the eunuch Ku Ta-yung, in charge with explicit orders not to allow court officials beyond the pass. On 16 September he reached Hsüan-fu and moved into his new palace. He was completely unrestrained in his behavior. To amuse himself in the evenings, he would burst into wealthy households and seize women for his harem. In October 1517 he began to refer to himself as a military commander and general and to his Hsüan-fu residence as a military headquarters. His orders and requisitions all carried a general's seal, and he would not use his imperial seal and title.

The grand secretaries protested. How could they know that such orders really issued from the emperor? They asked him to use the imperial seal. He ignored these requests and instead ordered the Ministry of Revenue to transfer 1 million ounces of silver from its treasuries to his palace in Hsüan-fu. Grand secretary Liang Ch'u objected. He did not know where the money was supposed to come from. The Ministry of Revenue had only 200,000 ounces of silver on hand, while the T'ai-ts'ang treasury held only 150,000 ounces in reserve. After much protest, the minister of revenue finally agreed to send half the amount requested. The emperor found this behavior on the part of his officials intolerable. Who were they to question his orders? In January 1518 he virtually imprisoned the court in Peking. The officers in charge of the gates were told that court officials could not leave the city.

Meanwhile, in October 1517 he saw what he had come to the frontier to see. On 15 October he was in a small fort about 40 miles southwest of Hsüan-fu. Several days earlier, a large Mongol raiding party under Batü Möngke had crossed the frontier. When he first heard about this raid, he saw it as an opportunity to exercise his military skills and began to prepare for a major engagement. Troop strength was increased at every garrison, and commanders were appointed for a campaign.

The raid began on 16 October. There were several small skirmishes the next day, but the Mongols retreated each time after taking casualties. On 18 October a major battle began near Ying-chou, a garrison city about 40

miles south of Ta-r'ung. On 19 October the emperor arrived with reinforcements. On 20 October he directed the fighting, which lasted the whole day. At dusk, the Mongols withdrew. The emperor ordered his forces to pursue them to the frontier and ended the campaign only because a severe duststorm made further pursuit impossible. Although he was nearly captured during this engagement, he considered it a victory. It was in fact the only time during the sixteenth century that Ming armies turned back a large Mongol raiding party, and the emperor's presence on the field of battle certainly influenced the outcome.

In November 1517 he returned to his palace in Hsüan-fu. He sent a eunuch to inform the court that owing to unsettled conditions on the border, he would not be able to return to Peking in time to perform the sacrifice to Heaven. The grand secretaries objected on the grounds that this had never been done before. They tried to reach him for an audience, but were turned back at Chü-yung Pass. In the end he decided to return for his own reasons. He reached Peking on 15 February 1518, just over five months after he had left.

Court officials were ordered to wait for him outside the northwestern gate of Peking. They waited all day in a sleet storm. He appeared late in the evening, armed and on horseback, accompanied by a cavalry escort. After receiving the obeisance of his officials (who were under the circumstances forced to kneel in the mud), he dismounted and repaired to a tent, where the grand secretaries served him wine and fruit. He told them that he had actually killed a Mongol himself and then left for his private palace. It was well after midnight before the court officials got back to Peking.

Three days later he conducted the sacrifice to Heaven, after which he went hunting in the imperial park. In March 1518 he left Peking again for his palace in Hsüan-fu, having been in the imperial capital less than twenty days. He returned on 22 March only because his grandmother, the empress Wang, had died three days earlier, and he intended to see to the arrangements for her burial. He left again in May to inspect the imperial tombs and then proceeded east to visit the garrison at Mi-yün (about 40 miles northeast of Peking) and Hsi-feng Pass, where he held an audience with several leaders of the Eastern Mongols. He returned to the capital for the empress's funeral. Her catafalque left Peking on 22 July. He followed on horseback and spent the night before the interment drinking in a tent near the tomb.

On 7 August 1518 he ordered the grand secretaries to draft an unusual edict. He told them that military discipline on the frontiers was lax. A campaign army under a certain general Chu Shou was to be sent to inspect the frontiers, and they were to draft the requisite edict. This general was

none other than the emperor. He had made up a new name for himself. Chu was the imperial surname and the character *shou* means long-lived; hence Chu the long-lived. He kept up the pretense that this general was someone other than the emperor for the rest of his reign. As emperor he also ordered the Ministry of War to award this general a noble rank for his exploits in the campaign against Batü Môngke. The grand secretaries were exasperated, but unable to deter him. In October 1518 Chu Shou was formally awarded the rank of duke and a stipend of 5,000 *tan* of grain per year.

In September he returned to his palace in Hsüan-fu, which he started to refer to as his “home,” to prepare for a tour of inspection along the northwestern frontier. Late in September he set out for the garrison at Ta-t’ung and then proceeded southwest through P’ien-t’ou Pass to the garrison at Yü-lin, which abutted Mongol territory. He was now almost 400 miles from Peking. The grand secretaries no longer knew whether he even saw the court documents sent to his headquarters, or who issued general Chu Shou’s orders. Was it the emperor or Chiang Pin, his second in command?

He remained in Yü-lin from November 1518 until January 1519, refusing to return to Peking for the winter solstice or to select animals for the sacrifice to Heaven. Orders were issued from his headquarters in the form of military commands. He refused to use the grand secretariat or the palace chancellery. On 13 January 1519 he left Yü-lin for T’ai-yüan, the capital of Shansi province, to visit the Prince of Chin. He had a particular reason for this visit. In October 1518, when he stopped at P’ien-t’ou Pass, he had seen a singing girl whom he fancied. She was brought to drink with him and to sing, and he found himself taken by her. He ascertained that she belonged to an entertainer household attached to the Prince of Chin’s court. When he passed through T’ai-yüan on his way back to Peking, he summoned her and then kept her with him. She became his favorite companion, and he subsequently spent most of his time with her. Chiang Pin and the emperor’s other favorites treated her with great deference, referring to her as “her ladyship Liu,” a form of address usually reserved for empresses, because they knew that she now had the emperor’s ear.

The sacrifice to Heaven, which was to have been conducted on 11 February 1519, had to be postponed for over a month while the emperor made his way back to Peking. This time he rode up to the altar with a cavalry escort, performed the ritual in military attire, and then went on a hunt in the imperial park at Nan-hai-tzu, south of the capital. Less than twenty days after he had returned, he ordered court officials to begin preparations for a tour of inspection through the Southern Metropolitan Region and Shantung. He wanted to see Nanking, the southern capital of

the empire. The grand secretaries objected; the minister of rites protested; court secretaries and censors petitioned him to abandon the idea. He ignored all of this and still planned to leave on 18 April.

On 13 April officials began to submit memorials objecting to his trip on various grounds. This continued for several days, by which time over a hundred officials had petitioned him to abandon the idea. But he was not going to be stopped. On 18 April he had the leaders of the protest arrested by the Imperial Bodyguard and ordered the other hundred-odd officials involved to kneel before the Wu Gate from dawn until dusk for five days. Two days later, other officials continued to protest. They were arrested at once and forced to join the rest before the Wu Gate. On 23 April he ordered all the officials who had opposed him publicly beaten.

The protest continued nonetheless. More officials were arrested and beaten; by June 1519 at least twelve had died from their wounds. One official was beaten to death in front of his young son. Even the emperor was moved. For whatever reason, he decided to postpone his trip.

This time court officials were objecting to the trip not on principle, but because they feared that this tour was part of a conspiracy to detain the emperor at the Prince of Ning's residence in Kiangsi or to assassinate him en route. For years officials had tried to report on the prince's treasonable activities, but their reports somehow never reached the emperor, or at least never convinced him. But their fears were well-founded; in July 1519 the Prince of Ning rebelled.

THE PRINCE OF NING'S TREASON

Chu Ch'en-hao, the Prince of Ning, had had designs on the imperial throne since the first years of the reign, although at first he thought to secure it by cunning rather than by force. The prince was a distant descendant of the seventeenth son of the founder of the dynasty. Because he was known to be a good field commander, the first prince of Ning received the fief of Ta-ning, a strategic military outpost on the steppe north of Peking. However, during the civil war of 1399–1402 the prince was moved to Peking by the victor in the conflict, the Yung-lo emperor, who doubted the prince's loyalty to his cause. His original fief was given to three Mongol princes (the leaders of the Uriyangkhad tribes), and he was later relocated in Kiangsi province. During the T'ien-shun reign (1457–64) the right to maintain a bodyguard was withdrawn after the reigning prince had been implicated in a case of treason, and it was never subsequently restored.

Chu Ch'en-hao was not a military man. He was reported to have had some literary ability and was otherwise known as a dilettante and pleasure-

seeker. However, he was cunning and ambitious. His plans matured slowly, and until the end he relied on deceit and conspiracy rather than on military force. He did nonetheless need some military support, so he first tried to arrange for the restoration of his princely bodyguard. In the summer of 1507 he sent a eunuch from his household to Peking with an enormous bribe for Liu Chin. The eunuch delivered this with the prince's request. The prince wanted to have his bodyguard and the revenues to support it restored to him. Liu Chin agreed. Although the Ministry of War objected, the prince's bodyguard was restored. It was withdrawn again the day before Liu Chin's execution in September 1510.

The prince was undaunted. In 1514 he tried again. This time he went through Lu Wan (1458–1526), who had become the minister of war in December 1513. The prince had first met Lu Wan several years earlier, when Lu was the judicial intendant of Kiangsi, and had become his patron and supporter. Now he wanted a favor. He approached Lu Wan with the same request. Lu agreed to do it, but this was easier said than done. Grand secretary Fei Hung (1468–1535) refused to draft or to approve the order. He knew what the prince was trying to do. However, by this time the prince had secured the cooperation of a number of imperial favorites: Ch'ien Ning (who had recently lost his position as the emperor's companion to Chiang Pin); Tsang Hsien, the emperor's favorite musician; and several eunuchs on the emperor's personal staff. Together they devised a plan to circumvent Fei Hung.

They knew that on 9 April 1514 Fei Hung would have to be absent from the grand secretariat in order to grade papers from the palace examination and to prepare the final list of successful candidates. It had been arranged that the prince's request for the restoration of his bodyguard would be presented that day and forwarded directly to the Directorate of Ceremonial. In this way the grand secretaries would not even see the document until after the edict had been issued. Ch'ien Ning had bribed eunuchs in the chancellery to prepare the requisite edict, which was then issued as a direct order. On 28 April the prince's bodyguard and the revenues to support it were restored by imperial decree. Objections were raised, but the emperor paid no heed and dismissed accusations against the prince as idle rumor.

By this time local officials in Kiangsi and censors in Nanking were regularly bringing charges against the Prince of Ning. In January 1514 the Nanking censors reported that the prince had seized fertile lands for himself, taxed wealthy households, and cowed local authorities, who dared not complain about the behavior of an imperial prince. The censors wanted to issue a proclamation to the people of Kiangsi. All property seized by the

prince was to be returned; any disturbances caused by his agents were punishable by the civil authorities; local officials were not to consort with the prince. There was no response to this request.

In April 1514 an official charged with the suppression of banditry in Kiangsi reported that brigands remained a problem largely because of the Prince of Ning. He both protected existing groups of brigands, whom he sometimes employed as his agents, and drove many people into outlawry by expropriating property and otherwise interfering in the trade and commerce of the region. The minister of war dismissed these charges as false allegations.

Having finally secured his bodyguard, in June 1514 the prince requested seals of office not only for his bodyguard, but also seals giving him authority over local military intendants and officers of the guard units in his region. This was approved. At the same time he recruited a private guard of about a hundred brigands who acted as his personal henchmen.

In August 1514 he asked for permission to try and punish the imperial clansmen under his jurisdiction. This too was granted on minister of war Lu Wan's recommendation. The emperor was pleased by what he perceived as the prince's diligent attention to the details of his duties and still dismissed allegations against him as slanders. Yet by this time the prince had already begun to refer to himself as a ruler, to his bodyguard as imperial attendants, and to his orders as imperial edicts. On one occasion he actually tried to make the civil officials in the area attend him in their formal court robes, as if he were indeed an emperor. The governor, speaking for his subordinates, said that it would be improper and refused to do it. Not even this outrageous behavior merited a censure from the court in Peking.

For some reason the Prince of Ning remained above suspicion; what was deemed treasonable behavior in other princes was overlooked in him. Late in 1514 the grandson of the Prince of Lu, who was an accomplished archer, was falsely implicated in a case of treason, convicted, and made a commoner. His crime was skill in archery and talent as a field commander. Yet the Prince of Ning, who was issuing his orders as imperial edicts, remained untouched.

Early in 1515 the prince began to recruit strategists and advisors to his cause. His principal advisor was a provincial examination graduate versed in military strategy. Bandit chiefs continued to seek his protection, and he used them to terrorize his enemies. Officials who openly opposed him put their lives at risk. He had almost managed to kill grand secretary Fei Hung on his way home to Kiangsi in 1514. When the judicial intendant for Kiangsi reported on the prince's treason in 1515, he too almost lost his

life. The prince tried to poison him. He then had him arrested and nearly tortured to death. Under the circumstances most local authorities either cooperated with the prince or said nothing.

Although he was preparing for the eventuality of a military campaign, the prince still hoped to secure the throne by other means. In the spring of 1516 he bribed Ch'ien Ning and several other favorites and asked them to suggest that his eldest son be sent to Peking. He wanted his son to fill the role of the heir apparent in the rituals conducted at the Ancestral Temple. In June 1516 he proposed to move into the Forbidden City, but provincial officials stopped him. In May 1517 several senior eunuchs in his household went to Peking in secret to report on his unlawful activities. The prince was furious. He had his ally Ch'ien Ning, the commander of the Imperial Bodyguard, forge an edict ordering that the eunuchs be taken to the prison of the Imperial Bodyguard, beaten, and exiled. He could not cover up his plans much longer. He began to organize his forces, to recruit more troops from among the aboriginal peoples to the southwest, and to prepare a store of armor and weapons, including firearms.

In the fall of 1517 he sent spies to Peking to report to him on conditions there. At the same time he set up a network of relay riders to bring him news. His advisors cautioned against the appearance of rebellion. He was to wait until the emperor had died, and then in the ensuing confusion rise and declare himself emperor. The emperor had almost been captured by the Mongols in October 1517; he was rarely in the Forbidden City and constantly exposed to danger. Yet the prince could not wait indefinitely for his demise, and he may have first considered assassinating the emperor at this time.

Meanwhile, bandit troops under his protection were literally waging war against provincial and local authorities, looting granaries and treasuries to fill his coffers. They also carried out his revenge. In October 1518 he again attacked Fei Hung, who was living in retirement in eastern Kiangsi. The members of the Fei clan took refuge from one of his bandit armies in the district seat, but the bandits broke down the city gates, looted the city, and dismembered many of Fei Hung's relatives. Fei Hung barely escaped. No official inquiry was made into the incident. A high official was dispatched from Peking to investigate it only after Fei Hung had directly petitioned the court for aid.

Sun Sui (cs. 1493), the new governor of Kiangsi, was sent in response to Fei Hung's plea. He was charged with the suppression of banditry, but was also to prepare for the eventuality of an uprising. Late in 1518 he captured several bandit leaders under the prince's protection and imprisoned them in the prefectural city of Nan-k'ang. Fearing that they might leak his plans

under torture, the prince had his forces storm the city to rescue them. In the wake of serious flooding banditry became more widespread, and local authorities had almost no control over large parts of the countryside.

By the spring of 1519 Sun Sui had sent in seven reports on the prince's treason, repeating over and over that the prince was certainly going to rebel. But to no avail. Yet the prince was growing anxious. How much longer could the emperor be duped? The emperor had originally intended to travel south of the Yangtze River during the spring and summer of 1519, and the prince may have hoped either to assassinate or to detain him somewhere en route. But this trip was put off after court officials objected to it, for even though the emperor remained blind to the prince's intent, his officials saw it clearly. There was only one reason why the prince had not already revolted. The emperor ignored his consorts and it was widely believed that he would not produce an heir, so the prince still hoped to secure the throne by having his son named the heir apparent. In that way he could avoid being branded as a rebel and a usurper and make at least a pretense of legitimate succession.

It seems that the emperor finally became aware of this state of affairs in the summer of 1519, after the court protest, only because Chiang Pin saw this as a way to topple his rival Ch'ien Ning forever. Ch'ien Ning had been in league with the prince since at least 1513. After the emperor began to travel in 1517, it was very easy for Ch'ien (who had remained behind in Peking) to intercept and destroy reports hostile to the prince.

After the imperial entourage returned to Peking in February 1519, Chiang Pin and his allies saw how precarious the situation had become. In the spring of 1519 the prince received what he had been waiting for—a response to his petition. Ch'ien Ning had tricked the emperor. He told him to approve the prince's request that his eldest son be allowed to take part in the sacrifices at the Ancestral Temple and to have the order written on a special sort of paper. This "special-colored dragon paper" was customarily reserved for communications with the Protector of the State (*chien-kuo*). The Protector of the State acted in the emperor's stead when there was no heir apparent. Now, if the emperor were to die, the Prince of Ning would have to be called to Peking to take control of the imperial administration. This would not be in Chiang Pin's interest.

In league with the eunuch Chang Yung, he decided to make the first move and to force the prince's hand. First they raised doubts in the emperor's mind about Ch'ien Ning's motives. Why was he always praising the prince's filiality and diligence? Was it not to mock the emperor? And why would he dare to do that? The emperor quickly changed his mind about the prince, and Ch'ien Ning's principal ally at court, the eunuch Chang Jui

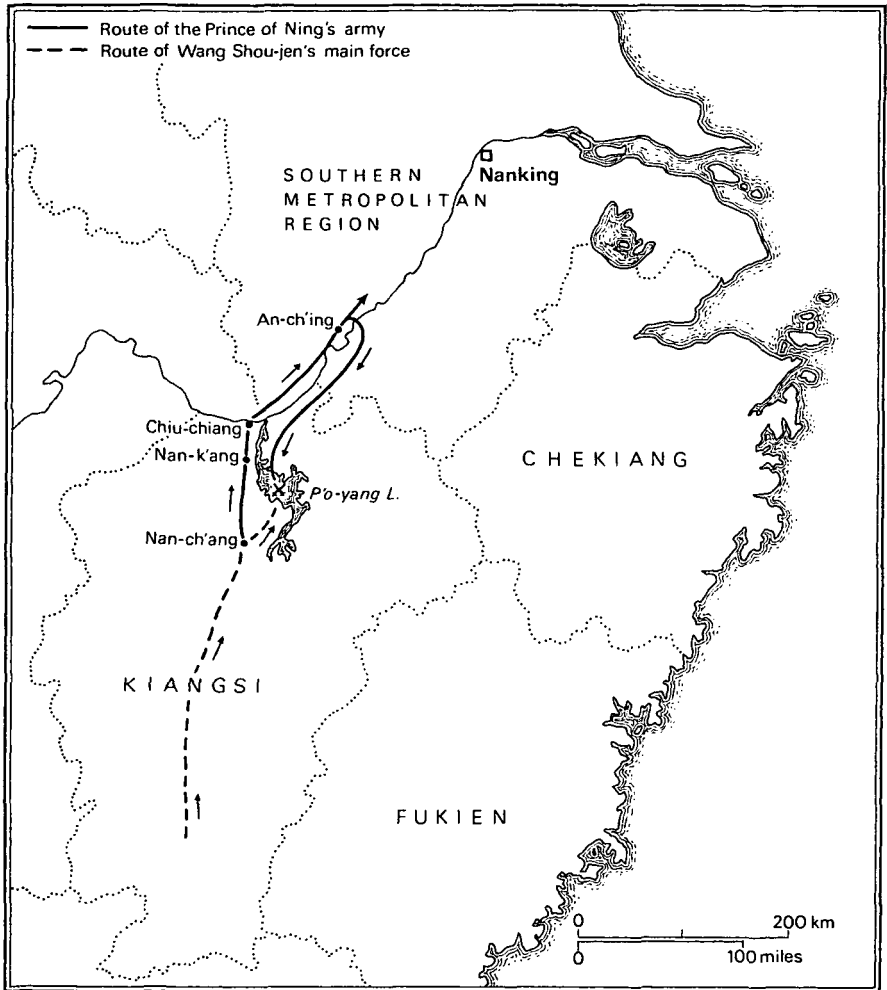
(who controlled the surveillance and security network in Peking) turned on Ch'ien as soon as he realized that the plot was known. He made certain that details of the prince's crimes found their way to a certain censor, who submitted a report on the prince's treason.

This time Ch'ien Ning could not suppress the document. When confronted by the emperor, he accused the censor of sowing discord in the imperial family. But the emperor's suspicions had been aroused; he said that the truth should be found out. The censor had no place to go. If he had falsely accused the prince of treason, he would pay the penalty instead.

He sent the report to the grand secretaries and asked for a recommendation. Grand secretary Yang T'ing-ho (1459–1529) advised him to follow a precedent set by the Hsüan-te emperor. In 1426, when the Hsüan-te emperor's uncle, Chu Kao-hsü (ca. 1380–1429?) openly rebelled, the emperor led an army to put down his uprising. Chu Kao-hsü surrendered without a struggle, and the emperor spared his life. Chu Kao-sui (d. 1431), another uncle, had admitted his complicity in the plot, but no action was taken against him. Copies of allegations made against him were delivered as a warning against future misdeeds; that was all. Yang suggested that the Prince of Ning be treated like Chu Kao-sui. Several high officials and imperial relatives were to be sent to admonish him and to deprive him of his bodyguard. This was a very mild rebuke, considering that the prince had all but risen in open rebellion. Even he mistook the intent of the imperial emissaries.

On 9 July 1519, while the prince was attending a banquet in honor of his birthday, a spy arrived from Peking with the news that high officials had been sent to arrest him, for that was what had been rumored in Peking. The prince left the banquet abruptly and called an urgent meeting of his advisors. They all agreed that his plot was known and that he could delay no longer. A plan was agreed upon. On the following day, when all the civil officials came to thank him for the banquet, he could announce his intentions and kill anyone who refused to support his cause.

On 10 July he appeared before the assembled officials, who were surrounded by several hundred of his guard. He made an incredible announcement. He claimed that the eunuch Li Kuang had deluded the Hung-chih emperor into thinking that the Cheng-te emperor was his son. According to him, the person on the throne was the child of a commoner. He then asked whether the officials knew of the empress' edict which he had received and told them that he had been ordered to punish this bandit—presumably the emperor. Sun Sui, the governor of Kiangsi, asked to see the empress's edict. When he was refused, he accused the prince of treason. He and several other high officials who would not cooperate were summarily



Map 21. The Prince of Ning's rebellion

executed. Many others were arrested and subsequently coerced into following the prince.

Forces set out at once from his headquarters at Nan-ch'ang in order to secure the route to the Yangtze River. Chiu-chiang fell on 13 July, and the prefectural city of An-ch'ing (which was over 150 miles from Nanking) was besieged on 23 July. However, the prince and the main body of the army did not set out for Nanking until 26 July. Wang Shou-jen (1472–1529), then the governor of southern Kiangsi, tricked the prince into delaying his

departure. When Wang heard about the uprising on 14 July, he began to assemble an army. At the same time he circulated false reports that a huge imperial army from Peking was marching on Nan-ch'ang. Only after the prince had ascertained that these reports were false did he dare to leave his headquarters.

The campaign was ill-fated from the outset. On the first day, while the prince was sacrificing for the success of his undertaking, the altar table broke and the sacrificial offering fell on the ground. Some of the first ships to set sail were destroyed in a storm. On 9 August 1519 the main army reached An-ch'ing, which had been under siege for over ten days. The prince's army had taken many casualties during assaults on the city. After a final attempt to take it had failed, he ordered the siege lifted. He was worried. If his forces could not take this prefectural city, how could he hope to take Nanking, the southern capital?

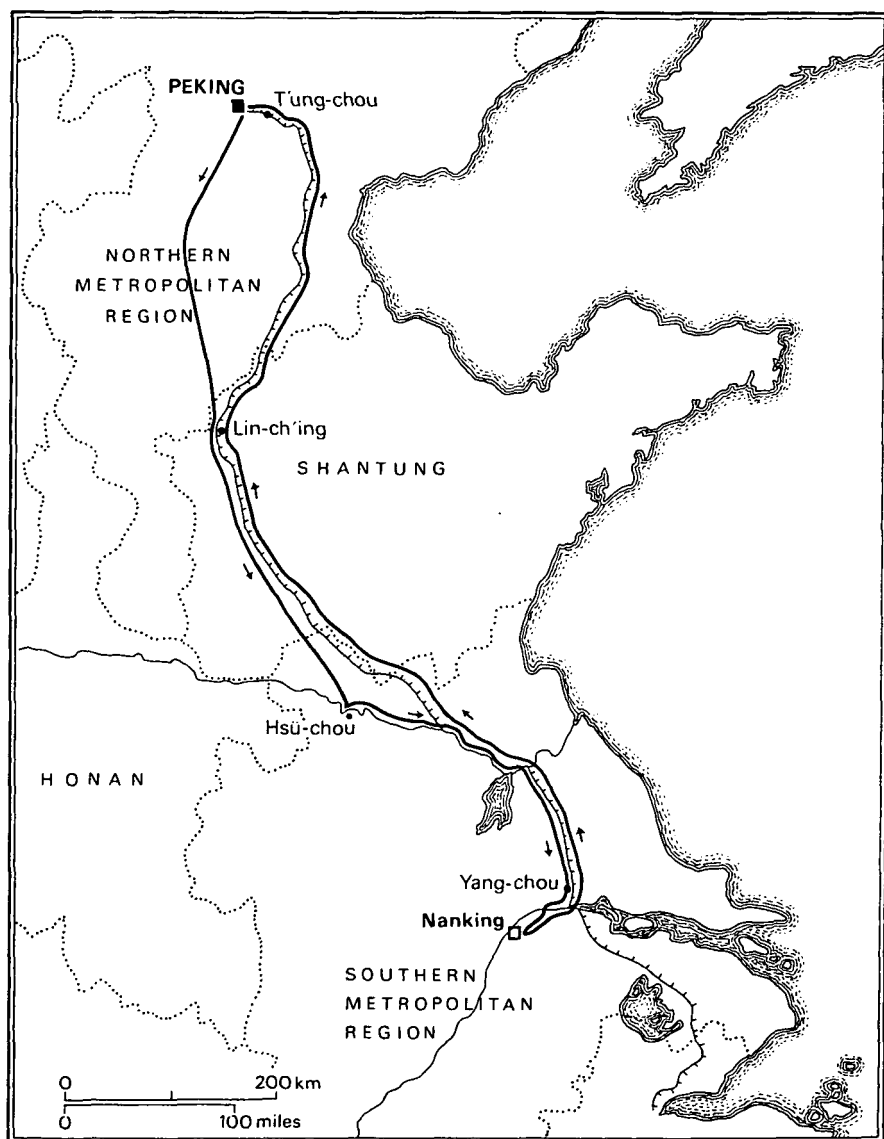
Meanwhile, Wang Shou-jen had assembled an imperial army and had decided on a strategy against the prince. The headquarters at Nan-ch'ang was not well garrisoned; most of the prince's forces were with him. Wang planned first to take Nan-ch'ang and then to engage the prince's main force on the Yangtze River. He reasoned that the prince would turn back to protect his headquarters, but by then his forces would be weak and tired. In a pitched battle, he would be at a disadvantage.

The forward column of Wang's army reached Nan-ch'ang on the night of 13 August 1519 and stormed the city the next day. Two days later, advance columns ambushed the prince's army, which had as anticipated turned back to protect Nan-ch'ang. The main force of the imperial army reached the prince's fleet on the morning of 20 August, just as he was holding audience. Small boats were set afire and left to drift into the prince's fleet. When his own ship caught fire, the prince was forced to flee and was subsequently captured. His army was utterly defeated. The uprising lasted only forty-three days.

THE TOUR OF THE SOUTH

News of the uprising reached Peking on 7 August 1519. The emperor wanted to lead an army south, for this would provide him with a perfect opportunity to tour the Yangtze delta. He issued an edict ordering his alias, Chu Shou, the duke of Chen-kuo, to bring together the border armies and to suppress the Prince of Ning. The grand secretaries, the minister of war, and other high officials objected, but the emperor threatened anyone who dared to object again with certain death.

He left Peking at the head of his army on 15 September 1519. The next



Map 22. The Cheng-te emperor's southern tour

day he received a report from Wang Shou-jen in which Wang informed him that the Prince of Ning had been captured. Wang beseeched him to return to Peking. According to Wang, the prince had hoped all along that the emperor would lead an army in person. Assassins had been placed along

the route south. Even though the prince had been captured, the emperor still was not safe. He kept this report secret and continued south, already aware that he was in danger. In August 1519, before he left Peking, he had arranged for Chiang Pin to oversee the activities of Ch'ien Ning and the eunuch Chang Jui, both of whom he now suspected of complicity in the prince's treason. Under the circumstances he was in fact no safer in Peking than he was anywhere else.

Late in September 1519 the imperial entourage reached the prefectural city of Lin-ch'ing, an important city on the Grand Canal about 175 miles south of Peking. When the emperor left Peking, his favorite concubine, her ladyship Liu, was ill and unable to accompany him. It was agreed that he would send for her later. She gave him one of her hairpins as a sign by which to know the messengers sent for her were indeed from him. He lost the hairpin just south of Peking, and it could not be found again. Upon reaching Lin-ch'ing, he dispatched messengers to bring her ladyship south; but when they arrived without the hairpin, she refused to accompany them. On being informed of this, the emperor set out in secret with a small cavalry escort to fetch her himself. Several days passed before court officials discovered his absence, and by then it was too late to stop him. He was gone for almost a month.

He returned to Lin-ch'ing without incident and continued southeast toward Yang-chou. From Hsü-chou he traveled by water at a leisurely pace, stopping on the way to hunt, fish, and visit with retired officials and eunuchs. He was in the habit of giving the spoils of the hunt to various officials and followers; but for even a feather or a piece of meat, he expected a handsome gift of silver or silk in return. He met the court when and where it suited him. The audience for the winter solstice was held in the residence of a retired eunuch, and shortly before that he had accepted congratulations for his birthday on board the imperial barge.

He arrived in Nanking in January 1520 and remained there for the next eight months. For the most part he enjoyed himself. He had been drinking since the first days of the reign, and he never gave up the habit. He had by now become addicted. One of his attendants was charged with the sole duty of following him about with a jug of hot wine and a ladle so that wherever he was, he could have a drink. Drinking was one of his relatively harmless pastimes. At most, he made officials get drunk in his presence for his amusement. His ridiculous orders and outrageous extortion schemes had more serious consequences.

Shortly before he reached Nanking, he issued a very curious edict. He forbade the raising and killing of pigs. Ostensibly he did this because in his view pigs were unclean and were a source of disease. This belief was widely

held by Muslims in northwest China, where the emperor had been traveling. However, it seems that he also issued the order because the phrase “kill pigs” (*sha chu*) sounded like “kill [the one surnamed] Chu.” It was a very unpopular edict. In the Yangtze delta meat was pork; everyone raised pigs. Pork was the principal offering in most imperial sacrifices, as well as the principal ingredient in most meat dishes. Yet in the face of perpetual banishment to the remotest frontier of the empire, many people complied with the order.

His most outrageous extortion scheme involved taking women for his harem from private households. This practice had been going on since 1517 and may have been one of Chiang Pin’s ideas. During his tour of the south, he tried to carry it out on a grander scale. Seizing women had two purposes. First, they might in fact be taken into the harem; and second, if they were not, their families could try to redeem them for a price. Many wealthy households began to bribe his companions in order to avoid this special mark of imperial favor. Those without money suffered a sad fate. Hundreds of young women were sent to the imperial laundry in Peking (a compound outside the Imperial City where palace women retired in their old age or were sent to be disciplined) to await the emperor’s return. Early in 1520 court officials complained that there was no more room for them, that supplies were insufficient, and that some of the women had already died of starvation.

His hunting excursions through the intensively cultivated regions around Nanking also caused great unrest because the imperial entourage virtually laid waste the areas through which it passed. He finally curtailed these activities in order to placate her ladyship Liu, but much damage had already been done.

It was under these circumstances that the first embassy from a European kingdom arrived at the imperial court. Tomé Pires (ca. 1468–1524), the son of a Lisbon apothecary, had been appointed the Portuguese ambassador to China in 1516 and had arrived in Canton with a letter from King Manuel I (r. 1495–1521) late in 1517. Civil officials in Canton considered the Portuguese pirates, and the governor requested permission to assemble a fleet and drive them off.

This reaction was hardly surprising; the Portuguese had a bad reputation in China. In 1511 a Portuguese fleet had overrun the Malay sultanate of Malacca, a kingdom nominally under the protection of the Ming court, and had forced the sultan to flee. He immediately sent emissaries to inform the Chinese of this invasion, and it was thus that the Portuguese first came to the attention of court officials. They were thought to have come from somewhere south of Malaya and were not identified as Europeans. Further-

more, since there was no record of such a people ever having offered tribute, the Ministry of Rites in Peking refused to receive the embassy of 1517. In February 1518 the ministry recommended that Pires be ordered to leave Canton.

In the interim someone had bribed the eunuch in charge of Canton's maritime affairs and secured permission for the embassy to proceed north. The party reached Nanking in May 1520 and managed to gain the emperor's permission to proceed to Peking for an audience. Hōja Asan, a Muslim merchant in Pires's party, may have arranged this by bribing Chiang Pin to introduce him at court. Having gotten this far, Pires's luck ran out. Although he reached Peking, he never had an audience. When the emperor returned to Peking in January 1521, he was very ill. He died three months later, and the next day Pires and his party were expelled from Peking.⁶

The emperor remained in Nanking during the spring and summer of 1520 in part because he was waiting for the border armies under Chiang Pin and the eunuch Chang Chung to return from Kiangsi. After he had captured the Prince of Ning, Wang Shou-jen requested permission to present him to the emperor in Peking, but the emperor and his favorites would not be denied their campaign. Wang was ordered to remain in Kiangsi with the prince. Chiang Pin wanted to let the emperor capture him in a mock battle on Lake P'o-yang, after which he and other favorites expected to receive substantial rewards for their part in the campaign. Wang Shou-jen refused to cooperate with them. He left Kiangsi with the prince and headed toward Nanking, where he intended to hand the prince over to the emperor in person. He trusted neither the provincial officials nor the emperor's favorites, and suspected there was still a plot to free the prince and kill the emperor.

When he reached Hangchow he met with the eunuch Chang Yung, who was in charge of military affairs for the region. On the advice of retired grand secretary Yang I-ch'ing, he agreed to turn the prince over to Chang Yung, whom Yang I-ch'ing felt could be trusted. Wang also informed Chang Yung that the situation in Kiangsi was unstable. If border troops were allowed into Kiangsi, he feared that their requisitions would lead to an uprising far worse than the prince's.

Meanwhile, his plans having been frustrated, Chiang Pin began to slander Wang before the emperor. He suggested that Wang was in fact in league with the prince. Chang Yung managed to intercede on Wang's

6 For more information on the arrival of the Portuguese in China see Paul Pelliot, "Le Hōja et le Sayyid Husain de l'histoire des Ming," *T'oung Pao*, Series 2, 38 (1948), pp. 81–292.

behalf, and the accusations were dismissed. But Chiang and his cronies would not be denied their reward. Late in 1519 the border armies were ordered to Kiangsi to wipe out the remnants of the prince's followers. At the same time, Wang Shou-*jen* was ordered to return to Kiangsi as the governor of the region. During the summer of 1520 he tried in every way possible to contain the damage done by the border armies, and eventually he managed to win their respect and obedience. Seeing that his own position as their commander was being undermined, Chiang Pin decided to end the campaign and return to Nanking.

In September 1520 the emperor ordered Wang Shou-*jen* to submit another report on the campaign against the prince in which Chiang and other imperial favorites were given credit for the prince's capture. Chang Yung had returned to Nanking with the prince early in 1520. All the prisoners from the campaign were kept on ships moored in the Yangtze River through the summer, despite protests from the grand secretaries, who still feared that some incident might occur. However, the emperor wanted his favorites credited with the success of the campaign, and until that issue was settled, he refused to acknowledge that the prince had been taken prisoner. After Wang Shou-*jen* submitted his revised report, the emperor formally received the prisoners from the campaign and began to prepare for his return to Peking.

He set out from Nanking on 23 September 1520 with the Prince of Ning in tow and proceeded north by boat along the Grand Canal, again stopping along the way to fish and to visit with retired officials and eunuchs. He continued to enjoy himself and was almost always drunk. This carefree journey came to an abrupt end on 25 October. He was fishing by himself in a small boat (and probably drunk) when his boat overturned. He very nearly drowned before his panic-stricken favorites were able to drag him out of the water. He was already in poor health owing to his chronic drinking, and he became seriously ill as a result of this accident. As soon as he felt well enough to travel again, he proceeded north without stopping and reached T'ung-chou just to the east of Peking, in December 1520.

He decided to try the Prince of Ning himself and to do it in T'ung-chou rather than in Peking. On Chiang Pin's advice he began an inquisition aimed at punishing anyone who had trafficked with the prince. Wang Shou-*jen* had anticipated just such a purge and so had destroyed most of the evidence (lists of the prince's gifts to various local, provincial, and court officials) when he took Nan-ch'ang in 1519. The eunuch Chang Yung, who had been sent to gather evidence, obtained only a fraction of the prince's original archives. The principal conspirators were all implicated by what evidence remained. Ch'ien Ning had already been arrested in December

1519. Minister of personnel Lu Wan was arrested on 15 December 1520 and was brought to T'ung-chou along with a number of eunuchs and officers of the Imperial Bodyguard.

At this point the emperor was bent on revenge. He particularly hated Ch'ien Ning and Lu Wan for betraying his trust and for repaying his beneficence with treason. He ordered them both stripped, bound back-to-back, and put in front of the prisoners that were to be marched to Peking for his triumphal entry into the city. They and the rest of the conspirators were to suffer the penalty for treason—death by slicing. On 13 January 1521 the Prince of Ning was allowed to take his own life, after which the emperor ordered his corpse burned. The case of the Prince of Ning's treason was closed, and at Chiang Pin's urging the emperor made plans to return not to Peking, but to his palace at Hsüan-fu.

It was clear both to Chiang Pin and to court officials that the emperor was seriously ill, that he might die soon, and that no provision had been made for the succession. Whoever was at his side when he died could name his successor, and for this reason Chiang Pin wanted to get him away from the imperial court. But the emperor felt weak, and his physician was finally able to persuade him to return to Peking for a while to recuperate before he traveled again.

He entered Peking on 18 January 1521. Thousands of bound captives lined both sides of the approach to the main gate of the Imperial City, each identified by a banner. Dressed as a general, he rode in triumph through the avenue of captives into the Imperial City. This was his last spectacle. Three days later he collapsed while sacrificing at the Altar to Heaven just south of Peking and had to be carried back to the city.

THE INTERREGNUM

He remained seriously ill through the spring of 1521, unable to meet the court or to officiate at the imperial sacrifices; and still he made no provision for the succession. Chiang Pin had his own plan. He was going to seize the Imperial City and install the Prince of Tai, who resided in the garrison city of Ta-t'ung. Chiang needed only to be at the emperor's side when he died. Who could dispute his version of the emperor's last instructions? To ensure that he would be able to put force behind his words, on 15 April 1521 he forged a decree that gave him control over the border troops in Peking. This plan almost succeeded, but Chiang was not at the emperor's side when he died in his private palace on the night of 19 April 1521, at the age of twenty-nine. Only two eunuchs from the Directorate of Ceremonial were present, and they wrote down his last words:

I'm afraid I won't get over this sickness. You two and Chang Jui tell the directors of the Directorate of Ceremonial to come and see me. Whatever happens, report to her ladyship [empress dowager Chang] that she should work out pressing matters of state with the grand secretaries. This is important. None of you [eunuchs] is at fault. I am the one who ruined the affairs of the empire.⁷

When the directors arrived, he was already dead.

Chief grand secretary Yang T'ing-ho was among the first to learn of the emperor's death. He too had made plans for this eventuality. On the morning of 20 April, when officials from the Directorate of Ceremonial brought him the emperor's final instructions, he was ready to act. On his deathbed the emperor had entrusted everything to the grand secretaries, but had not actually named a successor. Yang had had a candidate in mind for some time: the emperor's younger cousin, the thirteen-year-old son of the Prince of Hsing. He drafted a posthumous edict in which he named this boy the legitimate successor and told the eunuchs from the Directorate of Ceremonial to give it to the empress dowager for her approval. By midday the matter had been settled, although not to everyone's liking. Wang Ch'ung (1459–1532), the minister of personnel, objected to Yang's high-handed decision. He wanted the matter put to the full court, but he was too late. Early on the morning of 21 April a party set out to escort the prince to Peking. Only one serious threat remained—Chiang Pin.

Chiang entered the Forbidden City on 22 April to hear the reading of the emperor's posthumous edict. In that edict Yang T'ing-ho had ordered the border troops to return to their respective garrisons, which in effect deprived Chiang Pin of his command. Chiang's accomplices urged him to act, but he hesitated. He sent Hsü T'ai, his principal advisor, to spy on the grand secretaries. Yang managed to convince Hsü that he did not intend to do anything about Chiang Pin and that it was a matter for the succeeding emperor to decide. After hearing this, Chiang decided to remain sequestered in his residence. Although many court officials wanted to arrest

7 Yang T'ing-ho, *Shih ts'ao yü lu*, in *Yang Wen-chung san lu* (1607; rpt. Kyoto, 1972), p. 1b. For the entry on the Cheng-te emperor's death, the editors of the *Yü p'i li tai t'ung chien chi lan* (1767) include the Ch'ien-lung emperor's (r. 1736–95) opinion that this document was a forgery: "... At that time [the emperor] was sick in bed in the Leopard Quarter with no one at his side; his words come [to us] only through the mouths of eunuchs. How does one know that those [eunuchs], fearful that court officials would discuss their previous transgressions, did not purposely forge and transmit this order as a means of escaping from their predicament. For this reason it is not completely reliable." It is possible that the last two sentences were added for this reason, but the eunuchs gained no advantage from entrusting the matter of the succession to the grand secretaries, and at least that part of the document is probably authentic. The language is very colloquial and may reflect the way that the emperor actually spoke. See Ch'ing Kao-ts'ung, *Yü p'i li tai t'ung chien lan*, ed. Yang Shu-tseng (1767; rpt. Shanghai, 1883; facsimile rpt. Taipei, 1959), 108, p. 3b (p. 3524).

him at once, Yang T'ing-ho objected. He feared that a bloody battle might ensue if this matter were not handled carefully.

On 24 April Yang persuaded the directors of the Directorate of Ceremonial to request from the empress dowager an order for Chiang Pin's arrest. He found it difficult to gain their cooperation. Wei Pin, the principal director, was related to Chiang Pin by marriage; Chang Jui (who had managed to cover up his complicity in the Prince of Ning's treason with Chiang Pin's help) also tried to protect him. Yang finally threatened them both. He said that if anything did happen, he would implicate them on the grounds that they had refused to request Chiang Pin's arrest. Wei Pin agreed to detain Chiang, but not to charge him with any particular crime. Yang in turn agreed not to implicate any eunuchs in the case; only Chiang's military associates were to be arrested with him.

Chiang Pin entered the Forbidden City again on 24 April 1521 to attend ceremonies to celebrate the completion of the K'un-ning Palace, one of the residential palaces that had burned in the great fire of 1514. Having secured the order for his arrest, Yang T'ing-ho instructed the guards at the gates to the Imperial City to detain Chiang when he tried to leave. Yang feared only that Chang Jui might inform Chiang Pin of this plan before the guards had received their instructions. During the ceremonies a eunuch approached Chiang Pin and whispered something to him, whereupon he fled toward the north gate. He tried to bluff his way out by asking how a dead emperor could issue an order, but the guards arrested him and his escort. His principal accomplices were arrested a short while later and sent with Chiang to the prison of the Imperial Bodyguard. The succession was no longer in jeopardy.

During the thirty-five days between the Cheng-te emperor's death and the arrival of his successor, Yang T'ing-ho virtually ruled the Ming empire. He began at once to dismantle the deceased emperor's court. Eunuch military intendants were recalled from the border garrisons; the capital troops were returned to their original commanders, and the border armies to their original garrisons. Foreign embassies were sent home, and monks in the emperor's private palace were returned to their temples. The artisans, entertainers, and boat handlers on call in Peking were allowed to return to their homes, and the women in the imperial laundry were sent back to their families. All these measures were carried out as provisions of the Cheng-te emperor's final testament, which had in fact been written by Yang T'ing-ho.

Meanwhile court officials and eunuchs were bickering incessantly about who should meet the new emperor and where, when, and in what order. They were all anxious about what the future might bring and wanted to be

among the first to win the new emperor's favor. No one, not even Yang T'ing-ho, who had arranged the succession, could be certain of what lay ahead.

ASSESSMENTS OF THE REIGN

Ming historians writing in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries generally characterized the Cheng-te emperor as a sharp-witted, intelligent man who was very accomplished in poetry, music, and the martial arts. Such remarks may reveal that the historians, who had to find something to praise, could find nothing else to say; but their remarks may also contain some truth. He was if not intelligent at least cunning and brutal enough to preserve himself and his personal power for sixteen years.

The editors of the eighteenth-century *Official history of the Ming* commended him for his martial spirit and for his efforts to stop the decline of Ming military power, which had in their opinion been deteriorating since the middle of the fifteenth century. They characterized his reign as generally tranquil, credited him with employing talented civil officials in high office, and concluded that if he had not drunk so much, he might have become a mediocre ruler.

He was uniformly criticized for his attitude toward his position, for he refused to act as though the power of the ruler placed him above all else. The Cheng-te emperor's vision of himself as a warrior-ruler was not compatible with the ritual and bureaucratic norms by which his officials expected him to live. His personal behavior, his choice of companions, his disrespect toward civil officials, and his drinking were deemed reprehensible and unseemly in an emperor. Even though emperors during the T'ang and later northern dynasties (as well as early Ming emperors) commonly rode, hunted, and went on campaign, by the sixteenth century most civil officials found such pursuits unacceptable in an emperor. Tales of the Cheng-te emperor's free-living style and disregard for ritual, custom, and propriety remained nonetheless very popular and have appeared under various titles into the twentieth century.⁸

⁸ See, for example, *Cheng-te yü Chiang-nan* (n.d.; rpt. in *Chung-kuo li shih t'ung su hsiao shuo-san chung*, Taipei, 1976) and *Pai mu tan* (n.d.; rpt. in Vol. 9 of *Chung-kuo t'ung su chang hui hsiao t'ung k'an*, Taipei, 1971).

CHAPTER 8

THE CHIA-CHING REIGN, 1522–1566

THE EMPEROR'S SELECTION AND ACCESSION

Chu Hou-ts'ung, the eleventh emperor of the Ming dynasty, was born on 16 September 1507 on his father's estate in An-lu, Hu-kuang province (modern Chung-hsiang hsien in Hupeh). His father, Chu Yu-yüan (1476–1519), the Prince of Hsing, was the fourth son of the Ch'eng-hua emperor (r. 1465–1487) and the eldest of three sons born to the emperor's concubine, Lady Shao. Fond of poetry and calligraphy, he refused to engage in many of the other leisure pursuits of his peers and indulged himself instead in artistic and literary pastimes. Lady Shao, the future emperor's grandmother, had been sold by her father to the eunuch intendant of Hangchow, who trained her to write and recite T'ang dynasty poetry and then presented her as a gift to the Ch'eng-hua emperor. At the time of her grandson's accession in 1521, she was a blind old woman living in retirement in the imperial laundry, a compound outside the Imperial City set aside for retired or disgraced palace women. The future emperor's mother, née Chiang (1477–1538), was the daughter of an officer in the Peking guard. Wed to the prince in 1492, she accompanied him to his estate in An-lu in 1494.¹

Historians of the reign had to note that the future emperor's birth was attended by the extraordinary and auspicious signs that marked such important people. They wrote, for example, that in the year of his birth the

¹ Chu Hou-ts'ung is generally referred to either by his reign title, as the Chia-ching emperor, or by his posthumous honorific temple name, Shih-tsung. The reign title alludes to a passage in the *Book of documents*. The Duke of Chou (the younger brother of King Wu [r. 1027–1025 B.C.], the founder of the Chou dynasty), in his "Admonition against luxurious ease," cited the example of the Shang-Yin ruler Wu Ting (r. 1324–1266 B.C.): "He did not dare to indulge in useless and easy ways, but admirably and tranquilly presided over the empire of Yin, till in all its states, great and small, there was not a single murmur." The reign title comes from the line "but admirably (*chia*) and tranquilly (*ching*) presided over the empire of Yin," which might also be rendered, "He made the empire of Yin admirable and tranquil." The phrase was chosen both to criticize the conditions that had prevailed during the preceding reign and to characterize the expectations of the new emperor and his court. See James Legge, trans., *The Chinese classics* (1870; 2nd ed., Oxford, 1893; rpt. Hong Kong, 1960; rpt. Taipei, 1969), III, pp. 466–67.

Yellow River remained clear for five days and that roseate clouds filled the skies, because such portents marked the birth of a legitimate emperor.

The boy was considered remarkable. When he was very young, his father taught him to recite T'ang dynasty poetry, and he could often repeat the poems accurately after several attempts. When he was slightly older, he began a classical education under his father's direct supervision. Keen to learn, he proved himself an apt and diligent pupil.²

The boy and his father seem to have been close. Aside from personally tutoring his only son, the prince let him take part in all the customary rituals and ceremonials at his own princely court and took him to the imperial court in Peking when he went there to pay his respects to the throne. Thus the future emperor became familiar with ritual and ceremonial behavior as a boy, and this knowledge served him well during the first years of his reign.

When the prince fell ill and died in July 1519, his son took over the administration of the household. The palace chamberlain, Yüan Tsung-kao (1453–1521), assisted him in this task and later accompanied him to Peking. Yüan had served the prince's family with distinction since 1491 and had proved himself a just and competent administrator. During the first months of the reign, he became the new emperor's most trusted advisor and confidant.

In October 1520, on his return from Nanking to Peking, the Cheng-te emperor almost drowned in a boating accident; his health steadily worsened thereafter. By the spring of 1521 he was no longer able to attend court audiences, and his physicians reported that he was incurable. He had neither produced an heir nor had he adopted one; when he died on 19 April 1521, he left no explicit instructions about the succession. Everything was put into the hands of his grand secretaries.

Yang T'ing-ho, the chief grand secretary, had anticipated the difficulties that would follow on the emperor's death and had made plans to meet them. Five days before the emperor died, a special edict was issued in the emperor's name that ordered the emperor's young cousin, Chu Hou-ts'ung, to cut short the mourning period for his father and to assume his title, Prince Hsien of Hsing. On the day of the emperor's death, Yang instructed the eunuch directors who ran the Directorate of Ceremonial to request an edict from the empress-dowager naming this thirteen-year-old boy the legitimate successor to the deceased emperor. He told the directors that according to a provision in the *Ancestral injunctions*, which stated "when the elder brother

² For a specimen of the emperor's calligraphy written in 1524, when he was sixteen years old, see *Ming Tai-tsu Shib-tung yü pi* (Shanghai, n.d.).

dies, the younger brother shall succeed him," the succession should properly pass to this prince, who was the only son of the Hung-chih emperor's (r. 1488–1505) younger brother and the deceased emperor's cousin. He did not point out that the provision applied only to the sons of a principal consort, or that any contrary interpretation was punishable by beheading. He wanted to put this young boy on the throne, and he found a way to do it.³

Grand secretary Yang was under great pressure at this time. An uncertain succession was one of the greatest threats to dynastic stability, and no heir apparent or successor had been designated by the deceased emperor. In addition, General Chiang Pin (d. 1521), one of the deceased emperor's favorites, was stationed in the capital with troops from the border garrisons under his command, and Yang feared that he might try to stage a coup at any time. The court itself was packed with self-serving favorites of the deceased emperor, nervous men anxious to preserve their positions. In the streets of Peking people passed along rumors of an imminent uprising. Under these circumstances, the drafting of a succession edict seemed a minor affair, and Yang did not devote much time or thought to it. Chu Hou-ts'ung's succession was only one maneuver in his larger effort to undercut the power of the deceased emperor's favorites.⁴

The succession edict simply said that the eldest son of Prince Hsien of Hsing was ". . . to come to the capital and succeed to the imperial throne."⁵ No details of the arrangement were put forth, for in Yang's mind only one arrangement was possible. Neither the boy nor his family had any legitimate claim on the throne. His father had been the son of a concubine who had never been elevated to the rank of imperial consort, and sons of such concubines and their descendants could not carry on the imperial line in their own right. Consequently, Yang assumed that as emperor the boy would continue the line in the role of the deceased emperor's adoptive younger brother; that he would thus for ceremonial and ritual purposes treat his deceased uncle, the Hung-chih emperor, and his aunt, the empress dowager Chang, as his father and mother; and that he would likewise treat

3 The passage in the *Ancestral injunctions*, which appears in a section prescribing the proper behavior of imperial princes, reads: "Whenever there is no heir apparent at court, then the younger brother must succeed the elder brother. One born of a legitimate mother [a principal consort or empress] must be installed; one born of a mother other than the legitimate one [a secondary consort], even though he be the eldest, cannot be installed. Should a treacherous minister reject the legitimate one to install one who is not legitimate, the one who is not the legitimate [son] must keep his place and not respond. He must send a message saying that the legitimate one should be installed and work to bring the legitimate ruler to the throne. The court shall behead the treacherous minister at once. [The princes] shall [then] visit the court every third year as prescribed above." This passage clearly refers to brothers born of the same mother, not to half-brothers or to cousins. See Ming T'ai-tsu, *Huang Ming tsu hün* (1395; rpt. in *Ming ch'ao k'ai kuo wen hsien*, Taipei, 1966), III, pp. 1633–34.

4 See "The Cheng-te reign," chapter 7 of this volume, pp. 436–39.

5 *Ming shih lu*, *Wu-tsung shih lu* (1525; rpt. Taipei, 1961–66), p. 3681. The wording in the empress dowager's edict was the same.

his natural father and mother as his aunt and uncle. Although this arrangement was common in ordinary and imperial families, the new emperor and his family assumed no such thing, for the edict said nothing about such arrangements. They argued that the boy had never been invested as an heir apparent and that he had no ritual obligations of that sort to the deceased monarch or his line. He had been ordered to ascend the throne and to continue the succession, and nothing more. In sum, they construed the succession edict in a manner altogether contrary to the grand secretary's intent, and this clash of interests became evident on the day the new sovereign arrived outside the gates of Peking.

On 21 April 1521, two days after the Cheng-te emperor's death, a delegation comprised of representatives from the Directorate of Ceremonial, the nobility, the imperial family, the grand secretariat, and the imperial court departed for An-lu in Hu-kuang province. The young prince met them on their arrival, accepted the empress dowager's edict, ascended the throne of his audience palace, and received the homage of these officials as their new emperor. On 7 May 1521 a party of about forty people set out from An-lu with the emperor and traveled without interruption for twenty days. During the progress to Peking, the young emperor behaved admirably, refusing the gifts of officials and nobles, living and eating frugally, and overlooking the discomforts of his journey.

Grand secretary Yang had instructed the officials in charge of ritual to receive the boy with the rituals proper for an heir apparent, rather than those proper for an emperor. When the emperor was informed of these arrangements at Liang-hsiang, just southwest of Peking, his chamberlain advised him to disregard the grand secretary, to enter the imperial capital through its main ceremonial gates as an emperor would, to ascend the throne in the central audience palace, and to receive the respects of his court there. On the evening of 26 May 1521 the emperor reached his temporary quarters just outside the gates to Peking, and that night he issued his own protocols for the enthronement. He entered the palace early in the morning of 27 May and accepted the congratulations of his court at a predawn audience. The new emperor had won his contest with the grand secretaries, the first in a long struggle for power, authority, and legitimacy.

THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

The debate on imperial rituals

On 1 June 1521, the fifth day after his accession, the emperor ordered the responsible officials in the Ministry of Rites to recommend the imperial rituals and titles proper for his father. Grand secretary Yang instructed the

minister of rites to base his response on two precedents: the succession of the Han Prince of Ting-t'ao and the Sung Prince of P'u. He added that anyone who disagreed with him was a traitor and should be executed.

Yang T'ing-ho had selected two curious and controversial cases. Two years before the Han emperor Ch'eng-ti (r. 32–7 B.C.) died in 7 B.C., he arranged to have his nephew, the Prince of Ting-t'ao, succeed him and carry on his line. However, as soon as this boy came to power, he began to confer titles, stipends, and other favors on his family members, over the objections of the deceased emperor's relatives. In 4 B.C., at the request of two courtiers, the emperor elevated his forebears to an even higher status and proposed to erect a family ancestral temple, a suggestion that met with overwhelming approval. This was in some respects an unlikely precedent to set before a ruler bent on honoring his natural parents, for it only demonstrated that in the end the emperor could have his way.

Chao Shu, who reigned as the emperor Ying-tsung (r. 1064–67), was the thirteenth son of the Prince of P'u and a distant descendant of the first Sung emperor. In 1036 the emperor Jen-tsung (r. 1023–63), who had no male offspring, adopted this boy and subsequently installed him as the heir apparent. As soon as he came to the throne in 1064, court discussion about his parents' titles began. For two years high officials at court engaged in bitter debates on this issue. One group held that the emperor ought to honor his parents with titles and continue to refer to them as his parents; the other that he should acknowledge only his predecessor's line. This debate soon degenerated into a vituperative factional dispute, which largely centered on the proper limits of imperial authority. In the end the emperor and his counsellors had their way; the emperor acknowledged his natural parents and instituted sacrifices for them. However, later Sung thinkers strongly objected to this arrangement and wrote contrary opinions. The philosopher Ch'eng I (1033–1107) drafted the most influential contrary opinion, and grand secretary Yang appended Ch'eng's discussion of the case when he forwarded this precedent to the emperor for his consideration.⁶

The debate at the Ming court focused on the distinction between *t'ung*, legitimate succession in the dynastic line, and *ssu*, blood line succession (or

6 Cheng I wrote: "One who becomes an heir [should] call those whose heir he is father and mother; and he [should] call those who gave him life uncle-father and aunt-mother. This is the proper order [of relations] among the living. However, the attitude towards those who gave life [should be] most respectful and magnanimous. It is fitting to establish for them separate titles like 'Imperial Uncle-father, Prince of X'. Then the legitimate line of succession is clear, and those who gave life are honored in the highest degree." *Ming shih lu, Shih-tsung shih lu* (1577; rpt. Taipei, 1961–66), pp. 80–81. For a discussion of Cheng I's argument in the context of Sung history, see Liu Tzu-chien (James T. C. Liu), *Ou-yang Hsiu ti chih hsüeh yü t'ung cheng* (Kowloon, Hong Kong, 1963), pp. 235 ff.

succession by adoption) in clan law. The position advocated by the grand secretaries held that he who succeeds a man should be a son to him, a fundamental tenet of clan law. Thus, the young Chia-ching emperor was urged to treat his aunt and uncle as his father and mother, and vice versa. However, the opposition pointed out that in this case the emperor had never been adopted or installed as heir apparent by his predecessor, and that there was a clear distinction between legitimate succession in a ruling dynasty and the conventional practices of clan law, which had never in the past regulated the order and terms of imperial succession.

The history of Ming dynastic succession had already been marred by usurpations and a series of revolts, the last of which took place in 1519, when the Prince of Ning tried to depose the Cheng-te emperor. The debate on proper imperial rituals revolved around an unvoiced anxiety: that the Chia-ching emperor sought to establish ritual norms which set dangerous precedents. Those norms sanctioned the establishment of a collateral branch of the imperial family, a branch that was otherwise ineligible, in the legitimate order of succession. They thereby raised an aura of legitimacy where none had been before. For the grand secretaries, the Prince of Ning's revolt in 1519 remained a disquieting memory. Filiality and the prerogative of the throne were not at issue; the issue was the stability of the imperial line.

Yet after the emperor had ascended the throne, this weighty matter of state became moot. The majority of the officials had accepted the emperor and wished neither to depose him nor to accept his abdication; and the grand secretaries could never raise doubts about his suitability or legitimacy after the fact, for they had selected him. Since he could not be forced to accept the position of the grand secretaries, and since he could not be removed from his position, the grand secretaries could only pressure and persuade him to accept their point of view. Until he was forced out of office in 1524, grand secretary Yang used every means at his disposal to press his views on both the court and the emperor. But in this boy and his mother, the grand secretary met his match.

Yang T'ing-ho used this issue to consolidate his own power at court, to extend the authority of the grand secretaries, and to enhance the prestige of the Hanlin Academy and its members. He demanded the support of his clients, and he ruthlessly eliminated those in high office who opposed him. In May 1521 he had his most powerful enemy, Wang Ch'ung (1459–1532), the minister of personnel, cashiered, imprisoned, and banished to the remote western frontier of the empire. The same policy was applied to hundreds of other officials and functionaries in lesser degree. In particular, he eliminated anyone who opposed his position on imperial ritual.

The emperor was vexed by Yang's presumption, but his hands were tied. He raised the issue again in June 1521, during the palace examination, when he set an essay topic to elicit some support for his position: "What posthumous honors are proper for one's natural parents?"⁷ However, none of the essayists dared to contradict the grand secretaries' position. In the course of the next several months, the Ministry of Rites on three occasions submitted its recommendations on imperial rituals, and on each occasion the emperor objected to them.

Finally, after three months of stalemate, the emperor received a proposal that appealed to him. The author, Chang Ts'ung (later known as Chang Fu-ching, 1475–1539), had come to Peking to sit for the metropolitan examination, which he passed at forty-six after seven failures. Shortly after the grand secretaries had announced their position, Chang told a friend of his in the Ministry of Rites that the precedents chosen did not apply to the emperor's case, and he suggested that his friend circulate this position among his colleagues. Chang's friend was immediately transferred to a post in Nanking, and Chang decided to keep quiet. However, he gradually changed his mind when he saw that the emperor continued to reject the grand secretaries' position.

In August 1521 Chang made his opinions known to the emperor. He argued that the text of the posthumous edict referred only to the eldest son of Prince Hsien of Hsing, and not to any of the arrangements proposed by Yang T'ing-ho. The Han and Sung successions offered no historical analogies on which to base precedents, for in both cases the successor had been raised in the imperial palace and only then installed as heir apparent. The emperor forwarded Chang's memorandum to grand secretary Yang, who returned it with the remark: "What would a student know about affairs of state?"⁸ The emperor, however, saw in this argument the means to his ends. He continued to press the grand secretaries, and they continued to return his order on this matter unopened. By this time the issue had become a topic of debate at court. Several other officials voiced support for Chang's position, and by October circumstances forced the grand secretaries to relent.

On 30 April 1521, the third day after his accession, the emperor had sent a party to escort his mother from An-lu to Peking. When she arrived at T'ung-chou, just to the east of Peking, on 4 October 1521, a crisis developed. Having heard that she was to be received as a princess rather

7 Fan Shou-chi, *Huang Ming Su huang wai shih* (unpaginated manuscript: Gest Oriental Library, Princeton University), *cb.* 1.

8 Chang T'ing-yü, et al., ed., *Ming shih* (1736; rpt. Peking, 1974), p. 5037.

than as an empress, and that her son was being pressured to refer to her as his aunt, she refused to enter the capital and threatened to return to An-lu at once. When the emperor heard of this, he informed empress dowager Chang that he intended to abdicate and return to An-lu with his mother. This threat forced the grand secretaries to adopt a compromise position that had been put forth by Mao Ch'eng (1461–1523), the minister of rites. An edict was issued under the empress dowager's seal giving imperial titles to the emperor's father, mother, and grandmother. Moreover, the court was forced to accept the emperor's protocols for his mother's reception, protocols that bestowed on her the highest marks of honor and deference. Only then did she agree to enter the capital.

Empress dowager Chang, however, continued to regard the emperor's mother as an unimportant princess, receiving her with the courtesies proper for an imperial princess, her title of empress notwithstanding. Her behavior infuriated the emperor no less than it did his mother; henceforth he used every means at his disposal to humiliate and intimidate the dowager and her family.

In February 1522, on the day of the imperial sacrifice to Heaven, a fire of uncertain origin broke out in the palace compound where the emperor's mother had taken up residence. Grand secretary Yang interpreted this event as a clear sign that the imperial ancestors were displeased with the sacrificial arrangements and in particular with the new titles—fire being the element that governed all ritual matters. He forced the emperor to rescind his parents' imperial patents, at least for a time.

For Yang, the question of imperial rituals remained a minor matter. During the first years of the reign he ran the imperial administration, directing his energies to institutional and personnel reforms. Among other things, he attempted to return to the tax registers those properties seized as imperial estates during the preceding reign; to dismiss thousands of supernumerary members of the Imperial Bodyguard; to suppress heterodox teaching in imperial educational institutions; and to curb the power and influence of the eunuchs, who had arrogated to themselves many functions of the civil administration.

However, the issue of imperial rituals remained a sore point, and it only exacerbated the emperor's ill-will toward Yang and his group. When the emperor's grandmother died in December 1522, Yang proposed that only one day be set aside for her mourning period, argued about the details of her interment, and in the process further alienated himself from the emperor. All the criticism about Yang's high-handed and arrogant manner was thus borne out by the emperor's own experience.

On 30 June 1523 the emperor ordered the grand secretaries to appear

before him at a private audience. He personally instructed them to add the honorific “imperial” to the titles of his family members, and the grand secretaries could not refuse him in his presence. They protested the order as soon as they withdrew, declined to follow it, and asked in closing: “How can you continue to avoid what is right and proper [just] to indulge your own feelings?”⁹ Under Yang’s direction, the grand secretaries were in fact acting like prime ministers, dictating policy to the throne.

In January 1524 the emperor began to receive broader support for his position. Kuei O (d. 1530), a minor official in Nanking, collected several memorials written in support of the emperor’s position and submitted them to the throne. Among these was a memorial that had been drafted in 1522 by Hsi Shu (1461–1527), then the governor of Hu-kuang province, which he had been afraid to submit at the time. In it he attacked the grand secretaries, criticized the court for so readily accepting their directives, and fully supported the emperor’s position on imperial ritual. Hsi Shu had long been a patron of the great thinker and statesman Wang Shou-jen (1472–1529), and his opinion drew heavily on Wang’s teachings. Hsi’s patron, Yang I-ch’ing (1454–1530), the senior statesman of his day, had already taken a private stand against the grand secretaries in 1521; with this memorandum, opposition to Yang T’ing-ho became public and formal. Unable to carry out his policies or to influence the emperor, grand secretary Yang retired from office in March 1524.

During the next five months debate on this issue became very bitter. Accusations of factionalism were hurled by both sides, and plots were laid to bring an untimely death to the emperor’s supporters or to remove his opposition from office. By August 1524 the most outspoken of the emperor’s opponents had been forced out of office and replaced by men who were expected to support the emperor and his policies. These appointments were vigorously protested on various grounds, but to no avail.

On 11 August 1524 the emperor ordered the Ministry of Rites to restore his mother’s original imperial patent. This order met with immediate protest from Hanlin scholars, capital censors, and court secretaries in the opposition. The emperor ordered the Imperial Bodyguard to arrest and imprison the leaders of the protest. Furious, he berated the three remaining grand secretaries for obstructing his wishes. Mao Chi (1463–1545) thereupon announced to the court that the imperial patents would be conferred in four days.

Three days later, on 14 August, a group of over two hundred court officials refused to disperse after the morning audience and remained pros-

⁹ Fan Shou-chi, *Huang Ming Su huang wai shih*, ch. 3.

trate before the audience hall to protest the emperor's order. After the audience the emperor began to fast at the Wen-hua Palace, which was near the audience hall, and he became aware of the commotion. He sent eunuchs to disperse these officials, but they refused to leave without a written command. When that was forthcoming, they still refused to move. Just before noon the emperor demanded a list of the protesters and had the leaders thrown into the prison of the Imperial Bodyguard. At this point, a group of them began to shout and beat on the doors of the audience hall.

The emperor responded with dispatch. All the low-ranked officials were thrown into prison, and the rest were told to await sentencing. Five days later, over 180 officials were beaten at court; 17 died of their injuries, and the rest were banished. The next day the emperor set up his father's spirit tablet and conferred on him an imperial title.¹⁰

What had begun as a misunderstanding became in the course of three years a struggle for power that affected the careers of hundreds of officials and the conduct of the entire government. The conflict between Yang T'ing-ho and the emperor became a contest between two hostile camps in the bureaucracy as well. The attack against the grand secretaries was led by Yang I-ch'ing and Hsi Shu, two influential officials who had risen to power in the provinces. They sought to undermine the inordinate power that Yang T'ing-ho and his Hanlin associates had come to hold. For them, the debate on imperial rituals served another cause.

This controversy also had ramifications that went beyond court politics. As the debate developed, arguments from both sides became more sophisticated, more articulate, and more complex. The history of court practice as recorded in official documents became one focus of attention. This in time fostered an interest in the study of historical precedents (*chang ku*) and in the history of the dynasty generally.

The debates also aroused interest in philology and textual analysis that foreshadowed the rigorous, critical scholarship of late Ming and Ch'ing times, for at many points contention centered on the history of the ritual use of words and on the meaning of archaic ceremonies and traditions described in the classical literature. The interpretation of these texts came to rest on two contending sets of philosophical assumptions, one set associated with the Confucian tradition of interpretation fostered by Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi in the twelfth century (which the Ming court had accepted as the orthodox tradition of interpretation), the other with the contemporary

¹⁰ For a fuller account of these events see Carney T. Fisher, *The great ritual controversy in Ming China* (Ann Arbor, 1978), and Nakayama Hachirō, "Futatabi Kasei-chō no tairi mondai no hattan ni tsuite," in *Shimizu hakushi tsuitō kinan Mindaishi ronsō* (Tokyo, 1962), pp. 37–84.

school of interpretation led by Wang Shou-jen (1472–1529). Because textual interpretation and philosophy were so intimately bound up, this exchange became at one level a critique of the conservative tradition of the Hanlin Academy—the Ch'eng-Chu tradition—a critique drawn from the teaching of Wang Shou-jen and articulated by his many disciples. The debate at court was followed in all its detail by officials everywhere. Thus Wang's teachings became known throughout the empire in a very short time and remained a subject of great interest and contention into the seventeenth century.

Finally, the resolution of the debate marked a resurgence of despotic imperial authority. It had become customary for Ming emperors to discuss policy with the grand secretaries and only then to implement it. When grand secretary Mao Chi submitted his resignation in August 1524, he criticized the emperor's style of ruling:

Recently, during the debates on imperial ritual, we have been summoned to private audiences and given orders from the Directorate of Ceremonial. None of this bears any semblance of consultation. Everything is by imperial decree, without any advice requested. Who can approve or disapprove? As for flogging court officials by the hundreds, such a thing has never occurred in the history of the dynasty; and all this takes place by your direct command. Your officials play no part in it.¹¹

He was not being completely candid. In 1519 the Cheng-te emperor had over a hundred officials beaten because they opposed his plans to travel in the south, and he had rarely discussed anything with his grand secretaries. Mao Chi's remarks referred to conditions that had prevailed during the reign of the Chia-ching emperor's uncle, the Hung-chih emperor (r. 1488–1505), and to a lesser degree during the reigns of earlier emperors, most of whom had treated high civil officials with some regard.

The Chia-ching emperor continued to rule in the brutal and despotic style of his cousin. He overrode all counsel and precedent to get what he wanted; he tolerated no interference, no criticism of his person or his policies. His officials retained their positions so long as they carried out his will without question and quickly lost them when they did not or could not.

The Ta-t'ung revolt of 1524

Control over the border garrisons had been deteriorating since the early sixteenth century. When disorders broke out, the court pursued a policy of appeasement that mollified the soldiers for a time, but discipline grew lax

¹¹ *MS*, p. 5046.

and the troops more contumacious. In 1510 the new governor of Ningsia was murdered by disgruntled troops, and the governor of Kansu province met the same fate in 1521. When no serious retribution was forthcoming, it became evident that the court could not or would not interfere in these matters, and that knowledge gave rise to a dangerous notion among the troops—that they had license to kill.¹²

In August 1524 soldiers in the Ta-t'ung garrison murdered the governor of Ta-t'ung and the deputy commander of the garrison, set fire to a number of official buildings, and then fled the city. All this came about because the governor had tried to transfer 2,500 troops to five new outposts located about 30 miles north of the city. The troops refused to move, whereupon the governor ordered his bodyguard to man the outposts. Officers in the bodyguard were particularly indolent and very comfortably settled in the city. When they refused to follow orders, the deputy commander had them whipped. Incited to riot by their officers, the garrison troops rushed the commandant's headquarters, murdered him, and dismembered his body; they then went after the governor in the same fashion. The incident was reported at court, a perfunctory investigation was ordered, and new officials were appointed to the vacant posts. But the trouble did not end there.

The court had been divided for some time on the issue of border policy. One position held that the administration of the borders should be lenient and passive, the other that the court should take an active and authoritarian interest in the disposition of all border affairs. The first group argued that campaigns were costly and all too often ineffectual. Military force at best intimidated the troublesome elements in the army, and then only for a time, while the civilian population suffered endless requisitions. When the security of the metropolitan area was not directly threatened, this group advocated pacification through gifts and pardons. The other group held that such actions tarnished the authority and prestige of the court and ultimately led to the deterioration of the entire defense system. Military men and their patrons also promoted aggressive policies and punitive expeditions in part because such policies afforded them a chance for promotion and reward.

The official in charge of this investigation favored leniency. The two senior grand secretaries took contrary positions. The emperor himself held that the governor had been responsible for the disturbance; he wished only to arrest the ringleaders and to pardon the soldiers who had taken part in

¹² The 1510 uprising came about as a result of the eunuch Liu Chin's attempts to draw more revenue from the military fields controlled by these garrisons. See "The Cheng-te reign," chapter 7 of this volume, pp. 409–12.

the insurrection. It happened that a large campaign army en route from Peking to Kan-chou was approaching Ta-t'ung, and this was mistaken for a punitive expedition. Rebellious soldiers again took over the city and shut its gates. Such behavior, which so clearly challenged the authority of the court, could not go unchecked, so a detachment of 3,000 cavalry from the Imperial Bodyguard was dispatched to settle matters at Ta-t'ung. Before these troops arrived, the soldiers had killed the local magistrate, and shortly after they surrounded the residence of the Prince of Tai, who was forced to flee to the neighboring garrison at Hsüan-fu for protection.

When he neared Ta-t'ung, the cavalry commander made covert plans to capture the ringleaders in the insurrection, but he met with limited success. A number of the rebel leaders escaped and later returned to retaliate for the arrest of their comrades by burning and looting official buildings. The cavalry commander then petitioned for the execution of all who had aided and abetted the ringleaders. Faced with impending disgrace, the official in charge of the investigation finally trapped and executed the remaining rebel leaders in April 1525, and the matter was considered settled.¹³

The garrison at Ta-t'ung remained troublesome. In 1533 another major uprising took place, during which the commandant of the garrison was killed, and in 1545 an unsuccessful coup involving members of the imperial family was fomented there. The Mongols were involved in both cases, either as potential allies or as instigators, and they often used defectors from the garrison as spies or guides behind the Ming line of defense. Irregular trade between the officers and soldiers from the garrison and various Mongol chiefs made control even more difficult, since people were constantly passing back and forth through the defense lines, exchanging information as well as goods. But more serious trouble in the far west precluded any further attention to the problems at Ta-t'ung.¹⁴

In 1513 Mañšür (1484/5–1545/6), the sultan of Turfan, had occupied Hami, a strategic oasis city at the eastern terminus of the Silk Road. The Chinese had controlled this city since the late fourteenth century and had sent armies to protect it in the late fifteenth century, but on this occasion the court merely sent a civil official to negotiate the return of the imperial seals of the city. The negotiations met with no success. Mañšür continued to raid and plunder Chinese territory farther to the east. Sayyid Husain, Mañšür's agent at the imperial court, finally arranged a settlement that left Mañšür in control of Hami and allowed him to trade at the Ming court as well.

13 The five outposts were finally built and garrisoned in 1539, but abandoned again shortly thereafter in 1540. See L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, ed., *Dictionary of Ming biography* (New York and London, 1976), sv. Liang Chen.

14 See Henry Seruys, "Chinese in Southern Mongolia during the sixteenth century," *Monumenta Serica*, 18 (1959), pp. 1–95.

In 1521 Sayyid Ḥusain was executed for treason, and Maṣṣūr's envoys were detained in Peking. At Yang T'ing-ho's request, the emperor had approved a hostile policy toward Turfan. This led in turn to further raids, which culminated in an attack on Kan-chou in 1524. Ming armies comprised largely of Mongol levies were sent to counter this, and they met with some success. But sporadic fighting continued until 1528, when Maṣṣūr abandoned his large-scale campaigns and contented himself with raiding. He had secured control of Hami, and the Ming court acknowledged his power in the region. By that time the political climate at court had changed, and the policies Yang T'ing-ho had advocated six years earlier came under attack.¹⁵

The case of Li Fu-ta

Chang Ts'ung and Kuei O, who had now become the emperor's closest advisors, had been trying for years to eliminate Yang T'ing-ho's partisans in the bureaucracy. In 1527 the struggle came to a head during a series of attacks and purges. The confrontation began in the summer of 1526 over a case of treason.

In 1526 Kuei's patron, the marquis Kuo Hsün (1475–1542), was implicated in a case of treason by certain officials who opposed the emperor's policies and appointees. This was a curious case; even the name of the man accused was not certain. He was said to be a man named Li Fu-ta, or Li Wu, or Chang Yin. According to testimony taken over forty years later in 1569, a certain Li had rebelled, been exiled, escaped, and rebelled again in 1512. This man was then said to have surfaced in 1526 under another alias as an officer in the T'ai-yüan guard. He had been noticed by Kuo Hsün because one of his sons had been taken by the marquis as a catamite. But his version of the case, reconstructed years after the fact on the basis of new testimony, is questionable. The court inquisition focused on whether the man in Kuo Hsün's household was in fact the rebel who had most recently been defeated in 1512.

The case first came to the emperor's attention in August 1526. It seems that the man accused had at one point been taken into the household of the marquis, who prized his skill in concocting aphrodisiacs. Later, when he returned to his home, he was identified by an enemy as a rebel who had led an uprising in Shansi and as a notorious sorcerer. When this man appeared before the local authorities, he was cleared of these charges and his accuser

¹⁵ For information on Ming relations with the kingdoms of Central Asia during this period, see Paul Pelliot, "Le Ḥōja et le Sayyid Ḥusain de l'histoire des Ming," *T'oung Pao*, Series 2, 38 (1948), pp. 81–292.

was exiled. But his son, who was then in Peking, had meanwhile begged the marquis to petition the censor in charge of the case to drop it. The censor refused and instead added Kuo's name to the indictment.

After his sons had been arrested, the man gave himself up to the authorities. He was charged with treason, and the same charge was later leveled against Kuo Hsün. In September 1526 Kuo was further accused of misappropriating large amounts of silver and grain destined for the capital garrisons. The emperor only ordered him to address the charge of treason, whereupon Kuo noted that he had been repeatedly accused of complicity in various cases by the judicial authorities because he had supported the emperor during the first years of the reign.

When the case was moved to Peking for review in April 1527, the Ministry of Justice changed the indictment to practicing sorcery, which still carried a mandatory penalty of beheading for all co-conspirators. But the emperor grew suspicious after the indictment had been changed, and he finally took Kuo's side. In October 1527 he had all the officials involved with the case arrested, and he ordered his advisors to review it again. At his behest, they dismissed the charges against the accused and initiated an investigation of those officials at court who had supported the indictment. Ten officials were beaten to death and over forty were banished to frontier posts. When it was over, the Censorate and the ministries had been purged of officials who had associated with Yang T'ing-ho and the Hanlin clique.

The facts of the case were never clear. The final verdict held that the man who had been accused was in fact one Chang Yin and that the original testimony against him had been contradictory, claiming that he was both a sorcerer named Li Wu and a rebel named Li Fu-ta, when he was actually just an unregistered artisan who had fled from his native district. And there were other discrepancies in the details about ages and dates. The emperor was convinced that court officials had colluded to attack Kuo Hsün, and there was evidence to bear out his conviction. He was also concerned that there was a faction in the bureaucracy opposed to him and his partisans, and he was intent on destroying it. In the end this case had little to do with a man accused of treason; it was an attack on the emperor's partisans by the Hanlin clique in the government, and it ended in disaster for them.¹⁶

¹⁶ The case was reviewed again in 1569, when new testimony was presented, and the verdict was overturned. This was done primarily to allow the officials who had been disgraced in 1527 to regain their offices, stipends, and privileges, posthumously or otherwise. Historians writing in the sixteenth century disagreed about the significance of this new testimony, some holding that it cleared up the matter once and for all, others that it was not reliable, and others that the details of the case could never be fully known. Cf. *DMB*, p. 68.

The emperor then turned to the Hanlin Academy itself. Chang Ts'ung carried out this purge with a vengeance. He had suffered insults and humiliations at the hands of the Hanlin scholars since 1524, when he was made chancellor of the academy. Even the most lowly members of the academy declined to address him; he was treated like an outcast.

In November 1527 he struck back. He suggested a review of Hanlin officials; those who were deemed unsatisfactory received provincial assignments. Over twenty officials were demoted, and all the Hanlin bachelors, the most junior members of the academy, received appointments as magistrates or clerks in the ministries. The Hanlin Academy was restaffed with capital officials who had no previous connection to it, while the selection of scholars was broadened to include high officials outside the academy. These arrangements were effected to preclude the rise of another Hanlin faction. Appointments to the academy were no longer to be confined to its personnel or controlled by its officials.¹⁷

Meanwhile Chang and Kuei O schemed to gain control of the grand secretariat. They particularly disliked Fei Hung (1468–1535), the chief grand secretary, who disdained them and kept them from taking part in the affairs of the inner court. To counterbalance Fei's influence, they engineered Yang I-ch'ing's return. Since Yang had seniority, he replaced Fei as chief grand secretary. At first Yang was willing to defer to them, and through him they gained more influence among the grand secretaries. In December 1526 they began to slander Fei before the emperor, but the emperor liked Fei and paid no attention to their remarks. However, they continued to attack him, and Fei Hung finally left office in March 1527. Six months later, Chang Ts'ung became a grand secretary, and in March 1529 Kuei O received the same appointment.

Soon after Chang got into the grand secretariat, he set in motion the final purge against Yang T'ing-ho and his partisans. This purge began late in 1527 with the arrest of Ch'en Chiu-ch'ou, whom Yang had appointed to oversee western border affairs. Over forty officials were implicated in the case. Ch'en had reported that Manşūr died in battle in 1523. When it became clear that he was still alive, Kuei O accused Ch'en of falsely claiming credit for Manşūr's death. This led the emperor to suspect collusion among all high officials with jurisdiction over border affairs. Ch'en was banished to a frontier outpost; the rest of the officials involved were dismissed from office. Only Yang T'ing-ho still remained untouched.

¹⁷ In 1529 some Hanlin bachelors (*shu chi shih*) were selected for training in the academy because grand secretary Yang I-ch'ing had complained that there were not enough amanuenses in the drafting offices of the grand secretariat, and after 1532 they were once more regularly assigned to duties in the grand secretariat.

In June 1528 the emperor punished all the officials who had opposed him in the court debates on imperial rituals. Yang T'ing-ho was formally condemned to death, but the emperor commuted his sentence; he was stripped of his rank and privileges and reduced to the status of a commoner. His eldest son, Yang Shen (1488–1559), had already been banished to a remote frontier outpost in Yunnan, where he remained for the rest of his life. All the senior court officials involved lost their positions, and all the junior officials were stripped of their rank and reduced to the status of commoners. Their sentences were never commuted. In every subsequent general amnesty the emperor particularly excepted these officials, and anyone who spoke on their behalf was summarily punished.¹⁸

Following this final phase of the purge, the debate on imperial policy toward Turfan began anew. Late in 1528 Ilan, one of Manşūr's generals, requested asylum in Ming territory, and his request was granted. Manşūr offered to return the city of Hami if the court would agree to return Ilan to him for punishment. At the same time he asked to resume trade, which had stopped in 1524 when he invaded Kan-chou. Wang Ch'ung, once again the minister of war in charge of the western borders, sought to restore trade, and he was supported by the emperor's favorites, Chang Ts'ung and Kuei O. His opposition argued that leniency and forgiveness without a formal apology could only increase the arrogance of these western peoples and lead to further trouble. Wang countered that the Mongol hordes had massed to attack the northern frontiers. Under the circumstances, he felt that it would be wise to settle matters on the western borders at once. Although the emperor suspected Manşūr's intentions, he was finally persuaded to restore his trading privileges. As a result warfare on the western frontier subsided somewhat and the court was free to deal with the Mongols, who began to raid along the northern frontiers more often after 1528.

During 1528 and 1529, the grand secretaries continued to struggle for power. Yang I-ch'ing, the chief grand secretary, refused to follow Chang Ts'ung's directions on every issue, and a rift developed between them. Chang and Kuei were accused of abusing their authority. In September 1529 both men were dismissed from office, but their partisans at court continued to attack Yang. Huo T'ao (1487–1540) accused Yang of accepting bribes from eunuchs he had recommended for appointments in the imperial household and said that he had colluded with court officials to

¹⁸ For example, officials who had opposed the emperor in the ritual controversy were specifically excluded from the general amnesty proclaimed on 13 September 1533 in honor of the birth of the emperor's first son.

lodge false charges against Kuei O. When these allegations were borne out Chang and Kuei were reinstated, and Yang was allowed to retire.

For a few months in 1530 Chang and Kuei controlled the grand secretariat, but their triumph was short-lived. During the bitter struggles for power, Kuei O had alienated his colleagues and had lost both the emperor's trust and his own taste for politics. In February 1531 he retired from office and died in the following year. When Chang Ts'ung declined to carry out various reforms in court ceremony for the emperor, the emperor quickly found someone who would. After 1531 he lost the emperor's favor to Hsia Yen (1482–1548). However, he remained in office intermittently until 1535, when he retired on the grounds of poor health, and was still able to influence court policy.

Changes in imperial ritual

Although the emperor put an end to all discussion about his parents' titles in 1524, discussion about rituals for them continued. The emperor, now in his late teens, sought by various schemes to enhance his father's status. In the spring of 1524 he proposed to construct a temple for his father's spirit tablet. This idea had first been put forward in 1522, when a student in the National University suggested that such a temple should be built in Peking. In 1525, responding to the emperor's proposal, the same man suggested that a temple for the emperor's father should be built in the Ancestral Temple compound. On both occasions the emperor found no support at all for the proposals. When he pressed the issue in 1525, the Ministry of Rites suggested as a compromise that a separate temple for his father should be built adjacent to the Ancestral Temple, and this suggestion met with his approval. By the summer of 1525 the temple was under construction. The Ministry of Rites did not even try to find a legitimate precedent to support this proposal; the one selected did not pertain and was for appearance's sake only.

In May 1525 the emperor threatened to decide himself on a petition to place his father's spirit tablet in the Ancestral Temple, even though the whole court objected to this. Finding no support at all, he turned to another scheme. In October he insisted on changing the entrance to his father's temple, which had just been completed. He wanted to enter and exit through the main gate of the Ancestral Temple compound rather than through a side entrance. In November 1526 he ordered that the sacrifices at his father's temple be conducted on the same day as the sacrifices in the Ancestral Temple. Each time he had his way. In minor matters the court appeased him, but on the issue of placing his father's spirit tablet in the

Ancestral Temple opinion was firmly against him. He let the matter rest and turned his attention instead to other court ceremonies and rituals.

Between 1527 and 1531 he carried out every imperial ritual in person, often accompanied by the empress. At first grand secretary Chang Ts'ung kept him interested in harmless details of court ceremony. In 1528 the emperor republished and distributed an illustrated handbook on proper official attire, and in 1529 he changed the formal attire of the court. However, in 1530 he suggested restructuring the major imperial rituals. Grand secretary Chang and other officials who had earlier supported him were reluctant to carry out his proposals and recommended against them. The emperor insisted on further discussion and found a spokesman at court in Hsia Yen. Hsia rationalized the emperor's grand scheme as part of a dynastic restoration and endorsed it. Huo T'ao, who had earlier supported the emperor, continued to object, criticizing Hsia on several points. Hsia refuted these objections and again endorsed the emperor's proposal.

On 6 April 1530 the emperor praised Hsia's opinions and ordered him to report directly to the throne on court affairs. On 7 April he had Huo T'ao arrested. On 8 April the Ministry of Rites reported on the consensus of court opinion: 192 officials favored some form of separate sacrifices; 206 opposed them; and 198 had no opinion at all. The emperor forthwith approved Hsia's proposal for four separate sacrifices to Heaven, Earth, the sun, and the moon, and ordered the ministers involved to consult with Hsia about the details.

In December 1530 the emperor conducted the first sacrifice to Heaven at the new round altar in the southern suburbs, and in June 1531 the first sacrifice to Earth at the new square altar in the northern suburbs. In August 1531 Chang Ts'ung was dismissed from office. He had lost the emperor's favor by refusing to cooperate in this scheme.

In November 1530 the sacrifices and titles for Confucius (who had received the rank of prince in 738) were changed. The emperor wanted to stop using the rituals for the imperial sacrifice to Heaven in the sacrifice to Confucius, and he wanted to do away with all the marks and titles of nobility that had been conferred on Confucius and his followers. He disliked the fact that he had to bow to the image of Confucius when he conducted ceremonies at the Confucian Temple; he thought it unseemly for an emperor to kneel before a prince. Again he had his way. The sacrifices to Confucius were simplified and completely dissociated from the imperial sacrifices, and Confucius' title was rescinded. Late in 1530 he separated the sacrifice to former kings and emperors from the imperial sacrifice to Heaven and had a special temple built for this ritual. These and other changes all

raised the status of the emperor by making the imperial sacrifices different in kind from all other rituals.

The emperor stopped officiating at the sacrifice to Earth in 1532 and at the sacrifice to Heaven in 1533. During the subsequent thirty-three years of his reign, he never again took part in them. His interest in court ritual had all along been tied to schemes to make his father a legitimate emperor posthumously. In redesigning the imperial rituals he had failed to secure a place in them for his father, so he lost interest.

In September 1534 he again raised the issue of rearranging the Ancestral Temple in Peking. The Ancestral Temple in Nanking had burned down in August, and the court was subsequently ordered to discuss what should be done. Hsia Yen knew what the emperor had in mind. He proposed to reorder all the arrangements connected with the Ancestral Temple, to forego rebuilding the temple in Nanking, and to carry out all the major ancestral sacrifices in Peking.¹⁹ In the new design, each emperor was to have an individual temple. Work on the new complex began in the spring of 1535, and the nine new temples were completed in December 1536. The spirit tablet of the founding emperor and his ancestors remained in the central temple, which faced south, while the tablets of the other emperors were placed in smaller temples ranged before it, which faced east and west. In October he had changed the name of his father's temple, which still stood apart from these temples, to accord with the style used in the new Ancestral Temple complex. He now had only to get his father's tablet into the Ancestral Temple.

In July 1538, at the suggestion of a minor retired official, he revived an old ritual so that his father could officiate in a sacrifice to the Lord-on-high (Shang-ti), just as the first two emperors of the dynasty had officiated in the imperial sacrifices to Heaven and Earth. The author of this proposal was Feng Fang (cs. 1523), the son of Feng Hsi (1468–1537), who had led the court protest in August 1524 and had died in exile the previous year. Only members of the imperial lineage could officiate in such ritual offerings to Heaven. Since ancient times deceased emperors had been included in the most important sacrificial rituals as coadjutors (*p'ei*) to urge the recipient of the sacrifice to partake of the offering. This new ritual was to be carried out each autumn in every administrative district of the empire as well, where the emperor's subjects were to sacrifice to him just as he sacrificed to the supreme emperor.

In 1542 he simply replaced the imperial sacrifice at the southern altar

¹⁹ The emperor had already approved a proposal to discontinue the imperial sacrifices in Nanking in 1531, thus ensuring that henceforth imperial rituals could only be conducted in Peking under his supervision.

with this new ritual and instituted another sacrifice to the spirit of Heaven (*t'ien-shen*) which replaced the sacrifice at the northern altar. Two new palaces were built in the western park of the Imperial City for these new rituals, and henceforth he sacrificed at these palaces with his deceased father as coadjutor. By reviving such rituals, the emperor realized two of his ambitions. First, he gave his father a ritual role accorded only to deceased emperors, thereby establishing a pretext for including him in the imperial lineage; and second, he established a cult to the emperor that served to enhance his own prestige and authority throughout the empire.

Having thus insinuated his father into the imperial lineage, in October 1538 the emperor awarded him a posthumous title customarily reserved for the second or co-founding emperor of a dynasty. In order to do this, he first had to give the Yung-lo emperor a new posthumous title. By changing the Yung-lo emperor's posthumous title from T'ai-tsung to Ch'eng-tsu, he gave him the same ritual status accorded to the founding emperor of the dynasty, who also bore the posthumous title of progenitor (*tsu*). In so doing, he implicitly acknowledged that another emperor in the dynasty had ostensibly succeeded to the throne on the same basis that he had (as a younger brother replacing an older brother) and had established a collateral branch of the imperial family on the throne. By comparing himself with the Yung-lo emperor in this way he obviated all criticism of his behavior, for no one could question the Yung-lo emperor's legitimacy at that point.²⁰

As a member of the imperial lineage, his father's spirit tablet now belonged in the Ancestral Temple. The emperor had it placed in the temple of his uncle, the Hung-chih emperor, and ranked above the tablet of his cousin, the Cheng-te emperor, even though his father had in fact been the Cheng-te emperor's subject. After seventeen years he had finally made his father an emperor like all the others in the Ancestral Temple, but for one detail—his father's temple remained apart from the others.

On 30 April 1541, during a severe storm, a fire broke out in the Ancestral Temple compound, and all nine of the new Ancestral Temples were destroyed. Only the temple for the emperor's father, which stood apart, remained untouched. The stage was set for his next stratagem. In December 1543 he ordered the Ancestral Temple compound rebuilt according to the original design (which he had changed in 1535) so that all the spirit tablets, including his father's, would stand together in one temple. The new complex was finished in July 1545, and on 7 August he prescribed the arrangement of the spirit tablets. The first emperor's tablet was to be placed at the center of the temple, facing south, with the others ranked on the left and right before it,

20 Cf. "The Yung-lo reign," chapter 4 of this volume, p. 273.

facing east and west. Again he ranked his father's tablet above the Cheng-te emperor's, as if his father had actually ruled the empire before him. Now, twenty-four years after he had first raised the issue of imperial rituals, he was finally satisfied with the arrangements.

The imperial family

The emperor had three principal consorts. His first consort, née Ch'en, was selected for him by his aunt and installed as empress in 1522. The emperor treated her father, Ch'en Wan-yen (d. 1535), very well, and several court officials criticized his magnanimity. But in 1528, during a lecture on the *Book of poetry*, the empress threw a tantrum because she was jealous of two other consorts. The emperor became enraged, and the empress (who was with child) became so agitated that she aborted and died shortly afterward on 21 October.

His second consort, née Chang, the daughter of an officer in the Imperial Bodyguard, entered the palace in 1526. She indulged the emperor's fancy for elaborate court ceremonials, accompanying him everywhere. When the two empresses dowager instructed the emperor to select a new consort from among the palace ladies, he chose her. She was installed on 8 January 1529 and remained empress until she was deposed in 1534. During that time she took part in all the major court ceremonies and in January 1530 played the main role in a new ritual in honor of sericulture. A sacrificial terrace was built in the northern suburbs of Peking, and on 24 April 1530 an elaborate ritual was staged there for the first and only time. Five thousand eunuch guards lined the procession route, and five thousand more surrounded the terrace. All the imperial princesses and court ladies accompanied the empress, and a great banquet followed the ceremonies. The emperor found her deportment in this and other ceremonies very appealing.

However, the empress failed to produce an heir. In 1531, at the suggestion of grand secretary Chang Ts'ung, he chose nine special consorts, hoping thereby to increase the likelihood of offspring. Empress Chang was deposed quite suddenly in 1534, perhaps because she had tried to intercede on behalf of the emperor's aunt. She died in 1536 and was buried without ceremony.

Whereas the first two consorts were northerners from the region around Peking, the third principal consort, née Fang, was a southerner from the vicinity of Nanking. She entered the palace in 1530 and was selected as a special consort in 1531 at the suggestion of the emperor's mother. On 28 January 1534, nine days after empress Chang was deposed, she was installed as empress. She was reportedly chosen because she carried herself well, and she too catered to the emperor's delight in court ceremonial.

In 1542 she thwarted an attempt to assassinate the emperor, but in the process had his favorite concubine executed. The emperor subsequently held her responsible for his favorite's death. When her palace caught fire in 1547, he refused to permit her rescue, and she perished in the conflagration. However, in recognition of his great debt to her, he ordered elaborate rites for her burial.

Of the emperor's eight sons, only two reached maturity. His first son was born on 7 September 1533, a week before his twenty-sixth birthday, and died two months later on 27 October. His second son, Chu Tsai-huo (1536–49), was named heir apparent in 1539 at the age of three and died two days after his capping ceremony at the age of twelve. His third son, Chu Tsai-hou (1537–72), succeeded to the throne. In 1539, when the second son was installed as heir apparent, the third son became the Prince of Yü and the fourth son, Chu Tsai-tsun, became the Prince of Ching. Upon the heir's death in 1549, the Prince of Yü should have been installed as heir apparent, but the emperor put the matter off because he felt it was inauspicious. A rivalry developed between the two princes, but neither was capable of removing the other, so nothing came of it. In 1561 the Prince of Ching left Peking for his fief, where he died in 1565. However, during the 1550s the succession was openly contested in the palace, where it was common knowledge that the Prince of Ching was planning to replace his elder brother.

Relations between the emperor and the imperial relatives in Peking were strained. In particular he disliked his aunt, empress dowager Chang, who he felt had treated his mother badly in 1521 when she first arrived in Peking. In the spring of 1524 he refused her a formal audience on the occasion of her birthday, whereas several weeks earlier he had arranged elaborate ceremonies in honor of his mother's birthday. The officials who protested were arrested, and the emperor let it be known that he would not tolerate further criticism of his private life. He clearly intended to honor his mother at his aunt's expense in this and other court ceremonies.

On 15 April 1525 a fire destroyed his aunt's residential palace. She and her entourage had to move to a smaller palace while the old palace was being rebuilt. At first the emperor approved a suggestion to rebuild the palace on a smaller scale, since materials were needed for his father's temple, which was then under construction. But late in August he suggested that work on the palace be stopped, ostensibly to ease the burden on his subjects. Grand secretary Fei Hung noted that the dowager was not at ease in her quarters, but the emperor was unmoved. In October, when the minister of works suggested that several of the emperor's building projects be halted, he agreed on one condition: that work on the dowager's palace be halted as well.

In October 1533 he had her younger brother, Chang Yen-ling, put in prison. Chang had murdered a man in 1515, but had managed to have the case against him dropped through the intercession of an influential eunuch. When a guard commander who hoped to extort some money from him threatened to reopen the case, Chang had him murdered too. However, the commander's son pressed to have his father's petition submitted to the throne. The emperor saw the accusation as a means of taking revenge on his aunt. At first he wanted to have Chang charged with treason, which carried a mandatory death penalty for the entire clan. When his aunt requested an audience to beg mercy for her brother, he refused her. The charge of treason was dropped only after grand secretary Chang Ts'ung pointed out that empress dowager Chang was a member of the Chang clan and would also have to be executed. Instead, the emperor stripped Chang Yen-ling of his noble rank, sentenced him to death, and ordered that he be held in prison to await his execution.

In 1534, when an official pleaded for leniency in this case, he was arrested, tortured, beaten, stripped of his rank, and reduced to the status of a commoner. In 1536 a prisoner in the jail submitted documents in Chang's own handwriting that ridiculed the emperor, for which service his sentence was reduced. This and other accusations, all of which the emperor was inclined to believe, sealed Chang's death sentence, which was finally carried out in 1546.

In December 1537 he imprisoned her other brother, Chang Ho-ling. Chang had previously been stripped of his noble rank and made a commander in the Nanking guard. He was later falsely accused of using sorcery against the emperor, and even empress Chang was implicated in the charges. The emperor nonetheless had Chang Ho-ling arrested. He was starved to death in prison and died at the end of the month. His accusers were meanwhile banished for life to a remote frontier garrison.

In general the emperor took every chance, no matter how petty, to harass the imperial relatives. In November 1529, when the son of an imperial relative petitioned to inherit his father's rank, he responded with an edict declaring that henceforth all ranks of nobility held by imperial relatives would not be hereditary. In November he also personally intervened in a murder case in Peking and overturned the verdict so that the accused, a retainer in the household of his cousin's widow, empress Hsia, would be put to death. When empress Hsia died in February 1535, he refused to wear mourning clothes, claiming that she was not a member of his family. And when his aunt, empress dowager Chang, finally died in 1541, he buried her with the least possible ceremony.

It seems that after her brother's death in 1537 empress dowager Chang

sought to revenge herself on the emperor. When his mother died in November 1538 after taking some medicine, he believed she had been poisoned by his aunt. In 1539 he made an imperial progress to his former principedom in Hu-kuang to decide whether his mother should be buried there. On 18 March 1539, twelve days after the party had set out, a fire broke out in his temporary quarters and he almost died. None of his staff survived. He was saved by Lu Ping (1510–60), the son of a commander in his bodyguard who had come to Peking with the imperial entourage in 1522. Fires had already broken out twice before in the emperor's temporary quarters after the entourage had departed, and another fire broke out in his quarters the next day. This was no accident. Even after his aunt died in 1541, he was not safe in the Forbidden City. His short temper and harsh manner had antagonized many people, and even his concubines came to dread his visits. Many people would gladly have been rid of him, and more than one attempt may have been made on his life. In 1542 one group of palace ladies almost succeeded.

On the night of 27 November 1542, the emperor retired to the quarters of his favorite concubine to drink and rest. When he had fallen asleep the concubine and her attendants withdrew, leaving him alone in a stupor. Not long afterward a serving girl in the concubine's entourage led several palace ladies into his chambers. They took one of the silk cords holding the bed curtains, knotted it, and slipped it around his neck while stabbing at his groin with their pronged hairpins.

Then one of the ladies, seeing that he was not dead, took fright and raised an alarm. A eunuch watchman noted what was happening and rushed to empress Fang's quarters to report. She ran to the concubine's quarters and loosened the noose around her husband's neck. In their frenzy, the ladies had tied a dead knot. They were never able to pull the noose tight, and the emperor remained unconscious but alive. His physician, who had been summoned immediately, administered a strong prescription. The emperor remained unconscious for about eight hours, until midafternoon, when he finally sat up and began to spit out coagulated blood.

He still could not speak. Empress Fang issued an edict in his name ordering an immediate and gruesome death for all the women implicated in the plot, including the emperor's favorite concubine. She had been implicated by another lady who had attended the emperor on the preceding day; this lady said that his favorite must have known about the plot. By the end of the day, her testimony had become irrefutable; all the witnesses were dead.

After this assassination attempt, the emperor (now in his early thirties) withdrew completely from the formal life of the court and the Forbidden

City. He took up residence with his consorts and concubines in the Yung-shou Palace (The Palace of Everlasting Longevity) in the western park of the Imperial City and never again lived in his residential palace in the Forbidden City. He had already stopped attending routine court audiences in 1534. Outside of a small group of trusted advisors, he had no direct contact with the imperial bureaucracy. Yet he refused to relinquish any of his authority and continued to rule through this small inner circle, which came to comprise a court within the court. For the next three decades he remained obsessed with the pursuit of physical immortality through drugs, rituals, and esoteric physical regimens.

The eunuch administration

When he first arrived in Peking in 1521, the emperor filled key positions in the Imperial City with eunuchs who had served in his principedom, and he approved Yang T'ing-ho's plans to dismantle the eunuch administration of the preceding reign. Half of the eunuch treasury intendants in the capital and in the provinces were recalled in 1522, and the remainder were eliminated in 1535. In 1527 the eunuch in charge of maritime trade in Chekiang was dismissed, and in 1529 the post was abolished. In September 1530 the eunuch military intendant in Yunnan was recalled; in April 1531 the military intendant of Szechwan was dismissed for malfeasance and corruption, and seven more eunuch intendants were dismissed in July 1531. But these actions did not lessen the power of the eunuch administration. The emperor was simply removing agents of the throne who had been appointed before his accession and who were not loyal to him.

Powerful eunuchs still retained their influence and managed to secure imperial commissions. In 1526 a eunuch commissioner was dispatched to Shensi to oversee textile requisitions, and another was dispatched to Nanking in 1527, despite strong objections from the court. In January 1533 a eunuch was dispatched to Chen-ting to collect a transit tax on wood, and in 1538 all of the eunuch military intendants who had been dismissed or recalled in the early 1530s were replaced on the recommendation of Kuo Hsün, who had been bribed to bring the matter before the emperor. However, early in 1539 they were all dismissed again because high civil officials continued to object to the appointments. No other eunuch intendants were subsequently dispatched, and in this respect eunuch power in the provinces decreased.

Important eunuchs in the palace continued to increase their power throughout the reign, and gradually they came to overshadow even the grand secretaries. In 1548 or 1549 an important change took place in the

eunuch administration: the director of the Directorate of Ceremonial was put in charge of the Eastern Depot, the imperial security and surveillance agency. Prior to this the eunuch in charge of the Eastern Depot had been equal to the director of the Directorate of Ceremonial; both could submit private reports directly to the emperor, and each had to withdraw when the other reported or was questioned. Under this arrangement, the two most powerful officials in the eunuch bureaucracy kept watch on each other. After 1549 the director of the Directorate of Ceremonial held absolute power inside the eunuch bureaucracy. The Palace Army, which was established in 1552, also came under his jurisdiction.²¹

This change can also be seen in the increasing deference grand secretaries accorded to eunuchs in the Directorate of Ceremonial. In the 1520s, when Chang Ts'ung was in power, he was treated with deference by the eunuchs from the Directorate of Ceremonial. In the 1530s, when Hsia Yen was in power, these eunuchs treated him as an equal. His successor, Yen Sung (1480–1565), who remained in power during the 1540s and 1550s, actually deferred to them.

FOREIGN POLICY AND DEFENSE

Political conditions in Mongolia

For the first half of the fifteenth century, the Oirat tribes in western Mongolia controlled the steppe and imposed their policies on the Mongolian hordes, the descendants of the house of Chinggis Khagan, who lived to their south and southeast. Toward the end of the fifteenth century, after decades of internecine strife, the Mongolian hordes began to group around a new war leader, Batü Möngke (1464–1524).

Under Batü Möngke's leadership, the Mongols began to challenge the hegemony of the Oirats. The Oirat tribes had gradually extended their control over the Mongolian hordes early in the fifteenth century and reached the peak of their power and influence under Esen (d. 1455), who took for himself the title Prince of the Mongols in 1453, even though he was in no way related to the house of Chinggis. Two years earlier, in 1451, he had had the Mongolian prince Toghto Bukha driven into exile and killed for failing to name his grandson the heir apparent. During this conflict Batü Möngke's father, then an orphaned child, was taken with

21 See below, p. 477.

his mother to eastern Mongolia and placed under the protection of an Uriyangkhad commander.

Esen's plan to become prince of the Mongols failed; in 1454 he was overthrown by one of his vassals for usurping the title of prince and killed. The Mongolian succession was subsequently contested and remained unsettled until 1486 when, most other candidates having been murdered, Batü Möngke's father became a likely choice and was installed. He was murdered in 1487 and succeeded by his son, who then remained in power for the next thirty-eight years.

Between 1508 and 1510 Batü Möngke conquered the Ordos region to the west of Shansi, in the bend of the Yellow River, and in 1512 appointed his second son, Bars-bolod, *jinong* or viceroy over the peoples of that region. Two of Bars-bolod's sons, Gün-bilig (1505–42/3), who inherited the Ordos and the title of viceroy, and Altan (1507–82), who inherited the lands north of Shansi, were responsible for most of the raiding into Ming territory during the Chia-ching reign.

When Batü Möngke died in 1524, he held the allegiance of all the Mongols from the Pamirs east. His title was to pass to his grandson, who was then only twenty-one. However, Bars-bolod, the boy's uncle, attempted to usurp the throne. Another internecine conflict ensued, which resulted in the dissolution of the Mongolian confederation Batü Möngke had created. Batü Möngke's grandson continued to rule over the Eastern Mongols, and until his death in 1531, Bars-bolod exercised *de facto* control over the Ordos and the Western Mongols. When Batü Möngke grandson died in 1547, his successor was forced to move to eastern Mongolia by Altan, who then came to control all of southern Mongolia and the Ordos.²²

When Batü Möngke conquered the Ordos in 1510, he drove Ibrahim, the principal leader of the Western Mongols, into exile in the southwest, near the border of Shensi. Ibrahim then allied himself with Manşür, sultan of Turfan (the eastern capital of the Mongol-Turkic kingdom of Moghulistan), and began to plunder and raid the western part of Shensi in league with him during the 1510s and 1520s. He remained a threat to Batü Möngke, who led several unsuccessful campaigns against him. He was finally crushed by Gün-bilig in 1533.

Because the Mongols were preoccupied with internal conflicts during the first decade of the reign, their raiding was sporadic, limited for the most part to securing supplies for military campaigns. After Batü Möngke's heirs had secured the Ordos and the region north of Shansi, they began to raid into Ming territory every year, usually in the spring and early autumn. Military

22 See Hidehiro Okada, "Life of Dayan Qaghan," *Acta Asiatica*, 11 (1966), pp. 46–55.

discipline in the frontier garrisons was so lax that the commanders often could not raise an effective force to oppose the raiding parties. Raiding thus became an attractive alternative to trade, since success was virtually assured and losses were usually slight.

The border garrisons

It was under these conditions that the garrison at Ta-t'ung revolted again in October 1533. The region had last been raided only two years earlier in 1531 by a force of 60,000 Mongol cavalry, and the new garrison commander set about constructing earthworks and other fortifications to reinforce the northern perimeter of the defense area. The time limit he set for the completion of the work taxed his officers and men, who were used to doing nothing. The immediate cause of the insurrection was a trifling matter. The officers supervising the work requested a day of rest in the garrison city, and this was denied. On 24 October these officers incited their soldiers to loot the city, while they themselves killed the commandant. The rioting soldiers dispersed at dawn.

The newly appointed governor of the region was taken by surprise at this turn of events, and for lack of a better alternative he reported that the commandant had incited the troops to riot. When his report reached the court, the governor was accused of collusion with the rebel soldiers, and a debate on court policy toward the garrison began. In this case the debate was complicated by the fact that the garrison had revolted a decade earlier in 1523, and on that occasion the court had placated each soldier with three ounces of silver and a general pardon. Critics of that policy took this occasion to press a militaristic approach, and at first a military solution was approved.

The two most influential grand secretaries at court took opposing positions, largely for political rather than strategic reasons. Chang Ts'ung (who had fallen from the emperor's favor in 1532) hoped to regain his influence by proposing a successful solution to this problem. He wanted to send a viceroy at the head of an army to crush the rebels. His chief adversary, Hsia Yen, suspected that the emperor did not really favor a military solution, so he tacitly supported a vice-minister in the Ministry of Rites, who suggested a lenient approach.

The viceroy's commission enjoined him to execute the main conspirators and to pardon those who had been pressured into following them. He disregarded the intent of his commission and approached the city with the imperial forces, which began to loot and pillage in the suburbs. At this point the soldiers in the city, certain that they were marked for death, shut

the gates. The viceroy then laid siege to the city and tried without success to flood it, to storm it, to tunnel into it, to smoke out its defenders, and to trick them into surrender. The siege dragged through the winter, and by February 1534 the viceroy had no support at court. He was relieved of his command, and other officials were sent to investigate the matter, which was quickly settled. In his final edict, the emperor concluded: "Is this not an instance where an official, by being a busybody, has stirred up trouble from nothing?"²³

In 1535 several uprisings took place at garrisons in the northeast for similar reasons. In each instance, an imperial official was blamed for stirring up trouble. The garrison at Liao-tung revolted when the new governor attempted to reorganize the local defense establishment. Under the existing system, each soldier was given the labor service of three unregistered male adults and 50 *mu* of pastureland for each of his horses. The governor returned one male in three to the regular labor service registers and confiscated all the pastureland; at the same time, he ordered fortifications built against a harsh deadline. When the garrison officers came to complain about this, the governor prepared to have them arrested and beaten. They began to attack him, and he was forced to flee the yamen by climbing over the wall.

Within a month, the governor was recalled. All his innovations were done away with. The investigating official reported that the incident had been fomented at the governor's direction and requested a pardon for the troops. The Censorate opposed any pardon, but this time the emperor refused to support a military campaign and the pardon was granted.

As the disgraced governor was returning to Peking, he stopped at the Kuang-ning garrison to gather his belongings. The garrison commander gave him a departing gift, which he had taken from funds set aside for the soldiers' fodder allowance. When this was discovered, disgruntled soldiers attacked the governor and the commander. Both were stripped, beaten, tied naked back-to-back, paraded through the city, and finally thrown into prison. The soldiers forced the official in charge of rations to disburse cash to them and pressured the eunuch military intendant and the commander to impeach the two officials they had thrown into prison.

Once again the emperor refused to approve a military campaign. One official who spoke out in favor of a more authoritarian approach was immediately arrested by the Imperial Bodyguard. The subsequent court consensus held that recent uprisings in Liao-tung had come about from a combi-

23 MSL, Shih-tsung shih lu, pp. 3560–61. For a fuller account of this uprising, see James Geiss, *Peking under the Ming, 1368–1644* (Ann Arbor, 1979), pp. 120–37.

nation of harsh policies, truculence in the ranks, and lack of warfare to occupy the troops. The ringleaders in the uprisings had to be executed as examples; the rest could be pardoned. This was what the emperor wished to hear, and the policy was carried out quickly. Within a month the severed heads of the ringleaders were staked on poles outside the gates to the garrison cities where they had revolted. The policy was cheap and effective. There were no further incidents until 1539, and that uprising comprised only about forty soldiers, all of whom were immediately beheaded. There was subsequently very little trouble in the region.

The Annam campaign

Having been thwarted in their attempts to launch campaigns in the north-east, in 1537 the militarist faction at court, led by Kuo Hsün, the marquis of Wu-ting, and several influential eunuchs, tried to win approval for a very costly campaign against Annam. The matter arose in connection with the announcement of the birth of an imperial son in November 1536. Grand secretary Hsia Yen opposed sending an embassy to announce the birth to the Annamese court on the grounds that Annam had not presented tribute for twenty years and that the present rulers were in fact illegitimate. The minister of war proposed sending a punitive expedition to chastise the Annamese for failing to submit tribute, and Kuo Hsün supported him. The proposal was immediately criticized as an extravagant and needless expense, which would have to draw men and supplies from southern provinces that were already overburdened.

In March 1537 an emissary from Annam fortuitously arrived at court to request support for the legitimate ruler, whom the emissary claimed had been deposed by his chief minister. The emissary was detained and officials were dispatched to investigate his claim. Several officers of the Imperial Bodyguard were also sent ahead to make preparations for a campaign. The emperor at first favored military action because he perceived the suspension of tribute as an affront to his majesty. But some local officials in Kwangtung argued that since Annam had not tried to encroach on imperial territory, and since the civil war in the country had not been decided, it would be prudent to await its outcome and then to press for tribute. In May the full court petitioned for a campaign, and the emperor agreed to it. However, when other local and regional officials began to voice opposition, the emperor suddenly changed his mind and called off the campaign in June. In September, when still other local officials presented a new strategy for the campaign, he ordered preparations to begin again.

In April 1538 commanders were finally appointed. Yet the emperor

found the conflicting recommendations disturbing. When the governor of the region bordering Annam advised in May that the campaign would cost in excess of 2 million ounces of silver and have to be waged under difficult conditions in unfamiliar terrain, he ordered the Ministry of War to decide again whether to proceed. The Ministry of War again suggested that the matter be put to the full court. Although aware that most civil officials privately opposed the campaign, the emperor nonetheless countered that the matter was for the Ministry of War to decide, but it clearly could not do so. He terminated the campaign in disgust. He had never really favored a military solution. When the Annamese pretender surrendered his territories to Ming officials in 1540, he concluded that he had been right to resist the advice in favor of a campaign.

He had first become dissatisfied with the conduct of court officials during the debates on imperial ritual, which left him with the impression that they were a conniving and self-serving lot who did not have his interests at heart. Failure to recommend suitable policies on such matters as this campaign confirmed his impression. By September 1540 he had become so alienated from his court that he fully endorsed a statement which blamed the venality of his bureaucrats for the sorry state of imperial governance.

Policy toward the Mongols

There was only one area in which the emperor consistently pressed for military solutions. He loathed the Mongols and felt that they were an insufferable affront to his dignity and majesty. They had to be punished. He refused to consider petitions for trade, even though his most able commanders repeatedly advised him to do so. In order to display his disdain, in his later years he even demanded that the characters for “northern barbarians” (by which he meant the Mongols) be written exceedingly small in all edicts and memorials. This intransigent posture led only to disaster. When his petitions for trade were rebuffed, Altan raided.

Prince Altan wished to secure a trade agreement with the Ming court in order to further his own political objectives. Such goods as tea, metalwares, fine fabrics, and herbal medicines were prized in the steppe and could be useful in arranging alliances and marriages. Altan's pasturelands were poorer than those in the Ordos and more subject to the vagaries of the weather. Without access to Ming goods, he was unable to secure his larger political objectives or to ensure the livelihood of his subjects in difficult times.

During the 1540s he secured his position as the principal leader of the Mongols to the west and south of the Gobi Desert. In 1551 he came to

terms with Darayisun (1520–1557), the leader of the Eastern Mongols, whom he had driven into exile in 1547. Having secured this alliance, in 1552 he launched a successful campaign against the Oirats in the northwest, which brought Dzungaria (the area to the north of the T'ien-shan Mountains) under Mongol control. Sporadic warfare against the Oirats continued into the 1560s, and their subjugation remained Altan's principal military objective. Major raids into Ming territory were carried out to secure supplies for these various campaigns or to provide relief for his subjects during periods of drought and famine, which were prolonged and widespread during the 1540s and 1550s.²⁴

Under good commanders, the Ming armies did repel raids and inflict casualties on the Mongols. During a raid on Shensi in 1536, the Mongol commander's standard was taken. But if defense in a certain region was strong, the Mongol cavalry struck somewhere else. When a large raiding party reported at 40,000 attacked the Ta-t'ung command in 1537, the entire command with all its garrisons and outposts could muster only 14,000 soldiers. By the time reinforcements had arrived, the raiding party was gone. This was a perennial problem. No garrison was strong enough to repulse a large raiding party, yet the logistics of troop movement precluded rapid reinforcement. Furthermore, commanders customarily patrolled only the regions directly under their command and refused to engage in battles elsewhere.

Some officials like Weng Wan-ta (1498–1552), who was in charge of the strategic area around Ta-t'ung and Hsüan-fu from 1542 to 1550, pursued sensible defense policies, particularly the building of walls, the enforcement of military discipline, and the use of spying to ascertain conditions among the hordes. The emperor generally approved of building walls and fortifications and was willing to allocate large sums to such projects. At best these measures made raiding more difficult and costly for the Mongols; but they did not remove the cause of the raiding.

By August 1541 little rain had fallen in North China and southern Mongolia for almost a year. Grain had to be disbursed from the imperial granaries to feed the populace of Peking, and famine was widespread in the northern provinces. It was under these conditions that Prince Altan dispatched an emissary to the border of the Ta-t'ung command to request trading privileges. The Ministry of War refused the request for three reasons. The Mongols had not submitted tribute for forty years; they raided every year and could not be trusted; and their motives were suspect. In-

24 See Hidehiro Okada, "Outer Mongolia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries," *Ajia Afurika gengo bunko kenkyū*, 5 (1972), pp. 69–85.

stead, a reward was offered for Altan's head. In October raiding parties pillaged without opposition in northern and western Shansi, taking by force what supplies they needed.

In January 1542 the court had to transport 25,000 *tan* of grain to the garrisons at Hsüan-fu and Ta-t'ung to stave off starvation. More funds were requested; supplies were still insufficient. The drought continued. In July Altan again sent an emissary to request trading privileges. The emissary turned out to be a Ming subject who had been taken captive by the Mongols. The governor of Ta-t'ung reported that he had captured him by a ruse and sent him to Peking, where he was executed as a traitor. Altan was furious and retaliated by conducting a punitive strike deep into Shansi.

On 24 July over 30,000 cavalry encamped inside the northwest border of Shansi. On 4 August the imperial army was routed at Kuang-wu, the headquarters of the Shansi command. On 8 August the suburbs of the provincial capital at T'ai-yüan were burned and pillaged. The Mongols proceeded south unopposed. Late in August the governor of Yen-Sui reported that Mongol raiding parties planned to move east to the outskirts of Peking. The emperor was alarmed. He ordered the various ministries to make decisions without first reporting them and appointed a supreme commander to coordinate all troop movements in the region under attack. By this time the Mongols had pillaged the southernmost prefectures of Shansi and were retreating without harassment. Shansi had been devastated. Taxes were remitted for two years, and 100,000 ounces of silver had to be disbursed for relief measures. The Ming forces had not won a single engagement.

Mongol cavalry raided in Shansi throughout the summer of 1543 and encamped just to the west of the Yellow River so that raids could be conducted through the winter as well. By this time Altan's older brother, Gün-bilig, had died and his lands had been divided among his sons. This left Altan the senior and most powerful prince in southern Mongolia, since he now controlled the Ordos as well as the lands north of Shansi.

The drought continued into 1545. In January outbreaks of pestilence were reported in the border regions as well as in Peking. Starvation was widespread in North China. In April dust storms destroyed most of the winter wheat and barley crops. In June Altan dispatched another mission to the border north of Ta-t'ung to request trading privileges. He had been urged to sue for peace by a Chinese officer he had taken prisoner. Upon reaching the border, his emissaries were detained and murdered by the regional commandant's servant, who thought that he would be as richly rewarded for this as others had been in 1542.

When Weng Wan-ta, then the highest official in the region, reported

the incident, he recommended that the servant be executed immediately and that his head be displayed outside the frontier as a mark of good faith. He urged the emperor not to let this opportunity slip by. His advice was ignored. The emperor wanted to punish the Mongols; he wanted an offensive stratagem.

The Ordos campaign

Grand secretary Hsia Yen had been losing his influence with the emperor since 1539, when he was first dismissed from office. He was recalled in 1545 and made chief grand secretary again in January 1546, but his position was not secure. His former protégé Yen Sung (1480–1562) was vying with him for control of the grand secretariat. Seeing that the emperor now favored a campaign, Hsia supported a campaign to recover the Ordos. This idea had first been proposed by the minister of war Pai Kuei (1419–75) in 1472 but abandoned owing to the great cost, which was put in excess of 9 million ounces of silver per year by one estimate.

This time a plan was presented by Tseng Hsien (1498–1548), an able commander who had put down the insurrections in Liao-tung in 1535. He had been appointed governor of Shansi in 1544 and was made responsible for all border affairs in the northwest in 1546. In January 1547 he proposed two stratagems for deterring Mongol raids into eastern Shensi and Shansi: building a line of fortifications in Shensi from Ningsia east to the border of Shansi; and launching campaigns into the Ordos late in the spring for three consecutive years. The emperor immediately disbursed 200,000 ounces of silver for preparations and ordered Tseng to solicit the opinion of officials in the border regions regarding the campaigns.

The various governors refused to respond. When pressed, one requested permission to retire on the grounds of illness. The emperor accused him of incompetence and reduced him to the status of a commoner. He insisted on a campaign. When Tseng reported in June 1547 that he had driven the Mongols away from the frontier, the emperor felt that this strategy was working. He again refused to consider Altan's request to trade. Later in the summer, when Altan proposed to ally with the Ming against Darayisun and the Eastern Mongols, no one dared to report it.

In February 1548, however, the emperor suddenly withdrew his support for the campaign. Requisitions were creating unrest in Shansi and Shensi, where famine had been reported. It also was rumored that Tseng had misappropriated military funds. Yen Sung made certain that the emperor knew of this. When the emperor ordered divinations made to ascertain the outcome of the campaign and a disastrous result was predicted, he began to

criticize the whole idea as impractical. Yen Sung denied any knowledge of the campaigns, saying that the matter had been handled by the chief grand secretary. The court reversed its prior consensus, which had supported an offensive strategy. Tseng was executed in April, and Hsia Yen in October. The idea of campaigning against the Mongols was abandoned until 1551.²⁵

The 1550 raid on Peking

In June 1548 the Mongols attacked Hsüan-fu and defeated the imperial army. In October they raided again, pillaging and slaughtering as far south as Huai-lai, which lay only a day's ride from Peking. Yen Sung blamed the raids on the aggressive policies of his adversary Hsia Yen, but he himself offered no strategy to counter them. In November raiding parties penetrated the inner line of defenses that protected Peking and approached the imperial tombs.

In March 1549, when he again attacked Hsüan-fu, Altan routed the imperial army, but Ming forces managed to block his retreat and won several encounters. During this raid, several Ming commanders were warned that if trade were not allowed, Peking would be attacked in the fall. Upon being informed of this, the emperor ordered that measures be taken to thwart the plan.

By March 1550, no rain or snow had fallen for over 150 days. Spies reported that the hordes were assembling for a major attack. After several skirmishes near Ta-t'ung in July the Mongols rode east, having been bribed by the commandant of the region to go elsewhere. On 26 September the entire raiding party breached the defenses at Ku-pei Pass, just 40 miles northeast of Peking, and went south to T'ung-chou (the northern terminus of the Grand Canal, about 15 miles east of Peking), where a camp was established. On 30 September an advance party reached the gates of Peking. On 1 October the city was besieged, and the suburbs were looted.

In 1550 the military registers for the capital garrisons carried about 140,000 names, but only fifty or sixty thousand were assigned to military duties; the rest worked on construction projects. When the soldiers that could be found were assembled and pressed to go outside the city walls and fight, they refused to budge. The reinforcements arriving to defend the city had no provisions, and none could be found for them. They were starving, unfit for combat, but able to loot. The minister of war was nonplussed. He could only wait for the Mongols to withdraw. On Yen Sung's advice, he

25 For a fuller account of the Ordos campaign, see Arthur N. Waldron, "The recovery of the Ordos: A Ming strategic debate," *Diss. Harvard*, 1981.

ordered the various regional commanders not to pursue, so the raiding parties were able to retreat several days later with their spoils intact.

The situation after 1550

On 6 October 1550 the minister of war was executed for having failed to defend Peking. Eunuchs whose properties to the northeast of the city were being looted had complained that the civil officials were holding back the armies and that consequently the Mongols were pillaging everywhere. The emperor was furious. On 2 October he held an audience for the first time since 1539, but refused to address the court. His message was read from the Wu Gate. All of the civil and military officials were irresponsible and derelict in their duties; that was all. Yen Sung had advised the minister of war not to send out the armies on the grounds that a defeat in the vicinity of the capital could not be covered up. But when the emperor demanded the minister's life, Yen was not willing to intercede on his behalf.

The emperor then entrusted the military affairs of Peking to Ch'iu Luan (1505–52), the commandant who in July had bribed the Mongols to pass by Ta-t'ung. Ch'iu's forces were camped near Peking at Chü-yung Pass, and they arrived to defend the capital on 2 October, for which the emperor was duly grateful. Yet when Ch'iu Luan engaged the Mongols on 6 October, thousands of men were lost, and he barely escaped with his life. A victory was reported nonetheless, and he was rewarded with the command of all garrisons and training camps around Peking. Yen Sung, who was also grateful to him for testimony that had led to Hsia Yen's execution in 1548, arranged the appointment.

In January 1551 Ch'iu moved 60,000 troops from the border garrisons to Peking for training. The Ministry of War opposed this on the grounds that it left the frontier regions vulnerable. But Ch'iu was planning to campaign against the Mongols, his disastrous experience in the field notwithstanding, and he needed an army that would go beyond the gates of Peking.

In April 1551 Altan sent his adopted son Toghto (d. 1591) to request trading privileges, in particular the establishment of horse fairs. Both Ch'iu and Yen Sung urged the emperor to allow this in order to gain time for further preparations. It was agreed that the Mongols under Altan would cease raiding the frontier in return for two annual horse fairs. In fact Ch'iu Luan was terrified of the Mongols and did not want to confront them.

The Mongols ceased raiding for six months. They later wanted to trade cattle and sheep for beans and grain. This was refused them, and they began to raid again during the winter of 1551–52. When pressed on this,

Altan answered that his poorer subjects had nothing else to exchange and were starving; if this trade were denied, he could not be held responsible for the consequences. When Altan next sought to trade at his own convenience, he was refused and his messengers were arrested. This ended the horse fairs, although they were not formally discontinued until October 1552.

Ch'iu Luan now had to engage the Mongols. In April 1552 his forces were ambushed and badly defeated on the steppe north of Ta-t'ung. Ch'iu again reported a victory, but the emperor was skeptical. When raiding along the frontier continued unabated, Ch'iu's fate was sealed. His policies were attacked, and he died of aggravated ulcers on 31 August. After having been posthumously convicted of plotting treason, his corpse was exhumed and dismembered on 13 September, and his head was displayed beyond the border. None of this stopped the raiding, which continued into the winter.

The nature of the raids changed after 1550. Earlier raids had been limited to Shensi and Shansi, had been organized by Altan, and had included only his own subjects and the Ordos hordes. The Eastern Mongols had taken part in the 1550 raid, and it had proved so successful that thereafter they began to raid in Liao-tung and along the northeastern border. During the next two decades raiding took place along the entire northern border, and some major raids were coordinated. This placed a much greater strain on the border garrisons. Troops could no longer be transferred to fend off attacks in one region, and the strength of every garrison had to be increased because the size of the raiding parties had increased. It became clear that the Mongols could not be driven away from the frontier.

In April 1553 construction began on an earthen wall to protect the southern suburbs of Peking from further looting. A similar proposal had been made in 1541, but nothing came of it. After the extensive pillaging of 1550 the need for such a wall was obvious, and a proposal to build one won immediate approval. The wall was completed in seven months, in part because many people had fled to Peking to escape starvation and so there was a large labor force available to carry out the work.

The events of 1550 convinced the emperor that he could not rely on the Peking garrisons to defend the Forbidden City. In 1552 he established a Palace Army (*Nei wu fu*) comprised of eunuchs who trained in the Imperial City. No one dared to object. The emperor was right; he could not rely on the capital garrisons. This Palace Army became a powerful organization, a military bureaucracy staffed entirely by eunuchs and beyond the control of court officials.

The Mongols raided every year from 1550 to 1566. During the winter of

1557–58 a garrison near Ta-t'ung remained under siege for six months, at which point it was almost abandoned. This came about because a concubine belonging to Altan's eldest son, Sengge (d. 1586), had fled to the border at Ta-t'ung with her lover, a Chinese prisoner, where they were taken into custody. Sengge wanted the concubine back and promptly mounted a raid. The terrified regional commander returned the concubine, who was executed shortly thereafter. Sengge had meanwhile ascertained that the Chinese would not fight and continued the siege while pillaging in Shansi. By April 1558 the garrison had been reduced to starvation, and Yen Sung suggested that it be abandoned. The emperor refused. Instead, he ordered that the garrison be supplied and defended. No supplies were forthcoming; but when reinforcements arrived, the Mongols withdrew.

By 1558 the expense of defending the northern borders could not always be met. Early in 1552 the Ministries of Revenue and Works reported that the total revenues marked for border defense since October 1550 amounted to roughly 10 million ounces of silver, while the total disbursements exceeded 13 million ounces. When the emperor ordered the production of 19 million silver coins in 1553, he was informed that the issue would cost 32 million ounces and that the imperial treasuries held less than 2 million ounces, which was not sufficient to defray border expenses. In January 1556 a major earthquake leveled large parts of Shansi and eastern Shensi. Over 800,000 were reported dead in the Wei River valley alone. No revenues could be collected for years thereafter. In 1557 the three main audience palaces in the Forbidden City and the southern ceremonial gates all burned down; funds had to be disbursed at once for construction expenses. When the emperor ordered supplies sent to the besieged garrison near Ta-t'ung in 1558, the minister of revenue reported that the imperial treasuries held less than 200,000 ounces of silver and that the garrison could not be supplied.

The situation never improved. Between 1550 and 1560 the rations and payments for many garrisons doubled, while the revenues available remained constant. The difference had to be disbursed from the imperial treasuries in Peking, which were often depleted.

Ming armies won only one major victory during this decade. In 1560 the commandant of Ta-t'ung led a raid on the Mongol stronghold at Kuei-hua (modern Huhehot), 80 miles northwest of Ta-t'ung, and set fire to it. This proved only a minor setback. Raiding continued, and the Mongols did not withdraw from the frontier regions. The garrisons were now expected only to turn back raiding parties at strategic passes that opened onto the North China plain and the imperial capital. No further offensive strategies were proposed or implemented. After 1550 the emperor

himself took little interest in the disposition of military affairs; he was preoccupied with the pursuit of immortality.

TAOISM AND COURT POLITICS

The emperor's interest in Taoism first centered on rituals and practices that were said to induce or to increase fertility. As early as 1523 court officials complained that he was missing his lessons because he never left his concubines and that he was spending too much on offerings for Taoist ceremonies. These prayer ceremonies for fertility had been conducted during the preceding reign and were continued on the recommendation of a eunuch in the imperial household, who may have introduced the emperor to Taoist aphrodisiacs (which were called "elixirs of immortality") as well. No children were born during the first decade of the reign. The emperor's interest in fertility therefore increased, his own position being tenuous until he could establish an heir.

In 1524 he invited a Taoist adept from Kiangsi named Shao Yüan-chieh (1459–1539) to court on the recommendation of his teacher, an influential Taoist master. By 1526 Shao had won the emperor's favor with his prayers for rain and for an end to calamities. An extraordinary number of floods, droughts, and earthquakes had been reported throughout the empire since 1521, 1525 having been a particularly bad year. In March 1526, when Shao was raised in rank and put in charge of all Taoist affairs, Peking was still in the grip of a severe famine. His prayers for an end to calamities seem to have been ineffectual. In 1527 floods swept through the emperor's former principedom in Hu-kuang, and no rain fell in or near Peking. Comets, which were considered inauspicious omens, appeared in 1529, 1531, and 1532, in the last instance for 115 days. During these years the emperor's policies were still being questioned, and such signs were taken to mean that Heaven was displeased with him.

The emperor refused to accept this interpretation. In November 1532, when a censor argued that the most recent comet was a warning to curtail construction projects, he was ignored. Instead, the emperor sought out auspicious omens. He wanted some confirmation of his mandate to rule, not endless criticism of his every move and decision. Henceforth, when such auspicious things as white rabbits and deer were presented as signs of good government, he drew attention to them by reporting them to the imperial ancestors and ordering the court to congratulate him.

In any event, he seems to have been more interested in the efficacy of Shao's prayers for fertility, which were credited for the births of several sons after 1533. In October 1536 his second son was born, and Shao was

honored again several months later. After his first son died in infancy in 1533, the emperor became obsessed with establishing an heir and protecting him. On this occasion he even refused to entrust the child to the palace ladies and instead recruited a staff of nurses from among the common people.

Shao was by now in his seventies and in poor health. When the emperor visited his former principality in March 1539, Shao was too ill to accompany him and died within a month. Shao's protégé T'ao Chung-wen (c. 1481–1560) replaced him.

T'ao Chung-wen began his career as a minor official. Before he arrived in Peking in the late 1530s, he had been in charge of storehouses in Liaotung. He had met Shao Yüan-chieh in Kiangsi when he was young and sought him out when he went to Peking to report for an evaluation of officials. Shao, who was ill at the time, told the emperor that his protégé could rid the palace compound of a "weird black demon" that had been seen there. T'ao was apparently successful. During the imperial progress to Hu-kuang in 1539, T'ao accurately predicted an attempt to assassinate the emperor in a conflagration. This greatly impressed the emperor, who soon took T'ao into his confidence and put him in charge of all Taoist affairs.

T'ao Chung-wen was skilled at compounding aphrodisiacs and at divination. Under his guidance, the emperor began to explore these facets of Taoism in some detail. The aphrodisiacs were generally made of red lead (lead tetroxide) and white arsenic (naturally occurring arsenic trioxide), compounded with other substances and formed into pills or granules. These "elixirs of immortality" were said to make one feel light and strong, to increase all the appetites, and to lead to intense sexual arousal. In September 1540 the emperor informed the court that he intended to seclude himself for several years to pursue immortality. When a court official protested that this was nonsense and that aphrodisiacs were dangerous, he was arrested and tortured to death.

The emperor should have heeded this warning. Instead, he became addicted to these stimulants and sought them throughout the empire. Over the course of two decades, he gradually poisoned himself to death. The toxic effects of lead and arsenic in small doses appeared slowly. Symptoms of elixir poisoning included skin and stomach disorders, irrational rages, and dementia, all of which the emperor manifested in his late fifties.

By 1540 he firmly believed in Taoist lore and even charlatans could not shake his conviction. He had decided to seclude himself in part because an adept who claimed that he could transmute base substances into silver had promised him that if he secluded himself and ate from vessels of such silver, he would be transformed into an immortal. In 1543 this adept was

unmasked as a fraud and executed. Because he had recommended him in the first place, T'ao was worried that he too would be implicated in the fraud. When he offered his apologies, the emperor just said that the art of transmutation had long been practiced, but only true adepts could master it. He too had been fooled at first.

By 1545 he had begun to rely on divinations to decide matters of state. The instrument used for divining was a T-shaped object suspended above a platter of sand. An awl hung from the long arm of the T, and two mediums held the ends of the short arm. The awl wrote answers in the sand to prayers and petitions that had been carefully written on dark blue paper in gold ink, addressed to a certain Taoist deity, and burned, the smoke presumably wafting the message to the deity. Since T'ao Chung-wen supervised the divination ceremonies, controlled the mediums, and interpreted the responses, he was able to influence decisions about policy and personnel. In February 1548 the emperor abruptly changed his mind about campaigning in the Ordos after such a divination. Yen Sung had seen what advantages this sort of policy making afforded him early on. He willingly participated in Taoist ceremonials and took pains to ingratiate himself with T'ao Chung-wen.

During the 1550s T'ao continued to suggest new techniques for attaining longevity and immortality to the emperor, who responded with enthusiasm. Taoists had the notion that physical immortality could be attained by preparing oneself for such a transformation. This preparation entailed refining the inner and outer elixirs. The outer elixirs comprised the plant and mineral compounds loosely known as "elixirs of immortality." The inner elixir was refined by strengthening the *yang* or life element. It was held that this could be done by having intercourse with virgin girls at the first instance of menses after the age of fourteen, this being the point at which the *yang* or life force in the *yin* or dark force was said to be most intense and when it could be absorbed during intercourse.

T'ao Chung-wen advised the emperor to gather young girls for this purpose. In 1552 he selected 800 girls between the ages of eight and fourteen for palace service, and in 1555 he selected 180 more, all under the age of ten, for use in refining the elixir. Although this practice was criticized by some officials, it was in fact not uncommon on a lesser scale among the wealthy and the educated, particularly in the south.

In 1556 the emperor asked the Ministry of Rites to ascertain where the magical plants (*ling chih*) used in ancient times grew at present and how they were to be prepared, for Taoist texts mentioned plants that could prolong life and transform one into an immortal. The minister responded that he did not know whether such plants existed or where they could be

found. He merely presented a selection of quotations from classical texts that referred to magical plants. The emperor was not satisfied and ordered all local officials to look for such plants in remote and mountainous areas and to inquire about them among the common people. Apparently such plants did exist. In 1558 the Ministry of Rites presented 1,860 fresh specimens from throughout the empire, and they were thereafter presented by the hundreds. What exactly comprised the class of magical plants is not clear, but the emperor did ingest them and continue to seek them out, their preparation being a privilege entrusted to the grand secretaries alone.

After T'ao Chung-wen died in November 1560, the emperor began to search for a replacement, but he never found any other Taoist adept to his liking.

YEN SUNG'S RISE TO POWER

Shortly before he first dismissed Hsia Yen in June 1539, the emperor began to criticize his lack of deference, pointing out that Hsia had originally been recommended for promotion from a minor post and that he enjoyed his high status at the emperor's pleasure. To make this clear, Hsia was summarily dismissed. Although he was soon in favor again, he was also repeatedly criticized for failing to be punctilious in the execution of his duties.

Yen Sung took advantage of a long-standing animosity between Hsia Yen and Kuo Hsün, the marquis of Wu-ting, to secure his first appointment in the grand secretariat. In August 1541 Kuo Hsün refused to accept an imperial edict. His arrogance infuriated the emperor, who was from that point disposed to reduce his power. Kuo had been impeached for malfeasance and corruption before, but the emperor had always excused him. This time he did not. In October Kuo was impeached and arrested. Because Kuo had been one of his few allies during the first years of the reign, the emperor refused to order his execution. Kuo remained in prison until he died in November 1542. Hsia Yen had directed the impeachment proceedings from his sickbed.

Although Hsia Yen had taken part in various Taoist ceremonies during the 1530s, he began to disapprove of such practices after 1540. In July 1542 he simply refused to wear a Taoist cap and gown when he was attending the emperor because it was not official attire. The emperor saw Hsia's attitude as an affront to his authority and a sign of disrespect toward his person. Yen Sung played on the emperor's preoccupation with his authority and the dignity of his person to force Hsia into retirement.

Yen Sung had risen under Hsia Yen's patronage to the high rank of

minister of rites, a post he held from 1537 to 1542. Hsia nonetheless treated him rudely and did not consider him particularly competent or gifted. In this he was wrong, for Yen Sung was both resourceful and astute. Yen wore the Taoist cap and gown that the emperor had presented to him and carried out his orders punctiliously. When he was eventually questioned about Hsia's shortcomings, he dwelt on one point. Hsia Yen controlled the remonstrating officials. Kuo Hsün was impeached at his direction, while nothing was ever said about Hsia himself. He had usurped the emperor's prerogatives. The emperor dwelt on this point when he dismissed Hsia in August 1542. Hsia remained out of office until October 1545, during which time Yen Sung gained control of the grand secretariat.

When he became a grand secretary in September 1542, Yen Sung was already in his sixties. Aware that he served solely at the emperor's grace, he was at first very careful both to oblige him in all things and to refer all matters to him for decision. At the same time, he took advantage of his new position to remove his enemies from office.

In 1543 he first used a trick that later earned him a bad reputation. He had the emperor unwittingly carry out his revenge for him. Yen had earlier been impeached by a censor for taking bribes from two princes who wanted to have their stipends increased. He barely managed to escape the charges and came to hate the censor. In October he informed the emperor that a satirical question about border policy in the 1543 Shantung provincial examination had in fact been drafted by this censor. The emperor found such behavior insufferably arrogant. He had the censor arrested and ordered that he be beaten and exiled to a frontier garrison. The censor was never exiled; he died from the beating, which was carried out with unusual severity. More routine demotions occurred at Yen's direction during evaluations of capital officials.

To counterbalance Yen Sung's growing influence, in October 1545 the emperor recalled Hsia Yen to the grand secretariat. Upon his return Hsia ignored Yen Sung, refused to consult with him, dismissed Yen's appointees, and replaced them with his own partisans. Hsia also attacked such powerful imperial favorites as Lu Ping, who had saved the emperor's life in 1539. Lu Ping was charged with corruption, and Hsia withdrew the charge only after Lu had bribed him, prostrated himself, and begged to be spared. Yen Sung, who had been similarly humiliated, eventually conspired with such people to destroy Hsia Yen.

The final confrontation came in February 1548, ostensibly over a proposal to campaign against the Mongols in the Ordos region. Hsia Yen had supported the proposal and directed the operation without consulting Yen Sung. He alone was responsible for what happened. The emperor had heard

rumors about unrest in Shensi; divinations forecast an inauspicious outcome. He changed his mind and withdrew his support for the proposal, but he had no intention of executing Hsia Yen. However, when Lu Ping produced documents that implicated Hsia in a conspiracy to cover up defeats and otherwise protect his subordinates and Yen Sung produced an accusation that Hsia had taken bribes, the emperor suspected that he had been duped into approving the campaign. These charges were never substantiated. What in fact disturbed the emperor was Hsia Yen's arrogance. Although Hsia was formally charged with collusion, he was put to death for insubordination. The emperor once again unwittingly executed one of Yen Sung's enemies.

The court under Yen Sung

From 1549 until his demise in 1562, Yen Sung controlled the grand secretariat. He made certain that his colleagues lacked influence, and he deferred to the emperor's wishes in even the most trivial matters. In March 1549, for example, he referred the selection of other grand secretaries to the emperor, stating that he dared not propose a decision. The emperor appreciated these gestures, and Yen tried to accommodate him whenever possible.

He managed to retain his position through a decade of crises by referring decisions to other people, either to ministers or to the emperor himself. When Altan besieged Peking in 1550 and demanded trading privileges, Yen referred the matter to the minister of rites, who was technically responsible for tribute arrangements. After the Mongols had withdrawn, he let the responsibility for the disaster fall on the minister of war, who had in fact been acting at his direction.

While he made a show of returning executive authority to the ministries, he covertly worked to direct policy and personnel matters. In November 1550, shortly after the Mongols had withdrawn, Yen was impeached for taking bribes in return for securing promotions and appointments to coveted posts, for suppressing reports and memorials, for allowing his son Yen Shih-fan (1513–65) to abuse his position, and for so intimidating the court that no one dared to speak against him. The emperor was at first disturbed by the report, but T'ao Chung-wen secretly interceded on Yen's behalf. Appealing to the emperor's distrust of his officials, T'ao said that the attacks against Yen Sung were all motivated by partisan grudges. Inclined to think the worst of his officials, the emperor accepted the explanation. Yen Sung was impeached on various counts throughout the 1550s, but he avoided censure by using this tactic. He played on the emperor's distrust and suspicion, suggesting over and over that attacks

against him were motivated either by partisan grudges or by a desire to criticize the emperor through his chief minister.

During his tenure as grand secretary, he never involved himself in the most pressing administrative issue of his time—fiscal management. Just as he had left other difficult issues to the ministers of rites and war, he left the intractable problems of fiscal management to the ministers of revenue and works.

FISCAL CRISES

Despite the economies instituted between 1522 and 1524, when Yang T'ing-ho was the chief grand secretary, in 1525 the minister of war reported that the main imperial granaries only held a surplus equivalent to three years of disbursements, while the demand for grain was increasing. He noted, for example, that the dyeing and weaving works in the Imperial City, which was only one of many imperial manufactories in Peking, employed more than 11,000 people who consumed over 150,000 *tan* of grain each year. Owing to the physical limitations of canal transport, only 4 million *tan* of grain could be shipped to Peking each year, and this had to feed the imperial establishment, the court, the Peking garrisons, construction brigades, and border garrisons.²⁶

When Liang Ts'ai (1470–1540), who served as minister of revenue during the 1530s, was dismissed from office in 1540 for refusing to increase the number of people assigned to work on construction projects, over 40,000 laborers were at work on various projects. The minister of works reported that he had only 60,000 ounces of silver on hand and was 270,000 ounces in arrears on payments due for supplies and services. He noted that the total cost for palace construction, ceremonial altars, and temples since the beginning of the reign had already exceeded 6 million ounces of silver. He concluded that the work could no longer be financed at the present rate. The emperor agreed to stop all but his own building projects in the western park of the Imperial City, which were the most costly of all.

During the 1530s reserves of silver bullion in the imperial treasuries were sometimes exhausted to pay for special construction projects. This came about in part because the court had begun to rely more on silver to buy goods and services than on the traditional labor service system, which

²⁶ For a general discussion of problems in the fiscal administration during this period, see Ray Huang, *Taxation and governmental finance in sixteenth-century Ming China* (Cambridge, England, 1974), pp. 44–81.

could not meet the emperor's extraordinary demands. The demand for silver bullion soon exceeded available supplies. To remedy this, in 1544 the Ministry of Revenue proposed that 30 percent of the annual grain tribute sent to Peking be commuted to payment in silver, and the proposal was approved. After 1540 commutation of tax in kind and labor service to silver payments became common, although the tax categories ostensibly remained unchanged and the rates of commutation and percentages of tax payable in cash and in kind varied from place to place.

Faced with constant deficits and shortages, in 1549 the emperor ordered a general accounting of imperial finances since the beginning of the reign. The Ministry of Revenue reported that from 1522 to 1532 the capital granaries received on average 3.7 million *tan* of grain each year, of which 2.8 million was disbursed to the army and to laborers and artisans. The granaries usually held a surplus equivalent to eight or nine years of disbursements. After 1532 the average annual disbursements rose to 5.3 million *tan*, and the surplus dropped by about half. The T'ai-ts'ang treasury, which held silver bullion, received on average 2 million ounces of silver per year, of which 1.3 million was allocated to border defense. In 1529 the imperial treasuries in Peking held a surplus of 4 million ounces and provincial treasuries held altogether about 1 million ounces. However, during the 1540s regular annual disbursements rose to 3,470,000 ounces of silver, leaving an annual deficit of over 1,400,000 ounces, and the surplus quickly disappeared.

The Ministry of Revenue suggested that savings could be realized through economies and fiscal reorganization. It proposed instituting a system of consolidated accounts, divided into four categories: annual tax assessments, annual receipts, annual disbursements, and annual reserves. Each ministry, court, military command, and civil office was to submit such an accounting at year's end. The minister of revenue hoped in this way to gain some comprehensive picture of the uncoordinated system of receipts and disbursements in cash and in kind that then prevailed. The plan was approved and implemented, but the fiscal situation continued to deteriorate.

In 1543 the emperor had agreed to give over a portion of his private revenues to defray border defense expenses, and this arrangement, which remained in effect until 1558, added about 1 million ounces of silver to the annual receipts of the T'ai-ts'ang treasury. In 1551 the Liang-Huai salt administration began to purchase surplus salt for resale at an annual profit of 300,000 ounces of silver, and this arrangement remained in effect until 1565. These and other measures brought the anticipated annual silver receipts of the treasury to about 5 million ounces per year, but this amount could rarely be collected in full.

In 1552 the Ministry of Revenue reported that the aggregate annual disbursement of silver for imperial and border defense expenses had reached 5,950,000 ounces, while owing to tax remissions and defaults, the annual receipts in silver amounted to less than half that amount. In order to raise the balance, the minister of revenue suggested that a surtax of 2 million ounces be levied on the wealthy prefectures in the Yangtze delta. The emperor approved his proposal, and it subsequently became the standard method of raising additional revenues in silver to meet extraordinary expenses. However, during the 1550s the wealthy prefectures of the southeast suffered from widespread piracy and banditry, as well as from an unusual number of natural disasters. In many areas even regular taxes could not be collected; surtaxes were out of the question.

In 1553 officials in Nanking complained that the constant drain on provincial treasuries left no funds available for disaster relief in the Huai Valley; but the Ministry of Revenue had nothing to offer, and no relief was forthcoming. In the wake of serious drought and flooding, thousands of people had flocked to Peking in search of food. The price of rice had more than doubled, starvation was common, and bodies piled up in the streets. By the spring of 1554 serious epidemics had broken out in the city. Whatever funds and supplies were on hand had to be distributed to feed the populace of Peking.

During the 1550s annual silver disbursements fluctuated between 3 and 6 million ounces, and there was a deficit every year. These deficits had to be made up through various special taxes and surcharges, through direct requisitions of supplies, and through administrative economies. The military campaigns undertaken in the southeast during the 1550s were financed by surtaxes and levies imposed by the governors of the regions under attack. As the campaigns dragged on, taxes were collected in advance to pay for military supplies, usually by assessing a surtax on all labor service households. Furthermore, an endless series of ad hoc miscellaneous taxes were imposed as the need for funds arose, and many of these were never subsequently rescinded. Between 400,000 and 500,000 ounces of silver were raised in this fashion until 1562, when some of the taxes were discontinued. However, while these costly campaigns were underway, the emperor continued to allocate provincial funds for his own use, leaving local administrators to figure out how to pay for everything.

The situation became more serious after the major audience halls and southern ceremonial gates in the Forbidden City burned down in May 1557. They had to be rebuilt at once, and palace construction was very costly. (The two main residential palaces rebuilt in the Forbidden City between 1596 and 1598 cost over 730,000 ounces of silver.) In this in-

stance the work went on for five years, the palaces and gates being finished only in 1562. And in 1561, while this massive construction project was underway, the emperor's residential palace in the western park of the Imperial City burned down.

On 31 December, after a night of drinking, the emperor retired with his current favorite to a small, sable-lined tent that had been set up in the palace. An oil lamp was carelessly overturned while they were dallying; the fire spread immediately from the bedding to the tent and then through the palace. Nothing could be saved. The emperor's entire wardrobe and regalia, as well as an irreplaceable collection of valuables, all perished in the blaze. This palace too had to be rebuilt at once. It was finished in just four months by using materials gathered for the construction of the imperial audience halls. All these projects were carried out under the direction of the architect Hsü Kao, who held the titular rank of minister of works.

The revolt of the Nanking garrison

These costly construction projects generated even greater demands for silver bullion, and various schemes and economies were proposed to raise more silver revenue, sometimes with calamitous results. Most of the proposals involved taking advantage of the fluctuations in the silver price of grain so that rates of commutation would be more closely tied to market prices. In this way rates and terms of commutation could be manipulated to favor the government, and small profits could be realized.

Many of these economies were carried out at the expense of the Nanking garrison. This garrison had been recruited during the 1550s to defend Nanking from marauding pirate armies. The garrison's grain rations were first cut back in 1558, and constant investigations were undertaken to ensure that dead soldiers were dropped from the rolls. When these economies proved insufficient, the Nanking minister of revenue suggested that by dropping the rate of commutation for the two months of the year when silver was disbursed from .50 ounces of silver per *tan* to .40, a substantial savings could be realized. In 1560 the Nanking vice-minister of revenue in charge of granaries suggested that the supplemental allowance of 12 *tan* per year known as "wife grain" be discontinued for new recruits.²⁷

This was an untimely and ill-considered move. A severe drought had

27 During the fifteenth century the average price of one *tan* of rice in silver varied between .40 and .50 ounces. This rose slightly to about .60 ounces per *tan* during the first half of the sixteenth century, but fluctuations in the high and low prices of rice far exceeded the previous records. In general the price was not very stable in many regions during this period. See P'eng Hsin-wei, *Chung-kuo huo pi shih* (1954; rpt. Shanghai, 1958), pp. 495–502.

struck the Yangtze delta area in 1559, and by the spring of 1560 the price of rice in Nanking had risen to .80 ounces of silver per *tan*, twice the new rate of commutation. In March 1560, when soldiers in the Nanking garrison found out about the most recent cut in supplemental rations, they feared that the measure would soon be applied to them, and they rioted. The vice-minister of revenue was dragged from his office, killed, and hung naked from a ceremonial archway, where soldiers shot arrows at his corpse.

All the high officials in Nanking met in the prefectural offices to decide what to do; but when the rioting soldiers surrounded the compound, they were forced to flee for their lives. The troops were finally quieted down after the Ministry of Revenue disbursed 40,000 ounces of silver to them. The situation was so unstable that the court refused even to investigate the incident, and the garrison went unpunished.

These problems were compounded by another constant and ever-growing demand on provincial treasuries—stipends for members of the imperial clan. By 1562, when a censor raised the issue, over 8.5 million *tan* of grain (or its value in silver) was to be retained by princely households to pay stipends to imperial clansmen. This amount was not enough; the demand for stipends increased with each generation. No sensible official wanted to pursue such a delicate issue without support. However, the emperor agreed only that the problem needed to be discussed. Nothing happened until 1564, when over 140 imperial clansmen surrounded the governor of Shensi's residence to demand payment of their stipends, which were at the time over 600,000 *tan* in arrears. Provincial officers could only find 78,000 ounces of silver, which did not satisfy the clansmen. In the end the emperor simply reduced all of the imperial clansmen to the status of commoners and warned their prince not to let such an incident occur again. The matter was settled, and the problem of stipends remained unresolved.

Imperial finances did not improve until the 1570s. No innovative policies were put forth by court officials, and the Nanking revolt pointed up just how few administrative economies could in fact be implemented without untoward consequences. The constant demand for silver revenue during these years did engender long-lasting changes in the tax system that were later codified as the single assessment tax (*i t'iao pien fa*). Under this system, labor service obligations and other miscellaneous service obligations formerly assessed on households were commuted to payments in silver and in many instances gradually integrated into the land tax. This change began first in the southeastern coastal provinces, where silver was plentiful and where, owing to large-scale trade and commerce, silver had long been preferred in commercial transactions.

TRADE AND PIRACY

During the 1520s and 1530s, small bands of pirates raided all along the southeastern coast from Chekiang to Kwangtung. These raids were carried out by groups under different leaders who fought among themselves as much as they did against local militias. Pirate bands were often comprised of common people who had been pressed into a life of outlawry for various reasons and who had no plans or aspirations of their own. When they could make a profit through trade, they engaged in trade or acted as brokers for other merchants and pirates; when they could not trade, they pillaged; and often they both traded and pillaged. To curtail this outlawry, the court repeatedly promulgated bans against overseas trade. But such bans were not easy to enforce, for local civil and military authorities were themselves involved in the conduct of illicit trade.²⁸

Discipline in the coastal garrisons had grown lax, and most officers (who held their posts as hereditary sinecures) had no combat experience. Military officials who were supposed to be suppressing overseas trade instead acted as brokers between pirates, foreign traders, and local merchants. In 1529 several commanders at Wen-chou in Fukien were exiled for having done this. The emperor subsequently ordered local authorities to seize and destroy all the large ships that influential families in the region used for overseas trade. Local interests refused to cooperate. A large part of the local society was connected in some way to this illicit trade. Wealthy families provided capital for ships (which were often armed with cannon) and merchandise; military officers acted as brokers in the transactions; common people worked in the merchant fleets and sold what goods they could obtain inland. Overseas trade comprised an important part of many people's livelihood, and it was in no one's interest to stop it.

Local authorities simply ignored imperial edicts. In 1532 the governor of Kwangtung was recalled because he had failed to eradicate local pirates who had been raiding the coast for almost a decade. In 1533 the Ministry of War complained that the bans which had been promulgated were not being enforced and that armed fleets were pillaging at will along the coast. One pirate captured in 1534 had over fifty large ships under his command. He had been raiding the coast of Chekiang for years and was finally taken in a bloody battle during which many imperial troops died. When the local judicial authorities handed down light sentences in this case, the emperor ordered them to revise their decisions and sent a court official to guide

²⁸ For general background on this problem and a discussion of the literature see Kwan-wai So, *Japanese piracy in Ming China during the sixteenth century* (East Lansing, Mich., 1975).

them in their review of the case. He wanted the death penalty for all involved. The local powers had to be warned that this was no longer a minor offense.

During the 1540s these disparate groups of pirates and traders became more organized. They gathered on islands off the coasts of Chekiang and Fukien, where they put together large fleets for the conduct of overseas trade. Their principal strongholds in Chekiang were on various islands off the coast of Ning-po prefecture. In safe harbors they could unload cargoes and disperse them, meet foreign traders, store arms and supplies, and arrange to buy and sell merchandise on shore. Such overseas trade was at first conducted in the anchorage of Shuang-yü near Ning-po, which had served as a trading enclave since at least 1525. In 1539 Portuguese merchants (who had been forbidden to trade at Canton in 1522) were led to this island, and in 1545 trading fleets from Japan were led there for the first time.

The arrival of the Japanese in 1545 changed everything. Prior to this there had not been much private overseas trade with the Japanese. Although Fukienese merchants had established themselves at the port of Hakata as early as 1537 and small bands of Japanese warriors had raided the coasts of China intermittently since the early sixteenth century, most contacts took place within the framework of the tribute system. This arrangement satisfied the Japanese until the end of the fifteenth century. But in 1496, after Japanese tribute envoys killed several people on their return from Peking, the number of people allowed on each mission was reduced from four hundred to fifty. By this time three powerful families (the Ise, the Hosokawa, and the Ōuchi) had begun to compete in earnest for control of the trade with China. Since only one mission comprised of fifty envoys was allowed to proceed to Peking, there was fierce competition among these families for that permission. In 1510 and 1511 two tribute missions arrived, and in each instance the representative of the Ōuchi family threatened to resort to piracy if his party were denied permission to trade.

Court policy toward overseas trade

In 1523 two tribute missions again arrived at Ning-po, one representing the Hosokawa and one representing the Ōuchi. The Hosokawa mission arrived first (but prior to the time stipulated). The Ōuchi representative bribed the eunuch in charge of Ning-po's maritime affairs to give his mission preferential treatment. When the Hosokawa party found out that the Ōuchi ships were going to be inspected first, they attacked the Ōuchi mission. The Chinese envoy who represented the Ōuchi fled, whereupon

the Hosokawa party looted in Ning-po, seized a number of ships, and set sail. The Ming commander sent to pursue them was killed in a sea battle.

In the wake of this incident, several court officials criticized the response of the local authorities, whom they impeached for mismanagement and dereliction of duty. The eunuch in charge of maritime affairs for Chekiang was accused of taking bribes and of causing the trouble in the first place. However, nothing was done. In 1525 the same eunuch was in fact given broader authority over local officials in charge of maritime affairs and coastal defense. This came about in part because a number of officials who had attacked eunuchs in 1524 for mismanaging maritime affairs had also opposed the emperor's policies on imperial rituals.²⁹ For this reason their petitions and memorials were summarily rejected in favor of petitions from officials who supported the emperor and favored trade. No further action was taken in Chekiang until 1527, when the eunuch in charge of maritime affairs was dismissed in a general purge of eunuch officials from the preceding reign. The Maritime Trading Intendancy was abolished in 1529 on the grounds that only one eunuch official was needed in Chekiang. Responsibility for maritime affairs was given instead to the eunuch military intendant, who was generally responsible for the security of the region. The problem of coastal piracy and trade was still by and large ignored at court.

In 1527 Japanese tribute envoys were again permitted to trade once each decade, provided that there were no warriors among them and that the embassy did not exceed one hundred people and three ships. However, the families that had formerly organized such official embassies were no longer powerful enough to monopolize the trade with China. During the 1530s and 1540s small trading fleets from Japan began to develop contacts along the China coast, and Chinese merchants set up offshore trading centers to accommodate them. Very little trade took place within the framework of the tribute system after 1523; and after the Maritime Trading Intendancy for Chekiang was abolished in 1529, imperial authorities had even less control over overseas trade than before.

Proposals to appoint a governor with jurisdiction over all matters concerning coastal defense first appeared in 1524 after the Ning-po affray. Supporters of this policy argued that the Japanese were as much a threat as the Mongols and that administrative arrangements in effect on the northern borders should therefore be applied to the coast as well. A high official with the authority to act on his own initiative had to be dispatched to coordinate and investigate local officials. The eunuch in charge of maritime affairs for Chekiang proposed in 1525 that he be appointed to a simi-

²⁹ See above, pp. 443–50.

lar position. In 1526 court officials countered with other proposals critical of eunuch management and again stressed the need to appoint a civil official. Although the eunuch in charge of maritime affairs was finally recalled in 1527, no civil official was appointed in his place, and the matter was dropped.

In 1529, after a garrison on the coast had rioted and fled to join pirate bands, Hsia Yen (who became chief grand secretary in 1537) raised the issue again. A censor was sent to inspect coastal defenses, to coordinate the suppression of piracy, and to punish the leaders of the riot. However, neither of the officials sent to do this was able to stop overseas trade or to suppress piracy. In 1531 the censor in charge of coastal defense was transferred and not replaced. The situation remained as before. Grand secretary Chang Ts'ung (who came from a coastal prefecture of Chekiang) opposed any such *intervention and was able to stall or to frustrate every attempt to enforce the prohibition against overseas trade until he left office in 1535*. During the 1530s court inspectors repeatedly complained that local officials permitted overseas trade, refused to enforce imperial edicts, and ignored outbreaks of piracy. Nothing of consequence was done about this for sixteen years.

During this interim, the tribute system broke down altogether. In 1539, when the first Japanese mission since 1523 arrived in Ning-po, the local authorities confiscated the emissaries' weapons and kept them under close supervision. They had no chance to trade with Chinese merchants and hence made no profit from the mission. In 1544, when another mission arrived to trade, officials refused to deal with the emissaries because the next mission was not supposed to arrive until 1549. The Japanese who had organized the mission then turned to Chinese merchants. One of them, Wang Chih, returned to Japan with the mission. In 1545 he led a private trading mission back to Shuang-yü anchorage. Thereafter such private missions became common, while the size of the fleets sailing to and from Japan grew each year.

As the volume of trade grew, so did the violence associated with it. In many instances violent altercations came about because wealthy families involved in illicit trade refused to pay their debts to overseas trading groups. In some cases such families threatened to use their influence to force local officials into action against their creditors. Traders retaliated by looting and burning the properties of wealthy families who defaulted. One of the Hsieh family's estates in Shao-hsing prefecture was looted and burned in the summer of 1547 for this reason. The property belonged to the younger brother of Hsieh Ch'ien (1450–1531), who had served as a grand secretary under three emperors.

Chu Wan

In 1547 a censor again reported that piracy was out of control all along the southeastern coast. He recommended that a high official with authority to act on his own initiative be sent to the region for several years to eradicate the cause of piracy—overseas trade. In July 1547 Chu Wan (1494–1550), who had been in charge of suppressing banditry in southern Kiangsi and the Fukien border region since 1546, was put in charge of Chekiang and Fukien coastal defense.

Chu took up office in November 1547 and made his headquarters at Chang-chou, the principal center of overseas trade in Fukien. Local officials refused to cooperate with him in his campaign to suppress overseas trade, so he recruited his own staff. Late in 1547 he left Chang-chou to tour the coastal defenses to the north. In February 1548 he again recommended that the bans against overseas trade be strictly and vigorously enforced. Shortly after he made this recommendation, a large body of pirates raided the coastal prefectures of Ning-po and T'ai-chou in Chekiang, killing, burning, and looting without encountering any effective opposition from imperial forces. This was the largest and most destructive raid to date. The need to stamp out piracy seemed clear-cut. However, in February 1548 grand secretary Hsia Yen, who had drafted Chu's commission and had supported his policy recommendations, was dismissed from office and condemned to death for treason.³⁰ When he arrived in Ning-po in April 1548, Chu Wan no longer had a powerful ally at court.

Shortly thereafter, he made plans to attack the trading enclaves at Shuang-yü and Chiu-shan, which were the principal centers of overseas trade off the Chekiang coast. The attack on Shuang-yü took place at night during a storm, and many of the ships in the harbor escaped and regrouped off small islands farther south. In the subsequent regrouping of these merchant fleets, a new leader emerged—Wang Chih. Wang had joined the group on Shuang-yü in 1544 and was the same merchant who had led the first trading fleet to Japan in 1545. He gradually took control of the remnants of the fleet, killing his chief rival in a surprise attack. Overseas trade continued. Wang organized fleets sailing to and from Japan in 1549 and 1550. Shuang-yü was replaced by other safe harbors on small islands off the coasts of Chekiang and Fukien.

Chu Wan's strict interpretation of his commission led to his undoing. He had executed everyone taken in the April 1548 raid, despite strong protest from local officials. One of the people executed was the uncle of the Ning-po

³⁰ See above, pp. 474–75, 482–84.

prefectural judge; the judge was only one of many officials from Chekiang and Fukien who wanted to stop Chu Wan. In August 1548 Chu's authority was reduced. A censor from Fukien argued that one official could not oversee such a large jurisdiction by himself. Chu nonetheless continued to enforce the ban on overseas trade, moving south along the coast with his troops and warships. In March 1549 he attacked a large merchant fleet anchored off the coast of southern Fukien. Many captives were taken, ninety-six of whom were summarily executed on Chu's authority.

Just as his campaign seemed assured of success, Chu was dismissed from office. A censor accused him of killing people without proper authorization. He had failed to wait for permission to carry out the sentences to arrive from Peking. The impeachment proceedings against him were directed by the censor-in-chief, who was also a native of Ning-po. Chu had been ill for a long time. Faced with certain disgrace and perhaps execution, he committed suicide in January 1550. Most of his work was quickly undone. His coastal defense fleet was dispersed, and early in 1550 local officials in Chekiang requested that the bans against overseas trade be relaxed.³¹

Trade and piracy during the 1550s

It was under these conditions that such Chinese merchants as Wang Chih sought to influence court policy toward overseas trade. Wang Chih had by this time organized a large trading consortium and commanded a well-armed fleet manned with sailors and soldiers who could protect it. When the need arose, this trading fleet could be turned into a private navy. But Wang and his colleagues were first of all merchants. It was in their interest as well to reduce the incidence of piracy along the coast, either by forcing pirate fleets to join the consortium or by destroying them.

Between 1549 and 1552 Wang cooperated with local military intendants on several occasions and captured at least two pirate leaders whom he turned over to the authorities. In return, he expected local officials to relax the ban on overseas trade. But instead the ban was tightened. In 1551 even fishing boats (which had been excluded from prior bans) were forbidden to go out to sea. All overseas trade was outlawed. Having failed to obtain his objectives by compromise and cooperation, Wang began to use force. Raids after 1551 were large and well-organized attacks on official establishments, granaries, prefectural and district treasuries, and incidentally on the surrounding countryside, which was thoroughly pillaged.

31 For a fuller account, see Roland L. Higgins, *Piracy and coastal defense in the Ming period, government response to coastal disturbances, 1523-1549* (Ann Arbor, 1981).

The large-scale raids carried out between 1552 and 1556 followed several years of natural calamities and general unrest. Famines were reported in Chekiang during 1543 and 1544, and there were severe droughts in the Yangtze basin during the summers of 1545 and 1546. The thousands of people who had lost their livelihoods and who were roaming in search of food made ideal recruits for raiding parties and bandit gangs. By 1550 brigandage along the coast of Chekiang was so widespread and common that towns and villages had to erect palisades for security.

At first sea-based raiders made swift attacks and then retreated to their ships. In the spring of 1552 raiding parties of several hundred people attacked all along the coast of Chekiang. In the summer of 1553 Wang Chih assembled a large fleet of hundreds of ships to raid the coast of Chekiang from T'ai-chou north. Several garrisons were briefly taken, and several district seats were besieged. After this raid, it became clear that land bases could be set up along the coast.

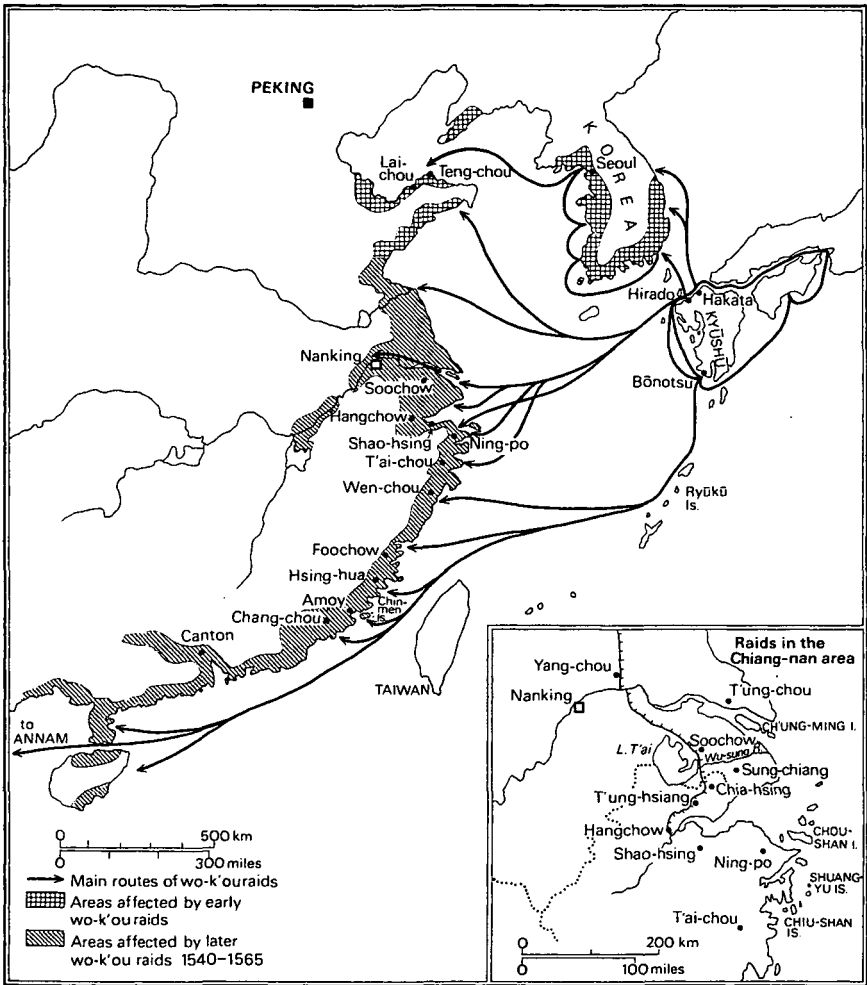
Early in 1554 fortified bases were established along the coast of Chekiang. From these camps, larger raiding parties comprised of sailors, pirates, Japanese warriors, foreign adventurers, Chinese bandits, and drifters set out on long inland campaigns. By 1555 such raiding parties were approaching the great cities of Hangchow, Soochow, and Nanking, and by 1556 the entire region from Nanking south to Hangchow was out of control.

Attempts to suppress piracy and brigandage

In 1552 Wang Yü (1507–60), the governor of Shantung, was put in charge of military affairs for Chekiang and the coastal prefectures of Fukien (a post that had remained vacant since Chu Wan's dismissal in 1549). Wang immediately released from prison the commanders who had served under Chu Wan and organized an army. This imperial army suffered repeated defeats in 1553 and 1554. Raiding parties took over twenty administrative cities or garrisons. In March 1554 the city of Sung-chiang was attacked and the magistrate put to death; in May Chia-hsing fell, T'ung-chou was besieged, and Ch'ung-ming Island was occupied; in June cities near Soochow were under attack. Wang had only one useful suggestion. He recommended that walls be built around the various cities which had been sacked.³²

In November 1554 Chang Ching (d. 1555), the Nanking minister of war, was put in charge of all armies in the southeast, given discretionary

³² For a detailed study of the local response to these attacks, see Marilyn Fitzpatrick, "Local administration in northern Chekiang and the response to the pirate invasions of 1553–1556." Diss. Australian National University, 1976.



Map 23. Sixteenth-century Japanese pirate raids

powers, and made solely responsible for the suppression of piracy. By this time raiders had established fortified bases in various towns and forts on the coast of Chekiang and garrisoned them with a combined force of 20,000 men. Chang set out first to destroy the raiders who held these fortified land bases. For this he needed a much larger army, so he conscripted about 11,000 aboriginal troops from Kwangsi and Hu-kuang to supplement the imperial forces already in Chekiang. However, these reinforcements did not arrive until the spring of 1555, and meanwhile imperial armies held only walled cities and grain depots, leaving everything else to be pillaged. Early

in 1555 Hangchow was attacked and thousands of people in the surrounding countryside were massacred. The imperial armies remained in Hangchow and Chia-hsing because Chang Ching refused to launch an offensive until all the aboriginal troops that he needed had arrived.

In March 1555 one of Yen Sung's agents, the censor Chao Wen-hua (d. 1557), was sent to assess the military situation in Chekiang. Raiding parties now posed a threat to the imperial tombs north of Nanking and to imperial grain barges moving through the Yangtze delta. The matter could no longer be ignored. Shortly after he arrived, Chao pressed Chang Ching to launch an attack. Chang, who was superior to him in rank, would not do this and declined to discuss his strategy. Chao then secretly reported that Chang Ching had misappropriated funds and had failed to defend the region. After Yen Sung confirmed this report, the emperor ordered Chang's arrest.

Meanwhile, in May 1555 Chang's combined forces surrounded a large raiding party north of Chia-hsing and took over 1,900 heads. This was the first time that imperial armies had been able to defeat a large force of marauders. After he heard about his victory, the emperor began to question Yen Sung. Yen informed him that Chang Ching advanced his troops only after he had learned of Chao's memorial and the credit for the victory belonged to Chao Wen-hua and Hu Tsung-hsien (1511–65), adding that Hu had actually gone on to the battlefield in his armor, when in fact he was far to the south in Hangchow. Chang Ching's plea for mercy was ignored, and Yen Sung put his name on the list of people scheduled to be executed in the fall. He was beheaded in November 1555, and it was generally believed at court that Yen Sung had arranged Chang's death to protect his protégé Chao Wen-hua.

Chao Wen-hua (who was also from Ning-po) had never favored the ban on overseas trade. In 1549 he tried to bribe Chu Wan with a promotion in order to get him out of Chekiang, but Chu refused the offer. Chang Ching declined to discuss his strategy with Chao in 1555 in part because he feared that Chao might let the battle plans become known. Although the emperor had ruled out a strategy of pardon and pacification in 1554, Chao still hoped to change his mind by arranging Wang Chih's surrender and presenting it as a *fait accompli*. Hu Tsung-hsien, who came from Wang Chih's district in Anhwei, agreed to cooperate in this scheme.

Hu Tsung-hsien and Hsü Hai

In 1554, when he began his association with Chao Wen-hua, Hu Tsung-hsien was a censor investigating military affairs in Chekiang. In 1556 he was the most powerful civil and military official in the southeast. During

these three years, he worked to implement Chao's plan and often faced outspoken opposition from his immediate subordinates, who opposed pardons and appeasements. In May 1555 Hu asked for permission to send envoys to Japan, ostensibly to request the king of Japan's assistance in fighting piracy and in fact to solicit Wang Chih's surrender. In July, shortly after he had been made governor of Chekiang, he had Wang Chih's family released from prison and moved to his headquarters at Hangchow. However, just prior to the envoys' departure, the emperor again offered a reward for Wang Chih's capture, dead or alive. Hu was certainly aware that he was carrying out a policy initiated by Chao Wen-hua, which contravened the emperor's orders.

In the spring of 1556 Hu's envoys returned with Wang Chih's adopted son, who reported that Wang would wipe out the pirate bands in Chekiang in return for a pardon and permission to engage in overseas trade. Wang Chih also sent a warning. Hsü Hai, a merchant in his consortium, was planning to raid Chekiang, and it was too late to do anything about it. This news complicated Chao's plans, for he now faced a serious military crisis.

In 1556 Hu Tsung-hsien was made supreme commander of the armies in the Southern Metropolitan Region, Chekiang, and Fukien. Imperial armies had been badly defeated during the last months of 1555. The aboriginal troops that Chang Ching had brought in from the southwest were attacking imperial troops and pillaging in the countryside; the military situation was deteriorating, and raiding continued. In January 1556 Chao returned to court to arrange Hu Tsung-hsien's promotion. He realized that he could not gain credit for suppressing piracy, and he did not want to bear the consequences of failure. Yang I (who had been in office for just over six months) was impeached for failing to launch an offensive against the raiders, and in April 1556 Hu Tsung-hsien replaced him. Hu spent his first six months as supreme commander trying to deal with Hsü Hai's attack on Chekiang, which began on 19 April.

Hsü Hai began his career as a Buddhist monk, but in 1551 he left his temple in Hangchow and went to work for his uncle, a merchant in Wang Chih's consortium. Between 1551 and 1554 he sailed on every trip to Japan and gradually acquired a small fortune. But in 1555, when his uncle failed to return from a trip to Kwangtung, the lord of Ōsumi (who was his uncle's patron and creditor) ordered Hsü Hai to make good his father's debts by directing a large-scale raid on Chekiang. His fleet set sail early in 1556. The object of the campaign was to pillage the cities of Hangchow, Soochow, and Nanking.

Aware that he could not win a pitched battle against Hsü Hai's forces,

Hu Tsung-hsien tried to negotiate his surrender. For this reason, he refused to engage him or to direct his subordinates to attack. All available forces were used to garrison Hu's headquarters at Hangchow. However, Juan O (1509–67), the new governor of Chekiang, decided to attack on his own initiative. He was badly defeated and forced to fight his way into the besieged city of T'ung-hsiang, where he and his forces were held at bay for a month. During this time Hu Tsung-hsien (who was only 60 miles to the south in Hangchow) refused to send reinforcements to lift the siege. He held that the seige could be lifted only by negotiating some arrangement with Hsü Hai and other leaders. Hu informed Hsü Hai that Wang Chih had already accepted terms of surrender and urged him to do the same. Hsü Hai agreed to surrender for a pardon and withdrew from T'ung-hsiang in June 1556 as a show of good faith.

Meanwhile, Chao Wen-hua was in trouble at court. Early in 1556 he had reported on his success in eradicating piracy; but in June, after reading reports of Hsü Hai's invasion and requests for reinforcements, the emperor ordered Yen Sung to explain what was going on. Chao had to volunteer to return to the southeast. He was ordered to pursue an aggressive strategy and to extirpate the pirates. It was now clear that the emperor would never pardon Hsü Hai.

During the six weeks between Hsü Hai's withdrawal from T'ung-hsiang in June and Chao Wen-hua's arrival in Chekiang in August, Hsü Hai and Hu Tsung-hsien were involved in negotiations for the surrender or withdrawal of the various groups in the raiding party. Hsü Hai was himself only one of several leaders among the raiders, and the whole group was loosely organized and coordinated. Although Hsü Hai directed the siege of T'ung-hsiang, many raiding parties took part in it. When Hu Tsung-hsien sent agents to offer the various pirate leaders besieging the city a pardon, only Hsü Hai responded and withdrew. The other groups then left because the siege had gone on too long and the countryside had already been thoroughly pillaged. These groups continued to plunder and remained a problem.

The leaders of the raiding parties were at odds over the issue of surrender. Many did not trust imperial officials and refused to consider the offer. Hu and Hsü Hai negotiated a deal. Those who wanted to return to Japan would be given ships; those who wanted to remain would be given military appointments. Meanwhile Hsü Hai's forces took part in campaigns to wipe out pirates along the Wu-sung River between Soochow and the sea, and this campaign was coordinated with attacks on pirate strongholds along the coast carried out by Wang Chih's adopted son. Hu's strategy seemed to be working. The overseas merchants were doing what imperial troops could

not. Hsü Hai was willing to withdraw his forces if he could get enough money to repay the lord of Ōsumi, and Hu indicated that he could arrange this. But when Chao Wen-hua arrived in August 1556, everything changed.

Shortly after he arrived in Chekiang, Chao Wen-hua publicly repudiated Hu Tsung-hsien's policy of appeasement. He declined to suggest how to resolve the crisis if surrender were not an option; that was Hu Tsung-hsien's problem. Hu now knew that he had to use the offer of withdrawal to contain the raiders until something else could be done. By this time the various groups in the raiding party had begun to fight among themselves, and Hu took advantage of this to eliminate some of the leaders through various deceptions and ruses. Hsü Hai continued to cooperate with Hu and still expected to be permitted to withdraw. He formally surrendered to Hu Tsung-hsien in September 1556, three weeks after Chao Wen-hua's return.

Hsü Hai surrendered under duress. Chao Wen-hua had sent agents to inform the raiders that they could withdraw, while he secretly ordered an official who opposed appeasement to ambush them as they retreated to the coast. Hsü Hai escaped and withdrew to a nearby estate. He no longer trusted Chao, but he had no way to escape. He had to try to negotiate some arrangement whereby he and his men could withdraw. Hu Tsung-hsien still supported him, but Chao insisted on his death. Imperial forces began to encircle his camp, and Hsü prepared for the attack by fortifying his position. The final battle lasted for a week, the outcome by no means certain until the last day. Hsü Hai was found drowned. Several leaders, including his brother, were captured and subsequently executed, and his forces were pursued and destroyed.³³

Wang Chih's surrender

Chao Wen-hua still thought that he could arrange Wang Chih's pardon. Chief grand secretary Yen Sung agreed with his analysis of the coastal situation. By pardoning people engaged in trade, by enlisting them to attack pirates, and by allowing them to pursue their livelihoods, the number of people who were driven to piracy would decline and the number of people willing to suppress it would grow. Wang Chih was to be recruited into the local military establishment and ordered to suppress piracy.

However, in September 1557, several weeks before Wang Chih arrived in

33 For a detailed account of the tactics and maneuvers of both sides, see Charles O. Hucker, "Hu Tsung-hsien's campaign against Hsü Hai, 1556," in *Chinese ways in warfare*, ed. Frank A. Kierman, Jr., and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), pp. 273–307.

Chekiang, Chao was dismissed from office. He had offended Yen Sung and displeased the emperor. After the main ceremonial gates to the Forbidden City burned down in May 1557, the emperor ordered that they be rebuilt at once. As minister of works Chao was technically responsible for this, even though he had been on tour in the south. When the emperor saw that the work was still in progress four months later, he told Yen Sung to inform Chao that he should ask to retire. He then reduced Chao to the status of a commoner and exiled him along with his son, but Chao died before the sentence could be imposed. No one had dared to impeach him. The emperor himself had to have Chao demoted on a technicality, and he upbraided Yen Sung for failing to report any of Chao's wrongdoing. He began to suspect that Yen Sung was not altogether trustworthy, his long service notwithstanding. Under these circumstances, Yen Sung could not press the emperor to reverse his policy of extirpation or dare to request that Wang Chih be pardoned.

In October 1557, Wang Chih arrived at Chou-shan Island off the coast of Chekiang with a large trading fleet. He immediately sent envoys to Hu's headquarters to announce his surrender and to request permission to trade. Hu sent the envoys back; Wang was to await his orders. Hu Tsung-hsien now faced a dilemma. He could not let Wang Chih go; but if he accepted his surrender and guaranteed his safety, he might have to execute him. He decided to accept Wang's surrender. Wang presented himself in November and was detained in prison while Hu tried to work something out. When he first announced Wang's capture, Hu added that Wang could be put to death or exiled to an island garrison. His subordinates took violent exception to this proposal. Fearing that his plan would be exposed, Hu recalled his first report and simply concluded that Wang Chih's fate was in the emperor's hands.

The emperor (who referred to Wang as a "bandit sorcerer") temporarily left the matter to Hu's discretion, and Wang was led to believe that some sort of pardon might still be arranged. He languished in prison until December 1559, when Hu finally carried out the emperor's order to execute him. Wang remained uncertain of his fate until the day of his execution.

After Wang Chih had been taken prisoner, his adopted son and his followers retreated to their stronghold on Chou-shan Island, convinced that they had been betrayed. They no longer intended to engage in trade. In April 1558 they were joined by another large raiding party from Japan, and this combined force began to attack cities in Chekiang and northern Fukien. Late in July the emperor relieved Hu Tsung-hsien's principal commanders, Ch'i Chi-kuang (1528–88) and Yü Ta-yu (1503–79), of their commands and ordered them to suppress piracy in Chekiang within a

month. If they failed to do this, they and their superior, Hu Tsung-hsien, were to be arrested and taken to Peking.

To counter growing criticism of his policies at court, Hu had earlier reported that the situation in Chekiang could be brought under control within the month. His enemies saw that he was held to this. However, Chou-shan Island could not be taken, and imperial forces suffered heavy losses during their several assaults on the main harbor. Hu presented, along with his reports of the battles, a white deer that had been captured on the island. Pleased by this auspicious sign, the emperor chose to overlook his failure, attacked his critics, and ordered Hu to remain in office.

His commanders did not fare so well. In April 1559 Yü Ta-yu was arrested on Hu Tsung-hsien's orders for having failed to pursue the pirate fleets that abandoned Chou-shan Island in December 1558. Although imperial troops had not been able to retake the island, the pirates had been besieged and harassed for almost a year. When it became clear that they intended to withdraw, Yü and other commanders wanted to pursue them, but Hu Tsung-hsien instead simply let them sail away. Early in 1559 a censor from Fukien accused Hu of sending the pirates to Fukien so that he would no longer have to deal with them. Hu suspected that Yü Ta-yu (who was also from Fukien) had made this known to the censor, so he in turn impeached Yü on the same count and saw that he was dismissed from office.

Ch'i Chi-kuang was also dismissed in the summer of 1559, but he was ordered to train an army and to redeem himself in combat. Ch'i recruited 3,000 men from the countryside south of Hangchow (a region noted for troublesome farmers) and drilled them in special tactics designed to combat Japanese warriors, whom Ch'i considered superior fighters. This army, which later became known as the Ch'i army, proved very successful and was used for the suppression of piracy and banditry until 1567.

Piracy after 1560

After the remnants of Wang Chih's fleet abandoned Chou-shan Island in 1558, only small bands of pirates remained in the Yangtze delta region, for the most part in Yangchow prefecture along the northern bank of the Yangtze River. These bands were gradually wiped out during the summer of 1559. During the 1560s most disturbances in the region south of Nanking were caused by disbanded troops that had been recruited to suppress piracy during the mid-1550s.

In 1559 a terrible drought destroyed the summer crops in the Yangtze delta area. After years of brigandage, local farmers were hard pressed to

survive another season. Starvation was widespread, and no relief was available. Soon reports of banditry began to reach the court. In December 1559 the governor of the Southern Metropolitan Region was forced to flee Soochow after a gang of several hundred local toughs attacked him. This group had been recruited during the height of the pirate invasions to protect the city and subsequently refused to disband. After this incident, they fled the city and escaped by taking to ships on Lake T'ai, where they remained a problem. In January 1560 similar groups of disbanded soldiers attacked cities north of the Yangtze. These groups presented no real difficulties for regional authorities. Without their overseas allies, they could be isolated and wiped out one by one. After 1560 the region from Nanking south to the bay of Hangchow remained quiet. Large-scale raiding and brigandage was now limited to Fukien, Kwangtung, and southern Kiangsi.

Between 1560 and 1563 the remaining pirate bands gathered on islands off the coast of Fukien. The remnants of Wang Chih's forces took over Chin-men Island (modern Quemoy) in 1559, and in alliance with pirate fleets from Kwangtung, launched major raids into southern Fukien and northern Kwangtung. In December 1562 a large raiding party captured the prefectural city of Hsing-hua after a month-long siege, and most of the surrounding administrative cities were taken as well. Court inspectors reported that the situation was out of control.

Early in 1563 Ch'i Chi-kuang and his army were ordered to Fukien. In cooperation with local forces, he retook Hsing-hua and by May had destroyed the last major pirate base on the coast of Fukien. Those pirates who had managed to escape and to sail farther south were gradually killed or captured in a series of campaigns conducted in southern Kiangsi and Kwangtung between 1564 and 1566. During these campaigns, much land and many people who had formerly been in the hands of brigands returned to imperial control. During one such campaign against a brigand in northern Kwangtung, over 80,000 people were recovered. The mountainous region between Kwangtung, Fukien, and southern Kiangsi, which had been a haven for bandits since the early years of the sixteenth century, was brought under imperial control.

By 1567 piracy was no longer a serious problem along the southeastern coast. The problem of policy toward overseas trade still remained an issue, largely because the emperor refused to change his position. However, not long after he died in January 1567, the governor of Fukien requested that the ban on maritime trade be repealed and that a maritime customs office be established. On the advice of Yen Sung's successor, grand secretary Hsü Chieh (1503–83), the request was approved. The debate on court policy toward overseas trade, which had begun four decades earlier, finally ended.

The southeast coast was fortuitously opened to maritime trade at the same time that the Spanish (who had occupied the Philippines in 1565) first realized that this otherwise poor possession might serve as the base for a rich trade with China. The commander of the first fleet to the islands wrote in 1569: "We shall gain the commerce with China, whence come silks, porcelains, benzoin, musk, and other articles." This trade began in fact in 1573, when two galleons—the Manila galleons—returned to Aca-pulco laden with Chinese silk and porcelain. By 1576 trade between China and the Americas was well established, and it continued without interruption into the next century.³⁴

YEN SUNG'S DEMISE

In 1560, Yen Sung was eighty years old. He was feeble both in mind and in body and was no longer able to serve the emperor as diligently as he once had. For some years most of the emperor's orders had in fact been drafted by his son, Yen Shih-fan, who accompanied him while he was on duty. After his wife died in the summer of 1561 Yen's son had to wait on him at home, this being the only way Yen could keep his son from leaving Peking to take care of his mother's burial. His son, now in mourning, could no longer go with him to the western park of the Imperial City to wait on the emperor. At this point Yen could not even read the emperor's handwriting; he had to have the emperor's instructions carried home to his son for a response. His son was often drunk or otherwise debauched and thus unable to prepare something in time. When the emperor sent eunuchs to press for an answer, Yen had to draft something himself, and his drafts were now found wanting. He was simply too old to continue the work; he was after all not a Taoist immortal, but a sick old man. He was vulnerable, and soon he was undone.

Grand secretary Hsü Chieh, Yen's subordinate in the grand secretariat, had originally been recommended at court by Hsia Yen, whom Yen Sung put to death in 1548. Hsü had never been on good terms with Yen Sung, and after he became a grand secretary in 1552, he worked to undermine Yen's position with the emperor by opposing his policies, giving contrary advice, and covertly directing impeachment proceedings against Yen and his agents. Yen suspected that Hsü Chieh was in some way behind various attempts to impeach him, but he could prove nothing. He tried on several occasions to have Hsü dismissed from office, but was foiled each time. Hsü continued to advise the emperor on matters of policy, and eventually he

34 See William Lytle Schurz, *The Manila galleon* (New York, 1939), p. 27.

was allowed to prepare elixirs and plant drugs, a task that had previously been entrusted to Yen Sung alone.

The emperor never fully trusted Yen Sung. He would sometimes ignore or refuse Yen's advice simply to exercise his absolute right to decide a matter. When Yen could no longer serve him, he began to look for a replacement. Hsü Chieh had waited eight years for this moment. He knew that the emperor no longer found Yen Sung useful and that he despised Yen's son. He tried to exacerbate the emperor's dissatisfaction whenever possible. In 1562 he personally took charge of the reconstruction of the emperor's residential palace, which had burned down in December 1561. Yen Sung opposed rebuilding the palace and suggested instead that the emperor move to another palace where the deposed emperor Ying-tsung had been kept as a virtual prisoner during the 1450s. The emperor refused to consider this. His palace was rebuilt in just four months, and in June 1562, less than two months after he had taken up residence again, Yen Sung was dismissed from office.

After his confidant and advisor T'ao Chung-wen became ill and retired from court in 1559, the emperor had to select a new Taoist adept to supervise divination ceremonies. At first his new diviner simply burned the sealed questions that were submitted to him, and the emperor was rarely able to get a satisfactory reply. This could not go on. The diviner and the eunuch who delivered the envelopes started to read the questions before they burned them. They were thus able to divine answers in accord with the emperor's wishes.

In league with this diviner, Hsü Chieh began to attack Yen Sung. Shortly before he was dismissed, Yen was the subject of a series of responses. When the emperor routinely inquired why the empire was not well-governed, he was informed that it was because good men were not used and unfilial men did not retire. Upon inquiring who was filial and loyal and who was not, he was informed that Hsü Chieh was loyal and Yen Sung was not. When this was subsequently confirmed in other divinations, the emperor became very agitated. News of the incident was passed along informally by a eunuch to a censor, who immediately impeached Yen Sung's son. When Yen tried to intercede on behalf of his son, the emperor rebuked him. Clearly no longer in favor, he was forced out of office in June 1562.

The emperor now took Hsü Chieh into his confidence. He had lost his only close companions in 1560, when T'ao Chung-wen and Lu Ping both died within weeks of one another. He had treated T'ao as an equal and Lu Ping (who had saved his life in 1539) as a brother. Yen Sung was gone. Only Hsü Chieh remained in favor. Hsü was careful not to attack Yen Sung

and his partisans right away; instead he appeared conciliatory. When memorials impeaching Hu Tsung-hsien were received late in 1562, the emperor said that Hu was not a member of Yen's faction, and Hsü did not press the matter.

He could not risk criticizing the emperor. Every past attempt to undo Yen Sung had failed because the memorialists could not limit their criticism to Yen Sung; they invariably attacked certain of the emperor's policies and decisions as well. The installation of an heir apparent had been put off for over a decade and the emperor did not wish to discuss the matter. Yet memorialists felt compelled to raise the issue in connection with Yen's crimes. The emperor would in the end be so annoyed at the memorialist that he would overlook the subject of his memorial and punish him instead. Hsü Chieh kept this in mind.

In 1562, when his father was dismissed from office, Yen Shih-fan was exiled to a garrison in a malarial region. Instead of proceeding to his place of exile, he returned to his ancestral home in Kiangsi, where he began to recruit a large bodyguard. In September 1564, on the occasion of the emperor's birthday, Yen Sung sent a book on how to summon cranes (the messengers of the Taoist immortals) and asked that his son be allowed to return from exile to care for him. This request was denied. In December 1564 a judicial intendant reported that Yen Shih-fan was indeed living in Kiangsi and had recruited over four thousand men. Yen Shih-fan and his associates were accused of treason, arrested, and taken to Peking for trial.

The first indictment against Yen Shih-fan accused him, among other things, of complicity in the deaths of several officials who had been executed on the emperor's orders. When he was shown the draft of the indictment, Hsü Chieh deleted everything but the material concerning treasonable offenses. The emperor immediately approved the sentences. He had long despised Yen Sung's son. In April 1565 Yen Shih-fan was put to death, his father was reduced to the status of a commoner, and the Yen family property was confiscated. Yen Sung died later in that year, an outcast with no one at court to turn to for help.

THE EMPEROR'S LAST YEARS

The emperor had been suffering from insomnia (a symptom of elixir poisoning) since at least 1560. He often worked through the night, reading and commenting on memorials and reports. Early in 1564 Hsü Chieh asked the emperor to select more grand secretaries, in part because he could not handle the work alone. The emperor was also now often subject to swings of mood, becoming in turn depressed and enraged. His eunuch attendants

tried to humor him whenever possible. In the summer of 1564 they began to drop peaches into his bed while he slept and later told him that they had fallen from heaven, gifts of the immortals. He was delighted.

By 1565 his mental capacity was certainly diminished. In March 1566 he told Hsü Chieh that he had been seriously ill for fourteen months. He wanted to return to the place of his birth to strengthen his life force. Although he brought this up repeatedly, Hsü Chieh dissuaded him each time by arguing that he could not withstand the hardships of the journey in his present condition. No handwritten commands were issued after 11 November 1566. The emperor lingered for two months, and on 23 January 1567 his condition deteriorated. He was moved from his palace in the western park back to his residential palace in the Forbidden City, where he died around midday.

The editors of the eighteenth-century *Official history of the Ming* considered the emperor "a mediocre ruler." T'an Ch'ien (1594–1658), a Ming historian, said that the Chia-ching emperor was somewhat better than the various Han, T'ang, and Sung emperors who had sought immortality through Taoist elixirs, but was on the whole undistinguished. His principal fault as a ruler was a common one, which is aptly summed up in Francis Bacon's (1561–1626) observation:

The difficulties in princes' business are many and great; but the greatest difficulty is often their own mind. For it is common with princes (saith Tacitus) to will contradictories, Sunt plerumque regum voluntates vehementes, et inter se contrariae [The desires of kings are for the most part vehement and inconsistent]. For it is the solecism of power to think to command the end, and yet not to endure the mean.³⁵

THE MING EMPIRE IN THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY

The first half of the sixteenth century is generally regarded as a time of great economic activity, of growth in agricultural technology and production, and of large-scale development in cloth and handicraft manufacture. It is also regarded as a period during which the autocratic power of the emperor grew and during which imperial control was strong. Yet these views seem to contradict, for if imperial control were strong, then taxes, in particular taxes from new land brought under cultivation and on commerce and handicraft manufacture, should in theory have provided new sources of revenue. In fact it was generally not possible to collect revenues at quotas that had been set over a century earlier. By that measure at least, control was not as strong as it once had been.

35 Francis Bacon, "Of empire," in *The essays of Francis Bacon* (New York, 1908), pp. 84–85.

Although both the Cheng-te and Chia-ching emperors tried in different ways to assert their prerogatives and to rule as autocrats, both were ultimately frustrated. Each was reduced to asserting his authority in negative ways. Officials who shared special interests were able to direct imperial policies to their own ends despite the wishes of the emperor.

The principal confrontations between officials and these two emperors concerned the proper role of the ruler, and both emperors fell short of officials' expectations, albeit in very different ways. The vision of emperorship that emerged in these confrontations drew on the teaching of neo-Confucian statecraft, a body of thought that took shape in the Southern Sung (1127–79) court. This vision of emperorship esteemed such sage kings of antiquity as King Wu (c. 1027–1025 B.C.), the founder of the Chou dynasty, who "had only to let his robes fall down, and fold his hands, and the empire was orderly ruled."³⁶ The ideal emperor was to act as an impartial adjudicator of bureaucratic disputes and a passionless vessel for ritual use. Even the Chia-ching emperor, who sought in the early years of his reign to uphold classical traditions of rulership, found this vision too constricting. It served nonetheless to constrain and hamper emperors' efforts to assert themselves. Although concerted and sometimes brutal attempts to enforce an emperor's will were carried out during this period, they proved by and large ineffectual. This is nowhere better evidenced than in the failure of repeated attempts to regain control of tax revenues that had fallen into private hands.

By the early sixteenth century, much taxable land had disappeared from tax registers by one trick or another, and much new land that had been brought under cultivation was never registered. Liu Chin's efforts to regain control of the original revenue quotas assessed on military households and their lands came to nothing. Attempts to regain control of estates and wasteland in the early years of the Chia-ching reign were similarly frustrated. Officials took their share of this new bounty. The tax-exempt status of officials was substantially increased in 1512, 1531, and 1545.³⁷

The ban on maritime trade was never effectively imposed, and the court was also unable to gain any substantial revenue from commercial taxes. The profit from advances in agricultural technology and production, from trade and commerce, and from handicraft and cloth manufacture went into other hands. Although the economy of the Ming empire flourished and some subjects benefitted from it, the imperial fisc did not.

³⁶ See Legge, *The Chinese classics*, III, p. 316.

³⁷ For a fuller discussion of this topic, see Wang Yü-ch'üan (Wang Yuquan), *Lai wu chi* (Peking, 1983), pp. 110–341.

All these problems remained unresolved into the next century. It appears in retrospect that the imperial administration achieved a precarious stability in the early sixteenth century, but was unable to reverse its loss of control over lands and revenues, despite two very different attempts to do so. And the antagonistic relation between the emperor and his officials which characterized both reigns continued during the long and eventful reign of the Chia-ching emperor's grandson, the Wan-li emperor.

CHAPTER 9

THE LUNG-CH'ING AND WAN-LI REIGNS, 1567–1620

THE TWO EMPERORS AND THEIR PREDECESSORS

The character of the Ming monarchy had changed markedly over the two centuries preceding the reigns considered here. Early emperors directed military campaigns, proclaimed laws, organized state institutions, and managed the bureaucracy. After institutional arrangements had been settled and the civil service fully developed, the sovereign no longer assumed an active role in the management of imperial affairs. The bureaucrats simply wanted the emperor to personify their ideals of virtue and wisdom, so that as the highest authority on earth, his arbitration of issues in dispute would be seen as final and incontrovertible. This method of decision-making seldom supplied rational solutions to problems; but when backed by the absolute authority of the emperor, the solutions that resulted were unchallengeable.

To retain his absolute authority, the emperor was to refrain from involving himself in the issues brought to his attention. He gradually became more secluded, and his power assumed a negative character. He could readily dismiss or punish any official, order tax remissions, and grant pardons. It was, however, extremely difficult for him to introduce proposals on his own initiative. Earlier emperors had not given up any part of their imperial prerogatives, but when it became clear that it was no longer practical to direct state affairs from the throne, court officials began to speak reverently of early administrative arrangements as "the ancestors' systems," implying thereby that it would be unfilial to tamper with the existing order. In reality, by paying lip service to these original institutional arrangements, they were warning everyone—even the emperor—not to make far-reaching changes.

The Hung-chih emperor (r. 1488–1505) lived up to the bureaucrats' expectations. While making no decisions of great significance, he kept his court in peace and harmony and led a personal life which, though colorless, was impeccable by conventional standards. His son, the Cheng-te emperor (r. 1506–21), on the other hand, resisted the strictures of court life in every way possible. He assumed personal command of the army, toured the

provinces mixing business with pleasure, and allowed eunuchs and army officers to take over duties that properly belonged to civil officials. This hedonistic sovereign remained thoroughly scornful of ritual proceedings. When cornered by his bureaucrats with “fundamental norms” that he could not resist, he devised schemes to separate himself as an individual from the monarchy as an institution.

The Chia-ching emperor (r. 1522–66) partially revived the early style of monarchy, but his infatuation with Taoist practices and his neglect of state affairs drew criticism from his officials. Yet his seclusion from the outer court, his personal exercise of the imperial power of appointment, his attention to ritualistic details, and even the cruel and arbitrary punishments that he meted out to his favorites and his critics were not incompatible with the standards of traditional statecraft.

The absolute power of the throne was tolerated because in theory it was impersonal. In settling every case at the highest level with arbitrary decisiveness, the emperor inevitably inflicted injuries on individuals unjustly. His acts of injustice, however, were free from personal malice. When the Chia-ching emperor developed close personal ties with his chief grand secretary’s family, his ability to rule impersonally was impaired. This state of affairs not only opened the door to endless intrigues and machinations; grand secretary Yen Sung also cast a shadow of fear and suspicion over the imperial court that lingered for decades. This situation did not improve after Yen Sung’s demise: the counsellors of the Chia-ching emperor’s successors continued to imitate his style of government by betrayal and even by treachery, although to a lesser degree.

Information on Chu Tsai-hou, the Lung-ch’ing emperor (r. 1567–72) is vague and contradictory. He took no part in court politics, but his authority over the bureaucracy was still nominal. The imperial historians’ laudatory accounts of his frugality and kindness have been proved untrue or without substance; more damaging reports on his character and personality can actually be verified.¹

1 For refutation of the Lung-ch’ing emperor’s frugality and kindness, see Meng Sen, *Ming tai shih* (1957; rpt. Taipei, 1967). The strongest evidence that the Lung-ch’ing emperor could not speak in public comes from a memorial submitted by Kao Kung in 1572, not long after the Wan-li emperor’s accession, in which it is said that even for perfunctory replies from the throne during the morning audience, the Lung-ch’ing emperor let grand secretaries act on his behalf. Kao emphasized that the practice impaired public confidence. This episode is referred to below. The memorial is found in Ch’en Tzu-lung, et al., ed., *Huang Ming ching shih wen pien* (P’ing-lu t’ang, 1638; facsimile rpt. Taipei, 1964), 301, p. 8b. This piece of information also lends credence to what is said about the Lung-ch’ing emperor in *Ping t’a i yen* (second half of the sixteenth century; rpt. in *Chi lu hui pien*, 1617; photographic rpt. Shanghai, 1938), a work which is attributed to Kao Kung but which is of questionable authenticity.

Since he never made any important policy decisions, the Lung-ch'ing emperor managed to avoid controversy. In his memoir, grand secretary Kao Kung impresses upon the reader that the emperor had a very limited mental capacity. He was inarticulate, self-pitying, and incapable of asserting himself as an individual, let alone as a sovereign. Although Kao's book is itself of doubtful authenticity and reliability, his portrait of an emperor devoid of personal character and strength, who showed no interest or even curiosity about state affairs, is not inconsistent with public records.

The Lung-ch'ing emperor had long been held back by his father. Even as the emperor's eldest surviving son, he was denied the title of heir apparent. When he was at last installed, he was not accorded the honors and privileges appropriate to his position. The Chia-ching emperor insisted that he and his younger half-brother, the Prince of Ching, be treated as equals. In fact, when it was necessary to refer to the two princes in memorials, courtiers were always careful to treat them as if they were identical twins. In an age when such gestures carried profound significance, the arrangement contributed to speculation that the Lung-ch'ing emperor would be eliminated and that his younger brother would be declared heir apparent. This neglect and insecurity clouded the life of the future emperor until he finally ascended the throne exactly one month before his twenty-ninth birthday.

Although the Lung-ch'ing emperor had received a normal Confucian education, he was not specially tutored in the statecraft of his day. There is no evidence that he ever understood the true meaning of his surroundings or of his own role as emperor. On the other hand, there is no conclusive evidence that he was actually mentally disturbed or mentally retarded. Curiously, his most notable involvement in public affairs was his participation in state ceremonies, which exceeded in pomp and grandeur those of previous reigns. Two of the most spectacular ceremonies were the grand review of the capital garrison in 1569 and the celebration of the winter solstice in 1570. There is reason to believe that such pageants were arranged by his enterprising grand secretaries to impress the public with the imperial presence. From the record, it appears that the emperor could not even carry on the stylized dialogue of his morning audience; grand secretaries spoke on his behalf.

The emperor can only be faulted for his excessive indulgence in personal pleasures. The five and a half years of relative tranquility and prosperity that marked his reign proved that, for the short term, state affairs could move on without the sovereign's personal direction. His inability or disinclination to intervene in affairs of state in fact enabled competent ministers

and grand secretaries to perform better. But the damage he did was institutional and long-term in effect, for he needed a chief executive whose decisions were emphatically backed up by the throne. Some form of pretense was required, for the delegation of the imperial authority was against the dynasty's tradition. Since the emperor could not perform the essential tasks of governing, the contest for power within the grand secretariat intensified. Thereafter, it became even more difficult for the highest ministers to retain public confidence.

THE WAN-LI REIGN

The reign of the Lung-ch'ing emperor's son, Chu I-chün, the Wan-li emperor (r. 1573–1620), should not be summarily dismissed as one of indolence and irresponsibility. This oversimplification draws an incomplete picture of a historical figure and obscures the institutional causes of his failure, thus making subsequent events incomprehensible.

The Wan-li emperor was intelligent and perceptive; his own claim to precociousness seems to be justified. He read widely; and even in his last days, when he had been secluded in the palace for decades and had become completely estranged from his bureaucrats, he remained well informed by the standards of his day. Stories about his adolescent years depict a restless youth whose creative energies were frustrated at every turn. He was forced to fill the role of a cloistered sovereign. Aside from being disciplined by his mother and grand secretary Chang Chü-cheng for getting drunk with eunuchs in the night, he was also criticized for practicing his calligraphy too often, for going horseback riding, and for presiding over archery contests—all pursuits deemed incompatible with his role as emperor. His interest in the welfare of the populace during the early years of his reign, as well as his concern about official corruption and the deterioration of the frontier defenses, are often passed over by his critics.

Owing to the influence of his mother, a devout Buddhist, he usually did not mete out the death penalty. Lu Shan-chi, who had been demoted by the emperor for siphoning funds from the privy purse for an unauthorized emergency delivery to the army, commented after the emperor's death that his "major fault" was being "over lenient." Even modern historians who are quite critical of the Wan-li emperor note that he did not allow the secret police to harass his bureaucrats and the populace. His eunuch secretary Liu Jo-yü, however, observed that on occasions the emperor intended to have remonstrating officials beaten to death, but that he was not consistently cruel.

The emperor could, however, be vengeful. He was easily hurt, and when

that happened his magnanimity was quickly overruled by his psychological defenses. Chang Chü-cheng, grand secretary and imperial tutor, in his effort to induce the child emperor to become a paragon of virtue, had with his mother's approval imposed on him a rigid standard of personal conduct, including some measure of frugal living. The emperor never forgot the humiliation of those days, when he was overawed by Chang. After the grand secretary's death, upon discovering that his tutor had himself lived in lavish style, the emperor contemplated his revenge for some time before he found the occasion to exact it. Two years after Chang's death, an imperial princess accused him of having illegally taken over her family estate; the emperor seized the opportunity to order the confiscation of Chang's properties and to exile his sons to the frontier. He simultaneously issued an edict in which he denounced Chang for his crimes. The posthumous exposure of Chang's "crimes" had a profound effect on the youthful sovereign. Perceiving the double standard of his high officials, he became cynical. Also, he himself became a hoarder of worldly goods. The crass greed displayed by this Son of Heaven remained an embarrassment until the end of his reign.

When the emperor attempted to assume control of imperial affairs, the result was disastrous. This happened not long after Chang Chü-cheng's death, when the emperor was about twenty years old. During the campaign to rid the government of Chang's cohorts, censorial officials found that they could impeach highly ranked courtiers with impunity. Polemical arguments were tossed out in such volume that finally the emperor became alarmed. He angrily asked the censors, if his own appointees were unacceptable to them, who else, in their opinion, would be better qualified to fill the vacancies in the bureaucracy? The question exposed the helplessness of the throne, and at the same time inadvertently acknowledged a fundamental organizational deficiency within the government. There was no orderly way to reach a consensus among the bureaucrats on any matter of policy or appointment. Consequently, negative criticisms always had a tendency to outweigh positive proposals. An official could at any time criticize and censure a man of responsibility; but he would encounter great difficulties if he nominated a competent person or initiated a constructive measure.

After 1585 the emperor himself became the major target of criticism. Remonstrating officials criticized his negligence and questioned the propriety of his private life. Enraged, the emperor retaliated by ordering that the remonstrators and the palace personnel who gave out the information be beaten. But this did not help matters. The mystique of the throne had to remain impersonal. By becoming entangled in the machinations of his

bureaucrats the emperor not only damaged his personal reputation, but also impaired the effectiveness of his office. The sovereign's power to punish, moreover, should have been reserved to settle important issues. The severity of imperial justice and its unpredictableness had silenced opposition during previous reigns. Yet when the Wan-li emperor exercised this prerogative routinely but indecisively, all was lost. His critics were far from being discouraged. In the emperor's own words, they braved the penalty to attain instant fame. Only on grand secretary Shen Shih-hsing's advice did the emperor decide to leave annoying remonstrating papers unanswered. But the damage was already done. And the practice of ignoring unpleasant counsel set the emperor on a path of passive resistance—a campaign that he carried on against his bureaucrats throughout the rest of his reign, with grave consequences for the efficacy of imperial administration.

The issue of imperial succession was raised early in 1586. By conferring the title of imperial consort on his favorite concubine, Lady Cheng, the emperor elevated her above all his secondary wives, leaving her inferior in rank only to the empress. It was not difficult for the courtiers to read his intentions. He wished to raise his third son, Chu Ch'ang-hsün, to a rank above that held by his eldest son (his second son had died prematurely), using the principle that sons derived their ranks from their mothers. This move raised a divisive issue from which no courtier could stand apart. Some bureaucrats defended primogeniture in principle; they regarded it as an essential component of natural law. Others, however, became involved in the dispute over "the foundation of the state" because they had to choose as their future master one of the two princes; and they knew from past experience that the wrong move, even silence at this point, could cost them their own lives and bring misfortune and disgrace to their families when the succession was finally settled.

Yet having created a controversy of such magnitude, the emperor lacked the resolve to carry through his plan. He never revealed that he had promoted his younger son in order to please the woman he loved. Instead, he himself paid lip service to the inviolability of the principle of primogeniture. He did not enlist the services of a confidant within the bureaucracy to advance his causes. His procrastination in designating an heir nonetheless led his most senior officials to distrust him, notably the senior grand secretaries Shen Shih-hsing (1535–1614) and Wang Hsi-chüeh (1534–1611). In an era when factionalism already threatened to hamstring the civil service, the emperor's inaction supplied a focal point for partisan polemics that continued long after his death.

This sequence of events reveals the emperor's inability to fulfill the requirements of the monarchy as it existed in the late Ming. Yet these

events also reveal the impossible conditions imposed on the monarch, conditions which had grown haphazardly from circumstances rather than from design. Although an autocrat, the emperor had no legislative powers. Although the final arbiter, he had to operate in a legal haze. And when he wanted the court to recognize his human needs, he discovered that he was not to have any. In handling the succession issue, the Wan-li emperor remained isolated. Only in 1601, under unbearable pressure from his advisors, did he consent to install his eldest son Chu Ch'ang-lo as heir apparent. Thirteen years passed before he sent his third son, the Prince of Fu, to his provincial residence, as dynastic law required. During the intervening years, he became thoroughly alienated from his officials.

This antagonistic relationship between the ruler and his courtiers had a long history. As early as 1588, when the imperial succession had not yet become an issue, the veritable record of the reign records that a remonstrating memorial which accused him of accepting bribes from the eunuch Chang Ching had already dampened the emperor's enthusiasm for his official role. Henceforth, he reduced his public appearances and eventually suspended his morning audience with the court indefinitely. Toward the end of the sixteenth century, he appeared only at the victory celebrations held after successful military campaigns. The business of the imperial court was conducted exclusively on paper, which gave the sovereign the option to leave some papers unread, and the Wan-li emperor often took advantage of this.

By the end of his reign, he had failed to fill a number of important positions in the capital and in the provinces; and resignations of high-ranked officials were left unacknowledged. Some of those officials quit their posts without authorization, and still the emperor failed to take action against them. The deadlock was complete: the emperor sought to paralyze the imperial bureaucracy, while it sought to constrain the emperor and to dictate his behavior, even the details of his private life.

The emperor's perspicuity contributed to his failure as a monarch. Although he never explicitly stated it, he seemed to realize that he could not reform the imperial bureaucracy as an institution.² His inability to do that was as unfortunate for the dynasty as it was for the emperor. For forty-eight years he had to reign without ruling, confined in his palace as a virtual prisoner of his bureaucracy.

² The strongest evidence of such an understanding is the emperor's conversation with Shen Shih-hsing on 25 August 1590. The minutes appear in *Ming shih lu, Shen-tsung shih lu* (1630; rpt. Taipei, 1961-66), pp. 4186-91. For an English translation, see my 1987, *A year of no significance: The Ming dynasty in decline* (New Haven, 1981), pp. 230-34.

THE DECADE OF CHANG CHÜ-CHENG: A GLOWING
TWILIGHT*The power struggle*

A power struggle began immediately after the death of the Chia-ching emperor. Early in 1567, before the Lung-ch'ing emperor's accession, senior grand secretary Hsü Chieh had on his own initiative prepared a "last testament" for the deceased sovereign and secretly submitted it to the then heir apparent for his approval. The paper expressed the deceased emperor's regret over the harsh punishments meted out to remonstrating officials for various reasons during his reign. He ordered his successor to make amends. Once proclaimed, no one could question the authenticity of this document; the reversal of previous decisions was also beyond challenge. But the intention of the author of this testament was criticized. By taking the initiative, Hsü not only dissociated himself from the unpopular policies of the previous monarch, whom he had served as chief counsellor, but also posed as the patron of the recalled officials. When some of the banished courtiers were reappointed censors and supervising secretaries, grand secretary Hsü Chieh secured a substantial power base in the bureaucracy and could henceforth easily make his influence felt. His maneuver was criticized by Kao Kung, one of his colleagues.

As a politician, Kao was of a different breed. Having spent many years in the literary-educational branch of the government, he had gained an insight into high-level management and was anxious to put his knowledge to work. He too had gathered a following, a small party of officials who, because of previous associations, honored and deferred to him as their mentor. Furthermore, before being appointed grand secretary Kao Kung had served as tutor to the heir apparent, now the emperor. This background enabled him to contend with Hsü Chieh for control of the inner court.

Kao Kung was brash and aggressive. He had a clear perception of the habitual practices of officialdom and never hid his contempt for its stylized mannerisms. In carrying out a policy, when a method would work, Kao Kung was willing to cut red tape; he was not even worried if, strictly speaking, his methods contradicted the letter of law. For these reasons, he was a natural enemy of the censorial-supervising personnel. He saw them as petty and obstructive, each holding his position to protect the interests of some group, often utilizing the impeachment proceedings to retaliate against those who threatened their interests.

In the spring of 1567 Kao was impeached by several censors. He suspected, with good reason, that the proceedings had been instigated by Hsü

Chieh, and urged one of his own followers to accuse Hsü of having obstructed the designation of the Lung-ch'ing emperor as heir apparent when he was serving as an advisor to the Chia-ching emperor, apparently in the hope of fanning a grudge between the emperor and his chief grand secretary. Now both under criticism, Hsü and Kao simultaneously retired to their homes on the pretext of poor health, as was customary in such cases. In fact, they had put their dispute to the arbitration of the throne. Subsequent imperial rescripts, however, did not show any partiality. Both grand secretaries were urged to return to office.

Before the case was finally settled, a number of papers censuring Kao Kung were submitted. The former tutor to the emperor was said to be "crafty" and "treacherous." The milder charges asked for his removal; the more antagonistic demanded his execution. The petitioners included not only the censorial-supervising officials, but also officials from the six ministries in Peking and some from service agencies and offices in Nanking. In all twenty-eight memorials were submitted accusing him of various offenses. In June 1567 Kao Kung was forced to retire.

Kao took his revenge against Hsü Chieh a year later, and Chang Chü-cheng played an important role in this plot. Chang, an associate grand secretary, had been a close friend of Kao Kung's for many years. Like Kao, he also had had a long career in the literary-educational branch of the government. Like Kao, he had also served as the Lung-ch'ing emperor's tutor. Moreover, he shared with Kao Kung certain ideas on how imperial policy should be conducted. But while Kao was impatient and outspoken, Chang was noted for his deliberation and prudence. He was willing to bide his time.

Kao's opportunity came in the summer of 1568. Hsü Chieh was censured by a supervising secretary. The main charge dealt with frontier defense, but the Chia-ching emperor's testament was also brought up. Hsü Chieh was accused of using the testament to expose the shortcomings of the deceased emperor. Since the accuser had a personal grudge against Hsü and was not acting on behalf of Kao Kung, the grand secretary was less vigilant. He naturally petitioned to the throne to clear himself; and at the same time he offered his resignation, fully expecting that the emperor would ask him to remain in his present position. But Chang Chü-cheng instructed the official who was drafting the presentation copy of the Lung-ch'ing emperor's rescript to accept the resignation.

Once Hsü had retired, Li Ch'un-fang, a mild-mannered man, became the senior grand secretary. Chang Chü-cheng waited for another year and a half to make his next move. Early in 1570, a court controversy forced the minister of personnel out of office. Chang conferred with the eunuchs close

to the emperor and arranged to recall Kao Kung as an associate grand secretary concurrently holding the ministerial post that had just been vacated, an extraordinary procedure. Chang's close ties with the emperor's personal staff at this time aroused very little attention.

On his return, Kao did something that later tainted his reputation. He lost no time in disciplining the censors and supervising secretaries who had opposed him. Many of them left quietly, and with the power he wielded as minister of personnel, Kao Kung had no difficulty in reshuffling the rest. At this time the throne was represented by the eunuchs in the Directorate of Ceremonial, with whom Chang Chü-cheng kept in close touch. The partnership that Kao and Chang had formed integrated several branches of the imperial administration at the highest levels: the grand secretariat and the ministries, the censorial-supervising branch of the government, and the literary-educational branch of the government all came under the control of these two grand secretaries.

Li Ch'un-fang resigned in the summer of 1571, leaving Kao Kung as senior grand secretary. But even before that, Kao had emerged as the dominant personality in the Lung-ch'ing emperor's court.

The court badly needed a leader. For several years, the two grand secretaries had done their utmost to fill this void and to give the passive bureaucracy a sense of direction. When Yang Po was appointed minister of war, a general policy was declared. Thenceforth high posts in the Ministry of War would be given only to officials with military experience; they were closed to general office rotation. Moreover, the frontier districts were henceforth to be regularly inspected by the central government. When the Yellow River overflowed and disrupted traffic on the Grand Canal, a proposal was under study to construct a parallel channel to the east. At the same time, test runs were conducted to divert the grain shipments from the south to the sea route. In selecting capable men for regional posts, Kao Kung and Chang Chü-cheng were at their best.

Ch'i Chi-kuang, already in command at Chi-chou, was encouraged to provide the model for other defense posts. The appointment of Chang Hsüeh-yen as governor of Liao-tung and Li Ch'eng-liang as the commander-in-chief under him provided an effective answer to the restless Eastern Mongols. The transfer of the able general Wang Ch'ung-ku to oversee the joint command of Hsüan-fu, Ta-t'ung, and Shansi proved an even greater success. It was Wang who induced Altan to accept a peace settlement. Meanwhile, as governor-general of Kwangtung, Yin Cheng-mao repeatedly defeated the insurgents in his province, pirates and aborigines alike. While not spectacular, such deeds afforded some measure of satisfaction and promise after decades of failure and frustration. When he

was running the government Kao Kung used ad hoc measures to reach his ends; he never attempted to reorganize the bureaucracy systematically. The official history of the dynasty quotes him as saying: "I gave Yin Cheng-mao one million taels of silver; he might have pocketed a half of it, but he got the job done." A split between Kao Kung and Chang Chü-cheng was inevitable. Both were brilliant men, and both were competing for personal influence in the same arena. Whether Chang had planned to use Kao to clear the ground for himself remains uncertain. But despite their common outlook, their differences in temperament were too obvious to be dismissed. Also, Kao Kung was apt to let temporary success occupy his attention, while Chang Chü-cheng's vision was far-reaching. Consequently, Chang prevailed in the end.

Contemporary sources cite the sequel to the case of Hsü Chieh as the major cause that led to the break between the two. After Kao Kung's recall, he appointed a confidant as vice-defense circuit intendant of Soochow and Sung-chiang prefectures, which jurisdiction included Hsü's home, specifically to prosecute the retired senior grand secretary and his family. Kao's agent had no difficulty in gathering evidence against Hsü's household for practicing usury and for annexing small farmsteads through fraud and intimidation on a grand scale. He arrested Hsü Chieh's three sons and recommended that the Hsü family estates (which were said to comprise 60,000 *mou* of land) be confiscated. Hsü Chieh had to expect that some sort of punishment would be meted out to him as well, not inconceivably the death penalty. At this point Chang Chü-cheng interceded, and as a result Kao Kung agreed to lessen the penalty. But afterward he believed the rumor that Chang had appealed on Hsü's behalf only because he had received a bribe of 30,000 taels of silver. This allegation emerged in their conversation, and the controversy over it set them permanently apart.

It was at this point, in the summer of 1576, that the Lung-ch'ing emperor died. The case of Hsü Chieh and his sons was put aside. The time was ripe for a confrontation between Kao Kung and Chang Chü-cheng. One account relates that when Kao, as senior grand secretary, was approached by a eunuch with a message from the succeeding child emperor, he reacted with the question: "How can a boy of ten *sui* manage all the affairs under heaven?"³ The remark reflected skepticism about the authen-

³ The episode, however, seems to have substance. For one thing, it is mentioned in Shen Shih-hsing's *Tz'u-hsien t'ang chi* (Preface 1616; Microfilm No. 865-866, Library of Congress), 40, p. 22a, including the quoted remarks. Wang Shih-chen in *Chia-ching i lai nei ko shou fu chuan* (late sixteenth century; rpt. Vol. I of *Ming Ch'ing shih liao hui pien ch'u chi*, Taipei, 1967), 6, p. 24a, indicates that Feng Pao reported to the empresses dowager that Kao Kung intended to replace the Wan-li emperor with the Prince of Chou.

ticity of the oral order he had received through the eunuch, but it could also be interpreted as a slur against the emperor. The ambiguity of his remarks played into the hands of Feng Pao, the eunuch director who was in charge of the Directorate of Ceremonial, an enemy of Kao Kung but a close friend of Chang Chü-cheng. After conferring with Chang, Feng exaggerated the disrespectful tone of Kao's remarks to seditious or even treasonable proportions, and reported them to the young emperor's principal mother and to his natural mother, who soon after the incident were to become the empresses dowager.

Capital officials were called to the palace gate on short notice. A decree purportedly signed jointly by the Wan-li emperor and his two mothers was read in front of them. Kao Kung was accused of obstructing the sovereign from exercising his rights and of intimidating the imperial family. He was stripped of his rank and position and ordered to return to his home district, where he was placed under the surveillance of the local magistrate for life.

Thus, at the age of forty-seven, Chang Chü-cheng became senior grand secretary. He was ready to start his decade of administration; it can be seen as a last radiant glow in the twilight of the Ming dynasty.

The decade

The period of Chang Chü-cheng's administration from 1572 to 1582 was an exceptional phase in late Ming history; and Chang's achievement is evident in the treasury reserves he accumulated during that time. Shortly before his death, the granaries in Peking had enough grain in stock to meet the needs of the next nine years. The deposits in the old vault of the T'ai-ts'ang treasury, which were not to be drawn on except in an emergency, rose to over 6 million taels of silver. The Court of the Imperial Stud held another 4 million taels, and the vaults in Nanking likewise contained reserves of 2.5 million taels. The provincial treasuries of Kwangsi, Chekiang, and Szechwan on average held deposits of between 150,000 and 800,000 taels. This forms a paradoxical contrast to the normal state of affairs of the sixteenth century, when there were no reserves at all.

Still more notable, this was done without any structural reform of existing fiscal institutions. Chang's personal influence functioned in place of the legislative process needed to effect institutional change. However, his success earned him both the praise and blame of subsequent historians, who lauded his achievements and criticized his methods. Reform as such was never proclaimed; Chang merely declared that his purpose was to restore the institutional arrangements of the dynastic founders. This gesture gave him an air of legitimacy that enabled him to apply pressure on the bureaucracy, in the

name of the Wan-li emperor, in order to promote his measures. The actual means at his disposal to accomplish these were, in the main, limited to personnel management and control by documents. In addition, Chang had access to the reports of the secret police; and when he needed to, he was ready to utilize the power to punish that belonged to the throne alone.

With the eunuch director Feng Pao and the empress dowager Tz'u-sheng, the Wan-li emperor's natural mother, on his side, Chang Chü-cheng had no difficulty in directing the young emperor, who promoted him from senior grand secretary to chief grand secretary. The associate grand secretaries, all nominated by the chief grand secretary, received imperial commissions that explicitly subordinated them to Chang. And while it was never officially acknowledged, Chang Chü-cheng also exercised control over the Ministry of Personnel and the Censorate. Chang Han and Wang Kuo-kuang, the two *ministers of personnel who were in office during most of the decade*, took orders from him. Ch'en Chieh, the censor-in-chief, was even more servile. During his entire tenure, which lasted almost six years, Ch'en impeached only one provincial official, a man who had offended Chang by failing to present himself when the grand secretary was on leave in his home district in Hu-kuang province.

Chang could select his personal favorites as ministers and vice-ministers, governors-general, and governors. In addition to the several officials already mentioned, he sent Ling Yün-i to Kwangtung, Chang Chia-yin to Che-kiang, and Liang Meng-lung to Liao-tung to replace Chang Hsüeh-yen, who became the minister of revenue. Meanwhile P'an Chi-hsün was entrusted with the Yellow River conservancy. Military leaders of proven ability—in particular Ch'i Chi-kuang and Li Ch'eng-liang—continued to enjoy the grand secretary's confidence. They remained in their posts well over a decade, which was unusual in the late Ming. All these men were enterprising, innovative, and conscious of their support in high places.

As grand secretary, Chang Chü-cheng had no power to initiate policy, let alone to give orders. However, he circumvented this constraint through private contacts. The grand secretary wrote long letters to his lieutenants, who occupied key positions in the imperial administration, urging them to put forth proposals that he favored. Then, as chief counsellor to the throne, he drafted rescripts on the emperor's behalf approving the very policies that he had proposed. In his letters he used cajolery, exhortation, complaint, and mild reprimands to effect his will. At times he gave advance notice of a recipient's next assignment or promotion, to make it clear that he was responsible for the person's advancement.

The matters under discussion in the correspondence covered a variety of subjects. When dwelling on details, Chang discoursed on subjects as vari-

ous as the personalities of troublesome tribal leaders, the sources of supply for copper coinage, the advantage in sending imperial grain barges up the Grand Canal earlier in the year, and the specifications for the watchtowers to be built along the walls in the north. These detailed letters reveal that in order to compensate for the imperial bureaucracy's organizational defects, he had to turn his attention to endless trivial details. There was no provision in the bureaucratic system for independent initiatives at lower levels; new problems had to be passed along to the top for a solution. Thus, the brilliant man on the top had to handle all the petty details of administration himself.

In this light, Chang's prudence in state affairs should come as no surprise. As an early advocate of a peace settlement with Altan, he rejected the proposal put forth by T'an Lun, the bellicose minister of war, to launch preemptive strikes against the Mongol hordes in the steppes. He gave explicit instructions to Ch'i Chi-kuang, who had the capability to launch such an offensive, that his primary objective was to maintain an armed peace, not to conduct offensive operations.

Beyond any doubt, concerns about public finance decisively influenced Chang's policies. In the last quarter of the sixteenth century the empire was in a state of fiscal chaos, which had resulted from the uncoordinated and irregular conversion of grain quotas to payments in silver, from commutations of labor service to silver payments, and from the addition of miscellaneous surcharges to the basic tax assessments whenever funds for military supplies were needed. Had these unstructured modifications gone on unchecked, they might have led to a state of anarchy. Since he was not able to reconstitute the fiscal structure of the imperial administration or to integrate the division of fiscal resources, Chang proceeded to audit the accounts; at the same time, he carried out a stringent fiscal retrenchment that affected all offices of the government.

Under the grand secretary's direction, all unnecessary and unimportant government operations were either suspended or postponed. The number of students on government stipends was reduced, and procurement missions by palace eunuchs were strictly supervised. Provincial officials were ordered to cut down their labor service requirements, in general to one-third of the existing level. The hostel service provided by the imperial postal system was likewise cut to a minimum. These cutbacks were not accompanied by corresponding reductions in taxes levied on the populace; the savings that resulted were simply put into imperial treasuries. The proceeds from fines, confiscations, and commutations of punishments were made subject to auditing. Tax delinquents were prosecuted with vigor, and a real effort was made to collect tax arrearages.

This austerity program was also extended to the army. Since peace had been made with the Mongols, the number of frontier guards and border patrols could now be reduced. This permitted savings overall and also freed more men for work on the military farms. Governors-general in charge of frontier posts were requested to reduce their expenditures so as to save up to one-fifth of their annual subsidies. Army stud horses maintained by civilian households as part of their labor service obligations were sold, and the service obligations of those households were commuted to silver payments.

The review of local districts' accounts started in 1572; but after 1579, all counties and prefectures had to submit their account books on labor service levies to the Ministry of Revenue for scrutiny. The account books from Shantung and Hu-kuang are known to have been examined by Chang Chü-cheng himself. After revisions were demanded and made, the books were returned and the local governments were instructed to publish them as a semi-permanent budget. While still lacking in uniformity, these accounts nonetheless checked the autonomy of local officials in the fiscal administration, which had grown in the wake of military emergencies in the mid-sixteenth century. With the publication of these account books, the single whip method of taxation (*i t'iao pien fa*) finally was formally established throughout the empire. Under this system, all the various labor service levies, surcharges, and miscellaneous requisitions were combined into a single payment of silver bullion. The original phrase describing this system, "the reformed single entry system," is homophonous with the phrase "single whip," and hence the system was referred to by taxpayers as the single whip system.

Chang Chü-cheng used the censorial-supervising branch of the government to tighten administrative discipline. Instead of allowing those officials to attack each other on petty and tangential issues, he demanded that they use their powers of impeachment in support of his program. By controlling the flow of documents, he ensured that any case once mentioned in a report would have to be settled within a reasonable period. The tireless grand secretary devised a scheme whereby supervising secretaries tabulated the tax arrearages and cases of banditry in the various counties and prefectures of the empire. All back taxes had to be collected in full and all bandits caught. The central government summarized any unfinished business monthly and semi-annually. Unless a magistrate was cleared by the supervising secretaries' offices, he could not be promoted or transferred. In some outstanding cases, officials were even called back from retirement to answer questions about undischarged responsibilities.

Clearly, from the middle of 1572 to the middle of 1582, the efficiency of the imperial bureaucracy reached its zenith. This high point also marked

the limit of what it was humanly possible to achieve under the binding political traditions of Chinese society at that time. Without resorting to repression, Chang Chü-cheng's administration was able to match the kind of material splendor usually known only immediately after the establishment of a new dynasty.

The drawbacks of Chang's program and its failure

In the absence of structural changes and adjustments, the strain the grand secretary put on the existing governmental machinery was also unprecedented. On the whole, Chang Chü-cheng sought results. He was in no position to alter the structure of the imperial bureaucracy. Without legislative power, he could not create or abolish any office, reconstruct the chain of command, or even revise the impractical official salary schedule. His application of pressure horizontally on all units undoubtedly resulted in hardship in many quarters. For instance, forced reductions in expenditures created more inefficiency in some offices than in others. Tax quotas were far more difficult to meet in some districts than in others. Neither could the achievements of his entrusted lieutenants be critically analyzed, because they too had to reach their assigned quotas by whatever means they could. In the eyes of his antagonists, therefore, the grand secretary merely abused his power to promote his own men; they charged that he established a false semblance of administrative efficiency at the expense of men of genuine virtue and integrity. By attacking vested interests with no more than a spurious legitimacy on his own side, Chang Chü-cheng made himself vulnerable to organized challenges.

Chang had previously been attacked in 1575 and 1576 by two individual censors who had independently spoken their own minds. In 1577, his father died. Dynastic laws and ritual norms required him to relinquish his office and to observe a period of mourning at home for twenty-seven months. It was suggested that Hsü Chieh be recalled to take charge of the grand secretariat. At this point, either at Chang's own suggestion or with his connivance, his supporters in the palace prevailed on the Wan-li emperor, then only fourteen years old, to respond to the grand secretary's request for mourning leave with an imperial rescript stating that his service was indispensable, that in this particular case he was to be exempted from the full requirement. While not without precedent, this imperial decision nevertheless caused an uproar at court. Officials of ministerial rank demanded Chang's removal. Members of the literary-educational branch of the government, as a group, called on Chang at his own residence to confront him on this ethical-ritual issue.

Even though several remonstrators were beaten on the emperor's orders and the opposition silenced, Chang Chü-cheng never recovered his prestige among his peers. Moreover, in a desperate effort to regain control, Chang organized an unscheduled personnel evaluation before the end of the year, in which all capital officials above the fourth grade were required to submit self-evaluations. A subtle scheme to get rid of political enemies, the maneuver also transformed personnel management into an instrument of partisan politics—an innovative practice that would continue to plague the Ming court for decades.

Yet Chang Chü-cheng's greatest weakness lay in his inability to break away from the dynasty's pattern of governance, which in turn meant that his attempts to reform the imperial bureaucracy could not be systematized. He patronized Ch'i Chi-kuang to establish a new "model army"; he was unable to devise a means of extending Ch'i's methods of recruitment, training, and tactics to other army commands. He accumulated great quantities of silver bullion in imperial treasuries; yet he found no way to invest it, not even ways to utilize it as capital to create an imperial bank for managing public finance. He placed the different branches of the government under his personal control; yet his authority remained tied to personal politics. Under the Ming system, he had no publicly acknowledged authority to make policy or to govern. At the same time, he extended the grand secretariat's influence over the Ministry of Personnel without the consent of his fellow officials; and his informal ties with eunuch officials close to the throne, the emperor's personal secretaries, constituted nothing short of a violation of the dynastic household law. With Chang's strictly speaking "illicit" improvisations, the Hung-wu emperor's model of government, which featured numerous, functionally isolated "administrative pockets," had once again been made workable. But the entire enterprise ceased to exist as soon as its coordinator, the grand secretary, left office.

Toward the end of the decade, Chang did make a major attempt to reform the empire's tax administration. In the name of the Wan-li emperor, he ordered a land survey. The imperial decree was promulgated in December 1580. When the grand secretary died about a year and a half later, the returns still had not been completed.

The survey cannot be considered a success. Honan province took a year and a half to submit its returns, which were later discovered to have been old data resubmitted. This was precisely the malpractice that Chang was attempting to overcome. Reprimanded and instructed to carry out the survey again, the provincial officials turned in another set of books, this time within six months after the first report was rejected. Even though the "long *mou*" (240 5-foot paces by one pace) had been specified as the stan-

dard unit of measurement for the entire empire, deviation from it was said to have occurred in many districts. After Chang Chü-cheng's death there were widespread complaints that local officials undertaking the land survey had been pressured to overreport the cultivated acreages in their districts in order to claim merit. The situation was getting far out of hand. The imperial court had to declare that the survey returns of 1581–82 had no binding effect; each district had the option to accept them as the basis for taxation or to use the data existing prior to the new survey. If Chang had lived longer and had seen this matter through, it is arguable that an institutional rationalization of the land tax might have ensued. Such a possibility, however, is no more than suggested by what actually happened.

The aftermath

Chang Chü-cheng's death on 9 July 1582 ended an era. In a matter of months, the grand secretary himself was posthumously accused of accepting bribes, living in luxury, placing unqualified partisans in key positions, abusing power, managing to get his sons passed in the civil service examinations and entered into the Hanlin Academy, conspiring with the eunuch Feng Pao, silencing public opinion, deceiving the emperor, and even attempting to take over the throne. While there was substance to some of the charges, the accusations were for the most part brought by courtiers who had suffered during Chang's administration and who were all anxious to vindicate themselves at his expense. In general, they tried to reverse his policies, to discontinue his procedural changes, and whenever possible, to stamp out his influence.

Chang Chü-cheng was publicly denounced, and his properties were confiscated. Thereafter the top echelon of the government remained without direction. Power struggles within the grand secretariat had been effectively checked; it was now no longer possible for any individual to gain control of that agency. But on the other hand, never again in the Ming dynasty did another statesman of Chang Chü-cheng's caliber appear. None had the capacity of Chang's early rivals, Kao Kung and Hsü Chieh, or were even as effective as Yen Sung had been in the 1540s and 1550s.

After Chang Chü-cheng's death his protégé, Chang Ssu-wei, filled the post for about a year. He ascertained correctly both public opinion as well as the Wan-li emperor's mind. Consequently his major concern in office was to dissociate himself from the stringent controls set up by his predecessor. He was willing to dismantle Chang Chü-cheng's work. That is manifest in his advice to discontinue the land survey immediately. His successor, Shen Shih-hsing, another man who had accepted Chang Chü-cheng's

patronage, went a step further. He persuaded the emperor to discontinue Chang's control of documents, offering the convincing argument that the local offices of government were not staffed to operate as efficiently as demanded. Shen was in office for more than eight years, yet his effort at reconciliation and compromise got nowhere. Nor was the emperor's attempt at personal rule successful. In 1591 Shen was forced to retire owing to the lack of confidence in him expressed by the majority of the courtiers when he represented them as a mediator on the succession issue. None of the senior grand secretaries who served the Wan-li emperor after him fared any better.

Deterioration of the central administration

However, the succession and Chang Chü-cheng's policies were not the only issues that divided the imperial court after 1590. Of the eight senior grand secretaries holding office under the Wan-li emperor after Shen Shih-hsing, none had associated with Chang Chü-cheng. In fact, the first three, Wang Chia-p'ing, Wang Hsi-chüeh, and Chao Chih-kao, were known to have opposed him. Chu Keng was recalled from retirement; it was thought that his distance from court politics would be advantageous. Li T'ing-chi, Shen I-kuan, and Yeh Hsiang-kao had been nominated by the senior courtiers. Yet, along with Fang Ts'ung-che, the eighth, they all served unhappily. Only Wang Chia-p'ing escaped censorial impeachment when he turned in his resignation. He achieved that distinction because, having served for six months only, he had simply avoided the partisan controversies engendered by debating issues with the emperor. Both Chao Chih-kao and Chu Keng died in office, and acrimonious charges followed them to the end. A story about Li T'ing-chi is even more preposterous.

For almost the entire duration of his three years and nine months as the nominal senior grand secretary, Li claimed sickness and refused to attend to his official duties. Yet the emperor refused to discharge him, while censorial officials refused to stop attacking him for his negligence. Thoroughly disgusted, he escaped to a desolate temple to avoid these attacks. Only after he had turned in his resignation more than 120 times, and had moved out of the city of Peking in 1613 to show his determination to separate himself from court politics, did the Wan-li emperor finally authorize his retirement.

In retrospect, it appears that the stylized management of the Ming bureaucracy, which relied primarily on ideological control and only tangentially on technical skills, was overwhelmed by changes in the social and economic conditions for which it had originally been designed. Seen in this light, Chang Chü-cheng's attempt to substitute personal management for

thorough institutional reorganization was the only practical solution to the problem of imperial control short of a dynastic turnover. But while the heroic grand secretary declared that his body was “no longer his own possession,” the unbearable strain his program placed on the institutional infrastructure was not welcomed by his fellow officials. They paid more attention to the “illegitimate” and “immoral” aspects of the man’s personal life than to acknowledging the rationale behind his policies. Once Chang Chü-cheng’s work was undone, the court’s control over its far-flung bureaucracy deteriorated further. Small parties of censorial-supervising officials, literary-educational officials, and the functionaries within the Ministry of Personnel were now free from the control of the grand secretaries and conscious of their own influence at court. They busied themselves with disputation and with efforts to purge Chang’s partisans, rather than with attempts to heal and to reconstruct. The emperor’s lack of resolution certainly did not help the situation. He had failed to live up to his bureaucrats’ image of a virtuous ruler, but he also lacked the personal capacity to act as an effective tyrant or despot.

His clumsy handling of the long-drawn-out succession issue eliminated the grand secretariat as a possible base for restructuring the imperial administration—a task that had already been begun by Kao Kung and Chang Chü-cheng. To further his private wishes, the Wan-li emperor tried to draw several grand secretaries into his confidence, but without success. Worse yet, in doing so he tainted them in the eyes of the other bureaucrats, who suspected them of conniving with the emperor against their wishes. When the grand secretaries failed as mediators between the civil officials and the throne, there was no longer any way to use their office to oversee the entire imperial administration.

Eunuch tax collectors and mining intendants

When the emperor dispatched eunuchs to the provinces as tax collectors and mining intendants in 1596, he further alienated the bureaucrats. It was customary by this time for emperors to appoint eunuchs to supervise various provincial administrative operations. It was also common for such eunuch officials to take over the operations themselves, reducing the civil officials who originally administered them to the status of office subordinates. Furthermore, in the closing years of the sixteenth century, urban manufacture, inland trade, and mining were clearly seen as potential sources of revenue. Thus, this policy was both practical and precedented.

When the first eunuch commissioners were dispatched in 1596, they worked in concert with civil officials, and their operations were limited to

local areas. In 1599, the scale was widened. By then all major ports had senior eunuchs in residence; they gradually extended their authority and eventually began to interfere with the normal functions of the local civil government. Without business laws and procedures for judicial review, the civil officials themselves had in the past been notoriously lax and corrupt in administering revenues from industrial and commercial sources.⁴ Local officials were accustomed to handling income and expenditures in fixed quotas, but were grossly incompetent and untrained in administering them in variable volumes. Effective auditing was virtually impossible. Realizing the technical limitations of their own administrations, the bureaucrats had exercised restraint in fixing quotas for business taxes. Projected income had to come from some form of quota assessment managed and collected by the heads of commercial guilds. If local officials were unable to enforce payment of commercial taxes set at high quotas, revenues would dwindle rather than expand, and the entire operation, as well as their own careers, would be placed in jeopardy. Their aversion to mining operations was even more vociferous, because the failure of a mining enterprise with few exceptions turned stranded mining workers into brigands.

What the bureaucrats did badly the eunuchs had no hope of doing better. They could not fill the legal vacuum. They were held less accountable by their colleagues. And without precedents and procedures for building a regular staff, they could only gather around themselves hordes of local ruffians and adventurers. In many cases their operations were sabotaged by rival civil officials, and they provoked many incidents of urban unrest. Often the mining tax was in effect a form of extortion. Eunuch agents threatened to mine the land beneath houses and ancestral tombs, and relented only after they had exacted some payment from the owners.

In 1606 a group of army officers joined rioters to take the life of Yang Jung, eunuch superintendent of mining in Yunnan. The news was disturbing enough to cause even the obese, self-indulgent Wan-li emperor to lose his appetite. Yet, having gone this far, he was unable to rescind his policy completely. When pressed, he made concessions on the issue. Nevertheless, the tax and mining operations under eunuch direction went on throughout the Wan-li reign, producing minimal revenues at great expense in goodwill. The issue divided the bureaucracy. It produced a stereotyped hero in Li San-ts'ai, who, as governor of Huai-an, arrested a number of eunuch followers in his territory and put a few to death. It also increased the opprobrium placed on grand secretary Shen I-kuan. That grand secretary

⁴ See Ray Huang, *Taxation and governmental finance in sixteenth-century Ming China*. (Cambridge, England, 1974), pp. 226–44.

was thought by his colleagues to have had an opportunity to demand that the emperor discontinue the operations, but had not pressed him hard enough.

THE TUNG-LIN ACADEMY AND PARTISAN CONTROVERSIES

The Tung-lin party

The Tung-lin party was not a political party in the present-day sense of the term. The word *tang*, which is translated as “party,” has a derogatory denotation, and is closer in meaning to such terms as “clique,” “faction,” or “gang.” There was no fixed criterion for membership: at the beginning, “members” received the label from their enemies. The principal figures of the Tung-lin Academy were always included in the group, but the party at no time had an exclusive membership. As partisan controversies developed, any public figure could earn membership, sometimes posthumously, simply by virtue of his political sympathies or even his social contacts. Eventually the label came to be regarded as a badge of honor.

As a group, the Tung-lin members were noted for their adherence to Confucian orthodoxy and for their strict observance of proper ethical behavior. When Chang Chü-cheng sought an exception from the mandatory mourning period, he was marked in their eyes as a man without principle. The Wan-li emperor’s prejudice against his eldest son, which led him to favor his third son for the succession, was also unethical and improper in their eyes. Unable to persuade the emperor to their views, they championed those who dared to speak up on the issue and regarded those who were ambivalent with deep suspicion. Such behavior sometimes simply amounted to vindictive fastidiousness.

Individuals who gave the Tung-lin movement its start were young officials in low positions. As such, many of them earned a reputation for righteousness by defying imperial authority and by eagerly suffering the penalty for such defiance. Toward the end of the Ming dynasty there were more Tung-lin sympathizers in jail or in exile than in office. Since they put personal virtue above everything else, it was also easy for them to distinguish themselves by individual acts. As a group, they came to one another’s aid under attack and, when in office, took concerted action to purge the bureaucracy of their enemies. For this reason, they appeared to some as quarrelsome and destructive. In anticipation of their hostile activities, on 17 February 1579 Chang Chü-cheng had issued an order to close all private academies. The Wan-li emperor himself intensely disliked the Tung-lin partisans. He routinely changed light punishments meted out to Tung-lin

sympathizers into heavier ones when their friends memorialized the throne in their defense. Little did the sovereign realize that his own emotional antipathy tended to fan the frenzy of the movement, rather than cool it off.

Members of the Tung-lin movement shared one intellectual assumption: the proper life's work of a scholar-official was to cultivate his moral character. The teaching of the *Ta-hsüeh* (The great learning), which succinctly articulates this point of view, makes no distinction between private and public morality. Self-cultivation begins with one's own heart, extends to the household, then to social contacts, and ultimately to public service. This life style was best exemplified by Kao P'an-lung (1562–1626). After having found a kind of personal freedom in the Ch'an Buddhist type of enlightenment (as had many prominent Ming neo-Confucians), Kao never contemplated a life of tranquil seclusion. Both in and out of office he remained deeply involved in the court politics of Peking for decades. When banished, Tung-lin partisans never thought to form a "loyal opposition." The very fact that they had been forced out of office meant that evil forces were in control; by maneuver and agitation they had to find ways to "rectify" the situation and to return to office. This doctrinaire attitude disqualified them as "liberals" (as they have sometimes been labeled), and of course they were not revolutionaries.

Although the promotion of ethical behavior in office took the place of any specific political philosophy as such, the Tung-lin movement was not entirely without influence in more practical matters. Tung-lin spokesmen voiced strong misgivings about the "concentration of power" in the office of the grand secretariat. Undoubtedly the malfeasance of Hsü Chieh and Kao Kung, as well as Chang Chü-cheng's failure, strengthened this conviction. To counterbalance the power of the grand secretariat, they championed the independence of the censorial-supervising personnel, who could check the influence of literary-educational personnel in government and the autonomy of the Ministry of Personnel, and see to the restriction of eunuch activities to the palace precincts. From their point of view, realization of these conditions would represent a "pure" form of administration, closer to the model set up at the founding of the dynasty.

These programs for reform were not devised to improve the organization of the imperial administration or to change its structure of authority; they were based entirely on ethical considerations. Recent experience had convinced them that an administration based on direction from a centralized agency, like the grand secretariat under Chang Chü-cheng, could not be achieved without unworthy personal behavior that benefited unprincipled opportunists at the expense of the upright.

Their yearning for a loosely structured government, with compartmen-

talized agencies reporting directly to the emperor, and with independent routes of reporting, was sometimes carried to an impractical extent. In 1583 Wei Yün-chen and Li San-ts'ai, both later linked to the Tung-lin group, risked the emperor's displeasure to argue that sons of grand secretaries should be made ineligible to take civil service examinations. The authors of the proposal intended to reduce the influence of that office by making it less attractive. Ten years later, Ku Hsien-ch'eng (1550–1612), the foremost organizer of the Tung-lin movement, as a senior official within the Ministry of Personnel, successfully blocked the appointment of a Hanlin scholar to head his own ministry on the grounds that all grand secretaries were already Hanlin members, and the dominance of key positions in the outer court by such an exclusive group from the inner court would be detrimental to the interests of sound government.

The determination of the Tung-lin partisans to retain a relatively unstructured hierarchy of the civil bureaucracy is not readily discernible to modern readers. The key to understanding this rests in the fact that in the late sixteenth century the imperial bureaucracy had already exhausted its technical capacity to solve administrative problems through systematic, methodical approaches. It was responsible for too much territory and too many people; its operation was too stylized and too shallow. Moreover, Tung-lin sympathizers rejected any notions of fundamental institutional or fiscal reorganization: they felt that technical solutions had not worked and could not work. Since they favored ideology over administrative reform, their movement may be judged, in an organizational sense, as a long stride backward, a significant retreat from the position taken by Kao Kung and Chang Chü-cheng.

But in the late sixteenth century, orthodox Confucian values had far more appeal than we can or are willing to appreciate. In a practical sense, they compensated for organizational deficiencies. Confucius himself had expounded the doctrine that in his love for humanity a cultured gentleman should be ready to lay down his life, and Mencius had demanded that individuals forgo their self-interest in deference to the public well-being. The call for self-sacrifice and determination, relentlessly presented in the classics and histories and incessantly repeated by village instructors as well as by educational directors at higher levels, was thought by such orthodox Confucians to provide a formidable reservoir of inner strength, superior to any organizational or operational strength. Public spirit, when directed by a core of scholar-officials who assumed leadership roles, could perform wonders. It guaranteed that the broken dikes on the Yellow River would be repaired and that nomadic invasions on the frontier would be checked, with or without the needed manpower and financial resources. The death-defying

rectitude of remonstrating officials in front of the emperor, endemic to the Ming dynasty, manifested the same sublimated attitude toward the purpose of life. Sung neo-Confucian scholars had already explained that all such ethical precepts and practices were consistent with natural law as they saw it. The implied appeal of martyrdom gratified those Tung-lin followers who relished the noble cause of the unjustly persecuted in an era of failures and frustrations.

Moreover, Confucian reverence for family relationships and patriarchal authority, already incorporated into the code of law, closely bound the state with society in Ming times. The strict adherence to such principles by Tung-lin sympathizers afforded hope that the practice and theory of governance might come closer to each other—the kind of unity that was absent from Chang Chü-cheng's management. The local government, until then, functioned as an agency of indirect and preventive governing. The effectiveness of the rural elite in leading the illiterate masses to pursue their lives within the limits of social custom was essential to the success of this kind of minimal governing. Under such a scheme, technical efficiency was irrelevant; law and order had to be rooted in male supremacy, deference to the aged, and strict observance of social distinctions. The entire civil service had been founded on these premises. When the central government shifted its emphasis to revenue collection and criminal prosecution, it created a situation that could no longer be referred to as simply an academic dispute between Confucianism and Legalism; rather, the superstructure reorientated its operation in a way that the infrastructure could not follow. The rural communities could never provide the needed personnel and technical support to carry out reforms like those promulgated under Chang Chü-cheng.

The futility of Chang's attempt to administer the empire with precision had been foreseen by the Tung-lin leaders even before they turned their attention to ethical and spiritual matters. In 1581, while still under Chang's administration, the minister of revenue Chang Hsüeh-yen had submitted to the throne the *Wan-li k'uai chi lu* (Record of the accounting procedures of the Wan-li reign), the most thorough fiscal compendium of the empire's resources to date, the compilation of which had occupied fourteen staff members for over two years. Yet it shows the acceptance of numerous modified fiscal units and peculiar fiscal procedures, exposing the sorry reality that the diversity prevailing throughout the empire could never be totally integrated into a uniform system of management. Among the compilers of the work were Ku Hsien-ch'eng, Chao Nan-hsing, and Li San-ts'ai, then all junior members of the Ministry of Revenue, but later prominent Tung-lin partisans. Having been given such a rare opportunity to observe high-level management at such an early stage of their careers, it

is hard to understand why they acted so differently in their later years. It seems that they had been convinced that the empire's interests could be better served through abstract moral exhortations than by auditing accounts at all levels.⁵

From the personnel evaluation of 1593 to the founding of the Tung-lin Academy

Scholars working on this period face formidable difficulties because the extent source materials are biased in favor of the Tung-lin group. Moral issues so distorted the vision of contemporary writers that their narratives became in fact tracts, apologies, and attacks that used facts and issues for particular ends. Certain fallacies and contradictions can be detected in these narratives. For instance, the *Veritable record* clearly establishes that until about 1587, the Wan-li emperor had been attempting to affirm his personal rule; important decisions taken by the court at the time were his own, including the demotion of the future Tung-lin founder, Ku Hsien-ch'eng. But the *Official history of the Ming* categorically accuses Shen Shih-hsing of the act. The grand secretary is said to have let his personal likes and dislikes overrule the preferences of the court.

The habit of equating personal virtue with administrative talent gained currency because of undue emphasis on the moral character of bureaucrats. Earlier historians who endorsed such a view tended to describe those who were more concerned with the proper functioning of the government than with ethical purity as being of inferior character, or even evil and unprincipled. Grand secretary Wang Hsi-chüeh undoubtedly damaged his moral reputation when he declared that Tsou Yüan-piao, who later became one of the most venerated leaders in the Tung-lin circle, "a plainly single-minded scholar showing no unusual ingenuity in state planning."⁶ Likewise Liu Tao-lung (cs. 1586), a supervising secretary, could never live down his image as a sycophant because he sardonically remarked that great fame and reputation could be attained by acting counter to the senior grand secretary (Chang Chü-cheng), and undying ignominy could be earned by taking sides with him, even though his statement was nothing but the unvarnished truth.⁷

When members of the Tung-lin movement chose to become entangled

5 The roster of the compilers appears in the preliminaries of Wang Kuo-kuang, comp., *Wan-li k'uai chi lu*, ed. Chang Hsüeh-yen (n.p., ca. 1582), microfilms of which are available at several libraries, among them the University of Chicago and Princeton University libraries. Also see L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, ed. *Dictionary of Ming biography* (New York and London, 1976), p. 82.

6 See *MSL*, *Shen-tung shih lu*, p. 4806.

7 See *MSL*, *Shen-tung shih lu*, pp. 4790, 4812. For Liu Tao-lung's remark, see p. 4812.

in the personnel evaluation proceedings of the court, they clearly revealed the narrow and limited nature of their movement. They simply wished to eliminate officials whose moral character was deficient in their eyes. Chang Chü-cheng had already utilized the evaluation proceedings to serve his personal ends. In 1577, facing organized resistance in the court because he had failed to mourn his parent's death, Chang issued an order in the emperor's name calling for a special personnel evaluation in addition to the regular six-year review. As a result, 51 officials were discharged from their duties. The next scheduled evaluation, which took place in 1581, ended with the demotion or discharge of 264 officials in the capital and 67 officials in Nanking. These two purges were said to have antagonized a large number of courtiers.

In 1587, when senior grand secretary Shen Shih-hsing had to handle the first evaluation after Chang Chü-cheng's demise, he proceeded with caution. Under his direction, only thirty-three metropolitan degree holders (*chin-shih*) were demoted and discharged, and none were from the Ministry of Personnel, the Hanlin Academy, or the censorial-supervising staff—the three departments where partisan controversies usually originated. But after the list was compiled, the censorial-supervising officials were also by tradition entitled to submit additional cases of censure under the category supplementary service reviews (*k'ao-ch'a shih-i*). At this point they seized the opportunity to call for the dismissal of minister of works Ho Ch'i-ming, who had maintained a close relationship with Chang Chü-cheng. The censure was clearly partisan. The emperor was angered, because he had appointed Ho to the position barely a month earlier. Consequently, the censor-in-chief was also ordered to retire when Ho was discharged from the civil service. Four censors responsible for the action were transferred to provincial posts.

On the grounds that the immunity of the censorial office had been violated, two supervising secretaries memorialized the emperor, ostensibly speaking on behalf of the censors while actually launching separate protests. Imperial rescripts in turn gave each of them a reprimand in addition to suspension of salary for a short period. Ku Hsien-ch'eng, a secretary with the Ministry of Personnel who was not involved in the evaluation proceedings, made his name known by further petitioning the throne in defense of the censors and the censor-in-chief. The Wan-li emperor was disturbed enough to call for a personal interview with the three grand secretaries. After the conference, Ku was demoted by three grades before being transferred to a provincial post. The incident actually marked a deadlock in the struggle for supreme institutional power and authority. When both the emperor and the bureaucrats asserted their respective powers—the imperial

prerogative to punish and the censorial function to impeach—there was no institutionalized mechanism that could stop this destructive contest for negative influence.

Six years later, during the evaluation of 1593, the conflict began again with greater intensity. By then the grand secretariat was directly implicated; and when the dust settled, so were the fortunes of the Tung-lin partisans, for the 1593 review process was used to eliminate the grand secretariat's influence on personnel management. The proceedings were well planned. While minister of personnel Sun Lung was in charge, his chief ally was none other than Ku Hsien-ch'eng, who had in the course of six years worked his way back from banishment to the post of deputy director of the Bureau of Evaluations within the Ministry of Personnel. Moreover, the director of the bureau was Ku's old and close friend, Chao Nan-hsing. To emphasize the review's impartiality, Sun Lung earmarked his own nephew for dismissal. Director Chao also sacrificed a supervising secretary connected to him by a marriage tie. But the list of officials designated for dismissal from the civil service heavily represented those who had maintained connections with the grand secretaries, including the brother of Chao Chih-kaio, an associate grand secretary.

The list had one further purpose. Early in 1593, Wang Hsi-chüeh had just been recalled to become the senior grand secretary. Upon his arrival, the emperor disclosed to him his plan to grant princely titles equally to his three sons. Wang, in the belief that anything would be better than an impasse on the succession issue, unwisely expressed his willingness to accept this arrangement, even though he stressed that a formal announcement must be added that the principle of primogeniture governing imperial succession was not to be compromised by the procedure. This was rejected by the sovereign and by Wang's fellow bureaucrats. The imperial offer was withdrawn. Meanwhile the court speculated that Wang must have accepted the new appointment as a bribe; the simultaneous granting of princely titles to the three imperial sons was seen as a subtle way to deny the seniority of the first-born. Now, with public opinion against him, the discharge of his followers from office at this point was meant to serve as a warning to Wang Hsi-chüeh as well as a protest to the throne.

Wang was unable to reverse the evaluation proceedings, he himself having returned to the court too late to manage or direct them. But nothing could stop him from retaliation. He is said to have instigated an inquiry into the supplementary service reviews. The Ministry of Personnel indeed had put aside the proposed censure of three officials who were close to the evaluators. When the case was brought up, the ministry's response only exacerbated the situation. When the censor-in-chief inter-

ceded on behalf of the evaluators, the emperor wrote on his memorial that the three censured officials, along with Chao Nan-hsing, director of the Bureau of Evaluations, should all be discharged. Remonstrations by several middle- and junior-grade courtiers against the emperor's decision brought disgrace to the remonstrators. Among them were a number from the area around Lake T'ai in Kiangsu, including Ku Hsien-ch'eng's younger brother, Ku Yün-ch'eng. All were later to become co-founders of the Tung-lin Academy.

Ku Hsieng-ch'eng himself survived the controversy. He was dismissed from the civil service in 1594 for another reason and never again took office. Kao P'an-lung (a junior official, who later came to head the Tung-lin Academy) was also demoted over this issue. Kao, who was close to both Chao Nan-hsing and Ku Hsien-ch'eng and from Ku's Wu-hsi district, returned to the capital late in 1593. He lost no time in arguing his friends' cause. Demoted to the post of docket officer in a county government, he served in that capacity for three months before returning home to join the Tung-lin group. Kao became the master of the Tung-lin Academy after Ku Hsien-ch'eng's death in 1612.

Thus, prior to the summer of 1594 all the elements that characterized the movement were already visible: the potential membership, the leadership, the noble ideal of resisting persecution, and the capacity for ideological polemics. The rich Yangtze delta afforded an excellent environment for scholarly gatherings. Several of the personalities mentioned above came from well-to-do families. They certainly did not lack admirers and supporters. Aside from noting that Ku Hsien-ch'eng fell seriously ill in the first years of his forced retirement, the source materials never clearly explain why these men waited for ten years before they founded the academy. But official records disclose that early in 1594 the emperor was alerted by a report which stated: "Powerful but restless native sons from south of the Yangtze are conspiring with treacherous designs."⁸ It seems that this public attack intimidated Ku and his sympathizers enough to make them postpone their larger plans.

At the same time, the leadership in Peking continued to deteriorate. After 1593 assignments to middle- and junior-grade offices were determined by drawing lots. The selection of candidates to fill high-level posts (including the grand secretariat), customarily decided by open nominations at court, was actually decided by asking each of those attending the Nine Ministers' Conference, the highest agency of the outer court, to submit a name. The emperor would then select one name from their lists. With the

⁸ See *MSL, Shen-tsung shih lu*, p. 5017.

most vociferous agitators for ministerial autonomy already removed from the court, the personnel evaluation of 1599 passed without arousing any serious partisan controversies. But with the succession unsettled and the banished group of Tung-lin sympathizers irreconcilable, the conviction that evil men were in control in Peking had not diminished. On the contrary, it intensified when the Wan-li emperor dispatched eunuchs to the provinces as tax intendants.

The founding of the Tung-lin Academy in 1604 marked another stage in the prolonged struggle for power at court, which its organizers had never abandoned. It also focused the disparate local study and lecture groups, which had in the meantime already attracted Ku Hsien-ch'eng and others. The opening of the Tung-lin Academy was marked by a three-day convocation, to which all scholars in the lower Yangtze area were invited. A platform sanctioning Confucian orthodoxy was adopted by the assembly. By a covenant, the assembled scholars pledged to uphold this platform through discipline, righteous living, and correct study. They made no pretense that the issues they were addressing were apolitical; their ultimate purpose was to save the world. Because a decade had elapsed since the academy's organizers had been expelled from the imperial court, the assembly was not considered subversive at this point. In fact, the county magistrate and local prefect contributed to the construction of academy buildings with public funds. Later the provincial governor was also seen at one of the meetings.

The academy did in fact function as an institution of learning, but it also served as a public forum. Monthly seminars conducted in three-day sessions attracted interested scholars from the general area. In addition, Ku Hsien-ch'eng gave regular lectures at affiliated schools. Annual meetings were usually held in the autumn, and their proceedings were published. The philosophical discourses seldom failed to touch upon current events. Ku, as the principal speaker, was in the habit of assessing the moral character of various officials. He was particularly influential among the young officials in the court of Peking. In retrospect, the prosecution of the leading academy figures twenty years later does not seem surprising. The free and open criticism practiced by Ku Hsien-ch'eng and his friends simply became intolerable to the emperor and his advisors.

The Tung-lin in politics

Until the end of the Wan-li reign, no major figure connected to the Tung-lin Academy ever reentered government service. Ku Hsien-ch'eng was offered an honorary post in Nanking in 1608 which he declined. But after years of lecturing and writing, he had built up a group of supporters

in the government. Together with other sympathizers, they were identified as Tung-lin partisans, even though they had no direct connection with the academy. Eventually they fought a series of intense political battles with anti-Tung-lin forces.

The battle began in 1605 with a minor confrontation over the outcome of the personnel evaluation. Senior grand secretary Shen I-kuan was independent, but not independent enough to defy the emperor to the degree that Tung-lin partisans wished. Hence, he was considered an enemy. The evaluation was in the hands of vice-minister of personnel Yang Shih-chiao and censor-in-chief Wen Ch'un, both Tung-lin sympathizers. Wen in particular was at odds with Shen I-kuan because of a previous quarrel.⁹ The closed-door sessions of the evaluators produced one of the harshest series of recommendations on record: 207 capital officials and 73 Nanking officials dismissed and demoted. Moreover, the list included several censors and supervising secretaries who had served Shen I-kuan well. Cognizant of the evaluation's implications, the emperor retained the report in the palace and refused to issue it under his seal, thereby violating a dynastic tradition by which such evaluations automatically received formal approval. To ease the pressure on two of the censured officials, an imperial directive specifically demanded their continued service.

Protests, accompanied by accusations and counteraccusations, some of them against the evaluators, began to crowd the official channels. The debate dragged on from late winter into summer. Coincidentally, in June a thunderbolt knocked down the flagpole at the Altar of Heaven. That omen compelled some officials to resign. Then throughout the capital officials began to tender their resignations, paralyzing the imperial administration. After much debate, it was decided that the censor-in-chief, who had been accused of being partial, should retire. The two most outspoken officials in the controversy were allowed to take "sick leaves" rather than be dismissed. Others on the list were dealt with as the evaluation had recommended. In the end, Shen I-kuan's position was made so untenable that he was forced to resign the following year.

This showed the Tung-lin partisans that they commanded considerable negative influence at the court. But it was difficult for them to find a leader to head the central administration. In 1610 they seemed to have found such a person in Li San-ts'ai. Li, governor of Huai-an for over thirteen years, was Ku Hsien-ch'eng's close friend. His handling of the eunuch commissioners had earned him a reputation for fearlessness. Spending money freely, he made friends in many quarters. At first it was thought

9 See below, pp. 547-49.

that he might be nominated for a position in the grand secretariat. If appointed, he would have been the first grand secretary in a long time who had not been a Hanlin member. This prospect had a particular appeal to the early Tung-lin organizers. Not having been Hanlin members themselves, they would have delighted to see that monopoly broken. But when Li's candidacy had to be put aside, it was suggested that he be made a censor-in-chief, or that he might be considered for the governor-generalship of Liao-tung. Military success in Liao-tung would undoubtedly boost his prestige and make him an attractive candidate for promotion.

The anti-Tung-lin groups did not fail to see the threat such a move posed to them. They exposed Li's connection with Ku Hsien-ch'eng to stress the danger of having the imperial court controlled from a distance by a disgraced official. For the first time, the Tung-lin party was referred to as an evil influence in court politics. At the same time, Li San-ts'ai's financial integrity also became a subject of heated debate. All of a sudden, twelve charges of treachery and corruption were brought against him, one of which specified the valuable goods that he had received and named the donors. Embarrassed, Li turned in his resignation, which the emperor (who was disgusted by this political bickering) did not acknowledge. Li left office without authorization.

Another potential candidate for grand secretary, Wang T'u, was courted by both factions. In 1610 Wang's position was of particular importance. As vice-minister of personnel concurrently in charge of the Hanlin Academy, he had the support of the anti-Tung-lin literary-educational branch of the government, as well as the confidence of minister of personnel Sun P'ei-yang. The latter connection was of particular importance at the time when the sexennial personnel evaluation was once again due; minister Sun, who was almost eighty, was not expected to attend to all the details.¹⁰

Circumstances suggest that Wang T'u made a double deal. His sympathy was with the Tung-lin group, yet he had not rebuffed the overtures of the anti-Tung-lin factions, then headed by T'ang Pin-yin of Hsüan-ch'eng and Ku T'ien-chün of K'un-shan. T'ang had just been promoted to chancellorship of the National University at Nanking, and Ku had recently relinquished his title as instructor to the heir apparent. Both therefore had substantial support within the literary-educational branch of the government; they had also lined up censorial-supervising personnel in a grouping

¹⁰ Wang T'u's title as vice-minister, however, gave him no substantial power within the Ministry of Personnel. During the evaluation of 1611 the vice-minister who actually took charge under Sun P'ei-yang was Hsiao Yün-chü. But Wang T'u was close to Sun P'ei-yang and was believed to have wielded considerable influence over him because both came from Shensi province and were referred to by their enemies as the "Ch'in (Shensi) party."

known as the Hsüan-K'un party, named after the native places of the two leaders.

Whether it was due to Wang T'u's maneuver or not, the evaluation of 1611 dealt fatal blows to these two anti-Tung-lin groups. The emperor, again seeing the implications of the evaluations, refused to promulgate their report, and once again held it in the palace to effect a kind of pocket veto. But this 1611 evaluation had a peculiar feature: attached to the report was an investigation brief (*fang-tan*) that specified the notorious personal conduct of seven prominent figures under censure, headed by T'ang Pin-yin. The emperor withheld the information, but its contents were leaked out. Worse yet, bogus impeachment papers, which washed the dirty linen of the censured with less inhibition, now appeared in the *Peking Gazette*. Under the circumstances, the emperor was compelled to release the evaluation report. T'ang Pin-yin, who headed the list, was charged with "indiscreet behavior," and Ku T'ien-chün with "repeated indiscreet behavior." Both were put on the inactive list of the civil service.

Yet Wang T'u did not come out of the 1611 evaluation unscathed. He was censured in the supplementary service review because his son, a county magistrate, had engaged in illicit financial transactions. For this reason, it was alleged that Wang was not suitable for appointment to a responsible position. His own connection with the eminent Tung-lin partisan Li Sant's'ai was also exposed. Wang's subsequent resignation was, however, repeatedly turned down by the throne. He never again assumed office and only a year later was granted a "sick leave." His departure from office ended any chance Tung-lin partisans might have had to attain high offices during the Wan-li reign. Moreover, while the evaluation in Peking under Sun P'ei-yang was generally considered to be favorable to Tung-lin partisans, the parallel proceedings in Nanking, the southern capital, were not. Officials removed from office in the Nanking evaluations were for the most part Tung-lin partisans.

In reality all this made little difference, because after 1611 the court drifted still further toward paralysis. Two years later, Fang Ts'ung-che assumed office as senior grand secretary, which position he occupied (for most of the time without an associate) until the death of the Wan-li emperor in 1620. He was generally regarded as a spineless bureaucrat. The emperor was not inclined to make any response to polemical memorials and was now in the habit of leaving high offices unfilled when they became vacant. The attrition of the bureaucracy was augmented by the work of the censorial-supervising staff. It became common for people mentioned in a censor's report to write out their resignations, to bow to the document, and to leave office without authorization. Conscious of their own power, the censors and supervising secretaries formed

into regional cliques referred to as the Ch'i (Shantung), Che (Chekiang), and Ch'u (Hu-kuang) parties, all of which shared an anti-Tung-lin bias. In general, the personnel evaluation of 1617 reflected this bias, which in some cases extended to officials on the inactive list.

PETTY ISSUES AND A FUNDAMENTAL CAUSE

The Tung-lin movement fulfilled only one political aim. It thoroughly thwarted the Wan-li emperor's attempt to change the order of succession. It proved that without the approval of his bureaucrats, the sovereign could never revise what they considered to be the fundamental law of the dynasty. In service or in banishment, the leaders of the opposition were able to bring pressure on the emperor, or, failing that, on his chief counsellor, the senior grand secretary; and failing that, on the next rank of bureaucrats. The censorial-supervising staff, the sounding board of the court, handled most of the communications. A great number of censures and impeachments had to do with this basic conflict, under which the search for individual satisfaction or revenge could also be subsumed. The misconduct of principal figures brought out by the periodic personnel evaluations might never have been exposed had not the Tung-lin group become actively involved in this power struggle.

The structure of politics described above would appear to have had the potential to transform the absolute monarchy into some form of government by participatory assembly. It is clear enough that in the late sixteenth century the throne did not maintain an army of its own; nor did it have a substantial land base from which it could derive economic strength. The role of military conqueror, which belonged to the dynastic founders, had faded into the background; the emperor now remained an emperor only because all the civil officials recognized him as such. The civil bureaucracy also experienced a metamorphosis. Outwardly it was recruited into the civil service through open, competitive examinations. Yet in the end, as a group it heavily represented the empire's middle- and upper-stratum landowners. These factors, along with the fact that the Tung-lin leaders, with the support of local elites, had now established a base of communications in the most economically developed area of the empire, have led some scholars to equate that movement with the rise of democracy and representative government in the Western world at about the same age.

But the parallels in form can never cover up the dissimilarities in substance. The focus that engendered democracy in the West was never separate from the concept of property rights, which were negotiable, divisible, transferable, and apt to be subjected to judiciary review. The Tung-lin

partisans were agitating over what they considered to be a moral issue which, given their neo-Confucian interpretation, was tantamount to a principle of natural law. They were deadlocked with the sovereign because the Wan-li emperor was, by birth, Heaven's (the cosmic order's) agent. Yet his attempt to change the order of the succession would have in their opinion disturbed the fundamental natural order of things. From their point of view this was an ethical, not an institutional or "constitutional" struggle.

The economy did come into the general struggle; but in the face of moral absolutes, economic interests, diffuse and hardly definable, lacked importance. That the Wan-li emperor was able to thwart public interests and retain his tax supervisors and mining intendants, but was unable to prevail in his attempt to modify the succession, demonstrates the relative weight of the issues. Likewise, although he gained popularity by holding those tax and mining agents at bay, *Li San-ts'ai* never commanded enough partisan influence to match *Ku Hsien-ch'eng*, *Chao Nan-hsing*, and *Tsou Yüan-piao*, who had built up their public images through moral disputation. The moral tone of the struggle was further enhanced by the personnel evaluation proceedings. All the principal figures discharged through the process, *Tung-lin* and anti-*Tung-lin*, were in one way or another labeled vicious and unscrupulous; none was cited for lacking resoluteness or expertise in the duties of office.

From a sociologist's perspective, all these points of view could be regarded as characteristic of an agrarian society. The proposition that all the complexities of human behavior could be categorized into moral archetypes of absolute good and complete evil reflected the lack of organizational depth in the bureaucracy, which had been patterned on the norms of the village communities that it governed. (Or, to put it differently, the superstructure followed the constitution of the infrastructure.) Unable to manage its own members with more sophistication, this bureaucracy was never known to have possessed anything resembling the legislative authority to enact laws that would accommodate divergent economic interests, let alone the right to engage in parliamentary debate over them. The *Tung-lin* movement in no way altered this situation. Conversely, if the situation could have been modified at this point, the movement might have taken a completely different course. Any modification would have amounted to the introduction of a new organizational logic. Instead, the movement simply dredged up contradictory polemics drawn from the same rhetorical trough of personal ethics.

The retention of this style of governance created particular social consequences, which in turn fed back to the official circles, affecting their modes of behavior. The *Tung-lin* movement dramatized this feedback process.

The upper classes of the late Ming had few vocational outlets. There is no evidence that the national economy had become diversified enough to entice the best talents to engage in trade and to make the accumulation of a fortune by that means respectable. On the other hand, all the creative distinctiveness exhibited by T'ang Hsien-tsu as a playwright, Feng Menglung as a storyteller, Wu Ch'eng-en as a novelist, Wang Shih-chen as a prose writer, Li Chih as an independent thinker, and Tung Ch'i-ch'ang as a painter and calligrapher had developed as tangents of their "normal" careers as professional bureaucrats. A public career still remained the only outlet for the ambition of the educated elite. (It is also interesting to observe that this group of creative spirits did not stay apart from the controversy: T'ang Hsien-tsu was identified as a Tung-lin member, Tung Ch'i-ch'ang as a Tung-lin affiliate, and Li Chih was denounced by the Tung-lin.)

The amount of unused energy within the civil bureaucracy, a huge pool of literati-officials, must have been considerable in view of the numerous references in their writings to their circumscribed leisure life; this is particularly evident in the works of Yüan Hung-tao. After Chang Chü-cheng the majority of the bureaucrats was again left with little to do. They had little chance to achieve merit and reputation through a civil service career.

Thus, while some government functionaries took their careers seriously, others, having passed the civil service examinations, carried on their careers with indifference and a lack of concern. Yet social approval was still eagerly sought. Under the circumstances, the recognition afforded to the persecuted had its unusual appeal.

Alongside this wasted talent lay uninvested wealth. The exorbitant prices that curios like ivory and rhinoceros horns commanded, and the amount of precious metal that was cast into utensils and buried underground (an occurrence often reported by contemporaries), exemplify the unproductive ways that capital could be tied up. All these elements combined to create a precious, gilded age, which can be glimpsed from the way some scholars lavished their wealth on themselves. In those days a rare ink slab could exceed in value the annual income of a peasant family. The birthday celebration of a well-to-do family could last for ten days, with guests coming from remote provinces; simple congratulatory notes turned into lengthy and elaborate eulogies. At the same time country gentlemen surrounded their sedan chairs with retainers; and rank purchasers erected flagpoles in front of their houses. In other words, when society failed to induce its members to be goal-oriented, they turned to being status-oriented. And a righteous name in history conferred status of the highest kind. Such fame, if sustained, not only outlasted stone tablets erected in memory of virtuous men, but guaranteed that honor would follow a family for generations.

The tragedy of the emperor was that he supplied the institutional causes for the Tung-lin movement. Had it not been for the succession issue and the controversy over the tax and mining commissioners,¹¹ the partisans would have had difficulty sustaining their struggle through several decades. As it happened, small issues and minor incidents were woven into the wider framework of a general controversy over the succession that was called in the rhetoric of imperial politics the contention over "the foundation of the state" because of suspected and implied connections with the emperor's policies. The following cases, seemingly petty yet essential to the history of the Tung-lin movement, are illustrative.

In 1603, even before the founding of the Tung-lin Academy, the Prince of Ch'u, the senior imperial clansman and a direct descendant of the dynastic founder's sixth son enfeoffed at Ch'u, was challenged by thirty kinsmen on his right to the succession. His legitimacy was questioned; it was even said that the preceding prince, alleged to be the father, had long been impotent. Although this happened thirty-two years after the death of the father and twenty-five years after the confirmation of the prince's title, the acting minister of rites, Kuo Cheng-yü, nevertheless asked for an open inquiry. Senior grand secretary Shen I-kuan, who wanted to minimize the effects of the case, said that the investigation must be carried out in secret. It so happened that Kuo, who had previously been the principal tutor of the heir apparent, was recognized by his peers as a leading champion of orderly imperial succession. He had also openly spoken against the dispatching of eunuch commissioners as tax and mining intendants. On the other hand, Shen I-kuan was regarded as a tool of the throne. In this way, the case involving the Prince of Ch'u's legitimacy inadvertently brought into collision the so-called good elements and evil forces at court.

At Kuo's insistence, an open inquiry was conducted by provincial officials. The testimony on the whole favored the prince. But Kuo again petitioned the emperor to have the evidence circulated among the highest-ranked court officials so that they could be canvassed for their opinions. This request was granted, and thirty-seven leading bureaucrats submitted

11 The economic implications of this issue must not be exaggerated. Many of those who disapproved of the dispatching of the eunuch commissioners used the Mencian argument that the state should never compete with the populace for profit, a consideration that was ethical rather than economic. Also, they were opposed to mining on account of geomantic considerations. On the other hand, modern scholars who stress that the Tung-lin partisans represented mercantile interests rely too much on an anti-Tung-lin memorial submitted by Ch'i Shih-chiao in 1613, reproduced in *MSL*, *Shen-ssung shih lu*, pp. 9691-93. The paper, while disclosing that "rich merchants" attended Tung-lin meetings, in no way suggests that the partisans adopted a pro-mercantile platform. On the contrary, the wealthy merchants are listed along with other undesirable elements of society. In this way the memorialist, by adhering to orthodox Confucian attitudes, claimed credit for himself in an area where the Tung-lin partisans were supposed to have excelled.

their separate opinions. These opinions not only contradicted one another, but also in some cases contained self-contradictory and evasive statements, revealing that partisan considerations had blighted their thinking on what otherwise would have been a technical issue. At this point the Wan-li emperor, acting on the advice of another vice-minister of rites who had been instructed to take over Kuo Cheng-yü's duties during this interim, upheld the Prince of Ch'u's legitimacy and declared the case closed.

No sooner had this happened than the throne was inundated with impeachments. The censorial-supervising officials who supported Shen I-kuan lost no time. They alleged that Kuo Cheng-yü had colluded with a malcontent imperial clansman in order to satisfy a personal grudge. Kuo retaliated by accusing the senior grand secretary of duplicity. Shen I-kuan and the other vice-minister of rites were said to have suppressed the opinions of the opposition. Kuo went further, disclosing that when the case was still pending, he himself had been approached by one of the prince's agents, who had offered him 10,000 taels of silver in exchange for a favorable decision, but that he had declined. He insinuated that the prince's legitimacy must have been purchased at a much higher price. Disgusted by such arguments, the Wan-li emperor turned a deaf ear to them. While the sovereign left these impeachment memorials unanswered, charges and countercharges among the bureaucrats gradually came to embroil the entire court in the case. Among others, the minister of revenue and the chancellor of the National University were attacked for their opinions in favor of the prince's legitimacy. The censor-in-chief and an associate grand secretary, however, supported Kuo Cheng-yü. Partisan lines were drawn.

Eventually the emperor accepted Kuo's resignation, apparently in the hope that this would end the case. But its implications for the imperial succession issue were clear to all, and the episode did not end there. By the time the former vice-minister of rites had packed to leave the capital, copies of a mysterious pamphlet were found in the streets of Peking, some tossed inside the doors of high-ranked officials. The publication announced that a conspiracy to depose the present heir apparent and to replace him with the emperor's third son was in the making. If this conspiracy succeeded, it went on, awards would be given to a dozen or so military and civil officials, whose names were listed. Then the pamphlet prophesied that the highest merit would undoubtedly belong to a senior grand secretary Shen I-kuan.

Upon seeing the publication, the emperor was enraged. The secret police arrested several suspects, but suspicion focused on Kuo Cheng-yü. A supervising secretary memorialized the throne; he linked Kuo's handling of the case of the Prince of Ch'u to the seditious literature. Kuo's friends, how-

ever, suspected that he had been framed by Shen I-kuan's partisans. In the end, both sides were cleared. A court hanger-on not connected with official circles was condemned for printing the pamphlet and executed. But the case dragged on for six months, reminding everyone that there was a party supporting the emperor and the senior grand secretary, and a party supporting the heir apparent. Their mutual hatred and suspicion were intense. The slightest incident, no matter how insignificant or irrelevant, could at any time escalate into a major confrontation.

The events of 1603–04 involved the Tung-lin partisans only marginally. During the search for the author of the mysterious pamphlet, a certain Yü Yü-li was implicated in the case. His correspondence had been found in the possession of one of the suspects. Yü, a vice-director with the Ministry of Justice, was consequently discharged from the civil service. He later maintained close contact with the organizers of the Tung-lin partisans in the capital.

No matter how trivial they might appear, such episodes had far-reaching consequences because they influenced the outcome and conduct of subsequent routine civil service evaluations. The personnel evaluation of 1605 came not long after the controversy over the prince's legitimacy and the disturbance caused by the pamphlet. The official in charge of the proceedings was none other than Wen Ch'un,¹² the censor-in-chief who had stood behind vice-minister Kuo Cheng-yü and had disagreed with grand secretary Shen I-kuan. The principal figures designated by him for removal from office during this evaluation were for the most part censorial-supervising personnel who had, in both aforementioned cases, served Shen well. Another person fell victim to this sequence of events in a different way. Li T'ing-chi, the vice-minister of rites who had advised the Wan-li emperor to accept the legitimacy of the Prince of Ch'u, had since been regarded by the Tung-lin partisans as *persona non grata*. In the face of mounting opposition, he eventually had to deny himself the senior grand secretaryship. His anti-Tung-lin posture was evident, for he had taken sides with Shen I-kuan.¹³

In handling these two incidents, the Wan-li emperor seemed to have done well under the circumstances. With little power at his command, in the matter involving the Prince of Ch'u he allowed the courtiers to express themselves, but refused to reopen the case once the decision was made. In dealing with the mysterious pamphlet, he repeatedly bade the high officials involved to remain calm. While pressing the secret police to arrest the conspirator, he refrained from prejudicing the case against the suspects. Because the capital had been shaken by the allegations in the pamphlet, he

¹² See above, p. 541. ¹³ See above, pp. 529, 547–48.

called the heir apparent in for an interview and their conversation, witnessed by the palace eunuchs, was sent to the grand secretaries' office for publication. Yet despite all these disturbances, he did not resolve the succession issue by designating his heir apparent and thereby did not remove the fundamental cause of the suspicion that infested the outer court.

When the pamphlet was first found in the streets of Peking, his third son, on whom he had conferred the title the Prince of Fu, was approaching eighteen. A dynastic tradition that had endured for two centuries would have required him to leave Peking and to take up residence in a distant province. But the emperor persistently delayed his favorite son's departure. Since the emperor failed to enforce this tradition, which was essential in guaranteeing an orderly succession, it was only natural for outsiders to speculate that the issue of the imperial heir had not been finally settled. For years to come, this suspicion was to generate many more unavoidable controversies. Only in 1614, when the prince was twenty-eight years old, did he at last leave the capital. But in the next year "the attack with the club" took place, an incident which was seen as an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the heir apparent by the Prince of Fu's supporting party. In the wake of this alleged assassination attempt, the Tung-lin partisans rallied around the heir apparent, the future T'ai-ch'ang emperor, who was to occupy the throne for only thirty days.

During the Wan-li reign the Tung-lin movement derived its ethical superiority from a narrow interpretation of the moral law. This is evident in the denunciation of Chang Chü-cheng for refusing to take mourning leave and in the active participation of Tung-lin partisans in the dispute over the Prince of Ch'u's legitimacy. Having survived many rounds of evaluation proceedings, Tung-lin partisans subsequently had to base their power on the succession issue. They hoped to realize their policies under the heir apparent when he succeeded to the throne. When "the foundation of the state" (the order of succession) actually appeared to be threatened, their concern was justified.¹⁴

AN IDEOLOGICAL STATE ON THE WANE

The deterioration of the quality of the government

Traditional Chinese historians have usually regarded the middle years of the Wan-li reign as a turning point in the history of the Ming empire; thereafter the dynasty's position became untenable and its collapse inevitable. In

¹⁴ The role of the Tung-lin partisans in subsequent state affairs is discussed below. See pp. 554–69, 570, 573, 575, 577, 581.

arriving at this conclusion they focus their attention on the emperor's character. The factional disputes among the courtiers are also condemned. Such interpretations tend to obscure a less well-recognized, underlying fact. A relatively unstructured government whose avowed purpose was to preserve the agrarian simplicity of the rural communities was unable to respond to the challenges of a new era.

Yet within the framework of the dynasty's constitution, the arguments of the aforementioned historians are not without substance. That is to say, if governmental reorganization and fiscal and legal reforms were not possible, these critics would be justified in regarding the prolonged deadlock between the sovereign and his bureaucrats, and the disputes among the latter themselves, as major causes, if not the exclusive cause, of the dynasty's failure to maintain its power.

Before this impasse, thinking men of the age had already made attempts to lessen the ideological grip that the highly stylized state structure maintained on government operations. While a complete transformation would have been impossible, some freedom of action on the part of the principal administrators was sought. Chang Chü-cheng, for example, at one time contemplated taking up the type of Confucian utilitarianism promoted by the iconoclast Wang Ken (1483–1541). Wang Ken held that altruism was no more than an act of self-preservation, like trading one's own room for that of another. His "left-wing Wang Yang-ming school" ideas seemed to have embodied a more materialistic, and hence pragmatic, approach to public issues.¹⁵ But somewhere along the line Chang must have come to the conclusion that his own patronage of a specific school of thought would inevitably establish a bad precedent. In the end he became the man who ordered the closing of all the private academies in the empire.¹⁶

Li Chih, generally regarded as the greatest iconoclast of the era, put forth a strange proposal. The restrictions on individual freedom implicit in the prevailing social norms still should apply to the general public, but men and women of unusual talent should be excepted from the conventional requirements when their achievements outweighed their transgressions. The exception was justified not on legal, but on philosophical grounds. An adherent of Wang Yang-ming's School of the Mind, Li Chih argued that since ultimate reality exists only in the mind, a superior mind, with its innate capacity for transcending evil, should be allowed greater

¹⁵ See Huang Tsung-hsi, *Ming ju hsüeh an* (1667; rpt. Vol. C79–82 of *Ssu-pu pei-yao*, Taipei, 1970), 32, p. 2a, 11b.

¹⁶ See above, p. 532.

freedom to act, even at the expense of public morality.¹⁷ His limited goal of giving more discretionary powers to outstanding ministers and generals cannot be called “radicalism.” The radical aspect of his proposal, however, lies in the means by which he sought to achieve this. In an age when jurisprudence was underdeveloped and philosophical discourse supreme, Li Chih went a step further by suggesting that the conventional norms of behavior embodied in statutory law could be supplanted by intellectual understanding. Because that point of view implicitly challenged the superiority of moral law, Li had to die in prison for espousing such nonconformist ideas. His suicide in 1602 ended every effort to amend the highly stylized constitution of the dynasty and its accompanying code of ethics, even by oblique and well-intentioned means.

Yet the constitutional deadlock that involved the Wan-li emperor and his bureaucrats did not develop into a crisis. True, the ceremonial proceedings requiring the emperor's presence were abandoned. Along with disputes over the responsibility of the throne, some proposals on practical issues were held in the palace unrescripted, given a *de facto* imperial veto. Nevertheless, other business went on, the documents apparently being given personal attention by the emperor. (In 1620, about three months before his death, he complained to grand secretary Fang Ts'ung-che about the mass of official papers still requiring his attention.) When high government positions remained unfilled, deputies and junior bureaucrats carried on as usual. Famine relief was handed out, internal rebellions were crushed, and frontier incursions by nomadic tribes were dealt with, even though the resolution of such matters often aroused criticism.

The most tangible accomplishment of the later Wan-li period was the completion of the Chia Canal. After the Grand Canal had been repeatedly silted up and inundated by the Yellow River, construction of an alternate channel, paralleling it on the east to avoid altogether the rapids near Hsü-chou, was contemplated. The proposal had at one time occupied the attention of Chang Chü-cheng. However, construction only started in 1593, and the project soon ran into difficulties. More stone than had been anticipated had to be removed; and work was suspended several times

17 Li Chih appears in much present-day Chinese literature either as a champion of egalitarianism or a man who indulged in wanton debauchery. Despite the great deal that has been written about him, his motives are not much appreciated. This lack of understanding has been caused in part by Li's own failure to produce a systematic treatise. His random notes and historical comments, appearing in the form of marginalia, are not fortified by logic. Numerous semantic traps easily lead to misinterpretation. However, his reasoning is not difficult to outline if the reader examines his writings comprehensively and critically, including the *Fen shu* (1590; rpt. Peking, 1961), *Hsü fen shu* (1611; rpt. Peking, 1959), and *Ts'ang shu* (1599; rpt. Peking, 1959). His biographical data will also shed light on his individual outlook; see *DMB*, pp. 807–18.

owing to a shortage of funds. Then in 1603 construction was resumed with vigor. The new channel, 110 miles long, was finally opened for traffic in 1609.

The deterioration of the government continued, although in less conspicuous ways: the decline was gradual, but constant. The bureaucracy had to rely on the morale and faith of its members to function properly.¹⁸ The moral fervor of the Tung-lin movement was but one expression of that commitment, which was still a powerful force in the workings of society at all levels. The Wan-li emperor contributed nothing to the maintenance of that public morale. On the contrary, his personal affairs further dampened the spirit of those who wished to rally behind the throne.

He responded to the factional conflicts in the central bureaucracy, which often resulted from his perverse behavior and vengeful spirit, by obstructing the bureaucratic channels through which government was normally conducted. He simply ignored the day-to-day operations of both the inner and the outer courts. Most notably, he refused to acknowledge or to make the required administrative response to memorials requesting appointments and resignations. In his analysis of the facts on the huge number of vacancies in the higher levels of the bureaucracy that resulted from the emperor's behavior in this respect, one modern historian concludes that this signifies several things about the emperor's changing role as the head of his government from about 1600 onward. First, having been repeatedly rebuffed by his bureaucrats and subjected to their will, he spitefully refused to cooperate as a way of getting back at them. Second, while he was content to allow many divisions of the administration to struggle on undermanned and leaderless, he pointedly excepted from that treatment all those agencies of the civil bureaucracy that were concerned with garnering wealth. Third, he was content to see staffing reduced because salaries not paid to the contemptible bureaucrats could be diverted to his privy purse.¹⁹

To illustrate the extent of the impasse, one may cite grand secretary Shen I-kuan's desperate memorial of early 1603, in which he reported to the throne that of thirteen Regional Inspectorates of the Censorate, nine had long remained vacant although candidates had been repeatedly nominated to fill them. All these recommendations had been ignored. In 1604 the Ministry of Personnel urgently reported that almost half of the prefectural magistracies in the realm were vacant, and that well over half of the ministerial and vice-ministerial posts of right and left, in both Nanking and Peking, remained unfilled, despite repeated efforts to fill them. The

¹⁸ See above, pp. 532–36, 554–55.

¹⁹ Meng Sen, *Ming tai shih*, pp. 282 ff.

throne had simply ignored the requests. On several occasions the officials still on duty at the capital devised extraordinary means of approaching the emperor (who now rarely if ever attended meetings of the court) when he did not expect it, to beseech him to authorize routine administrative appointments and to grant retirement to officials who had long since departed without official sanction. On some occasions they knelt en masse in the courtyards of the palace, chanting and wailing to gain his attention. But to no avail; unanswered memorials were allowed to pile up year after year.

Many vacancies in the eunuch staff also went unfilled, especially such leading positions as those in the Directorate of Ceremonial, which normally required the concurrent approval of the outer court or the grand secretaries. That displayed the emperor's contempt for the leading division of the eunuch bureaucracy which, in his view, had been a willing agent of the capital bureaucracy in imposing constraints on him in the past. Only those divisions of the eunuch and outer court administrative bureaucracy directly engaged in tax collection and in new revenue initiatives (the eunuch tax and mining intendants) received his close attention. These were maintained in full or expanded and charged to operate effectively. Whether he deserved it or not, this ruler earned a reputation as the most venal and avaricious occupant of the imperial throne in history. He constantly devised ways of denying revenues to the government and of enhancing his own private treasury. The contempt felt by the bureaucracy for this emperor permeated the government and had a profound impact on bureaucratic morale, which still further reduced the capacities of an administration that was not only understaffed, but also denied career mobility. The greatest damage was done in 1615 in the aftermath of "the attack with a club," which thoroughly exposed the Wan-li emperor's inadequacy not only as emperor, but also as head of his own household.

The case of "the attack with the club"

In the evening of an early summer day, a husky young man wielding a thick club was arrested inside the Imperial City at the heir apparent's residence. He had already wounded a eunuch attendant. The trial by the officials of the Ministry of Justice established the intruder's name as Chang Ch'a. The court was about to conclude that the man, mentally unbalanced, had intended to settle his grudge against two palace eunuchs whom he had met outside the city. The case could have been closed at this point by summarily sentencing the man to death, since the law required this extreme penalty for offenders who so much as even menaced the palace with gestures. The verdict was, however, prevented from being finalized by a

junior official in charge of prisons. The official, Wang Chih-ts'ai, contested the claim of insanity. During a private interrogation inside the cell he had established that the prisoner was sane and alert; he had been coached to carry out a conspiracy. A review of the case, conducted publicly by members representing all the offices in the Ministry of Justice, confirmed the finding by naming two palace eunuchs as instigators. Their closeness to Lady Cheng and her brother seemed to substantiate the general suspicion that the intruder had been sent to murder the heir apparent so that her son, the Prince of Fu, might eventually ascend the throne. Chang Ch'a was said to have been promised immunity and a reward.²⁰

In the wake of protests and criticism, the Wan-li emperor made an unprecedented move: he called all the officials into the palace. Normal protocol was dispensed with. The sovereign spoke impromptu in front of the kneeling courtiers with the heir apparent and his three sons and one daughter standing on the stone staircase one step or two below him. At one point he held the hand of the heir apparent to demonstrate his personal affection toward his son and to assure the officials that the order of succession was irrevocable. He then demanded that Chang Ch'a and the two eunuchs implicated in the case be executed. At this point several high officials from the Ministry of Justice challenged the emperor's decision to mete out the death penalty to all three of the suspects. Subsequently, the grand secretaries interceded. Chang Ch'a was sentenced to die the next day. But the two eunuchs, still under arrest inside the palace, were to be turned over to the civil officials for trial. The emperor consented to this.²¹

Yet in the end the eunuchs were never handed over. After Chang Ch'a's execution they were brought to the Wen-hua Gate for questioning by civil officials, but they remained in the custody of eunuch officials. They insisted on their innocence, so no verdict could be handed out. Now the heir apparent came forward to speak on their behalf, claiming that they had in fact been framed by the madman Chang. The ministerial officials then petitioned the throne for permission to cross examine them again, but the permission was never granted. On the fifth day after the emperor's audience, both eunuchs in question were reported to have died while confined within the palace. Two years later, during the personnel evaluation of

20 For Lady Cheng, see above, p. 516.

21 The lack of a detailed narrative of this case in Western literature compels the author to devote some space to it. The reader is reminded that most Chinese authors, disturbed by moral implications over the case, tended to maintain a selective vision. The most vital primary source, the *MSL*, *Shen-tsung shih lu*, has been only selectively used. The entries on pp. 10014, 10016, 10020, 10026, 10029, 10031, 10032, 10041, 10043, 10047, 10056, 10061, 10064, and 10067 differ considerably from most secondary sources. The anti-Tung-lin version of the case in the Ku Ping-ch'ien et al., comps., *San ch'ao yao tien* (1626; photographic rpt. Taipei, 1976) should also be consulted.

1617, Wang Chih-ts'ai, the energetic official who had investigated this case, was cashiered for corruption.²² Several officials who had previously advocated a quick settlement of the case had by then been labeled as members of the Chekiang faction. A partisan line decided the outcome of the case.

Its confidence shaken and its sense of direction gone, the civil service became an unmanageable body. Skepticism and disbelief spread slowly but irreversibly to the lower echelons of administration. Under the Ming system, the quality of local administration depended to a great degree on the character and integrity of individual magistrates. In preventing the exploitation of the populace by local gentry, they were very often forced to act alone. Now their merit was hardly ever recognized, and their fortitude went unsupported. The demoralizing effect of partisan politics consequently reached to every level of the imperial administration.

The lack of an alternative

One can garner from accounts by Europeans who visited China or who had a glimpse of it from Macao in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that the empire was conceived of as a rationally ordered entity which, however, failed to prevent numerous irregularities and widespread corruption in its administration. These writers were also impressed by the numerous towns and cities and the great variety of goods produced in the country. There arose a consensus that China was very rich but weak. During the age of voyages and discoveries, these conditions provided an irresistible temptation for military conquest. In fact, Philip II of Spain was repeatedly urged to send an expedition to conquer China, with earnest entreaties coming from lay and religious groups alike. This proposal to open China by force, if it had been carried out, would have preceded the Opium War by two and a half centuries. But in fact Philip remained unmoved, and the proposal never came to anything. In view of what happened to the Dutch colonists decades later, the decision taken by Madrid was not unwise. Western powers had not yet harvested the advantage of their technologies. Only after they had done that could they sustain the forces needed to bring China's imperial order to an end.

The Ming dynasty in the late Wan-li period presents a paradox. Its weaknesses lay exposed to European and indigenous observers alike, yet it was able to fend off assaults both from within and without. The Ming case demonstrates the enduring validity of the doctrine of the Mandate of

²² See p. 543–44.

Heaven. It was not that the Chinese populace by nature had more tolerance for misgovernment. But the peasantry, maneuverable only en masse, was at the command of an evenly deployed bureaucracy.²³ Unless the scholar-official class agreed to or was compelled to change its allegiance, a dynastic turnover would not occur. In other words, the dynasty endured not by virtue of its intrinsic strength, but by virtue of its noncompetitive position. The lack of an effective rival was sufficient to warrant its continued existence.

Before the sixteenth century came to a close, the Wan-li emperor had yet to celebrate the successful conclusion of his three major campaigns (*santa-cheng*).²⁴ Suffice it to say that during the last three decades of his long reign, a year rarely went by without some sort of internal rebellion or frontier crisis.

Social turbulence and border crises

During this period, domestic uprisings took place in several provinces. Among the most serious were those supported by the White Lotus–Maitreya sect in Shantung, which flared up in 1587 and again in 1616.

After Altan had been pacified in 1571, there were few raids along the frontier to the north and west of Peking. The once-powerful Mongolian confederation began to break apart; Altan's successors, Cürüke and Bushugtu, were unable to control all the tribes. However, this did not stop the Ordos Mongols from invading the Kansu–Kokonor border region. In subsequent engagements against the Ordos hordes the Ming army was on the whole successful, in part owing to assistance from Tibetan and Uighur tribes in the area. But border clashes and minor campaigns went on incessantly throughout the period. Meanwhile, the Eastern Mongols continued to migrate southward into Liao-tung (in modern Manchuria), where they frequently raided Chinese border outposts. In 1598 the tribesmen succeeded in ambushing and killing Li Ju-sung, the Ming commander-in-chief. Until the Manchus appeared under the Jurchen (Manchu) leader Nurhaci, the Mongols continued to occupy the attention of the Ming forces in the northeast. They were able to bring between 30,000 and 50,000 cavalry into a battle.

Intermittent border wars were also fought in the southwest between Ming forces and the Burmese. In 1582–83 a punitive expedition led by Liu T'ing penetrated deep into Burma; in 1584 Liu again defeated the Burmese. Despite these victories, the frontier remained subject to attack. In the last decade of the sixteenth century, the Burmese again invaded the Yunnan border. During this period of confusion even the Vietnamese be-

23 See pp. 534–35, 544–45, 556. 24 See below, pp. 563–74.

came restless; in 1607 they made raids along the borders of Yunnan and Kwangsi.

None of these crises and uprisings could have toppled the Ming state, although they caused enough problems and sometimes anxiety. They failed to pose any serious threat to the imperial order: no group managed to build a logistical base or to gain control of enough territory to sustain further growth. To do this, they needed the support of the educated elite. Unless a rebel could rally the local gentry behind his cause, his messianic message offered deliverance only in the life hereafter. Unless a frontier chieftain could recruit enough collaborators to organize a state on the Chinese model (as Altan had once tried to do and as Nurhaci and his descendants later in fact did), he could not hope to found a dynasty in China. These cases again make clear the point that no alternative to the ideological state of the Chinese tradition existed in China. The Ming empire's failure could be attributed to its success. Its conceptual constitution enabled it to cling tenaciously to its mandate; and so long as that remained the case, its misgovernment had to be tolerated.

Cultural insulation

The Ming state during the Wan-li period lacked its earlier vigor; the tributary system had deteriorated since the founding of the dynasty. Nevertheless, the system was far from abandoned; it continued to serve the interest of the empire and served it well. But the terms were now open to negotiation, whereas earlier they had been dictated by the Ming court. Altan and his vassals had been accommodated with a modified form of tributary relationship, the exchange of compliments and goods taking place at a frontier post rather than at the capital. Toyotomi Hideyoshi was close to being persuaded to present himself as the tribute-bearing "king" of Japan. The withholding of the subsidies to Cürüke, a privilege tied to the tributary relationship, was regarded as instrumental in subduing the Mongols in 1590. In 1594, the governor of Yunnan was able to organize an attack against Burma jointly with Siam, a tributary state. In 1615, a year before his open break with the Ming court, Nurhaci dispatched his last tributary emissary to Peking. However, policies that tied foreign aid to the recipient's voluntary subordination to the Celestial Empire had limitations. Such arrangements might reinforce an armed peace, but they could not substitute for armed force. This was amply demonstrated by Nurhaci, and Annam (Vietnam) provides another case in point. When the Ming court was unable to arbitrate the feud between the Lê and Mac families, its commanding position over Annam vanished.

The arrival of Europeans created a new problem. The major concern of the Ming empire was not to allow coastal trade to disturb the social life of its agrarian society. The Portuguese were permitted to continue residing in Macao; the legal status of the colony was never brought up, for no dispute had arisen over the issue. In practice the Portuguese paid the magistrate of Hsiang-shan county a nominal rent, and a Chinese customs house at Macao collected import and export duty and tonnage fees, with preferential rates for the Portuguese. In 1574 a barrier wall was erected to seal off the colony and to keep the foreigners inside. Within the colony, however, the Portuguese enjoyed self-government. After Philip II seized the throne of Portugal, the residents of Macao decided to form a senatorial administration based on a municipal franchise granted by their mother country, the sanction for which was eventually secured from the viceroy of India. Thus, while paying lip service to Philip as their king, the colonists managed to keep their port city free of Spanish intervention.

These details were of no concern to the Chinese. Although they admitted that foreign trade could not be prohibited, officials were expected to prevent Chinese from going abroad, for they were unable to handle the problems that would result from a mixed Chinese and foreign population. A colony administered under foreign law therefore served their purpose. The duties and tonnages of foreign trade did not appear as income for the state. The proceeds, which were not carefully audited, were disbursed for local use. Chinese sources bear witness that after collecting their own customary fees, the mandarins allowed customs declarations to pass with few questions asked.

In 1567 the Ming court lifted its ban on Chinese participation in foreign trade and also designated Yüeh-kang near modern Amoy as the port through which such maritime trade should pass. This was a special concession to the population of Fukien, which had taken to piracy and armed uprisings. Local people were now allowed to go to sea. The policy actually encouraged emigration and accounts for the emergence of a number of Fukienese communities in Southeast Asia at this time.

The shift of trading from Macao upriver to Canton seemed to have begun in 1578. In that year the Macao Portuguese were permitted to travel to Canton, the capital of Kwangtung province, to purchase Chinese goods. Canton had been closed and opened for foreign trade intermittently throughout the sixteenth century, the major consideration that determined its status being law and order. Provincial officials in Kwangtung had worked out a detailed set of procedures to regulate the foreign trade under their jurisdiction. Foreigners had to reside in designated areas. They were "secured" by wealthy Chinese merchants who were designated by a circuit

intendant. The trading period was limited to one session (and later two) a year. The Chinese had also developed a technique for coercion. They withheld services and supplies from foreigners who would not adhere to these procedures. When customs duty collection was shifted from Macao to Canton, all the elements of the nineteenth-century Cohong trade system (which was in reality a modification of the tributary system) were already in place.

The Chinese in the Philippines

At the same time that the Macao Portuguese secured their colony, the Spaniards tried to acquire a similar foothold in China through diplomatic negotiations. For a while the prospects for the undertaking seemed good: Chinese officials shared their interest in destroying the pirate leader Lin Feng (known as Lin A-feng, Limahong, or Dim Mhon in Western sources).

In 1570 the Spaniards had arrived at Manila, where a handful of Chinese had long been in residence, and established a colony. Late in 1574, his offer to submit to Chinese authorities having been turned down, Lin entered the Bay of Manila with a fleet of sixty-two vessels, loaded with men and women, arms, and farm implements, apparently with a view to colonizing. Lin's men had no difficulty overpowering a Spanish vessel on their way, but their engagement with the Spaniards on land was unsuccessful. The pirate group then turned north and eventually constructed a stronghold at Pangasinan in Lingayen Bay. In March 1575 the Spaniards organized an expedition and took the Chinese by surprise. Having destroyed most of the pirate ships, they laid siege to the fortress. The siege lasted for four months. While the fighting was going on, Wang Wang-kao, a Chinese naval officer in command of two warships, who was searching for Lin Feng, also arrived in Luzon. He was invited to Manila and given a warm reception. Wang in turn agreed to take back to China with him a Spanish embassy headed by the missionary empire builder Friar Martín de Rada.

Evidently, Chinese officials at this point wanted the Spaniards to fight for them. And the Spaniards, in addition to securing the island of Luzon, also sought to open China for trade and missionary work. When the Spanish mission arrived at Foochow, its members were cordially received; the Chinese governor promised to forward their requests to Peking. What was unexpected was that while the embassy was still at the guesthouse in Foochow, the pirates under Lin Feng (whom the Spaniards thought were surrounded) had secretly constructed more than thirty ships and dug a canal to escape to the sea. To make things even worse, once free on the high seas they returned to the Formosa Strait and created problems for Fukien offi-

cial. Those officials now had less enthusiasm for advancing the Spaniards' cause. De Rada's mission was turned back empty-handed; further wrangling only intensified bad feeling on both sides. These circumstances prompted the governor in Manila as well as Friar de Rada to recommend the military conquest of China.²⁵

The proposed expedition never materialized because Philip II rejected the suggestion.²⁶ But large-scale bloodshed was yet to occur, the victims being the Chinese civilians on the Luzon shores. After the Spanish had established themselves in Manila in 1571, Chinese immigrants thronged there in large numbers, much to the dismay of the Spanish colonists. In 1602, on the recommendation of a certain Chang I, the eunuch intendant in charge of business taxes and mining in Fukien obtained the Wan-li emperor's permission to mine for precious metals on Mount Chi-i on a remote offshore island. There is no evidence that the emperor realized where the island was, or that he was aware of the impending conflict with the Spaniards. His permission was granted in the face of strong protests from his censorial officials. Actually, "Chi-i" might well have been the city of Cavite on the island of Luzon.

When a Chinese delegation (including Chang I) arrived to investigate the possibilities, the Spanish authorities became enraged and the delegation was turned back. But governor Don Pedro Bravo de Acuña suspected that this was some Chinese plot. Just nine years earlier, the mutiny of Chinese conscripts under Spanish command had already cost a governor's life. It was rumored that a Chinese invasion was imminent and that Chinese immigrants were going to aid the invaders. When Spanish authorities took the precaution of searching the Chinese population for weapons and even iron objects, panic spread.

Soon the Chinese community began to plan for self-defense. The ensuing massacre of October 1603 might have been sparked by minor clashes. But as it gained momentum, it became a full-scale war between the Spanish forces and the Chinese community. The chase started from Manila; the defeated Chinese were driven to Batangas, where the native Filipinos also fell on them. The total loss of life is said to have been over 20,000 by the

25 There is little doubt that the Fukien provincial officials in 1575 reported prematurely on the impending capture of Lin Feng. Under the date of 1 November 1575, a Chinese source recorded the following contradictory entries: "Lin Feng conquers Luzon," and "Luzon delivers [to us] prisoners." Note that at the time many Chinese were confusing the newly arrived Spaniards with native Filipinos. See T'an Ch'ien, comp., *Kuo ch'üeh* (ca. 1653; rpt. Peking, 1958), p. 4276. The entries are not found in *MSL, Shen-tsung shih lu*. Lach refers to a "Luzon tributary embassy" in 1576. See Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the making of Europe* (Chicago, 1965), p. 789. This comes from Shen Shih-hsing, *Ta ming hui tien* (1587; rpt. Taipei, 1964), 106, p. 8a. The originator of this distorted report was Liu Yao-hui, the governor of Fukien. See *MSL, Shen-tsung shih lu*, p. 1264.

26 See above, p. 556.

Chinese count and 15,000 according to Spanish records. The incident was not reported to the emperor until a year later. The Wan-li emperor put Chang I, whose false report had provoked the Spanish atrocity, to death. Beyond that little could be done. In 1605 the new governor of Fukien sent a note to the Spaniards asking only that the widows and orphans be repatriated. The proposal put forth by the Ministry of War "that the red barbarians within the inner ocean be driven out"²⁷ was in keeping with the pretensions of the Celestial Empire, but altogether impractical.

The Jesuits in China

Bloodletting of such magnitude only strengthened the cultural barriers between China and the West. The task of establishing communications had to be achieved by some nonviolent means, and the Jesuits were moving in this direction. For a quarter of a century, since the death of Francisco Xavier on the island of Sancien in 1551, a growing number of Christians had been agitating for the forceful opening of China to Christianity. In 1577, when Friar Alessandro Valignano arrived at Macao, the missionary enterprise was given a new direction. As the new Visitor of the Jesuit Mission in the East Indies, he established the policy of cultural accommodation; he demanded that missionaries to China first become sinicized. Valignano himself never set foot in China; he remained in the Portuguese colony on Macao. But his efforts bore fruit. His followers Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci did. From the small church of Chao-ch'ing (in modern Kao-yao, 50 miles west of Canton), established in 1583, Ricci eventually worked his way to metropolitan areas, arriving in Nanking in 1595 and Peking in 1598. During his second trip to Peking in 1602, he established himself there permanently. This enabled him to devote the last busy decade of his life to preaching Christianity and to disseminating Western scientific knowledge among members of the imperial court. His success in Peking made missionary work in other cities possible.

Ricci's ability to win confidence is well known. Endowed with inexhaustible patience and an aptitude for learning about things Chinese first-hand, he was an ideal ambassador. He not only became accepted by China's educated elite, he virtually charmed them. Despite his successes, he did not raze the cultural barrier. He merely made an opening in it and squeezed himself in through it. The Jesuit father's own journal reveals that he did not consider his work an astounding success, even though he made converts, among them a few Chinese dignitaries. The upper-class Chinese,

²⁷ See *MSL, Shen-tsung shih lu*, p. 7536; *KC*, p. 4934.

Ricci complained, were seeking personal enlightenment rather than affirming their faith. The lower classes, on the other hand, indulged in idolatry and superstition. This is not difficult to understand; the dichotomy he sketches is in reality a reflection of China's social structure, with a huge, literate bureaucracy governing millions of peasants, neither group concerned deeply about the issues and dogmas of a foreign religion. At a time when the role of arbiter with the transcendent had been assumed by the head of the state, there was little room for Allah or Jehovah. In this way China did not need to fight a religious war to settle the issue. All creeds were appreciated for their relative value, but none of them had a claim on absolute truth, which was reserved for the cult of the state alone. Under these circumstances, the "rites controversy" that eventually set the Chinese throne against the pope in the eighteenth century is not surprising.

The policy of cultural accommodation had already caused some strain within the Church. Nicolo' Longobardi, Ricci's designated successor, did not wait long after the master's death in 1610 to register his dissension. In 1617, before the reign of the Wan-li emperor—not a man of religious bigotry—had come to an end, the new Church in China suffered its first persecution, albeit a mild one.

THE THREE MAJOR CAMPAIGNS OF THE LATER WAN-LI REIGN

The term "three major campaigns" is a historiographical invention of late Ming historians. There is little historical justification for grouping a campaign to eradicate an aboriginal chieftain in the southwest, a campaign to put down a mutiny of Sino-Mongolian troops in the northwest, and a war with Japan on the Korean peninsula as events of comparable significance. The campaigns varied in scale and dimension, and they are not similar in their historical origins. Nor did all the three campaigns end in clear-cut victories, as Ming writers claimed. The Korean campaign was a curious war, poorly managed by both sides, that developed into a stalemate. Only Toyotomi Hideyoshi's unexpected death brought about a settlement favorable to the Ming state. A victory celebration took place; prisoners of war were presented to the emperor and later executed.²⁸

Despite all the differences among them, these three campaigns have traditionally been treated as a related series of events. The Ming historian

²⁸ See *MSL*, *Shen-tsung shih lu*, p. 6168; Chu Kuo-chen, *Yung ch'uang hsiao p'in* (1621; photographic rpt. Shanghai, 1953), pp. 18–19; Ku Ying-t'ai, *Ming shih chi shih pen mo* (1658; rpt. Taipei, 1956), ch. 62–64.

Ku Ying-t'ai devoted three successive chapters of his topical history of the Ming dynasty to coverage of the three campaigns; and Feng Meng-lung, a contemporary of the events, in a short story published within a decade after the end of the Wan-li reign, also grouped the three campaigns together in a prelude to one of his tales.²⁹ One should be aware, however, of the implications of this convention. Historians tried to exaggerate the military prowess of the late Ming empire to eulogize a waning dynasty and, consciously or unconsciously, to sanction such an ideological state, even at the expense of the truth.

The Po-chou campaign in the southwest

The campaign against Yang Ying-lung could be considered an aspect of the sinification of the territory in the Southwest inhabited by minority groups, which had been going on throughout the Ming period. Yang himself was known to be of Chinese extraction, although in reality this means he was of mixed ancestry. The territory held by him was an anachronism. His earliest known ancestor, a T'ang general, having subdued the aboriginal peoples in the area known as Po-chou in the ninth century, was able to hold it as an autonomous state within the state and to pass it on to his descendants for the next seven centuries. Dynasties rose and fell, and the Yangs received various forms of enfeoffment and commission; but the family's control over the mountainous region bordering the three provincial administrations of Hu-kuang, Szechwan, and Kweichow (an area that stretched from east to west over about 200 miles and somewhat less from north to south) had never been broken by an imperial administration until the demise of Yang Ying-lung.

In a form of subinfeudation characteristic of that aboriginal society, Yang's overlordship was exercised through seven powerful households who also constituted his council. Circumstances suggest that these vassal households were divided in their loyalties to the Chinese and to the aboriginal Miao people. Yang Ying-lung was known to have identified with the cause of the Miao, and during his rebellion the aborigines eventually rallied behind his cause.

The event leading to his rebellion, as described in the contemporary

29 Feng's story, entitled "Tu Shih-niang nu ch'en pai pao hsiang" (The Tenth Lady Tu sinks her treasure box in anger) appears in his *Ching shih t'ung yen* (Preface 1624; rpt. Peking, 1956; 2nd ed., Peking, 1981) as the 32nd tale. It has been translated as "The courtesan's jewel box," in Yang Xianyi (Yang Hsien-i) and Gladys Yang, trans., *The courtesan's jewel box: Chinese stories of the Xth–XVIIth centuries* (Peking, 1981), pp. 246–71.

records, does not seem plausible. It is said that in 1587 Yang divorced his wife, néé Chang, and replaced her with a concubine from the T'ien family. Subsequently he butchered his ex-wife, whose relatives then informed Chinese authorities of Yang's impending uprising. It is more likely that the family feud upset the balance of power within the tribal structure and the Chinese decided to intervene, for the Changs and T'iens numbered among Yang's vassal households, and an internecine war might result. Chinese taxation cannot be ruled out as a cause of the rebellion. Ming officials had been extracting manpower and material, mainly lumber for palace construction, from the Miao tribes through Yang Ying-lung. Also, during the decade of Yang's "rebellion," he twice voluntarily surrendered to Ming authorities. Each time he was given a suspended death sentence. The first time he appealed to redeem himself with 20,000 taels of silver; the second time the sentence was commuted to a fine doubling that amount, plus an unspecified quantity of lumber. On neither occasion did he pay. The Korean war kept the government so occupied that officials were unable to sustain their pressure on him. Once he was free to act, Yang Ying-lung launched raids and surprise attacks on Ming forces. Yet he never made a bold strike to occupy Szechwan province, as his associates had advised.

The government took up his case in 1590. Except for a pause during the negotiations of 1594, Yang's rebellion lasted through the 1590s. The final settlement came in 1600. Immediately after the Korean war had ended, the court in Peking appointed Li Hua-lung supreme commander and commissioned him to suppress Yang Ying-lung. He arrived in Chungking late in 1599. The ensuing spring offensive was planned by him in every detail. Against Yang Ying-lung's forces of "some 40,000 to 50,000 men," he mobilized an army of 200,000. Contingents of troops came from as far as away as Shensi and Chekiang. Veterans from the Korean campaign were enlisted, as was a small party of Japanese from Korea. The bulk of the troops were drawn from provincial auxiliaries and other aboriginal tribesmen. Firearms were deployed. Each advancing column was led by companies of elite troops. The terrain was studied beforehand. The supreme commander was himself an expert at psychological warfare, and he made effective use of bulletins and handbills.

The actual fighting lasted 104 days. Li reported that 22,687 rebels were killed and 1,124 captured. The proportion suggests atrocities. Yang Ying-lung committed suicide, and his body was delivered to Peking for desecration. With the Yang clan's hereditary overlordship eliminated, the Po-chou native chieftainship was reorganized into two directly administered prefectures.

The Ordos campaign

The campaign against Pübei had far less substance. The extant records do not substantiate the claim that he had planned to rebel; he would have had to come to a better understanding with the Ordos Mongols before raising his standard. Some accounts suggest that he was a victim of circumstance who was afterward singled out by Ming officials as the rebel leader.

Pübei was a Mongol whose family had long been employed in the Chinese military service. In 1592 he had retired with the rank of a *tu chih-hui* or regional military commissioner. His military rank was inherited by his son, who used a Chinese name, P'u Ch'eng-en. As was customary, the family retained more than a thousand "household men," or veteran fighters who took personal orders from their lord commander and were often on his payroll. Observers have commented that the retention of such a private army, probably more than the mutiny in which the father and son were involved, had necessitated their destruction. Because Pübei and his son were stationed in the strategic city of Ningsia, their possible connections with enemy Mongol leaders in the steppe had come to worry the Chinese authorities.

In March 1592 a Chinese officer, Liu Tung-yang, rose in revolt. Angry with pay arrearages, he murdered the governor of the region. In the course of the uprising, Liu and his followers also forced the commander-in-chief of the military district to commit suicide. He then proclaimed himself commander-in-chief and made P'u Ch'eng-en and another Chinese officer his left and right deputies. Pübei never assumed any title throughout the sequence of violent events, but he was recognized as the mastermind behind the mutiny. From the very beginning, the report to the emperor by the supreme commander in charge of the northwest frontier played up the roles of Pübei and his son and played down those of the Chinese personnel. By exaggerating Pübei's connection with the Mongols, he hoped to make the incident take on the character of a frontier war, instead of an internal uprising that had resulted from Chinese mismanagement of subordinate commanders.

The following months, which coincided with the Japanese invasion of Korea, were a time of high anxiety at court. The contest between the rebels and government forces at auxiliary frontier posts around Ningsia intensified, the rebels at times being aided by bands of Mongol cavalry from the steppe. Chinese commanders inside the line of defense were alerted and ordered to prepare for a Mongol raid deep into Ming territory. Reinforcements were called in from adjacent districts. Mindful of the arrearages problem, the treasury delivered silver from Shensi, Honan, and Szechwan

to pay the fighting men. But reports of the presence of large Ordos forces in the vicinity were untrue.³⁰ Twice the emperor reprimanded officials for furnishing him with false reports and contradictory proposals. It is doubtful that the rebellion could have been suppressed if the Ordos Mongols had been committed in force. As it was, by midsummer government forces had already laid siege to the garrison at Ningsia.

On the last day of July 1592, Li Ju-sung arrived with reinforcements from the eastern military districts. This marked a turning point in the campaign, yet for another two months the besieging forces were unable to take the city. Finally a solution was found. A dike was constructed parallel to the city wall and the space in between was filled with lake water. The dike, when completed, was three and a half miles long; inside the water reached a height of 9 feet. Soon sections of the city wall began to crumble. The rebels, running out of food, became thoroughly discouraged. On 20 October 1592 the city of Ningsia was taken. Before the city fell, P'u Ch'eng-en killed Liu Tung-yang and hung Liu's head from the city wall, apparently hoping thereby to redeem himself. P'u was not pardoned. When he visited the headquarters of the government forces, he was seized and later executed in Sian. Pübei burned himself alive. Since in 1578 the entire Ningsia command had an active roster of only 27,934 men, the number of soldiers involved in the rebellion could not have exceeded 20,000. The population of the city of Ningsia is given in contemporary documents as 300,000. The total number of troops on the government side is not known, but it comprised contingents from all the military districts on the northern frontier.

The Korean campaign

The Korean war differed from the two preceding campaigns in that it was fought on foreign soil. In preparation for the invasion, Toyotomi Hideyoshi was said to have mobilized some 300,000 men. About a half that number saw action in Korea in 1592. The second invasion of 1597 involved about the same number of men. These numbers made it impossible for the Ming army to have the kind of numerical superiority it was used to.

Historians cannot discuss this international conflict with great certainty, for Hideyoshi's true motives remain unclear. Having announced as his

³⁰ Some sources indicate that the Ordos Mongols provided 30,000 mounts in support of the rebels. See Ku Ying-t'ai, *Ming shih chi shih pen mo*, ch. 63. What happened was that on 12 September 1592 a letter between the Ordos Mongols and Pübei, which promised much support, was reported to have been intercepted by the Chinese. The intelligence was belatedly relayed to Peking. See *MSL, Shen-tsung shih lu*, pp. 4696, 4700.

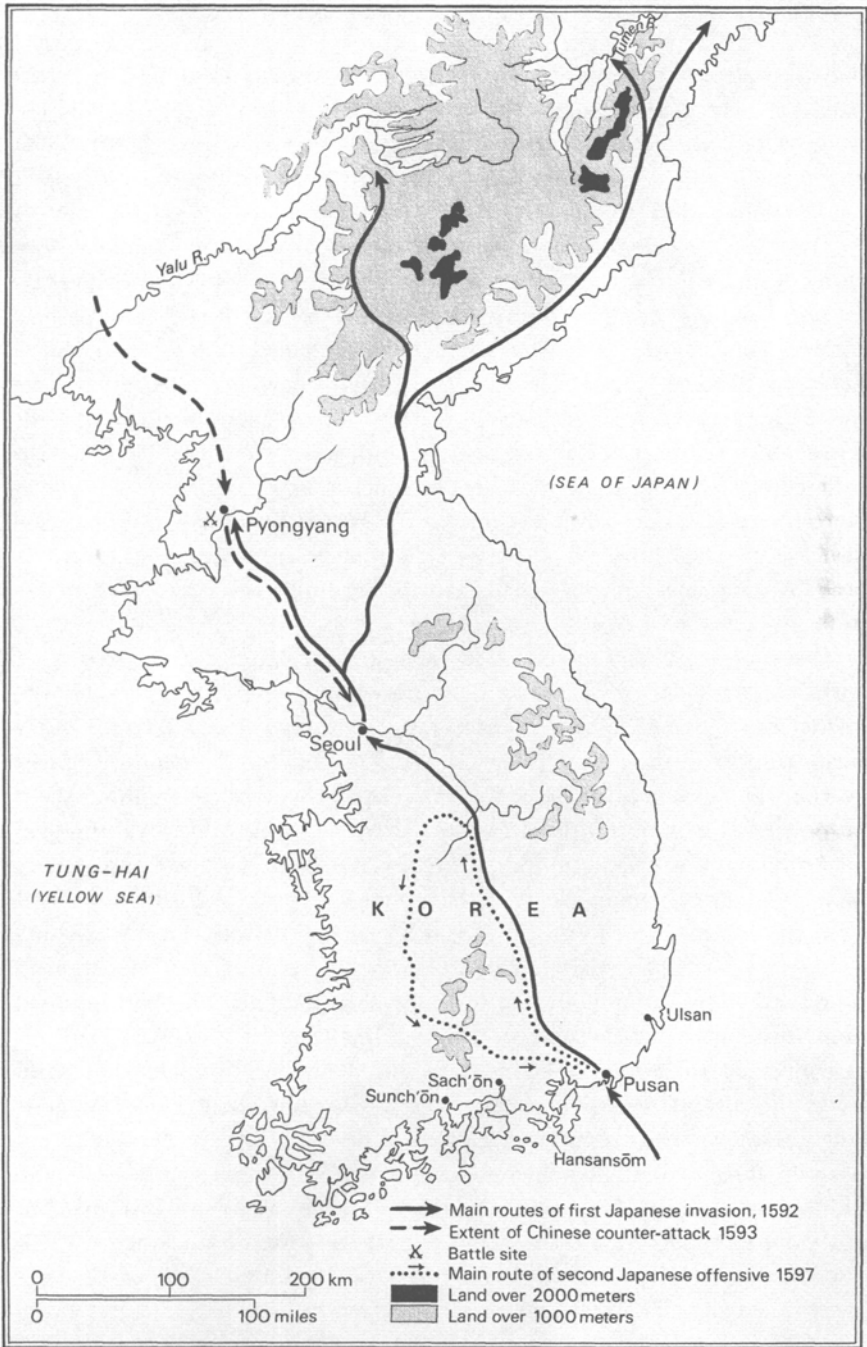
avowed goal the conquest of China, he did not even set foot in Korea to carry out his ambitious plan. His first swift attack in 1592 took the Koreans by surprise. Japanese forces landed on the Korean peninsula late in May 1592 and took both Seoul and P'yŏng-yang within two months. By the fall of 1592, two vanguard divisions had reached the Yalu and Tumen rivers. No effort was made to advance beyond these rivers or even to raid into Chinese territory. The failure to exploit this initial advantage can be attributed to the Korean navy and Korean irregulars, who harassed the Japanese and threatened their rear. But Hideyoshi might have had a less ambitious war aim than he was willing to admit or than the sources reveal. George Sansom doubts that he understood the problems of a continental war or anticipated serious Chinese intervention.³¹ As it happened, Konishi Yukinaga, the "Christian daimyo" of the Japanese, who commanded a vanguard division of 18,000 men and did most of the fighting against the Chinese, also carried on most of the peace talks in the field. This double role required him to alternate combat with friendly visits to Chinese generals. The truces probably worked more to the advantage of the Ming forces than to the advantage of the Japanese.

Having seen the token forces they had sent to Korea wiped out by the Japanese in 1592, the Chinese started their mobilization later in that year. An expeditionary force of a prescribed strength of 42,000 men was assembled, with units contributed by five northern military districts. A contingent of 3,000 soldiers proficient in the use of firearms came from South China. The entire empire was put on a wartime alert. Seaports were closed all along the east coast for fear that the pirate invasions of the 1550s would be repeated. Western visitors bore witness to the general suspicion against foreigners. When the die was cast, the Wan-li emperor decreed that an expeditionary army comprised of 100,000 men, with far more to come from Siam and the Ryūkyūs, be assembled to retake Korea and eventually to invade Japan.³² In line with standard practice, a civil official, Sung Ying-ch'ang, was made supreme commander, while Li Ju-sung was commissioned as commander-in-chief.

This expeditionary force crossed the Yalu River in January 1593. Its first battle, aimed at the recovery of P'yŏng-yang, was a clear Chinese victory. But twenty days later, Li Ju-sung took personal command of 1,000 mounts ahead of the main body of his army in a valiant pursuit and met with

31 See George Sansom, *A history of Japan, 1334–1615* (Stanford, 1961), chap. 22; see also the biography of Konishi Yukinaga in *DMB*, pp. 728–33.

32 This declaration probably had more effect on the Koreans than on the Japanese. For the text, see Kuksa p'yŏch'an wiwŏn hoe, ed., *Chosŏn wangjo sillok, Yŏjo sillok* (1400–45; 2nd printing 1603–1606; facsimile rpt. Seoul, 1968–70), 30, pp. 1b–2a.



Map 24. The Korean campaigns, 1592-1598

disaster. About 15 miles north of Seoul, he was checked by a Japanese battle formation three times the strength of his own force. The Chinese were routed; the commander-in-chief himself barely escaped capture. This engagement ended the hostilities of the first phase of the war, and peace negotiations followed.

The Chinese delegation to the negotiations was headed by Shen Wei-ching. Curiously, he was neither a member of the civil service nor an army officer. Recommended by the minister of war, he was hastily given a field commission as *yu-chi*, somewhat comparable to colonel, to meet the Japanese field commanders. His parley was credited with having cleared the way for the Japanese evacuation of Seoul in May. The real problem behind the withdrawal was that the invaders faced serious logistical problems, having suffered the loss of a huge food depot, which had been burned by Chinese-Korean agents. Hideyoshi had directed the Japanese to fortify their position near Pusan. The Chinese lacked the strength necessary to destroy this bridge-head. A stalemate thus developed, and the ensuing truce was to last for close to four years.

The protracted diplomatic effort to untie the knot and the slow pace with which the negotiations and their accompanying etiquette were conducted can in part be said to have resulted from cultural factors. But a curious reader must suspect Hideyoshi's calculating mind at work. The new overlord of Japan was aware of the grave consequences that might ensue if he pressed this issue too hard (he was already having difficulty supplying his army); he was willing to bide his time. Moreover, his grasp on power in Japan would not remain secure if there were a setback in Korea.

In the summer of 1593 a Chinese delegation, in which Shen Wei-ching served as an advisor, visited Japan. Hideyoshi received the delegation in June, and it stayed at his court for more than a month. Nothing resulted from this round of negotiations, but tensions lessened in Korea. The Chinese decided to keep 16,000 men on the peninsula to guard the armed truce; the rest of the expeditionary force was withdrawn. Evidence suggests that the Japanese, predisposed toward a peaceful settlement, could not reach an agreement among themselves as to the terms. Hideyoshi's envoy to China, Konishi Joan (referred to by the Chinese as Hsiao-hsi Fei), first had to debate in Pusan with the generals representing the invading army.³³ His discussions with the Chinese negotiators set off a similar round of disagreement in Peking. The majority opinion favored war. As a result, the envoy was detained in Korea and Manchuria for more than a year. The minister of war, however, argued strongly for a peaceful settlement, citing the finan-

33 See *DMB*, p. 731.

cial difficulties of continuing the war. It took the emperor's personal intervention to make his argument prevail. A junior official who was identified as the person responsible for obstructing the peaceful settlement most vociferously was discharged from the civil service and arrested. Only then was the envoy Konishi escorted to the capital, where he stayed for over a month.

Satisfied with these Japanese overtures, the court in Peking dispatched an embassy to invest Hideyoshi with the title of King of Japan. A precondition for the settlement was the complete withdrawal of the Japanese forces in Korea, which met some resistance. Lengthy haggling ensued. The Chinese embassy was held first in Seoul (which was under Chinese occupation) and in Pusan (which was under Japanese occupation for over a year), from May 1595 to July 1596. The imperial patent and silk robe which were supposed to be delivered to the Japanese warlord had become so soiled that they were no longer usable, and new ones had to be rushed from Peking. During the negotiations, the chief Chinese emissary, afraid for his life, abandoned the mission and fled. His place had to be filled by his deputy, who crossed the Korean straits to Japan only after the main body of Japanese forces had done so. A small garrison was nevertheless left by the invaders in Pusan.

The audience granted by Hideyoshi to the Ming embassy in October 1596 was one of the greatest diplomatic blunders of all time. The Japanese overlord, who considered himself the victor in the war, was enraged to find out that he was to be installed as a tribute-bearing vassal to the Chinese emperor and to pledge never again to make another incursion into Korea. He had expected the partition of Korea, the delivery of a Korean prince as a hostage, and the hand of a Ming princess. Suffice it to say that Japan had outgrown the Chinese concept of world order, with its dominant cultural influence radiating from the celestial capital to the peripheral areas. It is not difficult to understand that no one dared to report this new development to the Wan-li emperor. Two hundred and twenty years later, even under an alien Manchu ruler, when the Amherst mission from the English throne was sent to China in 1816, the Chinese court still clung dearly to its particular concept of a universal empire, a concept essential to its ideological foundations. The puzzling aspect of this case was that Hideyoshi, who had seen Shen Wei-ching more than once and whose representatives had been in touch with the Chinese for years, had remained ignorant of what was at issue until the patent of investiture was actually laid before his eyes.

Whatever may have led to this misunderstanding, as a result of it peace negotiations ceased and the war entered its second phase. Early in 1597 both sides resumed hostilities. Soon after the Chinese embassy was given

safe conduct home, it was reported that 200 Japanese ships carrying troops had reached the shores of Korea. During the summer, another thousand such troopships anchored at Pusan. The court in Peking appointed Yang Hao supreme commander of a new army. The governor-general in control of Manchuria and the territory around Peking functioned as the headquarters of a rear echelon and logistical commander. Eventually that official, Hsing Chieh, as defense coordinator, exercised power superior to the supreme commander. Meanwhile, those officials who previously had advocated a peaceful settlement were disgraced. Shen Wei-ching was set aside to die. The minister of war who earlier had so much imperial confidence was given the death penalty at the throne's insistence. Before the penalty could be carried out, he was reported dead in prison.

Chinese documents indicate that for this second campaign, 38,000 troops were mobilized initially. These were assisted by a naval force of 21,000 men. Hsing Chieh said that he planned a winter offensive using 100,000 men, but it appears that his army numbered about half that amount. A modern Japanese scholar holds that Ming strength was on a par with Hideyoshi's invasion force of 140,000, but that too seems unlikely.³⁴ The Chinese force was made up by transferring units in active service and recruiting throughout the empire. All the frontier districts were involved, and some of the soldiers came from as far away as Szechwan, Chekiang, Hu-kuang, Fukien, and Kwangtung. A realistic estimate might put the combined strength of Ming army and navy at the height of the campaign at 75,000 men.

The second campaign differed from the first one in several respects. This time almost the entire campaign was carried on south of the thirty-sixth parallel rather than along an extended north-south front. In August 1597 the Japanese pushed to within 50 miles of Seoul; but when the Ming reinforcements arrived, the battlefront became stabilized. As winter set in, the invaders had to retreat to the south. Thereafter they were on the defensive. Naval operations, already deemed important in the first campaign, had a decisive influence on the outcome of the second campaign. At first the Koreans sent admiral Yi Sun-sin to jail and put an incompetent officer in command of his fleet; they quickly lost their base on Hansan Island to the enemy. The mistake was corrected. Before the end of the year

³⁴ See Yoshi S. Kuno, *Japanese expansion on the Asiatic continent: A study of the history of Japan with special reference to her international relations with China, Korea, and Russia* (Berkeley, 1937–40), I, p. 171. This work, however, must be used with caution because it is heavily colored by the nationalism of pre-World War II Japan. Sansom states that the total invasion force on Korean soil reached numbers close to 150,000, all "first-class fighting men." See Sansom, *A history of Japan*, p. 359, note 19.

admiral Yi returned, and with his return the Koreans soon regained control over the waters of the straits. His success forced the Japanese land forces to take defensive positions along the coast from Ulsan in the east to Sunch'ön in the west.

Nor had the Chinese ignored the importance of seapower. At grand secretary Shen I-kuan's suggestion, the Wan-li emperor ordered that a fleet be organized and sent to Korean waters. Placed under the Chinese naval commander and artillery expert Ch'en Lin, it arrived in Korean waters in May 1598.³⁵ The port of Tientsin and ports on the Shantung and Liao-tung peninsulas were utilized to send in supplies. Eventually this naval force saw action in joint maneuvers with the Koreans or in coordinated attacks with the Chinese land forces.

Despite such strategic advantages, the land operations were by no means easy or smooth. The large numbers of casualties attest to the intensity of the struggle. Partisan controversies also entered into the Chinese side of the campaign, especially when the combat troops faced adverse situations. The siege of Ulsan in February 1598, for instance, was said to have come close to a successful completion. But the appearance of a Japanese relief column of 3,000 men at the last moment caused the attacking Chinese forces to stampede. Supreme commander Yang Hao was censured for the failure. He was criticized for having withheld the last assault and then for having fled for his life. While he admitted that several hundred Chinese soldiers died in action, his opponents insisted that the loss was well over 20,000 men. His close contact with Shen I-kuan, a grand secretary having many enemies, was linked to the censure. This led to Yang's dismissal.

In the spring of 1598 Konishi warned that the Japanese position in Korea was untenable. The Japanese in turn ordered the withdrawal of close to half of the invading force, leaving in Korea mostly Satsuma warriors under Shimazu clan member commanders. Those men fought fiercely. The news of Hideyoshi's death on 18 September 1598 did not reach the Japanese camp until late in October. By then they had turned back Chinese attacks at Sunch'ön and Sach'ön. In Chinese official circles it was admitted that the battle of Sunch'ön was a grave defeat, although the Japanese claim that they took 38,700 heads seems to be grossly exaggerated.

The latest setbacks put the court in Peking (which was still unaware of Hideyoshi's death) in a dilemma. Suggestions were made to suspend the attack and to take a defensive position. The emperor had already called a conference of the principal ministers to deliberate the issue. It was at this point that the governor of Fukien informed the court of the death of

35 See Ch'en Lin's biography in *DMB*, pp. 167-74.

Hideyoshi. That news was welcomed as the de facto end to a seven-year war (which the Japanese called *ryūto-dabi*, literally, a “dragon’s head followed by a snake’s tail”) that nobody had the appetite to continue.

THE MANCHU CHALLENGE

Nurhaci the empire builder

Nurhaci was born in 1559, which made him the Wan-li emperor’s senior by four years. His Chien-chou tribe of Tungusic people was of Jurchen stock. Only after 1635 did his descendants begin to call themselves Manchus, a term of obscure origin. But the designation the “Chien-chou commandery” was a Ming coinage, with which the Yung-lo emperor, recognizing the fighting qualities of those tribes, instituted the tribal commandery in 1412, thereby theoretically making the tribe an affiliated division of the Chinese imperial army. Such recognition, however, had very little substance. The Ming empire had never clearly defined the territorial boundaries of the commandery, and there is no evidence that the orderly succession of the tribal chieftains was kept under close imperial supervision save during perhaps the very early years.

Throughout the Ming dynasty, the Manchus migrated from their earlier residence, near the area which is today the boundary between Korea and the Soviet Union, into the Manchurian heartland some 300 miles to the west. In the sixteenth century they traded with the Chinese along a line corresponding to the present north-south railroad corridor to the east of the Liao River. Clashes with the Chinese population became frequent. Eventually Nurhaci posed as the champion of honest Manchus who had suffered bad treatment at the hands of corrupt and overbearing Chinese officials. In reality, internal warfare among the Manchu tribes was frequent. The pattern usually started with marriage ties and alliances and ended with betrayals and annexations. This was a situation which the local Chinese commanders had not hesitated to use to their advantage. Unable to fend off the pressure of the growing Manchu population, they usually sought to give aid to a weaker chieftain in his contest for power with a stronger one. In this way they influenced the balance of power and kept some control over the situation. Thus, by the first decades of the seventeenth century the Ming state, its armies, and Chinese settlers all had long been engaged in various relationships with the Manchus.

Nurhaci’s own family, whose claim to the chieftainship seems to have been justified on both the paternal and the maternal side, fell victim to unusual circumstances that launched his career as the Manchus’ leader. Late

in 1582, the future Ch'ing dynastic founder's father and grandfather were inside the stronghold of Atai, a chieftain who was at war with the Ming general Li Ch'eng-liang, when they were slain by the Chinese troops storming that bastion. Only later was it discovered that they had been Li's undercover contacts. After the incident Nurhaci went to see Li, who gave him comfort and treated him well. Some records go so far as to say that the future Manchu leader became Li Ch'eng-liang's adopted son.

In 1583, at the age of twenty-four, Nurhaci began to build his empire. He later boasted that when he started, his troops had only thirteen sets of armor. With Li Ch'eng-liang's sympathy and on the pretext that he was avenging the deaths of his forebears, he could act with impunity. But in 1587, when he began to fortify his residence, the governor of Liao-tung decided that Nurhaci had been allowed to go too far. He organized a preemptive war against the Chien-chou chieftain which, however, he later had to abandon. As was typical of Chinese politics in those days, there was disagreement about how to deal with the situation. A subordinate district administrator, differing with the Liao-tung governor, insisted that Nurhaci should be won over by inducements, or be "pacified." To make things more complicated, that subordinate had more support from the censorial officials in Peking than the governor himself. The scheme to destroy Nurhaci before he might become too powerful was thus set aside.

Yet after this incident the Manchu leader proceeded toward his goal by less warlike means. Already in control of the territory south of the Hetu Ala (later Hsing-ching) River, he maintained cordial relationships with four major tribal states of Jurchen descent, marrying the daughter of one of the chieftains and the granddaughter of another. The lesser tribes were induced to accept him as their leader. Still biding his time, he made peace with the Ming empire as well. Consequently, a title and a rank were granted to him by the Wan-li emperor in 1589. The next year he arrived in Peking at the head of his own tributary mission. Later, in 1597, he visited the Chinese capital again.

China's war with Hideyoshi provided Nurhaci with an unusual opportunity. In 1593, having routed a joint attack organized by his brother-in-law from the Yehe tribe, he extended his influence over the Mongols in Manchuria. His offer to lead his forces to join the Ming expedition in Korea was declined with thanks. Nevertheless, the court of Peking had to treat him with deference. He also profited from monopolizing trade with the Chinese in pearls, sable, and ginseng; the financial resources so gained benefited his plans for expansion. It is almost incredible that everybody saw at this point that Nurhaci would sooner or later rise to challenge the Ming dynasty, yet no plan to check him was put forth. In 1592, on the eve of the campaign

against Hideyoshi, a Chinese dispatch from Manchuria indicated that the Manchu chieftain had somewhere between 30,000 and 40,000 cavalrymen, plus some 40,000 to 50,000 infantrymen. The quality of Nurhaci's elite corps was even more impressive; it was generally regarded as superior even to the Japanese.³⁶

Near the turn of the century, Nurhaci took two steps to raise his organization above the level of a tribal state. One was the development of a distinctive Jurchen alphabetic script in 1599, which replaced the Mongolian script previously used. The other was the organization of the "banner system" in 1601. Under each of four banners there were perhaps twenty-five companies of 300 households each; in 1615 another four banners were added. More than just fighting units, these banners and companies also functioned as military administrative districts. The entire population was registered under them, including all tribal men and women, and their children and slaves. In peacetime, they were administrative and taxation units. In time of war, the soldiers registered in the companies were rarely called up all together; they were ordered to contribute a prescribed number of men from each company, depending on the degree of mobilization.

In 1603 Nurhaci reached an agreement with the Ming generals in Liaotung to delineate a boundary between their territories. Thereafter the Manchu lands were closed to Chinese immigration. That the Chinese did not live up to this agreement was cited by Nurhaci as one of his grievances.

Nurhaci's tactics centered around the mobility and striking power of cavalry formations comprised of from 10,000 to 50,000 mounts. The banners, commanded by his sons and nephews, were well coordinated. The great speed with which these battle formations operated enabled them to withstand Chinese and Korean firearms. In the campaign of 1619, Nurhaci was able to force the Chinese to fight him in a series of direct engagements in the open field (where the Manchus excelled), rather than in sieges and a war of attrition (at which the Chinese excelled). Nurhaci sent his last tributary mission to Peking in 1615, apparently to distract the court from his true purposes and to conceal his imminent rebellion.

He had long perceived the weaknesses of the Ming empire. For example, he told his subordinates that when a Ming general was sent to chastise him, the general merely carried out *pro forma* maneuvers and then falsely reported his exploits. He called Tu Sung, the Ming commander at Shan-hai Pass, who had a reputation for rashness, Tu the Madman. In general, he regarded the Chinese with hatred and contempt. But ironically, he never lacked Chinese advisors. One of them is said to have served him for thirty years.

³⁶ *Chosŏn wangjo sillok, Yijo sillok*, 30, p. 16a (97); pp. 4b–5a, 55–63).

The last showdown

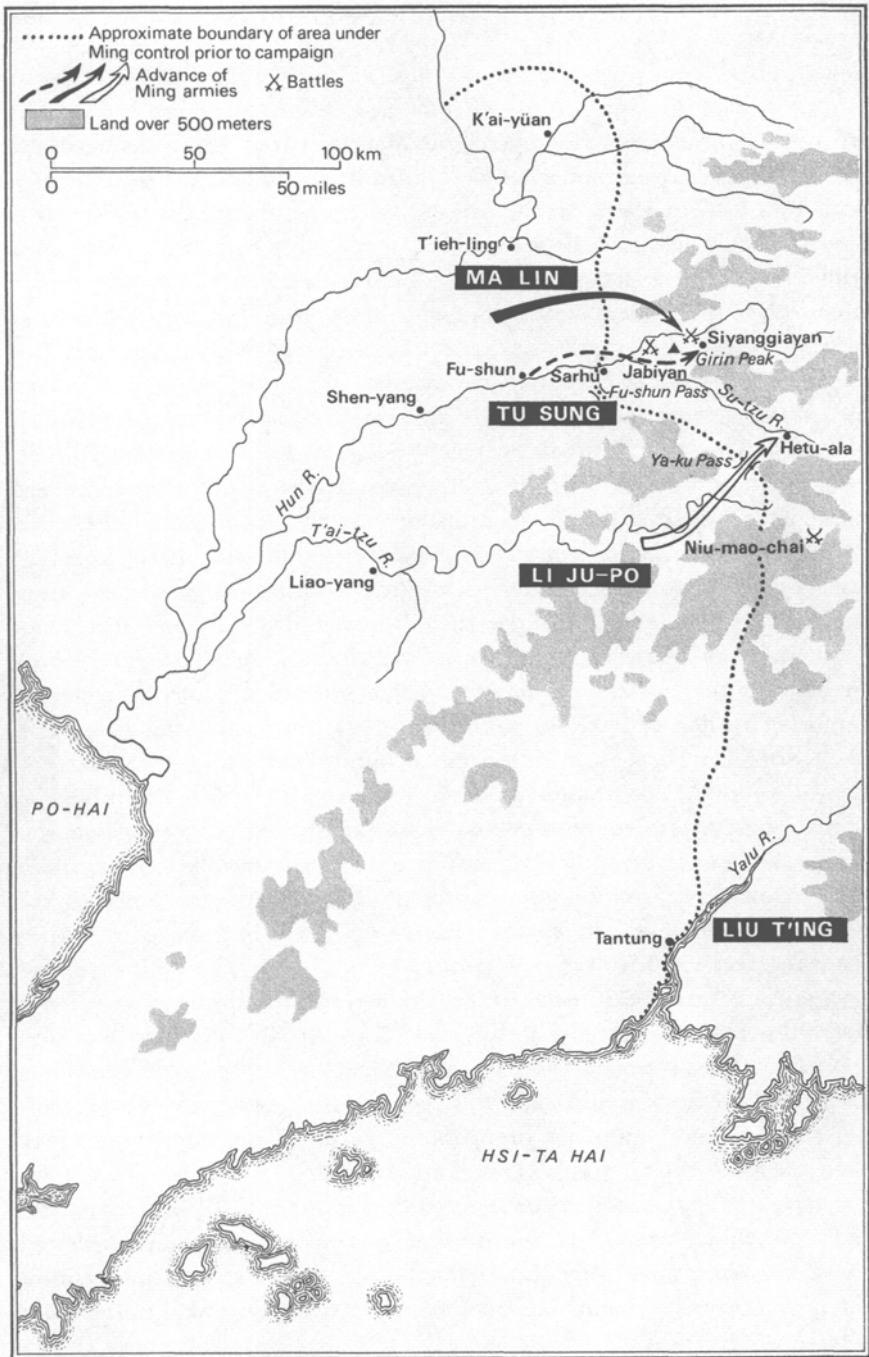
By 1618, Nurhaci had annexed all the Manchu tribes except the Yehe and Haihsi which, being under Chinese protection, could not be eliminated without a full-scale war. In the spring of that year the time was ripe. On 8 May the Manchus let it be known that on the next day 3,000 Chien-chou tribesmen would arrive at Fu-shun to barter their goods. At the specified time, when the town's population and soldiers from the garrison thronged into the market outside the city gate eager for bargains, Nurhaci unleashed his attack, killing a battalion commander and forcing a colonel to surrender. The commander-in-chief of the Liao-tung military district rushed to attack. The Manchus then evacuated Fu-shun and retreated toward their own territory; but on their way, they turned back and surrounded the Chinese, this time killing the commander-in-chief.

Still claiming to desire a peaceful settlement, Nurhaci now publicized his *Seven grievances*, which in reality stressed three major issues: the killing of his father and grandfather by the Ming army; the aid and encouragement given by Ming authorities to his tribal rivals; and the encroachment on his territory by Chinese settlers. These grievances could be redressed only by a cession of territory to him and by annuities in gold, silver, and silk fabrics—in effect, a tribute from Peking. Those conditions were calculated to be unacceptable to Peking. In fact, the Ming court was so plagued by partisan contention that it was compelled to act imperiously. Unless Nurhaci were quickly annihilated, no responsible officials could hope to escape censure and impeachment. Under this pressure, even the Wan-li emperor decided to act. For several months official papers on Liao-tung received his prompt attention.

A punitive expedition was planned for early in the spring of 1619. But of all the possible officials, it was the controversial Yang Hao who was again appointed supreme commander. Several highly regarded generals—the best the empire could muster—were also assigned to Liao-tung. Soldiers, horses, and equipment from frontier garrisons and interior provinces as far off as Chekiang and Szechwan were assembled to build up an offensive force. When more personnel were required, recruits filled the ranks. The Yehe and Koreans were also asked to take part in the campaign.³⁷

Finance was a major problem. The treasury reserves accumulated during Chang Chü-cheng's tenure as chief grand secretary had all been spent a

37 These military campaigns of 1619 are fully analyzed in my article, "The Liao-tung campaign of 1619," *Oriens Extremus*, 28 (1981), pp. 30–54. Professor Gari Ledyard advised me on the use of Korean sources.



Map 25. Yang Hao's offensive against Nurhaci, 1619

decade earlier to finance other campaigns. The normal revenues could never cover this enormous expenditure. The Wan-li emperor, always loath to part with his own money, contributed only 100,000 taels of silver toward the campaign, even though he had millions in the palace treasury. At the minister of revenue's recommendation, a silver surcharge was added to the land tax in all provinces except Kweichow. Along with other revenues, this increase was expected to provide 3 million taels of silver, which was at that time considered enough to bring the Liao-tung affair to a satisfactory conclusion. By March 1619, all the preparations had been completed.

Yang Hao's total strength is mentioned in some sources as 200,000 men. Actually he might have had only half that number, among which were about 83,000 Chinese troops, including those assigned to service and supply functions. The balance was made up by the Korean and Yehe auxiliaries. All of Nurhaci's forces were committed as soon as they arrived at the battlefield. At the high point of the campaign, he probably had 50,000 to 60,000 men. Despite the inflated and deflated figures of troop strength in the records, it is safe to assume that overall the Chinese had a numerical superiority of roughly three to two. But on the battlefield the numerical advantage was on the side of the Manchus, for Yang Hao divided his forces into four routes, while Nurhaci retained the opportunity to strike with his entire force on practically all occasions.

In retrospect, Yang Hao's war plan deserved every criticism it received. That war plan, however, was similar to the one used at the end of the campaign against Yang Ying-lung and in the second phase of the Korean war. Such plans were usually put forth by civil officials rather than by field commanders. It was customary for civil officials to be commissioned as supreme commanders, but professional soldiers were not expected to rise beyond the rank of field marshal. Usually a general officer who commanded an army corps had reached the pinnacle of his career. This was the case with the four commanders in the 1619 campaign. Roughly equal in terms of their service records and their prestige, none was expected to be subordinate to any other; none had the expertise to maneuver battle formations larger than the four columns mentioned above.

The problems that arose from this lack of military leadership were compounded by lack of technical and logistical support. The army was financed by a variety of sources spread out among a large number of administrative units. Its personnel included members of the hereditary military households as well as new recruits. More of its equipment came from local levies than from standardized manufacture under central control: quality control, therefore, could not be expected. Western visitors to China in the late sixteenth century almost unanimously held that the Chinese army was poor

in combat; but whatever it lacked in quality, it made up for in numbers. During the war with Hideyoshi, the Koreans were horrified to see Chinese soldiers without the protection of armor attacking Japanese muskets head on and sustaining heavy casualties. Most important, such an army could not be maneuvered. It needed an elite corps of highly seasoned fighters to open up avenues of attack so that the bulk of the soldiers could then swarm in behind them, sustain the momentum of the attack, and exploit the results. These battle formations were nonetheless commanded by men of courage, who were themselves versed in the martial arts and who personally led their soldiers in valiant charges.

All the commanders in the campaign of 1619 could be described in these terms. None of them qualified as an ingenious, let alone sound, strategist, but their bravery in action was well established. In battle, they were expected to take charge with their "household men," battalions of veterans who had pledged to survive or perish with their commanding generals. For example, Liu T'ing, one of these four field commanders, was a professional soldier whose career began with his command on the Burma front in the campaign of 1582–83. In 1619 he had arrived in Liao-tung with 736 such household men. When lieutenant-generals could not do better than function as battalion commanders, the options of the high command were limited. For this reason, strategies and tactics had to be kept simple.

In all fairness to Yang Hao, other mitigating factors also contributed to his defeat. After he sent Ma Lin to the north and Liu T'ing to the south, he apparently retained command of the Ming forces already in Liao-tung, including the Yehe and Korean auxiliaries. The Koreans could not be used effectively away from their home bases. Terrain was another factor that affected his decision; routes leading to Hetu Ala from the west were limited. To the north the Hun River intersected all routes of approach, while high mountains remained a serious barrier in the south.

When the battle plan had been settled upon, Yang Hao, as the supreme commander, with most officers present, officiated at the ceremony to launch the campaign on 26 March 1619 at Liao-yang. Several columns were sent off on different dates after 5 April, depending on how far each had to march to reach the enemy's capital. During the ceremony a colonel who in the previous year's campaign did not advance vigorously was executed in front of the assembled officers. Yang Hao promised to apply the same extreme penalty to anyone, from generals downward, should they make a similar error in the present campaign. A heavy snow fell on 31 March, which made it necessary to reschedule the beginning of the campaign for 9 April.

The plan had some chance of success only if Nurhaci concentrated on

defending Hetu Ala and allowed the Ming columns to besiege him, or scattered his forces over a wide area so that the Ming forces would retain numerical superiority. But the Manchu leader did none of these things. Failure to assess Nurhaci's capability had foredoomed Yang Hao and his army.

It happened that Tu Sung, the commanding general who started from Fu-shun Pass with an estimated strength of 25,000 men, was blamed for the failure of the campaign. It was said that in the Battle of Sarhû he was twice ambushed. Early on 14 April he crossed the Hun River and abandoned his battalion of battle wagons, which were loaded with light guns, on the northern shore. In skirmishes on the southern shore he quickly eliminated two enemy barriers and captured fourteen Manchus. Encouraged by this success, he dashed forward, right into Nurhaci's ambush. His forces were confronted by 30,000 Mongols. During the intense fighting, Tu Sung attempted to occupy a mountaintop, only to fall into yet another ambush. Before sunset this "madman" general had perished with his two division commanders; few who had crossed the Hun River returned.

Censorial officials accused Tu Sung of "avidity for personal merit." His misdeeds included advancing his starting date without authorization, abandoning firearms, crossing the Hun River against the advice of his subordinates, and joining battle with a span of water at his rear. Eventually the grave responsibility of the failure of the campaign fell on Tu—a judgment that was accepted by the emperor. But those criticisms were based exclusively on a field report filed by a surveillance commissioner, who in turn based his observations entirely on the oral accounts furnished by four soldiers, three of whom had been on reconnaissance duty and only one of whom had actually fought in the battle. The critics made no allowance for the undue pressure put on the commanding generals by their supreme commander, and still less for the pressure exerted on the entire war effort by grand secretary Fang Ts'ung-che, who was himself facing censure by dissatisfied courtiers.

In fact, Tu Sung's force was supposed to set out on 14 April. He actually started at midnight between 13 and 14 April, which was technically not at variance with his orders. His tactical errors could be tied to the lack of adequate reconnaissance. Yet once his forces were committed, Tu had to secure his position by occupying a dominant height. The battle wagon battalion was not left behind as a result of a command decision. In a hurry to meet the enemy, Tu Sung rushed to the front. Later the battalion commander testified that the swift current of the Hun River made crossing with heavy equipment and gunpowder difficult, so he had held up his advance. But the frontline troops still had a number of muskets. The

charges against Tu thus were mostly unfair, especially the charge that he had failed to use firearms. It should be noted that firearms did not have a decisive effect on the outcome of any battle or the campaign. In subsequent battles at Siyanggiayan and Niu-mao chai, Chinese and Korean light guns could not be fired fast enough to check massive cavalry formations that attacked with determination. Later on, the same situation occurred during battles at K'ai-yüan and T'ieh-ling.

The battle at Siyanggiayan on 15 April 1619 repeated the previous day's pattern of fighting. Again the Chinese tactical command divided itself. Again Nurhaci eliminated the detached salients of his enemy before attacking the main body of the army. Again the Ming forces were unable to move swiftly enough to seize the tactical advantage when Nurhaci redeployed his banners. The only difference was that in this battle the Ming army had the time to take up defensive positions. The Manchus, on the other hand, had a successful day of hard fighting behind them. At Siyanggiayan, the Chinese commanding general Ma Lin survived the battle; he retreated to safety. P'an Tsung-yen, the ranking civil official attached to his command who supervised the rear echelon, was killed in action. The Chinese soldiers, disheartened by the news of Tu Sung's defeat on the previous day, stampeded at the sight of the enemy; P'an's fatal wound was caused by an arrow in his back.

These two days of engagements wiped out the northern sector of the Ming front. Only Li Ju-po and Liu T'ing remained in the south. Nurhaci began to breathe more easily. He dispatched two vanguard units made up of Mongol components, one consisting of 1,000 cavalymen on 15 April, and another of 2,000 mounts on 16 April. That done, he took the time to thank Heaven for his victory, sacrificing eight oxen at Jabiyän. It was only late on 16 April that he set out for the south. He himself never went beyond Heru Ala. He held 4,000 troops at the capital as a precaution against Li Ju-po's advance from Ya-ku Pass. The operation against Liu T'ing was directed by his son, Amba beile; another son, Hong taiji, and his nephew, Amin taiji, also took part in this campaign. According to Manchu sources, the battle of Niu-mao chai took place on the fourth day after the decision to move south had been made; that would place it on 20 April. The Korean accounts date it on 17 April, which is virtually impossible, because the Manchu forces were still en route south at that time.

The final confrontation

The battle at Niu-mao chai was fought without Yang Hao's prior knowledge and against his wishes. After the collapse of the northern front, the supreme commander immediately ordered the two southern columns to

stop their advance. Li Ju-po, who was operating in a most difficult area and who had only made contact with Manchu scouts, pulled out in time to avoid further disaster. But Liu T'ing never received this order. When the Manchu assault fell on him, his column remained in a marching formation. Korean sources said that the soldiers were then looting in the villages. The ineffectiveness of the Chinese communications system was all too evident.

Yet according to the Manchu sources, Liu T'ing's forces had been able to withstand the initial wave of Amba beile's attack. The Chinese general was leading his Ming units at the front of his column, followed by Korean troops carrying muskets. Still farther behind them was the balance of the Korean infantry. To renew the assault, the Manchus sent cavalry squadrons to slip through these formations and occupy the heights to their west. The frontal assault was aided by a downhill charge conducted by Hong taiji against the flank. When the Chinese were routed, their commanding general perished with them. Subsequently the Chinese claimed that Liu T'ing was killed in action. The Manchus said that he was captured and executed, and the Koreans said that he committed suicide by igniting gunpowder under himself.

Within a week, the Manchus had won a series of dazzling victories in one battle after another. Three months after the campaign, Nurhaci took K'ai-yüan, killing Ma Lin. Seven weeks after that, he entered T'ieh-ling in triumph. The remaining Jurchen tribes were annexed. Peking finally had to order the arrest of Yang Hao. The death sentence hung over his head for over a decade; he met the executioner's sword only in 1629. Li Ju-po, the only surviving field commander among the original four, was arrested a year and a half after his withdrawal, on orders of his supreme commander. He chose to commit suicide rather than face the charges that he and his family had fraternized with the Manchu leader.

After the news about the setback in Liao-tung had reached Peking, food prices in the capital suddenly soared as residents began to sense the possibility of a siege. Early in 1620 the army reported that desertions were occurring at an unprecedented rate. Sometimes units of battalion and regimental size disappeared overnight: soldiers ran away by the thousands. The surtaxes on the land taxes, originally earmarked to be in effect for one year only, could not be discontinued. Instead, they were increased. The Ming court was still able to find a capable replacement for Yang Hao in Hsiung T'ing-pi, who was nonetheless viciously attacked by his partisan enemies. The Wan-li emperor, still grudgingly resisting proposals to release the silver bullion in his private hoard, died in the summer of 1620. About three months before his death, he told grand secretary Fang Ts'ung-che that the discord between and among civil and military officials in Liao-tung had led to the catastrophe.

It is ironic that the Wan-li emperor, who had passed judgment on so many others, died without knowing of the judgment historians would pass on him. Even though he was very ill in his last days, dizzy, bedridden, and unable even to read the memorials that were brought to him, as the Son of Heaven he was still held responsible for all that went wrong in the empire. The fact that he was ill and could do little to change the organization of the empire made no difference. Someone had to bear the ultimate blame, and that person was the emperor.

THE T'AI-CH'ANG, T'IEN-CH'I, AND CH'UNG-CHEN REIGNS, 1620–1644

Until quite recently, most students of Chinese history tended to regard the last twenty-five years of Ming rule as little more than another production of the old drama of dynastic decline and ultimate collapse that had been performed many times before. Yet to view the T'ai-ch'ang (28 August–26 September 1620), T'ien-ch'i (10 October 1620–30 September 1627), and Ch'ung-chen (2 October 1627–24 April 1644) reigns simply in terms of what is known about the end of the Han, T'ang, or Sung dynasties is to ignore much that is unique and significant about them, for in crucial aspects of economic, social, cultural, and political life, China during the first half of the seventeenth century was a vastly different country from that of previous ages. The changes that had occurred in Chinese society even since the beginning of the sixteenth century were of fundamental importance not only to the period under consideration here, but also to the subsequent development of Chinese civilization. Thus any attempts to pass over late Ming history with facile references to the inexorable workings of the dynastic cycle should be quickly and firmly rejected.

Yet the Ming empire was conquered during the 1640s by vastly outnumbered Manchu invaders and their allies, and one of the purposes of this chapter must be to explore how this momentous military and political event came about. Unfortunately, such an exploration must contend with obstacles that at times seem insurmountable. First, there is the sheer size and diversity of Ming China. For example, the distance from Peking on the extreme northern edge of the North China plain to subtropical Canton is approximately 1,200 miles, or about the same distance as from Copenhagen to Palermo or from Toronto to Miami. From Soochow in the lush Yangtze delta near modern Shanghai to Chengtu in the mountainous western province of Szechwan is 1,000 miles, a distance roughly equal to that from London to Budapest or from Washington, D.C., to Kansas City.

Despite enormous differences in climate, topography, agriculture, population density, language, and local customs, not to mention difficulties in transportation and communication, Ming officials did an admirable job of maintaining peace and stability in this huge expanse of territory for much

of the dynasty's 276-year history. Nevertheless, it is also clear that they were much more effective in some areas than in others, a fact which is reflected in the wealth of information available about certain parts of the empire and the paucity of information about other parts. Thus it is often difficult, if not impossible, to generalize with confidence about such things as "Ming economic conditions" or to gauge with any precision the impact of events in one region on developments in another.

A second difficulty stems from the inadequate attention that has been paid to some of the variables mentioned in the preceding paragraph. For example, our admittedly rudimentary knowledge of the history of climate in East Asia suggests that during the middle decades of the seventeenth century, China, like many other countries in the northern hemisphere, experienced much colder winters (and perhaps cooler, more unsettled summers) than had been known for several centuries.¹ However, there are as yet no serious or detailed discussions of the effects this change may have had on agricultural yields, a fact which is particularly regrettable when it is considered that "bad weather" and "poor harvests" will be recurring themes in much of what follows.

Nor has the study of Ming demography progressed much past its preliminary stages. Following the appalling disasters of the fourteenth century, which in some ways paralleled those in Europe and during which the population of China apparently dropped from about 120 million to somewhere between 65 and 80 million,² it seems likely that the number of people living in the country increased slowly but unevenly throughout most of the fifteenth century. Early in the sixteenth century, a period of more rapid population growth began, with urban areas in the economically advanced regions expanding noticeably and quickly.³ By the late sixteenth century China's total population had probably reached between 150 and 175 million. Then, at some point during the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries, this spectacular demographic advance came to an end, and a long period followed in which population either stagnated or, in some parts of the country, actually declined.

This demographic break, its timing, and its regional variations have just begun to be understood. Certainly climate was a contributing factor. Some of the lethal epidemics of 1586–90 and 1637–44 were preceded or accompanied by floods, droughts, and other natural disasters that destroyed har-

1 Chu Ko-chen, "A preliminary study on the climatic fluctuations during the last 5,000 years in China," *Chung-kuo k'o hsüeh (Scientia Sinica)*, 16, No. 2 (May 1973), pp. 240–45, 252.

2 Ho Ping-ti, *Studies on the population of China, 1368–1953* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), pp. 3–23; and Dwight H. Perkins, *Agricultural development in China, 1368–1968* (Chicago, 1969), pp. 194–201.

3 Han Ta-ch'eng, "Ming tai shang p'in ching chi ti fa chan yü tzu pen chu i ti meng ya," in *Chung-kuo tzu pen chu i meng ya wen t'i t'ao lun chi* (Peking, 1957), II, pp. 1048–50. See also Gilbert Rozman, *Urban networks in Ch'ing China and Tokugawa Japan* (Princeton, 1973), pp. 41–45.

vests and created food shortages. However, many of these disasters were local. Major grain-producing and exporting areas like southern Hu-kuang and central Kiangsi appear to have been only slightly affected. Indeed, except for certain districts in Pei Chihli, in Honan, and in the backward northwest, many of the stricken areas were noted for their commercialized agriculture, advanced handicraft industries, and large urban populations, or were situated along such major trading routes as the Grand Canal and the Yellow and the Yangtze Rivers.⁴ One implication of this is that, as in Europe, marginal areas in the north were probably more seriously affected by climatic change and particularly colder temperatures than richer areas farther south. Another is that these disasters do not represent classic Malthusian corrections in which the rapidly growing population had outstripped the ability of the agricultural sector to support it. Rather, they seem to reflect, at least in part, the vulnerability of certain economically advanced and densely populated areas to even temporary dislocations in the huge intra- and interregional markets for grain. Indeed, as will be seen below, rice was available in the Yangtze delta even during the terrible "famines" that plagued the area during the early 1640s. The problem was that poor local harvests and a variety of other factors had driven the price so high that many people simply lacked sufficient funds to pay for it.

But why should the ability to pay for food have been an issue in the greatest agricultural nation on earth in the seventeenth century, and why was the Ming government apparently unable to do more to alleviate the situation? To attempt to answer these questions requires a brief consideration of some of the significant changes that had occurred in Chinese economic life during the sixteenth century. Not the least of these changes resulted from China's participation in the opening phases of what is sometimes called the "expansion of Europe," but which, to the student of Asian history at least, is a much more complex and interesting subject than that term implies. Once again paralleling developments in Europe and probably connected with them in subtle ways not yet understood, the Chinese economy had enjoyed substantial though erratic growth during the first half of the sixteenth century. Then, following the establishment of Nagasaki and Manila as major trading centers in the early 1570s, commercial activity in East Asian waters increased dramatically. Within a short time Chinese silks were being worn in the streets of Kyōto and Lima, Chinese cottons were being sold in Filipino and Mexican markets, and Chinese porcelain was being used in fashioning homes from Sakai to London.

China was paid handsomely in Japanese and Spanish-American silver for

⁴ See Helen Dunstan, "The late Ming epidemics: A preliminary survey," *Ch'ing shih wen t'i*, 3, No. 3 (November 1975), pp. 9-10, and maps on pp. 52-59.

the luxuries it exported, a fact that clearly affected the growth of certain sectors of the Chinese economy during the late sixteenth century. Yet that growth proved to be a mixed blessing. On the positive side, in the advanced regions of the country like southern Nan Chihli, Kiangsi, and the coastal provinces of Chekiang, Fukien, and Kwangtung, the already rapid pace of economic expansion quickened even further. Merchants, money-lenders, and entrepreneurs took the opportunity to become wealthy, a fact evidenced by increased expenditures on luxury items and personal services—vividly described in the popular literature of the period⁵—and by the proliferation of merchant associations (*bui-kuan*), pawn shops (*tang-p'u*), assaying shops (*yin-hao*), and proto-banks (*ch'ien-chuang*).⁶

The Ming government also benefitted from this increase in the level of monetary circulation, for it was able to implement long-needed reforms in the outmoded, complex system of taxation.⁷ Although complicated and subject to regional and even local variation, the reforms commuted most land taxes, labor service obligations, and extra levies to payments in silver and helped to put the dynasty on a sounder financial footing than it had perhaps ever known. The military establishment was strengthened, land and sea frontiers were pacified, and a general sense of peace and prosperity seems to have settled over most parts of the empire.

That feeling did not last, for imported silver could not solve all late Ming China's problems. Indeed, it helped to create such new ones as severe price inflation, uncontrolled urban growth, and business speculation, developments some commentators have said widened the gap between rich and poor and increased social tensions.⁸ Those tensions were exacerbated when economic growth slowed in the early seventeenth century, partly as a result of changes in the government's spending policies. Although silver revenues increased spectacularly after 1570, for example, they failed to keep pace with the rapid rise in public expenditures.⁹

5 See, for example, almost any chapter in Clement Egerton, trans., *The golden lotus: A translation from the Chinese original of the novel Ch'in P'ing Mei* 4 vols. (London, 1939).

6 Ho Ping-ti, *Chung kuo hui kuan shih lun* (Taipei, 1966), p. 40; and P'eng Hsin-wei, *Chung kuo huo pi shih* (1954; 3rd ed., Shanghai, 1965), pp. 741–52.

7 On these reforms, see Liang Fang-chung, *The single-whip method of taxation in China*, Trans. Wang Yü-ch'uan (Wang Yü-ch'üan) (Cambridge, Mass., 1956); Ray Huang, *Taxation and governmental finance in sixteenth-century Ming China* (Cambridge, England, 1974), pp. 112–33; and Jerry Dennerline, "Fiscal reform and local control: The gentry-bureaucratic alliance survives the conquest," in *Conflict and control in late imperial China*, ed. Frederic Wakeman, Jr., and Carolyn Grant (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975), pp. 86–120.

8 Willard J. Peterson, *Bitter gourd: Fang I-chih and the impetus for intellectual change* (New Haven and London, 1979), pp. 64–80; and Tsing Yuan, "Urban riots and disturbances," in *From Ming to Ch'ing: Conquest, region, and continuity in seventeenth-century China*, ed. Jonathan D. Spence and John E. Wills, Jr. (New Haven and London, 1979), pp. 280–320.

9 Ch'üan Han-sheng and Li Lung-hua, "Ming tai chung yeh hou T'ai-ts'ang sui ch'u yin liang ti yen chiu," *Chung-kuo wen hua yen chiu so hsüeh pao*, 6, No. 1 (December 1973), pp. 169–242.

Military expenses soared. Two very expensive campaigns against the Japanese in Korea during the 1590s, persistent problems with Thai, Burmese, and aboriginal groups on the southwestern frontier, renewed pressure from the Mongols in the north and northwest, and the ominous growth of Manchu power in the northeast all increased the cost of defense. Large sums of public money also went to repair and improve the Grand Canal network, to strengthen portions of the Great Wall, and to reconstruct several palaces following disastrous fires in Peking during 1596 and 1597.¹⁰

The extravagance of the Wan-li emperor further strained the empire's resources. Following the death of his fiscally conservative grand secretary Chang Chü-cheng in 1582, he began spending lavishly on himself and his family, particularly on the weddings and investitures of his sons.¹¹ In addition to a large annual income in silver and gold, the emperor also received payments in silk, porcelain, jewels, and other luxury items. Not content, he periodically appropriated state funds and collected special taxes to help pay his bills and to fill his privy purse. And while imperial expenditures undoubtedly stimulated certain sectors of the Ming economy, the harm done by the Wan-li emperor's profligacy far outweighed the benefits.

Factors beyond imperial or bureaucratic control also adversely affected the late Ming economy. Not the least important of these was the nature of the empire's monetary system. Following the collapse of the dynasty's paper currency during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, a monetary structure based on unminted silver traded by weight and on copper coins issued by the government had developed. Because copper coins of good quality were in short supply throughout much of the dynasty's history, silver played an increasingly important role in the economy. As long as China relied on domestic silver, the state had some control over the amount of the metal entering the money supply. With the great influx of foreign bullion in the late sixteenth century, however, that control was lost.

Thus while Japanese and Spanish-American silver helped to stimulate the late Ming economy, the bullion's uneven flow created certain dangers. Fluctuating silver production in Peru, Mexico, and Japan, protectionist sentiments in Madrid and Edo, piracy and shipwrecks all made China's foreign trade throughout the seventeenth century highly erratic. It was particularly capricious during the period under consideration here. Such fluctuations had particularly serious repercussions when they coincided with

¹⁰ Huang, *Taxation and governmental finance*, pp. 279–86, 301–05.

¹¹ Charles O. Hucker, "Chu I-chün," in *Dictionary of Ming biography*, ed. L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang (New York and London, 1976), p. 334.

unsettled weather, floods, droughts, and the crop failures, which plagued China and other parts of East Asia during the late 1630s and early 1640s.

THE T'AI-CH'ANG REIGN, AUGUST–SEPTEMBER 1620

Although the last few years of the Wan-li reign had been disastrous politically, economically, and particularly militarily, most keen observers in 1620 were far from convinced that the dynasty's cause was hopeless. They were aware, however, that there were serious problems to be faced. In April 1620, for example, land taxes were increased for the third time since the military emergency in the northeast had become serious in 1618.¹² Because it was known that the Wan-li emperor's personal treasury was far from empty and that he simply refused to spend his own resources for the defense of the empire, this increase caused great unhappiness at court and throughout the empire. Speaking for many of his colleagues, the censor Chang Ch'üan (1577–1621) bluntly warned the throne in the summer of 1620 that the continual raising of taxes might not save Liao-tung, but could exhaust the resources of the rest of the country, thus creating the conditions for internal rebellion.¹³

Chang, who died a heroic death in 1621 and was posthumously honored by the court for his courage and loyalty, was not opposed to military action per se. He simply believed that the Chinese had to meet the Manchu threat in full recognition of the dynasty's limited resources. In view of the disasters suffered by Ming forces in the northeast during the previous two years,¹⁴ this position was probably a reasonable one. Nevertheless, it was successfully opposed by rash elements at court and in the military, with ultimately catastrophic results for the Chinese side.

Although Chang Ch'üan's memorial had no immediate effect on government policy, his warnings about the danger of internal disorder were not without basis, for reports of a new wave of antigovernment activity in North China were even then reaching Peking. Much of this activity was spearheaded by members of the so-called White Lotus Society (*Pai-lien chiao*), a quasi-religious group that had caused considerable trouble earlier in the dynasty and that had once again become active as economic conditions in Shantung and Pei Chihli began to deteriorate late in the Wan-li

12 Ray Huang, "Fiscal administration during the Ming dynasty," in *Chinese government in Ming times: Seven studies*, ed. Charles O. Hucker (New York and London, 1969), pp. 117–18.

13 Hsia Hsieh, comp., *Ming t'ung chien* (ca. 1870; rpt. Peking, 1959), 4, p. 2953. Biographies of Chang in Chang T'ing-yü et al., ed., *Ming shih* (1736; rpt. Peking, 1974), 291, pp. 7454–56; and Arthur Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing period* (Washington, D.C., 1943–44), p. 34.

14 On these disasters, see chapter 9 of this volume, pp. 574–84.

reign.¹⁵ Thus, the Ming authorities were doubly threatened when, not long before the Wan-li emperor's death on 18 August 1620, Manchu forces followed their spectacular victories of the previous year with destructive raids against Chinese settlements and military outposts in various parts of Liao-tung.

Chu Ch'ang-lo ascends the throne

These dangers and difficulties notwithstanding, many people living in Peking in 1620 (including the small number of Jesuits who had been permitted to reside there by the court) viewed the end of the Wan-li reign after forty-eight years, many of which had been filled with controversy, as an opportunity for the dynasty to make a new beginning. The hopes of many people centered on the heir apparent, Chu Ch'ang-lo (1582–1620), who had been named heir to the throne in 1601 after a long and acrimonious succession dispute between the Wan-li emperor and his ministers.¹⁶ In part because Ch'ang-lo had not been his father's choice and in part because the two had never been close, supporters of the new emperor hoped that he would move quickly to reverse some of his father's more objectionable policies and to implement what they believed to be essential reforms. They were not disappointed. On 19 August 1620, only a day after the Wan-li emperor's death and a fortnight before Ch'ang-lo officially assumed power, one million taels were released from the palace treasury for use in border defense. At the same time, the mining and commercial taxes, which had been a source of great controversy since the 1590s, were abolished, and the Wan-li emperor's hated eunuch tax commissioners were recalled from the provinces.¹⁷

Whether Chu Ch'ang-lo issued these orders in accordance with the will or posthumous instructions (*i-chao*) of his father, who was reported to have finally acknowledged the error of his ways on his deathbed, cannot be known. "Posthumous instructions" in late imperial China were frequently altered to suit the needs and desires of a new ruler or the dominant faction at court. What is quite clear is that Chu Ch'ang-lo continued to delight his father's former critics. On 21 August he released another million taels from imperial household funds for use in Liao-tung.

15 On White Lotus activities and doctrine, see Hok-lam Chan, "The White Lotus-Maitreya doctrine and popular uprisings in Ming and Ch'ing China," *Sinologica*, 10, No. 4 (1969), pp. 211–33.

16 On this dispute, see Ku Ying-t'ai, *Ming shih chi shih pen mo* (1658; rpt. 4 vols. in *Kuo-hsüeh chi pen ts'ung shu chien pien*, Shanghai, 1936; photographic rpt. Taipei, 1956), 4, pp. 24–36; and biography of Chu Ch'ang-lo in *ECCP*, pp. 176–77.

17 *MSCSPM*, 3, pp. 237–50; and Huang, *Taxation and governmental finance*, pp. 302–03.

The new emperor was formally enthroned on 28 August 1620 and, as was customary on these occasions, announced that the first day of the next lunar year (22 January 1621) would mark the official beginning of his reign. For his reign title Chu Ch'ang-lo chose the term *'ai-ch'ang*, which brings to mind an image of great peace and prosperity. In this way the emperor and his advisors proclaimed their determination to reverse the decline in the dynasty's fortunes that had marked the Wan-li emperor's last years on the throne.

Of all the problems confronting the T'ai-ch'ang emperor when he came to power, perhaps none demanded more immediate attention than the staffing of the imperial bureaucracy. For more than two decades before his death the Wan-li emperor had ignored his ministers' pleas to fill official posts that had become vacant. Consequently, by the summer of 1620 many ministries and offices in Peking and elsewhere were seriously understaffed, and bureaucratic morale and efficiency were at a low ebb. Acting promptly, the new emperor recalled to office a number of men who either had been dismissed by his father or had resigned in protest over the handling of government affairs. Among the first to be recalled were Tsou Yüan-piao (1551–1624) and Feng Ts'ung-wu (1556–1627?), both of whom were associated with what has come to be known as the Tung-lin movement.¹⁸

This "movement" actually comprised two related but not identical groups. The first consisted of disgruntled scholars and ex-officials who gathered at the Tung-lin Academy (*Tung-lin shu-yüan*) near Wu-hsi in the Yangtze delta for lectures and philosophical discussions dedicated to fostering a moral revival throughout Chinese society. Convinced that the corruption and immorality of the times stemmed from a decline in traditional Confucian education and values, they believed that a return to good government and a properly functioning society would be possible only when dedicated teachers were once again producing upright officials and scholars.

The second group was more directly political in nature and was "represented by . . . men involved in continuing partisan controversies at court who sought to restore integrity to the government service."¹⁹ These men did have ties with the Tung-lin Academy, but unlike many academy members, were political activists. However bitterly they might disagree on

18 On this movement, see Charles O. Hucker, "The Tung-lin movement of the late Ming period," in *Chinese thought and institutions*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Chicago, 1957), pp. 132–62; Heinrich Busch, "The Tung-lin shu-yüan and its political and philosophical significance," *Monumenta serica*, 14 (1949–55), pp. 1–163; Frederic Wakeman, Jr., "The price of autonomy: Intellectuals in Ming and Ch'ing politics," *Daedalus*, 101 (Spring 1972), pp. 35–70; Peterson, *Bitter gourd*, pp. 8–10, 72–74 and the preceding chapter, pp. 532–50. Biographies of Tsou and Feng in *MS*, 243, pp. 6301–06, 6315–16; and *DMB*, pp. 458–59 and pp. 1312–14, respectively.

19 Hucker, "The Tung-lin movement," p. 132.

specific issues, their political aims and ideals were sufficiently in accord for their enemies to label them a faction (*tang*), a term loaded with negative connotations in a society that placed high value on loyalty, consensus, and political unity. The Tung-lin activists responded in kind, and their battles with other factions at court became a prominent political feature of the Wan-li reign.²⁰ Of particular significance here is the fact that men subsequently identified with the Tung-lin cause had supported Chu Ch'ang-lo in the 1580s and 1590s during the controversy over the imperial succession. And while his precise political intentions are unknown, Chu seems to have been willing to reward them generously when he finally came to the throne. Indeed, for a short time in August and September 1620, it must have appeared that Tsou Yüan-piao, Feng Ts'ung-wu, and their friends would take control of the government.

The Red Pill Case

Then disaster struck—at least for those who were counting on the T'ai-ch'ang emperor to push through governmental reforms. On 6 September, one day after appointing several Tung-lin partisans to important positions in the bureaucracy, the thirty-eight-year-old emperor fell seriously ill. Almost immediately the capital was filled with rumors of an assassination plot and related palace intrigues, which reportedly involved consorts of both the Wan-li and T'ai-ch'ang emperors, imperial eunuchs, and assorted palace functionaries.

Although the details are unclear, it is said that not long after the T'ai-ch'ang emperor became ill, a eunuch associated with Cheng Kuei-fei (ca. 1568–1630),²¹ the consort whose son had been the T'ai-ch'ang emperor's chief rival for the succession, gave the emperor some medicine which caused uncontrollable diarrhea. For a time the emperor continued to get some work done from his bed, but on 17 September he weakened and shortly thereafter began to speak openly of his impending death. Finally, on 25 September he ordered that a minor official who claimed to possess a miracle drug be brought to his chambers. Despite warnings from his ministers and court physicians that the medicine was of dubious value, the T'ai-ch'ang emperor took two doses of red pills (*hung-wan*) prepared by this official. He died about dawn the following morning, and recriminations over what came to be known as the Red Pill Case (*hung-wan an*) were to color political debate for years to come.²²

²⁰ See chapter 9, pp. 532–50.

²¹ Biography in *DMB*, pp. 208–11.

²² On this case, see *MSCSPM*, 4, pp. 43–50.

The change of palace case

From the moment word of the T'ai-ch'ang emperor's illness spread, court officials, including such Tung-lin stalwarts as the supervising secretary to the Ministry of War, Yang Lien (1571–1625), and the censor Tso Kuang-tou (1575–1625),²³ became concerned lest imperial power fall into unscrupulous hands inside the palace. Some of their fears stemmed from the fact that the motherless fourteen-year-old heir apparent, Chu Yu-chiao (1605–27),²⁴ was rumored to be under the influence of the T'ai-ch'ang emperor's favorite consort, née Li. She had political ambitions of her own, and at an audience with his ministers not long before he died, she interrupted the emperor, demanding to be made empress, a position that would have given her considerable legal authority over the heir. The emperor refused, a decision which indicated that he too mistrusted her.

When they learned of the emperor's death on the morning of 26 September, Yang Lien, grand secretary Liu I-ching (1567–1635),²⁵ and other leading officials went to the Ch'ien-ch'ing Palace, where they asked to see the heir apparent. At first their request was denied by eunuchs sympathetic to consort Li. Led by Yang, the officials forced their way into the palace and demanded to know where Chu Yu-chiao was being kept. A eunuch who had previously cooperated with Tung-lin elements on other matters then escorted the prince out to see them. He was taken to the nearby Wen-hua Palace, where he was formally greeted by the officials as their next emperor.

The political battle that ensued at court was vicious. Although Chu Yu-chiao had been removed from her control, consort Li refused to leave the Ch'ien-ch'ing Palace, asserting that the prince needed her support and guidance in personal and official matters. But Yang Lien, Tso Kuang-tou, and other Tung-lin leaders, having just lost an emperor whom they had waited for more than twenty years to serve and from whom they had expected to receive political support, were in no mood to hand over the heir apparent to someone they deeply mistrusted. Pointing out the impropriety of an unmarried male living under the same roof with a woman who was neither his mother nor his father's legal wife, Tso practically accused consort Li of plotting to usurp the throne, just as the infamous empress Wu had during the T'ang dynasty.²⁶ This and similar statements

23 Biographies of Yang and Tso in *MS*, 244, pp. 6319–33; *ECCP*, pp. 892–93; *DMB*, pp. 1305–08.

24 Biography in *ECCP*, p. 190.

25 Biography in *MS*, 240, pp. 6238–42.

26 T'an Ch'ien, comp., *Kuo ch'ieh* (ca. 1653; rpt. Peking, 1958), 5, p. 5177. On Empress Wu, see Denis Twitchett, ed., *Sui and T'ang China*, 589–906, Vol. III of *The Cambridge history of China* (Cambridge, England, 1979), pp. 244–321 et passim.

outraged the consort and her supporters, but they achieved the desired effect. On 30 September she moved to another residence in the Forbidden City. Although the Tung-lin forces had won an important victory, the struggle for power continued unabated. Indeed, what quickly became known as the Change of Palace Case (*i-kung an*) was just beginning.

THE T' IEN-CH' I REIGN, 1621-1627

Chu Yu-chiao became the fifteenth emperor of the Ming dynasty on 1 October 1620. Following a suggestion from one of the Tung-lin leaders at court, it was decided that the period from the enthronement of the T'ai-ch'ang emperor on 28 August through the end of the current lunar year (21 January 1621) be known as the T'ai-ch'ang reign. The new emperor's reign title, *t'ien-ch'i*, which alluded to a passage in the *Tso commentary* on the *Spring and autumn annals*, meant the "opening [of a ruler's way] by Heaven,"²⁷ and it was to come into use on 22 January 1621.

The T'ien-ch'i period was a disastrous one in Chinese history, and the T'ien-ch'i emperor has acquired the worst reputation of the dynasty's rather undistinguished rulers.²⁸ One of his father's sixteen children (only five of whom survived to maturity), the new emperor was physically weak, poorly educated, and perhaps mentally deficient. Given the highly centralized nature of government during the late imperial period, he clearly was the type of ruler the state could ill afford in a time of crisis. Although encouraged by some of his advisors to study and to take an active role in governmental affairs, the emperor quickly lost interest in such matters and retreated to a less demanding life deep in the imperial apartments. There he could pursue his pleasures and hobbies in peace, one of the latter being carpentry, at which he is said to have excelled. While he was making fine furniture and building elaborate models of the palace, contending factions at court were continuing the bureaucratic wars of the Wan-li period, and decisions on important matters of state were increasingly being left to the discretion of the emperor's trusted servants in the imperial household. Among those servants was a eunuch who was to become one of the most notorious figures in Chinese history.

27 Juan Yüan, ed., *Shih san ching chu shu* (1815; rpt. Taipei, 1971-72), 5, p. 3874; James Legge, trans., *The Chinese classics* (1870; rpt. Hong Kong, 1960; 2nd ed. Taipei, 1969), V, pp. 124-25.

28 In writing this section I have benefitted greatly from Charles O. Hucker's *The censorial system of Ming China* (Stanford, 1966), which contains, among other things, a detailed political narrative of the T'ien-ch'i reign and an invaluable analysis of some of the institutional arrangements and tensions that gave Ming government much of its distinctive character.

The emergence of Wei Chung-hsien and Madame K'o

In recent years it has become acceptable to play down the traditional Chinese opinion of eunuchs as evil incarnate and to view them as simply another group of participants in the endless political battles at court. Thus, it has been suggested that some of the policies championed by the eunuch Liu Chin (d. 1510) were far-sighted and deserving of official support; that Chang Chü-cheng owed much of his success during the early Wan-li reign to his good relations with the eunuch Feng Pao; and that even Tung-lin leaders like Yang Lien and Tso Kuang-rou relied heavily upon “good eunuchs” like Wang An (d. 1621) to promote their views inside the palace. Without attempting to refute these specific assertions, and recognizing the overwhelming bias against eunuchs in the extant sources, it still is difficult to find anything positive to say about Wei Chung-hsien (1568–1627).²⁹

After an unsavory childhood and adolescence in his hometown of Su-ning in modern Hopei province, Wei voluntarily became a eunuch and is then said to have spent the next three decades working his way into a position of influence in palace politics. Although some doubts have recently been cast on this portrait of him as an inveterate schemer, it is known that by the early years of the seventeenth century Wei was serving on the staff of the concubine who had given birth to Chu Yu-chiao. At the time, of course, Chu Yu-chiao, the eldest son of the future T'ai-ch'ang emperor, was still a very young boy; most sources imply, however, that Wei was making long-range plans. If so, he was eminently successful. The sickly Chu Yu-chiao took a great liking to the eunuch and to a nurse named Madame K'o (d. 1627). They became his confidants and constant companions, and it was rumored that they led him into “dissolute pleasures.”

Whatever the truth of these rumors, and there is no way to verify them, Wei and Madame K'o were clearly in a good position when the T'ai-ch'ang emperor died. Less than a month after the new emperor ascended the throne, both were given imperial honors, and several of their relatives were awarded positions in the emperor's personal bodyguard. Wei himself was transferred from a relatively minor palace post to the powerful Directorate of Ceremonial (*Ssu-li chien*), an agency that through the years had become the center of eunuch operations in the capital and in the empire at large. Because he apparently was illiterate, Wei ordinarily would not have been considered for such a position, but the *Official history of the Ming* suggests

²⁹ Biographies in *MS*, 305, pp. 7816–25, and *ECPP*, pp. 846–47. See also Ulrich Hans-Richard Mammitsch, *Wei Chung-hsien: A reappraisal of the eunuch and the factional strife at the late Ming court* (Ann Arbor, 1968).

that it was secured for him through Madame K'o's influence with the emperor.³⁰ In any event, it was from the Directorate that Wei conducted a reign of terror in the mid-1620s.

Although it is not clear when Tung-lin elements at court first became aware of Wei and Madame K'o as political threats, Yang Lien, Tso Kuang-tou, and their allies had read enough history to be deeply concerned about eunuch abuses and about the potential danger posed by unscrupulous and ambitious women inside the palace. Despite the fact that it had been more than a century since a eunuch had last dominated the government, even a casual observer could tell that eunuch power and influence had increased during the Wan-li reign. Not only had the Wan-li emperor entrusted eunuchs with important economic, political, and military responsibilities, but he also permitted their numbers to increase substantially during the nearly five decades of his reign. Contemporary Jesuit accounts suggest that during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as many as 3,000 eunuchs at a time were being routinely selected for imperial service, while the total number of eunuchs employed in the palace and elsewhere was approximately 16,000. Other sources place the figure much higher.³¹

Although they themselves had to deal on a daily basis with eunuchs like Wang An, it is clear that officials associated with the Tung-lin group were worried about the situation in the imperial household and wasted little time in making their views known. Even before the T'ien-ch'i emperor had ascended the throne, a censor with Tung-lin connections submitted a memorial demanding punishment for the eunuch physician whose medicine had worsened the condition of the T'ai-ch'ang emperor. This was followed by an attack on eunuchs associated with consort Li who were accused of stealing imperial property. In the ensuing investigation, an official with Tung-lin sympathies was offered a bribe to play down the matter. When he complained to his superiors, he was promptly transferred from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Works. In his new position, this official immediately became embroiled in a series of disputes with eunuchs under the control of Wei Chung-hsien over misappropriation of funds and mismanagement of construction work on the tombs for the Wan-li and T'ai-ch'ang emperors.³²

³⁰ *MS*, 305, p. 7816.

³¹ Diego de Pantoja quoted by George H. Dunne S.J., *Generation of giants: The story of the Jesuits in China in the last decades of the Ming* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1962), p. 86. For a biography of Pantoja, see *DMB*, pp. 1116–17. See also Charles O. Hucker, *The traditional Chinese state in Ming times (1368–1644)* (Tucson, 1961), pp. 12, 80, n. 9, 10.

³² Ch'en Tzu-lung, *An-ya t'ang kao* (Ch'ung-chen [1628–1644]; rpt. Taipei, 1977), 3, pp. 968–71.

In February 1621, Wei and Madame K'o came under direct criticism. The censor Wang Hsin-i (1572–1645) protested to the throne about the gifts and honors being bestowed upon them by the emperor, pointing out that the troops fighting the Manchus would be demoralized at such news.³³ The memorial was ignored, but later that year Wang and other officials of the Tung-lin group returned to the attack. They demanded that Madame K'o be permanently barred from the palace on the grounds that her continued presence there might prove politically disruptive. The emperor wavered for a time, but in the end Wang and several others were punished for their outspokenness and Madame K'o retained her influence. She and Wei Chung-hsien engineered a palace purge during the summer of 1621 in which the eunuch Wang An, a Tung-lin sympathizer, was murdered and those close to him were removed from positions of authority.

Factional battles at court

Despite their growing notoriety and increasing power inside the palace, neither Wei Chung-hsien nor Madame K'o should be overrated as political powers during the early 1620s. Several years were to pass before they were strong enough to challenge their enemies at court. Meanwhile, bitter political battles were being waged among the bureaucrats themselves. Among the first victims of these battles during the T'ien-ch'i reign was an old Tung-lin enemy, grand secretary Fang Ts'ung-che (ca. 1583–d. 1628), who was attacked for his handling of the Red Pill and Change of Palace cases.³⁴ His critics were particularly incensed because Fang had permitted "unqualified" persons to give medicine to the T'ai-ch'ang emperor and also because he had not forced consort Li to vacate the Ch'ien-ch'ing Palace. Although these charges may have been unfair, Fang submitted his resignation in the weeks following the T'ien-ch'i emperor's enthronement on 1 October and was permitted to retire early in 1621.

Fang's departure undoubtedly pleased Tung-lin elements at court. So did the retention of three grand secretaries appointed by the T'ai-ch'ang emperor, Liu I-ching, Han K'uang (ca. 1558–ca. 1637), and Yeh Hsiang-kao (1562–1627).³⁵ Although they were not active Tung-lin partisans, they were sympathetic and came to the aid of Tung-lin members in a number of controversies during the next several years. Tung-lin influence was further enhanced when Tsou Yüan-piao arrived in the capital in mid-1621 and was joined there by such kindred spirits as Kao P'an-lung (1562–1626), Chao

³³ *MTC*, 4, p. 2975, and *MS*, 246, p. 6380.

³⁴ Hucker, *Censorial system*, pp. 185–86; biography of Fang in *MS*, 218, pp. 5759–66.

³⁵ Biographies of Han and Yeh in *MS*, 240, pp. 6231–38, 6243–49, respectively; and in *DMB*, pp. 483–85, 1567–70, respectively.

Nan-hsing (1550–1628), and Liu Tsung-chou (1578–1645). Liu made his presence felt almost immediately. Less than two weeks after taking up his new post in the Ministry of Rites, he submitted a memorial suggesting that Wei Chung-hsien might become another Chao Kao, the infamous Ch'in (221–206 B.C.) eunuch who had been held responsible for the death of the second Ch'in emperor and for the dynasty's collapse. Wei was furious, but he still lacked the power to bring about Liu's removal from office.³⁶

During the early 1620s, then, the loosely organized Tung-lin group emerged as the dominant faction at the T'ien-ch'i court. Yet its power did not go unchallenged, and from time to time it too suffered significant political reverses. Early in 1622 two Tung-lin allies, Chou Chia-mo (1546–1629) and Liu I-ching, resigned from their posts as minister of personnel and grand secretary, respectively, after having been repeatedly impeached by officials said to have been acting on the orders of Wei Chung-hsien.³⁷ That summer another important Tung-lin supporter, the minister of rites Sun Shen-hsing (1565–1636), left the government following a series of acrimonious disputes involving old Tung-lin enemies, eunuchs, and even members of the imperial family.³⁸

The most serious blow to the Tung-lin cause came in the autumn of 1622. Tsou Yüan-piao and Feng Ts'ung-wu resigned in the midst of a controversy over an academy in Peking which they had established to promote philosophical discussions. Since most of the participants in those discussions had strong Tung-lin connections, Tung-lin opponents charged that it had been founded for partisan purposes. When the emperor ordered that the academy be closed, Tsou and Feng were forced to tender their resignations. Tsou's departure seriously affected government stability. Since his return to office he had been the most moderate of the Tung-lin leaders, and as censor-in-chief he had tried to unify political opinion and to help the administration concentrate on the problems confronting the dynasty. After his departure extremists on both sides rose to prominence, with consequences that were ultimately disastrous for nearly all concerned.

Developments on the northeastern frontier, 1620–1626

Civilian control over the military was a well-established principle in late imperial China, and the factional battles at the Wan-li and T'ien-ch'i courts inevitably spilled over into military affairs. The most notorious such

36 *MS*, 255, p. 6574. Biographies of Kao, Chao, and Liu in *MS*, 243, pp. 6297–301, 6311–14, and 255, pp. 6573–92, respectively; *DMB*, pp. 128–32, 701–10, and *ECCP*, pp. 532–33, respectively.

37 Biographies of Chou in *MS*, 241, pp. 6257–59, and *DMB*, pp. 263–65.

38 Biographies of Sun in *MS*, 243, pp. 6306–10, and *ECCP*, pp. 679–80.

incident during the T'ien-ch'i reign involved the distinguished military strategist Hsiung T'ing-pi (ca. 1598–1625).³⁹ Following the Manchus' defeat of a joint Chinese–Korean expeditionary force in April 1619,⁴⁰ Hsiung had been appointed supreme commander of the Ming armies in the northeast. He spent the next year there gradually improving defenses and restoring his troops' badly shaken morale. His caution was seen as cowardice by some elements at court, however, and his bluntness and arrogance had earned him enemies during a long and controversial official career. He was stripped of his command in October 1620 and replaced by a subordinate, Yüan Ying-t'ai (ca. 1595–1621).⁴¹

Yüan had served with distinction in a variety of civilian posts, but had little experience in military affairs. His fatal error was a decision to supplement Chinese forces in Liao-tung with Mongol tribesmen who had fled to Ming territory to escape famine and the advance of the Manchus. In the spring of 1621 some of these Mongols defected to the enemy at critical moments. With their help, Manchu forces took the strategic city of Shen-yang (Mukden) on 4 May 1621, and a week later the regional headquarters at Liao-yang. Yüan, with other Ming officials, chose to commit suicide rather than face the humiliation of surrender; other colleagues died in battle. With the capture of Liao-yang, Manchu forces took control of all the territory east of the Liao River that had formerly been claimed by the Ming.

Although recent research suggests that the Manchu forces were much weaker during the early 1620s than they then appeared to be,⁴² the poor showing of Chinese troops threw the Ming court into a state of near panic. On 16 May 1621 martial law was declared in Peking, and reinforcements were rushed to the front. The emperor was deluged by advice on military policy, especially recommendations that Hsiung T'ing-pi be recalled to service. Despite bitter opposition, much of which came from anti-Tung-lin quarters, the emperor agreed, and on 24 July Hsiung once again became supreme commander on the northeastern frontier. This time, however, his headquarters were at Shan-hai Pass, a strategic pass only 175 miles north-east of the capital at the eastern terminus of the Great Wall. A number of officials who had been involved in securing Hsiung's earlier dismissal were demoted, transferred, or, in the case of one staunch Tung-lin opponent, stripped of bureaucratic rank.

39 Biographies in *MS*, 259, pp. 6691–706, and *ECCP*, p. 308.

40 On this military engagement, see chapter 9, pp. 57–84.

41 Biographies in *MS*, 259, pp. 6689–91, and *ECCP*, p. 957.

42 Gertraude Roth, "The Manchu-Chinese relationship, 1618–1636," in *From Ming to Ch'ing: Conquest, region and continuity in seventeenth-century China*, ed. Jonathan D. Spence, and John E. Wills (New Haven and London, 1979), pp. 1–38.

Unfortunately, Hsiung was unable to work smoothly with the new governor of the region, Wang Hua-chen (cs. 1613–d. 1632), who was stationed at Kuang-ning, between Shan-hai Pass and the Liao River.⁴³ The two men disagreed on strategy: Hsiung wanted a cautious, defensive policy; Wang insisted on carrying the battle to the enemy. When one of his generals, Mao Wen-lung (1576–1629),⁴⁴ made a daring raid behind Manchu lines and captured a town on the Yalu River early in September, Wang was delighted; he convinced many at court that now was the time for an offensive. Hsiung strongly disagreed, arguing that such sorties would not result in any permanent gains. In his opinion, these independent and uncoordinated actions were undermining his authority. Desperate for good news from the front, however, the court disregarded classic Chinese military theory and overruled the commander in the field. Mao was promoted and Wang, supported by the new minister of war Chang Ho-ming (1551–1635),⁴⁵ continued to make sorties across the Liao River to challenge the Manchus.

As Hsiung had feared, Nurhaci was duly aroused. In December 1621 an army under his nephew Amin (d. 1640) drove Mao Wen-lung from north-western Korea and forced him to take refuge on an island near the mouth of the Yalu River. Several months later, Wang Hua-chen suffered a disastrous defeat at Kuang-ning and was pushed back toward Shan-hai Pass. Hsiung, unable to mount a counterattack, withdrew his remaining forces inside the pass to block a direct strike against Peking. This did not occur, but Hsiung and Wang were arrested for their “failures” and sentenced to death. Despite numerous protests at court, some organized by Tung-lin elements in the capital, Hsiung’s execution was carried out three years later at the insistence of officials associated with Wei Chung-hsien. Wang too was executed, but not until 1632, long after Wei was dead.

Fortunately for the dispirited, disorganized Chinese forces, the Manchus could not take advantage of their sweeping victory at Kuang-ning. Nurhaci’s rapid and easy conquest of much of Liao-tung between 1618 and 1621 had not given him time to consolidate his hold there; he exercised even less control in the territories to the west of the Liao River. Although the Manchus intended to pursue an offensive policy in 1623–24, logistical problems, food shortages, and popular uprisings behind their lines forced them to pause.⁴⁶ This gave the Ming forces a breathing space, which they used to their advantage.

43 Biographies of Wang in *MS*, 259, pp. 6695–706, and *ECCP*, p. 823.

44 Biographies in *MS*, 259, pp. 6715–17, and *ECCP*, pp. 567–68.

45 Biography in *MS*, 257, pp. 6617–19.

46 Roth, “The Manchu-Chinese relationship,” pp. 7–21.

After several months of confusion, Sun Ch'eng-tsung (1563–1638)⁴⁷ was appointed supreme commander at Shan-hai Pass. He immediately began improving defenses in the area, and during the next few years he and his talented subordinate, Yüan Ch'ung-huan (1584–1630),⁴⁸ were able to recapture some of the territory Wang Hua-chen had lost. Even after Sun resigned his position in November 1625, following a protracted dispute with Wei Chung-hsien, Yüan was able to repulse a major Manchu assault on the strategic town of Ning-yüan, about 120 miles north of Shan-hai Pass. Nurhaci was wounded in this engagement, and on 30 September 1626 he died in his new capital at Shen-yang. While his death did not end the dangers on the northeastern frontier, the Chinese position there was not as precarious late in 1626 as it had been during the dark days of March 1622, when Wang Hua-chen was being routed at Kuang-ning and Hsiung T'ing-pi was trying desperately to stem the Manchu advance.

Military problems elsewhere in the empire

The Manchus were not the only threat to the Ming state during the early 1620s. There were constant difficulties with the Miao and other tribes in the remote southwestern provinces of Kweichow and Yunnan, and in the autumn of 1621 a Lolo chieftain in Szechwan took advantage of the government's preoccupation with Liao-tung to launch a major rebellion. A number of cities including Chungking were taken, and the provincial capital at Chengtu was besieged for 102 days.⁴⁹ Just after the court had dispatched troops to deal with this problem, tribal groups elsewhere in Szechwan, Kweichow, and Yunnan began to rise up against the Ming authorities. The government faced a double threat. It could not afford the men and matériel to wage continuous war in the west and southwest; and it was deprived of substantial resources in those areas. Since Szechwan had been a major grain-exporting province as early as the Sung (960–1279) period⁵⁰ and Kweichow and Yunnan contained many of the empire's richest silver mines,⁵¹ the economic impact of the troubles there was serious.

Six months after the siege of Chengtu began in November 1621, a new threat appeared off the southeastern coast. Vessels of the Dutch East India

47 Biographies in *MS*, 250, pp. 6465–77, and *ECCP*, pp. 670–71.

48 Biographies in *MS*, 259, pp. 6707–19, and *ECCP*, pp. 954–55.

49 *MSCSPM*, 4, pp. 60–72.

50 Ch'üan Han-sheng, "Nan Sung tao mi ti sheng ch'an yü yün hsiao," *BIHP*, 10 (April 1948), pp. 403–32; rpt. in his *Chung-kuo ching chi shih lun ts'ung* (Hong Kong, 1972), I, pp. 278–79.

51 Sung Ying-hsing, *T'ien kung k'ai wu: Chinese technology in the seventeenth century*, trans. E-tu Zen Sun and Shiou-chuan Sun (University Park and London, 1966), pp. 235–47; Ch'üan Han-sheng, "Ming Ch'ing shih tai Yün-nan ti yin k'o yü yin ch'an," *Hsin ya hsieh pao*, 11 (1976), pp. 61–88.

Company had been preying on Chinese, Portuguese, and Spanish shipping in East Asian waters for two decades, at times seriously disrupting the maritime trade so important to the economies of Fukien and Kwangtung. In June 1622 a Dutch fleet of eight ships carrying more than a thousand men attacked the Portuguese colony of Macao in an attempt to take over that city's lucrative commerce with Japan, Southeast Asia, and Europe. Driven off after a fierce battle, in which more than a quarter of their men were killed or wounded, the Dutch sailed north along the Chinese coast and early in July landed on the Pescadores (P'eng-hu) Islands in the Taiwan Strait.⁵²

After throwing up fortifications on one of the larger islands, the Dutch sent a representative to the Amoy area. He demanded direct trade privileges with China and announced that the Dutch intended to harass and disrupt Sino-Spanish and Sino-Portuguese commerce. The Chinese quickly rejected these demands and threats. In September 1622, the governor of Fukien sent a Ming official bearing letters to the Pescadores ordering the Dutch to demolish their small fortress and to leave at once. The Dutch refused, and in mid-October their ships began to attack Chinese vessels and vulnerable locations along the coast. For a time they were successful, but the authorities in Fukien eventually retaliated. In October 1623 a Dutch emissary who had been offered safe conduct as a negotiator was taken captive in Amoy, and in 1624 a large Chinese fleet forced the Dutch colonists to withdraw from the Pescadores to Taiwan. There they remained, a nuisance but not a serious threat, for the rest of the dynasty.

Economic problems and popular unrest

During much of the T'ien-ch'i reign, the Chinese economy stagnated or declined. One cause of this decline, and one that affected many other parts of the world at approximately the same time, was a sharp drop in the level of bullion exports from the New World.⁵³ In China, this drop may have been tied to a decline in Peruvian silver production.⁵⁴ Not only did this

52 Leonard Blussé, "The Dutch occupation of the Pescadores (1622–1624)," *Transactions of the International Conference of Orientalists in Japan*, 18 (1973), pp. 28–43. See also John E. Wills, Jr., "Maritime China from Wang Chih to Shih Lang," in *From Ming to Ch'ing*, pp. 213–20; and the biography of Nan Chü-i in *DMB*, pp. 1085–88.

53 For an interesting attempt to place the problems of this period in a worldwide perspective, see Ruggiero Romano, "Between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: The economic crisis of 1619–22," in *The general crisis of the seventeenth century*, ed. Geoffrey Parker and Lesley M. Smith (London, Henley, and Boston, 1978), pp. 165–225.

54 Peter J. Bakewell, "Registered silver production in the Potosí District, 1550–1735," *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft, und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas*, 12 (1975), pp. 92–95; and Harry E. Cross, "South American bullion production and export, 1550–1750," paper presented at the Workshop in Pre-modern World Monetary History, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 28 August–1 September 1977.

apparently reduce the amount of bullion reaching Manila, it also reduced the level of trade between China and the Philippines, for it was silver that had drawn Chinese merchants to the islands. Chinese merchants also feared to trade in Manila because of the dangers posed by pirates in the South China Sea. This drop in the Sino-Spanish trade had a serious impact on economic activity in the coastal areas of Fukien,⁵⁵ areas that carried on an extensive commerce with many other regions of the empire.

The Ming economy was also adversely affected between 1621 and 1627 by other factors. Fires swept Hangchow, Peking, and other major cities, destroying tens of thousands of homes and businesses. A major earthquake struck the P'ing-liang area of modern Kansu province in 1622, causing heavy property damage and reportedly killing more than 12,000 people. In 1623 the Yellow River, which at this period emptied into the sea south of the Shantung peninsula, burst its dikes in northern Nan Chihli, inundating vast tracts of land in and around Hsü-chou subprefecture. Severe flooding struck in Nan Chihli during August 1624, with Hsü-chou again being particularly hard hit. These disasters aggravated the economic and social dislocations already being caused by widespread military activity, steadily increasing taxation, a reduction in government orders for nonessential goods, and what some observers saw as monumental bureaucratic corruption and inefficiency. Singly and together, they provoked a series of peasant uprisings, urban disorders, bandit and pirate raids, and mutinies among government troops, all of which taxed the dynasty's ability to maintain law and order.

The most serious uprising, involving members of the White Lotus Society, occurred in 1622. Groups influenced by White Lotus teachings had been active in North China during the Wan-li reign. They had been kept under control by the authorities, who detained suspected leaders and conducted periodic campaigns of suppression. When in 1621 refugees from Liao-tung poured into Pei Chihli and Shantung to escape the Manchu advance, the ensuing turmoil gave the remaining White Lotus leaders their long-awaited opportunity. That came when the economic slowdown was already reducing commercial activity on the Grand Canal, creating difficulties for those who depended on the canal for their livelihood. A major White Lotus uprising began near the canal in southwest Shantung in June 1622, led by a man known as Hsü Hung-ju.⁵⁶

Bolstered by recruits from other parts of North China, Hsü's forces

55 Kobata Atsushi, *Kingin bōekishi no kenkyū* (Kyoto, 1976), pp. 259–62; William Lytle Schurz, *The Manila galleon* (New York, 1939), pp. 342–52.

56 Biography in *DMB*, pp. 587–89. See also *MSCSPM*, 4, pp. 72–75.

enjoyed initial success. In July he took two county capitals in Shantung's Yen-chou prefecture, and in August he blocked the Grand Canal near the border between Shantung and Nan Chihli, capturing more than fifty imperial grain transport barges. Since his blockade cut off supplies both to Peking and to the Ming forces defending the northern and northeastern frontiers, the government moved swiftly to deal with the situation. Efforts were at first handicapped because many of the troops ordinarily stationed in the affected areas had been transferred elsewhere. However, imperial forces gradually regained the initiative, and late in November 1622 they retook the last of the cities held by the rebels.

Hsü Hung-ju was captured during the final stages of the campaign, and he and more than a dozen of his lieutenants were subsequently executed in Peking. At its peak Hsü's revolt affected parts of Shantung, Pei Chihli, Nan Chihli, and at least five other provinces. It may well have been the most serious internal threat to the dynasty's security since the rebellion of the Prince of Ning nearly a century earlier.⁵⁷ The court thus had good cause to reward those who had brought Hsü to justice.

The Tung-lin debacle

Even as those rewards were being handed out, however, tension between the Tung-lin faction and its opponents at court continued to grow, a state of affairs for which the former group must bear considerable responsibility. Early in 1623 Chao Nan-hsing, a Tung-lin leader newly installed as censor-in-chief, took advantage of the sexennial capital evaluation (*ching-ch'a*) of officials in Peking to settle some old scores. A number of men who had opposed the Tung-lin group in the past were dismissed from government service and some even had their names removed from the civil service register, which made them ineligible for any other bureaucratic appointment. Later in the same year, Chao continued his crusade as minister of personnel. He immediately set out to eradicate from the government as a whole and from Peking in particular what he and many of his friends saw as intolerable levels of corruption. Whatever the justice of his views, Chao's moral and uncompromising attitude soon brought him into open conflict with imperial eunuchs and others in the capital who had good reasons for wishing to maintain the status quo.

Although many of the high offices in Peking were in the hands of Tung-lin partisans and their sympathizers,⁵⁸ Tung-lin power was con-

⁵⁷ For this rebellion see chapter 7, pp. 423-30.

⁵⁸ *MS*, 243, pp. 6299-300.

stantly challenged. Several prominent Tung-lin figures had left or were driven from office in 1622, and in February 1623 Ku Ping-ch'ien (cs. 1595) and Wei Kuang-wei (cs. 1604) were appointed to the grand secretariat.⁵⁹ Both men were closely associated with Wei Chung-hsien, and it was later rumored that the eunuch had indeed secured their appointments. Certainly the Tung-lin group viewed the appointments with grave suspicion.

Other events indicate how limited Tung-lin power had become. Early in 1623 over forty palace eunuchs were dispatched to investigate conditions along the northeastern frontier. Sun Ch'eng-tsung, a Tung-lin hero who was the Liao-tung supreme commander, saw that such an investigation could affect the efficiency and morale of his troops and became concerned that it might establish an unwelcome precedent. In a strongly worded memorial to the throne he outlined his deep misgivings about the entire enterprise.⁶⁰ Other Tung-lin figures were equally outspoken against eunuch involvement in military affairs. As Wei Chung-hsien's influence in the palace grew, however, the group's warnings were routinely ignored. For example, despite Tung-lin attempts to stop such activities, military training for eunuchs had been conducted inside the Forbidden City since the spring of 1622.⁶¹

Skirmishing between the eunuchs and the various factions at court continued throughout 1623, but the real battle for supremacy began in 1624. In February Wei Chung-hsien was appointed head of the Eastern Depot (*Tung-ch'ang*), a eunuch security agency answerable only to the throne and responsible for ferreting out treasonable offenses.⁶² This appointment gave Wei judicial and punitive powers with which to strike back at his enemies and has been regarded as an important turning point in late Ming political history.

While Tung-lin members continued to criticize Wei indirectly, he was not openly attacked until the vice-censor-in-chief Yang Lien submitted his famous memorial of 15 July 1624. Yang's memorial was given form and substance at secret Tung-lin conferences held in Peking during the first half of 1624. He also discussed his intentions with Tso Kuang-tou and Miao Ch'ang-ch'i (1562–1626), who helped him with the draft.⁶³ However, some members of the Tung-lin group in Peking did not support a direct challenge to Wei at that time; Miao Ch'ang-ch'i himself had some reserva-

59 Biographies of Ku and Wei in *MS*, 306, pp. 7843–46.

60 *MTC*, 4, pp. 3027–28. 61 *MTC*, 4, p. 3008.

62 For a brief description of the Eastern Depot, see Charles O. Hucker, "Governmental organization of the Ming dynasty," *HJAS*, 21 (1958), p. 25.

63 Biographies of Miao in *MS*, 245, pp. 6351–53, and *DMB*, pp. 1067–69.

tions, and the Tung-lin censor Huang Tsun-su (1584–1626)⁶⁴ bluntly warned Yang that disaster would follow if he failed to oust the eunuch from power quickly. The chief grand secretary Yeh Hsiang-kao, who did not wish to jeopardize the tolerable working relationship he had established with Wei, also voiced his opposition.

Yang, whose fiery personality and zeal had been tested in the 1620 Change of Palace Case,⁶⁵ was adamant. His memorial accused Wei of twenty-four crimes, including “usurping imperial authority, intriguing against upright ministers, manipulating civil service appointment procedures, murdering opponents within the palace, and, by forced abortion, preventing the empress from giving [the T'ien-ch'i emperor] an heir.”⁶⁶ It rocked the capital like an earthquake. Wei's supporters at court and in the imperial household had the emperor rebuke Yang severely, but memorials supporting Yang and condemning Wei were soon pouring into the palace. The most telling was one submitted by an official in the Ministry of Works, Wan Ching (cs. 1616, d. 1624), who accused Wei of having built a magnificent mausoleum for himself while refusing to supply materials for the tomb of the emperor's own father.⁶⁷

Since Wan himself had worked on the imperial tomb in question, his testimony was most damning. In retaliation, Wei had Wan beaten at court so savagely that he died a few days later. Shortly thereafter, a full-scale purge of Tung-lin elements in the government began. One of the first to go was Yeh Hsiang-kao. In August he was permitted to resign from the grand secretariat, having become embroiled in another case involving an official who had offended the eunuch. During the winter he was followed by Chao Nan-hsing, Yang Lien, Tso Kuang-tou, and others, and by 1625 many of the positions held by these men and their supporters were being filled by people sympathetic to, or at least willing to work with, Wei Chung-hsien.

Although the tide appeared to have turned decisively in their favor, Wei and his friends were not satisfied. In January 1625 the indefatigable Tung-lin organizer Wang Wen-yen⁶⁸ was arrested on charges related to his long-standing support for the former Liao-tung supreme commander Hsiung

64 Biography in *MS*, 245, pp. 6360–64.

65 See above, pp. 594–95.

66 Hucker, “The Tung-lin movement,” p. 132. For a more detailed discussion of this memorial, see Hucker's *The censorial system of Ming China*, pp. 200–05.

67 Biography of Wan in *MS*, 245, pp. 6367–68.

68 Chao I, *Nien erh shih cha chi* (Prefaces 1795 and 1800; rpt. Shanghai, 1937; Taipei, 1971), pp. 514–15.

T'ing-pi, who was still awaiting execution. Wang was tortured and died in custody early in May. Shortly before Wang's death, Wei ordered the arrests of Yang Lien, Tso Kuang-tou, and four other Tung-lin figures who had been among his most vociferous critics. Imprisoned in Peking, these Six Men of Superior Virtue (*liu chün-tzu*), as they are known in pro-Tung-lin sources, were all dead by the middle of October. Late in September Hsiung T'ing-pi was publicly beheaded at the urging of such Tung-lin enemies as the new grand secretary Feng Ch'üan (1595–1672).⁶⁹

Wei's reign of terror continued into the following spring, when he issued orders for the arrest of seven more political opponents, not all of whom had been closely connected with the Tung-lin group in the capital. Among the seven was Chou Shun-ch'ang (1584–1626)⁷⁰ a highly respected official who since 1622 had been living in retirement in Soochow, but whose contempt for Wei and his supporters had been well publicized. When news of Chou's arrest was announced in Soochow in April 1626, a number of his friends and admirers in the city began a campaign to secure his release. Their efforts failed, and Chou was placed under special guard for transport to Peking for questioning. Knowing that such questioning would probably lead to Chou's death, the outraged citizenry of Soochow staged a massive and violent demonstration during which Wei's agents were attacked and several were killed. News of the uprising spread quickly throughout the Kiangnan region. It appeared that the eunuch had overstepped himself and that an armed insurrection against him might be mounted in the southeast. But Wei was able to reestablish order. Late in October of that year, Chou and the other six men who had been arrested with him were dead, either by torture or by suicide.

Wei Chung-hsien in power

While he brutally and efficiently disposed of his most outspoken critics, Wei Chung-hsien also worked in other ways to consolidate his position. In March 1625 he was "awarded" the hereditary post of vice-commander-in-chief in the Chief Military Commission to celebrate the completion of the T'ai-ch'ang emperor's tomb. Later in the year Wei and Madame K'o were further honored; in 1626 one of Wei's nephews was made an earl and then

69 Biography in *ECCP*, pp. 240–41.

70 Biographies in *MS*, 245, pp. 6353–55, and *DMB*, pp. 274–77. See also Charles O. Hucker, "Su-chou and the agents of Wei Chung-hsien: A translation of *K'ai tu ch'uan hsün*," in *Sōritsu nijūgoshūnen kinen ronbunshū* (*Silver jubilee volume of the Zinbun Kagaku Kenkyūyo*) (Kyoto, 1954), pp. 224–56.

a duke, and in November Wei himself became an exalted duke (*shang kung*), a rank and title created expressly for him. Several months earlier, the governor of Chekiang had requested and received permission to build a "living shrine" in Wei's honor. Before long such shrines were being constructed all over the empire.⁷¹ During this period, memorials to the throne were often filled with glowing references to the eunuch's virtue and ability. He was even credited with military victories far from the capital, which were attributed to his sagacious handling of administrative and strategic affairs.

As long as Wei dominated the government, officials willing to engage in such flattery were treated well. For example, early in 1625 Ts'ui Ch'eng-hsiu (cs. 1613, d. 1627),⁷² an official who had been denounced for corruption in the previous year by Tung-lin leaders, begged Wei for protection. He was brought back into the government as a censor and is then said to have provided the eunuch with lists of pro- and anti-Tung-lin officials. These lists were consulted when bureaucratic appointments were made, and they effectively eliminated Tung-lin partisans from high office. Of the seven men who served in the grand secretariat in 1626, only one had been a member since 1624, and he is known to have been a supporter of the eunuch.⁷³ Similar changes also occurred in the upper echelons of the various ministries in the capital.⁷⁴

It was common for the victorious side in a factional dispute to write or rewrite recent history to suit its own needs and purposes. This is clearly what happened in the history written during the T'ien-ch'i reign. In 1623, for example, a version of the veritable record for the T'ai-ch'ang period had been completed which apparently treated the controversial issues of that period in a manner acceptable to the pro-Tung-lin figures then dominating the court. However, once Tung-lin opponents came to power late in 1624 and early in 1625, they decided that the work would have to be revised.⁷⁵ While this project was under way, Wei Chung-hsien and his supporters produced their own version of the events surrounding the three great cases (*san ta-an*) of the Wan-li and T'ai-ch'ang reigns—the Attack with the Club case of 1615, and the Red Pill and Change of Palace cases of 1620. Edited by chief grand secretary Ku Ping-ch'ien, this work, published in the summer of 1626 under the title *San ch'ao yao tien* (Essential documents of three reigns), contained bitter denunciations of

71 *KC*, 6, p. 5330; Chao I, *Nien erh shih cha chi*, pp. 512–13.

72 Biography in *MS*, 306, pp. 7848–50. 73 *MS*, 110, pp. 3379–81.

74 *MS*, 112, pp. 3492–95.

75 Wolfgang Franke, *An introduction to the sources of Ming history* (Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, 1968), pp. 17, 32.

many Tung-lin figures for their roles in partisan controversies dating back to the late sixteenth century.⁷⁶

Wei and his cohorts used other methods of control during this period. Extensive blacklists of alleged Tung-lin sympathizers were published and distributed throughout the empire. In August 1625 the Shou-shan Academy in Peking, founded by the Tung-lin leaders Tsou Yüan-piao and Feng Ts'ung-wu, was ordered destroyed. Three weeks later another order was issued for the destruction of all such institutions in the empire, although the real targets were those academies closely associated with the Tung-lin movement. The first to fall was the Tung-lin Academy itself, which during the early 1620s had become a symbol of anti-Wei sentiment throughout the empire and especially in the Yangtze delta, where the academy was located.⁷⁷ To add insult to injury for those who had been caught up in the purges of 1624–26, in 1627 it was suggested that Wei Chung-hsien should be honored with ritual observances similar to those performed for Confucius. When the emperor fell ill late in the summer of 1627, one of Wei's relatives even officiated in his place at a ceremony in the imperial Ancestral Temple.

Political instability at the end of the T'ien-ch'i reign

During the mid-1620s, Ming military commanders like Sun Ch'eng-tsung and Yüan Ch'ung-huan had been successful in their efforts against the Manchus. News from other fronts was not so encouraging. In the spring of 1626 the official responsible for the Szechwan, Kweichow, and Hu-kuang military region committed suicide following a disastrous defeat at the hands of a tribal leader who had been causing serious trouble in the southwest since 1622 and would continue to do so well into the next reign.⁷⁸ In 1626 there was also a major uprising on the Szechwan-Shensi border, touched off by the corruption of officials assigned to the area by Wei Chung-hsien, but also attributable to deteriorating economic conditions that had been affecting the region for some time.

In 1627 things worsened. Insurrections broke out from Shensi to Kwangsi, pirates raided along the southeastern coast, and the Manchus completed a successful offensive against Chinese forces in Korea. And once the Manchu forces had secured their southeastern flank, they broke a truce

⁷⁶ Franke, *An introduction*, pp. 17–18, 63–64.

⁷⁷ Busch, "The Tung-lin shu yüan," pp. 57–66; and John Meskill, "Academies and politics in the Ming dynasty," in *Chinese government in Ming times: Seven studies*, ed. Charles O. Hucker (New York and London, 1969), pp. 171–74.

⁷⁸ *MSCSPM*, 4, pp. 68–71.

they had negotiated with Yüan Ch'ung-huan and put pressure on his forces at Ning-yüan and other strategic locations west of the Liao River. Soon embroiled in a dispute with supporters of Wei Chung-hsien over various matters relating to border defense, Yüan decided his position was hopeless. He resigned his post in August 1627 and was promptly replaced by an official with whom he had previously refused to cooperate.

Similar tensions and jealousies plagued the court. As soon as Wei Chung-hsien's partisans had gained control of the government, they began to disagree among themselves. Concerned about the harsh punishments meted out to Tung-lin figures during 1625, grand secretary Wei Kuang-wei memorialized the throne (and thus Wei Chung-hsien) to urge restraint and compassion.⁷⁹ The eunuch was furious at this attempt to limit his purges, and Wei Kuang-wei, fearing for his own safety, submitted several requests to resign. Permission was granted late in September 1625. Shortly thereafter, officials more amenable to Wei Chung-hsien's wishes were appointed to the grand secretariat. In July 1626 Feng Ch'üan left the government after a dispute with Ts'ui Ch'eng-hsiu. Less than four months later, chief grand secretary Ku Ping-ch'ien also resigned, apparently because he felt insecure without the presence of his former allies Feng and Wei Kuang-wei.

Through all of this Wei Chung-hsien and his family continued to amass awards and honors from the throne. Early in September 1627, for example, two of the eunuch's relatives received the prestigious titles of grand preceptor (*t'ai-shih*) and junior preceptor (*shao-shih*). But even as these honors were being bestowed, the T'ien-ch'i emperor's health, which had never been good, failed; he died on 30 September 1627 at the age of twenty-one. Since all five of his children had died in infancy, the throne automatically passed to his eldest surviving brother, Chu Yu-chien (1611-44).⁸⁰

THE CH'UNG-CHEN REIGN, 1628-1644

The T'ien-ch'i emperor's death was an occasion for solemn mourning at court, but many officials felt relief when they heard that this disastrous reign had come to an end. Some optimistic observers even saw the accession of Chu Yu-chien as an opportunity for the government to enact far-reaching reforms and for the dynasty to recapture some of its former greatness. In retrospect, such optimism was all that was possible in the autumn of 1627, for the new emperor was as much a mystery as his elder brother had been when he ascended the throne almost seven years earlier. And while Chu Yu-chien turned out to be a much more conscientious ruler than any

79 MS, p. 7845. 80 Biography in *ECCP*, pp. 191-92.

emperor had been for many years, he could not compensate for his inexperience, suspicious nature, and stubbornness—all character traits that contributed to the collapse of his dynasty.⁸¹ Whatever future research may reveal, it is not likely that Chu Yu-chien will be counted among the good rulers in Chinese history. One tragic fact will remain. He was the emperor who hanged himself in the imperial compound while the rebel troops were swarming through the suburbs of his capital.

The fall of Wei Chung-hsien

Chu Yu-chien's mother had died when he was a small child, and he spent his formative years in the care of various imperial concubines, one of whom is said to have died of "anger and indignation" after running afoul of Wei Chung-hsien and Madame K'o during the T'ien-ch'i reign.⁸² Given the political situation and the high mortality rate in the imperial palace, the mere fact that Chu Yu-chien survived his brother's seven years on the throne may have been more remarkable than is generally realized. He formally became the sixteenth Ming emperor on 2 October 1627, and the term "lofty and auspicious" (*ch'ung-chen*) was chosen as his reign title. Following his death in 1644, he was given three temple names (Ssu-tsung, I-tsung, and Huai-tsung) by various pretenders to the Ming throne. He is also known as Chuang-lieh ti.

The new emperor, not yet seventeen, was quite unknown when he came to power, and no one in the capital was sure what his attitude toward Wei Chung-hsien would be. The eunuch was among the first to know. On 9 October, a week after the emperor had been installed, Wei requested permission to retire.⁸³ Although this was refused, the throne was soon inundated with memorials denouncing some of the eunuch's staunchest supporters. Prominent among them was Ts'ui Ch'eng-hsiu, who after some hesitation was permitted to resign his post as minister of war. On 8 December Wei himself was ordered to leave the capital to assume a minor ceremonial post at the ancestral home of the first Ming emperor in northern Nan Chihli.

Wei immediately complied with this order, and within a few days he and a large retinue had traveled about 125 miles from Peking to Fu-ch'eng county in southern Pei Chihli. It was there that he learned from his efficient intelligence network that the emperor had ordered his arrest and

81 See, for example, the discussion in Albert Chan, "The decline and fall of the Ming dynasty: A study of internal factors," Diss. Harvard University, 1953, p. 10.

82 *MS*, 114, p. 3542. 83 *KC*, 6, p. 5387.

interrogation for crimes listed in the memorials that were pouring into the palace. Fearing the worst, Wei and a close eunuch associate hanged themselves in the city of Fu-ch'eng during the second week of December. Not long afterward, Ts'ui Ch'eng-hsiu committed suicide. However, neither he nor Wei was permitted an honorable death. Two months later they were publicly humiliated; their corpses were dismembered and their heads exposed in their respective hometowns—a warning to those who might wish to follow in their footsteps.

After Wei's death, a purge of his former associates began. Madame K'o, her brother, her son, and one of Wei's nephews were among more than two dozen people who were executed or forced to commit suicide. Others were sentenced to military service, banished to the frontiers, stripped of official rank, or otherwise punished.⁸⁴ The shrines constructed throughout the country in Wei's honor were torn down or put to other uses. Another revision of the veritable record for the T'ai-ch'ang reign was ordered, and following an impassioned plea from Ni Yüan-lu (1596–1644),⁸⁵ a young Tung-lin supporter in the Hanlin Academy, the printing blocks for Wei's *Essential documents of the three reigns* were destroyed. At the same time, the emperor made a public display of his concern for the families of those who had been murdered or otherwise persecuted when Wei Chung-hsien was in power. Now viewed as martyrs, a number received posthumous honors. Their survivors were given gifts and special privileges as a mark of imperial favor.

To the remnants of the Tung-lin group and their supporters, it must have seemed that they could again dominate the court as they had during the early years of the T'ien-ch' i reign. Late in 1628 Han K'uang returned to Peking to become chief grand secretary. He immediately joined with other recently appointed officials sympathetic to the Tung-lin cause to compile a blacklist of Wei Chung-hsien's associates that was published and distributed throughout the empire. Even before this compilation began, other Tung-lin figures were given important positions in the capital, and Yüan Ch'ung-huan was reinstated as supreme commander on the northeastern frontier. Yüan's precise relationship with the Tung-lin group is not clear,⁸⁶ but its members, sympathetic to his difficulties with Wei Chung-hsien, had urged his recall.

84 Chao I, *Nien erh shih cha chi*, p. 513.

85 Biographies in *MS*, 265, pp. 6835–41, and *ECCP* p. 587. See also Ray Huang, "Ni Yüan-lu: 'Realism' in a neo-Confucian scholar-statesman," in *Self and society in Ming thought*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary (New York and London, 1970), pp. 415–49.

86 Liu Po-han, "Lun Yüan Ch'ung-huan yü Tung-lin tang ti kuan hsi," *Li shih yen chiu*, 4 (1958), pp. 11–27.

Despite this dramatic reversal in Tung-lin fortunes, the young emperor had learned enough from the politics of the Wan-li and T'ien-ch'i reigns to try to keep his government free from the control of any one faction.⁸⁷ Late in 1628 Ch'ien Ch'ien-i (1582–1684),⁸⁸ a Tung-lin adherent, was nominated to fill a vacancy in the grand secretariat. He had previously been removed from office by Wei Chung-hsien and only recently recalled to Peking. Given the anti-eunuch attitude then prevailing at court, he seemed a reasonable candidate. Nevertheless, his nomination was vigorously opposed by the grand supervisor of instruction Wen T'i-jen (cs. 1598, d. 1638) who, supported by the vice minister of rites Chou Yen-ju (1588–1644), charged Ch'ien with corruption and partisanship in connection with an examination scandal of 1621.⁸⁹ The emperor was convinced that Ch'ien deserved to be punished. He was dismissed from office and stripped of bureaucratic rank; several of his supporters were also disciplined. Wen and Chou were rewarded for their efforts, and any faint hope that the Ch'ung-chen reign would be free of factional strife was lost.

Developments in maritime trade, ca. 1628–1634

Trade along China's southeastern coast had been severely hampered during the mid-1620s by the activities of Dutch and Chinese pirates in the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea. This situation changed dramatically in August 1628, when the noted pirate leader and smuggler Cheng Chih-lung (1604–61) surrendered to the new governor of Fukien, Hsiung Wen-ts'an (cs. 1607, d. 1640).⁹⁰ Cheng agreed to help the dynasty control the illegal activities in which he had been involved. He proved a great success. In three years, the situation along the Fukien and Chekiang coasts had so improved that Hsiung recommended the resumption of normal maritime commerce in the area.

Shipping, customs, and other records from the Philippines, however incomplete, indicate that Chinese merchants did not wait for government approval. They once again began trading with the Spanish in large numbers during the late 1620s.⁹¹ By 1632 the amount of silver flowing through

87 Chan, "Decline and fall," pp. 10–11; and Jerry Dennerline, *The Chia-ting loyalists: Confucian leadership and social change in seventeenth-century China* (New Haven and London, 1981), pp. 28–29.

88 Biography in *ECCP*, pp. 148–50.

89 Biographies of Wen and Chou in *MS*, 308, pp. 7925–37, and *DMB*, pp. 277–79, 1474–78.

90 Biographies of Cheng and Hsiung in *ECCP*, pp. 110–11; *MS*, 260, pp. 6733–38; and *DMB*, pp. 562–66. See also Wills, "Maritime China," pp. 216–20; and the biography of Liu Hsiang in *DMB*, pp. 947–49.

91 Pierre Chauu, *Les Philippines et le Pacifique des Ibériques (XVI, XVII, XVIII siècles): Introduction méthodologique et indices d'activité* (Paris, 1960), pp. 148–60; and Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803* (Cleveland, 1903–09), 23, pp. 29–92.

Manila into Chinese hands totaled more than 2 million pesos per year,⁹² which was an extremely large sum.⁹³ Fragmentary and occasionally contradictory trade figures make generalization difficult, but it appears that during the early 1630s Sino-Japanese commercial activity also picked up, with the Portuguese shipping large quantities of silver to China via Macao.⁹⁴ It seems that these developments led to a temporary boom in those areas of the Ming empire most directly involved in maritime trade.

Economic decline and rebellion in the northwest, 1628–1631

Other regions were not so fortunate. During the spring of 1628, the depressed northwestern province of Shensi was struck by a severe drought; by winter conditions in some areas were so appalling that the selling of women and children was common and cannibalism was not unknown. When the government could not provide food to relieve the famine, violence erupted, particularly in the eastern and central parts of the province.⁹⁵

Early in 1629 the situation there worsened when the emperor cut government expenditures by reducing the number of imperial post stations and attendants.⁹⁶ This swelled the ranks of the rebels, for the dismissed attendants had no means of support. They were joined by army deserters and mutineers, and before long bandit activity was being reported throughout the province. To deal with this rapidly deteriorating situation, in March 1629 vice-censor-in-chief Yang Ho (ca. 1604, d. 1635)⁹⁷ was made the supreme commander of the northwestern military region, with jurisdiction over a large part of Shensi.

Although Yang had served well in his civilian posts, he was not an inspiring military commander, and his two and a half years in Shensi produced mixed results. Though he had some success in persuading rebel leaders to surrender and even to commit their forces to the government cause, he failed to eliminate those rebels who could not be trusted. Critics

92 Blair and Robertson, *The Philippine Islands*, 24, pp. 254–55.

93 See, for example, the estimates of Spanish-American bullion imports into Europe during this period in Earl J. Hamilton, *American treasure and the price revolution in Spain, 1501–1650* (Cambridge, Mass., 1934), pp. 34 and 42, and the comments on those figures in Pierre Vilar, *A history of gold and money*, trans. Judith White (London, 1976), pp. 193–94.

94 Charles R. Boxer, *The great ship from Amacon: Annals of Macao and the old Japan trade, 1555–1640* (Lisbon, 1959), pp. 115–44.

95 In the following section I have relied heavily upon James B. Parsons, *The peasant rebellions of the late Ming dynasty* (Tucson, 1970), chap. 1. See also Li Wen-chih, *Wan Ming min pien* (Shanghai, 1948), pp. 15–51.

96 *KC*, 6, p. 5469; Li Wen-chih, *Wan Ming min pien*, pp. 24–25.

97 Biography in *MS*, 260, pp. 6725–28.

pointed to numbers of rebels who had surrendered and then rebelled again when it suited their purpose. Others refused to surrender at all, and one group greatly embarrassed Yang by capturing a strategic town in northeastern Shensi, which they held during the summer and early autumn of 1630. In 1630 and 1631 rebels from Shensi made destructive raids in neighboring Shansi, a development that caused alarm both there and in Peking. Although he had enthusiastically supported Yang's initial pacification efforts, the emperor gradually became disillusioned. In October 1631, with the rebels in Shensi more numerous than ever, Yang was relieved of his command and arrested.

The Manchu invasion of 1629–30

In December 1629, Manchu forces under Nurhaci's eighth son and successor, Abahai (also known as Hung Taiji, 1529–1643),⁹⁸ unexpectedly broke through the Great Wall west of Shan-hai Pass and began to rampage through Pei Chihli. Within a few days they had taken the important ironworks at Tsun-hua and had forced Yüan Ch'ung-huan to rush back from the frontier to aid in the defense of Peking. Even before his arrival on 30 December, rumors began circulating in the city—rumors started by the Manchus—that Yüan was secretly in league with Manchu generals. Fearful of Yüan's military prowess, the Manchus hoped to discredit him in the eyes of the Ch'ung-chen emperor. The rumors gained credibility because Yüan had negotiated a temporary truce with Abahai several years earlier. On 13 January 1630 he was arrested and charged with treason.

In the weeks and months following, Ming military forces suffered a series of humiliating defeats in Pei Chihli. On 14 January 1630 Manchu units took the city of Ku-an, 30 miles south of Peking. Two weeks later, the respected general Man Kuei (d. 1630)⁹⁹ was killed as he fought the enemy just outside the southern walls of the capital; and by mid-February, when the Manchu forces finally withdrew from the Peking area, literally thousands of corpses lined the approaches to the city.¹⁰⁰ However, the Manchu campaign was not yet over; they subsequently overwhelmed several cities in eastern Pei Chihli, stopping at a point only a few miles southwest of Shan-hai Pass.

Abahai returned to the Manchu capital at Shen-yang in April 1630 and sent Amin, the hero of two Korean campaigns who had been serving as

⁹⁸ Biography in *ECCP*, pp. 1–3.

⁹⁹ Biographies in *MS*, 271, pp. 6957–60, and *ECCP*, pp. 561–62.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Cooper S. J., *Rodrigues the interpreter: An early Jesuit in Japan and China* (New York, 1874), p. 342.

regent in his absence, to consolidate and if possible to expand the unanticipated gains made south of the Great Wall during the previous four months. Early in May Amin arrived in Yung-p'ing (modern Lu-lung), 125 miles east of Peking, to face a Ming offensive directed by Sun Ch'eng-tsung, the former supreme commander of Liao-tung, who had returned to service a few months earlier. Late in June, with Chinese troops pressing him from several directions and his supply lines in danger of being severed, Amin was forced to retreat through the Great Wall at Leng-k'ou, 50 miles west of Shan-hai Pass.

The immediate threat to Peking and to the dynasty had passed; but the court had been badly frightened, so much so that the emperor, believing the earlier rumors, had his most talented general, Yüan Ch'ung-huan, cut to pieces in the capital on 22 September 1630. Amin fared somewhat better. On his arrival in Shen-yang he was arrested, tried, and convicted of various crimes, including fleeing his post. More noteworthy was the charge that he had permitted murder and looting in several Chinese cities during his withdrawal from Pei Chihli; this dealt a severe blow to Abahai's scheme of presenting Manchu rule as an alternative to Ming rule.¹⁰¹ Amin's death sentence was commuted, and he died in confinement in 1640.

The siege of Talingho and its aftermath

The northeastern frontier then remained fairly quiet until early in September 1631, when Abahai surrounded the new fortifications at Talingho (Ta-ling-ho ch'eng), a strategic outpost just north of the Ming stronghold at Chin-chou, 125 miles north-northeast of Shan-hai Pass. Relief columns sent in October were decimated by the Manchu forces; by mid-November, the defenders at Talingho were reduced to eating their horses and even their dead comrades. Finally, on 21 November the Ming commander Tsu Tashou (d. 1656)¹⁰² surrendered, but not before he had killed at least one officer who still wished to continue to fight.¹⁰³ Tsu subsequently persuaded Abahai to allow him to return to Chin-chou, with the understanding that he would arrange to hand over the city to the Manchus. He later reneged, but Abahai had won an important psychological and strategic victory, because a number of Ming military figures, including Chang Ts'un-jen (d. 1652),¹⁰⁴ defected to the Manchu side at this time.

These events also affected the political stability of Shantung province. Late in 1631 troops stationed in the Shantung prefectural city of Teng-chou, many originally from Liao-tung, were ordered back to the northeast

101 Roth, "The Manchu-Chinese relationship," p. 26. 102 Biography in *ECCP*, pp. 769-70.
103 *MS*, 271, pp. 6966. 104 Biography in *ECCP*, pp. 56-57.

to fight against the Manchus. As these troops were passing through southern Pei Chihli, they mutinied and persuaded their commander, K'ung Yu-te (d. 1632),¹⁰⁵ to join them. Sweeping quickly back across northern Shantung, K'ung laid siege to Teng-chou, which fell on 22 February 1632. Keng Chung-ming (d. 1649), an officer in the city, defected to K'ung's side and opened Teng-chou's gates for his army.¹⁰⁶ One casualty in this insurrection was the Ming commander in this region of Shantung, Sun Yüan-hua (d. 1632),¹⁰⁷ a Catholic convert and ballistics expert who was captured when Teng-chou was taken. Sun was subsequently freed by the rebel leaders, but the emperor was unwilling to excuse his "failures." He was executed in Peking later in the year.

Meanwhile, K'ung Yu-te and Keng Chung-ming continued their rebellion. In March they laid siege to the important city of Lai-chou, 60 miles southwest of Teng-chou; in April they took P'ing-tu prefecture midway between Lai-chou and Chiao-chou Bay; and in August they captured several important Ming officials who walked into a cleverly set trap. Their time was running out, however. Early in October the six-months siege of Lai-chou was broken, and on 10 October K'ung Yu-te, badly beaten northeast of Lai-chou, was forced to retreat to Teng-chou. The tables were then turned as government troops began a long siege of that rebel stronghold. After several unsuccessful attempts to escape, K'ung and Keng fled by boat to Liao-tung in April 1633, where they promptly offered their services to Abahai. These were accepted, and within months they had helped the Manchus capture the strategic town of Lü-shun (modern Port Arthur) on the tip of the Liao-tung peninsula. Both K'ung and Keng went on to have distinguished careers in the conquest of their former dynasty.

Wen T'i-jen and the Ch'ung-chen emperor

These military setbacks had important repercussions at court. The Manchu campaign south of the Great Wall, which had begun in December 1629, not only led to the arrest and execution of Yüan Ch'ung-huan, but also to the resignation of several of his former supporters. The first to go was grand secretary Ch'ien Lung-hsi (1575–1645),¹⁰⁸ a Tung-lin sympathizer who resigned in February 1630 after being bitterly criticized by men associated with anti-Tung-lin elements in the bureaucracy. Several weeks later, chief grand secretary Han K'uang, who had been Yüan Ch'ung-huan's examiner

105 Biography in *ECCP*, pp. 435–36. 106 Biography in *ECCP*, pp. 416–17.

107 Biographies in *MS*, 248, pp. 6436–37, and *ECCP*, p. 686.

108 Biography in *MS*, 251, pp. 6484–86.

when he won his metropolitan degree, also resigned, in part because he was attacked for his close relationship with Yüan and Ch'ien Lung-hsi. Other officials with Tung-lin leanings who left office at this time included minister of justice Ch'iao Yün-sheng (cs. 1592), and censor-in-chief Ts'ao Yü-pien (1558–1634), both of whom had suffered for their political affiliations when Wei Chung-hsien was in power.¹⁰⁹

Such reversals did not mean that the Tung-lin group had lost all influence at court. During this period, the Ch'ung-chen emperor was apparently trying to strike a balance in his administration between those who were known or rumored to be Tung-lin supporters and those who opposed them. In February 1630, at the height of the military crisis in Pei Chihli, the emperor appointed three officials to the grand secretariat, two of whom had Tung-lin connections. The third, Chou Yen-ju, had helped Wen T'i-jen remove the Tung-lin partisan Ch'ien Ch'ien-i from the government two years before.¹¹⁰ Wen himself was appointed to the grand secretariat in June 1630. By the end of the year the membership of that institution, which had been pro-Tung-lin in 1629, seems to have been split between Tung-lin partisans and their opponents.

However, this policy in effect drove even more Tung-lin partisans from office. In July 1631 the grand secretary Ch'ien Hsiang-k'un (1559–1640),¹¹¹ who had on occasion supported Tung-lin causes, left his post after a dispute with associates of Chou Yen-ju. Two months later, grand secretary Ho Ju-ch'ung (cs. 1598, d. 1641),¹¹² who had been dismissed from the government in 1625 because of his friendship with the Tung-lin stalwart Tso Kuang-tou, also resigned. He did so in part because he could not get along with Chou Yen-ju and Wen T'i-jen.¹¹³ In December 1631 grand secretary Sun Ch'eng-*tsung*, a Tung-lin hero who was serving at the time on special assignment at Shan-hai Pass, was allowed to leave office after being bitterly criticized at court for the recent military disasters in the northeast.

Another ominous political development occurred in 1631. Early in October eunuchs were once again sent from the palace to inspect conditions along the northern frontier, a practice that had been abandoned when the Ch'ung-chen emperor ascended the throne in 1627. The emperor's change of mind reflected his growing dissatisfaction with his civilian and military officials and his belief that he needed independent sources of information. Faced with constant infighting at court, he may well have felt that the eunuchs were more useful because they were responsible directly to him.

109 Biographies of Ch'iao and Ts'ao in *MS*, 254, pp. 6553–57.

110 See p. 614 above. 111 Biography in *MS*, 251, pp. 6492–93.

112 Biography in *MS*, 251, pp. 6491–92. 113 *MTC*, 4, p. 3165.

This did not mean that the emperor intended to return to the dark days of earlier reigns, when eunuchs had dominated palace and government affairs. On the contrary, he appears to have decided that he and he alone would make the final decisions on policy. Nevertheless, the eunuchs continued to gain influence in the years after 1631, particularly as special investigators for the throne who operated a large spy network in Peking and elsewhere.¹¹⁴ For those who remembered the Tung-lin debacle of 1625–26 with outrage and horror, these developments were cause for great unhappiness.

Grand secretary Wen T'i-jen did not share those feelings; he maintained his position and enhanced his influence with the emperor throughout the turbulent early 1630s by convincing him that he was a political neutral, disinterested in factional wrangling and dedicated wholly to serving the interests of the throne. Despite the bias against him in the extant sources, and despite the fact that he built up a faction of his own, Wen did retain the confidence of an intelligent, suspicious, and diligent emperor for nearly a decade, during four years of which he served as chief grand secretary. However, Wen never dominated his ruler as Chang Chü-cheng had dominated the Wan-li emperor from 1572 to 1582. This suggests that many of the Ming government's failures during the mid-1630s, which are usually attributed to Wen, should be laid at the doorstep of the man who maintained him in power and gave him his orders: the Ch'ung-chen emperor himself.¹¹⁵

Following his appointment to the grand secretariat in July 1630, Wen T'i-jen used his consummate political acumen to topple one opponent after another without arousing the emperor's suspicions. As his earlier attack on Ch'ien Ch'ien-i made clear, among his favorite targets were officials associated with the Tung-lin group, dozens of whom left or were driven from the government during the early and mid-1630s. Prominent among these were the grand secretaries Wen Chen-meng (1574–1636), Ho Wu-tsou (cs. 1619), and Ch'ien Shih-sheng (1575–1652), the vice-minister of works Liu Tsung-chou, the chancellor of the National University Ni Yüan-lu, and the junior supervisor of instruction in Nanking, Yao Hsi-meng (1579–1636).¹¹⁶

Nor, when he judged the time right, did Wen hesitate to move against those generally regarded as opponents of the Tung-lin cause, particularly if

114 *MS*, 305, pp. 7827–31; Albert Chan, "The decline and fall," pp. 56–57; and Dunne, *Generation of giants*, p. 253.

115 See, for example, the discussion in *DMB*, p. 1477.

116 Biographies of Wen, Ho, Ch'ien, and Yao in *MS*, 216, pp. 5718–19; 251, pp. 6487–88, 6495–99; 253, p. 6532; and *DMB*, pp. 237–39, 1467–71.

they happened to stand in his way. During the first half of 1633 chief grand secretary Chou Yen-ju, who had supported Wen in the Ch'ien Ch'ien-i case, was charged with a variety of misdeeds, including the absurd allegation that he had accepted bribes from a rebel leader in Shensi. When Chou turned to Wen for help, it was not forthcoming. He was forced to resign in July of that year and was replaced by none other than Wen T'i-jen.

*Drought, famine, and rebellion in northern and central China,
1632-1636*

Although the military situation in Shensi had improved following Yang Ho's dismissal in October 1631, the improvement was largely an illusion. The rebels had merely moved into other provinces to escape government troops or economic conditions, which were so desperate in many parts of Shensi that very little remained to plunder. By the end of 1632 the focus of rebel activity had shifted to southeastern Shansi, southwestern Pei Chihli, and northern Honan, where some bands had considerable success. They took cities and towns along the Shansi-Honan border, killed officials and members of the local elite, and seldom encountered regular army troops. The most ominous development from the government's point of view was not only that the rebels had proved capable of operating effectively in the relatively prosperous areas of central Shansi along the Fen River, but that they had also moved onto the North China plain and were within striking distance of Peking itself.¹¹⁷

The court moved quickly to counter this threat. Early in 1633 government forces scored a series of victories over the rebels in the Shansi-Honan border region. Despite occasional setbacks in southern Shansi, by December they had forced many of the rebel bands back across the Yellow River into central Honan, northern Hu-kuang, and southern Shensi. These areas, affected by drought and famine in 1633,¹¹⁸ provided new recruits for the rebel forces as they pushed south and west, away from their old haunts. Mien-ch'ih in northwestern Honan fell on 27 December; Lu-shih, to the southwest, was attacked four days later; and by 1634 some rebel groups were operating freely along the Han River in northern Hu-kuang. In March

¹¹⁷ For more detailed discussion of the general conditions during this period, see Parsons, *Peasant rebellions*, pp. 22-52; and Li Wen-chih, *Wan Ming min pien*, pp. 26-43.

¹¹⁸ Although the interrelationship, if any, has yet to be studied, it should be noted that many areas in northern India experienced severe drought in the early 1630s as well. For a graphic account of the economic disasters and human suffering which ensued there, see William Harrison Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb: A study in Indian economic history* (London, 1923), pp. 205-19.

and April 1634 raids were carried out along the Yangtze River where it cuts through Wu Mountain Gorge between Hu-kuang and Szechwan.

Once again the government gradually brought the situation under control. Early in 1634 Ch'en Ch'i-yü (cs. 1616, d. 1648),¹¹⁹ who had successfully fought the rebels in northern Shensi, was named to coordinate "bandit" suppression in a large area comprising parts of Honan, Shansi, Shensi, Szechwan, and Hu-kuang provinces. Within months Ch'en had trapped thousands of rebels in a remote gorge in western Honan near the Shensi border. Then, in a controversial move that ended his career, Ch'en accepted the surrender of Li Tzu-ch'eng (1605?–45)¹²⁰ and other rebel leaders and had them and their followers escorted back to northern Shensi. The rebels repudiated their agreement, killed their escorts, and began a series of successful raids in Shensi's strategic Wei River valley. Ch'en Ch'i-yü retained his command for several months following this disaster, but he was subsequently arrested and replaced by two officials with previous military experience in the northwest, Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou (1593–1695)¹²¹ and Lu Hsiang-sheng (1600–39).¹²²

Hung and Lu spent the next two years combatting the mobile rebels while trying to control the unruly officers and men under their command. Rebel operations expanded during 1635–36,¹²³ and it was the dynasty's good fortune that a conclave of rebel leaders held in Honan early in 1635 failed to achieve the unity of purpose and organization its planners had desired.¹²⁴ Still, in February and March 1635 two rebel groups did manage to coordinate their operations enough to launch a campaign deep into northern Nan Chihli, where they overran the city of Feng-yang and burned and looted property belonging to the imperial family. They were unable to maintain themselves there, however, and for the next year they concentrated their activities in Shensi, Honan, and northwestern Hu-kuang. A second incursion into Nan Chihli in 1636 was turned back by Lu Hsiang-sheng.

Although the rebels failed to secure a firm foothold in the economic heartland of the empire, their numbers had greatly increased and they occasionally inflicted costly defeats on the government soldiers sent to oppose them. In August 1635 the highly regarded Ming general Ts'ao Wen-chao (d. 1635)¹²⁵ and more than 2,000 of his men died in an ambush in the extreme eastern portion of Kansu province. The following month, Li

119 Biographies in *MS*, 260, pp. 6729–32, and *ECCP*, p. 85.

120 Biography in *ECCP*, pp. 491–93. 121 Biography in *ECCP*, pp. 358–60.

122 Biography in *MS*, 261, pp. 6759–65. 123 See maps on pp. 624–25.

124 On this conclave, see Parsons, *Peasant rebellions*, pp. 38–40.

125 Biography in *MS*, 268, pp. 6893–98.

Tzu-ch'eng, who had become one of the important rebel leaders, took two county cities in central Shensi, killing the magistrates on both occasions. When food shortages in Shensi led Li to attempt to cross the Yellow River into neighboring Shansi, he was repulsed by grand coordinator Wu Shen (1589–1644)¹²⁶ and forced to resume raiding his native province. Although Li continued to elude them, in August 1636 officials in Shensi did manage to capture the veteran rebel leader Kao Ying-hsiang (d. 1636) near Chou-chih county southwest of Hsien-yang. Kao was sent to Peking, where he was executed later in the year.

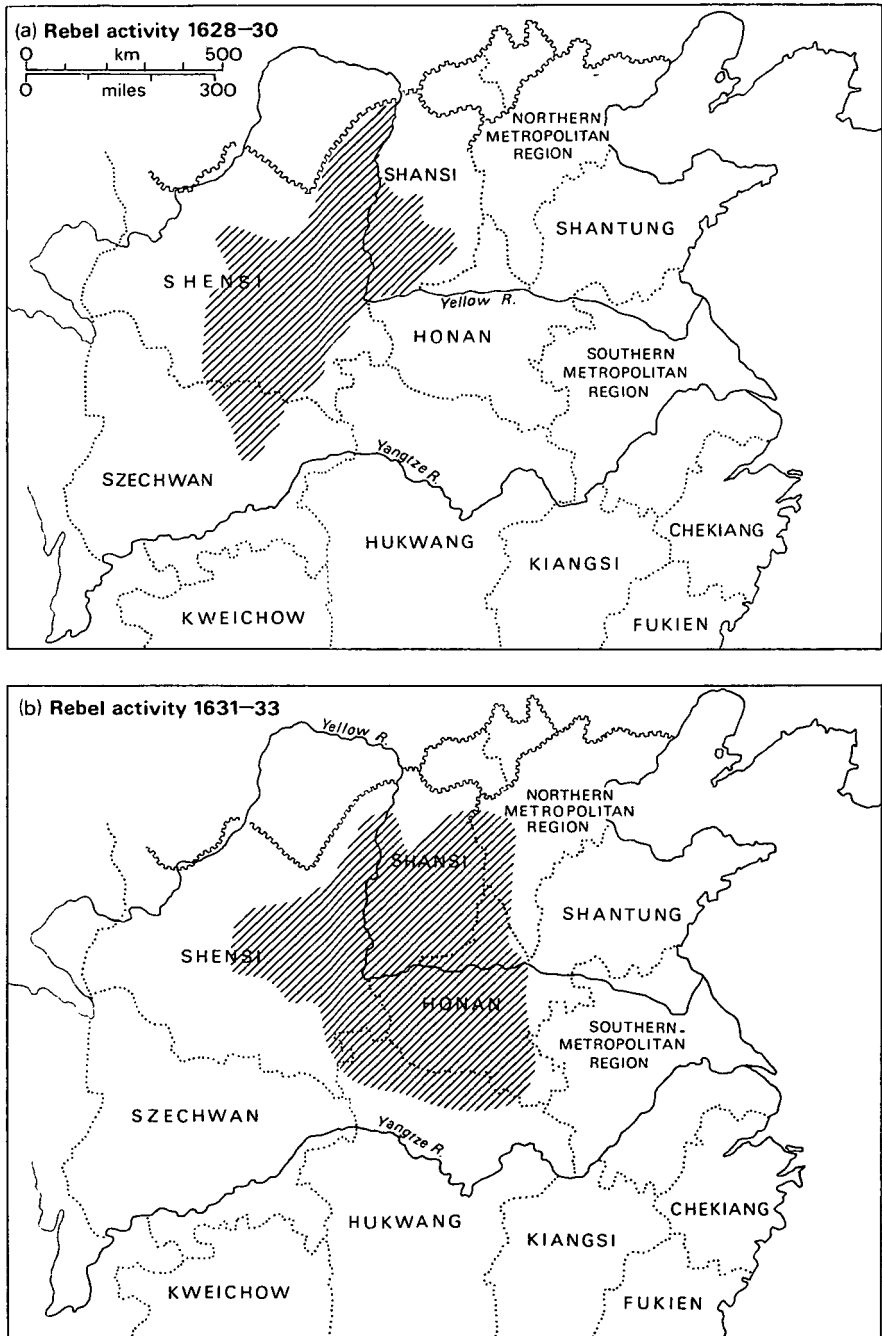
Even with such victories, the government's performance during the mid-1630s left much to be desired. Its task was vastly complicated by military emergencies elsewhere. Appalling economic conditions in the northwest provided rebel leaders with a constant supply of recruits. Moreover, the quality of the imperial forces in the region had been declining. Chinese military theory held that the restoration and maintenance of public confidence was essential to the suppression of rebellious activity; yet people living in many parts of Shensi, Honan, and Hu-kuang during this period considered certain Ming commanders and their unruly troops as dangerous as the bandits they were sent to suppress. The authorities in Peking were well aware of the danger inherent in this situation, but given the problems confronting them were either unable or unwilling to do much about them. Indeed, the court probably felt that the dynasty needed all the military support it could muster, and that to ask too many questions about methods and ultimate loyalties would be counterproductive.

*Economic stagnation and social instability in the southeast,
ca. 1634–1638*

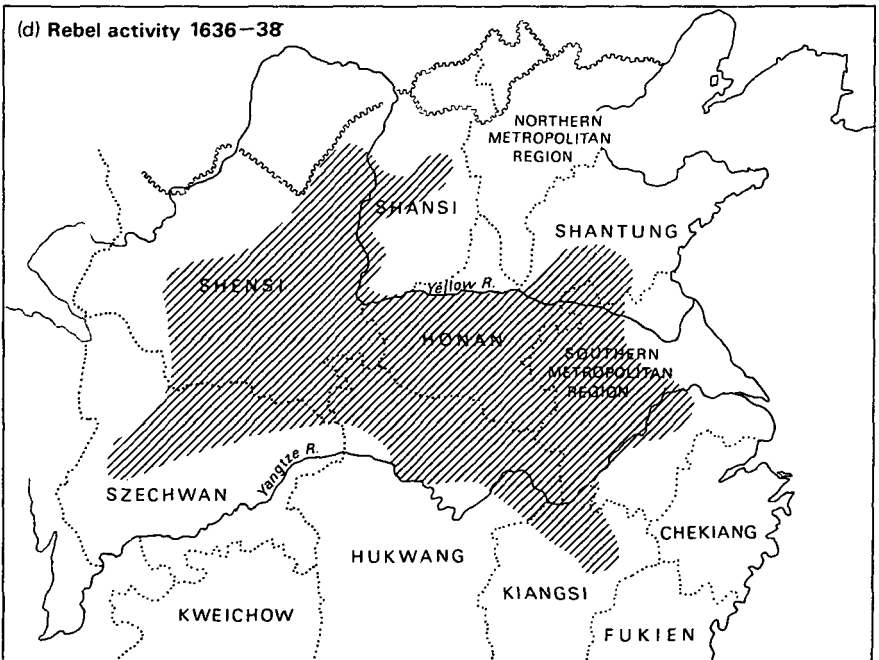
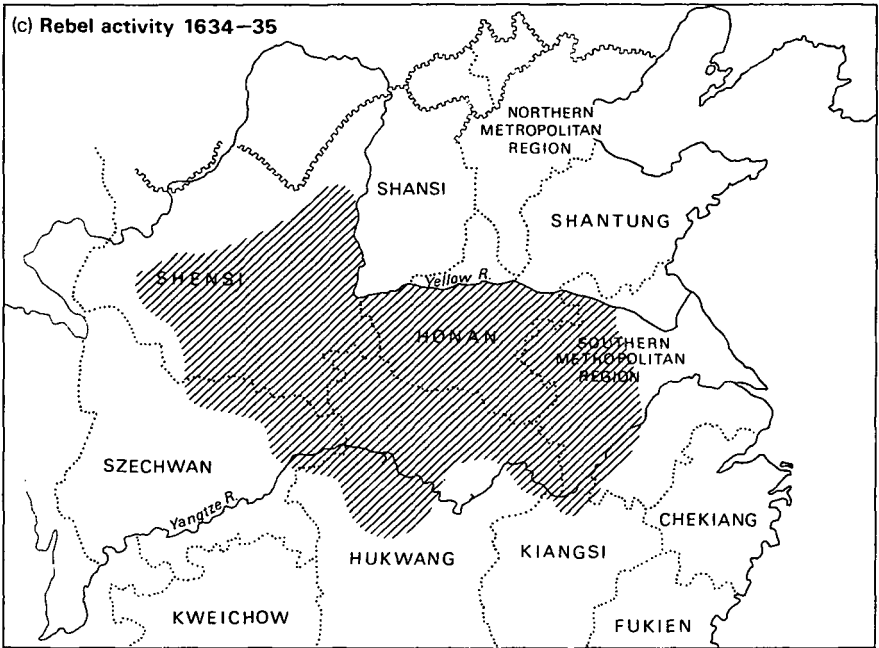
The vastness of the Ming empire makes it difficult to gauge the impact of events in one region on developments in another. One example of this is a violent uprising that occurred in Nan Chihli's T'ung-ch'eng county early in the autumn of 1634.¹²⁷ One source claims that dissidents in T'ung-ch'eng planned to revolt when a rebel army from the west arrived in the area. That army never came, so the conspirators went underground and waited for a propitious moment to strike. It came on the evening of 14 September, when a "mob of commoners" broke into T'ung-ch'eng city, burning and looting at will. As one contemporary described the scene:

¹²⁶ Biographies in *MS*, 252, pp. 6521–25, and *DMB*, pp. 1494–95.

¹²⁷ For recent discussions of this uprising in English, see Peterson, *Bitter gourd*, pp. 36–37; and Hilary J. Beattie, *Land and lineage in China: A study of T'ung-ch'eng county, Anhwei, in the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties* (Cambridge, England, 1979), pp. 43–45.



Map 26. The spread of peasant uprisings, 1630–1638



They formed strongholds, carried flags, and set fires in the night. All of the prominent families fled. This was a disturbance such as T'ung-ch'eng had never before experienced. Although T'ung-ch'eng was in fact prospering, a mean-spirited, deeply resentful current had been changing things for a long time. But who would have thought that there would be this outbreak with armed men?¹²⁸

Other observers were less surprised at the violence, and suggested that the wealthy members of the community had brought it upon themselves by their outrageous and often illegal treatment of social and economic inferiors. And although the T'ung-ch'eng uprising was put down rather quickly, the tensions between rich and poor that existed there also existed in other parts of southeastern China during the mid-1630s, tensions resulting from, among other things, the collusion among local officials, corrupt yamen functionaries, and powerful landowners. Many landowners had for years falsified tax records and evaded a substantial portion of their tax obligations.¹²⁹ With the continual pressure from the central government to fill the local tax quotas, an ever greater share of the burden was shifted to smaller property owners who lacked the financial resources and political connections to defend themselves against unfair exactions.

Many of these landowners were finally confronted with two equally unpleasant choices. They could give their land to influential families and work it as tenants, trading protection from the tax collector for high rents; or they could abandon their holdings and flee in the faint hope that conditions might be better elsewhere. Whichever they chose, the land in question either went unattended or fell into the hands of those in the best position to avoid paying taxes on it. The remaining small landholders were then pressured to make up the deficits, and the vicious circle continued.

The plight of many taxpayers was worsened by rising military costs, which forced the government in Peking to reduce nonessential expenditures and, more important, to increase land tax assessments six times between 1618 and 1637. Although some scholars have recently expressed reservations about the traditional assumption that excessive taxes contributed significantly to the Ming dynasty's downfall,¹³⁰ there can be little doubt that tax increases "added new and additional strains to an already over-worked fiscal machinery . . . [and] imposed an unbearable burden on certain taxpayers."¹³¹ The tax burden became unbearable not because the rates were outrageously high (by sixteenth-century standards they may have been

128 Fang I-chih quoted in Peterson, *Bitter gourd*, p. 36.

129 For a detailed discussion of these abuses and some attempts to reform them, see Dennerline, "Fiscal reform and local control."

130 Huang, "Fiscal administration," pp. 121–22. 131 Huang, "Fiscal administration," p. 119.

low), but because many of the taxes were payable in silver, a commodity becoming difficult to obtain.¹³²

In southeastern China this situation was exacerbated during the mid-1630s by a series of decisions taken by the Spanish authorities in Madrid and Acapulco between 1634 and 1636. They decided to reduce the amount of New World silver flowing to Manila and thus to the Fukienese and Portuguese merchants who dominated Sino-Spanish trade there.¹³³ This reduction did not lead to an immediate financial crisis in China because it took some time for its impact to be felt in the economy, and also because large amounts of silver continued to be imported from Japan.¹³⁴ Yet contemporary accounts from the wealthiest sections of the southeast indicate that economic conditions were already deteriorating rapidly and that some officials and local leaders were preparing for the unrest that they feared was inevitable.¹³⁵ Their fears were soon justified.

The rise and fall of Yang Ssu-ch'ang

The political situation in Peking remained unsettled. Between 1634 and 1638, no fewer than nineteen men served in the grand secretariat.¹³⁶ Moreover, while Wen T'i-jen retained his position as chief grand secretary for most of this period, even he found it difficult to console the Ch'ung-chen emperor when discouraging reports poured into the palace from almost every quarter. The emperor was particularly distressed when informed that during the rebel raid on Feng-yang in March 1635, tombs and temples belonging to the imperial family had been desecrated.¹³⁷ Officials associated with the Tung-lin group at court were quick to point out some of Wen T'i-jen's supporters were involved in the defense of Feng-yang. Apparently impressed by their arguments, the emperor appointed a Tung-lin partisan to the grand secretariat later that year.

Wen T'i-jen still remained the most influential man at court, however, and for the next two years he was generally victorious in the bureaucratic

132 Conditions in many parts of China at this time seem similar to those in France during roughly the same period. Jan de Vries, *The economy of Europe in an age of crisis, 1600-1750* (Cambridge, England, 1978), pp. 63-64.

133 Blair and Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands*, 30, pp. 51, 69-70.

134 Boxer, *The great ship from Amacon*, pp. 145-58; Kobata Atsushi, "The production and uses of gold and silver in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Japan," trans. W. D. Burton, *The Economic History Review*, 2nd. ser., 18, No. 2 (August 1965), p. 256.

135 See the discussion of these matters in Jerry Dennerline, "Hsü Tu and the lesson of Nanking: Political integration and the local defense in Kiangnan, 1634-1645," in *From Ming to Ch'ing*, ed. Jonathan D. Spence and John E. Wills (New Haven and London, 1979), pp. 89-132.

136 *MS*, 110, pp. 3386-89.

137 On this raid, see Parsons, *Peasant rebellions*, pp. 38-39.

battles that raged in the capital. Nevertheless, early in 1637 he overstepped himself; he had his old nemesis Ch'ien Ch'ien-i and a close associate arrested on false charges. Tung-lin forces in Peking mounted a ferocious counterattack, and the numerous memorials denouncing Wen finally forced him to request permission to retire—apparently confident that his request would be denied. However, it was approved; in August 1637 he returned home to Chekiang, where he died in the following year.

Wen's sudden departure from the government did not mark the rise of a Tung-lin administration. One of his replacements in the grand secretariat was an old political ally, Hsüeh Kuo-kuan (cs. 1619, d. 1641),¹³⁸ who had been opposed to the Tung-lin group since the T'ien-ch'i reign. Hsüeh subsequently became one of the emperor's most trusted advisors, and over the next few years officials with Tung-lin connections had an extremely difficult time getting their views accepted at court. During the summer of 1638, when the Tung-lin stalwart Huang Tao-chou (1585–1646)¹³⁹ and several of his supporters spoke out against one of the emperor's current favorites, the minister of war Yang Ssu-ch'ang (1588–1641),¹⁴⁰ they were demoted and transferred to provincial posts.

Yang was the son of Yang Ho, the Ming commander who had been dismissed from office in 1631 for failing to pacify the rebels in Shensi. After his father's disgrace, Yang Ssu-ch'ang had served competently in several important military posts in the northeast; by 1634 he had become supreme commander of the key border region north and west of the capital, an area with jurisdiction over Hsüan-fu, Ta-t'ung, and northern Shansi. When his father died in 1635, Yang was obliged to observe the official mourning period. But late in 1636, long before the prescribed twenty-seven months of mourning had been completed, he was recalled to Peking to become minister of war. For an official to serve while in mourning had been a controversial issue throughout the Ming dynasty, and Yang's case was no exception. Despite the emperor's insistence that Yang's experience and expertise were needed in the military crisis then facing the empire, critics like Huang Tao-chou disagreed, suggesting that the lowering of moral standards occasioned by such an appointment far outweighed the possible benefits. The emperor, however, was not moved; Yang's appointment stood.

The task that confronted Yang when he took up his new post in the spring of 1637 was daunting. In 1636 Abahai had proclaimed himself

¹³⁸ Biography in *MS*, 253, pp. 6537–41.

¹³⁹ Biographies in *MS*, 255, pp. 6592–01, and *ECCP*, pp. 345–47.

¹⁴⁰ Biographies in *MS*, 252, pp. 6509–21, and *DMB*, pp. 1538–42.

emperor of a new dynasty, which he called the Ch'ing; with this gesture he made it clear that he intended to overthrow the Ming. During the mid-1630s the Manchus had continued periodic and demoralizing raids into Chinese territory and also consolidated their power north of the Great Wall by subduing the strongest of the tribal groups in Inner Mongolia and by dispatching successful expeditions deep into the Amur region. During the summer of 1636 Abahai sent forces under his half-brother Ajige (1605–51)¹⁴¹ and others into Pei Chihli, where they campaigned successfully in the vicinity of Peking for more than a month before withdrawing. Late in December Abahai personally led an invasion of Korea, which had long been the Ming empire's most important ally. Within two months the Korean forces had capitulated, and the Manchus, flanks and rear secured, were now free to turn their full attention to China.

Yang Ssu-ch'ang responded to this threat by advocating peace negotiations, negotiations aimed at a treaty like that made with the Mongols in 1571.¹⁴² He wanted to give the government time to deal once and for all with the rebels in the northwest. Yang's plans for negotiations came to nothing, for they were fiercely opposed at court, and Abahai saw few advantages in agreeing to peace when he was making impressive territorial gains. Late in 1638 his armies followed their earlier successes with a devastating five-month campaign in Pei Chihli and Shantung, during which more than sixty Chinese cities—including Chi-nan and Tientsin—were attacked. The Manchu forces returned to Shen-yang “with much booty and many captives.”¹⁴³ During this campaign, Lu Hsiang-sheng, the Ming supreme commander for the Hsüan-fu and Ta-t'ung area, died in the fighting. Lu had distinguished himself during the 1636 rebel incursion into Nan Chihli, and later he had been one of the most vehement critics of Yang Ssu-chang's plans to enter into negotiations with the Manchus.

Manchu successes in the northeast during the late 1630s and early 1640s adversely affected the government's campaign against rebels in the northwest.¹⁴⁴ Yang Ssu-ch'ang was particularly discouraged; during 1637 and 1638 there had been considerable optimism that the rebel problem would soon be solved. Chang Hsien-chung (1605–47)¹⁴⁵ and other rebel leaders had campaigned with moderate success in northern Nan Chihli for several months during 1637, but by autumn most rebels had returned to southern Honan or northern Hu-kuang, which had become major staging

141 Biography in *ECCP*, pp. 4–5.

142 On the treaty, see *DMB*, p. 7 and pp. 1372–73.

143 *ECCP*, p. 216.

144 See, for example, the brief discussion of this point in Li Wen-chih, *Wan Ming min pien*, p. 124.

145 Biography in *ECCP*, pp. 37–38.

grounds for their operations. Not long afterward, Chang was attacked by Ming forces in southwestern Honan, and over the next few months he was driven up and down the Han River valley until he finally established himself in the town of Ku-ch'eng in northwestern Hu-kuang.

Early in 1638 Chang entered into negotiations with the new supreme commander (*tsung-li*) of bandit pacification, Hsiung Wen-ts'an, famous because a decade earlier he had persuaded the pirate leader Cheng Chih-lung to surrender and serve the Ming cause. Despite vigorous protests from some of his subordinates, Hsiung remained convinced that this approach to pacification was effective. In May 1638 Hsiung accepted Chang Hsien-chung's surrender and installed him as a government commander in the Ku-ch'eng area.¹⁴⁶ This arrangement lasted for nearly a year, during which time Ming forces brought substantial pressure to bear on rebel groups operating in Shensi, Honan, and Hu-kuang, and in particular on the rebel leader Li Tzu-ch'eng. Late in 1638 Li suffered a severe defeat on the Shensi–Honan border, and he had to spend most of the next two years rebuilding his shattered forces.

In 1638, just when victory over the rebels seemed within reach, the Manchu forces invaded. As city after city in Pei Chihli and Shantung fell to the invaders, the government was forced to withdraw men and materials from the northwest. Within months, its pacification efforts there were in ruins. In June 1639 Chang Hsien-chung repudiated his agreement with Hsiung Wen-ts'an and less than three months later scored a spectacular victory over government forces in the far northwestern portion of Hu-kuang. This disaster sealed Hsiung's fate. He was stripped of official rank, arrested, and eventually sent to Peking for trial. His powerful friends in the bureaucracy would do nothing to save him, and he was executed in November 1639.

Hsiung's replacement in the field was his former patron Yang Ssu-ch'ang, who had come under intense pressure to make good his promises of military success. Arriving in northern Hu-kuang during the autumn of 1639, Yang immediately met with hostility from two of his most important generals, who not only opposed his pacification strategy but also disliked him personally. Although he had some success against the rebels early in 1640, Yang was unable to deliver the final blow; and by the summer of 1640 Chang Hsien-chung and several other rebel leaders had broken through Yang's defensive line on the Yangtze River and pushed into eastern Szechwan. From there, Chang in particular made destructive sorties well into 1641.

¹⁴⁶ See the discussion of this decision in *DMB*, pp. 564–65.

Yang Ssu-ch'ang's problems worsened in 1641, when Li Tzu-ch'eng began to operate again in western Honan. Severe famine in that province provided him with willing recruits for his cause, and during the first three months of 1641 Li took a number of important cities, including Lo-yang, which fell to his armies early in March. Among the captives taken at Lo-yang was a notoriously profligate imperial prince who was executed, dismembered, and apparently eaten to demonstrate the rebels' deep animosity toward those who lived in luxury while their countrymen starved. As these events were taking place in northern Honan, Chang Hsien-chung made a lightning strike from Szechwan into Hu-kuang, where he captured and executed another imperial prince at Hsiang-yang. Chang's bold move took Yang Ssu-ch'ang completely by surprise. Unable to counter the rebels, Yang committed suicide.

Economic crisis, ca. 1639–1644

In 1639 events in Japan and in the Philippines combined to create serious difficulties for key sectors of the Ming economy. During the summer of 1639, the Tokugawa authorities refused to permit merchants from Macao to trade at Nagasaki. This abruptly ended nearly a century of lucrative trade that had brought vast quantities of silver from Japan to Canton and other Chinese markets; and while Dutch and Chinese traders continued to ship Japanese silver to China through the 1640s, the amounts involved were much smaller than they had been during the heyday of Sino-Japanese trade earlier in the century.¹⁴⁷ Several months after the Portuguese had been expelled from Japan, Sino-Spanish trade in the Philippines—already greatly reduced—came to a virtual standstill. Tensions between the Spanish and the Chinese in Manila exploded into violence, leaving more than twenty thousand Chinese dead. As a result, very little New World silver flowed to China from the Philippines during the next few years.¹⁴⁸

Since domestic bullion production could not meet the demand for specie, these developments had a powerful deflationary effect on an economy already beset with problems. In the advanced regions of the southeast the value of silver increased sharply in the early 1640s, while silver prices for many cash crops and manufactured goods plummeted to previously unimagined lows. This in turn led to increased hoarding; substantial quantities of silver were removed from circulation as people prepared for worse

147 Iwao Seiichi, *Shuin sen bōkeshi no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1958), p. 327; Oskar Nachod, *Die Beziehungen der Niederländischen Ostindischen Kompagnie zu Japan im siebzehnten Jahrhundert* (Leipzig, 1897), Beilage 63; and Boxer, *The great ship from Amacon*, pp. 159 ff.

148 Blair and Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands*, 29, pp. 208–58; Chaunu, *Les Philippines*, pp. 157, 159.

times ahead. The crisis became more severe during the summer of 1639, when the Ch'ung-chen emperor agreed to increase taxes once again to finance Yang Ssu-ch'ang's grandiose bandit pacification program.¹⁴⁹ Whatever additional revenues this increase may have raised—and many were unable to find sufficient silver to pay the old rates, much less the new ones—the government's military needs further complicated the money supply problem by drawing more bullion out of the private sector.

A period of bad weather followed this tax increase of 1639, weather that brought terrible suffering to many areas of the country previously untouched or only slightly affected by the natural disasters of the 1620s and early 1630s. In northern Chekiang there were serious floods in 1639–40, drought and devastating locust attacks in 1641, and both drought and floods in 1642–43. Eyewitness accounts of conditions in this region during the early 1640s tell of mass starvation, hordes of beggars, infanticide, and cannibalism.¹⁵⁰ Similar descriptions can be found for other parts of eastern and southeastern China during this period,¹⁵¹ and in many areas famine was followed by outbreaks of epidemic disease.¹⁵² The situation was made worse by widespread hoarding and speculation in grain, which drove food prices up just when the amount of silver in circulation was contracting sharply. Although the droughts, floods, and locust attacks were calamitous, there is evidence that rice was still available in many "famine areas" in the southeast during the 1640s. The problem was that it was too expensive for many people.

These natural calamities also took their toll on government finances. Taxpayers in Kiangnan, coastal Fukien, and other formerly wealthy regions of the empire defaulted and abandoned their properties; tenants attacked landlords and rent collectors; indentured servants rebelled against their masters; urban workers rioted; banditry increased; and hungry peasants roamed the countryside taking food wherever they could find it. By 1642 the great city of Soochow was in visible decline, with many homes "vacant and falling into ruins,"¹⁵³ while the once rich countryside had become a no man's land which only armed men dared to enter.

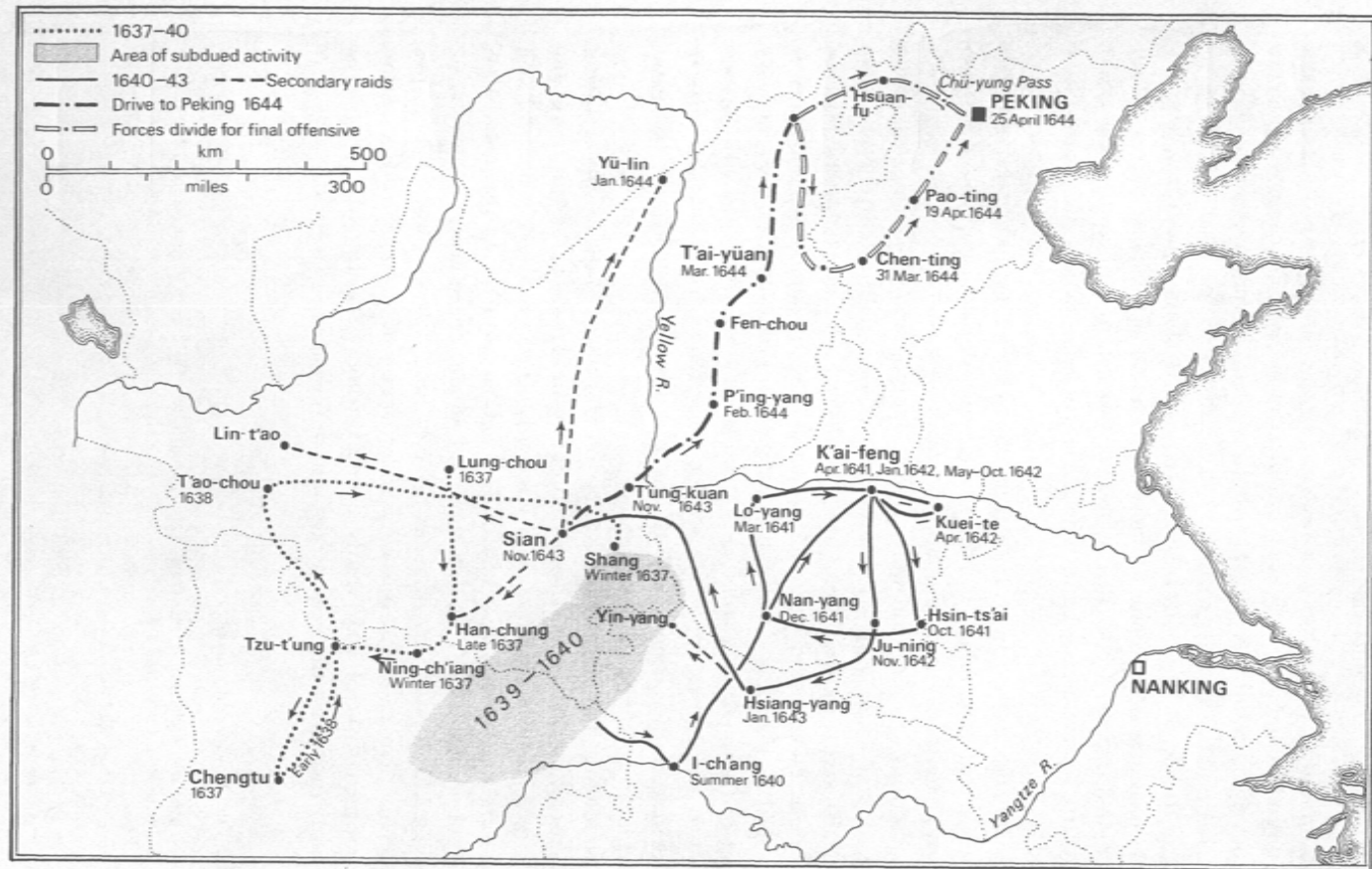
149 *MTC*, 4, pp. 3318–20; *MS*, 21, pp. 6514–15. See also *DMB*, p. 1540.

150 Dunstan, "The late Ming epidemics," p. 12.

151 See, for example, Li Wen-chih, *Wan Ming min pien*, p. 123; and Mi Chü Wiens, "Cotton textile production and rural social transformation in early modern China," *Chung-kuo wen hua yen chiu so hsiieh pao*, 7, No. 2 (December 1974), p. 525.

152 See the maps on pp. 624–25 above.

153 Yeh Shao-yüan, *Ch'i Chen chi wen lu*, in Vol. 3 of *T'ung shih*, ed. Lo-t'ien chü-shih (early Shun-chih [1644–62] period; rpt. Shanghai, 1911), XVIII, 2, p. 10b. On the social disorders in this and other areas of southeastern China during this period, see Fu I-ling, *Ming Ch'ing nung ts'un she hui ching chi* (Peking, 1961), pp. 92–124; and his *M'ing tai Chiang-nan shih min ching chi shih i'an* (Shanghai, 1957), pp. 94–95; Mori Masao, "Min Shin jidai no tochi seido," in *Iwanami kôzo sekai rekishi*, ed. Iwanami Kôza (Tokyo, 1971), Vol. XII, chap. 7, pp. 235–45; and Mark Elvin, *The pattern of the Chinese past* (Stanford, 1973), pp. 245–47.



Map 27. The campaigns of Li Tzu-ch'eng, 1641-1644

Political and military collapse, ca. 1641–1644

Five months after Yang Ssu-ch'ang's suicide in April 1641, the Ch'ung-chen emperor ordered another prominent Tung-lin opponent, former chief grand secretary Hsüeh Kuo-kuan, to commit suicide. Hsüeh had been implicated in a corruption scandal that led to his dismissal in 1640. Although Tung-lin involvement in this affair is not clear, Hsüeh's last words implicated one of the group's members.¹⁵⁴ Just over a month later, in October, Chou Yen-ju returned to Peking to become chief grand secretary, an appointment in which the Tung-lin faction once again had a hand.

Since he had been instrumental in Ch'ien Ch'ien-i's dismissal during the early Ch'ung-chen reign,¹⁵⁵ Tung-lin support for Chou might seem extraordinary, but this return to office resulted from a compromise between warring factions at court who were trying to solve their differences so that the government could turn its undivided attention to the military and fiscal difficulties threatening the dynasty's survival.¹⁵⁶ The compromise was a failure. It failed because certain idealistic Tung-lin partisans were unable to accept the pragmatic deals that kept the compromise alive. Early in 1643 some of these idealists tried to remove Chou from office; and although he retained the emperor's confidence for some months to come, his bitterly divided administration failed to make much headway against the overwhelming problems that confronted it.

Following his successful invasion of Hu-kuang early in 1641, Chang Hsien-chung had suffered some temporary setbacks, but by the end of the year he had recovered enough to join with other rebel leaders in attacks on the western portions of Nan Chihli.¹⁵⁷ He spent 1642 in this area, overwhelming Lu-chou, T'ung-ch'eng, and several other cities. However, he was unable to hold any of them for very long. Early in 1643 Chang put aside his plan to attack Nanking and moved west into Hu-kuang, where government control was rapidly disintegrating. City after city surrendered to him, including the provincial capital, Wu-ch'ang, which fell on 15 July

154 By this time in Ming history a Tung-lin affiliated group known as the Fu She had become deeply involved in the political maneuvering at court. For the sake of convenience the term Tung-lin will be used when referring to members of this group in what follows. For an account in English that tends to exaggerate the Fu She's importance in late Ming political history, see William S. Atwell, "From education to politics: The Fu She," in *The unfolding of neo-Confucianism*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary (New York and London, 1875), pp. 333–67. See also Dennerline, *The Chia-ting loyalists*, passim.

155 See pp. 614, 619–21 above. 156 Dennerline, *The Chia-ting loyalists*, pp. 52–56.

157 For details on Chang's activities during the early 1640s, see Parsons, *Peasant rebellions*, pp. 142–56; and Li Wen-chih, *Wan Ming min pien*, pp. 78–89.

1641 after a short siege. Chang toyed with the idea of establishing a permanent bureaucracy in Wu-ch'ang, but government forces from the east forced him to leave and push farther south. He captured Ch'ang-sha and Heng-chou early in October and spent the next few months in the area directing brief campaigns into northern Kwangtung and central Kiangsi. Once again imperial armies forced him to retreat, and early in 1644 he was back in northwestern Hu-kuang, poised for another invasion of Szechwan.

Meanwhile Li Tzu-ch'eng achieved even greater success farther north. By the autumn of 1641 a number of independent rebel commanders had submitted to Li's leadership, and during the last three months of that year he raided large portions of eastern and southern Honan without encountering serious opposition. Li then moved to the north, and in mid-January 1642 laid siege to K'ai-feng, a provincial capital that he had tried and failed to capture in 1641. He failed again. During the second week of February he turned his attention to the area south and east of the city near the Shantung border, where he remained for several months, crushing local defenses and gathering supplies for another siege of K'ai-feng that began in May. This lasted nearly five months, and when it was over several hundred thousand people in the city were dead, some of starvation or disease, others in the floods that swept through the city when the rebels cut key dikes on the Yellow River early in October. The devastation in K'ai-feng was such that Li remained there only briefly before moving on to more promising areas. By November he was back in the vicinity of Nan-yang, 60 miles southwest of K'ai-feng.

After quickly disposing of an imperial army sent from Shensi to surprise him, Li turned east and overcame the few remaining government forces in Honan that posed any threat to his dominance over the province. He then moved into northern Hu-kuang. In January 1643 he easily defeated the poorly disciplined and thoroughly demoralized units under the command of the Ming general Tso Liang-yü (1598–1645).¹⁵⁸ Tso and his men retreated in disarray down the Han River valley while Li took the strategic city of Hsiang-yang. During the next few months Li consolidated his power in the rebel movement by purging potential rivals and establishing a skeleton government to serve as an alternative to Ming rule. The name of Hsiang-yang was changed to give the city an imperial air; officials were appointed to a traditional bureaucracy; and Li himself took over grander titles—although for the time being he refrained from proclaiming himself emperor.

¹⁵⁸ Biographies in *MS*, 273, pp. 6987–98, and *ECCP*, pp. 761–62.

The conquest of the dynasty was very much on his mind, however, and late in the summer of 1643 Li moved back into Honan to prepare for a strike against Peking. First he had to deal with supreme commander Sun Ch'uan-t'ing (cs. 1619, d. 1643),¹⁵⁹ whom he had defeated at Nan-yang in 1642. Since that time Sun had built up a respectable fighting force in Shensi. Although he questioned the wisdom of taking the offensive against Li, Sun obeyed orders from the capital and during late autumn entered Honan just south of the Yellow River. To the delight of the military planners in Peking, Sun had considerable success against the rebels in the early stages of the campaign. Logistical and other problems prevented him from sustaining his offensive, however, and by early November he was in full retreat. Li pursued him through the T'ung Pass into Shensi, and in mid-November Sun was killed in a valiant last stand. On 22 November 1643 Li took the provincial capital at Sian, and within two months had brought most of the province under his control. The stage was now set for his advance to Peking.

In this push he was aided, as he had been many times before, by the Manchu threat. The Manchus forced the Ming court to commit men and resources to the northeastern frontier that otherwise could have been employed against the rebels in Shensi and elsewhere. In September 1641 the Ming supreme commander Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou, who had been transferred from the northwest to counter the Manchu invasion of Pei Chihli and Shantung during the winter of 1638–39, was trapped by Abahai's forces a hundred miles northeast of Shan-hai Pass while attempting to aid the Ming general Tsu Ta-shou, who was besieged nearby at Chin-chou. All rescue attempts failed, and both generals surrendered within three weeks of each other in March and April of 1642. With the fall of Chin-chou on 8 April 1642, Ming defenses north of the Great Wall virtually collapsed.

Late in the summer of 1642, following the failure of secret peace negotiations with the Ming court,¹⁶⁰ Abahai pressed his strategic advantage by sending his elder brother Abatai (1589–1646)¹⁶¹ and other commanders on an extended campaign into eastern China that reached as far south as northern Nan Chihli. This campaign lasted for nearly seven months. When it was over, Ming control in many areas had been seriously impaired; countless officials and local leaders had been killed or had committed suicide during the fighting. Abatai alone is reported to have taken ninety-

159 Biography in *MS*, 262, pp. 6785–92.

160 Jung-pang Lo, "Policy formulation and decision-making on issues respecting peace and war," in *Chinese government in Ming times: Seven studies*, ed. Charles O. Hucker (New York and London, 1969), pp. 68–69.

161 Biography in *ECCP*, pp. 3–4.

four towns and cities, 360,000 prisoners, and vast amounts of booty.¹⁶² However much these figures are inflated, there can be little question that the destruction in Pei Chihli, Shantung, and Nan Chihli crippled the dynasty's chances of staving off defeat.

This campaign also brought an abrupt, ignominious end to chief grand secretary Chou Yen-ju's political career. In May 1643, when Manchu units moving north from Shantung were thought to pose a threat to Peking, Chou grandly offered to direct defensive operations at T'ung-chou, a few miles east of the capital. His offer was promptly accepted by the emperor. But at T'ung-chou he apparently decided to engage the enemy if it became absolutely necessary, and since the Manchu forces were withdrawing to the north of the Great Wall, there was very little fighting. Chou nonetheless claimed a major victory, and on his return to Peking late in June was handsomely rewarded for his efforts. Less than three weeks later, when the emperor learned the truth about this "victory," Chou was removed from office. Later in the year he was arrested on corruption charges and, as a mark of imperial favor, permitted to commit suicide on 15 January 1644.

By this time the court faced a very bleak prospect. One scholar has aptly described the situation:

In early 1644 arrears in army pay had accumulated to several million taels of silver while tax payments from the south arrived only in small parcels of several tens of thousands. The imperial granaries were now practically empty. Unable to meet the ration requirements with husked rice, the Ministry of Revenue purchased small tonnages of miscellaneous beans in its place. When Peking itself was besieged, the garrison had not been paid for five months. Troops were called to duty without cooking utensils. Each soldier was issued 100 copper cash and told to purchase food as he could. Morale and discipline sank to such a low point that a general reported: "When you whip one soldier, he stands up; but at the same time another is lying down." It was not surprising that the dynasty was about to fall; it was a wonder indeed that it had survived until then.¹⁶³

THE SHUN INTERREGNUM

For many people living in China at the time, and for most historians subsequently, the end of the dynasty came shortly after midnight on 25 April 1644, when, accompanied by a loyal eunuch, the Ch'ung-chen emperor climbed a small hill in the palace compound and hanged himself in a pavilion that housed the Imperial Hat and Girdle Department.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² *DMB*, p. 4. ¹⁶³ Huang, "Fiscal administration," p. 123.

¹⁶⁴ This section draws heavily upon Frederic Wakeman, Jr., "The Shun interregnum of 1644," in *From Ming to Ch'ing*, ed. Jonathan D. Spence and John E. Wills (New Haven and London, 1979), pp. 43-87. See also Li Wen-chih, *Wan Ming min pien*, pp. 135-43; and Parsons, *Peasant rebellions*, pp. 123 ff.

Eleven weeks earlier in Sian, Li Tzu-ch'eng had announced the establishment of a new dynasty, the Shun. During the intervening weeks his forces had overwhelmed resistance in Shansi, crossed into northwestern Pei Chihli, and by 24 April were camped on the outskirts of Peking itself. The Ch'ung-chen emperor, having rejected suggestions to flee south and lend his legitimacy to a resistance movement already being organized there, at the last moment tried to escape from the palace dressed as a eunuch. When this failed, he is said to have gone to his death less than nobly, blaming nearly everyone but himself for the disasters that had befallen his dynasty. Some of his ministers behaved with more dignity, accepting their share of the responsibility and committing suicide to repay the emperor and the dynasty for the benefits they had received.

On the morning of 25 April 1644, when Li Tzu-ch'eng's soldiers finally appeared in the capital's streets, they went about their assigned tasks with a remarkable degree of restraint. Violence against civilians was not tolerated; looters were summarily executed; and by the time Li arrived at the imperial palace in the early afternoon, an atmosphere of calm had begun to settle over the city. Much of this disciplined, orderly transition was due to a number of former Ming officials and Confucian advisors who had joined Li's cause during the last years of his campaigns in the northwest. These men were determined to help him establish a new dynasty in fact as well as in name. Anything that might detract from Li's dignified and, to their minds, inevitable accession to the throne had to be prohibited.

Li himself seems to have been genuinely sad when he learned that the Ch'ung-chen emperor was dead. Frederic Wakeman suggests that this was because he "was aware of the horrible onus attached to regicide in Chinese political judgments, and he may also have realized that usurpers seldom hold the throne for long, usually being succeeded by one free of blame for overthrowing the previous ruling house."¹⁶⁵ This may explain why Li repeatedly postponed the ceremonies that would have made him emperor, preferring instead to retain the title Prince of Shun, which he had taken in Hsiang-yang in 1643.

Whatever Li's qualms about ascending the throne, organizing and staffing his bureaucracy could not wait. Although most of the key positions went to men who had surrendered to Li before 1644, an acute shortage of qualified personnel in his own ranks forced him from the very outset to draw the talent and expertise of thousands of Ming bureaucrats and clerical workers who were still in Peking. It proved an uncomfortable arrangement for both sides. Much of Li's earlier antigovernment propaganda had been

¹⁶⁵ Wakeman, "The Shun interregnum," pp. 52–53.

directed against the Peking establishment, and neither he nor his aides were in any mood to forgive and forget. For this reason, most of the men selected to serve in the new administration were low-ranking bureaucrats who, in theory at least, had not been directly involved in formulating the policies that led to the Ming dynasty's collapse.

Some of those who did not obtain posts in the Shun government soon faced a fate far worse than unemployment. Within a week of his arrival, Li Tzu-ch'eng was facing the same problem that had confronted the Ch'ung-chen emperor during his final months on the throne: how to pay his troops. The vast wealth Li had expected to find in the imperial treasuries did not exist. On 1 May he approved the suggestion that funds should be collected from the large number of Ming officials who were under arrest in various military camps in the city. Knowing that voluntary contributions would be difficult to obtain, the generals in charge of these camps began a systematic and horrifying regimen of torture to obtain what they wanted. Many prisoners died as a result. By 12 May, even Li realized things had gone too far and stopped the proceedings. The generals, however, had been gratified by the fruits of their labors; and when instructed to release the remaining prisoners, they quickly turned their attentions to Peking's large merchant community.

These irregular activities led to a slackening in military discipline. Before long, Shun soldiers were looting shops and homes in broad daylight and terrorizing the very people they had come to liberate from the "corrupt and cruel" Ming government less than a month earlier. Li's attempts to restore order were unsuccessful, and when he rode out of the capital on 18 May to direct a campaign in eastern Pei Chihli, his dynastic mandate looked decidedly tarnished. It looked even worse two weeks later when he returned to Peking, having been badly beaten by a force under the control of the last Ming commander in the northeast, Wu San-kuei (1612-78), and the Manchu general Prince Dorgon (1612-50).¹⁶⁶ On 3 June, in the midst of one last frenzied orgy of looting and bloodletting, Li finally proclaimed himself emperor of Shun in a hastily organized ceremony in the Wu-ying Palace. The next day he abandoned Peking and left for Sian to prepare for the many battles he knew lay ahead.

On the morning of 5 June 1644, Dorgon's vanguard reached the outskirts of the capital, and by late afternoon he and his entourage were ensconced in the Forbidden City. After nearly thirty years of open warfare,

¹⁶⁶ Biographies of Wu and Dorgon in *ECCP*, pp. 215-19, 877-80. There still is some question about precisely when Wu San-kuei surrendered to the Manchus and when he and Dorgon joined forces to drive Li Tzu-ch'eng from Pei Chihli. For a discussion of these issues, see Angela Hsi, "Wu San-kuei in 1644: A reappraisal," *JAS*, 34, No. 2 (February 1975), pp. 443-53.

Manchu rule in China had finally begun. Dorgon soon sent forces to pursue and harass Li Tzu-ch'eng in his flight to the west. However, that story properly belongs to the opening chapters of Ch'ing history. Meanwhile, the final chapter of Ming history was unfolding far to the south of Peking in the dynasty's original capital at Nanking.

CHAPTER 11

THE SOUTHERN MING, 1644–1662

THE HUNG-KUANG REGIME

As rebel forces overran Shansi, Pei Chihli, and Shantung in the spring of 1644, communications between north and south China were severely disrupted. Confusion, dilatoriness, and lack of direction prevailed among Ming military authorities south of the Yellow River. Most of the regular personnel along the usual postal and transport routes had abandoned their stations, and roads were clogged with refugees who brought southward pestilence, hysteria, enemy agents, and alarming rumors about conditions in the north. On 5 April the Ch'ung-chen emperor had issued a general call for immediate aid from all commands in the empire. But when Peking fell to the rebels three weeks later, the grand adjutant and minister of war for Nanking, Shih K'o-fa, had still not yet mobilized an army. Not until three more weeks had elapsed did reliable word of the Ch'ung-chen emperor's suicide reach Nanking.

This news not only caused great consternation among officials and members of the elite, especially at Nanking and in Nan Chihli, but also, as it spread throughout the south, set in motion new waves on the sea of late Ming social unrest—urban riots, revolts of tenants and indentured persons, strikes by factory and mine workers, outlaw raids, insurrections by local armed groups of various stripes—waves that did not settle in many areas for decades. It was during the consequent general failure in local control and undirected, uncoordinated militarization throughout society that the first Southern Ming court sought to establish a base for recovering the north and restoring the Ming empire.

Deliberations began immediately concerning a successor to the Ch'ung-chen emperor. At the time, no one knew the fate of the teenage heir apparent (Chu Tz'u-lang) or of the Ch'ung-chen emperor's two surviving younger sons,¹ and some argued that the choice of a new monarch should be delayed

1 The Prince of Ting (Chu Tz'u-ts'an) and the Prince of Yung (Chu Tz'u-huan). Standard sources are confused and mistaken regarding the names, titles, and identities of these princes. See Meng Sen, *Ming Ch'ing shih lun chu chi k'an* (1961; rpt. Taipei, 1965), pp. 61–64.

for this reason. However, it was more widely felt that an imperial figure was urgently needed to rally the country. By 22 May, when the highest-ranked incumbent officials in Nanking, the auxiliary southern capital, first convened to address this issue, several Ming imperial princes, having fled their estates in Honan and Shantung, had arrived in the Huai River area. The most important of these were the Prince of Fu (Chu Yu-sung), and the Prince of Luh (Chu Ch'ang-fang).²

Considered strictly in terms of imperial descent, after the Ch'ung-chen emperor's own sons, the Prince of Fu was clearly next in line for the succession, followed by three other princes who were nowhere near Nanking at the time, with the Prince of Luh falling in fifth place. Nevertheless, the Prince of Luh had some influential supporters, partly because in character and intelligence he was regarded as superior to the Prince of Fu and also because many officials of the "upright" camp feared that a Fu monarchy would be unfavorable, perhaps disastrous, for them. The reason for this fear went back three reigns. It had been the father of the Prince of Fu whom the Wan-li emperor had intended to designate as heir apparent over his first-born son. This intention was bitterly opposed for many years and ultimately thwarted by Tung-lin adherents, giving rise to a series of factional struggles and enmities that were still alive during the Ch'ung-chen reign.³ Consequently, it was thought that the Prince of Fu, as emperor, might be led to take revenge on the "pure element" because of this. Shih K'o-fa, who had come to know the Prince of Fu's poor reputation, was susceptible to influence from these wary partisans.

Nevertheless, most officials feared the ambiguities latent in choosing worthiness over bloodline, and majority opinion favored the Prince of Fu. Perceiving this, the viceroy at Feng-yang, Ma Shih-ying, began a bold political maneuver. While having the Prince of Fu rapidly transported to the Nanking vicinity, Ma also arranged support for this prince among the other major military commanders in the Huai region, upon whom the security of the new court would depend. In view of this pressure, when the Prince of Fu arrived on the Yangtze River in the first days of June, Shih K'o-fa dropped his reservation that disruption might occur if the heir apparent were found, and he accepted Ma's *fait accompli*.

On 5 June 1644 the prince entered Nanking in formal procession, and on the next day he tentatively accepted the title of Protector of the State (*chien-kuo*), following the precedent of the Ching-t'ai emperor in 1449. Then on 7

2 The fief of this prince is arbitrarily spelled "Luh" to distinguish him from the Prince of Lu who became regent at Shao-hsing in the account below.

3 See Chapter 10, pp. 611–14, 618–21, 627, 634–40.

June he moved into the imperial palace and received the regalia of his station. For one week, as Protector of the State or de facto regent, he legitimized appointments to the six ministries, the grand secretariat, and various military posts, as the task of converting the moribund auxiliary capital into the functional, though "temporary," main capital of the empire began.

Since the early fifteenth century, when the Yung-lo emperor made Peking his capital, Nanking had become the southern capital more in name than in fact. Auxiliary counterparts to most six ministry positions remained there, with smaller staffs, but these were generally considered to be unprestigious transitional posts, and they often went unfilled. Nanking had come to serve the dynasty primarily in two capacities: first as a military base for defending and policing the rich Kiangnan region, especially the Yangtze River and Grand Canal transport network; and second as, in effect, the provincial capital of the most important province, the Southern Metropolitan Region, (Nan Chihli), which fed, by production or transport, the Northern Metropolitan Region, (Pei Chihli). Consequently, by the end of the Ming the most important officials in Nanking were the Nanking minister of revenue and a security triumvirate of the minister of war (who was always concurrently the grand adjutant), a grand commandant (normally a eunuch), and a commissioner-in-chief for river control.⁴

Besides filling many vacancies in the usual Nanking offices, this new regime also had to re-create almost the entire Peking governmental structure, including the Capital Guard system; to redirect the flow of tax revenues and transport services; to rearrange administrative circuits; and to rebuild or renovate the halls, temples, and living quarters in the old imperial palace compound. All this was begun in the midst of considerable confusion, without a sufficient number of competent or experienced personnel immediately at hand. But no small psychological benefit derived from restoring the Ming in its original capital, close to the tombs not only of the dynasty's founder, but also of the Chien-wen emperor. During the Wan-li reign the Chien-wen emperor again had become acknowledged as the rightful successor to the founder, and he regained popularity in the south as a symbol of legitimacy and of resistance to an immoral, brute power in the north.⁵

The initial selection of top officials seemed both appropriate and impartial to most observers; and although a few well-known figures declined to participate, or did so only reluctantly or under pressure, many important

4 Lung Wen-pin, comp., *Ming hui yao* (1887; rpt. Peking, 1956), I, pp. 541, 566–67, II, pp. 1230–31. Huang K'ai-hua, *Ming shih lun chi* (Kowloon, 1972), ch. 1.

5 Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Ming ching nan shih shih k'ao cheng kao*, BIHP, Special publication, No. 25 (1945; facsimile rpt. Hong Kong, 1969), pp. 38–41. Also see Chapter 4, pp. 202–05.

posts were accepted by men of upright reputation; for instance, Shih K'o-fa, Kao Hung-t'u, and Chiang Yüeh-kuang all became grand secretaries. Moreover, out of apparent general concern for stability, it was assumed that regent Fu would be formally enthroned as emperor on the earliest auspicious day. For his inauguration, twenty-five articles of governance were drafted to elicit broad support from officials, notables, and commoners. They included inducements to the educated elite to adhere to the new government, provisions for judicious employment of men thrown out of office by rebels or by partisan strife, leniency toward officials who had "fallen under" the rebels, warnings against abuses in tax collection, a rollback of late Ming supernumerary taxes, and tax remissions in areas that had suffered special hardship. Despite these promising first steps dissension arose almost immediately, first in the form of conflict between the civil and military establishments.

Early problems and consequences

Initially, Ma Shih-ying had been rewarded with titular posts as minister of war and grand secretary, but in fact he remained as viceroy at Feng-yang. Having virtually placed the Prince of Fu on the throne, Ma apparently felt that he should not now be excluded from the highest councils of state. He soon descended on Nanking with a large armed force, vociferously urged that regent Fu quickly ascend the throne, and in effect pressured the court into assigning him to Nanking as minister of war and grand secretary. Ma was in attendance when The Prince of Fu formally became emperor on 19 June and assumed the regional title Hung-kuang. The next day Shih K'o-fa, on the suggestion of powerful generals influenced by Ma Shih-ying, requested that he be relieved of his court functions so that he could coordinate military forces in Nan Chihli north of the Yangtze. Soon he proceeded to establish his headquarters at Yang-chou. This development not only upset officialdom, but also aroused hostile public opinion in Nanking, since it was felt that such an able and popular statesman should be at the emperor's side, while Ma, the superior military strategist popular among generals, should be in the field. But Shih did not encourage these protests, probably because he hoped to preserve fragile unity at this juncture by avoiding conflict with Ma in the grand secretariat.

An important part of the initial reorganization had been a proposal to create four defense commands (*ssu-chen*) from the various armies then milling chaotically and destructively in northern Nan Chihli. The commanding generals and their respective territories were to be as follows: (1) Kao Chieh, occupying the area between the Yellow and Huai rivers in northwestern Nan

Chihli and responsible for actions in northern Honan; (2) Liu Liang-tso, occupying west-central Nan Chihli south of the Huai River and responsible for actions in central and southern Honan; (3) Huang Te-kung, occupying central Nan Chihli north of the Yangtze and responsible for backing up Kao and Liu to his north; and (4) Liu Tse-ch'ing, occupying Huai-an prefecture and responsible for actions in northeastern Nan Chihli and southern Shantung. The soldiers of each command were to supply their own food by cultivating abandoned or marginal lands; and weapons, equipment, and other material were to be purchased with the proceeds of taxes levied in each command's jurisdictional area. Moreover, each command, authorized to maintain 30,000 men, was to receive from the central government allocations of money and provisions at a level of 20 taels per soldier per year. Shih K'o-fa was to operate as a viceroy in their midst, with his 30,000 troops concentrated between Yang-chou and Hsü-chou.

In addition, there was an important latecomer to allegiance to the Hung-kuang emperor, Tso Liang-yü in Hu-kuang, who with his sprawling, motley army of over 50,000 men came to be designated as a fifth defense commander. To defend Yangtze River approaches to the southern capital, which itself had a contingent of 60,000 guards at full strength, two divisions were established at An-ch'ing and Chen-chiang with riverine guards stationed at several points between them. Moreover, the forces of the commissioner-in-chief for river control at P'u-k'ou, across the river from Nanking, were strengthened. Viceroys at Chiu-chiang and Feng-yang, and three grand coordinators in the An-ch'ing–Wu-hu, Huai-an–Yang-chou, and eastern Honan areas were to be partially supported by central government allocations.

The total anticipated expenditure for such a military establishment came to over 7 million taels—that is, at least 1 million more than the income the Nanking Ministry of Revenue anticipated for that year. And that income also had to meet expenses for salaries, construction, and court ceremonials. Because of tax remissions to areas ravaged by bandits, the diversion of regional tax proceeds to augment military establishments, and the loss of revenues from most parts of Fukien and Liang-Kuang,⁶ Nanking could only count on tax receipts from southern Nan Chihli and Chekiang, areas which by late Ming times no longer were self-sufficient in grains and derived their wealth from interregional trade. Moreover, it was a year of severe drought. There would have been supply shortages even if troop levels had not risen sharply, and even with the best fiscal managers and quartermasters; the Hung-kuang emperor had neither.

6 I.e., the provinces of Kwangtung and Kwangsi.

Desperate to hold the allegiance of armies it scarcely could supply, the court toadied to them in two ways. It gave the armies complete freedom to obtain provisions within their respective territories and even to appoint their own supervisory personnel, and it showered honors and promotions in rank on their leaders not to reward, but to exhort them to martial accomplishments. These policies led to serious conflicts. Civil officials objected to the rapacity and arrogance of the commanders, who had done nothing to merit their elevated status; and the populace decried the garrisoning of troops in towns and cities, which the armies preferred to rural camps and colonies because they were richer and offered more immediate sources of goods (and gave the army units walled protection against one another). Moreover, endemic rivalry among commands was exacerbated by the unequal incomes their respective territories yielded.

Citizens disparaged soldiers, and some soldiers disparaged other soldiers as bandits on the public dole. Indeed, many army units had been rebel bands. In particular, most of central Honan south of the Yellow River was dotted with fortresses, groups of which were commanded by men who had been local rebels and who only gradually came to hold appointments from the Hung-kuang court.⁷ But this circumstance hardly distinguished them from regular units. Both comprised large numbers of armed men who fought, stole, and extorted to live, under official aegis or otherwise.

The court itself had been disrupted from the start by ugly disagreements between high civil officials and hereditary military nobles (*hsün-ch'ên*). The latter controlled most of the guards around the southern capital. They sought to be included in government deliberations and to be accorded more than the usual respect by the civil administration. Liu K'ung-chao, then commissioner-in-chief for river control, attempted to secure for himself a position in the grand secretariat. He was opposed by Chang Shen-yen, the minister of personnel, on the grounds that there was no precedent for such an appointment. Other military nobles joined Liu in charging that Chang was slighting the military in making appointments; civil officials retorted that military officials had no right to interfere in court affairs. The dispute and its ramifications caused Chang Shen-yen's resignation from the most important position in the civil bureaucracy.

Serious enough in themselves, such disputes were thoroughly intertwined both with Ma Shih-ying's drive to augment his personal power and with conflicts between the "pure element" and the "pernicious clique" at court, conflicts that had begun with the Tung-lin partisans in the late sixteenth century. Although Ma was seen as a man of definite ability, and

7 Wu Wei-yeh, *Sui k'ou chi lüeh* (early Ch'ing; rpt. Taipei, 1968), suppl. *hsia*, pp. 17a–22b.

one whom tolerant men could accommodate, he was not liked by civil officials, least of all by intransigent adherents of the reformist Tung-lin and Fu She factions.

Knowing this, Ma cultivated the support of disgruntled elements from outside the civil-bureaucratic sphere: generals, military nobles, and ambitious members of the imperial clan; and from within that sphere, men whose careers had been damaged or limited by opposition from the purists. Ma's felt need for such a strategy was reinforced dramatically by scathing memorials from the doyen of the "pure element," censor-in-chief Liu Tsung-chou, who generally criticized the military, warned against the effects of allowing "small men" at court, and specifically urged that certain disobedient generals be punished and that Ma Shih-ying be sent back to Feng-yang.⁸ Ma determined to use every means available to strengthen his position and to combat those court officials whom he saw arrayed against him. This decision set in motion forces that he was unable to control.

The "pure element's" distrust of Ma Shih-ying arose from his long friendship with, and indebtedness to, a man whom the Fu She had thoroughly anathematized ever since the T'ien-ch'i period: Juan Ta-ch'eng. It was frequently alleged that in the 1620s Juan had intrigued with the notorious eunuch dictator Wei Chung-hsien to liquidate an ally of the Tung-lin who, through the machinations of fellow partisans, had obtained a position that Juan coveted. Consequently, Juan was listed as a lesser figure in the "eunuch clique," and he was barred from further government service when Wei Chung-hsien and his collaborators were condemned in the "perniciousness cases" (*ni-an*) at the beginning of the Ch'ung-chen reign. However, this taint does not fully account for the depth of hatred felt toward Juan by Fu She activists, some of whom had taken extraordinary steps to vilify him publicly and to exclude him both from office and from influential social circles.⁹ Juan's overweening desire for public office, combined with his calculating and vengeful character, made him seem to them a sinister figure. Events at the Hung-kuang court seem to have borne out such fears, but to the extent that Juan was excessively goaded and humiliated by the partisans, their suspicions also may have been self-confirming.

Piqued by "pure element" opposition, Ma determined to secure an official post for Juan, fully aware that this would cause furor. Not only had Juan previously been proscribed from holding office, worse, his employ-

⁸ Liu Tsung-chou, *Liu Tzu ch'üan shu* (ca. 1821-50; rpt. Taipei, n.d.), 18, pp. 3a-5a, 13a-15a.

⁹ Robert B. Crawford, "The biography of Juan Ta-ch'eng," *Chinese Culture*, 6, No. 2 (March 1965), pp. 28-105.

ment at this juncture was ordered by means of a direct edict (*chung-chih*), which circumvented the customary procedure of recommendation and review by high court ministers. This procedural shortcut, first instituted in the early Ch'eng-hua reign and much abused thereafter, had aroused great controversy and led to disaster in the T'ien-ch'i and Ch'ung-chen reigns.¹⁰ Juan's eventual appointment as a junior vice-minister of war on 30 September 1644 hastened the departures from office of Kao Hung-t'u, Chiang Yüeh-kuang, and Liu Tsung-chou. His elevation the following year to minister of war and assistant censor-in-chief for Yangtze defense set a pattern for other men, who saw in Ma Shih-ying's clique building their chance to obtain both high office and revenge.

In order to purge the government of factional enemies, Ma Shih-ying and such formerly excluded figures as transmission commissioner Yang Wei-yüan argued that the "perniciousness" to be punished was not that of alleged relations with T'ien-ch'i eunuchs, but rather that of outrageous collaboration with the rebels in the north. They also sought absolution from guilt for men blacklisted in the perniciousness cases, and they went so far as to request reissuance of the *San ch'ao yao tien* (Essential documents of three reigns), a eunuch tract of the T'ien-ch'i period that condemned the activities of Tung-lin officials.¹¹ A great issue was made of the fact that certain "pure" officials had not favored the candidacy of the Prince of Fu when "setting the plan" (*ting-t's'e*) for the Nanking court. These witchhunts came to be pursued more widely and viciously than even Ma Shih-ying could condone. The most reprehensible case was Juan Ta-ch'eng's successful implication of his chief nemesis, Chou Piao, in the treason of an estranged clan cousin who had briefly served in Li Tzu-ch'eng's regime in Peking. Unlike many of the Fu She partisans who were ordered arrested during Juan's ascendance, Chou Piao did not escape and was commanded to commit suicide in the first week of May 1645.

Such purges may have strengthened the Ma–Juan clique, but they greatly weakened the government by diverting attention from more important matters, by driving good men away from the court, and by compounding the difficulty of establishing a clear policy toward men who had fallen under suspicion for aiding, or not properly resisting, rebels in the north. Such men were alternately welcomed back to the fold or sternly threatened with prosecution under "six grades of criminality." They were arbitrarily reemployed in Ming government or persecuted for collaboration, usually on the basis of clique associations. Thus, it is not surprising that many chose to remain

¹⁰ C. O. Hucker, *The censorial system of Ming China* (Stanford, 1966), pp. 209–10.

¹¹ See above, Chapter 10, pp. 609–10, 613.

outside the reach of the Hung-kuang court, on either the rebel or the Manchu side.

In order to secure his power, Ma Shih-ying also appointed tactical military leaders for political reasons. Moreover, he encouraged certain members of the Ming imperial clan to intrude into court affairs when such persons could be utilized to attack Ma's enemies. Among the generals, Liu K'ung-chao and Liu Tse-ch'ing were most vocal in condemning Ma's factional enemies; among imperial clansmen, Chu T'ung-lei attached himself to Ma and Juan in the hope of gaining bureaucratic position (from which clansmen normally were excluded) in return for hounding the opposition. The flurry of special pleading by clansmen which this elicited was a minor problem compared to the effects of politicization on the defense commands. Shih K'o-fa, who from the start faced great difficulty in controlling the four unruly defense commanders, was continually undercut by direct relations between the generals and the Nanking Ministry of War (controlled by Ma and Juan). Of greatest consequence, however, was the incitement this gave to Tso Liang-yü, who earlier in life had been deeply influenced by a Tung-lin figure and thus detested Ma and Juan. Ma deliberately antagonized Tso by holding back provisions and by attempting to create friction between him and the viceroy at Chiu-chiang, although Ma also feared the potential for mutiny in Tso's notoriously undisciplined army. Huang Shu, a troublemaking censorial official for Hu-kuang, played havoc with this situation, first by impeaching Ma for "ten capital crimes" and later by inciting Tso to act against Ma.

Most essential to Ma's success, and to the fortunes of the Hung-kuang court, was his relationship with the emperor. Chu Yu-sung had been reluctant to assume the throne. Like all imperial princes, he was reared in luxury and strictly barred from any role in politics. He had never developed the strength of character, decisiveness, or knowledge of public affairs and rulership that the times now required. Nevertheless, he did try hard in the first months of his reign to fulfill the duties of emperor, freely acknowledging his need for guidance and for the assistance of an able chief grand secretary. Although at first the emperor preferred Kao Hung-t'u to Ma Shih-ying, in time Ma undermined Kao and became chief grand secretary himself.

He did this by exploiting the emperor's feelings of inadequacy and insecurity and by catering to his desire to entrust the extremely frustrating affairs of the court to someone else. Various impeachments, purges, and political maneuvers emphasized that the "pure element" had preferred the Prince of Luh, that the Tung-lin group had wronged Chu Yu-sung's father and grandmother, that certain persons dared to criticize the emperor's "own

family” (the obtrusive imperial clansmen), and that others had thwarted the eunuchs’ attempts to pay certain taxes into the emperor’s personal treasury. Although the emperor did not initiate or encourage these divisive charges, he lacked the will to stop them. By leaning on a small coterie of eunuchs who had accompanied him from Honan, he alienated more politically astute eunuchs previously posted in Nanking.

The emperor gradually withdrew to the inner palace, giving rise to all sorts of rumors about his lechery, debauchery, and flagrant disregard for the state, as well as about the sordid ways in which Ma and Juan abetted such depravity. Whether or not such stories are true, Ma gained limited power not so much by winning the emperor’s confidence as by creating a vacuum at the pinnacle of state. The expenses incurred to support the good life of the inner court—in particular, the selection of an empress and plans for the imperial wedding—rapidly led to bankruptcy in the ministries.

The parlous condition of the Hung-kuang treasury engendered a variety of schemes, most of them conventional, for increasing revenues. Besides dispatching officials and eunuchs to “expedite” the forwarding of land taxes and the proceeds of the salt monopoly, considerable attention was paid to miscellaneous taxes on such items as fish and shoreline reeds. While suggestions were made to open mines in remote mountains and to remove the restrictions on maritime trade in order to derive more customs revenue, in Kiangnan the government levied new taxes on wine and real estate transactions and minted Hung-kuang coins. Lower degree holders and students were required to make graded contributions and were permitted to pay fees for exemption from examinations, for honorary and official titles, for minor clerical positions at court, and for reprieves from criminal sentences.

More damaging to the reputation of the regime, however, was the bribery that became a requirement for every appointment. The openness with which Ma, Juan, and their associates engaged in this practice suggests that to them it was a semi-institutional means of financing government operations. But such a view was never formally articulated, and the practice looked more like private corruption. In the popular mind, “supervisors more numerous than sheep, bureau aides as low as dogs, . . . swept up all of Kiangnan’s cash to stuff the mouths of the Family Ma.”

Enemies and strategies

A definite strategic objective was needed to forge unity within and between the military and civil sectors, but never in the Hung-kuang period was the identity or position of the primary enemy clearly discerned or agreed upon. Rebels or Manchus: which should be defended against, and from what

quarter? If rebels were the main threat, which group, Li Tzu-ch'eng's in Shensi or Chang Hsien-chung's in Szechwan, was most likely to descend first on Kiangnan? If the Manchus were the main threat, would they challenge the south before or after dealing with the rebels, and by which route? Were the Ch'ing armies in Shantung and Pei Chihli simply cleaning up rebel pockets in preparation for the campaign against Li Tzu-ch'eng to the west, or were they reconnoitering the south and preparing for further invasion and occupation of Chinese territory? Might they actually join forces with the rebels against the south?

Because of this complexity, the financially troubled regime had to prepare simultaneously to defend itself on four fronts: central Hu-kuang, central and southeastern Honan, northeastern Honan, and northern Nan Chihli. Moreover, Nanking constantly worried about the approach of mutinous Ming forces from upstream on the Yangtze, from across the Yangtze at its juncture with the Grand Canal, and from Chekiang. During the first five months of the reign, the Hung-kuang court was obsessed with the rebels; in the winter it came to perceive more clearly the danger from the Manchus; and in the end the question became whether to fight the Ch'ing or enemies within the Ming camp. Generally speaking, throughout these stages the court, like all in the Southern Ming establishment, consistently underestimated the intentions and capabilities of the Manchu "barbarians."

Initially, Shih K'o-fa and the entire court hoped that the Manchus genuinely intended, as they had proclaimed, to assist and reap justice for the Ming—that is, that they would cooperate with the southern court, and unless provoked would be satisfied with certain payments, concessions, and privileges. In order to explore these possibilities and to preempt further strengthening of the Ch'ing bargaining stance, the Hung-kuang court began planning an ambassadorial mission to Peking in July 1644. The stated purposes of this mission were to: (1) insure proper burial of the Ch'ung-chen emperor; (2) bestow noble titles and congratulatory gifts on Wu San-kuei,¹² the one erstwhile Ming general in the north who had been effective against the rebels and whose new allegiance to the Ch'ing needed to be subverted; (3) present gifts of thanks (indemnities) to the Manchus for their service in driving the rebels away from the northern capital; and (4) induce the Manchu forces to withdraw by offering them all the territory outside Shan-hai Pass, a yearly payoff of 100,000 taels, and Ming acquiescence in any title they might want for their ruler other than the Chinese term "emperor." It was not

12 Angela Hsi, "Wu San-kuei in 1644: A reappraisal," *JAS*, 34, No. 2 (February 1975), pp. 443–53. Ch'en Sheng-hsi, "Ch'ing ping ju kuan yü Wu San-kuei hsiang Ch'ing wen t'i," in *Ming Ch'ing shih kuo chi hsieh shu t'ao lun hui lun wen chi* (Tientsin, 1982), esp. pp. 723–35.

known that the Manchu regent Dorgon at this same time was bringing the young Shun-chih emperor from Mukden to Peking for strategic advantage in securing all “beneath the Heavens.”

Early in August 1644 three men were formally charged with carrying out the ambassadorial mission: Tso Mao-ti, the chief emissary, was appointed vice-minister of war and assistant censor-in-chief, Ch'en Hung-fan was made military commissioner-in-chief, and Ma Shao-yü vice-minister of the Court of the Imperial Stud. This was not the best possible team. All three were minor figures, chosen mainly because they were the only men who seemed willing to go. Tso Mao-ti was staunchly determined to uphold Ming honor in this confrontation with the barbarians and was not inclined toward negotiation. Moreover, he publicly objected to the assignment of Ma Shao-yü, whose role in negotiating with the Manchus in the Ch'ung-chen period had not left him above suspicion of favoring the adversary.¹³ Ch'en Hung-fan was the very man the Ch'ing court was seeking at this time as a possible go-between for persuading the south's leading generals to change sides.

The mission commenced haltingly and proceeded up the Grand Canal route very slowly because of provisioning and transport problems, and encounters with bandits. In Ch'ing territory, Chi-ning and beyond, they were received very inhospitably, offered no quarters, and subjected to many restrictions, which increased as they neared Peking in the last days of October. Treated as tribute bearers from a subordinate state rather than as emissaries from an equal, they eventually were detained in the Court of State Ceremonial, having been spurned in attempts to contact Wu San-kuai. There they twice were visited by Manchu grand secretary Ganglin, who berated them and the southern government, confiscated the gifts they had brought, refused to allow any sacrifices to, or reburial of, the Ch'ung-chen emperor or his deceased consorts, and abruptly dismissed negotiations as futile, since the Ch'ing already had launched a campaign on the south. The party finally was allowed to leave Peking under heavy guard on 25 November, but soon they were overtaken by a Ch'ing contingent that made captives of Tso Mao-ti and Ma Shao-yü. Ch'en Hung-fan, who by this time certainly was in collaboration with the Ch'ing, went on to report the impending onslaught to Nanking.

Reports of Ch'ing confidence and bellicosity had come to Shih K'o-fa as no surprise. Late in August Dorgon had dispatched a letter to Shih in which he contrasted the self-sacrificing achievements of the Ch'ing to the self-interested failures of the southern court, and in which he urged Shih to

13 Chao I, *Nien erh shih cha chi* (prefaces 1795 and 1800; rpt. Shanghai, 1937), 35, p. 740.

change his allegiance. Shih's famous reply,¹⁴ an astute refutation of Dorgon's points and an eloquent refusal to defect, was sent on 15 October, and since then Shih had taken steps to bolster Ming defenses against a possible Ch'ing drive. Earlier Shih's sterling character and patriotism had deeply impressed the strongest but most unruly of the four defense commanders, the former bandit general Kao Chieh. Now, as Shih redeployed the commanders and other units, Kao took the crucial forward position at Hsü-chou. In November and December Ch'ing advances were repulsed in far northeastern Nan Chihli, and it was hoped that Ming forces could at least hold the Yellow River line.

The "three suspicious cases"

In Nanking morale had gone from bad to worse as paranoia, factional fights, and their attendant purges and persecutions irremediably weakened the Hung-kuang regime. The factionalism of the Hung-kuang court at this time is best revealed in three almost unbelievable cases of disputed identity, which seized attention from January 1645 until the end of the regime. In each case, a matter that could have been disposed of magnanimously or diplomatically was used for vindictive purposes by Juan Ta-ch'eng and his clique to implicate their enemies in alleged sedition. The collective result was to generate alarming rumors and incite mass disaffection from the court.

The first case was that of a monk with the clerical name Ta-peï, who was arrested outside Nanking for threatening mayhem and allegedly impersonating the Ch'ung-chen emperor. Official reports of the subsequent secret interrogations said that Ta-peï dementedly posed first as one imperial prince, then another, and that all his claims were patently false. However, others held that his testimony had revealed knowledge about certain of the imperial princes, including the Prince of Fu, which men in power did not wish to have brought to light. In any case, whether Ta-peï actually was insane or was feigning derangement, officials in charge of the case sought to bring it quickly and quietly to a close. Only Juan Ta-ch'eng saw reason to press the case, and he drew up a blacklist of persons who purportedly had favored the Prince of Luh and had instigated Ta-peï to upset the

14 Hellmut Wilhelm, "Ein Briefwechsel zwischen Durgan und Schi Ko-Fa," *Sinica*, 7, Nos. 5-6 (1933), pp. 239-45. There are different versions of Shih's reply to Dorgon. See T'an Ch'ien, *Tsao lin tsu tsu* (mid-seventeenth century; rpt. in *Pi chi hsiao shuo ta kuan*) (rpt. Taipei, 1962), *jen*, p. 18b; and compare Wen Jui-lin, *Nan-chiang i shih* (1711; rpt. Shanghai, 1960; rpt. Vol. 1 of *Wan Ming shih liao ts'ung shu*, Tokyo, 1967), 5, pp. 38-39, with Shih K'o-fa, *Shih Chung-cheng kung chi* (1784; rpt. Taipei, 1968), 2, pp. 23-25.

Hung-kuang court. In this instance, however, Juan was restrained by Ma Shih-ying, and the matter ended with the public execution of the Mad Monk on 27 March 1645.

On that same day it was reported to the throne that a young man who claimed to be the Ch'ung-chen emperor's eldest son and heir had been found in Chekiang, whereupon eunuchs were dispatched to bring him to Nanking. Initially treated with cautious respect, the young man first was questioned by assembled officials, in particular by former tutors to the Ch'ung-chen emperor's sons and others acquainted with palace life in the northern capital. Although the young man did recognize one imperial tutor and seemed remarkably familiar with the layout of the Peking palace grounds, he failed to respond correctly to many questions. Some accounts relate that under close cross-examination he then confessed to being Wang Chih-ming, a former member of the real heir's personal guard. Other accounts allege that this identification was fabricated, and that the young man consistently maintained his claim to be the true heir in spite of the humiliations to which he was subjected.

The Hung-kuang emperor, who seems to have sincerely welcomed discovery of the heir, accepted the decision that the person in question was an impostor, and he expressed this conviction repeatedly in responses to memorials from commanders in the field who had become alarmed by rumors that the heir apparent was being slandered and mistreated by villains at court. Such rumors were intensified by the increasingly severe interrogations of "Wang Chih-ming" and the three men who allegedly had put him up to this masquerade.

Complicating the historical question of the fate of the genuine heir is the fact that three months earlier another person who claimed to be the heir apparent had appeared in the north, giving rise to a case in the Ch'ing court every bit as delicate and fraught with political consequences as the one in Nanking.¹⁵ The Manchus eventually executed the northern claimant, but greater dissension prevented the exercise of this option in the south, where, despite lack of evidence, it became widely and often fanatically believed that the "false heir" was real.

Even as interrogation of the "false heir" was taking place, a certain Madame T'ung, who claimed to be a concubine of the Hung-kuang emperor, was being escorted from Honan into Nanking. There she was conducted straight into the palace prison, since the emperor had angrily and summarily declared her story to be bogus and refused to hear more of the

15 Ch'ien Hsing, *Chia shen ch'uan hsin lu* (early Ch'ing; rpt. Vol. 8 of CNW, Shanghai, 1947, and Taipei, 1964), pp. 149–53. Meng Sen, *Ming Ch'ing shih lun chu chi k'an*, pp. 29–43.

matter. While some accounts tell how movingly she spoke and wrote of her past relationship with the Prince of Fu and of the hardships she had suffered, others say that she soon turned to claiming that her mate had been another prince whom she mistakenly thought had been enthroned in Nanking. In any case, under torture the "false imperial concubine" mentioned some names which led to allegations that she had conspired with certain men to upset the court. These and other unsavory charges concerning her sexual life naturally heightened disaffection among political figures; and the apparent callousness with which the Hung-kuang emperor treated this woman, who was allowed to die in prison of illness or starvation, added to his unpopularity and even led to suspicions that he himself was the impostor.¹⁶

Supply shortages, purges, and the "false heir" case, combined with the fear that Li Tzu-ch'eng's army, fleeing the Ch'ing, would descend on the Yangtze Valley, eventually brought about the mutiny of which Nanking long had been forewarned: the eastward campaign by Tso Liang-yü's army, ostensibly undertaken to "cleanse the surroundings of the ruler."

Demise of the Hung-kuang regime

Since occupying defenseless and chaotic Peking in June 1644, the Manchu leadership realized that it would have to deal decisively with the rebel armies of Li Tzu-ch'eng and with general outlawry in North China. Only then could it contemplate a campaign against the southern regime, for at this point the Manchus were not aware of its political and military weakness. Consequently, during the summer and early autumn of 1644 their leaders concentrated first on attacking Li's forces in southern Shensi, and second on subduing scattered rebel bands in northern and eastern Shantung. The Ch'ing armies gradually established a tenuous line of defenses across the plain north of the Yellow River (which since 1495 had flowed south of the Shantung peninsula). By late autumn reinforcements had moved into southern Shantung and northern Nan Chihli to guard against an offensive from the south. In southern Pei Chihli and northern Honan they suppressed remnants of Li Tzu-ch'eng's army still active in these areas. During this period certain Ming military personnel at the front offered to collaborate; some actually were loyal to Nanking, some were vacillating, and others were genuinely bent on defecting. The most serious case of defection involved the regional commander for the K'ai-feng area, Hsü Ting-kuo.

¹⁶ Ch'ien Ping-teng, "Nan tu san i an," *So chih lu* (1651; facsimile rpt. Taipei, 1970), ch. 3; Lin Shih-tui, *Ho cha ts'ung t'an* (mid-seventeenth century; rpt. No. 153 of *TW*, Taipei, 1962), pp. 126-29.

Having achieved some measure of consolidation and having learned southern Ming conditions, in mid-November the Ch'ing court decided to launch simultaneous campaigns against both Sian and Nanking. These were to be led, respectively, by Dorgon's elder brother, Prince Ajige, and his younger brother, Prince Dodo. Subsequently, however, the unpredictable situation in northwestern Honan threatened the success of both endeavors. The strategy was revised: Dodo was to stabilize the area south of the Yellow River from Lo-yang to K'ai-feng and then turn to attack Li Tzu-ch'eng's strongest defenses at T'ung Pass, while Ajige proceeded to attack Sian from the north, thus putting pincers on Li's base area.

Dodo's part of the plan was carried out with dispatch and heroism. Early in January 1645 his forces crossed the Yellow River in northwest Honan, and took Lo-yang and all the forts from there east to K'ai-feng. They vanquished the rebels and captured or received in surrender several Ming commanders. With his rear secured, Dodo then moved west and penetrated T'ung Pass on 9 February after heavy fighting. Li Tzu-ch'eng then abandoned Sian. Pursued by Ajige, he fled southeast along the Shensi–Honan border into northern Hu-kuang with an army of perhaps 200,000 men. Dodo remained behind to complete operations in Shensi and northwestern Honan, but shortly after 11 March he received orders to move on Kiangnan.

In response, the Ming court had ordered its best units forward, repulsing the Ch'ing armies and designating new defense areas all along the southern bank of the Yellow River. But two developments seriously reduced the court's capacity to deal with further Ch'ing challenges: the assassination of Kao Chieh and the revolt of Tso Liang-yü. Because he was the strongest and most aggressive of the defense commanders, Kao Chieh had been ordered to advance westward from his headquarters at Hsü-chou to defend the strategic pass between Lo-yang and K'ai-feng, and to coordinate his movements with regional commander Hsü Ting-kuo.

Because Kao had previously fought against Hsü, the two had cause to fear and hate one another. Now both evinced great amicability and forgiveness. However, on the night of 8 February 1645, after treating Kao to a feast and entertainment at his headquarters in Sui-chou, Hsü had his guest murdered. Subsequently he made his way across the river to the Ch'ing side, his merit in their eyes much enhanced by this act. This threw Kao's large army into a state of rage and confusion. Resentment toward Kao on the part of other defense commanders and political machinations in Nanking defeated Shih K'o-fa's attempt to reestablish leadership over Kao's men and to keep them at the front. As they came spilling back uncontrolled into Nan Chihli toward Yang-chou, hopes of holding the Yellow River line were dashed.

The Ch'ing defeat of Li Tzu-ch'eng in Shensi augmented the fears of

commanders under Tso Liang-yü; they worried that their ill-supplied and undisciplined troops soon would face a rebel onslaught from the northwest. Moreover, rumors reaching Hu-kuang about the purported heir apparent and Madame T'ung heightened Tso's dislike for the Ma-Juan clique. Old, ill, and failing mentally, Tso was led to accept as genuine both a letter from the "heir" calling for aid and the pretext subordinates conjured for moving eastward—to rid the court of Ma Shih-ying. On 19 April, as Ch'ing troops were marching east across northern Honan and Li Tzu-ch'eng's routed army, pursued by Ajige, was pressing on Wu-ch'ang, Tso launched his own "eastward campaign."

Tso did not realize that he had been duped until at Chiu-chiang he was confronted by viceroy Yüan Chi-hsien, who refused to support Tso's drive. Troops under both men, disobeying orders, conspired to enter and pillage the city. His malady aggravated by remorse, Tso died within days. His son assumed leadership of the renegade army, which continued downstream, "requisitioning provisions" at every point. Ma Shih-ying and Juan Ta-ch'eng were more concerned about Tso than about the Manchus, whom they believed could be appeased through negotiations. Consequently, just as Ch'ing forces were pressing on Hsü-chou and Feng-yang, Ma ordered several Ming commanders north of the Yangtze, including Shih K'o-fa, to move west of Nanking to halt Tso's troops. Although regional forces in the vicinity of Ti-kang were able to stop what had become little more than a large, desultory raiding party, attention and strength were diverted away from the Huai area at a crucial time.

Having set out from T'ung Pass on 1 April, Dodo's army proceeded along three routes: through Hu-lao Pass; through the Lo-yang area and down the Ying River; and over the Lan-yang crossing east of K'ai-feng. After converging at Kuei-te, they divided again to cross the Huai River. One column went toward Lin-huai, another toward Hsü-i. The latter column branched again at Hsü-chou to send a strong contingent under the Manchu prince Junta along the northeastern side of the Yellow River to take Huai-an. The Ch'ing encountered no resistance in these drives until they reached Yang-chou on 13 May. On the contrary, many Ming commanders surrendered and offered their services to the enemy.

His army decimated by transfers and desertions, Shih K'o-fa held Yang-chou with a small force. The hard-bitten citizens of Yang-chou repulsed the Ch'ing attack and refused Dodo's repeated inducements to surrender. Finally the city wall was breached by cannon fire on 20 May, and the Manchu command, perhaps intending to set an example for other cities that might think to resist, ordered a general massacre and plunder of Yang-chou that lasted for ten terrifying days. Having failed in his attempt at suicide, Shih

K'o-fa was captured and executed after refusing to submit to Dodo. He became one of the best-known patriotic martyrs in Chinese history.¹⁷

By 30 May 1645 the main Ch'ing force was arrayed between I-cheng and Kua-chou on the north bank of the Yangtze. On the opposite shore, at the juncture of the Grand Canal and the river, substantial Ming forces defended the garrison city of Chen-chiang and the key transport station there. Taking advantage of darkness and heavy fog, on the night of 1 June the Ch'ing sent rafts mounted with torches across the river, and caused the Ming side to expend its ammunition on this phantom attack. Meanwhile, a vanguard slipped across the river to the west. When daylight came, the Chen-chiang defenders panicked at the discovery of Ch'ing troops nearby and abandoned their stations.

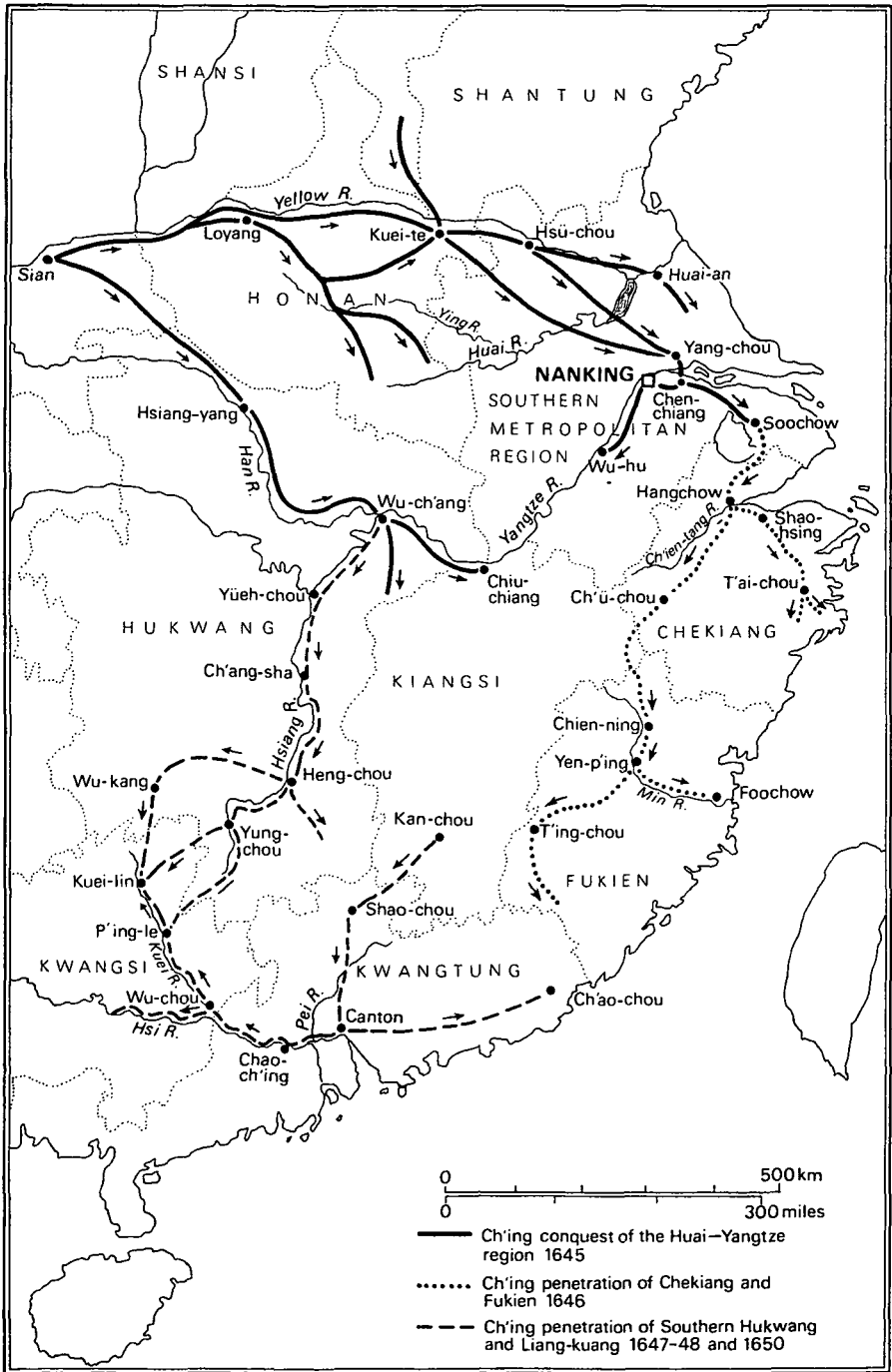
Ajige had chased Li Tzu-ch'eng through the Wu-ch'ang area (abandoned by Tso Liang-yü) into the hills of the northwestern Kiangsi border, where Li probably was killed by villagers early in June.¹⁸ While some Ch'ing troops continued to search for Li, others trailed the Tso army down the Yangtze, planning to attack it from the rear. But on reaching Chiu-chiang late in May, they obtained the surrender of disrupted and disoriented Ming units in that vicinity without a fight.

News that Chen-chiang had fallen led to pandemonium in Nanking. On the night of 3 June 1645, the Hung-kuang emperor secretly escaped from the city with a small party and headed southwest to the camp of general Huang Te-kung near Wu-hu. The next day, when the emperor's absence was discovered, Ma Shih-ying also left the city and went south toward Hangchow with his large personal guard and a woman who is said to have been the empress dowager. Most other officials also fled or simply closed their doors and waited, while commoners sacked the imperial palace and the residences of high officials. A mob of commoners led by a few minor literati also released the "heir" from prison, "enthroned" him using palace theatrical costumes, and set up a small court in the Wu-ying Hall. But the man of the hour in Nanking was the supreme commander of the capital garrisons, Chao Chih-lung, who attempted to promote calm and preserve the city. He tolerated supporters of the "heir" and made conciliatory gestures toward Dodo until he was certain that he could surrender himself and Nanking to the Manchus on favorable terms.

The Ch'ing army arrived outside Nanking on 7 and 8 June and encamped directly in front of the main gate to the imperial palace. There, in

17 Many books and articles have been written on Shih K'o-fa. For a recent and thorough chronological biography, see Shih Yüan-ch'ing, *Shih K'o-fa hsiên sheng nien p'u* (Taipei, 1979).

18 P'eng P'u-sheng, "Li Tzu-sheng pei hai jih ch'i t'an k'ao," *Ku kung po wu yüan yüan k'an*, 3 (August 1980), pp. 35–39.



Map 28. Ch'ing campaigns into South China, 1644-1650

mud and pouring rain, they accepted surrenders from high-ranking representatives of the military nobles and civil officials. After allegiances were confirmed and peaceful occupation of the city assured, Dodo entered the southern gate on 16 June. Meanwhile, in Wu-hu the Hung-kuang emperor and a few remaining supporters were planning a move to Hangchow, which had been a capital of China during the Southern Sung dynasty. But the emperor still had not set out when a Manchu force guided by Liu Liang-tso arrived. Betrayed by subordinates and mortally wounded, Huang Te-kung committed suicide as the emperor was turned over to Liu. On 17 and 18 June the erstwhile emperor, dressed as a commoner and reviled by people along the road, was taken in custody back to Nanking. There he was subjected to a humiliating banquet with Dodo and the "heir" before being confined in a nearby district.

Another Ch'ing army of 80,000 men had moved southeast along the Grand Canal to secure Soochow, and then farther south to cut off plans by Ming loyalists to establish another capital at Hangchow. There the Prince of Luh first refused and then agreed to act as regent,¹⁹ but no effective measures were taken before a Ch'ing army under the Manchu prince Bolo made a surprise approach on 6 July. The Prince of Luh then surrendered as most Ming troops in the area scrambled southeastward across the Ch'ien-t'ang River, which, together with Hangchow Bay, then became the principal boundary between the Ming and Ch'ing armies.²⁰

INITIAL RESISTANCE TO CH'ING OCCUPATION IN THE LOWER YANGTZE REGION

Having come this far by military means, the Ch'ing court now turned to the social, economic, and political aspects of pacification in an area where security was recognized as essential to success in future stages of the conquest. Because they believed that the Yangtze delta region held great stores of rice which could relieve a prolonged, drought-induced grain shortage in Pei Chihli, the Ch'ing court first took steps to restore service on the Grand

19 Several standard sources record that the Prince of Luh did not formally assume the regency. For corroborative evidence that he did so on 1 July, see Huang Tao-chou, *Huang Chang-p'u wen hsüan*, ed. Ch'en Shou-ch'i (1830; rpt. Vol. 137 of TW Taipei, 1962), Vol. 2, pp. 161–63, 282–83, and Ch'i Piao-chia (1602–45), *Chia i jih li* (1st ed., Shao-hsing, 1937; rpt. No. 279 of TW, Taipei, 1969), p. 113. Also see Chang Tao, *Lin-an hsün chih chi* (preface 1885; rpt. Taipei, 1967) ch. 2.

20 In October 1645 the princes of Fu and Luh, as well as the "heir," were taken by Dodo to Peking. The Prince of Luh appears to have been executed there in a purge of Ming princes, ostensibly for seditious plotting, which occurred in June and July 1646; *Ta Ch'ing Shih-tsu Chang huang ti shih lu* (1672; rev. 1739; rpt. Taipei, 1964 in *Ta Ch'ing li ch'ao shih lu*), 26, pp. 10a–11a, in a typical error, uses the wrong character for the title of the Prince of Luh. The Prince of Fu reportedly died in the spring of 1648. T'an Ch'ien, *Kuo ch'üeh* (ca. 1653; rpt. Peking, 1958), Vol. 6, p. 6217.

Canal, which for at least two years had been virtually unused and, like the Yellow River dikes, was in need of maintenance. For both symbolic and administrative reasons, it quickly deputed its own officials to various prefectural and district seats (most of which had been abandoned by their Ming incumbents) to collect the local land taxes and to secure the tax registers.

Some form of civil government was needed in what had been the southern capital and Southern Metropolitan Region of the Ming regime. In mid-August the Ch'ing court did away with Ming administrative arrangements and renamed Nanking Chiang-ning; thenceforth it was merely the provincial seat of Kiangnan (what had been the Southern Metropolitan Region.)²¹ The Nanking bureaucracy was thus reduced and reorganized, while former Ming military nobles and officers were incorporated into the Ch'ing military hierarchy. To relieve Dodo after his arduous and successful campaign, the Ch'ing court deputed Lekdehun, Dodo's nephew, to assume tactical command, and the infamous but extraordinarily able and dedicated collaborator Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou as governor-general to handle political, organizational, and logistical matters.²²

Of greater concern to the populace were thirty-eight items of policy that were to take effect on 24 June. Similar to those announced the previous year for the north, these included: a general amnesty; cancellation of all late Ming supernumerary taxes, irregular levies, odd revenue schemes, and arrears accumulated because of these; harsh punishments for official abuses and corruption; tax remissions, especially in areas that submitted obediently to the Ch'ing; judicious employment of good civil and military officials who came to allegiance sincerely, and extension of invitations to other nobles, officials, and talented social leaders of the former dynasty; revival of mercantile trade; care of the destitute and reunion of families; restoration of properties grabbed by local bosses or bullies and resettlement of people in their former homes; reinstatement of the government school system and the civil service examinations; and other pronouncements designed to win compliance to Ch'ing rule. Toward enemies not yet subdued, the Ch'ing offered various inducements: leniency to surrendering rebels; employment with no reduction in rank, title, or level of emolument for Ming resistance leaders who might surrender willingly; and dignified treatment, including state subsidization, for Ming princes who presented themselves to the Ch'ing authorities.

One of these items departed sharply from previous Ch'ing policy. This

21 Kiangnan had been, and still is, a common term for the whole lower Yangtze region. From this time until the early K'ang-hsi reign it also was the specific name of a province, which subsequently was divided into the modern-day provinces of Kiangsu and Anhwei.

22 Li Kuang-t'ao, "Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou pei Ming shih mo," *BIHP*, 17 (April 1948), pp. 277-301.

was the order issued from Chiang-ning on 21 July. All nonclerical adult male citizens had to demonstrate their allegiance to the Ch'ing by adopting the Manchu hair style—the shaven pate and long queue—and by changing to the Manchu style of dress. This order, which was to be enforced on pain of death within ten days of its receipt in each locality, had been temporarily rescinded for civilians in the north, probably because it was too offensive to Chinese conservatism and ethnic sensibilities. And when Dodo first assumed control in Nanking, he had made it clear that only Chinese military personnel who joined the Ch'ing armies were to change their hair and dress.²³ The sudden reinstatement and draconian enforcement of this decree in Kiangnan, more than any other factor, inflamed the people's spirit to resist and broke the momentum of Manchu conquest.

With the successive losses of two Ming capitals, locally prominent families and minor officials in Kiangnan had been sorely pressed to contain a rash of uprisings by various discontented and lawless elements—mainly tenants, indentured persons, and underground groups—and they now welcomed any authority that could restore the social order to which they were accustomed. Consequently, the first appearance of Han Chinese Ch'ing officials in most locales was relatively uneventful, as social leaders adopted a cooperative, wait-and-see attitude. However, as the ultimatum was given in each prefecture to “either lose your hair or lose your head,” it became clearer that “barbarians” really were in charge, and a common cause to oppose the Ch'ing was forged among social elements that otherwise would have been at odds.

This resistance became most pronounced in four areas: first, the highly commercialized northeastern side of the Su-Sung delta; second, the T'ai and Mao Lakes region to the west and the southeast of Soochow, an area of rapid mobility and easy concealment; third, the intermontane corridor between Ning-kuo and Hsiu-ning southwest of Nanking; and fourth, northeastern Kiangsi, where members of the Ming imperial clan resided in large numbers.

Resistance in these areas took many forms: holding cities against Ch'ing sieges; trapping Ch'ing forces or beating them back from strategic places in rural areas; raiding cities or military posts already occupied by the Ch'ing; and triggering urban insurrection and assassinating Ch'ing officials. The social elements that supported and sometimes took over these resistance efforts were extremely varied. The group comprised incumbent or retired Ming civil and military officials, members of the district yamen or con-

23 Nakayama Hachirō, “Kando ni okeru benpatsu no mondai—Shinso no benpatsu rei shikō o chūshin to shite,” *Chūgokushi kenkyū*, 5 (1968), pp. 1–24.

stabulary staffs, Ming imperial clansmen, local landowners and merchants, leaders of political and literary societies, regular Ming military units, local sea and land militia, freelance military experts, armed guards from private estates, peasant self-defense corps, martial monks, underground gangs, secret societies, tenant and "slave" insurrectionary forces, and pirate and bandit groups.

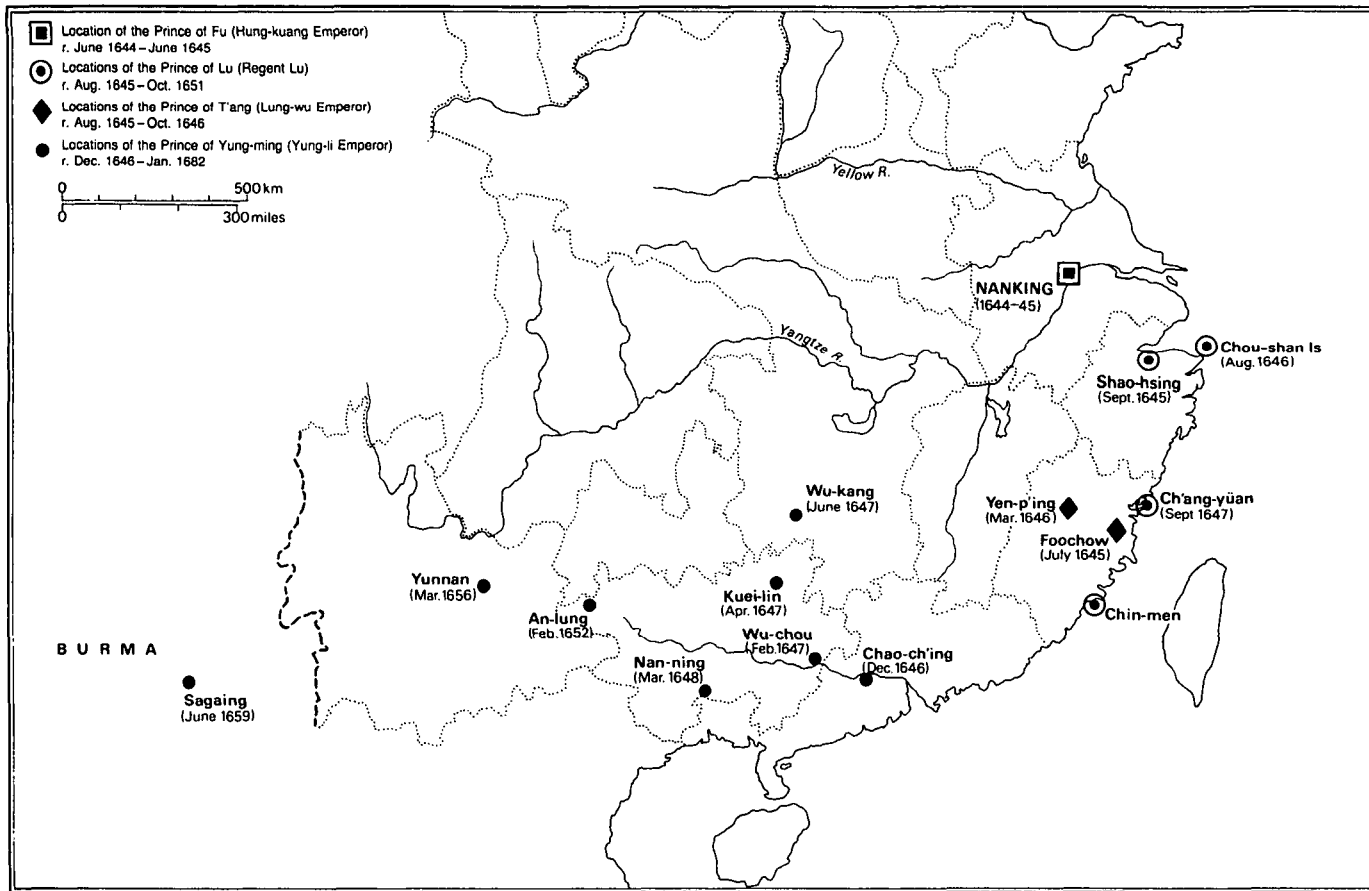
So diverse and conflicting were the interests of these strange bedfellows, and so uncertain their vision of what order, if any, would be to their advantage, that cohesive and sustained resistance proved very difficult to maintain. Moreover, although many of the resistance leaders received formal commissions and titles from Southern Ming governments that had been set up in Chekiang and Fukien, any effective Ming governmental presence had dissolved in Nan Chihli, and there was no structure through which to coordinate action in various places. Even the shared repugnance toward submission to barbarian ways was vitiated when resisters were set upon by armies composed almost entirely of ethnic Chinese, who were often more barbarous than their Manchu masters. The Ch'ing policy of ruthlessly massacring recalcitrant communities also deterred resisters. In all, the loss of life and property was staggering.

Widespread resistance throughout what had become the Ch'ing secondary base area was not the only reason why the Manchus did not immediately press farther southward. Banner units and generals had to be rotated and relieved. Moreover, the Ch'ing not only had to supply armies occupying Kiangnan, but also had to support units holding out tenuously in devastated Hu-kuang province, an area that usually shipped surplus grain eastward. And the general situation needed to be reassessed by the new chief official in the south, Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou. It probably is true that the anti-Ch'ing resistance in the lower Yangtze region slowed the Ch'ing momentum, thus allowing the Ming resistance more time for organization and preparation in other parts of the south. However, it is doubtful that time was on the Ming side.

THE LU AND LUNG-WU REGIMES

Simultaneous establishment of the two courts

During the Hung-kuang period a number of refugee Ming princes from the north had been assigned to new residential locations in the south. The Prince of Lu, Chu I-hai, moved from Shantung to southeastern Chekiang; and the Prince of T'ang, Chu Yü-chien, whose estate had been in Honan, had been passing through Soochow on his way to Kwangsi when Nanking



Map 29. Principal locations of the Southern Ming courts

fell to the Ch'ing.²⁴ The Prince of T'ang had continued southward. When Hangchow fell, he in turn withdrew up the Ch'ien-t'ang River²⁵ under the protection of a retreating general, Cheng Hung-k'uei. After having received the requisite three letters of persuasion from the minister of rites Huang Tao-chou, he announced his decision to assume the Ming regency at Ch'ü-chou on 10 July 1645. He then proceeded along the usual land route between Chekiang and Fukien, through the northeastern corner of Kiangsi, and over the Hsien-hsia Mountains, along the way making specific plans for the establishment of his court.

He arrived in the outskirts of Foochow on 26 July. Three days later he entered the city and formally received the title of regent. A familiar debate then ensued between those who felt it would be more prudent for the prince to remain a regent and to ascend the throne only after he had regained substantial territories outside Fukien, and others who felt that in such chaotic conditions only the charisma of an emperor could rally the people and organize their support. The latter argument won the day, and regent T'ang became the Lung-wu emperor in Foochow on 18 August 1645.

Meanwhile, to the north, Ch'ing advance agents and new local officials had moved rapidly into the prosperous region commonly referred to as eastern Chekiang (Che-tung).²⁶ Popular reaction to this arrogation of authority, and to the easy submission of many local powerholders, began with an uprising in Yü-yao on 31 July. Under the leadership of gentry leaders, displaced local officials, and regular Ming commanders, neighboring districts responded within days. Ch'ing officials and collaborators were executed or imprisoned; a variety of auxiliary fighting units were established; and Ch'ing forces were chased back to the western bank of the Ch'ien-t'ang River. The leaders of these uprisings immediately added their support to others in T'ai-chou who were urging the Prince of Lu to bolster popular resistance by assuming the regency in eastern Chekiang. To this he readily acceded; he formally became regent in Shao-hsing late in August.²⁷

24 According to surviving records of these two princes' own genealogical reckonings, their ancestors were the ninth and twenty-second sons of T'ai-tsu, respectively. See Richard C. Rudolph, "The real tomb of the Ming regent, Prince of Lu," *Monumenta Serica*, 29 (1970-71), pp. 487-89; and Ch'ien Yen-i, (ca. 1634), *Ssu wen ta chi* (rpt. No. 111 of *TW*, Taipei, 1967) 2, pp. 2b-3a. This is at variance with the *Ming shih* tables of princely descent ("Chu wang shih piao," 2 and 3), Chang T'ing-yü, et al., *Ming shih* (1736; rpt. Peking, 1974). In any case Chu Yü-chien, as a ninth-generation descendant of T'ai-tsu, was acknowledged to be senior in the imperial line to Chu I-hai, a tenth-generation descendant of the first Ming emperor.

25 Strictly speaking, this river is called Ch'ien-t'ang only in the lowermost section where it enters Hangchow Bay, but for convenience, the whole waterway reaching toward northeastern Kiangsi is referred to as the Ch'ien-t'ang here.

26 I.e., Chekiang east of the Ch'ien-t'ang and directly south of Hanchow Bay.

27 Primary sources differ widely regarding the date of ceremonies in Shao-hsing. See Yang Yün-p'ing, "Nan Ming Lu chien kuo shih chi ti yen chiu," *Chung kuo li shih hsüeh hui shih hsüeh chi k'an*, 8 (May 1976), pp. 34-36.

Although several of his supporters had considerable experience as imperial officials, virtually all leading figures in the Lu regime were natives of eastern Chekiang. Other figures carried weight in the regime because of their initiative and perseverance in leading district volunteer organizations and auxiliary corps, and they were strongly motivated by local pride and concern. This parochialism had important consequences. It accounts for the level of regional popular support, which was higher than that enjoyed by any other Southern Ming regime. It also allowed for the rapid deployment of fighting men at key defense points, where they took good advantage of their familiarity with local conditions. With admirable dispatch, a frontal arc was established all along the eastern side of the Ch'ien-t'ang River and the southern shore of Hangchow Bay. Some efforts were made to link up with resistance activity in northern and western Chekiang and in the lakes region of the Yangtze delta. However, little thought was given to extending the court's sway beyond this small area.

Although it had a preponderance of Fukien appointees, the Lung-wu regime was broader in scope than the Lu regime. The court's most prominent figure, grand secretary Huang Tao-chou, was a native of Fukien; but he had achieved widespread fame as an outspoken advocate of "righteous" causes during the T'ien-ch'i and Ch'ung-chen reigns. Moreover, the Lung-wu emperor was especially determined to attract and employ able men from outside Fukien. He was very ambitious in making contact with, and conferring Lung-wu titles on, Ming resistance leaders in Chekiang, Kiangsi, Hu-kuang, and in the hundreds of stockades in the Ta-pieh mountain range north of the Yangtze.²⁸ He expected obedience from civil and military officials in Kwangtung and Kwangsi and received reports from officials as far away as Szechwan. In the end, however, actual control over the provinces was thwarted by the limitations of Fukien (both economic and topographical) and by the self-protective outlook of the most important Lung-wu supporters, whose interests were limited to Fukien: the Cheng brothers, Hung-k'uei and Chih-lung.

Cheng Chih-lung (known to foreigners of the day as Nicholas Iquan) began his career as an assistant and interpreter in the competitive overseas trade between China and Japan. Despite restrictions imposed by the governments of both countries, he gradually became a mogul in Chinese southeastern ports and coastal waters. He achieved notoriety first as an uncommon brigand who had exceptional organizational and disciplinary capabilities, an evident desire to exercise social leadership, and a related tendency to coop-

²⁸ Wang Pao-hsin, *Ch'i Huang sui shih pa chai chi shih* (late 19th century; rpt. 1906; rpt. Taipei, 1966), ch. 1.

erate intermittently with governmental authorities. In 1628 the Ming court succeeded in obtaining his surrender. Thereafter he increased his power under the aegis of the Ming military establishment, eventually rising to the post of regional commander.²⁹

The Hung-kuang emperor elevated him to the rank of earl; and the Lung-wu emperor awarded both Cheng Hung-k'uei and Cheng Chih-lung the rank of marquis for their role in setting up his court. Moreover, in recognition of Cheng Chih-lung's large measure of de facto control over fiscal matters in Fukien, the emperor gave him extensive powers to coordinate the affairs of the ministries of Revenue, Works, and War. At first the Lung-wu emperor was grateful to have the support of such a figure, and he indulged Cheng by filling many civil and military posts with his relatives and hangers-on. Being childless, the emperor even went so far as to "adopt" Cheng Chih-lung's eldest son, Cheng Sen, as his own, bestowing on him the imperial surname, a new given name, Ch'eng-kung, the rank of an imperial son-in-law, and many special responsibilities and privileges. The Lung-wu emperor's close relation with this Lord of the Imperial Surname (Koxinga), best known in Chinese history as Cheng Ch'eng-kung, had far-reaching consequences for the Southern Ming cause.

The failure to cooperate

Not until early in October 1645 did the Lung-wu court learn that a rival court had been established in Chekiang. An emissary carrying a copy of the Lung-wu emperor's accession proclamation was immediately dispatched to Shao-hsing. His arrival late in October discomfited and divided Lu official ranks. At first Lu was willing to step down in favor of the older Prince of T'ang, his "august uncle" in Fukien. Several respected figures urged that the court in Chekiang subordinate itself to the larger cause. However, grand secretary and minister of war Chang Kuo-wei passionately stated the opposing argument: "The whip [of command] was not long enough to reach" all the way from Foochow; the heroic resistance movement in eastern Chekiang was fragile and would collapse if the regent withdrew; and a transfer of loyalties at this point would constitute a rupture of trust between the sovereign and his ministers.

Regent Lu was persuaded by such pleading. Other officials were constrained to show unanimity in rejecting the Lung-wu proclamation, and emissaries were sent back to Fukien with a restatement of Chang's position.

²⁹ Liao Han-ch'en, "Cheng Chih-lung k'ao," *T'ai-wan wen hsien*, 10, No. 4 (December 1959), pp. 63-72, and 11, No. 3 (September 1960), pp. 1-15.

Consequently, although many Lu officials and generals secretly requested or accepted appointments and titles from the Lung-wu emperor, the Lu court never sought to work with the Lung-wu court, and a “fire-and-water” relation developed between the two regimes.

In February 1646 the Lung-wu emperor sent a moving personal letter to his “nephew prince” imploring him to cooperate in the goal of restoration and pledging nonbelligerence. He earnestly stated his unselfish reasons for claiming a prior right to rule, as well as strategic reasons why he could not avoid planning military action in Lu territory.³⁰ But it is not known whether this letter ever reached the Lu court at Shao-hsing. Later that spring a censorial official who had been sent by the Lung-wu emperor with a large amount of silver to reward and encourage military units stationed on the Ch’ien-t’ang River received no protection from Lu authorities and was killed by unruly troops. And early in the summer a Lu emissary to Fukien was imprisoned and executed by the Lung-wu emperor, probably because he was suspected of seditious collusion with Cheng Chih-lung.

To explain this sad sequence of events, one must look to geography, to the personalities of the two princes concerned, and to the apprehensive temper of the time. First, several broad ranges of mountains blocked direct travel between the populous areas of Fukien and Chekiang, and rapid communication between Foochow and Shao-hsing had never been possible even in the best of times.

Second, both the Prince of T’ang and the Prince of Lu were disposed by opposite traits of character to hold on to their ruling positions. Regent Lu was kind and mild-mannered; he confined himself largely to the proper execution of court formalities and allowed his ministers and generals to take the initiative. But he was very determined and sincere in his willingness to act as a figurehead for men who wanted to fight for the Ming cause, and he probably felt that he simply could not desert his supporters.

The Prince of T’ang, now in his mid-forties, had suffered severe hardships and had spent fully half his life incarcerated. He had passed his entire boyhood and early adult years accompanying his father, who had been unjustly imprisoned by his grandfather, the current Prince of T’ang. In 1636 he was degraded for illegally leading troops from his fief to assist in the defense of Peking against a threatened Manchu attack. Until his pardon, release, and restoration to princely status by the Hung-kuang court in 1644, he had barely survived the rough treatment he received in the prison for members of the imperial clan at Feng-yang.

³⁰ Appended to *Lung-wu i shih* (early Ch’ing; rpt. Shanghai, 1911–12; photographic rpt. Taipei, 1968), pp. 11a–12b.

Now liberated from such confinements, he showed even more of the determination and initiative that had elicited disapproval from the Ch'ung-chen emperor. Ascetic, diligent, and singly devoted to his able wife, *née* Tseng, who had shared his travail of the previous decade, he feared no physical sacrifice. Remarkably learned, especially in history and Ming institutions, and proud of his heritage, which he had suffered to claim, he now believed that his time had come and that he was the one prince who could restore the dynasty. Although he treated Lu delicately, the Lung-wu emperor dealt quite differently with the Prince of Ching-chiang, Chu Heng-chia, after the latter was defeated in his attempt to take the imperial title in Kuei-lin, Kwangsi, in the fall of 1645. This hapless prince was transported to Fukien, reduced to commoner status, and allowed to die in prison as an example to other imperial clansmen in the region. Clearly, the Lung-wu emperor had a strong, visceral sense of mission and was not inclined to share leadership, even with his own ministers.

Third, neither regime was secure enough to sustain cooperation with another power center. Tensions, animosities, and partisanship invited charges of sedition against competitors for imperial favor. Moreover, many of those who took appointments under both the Lu and Lung-wu regimes did so in a self-serving manner, discrediting what could have been a noble practice.

Internal and strategic problems

Both the Lu and the Lung-wu regimes began in defensive postures. The reasons why neither regime gained an offensive advantage differ in detail, but are in general the same: inadequate bases of supply; logistical difficulties, compounded by animosities between civil and military officials; reliance on righteous spirit over solid military organization, discipline, and training; and the two princes' different approaches to rulership. To these one can add for Fukien the widespread outbreak of various social disturbances. Both faced the unquestionable land superiority of Manchu cavalry. But this was not the case until a year had elapsed, during which time both regimes had grown weaker instead of stronger.

The forces of regent Lu, roughly estimated at 200,000, were supplied entirely from those eastern Chekiang districts which bordered directly on the Ch'ien-t'ang River or Hangchow Bay. Owing to the grassroots nature of the regime's support, the passive ruling style of regent Lu, and the general tendency toward decentralization in finance and military supply, no central Ministry of Revenue was established. Operations began under the loose principle that Ming regulars were to draw their pay from the tax

proceeds of the prefectures in which they were based, while auxiliary and volunteer forces (troops under various “righteous” leaders) were to be supported by voluntary contributions from the districts where they had originated. The professional military men found this arrangement unsatisfactory and pressed to have all monies and materials accrued for the war effort placed under their control for allocation according to strategic need. However, leaders of “righteous soldiers,”³¹ mistrustful of the militarists, refused to go along with this proposal. The compromise plan that all units, regular or volunteer, should draw any support, tax proceeds or patriotic contributions, from locales nearest to them was followed more on expedience than on principle. No logistic plan ever truly resolved the “controversy over dividing supplies and dividing territories.”

Disorder led to chaos through the winter of 1645–46, when increasingly severe shortages incited regular troops to steal provisions meant for volunteer units. As starvation among Lu troops became common, many “righteous soldiers” simply disbanded and went home, while regular troops turned to looting and extortion. In the absence of any central logistic control, no central command structure could be effected. Moreover, little could be done when desperate, disruptive Ming naval forces descended on Lu territory after having been defeated in the Yangtze delta region.

There were disagreements on tactical matters as well. Among the generals, some favored quick offensive strikes against Hangchow, while others placed priority on building a strong defense for Shao-hsing. Several remarkably successful drives across the Ch’ien-t’ang threatened Hangchow; moreover, Ming forces penetrated western Chekiang almost to Lake T’ai and isolated Ch’ing forces in the area for a while. But these drives always failed because of poor coordination and communication, both among the Lu units and between them and resistance groups with which they hoped to join forces behind Ch’ing lines. “Righteous” units led by literati figures were inclined to take independent action, heedless of others’ plans or the risks involved. This continued to be the case after the failure of another campaign against Hangchow in February 1646. Lu commanders had to concede the land west of the Ch’ien-t’ang River to the Ch’ing forces. Hopes then rested on using Ming superiority on the water to counter Ch’ing naval attacks or to cross Hangchow Bay and spur fifth-column insurrectionary activity from Hai-ning northwestward into the “back” of the enemy.

Troops, money, and supplies for the Lung-wu regime were drawn

31 In Chinese, to fight voluntarily for a cause is *ipso facto* “righteous.” In this case, the leaders were “righteous” in the additional sense of being associated with the “pure element” in late Ming politics.

mainly from Fukien and secondarily from Kwangtung and Kwangsi; but there was never enough of anything. Shortly after the court was established, it was recognized that even minimal military expenses would run far in excess of current tax receipts for Fukien and Liang-Kuang combined. This problem was approached on the one hand by trying to squeeze more from the fiscal base. Miscellaneous revenues were sought from bridge and harbor tolls; fees levied on shopowners and from the salt monopoly were assiduously collected; local treasuries were scoured for surplus stores; official titles were sold; and "patriotic contributions" were levied on landowners according to acreage, on gentry according to examination degree, and on officials according to rank. On the other hand, expectations of what could be achieved in troop deployment gradually shrank. In May 1646 Cheng Chih-lung reported that the expenditure required for supplying and arming all the troops then defending Fukien would come to 1,560,000 taels—a sum still far beyond the regime's capacity.

The emperor then agreed to limit the use of Fukien revenues strictly to the support of Fukien. This optimistic plan called for 30,000 troops at the passes and 10,000 troops for internal security in the prefectures, at a yearly cost of 862,000 taels. Military action in southwestern Chekiang, Kiangsi, and Hu-kuang had to be financed wholly from resources in those areas. Actual troop levels at the passes never approached the projected numbers, and the few thousand troops that were deployed often received allocations at rates well below standard. Kwangtung delivered some revenues directly to southern Kiangsi and also to the Lung-wu court in Fukien. But these sums represented only a fraction of the normal revenues and scarcely met the pressing needs of the court.

Several factors combined to limit the flow of revenues to the Lung-wu court and the flow of supplies to the front. One was geographical. Transport facilities on the upper reaches of Fukien's principal river system, which passed through very rugged terrain to the most important passes, simply could not bear the sudden burden of serving a major war effort. Other factors related either to widespread social unrest or to the character and motivations of Cheng Chih-lung.

As noted above, the successive losses of two Ming capitals and the concomitant disorientation of provincial and local governments had brought outlawry and latent social conflicts rapidly to the surface. In the far southeast trouble developed in the mountainous region where the provinces of Fukien, Kiangsi, and Kwangtung intersect. The great difficulty in controlling outlaws of that region had long justified the stationing of special bandit-suppression forces in "South Kan" (in southern Kiangsi around Kan-chou), where the populace was also skilled in self-defense.

Now large bandit gangs raided districts in eastern Kwangtung and southwestern Fukien, not only necessitating the diversion of resources to combat them, but also endangering overland communication and transport routes. In adjacent locales tenants rose up against landlords who made unfair use of grain measures in receiving land rents.³² As the months went by, raids by “mountain bandits” occurred in all parts of Fukien, highway robbery became a common occurrence, local altercations went unchecked, and because the Chengs’ attention had been diverted, even some piracy recurred. Under such conditions, when people were not sure whether new officials and levies were legitimate, individuals and locales naturally hoarded whatever resources they had to ensure their own survival.

Moreover, many civil officials and gentry in Fukien regarded the former pirate Cheng Chih-lung as nothing more than a poacher turned game-keeper. They were suspicious of his schemes to raise more money from them and their districts. Not only did many not respond to calls for patriotic contributions, they also held back regular tax shipments. Traditional historiography is so biased against Cheng Chih-lung that it is difficult to assess the man objectively. Certainly he was able, cunning, ambitious, and powerful within a certain sphere. Certainly he hoped that by supporting the Lung-wu emperor he could extend the scope and depth of his sway in Fukien. Yet it also seems clear that he was unwilling to sap or sacrifice his hard-won, lucrative maritime power base for an inland campaign that might carry the court into another province. Probably his repeated protests that supplies and preparations were inadequate for the emperor’s zealous “personal campaign” beyond the passes were based on fair-minded appraisals of the situation. But Cheng Chih-lung’s procrastination, which earned him the scorn of the court’s most prominent civil officials and the guarded disdain of the emperor as well, was due in large measure to a basic conflict between his own long-range plans and those of his sovereign.

Leading civil officials wished to deliver the emperor from the confines of Fukien and its satrap, so they argued for a quick offensive that would take advantage of the spirit of resistance among people in Chekiang and Kiangsi, who had just felt the heel of conquest. Leading military officials (especially the Chengs, who wished to conserve and protect their gains) argued for caution and gradual self-strengthening; they balked at the suggestion of fighting beyond the outer approaches to the major passes leading

32 Mori Masao, “Jūshichi seiki no Fukken Neikaken ni okeru Kō Tsū no kōso hanran,” *Nagoya daigaku bungakubu kenkyū ronshū*, *Shigaku* series, 20 (1973), pp. 1–31, 21 (1974), pp. 13–25, and 25 (1978), pp. 25–65.

into Fukien. This conflict was epitomized in the friction between Huang Tao-chou and Cheng Chih-lung.

In reaction to Cheng Chih-lung's obstructiveness, in November 1645 Huang requested that he be allowed to lead a personal campaign to aid recently defeated Ming resistance groups in northeastern Kiangsi. Having received no assistance from the Chengs, he left Fukien with only a small, ragtag army of enthusiastic volunteers and one month's provisions. He was confident that he could raise along the way all the men and supplies he would need purely from "loyalty and righteousness." Responses to Huang's campaign both in Fukien and Kiangsi were heartening, but his forces remained too disparate and poorly trained to counter the formidable Ch'ing presence in the southern tip of Kiangnan. Huang was easily defeated there by the Ch'ing early in February 1646. He was executed with his closest associates in Nanking two months later. This was a terrible blow to the Lung-wu emperor, who had relied on Huang's help to achieve some balance between civil and military officials in his court.

The Lung-wu emperor's strong temperament showed many contradictory tendencies which in less turbulent times might have been reconciled, but which instead were exacerbated by the frustrating circumstances of his reign. He hoped to follow the example of the Han emperor Kuang-wu (r. A.D. 25–57), who had restored the Han dynasty through excellent generalship, and he responded favorably to officials who encouraged him in this role. Just one week after becoming emperor he announced plans to lead a personal campaign beyond the passes, and he designated his younger brother, Chu Yü-yüeh, the new Prince of T'ang, to handle affairs in Foochow during his absence. For various reasons sketched above, he was not able to leave Foochow until January 1646, when he set up an "imperial campsite" at Chien-ning and announced his intent to proceed directly from there into the wider arena of the lower Yangtze region.

At the same time, he placed great emphasis on the emperor's role as model and patron in the literary arts, usually composing his own public pronouncements with speed and skill, receiving most warmly as gifts hundreds of volumes of books, and insisting stubbornly that civil service examinations be held even under very inhibiting conditions. He repeatedly admonished troops not to disturb the civilian population; but he watched helplessly as armed conflict overtook the whole society and lamented that militarism and militancy could no longer be checked by civil power.

In utilizing men, the Lung-wu emperor also behaved in a contradictory manner. His zeal led him to welcome men from far and near who at least seemed to share his purpose. As a result, many glib-tongued incompetents were given important assignments in the field, while at court the emperor

tried to do too much himself and failed to utilize several men of true ability in his idle, overstaffed grand secretariat.

The Lung-wu emperor was most erratic in strategic matters. This arose in part from his inclination to respond actively to any news, good or bad, that came from the contested provinces (Chekiang, Kiangsi, and Hu-kuang) and to give orders first and consider feasibility later. But even the most steady helmsman would have been fraught with indecision under the circumstances. First, there was the attitude of the Chengs, who were overtly aggressive but covertly dilatory. Their preparations never seemed to be complete, their supplies never adequate, and they never followed through on their assignments to strike out west and north from the Shan and Fen-shui passes. Thus, the emperor was never able to proceed farther than Chien-ning. Second, it was difficult to get accurate information about the strength of Ch'ing forces on the upper Ch'ien-t'ang, the possibility of successful naval strikes at the Hangchow and Soochow areas, the extremely fluid situation in Kiangsi, and the complex state of affairs in distant Hu-kuang.

These circumstances thwarted the emperor's strategies. First, he planned to drive down the Ch'ien-t'ang and recapture Hangchow on the way to Nanking. Then he hoped to gather under his leadership Ming units from Fukien, northern Kiangsi, central Hu-kuang, and from a point east of Lake P'o-yang to descend by river on Nanking. Lastly, as Ch'ing pressure on Fukien's northwestern passes increased, he considered taking his "campaign" to Kan-chou, whence he might lead a restoration of northern Kiangsi or move his court into relatively well-defended southern Hu-kuang. In any case, as it became more likely that he would move to or through Kiangsi, rather than head for Chekiang or Kiangnan, in March 1646 the Lung-wu emperor transferred his "imperial campsite" southward to Yen-p'ing, where he renewed his pledge to go through the passes and never retreat to Foochow.

The successive demises of both regimes

The Lung-wu emperor had long been especially concerned to maintain the Ming hold on southern Kiangsi, because the conquest of that entire province by the Ch'ing would block off all the major land routes in and out of Fukien and would expose Kwangtung to attack as well. He had bestowed high office on Ming officials who were active in the resistance there and had sent some of his most able ministers, including grand secretaries Su Kuan-sheng and Kuo Wei-ching, to help defend that area. Late in May 1646, when news arrived that Kan-chou was under siege, a real crisis faced the Lung-wu court, and every effort was made to save the situation.

Ming troops in Kan-chou prefecture eventually totaled over 40,000; but

these were a disorderly hodgepodge of Ming regulars (many recruited very recently) from Fukien, Kiangsi, Kwangtung, and Hu-kuang, aboriginal mercenaries from Kiangsi and Kweichow, former river pirates, and armies of mountain bandits who had made marriages of convenience with the Ming cause. Even though the Ch'ing Kiangsi command was in disarray at this time and Ch'ing troop morale was low, the Ming command was unable to concentrate its disparate forces to drive the Ch'ing armies away from Kan-chou, and the city became more and more isolated.

Meanwhile, in Chekiang the Ch'ing had been gradually strengthening its position west of the Ch'ien-t'ang River, even though the territory between Nanking and Hangchow was not completely secured. In April 1646 the Manchus designated Prince Bolo as Generalissimo of the Southern Campaign. He arrived in Hangchow with Manchu reinforcements on 14 June. Preparations were made to move the Ch'ing forces from the dikes south of Hangchow across the Ch'ien-t'ang River to the Ming side. But drought persisted in the southeast, causing an unusually low water level, slow current, and increased silting in the river. A crossing on horseback upriver at some point not too distant from Shao-hsing became feasible. On 10 July, as Ch'ing cavalymen rode across the river at T'ung-lu, the defending army collapsed and fled in disarray toward Shao-hsing. The Ch'ing cavalry pursued them and converged on the Shao-hsing area with other Ch'ing troops that had been ferried from Hangchow across the mouth of the Ch'ien-t'ang.

Regent Lu fled Shao-hsing when he heard that Fang Kuo-an and his men were retreating toward the city. He apparently feared that this army would sack the city and that he would be taken captive and used by Fang to bargain with the Manchus for favorable terms of surrender. The regent traveled swiftly overland back to T'ai-chou, but there he narrowly escaped being kidnapped by an agent of Fang Kuo-an, who also was retreating in that direction. So he took to sea from Hai-men and found refuge with Chang Ming-chen, a Ming naval commander who subsequently transported him to the Chou-shan Islands.

The Lung-wu court at Yen-p'ing in western Fukien heard of the Ch'ien-t'ang crossing in the last week of July. Shortly thereafter Cheng Chih-lung, claiming that he had to deal with pirate raids on the coast, deserted Yen-p'ing. He was soon followed by the few troops under his banner who were still stationed at the northwestern passes. Although the Lung-wu emperor tried to aid southeastern Chekiang and to reinforce Fukien's northern border, a defeatist attitude pervaded his court. Efforts to rekindle a loyal spirit among his supporters failed to forestall the dissolution of his government.

Reports of an emergency at Hsien-hsia Pass finally induced the emperor to begin his southwestern “campaign” toward Kan-chou, and his entourage left Yen-p’ing in orderly fashion on 29 and 30 September 1646. But two days later, news that the Ch’ing had already taken Yen-p’ing threw the imperial party into a panic. Many members scattered and became lost, while some tried to follow the emperor, who had galloped at full speed with a small guard to T’ing-chou. There he was overtaken by a Ch’ing contingent and summarily executed with his empress on 6 October.³³

When Manchu noblemen entered Foochow unopposed on 17 October 1646, the city was almost deserted. Cheng Chih-lung had probably been negotiating with the Ch’ing side for some time. Still uncertain about the terms of his submission, he had destroyed his arsenal at Foochow and had withdrawn to his main base farther south. But one month later, heedless of protestations from his son and many of his commanders, Cheng Chih-lung formally surrendered to the Ch’ing at Foochow, having been promised the position of viceroy for Fukien and Kwangtung. However, he was soon taken north on the pretext of going to “see his [new] emperor” and was subsequently kept under close watch in Peking. Other Lung-wu officials and commanders who surrendered were allowed to redeem themselves by assisting in the Ch’ing conquest of Kwangtung.

THE YUNG-LI REGIME IN LIANG-KUANG AND SOUTHERN HU-KUANG, 1646–1651

Yung-li versus Shao-wu

When news of the Hung-kuang emperor's demise reached the far south in 1645, many officials there, including Ch’ü Shih-ssu the provincial governor of Kwangsi and Ting K’uei-ch’u the viceroy of Liang-Kuang, had favored enthronement of the Ming prince who by birth was next in succession after the Prince of Fu: Chu Yu-ai, the eldest surviving son of the recently deceased Prince of Kuei. Chu Yu-ai and his father had fled their princely estate when Chang Hsien-chung’s rebel army invaded southern Hu-kuang in 1643 and had taken refuge in Wu-chou, Kwangsi, where the father died in 1644. Ch’ü and others had regarded the Prince of T’ang as a presumptuous upstart whose claim to the throne obscured the principle of orderly succession. But they had accepted his enthronement as a *fait accompli* and

33 Stories of the ultimate fate of the Lung-wu emperor and empress vary considerably. This account follows Chiang Jih-sheng, *T'ai-wan wai chi* (ca. 1708–18; rpt. No. 60 of *TW*, Taipei, 1960), 2, p. 94, and the *CSL*, *Shun-chih shih lu*, 29, p. 2a (p. 341).

had performed their duties as loyal Lung-wu officials. Moreover, Chu Yu-ai died suddenly not long after his investment as the next Prince of Kuei.

Of the father's male progeny, there remained only the youngest, Chu Yu-lang, the Prince of Yung-ming.³⁴ He had spent most of his twenty-two years in comfortable obscurity until Chang Hsien-chung's horde exposed him to the terrors of desperate flight, capture, and near execution. He was barely able to escape from southwestern Hu-kuang into Kwangsi; later he was housed and protected in Chao-ch'ing by Ting K'uei-ch'u. Now, by a process of rapid attrition among his elders, he suddenly became the sole surviving grandson of the Wan-li emperor and next in line to become the emperor of Ming China.

When news from Fukien became ominous, Ch'ü Shih-ssu and other officials probed the Prince of Yung-ming's willingness to assume the throne. They received only steadfast refusals from the prince's honorary mother, née Wang, who now dominated the affairs of her deceased husband's only remaining heir. She objected that the Prince of Yung-ming was too young, inexperienced, and delicate to assume heavy responsibilities in chaotic times, and that Kwangtung currently lacked a host of courtiers or even the semblance of an army to constitute and defend a government.

The matter was not pressed until Ting K'uei-ch'u received definite word of the Lung-wu emperor's demise in the first week of November 1646. Stressing the urgency of the dynasty's cause, Ch'ü and Ting were able to persuade the prince in mid-November to become regent at Chao-ch'ing, the site of a former Ming estate and of special headquarters for the Kwangtung provincial governor and Liang-Kuang viceroy.³⁵ Both Ch'ü and Ting became grand secretaries in the new court, and other major ministerial posts were conferred on principal officials in Hu-kuang, while posts in the military hierarchy were bestowed on several dozen commanders in Hu-kuang, Kwangsi, Szechwan, and Kweichow.

Previously Kwangtung had sent most of its organized armed forces to help defend southern Kiangsi. Only small, mutinous local units remained to deal with (or join) the swarms of bandit and pirate groups that had been acting ever more boldly in Kwangtung since news had arrived of the fall of Peking in 1644. Consequently, late in November, when he learned that the patriots at Kan-chou had been overwhelmed by Ch'ing forces twelve days earlier, the new monarch and his family felt very insecure and de-

34 Many Ch'ing and twentieth-century accounts refer to Chu Yu-lang as the Prince of Kuei. This is inaccurate, since his succession does not appear to have been confirmed before the demise of the Lung-wu emperor.

35 Chiang Fan, et. al., comp., *Kuang-tung t'ung chih*, ed. Juan Yüan, et. al. (1864; facsimile rpt. Shanghai, 1934), 18, pp. 1a–b; 83, p. 28a.

parted westward for Wu-chou. There they would be farther away from the Ch'ing threat and closer to loyal Ming armies in Kwangsi. They were unaware that another threat was emerging even closer at hand.

At this point a number of officials who had served directly under the Lung-wu emperor in Fukien began to arrive in the vicinity of Canton, the Kwangtung provincial capital. Several of these men had been in contact with supporters of the Prince of Yung-ming; but they had all come to feel that they would not be able to participate wholeheartedly in that regime because of personal rebuffs, exclusion from their accustomed high posts, or because of the Chao-ch'ing group's prejudice against the Lung-wu emperor, toward whom the others felt great admiration and gratitude. Some also lacked confidence in the new prince, especially after he so lightly abandoned Kwangtung when the first sign of danger appeared. In any case, when the late Lung-wu emperor's younger brother, Chu Yü-yüeh, arrived in Canton by sea on 5 December, he was greeted with warm expectation. One week later he was enthroned there as the Shao-wu emperor, according to the principle that the younger brother should succeed the elder. The most important appointees of this regime were almost all natives of Canton prefecture.

When the Yung-ming court in Wu-chou learned of the Shao-wu challenge, it was decided that the prince should return to Chao-ch'ing and ascend the imperial throne, on the assumption that the greater prestige and wider authority of his ministers would eventually draw popular support to his court. Subsequently, regent Yung-ming became the Yung-li emperor in Chao-ch'ing on 24 December 1646, and defenses were hastily set up at strategic points on the Hsi River between Chao-ch'ing and Canton.

An attempt by the militarily weaker Yung-li court to initiate negotiations ended disastrously when their emissary was executed at the Shao-wu court. Canton, which until the recent troubles had been garrisoned with units of the Kwangtung Regional Military Commission,³⁶ was an easily defensible bastion, and this circumstance further bolstered the confidence of the Shao-wu group, even though its own armed forces consisted largely of untrustworthy local hill bandits and river pirates who had been persuaded to fight under official banners. Two battles ensued between the Yung-li and Shao-wu forces: The first, on 4 January 1647, was won handily by the Yung-li vice-minister of war; but in the second, three days later, the Yung-li force was almost totally annihilated.

The attention and scarce military resources of both courts were directed to this internecine struggle, while the greater common enemy was tempo-

36 Chiang Fan, et al., comp., *Kuang-tung t'ung chih*, 173, p. 17b.

rarily forgotten. The Shao-wu court was just celebrating its victory over the Yung-li forces with a formal military review on 20 January 1647 when Canton was suddenly overrun: Ch'ing cavalry forces met only startled and disorganized opposition. They had proceeded all the way from Chang-chou prefecture in Fukien without being detected by the wholly preoccupied Shao-wu leadership. Since no defense was now possible, the chief grand secretary committed suicide; most of his colleagues submitted to the Ch'ing. The Shao-wu emperor attempted to flee but was captured and later executed, as were many other Ming princes who had congregated in Canton.³⁷

When news of this calamity reached the Yung-li court at Chao-ch'ing, the initial response was one of incredulity; but subsequent reports soon dispelled all illusions. The Yung-li emperor hastily abandoned Chao-ch'ing for Wu-chou late in January. From there he went on to Kuei-lin, establishing a pattern of sudden flight from perceived dangers. This pattern effectively precluded the development of true grassroots support anywhere in the southwest and, in particular, permanently alienated the populace of Kwangtung.

The first Ch'ing penetration of Liang-Kuang

The Ch'ing forces which so swiftly invaded Canton were a typical combination of reliable, disciplined, and small units of Ch'ing banner-men and less reliable, less disciplined, large units of erstwhile Ming troops who had surrendered since the Ch'ing advance into Pei Chihli. In this case, the former were led by T'ung Yang-chia, a Han Chinese from Liao-tung who had been born into the Ch'ing Plain Blue Banner and who recently had accompanied Bolo in his campaign through Chekiang and Fukien. The former Ming troops were led by Li Ch'eng-tung, who since his surrender at Hsü-chou in 1645 had fought almost continuously for the Ch'ing, pacifying the Yangtze delta region and subjugating Fukien.

After Canton had been subdued, T'ung remained there with only a few hundred men, while Li proceeded to seize Chao-ch'ing. From there he sent contingents up the Pei River, south into the Lei-chou peninsula, and somewhat later across the straits to Hai-nan Island. Meanwhile, Li Ch'eng-tung led his main force up the Hsi River to Wu-chou, which he reached on 5 March. From this position reconnaissance missions were dispatched into central Kwangsi and northwest toward Kuei-lin, which was almost taken by a small Ch'ing force in a surprise attack on 15 April 1647.

37 Chu Hsi-tsu, "Nan-Ming Kuang-chou hsün kuo chu wang k'ao," *Wen shih tsu chih*, 2, Nos. 7-8 (August 1942), pp. 51-54.

All of Kwangtung and half of Kwangsi had fallen before the Ch'ing armies with amazing speed. Once again the Ch'ing forces were overextended, a situation that recurred at each stage in the Ch'ing conquest. Numerous Ming officials submitted without resistance, and the formal, physical trappings of Ming government—official seals, yamen buildings, city walls, guardposts—were easily taken over, if only because the Ming government had already lost its authority in these areas. The Ch'ing invariably found that it was a much more difficult matter to restore social order, especially when all manner of disruptive elements began to cloak themselves in legitimacy by allying with Ming loyalists who opposed the Ch'ing regime.

Many communities armed and organized themselves to kill all intruders—Manchus, northern troops, loyalist bands, Ming regulars, bandits, or pirates—simply for self-preservation. T'ung Yang-chia knew that the pacification of Kwangtung depended on the restoration of security along the trade routes from Canton northward through Hu-kuang to the central Yangtze region, and especially through Kiangsi toward Kiangnan. Those in Kwangtung who now had no means of livelihood other than fighting and stealing would then be able to find constructive employment. But at this point T'ung did not have enough men to accomplish the task.

With Li Ch'eng-tung occupied in the west, it soon became apparent to both outlaws and loyalists in the delta region that Ch'ing forces in Canton were scarcely able to defend that city and would be unable to deal with armed insurrections in other parts of the prefecture. Consequently, from mid-March through November 1647 the famous “three loyalists of Kwangtung” (Chang Chia-yü of Tung-kuan, Ch'en Pang-yen of Shun-te, and Ch'en Tzu-chuang of Nan-hai) led a series of short-lived restorations.³⁸ None of them had identified closely with either the Yung-li or Shao-wu regimes, so their efforts during this interval should be seen as a promotion of the Ming cause in general, rather than of the Yung-li cause in particular, although benefits did accrue to the latter.

As soon as these resistance activities began, T'ung Yang-chia called on Li Ch'eng-tung to return immediately to the Canton delta area, where he arrived early in April. From then until autumn he was forced to run frantically from district to district, suppressing one uprising after another. But eventually the superior strength and organization of his army prevailed. In mid-October Ch'en Pang-yen was captured when the Ch'ing successfully besieged Ch'ing-yüan; early in November Chang Chia-yü was

38 Li Chieh, “Nan Ming Kuang-tung san chung shih chi k'ao,” *Chu hai hsüeh pao*, 3 (June 1970), pp. 162–73.

killed in a furious battle against Li's men in Tseng-ch'eng; and late in November Ch'en Tzu-chuang was captured when Li's forces took Kao-ming. Both Ch'en Pang-yen and Ch'en Tzu-chuang were publicly and cruelly executed in Canton.

These patriots failed to restore central Kwangtung to Ming control because they had recruited many bandits and pirates into their fighting forces; as a result, they were unable to enlist broad support from other members of the social elite in their home region. However, by forcing Li Ch'eng-tung to return from Wu-chou and to remain in central Kwangtung, they did succeed in relieving direct pressure on the Yung-li court from that quarter and thus helped the court survive the many tribulations of 1647.

The fugitive court in Kwangsi and southwestern Hu-kuang

In mid-March the Yung-li emperor's entourage had stopped briefly in Kuei-lin, the provincial capital of Kwangsi, which served as the headquarters for Ch'ü Shih-ssu. But in view of the Ch'ing presence close by, on 20 March the court had moved further up the Kuei River to Ch'üan-chou, the principal gateway between Kwangsi and Hu-kuang. There also was a positive rationale for this move. By far the largest Ming armies now were in southern and western Hu-kuang; the central Yangtze region (modern Hupeh and Hunan), if it could be wrested from Ch'ing control, would be much more advantageous offensively than any position in the far south.

But supply bases and relations among the various armed forces in Hu-kuang were extremely unstable. After his harrowing escape from calamity in the revolt of Tso Liang-yü, viceroy Ho T'eng-chiao had faced the overwhelming task of organizing a jumbled variety of fighting men in Hu-kuang into an army: first, Ming regulars under five generals who had survived the invasion of Chang Hsien-chung by hiding out in remote areas, in which process they became independent of any central command or source of supply; second, troops under three of Tso Liang-yü's former commanders, who had feigned surrender to the Ch'ing in Kiangsi but then returned to Ming allegiance in Hu-kuang; third, an army from Yunnan which had been enroute to aid Nanking when the Hung-kuang regime collapsed; and fourth, the remainder of Li Tzu-ch'eng's army, which had split into four separate commands, each of which had negotiated evasively with the Ch'ing but then accepted positions and titles from the Ming side, first from the Lung-wu court and then from the Yung-li court.

The political and economic infrastructure of Hu-kuang, which had been devastated by the hordes of Chang Hsien-chung and Tso Liang-yü, could not have borne such a great concentration of troops even under optimal

conditions. Now most of these armies had to plunder to survive, and even units directly under the viceroy's command used extortion to squeeze scarce supplies from an exhausted and depleted populace. The various generals, whose chief concern was to keep their commands intact, were wary of one another and tended to follow Ho T'eng-chiao's orders only when doing so would strengthen their access to supplies and their defenses at the expense of other generals.

At court, Ch'ü Shih-ssu argued that the emperor risked casting away the hearts of the people in his readiness to withdraw precipitously from challenged territory. But since the emperor had already gone to Ch'üan-chou, Ch'ü urged that he remain poised there for a "personal campaign" through southern Hu-kuang toward Wu-han and beyond, by his very presence bringing unity and a greater sense of purpose to the Hu-kuang armies.

However, the Yung-li emperor was about to display a two-sided propensity that characterized his entire reign. On the one hand, he disliked the urgings of high-minded civil officials that he be bold, brave, and far-sighted. He regarded with suspicion their rosy assessments and buoyant prophecies and felt they were too willing to expose him to danger. On the other hand, he ran gratefully into the arms of any militarist who seemed capable of providing physical security for him and his family, only to chafe petulantly under the restrictions such protection invariably imposed on him.

At this point Liu Ch'eng-yin, the most headstrong general in Hu-kuang, persuaded the Yung-li emperor to move the court from Ch'üan-chou on 19 May to his headquarters at Wu-kang, in southwestern Hu-kuang. So instead of acting as imperial overseer of all the Hu-kuang generals, the emperor actually became the pawn of the most resented among them. At Wu-kang Liu had his own associates appointed to key positions, behaved with alarming pretentiousness, and employed strong-arm tactics to isolate the emperor from opposing officials.

Throughout 1647 the Ch'ing armies' progress through Hu-kuang had been slower than in Kwangtung. First, to accord with their own propaganda justifying the takeover, they placed highest priority on attacking those parts of Li Tzu-ch'eng's remnant army which, on agreement with Ho T'eng-chiao, had moved westward and northwestward from Lake Tung-t'ing. Second, in order to secure the rear of Wu-ch'ang they expended considerable effort in pacifying Ming loyalists and other unsubmissive elements who had manned the numerous stockades of northeastern Hu-kuang. Consequently, although the southern Hu-kuang campaign was announced in Peking in September 1646, K'ung Yu-te did not take Ch'ang-sha until March 1647. And although Ho T'eng-chiao's organized opposition to this Ch'ing drive was quite

weak, K'ung still found the situation complex and frustrating. He did not immediately learn of the Yung-li emperor's location, and his forces did not move toward Wu-kang until mid-September.

After several days' fighting over outer defenses at Wu-kang, on 23 September Liu Ch'eng-yin prepared to surrender and allowed the Yung-li emperor and his family to escape. With a small, disunited party, assisted chiefly by Ma Chi-hsiang, the increasingly influential head of his Imperial Bodyguard, the emperor fled back into Kwangsi by a circuitous and hazardous route. During the autumn of 1647 a number of officials who had remained in Kwangsi rejoined the emperor's entourage, which stopped temporarily at Hsiang-chou.

Because of growing resistance in central Kwangtung, all Ch'ing forces had been withdrawn from Kwangsi. But by late autumn Li Ch'eng-tung had suppressed the "three loyalists," and in December he regained Wu-chou, thereby exposing the court at Hsiang-chou to possible attack. Consequently, it was decided that the women in the imperial party should be removed to the relative security of Nan-ning, while the emperor responded to the urgings of Ch'ü Shih-ssu and others and returned to Kuei-lin, arriving there on 30 December.

It was hoped that the emperor's presence in Kuei-lin would foster spirited cooperation among the several Hu-kuang armies, which had fallen back in the face of K'ung Yu-te's advance and now were crowded together uneasily in the far northeastern tip of Kwangsi. Unfortunately, the emperor's presence elicited only special pleas from Ho Yung-chung,³⁹ who had little confidence in the fighting abilities of his fellow generals. Seeking a legitimate excuse to withdraw farther, he tried to persuade the emperor to move under his escort deeper into Kwangsi. At the insistence of Ch'ü Shih-ssu, the emperor remained. But on the evening of 14 March 1648 Ho descended on Kuei-lin with his army, causing a great commotion and claiming that Ch'ing cavalry were close at hand. Subsequently, while Ch'ü Shih-ssu was being manhandled and kidnapped by unruly troops, the emperor became separated from Ho Yung-chung in the chaos. Gradually he made his way southwestward to rejoin his family in Nan-ning, and Ch'ü managed to return to Kuei-lin. Although that city had been thoroughly gutted by looting soldiers, Ch'ü and Ho T'eng-chiao were able to pull together enough forces to repulse the third Ch'ing attack on Kuei-lin on 14 April 1648.

39 Original name, Ho Yao-ch'i. Ho and other leading generals in Li Tzu-ch'eng's remnant army had been granted new given names by the Lung-wu emperor to ritualize their change from life as rebels to life as loyal servants of the state.

At this point, a precarious situation was saved by events occurring completely beyond the knowledge or control of the Yung-li regime.

Chin Sheng-huan and Li Ch'eng-tung revert to the Ming side

From the surrender of Tso Liang-yü's forces to Ajige at Chiu-chiang in the summer of 1645 through the subjugation of Kan-chou in the autumn of 1646, the collaborator general Chin Sheng-huan had been a key figure in Ch'ing efforts to pacify Kiangsi. Chin's chief deputy and close associate during this time had been regional vice-commander Wang Te-jen, formerly leader of a remnant of Li Tzu-ch'eng's army. Relations between the generals Chin and Wang and the Ch'ing authorities, while appearing smooth on the surface, were in fact very tenuous.

The Ch'ing had early been aware of Chin's tendency to inflate reports of his successes and to neglect mentioning persistent or emergent problems; and Wang Te-jen's reputation for slaughter and pillage had singled him out for quick removal. In view of these matters, the Ch'ing court found Chin's bald requests for additional rewards insufferably presumptuous. Chin relished the civil and military powers he temporarily had wielded as "general who summons and chastizes." Thus he was sorely disappointed when the Ch'ing did not formally appoint him to a post of similar authority. He saw that they intended not only to exclude him from civil affairs, but also to reduce his military status to a level commensurate with that of other surrendered commanders in the province. As a sop, he was eventually appointed regional commander and superintendent for military affairs for Kiangsi, but he chafed under the supercilious provincial governor and the inspector whom the Ch'ing dispatched to Kiangsi.

Consequently, Chin Sheng-huan resolved to restore his allegiance to the Ming. But he delayed any action until secret arrangements could be made with Ming loyalists in Kiangsi and with officials of the Yung-li court in Hu-kuang. Wang Te-jen, however, learned that a Ch'ing official had indicted him for misdeeds during pacification. So, with the encouragement of loyalist infiltrators in his own ranks, he forced Chin's hand. In Nan-ch'ang on 20–21 February 1648 the Ch'ing provincial governor was imprisoned, the regional inspector killed, and queues removed. Chin and Wang arrogated Ming noble titles to themselves, and they sent emissaries to find the Yung-li court and convey news of their "return to proper allegiance."

Although Chin Sheng-huan had acted out of personal motives and lacked great vision or ability as a leader, his turnabout had widespread repercussions. Not only were Kiangsi loyalists aroused, but officials in places as far away as western Hu-kuang and coastal Fukien began realigning themselves with the Ming. Stockade defenders in northeastern Hu-kuang became ac-

tive once more, and sympathizers struck at Ch'ing positions far down the Yangtze toward Nanking. However, in one crucial place, Kan-chou, officials remained loyal to the Ch'ing. When strategy options were discussed, Chin was advised to take advantage of Ch'ing unpreparedness and to launch a campaign toward Nanking. But Chin worried that with Kan-chou and the passes leading from Kwangtung still under Ch'ing control, his rear would be insecure. He decided he must subdue Kan-chou before moving into Kiangnan.

The most important response, however, was that of Li Ch'eng-tung. He too had long been disappointed by the Ch'ing failure to reward him and his subordinates more generously. (In June 1648 T'ung Yang-chia was appointed viceroy for Liang-Kuang, whereas Li received a lower rank and assignment in Kwangtung only.) Romanticized accounts of Li's reversion suggest not only that he had been deeply moved by the ardor of many loyalists he had slain, but also that his final decision to declare for the Ming was prompted by the suicide of his favorite concubine.⁴⁰ Perhaps Li was a man of troubled conscience; we can only guess what was in his heart. The most substantial evidence suggests that his primary motivation was fear of becoming isolated and vulnerable in Kwangtung as Chin Sheng-huan and the Yung-li generals gathered strength in Kiangsi and Hu-kuang.

In any case, having plotted early in May 1648 with his closest supporters, Li Ch'eng-tung constrained T'ung Yang-chia to join him in declaring allegiance to the Yung-li court, probably by threatening to massacre T'ung's bannermen and all others who had adopted Manchu styles. Li began using the seal of the Ming viceroy of Liang-Kuang and soon dispatched officials from Wu-chou to convey his respects to the Yung-li court in Nan-ning. Subsequently, however, a personal letter from Li was required to overcome suspicion that he was luring the court into a trap.

Still, the Yung-li emperor did not rush back to Kwangtung. The court first reconsidered Ch'ü Shih-ssu's persistent arguments in favor of Kuei-lin, but it then acceded to Li Ch'eng-tung's plea that he could neither calm agitation among the people of Kwangtung nor hold the province secure without the court's presence. Since Chin and Li were responsible for so dramatically restoring the court's fortunes, it was felt that the emperor should encourage them by moving back to Chao-ch'ing. The imperial entourage eventually arrived there late in September 1648; they were pleased to find that Li provided handsomely for a dignified return after a year of hardship and humiliation.

In the north, the Ch'ing court was stunned by these developments. An

⁴⁰ Chien Yu-wen, "Nan Ming min tsu nü ying hsiung Chang Yü-ch'iao k'ao cheng," *Ta lu tsu chih*, 41, No. 6 (September 1970), pp. 1-19.

army consisting wholly of banner troops, led by Manchu and Mongol lieutenant-generals, was sent all the way from Peking to deal with Chin Sheng-huan. Chin and Wang, unsuccessful in their siege of Kan-chou, had dashed north and barely managed to reenter Nan-ch'ang before the Ch'ing made their first concerted attack against the city on 9 July. By late August such attacks had not been successful, however, so the Ch'ing armies prepared to starve the city into submission.

Meanwhile, Ch'ing forces withdrew from advance positions in southern Hu-kuang; and in the course of 1648 Ho T'eng-chiao and several Hu-kuang generals who had been confined to northeastern Kwangsi were able to reoccupy much of southern Hu-kuang for the Ming cause. Chin Sheng-huan and Wang Te-jen begged Ho to send relief forces. But because Ho's control over his generals was too tenuous to launch a credible overland campaign from southeastern Hu-kuang into northwestern Kiangsi, no aid ever reached Nan-ch'ang. The city long since had been reduced to cannibalism when, after eight months under siege, some soldiers secretly agreed to capitulate and Ch'ing forces thus were able to scale the city wall on 1 March 1649. Chin Sheng-huan committed suicide, while Wang Te-jen was captured in the fighting and executed.

On this same day in central Hu-kuang, Ho T'eng-chiao was captured at Hsiang-t'an. He was executed six days later in Ch'ang-sha. Then in the second week of April, Li Ch'eng-tung accidentally drowned fording a river in southern Kiangsi. He had been beaten by the Ch'ing after a long, frustrating campaign to restore Ming control of Kan-chou from the south. Ho's defeat had been engendered by a tumultuous falling out among former Tso commanders, leaders of the major section of Li Tzu-ch'eng's remnant army, and the official who was supposed to control them—grand coordinator for southern Hu-kuang Tu Yin-hsi. Li's defeat came about because the Ch'ing court had been able to supply and reinforce Kan-chou, whereas the Yung-li court had been unable to supply Li Ch'eng-tung once he had crossed Mei Pass and moved northward outside Kwangtung. Thus, within one month's time in the spring of 1649 the three men who seemed to have miraculously recovered almost the whole south for the Ming—Chin, Ho, and Li—were removed from the scene.

The restored court in Chao-ch'ing

After moving back to Kwangtung, the court's first order of business was to award official ranks. The chief difficulty here lay in balancing the distribution of rewards and powers between men who had loyally "accompanied the imperial carriage" on its perilous odyssey, and men who had earned "the

merit of returning to correct allegiance" by following Li Ch'eng-tung. Before long, however, the tension between old guard and repatriated officials was replaced by more typical factional alignments based on place of origin, teacher-student (patron-client) relations, and institutional affiliations. To survive and become predominant, a clique had to have effective members in the inner court, the outer court, and the provincial administration (which by the Yung-li period comprised little more than the organizations under various military commanders). The object of clique competition was to capture positions, in particular the senior position, in the grand secretariat, and thereby to influence or even control the official acts of the emperor.

Two cliques developed. The dominant Ch'ü clique's core membership was in the Censorate (the outer court). It had adherents and sympathizers among both the eunuchs and guard officers in the imperial household (the inner court). In addition, it was favored by provincial military leaders (chiefly Li Ch'eng-tung, now viceroy for all of the southeast, and Ch'ü Shih-ssu, minister of war in charge of defending Kuei-lin), as well as by the chief grand secretary. The clique heads, censor-in-chief Yüan P'eng-nien and supervising secretary of the Office of Scrutiny for Personnel Ting Shih-k'uei, with the censors Liu Hsiang-k'o, Meng Cheng-fa, and Chin Pao, became known, because of their political aggressiveness, as the Tiger Five.⁴¹

The weaker Wu clique drew its support from the inner court, from among the eunuchs and maternal in-laws of the emperor, and especially from Ma Chi-hsiang who, as commander of the Imperial Bodyguard, had become the emperor's influential personal attendant and secretary. This clique's chief supporter in the provinces was the general Ch'en Pang-fu, who continually and often illicitly strove to increase his power in Kwangsi. Adherents in the outer court were mostly junior heads of ministries and among the grand secretaries, two were considered to be Wu men.

These clique names, which refer to the regional origins of certain factional leaders, suggest at least one reason why a large number of men sought bureaucratic positions in a fragile regime. They were far away from their homes, which had fallen under Ch'ing control, and they had no income aside from stipends, official privileges, and the opportunities for graft which public office afforded. This was true both for loyalists and for opportunists. The former may have thought little of personal profit; they sought high positions from which to exercise leadership in the resistance.

41 They were popularly caricatured as a tiger with five parts, each man constituting the head, fangs, hide, feet, and tail of the animal. Ho Shih-fei, *Feng-tao wu t'ung chi* (Shun-chih [1644-1661] period or early K'ang-hsi [1662-1722]), in *Ch'ing t'o i shih* (Tao-kuang [1821-50] period; rpt. Shanghai, 1911), 2 p. 1a.

The latter sought such positions for their emoluments and for the “gifts” they might receive. They also expected the Ch’ing court to recognize their former ranks if they were to submit to its authority at some future time. But Ch’u men were by no means all loyalists, nor were all Wu men opportunists.

During the sixteen months that the court stayed in Chao-ch’ing, the Ch’u clique remained dominant. This came about in part because the court relied on Li Ch’eng-tung, whose generals controlled Kwangtung and whose son controlled the Capital Guard, even after Li’s death. Also the Ch’u clique, rooted in the bureaucracy of the outer court, made every effort to continue the established patterns of the dynasty. Such an approach, especially when carried out in the astringent, sarcastic style of Chin Pao, may have galled the emperor and those (especially in the Wu clique) who might be termed “realists.” But it was an emphasis the court needed in order to attract large numbers of conscientious civil servants, through whom it could begin to establish a semblance of genuine government throughout the provinces under its nominal control. In other words, the Ch’u clique represented the continuance of the usual Ming procedures and authority, which was what the Yung-li court needed more than anything else at that time. Unfortunately, too much attention was focused on the court and on the affairs of high officials, and not enough on provincial governance.

During the earlier years of danger, flight, and isolation, the commandant Ma Chi-hsiang and others connected with the inner court were personally responsible for the emperor’s security, and thus more influential. They continued to be so during the Chao-ch’ing interval. This circumstance came about because of the diffident character of the Yung-li emperor. His ignorance of Ming governmental forms led him to use his eunuchs and Ma Chi-hsiang as buffers. He recoiled from the demands which righteous bureaucratic officials made on him. Moreover, the protests of certain Ch’u men rang hollow, for they too, by applying pressure through military allies, by promoting unqualified associates, and by accepting bribes became part of the very corruption they lamented.

One problem in particular illustrates the state of governance and policy discourse during the restoration period: the request of the rebel leader Sun K’o-wang to be granted the title Prince of Ch’in for having declared his allegiance to the Ming and for placing his large army in Yunnan at the disposal of the court. “Realists” who favored catering to the vanity and even to the territorial ambitions of military leaders, if these would enhance the security of the court, argued that a formal investiture could make a valuable ally of a potential enemy.

However, guardians of the "controlling principles" of Ming institutions and of the court's dignity, led by supervising secretary for the Ministry of Rites, Chin Pao, vigorously opposed such acts. In the first place, as Chin pointed out, it was not permissible according to the *Ancestral injunctions* to confer such an imperial title on a commoner. Furthermore, the court would surely lose more from this embarrassment in the eyes of officialdom than it might gain in military services from a notorious bandit. Whether it conferred such a title or not, the court still had no actual control over Sun; but if the court were to hold firm, perhaps Sun would be impressed enough to offer his allegiance voluntarily and be obedient.⁴² Chin's memorial was erudite, eloquent, and typically impolitic; it stopped public debate on the matter for a year, until after the Ch'u clique's fall from power. The court decided instead to offer Sun the lesser title of duke.

Some, however, took unauthorized action in this case. For various reasons, predominantly self-aggrandizing, Tu Yin-hsi and Ch'en Pang-fu separately fabricated documents of investiture for Sun. Ch'en granted him his coveted Prince of Ch'in title, and Tu conferred on him the rank of prince of the secondary degree.⁴³ When Sun received these contradictory offers, he became enraged and sent emissaries to demand clarification. The issue smoldered again for several months before the court decided to confirm Tu's patent, but the mishandling of this matter had already set relations with Sun on a calamitous course.

Notably absent from this affair was any serious criticism of two practices that would have been severely condemned four years earlier during the Hung-kuang reign. These were the widespread granting of discretionary powers to civil and military officials, which enabled some to act as satraps, and the granting of noble titles to military men to ensure their loyalty, rather than to reward them for outstanding service. Only such flagrant claims as Ch'en Pang-fu's (that he was the hereditary duke of Kwangsi) were vigorously opposed.

It may be useful here to note other encroachments on bureaucratic power. Military men now memorialized and directly addressed the court on all kinds of political matters almost as freely as civil officials, without arousing objections. Members of the imperial clan assumed a variety of minor posts; some were officially confirmed as leaders of armed forces, perhaps because now, rather than being looked down on as incompetent

42 Chin Pao, *Ling-hai fen yü* (1645–50; rpt. No. 302 of *TW*, Taipei, 1972), pp. 51–54.

43 According to established Ming precedents, no prince's title, whether of the first or second degree, was to be conferred on any meritorious civil or military official except as a posthumous honor for dukes. Shen Shih-hsing, comp., *Ta Ming hui tien* (1587; photographic rpt. Taipei, 1964), 6, pp. 1a–2a).

intruders by regular bureaucrats, their relative competence and loyalty compared to others were especially valued.

Also, one finds no discussion of public finance other than occasional revelations that above the prefectural level there was none. Ministers of revenue were appointed perfunctorily, but they scarcely even functioned. There were no regular fiscal links between the Yung-li court and any of its provincial locales, and nothing was done to reestablish such links. There was no central logistical management, only the separate organizations of the various commanders, some of whom were conscientious and orderly, but most of whom were heavy-handed and arbitrary. The court was dependent for its physical well-being on the extractive and distributive practices of the particular militarist who controlled the current site of the “temporary capital,” and no courtiers made an issue of this.

On 6 February 1650 Chao-ch'ing learned that Ming forces, hearing of a Ch'ing approach, had abandoned Shao-chou, the key northern point of defense for Kwangtung. Two days later the emperor again departed for Wu-chou in eastern Kwangsi.

The westward flight of the court

The Yung-li court had already lost control of Hu-kuang and Kiangsi in 1649. Earlier, in October 1648, the Manchu prince Jirgalang had been charged with the task of exterminating Li Ch'ih-hsin, leader of the largest part of Li Tzu-ch'eng's remnant army.⁴⁴ But when he began his campaign in southern Hu-kuang in the spring of 1649, he found that it was easy to advance his armies but difficult to gain control over the regions that he had traversed. Furthermore, it was impossible to find the real Li Ch'ih-hsin, who had quit the Hu-kuang theater for Kwangsi. Throughout the summer of 1649, Jirgalang's forces gained control over all major cities in the southernmost parts of Hu-kuang, but their hold on the territory was tenuous.

In any case, Jirgalang had not in fact been authorized or prepared to invade Kwangtung or Kwangsi. The Ch'ing forces in Kiangsi were only to take Nan-ch'ang, save Kan-chou, and eliminate loyalist activity in the province. After Li Ch'eng-tung's units disintegrated near Kan-chou, the Ch'ing armies simply guarded Mei Pass and did not advance into Kwangtung. Moreover, in the north the Ch'ing court was suppressing another revolt by a former Ming regional commander. On 15 January 1649 Chiang Hsiang, headquartered at Ta-t'ung, Shansi, had rebelled and disrupted the entire

⁴⁴ Li Ch'ih-hsin, who prior to allying with the Southern Ming had used two given names, Kuo and Chin, was the nephew and adopted son of Li Tzu-ch'eng.

province, including places close to the Ch'ing capital at Peking. Ultimately he was betrayed and finally killed on 4 October.

Nevertheless, on 28 June 1649 the court in Peking formally charged three princes—the veteran Chinese bannermen K'ung Yu-te, Keng Chung-ming, and Shang K'o-hsi—with the conquest of Liang-Kuang. There was some delay when Keng, dishonored by the revelation that escaped fugitives had been harbored in his army, committed suicide in Kiangsi. His son, Keng Chi-mao, was allowed to succeed in command, and the campaign went on as planned. Simultaneously, in January 1650 K'ung pressed south from Ch'ang-sha and concentrated on retaking northeastern Kwangsi, while Keng and Shang moved across Mei Pass into northern Kwangtung.

This time the Ch'ing forces proceeded more deliberately than they had earlier, concentrating on fewer targets. The corridor from Ch'üan-chou to Kuei-lin remained dangerous, and in west-central Kwangtung the Yung-li forces still held key defense points. Through April 1650, K'ung Yu-te consolidated his hold on the approaches to Ch'üan-chou, but he did not advance in force until autumn. Keng and Shang had proceeded quickly to attack Canton in March. When that failed, they made preparations for a difficult siege through the malarial summer.

As soon as the Yung-li court arrived at Wu-chou, clique struggles began anew. The emperor vented his anger and resentment condoning a severe persecution of four of the Tiger Five. (Yüan P'eng-nien was spared because of his great merit in effecting Li Ch'eng-tung's reversion.) They were arrested and interrogated by the Imperial Bodyguard, and Chin Pao was tortured so ruthlessly that he was permanently crippled. The charges were based on allegations of sedition, but were really little more than fabrications. A flood of appeals came to the court pointing out that this was no time to persecute censorial officials, and some key figures on whom the court relied challenged the emperor to punish them for their association with the imprisoned four. The persecution finally ended in midsummer after a military rival of Ch'en Pang-fu moved a portion of his army to Wu-chou in support of those who wanted to free the caged "tiger." Eventually Chin and Ting Shih-k'uei were exiled to garrison duty in Kweichow, while Liu Hsiang-k'o and Meng Cheng-fa were assessed fines and reduced to the status of commoner.

Meanwhile, the Wu faction had its chance to replace the Ch'u faction but failed. Although Wu sympathizers reentered the grand secretariat and numerous Wu partisans received promotions in rank and office, they lacked the talent and cohesiveness needed to form a new factional network for governing. The court, now leaderless, lost any semblance of purpose or direction, and arguments among courtiers fell to a level of extreme petti-

ness. A decentralized approach was adopted in order to deal with the Hu-kuang armies, which had lacked a commander since the death of Ho T'eng-chiao. So as the Ch'ing patiently pressed in from the north and east, affairs both at the Yung-li court and among the military commands deteriorated further for internal, political reasons.

One interesting revelation of the anxiety that afflicted members of the inner court at this time was the solicitation of spiritual (and possible political) assistance by senior empress dowager Wang and eunuch director of ceremonial P'ang T'ien-shou from Pope Innocent X in Rome. P'ang and Ch'ü Shih-ssu previously had been baptized as Christians and probably were the ones responsible for introducing the German Jesuit missionary Andreas Koffler to the imperial family. Subsequently, Koffler baptized and gave Christian names to the senior and junior empresses dowager, the empress, and the Yung-li heir apparent, and he sought military aid for the court from the Portuguese colony at Macao. However, despite his closeness to the imperial family, he exercised no discernible influence on Yung-li politics.

It was not Koffler but his assistant, the Polish Jesuit Michel Boym, who had actually accompanied the court on its recent flight from Chao-ch'ing to Wu-chou. Boym subsequently agreed to carry two letters, dated 1 and 4 November 1650, from the senior empress dowager and P'ang to the Vatican. These letters ingenuously begged the pope to pray both for their souls and for the Ming restoration, and to send more Catholic priests to China. By 1658, however, when Boym finally was able to return to the Tonkin Gulf with a spiritually uplifting but politically noncommittal letter from Pope Alexander VII, the senior empress dowager had died, and the Yung-li court had been forced deep into the southwest beyond his reach.⁴⁵

Late in the autumn of 1650 the Ch'ing broke through Ming defenses in Kwangtung and Kwangsi. On 24 November Shang K'o-hsi finally penetrated the old city of Canton, and he subjected the city (which had held out stubbornly for eight and a half months) to a terrible slaughter. K'ung Yu-te, taking advantage of a general breakdown in cooperation among Ming generals and a mutiny at Ch'üan-chou, took Kuei-lin on 27 November. Ch'ü Shih-ssu and a loyal aide were captured together and, after refusing to submit, were executed there the following January. On 2 December, just as Ch'ing forces were preparing to take Chao-ch'ing, the Yung-li entourage was pillaged as it fled Wu-chou in disarray, the emperor narrowly escaping capture by Ming forces bent on surrender. Two hundred

45 Paul Pelliot, "Michel Boym," *T'oung Pao*, series 2, 31, Nos. 1–2 (1935), pp. 95–151. Fritz Jäger, "Die letzten Tage des Kü Schi-si," *Sinica*, 8 Nos. 5–6 (1933), pp. 197–207. Kuwabara Jitsuzō, "Min no Hō Tenju yori Rōma Hōō ni sōtei seshi bunsho," *Shigaku zasshi*, 11, No. 3 (March 1900), pp. 338–49, and 11, No. 5 (May 1900), p. 617–30.

fifty miles to the southwest at Nan-ning, the much diminished court was reconstituted and entered a new phase in its history.

THE MARITIME REGIME OF REGENT LU, 1646–1652

The odyssey of the Yung-li court on land was matched in time, distance, and complexity by the maritime odyssey of regent Lu. In contrast to the Yung-li emperor and his regime, however, regent Lu, a man in his late twenties, continued to evince a willingness to expose himself and his family to dire hazards for the sake of his supporters and for the Ming cause. His regime, though smallest in terms of number of officials and territory held, continued to command the highest degree of genuine loyalty from its adherents. Although not plagued by ideological or factional divisions, it did exhibit the same rivalries that weakened every Southern Ming endeavor.

Ming retrenchment after losses in the coastal provinces

Although many Lu and Lung-wu officials had escaped into mountainous parts of eastern Chekiang and Fukien in the summer and fall of 1646, the most important among the survivors sought the coast and the aid of various land and naval generals. In maritime Chekiang the strongest of these were Chang Ming-chen and Huang Pin-ch'ing. In maritime Fukien these were commanders in the disintegrating organization of Cheng Chih-lung. There were, however, other armed forces on the seaboard—an abundance of pirate organizations. Indeed, many Ming naval commanders had begun their careers as freebooters, and after the collapse of Ming government in Chekiang and Fukien they constantly fought among themselves for good sailors, bases, and supplies. Some undeniably were sincere Ming loyalists; nevertheless, the Lu resistance effort was crippled by internecine struggles among the warlords who supported the court.

The most important satrap at this time was Huang Pin-ch'ing. In 1645 he had begun to establish an independent base on Chou-shan Island off the coast of northern Chekiang, when he was charged by the Lung-wu emperor to coordinate counteroffensive activities in the Hangchow Bay region. Subsequently he cooperated with other Ming naval commanders, but only when such cooperation could be turned to his own advantage. He soon gained a reputation for being more willing to wage war on his compatriots than on the Ch'ing, but this attitude was tolerated because of his strategic position.

Two experiences in particular seem to have reinforced Huang's preference for an offshore rather than a mainland base. First, in the spring of 1647

Huang aided an attempt to supply outside naval power to Wu Sheng-chao, the Ch'ing regional commander at Sung-chiang who was planning to switch his allegiance. However, the relief fleet was broken up by typhoon winds and subsequently decimated by Ch'ing defenses when it reached the mouth of the Yangtze. Ming loyalists in Wu's ranks refused to abort their plans because of this and unsuccessfully attempted a coup on 24 May. Many military and civilian leaders were executed after this incident.⁴⁶ The Ch'ing became determined to break the seditious triangle of lake "bandits," traitors among Su-Sung military personnel, and coastal elements loyal to regent Lu.

Next Huang was persuaded to lead a naval force to Ning-po, where local loyalists planned to stage an uprising and wrest the prefecture from Ch'ing control. But the conspirators were betrayed, and the insurrection failed to occur. Again, many arrests and executions followed.⁴⁷ After these incidents, Huang never again became involved in mainland offensives. Even less was he willing to allow regent Lu to establish his court at Chou-shan.

Cheng Chih-lung had not been able to persuade the most important fighting members of his clan to surrender with him to the Ch'ing. For a period after he had been taken to Peking, the Cheng home base at An-p'ing (near Hsia-men) was spared from Ch'ing assaults. Such noblesse oblige was, of course, part of the Ch'ing strategy. But the Ch'ing felt that as long as Cheng Chih-lung was alive and favorably disposed toward them, they might gain the support of the other Chengs without a costly campaign of suppression. Therefore, the Chengs were able to maintain control over mainland areas of coastal southern Fukien, as well as to develop bases on the islands of Hsia-men (Amoy) and Chin-men (Quemoy). The chief candidates to succeed Cheng Chih-lung were his younger brother, Cheng Hung-k'uei, his clansman, Cheng Ts'ai, and his twenty-two-year-old son, Cheng Ch'eng-kung.⁴⁸ The last symbolically continued the Lung-wu calendar and changed to that of the Yung-li court when the opportunity arose; he never acknowledged the status of regent Lu. With almost no army of his own, he began garnering both the necessary experience and the personnel he needed to attack Ch'ing positions at Ch'üan-chou and Chang-chou in coastal southern Fukien.

In refusing to recognize regent Lu, Cheng Ch'eng-kung was exceptional. Of those who rallied to the Lu standard, about half formerly had served the

46 Later accounts, sympathetic to the loyalists, assign a leading role among civilian conspirators to the ardent teenage resister, Hsia Wan-ch'un. See Cha Chi-tso, *Tung-shan kuo yü*, supplement by Shen Ch'i (between 1669 and 1676; rpt. No. 163 of TW, Taipei, 1963), pp. 101–03.

47 Kao Yü-t'ai, *Hsiieh-chiao t'ing cheng ch'i lu* (1655; rpt. No. 286 of TW, Taipei, 1970), ch. 5.

48 See above, pp. 666–67.

Lung-wu court, and almost all hailed from Chekiang, Fukien, and Nan Chihli in roughly equal proportion. The division in the Ming resistance which now formed along the southeastern coast did not represent an extension of the earlier antagonism between Lu and Lung-wu partisans. Rather, it was a division between regent Lu's new regime and a changing Cheng organization, which eventually came to be dominated by Cheng Ch'eng-kung.

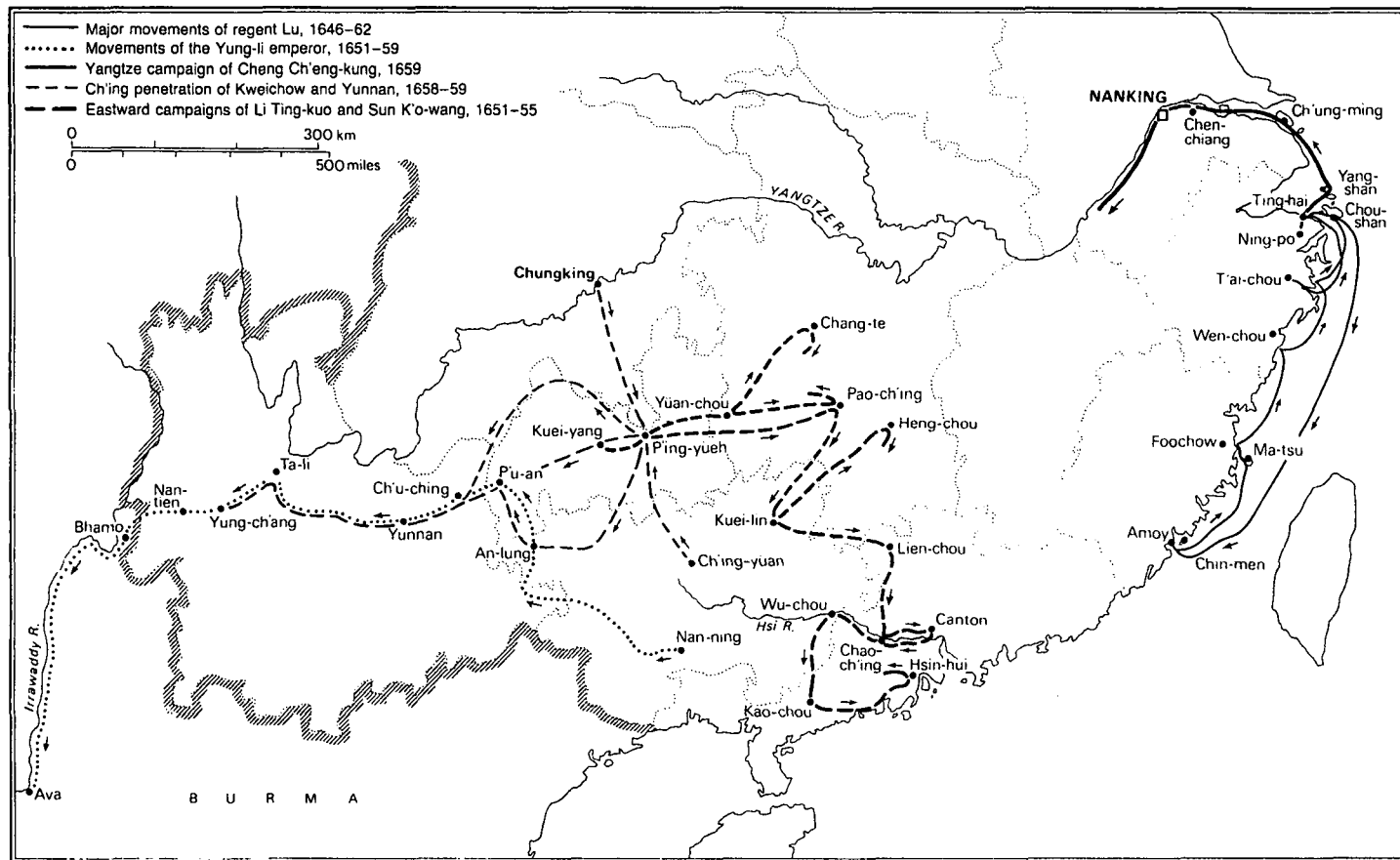
Cheng Ts'ai remained ambivalent. He seems to have hoped for an opportunity to emulate Cheng Chih-lung's earlier role as protector to the Lung-wu emperor, and thus to become the next patriarch and provider to regent Lu. He sailed to the Chou-shan area and in December 1646 transported the regent back to Amoy. Cheng Ts'ai's rivalry with Cheng Ch'eng-kung gave the latter added reason to ignore the regent, but since Cheng Ch'eng-kung still could not afford to initiate hostilities against Cheng Ts'ai, he made no attempt to drive regent Lu away from the Cheng family base camp.

The Fukien phase

From the spring through the fall of 1647, regent Lu stood behind attacks on Ch'ing positions in Chang-chou, Fukien's southernmost prefecture, and in Foochow prefecture, including the provincial seat itself. These attacks were carried out by Cheng Ts'ai and other naval commanders who had served the earlier Lu and Lung-wu regimes. By early September regent Lu had moved northward from Hsia-men Island to the Ch'ang-yüan Islands in order to give more direct encouragement to the Foochow campaign.⁴⁹ From this time until the effective end of the Lu regime, Lu forces operated from Foochow prefecture northeastward into Chekiang, and Cheng Ch'eng-kung's forces operated from Ch'üan-chou prefecture southwestward into Kwangtung. They were segregated not by formal agreement, but by circumstance.

In November regent Lu began to reestablish the semblance of a legitimate court at Ch'ang-yüan by appointing a number of high ministers, among them men from both the former Shao-hsing and Foochow courts. Officials from both camps worked together harmoniously, and spirits were buoyed when several districts were restored in northeastern Fukien. The response which Lu coastal attacks drew from loyalists in upland Fukien also was heartening. Through the fall and winter of 1647-48, Ming princes

49 Ch'ang-yüan was a collective term for that group of islands off the coast from Foochow, the largest of which is modern Ma-tsu. See Sheng Ch'eng, "Shen Kuang-wen yü Ming Ssu-tzung chi nan tu chu wang," *Hsiieh shu chi k'an*, 4, No. 3 (March 1956), pp. 51-52.



Map 30. The end of the Southern Ming

and local loyalists led uprisings throughout the length of Fukien's central, intermontane region. The first of these threatened Ch'ing control even at their upland stronghold, P'u-ch'eng. Soon almost every district in north-central Fukien was in revolt. Although the Ch'ing forces managed to retain or recover essential points, suppression campaigns in the region continued into 1651.

But all did not continue to go well in this challenge to the Ch'ing in Fukien. Most damaging was the enmity that grew between Cheng Ts'ai and certain leaders among regent Lu's other supporters. Cheng, a military man, seems to have been resented mostly for his attempts to dominate court affairs. But in addition to this problem, the Lu regime also lacked sufficient manpower to link up with loyalist movements inland. And, here as elsewhere, the Ch'ing forces were more skilled in land battles and had greater tactical flexibility than the Ming.

By the spring of 1648 Ch'ing armies had retaken almost all the locales seized by Lu forces in Foochow prefecture. One year later, the restored locales in northeastern Fukien also succumbed. At this point Cheng Ts'ai lost interest in maintaining the Lu regime and returned to Hsia-men, hoping to become reconciled with Cheng Ch'eng-kung. Regent Lu remained on the seacoast until Chang Ming-chen rescued him again. In July 1649 Chang restored the coastal garrison of Chien-t'iao-so to Ming control so that the regent could reestablish his court there.

The Chekiang phase

From Chien-t'iao-so the Lu court easily made contact with armed groups that had held out in the hills of southeastern Chekiang since the Ch'ing invasion of the surrounding region in 1646. These included loyalists and opportunistic strongmen. In addition, encouragement and help were given to loyalist groups in Wen-chou prefecture, which abutted northeastern Fukien. Regent Lu now had two good opportunities to establish a land base in Chekiang, but both were lost. The Ch'ing were able to persevere. On the other hand, the Lu regime lacked manpower; and there was significant friction between the newly dominant military figure, Chang Ming-chen, and his political critics.

The strongest and most conscientious of the stockade defenders in the Ssu-ming Hills was Wang I, a headstrong fighter who had risen from social obscurity. After having been badly beaten by the Ch'ing in the spring of 1648, he rebuilt his movement and was at the peak of his strength when the Lu court arrived at Chien-t'iao-so. But even though he was deeply anti-Ch'ing in sentiment, he was not willing to sacrifice his independence

to Chang Ming-chen. No agreement was reached between the Lu court and the various stockade defenders.

By autumn of 1649 supplies at Chien-t'iao-so were critically short, and it was clear that regent Lu's court would have to abandon its mainland foothold. Chang Ming-chen and his lieutenants then conspired with disgruntled commanders to overthrow Huang Pin-ch'ing and to seize Chou-shan Island as a more secure site for regent Lu's court. Defeated, Huang committed suicide at Chou-shan on 29 October, and the Lu court moved to the island in November. After 1649 the Lu regime was isolated and on the defensive; its primary concern was to survive.

The Ch'ing strategy was to build an efficient navy and at the same time to suppress Ming loyalists in the mountains to the west and east of the Ch'ien-t'ang River. In addition to such tactics, the embargo on trade with Chou-shan was continued, and a welcome was extended to defectors from Ming ranks. In October 1650 the Ch'ing launched a concerted attack on resisters in the Ssu-ming Hills, effectively destroying Wang I's organization. In March 1651, because of petty yet violent squabbles, certain subordinates of an assassinated Ming general defected to the Ch'ing side and informed the enemy about conditions on Chou-shan. Thus, by autumn of 1651 the Ch'ing were prepared to attack the island with some confidence.

From 4 through 15 October, Ch'ing forces successfully carried out an elaborate campaign to seize Chou-shan. The brunt of the fighting was borne by the Ch'ing contingent from Ting-hai, which destroyed a key Ming fleet in the Chou-shan sea lane. Regent Lu, probably forewarned of a Ch'ing strike, left Chou-shan city and stayed aboard ship with Chang Ming-chen. On 15 October, after holding out for ten days, the city finally succumbed to cannon fire. Most of regent Lu's relatives and court officials went to martyrs' deaths, many by self-immolation.

Subsequently, Chang Ming-chen took regent Lu southward along the coast. With a few other survivors from the court, they were received by Cheng Ch'eng-kung on Amoy early in 1652. By this time Cheng Ch'eng-kung had either eliminated or clearly subordinated his rivals in the Cheng organization. Furthermore, Chang Ming-chen was now so weak that he could be kept under Cheng's supreme command. Cheng had maintained tenuous contact with the Yung-li court in Liang-Kuang, had received Yung-li noble titles,⁵⁰ and had responded, albeit unsuccessfully, to appeals for aid. In view of these circumstances, Cheng most likely received regent Lu with the ceremony proper for a Ming imperial prince, while refusing to ac-

⁵⁰ Chu Hsi-tsu, "Cheng Yen-p'ing Wang shou Ming kuan ch'ieh k'ao," *Kuo li Pei-p'ing ta hsieh kuo hsieh chi k'an*, 3, No. 1 (March 1932), pp. 94–97.

knowledge his title of regent. In any case, regent Lu was domiciled on Chin-men Island, where he renounced the title of regent early in 1653.⁵¹

Aid solicited from Japan

Regent Lu received naval support from the same groups that had carried on large-scale illicit trade between China and Japan in late Ming times. The Chengs were only the best organized of such pirate-traders. Cheng Ch'eng-kung was born in Japan, and his mother was Japanese. Men like Cheng had long been in close contact with Japanese provincial lords and officials who profited from the China trade. Even though the Ming court had formally banned such trade a century earlier and had cut off diplomatic relations with Japan in the 1590s, the Japanese consistently favored trade with China. This remained true even after an exclusion policy was put into effect in the 1630s, which was intended primarily to eliminate Christianity in Japan and to constrict and control the entry of European trading ships. Moreover, the wars between 1600 and 1615 that had culminated in the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate had earned Japanese fighting men a reputation for great prowess. Consequently, it is not surprising that maritime adherents of the Southern Ming repeatedly approached Japan to obtain soldiers, weapons, and war materièl.⁵²

The first to request Japanese soldiers was Cheng Chih-lung, whose representative appeared in Japan's designated foreign affairs port of Nagasaki in December of 1645. Two months later, another commander from the Lung-wu regime requested soldiers and armor. No response to the first mission is recorded; the second was rebuffed with citations of both Ming and Japanese prohibitions against the export of arms. The next mission from the Lung-wu court, however, seems to have been of interest to the Japanese military government (*bakufu*) in Edo. In October 1646 Huang Cheng-ming, acting both as Cheng Chih-lung's personal representative and as the official emissary of the court, sought to obtain some of the best Japanese troops. This time the *bakufu* response was only tentatively negative, since the Japanese leadership apparently was considering some military action and needed more information about conditions in China. However, before their reply was delivered to Huang, news of the Ming loss of Fukien and Cheng

51 No primary source satisfactorily records the date of regent Lu's arrival or the circumstances of his reception on Amoy. For secondary studies, see Chuang Chin-te, "Ming chien kuo Lu wang I-hai chi shih nien piao," *T'ai-wan wen hsien*, 2, No. 1 (March 1951), pp. 30-31, and notes, pp. 234-35, 242; and Chang T'an, *Cheng Ch'eng-kung chi shih pien nien* (Taipei, 1965), p. 46, note.

52 Ishihara Michihiro, *Minmatsu Shinsho Nihon kisshi no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1945), pp. 1-187; Hayashi Shunsai, comp., *Ka'i hentai* (Tokyo, 1958-59), I, ch. 1, pp. 11-45.

Chih-lung's surrender to the Ch'ing reached Edo. All thoughts of rendering military assistance were abandoned. A subsequent formal mission was undertaken by followers of regent Lu in the spring of 1647, but this was refused by the Japanese on a thin pretext.

Attempts then were made to circumvent the *bakufu* by appealing directly to the powerful Shimazu clan, which from its domain on Satsuma Island was intimately involved in the China trade and sympathetic to the Ming cause. In the summer of 1647 Huang Pin-ch'ing allowed his younger brother to accompany the ardent coastal resistance fighter Feng Ching-ti to Satsuma, perhaps in the hope of renewing an earlier, failed agreement to obtain men, provisions, and arms. Purportedly the Shimazu clan did send a large quantity of early Ming Chinese coins to Chou-shan, but not military aid.

Despite successive failures, hope persisted among Ming loyalist that some forms of aid could be obtained from Japan through trade and by fostering cultural relations. The Chengs especially continued to seek Japanese arms and supplies (in particular saltpeter for making gunpowder) in return for Chinese medicines, silks, silver, and other goods. And when on Chou-shan Island the Lu regime sought to earn favor by presenting prized Buddhist objects to a temple in Nagasaki. Although this mission was not received, later the Japanese reportedly gave a substantial amount of grain to Chou-shan for famine relief. And Cheng Ch'eng-kung, by flattery and by touting his Japanese ancestry, may have obtained some metals and weapons.

Although we know very little of the specific Japanese responses to these appeals, it seems that in general they were unwilling to give direct military aid to the loyalists for three reasons: preoccupation with domestic problems; the recently instituted exclusion policy (which, besides excluding Europeans, also prohibited travel abroad by Japanese); and a low estimation of Southern Ming capabilities. Military ventures across the high seas into China might have seriously upset the delicate balance of power the new Tokugawa government had forged. Moreover, such activities would have increased the possibility of friction in the maritime zone with the bellicose Europeans; and many remembered the defeats Japan had suffered in the Korean war of 1592–98 because of a weak navy. Most evident in the Japanese documents, however, is the glaring contrast between the grand portrayals of Ming strength and loyalist hopes, on one hand, and the perception—through Nagasaki, Korea, and Liu-ch'iu (Ryūkyū)—of Ming disunity and loyalist weakness on the other. The Japanese were not at all sympathetic toward the Ch'ing; nor did they see the Manchu conquest of China as inevitable. But they did see that China was in disorder, and they

were understandably reluctant to involve themselves in such an uncertain situation.

THE SOUTHWEST AND SOUTHEAST, 1652–1662

Between 1652 and 1662 organized support for the Ming dynasty became confined largely to the southern edge of the empire. Suppression was regarded by the Ch'ing as a chore that was bothersome but necessary for fiscal and political stability.

Conditions differed vastly between the undeveloped, landlocked southwest—Kweichow and Yunnan—and the verdant southeast islands of coastal Kwangtung, Fukien, and Chekiang. However, during the 1650s the Ming civil bureaucracy in both areas was eclipsed by military organizations which originally had developed outside Ming control. Because the new leadership came from rebel and pirate stock, the imperial government gradually lost its institutional infrastructure. “Ming” came more and more to signify an undaunted will to resist foreign invasion and conquest.

The legacy of Chang Hsien-chung

Since the summer of 1644, the far western and southwestern provinces of Szechwan, Kweichow, and Yunnan had witnessed a series of minor dramas that influenced the course of the Yung-li court in its last decade. Chang Hsien-chung, the one major rebel leader who had not been eliminated or subsumed by Li Tzu-ch'eng in the Ch'ung-chen period, first declared himself monarch of a Great Western Kingdom in central Hu-kuang in 1643. In 1644, however, he moved his entire following and reestablished the kingdom in Szechwan. From his capital at Chengtu he asserted control over the most developed parts of Szechwan's huge area,⁵³ and he proceeded to institute a two-year reign of terror that depleted both population and resources.⁵⁴

In spite of the relative isolation of Szechwan, Chang could not achieve security. He was unable to eradicate Ming generals who had survived and rebuilt their strength in the west and south. In the north he was threatened initially by his old rival, Li Tzu-ch'eng, and afterward by Ch'ing armies. Late in 1646, having exhausted Szechwan as a base area, Chang began to move toward Shensi in order to contest Ch'ing control of Sian. But while

53 In Ming times Szechwan included the northern third of present-day Kweichow, the northeastern arm of present-day Yunnan, and the eastern third of modern Sikang.

54 James B. Parsons, “The culmination of a Chinese peasant rebellion: Chang Hsien-chung in Szechwan, 1644–46,” *JAS*, 16, No. 3 (May 1957), pp. 387–400.

camping at a site in north-central Szechwan, he was killed by a special Manchu expeditionary force on 2 January 1647.

In the month following Chang Hsien-chung's death, his four chief lieutenants, the most important being Sun K'o-wang and Li Ting-kuo,⁵⁵ tried to regroup and lead the remnants of Chang's army to relative safety in Kweichow. They regained strength by taking over Chungking and most of its defense forces; and early in the spring of 1647 they proceeded south through Tsun-i to take Kuei-yang. Ming civil and military officials whom they encountered en route offered little resistance. The army did not remain long in Kweichow, however, because the acknowledged leader among Chang Hsien-chung's heirs, Sun K'o-wang, was soon lured into Yunnan by an extraordinary local situation.

Throughout the Ming dynasty, Yunnan had been governed in a unique manner. Like other provinces in the southwest, Yunnan employed a combination of the usual provincial, prefectural, and district civil offices, and a network of hereditary native chieftainships (*i'u-ssu*), the local governments for non-Han populations, and pacification offices (*hsüan-wei ssu*), common to aboriginal regions.⁵⁶ Paralleling these two was the military establishment (and extensive estate holdings) of the Mu family, descendants of Ming T'ai-tsu's adopted son, Mu Ying, who had been enfeoffed in Yunnan. The Mu clan had virtually created Yunnan as a Ming province and made it an integral part of Han Chinese civilization. The prestige of the family had remained high, its dominance unchallenged, and successive dukes of Ch'ien-kuo had continued as the only military nobles in Ming China to wield actual territorial powers.

During the Ch'ung-chen period, however, Mu family control was weakened by two circumstances. First, the current Duke of Ch'ien-kuo, Mu T'ien-po, had allowed management of his affairs to fall into the hands of a corrupt subordinate, whose arrogance irked Mu's Chinese officers as well as the native military chieftains. Second, certain of Mu's officers, as well as native officials and commanders, had grown ambitious as a result of their outside service suppressing Han rebels in Hu-kuang and aboriginal rebels in Kweichow. This situation eventually led to the revolt of a zealous pacification commissioner from southeastern Yunnan, Sha Ting-chou, who in January 1646 seized Yunnan-fu (modern K'un-ming) and tried to displace Mu T'ien-po as the hereditary military governor. Sha usurped Mu's offices, defeated or subsumed most of his armed forces, and bullied Ming

55 Kuo Ying-ch'iu, *Li Ting-kuo chi nien* (Shanghai, 1960). All of them had been "adopted" as sons and awarded titles as lesser "kings" by Chang.

56 Yü I-tse, *Chung kuo i'u ssu chih tu* (Chungking, 1944), ch. 2.

civil officials into acquiescence. But he was unable to eliminate Mu, who held out in northwestern Yunnan. The resulting stalemate was finally broken when a native general invited Sun K'o-wang to enter Yunnan and assume preeminence by stamping out Sha Ting-chou's revolt.

Consequently, to return to the problem of Chang Hsien-chung's remaining chiefs, the rebel army invaded Yunnan in the spring of 1647 under the pretext of taking revenge for the Mu family's disgrace and restoring Ming rule. They broke through Sha Ting-chou's eastern defense line, chasing him out of Yunnan-fu and back to his home base. Through the summer Li Ting-kuo fought against Sha's supporters and also suppressed popular opposition to the rebel invasion, which broke out in southeastern Yunnan, while Sun concentrated on defeating and capturing Mu T'ien-po. Mu was skeptical of Sun's claims of loyalty to the Ming cause, but he agreed to cooperate if Sun would refrain from atrocities and suppress Sha Ting-chou's movement. This was done by Li Ting-kuo in the fall of 1648.

At this point a rift appeared between Sun K'o-wang and Li Ting-kuo. Previously, Li had accepted Sun as the senior figure among Chang Hsien-chung's four heirs, but he resented Sun, the better administrator, who sought to elevate himself to a position of power and authority comparable to that formerly occupied by Chang. Sun, on the other hand, was jealous and wary of Li Ting-kuo's superior generalship and popularity among fighting men. The title Prince of Ch'in, which Sun demanded from the Yung-li court,⁵⁷ would have officially confirmed Sun's superiority over his "brothers." It implied succession to Chang Hsien-chung's patrimony, and partially legitimized any future move by Sun to exercise the powers of a regent or even of an emperor. When the Yung-li court delayed the enfeoffment, Sun's plan to subordinate his comrades was frustrated, and he was angered all the more.

For the time being, however, an open break within the rebel organization was avoided. Yunnan had to be secured, Kweichow retaken, and strikes made into Szechwan and southern Hu-kuang to stop the advance of the Ch'ing armies. In September 1650 Sun K'o-wang sent his armies back into Kweichow, and from there they attacked to the north and east. Although the campaign in Szechwan met with considerable success, Sun's men were unable to gain the cooperation of the remnants of Li Tzu-ch'eng's army occupying the border region between Szechwan and Hu-kuang.⁵⁸ The province thus remained in a state of anarchy.⁵⁹

57 See above, pp. 688–89.

58 Chao Li-sheng and Kao Chao-i, ed., "K'uei-tung shih san chia' k'ao," in *Chung-kuo nung min chan cheng shih lun wen chi* (Shanghai, 1955), pp. 154–62.

59 Li Kuang-ming, "Ming mo Ch'ing ch'u chih Ssu-ch'uan," *Tung fang ts'a chih*, 31, No. 1 (January 1934), pp. 171–81.

In 1652 Li Ting-kuo launched several campaigns in southern Hu-kuang and eastern Kwangsi that used the strengths of the late Ming roving bandit armies to great advantage. These were large armies that moved fast and relied on the element of surprise, using such regional resources as, in this case, war elephants and aboriginal fighters. Their weaknesses were reliance on personal leadership, and either a disinclination or an inability to hold territory. Li's campaigns included a rapid strike at Kuei-lin. The Ch'ing generalissimo K'ung Yu-te did not anticipate this sudden rebel challenge, and he committed suicide as Li's men swarmed into the city on 7 August. Consequently, localities throughout Ch'ing-occupied parts of Kwangsi returned their allegiance to the Ming court, leaving only Wu-chou in Ch'ing hands. Moreover, while Li occupied Heng-chou (modern Heng-yang), his forces ambushed and killed the Manchu prince Nikan, who had been deputed from Peking to save southern Hu-kuang. Despite these and other rapid successes, Li was not able to hold the cities he had taken. Early in 1653, when Nikan's replacement arrived, Li was forced to withdraw to northern Kwangtung.

Reports of Li Ting-kuo's victories both cheered and disturbed Sun K'o-wang, who by this time had set up a second administrative center in Kuei-yang and had invaded the Pao-ch'ing region of southern Hu-kuang. These actions, conversely, could have been seen by Li Ting-kuo as reinforcing him or as threatening him. Indeed, Sun is alleged to have sent agents several times to undercut Li's position. In any case, Li remained in Liang-Kuang probably because he could no longer suffer Sun's domination. He avoided an open breach, perhaps on account of his former closeness with Sun, or perhaps from a practical fear of Sun's military strength.

In 1653–54 Li campaigned twice in western Kwangtung. In the first instance he attacked Chao-ch'ing and threatened Canton. But he soon withdrew from this exploratory foray to gain some respite in Kwangsi, failing en route to retake Kuei-lin. The following spring Li made a much more calculated advance by moving through southern Kwangsi and Kwangtung into the heart of the Lei-chou peninsula, where he passed several months recovering from an illness. In the fall he advanced again to Hsin-hui, the crucial point in his plan to take Canton. Lacking ships in the delta region, Li twice appealed to Cheng Ch'eng-kung to assist his Kwangtung efforts from Fu-kien, but for various reasons such help did not arrive in time.⁶⁰ In January 1655 Li's army was badly beaten by Ch'ing reinforcements and was pursued, suffering severe losses, into southern Kwangsi. When Li's men regrouped at Nan-ning, they numbered only several thousand.

Meanwhile, Sun K'o-wang's efforts in western Hu-kuang met with similar results. In the winter of 1652–53 he launched a two-pronged campaign

⁶⁰ See below, p. 714.

from Yüan-chou. But he was defeated near Pao-ch'ing by the Manchu generalissimo Tunci and subsequently returned to Kuei-yang. In the spring of 1655 one of Sun's armies again penetrated deeply into central Hu-kuang. But by this time provincial affairs had been taken in hand by the Ch'ing viceroy Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou, who stopped further incursions. A lull in the hostilities followed. The Ch'ing concentrated on strengthening their overall control in Hu-kuang, northern Szechwan, and Liang-Kuang, while the erstwhile chief lieutenants of Chang Hsien-chung, now the sole supporters of the Yung-li court, became embroiled in internecine struggles.

The Yung-li court under Sun K'o-wang and Li Ting-kuo

The Yung-li emperor's party had already arrived in Nan-ning in December 1650, when Sun K'o-wang was consolidating his gains in Yunnan and Kweichow. The following spring Sun sent an armed unit to "enter the [imperial] guard" and to suggest that the emperor come to Yunnan. His men then summarily executed several officials who were known to have opposed his demand to be enfeoffed Prince of Ch'in. Thoroughly intimidated, the emperor formally granted Sun his title, along with the imperial surname and a new given name.

Meanwhile the Ch'ing armies had been making gains in Kwangsi, and in October 1651 the Yung-li court was forced to flee Nan-ning, this time by a difficult route through extreme southwestern Kwangsi. In March of the following year the imperial party was escorted by Sun K'o-wang's deputies to the crude garrison town of An-lung in southwestern Kweichow. What was left of the court remained isolated under very poor conditions in An-lung for four years, while Sun put on imperial airs in his new headquarters at Kuei-yang—establishing ministries and making high appointments, conducting civil service examinations based on his own interpretations of the classics, and allegedly plotting to depose the Yung-li emperor and found his own "Later Ming" dynasty.

After news of Li Ting-kuo's successes and of his alienation from Sun reached the court, the emperor secretly appealed to Li for aid on two occasions. Li was offered the title of first-degree prince of the blood if he could free the court from Sun K'o-wang's domination. But Sun eventually found out about the plot. His henchmen entered the court and began an inquisition in the spring of 1654. They sought to expose every official involved in the schemes to contact Li Ting-kuo. True to his character, the Yung-li emperor declined to acknowledge his own responsibility and allowed "eighteen gentlemen of An-lung"⁶¹ to be condemned to death.

61 Chu Hsi-tsu, "Yung-li ta yü shih pa hsien sheng shih liao p'ing," *Kuo hsüeh chi k'an*, 2, No. 2 (December 1929), pp. 237-59.

During this time Li Ting-kuo had been preoccupied with his Hu-kuang and Kwangtung campaigns, and he was not in a position to do as the court begged. Despite the apparent sincerity of his devotion to the Yung-li emperor and the Ming cause, not until Li's options in Liang-Kuang were completely exhausted did he turn his attention toward An-lung. By this time, although Li Ting-kuo's fortunes had sorely declined, his popularity among Sun K'o-wang's associate and subordinate commanders had increased. This was in part because Li treated them honorably, and in part because they too had become disgusted with Sun K'o-wang's pretense to imperial authority and his disrespect for the Yung-li court. Consequently, as Li withdrew from western Kwangsi in the autumn of 1655 and went toward An-lung, he received the quiet cooperation of certain military personnel dispatched earlier by Sun to block just such a move.

In February 1656 Li Ting-kuo arrived at court, and within days he escorted the Yung-li party away from An-lung. Li subsequently made such a show of force at Yunnan-fu that generals there were cowed into accepting his authority. Late in March the Yung-li emperor was brought into Yunnan-fu, now called the Yunnan Capital. In an effort to create some semblance of a government, the emperor began distributing appointments and titles, mostly to Li's subordinates and allies.

After this, neither Sun nor Li felt secure enough in his own domain to move decisively against the other. Revolts, defections, and seditious plots occurred on both sides. Li Ting-kuo tried several times to effect a reconciliation with Sun, but his peace overtures all were rejected. Late in the summer of 1657 Sun was persuaded to launch a punitive campaign against Li, not realizing that his advisors had colluded with his rival. Late in September Sun's armies crossed western Kweichow, and the following month his forces met those of Li Ting-kuo in battle in eastern Yunnan. As had been agreed, Sun's key generals then turned against him, and Sun's stratagems were completely foiled. He retreated to Kweichow, his military power and his pride both much diminished.

Angry and weak, Sun proceeded into Hu-kuang and in December 1657 surrendered to Ch'ing authorities in Pao-ch'ing, venting his hatred for his betrayers. He urged the Manchus to let him "dispel his shame" by leading a Ch'ing campaign into Szechwan, Kweichow, and Yunnan. The Ch'ing commanders distrusted Sun enough to prevent such an appointment, but they did treat him well.

The court's flight into Burma

In 1658, exactly one month after Sun K'o-wang's surrender, marching orders for the invasion of Kweichow were sent to three Ch'ing generalissi-

mos: Wu San-kuei was to proceed from northwestern Szechwan; Loto was to enter through southwestern Hu-kuang; and Jobtei was to advance through northwestern Kwangsi. Late in June 1658 these three armies converged on Kuei-yang. Subsequently they met with Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou to plan the next, more difficult stage of the campaign.

In Yunnan the Yung-li court was slow to assemble an army to fight against the Ch'ing in Kweichow. By August three positions had been designated to guard the various river crossings in southwestern Kweichow. But these defenses were not able to withstand the concerted assault of the Ch'ing armies. From the end of December and into January 1659 the Ch'ing advanced along three routes: Wu San-kuei through Ch'i-hsing Pass to the north; Doni (whose army had relieved Loto's) across the upper section of the Pei-p'an River; and Jobtei across the lower section of the Pei-p'an River. Li Ting-kuo fought desperately to block Jobtei's advance in the central position, but he was badly beaten and returned in haste to Yunnan-fu to arrange for the removal of the court to a safer location.

At this point some consideration may have been given to relocating in eastern Szechwan or southern Kwangsi, but the court actually had little choice but to withdraw farther westward. Few wished to contemplate flight beyond China's southwestern borders; the court still hoped to retain control of the territory west of Ta-li. The imperial party departed from Yunnan-fu on 7 January 1659, as the Ch'ing armies entered Yunnan. They were escorted by Mu T'ien-po, who still had influence among the aboriginal officials encountered en route. In the meantime, Li Ting-kuo and his best generals prepared to slow the Ch'ing advance.

On 2 February Wu San-kuei and Jobtei struck out westward from the Lake K'un-ming region, defeating all opposition. Ch'ing forces entered Yung-ch'ang on 10 March, as the panic-stricken Yung-li court, having been robbed repeatedly by its own escort troops, arrived in T'eng-yüeh, just inside the border with Burma. Then Li Ting-kuo made his last real stand against the Ch'ing along the tortuous trails of Mo-p'an Mountain, west of the Nu River. There the Ch'ing forces narrowly avoided an elaborate ambush, and a ferocious battle ensued, resulting in heavy casualties on both sides. Li and his remaining troops managed to escape southward into the border region. The Yung-li entourage, plagued by mutinies, staggered through one of the border passes and entered Burmese territory late in March,⁶² having lost two-thirds of the 4,000 persons who had set out from

62 Dates for the first three lunar months of 1659 are complicated not only by errors in the primary sources, but also by a divergence between the Yung-li calendar and the now standard Ch'ing calendar. Because of differences in the insertion of intercalary months, the Ch'ing and various Southern Ming calendars disagree for several of the years discussed here: 1648, 1650-51, 1653, 1659, and 1662. See Huang Tien-ch'üan, *Nan-Ming ta t'ung li* (Tainan, 1962), and Fu I-li, "Ts'an Ming ta t'ung li," in *Erh shih wu shih pu pien*, Vol. 6 (Shanghai, 1937), pp. 8841-45.

T'eng-yüeh. The Ch'ing armies, weakened and unnerved by the Mo-p'an Mountain attack, merely scouted a short distance beyond T'eng-yüeh without pursuing.

As Li Ting-kuo and his associate generals recuperated separately in the northeastern region of Burma, the Ch'ing established garrisons around Yunnan-fu and other points. Under the direction of viceroy Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou, the Ch'ing concentrated for a while on restoring agriculture, learning to manage aboriginal leaders, and applying diplomatic pressure on the Burmese. They hoped that defeat, hunger, and malaria would eventually destroy Li Ting-kuo's remaining forces.

The plight of the Yung-li emperor in Burma

On the Burmese side of the border, the Yung-li party, already deserted by almost all its soldiers, was forced to give up its weapons before proceeding farther. A few days later, the emperor and 646 members of the party boarded boats on the Irrawaddy River at Bhamo. The rest went by land southward, the two groups planning to meet at the Burmese capital of Ava. However, the emperor's group was detained temporarily at Htigyaing. The overland group, perhaps mistaken for an invasion force, was slaughtered in the Ava area early in May, only a few dozen escaping into the wilds. In June 1659 the Yung-li emperor's group reached Ava and was housed in a rustic camp in a district across the river from the capital. For many months the emperor and his party were treated with cool courtesy by the Burmese government. Conditions were simple but reasonably comfortable, and members of the imperial party tried to accommodate their hosts' wishes and adjust to Burmese customs.

During the Ming dynasty the Chinese term for modern Burma, Mien-tien, denoted merely one of several "barbarian" kingdoms and tribal confederations in that region. During the Hung-wu and Yung-lo reigns, a nominal Ming hegemony had been established over these political entities by designating them "pacification offices" (without appointed staffs), and by exacting tribute and military assistance. Relations among the various Burmese peoples were always poor. At one point Mien-tien ceased to exist, but by the middle of the sixteenth century it had reemerged. In the Wan-li period Mien-tien's expansive campaigns of northward subjugation led to incursions into Yunnan. Particularly in the last decade of the sixteenth century, Mien-tien and Yunnan authorities fought intermittently, using the smaller border states as pawns. By the turn of the century Mien-tien again recognized Chinese suzerainty; but relations were strained, and there was no contact after the end of the Wan-li reign. In reality, the various states of upper

Burma by then had yielded to Mien-tien and had come to accept administrative control from Ava, the center of Burmese government.⁶³

The current Burmese king, Pindalè, much weaker than his innovative predecessor, granted asylum to the Yung-li emperor on humanitarian grounds, but he simply was unable to deal with the influx of retreating Chinese armies. The troops, mainly those of Li Ting-kuo and his associates, not only caused considerable destruction in northeast Burma, they also threatened to incite outlying tribal peoples to rebellion. In fact, beginning in the spring of 1660, these armies approached Ava several times in force, demanding that the Yung-li emperor be put in their charge. This frustrated the Burmese because, even if the emperor were released, there was no assurance that he and his unruly supporters would or could leave Burma; and Ava, under Pindalè, lacked the power to drive them out. To comply with their hosts' demands, members of the Yung-li court issued edicts to send the invaders away, but the two Chinese generals simply refused them.

Burmese treatment of the Yung-li camp grew less hospitable as military incursions against the capital increased. By mid-autumn 1660, the court was in a state of utter destitution. Every last valuable had already been sacrificed to fend off starvation. But things grew worse when the frustrated Burmese council of state deposed and executed Pindalè in June 1661. His brother, Pye Min, succeeded him. He was a more vigorous leader, one who was ready to fight the Chinese intruders.⁶⁴ Within a few weeks all Yung-li officials were invited to participate in a rite of allegiance to the new king and to arrange the final dispersal of the court. This event became a massacre in which all able-bodied men of the court were killed, and many others committed suicide. The severely asthmatic emperor, now accompanied by only a few family members and personal attendants, was kept alive but under terrible conditions. All this may have been more than just a show of determination by the new Burmese king; it may have been carried out to comply with Ch'ing demands.

In December 1659 Wu San-kuei was given charge of Yunnan affairs from Peking. He advocated that forceful steps be taken at once to eradicate the Yung-li court and its supporters, who had been inciting the Yunnanese against the Ch'ing. The court in Peking was reluctant to authorize such a campaign, however, wholly for financial reasons. Through most of 1660 deliberations continued over fiscal and logistical issues, until the Burma campaign was finally approved in September.

63 Chang Ch'eng-sun, *Chung-Ying Tien-Mien chiang chieh wen t'i* (Peking, 1937), pp. 19–23; Victor B. Lieberman, "Provincial reforms in Taung-ngu Burma," *BOAS*, 43, No. 3 (1980), pp. 548–49.

64 Maung Htin Aung, *A history of Burma* (New York, 1967), pp. 149–50.

From late in December 1661 and into January of the following year, Wu and the Manchu duke Aisingga proceeded into Burma through the Mu-pang region. They defeated Li Ting-kuo's strongest associates and forced Li to withdraw eastward. Ch'ing troops arrived about twenty miles southeast of Ava on 20 January, and within a few days the Yung-li emperor was delivered to Wu San-kuei's officers. Soon the emperor commenced a three months' journey back to Yunnan-fu. He and his teenage son were executed there privately in the latter part of May 1662, probably because of the security problems their presence caused the Ch'ing.⁶⁵ Li Ting-kuo was not even considered worth pursuing, and probably in August, somewhere near the border between Yunnan and present-day Laos, he died in desperate circumstances.⁶⁶ At about the same time, Wu San-kuei made a prince of the first degree by the Manchus.

Cheng Ch'eng-kung's rise to power

Cheng Ch'eng-kung has captivated the imagination of historians, playwrights, and storytellers and has remained a folk hero in China and Japan.⁶⁷ The elements of his popularity are several, and involve political events, his business acumen, and his personal charisma.

First, following his father's path, Cheng Ch'eng-kung developed a strong maritime organization. Despite official prohibitions and obstructions, the volume of trade between the Chinese coast and various entrepôts in East and Southeast Asia had increased toward the end of the sixteenth century. This rise was influenced by aggressive trading and shipping on the part of Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands. Many residents of China's southeastern coast relied directly or indirectly on ocean-going commerce for their livelihood, as well as on domestic coastal trade. These people appear to have been amenable to organized control of any kind that brought protection and stability without gross interference. The vacuum left by Ming government in this sphere was filled by such men as Cheng Chih-lung and his fellow clansmen.

Cheng Ch'eng-kung used revenues derived from maritime commerce, together with a large portion of his commercial manpower, manufacturing skill, and vessel tonnage to resist the Ch'ing. There were limits, however, to how far one could lead the loosely associated maritime community toward war. In fact, many Chinese during this period escaped Cheng

65 No official source records this execution. Dates of May 19 and 25, respectively, are given in Yang Te-tse, *Yang chien pi chi* (K'ang-hsi [1662–1722] period; rpt. Shang-yü, 1910), p. 28b; and in Teng K'ai, *Yeh shih lu* (late Ming [1368–1644] period; rpt. Shanghai, 1896 and 1936), p. 351.

66 Kuo Ying-ch'iu, *Li Ting-kuo chi nien*, pp. 27–30, 186.

67 Ralph C. Crozier, *Koxinga and Chinese nationalism: History, myth, and the hero* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977); Donald Keene, *The battles of Koxinga: Chikamatsu's puppet play, its background and influence* (London, 1951).

Ch'eng-kung's exactions and militarization by emigrating to Taiwan, Siam, Luzon, and even the west coast of South America.

A second element in Cheng Ch'eng-kung's rise to power was the Ch'ing's psychological and geographical vulnerability to his tactics. The Manchus took greatest pride in their tradition of mounted combat, and they excelled in land operations. Although they adapted quickly to river and lake fighting, they were baffled and frightened by the sea. Invincibility on land and inland waters sufficed for their conquest of China proper (except the southeastern coastal strip), for their capture of the last Ming imperial claimant, and for the "extermination" of the rebel armies that were blamed for destroying the Ming. So it is understandable that the Manchus, advised by a group of Chinese officials who were equally ignorant of maritime affairs, chose to eradicate Cheng Ch'eng-kung last.

Even if the Ch'ing court had quickly overcome its disinclination to deal with the seaboard, it was still constricted financially. The relative inaccessibility and limited agricultural resources of southeastern Chekiang, Fukien, and extreme eastern Kwangtung made it costly to transport armies there and to maintain large garrisons. If a stationary strategy were adopted, then huge numbers of soldiers would have been needed to guard every urban center on the coastline against "pirate" attack. Actually meeting the sea-borne rebels on water would have required a large investment—nothing less than building a navy. Thus, it is not surprising that the Ch'ing first sought to negotiate with Cheng Ch'eng-kung, nor that they chose a strategy based on land tactics (moving populations inward),⁶⁸ until they finally were free to concentrate on the maritime arena in the 1660s. In so doing the Ch'ing aimed not only to deprive Cheng's forces of any land bases; more important, they hoped to strike at the Achilles heel of the enemy: the constant need for products and services from the settled population—grain, food-stuffs, wood, and shipbuilding.⁶⁹

Another element in Cheng Ch'eng-kung's rise to power was his own self-consciousness. From 1646, when he refused to follow his father and surrender to the Ch'ing, he began to train his own small band of fighters. He clearly harbored an unusual sense of personal destiny. Moreover, this sense was combined with considerable skill in management, and with mercantile shrewdness and competitiveness. His talent in military strategy and tactics, as well as his charisma, enabled him to discipline his subordinates with an iron hand. He was remarkably successful in recruiting former

68 Hsieh Kuo-chen, "Ch'ing ch'u tung nan yen hai ch'ien chieh k'ao," in *Ming Ch'ing chih chi tang she yün tung k'ao* (Shanghai, 1934), Appendix II, pp. 290–328.

69 Chuang Chin-re, "Cheng shih chün liang wen t'i ti yen t'ao," *T'ai-wan wen hsien*, 12, No. 1 (March 1961), pp. 55–66. Fang Hao, "Yu Shun-chih pa nien Fu-chien wu wei shih t'i lun Cheng shih k'ang Ch'ing ti chu li," *Ta lu sha chih*, 22, No. 6 (March 1961), pp. 1–20.

adversaries, and obtained some of his most valuable generals in this way. However, the unreasonable severity with which Cheng punished even minor infractions by his men, regardless of their rank or degree of personal association with him, led to defections that weakened his movement and damaged his interests.

Fourth, and last, was Cheng Ch'eng-kung's astute use of the symbols of Ming legitimacy, despite his physical separation from the court. His close relationship with the Lung-wu emperor and his receipt of the imperial surname and its privileges have been discussed above. This direct link with the Ming court was crucial in forging Cheng's commitment to its cause. As his organization grew, he adopted a variety of Ming institutional forms, which he modified to suit his own circumstances.⁷⁰ His relations with the faraway Yung-li court were conducted with flawless propriety and humility; but he had already learned to march on orders only when it suited his own designs for the southeastern theater. The Ming cause was to him more a principle of resistance to barbarian subjugation than service to a political institution. Thus, he derived strength from a symbol suited to his personality, while remaining unconstrained by an imperial bureaucracy or a real monarch. Ultimately he was able to equate the interests of his organization with the interests of the Ming court.

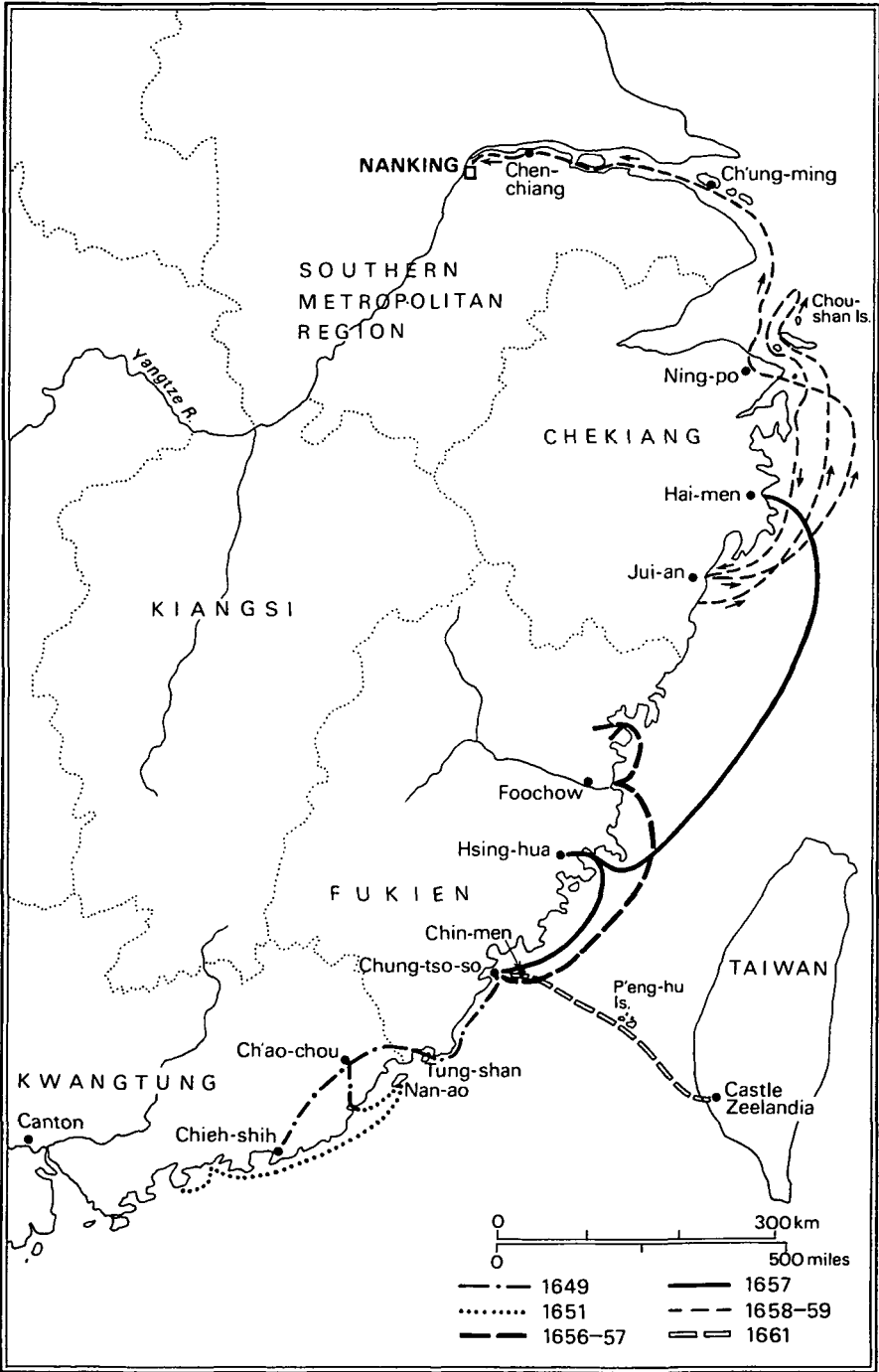
Cheng Ch'eng-kung's rise in power occurred in three stages. Between 1647 and 1651 he emerged as the unchallenged leader in maritime southeastern China; from 1652 into 1655 he built a strong base and increased his manpower; and from 1655 into 1659 he tried to extend the area under his control from the coastal periphery into the heartland of China.

The earliest stage involved a series of intrafamilial struggles for power. Initially, as Cheng Ch'eng-kung gradually increased the number of soldiers under his direct command, he campaigned in concert with his clansmen in Chang-chou and Ch'üan-chou prefectures. The Ch'ing retaliated for this with a raid on An-p'ing, the Cheng family home, in the spring of 1647, during which Cheng Ch'eng-kung's mother committed suicide. Subsequently, in 1648 and 1649, Cheng campaigned independently in Ch'ao-chou prefecture, Kwangtung, and there gained valuable experience in logistics, strategy, and recruitment. He returned from this campaign in September 1650 so strong that he was able to seize control from his clan uncles, Cheng Lien and Cheng Ts'ai.⁷¹

Two months later, Cheng Ch'eng-kung received an appeal from the

70 Shih Wan-shou, "Lun Cheng Ch'eng-kung pei fa i ch'ien ti ping chen," *Yu shih hsüeh chih*, 11, No. 2 (June 1973), pp. 10, 18.

71 On the relation of Cheng Lien and Cheng Ts'ai to Cheng Chih-lung's lineage, see Cheng Hsi-wen, "Ming Cheng shih shih wu tse," *T'ai-pei wen wu*, 10, No. 1 (March 1961), pp. 81–84.



Map 31. The movements of Cheng Ch'eng-kung

Yung-li court to come to the aid of Canton, which had long been under siege. In March 1651 he launched an eastward campaign for this purpose but was thwarted by stormy weather at sea. Late in April he heard that the Ch'ing forces had taken advantage of his absence to carry out a damaging raid on Hsia-men. Cheng Ch'eng-kung aborted his Canton expedition and returned immediately. At the end of May he summarily beheaded the uncle whom he had left in charge of Hsia-men's defense and forced another to retire.

Thus by the summer of 1651 Cheng Ch'eng-kung had eliminated or clearly subordinated all his rivals within the Cheng clan. Moreover, at the end of this year he incorporated the naval forces that had survived the attack on the Lu court at Chou-shan. This marked the end of the first stage in Ch'eng-kung's rise to power. He was then twenty-seven.

Through these years, Cheng had become a more skillful leader. By 1654 he had gained control of all Chang-chou prefecture, easily repulsing Ch'ing counterattacks; and early in 1655 he moved north toward adjacent Ch'üan-chou prefecture. During this time Cheng did not overlook matters of training and formal organization. He adopted the Ming five-part military command structure, which by 1655 comprised thirty-three guards (*chen*),⁷² or approximately 165,000 troops. During this period he received a request for assistance from Li Ting-kuo, who then was attempting to seize Canton. But Cheng Ch'eng-kung had learned not to leave his base area before firmly establishing a protective zone around it. Thus he only sent a representative to Li and continued to secure the region around Chang-chou and Ch'üan-chou.

After 1655 Cheng Ch'eng-kung directed all his attentions to preparations for his most ambitious undertaking to date: the "northward campaign" into Chekiang and Nan Chihli. He eventually mustered over 250,000 fighting men (over 50 guard units) and at least 2,300 ships. In 1655 he organized his bureaucracy on the Ming model, although most civil offices chiefly supervised military affairs.⁷³ Furthermore, he accepted from the Yung-li court what came to be his most popular title, Prince of Yen-p'ing, and he renamed Chung-tso-so, his main base on Hsia-men, Ssu-Ming (Think of the Ming) prefecture.⁷⁴ In order to evoke wider support, he began to harangue his troops to shed their reputation as pirates and win the hearts of people in other provinces.

72 Shih Wan-shou, "Lun Cheng Ch'eng-kung pei fa i ch'ien ti ping chen," p. 7.

73 For an exhaustive listing of persons who held noble titles and civil or military positions under Cheng Ch'eng-kung, see Lai Yung-hsiang, "Ming Cheng fan hsia kuan ch'ieh piao," *T'ai-wan yen chiu*, 1 (1956), pp. 79–101, and 2 (1957), pp. 47–78.

74 The dates on which Cheng Ch'eng-kung received a series of Yung-li noble titles are frustratingly confused in the major sources. For the best solution to this puzzle, see Chu Hsi-tsu, "Cheng Yen-p'ing Wang shou Ming kuan ch'ieh k'ao," pp. 87–112.

Negotiations with the Ch'ing

Cheng Ch'eng-kung had been a thorn in the side of the Ch'ing court since 1652, and in the fall of that year the Shun-chih emperor initiated two years of exchanges aimed at mollifying him. We see Cheng here in the most cunning and deceptive performance of his career. Did he really contemplate surrendering to the Ch'ing? Was he callous about the fate of his father and other relatives on the Ch'ing side? Or did he prolong the negotiation process to stuff his war chest and to protect his father? These are difficult questions and answers to them are hard to find, in part because the documentary evidence is itself ambiguous. A few general points, however, are indisputable.

First, there was suspicion on both sides. The Ch'ing naturally sought out the father, Cheng Chih-lung, to gain the son's submission. However, they distrusted Cheng Chih-lung so thoroughly that on 1 September 1652 his movements in Peking were restricted "for his own protection." Originally he had been taken to Peking and never given the high provincial position promised upon his surrender in 1646. Such treatment did not go unnoticed by his son. In February 1653 Cheng Ch'eng-kung was surprised by a letter from Cheng Chih-lung condoning his countermeasures against certain Ch'ing incursions, but also urging him to cease hostilities. Cheng Ch'eng-kung asked bluntly whether he really expected that his son would be so naive as to step into the same trap that had snared him. This taunt was repeated in subsequent communications and reveals the son's determination never to be tricked or constrained in the name of filiality.

Second, the Ch'ing initiated negotiations when their forces were immobile and ineffectual. Consequently, in spite of Cheng Ch'eng-kung's negative response to Cheng Chih-lung, the court found reason in it for optimism and in June 1653 made the son a concrete offer: the title of duke, the position of regional commander at Ch'üan-chou with broadly defined coastal responsibilities and powers, and Ch'ing withdrawal from the seaboard as a demonstration of good faith. In a highly conciliatory edict, the Shun-chih emperor blamed the deceased Ch'ing regent Dorgon and certain nefarious provincial and local officials for past actions which had embittered Cheng Ch'eng-kung. The latter's refusal was arrogant and disdainful, but the Ch'ing court still felt that he might respond favorably to an offer of four prefectures and a general's seal.

These concessions came to Cheng Ch'eng-kung just as his movement was showing real strength and a capacity for expansion beyond Fukien. So when he found the Ch'ing court eager to negotiate and quick to offer concessions, Cheng took full advantage of their stance and of the time delays required

for communication with Peking. Confident that he would not be attacked before the negotiation process had run its course, he began moving units into coastal districts immediately after he responded to the first Ch'ing offer in 1653. At Cheng Ch'eng-kung's instigation, Chang Ming-chen led expeditions to penetrate the mouth of the Yangtze three times in 1653 and 1654, harassing the Grand Canal traffic that crossed the Yangtze at Chen-chiang.⁷⁵ Though Cheng Ch'eng-kung later claimed that he had been restraining his forces, in fact he used them to strengthen his position and maintain as much pressure on the Ch'ing as possible, without causing a premature collapse in the negotiations. The Ch'ing had given him ample reason to feel superior.

A third point is that the Ch'ing authorities and Cheng Ch'eng-kung held very different views of the negotiations. Cheng was willing to "talk peace" in the sense of seeking an accommodation to alleviate hostilities. But the Ch'ing aim was to "summon and soothe," that is, to help Cheng Ch'eng-kung feel good about surrendering. Thus the two sides approached but never consummated an agreement.

In all, for almost eight months in 1654 Cheng managed to frustrate the Ch'ing negotiating team and the Cheng relatives who had been sent to Fukien to obtain his submission. Ch'ing officials complained that he did not sincerely intend to surrender. In August 1654 the Shun-chih emperor admonished him to clarify his position, keeping in mind that the Ch'ing would allow no special status for the maritime provinces, as Cheng had demanded, and that the Ch'ing could and would use force to pacify Fukien if need be. For his part, Cheng charged that the Ch'ing officials did not behave properly, and that lacking virtue, they used coercion; unable to coerce him, they tried deceit. Cheng Ch'eng-kung's final letter to Cheng Chih-lung was shown to the Ch'ing court on 22 December 1654; it closed any possibility of reaching a peaceful settlement.

Understanding Cheng Ch'eng-kung's actions requires an examination of his ambiguous statements. He claimed to want some sort of semi-autonomous or suzerain realm, on the pattern of Korea or Chiao-chih (extreme northern Vietnam), and composed of Fukien, Chekiang, and Kwangtung. Through such an arrangement Cheng Ch'eng-kung might have formally acknowledged the Ch'ing court, while keeping his hair style and possibly

75 The dates and circumstances of the much touted "three instances of entering the Yangtze" have been difficult to determine. This account follows the reasoning and textual criticism of Li Hsüeh-chih, "Ch'ung k'ao Li Chen-hua hsien sheng 'Ming mo hai shih san cheng Ch'ang-chiang k'ao,'" *Ta lu ta chih*, 7, No. 11 (15 December 1953), pp. 7–8, and 7, No. 12 (30 December 1953), pp. 21–27, with additional evidence from *Wen hsien ts'ung pien*, ed. Kuo-li Pei-p'ing Ku-kung po-wu yüan wen-hsien kuan (Peiping, 1930–37; rpt. Taipei, 1964), I, pp. 426–28 (10a–16a).

even his identification with the Ming. It is impossible to say whether he envisioned this territory as a permanent Ch'ing ally or as a place in which to plot for the Ming restoration. Of course, from the Ch'ing point of view such a demand was preposterous. But Cheng Ch'eng-kung's perception of his own strength and of Manchu weakness was such that he openly berated the Ch'ing for underestimating him and declared his intent to challenge their control of the Yangtze region.

As hopes for a negotiated settlement gradually disintegrated, the lives of Cheng Chih-lung, his fellow clansmen, and members of his household in Peking correspondingly became Ch'ing liabilities. It proved easy now to charge them with engaging in acts of sedition. Cheng Ch'eng-kung had known that his family's future would be bleak if negotiations broke down, yet he responded to their pleas trenchantly. Having chosen political loyalty as the higher principle, he seems to have had little sympathy for his father. In Cheng Ch'eng-kung's last letter to Cheng Chih-lung, he pointed out that since his father had "cast himself into the tiger's mouth," he would have to bear the consequences.

The northward campaign

Cheng Ch'eng-kung had begun thinking seriously about carrying his war toward the Yangtze region as early as 1653. Negotiations with the Ch'ing delayed his plans for two years, but he emerged in 1655 more determined than ever to carry them out. Several reasons can be cited for this. Most basic, perhaps, was Cheng's self-image as a great leader; he felt bound to extend his control beyond the southeastern seaboard. Also, the increasing isolation of the Yung-li court in the far southwest made a stronger Ming presence in the most populous and politically important regions of the country more desirable. The Ch'ing negotiations had quickened Cheng's ambition for a northward campaign in three ways: by allowing him to increase his store of provisions; by enhancing the logic of a preemptive strike on Chekiang and Nan Chihli, before the Ch'ing could retaliate in Fukien for Cheng's intransigence; and by making him even more eager to show his prowess and cause the court to regret its rejection of his terms. In short, after the negotiations failed, both sides were eager for a decisive fight.

In January 1655 the Manchu imperial clansman Jidu was appointed generalissimo to lead an "extermination" campaign against Cheng Ch'eng-kung. From midsummer into the fall, Cheng had most of the city walls and other fortifications in mainland districts adjacent to Hsia-men torn down, and Hsia-men itself was evacuated. At the same time the

Ch'ing court promulgated the first general prohibitions against maritime activities. Thus, a combat zone was delineated, to the increasing detriment of people who lived near or worked the sea. Jidu arrived in Fukien in October 1655, his forces exhausted from the long journey. Not until 9 May 1656 was he able to mount an assault on Chin-men (Quemoy) Island. The ensuing battle was interrupted by a fierce storm and ended with the virtual destruction of the Ch'ing fleet. This confirmed Cheng Ch'eng-kung's view that the price of taking and holding Fukien could be made too high for the Ch'ing to bear.

Following this defeat at sea, the Ch'ing court turned to methods that could be better controlled. The prohibitions on coastal trade with the enemy were extended, while a special amnesty and other inducements were offered to "pirates" who would surrender. These policies bore fruit when one of Cheng's generals surrendered and turned over the Cheng military arsenal at Hai-ch'eng. The loss of this site may have forced Cheng Ch'eng-kung to depart on the first leg of his northward campaign sooner than he had intended.

Actually, the northward campaign was not a single drive, but rather a series of halting, interrupted efforts that fall into four stages: Chou-shan and northeastern Fukien, November 1655 to April 1657; T'ai-chou prefecture, Chekiang, September through November 1657; southeastern coastal Chekiang, June 1658 to June 1659; and the lower Yangtze region, June through September 1659.⁷⁶

To establish a strategically more suitable base for the first stage, Cheng Ch'eng-kung seized the city of Min-an at the mouth of the Min River in the fall of 1656. From there he pressed attacks on districts adjacent to Foochow and moved farther north into areas surrounding San-sha Bay. There he annihilated a large eight-banner counterforce and killed three renowned Ch'ing lieutenant-generals in February 1657. The ease of these accomplishments reinforced Cheng's perception of the Ch'ing army's incompetence.

In August 1655 Cheng had assigned one of his Fukienese naval commanders to accompany Chang Ming-chen on an expedition "into the heartland" of the Ch'ing – that is, to attack Ch'ing coastal installations in Chekiang and Nan Chihli. Bad weather had limited their campaign to Chou-shan, however, and Chang Ming-chen had died there in January 1656.⁷⁷ More-

76 On this point and some of the judgments presented below, see Liao Han-ch'en, "Yen-p'ing wang pei cheng k'ao p'ing," *T'ai-wan wen hsien*, 15, No. 2 (June 1964), pp. 47–74.

77 Regarding the date of Chang Ming-chen's death, the informed guess of Liao Han-ch'en [see his "Lu wang k'ang Ch'ing yü erh Chang chih wu kung," *T'ai-wan wen hsien*, 11, No. 1 (March 1960), p. 102] is specifically confirmed in Chung-yang yen-chiu yüan li-shih yü-yen yen-chiu so, comp., *Ming Ch'ing shih liao* (Peiping, 1930), Part I, Vol. IV, p. 576b, i.e., that it was some time in the interval of January 12–25.

over, that year two other important loyalist generals were killed, and a third surrendered when the Ch'ing reconquered Chou-shan. Thus, by the spring of 1657 there were no more former Lu naval commanders who could guide Cheng Ch'eng-kung into the unfamiliar waters north and east of Hangchow Bay. So in spite of Cheng's success in extending his Fukien bases of operation, he returned to Hsia-men and ended the first phase of the northward campaign.

The second stage was the briefest. After raiding for provisions in Fukien late in the summer of 1655, Cheng sailed directly northward to enter the mouth of the Ling River in Chekiang. With little difficulty, he seized the T'ai-chou prefectural seat early in October. At this point, however, the Ch'ing employed some extraordinary tactics to regain Min-an in Fukien. Cheng Ch'eng-kung rushed there to help, but arrived too late; and in November he again returned to Hsia-men and disbanded his expeditionary forces for the winter. The following spring, however, he began a vigorous new training program, and first created units of his famous "ironmen" – strong men who could fight in iron-plated tunics.

In mid-June 1658 Cheng again entered Chekiang. The city of Wen-chou was besieged for a time, but once adequate supplies were gathered, Cheng took his fleet to Chou-shan, which again had been left vacant by the Ch'ing. As he went north toward Ch'ung-ming Island in the mouth of the Yangtze, his fleet stopped midway at Yang-shan Island and was struck by a violent typhoon. The loss was disastrous. On one ship alone, 230 of Cheng Ch'eng-kung's family and household members were lost. His men were quite demoralized, and the surviving portion of the fleet returned to southeastern coastal Chekiang to recoup. In December 1658 Cheng occupied the mouth of the Ou River near Wen-chou and dispersed the various commands to winter in enclaves along the coast. Despite Cheng's vulnerability, the Ch'ing failed to dislodge him from Wen-chou prefecture, and he was able to maintain his headquarters there until June 1659.

Then Cheng Ch'eng-kung embarked on the fourth and final stage of his northward campaign. First, he seized material in Ning-po prefecture, Chekiang, and disabled the nearby Ch'ing naval installation at Ting-hai. His fleet reached the sandbanks on the south side of Ch'ung-ming Island on 7 July. He kept his fleet in the broad outer mouth of the Yangtze for the rest of this month and limited necessary foraging to adjacent rural lands.

Since Cheng ordinarily was very secretive about his tactics, it is significant that he at no point sought to make his Yangtze campaign a surprise to the enemy. Since 1653, naval units under his orders had harassed the Yangtze effluence, and since 1655 he had told the Ch'ing flatly more than once that he intended to attack the Nanking region. Now he delayed three

weeks before proceeding upriver, and at subsequent junctures he adopted the slower course of action, seemingly unconcerned that the Ch'ing would be given time to amass defense forces.

The reason for this appears to be that Cheng was overconfident. He wanted as large a battle as possible so that his victory would have a corresponding psychological impact on the Han people and the Manchu leadership. This strategy was consistent with earlier campaigns; however, in applying it to Kiangnan, Cheng overplayed his hand. For one thing, Ch'ing control elsewhere was not crumbling, as he had imagined, and Nanking under any circumstances was more heavily garrisoned than the coastal prefectures. Moreover, repeated threats to the Yangtze delta by Chang Ming-chen and others in recent years had given the Ch'ing useful experience, inspiring special measures to prevent enemy ships from penetrating past Chen-chiang. Cheng Ch'eng-kung had arrived too late. He might have had more success a year earlier, when Manchu forces were heavily committed in the southwestern provinces. But by the time he arrived in the summer of 1659, most of those expeditionary forces were returning to Nanking.

Cheng Ch'eng-kung nevertheless had important military assets, as well as spreading popularity. His force was large—about 2,000 vessels of different sizes carrying about 200,000 well-trained fighting men—and his officers were seasoned, if a bit ill at ease in the strange Yangtze region. Moreover, in this campaign Cheng Ch'eng-kung relied on a man with valuable Yangtze experience, one who was singlemindedly dedicated to the Ming cause. Chang Huang-yen had held a ministership of war under both regent Lu and the Yung-li court. Ever since the fall of Chekiang and Fukien in 1646, he had been involved in every aspect of the coastal resistance movement, and he had been a longtime aide-de-camp to Chang Ming-chen.⁷⁸

Therefore, when Cheng Ch'eng-kung finally proceeded into the Yangtze proper, Chang Huang-yen was in the lead. The heroic actions of Chang's unit enabled Cheng to seize Kua-chou on 4 August 1659. Chang then took a light naval unit to show the flag upstream, while Cheng went on to challenge the Ch'ing at Chen-chiang, which surrendered on 10 August. Next he besieged Nanking, where his main force arrived two weeks later on 24 August. Cheng stationed his men outside the northwestern quarter of the city and made no attempt to prevent Ch'ing reinforcements from entering Nanking. Although a startling number of localities sent representatives

⁷⁸ Li Chen-hua, *Chang Ts'ang-shui chuan* (Taipei, 1967); Ishihara Michihiro, "Chō Kōgen no kōnan Kōhoku keiryaku," *T'ai-wan feng wu*, 5, No. 11–12 (1955), pp. 7–53.

to Cheng Ch'eng-kung and Chang Huang-yen proffering allegiance,⁷⁹ neither a political plan nor a body of civil officials was made ready for any organized response. To the consternation of Chang, who believed ardently that the collective spirit of the local elite could change the course of events, Cheng Ch'eng-kung placed his faith in his military men and in winning battles.

Cheng's strategy was to wait for the enemy to become fully prepared so that he could beat them in one resounding clash. This obviously gave the initiative to the most prominent regional officials on the Ch'ing side. And it also allowed Cheng Ch'eng-kung's men to become lax. In the end, Cheng's forces were simply outmaneuvered and outfought by the superior Ch'ing cavalry and infantry. In a Ch'ing preliminary strike on 8 September and the furious battle which ensued the next day, Cheng lost several of his most able generals. His army was decimated.

The navy, however, was virtually unscathed and was able to transport Cheng and his surviving men back to Chen-chiang and then out to Ch'ung-ming. Chang Huang-yen was left stranded upstream and was overcome by a Ch'ing river fleet. Cheng then attacked the Ch'ung-ming garrison for show, while asking for new peace negotiations with the Ch'ing court. But his men were too dispirited to fight well, and the Ch'ing refused to talk. So while Chang Huang-yen made a dangerous escape overland from southwestern Kiangnan to the Chekiang coast, Cheng returned by sea to Hsia-men in the autumn of 1659.

Retreat to Taiwan

Shortly after returning to Hsia-men, Cheng Ch'eng-kung began to prepare for a major Ch'ing assault. When news of his penetration of Kiangnan had reached Peking in August 1659, the Ch'ing court had appointed a chamberlain of the imperial bodyguard, Dasu, to lead Manchu reinforcements southward. As Dasu arrived at Foochow in February 1660, Cheng collected his army and navy, still of no mean size, to defend the home islands. But even though his forces were intact and strong, confidence had been shaken by the Nanking defeat.

In June Dasu launched an attack on the Hsia-men and Chin-men islands from Ch'üan-chou and Chang-chou. As before, the Ch'ing fleets were vanquished, but this time Cheng Ch'eng-kung had little cause for celebration. He was too impressed by the Ch'ing preparation and dissatisfied with his

79 Seven prefectural seats, three subprefectures, and 32 districts. This count is derived from various sources and is larger than that which is conventionally cited from Chang Huang-yen's account, "Pei cheng te shih chi lüeh" in *Ch'ang Ts'ang-shui shih men chi* (1659; rpt. No. 142, Vol. 1 of *TW*, Taipei, 1967), pp. 3-4.

own men's performance. Moreover, he knew that since the Ch'ing had by this time triumphed in all other theaters, they would be able to commit more resources to Fukien for multiple attacks. Indeed, in August and September the court assigned Prince Keng Chi-mao to Fukien and made the formidable general Loto his assistant. It seemed impossible for Cheng Ch'eng-kung to maintain such a small area under repeated assaults by such forces.

Consequently, early in the spring of 1661 Cheng Ch'eng-kung pressed his commanders to accept a previously rejected proposal: removal of the Cheng main base to Taiwan. Some objected that Taiwan was a wild and disease-ridden place too far at sea. Cheng's mind was made up, however, because he needed a territory that was larger and more secure than what he had, but still near major East Asian trade routes. Perhaps he now credulously recalled the glowing description of Taiwan's easily obtainable resources that had been given to him by a former Chinese employee of the Dutch East India Company.

Since 1624 the Dutch East India Company had maintained a trading colony on the southwestern coast of Taiwan (which they called Formosa). Their relations with Cheng Chih-lung had been strained, but those with Cheng Ch'eng-kung had become even worse because of his frequent interference with trade in order to pursue his "war against the Tartars." Many of the officers of the company were concerned lest Cheng Ch'eng-kung try to occupy Taiwan in the wake of his coastal setbacks. In 1652 a revolt among the growing number of Chinese settlers in the colony was thought to have been secretly instigated by Cheng agents. Since then, each spate of campaign preparation around Hsia-men had given rise to fresh rumors that Cheng Ch'eng-kung was about to invade Taiwan, especially after his defeat at Nanking. But at company headquarters in Batavia there was little inclination to invest further in the Taiwan outpost, and little belief in the rumors. No steps were taken to strengthen the colony's defenses.

In March 1661 Cheng Ch'eng-kung made command assignments for the Taiwan campaign. On 21 April his fleet departed from Chin-men, but for a week it was trapped among the P'eng-hu Islands (the Pescadores) by inclement weather. Unfortunately, Cheng Ch'eng-kung had been assured that the sea passage would be easy and that food would be waiting in Taiwan, so the fleet brought almost no provisions. When Cheng's men finally reached shore near the Dutch colony on 30 April,⁸⁰ they were desperate to find

80 Determining the exact date of Cheng Ch'eng-kung's landing on Taiwan has been problematical. For conclusive studies, see Ch'en Cheng-ch'iang, "Cheng Ch'eng-kung shou fu T'ai-wan ti shih chien wen t'i," *Hsia-men ta hsieh hsieh pao*, 1 (April 1962), pp. 158–64; T'ien Ta-hsiung, "Kuo-hsing-yeh ti teng lu T'ai-wan," trans. Shih Wan-shou, *T'ai-pei wen hsien*, 44 (June 1978), pp. 111–21 (originally published 1938).

food. Nevertheless, numbering several thousand on a fleet of impressive vessels, they must have completely unnerved the few hundred Dutchmen manning the shabby forts and the two warships on T'ai Bay.

On 1 May Cheng demanded the surrender of Fort Provintia and the larger Castle Zeelandia. He promised to let the Dutch leave safely, since he bore them no malice but simply needed to "repossess" the territory that he claimed his father had allowed them to use. He rejected proposals from the company's Formosa Council and from Governor Frederic Coyett for peaceful coexistence with the Christian church there. Indefensible Fort Provintia was surrendered forthwith, but the "blood flag" was raised over Castle Zeelandia and battle lines were drawn.

Cheng Ch'eng-kung did not attack Castle Zeelandia at once for several reasons. First, he had always disliked costly sieges. He thought that the summer monsoons would delay getting calls for help to Batavia for many months, during which time the Dutch resisters could be starved into capitulation. Moreover, Cheng himself faced food shortages. Supply ships expected from the mainland failed to come. Rice became almost impossible to obtain, and the native corn and taro roots were never sufficient. Consequently, Cheng was forced to commit most of his men to agriculture. Many of them died or became ill from local diseases. Surely he had not expected crossing the Taiwan Strait to be so difficult, nor Taiwan to be so underdeveloped. He might not have succeeded at all but for some peculiar behavior on the Dutch side.

On 12 August, to Cheng Ch'eng-kung's surprise, A Dutch "succor fleet" arrived and managed to transfer needed men, food, and material to Castle Zeelandia. In September Cheng was forced to resume the offensive, despite his army's general weakness. But the captain of that fleet, discouraged by the size of the enemy and the castle's poor condition, deserted the colony as soon as an opportunity arose. Naturally this dampened the spirits of Castle Zeelandia's defenders, and on 16 December some Dutch soldiers defected to the Cheng side. The leader of these defectors then gave Cheng Ch'eng-kung valuable advice on how to attack the castle most effectively. On 27 January Governor Coyett and the Council decided to negotiate a surrender, which was formally concluded on 1 February 1662, ending a nine-month ordeal.⁸¹

Even before the Dutch departed, Cheng Ch'eng-kung had dubbed his settlement the Ming Eastern Capital. Although he continued to use the Yung-li calendar, on Taiwan he began to behave much like the ruler of an independent realm, instituting a tax system, regulating hunting and fish-

81 C. E. S. [Frederic Coyett], *Neglected Formosa*, ed. Inez de Beauclair et. al. (Taipei, 1975).

ing, supervising land allocations, and arrogantly demanding “tribute” from the Spanish governor of Luzon.

Cheng Ch'eng-kung's power over his carefully nurtured organization began to disintegrate as the requirements for his private quest and the self-interest of his followers diverged. This became most clear when, in March 1662, he ordered his eldest son, Cheng Ching, and the commanders who had been left in charge on Hsia-men and Chin-men to abandon those islands and move their families to Taiwan. But the hardships on Taiwan were well known, and they refused to obey. Frustrated at all turns, Cheng Ch'eng-kung punished wrongdoing among his men on Taiwan with a harshness that bordered on madness.

This situation became critical in May and June 1662 when Cheng Ch'eng-kung learned that Cheng Ching had just been borne a son by the family wetnurse. He promptly ordered the executions of Cheng Ching, the mother and baby, and even his own principal wife for failing to govern her household. When his generals tried to placate him with the heads of the mother and child, Cheng became even more enraged and ordered that the generals be executed as well. This bizarre sequence of events engendered mutual suspicion among remaining commanders, and defections began. The effects of a Ch'ing naval blockade were also being felt, and this led even more officers to defect.

At this time Cheng Ch'eng-kung also learned that the Yung-li emperor had been captured and probably killed. His despair over this, added to the news of the execution of his father by the Ch'ing on 24 November 1661 and the disobedience of his own son, seems to have cast him into a state of mental turmoil so severe that he fell ill. On 23 June 1662 he died on Taiwan, probably from a combination of insanity and some delirium-inducing disease.⁸² He was thirty-seven years old.

Chang Huang-yen had been unsuccessful in harassing the Chekiang–Fukien coast with his resistance fighters. He pleaded several times with regent Lu on Chin-men to assume Cheng Ch'eng-kung's banner and give the Chinese masses one more chance to rise up for the Ming. But the regent was gravely ill too, and he died of asthma on 23 December 1662.

The stage had been set for a power struggle between Cheng Ching, who was declared heir to his father's titles by the commanders on Hsia-men, and Cheng Ch'eng-kung's younger brother, Cheng Hsi,⁸³ who was supported

82 Li T'eng-yü, “Cheng Ch'eng-kung ti ssu yin k'ao,” *Wen hsien chuan k'an*, 1, No. 3 (August 1950), pp. 35–44.

83 He usually is referred to in sources as Cheng Shih-hsi because the honorific term “shih” was added to the given names of all Cheng Chih-lung's sons except the eldest. For a genealogy of the Cheng clan of An-p'ing, see Liao Han-ch'en, “Cheng shih shih hsi chi jen wu k'ao,” *Wen hsien chuan k'an*, 1, No. 3 (1950), pp. 54–64.

by generals and officials in Taiwan. Cheng Ching for a time was able to defeat his opposition in Taiwan and to preserve his Fukien base, but in 1664 Fukien was taken over by the Ch'ing. Although he and his son maintained the Cheng legacy of authority on Taiwan for another twenty years, the appellation "Ming" had lost all force as a rallying cry and became merely a nostalgic reminder of greatness lost.

CHAPTER 12

HISTORICAL WRITING DURING THE MING

INTRODUCTION: SOME GENERAL TRENDS

The nearly three centuries of the Ming dynasty's rule can hardly be considered a homogeneous period, and the changes that took place during this time touched all aspects of Chinese cultural and intellectual life. Historiography in its broadest sense was no exception. Although innovations develop only gradually over a long period, on the whole the historical writing of the last century of the Ming dynasty differed considerably from that of the first century. The difference became evident in quality as well as in quantity. The details of these changes will be elaborated in the course of this chapter. They may be summarized here as a more critical attitude toward source materials, which became gradually evident during the sixteenth century and distinguished the later period from the earlier one.

Economic developments in the sixteenth century, particularly in the lower Yangtze area, made literary education for their offspring affordable to ever more people. Literacy expanded greatly, and the demand for reading materials (including writings on history) increased. One aspect of this general trend was the large increase in the quotas of successful candidates in the official examinations. These men were also the prospective readers of historical writings. The average number of successful candidates in the metropolitan examination (who formed the majority of authors and compilers of publications relevant to history) rose from roughly 150 every three years in the period from 1388 to 1448 to 290 in each triennial examination period between 1451 and 1505, and to 330 between 1508 and 1643.¹ Likewise favorable to the spread of books and learning was the development of printing techniques and publishing enterprises in the sixteenth century. According to an expert, printing in the second half of the Ming dynasty "attained a very high level which equaled, if it did not surpass, that of previous periods."²

¹ See the examination lists, *Ming Ch'ing li k'o chin shih t'i ming pei lu* (preface 1732; photographic rpt. Taipei, 1969), Vols. I and II.

² K. T. Wu, "Ming printing and printers," *HJAS*, 7 (1942-43), pp. 203-60, quotation p. 203.

It is true that the Ming dynasty cannot boast of such outstanding original cultural and intellectual achievements as earlier periods. This is true as well in the field of historiography. The major creative innovations in historical writing occurred earlier and had by Ming times become the models for historical writing. Outstanding examples were the *Shih-chi* and *Han shu* for the composite style used in the standard histories; *Tzu chih t'ung chien* for works in the annalistic pattern; *T'ung chien chi shih pen mo* for the topically arranged style; *T'ung tien* and *Wen hsien t'ung k'ao* for the political encyclopedias, to name only a few of the most important genres. The late Professor Yoshikawa Kōjirō demonstrated that in the case of regulated verse poetry (*shih*), without doubt the highest stage of development was attained in T'ang times and was never reached again.³

But whereas in T'ang and Sung times only a rather small number of literate people had been able to appreciate or even to imitate the great poets, this number greatly increased in the following periods. Yoshikawa expresses the opinion that the growing participation of wider strata of society in the cultural achievements of the past should be considered an advance in itself. Implicitly he suggests that his point of view should not be limited to poetry alone. It seems largely applicable to historical writings; the original, early models became known to more and more people, who then applied these models to their own historical writing.

It may be appropriate to define here what we mean by historical writing. It includes those writings covered by the division of history (*shih-pu*) in the traditional Chinese classification:

1. Official or standard histories (*cheng-shih*) of the composite type, divided into the basic annals (*pen-chi*), monographs (*chih*), tables (*piao*), and biographies (*lieh-chuan*)
2. Private or semi-official compilations of the composite type similar to the standard histories (*pieh-shih*)
3. Official and private works in the annalistic pattern (*p'ien-nien*)
4. Topically arranged histories (*chi-shih pen-mo*)
5. Miscellaneous histories (*tsa-shih*) mostly covering a limited period or a certain event
6. Collections of imperial edicts and memorials presented by high officials (*chao-ling tsou-i*)

³ Yoshikawa Kōjirō, "Shinpo no ichi keishiki—Sō igo no Chūgoku no shinpo ni tsuite," *Asahi shinbun* [Tokyo], 3 January 1958; rpt. in *Yoshikawa Kōjirō zenshū* (Tokyo, 1974), Vol. XIII, pp. 605–07. See also a related article by Barbara Krafft, "Über die Weiterentwicklung der chinesischen Literatur in anderer Form: ein Aufsatz von Yoshikawa Kōjirō." In *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens*, 84 (1958); rpt. in *Yoshikawa Kōjirō zenshū* (Tokyo, 1969), Vol. XIII, pp. 617–22.

7. Biographical collections (*chuan-chi*)
8. Works on the organization of officials (*chih-kuan*)
9. Works on political institutions (*cheng-shu*)
10. Works on geography and territorial administration (*ti-li*), including gazetteers or local histories (*fang-chih*)

To these works, some items from the division of noncanonical writers or philosophers (*tzu-pu*) must be added:

1. Works on military affairs and on border defense, mostly classified under military writers (*ping-chia*)
2. Political encyclopedias, classified under miscellaneous schools (*tsa-chia*) or under small talk (*hsiao-shuo*)

These classifications are not exactly the same in all catalogues.⁴ A number of titles or whole groups of titles classified in the *Ssu k'u ch'üan shu tsung mu* (Imperial catalogue) under the division of philosophers are arranged in other catalogues under the division of history, whereas collections of memorials listed in the *Imperial catalogue* under the division of history are attached elsewhere to the division of collected writings (*chi-pu*).

Besides these strictly historical works, many other writings can be important for historical research. The collected writings (*wen-chi*) of a certain author may contain in addition to memorials and addresses (*piao*) to the emperor, biographical materials on the author's friends; recordings (*chi*) about interesting places visited by the author or events in which he participated; treatises (*chih*), discussions (*lun*), or expositions (*shuo*) on historical and political subjects; and letters (*shu*) that he exchanged with friends and colleagues in office. Sometimes even short historical compositions are included in the author's collected writings, without being mentioned separately in any bibliography or catalogue. Moreover, many novels and plays must be considered primary sources for the cultural and social history of the times in which they were written. Finally, Ming poems also express the spirit of their age and can also be considered materials for historical research.⁵

A characteristic feature of historical writing during the first century of the Ming dynasty was the compilation by the government of huge collected works. Such sponsored compilations continued traditions of the Yüan and earlier dynasties. The first work of this kind was the *Official history of the Yüan dynasty*, compiled during the Hung-wu period and subsequently printed. This was followed by the major compilations of the Yung-lo

4 On the different systems of classifying historical writings, see Cheng Ho-sheng, *Chung-kuo shih pu mu lu hsieh* (Shanghai, 1930).

5 See Yoshikawa Kōjirō, *Gen-Min shi gaisetsu* (Tokyo, 1963).

period: the editions of the Confucian classics, with the commentaries and interpretations of Chu Hsi and other Sung scholars (*Ssu shu ta ch'üan* and *Wu ching ta ch'üan*) and the collection of neo-Confucian writings (*Hsing li ta ch'üan*). Relevant to history are the large collections of memorials from ancient times to the end of the Yüan dynasty (*Li tai ming ch'en tsou i*) of 1416 and the famous Yung-lo encyclopedia (*Yung-lo ta tien*), the biggest compilation project in Chinese history. Although only about a tenth of its original 12,000 volumes (*ts'e*) were still extant in the eighteenth century (even less is extant at present), it has transmitted some unique writings relevant to Sung, Yüan, and early Ming history that otherwise would have been completely lost. These include materials on the postal organization of the Yüan period from the *Ching shih ta tien* of 1331 and other works that permit a reconstruction of the Yüan postal system.⁶

These compilations were more outstanding for their monumental size, which reflected the splendor the Yung-lo period, than for their scholarly achievement.⁷ The tradition of large government compilations was continued after the Yung-lo reign with such works of great importance for the Ming historian as the official geographies of 1456 and 1461, the *Ta Ming hui tien* (Collected statutes) of 1503 and 1587, and the *Ta Ming chi li* (Collected ceremonies) of 1530. All these later works were printed under the supervision of the eunuch Directorate of Ceremonial (*Ssu-li chien*). The printing blocks were kept in a storehouse of the Directorate serving this purpose named the Classics Storehouse (*Ching-ch'ang*). Therefore, the books printed on the order of the Directorate were called classics storehouse volumes (*ching-ch'ang pen*).⁸ They were technically very well printed, being large volumes with big characters on thick white paper. They provided the model for the palace editions of the Ch'ing period and also for a number of Korean editions of Chinese texts.

The most salient advance in historiography during the Ming period was the critical attitude adopted toward historical materials. The Chu Hsi school of neo-Confucianism dominated intellectual life during the first half of the Ming. This school influenced historical writing insofar as it taught one to accept tradition and its values as they had been transmitted in the *T'ung chien kang mu* edited by Chu Hsi and did not encourage the questioning of the validity and reliability of historical records.

Before the middle of the sixteenth century, historical writers usually did

6 See Peter Olbricht, *Das Postwesen in China unter der Mongolenherrschaft im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 1954), pp. 12–20.

7 The various "great completes" (*ta-ch'üan*) were even later ironically called the "great incompletes" (*ta pu-ch'üan*). See Naitō Torajirō, *Shina shigaku shi* (Tokyo, 1961), p. 340.

8 Wu, "Ming printing and printers," pp. 228–29, note 3.

not bother to make clear distinctions between historical documents of various kinds and narratives or even gossip of dubious origin. They were even less inclined to question the authenticity of official records. This attitude is evident in works of a formal character as well as in miscellaneous works and notes on historical subjects. Such works as the *Wu hsüeh pien* (2.1.1) by Cheng Hsiao (1499–1566) of 1459–1566, or the *Hsien chang lu* (1.3.1) by Hsüeh Ying-ch'i (b. 1500) of 1574, were still compiled in this way, being based in part on official documentary materials and in part on hearsay or narratives of unequal reliability.⁹ For instance, in chapter eleven of the *Wu hsüeh pien*, which treats the demise of the Chien-wen emperor, the author writes that the Chien-wen emperor was reported to have died in the fire at his Nanking palace, but also adds the stories of his flight to Szechwan, Yunnan, and Kwangsi and of his later reappearance as possible facts.¹⁰ In works of this kind valuable information sometimes not found in the official record may be mixed in with unverifiable tales.

By the early sixteenth century, historians gradually began to apply the new approaches of Ch'en Pai-sha and later of Wang Shou-jen to their writings. More and more they became aware of the fundamental differences between documentary materials and stories transmitted by hearsay, while realizing as well that documentary materials did not necessarily always give truthful information and that stories of all kinds might contain some truth. One of the earliest representatives of the transition toward the new approach was Chu Yün-ming (1461–1527), a rather unorthodox thinker who opposed the Chu Hsi school. His various collections of miscellaneous notes (e.g., 4.5.8) combined valuable information with unverifiable stories; but his collected biographies of eminent people from Soochow (*Su ts'ai hsiao tsuan* 3.5.1) of 1499 is appreciated as a reliable work based on epitaphs, *curricula vitae*, and other documentary materials. In his last work, *Chu-tzu tsui chih lu*, he presents judgments on historical personalities that are often quite distinct from traditional views. His work is said to have considerably influenced Li Chih in the compilation of his *Ts'ang shu*.¹¹

9 Three numbers in parentheses, e.g. (2.1.1) or (4.5.7) after book titles, refer to the key to works discussed in Wolfgang Franke, *An introduction to the sources of Ming history* (Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, 1968).

10 Cheng Hsiao, *Wu hsüeh pien* (1567), II, pp. 42a–b. See Chapter 4 above for information on the demise of the Chien-wen emperor. Works cited in the text of this chapter and cross-referenced to entries in Franke's book have not been included in the bibliography for this volume of *The Cambridge history of China*. See Franke, *An introduction to the sources of Ming history*, for further bibliographic information.

11 Mano Senryū, "Shuku Inmei no shigaku," in *Mindai bunkashi kenkyū* (Kyoto, 1979), pp. 211–41; and the biography of Chu Yün-ming by Hok-lam Chan in L. Carrington Goodrich and Chao-ying Fang, ed., *The dictionary of Ming biography* (New York and London, 1976), pp. 392–97. See also Christian Murck, "Chu Yün-ming (1461–1527) and cultural commitment in Soochow" (*Ann Arbor*, 1978), pp. 302–444. On the *Ts'ang shu*, see below, pp. 732–33, 763.

This new trend in Ming historiography, however, found its full expression in the writings of such authors as Wang Shih-chen (1526–90), who also came from the Soochow area. Unlike earlier Ming writers, Wang did have access to the veritable records and was therefore able to base the various historical treatises published in his *Yen-shan t'ang pieh chi* (2.2.6) of 1590 and in his *Yen-chou shih liao* (2.2.8) of 1614 primarily on these records. One of his treatises, *Shih ch'eng k'ao wu* (Investigation of the errors in historical works), clearly reveals his understanding of the relative value of various sources and of the need for selective and critical evaluation. In the introductory paragraph of this treatise, for example, he states:¹²

National historiography never failed in its task to such an extreme degree as under our dynasty. Only when past events needed no more concealment [that is, after the death of a ruler] did the grand secretariat and the Hanlin Academy receive the order to compile the veritable records. The old memorials from the six offices of scrutiny for supervision of the six ministries and from the Bureau of Remonstrance were consulted, and that was all. The records of utterances and actions by the historiographers of the left and of the right [that is, the diaries of activity and repose] are missing. Thus the compilers of the veritable records had no material upon which they could rely, and therefore they were not in a position to write. As to national disgraces and imperial faults, there was reason for evasiveness and [still] they did not dare to write. Worst of all was that those in charge of writing had their private sympathies and aversions. Thus even if there was material to rely upon and nothing to evade, they did not wish to write about it. Therefore what they wrote did not correspond to the facts.

Should we [perhaps] look for that which is missing in the official histories in the unofficial sources? The unofficial histories, however, have three deficiencies. First, they presume upon discord and in many cases make false implications. It is impossible to call the authors of such works fair and honest wise men. They erase from their works sources upon which they look with anger. Such writings as *Shuang hsi tsa chi* and *So chui lu* are of this type.¹³ Second, they casually hear information and get entangled in contradictions. These people have grown up as country people and no longer understand the matters of the county officials. They misunderstand the information they have heard and then tell the details. Such writings as *Chih shan yeh chi* and *Chien sheng yeh wen* (4.5.7) are of this type.¹⁴ Third, they like strange things

12 Wang Shih-chen, "Shih ch'eng k'ao wu," *Yen-shan t'ang pieh chi* (1590; rpt. *Kuang-ya shu-chü* n.p., n.d.), 20, pp. 1a–b.

13 The *Shuang hsi tsa chi* (Ming; rpt. Vol. 6 of *Chin hsien hui yen*, Shanghai, 1937; photographic rpt., Vol. 3, No. 6, Taipei, 1969) was compiled by Wang Ch'üung (1459–1532; *DMB* pp. 1367–68). See Wolfgang Franke, "Miscellen von einer Chinareise 1977: Bemerkungen zu einigen Ming Inschriften," in *Studia Sino-Mongolica. Festschrift für Herbert Franke*, ed. Wolfgang Bauer (Wiesbaden, 1979), pp. 260–64. The *Chien-chai so chui lu* (Ming ed.; photographic rpt. *ch.* 93 of *Li tai hsiao shih*, 1940; rpt. Taipei, 1969) was compiled by Yin Chih (1427–1511; *DMB*, pp. 1525, and on this work, pp. 1500 and 1538).

14 *Chih shan yeh chi* (Ming ed.; photographic rpt. *ch.* 79 of *Li tai hsiao shih*, 1940; rpt. Taipei, 1969) is by Chu Yün-ming. Hsü Chen-ch'ing (1479–1511; *DMB*, pp. 569–70) compiled the *Chien sheng yeh wen* (Ming ed.; photographic rpt. in *ch.* 78 of *Li tai hsiao shih*, 1940; rpt. Taipei, 1969).

and in many cases they even invent abstruse things to startle us or to flatter the excellence of the person in question. They make no further investigation and then write the story down. Such writings as *K'o tso hsin wen* and *Keng ssu pien* are of this type.¹⁵ Must one then look for reliable information in family genealogies, memorial tablets and *curricula vitae*? They merely adulate dried bones and appeal for some golden words in memory of a deceased ancestor. It is true that the official historians are unrestrained and are skillful in concealing the truth, but the memorials and statutes they record and the documents they copy cannot be discarded. The unofficial historians express their opinions and are skillful at missing the truth, but their verification of right and wrong and their abolition of taboos against names and things cannot be discarded. The family historians flatter and are skillful in exceeding the truth, but their praise of the merits of the ancestors and the manifestation of their achievements as officials cannot be discarded.

In this piece Wang Shih-chen substantiates his general criticism of historical writing that indiscriminately quotes from other works. The great importance attached to primary documentary sources is also seen in the *Kuo ch'ao hsien cheng lu* (3.1.2) of 1594, a large biographical collection of epitaphs, memorial tablets, and obituaries of eminent Ming personalities compiled by Chiao Hung (1541–1620).¹⁶

Li Chih (1527–1602), the most peculiar and unorthodox historical author of the period, was greatly admired by Chiao Hung.¹⁷ In his *Ts'ang shu* of 1599, a collection of classified biographies of eminent people from the Chou to the Yüan dynasties, Li Chih used entirely new criteria and viewpoints to evaluate historical personalities. The introductory remarks in his *Ts'ang shu* begin with the words: "Human judgments are not fixed quantities. In passing judgments men do not hold settled views."¹⁸ According to Li Chih, opinions and judgments held by different people at different times vary greatly. If Confucius were to return, he said, his views would be very different from those he expressed two thousand years ago. Such ideas do not provide sufficient grounds to classify Li Chih as anti-Confucian, but they clearly indicate that he opposed the kind of official neo-Confucian orthodoxy established by the Chu Hsi school, according to which judgments actually or allegedly once expressed by Confucius had to be the only valid criteria for all times.

15 Shen Chou (1427–1509; *DMB*, pp. 1173–77) compiled the *K'o tso hsin wen*; rpt. in part 13 of *Shuo fu hsiü*, ed. Tao T'ing (Liang-Che, 1646; facsimile rpt. Taipei, 1964), I, pp. 589–93. Lu Ts'an (1494–1551) compiled the *Keng ssu pien* (ca. 1520; rpt. in *Pai pu ts'ung shu chi ch'eng*, Taipei, 1966).

16 Arthur Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing period* (Washington, D.C., 1943–44), I, pp. 145–46.
17 *DMB*, pp. 807–18.

18 Li Chih, *Ts'ang shu* (1599; rpt. Peking, 1959) 2 vols., p. 7; *DMB*, p. 811. Two important new works on Li Chih are the following: Jean François Billeter, *Li Zhi, philosophe maudit (1527–1602): Contribution à une sociologie du mandarinat chinois de la fin des Ming* (Genève and Paris, 1979); and Hok-lam Chan, *Li Chih in contemporary Chinese historiography* (White Plains, N.Y., 1980).

As for the valuation of history and historical personalities, Chu Hsi had set the pattern in his *T'ung chien kang mu*, which enjoyed, at least officially, undisputed high esteem during the Ming.¹⁹ In keeping with his basic views, Li Chih's judgments on not a few historical figures necessarily contradicted the orthodox appraisal. For example, Li Chih esteemed Ch'in Shih-huang, the *bête noire* of all Confucian historiography to the present day, and rated him "the greatest emperor of all ages."²⁰ His *Ts'ang shu* covers pre-Ming times only, but three years later in 1602 a continuation, *Hsü ts'ang-shu* (3.3.15), was published. In this work Li Chih expressed similar independent and unorthodox judgments about Ming personalities. Although Li Chih had to bear the consequences of the anti-orthodox thought in his writings and public remarks by committing suicide in prison, his writings were reprinted and enjoyed great popularity into the early Ch'ing period, when the suppression of all his books was enforced.

The great work on Ming intellectual history, the *Ming ju hsüeh an* (3.4.6) of 1676 by Huang Tsung-hsi, represents another type of innovation in historical writing.²¹ This was the "*Acta Eruditorum* of the Ming dynasty" and actually the first history of Chinese philosophy, a work which excited nation-wide interest.²² It is arranged according to schools of thought. Each individual scholar is introduced by a short biography followed by an exposé of his thinking. Thus the course of intellectual trends during the Ming period becomes evident. In the Chinese catalogues the work is usually classified under the section of biographies, which does not give sufficient credit to its character. Huang Tsung-hsi started to compile a similar work on the Sung and Yüan periods, *Sung Yüan hsüeh an*, which was completed by others only after his death.

During the sixteenth century, government offices also began to sponsor the compilation of monographs or handbooks on their own institutions and activities which were based mainly on archival materials. These preserved a detailed account of institutional and administrative precedents. The comprehensive and informative draft monograph on the Ministry of Rites of 1620 (6.2.1) is typical of such works.

Another consequence of this new appreciation of documentary materials was the collection of writings on state affairs (*ching-shih wen*, or *ching-chi wen*).

19 Otto Franke, "Das *Ts'ang-shu* und das *T'ung chien kang-mu*, ihr Wesen, ihr Verhältnis zueinander und ihr Quellenwert," in *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* [Berlin], Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, 4 (1930), pp. 103-44.

20 *DMB*, p. 811. 21 *ECCP*, pp. 351-54.

22 Étienne Balázs, *Political theory and administrative reality in traditional China* (London, 1965), p. 19. See also Julia Ching, "The records of the Ming philosophers: An introduction," *Oriens Extremus*, 23 No. 2 (December 1976), pp. 191-211.

The most important writings on state affairs were the memorials presented by the higher metropolitan and regional officials to the emperor reporting facts and proposing corresponding actions. Besides the memorials, other types of proposals, addresses, or reports to the emperor or communications to other government offices may be included in such collections.

There are a few collections of memorials dating from the Sung and even earlier periods. Their publication may have been motivated mainly by the wish to exhibit the moral qualities that found expression in selected memorials written by outstanding personalities and to encourage imitation. Only during the sixteenth century did it become general practice for an author to collect and publish his own memorials to the throne during his lifetime or for his descendants and friends to do this for him posthumously. The motive behind such undertakings probably was primarily to give an account of the author's administrative achievements and to preserve documentary materials for later biographers and historians. In addition, the memorials may have been considered literary achievements and therefore as worthy of publication as other prose writings.

The compilation of selected memorials for their practical use, in addition to those valued as exemplars of political morality, was a real innovation of the Ming period. The large, general collection of memorials written by leading officials throughout Chinese history, *Li tai ming ch'en tsou i*, published as early as the Yung-lo period, has been mentioned already. Collections of memorials and other "writings on state affairs" by Ming officials were first compiled in the middle of the sixteenth century. The most outstanding example is the large *Huang Ming ching shih wen pien* (5.1.8) of 1638, the most comprehensive work of this kind from any period. As is evident from the title of this and most other compilations, they were intended to provide documentary materials for use in deliberations on state affairs.

Political encyclopedias (*cheng-shu*) dealt mainly with state affairs. Encyclopedias had been compiled as early as the T'ang and Sung periods. This tradition continued during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. New, often well-documented works dealing mainly with the Ming period supplemented earlier encyclopedias. These include the *Huang Ming shih fa lu* (6.6.7) of 1630 by Ch'en Jen-hsi, the *Hsü wen hsien t'ung k'ao* (6.6.2) of 1586 by Wang Ch'i, the *Huang Ming ching shih shih yung pien* (6.6.4) of 1604 by Feng Ying-ching, and many others. *Ching-shih* and *ching-chi* were apparently popular terms at the time.

Another important source for documentary material was the *Ti-pao* or *T'ang-pao* (Metropolitan gazette), a government bulletin containing orders and information that circulated among the various metropolitan and pro-

vincial government offices. Such a bulletin existed in earlier periods, but it became a permanent institution only during the later part of the Ming. At first it circulated in manuscript copies, but after 1628 it was issued in movable-type print. The Manchu dynasty adopted this institution, and in later times it became known as the *Ching pao* (Peking gazette).

From the sixteenth century onward, the compilation of gazetteers or local handbooks greatly increased in quality and in quantity, and the study of regional or local history and historical geography became widespread. In the early seventeenth century scholars began to combine the study of literary sources with experiences gained from field work. The travel records by Hsü Hung-tsu,²³ *Hsü Hsia-k'o yu chi* (8.3.2), give detailed historical and geographical descriptions based on the author's own experiences when he traveled through all provinces of the Ming empire except Szechwan between 1607 and 1640. Ku Yen-wu²⁴ based his large economic and strategic geography of China, the *T'ien hsia chün kuo li ping shu* (8.1.10) of 1662, on literary sources, mainly gazetteers, as well as on extensive travels. The main purpose of Ku Yen-wu's travels was not so much to visit historical sites and collect antiquities (as had been the case among most scholars traveling before him), but "to inspect personally the regions of peasant guerrilla warfare and to assess the strategic possibilities of the terrain for subsequent resistance."²⁵

No great innovations took place in such so-called sciences auxiliary to history (*historische Hilfswissenschaften*) as epigraphy (*chin-shih hsüeh*) or bibliography (*mu-lu hsüeh*), but they were well tended and further developed in the second half of the Ming period. Epigraphy was one of the many fields covered by Yang Shen,²⁶ an outstanding, versatile, and prolific scholar of the early sixteenth century. He was one of the first to study the bronze drums of the southwestern border regions of China.²⁷ Chiao Hung's catalogue of works written by Ming authors up to his time, *Kuo shih ching chi chih* (1590), reveals his wide reading and bibliographic competence, and it ranks among the most important bibliographic works of the period.²⁸ It was later partly superseded by Huang Yü-chi's²⁹ catalogue, *Ch'ien-ch'ing t'ang shu mu* (see below, p. 753), which covered the whole Ming period up to 1644.

In sum, the cultural liveliness and intellectual variety of the late Ming

23 *ECCP*, pp. 314–16. 24 *ECCP*, pp. 421–26.

25 Balázs, *Political theory and administrative reality in traditional China*, pp. 31–32. See also Willard Peterson, "The life of Ku Yen-wu (1612–1682)," *HJAS*, 28 (1968), pp. 114–56; and 29 (1969), pp. 201–47.

26 *DMB*, pp. 1531–35.

27 Naitō, *Shina shigaku shi*, pp. 356–57, 371–72.

28 Naitō, *Shina shigaku shi*, pp. 368–70. 29 *ECCP*, pp. 355–56.

period is evident in almost all forms of historical writing. The following sections discuss in detail various aspects of Ming historiography.

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF HISTORIOGRAPHY
(KURO-SHIH KUAN)

Since early times, the keeping of chronicles or records was considered as an important government function, and the official historiographer (*shih* or *shih-kuan*) was entrusted with this task.³⁰ This conception was incorporated into some of the Confucian classics. Regardless of whether the government organization described in these classics actually existed or not, it served as a model for later times, and such passages as “[The emperor’s] actions were written down by the recorder of the left, and his utterances by the recorder of the right,” were quoted again and again throughout Chinese history in connection with official historiography.³¹

During the first half of the seventh century, a special Bureau of Historiography (*Shih-kuan*) was set up as an independent government office. Its main tasks were to keep diaries of activity and repose or audience records (*ch’i-chü chu*) and to compile the veritable records (*shih-lu*) on which the national history (*kuo-shih*) and the official or standard histories (*cheng-shih*) of former dynasties were based.³² This Bureau of Historiography continued to function in later periods.

Under the first Ming emperor, the bureau was not reestablished as an independent institution, but was incorporated into the Hanlin Academy. As early as 1367, one year before Chu Yüan-chang’s formal accession to the throne, first- and second-class compilers (*hsiu-chuan*, *tien-pu*, and *pien-hsiu*) were appointed.³³ In 1381 the numbers and ranks of the officials in charge of historiographical work were fixed at three first-class compilers (*hsiu-chuan*) with the rank of 6b, four second-class compilers (*pien-hsiu*) with the rank of 7a, and four correctors (*chien-t’ao*) with the rank of 7b.³⁴ These officials continued

30 Otto Franke, “Der Ursprung der chinesischen Geschichtsschreibung,” *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* [Berlin], Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, 23 (1925), pp. 276–309.

31 *Li chi*, ed. Cheng Hsüan (second century; rpt. Shanghai, 1936), 1, p. 5; James Legge, trans., *The Li Ki*, in Vol. XXVII of *The sacred books of the East* (Oxford, 1885), p. 2.

32 William Hung, “The T’ang bureau of historiography before 708,” *HJAS*, 23 (1960–61), pp. 92–107.

33 *Ming shih lu*, *T’ai-tsu shih lu* (1418; rpt. Taipei, 1961–66), pp. 338–39. Chang T’ing-yü et al., ed., *Ming shih* (1736; rpt. Peking, 1974), 73, p. 1787.

34 Chai Shan, comp., *Chu ssu chih chang* (1380; rpt. Vols. 43–50 of *Hsüan-lan t’ang ts’ung shu*; rpt., Taipei, 1981), pp. 19a and 56b–57b; Shen Shih-hsing, comp., *Ta Ming hui tien* (1587; rpt. Taipei, 1964), 2, p. 34a (p. 79), and 10, pp. 8a–10a (pp. 196–97); Hucker, “Governmental organization of the Ming dynasty,” p. 40.

to be appointed throughout the Ming period, but their numbers varied according to the requirements of the compilations under preparation.³⁵ Thus, for example, in 1529 the number of second-class compilers and of correctors was fixed at six each.³⁶ Sometimes, however, there were many more. First-class graduates in the metropolitan examinations (*i-chia chin-shih*) were often appointed as first-class compilers, second-class graduates (*erh-chia chin-shih*) as second-class compilers and correctors.³⁷

The historiography officials collected documentary materials and compiled historical records:

The historiography officers are in charge of the compilation of the national history. They should carefully register and record all edicts, rescripts, letters, and despatches coming down from above and dealing with such important political matters as astronomy, geography, the imperial house, rites and music, military affairs, and justice.³⁸

According to tradition, one of the most important aspects of collecting documentary materials was supposed to be the keeping of detailed audience records. In 1364, four years before becoming emperor, Chu Yüan-chang had set up the office of supervising secretary for keeping audience records (*ch'i-chü chu chi-shih chung*).³⁹ Such eminent people as Sung Lien, Wei Kuan, and Chan T'ung were reported to have held this position, which shows the importance that Chu Yüan-chang initially attached to it.⁴⁰

The importance of this office is also evidenced by the rather high rank of 5a which was given to its incumbents in 1367.⁴¹ The same rank was held at that time by the academicians (*hsüeh-shih*) of the Hanlin Academy and by the directors of bureaus (*lang-chung*) in the six ministries. This was, however, only temporary. After several changes, the official position of audience recorder was reorganized in 1381 with the rank of 7b.⁴² Some years later, this institution was abolished, probably prior to 1393, since it is not mentioned in the government statutes (*chu-ssu chih-chang*) issued in that year.

In response to a memorial drafted by Chang Ssu-wei (1526–85) and

35 *TMHT*, 2, p. 34a (p. 79); *MS*, 73, p. 1787–88.

36 *MS*, 73, p. 1788. 37 *MS*, 70, p. 1695.

38 Sun Ch'eng-tse, *Ch'un ming meng yü lu* (4.8.2) (early Ch'ing; rpt. Hong Kong, 1965), 32, p. 1b.

39 *MSL*, *T'ai-tsu shih lu*, 14, p. 181. On the audience records of the Ming period, see the relevant article by Imanishi Shunjū, "Minki sandai kikyō chūkō," in *Mindai Man-Mō shi kenkyū*, ed. Tamura Jitsuzō (Kyoto, 1963), pp. 587–662.

40 For biographies and/or references on Sung Lien, Wei Kuan, and Chan T'ung see *DMB*, pp. 1225–31; 698; 43–44, respectively.

41 *MSL*, *T'ai-tsu shih lu*, 27, p. 412. 42 *MSL*, *T'ai-tsu shih lu*, 139, p. 2188.

presented by Chang Chü-cheng (1525–82), the keeping of audience records was resumed again in 1575. This memorial also contained detailed suggestions about how the work of the Bureau of Historiography was to be conducted, some of which were approved by the emperor and later incorporated into the *Ta Ming hui tien*.⁴³ This document provides valuable information about how official historiography worked and should therefore be discussed in detail.⁴⁴

Chang Chü-cheng's memorial, like most proposals of its kind, referred to the institution of the recorder of the left and the recorder of the right in ancient times. He stressed that without audience records, no reliable source on the deliberations at imperial audiences and on imperial actions would be available for the compilation of the veritable records. This was in fact the case for veritable records of the Chia-ching and Lung-ch'ing emperors, which were compiled under Chang Chü-cheng's direction.⁴⁵ Chang then raised the following eight points:

1. Procedures for keeping records. Among the duties of the historiography officers, the keeping of the audience records was the most important one. If there were no reliable audience records, historiographical work would be in danger of having to rely on unverifiable rumors about the proceedings at imperial audiences. The officials in charge of the daily interpretation of the Confucian classics were closest to the emperor, and therefore it would be appropriate to appoint them in daily rotation as audience recorders. After secret consultations with the emperor, the grand secretaries should at once give the necessary information to the audience recorders. They should also write down all imperial edicts (*sheng-yü*), proclamations (*chao*), commands (*chih*), patents (*ts'e-wen*), and so on, as well as the memorials (*t'i-kao*) of the grand secretariat. In addition, six experienced and learned historiography officers should be ordered to compile political

43 See *TMHT*, 221, pp. 7a–9a.

44 The memorial is dated 7 April 1575. As recently discovered by Li Cho-jan [see "Chiao Hung chih shih hsüeh ssu hsiang," *Sbu mu chi k'an*, 15, No. 4 (Taipei, 1982), pp. 42–43, note 51], the text of this memorial was actually drafted by Chang Ssu-wei (*DMB*, pp. 103–05) and is contained in Chang's collected writings, *T'iao-lu t'ang chi* (postface 1596; photographic rpt. Tokyo 1975), 8, pp. 14b–15b and in Ch'en Tzu-lung, et al., ed., *Huang Ming ching shih wen pien* (1638; rpt. Taipei, 1964), 373, pp. 1a–5b (see below, p. 768). Since the memorial had been presented to the throne with only slight modifications under the name of Chang Chü-cheng, later authors, including the present writer, have taken his authorship for granted and used the text contained in his collected works, *Chang Wen-chung kung ch'üan chi* (late Ming; rpt. Vol. 309 of *Kuo hsüeh chi pen ts'ung shu*, Taipei, 1968), 4, pp. 53–56. For less complete texts, see *MSL*, *Shen-tsung shih lu*, 35, pp. 825–31; Sun Ch'eng-tse, *Ch'un ming meng yü lu*, 32, pp. 25a–29a. The memorial is further quoted partly by Wu Han in *Tu shih cha hi* (Peking, 1956; rpt. 1961), pp. 165–66, and in full with an interpretation by Imanishi, "Minki sandai kikyō chūkō," pp. 611–20. For the relevant passages in the *TMHT*, see 221, pp. 7a–8b (p. 2040).

45 Mano Senryū, "Min jitsuroku no kenkyū," rpt. in *Mindai bunkashi kenkyū*, Tōyōshi kenkyū sōkan, No. 31 (Tokyo, 1979), pp. 1–134.

records based on the memorials of the various government bureaus. Each officer should be in charge of the sphere of action of one of the six ministries. These officers should be free of all other duties and not be allowed to be absent for any reason.

2. Regulations concerning the places the attendant audience recorders should take in the different categories of audiences. Recorders should always be placed near the emperor so that they may clearly see and hear what is going on. At secret discussions between the emperor and leading officials the presence of a historiography officer may not be suitable, but immediately afterward the officials in question should inform the Bureau of Historiography in a sealed letter about the imperial edict and the preceding deliberations.

3. Transfer of documents to the Bureau of Historiography. Copies of the memorials of the grand secretariat and of the imperial edicts, proclamations, and commands prepared by the officials of the "two bureaus"⁴⁶ assigned to the drafters (*chung-shu she-jen*) and kept in the grand secretariat should be forwarded to the Bureau of Historiography by order of the grand secretaries. Memorials presented by other government offices and the imperial rescripts returned to the office in question should be prepared in duplicate. A copy of the whole document was to be sent to the grand secretariat and then forwarded to the Bureau of Historiography. Discussions of current government (*shih-cheng*) were incorporated in the memorials of the various government offices.

4. The importance of faithful record keeping. Since these records would provide the only material for the compilation of the veritable records, exactness was of greater importance than a refined and beautiful manner of writing. Imperial utterances had to be recorded literally and were not to be put into literary style. In the texts of the memorials only insignificant matters of minor importance could be left out. Only passages difficult to understand owing to unclear wording could be slightly improved. Otherwise all texts were to be recorded without alteration. Causal connections and temporal sequence were to be made clearly evident. The content could not be changed or modified under any circumstances. The historiography officers had to be strictly prohibited from expressing their own opinions of praise and blame (*pao pien*).

5. (This section deals with the office and working facilities to be provided to the historiography officers and will not be discussed here.)

⁴⁶ This refers to the *Kao-ch'ih fang* in the east and the *Chih-ch'ih fang* in the west, the two bureaus assigned to the drafters (*chung-shu she-jen*) (Hucker, "Governmental organization of the Ming dynasty," p. 31, note 4) within the grand secretariat. See Shen Te-fu, "Liang tien liang fang chung shu," (*Wan-li*) *yeh huo pien* (1619; rpt. Peking, 1959, 1980), 9, pp. 247-48; Yamamoto Takayoshi, "Mindai naikaku seido no seiritsu to hattatsu," *Tōhōgaku*, 21 (1961), pp. 87-103, esp. p. 95.

6. The places of safekeeping. In ancient times, the national history was called the book of the metal chest and the stone building,⁴⁷ since it was carefully kept safe in order to be transmitted in perpetuity. This ancient practice was followed in the Ming as well. For each month a small chest was kept, and for each year a big one. They were all to be deposited in the left and right bureaus of the Eastern Hall (*Tung-ko*).⁴⁸ Each month the complete drafts compiled by the historiography officers were to be bound into seven volumes, one volume for the audience records and six volumes for the materials from the six ministries. On the cover of each volume the year and the month and the name of the responsible historiography officer were to be noted. The completed volumes were to be sent to the grand secretaries for inspection, put into a small chest, and sealed with the seal of the Wen-yüan ko. At the end of the year the grand secretariat and the historiography officers were to open the small chests, take out the drafts of all the months, put them together in a big chest, and seal it in the same way, never to be opened again.

7. (This section deals with the rules for the copyists and will not be discussed here.)

8. Handling events prior to this memorial. For the first two years of the Wan-li reign (1573 and 1574) and the first months of the third year (1575), the texts of the audience records and of the memorials of the six ministries should be recorded after the fact on the basis of the documentary material available.

This memorial makes it clear that after the keeping of the audience records was reintroduced, these documents comprised only a small part of the materials collected for the preparation of the veritable records. The major part was drawn from the memorials of the six ministries, which were also known as records of current government (*shih-cheng chi*).⁴⁹

Only one short specimen of an official *Record of current government* dated 1127 is still extant. Works of a similar type from the Ming period were not official documents, but were privately written by officials who had access to administrative records.⁵⁰ A number of fragmentary copies of audience records from the Wan-li, T'ai-ch'ang, and T'ien-ch'i periods have been pre-

47 See Ssu-ma Ch'ien, *Shih chi* (ca. 90 B.C.; rpt. Peking, 1959), 130, p. 8b; Burton Watson, trans., *Records of the grand historian of China: Translated from the Shih chi of Ssu-ma Ch'ien* (New York, 1961), p. 50.

48 *Tung-ko* perhaps refers to the building of the *nei-ko*, and the "left and right bureaus" to the two bureaus of the drafters (see above, note 46). This identification, however, cannot be substantiated.

49 Lien-sheng Yang, "The organization of Chinese official historiography," in *Historians of China and Japan*, ed. W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank (London, 1961), p. 45.

50 Shen Te-fu, (*Wan-li*) *yeh huo pien* (1619; rpt. 1869), 8, pp. 25b–26a.

served in several libraries in China and Japan.⁵¹ The audience records served as the basis for the later compilation of the veritable records.

There was, however, at certain times a kind of intermediate stage between audience records and the veritable records. These were the daily records (*jih-li*), which covered a period of only several years. It is known that in 1373 a committee selected from the Hanlin Academy was ordered to compile the *Ta Ming jih li* (Daily records of the Great Ming). The work was carried out under supervision in a special part of the imperial palace strictly forbidden to the outside world. Early in the morning, the members of the committee went together to their working room. There they got their meals; they left only in the evening to retire together to their dormitory in the Hanlin Academy, likewise carefully separated from the outside world. During a period of almost nine months from 20 September 1373 to 11 June 1374, while work was under way, none of the compilers was allowed to get in touch with people from the outside. The whole enterprise was kept strictly secret in order to prevent interested people from trying to influence the compilers. They were required to base their work only on the written material available. This was in accordance with the regulations issued by the emperor, which stated that after its completion the work was to be inspected by the emperor and safeguarded in a metal chest. A copy was then deposited in the Imperial Library (*Mi-shu chien*).⁵²

The historiography officers were primarily responsible for the compilation of the veritable records; all other work was merely preparation for this task. Compilation work, however, was not handled exclusively by the historiography officers; a much wider group of officials was involved. According to the regulations laid down in the *Ta Ming hui tien*,⁵³ grand secretaries were to serve as supervisors of compilation (*tsung-ts'ai*) and the academicians of the Hanlin Academy (*Han-lin hsüeh-shih*) as vice-supervisors of compilation (*fu tsung-ts'ai*). They were appointed by imperial order (*ch'ing-ming*) and had to fix the regulations for the compilation and to check the

51 See Imanishi, "Minki sandai kikyō chūkō," pp. 597–615; T'ao Yüan-chen, "Wan-li ch'i chü chu," *Wen shih ts'a chih*, 4, No. 7–8 (Chungking, 1944), pp. 54–56.

52 The only detailed report on the compilation of the "daily records" is given in the *Han-lin chi* (6.2.7), written between 1560 and 1566 by Huang Tso, chapter 13, "Hsiu jih li pao hsün" (rpt. *T'sung shu chi ch'eng chien pien*, Taipei, 1965–66), pp. 159–60. The *MSL*, *T'ai-ssu shih lu*, p. 1507, mentions only the compilation order dated Hung-wu 6, ninth month, fourth day (20 September 1373) and the completion order under *MSL*, *T'ai-ssu shih lu*, p. 1573, Hung-wu 7, fifth month, first day (11 June 1374). See also the preface by Sung Lien, "Ta Ming jih li hsü," contained in *Ming wen tsai*, ed. Hsüeh Hsi (1889; rpt. Taipei, 1968), pp. 353–54.

53 *TMHT*, 221, pp. 3b–4a (p. 2938).

drafts prepared by the compiling officers (*tsuan-hsiu kuan*)⁵⁴ selected from the grand secretariat, the Hanlin Academy, the Household Administration of the Heir Apparent (*Chan-shih fu*), the Directory of Instruction (*Ch'un-fang*), and the Library (*Ssu-ching chü*). The overseers (*ts'ui-tsuan*) and the copyists (*t'eng-lu*) were assigned from the Kao-ch'ih fang and the Chih-ch'ih fang.

The actual lists of compilers show that these regulations were followed strictly from the early sixteenth century onward. Even in earlier periods, the practice seems largely to have conformed to the later regulations. The majority of the compiling officers always belonged to the Hanlin Academy. At some times, apparently, there were twenty or more second-class compilers. Only very few—sometimes none—of the compiling officers came from other offices. Furthermore, the copyists and overseers were chosen mainly from the ranks of the higher officialdom or at least from students of the National University. On the whole, the number of people taking part in the compilation work was rather large. Thus, for example, the list at the beginning of the *Wu-tsung shih lu*, which was compiled between 1522 and 1525, records the names and official positions of ninety-seven people who had taken part in the compilation.⁵⁵ In addition, there must have been quite a number of clerks, attendants, and servants involved.

The figurehead of the operation was the inspector of compilation (*chien-hsiu*). Nominally he was senior even to the supervisors, but actually he does not seem to have had much influence on the work. He had to be selected from among the holders of the highest hereditary ranks of nobility, duke (*kung*) or marquis (*hou*). In the case of the *Wu-tsung shih lu*, he was a duke. The three supervisors (*tsung-ts'ai*) were grand secretaries, concurrently ministers with the rank 2a.⁵⁶ Of the two vice-supervisors (*fu tsung-ts'ai*), one was a Hanlin chancellor (5a) and the other an expositor-in-waiting (*shih-chiang hsüeh-shih*, 5b). Of the forty compiling officers (*tsuan-hsiu*), eight were readers-in-waiting (*shih-tu*, 6a), three were first-class compilers (*hsiu-chuan*, 6b), twenty-one were second-class compilers (*p'ien-hsiu*, 7a), and eight were correctors (*chien-t'ao*, 7b). The three overseers (*ts'ui-tsuan*) were the chief ministers of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (*T'ai-ch'ang ssu ch'ing*, 3a) and of the Seal Office (*Shang-pao ssu ch'ing*, 5a), and a drafter (*chung-shu she-jen*, 7b). Among the forty-seven copyists, there were two vice-ministers of the Seal Office (*shang-pao ssu shao-ch'ing*, 5b), one vice-director (*yüan-wai lang*, 5b) in

54 The translation "compiling officer" has been applied to this term in order to distinguish it from the compilers, *hsiu-chuan* and *p'ien-hsiu*, of the Bureau of Historiography.

55 The list is included in the new Taiwan edition (1961–66) but not in the Nanking edition of the *Ming shih lu*. Less complete lists are given in the *shih-lu* under the dates the compilation was ordered and quoted therefrom in various studies on the *shih-lu*. See in particular Mano, "Min jitsuroku no kenkyū."

56 The ranks of the different official positions are given in *Ta Ming hui tien*, chapter 10.

the Ministry of Personnel, three assistant secretaries of the Grand Court of Revision (*Ta-li ssu yu-ssu fu*, 6b), six drafters (*chung-shu she-jen*, 7b), one compiler of edicts (*tai-chao*, 9b) in the Hanlin Academy, one director in the Court of Imperial Entertainments (*Kuang-lu ssu shu-ch'eng*, 7b), three registrars in the Court of State Ceremonial (*Hung-lu ssu chu-pu*, 8b), twelve ushers (*hsü-pan*, 9b) in the same court, two translators (*i-tzu kuan*, no official rank) probably from the College of Translators (*Ssu-i kuan*), fifteen students of the National University (*Kuo-tzu chien*) and one bachelor (*hsiu-ts'ai*) of the Hanlin Academy. Finally, there was one official in charge of the safekeeping of documents (*chang-shou i-ying wen-chi*) and a vice-minister of the Seal Office (*Shang-pao ssu shao-ch'ing*, 5b).

Such detailed lists of officials who took part in the compilation work are not available for the whole *Ming shih lu*, but those extant from the *T'ai-tsung shih lu* onward list between sixty and one hundred names of officials who held titles similar to those of the officials who compiled the *Wu-tsung shih lu*. These therefore can be considered as fairly representative for the compilation committees of the *Ming shih lu* as a whole. The rather large number of high officials assigned to the compilation work also indicates the importance of the project. It is surprising to find officials with ranks as high as 5b among the copyists, and one must wonder whether they actually participated in the copying work. The special historiography officers did only a minor part of the compilation, which was carried out mainly by the Hanlin Academy and the grand secretariat, with assistance from officials of several other government offices. The importance of the compilation of the veritable records is further evidenced by the fact that it was under the supervision of the most powerful policy-making officials, the grand secretaries.

The compilation of the veritable records was more a political enterprise than a detached exercise in academic scholarship. Since the grand secretaries who supervised the compilation had often been involved in political controversies during the preceding emperor's reign, they were eager, of course, to have their personal points of view brought forth in the text at the expense of opposing views. Moreover, they were sometimes able to express regional or group points of view. Therefore, the *Ming shih lu* has been severely criticized by contemporary Ming scholars for its political bias.⁵⁷

The grand secretaries, however, had many pressing responsibilities in formulating current policies and could only occasionally give attention to

57 See, for example, the statement quoted by Wu Han, *Tu shih cha chi*, pp. 156–61, and by the present writer in "The veritable records of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644)," in *Historians of China and Japan*, pp. 66–73.

the compilation work. They took part in deciding on the principle rules of compilation (*fan-li*), but had to leave the immediate supervision to the vice-supervisors, who did not have so many other duties and thus held a key position in the supervision of the compilation work, since they were senior to the compiling officers. The role of the overseers (*ts'ui-tsu'an*), who were always listed after the compiling officers, was probably limited to the organizational and technical aspects of compilation. They had no influence on the content. Except for the compilation of the veritable records for the long reigns of the Chia-ching and Wan-li emperors (both projects took a decade), the compilation work usually took three to five years.

The veritable records were not intended for publication. After the records for a reign had been compiled, the main copy (*cheng-pen*) was presented to the emperor in a carefully prescribed ceremony, the regulations of which were first fixed in 1403 and subsequently revised in 1536 and in 1577.⁵⁸ The veritable records and the precious injunctions (*pao hsün*)⁵⁹ were carried in a solemn procession from the Bureau of Historiography to the Feng-t'ien Hall and the Hua-kai Hall. All the officials on the compilation committee followed, dressed in their ceremonial court robes. Then, in the presence of the emperor and to the accompaniment of ceremonial music, the veritable records and the precious injunctions were deposited in the Hua-kai Hall. On the following day they were brought in another solemn procession in which the emperor took part to the Imperial Historical Archives (*Huang-shih ch'eng*) and sealed in the presence of the emperor.

The books were not allowed to be taken out again. They were to provide the principal source for the compilation of the standard history by later generations. One or two days later, an official banquet was given to the committee members and each of them got a reward, sometimes in the form of a promotion.⁶⁰ Exact regulations fixed the number of dishes to be served at the banquet and the amount of rewards to be given to the supervisors, vice-supervisors, compiling officers, and so on.⁶¹

A duplicate copy (*fu-pen*) was kept for reference and was at the disposal of the emperor, the grand secretaries, and the historiography officers. It was deposited in the grand secretariat. In order to guarantee secrecy, all drafts and preliminary copies were burned in the Chiao-yüan, east of the T'ai-yeh ch'ih (an artificial lake to the west of the Forbidden City). All officials who

58 See Yü Ju-chi, *Li pu chih kao* (1602; rpt. cases 73–77 of *Ssu-k'u ch'üan shu chen pen ch'u chi*, Shanghai, 1935), 22, pp. 16a–21a; and *MSL, Shih-tsung shih lu*, pp. 4004–06.

59 On the precious injunctions, see below p. 745.

60 See, e.g., *MSL, Hsien-tsung shih lu*, pp. 935–39; *MSL, Shih-tsung shih lu*, pp. 4015–16; Huang Tso, "Hsiu shu sheng shang," *Han-lin chi*, 13, pp. 168–74.

61 *Li pu chih kao*, 39, pp. 10a–11a; 37, pp. 5b–6a.

had participated in the compilation had to be present.⁶² The imperial edicts considered suitable for publication were selected during the compilation of the veritable records, classified according to subjects, and compiled into a separate work, the precious injunctions (*pao hsün*) of the emperor in question.

The safekeeping of the manuscripts of the veritable records was a major concern. In 1492 the grand secretary Ch'iu Chün (1420–95) proposed in a lengthy memorial—as far as is known, for the first time—that a new copy of the veritable records should be made and safeguarded in a building constructed specifically for this purpose.⁶³ His proposal was never implemented. It was not until more than forty years later that the emperor agreed to a similar proposition by grand secretary Chang Fu-ching (1475–1539) and issued an edict ordering that the veritable records of the previous emperors be copied.⁶⁴ A special committee was nominated, in the same way as for the compilation, to take charge of the copying work, with an inspector, supervisors, and so on. At the same time, the construction of a special building for the safekeeping of the veritable records was ordered, just as Ch'iu Chün had originally proposed. The building, which was constructed between 1534 and 1536, was given the name Huang-shih ch'eng, which is generally translated as Imperial Historical Archives.

Two years later, the copying was completed. The new copy was presented to the emperor in an official ceremony and sealed up the next day in the new archives in the presence of the emperor.⁶⁵ This building served the same purpose during the Manchu Ch'ing dynasty and was thoroughly repaired in the early nineteenth century. The building corresponded literally to the ancient expression “metal chest and stone building.”⁶⁶ Its thick walls were made from solid bricks with only a very few small windows, and the manuscripts were kept in more than a hundred metal chests. The building was still there during the 1930s and 1940s in its original condition. It was situated to the southeast of the imperial palace on the eastern side of the southern part of Nan-ch'ih-tzu Street.⁶⁷

62 See the various quotations by Wu Han, *Tu shih cha chi*, p. 180.

63 *MSL*, *Hsiao-tsung shih lu*, pp. 1209–20, especially pp. 1218–19; *Li pu chih kao*, 46, pp. 8b–9b.

64 *MSL*, *Shih-tsung shih lu*, pp. 3635–37.

65 *MSL*, *Shih-tsung shih lu*, pp. 4001 and 4010.

66 See above p. 740, note 47.

67 *TAMHT* 221, p. 4a (p. 2938); Sun Ch'eng-tse, *Ch'un ming meng yü lu*, 13, p. 1a; Kanda Nobuo, “Kōshisei (Huang shih ch'eng)” in *Ajia rekishi jiten*, III, p. 239. On the actual condition of the Huang-shih ch'eng, see Yüan T'ung-li, “Huang shih ch'eng chi,” *T'u shu kuan hsüeh chi k'an*, 2, No. 3 (September 1928), pp. 443–44; and Imanishi Shunjū and Ono Shōnen, “Bungenkaku, Jukōden, Kōshisei o miru no ki,” *Tōyōshi kenkyū*, 5, No. 1 (1939), pp. 78–79 and 81–82. Photographs of the Huang-shih ch'eng are also in Chuang Kuo-jui, ed., (*Ku kung po wu yüan wen hsien kuan hsien ts'un*) *Ch'ing tai shih lu tsung mu* (Peiping, 1934).

The compilation of standard histories, the final product of official historiography, was another duty of the historiography officers. The standard history of the preceding Yüan dynasty was compiled by a history bureau that was housed in a Buddhist temple at Nanking.⁶⁸ In 1594 the work of the compilation of a standard history of the Ming dynasty up to this date was begun. A committee was appointed in the same way as for the compilation of the veritable record, with Wang Hsi-chüeh (1534–1610) and other grand secretaries as supervisors, other high officials—most of them, however, outside the Hanlin Academy—as vice-supervisors, and nineteen compiling officers, most of them first- and second-class compilers or correctors of the Hanlin Academy.⁶⁹ But when in 1597 a fire in the palace destroyed all drafts and materials, the project was suspended and apparently never taken up again.⁷⁰ Since no veritable records were being compiled at that time, their compilation was not affected by the fire.

MING GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS RELEVANT TO HISTORY OR AS HISTORICAL SOURCES

The most important product of Ming official historiography was the *Ming shih lu* (Veritable records of the Ming dynasty).⁷¹ Originally the veritable records were to be kept secret in the palace and were not intended for publication. Several private manuscript copies have nonetheless been preserved, and photostatic reprints of two such manuscripts are now available. They are the most important source for all students of Ming history.⁷² Only a new collated and punctuated edition similar to the new editions of the standard histories would make it possible to evaluate this source more fully.

Officially compiled veritable records are extant for the reigns of thirteen of the sixteen Ming emperors. The reigns of the Chien-wen and Ching-t'ai emperors are included in the *T'ai-tsung* (*Ch'eng-tsu*) *shih lu* and *Ying-tsung shih lu*, respectively. Owing to the downfall of the dynasty, no veritable records were compiled for the last emperor. The so-called *Ch'ung-chen shih lu* (I.I.14) included in the printed editions was a private compilation. It is not necessary to discuss the thirteen *shih-lu* individually here, since this has

68 Huang Tso, *Han-lin chi*, 13, pp. 165–66; Li Chin-hua, *Ming tai ch'ih chuan shu k'ao*, Harvard-Yenching Institute sinological index series, Supplement No. 3, pp. 3–4. See also F. W. Mote, *The poet Kao Ch'i* (Princeton, 1962), pp. 147 ff.

69 *MSL*, *Shen-tsung shih lu*, pp. 5038–40; *MS*, 217, pp. 5731–32.

70 *MSL*, *Shen-tsung shih lu*, p. 5817.

71 On the *Ming shih lu*, see Wolfgang Franke, *An Introduction*, pp. 8–23, 30–33 and the references given there. The most up-to-date publication is the revised version of the 1963 contribution by Mano, "Min Jitsuroku no kenkyü," pp. 1–133.

72 W. Franke, *An Introduction*, p. 23.

been done elsewhere.⁷³ According to the period covered, the size varies between eight and 596 *chüan*. All together, they comprise nearly three thousand *chüan* in five hundred *ts'ue* (1940 edition) or 133 volumes (1963 edition).

In the arrangement of the materials, the veritable records follow the annalistic pattern (*p'ien-nien*). In a strictly chronological order of year, month, and day, the veritable records report actions undertaken by the emperor or in the name of the emperor, as well as important political events. These records naturally tend to contain information that would be useful to the imperial government. The recorded facts appear mostly in the form of excerpts from memorials, for the events were reported in this way to the throne by officials in charge, and from relevant imperial orders. Moreover, appointments, transfers, or suspensions of higher officials are usually noted, as are startling natural phenomena.

Events, however, are not necessarily recorded under the date on which they actually occurred, but under the day on which they were reported and discussed in imperial audiences. If things happened at a distant place, a considerable amount of time might elapse between the date on which the event occurred and the date on which it was brought up at court. Under the date on which the death of a high official was reported, a short biography was usually appended. At the end of each year, statistical data on the population, on tax revenues, on foreign "tribute" embassies, and so on, were given.

It is evident from the organization of the compilation of the veritable records in Ming times that it was an important political task. Some of the supervisors and compilers were severely reproached by later writers for showing partiality according to their personal sympathies and aversions. Since the veritable records are for the most part made up from the texts of official documents and from dry reports about government actions, the chances for the author to express his personal opinion rested mainly in the selection of some documents and in the suppression of others. In this way, fact and events could be greatly misrepresented. In addition, documents could be condensed so as deliberately to distort the original meaning, even though this was against the regulations. Besides these, there were few opportunities for the distribution of carefully concealed hints of praise and blame. No accusation of any deliberate forging of documents has ever been made. If the documents themselves (memorials, for example) contained

73 W. Franke, *An Introduction*, pp. 30–32; more complete in his "Der Kompilation and Überlieferung der Ming *shih-lu*," *Sinologische Arbeiten*, 1 (Peking, 1943), pp. 12–33; most up-to-date by Mano, "Min Jitsuroku no kenkyū," pp. 6–69.

erroneous statements, it was not the duty of the compilers to correct these. Unintentional errors are by no means a rarity in the veritable records.

The partiality mentioned was not limited to the distribution of praise and blame according to the common standard of Confucian political ethics, as generally recognized and applied by all Chinese historiographers, but was closely connected with the numerous groups and personalities in high officialdom who struggled against each other in daily political life. At least in one case, the emperor himself was involved. This may also explain not only the fact that the veritable records under preparation were revised if an important change took place among the grand secretaries, but also the fact that in two known cases even the veritable records already completed and sealed were, against all custom and regulation, opened again and rewritten.

The veritable records for the first emperor, T'ai-tsu, were handled in this way. The first compilation was undertaken and completed during the reign of the Chien-wen emperor, grandson and successor of T'ai-tsu. It is quite obvious that the Prince of Yen, fourth son of T'ai-tsu and uncle of the Chien-wen emperor, who usurped the throne in 1402, could not leave the veritable records for the reign of his father untouched. They declared his nephew to be the rightful successor to the throne and consequently branded him a rebel, thereby transmitting a statement of his own usurpation to later generations. Thus he ordered them rewritten.

After the completion of the new draft, the old text is said to have been burned. But even this new draft, completed in a few months, was not satisfactory to the emperor. A few years later he remarked that the compilers had not had a correct attitude toward their work and that they had completed it too quickly at the expense of thoroughness. After seven years' work, a third draft was finally completed, and this was the only one transmitted. By the middle of the Ming period it was already known as the only existing one. This final draft has been severely criticized for its numerous errors. As early as the seventeenth century, Ch'ien Ch'ien-i (1582–1664) in an extensive study, *T'ai-tsu shih lu pien cheng* (1.1.1), critically discussed its doubtful passages.

For the same reason, the veritable records for the reign of the Chien-wen emperor (r. 1399–1402) are of doubtful authenticity. According to some reports the records of events (*shih-chi*) for this period were added to the *T'ai-tsu shih lu* during the Wan-li period. They are not contained in the existing copies of these veritable records, but they constitute the first nine *chüan* of the *T'ai-tsung shih lu*, having in some copies the subtitle *Feng t'ien ching nan {shih} chi* (Record of the events of the removal of troubles by order of Heaven), under which designation the usurpation of the throne by the Prince of Yen was described. Since these *chüan* give the reign name (*nien-hao*) of the Chien-wen emperor, which was not officially used before the Wan-li

reign, it is not clear whether they were compiled together with the other parts of the *T'ai-tsung shih lu* or added at a later date (see 1.1.2).

Similar problems are raised in regard to the veritable records for the reign of Ching-ti, enthroned after his imperial brother was taken prisoner by the Mongols in 1449. After a reign of eight years, he was dethroned by a coup d'état in favor of his brother, who had returned from captivity; a few days later he died. In the *Ying-tsung shih lu* (1.1.5), covering the three reigns from 1436 to 1464, the records of the Ching-t'ai reign (*chüan* 187–262) are as detailed as those for the preceding and following periods, but they have the characteristic subtitle *Fei ti Ch'eng-li wang fu lu* (Annals concerning the deposed emperor, the rebellious Prince of Ch'eng) and separate *chüan*, numbers 5–91. Occasionally some bias is evident against the emperor Ching-ti and the leading part played by Yü Ch'ien (1398–1457)⁷⁴ at this time. It was he who in these critical weeks saved the Ming dynasty from an early downfall after the emperor Ying-tsung was captured by the Mongols. Yü Ch'ien was killed during the coup d'état in 1457 on an empty pretext.

Earlier critics, however, did not censure this section of the *Ying-tsung shih lu* in particular, as they did in the case of the records dealing with the Chien-wen period. In a memorial at the end of the sixteenth century asking for the compilation of separate veritable records for the emperors Hui-ti and Ching-ti, its author, Shen Li, does not mention any deficiency of content as reason for his proposal, but only stresses the formal argument that the reigns of emperors recognized in later times as legitimate should be dealt with in separate veritable records and should not be attached to those of other emperors.⁷⁵

The most serious controversies centered around the *Kuang-tsung shih lu* (1.1.12), the emperor with the shortest reign (only one month) of the Ming. They were stimulated by the political struggles between the Tung-lin partisans and their sympathizers on the one side, and their opponents on the other. The struggles became more and more violent after the beginning of the seventeenth century, and the *Kuang-tsung shih-hu* fell victim to partisan controversy. The veritable records of his reign were first compiled under the supervision of personalities close to the Tung-lin group. But after the anti-Tung-lin group closed ranks around the notorious eunuch Wei Chung-hsien,⁷⁶ the Tung-lin partisans were largely eliminated from government. An imperial order was issued for the compilation of a kind of "white paper" with the title *San ch'ao yao tien* (Essential Documents of three

74 *DMB*, pp. 1608–12.

75 *Li pu chih kao*, 97, pp. 8a–11b; Shen Li (1551–1615), *DMB*, p. 616. Dr. Philip de Heer kindly drew the present writer's attention to the actual bias in the *shih-lu*.

76 *ECCP*, pp. 846–47.

reigns, 2.8.4). Its aim was the denunciation of the Tung-lin faction and the justification of the policy of the anti-Tung-lin group. The work was completed in 1626. Thereupon the *Kuang-tsung shih lu*, which had already been completed in 1623 and safeguarded in the Imperial Historical Archives, was unsealed and revised according to the *San-ch'ao yao tien*, together with those for the Wan-li reign which had not yet been finished.⁷⁷ This unusual action has a counterpart only in the revision of the *T'ai-tsu shih lu* under the Yung-lo emperor, but in the latter case the emperor himself was the *spiritus rector* of the procedure, whereas in the former case it was instigated by a factional group of officials and eunuchs, the emperor himself playing only a passive role.

A similar proposal was made during the Chia-ching period with regard to the *Hsiao-tsung shih lu* (1.1.7), which had been compiled under the supervision of the grand secretary Chiao Fang.⁷⁸ Since critics unanimously condemned Chiao Fang for distorting facts and for defaming people he disliked, the proposal to revise the records was not without reason. This was recognized by the emperor too, but he nonetheless declined to act on the suggestion.⁷⁹ In the case of the *Kuang-tsung shih lu*, the emperor apparently had neither the will nor the authority to prevent the revision aimed at by the interested group.

When, after the death of the T'ien-ch'i emperor, Tung-lin partisans returned to power, the *Kuang-tsung shih lu* was rewritten again. The previous version was burned, together with the *San ch'ao yao tien*. The extant version of 1628 was scarcely less biased than the second one. These controversies also concerned the last part of the *Shen-tsung shih lu* (1.1.11), but all the revisions took place before the compilation was completed.

Besides these two cases of official rewriting of veritable records already completed and safeguarded in the archives, one more known case of private interference with the veritable records should be mentioned. In the preserved copies of the *Hsi-tsung shih lu* (1.1.13), the records of several months of the years T'ien-ch'i 4 and 7 (1624 and 1627) are missing. This deficiency was noticed as early as the first years of the Manchu dynasty, when preparations for the compilation of the *Official history of the Ming* were started.

According to a contemporary report by Chu I-tsun (1629–1709),⁸⁰ these parts are said to have been eliminated during the early Shun-chih period by

77 Sun Ch'eng-tse, *Ch'un ming meng yü lu*, 13, pp. 18b–26a; Liu Hsin-hsüeh, *Ssu ch'ao ta cheng lu* (2.8.18) (early seventeenth century; rpt. No. 46 of *Kuo hsiieh wen k'u*, Peking, 1937), pp. 38–42.

78 *DMB*, pp. 233–34.

79 Shen Te-fu, "Pu-i," (*Wan-li*) *yeh huo pien* (1619; rpt. 1959), 1, p. 801.

80 *ECCP*, pp. 182–85; Chu I-tsun, "Shu liang ch'ao ts'ung hsin lu hou," *P'u-shu t'ing chi* (preface 1714; rpt. cases 155–56 of *Ssu pu ts'ung k'an*, Shanghai, 1926), 45, p. 12a.

Feng Ch'üan, a Ming renegade. Feng Ch'üan had been a partisan of Wei Chung-hsien and had had an influential part in the compilation of the *San ch'ao yao tien* and in the persecution of the Tung-lin party. He put himself at the disposal of the Manchus as early as 1644 and was nominated by the conquerors as grand secretary in 1645. When in the same year the veritable records were unsealed for the preparation of the official history, he took the opportunity secretly to remove and destroy the parts containing passages disadvantageous to himself. This explanation for the missing parts in the *Hsi-tsung shih lu* was accepted by later scholars and has never been seriously questioned.⁸¹

The political partiality in the compilation and in the handling of the veritable records evoked strong criticism at an early date. Such Ming authors as Wang Ao (1450–1524),⁸² Cheng Hsiao (1499–1566),⁸³ Lang Ying (1487–ca. 1566),⁸⁴ Shen Te-fu (1578–1642)⁸⁵ and others condemn the *Ming shih lu* as a whole. The criticism by T'an Ch'ien (1594–1658),⁸⁶ the author of the *Kuo ch'üeh* (1.3.7), can be regarded as comparatively lenient. He wrote:

Historiography relies upon the veritable records only. The veritable records show the exterior facts, but they do not show the inner connections. Moreover Yang Wen-chen [i.e. Yang Shih-ch'i] did not avoid missing the facts in [writing down] the events of the expulsion [of the Chien-wen emperor]; and Chiao Pi-yang [Chiao Fang] also disgraced the truth in many cases when [recording] the glorious time of T'ai-ling [i.e. the Hung-chih emperor]. The compilers of the *Shen-tsung [shih lu]* and *Hsi-tsung [shih lu]* were all the creatures of rebellious eunuchs.⁸⁷

The last sentence reveals the prejudice all officials, as members of a distinct class, shared against the eunuchs. Despite the fact that some eunuchs were of gentry origin and that many or even most officials cooperated with eunuchs and used them for their own purposes, they were always eager to find eunuchs as scapegoats for the misdeeds of their fellow officials.⁸⁸ Although certain eunuchs were considered "good eunuchs," on the whole a

81 *ECCP*, pp. 240–41.

82 *DMB*, pp. 1343–47; Wang Ao, *Chen tse ch'ang yü* (4.5.10) (early sixteenth century; *Chi-lu hui-pien*, 1617; rpt. Shanghai, 1938), 125, pp. 12b–13a.

83 *DMB*, pp. 200–04; Cheng Hsiao, *Chin yen* (4.2.2.) (1566; rpt. *ch.* 144–47 of *Chi-lu hui-pien*, 1617; rpt. Shanghai, 1938), 145, p. 2b.

84 *DMB*, pp. 791–93; Lang Ying, *Ch'i hsiu lei kao* (4.3.3) (1566 or later; rpt. Peking, 1961), 13, pp. 190–92.

85 *DMB*, pp. 1190–91; Shen Te-fu, (*Wan-li*) *yeh huo pien*, 8, pp. 223–34.

86 *DMB*, pp. 1239–42.

87 Quoted from Yao Ming-ta, *Shao Nien-lu nien p'u* (Shanghai, 1930; rpt. 1934), pp. 16–17.

88 This topic has been elaborated by the late Heinz Friese in his unpublished Habilitation thesis on the political role of Ming eunuchs. See also Ulrich Hans-Richard Mammitzsch, "Wei Chung-hsien (1568–1628): A reappraisal of the eunuch and the factional strife at the late Ming court." Ann Arbor, 1968.

strong partiality is evident in nearly all historical writing, official or private, for the authors were almost exclusively officials, or at least members of the gentry class. Very few of them (Shen Te-fu, for example) displayed a somewhat more broadminded attitude and were intent upon being impartial even outside the limits of their own class. Few books written by eunuchs are extant. The *Cho chung chih* of ca. 1638 (4.2.7) by Liu Jo-yü, one of the most important, contains many details about palace life that only eunuchs could have known.

Ming authors were still near enough in time to the events about which they wrote to have personal points of view about them. Thus they were more likely to stress the negative rather than the positive aspects of the *Ming shih lu*. Ch'ing historians had a more positive attitude. Probably the longer interval between their lifetimes and the events dealt with in the records enabled them to pass more objective and balanced judgments. Hsü Ch'ien-hsüeh (1631–94),⁸⁹ one of the chief compilers of the *Ming shih*, wrote:

Of the *Ming shih lu*, those for the reigns of the Hung-wu [emperor] and the Yung-lo [emperor] are most arbitrary and summary. Most detailed are those for the Hung-chih [emperor], but the brush of Chiao Fang in distributing praise and censure has in many cases distorted the facts. Most careless are those for the Wan-li [emperor], and not a single one of the statements written by Ku Ping-ch'ien [supervisor of compilation of the *Shen-tsung shih lu*] can be selected as adequate. Only [the *shih-lu*] for the reign of the Chia-ching [emperor] are skilled and clear in their statements, keeping the balance between detailed and summary [description]. The *Jen-tsung shih lu*, *Hsüan-tsung shih lu*, *Ying-tsung shih lu*, and *Hsien-tsung shih lu* are superior to those for the [reign of] Wen-huang [i.e. T'ai-tsu]. Those for the Cheng-te [emperor] and the Lung-ch'ing [emperor] are inferior to those of the [reign of] Shih-miao [i.e. Shih-tsung]. That is a general judgement about the veritable records for the successive reigns.

Until the middle of the Wan-li reign (to the end of the sixteenth century), the veritable records seem to have been kept from the public. In 1588, however, the duplicate copies (*fu-pen*) in the grand secretariat had been worn out and damaged by continuous use and were ordered recopied. Only after this work had been completed in 1591 did drafts of the veritable records or sections of them circulate outside the palace. Later, wealthy families wanted to own a copy of the veritable records as a mark of status, and the prices paid for such works rose steadily. Owing to this demand, the

89 *ECCP*, pp. 310–12. The text is from *Hsiu shih t'iao i*, preserved as "Hsü Chien-an hsiu shih t'iao i" in *Ming shih li an*, ed. Liu Ch'eng-kan (1915; facsimile rpt. Peking, 1982), 2, p. 10a. Hsü's preface to his notes on historiography can be found in *Ming shih li an*, 2, 1a–1b and in Hsü Ch'ien-hsüeh, *Tan yüan wen chi* (1697; rpt. in *Ch'ing ming chia chi hui k'an*, ed. Ch'ang Pi-te, Taipei, 1979), 19, pp. 20b–21a.

texts of the veritable records were often copied. Since these copies were made chiefly for commercial and not purely academic purposes, the copying was often careless and inaccurate. In many cases, owners of copies who were personally involved in or particularly interested in having the events modified condensed or supplemented the text to suit their own tastes. Copies made from texts altered in this fashion, of course, deviated more or less from the original. This applied in particular to the veritable records from the reign of the Chia-ching emperor onward.⁹⁰ The frequent and considerable discrepancies found in the existing manuscripts of the veritable records probably came about in this way.⁹¹

It is noteworthy that the *Ch'ien-ch'ing t'ang shu mu* by Huang Yü-chi,⁹² the most complete catalogue of works written during the Ming dynasty (and which uses a classification rather different from that applied in the *Ch'ien-lung Imperial catalogue*), has at the beginning of Section Two, History (*shih-pu*), a subsection entitled "National History" (*kuo-shih*). This subsection lists the veritable records one by one, the *Ta Ming jih li* which was probably still extant in the seventeenth century, the precious injunctions, some no longer extant records (*sheng-cheng chi*) and chronological tables (*nien-piao*) from the early Ming reigns, *Ming lun ta tien* (6.4.2), *San ch'ao yao tien*, audience records for the Wan-li reign, and a certain *Nei chih jih chi*.⁹³

The first of the other products of the Ming Historiography Bureau was the *Yüan shih* (Official history of the Yüan) in 212 *chüan*. It was completed in 1369–70 within a period of altogether less than a year and does not redound to the honor of Ming official historiography. It is considered a poorly edited, incomplete, and inaccurate work, and the worst of all the official histories.⁹⁴

The *Hsü tzu chih t'ung chien kang mu*, which was compiled by imperial order in 1473 and completed in 1476, was not much better. It was sup-

90 Asano Chün, "Min jitsuroku zakkō," *Kita Ajia gakubō*, 3 (October 1944), pp. 254–85.

91 On the transmission of the extant manuscript copies and the origin of the two printed editions, see W. Franke, *Introduction*, pp. 22–23; Mano, "Min Jitsuroku no kenkyū," pp. 91–115.

92 Huang Yü-chi (1629–91), *ECCP*, pp. 355–56; *Ch'ien-ch'ing t'ang shu mu* (late seventeenth century; rpt. in *Shih-yüan t'ang ts'ung shu*; rpt. Vol. 1 in *Shu mu ts'ung pien*, Taipei, 1967), 177, pp. 1–6. According to editor Chang Chün-heng's postscript, this catalogue was the main source for the "I wen chih" of the *Ming shih*. See also Wang Tsun-t'ung, "A new collated and annotated edition of the history section of the 'Ch'ien-ch'ing t'ang shu mu' by Huang Yü-chi (1629–1691)." Diss. Kuala Lumpur University of Malaya, 1968.

93 On the *Ta Ming jih li*, see above p. 741; on the precious injunctions, see p. 744; on the *San ch'ao yao tien*, see above pp. 749–51; on the audience records from the Wan-li reign, see above pp. 740–41.

94 More, *The poet Kao Ch'i*, 1336–1374, pp. 162–65; and *DMB*, pp. 697–98 and 1227. Li Chin-hua has published in 1932 an annotated list of all works compiled upon imperial court order during the Ming dynasty, *Ming tai ch'ih chuan shu k'ao*, in Harvard-Yenching Institute sinological index series supplement, No. 3.

posed to have been a continuation of Chu Hsi's work, *Tzu chih t'ung chien kang mu*, to have been based on his famous rules of compilation (*fan-li*), and to have covered the Sung and Yüan dynasties, roughly the period from 960 to 1367. Like Chu Hsi's work, it is of no value as historical source, but it may indicate how the Sung and Yüan periods were evaluated from the official neo-Confucian viewpoint that prevailed at the time of its compilation.

A number of other official publications particularly relevant for Ming history were compiled by imperial order outside the Historiography Bureau. Among the most important are the following works: imperial instructions concerning the basic policies of the Ming dynasty, and the investiture and privileges of imperial princes and exhortations for their conduct, first issued in 1373 and repeatedly revised thereafter (6.2.12);⁹⁵ the proclamations by the first Ming emperor to the officials and common people (*Ta kao*), which contained exhortations, prohibitions, and provisions for punishments and was distributed among the officials and subofficial administrative functionaries, issued from 1385 to 1387 (6.3.2); the Great Ming code (*Ta Ming lü*) of 1397 and its predecessor of 1368 (*Ta Ming ling*, 6.3.3); and the imperial instructions on Confucian moral principles (*Chiao min pang wen*, 6.1.5 and 6.1.6), which were aimed at enforcing the organization and control of the rural population, as well as a great number of additional official publications serving the purposes of education and instruction. These were meant to enhance imperial authority by propagating the orthodox neo-Confucian "imperial Confucianism" in order to produce loyal officials and obedient citizens—in Confucian terms, "to encourage the good and warn against the evil." They thus belonged to the category of "books for the good" (*shan-shu*).⁹⁶ All these imperially sponsored publications constitute a fundamental source for understanding the character of the Ming dynasty and the rule of the first Ming emperor in particular.

Statutes were first compiled for the use of central government agencies in 1393 under the title *Chu ssu chih chang* in 10 *chüan* (6.1.1). This work was later superseded by the much more detailed *Ta Ming hui tien* (Collected statutes of the Ming dynasty) of 1503 and 1587, in 180 and 228 *chüan*, respectively (6.1.2). The regulations for all kinds of official ceremonies, including imperial audiences and the reception of foreign embassies, were published separately in 1530 under the title *Ta Ming chi li* (Collected ceremonies of the Ming dynasty) in 53 *chüan* (6.4.3). This work contains illustrations of ceremonial utensils, ceremonial arrangements, and so on.

95 Huang Ming tsu hsün lu (6.1.12) (1373); rpt. in *Ming ch'ao k'ai kuo wen hsien*, Taipei, 1966), p. 1686.

96 Sakai Tadao gives in his profound study, *Chügoku zensho no kenkyü* (Tokyo, 1960), an annotated list of 56 official publications of this kind.

These works were similar to compilations undertaken in earlier dynasties, but were more elaborate. They served as the model for similar works compiled under the succeeding Ch'ing dynasty. This is also true of the administrative geographies of the Ming empire of 1456, the *Huan yü t'ung chih* in 119 *chüan* (8.1.1), and 1461 the *Ta Ming i t'ung chih* in 90 *chüan*, with maps (8.1.2).

One more category of document should be mentioned. During the Ming a number of "white papers" were published. "Official papers" contained documents that justified government policies sanctioned by the emperor. One pertained to the controversy over bestowing posthumous imperial honors on the father of the Chia-ching emperor. This is the *Ming lun ta tien* of 1528 in 24 *chüan* (6.4.2). Another concerned actions taken against the Tung-lin party during the T'ien-ch'i period. This was the *San ch'ao yao tien* of 1626 in 24 *chüan* (2.8.4).

SEMI-OFFICIAL WORKS ON INDIVIDUAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS

Official compilation and publication was not limited to works supervised by the Hanlin Academy and carried out under imperial sponsorship. By the second half of the sixteenth century, individual government offices and agencies began to compile monographs on the organization and activities of their own institutions. Unfortunately, very few of these are extant. One of the most important is the *Li pu chih kao* (Draft monograph of the Ministry of Rites) of 1620 (6.2.1). It was compiled under the direction of an editorial board composed of incumbent and former leading officials of the Ministry of Rites. It is a large and comprehensive work of 100 *chüan* containing administrative and ceremonial regulations, imperial edicts, memorials, and other documents concerned with the Ministry of Rites and its subordinate offices. It also has tables of high officials who served in the ministry from the beginning of the dynasty to the early T'ien-ch'i period. In addition, biographical data for these officials and biographies of men who played an important role in the history of the ministry are provided. Special treatises on such topics as ceremonies, rites, offerings, examinations, ceremonial regulations, relations with foreign peoples, and public institutions like temples and schools, all of which fell within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Rites, are also included. This work contains important material that does not appear in the veritable records or in the *Collected statutes* or the *Collected ceremonies*.

Some monographs on other ministries were written by private individuals on their own initiative. Such works exist for the Nanking Ministries of

Revenue and Justice (6.2.3 and 6.2.5). Others treat individual departments of ministries in charge of factories and stores or, for example, the shipyard outside Nanking (6.2.2 and 6.5.1). There is also a monograph on the Hanlin Academy (6.2.7 and 6.2.9). All these works include official documents to which the authors must have had access at some time in their official careers.

A unique work of this semi-official type is the *Wan-li k'uai chi lu* (6.5.1), an official record of government income and expenditure, in particular of the income from the various taxes in different regions of the Ming empire. It was compiled by five ministers of revenue and presented to the emperor and printed in 1582. The work contains statistical tables and gives exact revenue figures to the end of the Lung-ch'ing period. It presents information not provided in other works, including the veritable records, and is a most important source for Ming economic history.

As is evident from the relevant sections of the most complete catalogue of Ming works, the *Ch'ien-ch'ing t'ang shu mu* (see above, pp. 735, 753, and note 92), a great number of such semi-official compilations on fiscal administration and government economic enterprises were available in the early Ch'ing period, but only a very few of them are extant today. In addition to those mentioned above, there exist treatises on the salt administration (6.5.12 and 6.5.13), on irrigation and waterways, in particular on the Grand Canal and the tax grain transport on this canal and by the sea route (6.5.4–9), on the organization and administration of the supply and maintenance of horses for official service (6.5.16), on precautions against famine and famine relief (6.5.17–19), and on a few other topics.

SEMI-PRIVATE AND PRIVATE HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE COMPOSITE AND ANNALISTIC STYLES

Except for the distinct official works compiled and in many cases also published by imperial order, the line of distinction between semi-official, semi-private, and entirely private compilations is in many cases difficult to draw. The great majority of works relevant to history were written by officials either in active service at the court (*tsai-ch'ao*) or retired—often at their country homes—in the wilderness (*tsai-yeh*). Officials in active service usually had access to official documents and may have written in their capacity as officials. Such writings by and large expressed the government point of view, certain personal or group biases notwithstanding. Retired officials found it difficult or impossible to gain access to official documents and may have felt more freedom to express a personal point of view or even to criticize the government.

Some works could be fairly clearly attributed to officials in active service or to retired officials, but many others would be rather difficult to categorize clearly. Moreover, despite individual and group enmities and struggles, all officials had a strong class consciousness. They wrote as officials about their fellow officials, whether "at court" or "in the wilderness." As mentioned above, they all shared in principle a common bias against eunuchs and were always eager to make eunuchs responsible for the misdeeds of their fellow officials.⁹⁷

Hence the term "semi-private" is used where a clear distinction cannot be made. Huang Yü-chi (1629–91), the author of the *Ch'ien-ch'ing t'ang shu mu*, also noticed some of these problems.⁹⁸ There are a number of historical works compiled by individual authors on their own initiative in the composite style,⁹⁹ some of them following the pattern of the standard histories, others not. Huang nonetheless lists in the section *cheng-shih* not only the Yüan dynastic history (*Yüan shih*), but in addition several of these unofficial compilations. Among those extant, Teng Yüan-hsi's *Huang Ming shu* of the late sixteenth century (2.1.2) and Yin Shou-heng's *Huang Ming shih ch'ieh* of ca. 1634 (2.1.4) have both imperial annals and biographies; the latter also includes monographs and chronicles of noble families (*shih-chia*). They thus come close to the pattern of the official dynastic histories, whereas other works listed did not closely follow this pattern, but rather comprised sections that could in most cases somehow be incorporated into a work of the standard type. Such works include the following: Cheng Hsiao's *Wu hsüeh pien* of 1567 (2.1.1), which contains several chronological records (*chi*), tables (*piao*), biographies (*chuan*), treatises (*shu*), and studies (*k'ao*); Ho Ch'iao-yüan's *Ming shan ts'ang* of 1640 (2.1.5), which comprises thirty-five records including imperial annals, chronicles of emperors, imperial princes, and hereditary nobles, biographies and monographs; and Chu Kuo-chen's *Huang Ming shih kai* of 1632 (2.1.3), which contains three sections of records in the annalistic and topically arranged pattern and two sections of biographies.

The two most important works of this kind and the ones most closely modeled on the official histories were completed by Ming loyalists only after the end of the dynasty and therefore do not appear in the *Ch'ien-ch'ing t'ang shu mu*. These are the *Tsui wei lu* by Cha Chi-tso (1601–76, 2.1.6), which contains imperial annals, monographs, and biographies; and the *Ming shu* by Fu Wei-lin (d. 1667, 2.1.7), which also contains imperial

97 See pp. 751–52.

98 See above, p. 753, note 92.

99 On the "composite style," see Lien-sheng Yang, "The organization of Chinese official historiography," pp. 44–59.

annals, records, monographs, biographies of hereditary noble families, and individual biographies. The draft history (*Ming shih kao*) and the official history (*Ming shih*, 2.1.9), completed in 1723 and 1736 respectively, were the products of Ch'ing official historiography and largely reflected a Ch'ing interpretation of Ming history.

During the Ming many works in the annalistic pattern were written covering different periods of time. One of the most popular was the *Huang Ming t'ung chi* of 1555 (1.2.1), allegedly written by Ch'en Chien. This subsequently appeared with many supplements in later editions (1.2.2–12). It was the first comprehensive history of the Ming dynasty and covered the period from 1351 to 1521, the end of the Cheng-te reign. It soon became very popular. Like other historical works written after the middle of the sixteenth century, the *Huang Ming t'ung chi* is based on rather heterogeneous materials and makes no distinction between documentary evidence and hearsay. Soon after its publication, it was severely criticized for containing misleading statements and for alleged distortions of the historical facts. Even its suppression and the burning of its printing blocks were ordered by the emperor. But as in many other cases past and present, prohibition of the book only increased its popularity.

It was repeatedly reprinted and supplemented and reedited until 1627, the end of the T'ien-ch'i period. There were Korean as well as Japanese editions. A very popular revised and supplemented edition with commentary and marginal notes was the *Huang Ming t'ung chi ts'ung hsün lu* of 1620 by Shen Kuo-yüan (1.2.6). The author corrected some of the errors in the *Huang Ming t'ung chi*, and his is considered to be the best edition of this work, even though he still indiscriminately incorporated all kinds of information. In contrast, the same author in his *Liang ch'ao ts'ung hsün lu* of 1621 (1.2.6), a supplement covering the T'ai-ch'ang and T'ien-ch'i periods (1620–27), relied mainly on the veritable records.

Other popular Ming histories in the annalistic pattern were published during the early Ch'ing period. One is the *T'ung chi hui tsuan* (1.3.8), attributed (probably spuriously) to Chung Hsing (1574–1625), which covers the history of the dynasty to 1646. Chung Hsing was famous as a poet. Probably because of his popularity, his name was used after his death by editors and publishers to advertise spurious writings, a practice that seems to have been rather common in seventeenth-century China.

A notorious case involves the *Shih kang p'ing yao*, an annalistic history that covers a period from ancient times to the end of the Yüan dynasty. This work contained comments attributed to Li Chih. It was “rediscovered” and reprinted during the Cultural Revolution when Li Chih enjoyed great popularity as an “anti-Confucianist and pro-Legalist.” After the overthrow

of the Gang of Four, however, it became evident that Li Chih's authorship was spurious and that the *Shih kang p'ing yao* was a late Ming forgery, based on the *Shih kang yao ling* of 1610 by Yao Shun-mu (1563–1627).¹⁰⁰

Another popular history covering in some editions even the Southern Ming is the *T'ung chien Ming chi ch'üan tsai chi lüeh* of 1696, attributed to the early Ch'ing scholar Chu Lin (1.3.9). This work was even used by de Mailla for the compilation of his voluminous history of China.¹⁰¹ Although both works appeared in many editions under various names and enjoyed a wide circulation, neither has much value as an historical source. In contrast to genuine official writings, these works can be considered genuine nonofficial histories (*yeh-shih*).

There were, however, more scholarly works in the annalistic pattern. These include the following: the *Hsien chang lu* of 1573 by Hsüeh Ying-ch'i (1.3.1), which covers to 1521; the *Chao tai tien ise* of 1600 by Huang Kuang-sheng (1.3.2), which covers to 1527; and the *Ming ta cheng tsuan yao* of 1619 by T'an Hsi-ssu (1.3.5), which covers the same period.

The most outstanding work of this kind is the *Kuo ch'üeh* of ca. 1653 by T'an Ch'ien (1.3.7), which covers the whole Ming period from 1328 to 1645. It is based on documentary materials and is most detailed for the last twenty-five years of the dynasty. This final section takes up more than one-sixth of the entire work. The first printed edition, based on the collation of several different manuscript copies, was published in 1958 in Peking.¹⁰²

Several works in the annalistic style deal with a limited period only. For the early Ming, the *Lung fei chi lüeh* (1.4.2) of 1542 by Wu P'u, which covers the years from 1352 to 1402, may be mentioned. Most of these works deal with the Chia-ching and Lung-ch'ing reigns. Fan Shou-chi's *Huang Ming Su huang wai shih* (1.4.4) of 1582, which covers the Chia-ching period, reportedly contains material not included in the veritable records. The *Ch'ung-chen ch'ang pien* (1.4.9), an annalistic record of the Ch'ung-chen period (for which no veritable record was compiled), was compiled by Wan Yen and others during the early Ch'ing. A manuscript edition in 66 *chüan* in the possession of Academia Sinica, Taipei, may be the most complete copy in existence. A few chapters from this work have been printed in collectanea.

The first major original work in the topically arranged style, a variation of the composite style modeled on the *T'ung chien chi shih pen mo*, was the

100 Hok-lam Chan, *Li Chih (1527–1602) in contemporary Chinese historiography*, pp. 125–51; DMB, pp. 1565–67.

101 J. A. M. de Moyriac de Mailla, *Histoire générale de la Chine, ou Annales de cet Empire; traduites du Tong-Kien Kang-Mou* (Paris, 1779–85), Vol. X.

102 A pirated reprint of this edition was published in 1978 in Taipei.

Ming shih chi shih pen mo (2.2.11) of 1658 by Ku Ying-t'ai. It differs from its model, which reorganized the contents of Ssu-ma Kuang's *Tzu chih t'ung chien*, insofar as it was based on a wide range of sources from the Ming dynasty, many of which are now lost. It is considered one of the most useful and reliable early works on Ming history and has been reprinted often, in Japan as early as 1843.

There is another variation of the composite style comprised of collections of different treatises by the same author focused on the history of a certain period. Such works are on the one hand less comprehensive than the works dealt with in the first part of this section, and on the other are distinct from the heterogeneous collectanea of works by one author. In the Chinese catalogues, these works are usually classified in the division of history under the section of separate histories (*pieh-shih*). Such works include the *Yen-shan t'ang pieh chi* (2.2.6) of 1590 and *Yen-chou shih liao* (2.2.8) of 1614, both by Wang Shih-chen.

The second work was edited posthumously. Both works overlap occasionally. The former contains a number of treatises, genealogical tables, studies, and the important *Shih ch'eng k'ao wu* (Investigations of the errors in historical works).¹⁰³ The latter contains in addition several monographs (*chib*), some of which deal with China's relations with foreign peoples and with such countries as Annam, Hami, and parts of eastern Mongolia, as well as biographies and biographical material and various notes on topics in Ming history. Wang Shih-chen (1526–90)¹⁰⁴ was an outstanding scholar of the sixteenth century and a prolific representative of the new trend of critical historical writing.

BIOGRAPHICAL WRITING

Biographical writing has had a prominent place in Chinese historiography of all periods. The major part of all dynastic histories is assigned to the biographical section (*lieh-chuan*). In the *Ming shih* (2.1.9, Official history of the Ming), 220 of 332 *chüan* are biographies. In most of the private or semi-private works in the composite style, the proportion is similar. The main features of Chinese biographical writing have been dealt with elsewhere and need not be repeated here.¹⁰⁵ In biographical writing, often no

103 On this work see above, pp. 731–32.

104 *DMB*, pp. 1399–405.

105 Peter Olbricht, "Die Biographie in China," *Saeculum*, 8, No. 203 (1957), pp. 224–35; Denis C. Twitchett, "Chinese biographical writing," in *Historians of China and Japan*, ed. W. B. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank (London, 1961), pp. 95–114, and "Problems of Chinese biography," in *Confucian personalities*, ed. Arthur F. Wright (Stanford, Calif., 1962), pp. 24–39; David S. Nivison, "Aspects of traditional Chinese biography," *JAS*, 21, No. 4 (1962), pp. 457–63.

strict line can be drawn between history and literature. It has been pointed out that the main purpose of biographical writing in China was to pay respect to the dead and to give a final judgment on their lives and that in eighteenth-century China this final act of respect was considered a gentleman's duty.¹⁰⁶

This holds equally true for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when most biographies of Ming personalities originated. In this way biographical writing often served a kind of social function. Nivison uses the term "social biography" to describe epitaphs (*mu-chih ming* or *mu-piao*), memorial tablets (*shen-tao pei*), obituaries (*chi-wen*), and other such commemorative writings.¹⁰⁷ These social biographies were not expected to present a critical evaluation of the personality and achievements of the deceased individual; they were intended to be eulogies written by a friend or scholar with whom the family had some direct or indirect relation.

Social biographies were an essential part of every scholar's literary *oeuvre* and often occupied a large portion of his collected writings. Besides the accounts of conduct (*hsing-chuang*) prepared by close relatives or friends of the deceased and often printed, these "social biographies" contained the most primary and detailed biographical material available, since they were written just after a person's death, were based on the best information then available, and generally presented the most reliable data.

The two large collections of such sources, the *Kuo ch'ao hsien cheng lu* (3.1.1) of 1616 by Chiao Hung and the *Huang Ming wen hai* (3.1.6) of 1693 by Ku Ssu-li, can be considered the two most outstanding compilations of Ming biographies. The former (which is available in a modern reprint) covers the Ming dynasty to the early Wan-li period.¹⁰⁸ In addition to social biographies and accounts of conduct, the work includes biographies collected from the veritable records, family chronicles, and various other sources. The latter work, available only in manuscript,¹⁰⁹ covers the whole Ming period and contains a similar range of biographical materials. Although there is some overlap in the content of these works, the materials included sometimes differ. Both works, however, contain only a limited part of the vast quantity of biographical material published for the most part in the collected writings (*wen-chi*) of Ming authors.

The "historical biographies" included in later official or private historical compilations differed from these "social biographies." They were usually

106 Nivison, "Aspects of traditional Chinese biography," p. 459.

107 Nivison, "Aspects of traditional Chinese biography," pp. 457–59.

108 8 vols. (Taipei, 1965).

109 At the Jimbun-kagaku kenkyūjo, Kyōto University.

edited by authors who had no close relation with the subject of the biography. The purpose was not so much to praise and eulogize as to give a detached assessment, based on prevailing moral standards, of a person's life and actions in the context of his times. Such evaluations could be expressed directly in the form of comments or indirectly by classifying the biography under such headings as devout sons, loyal and righteous persons, upright or good functionaries (*hsün-li* or *liang-li*), rebellious functionaries (*k'u-li*), and so on. The last category no longer appeared in compilations of the Ming period, whereas it had occupied a prominent place in both official histories of the T'ang.¹¹⁰

These later historical biographies had to rely to a great degree on the earlier "social biographies" even when "accounts of conduct" could be checked against the official records available to high officials and to those in charge of official compilations. As a whole, biographical writing was rather circumscribed by conventional restrictions on form and content. Most biographies provided important dates in a person's official career, records of his achievements as an official, and excerpts from his memorials and perhaps from his literary writings. Aside from a few laudatory remarks, little information was given about the subject's character and personal life. Thus, the many large and small biographical collections of the Ming are as a rule merely compiled from different points of view; there is rarely any significant difference in their content.

There are several other collections like the two mentioned above. Such biographical collections were usually arranged by the following categories: members of the imperial household, metropolitan officials (often subdivided by office), regional officials, military officials, people with such outstanding moral qualities as loyalty or filial piety, Confucian scholars and eminent literati, hermits, Buddhists and Taoists, and perhaps virtuous women and foreigners. Within each category, the order was roughly chronological. There was, however, a large biographical collection of another type, the *Pen ch'ao fen sheng jen wu k'ao* of 1622 by Kuo T'ing-hsün (3.1.5), which is arranged according to the province and prefecture of origin of the person recorded.¹¹¹ The existence of this work shows that Ming scholars were aware of the importance of regionalism in political history.

Many biographical collections are limited to people distinguished by certain moral qualities, in particular people who sacrificed their lives out of loyalty to the Ming dynasty (3.2.4, 3.2.6), for the sake of the Chien-wen

¹¹⁰ Jen-k'ai Liu, "Die boshafte, unbormäßigen und rebellischen Beamten in der Neuen offiziellen Dynastiegeschichte der T'ang." Diss. Hamburg, 1975.

¹¹¹ Available in reprint, 30 vols. (Taipei, 1971).

emperor (3.2.1, 3.2.2), in the political struggles of the T'ien-ch'i period (3.2.3, 3.2.5), or in the struggles against internal and external enemies at the end of the Ming (3.2.7–10).

Other collections are devoted to officials. Several of them follow the pattern of Chu Hsi's *Ming ch'en yen hsing lu*, which selected and classified biographical material on famous officials from other works (3.3.2–8). The largest collection of this kind is the *Ming ming ch'en yen hsing lu* (3.3.2) of 1681 by Hsü K'ai-jen. This work covers the entire Ming period. Another work in this category is the *Ts'ang shu* and its continuation the *Hsü ts'ang shu* (3.3.15) by Li Chih. This work is original not in its focus, but in its judgments on historical personalities.¹¹²

A different approach to the presentation of biographical material on officials is represented by the *Kuo ch'ao lieb ch'ing chi* (3.3.12) of the late sixteenth century by Lei Li, which comes close in its format to works on government institutions.¹¹³ It contains prefatory essays on the various government officers, tables of officeholders with dates of appointment, and biographies of officeholders. The tables are more complete than similar tables in other works. Biographical works in this format are rare and most useful.¹¹⁴

Some collections are limited to people of a particular region, such as the work on Soochow prefecture, *Su ts'ai hsiao tsuan* (3.5.1), by Chu Yün-ming¹¹⁵ and that on Honan, *Huang ch'ao chung chou jen wu chih* of 1568 (3.5.2) by Chu Mu-chieh. Others cover a particular period, as does Wang Shih-chen's collection of the biographies of fifteen grand secretaries from the Chia-ching, Lung-ch'ing and early Wan-li periods, the *Chia-ching i lai nei ko shou fu chuan* (3.6.6). Finally, there are collections grouping people together under such categories as scholars, poets, and artists (3.4.1–5); leading military officials (3.7.4); and members of the imperial family (3.7.3). The most outstanding biographical collection on scholars by Huang Tsung-hsi (3.4.6) has already been mentioned.¹¹⁶

VARIOUS NOTES DEALING WITH HISTORICAL SUBJECTS

In the traditional classification scheme, collected notes or notebooks (*pi-chi*) were generally assigned to the miscellaneous schools (*tsa-chia*) or small talk (*hsiao-shuo*) sections of the third division, noncanonical writers (*tsu-pu*). It is nonetheless evident that most of these notebooks give important information on historical subjects:

112 On this work see above, pp. 730, 732–33.

113 See above, pp. 754–55.

114 Available in reprint, 25 vols. (Taipei, 1970).

115 See above, p. 730.

116 See above, p. 733.

The purpose of the authors [of notebooks] was in most cases the desire to supply materials for learned and witty conversations, an aim which was often expressed in the preface to such works. But often the authors hoped to supplement the official histories by writing down their own experiences and information. Another purpose was to illustrate traditional ethics by giving examples of behavior both laudable and blameable. Finally there was a motive which usually accompanied the other motives, namely, entertainment. It is clear that, written by and for scholars, they also reflect the ideology of the literati class with all its traditional concepts. Very seldom do we learn about lower classes; most events are reported from among the class of learned officials.¹¹⁷

The scope and content of these notebooks are extremely varied. Many deal predominantly with the Confucian classics, with literature, and with the history of earlier periods. Such notes are important for the ideas and for the intellectual history of the Ming period. They also recount all sorts of amazing or popular stories, which provide valuable information on various aspects of life and thought in a certain period. But works of this kind, as well as fiction, cannot be dealt with fully in a chapter on historical sources, the great importance of fiction and even of poetry for understanding Ming culture and society notwithstanding.

The discussion will be limited to notebooks that present direct information on the political and social history of the Ming period. Notebooks were much more personal than any other kind of historical writing; the subjective, individual attitude of an author becomes evident in his notebooks. They are thus "history written in the wilderness" (*yeh-shih*) in the true sense.

Whereas the *Imperial catalogue* and most other traditional catalogues list without any distinction all notebooks in the division of noncanonical writers, the *Ch'ien-ch'ing t'ang shu mu* takes proper notice of the historiographical character of a number of them and more adequately classifies these writings as historical works under the subsections of separate histories (*pieh-shih*) and miscellaneous histories (*tsa-shih*). Some of these notebooks cover the whole Ming period up to the author's lifetime and often provide valuable information not contained in formal historical works.

Most outstanding among them is the *Yeh huo pien* (4.1.5) of 1619 by Shen Te-fu. His notes deal primarily with historical, political, and institutional matters and are based on the information obtained by the author from his father and grandfather, who were both metropolitan officials, from his own experiences in Peking and elsewhere, as well as from various other sources. The value of this work is enhanced by the open-minded and often

117 Herbert Franke, "Some aspects of Chinese private historiography in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries," in *Historians of China and Japan*, pp. 116–17.

unconventional outlook of the author. Although it was prohibited, its importance was appreciated by Ch'ing scholars. It was reedited in 1713 and reprinted in 1827, 1869, and 1959.¹¹⁸

Another much-quoted notebook of this kind is the *Yung ch'uang hsiao p'in* of 1621 by Chu Kuo-chen (4.1.6), who also authored a large history of the Ming in the composite style.¹¹⁹ Probably the most voluminous notebook is the *Hsi yüan wen chien lu* of 1632 by Chang Hsüan (4.1.7).¹²⁰ It contains biographical materials classified according to the moral or other qualities exhibited by various people, mainly officials, in certain situations. It contains quotations of statements and descriptions of actions arranged according to the government office and official functions within those offices. The statements are quoted from memorials and from other writings, some of which are no longer extant. A short final section featuring folklore and religion is comprised mainly of quotations from other sources. The form of this work is quite peculiar. It comes close to biographical writing on one hand and to writings on state affairs on the other. It is a useful and important source.

Such other notebooks as the *Yü-t'ang ts'ung yü* (4.2.6)¹²¹ of 1618 by Chiao Hung or the *Cho chung chih* of ca. 1638 by Liu Jo-yü (4.2.7) deal mainly with government institutions and official life. They often supplement official and semi-official works on state institutions. The *Cho chung chih* deals with events and proceedings in the imperial palace, in particular under the last four emperors. It is one of the very few works written by a eunuch and therefore an important source for events and life in the inner palace during the late Ming period because it does not reflect the bias of officials toward eunuchs.

Other notebooks of a more general character that are classified by the *Ch'ien-ch'ing t'ang shu mu* in the division of "noncanonical writers" contain material relevant to Ming history. The most outstanding was published only after the period covered by the *Ch'ien-ch'ing t'ang shu mu*. It is the *Jih chih lu*, written between 1671 and 1695 by Ku Yen-wu. It deals with a wide variety of topics. The notes are not casually written, as are those of many other authors, but are based on wide reading and observations made during Ku's extensive travels. It contains valuable information on many aspects of Ming history as well.

Other works useful for the Ming period include the *Ch'i hsiu lei kao*

118 New punctuated edition by Chung-hua shu-chü (Peking, 1959; 2nd ed., Peking, 1980).

119 Modern printed editions (Shanghai, 1935) and (Peking, 1959).

120 First printed in Peking in 1940 by the Harvard-Yenching Institute.

121 Chiao Hung, *Yü t'ang ts'ung yü* (1618) was reprinted in a punctuated edition in Peking in 1981 and pirated in Taiwan in 1982.

(4.3.3) of 1566 or later by Lang Ying, the *Ssu yu chai ts'ung shuo* (4.3.5) of 1573 by Ho Liang-chün, the *Wu tsa tsu* (4.3.11) of ca. 1600 by Hsieh Chao-che,¹²² and the *Chiao-shih pi sheng* (4.3.13) of 1606 by Chiao Hung. Such notebooks as *Liu ch'ing jih cha* (4.3.6) of 1573 by T'ien I-heng contain information on cultural history and folklore. Some, like the *Chien sheng yeh wen* (4.5.7) of ca. 1500 by Hsü Chen-ch'ing, deal with a limited period in the past. Notebooks more often treat the events of the author's lifetime. The *Ku jang tsa lu* (4.5.3) of after 1460 by Li Hsien covers the periods from the Hsüan-te to the T'ien-shun reigns, and the *Sung ch'uang meng yü* (4.6.4) of 1593 by Chang Han covers the Chia-ching, Lung-ch'ing, and early Wan-li reigns.

Other works cover only a certain geographical area. These works are listed in most catalogues in the section on geography and local history (*ti-li*), and include such titles as the *Chin-ling so shih* (4.9.5) of 1610 by Chou Hui¹²³ on Nanking, the *Keng-ssu pien* (4.9.2) of ca. 1520 by Lu Ts'an on southern Kiangsu, or the *Kuang-tung hsin yü* (4.10.2) of ca. 1680 by Ch'ü Ta-chün¹²⁴ on Kwangtung.

Some authors (such as Shen Te-fu and Ku Yen-wu) limited themselves to making fairly objective critical comments on matters they really understood from broad knowledge and personal experience. Others (such as Lang Ying) collected various kinds of curiosities and gossip. Still others were eager to express their personal opinions on certain subjects, on persons and their actions (such as Hsü Chen-ch'ing) or to report their own experiences (such as Chang Han). Some authors were conservative officials (such as Hsieh Chao-che and Li Hsien). Others were more open-minded private scholars, often with rather liberal opinions (such as Shen Te-fu and T'ien I-heng). Thus, it can be seen that Wang Shih-chen's criticism was not without foundation.¹²⁵ The notebooks nonetheless contain an unparalleled wealth of information that must be evaluated carefully.

WRITINGS ON STATE AFFAIRS

Part of the new trend in historical writing during the later sixteenth century was the collection of writing on state affairs (*ching-shih wen* or *ching-chi wen*, an abbreviation of *ching-shih chi-min*, "to administer society and relieve the people"), by individual authors as well as by groups of authors.

122 All three works are available in punctuated, printed editions: *Ch'i hsiu lei kao* and *Ssu yu chai ts'ung shuo* (Peking, 1961), and *Wu tsa tsu* (Peking, 1959).

123 Reprinted in Peking, 1955.

124 Ch'ü Ta-chün, *Kuang-tung hsin yü*, punctuated, printed edn. (ca. 1680; rpt. Hong Kong, 1974).

125 For the text of Wang's criticism, see above, pp. 731–32.

Writings on state affairs consisted primarily of official memorials (*t'i-pen*). Insofar as they reported facts and proposed corresponding actions, these were distinct from personal memorials (*tsou-pen*) presented by high officials to the emperor (informally also called *tsou-shu* or *tsou-i*).¹²⁶ Official memorials in many cases explained and substantiated government decisions and political actions. The value of these memorials as historical sources is not reduced if the proposed action was not sanctioned by the emperor, or if—as often happened—the memorial did not even reach the emperor, since the information presented and the opinions expressed are of value in themselves.

The memorials not only offer valuable information on conditions within the jurisdiction of the memorializing official, but also help one understand the range of views held on certain subjects and assess adequately the frictions and struggles within the government. It was in particular the duty of the officers of the various censorial institutions, the “eyes and ears” of the emperor, to report to the throne on everything, to ensure that bureaucrats carried out official policies, to make known all inadequacies or offenses against the law on the part of officials, and to criticize government policy. Therefore the memorials presented by censors were particularly numerous.

Other informative official writings include proposals, addresses, or reports to the emperor that were not classified as memorials (*i*, *piao*, *chien*, *ts'ei*); communications to other government offices (*chieh*, *chi*); drafts of imperial orders (*yü*, *chao*, *ch'ih*); and orders to subordinate officials (*p'ai*). There are, however, other types of *shu*, *i*, *piao*, and so on that are of an entirely private character and have to be distinguished from official writings.¹²⁷ In addition, the semi-official correspondence between leading officials on matters within their official jurisdiction may in some cases be extremely revealing.

The most important memorials on policy were usually excerpted in the veritable records and other historical works. In addition, the most important memorials of a certain official were as a rule mentioned in his biography. Such quotations generally do not provide the complete texts of the memorial, but only excerpts of varying length. In order to get the full text of a memorial, it is almost always necessary to turn to general or individual collections of memorials.

The selection and collection of memorials and other writings on state affairs began in the second half of the sixteenth century and was a genuine

126 On the types and the transmission of Ming memorials, see Silas Wu, “Transmission of Ming memorials and the evaluation of the transmission network,” *T'oung Pao*, 54 (1968), pp. 275–87.

127 The types of official documents and their names under the Ming dynasty were apparently not exactly the same as those used during the Ch'ing period described by John K. Fairbank and S. Y. Teng in “The types and uses of Ch'ing documents,” *HJAS*, 5 (1940), pp. 1–71; and in John K. Fairbank and S. Y. Teng, *Ch'ing administration: Three studies* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960).

innovation of this period. One of the earliest works of this kind was the *Huang Ming ching chi wen lu* (5.1.3) of 1554 by Wan Piao, which covered the history of the dynasty to the early Chia-ching period. As is almost always the case with collections of this kind, the materials are topically arranged. The most comprehensive work of this type was the huge *Huang Ming ching shih wen pien* (5.1.8) of 1638 by Ch'en Tzu-lung and others. It contains memorials and other political writings by 430 persons from the early Ming to the editors' own time and provides short biographies of all the authors selected for inclusion. Much of the material concerns border defense. The work has been reprinted and is a particularly important source for Ming history.¹²⁸

In addition to these comprehensive collections, there were also collections limited to a certain period, but such collections appeared only in the Chia-ching and later periods (5.2.1–6). Specialized collections usually included the unabridged texts of all the available memorials or draft memorials written by the author either throughout his career or in a single official position or during a certain period. The earliest documents in these collections date from the Hsüan-te and Cheng-t'ung periods, but the greater part date from the second half of the Ming period. More than a hundred such individual collections are still extant.

In many cases the memorials of a certain author were not published separately, but were included in editions of his collected writings. Sometimes a whole section or the major part of a person's collected writings comprised memorials of a rather personal nature—thanks for an imperial favor, resignation from an official position, and so on. Generally the memorials contained in an author's collected writings were considered not as historical documents, but as literary compositions. Memorials transmitted in collected writings nonetheless contain a vast amount of valuable material not found elsewhere.

Writings on state affairs were also collected in various works on political institutions and government administration. Such works were not limited to official and semi-official publications, but were often compiled on private initiative. However, the authors or compilers of private works had access to relevant official materials. Typical private works on government institutions include the monograph on the Imperial Bodyguard (*Chin i chih*, 6.2.10), the Ming palace guard, by Wang Shih-chen,¹²⁹ and the various

128 30 vols. (1638; rpt. Taipei, 1964).

129 Available in German translation by Peter Greiner, *Die Brokatuniform-Brigade (Chin-i wei) der Ming-Zeit von den Anfängen bis zum Ende der T'ien-shun Periode (1368–1464)* (Wiesbaden, 1975), and by the same author, "Aufzeichnungen über die Brokatuniform-Brigade (chin-i wei) von Wang

monographs on the Han-lin Academy (6.2.6–9), all written in the middle or later part of the sixteenth century.

The guidebooks for officials (*kuan-chih ta-ch'üan*), which appeared in various editions in the sixteenth century, comprised a new genre. They listed all civil and military metropolitan and local government offices with subdivisions and with the ranks of the officials in charge of each office. The lists were arranged according to province and prefecture, with introductory notes on administrative geography, including paragraphs on the northern border districts and on foreign people, as well as a few maps. Only a very few of these guidebooks, which were probably quite popular at the time of their publication, are still extant. The *Ta Ming kuan chih ta ch'üan* (6.1.6) is the most outstanding extant example of this genre. For the use of officials who had to deal with lawsuits, many annotated editions of the *Great Ming Code* with judicial tables and judicial regulations (*t'iao-li*) were published, mainly in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (6.3.3–7).¹³⁰

A third variety of writing on state affairs was the political encyclopedia. Although most general encyclopedias (*lei-shu*) contain some material on political matters, the political encyclopedias are devoted exclusively to government organization and economic matters. In most Chinese catalogues they are classified under the category of "books on politics" (*cheng-shu*) in the division of history. These encyclopedias followed and enriched an earlier tradition. The *Hsü wen hsien t'ung k'ao* (6.6.2) of 1568 by Wang Ch'i continues the outstanding *Wen hsien t'ung k'ao* of Ma Tuan-lin for the Liao, Chin, Yüan, and Ming dynasties to the early Wan-li period. It follows the classification of the earlier work, but adds some new sections and items. It is considered more informative in some areas for the Ming period than the official *Ch'in ting hsü wen hsien t'ung k'ao* of 1749 (6.6.9). A very prolific compiler of political encyclopedias was Ch'en Jen-hsi (1579–1634), who edited two large works of this kind, the *Huang Ming shih fa lu* (6.6.7) of 1630 and the *Ching shih pa pien lei tsuan* (6.6.6) of 1626. The latter is merely a new arrangement of relevant materials selected from eight other Ming encyclopedias. The title of this and of several other encyclopedias indicate that they were considered compilations of works on state affairs.

Shih-chen. 2. Teil," in *China. Politik und Wirtschaft: Festschrift für Alfred Hoffmann zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Hans Link, Peter Leimbögl, and Wolfgang Kubin (Tübingen and Basel, 1976), pp. 130–63.

¹³⁰ See also Huang Chang-chien, *Ming tai lü li hui pien*, 2 vols. (Taipei, 1979), listing 72 titles of extant editions known to him.

WORKS ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND ON MILITARY
ORGANIZATION

In accordance with traditional Chinese political thinking, which did not distinguish between domestic and foreign policy, the traditional classification system does not provide a special section for foreign relations. Peaceful relations with other peoples were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Rites. Border defense and military affairs came under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of War. Although relations with the peoples of Inner Asia, in particular the Mongols and later the Manchus, were the main focus of Chinese foreign policy during the Ming, overseas relations also became very important. The great Chinese naval expeditions to Southeast Asia and to the Indian Ocean as far as eastern Africa during the early fifteenth century ranked as the greatest feats of navigation undertaken to that time. Later the eastward expansion of European naval power eventually became crucial to China's development under the Ch'ing dynasty. Therefore, it is appropriate to sum up in a separate section how these foreign relations were reflected in Chinese historical writing.

In addition to pertinent sections on foreign relations in the veritable records,¹³¹ other general historical works, and the political encyclopedias, a number of works deal exclusively with foreign countries and peoples who came into contact with the Ming empire. The majority of these works date from the second half of the Ming dynasty and can be broadly classified as writings on state affairs. Although military affairs were stressed, information on the nature and the customs of potential enemies appeared in most works. Examples of such works include the *Shu yü chou tzu lu* (7.1.4) of 1574 by Yen Ts'ung-chien, a comprehensive treatise on foreign countries and on their relations with China by land and by sea up to the Chia-ching period, and the *Ssu i kuang chi* (7.1.10) of the late Wan-li period by Shen Mao-shang. It covers to the early seventeenth century and is divided into four sections. The first deals with Korea, Japan, and Ryūkyū (Liu-ch'iu); the second with the Mongols, the Uriyangkhad, and the Jurchen; the third with Tibet and Central Asia; and the fourth with the overseas countries of Annam, Champa, Java, Siam, Malacca, Srivijaya, Cambodia, and the European states (Fo-lang-chi). In addition to descriptions of the different

131 Relevant passages in the *Ming shih lu* dealing with Mongolia and Manchuria have been excerpted and published separately by Tamura Jitsuzō as *Mindai Man-Mō shiryō* in 18 vols. (Kyoto, 1954–59) (7.3.27); those dealing with Southeast Asia by Chao Ling-yang (Chiu Ling-yeong) et al., as *Ming shih lu chung chih Tung-nan Ya shih liao*, 2 vols. (Hong Kong, 1968 and 1976); and those concerning the history of Yunnan by the Ch'üan-kuo jen-min tai-piao ta-hui min-tsu wei-yüan hui Yün-nan min-tsu tiao-ch'a tsu as *Ming shih lu yü kuan Yün-nan li shih tzu liao chai ch'ao* (Kunming, 1959) (7.5.13).

peoples, their institutions, and their customs, short vocabularies in Japanese, Ryūkyū, Mongolian, Arabic, Vietnamese, and other languages were added. These vocabularies are possibly abbreviated versions of the more extensive Sino-foreign glossaries with text examples and Chinese translations known as *Hua i i yü* (7.1.1), and first compiled for official use in the late fourteenth century. They are an important source for the historical linguistics of Chinese, as well as the languages included, and came to the attention of Western scholars more than a century ago.

Among the works on military affairs, two are outstanding. The *Teng t'an pi chiu* (7.2.6) of 1599 by Wang Ming-ho treats military science and contains maps and illustrations on geography, military organization and preparation, strategy, tactics, and armaments; notes on foreign peoples; and important memorials on military matters of the Ming period. The *Wu pei chih* (7.2.7) of 1621 by Mao Yüan-i,¹³² which also contains maps, is a kind of encyclopedia on military tactics and strategy, armaments and war machinery, and military organization and border defense. This work is particularly strong on the Ming period to the early seventeenth century. The sections on armaments and on border defense are interesting owing to their numerous illustrations. This work best represents the state of knowledge about military science during the late Ming period.

There are many more works dealing with specific topics relating to military enterprises, border questions, or foreign peoples. They comprise records written by participants or eyewitnesses of the events in question, as well as treatises based on documentary evidence. Most numerous are works on Mongolia and the northern border, including Manchuria.

Some personal accounts of the Yung-lo emperor's Mongolian campaigns written by high officials in the close company of the emperor are extant (7.3.2–3). There are also treatises based on personal experience written by such border officials as Ma Wen-sheng,¹³³ Wang Ch'ung,¹³⁴ or Hsiao Ta-heng.¹³⁵ Hsiao's work provides firsthand information on the customs and habits of the Mongols and their relations with China.¹³⁶ Other writings contain valuable maps of the frontier regions and border fortifications. In most cases their authors were also high officials in the Ministry of War or in the frontier administration who had access to the relevant materials. Ex-

¹³² *DMB*, pp. 1053–54.

¹³³ (7.3.5, 7.10.2); *DMB*, pp. 1027–29.

¹³⁴ (7.3.6); *DMB*, pp. 1367–68.

¹³⁵ (7.3.20); *DMB*, pp. 544–46.

¹³⁶ Available in French translation by Henri Serruys, "Pei-lou fong-sou, les coutumes des esclaves septentrionaux de Siao Ta-heng suivi des Tables généalogiques," *Monumenta Serica*, 10 (1945), pp. 117–208.

amples of such works include the *Chiu pien t'u lun* (7.3.7) of 1534 by Hsü Lun,¹³⁷ which includes maps and descriptions of the northern border regions as a whole; the *Hsüan Ta Shan-hsi san chen t'u shuo* (7.3.21) of 1605 by Yang Shih-ning, which treats the Hsüan-fu, Ta-t'ung, and Shansi defense areas only; and the *K'ai-yüan t'u shuo* (7.10.3) of ca. 1618 by Feng Yüan on the K'ai-yüan area northeast of present-day Shen-yang in Manchuria.

There are also monographs (*chih*) on certain border regions that resemble the gazetteers of the prefectures and counties of China proper. Examples of such works include the *Ssu chen san kuan chih* (7.3.18) of 1576 by Liu Hsiao-tsu on the Chi-chou, Ch'ang-p'ing, Pao-ting, and Liao-tung defense areas and on the Chü-yung, Tzu-ching, and Shan-hai passes; the *Yen Sui chen chih* (7.3.22) of 1607 by Cheng Ju-pi on the Yen-sui defense area in present-day northern Shensi; the *Liao-tung chih* of 1443 by Pi Kung (7.10.1) on southern Manchuria; and the *Lu-lung sai lüeh* (7.3.23) of 1610 by Kuo Tsao-ch'ing, a comprehensive monograph about the border area around the Lu-lung pass in modern-day eastern Hopei. This last work contains a chronicle of the period from the Hung-wu reign to the Wan-li reign, biographies of eminent officials in charge of the defense of the area, treatises on such subjects relating to border defense as military organization, armament, transport, and strategic topography; and information about the Mongols, including a vocabulary of the Mongol language.

Some works are presented as investigations (*k'ao*) into defense administration; these include the *Chiu pien k'ao* (7.3.8) of 1541 by Wei Huan and the *Pien cheng k'ao* (7.3.10) of 1547 by Chang Yü. The *San ch'ao Liao shih shih lu* (7.10.9) of 1638 by Wang Tsai-chin is an annalistic record of events on the Manchurian frontier during the late Wan-li, T'ai-ch'ang, and T'ien-ch'i reigns. The *Chiu shih chiu ch'ou* (7.10.6, Ninety-nine schemes [for military resistance against Manchus], written by Yen Chi-heng during the T'ien-ch'i period, was one of the last Ming books on the subject.¹³⁸

Similar works exist for other frontier regions, including the "third" or maritime frontier.¹³⁹ There are only a few personal accounts of travels in Central Asia, the most notable being the *Hsi yü hsing chi* (7.4.1), an account of the author Ch'en Ch'eng's embassy through Central Asia to Samarkand and Herat during 1414 and 1415. It is an important source for information on the situation in Central Asia during the early Ming period. Several officials stationed near the native territories in southwestern China

137 DMB, pp. 593–95.

138 See L. Carrington Goodrich, "The ninety-nine ways of destroying the Manchus," *T'ien hsia monthly*, 6, No. 5 (1938), pp. 418–24.

139 The expression "third frontier" has been coined by Bodo Wiethoff, *Chinas dritte Grenze: Der traditionelle chinesische Staat und der küstennabe Seeraum* (Wiesbaden, 1969), in particular pp. 1–5.

left behind records of their peaceful or warlike experiences in the area. There are only a few treatises of a more general type. The *Nan-chao yeh shih*, (7.5.8) by an unknown author, contains historical and ethnographical notes on the non-Chinese peoples of Yunnan down to the late Ming period.¹⁴⁰ The *Yen chiao chi wen* (7.5.9) of 1560 by T'ien Ju-ch'eng gives an account of the struggles with natives in Kwangsi, Kweichow, and Yunnan up to the Chia-ching reign. A few works deal with China's relations with Annam, the most detailed being the *Yü chiao chi* (7.6.8), written in the annalistic pattern between 1638 and 1641 by Chang Ching-hsin, the major part of which covers the Ming period up to 1637.

The great maritime expeditions of the early fifteenth century have not found in historical writing the appreciation one might perhaps expect. Although they are in many ways comparable to the famous voyages of discovery by Western seafarers, Chinese writers of later times never considered them glorious achievements and never took any serious interest in them. The expeditions were looked down upon as a distasteful eunuch extravagance. The prejudices of scholar officials against all eunuch enterprises—Cheng Ho, the leader of the expeditions, was a eunuch—certainly played a role in this. Popular tradition further distorted the facts about the expeditions by adding many invented stories that made foreign peoples in particular appear ridiculous.

Consequently, the few authentic materials that have been transmitted are particularly valuable. The most outstanding work on these expeditions is the *Ying ya sheng lan* (7.7.2) of 1451 by Ma Huan.¹⁴¹ Ma Huan took part in several voyages and described the places he visited. His account was written in the colloquial style, and this provided an additional pretext for premodern Chinese scholars to dismiss it. Ma's record remains the most important source for the expeditions.¹⁴² An equally valuable account, which supplements the one by Ma Huan, is the *Hsing ch'a sheng lan* (7.7.1) of 1436 by Fei Hsin,¹⁴³ who also participated in some of the expeditions. The only other comprehensive investigation worth mentioning is the *Tung hsi yang k'ao* (7.7.4) by Chang Hsieh. This work describes the countries of Southeast Asia and Japan and their relations with China, as well as sea routes and maritime trade. It also includes documentary materials and long quotations from earlier works on these subjects.

140 Available in French translation by Camille Sainson, *Nan-tchao ye-che, Histoire particuliere du Nan-tchao: Traduction d'une histoire de l'ancien Yun-nan accompagnée d'une carte et d'un lexique géographique et historique* (Paris, 1904).

141 DMB, pp. 1026–27.

142 The most up-to-date annotated translation has been prepared by J. V. G. Mills, *Ma Huan, Ying-yai Sheng-lan: The overall survey of the ocean's shores (1433)* (Cambridge, England, 1970).

143 DMB, pp. 440–41.

Relations with Ryūkyū, Japan, and Korea, and coastal defense in general, all of which were topics of immediate concern for Ming officials, are treated in similar works. These include such accounts of personal experiences as the *Shih Liu-ch'iu lu* (7.8.2) by Ch'en K'an,¹⁴⁴ who led an embassy to Ryūkyū in 1533–34, and Kung Yung-ch'ing's¹⁴⁵ report on his embassy to Korea in 1536–37, the *Shih Ch'ao-hsien lu* (7.9.4). Records by officials charged with coastal defense include such works as the *Hsi hai chin shih* (7.8.12) by Yü Ta-yu,¹⁴⁶ which deals with the suppression of pirates along the coast from Fukien to Kwangtung in 1568–69.

Two illustrated treatises on coastal defense are also noteworthy as scholarly achievements. The *Ch'ou hai t'u pien* (7.8.10) of 1561–62 by Cheng Jo-tseng¹⁴⁷ treats coastal defense from Manchuria to Kwangtung and contains illustrations of ships and armaments. The same author's *Cheng K'ai-yang tsa chu* (7.8.11) of about the same time comprises a collection of ten different treatises on coastal defense and contains maps. Cheng Jo-tseng was considered the first geographer to focus his attention on coastal areas in particular and to investigate the problems caused by the new developments in maritime trade and piracy in this period. In addition, there are a number of specialized monographs. The *Liang Che hai fang lei k'ao* (7.8.14) of 1575 by Liu Tsung-tai and its revised, enlarged edition, the *Liang Che hai fang lei k'ao hsü pien* (7.8.20) of 1602, by several authors, deal with the coastal defense of Chekiang; and the *Hai fang tsuan yao* (7.8.21) of 1613 by Wang Tsai-chin, with maritime defense from Kwangtung to Korea.

ENCYCLOPEDIAS AND WORKS ON GEOGRAPHY, ECONOMICS, AND TECHNOLOGY

Encyclopedias and the other works mentioned in this section cannot be considered historical writings in the strict sense. The compilation of general encyclopedias reached its heyday in the last half-century of the Ming dynasty. Among the 282 encyclopedias listed by the *Imperial catalogue* for all periods, including the first century of the Ch'ing dynasty, almost half (139) were compiled in the Ming period.¹⁴⁸ These general encyclopedias (*lei-shu*) also included materials on state affairs, but coverage was limited and comprised only a small part of the entire work. Only the two most outstanding such works need be mentioned. The *San ts'ai t'u hui* (9.2.2)¹⁴⁹

144 *DMB*, pp. 165–67. 145 *DMB*, pp. 762–65.

146 *DMB*, pp. 1616–18. 147 *DMB*, pp. 204–08.

148 See Ch'iu K'ai-ming, "Ha-fo ta hsüeh Ha-fo Yen-ching hsüeh she t'u shu kuan ts'ang Ming tai lei shu kai shu (shang)" *Ch'ing-hua hsüeh pao*, NS 2, No. 2 (1961), pp. 93–115.

149 Available in a modern reprint, 6 vols. (Taipei, 1970).

of 1609 was compiled by Wang Ch'i,¹⁵⁰ who was also the author of an important political encyclopedia. This illustrated encyclopedia is divided into fourteen sections covering such topics as astronomy, geography, biographies, directives for times and seasons, buildings, utensils, human physiology, clothing for official and private use, human affairs (music, games, calligraphy, painting, dances, breathing exercises, gymnastics, cockfights), ceremonies, precious things, literary history, birds and beasts, and plants and trees.

The other work, the *T'u shu pien* (9.2.3)¹⁵¹ of 1613 by Chang Huang,¹⁵² also covers such items as cosmology, astronomy, the calendar, the geography of the Ming empire and foreign countries, border defense, the physical and moral qualities of men, emperors and famous personalities of Chinese history, as well as political, social, and religious institutions. Chang Huang had known Matteo Ricci and included the latter's famous world map (*mappa mundi*) in his encyclopedia. In addition to these learned encyclopedias for the use of scholars, a great number of popular encyclopedias reflect the state of knowledge among ordinary literate people during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.¹⁵³

The two most important works on geography, as distinct from local history, local handbooks, and administrative geographies of the whole empire, were based on the authors' own field work and have already been mentioned.¹⁵⁴ Hsü Hung-tsu made a number of important new geographical discoveries, the most noteworthy being his identification of the River of Golden Sand (*Chin-sha Chiang*) as the upper course of the Yangtze and his observation that the Mekong River and Salween River were different waterways in their upper courses.¹⁵⁵ Valuable information is presented in Hsü's maps. Other maps published before the seventeenth century, including the *Kuang yü t'u* (8.1.3) of 1541 by Lo Hung-hsien,¹⁵⁶ however, were generally based on and supplemented the so-called "Mongol atlas" by Chu Ssu-pen (1273–ca. 1338).

The new geographical knowledge acquired during the maritime expeditions of the early fifteenth century and later was evaluated in the maps in the works of Cheng Jo-tseng and in the *Wu pei chih*.¹⁵⁷ The most elaborate

150 DMB, pp. 1355–57.

151 Available in modern reprint, 30 vols. (Taipei, 1971).

152 DMB, pp. 83–85.

153 See Franke, *An Introduction*, pp. 310–320.

154 See above, p. 735.

155 Hsieh Chiao-min, "Hsia-k'o Hsü, pioneer of modern geography in China," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 48 (1958), pp. 73–82.

156 DMB, pp. 980–84; Walter Fuchs, *The "Mongol atlas" of China by Chu Ssu-pen and the Kuang-yü-t'u* (Peking, 1947).

157 See above, p. 771.

and finely drawn maps of China and adjacent countries with accompanying text appeared in the *Huang Ming chih fang ti t'u* (8.1.8) of 1635 by Ch'en Tsu-shou.

The works on water regulations, waterways, and communications mentioned above dealt with these topics from an administrative point of view. There were in addition a number of other works on geographical and economic topics written from other points of view. One such work is the *Ho fang i lan* (8.2.6) of 1590 by P'an Chi-hsün,¹⁵⁸ a monograph on the regulation of the Yellow River, the Huai River, and other waterways in Honan, Anhwei, Kiangsu, and Chekiang and on preventive measures taken against flooding. It contains maps of the course of the Yellow River from its alleged source at the Hsing-su Sea to the ocean and of the rivers and waterways in the coastal regions of Kiangsu and Chekiang.¹⁵⁹ Another similar work is the *Wu chung shui li ch'üan shu* (8.2.8) of 1636 by Chang Kuo-wei, a comprehensive treatise on the regulation of waterways and on irrigation in southern Kiangsu, based on the author's own experience and on literary evidence, which includes maps and documentary materials. Additional smaller works (8.2.1–5) treat more limited areas or topics. An informative survey of Ming travel routes appears in the *Shang ch'eng i lan* (8.2.7) of the Wan-li period, a travel guide that describes overland routes and waterways, resting places, and road distances throughout the Ming empire, with particular attention to the border regions.¹⁶⁰

Semi-official works on fiscal administration and government economic enterprises have been discussed above. There are in addition works dealing with aspects of agriculture. The most outstanding is the large illustrated encyclopedia on the history and actual state of agriculture in the late Ming by Hsü Kuang-ch'i (1562–1633),¹⁶¹ the *Nung cheng ch'üan shu* (9.1.3) of 1640. This work treats such topics as agrarian administration, climatic conditions, irrigation, agricultural implements, food plants, sericulture, cotton, various non-food-producing trees and plants, animal husbandry, prevention of famine, and wild plants that can be eaten in case of famine.

The most remarkable scientific work in a special field is Li Shih-chen's¹⁶² famous pharmacopoeia of 1593, the *Pen ts'ao kang mu*. It contained a detailed investigation of all available earlier works on the topic, as well as his own tests and examinations during several decades of experience as a

158 *DMB*, pp. 1107–11.

159 Available in two reprints of the original Ming edition and of a later edition in three volumes (Taipei, 1965) and two volumes (Taipei, 1969).

160 For details, see Timothy Brook, "Guides for vexed travelers: Route books in the Ming and Qing," *Ch'ing shih wen t'i*, 4, No. 5 (June 1981), pp. 32–76; 4, No. 6 (December 1981), pp. 130–40.

161 *ECCP*, pp. 316–19. 162 *DMB*, pp. 859–65.

medical practitioner. Li's work became famous at once and has attracted the attention of pharmacologists in particular during the last few decades.

An outstanding and very famous work on technology, the *T'ien kung k'ai wu* (9.1.2) of 1637 by Sung Ying-hsing,¹⁶³ is an illustrated work on various rural and urban industries, and features a wide range of manufacturing and technological skills of that time, including irrigation mechanisms, looms, mills, pumps, wells, kilns, boats, wagons, forges, and mining.

The works mentioned in this section reveal in some degree the achievements of Chinese material culture during the late Ming period.

WORKS ON LOCAL HISTORY

With the exception of a limited number of biographical collections, notebooks, and writings on border defense and military organization, almost all the works dealt with in the previous sections covered the whole of China and were written from a centrist point of view. A centralized state of such enormous size, with such a huge population and such great regional diversity, had particular problems. The tension between centripetal and centrifugal forces is as old as Chinese history and persists to the present day. The degree to which the central government could enforce its authority over regional forces varied at different times. Nevertheless, political theory always supported the ideal of centralized power and left no room for special regional privileges, not to mention sovereign rights. Therefore, authors writing on the history of institutions of China as a whole tended to stress the uniform aspects of imperial administration and to generalize their statements. They had to find a common denominator in the regional diversity of the Ming empire for their descriptions of the agrarian system, taxes, or village administration.

Thus the general sources may often present a picture of uniformity that actually never existed. Specific concerns of a certain region received hardly any attention. The dependence of the Fukien coastal population on fishing on the high seas and on overseas trade for their subsistence, which led to overseas emigration as early as the Ming period, is ignored. Prior to the twentieth century a few such private scholars as Ku Yen-wu began to become aware of the importance of particular geographic and regional characteristics to historical development in China. Only in recent decades has it been understood that further elaboration of regional particularities and developments is necessary for a clearer view of the overall development of China.

163 *ECCP*, pp. 690–91.

The increasing attention paid to sources on regional history has to be understood in this context. Most important among these sources are the regional topographies (*fang-chih*) for various administrative units, provinces (*sheng*), prefectures (*fu*), subprefectures (*chou*), and counties (*hsien*), usually known as gazetteers or local histories. In the Chinese catalogues they are classified under the section on geography in the history division. But they are neither geographical works nor local histories, and are rather nearer to the books on politics (*cheng-shu*). They differ from such works insofar as they describe only a single administrative area. They were primarily intended to serve as handbooks for consultation by local officials, who were often strangers to the area under their jurisdiction, and to provide them with all the information relevant to the administration of the area in question. In addition, the compilation and publication of such handbooks enhanced the prestige of a region. To underwrite the production of a local history came to be regarded as an act that furthered local self-identification and solidarity.

Although gazetteers differ in detail, they cover by and large the same topics.¹⁶⁴ These include maps or panoramas of the region under discussion with important places indicated; its location in relation to the cosmic constellations and within the whole of China; the history of the region as an administrative unit and subsequent changes in its status; physical geography; outward borders and internal subdivisions; streets, squares, bridges, and fords; such public buildings as the yamen, Confucian schools and academies, and Buddhist and Taoist temples; data on historical development, irrigation and waterways, military defense, population, taxes and revenues; lists of officials who had served in the region since antiquity, of native candidates successful in the provincial and metropolitan examinations, and of candidates promoted to official rank; biographies of eminent officials and natives who became famous as officials, scholars, book collectors, artists, or as filial sons or virtuous women; and writings of various kinds concerning the region, including memorials and other documents, essays, and epigraphic materials. In some cases selected essays, poems, and other literary writings by local authors are also included.

The division into sections varies a great deal. Some prefectural gazetteers divide all materials, as far as possible, on the basis of counties, but most of them do not follow this practice. Usually the subjects are dealt with in every gazetteer in varying detail. Most works compiled prior to the Chia-ching

164 Bodo Wiethoff, "Bemerkungen zur Bedeutung der Regionalbeschreibungen (*fang-chih*)," *Oriens extremus*, 15 (1968), pp. 149–68. The present writer is obliged to Jae-hyon Byon of Gest Oriental Library, Princeton University, for some valuable suggestions concerning the topic of this section.

period are rather sketchy. But the impact of the general trend to provide more documentary evidence and to stress state affairs can also be observed in the gazetteers, which became more detailed and informative during the sixteenth century.

Gazetteers contain a wealth of information that so far has been used in a very limited manner. They are, however, not always unbiased sources. Although in Ming times it was usually the local officials who were ordered by central authorities to collect local data and who thus initiated the compilation of gazetteers, they always needed the cooperation of the local gentry, whose interests were also served by such compilations. In all matters the officials appointed by and responsible to the central government had to rely on the local gentry in order to carry out their administrative responsibilities. The compilation of gazetteers was no exception. Members of the gentry who collected data for the gazetteer of their area would certainly avoid including any statements or materials detrimental to their own interests. This might concern such issues as population figures, agrarian property, fixed tax quotas, corvée labor, or even the selection of biographies of officials. Depending on the degree to which members of the gentry could influence the official in charge, they might seek to eliminate the biographies of those who tried to restrict the activities of gentry and bring into prominence those who cooperated well with the gentry.¹⁶⁵

Based on the information provided by various catalogues, in particular the *Cb'ien-ch'ing t'ang shu mu*, we have to presume that more than two thousand gazetteers were compiled during the Ming period, of which nearly one thousand are extant. Only about 6 percent of these were compiled before the sixteenth century, and not more than 15 percent prior to the Chia-ching period (1522–66). The increase in quantity coincides with the increase in quality mentioned above and probably occurred for the same reasons. Ming gazetteers for the northern and southern provinces directly administered by the court (Pei Chihli and Nan Chihli) and for Chekiang, the center of wealth, education, and political power, are most numerous; least numerous are those for Kwangsi, Yunnan, and Kweichow, which were still in Ming times underdeveloped border regions.

The compilation of regional topographies was not limited to various administrative units. There were, in addition, works dealing with specific mountains, lakes, Buddhist and Taoist monasteries, and academies (*shu-yüan*). They generally followed the pattern of the other gazetteers.

Besides the provincial gazetteers (*t'ung-chih*), there are a few outstanding

165 Wiethoff, "Bemerkungen zur Bedeutung der Regionalbeschreibungen (fang-chih)," in particular pp. 163–65.

works on certain major regions. These include the *Min shu* (8.13.4) of 1630 by Ho Ch'iao-yüan, a comprehensive monograph on Fukien province from ancient times to 1620, with particular attention to the Ming period. It is arranged under twenty-two topics, including topography, buildings, customs, population and taxation, civil and military officials on duty in Fukien, examinations, eminent men and women of Fukien, and descriptions of the Ryūkyū Islands, plants, animals, and local products. The materials on each topic are arranged according to prefecture and county. The scope of the contents and the disposition of materials closely follows that of the provincial gazetteers. However, none of the Ming provincial gazetteers is as detailed and comprehensive as the *Min shu*. The *Shu chung kuang chi* (8.16.2) of the late Ming period by Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'üan, a large collection of twelve treatises dealing with various aspects of Szechwan province, uses a slightly different format. Most of the materials in it were selected from earlier literature, and it treats only pre-Ming times. Partly relevant to the Ming period are five treatises dealing with famous places, border defense, administrative geography, uses and customs, and local products.

Besides the gazetteers, there are a few works dealing with a particular prefecture or county. Several of these were written by officials on duty in these administrative units and deal with the administrative issues of the region from the point of view of the prefect or the magistrate who was usually responsible for the compilation of gazetteers. This perspective was distinct from that of the gentry who, as mentioned above, often influenced the content of gazetteers. These important treatises are rarely available separately, but are included in the collected writings of the author. The *Hui-an cheng shu* (8.13.3) by Yeh Ch'un-chi, who was magistrate at Hui-an county in Ch'üan-chou prefecture, Fukien, from 1570 to 1573, and the *Hsing ko t'iao li* by Hai Jui¹⁶⁶ on his experiences in Ch'un-an county, Yen-chou prefecture, Chekiang, where he was magistrate from 1558 to 1562, are two such works.¹⁶⁷ Both authors, particularly Hai Jui, were stern, law-abiding officials, eager to protect ordinary people and to curb the illegal activities of the gentry. Therefore their expositions are of particular importance for understanding local conditions in sixteenth-century China.

Another category of material, which covers smaller units than the gazetteers, comprises family or clan genealogies (variously called *chia-p'u*, *chia-*

¹⁶⁶ DMB, pp. 474–79.

¹⁶⁷ Hai Jui's work has been evaluated by Michel Cartier, *Une réforme locale en Chine au XVI^e siècle: Hai Jui à Chun'an 1558–1562* (Paris and The Hague, 1973); see also W. Franke, "Material aus gesammelten Schriften (Pieh-chi) als Quelle für Lokalgeschichte: Bemerkungen zu einer Untersuchung von Michel Cartier," *Oriens extremus*, 21 (1974), pp. 191–98.

sheng, *tsung-p'u*, or *tsu-p'u*). Although many commoner families had compiled genealogies as early as the Sung period, this custom became widespread during the sixteenth century.¹⁶⁸ The passage from Wang Shih-chen's critical discussion of Ming historiography¹⁶⁹ in which he expressly mentioned the genealogies as historical materials indicates that Ming historians were aware of their importance. However, the author of the *Ch'ien-ch'ing t'ang shu mu* apparently did not pay particular attention to this genre. In the section on tables and registers (*p'u-hsi*),¹⁷⁰ this catalogue lists about 120 titles. These comprise family genealogies for only seventy distinct clans, excluding the imperial family. One can surmise, however, that the actual number of clan, lineage, or family genealogies compiled but not published was much larger.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As early as 1645, immediately after the establishment of the Ch'ing dynasty, preparations for the compilation of the standard history of the Ming dynasty were begun. The work dragged on for several decades. Only in 1723 was the *Ming shih kao* (Draft history, 2.1.8) completed, and only in 1739 was the final version, the *Ming shih* (Official history of the Ming, 2.1.9) printed. Of the twenty-four official histories, the *Official history of the Ming* ranks as one of the most carefully compiled and therefore as one of the most reliable. Many of the sources available to the compilers of the official history are no longer extant. On the other hand, it is evident that the official history presents an interpretation of Ming history based on the Ch'ing government's official neo-Confucian orthodoxy. A certain bias in this direction has to be expected. All topics concerning the Ming empire's relations with Manchuria and Mongolia during the late Ming period are necessarily dealt with in a biased manner. The official history's most serious drawback as a source, however, is that despite some losses, many primary sources from the Ming period which largely supersede the official history are extant. In this connection it may be worthwhile to note that most works banned during the literary inquisitions of the Ch'ing period have been preserved, whereas most of the works lost were not among those prohibited.¹⁷¹ This may be another illustration of a feature to be observed in many countries to the present day. A book listed as prohibited is

168 See Lin Tien-wai, "Clan genealogies as they relate to local history," *Chinese Culture*, 22, No. 1 (Taipei, 1981), pp. 33-55.

169 See above, pp. 731-32.

170 Huang Yü-chi, *Ch'ien-ch'ing t'ang shu mu*, 10, pp. 43a-48a.

171 L. Carrington Goodrich, *The literary inquisition of Ch'ien-lung* (Baltimore, 1935); Lynn Ann Struve, "Uses of history in traditional Chinese society: The southern Ming in Ch'ing historiography." (Ann Arbor, 1974).

considered to have a particular value and is therefore preserved with great care. Prohibition is actually the most effective form of advertisement.

The literary inquisition of the eighteenth century did, however, dampen interest in Ming history. Scholars scarcely ventured to publish any writing on Ming history. Only with the relaxation of government control in the late nineteenth century did books on Ming history appear again. Two works in the annalistic pattern, still useful today, appeared almost at the same time: the *Ming t'ung chien* (I.3.11) of ca. 1870 by Hsia Hsieh (1799–1875?),¹⁷² and the *Ming chi* (I.3.12) of 1871 by Ch'en Ho (1757–1811). Not much later, in 1887, the *Ming hui yao* (6.6.10) by Lung Wen-pin (1821–93)¹⁷³ was published. Modeled on the *T'ang hui yao* of A.D. 961, it contains materials on the political and social institutions of the Ming dynasty selected from the official history and from more than two hundred other sources, and comprises altogether nearly five hundred items divided into fifteen sections.

In general, the setback in Ming studies experienced during the Ch'ing period continued to have an impact to almost the middle of the twentieth century. Only in recent decades has Ming history attracted in China, Japan, and in the West the attention it deserves as a crucial period in Chinese history.

172 New punctuated edition in four volumes by Chung-hua shu-chü (Peking, 1959); pirated in six volumes (Taipei, 1978).

173 New punctuated edition in two volumes (Peking, 1956).

APPENDIX

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTES

The authors of each chapter and the volume editors provide bibliographic information of a general character here to supplement the limited footnoting of specific points, to inform the reader about the scope of their research, and to acknowledge important scholarly and intellectual debts that have influenced the content of the chapters.

In the preceding chapter, Wolfgang Franke offers an impressive description and seasoned evaluation of historical writing during the Ming, and makes systematic reference to his indispensable work, *An introduction to the sources of Ming history* (Kuala Lumpur, 1968). A recent publication from China lists 9,400 articles and 600 books on Ming history published everywhere, in Chinese, between 1900 and 1978.¹ A more selective survey of modern Chinese and Japanese writings on the Ming period published in 1960 even then could list over 2,500 articles and books.² These bibliographic tools display the vast scope of the field; at the same time, they make the point that the exhaustive documentation expected in monographic studies could not, and indeed need not, be undertaken in the present work. What follows are neither bibliographies nor bibliographic essays, but notes on bibliography conveying the authors' sense of the special problems of scholarship in each of the eleven chapters comprising this narrative of Ming dynasty political history.

1: THE RISE OF THE MING DYNASTY, 1330–1367, BY FREDERICK W. MOTE

Although there was much interest in Chu Yüan-chang's early career in Ming times and some historical writing (apart from official historiography, note the works discussed in W. Franke, *An introduction*, numbers 1.4.1–1.4.3 and 2.3.1–2.3.16), the critical examination of the events of the

1 Chung-kuo she-hui k'o-hsüeh yüan, Li-shih yen-chiu so, Ming-shih yen-chiu shih, ed., *Chung-kuo chin pa shih nien Ming shih lun chu mu lu* (Chen-chiang, Kiangsu, 1981).

2 Yamane Yukio, ed., *Mindaishi kenkyü bunken mokuroku* (Tokyo, 1960).

Ming founding assumed importance only in the seventeenth century and continued to be a focus of critical scholarship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As also in other fields of scholarship on China, the best modern scholarship in the present century, although employing a broadened range of conceptual and methodological tools and directed in some measure toward new purposes, nonetheless has been based soundly on the products of that tradition. Among those of most direct relevance to the present writer's research for the present chapter have been the following three: (1) Ch'ien Ch'ien-i (1582–1664), *Kuo ch'u ch'ün hsiung shih lüeh*, 12 *chüan*, written in the 1620s–30s (2.3.17; newly edited and punctuated edition, Peking, 1982); and (2) his subsequently written (but before 1644) *T'ai-tsu shih lu pien cheng*, 5 *chüan* (mentioned in Franke, *An introduction*, under his number 1.1.1). (3) A related work of importance is that of Ch'ien's follower, P'an Ch'eng-chang (1628–63); structured as critical notes on Ming history (only the 6 *chüan* covering the first three reigns survive), it is called *Kuo shih k'ao i* (2.3.18).

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works of monumental scope in the development of Ch'ing critical historiography, and of particular relevance here, include: (1) Chao I (1727–1814), *Kai yü ts'ung k'ao*, 43 *chüan*, and his (2) *Nien erh shih cha chi*, 36 *chüan*. (The latter should be used in the critical edition by Tu Wei-yün, Taipei, 1977; Tu has also published *Chao I chuan*, a biography of Chao I, 1983.) (3) Ch'ien Ta-hsin (1728–1804), *Shih-chia chai yang hsin lu*, 20 plus 3 *chüan*. (4) Hsia Hsieh (1799–1875?), *Ming t'ung chien*, 90 plus 4 plus 6 *chüan* (1.3.11). The latter, in a modern typeset, punctuated edition (four volumes, Peking, 1959, and widely reprinted), is the most convenient and today probably the most widely used history of the Ming, excepting only the *Official history of the Ming* (2.1.9; presented to the throne in 1736). Twentieth-century scholars have not yet undertaken the large tasks of analysis and synthesis.

Among recent scholars who have specialized on the period of the Ming founding and the early years of the dynasty, as is evident from the footnotes, the present writer has relied most heavily on the historical scholarship of Wang Ch'ung-wu (d. 1959?). His many specialized studies published in the 1940s offer the best combination of meticulous research, disciplined imagination, and sound historical judgment. Among his contemporaries, Wu Han (d. 1967?) has been the most important. His *Chu Yüan-chang chuan* (Biography of Chu Yüan-chang), published in 1948, extensively revised in an edition of 1965 that is known only from the reprint of 1979, has been very influential both as a pathbreaking model of modern biographical writing and as scholarship on the life of the Ming founder. As scholarship, Wu Han's work has often been subjective in its

judgments and self-consciously "political," although broadly learned and brilliantly imaginative. A third scholar of the generation of Wang and Wu, S. Y. Teng, has published importantly on Chu Yüan-chang in both Chinese and English, although more on his reign than on the years of his rise to power.

Ming studies have flourished, particularly in the West, during the third quarter of the twentieth century. In addition to Wolfgang Franke, six scholars whose first publications appeared in those years have significantly expanded the field of early Ming studies. They are Charles O. Hucker, Romeyn Taylor, John W. Dardess, and the authors of the three succeeding chapters in the present volume, Edward L. Dreyer, John D. Langlois, Jr., and Hok-lam Chan. The present writer is heavily indebted to the scholarship of all, and their impact on early Ming studies is evident in the footnotes to the first four chapters of this volume, where their principal writings are repeatedly cited.

To return to Chinese historical studies published in Chinese, the first half of the present century produced very little scholarship on the period of the rise of the Ming dynasty. One curious exception is the quite useful but not always thoroughly reliable study of the career of Chang Shih-ch'eng in which his status as a local hero in the Soochow region is stressed. This is *Wu-wang Chang Shih-ch'eng tsai chi*, in five small thread-stitched volumes, Shanghai, 1932. The authorship of this work appears to be divided among a group of collaborators; the ultimate compiler-editor is Chih Wei-ch'eng. This work, and some materials that have come to light in recent decades, make clear that a critical examination of the rivals of Chu Yüan-chang, particularly Chang Shih-ch'eng and the regime of the Chaghan Temür and Kökö Temür in Honan, is much to be desired.

There is little else in Western or in Japanese scholarship that must be specially pointed out here. Recent Chinese scholarship merits a further word. During the third quarter of this century, among scholars who write in Chinese, little new activity on the period of the Ming founding since the deaths of Wang Ch'ung-wu and Wu Han is evident. The most important focus of attention in China's new socialist historiography relevant to the mid-fourteenth century, as also in recent Japanese scholarship, has been that on the peasant uprisings (*nung-min ch'i-i*) that accompanied the degeneration of Mongol rule at the end of the Yüan dynasty, reflecting a major concern with populist movements throughout history. Typical of these is the article by Ch'iu Shu-sen (1977) on the dating of P'eng Ying-yü's death (cited in footnote 21 of Chapter 1). Professor Ch'iu has directed a Yüan History Research Center at Nanking University (Nanjing Daxue), where interest appears to have been particularly strong in the material evidence for

late Yüan social history. Despite its self-imposed strictures, such research has succeeded in assembling useful data. The larger issues of late Yüan social and political history, out of which the Ming dynasty emerged, are to be dealt with in Volume 6 (forthcoming). The controversies over the interpretations of Chu Yüan-chang's career have been largely about matters of his social background and "class identity" in relation to the deteriorating conditions of mid-fourteenth-century society. These matters appear to have eluded definitive scholarship.

Cognizant of, but not products of, that new socialist historiography are two recent works by less well-known senior scholars in China. Four volumes have appeared (1979–84) of the late Huang Yün-mei's critical notes on the text of the *Official history of the Ming*, his *Ming shih k'ao cheng*. These cover the first 158 of that work's 332 *chüan*, and might be considered a kind of modern continuation of Ch'ien Ta-hsin's *Nien erh shih k'ao i*, 100 *chüan*, completed in 1782, and covering the first twenty-two of the dynastic histories up through the *Yüan shih*. Sun Cheng-jung died in 1983 shortly after the publication of his *Chu Yüan-chang hsi nien yao lu* (1983). This work assembles the essential materials from a wide range of traditional sources, covering the entire life of the Ming founder, along with the compiler's critical notes and historical commentary. The preface states that this is the preliminary publication of what, in a final revision, will constitute the first portion of a *Hsin Ming chi* (New Ming annals), but gives no information on the status of the remainder of the compilation. This is a useful volume, especially for its critical judgments on disputed issues of fact while also offering a coherent account of history, something that Huang Yün-mei's critical notes do not attempt. If nothing else, these two works reveal the continuity, if not the dominance, in China of traditional high standards in scholarship.

2: MILITARY ORIGINS OF MING CHINA,

BY EDWARD L. DREYER

The most important source for the events described in this chapter is the veritable record of Chu Yüan-chang's rise to power and his imperial reign under the designation Hung-wu. This record—titled *T'ai-tsu Kao huang ti shih lu* and cited as *HWSL* in my *Early Ming China*—survives only in its 1418 rescension under the editorship of grand secretary Hu Kuang. Two earlier versions, one prepared soon after Chu Yüan-chang's death and the second a few years later during the reign of Chu's grandson the second Ming emperor, have been suppressed. The official history (*Ming shih*, 1739) as well as the nonofficial histories of comparable quality (*Tsui wei lu*, *Kuo ch'üeh*, *Ming shih*

chi shih pen mo, and others) all depend heavily on *T'ai-tsu Kao huang ti shih lu*, usually following its exact wording not only in the annalistic sections, but also in the biographies. Furthermore, most local gazetteers (*fang-chih*) simply cite the *T'ai-tsu Kao huang ti shih lu* account when they mention events from this period relating to their particular locality.

We will never be certain, but it nevertheless seems likely that the revisions of the *T'ai-tsu Kao huang ti shih lu* were mandated by the specific political requirements of the Chien-wen and Yung-lo reigns, so that had the original *T'ai-tsu Kao huang ti shih lu* survived, its account of Chu Yüan-chang's early career might not differ substantially from the existing version. From a modern historian's point of view, the major problem with the *T'ai-tsu Kao huang ti shih lu* is the retrospective halo of orthodox Confucian emperorship that hangs over Chu Yüan-chang from the very beginning. In fact, the crimson aura of Chu's early political career was that cast by the Red Turban movement, to which he belonged in the eyes of his contemporaries, at least until the death of Han Lin-erh. *T'ai-tsu Kao huang ti shih lu* attempts to play down these associations, but does give much relevant information, and modern historians (Wada Sei, John Dardess, Wu Han, Romeyn Taylor, and others) have quite properly supplied the necessary emphasis.

The Red Turban association is made much more explicit in an independent source, the *Chi shih lu* of Yü Pen, composed in 1397 by a military officer who participated in the critical campaigns of the Ming founding. Yü Pen is usually known from quotations in Ch'ien Ch'ien-i's *Kuo ch'u ch'ün hsiung shih lüeh*, but a more complete version is extant (see Dreyer, "Yü Pen"). This source explicitly portrays Chu Yüan-chang as a field commander for the Red Turban "Sung" court, and it provides some interesting military material not found in *T'ai-tsu Kao huang ti shih lu*. It also offers a chronology quite inconsistent with that of *T'ai-tsu Kao huang ti shih lu*, and is on the whole much less satisfactory. Scholars from Ch'ien Ch'ien-i and P'an Ch'eng-chang in the seventeenth century down to Wada Sei and Nakayama Hachirō in the twentieth have attempted to use the Yü Pen material to correct the real deficiencies of the *T'ai-tsu Kao huang ti shih lu* account. I feel that the Yü Pen account is misleading in describing the "Sung" as a relatively unified and centrally directed empire, while *T'ai-tsu Kao huang ti shih lu* is more realistic in depicting the Red Turbans as a number of mutually independent rebel bands. For this and other reasons, I feel that the Yü Pen material should be used to supplement, but not to displace, the basic sequence of events given in *T'ai-tsu Kao huang ti shih lu*.

I have covered this entire period, with additional bibliography, in my *Early Ming China* (1982).

3: THE HUNG-WU REIGN, 1368–1398,

BY JOHN D. LANGLOIS, JR.

Secondary Coverage

Wu Han's work on the early Ming is the most important body of secondary literature on the Ming founder's life and times. His *Chu Yüan-chang chuan*, initially published in the 1940s under the title *Ts'ung seng po tao huang ch'üan* (From begging bowl to imperial power), was the first modern attempt to interpret the founder's life. A widely cited version of this work appeared in the dawn of the People's Republic of China in 1949, and a revised version in 1965. The author came under severe attack during the Cultural Revolution, and the 1965 text was suppressed. But it was republished in 1979 after the author's posthumous rehabilitation.

Wu Han interpreted Chu Yüan-chang as a popular revolutionary who became a ruling tyrant. Power corrupted him, as it were; in that sense, Wu Han's work was a critique of his contemporaries in positions of power.

Wu Han's many writings on the Hung-wu era are also extremely important. In "Hu Wei-yung tang an k'ao" (A study of the Hu Wei-yung case documents, 1934), for example, Wu Han attempted to sort through the many conflicting sources on the Hu Wei-yung case. Although no hard conclusions are drawn in this work, it is most valuable for its collection of original material.

Hung Chang-chien's writings on Ming institutions are also extremely useful. Collected in a volume entitled *Ming Ch'ing shih yen chiu ts'ung kao* (1977), the essays are richly provided with lengthy quotations from the primary sources.

Other Chinese-language secondary materials of importance for the study of the Hung-wu era are Wang Ch'ung-wu's "Ming tai ti shang t'un chih tu" (1936), a study of the military farming system; and Wei Ch'ing-yüan's *Ming tai huang ts'e chih tu* (1961), on the "yellow registers."

Among recent scholarly publications in the United States, the *Dictionary of Ming Biography* (1976), edited by L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, is indispensable. Other notable surveys include John W. Dardess, *Confucianism and autocracy: Professional elites in the founding of the Ming dynasty* (1983), and Edward L. Dreyer, *Early Ming China: A political history 1355–1435* (1982). Edward Farmer's *Early Ming government: The evolution of dual capitals* (1976) is also worthy of note. For the thought of Chu Yüan-chang, see John D. Langlois, Jr., and K'o-k'uan Sun, "Three teachings syncretism in the thought of Ming T'ai-tsu," *HJAS* (1983). Romeyn Taylor's articles on Ming T'ai-tsu, such as "Ming T'ai-tsu and the nobility of merit," *Ming*

Studies (1976), and "Ming T'ai-tsu and the gods of walls and moats," *Ming Studies* (1977), are important as well.

Not very recent but well worth mentioning is Henry Serruys, *The Mongols in China during the Hung-wu period* (1956–1959). It is a thorough and well-written study of the subject. F. W. Mote's *The poet Kao Ch'i, 1336–1374* (1962) re-creates the life of a scholar of the Hung-wu era.

Japanese literature on the early Ming is fairly extensive. To mention a few useful studies only, there are Tsukamoto Shunkō's "Kōbutei to Butsu Dō ni kyō" (The Hung-wu emperor and Buddhism and Taoism), *Gifu Daigaku Kenkyū Hōkoku (Jim bun Kagaku)*, 1966; and Danjō Hiroshi, "Min ōchō seiritsu ki no kiseki—Kōbu-chō no gigoku jiken to keishi mondai o megutte" (The miracle of the founding of the Ming dynasty: Concerning the criminal cases of the Hung-wu era and the succession problem), *Tōyōshi Kenkyū*, 37, No. 3, 1978. Naitō Kenkichi's article on the Ming statutes (*ling*), entitled "Dai Min ryō kaisetsu" (reprinted in *Chūgoku hōseishi kōshō*, 1963) is a valuable survey of relevant materials.

Primary sources

Two collections of Ming documents are of great importance in any study of the early Ming: *Huang Ming chih shu*, edited by Chang Lu (1523–59), and *Ming ch'ao k'ai kuo wen hsien*, reprinted in Taipei in 1966. The former contains fundamental constitutional documents from the early Ming, while the latter includes many of the same along with T'ai-tsu's *Ta kao* or *Grand pronouncements*. Naturally the *Ming shih*, compiled in early Ch'ing times, is a basic source for all of Ming history. The same applies to the Ming veritable records (*shih-lu*), although it should be noted that the records for the Hung-wu reign were heavily doctored under orders of the Yung-lo ruler. Wang Ch'ung-wu's collation of an early version of the basic annals of T'ai-tsu in the *Ming shih*, entitled *Ming pen chi chiao chu*, is another valuable source for T'ai-tsu's reign.

For the writings of Ming T'ai-tsu, the handiest text is *Kao huang ti yü chih wen chi*, reprinted in Taiwan in 1965. The emperor's *Ta kao* is included in *Ming ch'ao k'ai kuo wen hsien*, cited above.

Sung Lien (1310–81) was a prolific and influential scholar of the Hung-wu era. His writings are an indispensable source for a knowledge of the period. The most complete edition is the *Ssu pu pei yao* edition of his works, *Sung Wen-hsien kung ch'üan chi*.

For the basic chronology of events, T'an Ch'ien's *Kuo ch'üeh* (ca. 1653) is extremely handy. The work, previously known in manuscript copies, was first published in partially punctuated form in Peking in 1958.

4: THE CHIEN-WEN, YUNG-LO, HUNG-HSI, AND HSÜAN-TE
REIGNS, 1399–1435, BY HOK-LAM CHAN

There is no dearth of primary sources for the reigns of these four Ming emperors, as is the case for most of the Ming rulers. They include not only such basic official sources as the imperial decrees, the political and institutional compendia of their reigns, and most important, the veritable records (*shih-lu*) compiled immediately thereafter, but also numerous collections of private sources, particularly the literary writings and miscellaneous literature by contemporary scholar-officials. These are supplemented by various documentary and biographical compendia, as well as collections of historical and literary writings compiled under official and private auspices in later reigns. In addition, a number of synthetic historical narratives that draw on the earlier sources have been written by later Ming and early Ch'ing scholars. They include, for example, T'an Ch'ien's *Kuo ch'üeh*, Ku Ying-t'ai's *Ming shih chi shih pen mo*, the official *Ming shih*, Hsia Hsieh's *Ming t'ung chien*, and the like. Not all the primary and traditional sources, especially the official records, however, are of equal historical value, and each must be carefully scrutinized to ascertain its worth and reliability.

The primary sources for the Chien-wen reign are the most problematic. The situation was complicated on the one hand by the Yung-lo emperor's destruction and proscription of the official records and private writings and by the compilation and propagation of biased versions of historical events, and on the other hand by the profusion of pseudohistorical, semi-fictional miscellaneous writings by later scholars sympathetic to the Chien-wen court.

The official version of the civil war, *Feng t'ien ching nan (shih) chi*, which was later incorporated into the *T'ai-tsung shih lu*, for instance, is so fraught with distortion and falsehood that it can rarely be taken at face value. Those portions of the *T'ai-tsu shih lu* concerning the early years of the reigns of the Chien-wen and Yung-lo emperors also have been systematically tampered with and distorted during two revisions in the Yung-lo reign when the text was rewritten to bolster the Yung-lo emperor's claim to legitimate succession. These revisions have been methodically exposed by Wang Ch'ung-wu and to a lesser extent by Huang Chang-chien. These two scholars have made the most substantive contributions to the study of the Chien-wen reign and the early years of the Yung-lo emperor's career.

Despite the destruction and proscription of the bulk of official works of the Chien-wen reign and the writings of Chien-wen officials, some either escaped detection or were reconstructed from fragments by later scholars.

The most important work to survive intact is the *Huang Ming tien li*, a compendium of statutes and rituals compiled in the Chien-wen reign. Fragments of the writings of some of the leading Chien-wen officials have been collected but are not very informative.

Later Ming scholars sympathetic to the Chien-wen emperor also produced several collections of sources on the events and personalities of this period. They include Chiang Ch'ing's *Chiang-shih mi shih*, T'u Shu-fang's *Chien-wen ch'ao yeh hui pien*, as well as Chu Lu's *Chien-wen shu fa ni*. These compilations include some meticulous verification and reconstruction of the events, but they also incorporate a large body of pseudohistorical and semi-fictional materials. They must be used judiciously to produce a reliable account of the history of this period.

With the exception of the accounts of the years before the palace rebellion, the primary sources of the Yung-lo reign present few controversial historiographical problems. This does not mean, however, that the primary sources, particularly the veritable records, are as rich and informative as they might have been. The *T'ai-tsung shih lu*, compiled in 1430 under the Hsüan-te emperor, covers twenty-two years, includes only 130 *chüan*, and is rather sketchy in narrative and documentation, particularly on certain important political and military developments. There is no detailed account, for example, of the campaigns against the Mongols, of Cheng Ho's maritime expeditions, or of other expansionist activities. Was this because some of the archival documents concerning such projects initiated and directed by eunuchs, such as Cheng Ho's voyages, were either scattered or made inaccessible to the official compilers? Or was it because these historiographers, who produced the veritable records under an emperor and grand secretaries who opposed expansionist programs, deliberately underplayed their significance? It seems that a combination of these factors may offer a plausible explanation.

For a more comprehensive account of the Yung-lo reign, we have to go beyond the veritable records and look into other contemporary sources. There exist, for instance, the writings of the emperor, and most important, the collected works of contemporary scholar-officials who had an important role in government administration. The *Sheng hsüeh hsin fa* was compiled by the Yung-lo emperor himself. Such official compendia as anthologies of Confucian literature are also useful. The literary writings of such leading grand secretaries as the Three Yangs, Chin Yu-tzu, Hsia Yüan-chi, and others are valuable sources. Most of these writings are available in individual editions, but many of the important essays on statecraft from this period have been excerpted in the *Huang Ming ching shih wen pien* compiled by Ch'en Tzu-lung in the late Ming. These writings are more informative

on political affairs and government administration than on fiscal matters and local development, for which one must turn to the gazetteers and other specialized writings.

For foreign relations under the Yung-lo emperor, primary sources in the form of memoirs by contemporary scholar-officials who had participated in the events are the most important and informative. These include such accounts on the Mongolian campaigns as the *Pei cheng lu* by Chin Yu-tzu and Yang Jung's *Pei cheng chi*. (See Li Su-ying's summaries in *Yü kung*, vols. 3, 4, 1935–36.) Travelogs by envoys to the Central Asian states like Ch'en Ch'eng's *Hsi yü hsing ch'eng chi* and *Hsi yü fan kuo chih* are complemented by the reports written in Persian by the envoys of Shāhrukh Bahādur of Samarkand to the Ming court, which are available in English translation.³ In addition the Korean chronicles, *Chōson wangjo sillok* (*Yijo sillok*), contain valuable information on Sino-Korean relations as well as on certain significant events at the Yung-lo court from the Korean perspective (see below).

For the maritime explorations, there are three excellent contemporary accounts: Ma Huan's *Ying ya sheng lan*, Fei Hsin's *Hsing ch'a sheng lan*, and Kung Chen's *Hsi-yang fan kuo chih*. They provide not only the most important sources for a study of Ming relations with southeast and western maritime Asia, but also record the extent of China's geographical knowledge about these regions in the early fifteenth century.

In contrast to the earlier periods, the primary sources for the Hung-hsi and Hsüan-te reigns are their veritable records, the *Jen-tsung shih lu* (10 *chüan*) and the *Hsüan-tsung shih lu* (115 *chüan*), which were compiled in 1430 and 1438, respectively, under the supervision of the veteran grand secretaries known as the Three Yangs and their colleagues. These veritable records do not cover as long a period as those of the Yung-lo emperor. The Hung-hsi reign lasted just nine months, and the Hsüan-te emperor ruled only nine years, but their official records far excelled those of the preceding reign in information and documentation. The veritable records for these two reigns are distinguished particularly for the relatively impartial, rich details on bureaucratic administration they contain. These were periods when the Ming rulers veered away from military expansion to pursue the ideals of Confucian civil government, which apparently accounts for the lack of attention in these records to foreign contacts. For this reason, such non-Chinese sources as the Korean *Chosōn wangjo sillok* are exceptionally valuable. The *Chosōn wangjo sillok* provides not only rich details on Sino-

3 See K. M. Maitra, trans., *A Persian embassy to China, being an extract from Zubdatut Tawarikh of Hefiz Abri* (1934; rpt. New York, 1970).

Korean relations during this time, but also important details about these two Ming emperors that are not revealed in Chinese records.

In addition to the veritable records, a considerable body of literary works by the leading ministers and scholar-officials of the Hung-hsi and Hsüan-te reigns remains extant. These works include not only the writings of the senior grand secretaries, the Three Yangs, Hsia Yüan-chi, and other high-ranking ministers, but also those of the lesser ministers and scholar-officials who had held various government positions. Their writings provide the basic sources for the summary treatment of the political and institutional developments of these periods by later historians and also for such anthologies on statecraft as Ch'en Tzu-lung's *Huang Ming ching shih wen pien*. Large collections of miscellaneous writings by contemporary scholars on a wide range of subjects, including political, social, and economic affairs, as well as on intellectual and cultural development, have also survived. They thus supply important additional information to the official records and the collected works of the scholar-officials. It is noteworthy, however, that insofar as foreign contacts and military activities were reduced to a minimal level under these two emperors, there were fewer contemporary treatises on these subjects, and they did not receive much attention in the literary miscellanies. This stands in sharp contrast to the situation during the Yung-lo period.

Our knowledge of these early Ming reigns has been greatly enhanced by a steady stream of productive scholarship on the dynastic period in general and on individual topics exclusively concerned with these eras in particular. There are numerous books, monographs, and articles in Chinese, Japanese, English, and other European languages dealing with various areas of the Ming dynasty, but most of these works are specialized studies and are not concerned with narrative history or general interpretation. For the latter, Meng Sen's lecture notes, *Ming tai shih*, and Edward Dreyer's recent book, *Early Ming China*, are the most informative and useful. In addition, the *Dictionary of Ming biography* provides an indispensable source of biographical reference. In general, however, modern scholarship is far richer on the Chien-wen and Yung-lo reigns than the Hung-hsi and Hsüan-te reigns and on historiography, political institutions, military campaigns, foreign relations, and intellectual activities than on social and economic development. These phenomena are undoubtedly conditioned by the nature of the sources, but they also reflect the predilection of the scholars and the uneven development of the field.

For the Chien-wen reign, which is so fraught with complex historiographic problems, Wang Ch'ung-wu's two volumes offer a meticulous reconstruction of the events of the civil war and related political develop-

ments and remain the authoritative work in this field of scholarship. In recent years, Huang Chang-chien has also made important contributions on similar historiographical issues. In this connection, we should take note of the earlier writings of Fu Ssu-nien, Li Chin-hua, Wu Han, and others on the verification of the maternity of the Prince of Yen, a problem that holds the key to an understanding of the behavior and actions of the new emperor. Similarly, a sizeable literature exists on the fate of the Chien-wen emperor and the bizarre legends that kindled sympathy and imagination.

There are several general accounts of the civil war between the Chien-wen emperor and the Prince of Yen, but the only monograph, David Chan's *The usurpation of the Prince of Yen*, is a major disappointment. It has not fully absorbed the fruits of Wang Ch'ung-wu's research, and though it presents a useful narrative of the military campaign, the book is marred by serious errors of judgment on historiographic issues. It should be used with great caution. As to the institutional and political developments under the Chien-wen emperor, both Wu Chi-hua and Huang Chang-chien have done important work on the role of the imperial advisors and the abortive governmental reorganizations. In addition, mention should be made of the worthy articles by Sakakura Atsuhide and Mao P'ei-ch'i on the Chien-wen emperor's state policies and their political repercussions.

For the Yung-lo period, a short but useful biography of the emperor has been written by Terada Takanobu, and there are important monographs and articles examining various aspects of his reign. For instance, besides the rich scholarship on the civil war and the issue of the emperor's maternity, there are important studies by Wu Han, Wu Chi-hua, Tu Nai-chi, Wang Yü-ch'üan, and others dealing with institutional reorganization and political development. Some of these works cover the whole dynasty, but they also devote considerable attention to the Yung-lo reign. Among Western writings on these topics, Charles Hucker's work on governmental organization and Edward Farmer's study of the dual capital system have become standard references.

In addition, important studies on the Yung-lo era include those by Kuo Po-kung and others on the compilation of the *Yung-lo ta tien*; by D. Pokotilov, Wolfgang Franke, Tamura Jitsuzō, and others on the Mongolian campaigns and northern defense; by W. T. Chan and W. T. de Bary on the formation of the Confucian orthodox ideology; and those by Yamamoto Tatsurō, J. P. Lo, and John Whitmore on the intervention in Annam. There is a substantial and expanding literature on Cheng Ho's maritime expeditions. Furthermore, valuable work has been done by Wu Chi-hua and Hoshi Ayao on the tribute grain and transport system; by R. Huang on fiscal administration; by Henry Serruys, J. Fletcher, and Morris Rossabi on relations with Inner and Central Asia, Mongolia, and the Jurchen; by

Kimiya Yasuhiko, Wang I-t'ung, Wang Ch'ung-wu, and others on relations with Japan and Korea; and by Hsü Yü-hu, J. V. G. Mills, and Wang Gungwu on relations with Southeast Asia. It seems that only the socioeconomic aspects of the Yung-lo reign remain comparatively understudied in the recent scholarship on the Ming dynasty.

There are a few specialized studies devoted to the Hung-hsi and Hsüan-te reigns as a whole. With the exception of such areas as institutional development, the rebellion of prince Chu Kao-hsü, fiscal reforms, and foreign relations, not many special topics have received adequate treatment. Edward Dreyer's *Early Ming China* is the only modern work that devotes a substantial chapter of narrative to these two reigns. In general, modern scholarship dealing with this period in some depth is concerned with institutional reorganization, political consolidation, and fiscal retrenchment. For these topics, the works on the development of the grand secretariat by Wu Chi-hua, Tu Nai-chi, and Charles Hucker are the most informative and useful, as are the writings of Wu Chi-hua, Chou Liang-hsiao, and Wu Tan-ko on the fiscal reforms undertaken in Soochow and Sung-chiang prefectures. In addition, there are two valuable monographs for this period. Charles Hucker's monograph on the censorial system has given considerable attention to the Hsüan-te era, and Chiang Hsing-yü's recent biography of K'uang Chung, architect of the fiscal reform in the Kiangnan region, is also useful. Ray Huang's *Taxation and governmental finance of sixteenth-century China* and his other related studies have provided indispensable guidance for an assessment of similar issues in the Hsüan-te period. The Hsüan-te reign has been a period favored by art historians because the emperor was a connoisseur of the fine arts, but since this area is outside the domain of political narrative, such studies will not be discussed further here.

Finally, the study of these early Ming reigns has greatly benefited from the publication of several important collections of source materials compiled by leading scholars in the field. Most of these compendia, which cover the entire dynasty, are extracts from the veritable records on foreign peoples and on official relations with them. They include, for example, the collections edited by Haneda Tōru and Tamura Jitsuzō on the Mongols, by Lo Hsiang-lin on Tibet, by Chao Ling-yang (Chiu Ling-yeong) and Ch'en Hsüeh-lin (Chan Hok-lam) on Southeast Asia, and that by Pai Ts'ui-ch'in on the Oirat Mongols. These works are complemented by an equally important collection, that of extracts of records from the *Chosŏn wangjo sillok* on Sino-Korean relations edited by Wu Han, and a compendium of selected official and private records on Cheng Ho's voyages compiled by Cheng Ho-sheng and Cheng I-chün that promises to be the most comprehensive collection of primary sources on the subject to date. Most of these works are

compiled by meticulous scholars, but to ensure accuracy, it is always advisable to check these selections against the original records.

5: THE CHENG-T'UNG, CHING-T'AI, AND T' IEN-SHUN
REIGNS, 1436-1464, BY DENIS TWITCHETT AND
TILEMANN GRIMM

The history of the middle period of the Ming dynasty (from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century) has not been very well studied by traditional Chinese historians or by contemporary historians in China, Japan, and the West. The history of the mid-fifteenth century, which includes the reigns treated here, presents more difficulties than the history of the sixteenth century for two principal reasons. First, there is little secondary scholarship on the general history of the period, and only a few specialized studies on important people and events. Second, the source materials for the fifteenth century are not as varied and abundant as they are for the sixteenth century, when it became popular for officials and literary men to publish their collected writings (which included letters, memorials, essays, and treatises on political administration) during their lives. In fact, many important collections of memorials and writings by fifteenth-century officials were only published in the sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries, and these collected writings are not as voluminous or comprehensive as later collections. Consequently, the historian must draw heavily on the material preserved in the veritable records and the standard histories based on court records.

The veritable records for the three reigns covered in this chapter are not particularly reliable, since they were compiled under the direction of Li Hsien (1408-66), who had been directly involved in the court politics of all three reigns. He had supported Yü Ch'ien in 1451 and yet managed to attain a high position after the restoration of 1457. P'eng Shih (1406-75), the editor-in-chief, was Li Hsien's colleague and had also taken part in many important events of the period from 1450 to 1464. However, in the absence of other corroborative evidence, the historian has no recourse but to take into account the bias of the compilers when he uses this material.

A small number of monographs and studies deal exclusively with important events or personalities of the period. The T'u-mu incident of 1449 has been recounted in detail by F. W. Mote in "The T'u-mu incident of 1449," and subsequent events at court are described in Wolfgang Franke's study, "Yü Chien, Staatsman und Kriegsminister, 1398-1457."⁴ The gen-

⁴ See F. W. Mote, "The T'u-mu incident of 1449," in *Chinese ways in warfare*, ed. Frank A. Kierman, Jr., and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), pp. 243-72; and Wolfgang Franke, "Yü Chien, Staatsman und Kriegsminister, 1398-1457," *Monumenta Serica*, 11 (1946), pp. 87-122.

eral political history of the first two reigns, to the restoration of Ying-tsung in 1457, is treated in more detail in Philip de Heer's dissertation on the Ching-t'ai period and the restoration.⁵ These three studies together provide a good and comprehensive general introduction to the most important events of the period to 1458. There is almost no secondary scholarship on the period of Ying-tsung's restoration.

The history of the Ming empire's dealings with the Mongols and the Oirat during this period has been studied by H. Serruys and D. Farquhar. Serruys' general studies on the Mongols during the Ming period contain much valuable information on fifteenth-century Ming–Mongol relations and comprise the best secondary sources on this topic.⁶ The rise of the Oirat under Esen during the early fifteenth century and their relations with Ming China during this period are treated in Farquhar's study, "Oirat-Chinese tribute relations, 1408–1446."⁷

6: THE CH'ENG-HUA AND HUNG-CHIH REIGNS, 1464–
1505, BY FREDERICK W. MOTE

Materials as well as modern scholarship on the second half of the fifteenth century are perhaps still less numerous than those drawn upon by Professor Hok-lam Chan in his chapter on the period from 1398 to 1435. Some of the scholarly works he has cited in his bibliographic note also apply to this period. Among those are several studies on Ming institutions by Huang Chang-chien, now collected in his volume *Ming Ch'ing shih yen chiu ts'ung kao* (1977); the writings on institutional and on socioeconomic history by Wu Chi-hua, especially the four volumes of collected studies, cited as Wu (1970) and Wu (1971); and the volume *Ming shih lun chi* by Huang K'ai-hua (Hong Kong, 1972). To those writings by recent writers may be added the small collection of studies by Su T'ung-ping, *Ming shih ou pi* (Taipei, 1970), particularly the first essay on chief ministerial powers in the Ming.

The researches of Wang Yü-ch'üan have been particularly useful, especially several on Ming institutions and economic matters included in his recently published collection *Lai wu chi* (Peking, 1983). I must also acknowledge Professor Wang as a learned source of advice on all aspects of

5 See Philip de Heer, *The caretaker emperor: Aspects of the imperial institution in fifteenth century China as reflected in the political history of the reign of Chu Ch'i-yü* (Leiden, 1985).

6 See, for example, (*Sino-Mongol relations during the Ming. II*) *The tribute system and diplomatic missions, 1400–1600*, in *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques*, Vol. 14 (1967), and "The Mongols of Kansu during the Ming," *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques*, Vol. 10 (1955), pp. 215–346.

7 See David M. Farquhar, "Oirat-Chinese tribute relations, 1408–1446," in *Studia Altaica: Festschrift für Nikolaus Poppe zum 60. Geburtstag am 8 August 1957* (Wiesbaden, 1957), pp. 60–68.

Ming history during his association with Princeton University from 1981 to 1983, as this volume was being completed.

Meng Sen (1867–1937) is credited with the one-volume history of the Ming period, *Ming tai shih* (1957), actually a transcript of his lectures at Peking University in the late 1930s. This volume is an ever-stimulating source of interpretive ideas; the present chapter is indebted to it in a general way, although it is not cited in the footnotes.

A major problem focus of this period in Ming history is relations with the nations beyond the northern frontier, particularly the Mongols. Although that subject will be dealt with more fully in Volume 8 (forthcoming), in writing the present chapter the works of the late Henry Serruys have been the most extensively used. These include: (*Sino-Mongol relations during the Ming. II) The tribute system and diplomatic missions, 1400–1600* (Brussels, 1967); *Genealogical tables of the descendants of Dayan-Qan* (The Hague, 1958); and *The Mongols of Kansu during the Ming* (Brussels, 1955). More recent scholarship on this subject includes the work of Morris Rossabi, including his several biographies of Inner Asians in *Dictionary of Ming biography*; his doctoral dissertation, “Ming China’s relations with Hami and Central Asia, 1404–1513” (Columbia University 1970); and *China and Inner Asia from 1368 to the present day* (New York, 1975). This chapter also has been heavily influenced by the work of Dr. Arthur N. Waldron, especially his article, “The problem of the Great Wall,” *HJAS*, No. 2 (December 1983), pp. 643–63.

For later fifteenth-century political debates, I have relied heavily on the recent doctoral dissertation by Chu Hung-lam, entitled *Ch’iu Chün (1421–1495) and the ‘Ta hsüeh yen i pu’: Statecraft thought in fifteenth-century China* (Ann Arbor, 1983). Dr. Chu’s extensive bibliography gives a good sense of the state of the field.

Although Japanese scholarship has been voluminous, especially in socio-economic fields, the present chapter has not relied extensively on it, having little need to venture into those fields here. Among modern Western scholars, all who work on the Ming period are indebted to Wolfgang Franke and Charles O. Hucker in particular; their standard reference works and other writings have been used throughout, although not specifically cited in most cases.

This chapter is quite conventional in its reliance on such traditional sources as the Ming veritable records—the *Ming shih lu*, the dynastic history—the *Ming shih*, and several topical or annalistic histories such as the *Ming t’ung chien* (1837) by Hsia Hsieh. Although collected writings of private persons, whether officials or scholars or littérateurs, began to become more numerous in the later fifteenth century, those works have not

been fully exploited here—or indeed by anyone. This period of Chinese history awaits fuller study of the traditional sources.

7: THE CHENG-TE REIGN, 1506–1521, AND 8: THE
CHIA-CHING REIGN, 1522–1566, BY JAMES GEISS

There is not a great deal of secondary scholarship on the political history of the Cheng-te and Chia-ching reigns in Chinese, Japanese, or Western languages. Most modern scholarship has focused on a few topics: the arrival of the Portuguese, the debates on imperial rituals, the pirate invasions of the 1550s, and the careers of several prominent statesmen. For information on other topics, it is necessary to consult the documents of the period and traditional Chinese scholarship of the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

Hsia Hsieh's *Ming t'ung chien* is particularly useful for the history of the Cheng-te and Chia-ching reigns because Hsia had a copy of the veritable records for both reigns at hand when he compiled his history. In his critical notes (*k'ao-i*) he resolves a number of discrepancies in dating and numbers between the official history, private histories, and the veritable records.

The veritable record for the Cheng-te reign is unusually frank about the behavior of the emperor and presents a far from flattering portrait of him. This results from two peculiar circumstances. First, his cousin, who succeeded him, was contemptuous of his lifestyle and did not want it obscured in the official records. Second, the officials who compiled the record of his reign had served under him and had also in some cases suffered under his rule. Hence, many details that might otherwise have been struck out were left intact. Huang Yün-mei notes in his *Ming shih k'ao cheng* that the emperor's remarks on the night of the great fire of 1514 were kept in the records for this reason.⁸ The principal accounts of the emperor's private life have been conveniently assembled in Mao Ch'i-ling's *Wu-tsung wai chi* (2.6.4).

Hsieh Pen's (ca. 1521) *Hou chien lu* is a particularly valuable source for the history of the Cheng-te period. While he was serving as a court secretary in the early 1520s, Hsieh copied material about the principal investigations of the Cheng-te reign (Liu Chin's trial, the Prince of An-hua's uprising, and the Prince of Ning's treason) from the archives of the Ministry of Justice. This record contains material that does not appear in the veritable record or later accounts. For example, the indictment against Liu Chin states that he was fifty-eight years old (sixty *sui*) at the time of his

⁸ See Huang Yün-mei, *Ming shih k'ao cheng* (Peking, 1980), p. 156.

arrest in 1510, which would put his date of birth, hitherto uncertain, at about 1452. Since almost no archival material from the early sixteenth century survives, this work is a particularly valuable source for corroboration and detail.⁹

The chronology of the emperor's trips to Hsüan-fu and Ta-t'ung has been worked out in detail by Chiang Tso-wen in his article "Ming Wu-tsung san hsing Hsüan-fu Ta-t'ung chi" and provides a convenient index to the relevant passages in the veritable record.¹⁰ All the principal passages in the veritable record concerning the activities of eunuchs in this period have been assembled in Wang Shih-chen's *Chung kuan k'ao* (2.2.6).

Another important source for both reigns which contains far more detail than the veritable record and other official accounts is Yang T'ing-ho's diary. This diary covers the period from 1507, when Yang became the Cheng-te emperor's chief grand secretary, to 1523, when he was dismissed from office, and appears in the 1607 edition of Yang's collected works, *Yang Wen-chung san lu*, under the title *Shih ts'ao yü lu* (5.5.35). It contains the most detailed account of the events immediately following the Cheng-te emperor's death in 1521 and the confrontations between Yang and the Chia-ching emperor during the early 1520s. It also contains many revealing anecdotes about the court of the Cheng-te emperor and the emperor's personality. It is clear from Yang's account that in the last years of his reign the Cheng-te emperor was almost always drunk, even when deciding matters of state, and that his eunuch attendants thought nothing of it.

The veritable record for the Chia-ching reign conforms to the standards of imperial historiography, and some of the most bizarre episodes in the emperor's life (like the assassination attempt of 1542) receive only perfunctory mention. A better sense of the Chia-ching emperor's personality and character can be gleaned from the anecdotes about him and his court collected in Shen Te-fu's (*Wan-li*) *yeh huo pien* (4.1.5). I have relied on Shen's work for many points of interpretation and detail. The case of Li Fu-ta and its antecedents is most clearly and judiciously explained in his account. I have often compared Shen's comments with the comments that appear throughout another very useful selection of historical excerpts compiled by Hsü Hsüeh-mo, an official who served in the Chia-ching court during the 1550s. His compilation, *Shih miao shih yü lu* (2.7.5), contains for the most part excerpts from the veritable record. Some of these excerpts are followed by substantial comments, which I have also relied on to

9 The *Hou chien lu* has been reprinted in Hsieh Kuo-chen, ed., *Ming shih tzu liao ts'ung k'an*, No. 1 (Kiangsu, 1981), pp. 1-160.

10 See *Yü kung*, 5 (1935), pp. 29-41.

interpret many points of detail. Hsü's remarks on the case of Li Fu-ta, for example, support the interpretation given in *Yeh huo pien*. The third source to which I have consistently referred is Fan Shou-chi's annalistic history of the Chia-ching reign, *Huang Ming Su huang wai shih* (1.3.3), which also contains material that does not appear in the veritable records.¹¹

Most of the sources dealing with the Mongols were written from the Chinese point of view. The most balanced account of relations with the Mongols (and in particular with Prince Altan) written in Chinese appears in Ch'ü Chiu-ssu's *Wan-li wu kung lu* (2.8.3) in the chapters containing Prince Altan's biography.

The sources on piracy are rich and conflicting. Two of the most important and widely circulated accounts of dealings with Hsü Hai and Wang Chih were written as political tracts to exonerate Hu Tsung-hsien from a number of charges that had been leveled against him. Both *Hsü Hai pen mo* (7.8.8) and *Wang Chih chuan* (7.8.7) were probably written by Mao K'un (1512–1601), a personal friend of Hu Tsung-hsien who had served as his private secretary during the 1550s. Although the veracity and reliability of these accounts were questioned by some late Ming historians, they were accepted by the compilers of the official history. The account of Hu Tsung-hsien's dealings with Hsü Hai in Hu's official biography was drawn almost entirely from Mao K'un's work. Mao's accounts and subsequent accounts based on them are certainly biased and cannot be used without corroboration. In general I have favored the chronology and interpretation of events in Ts'ai Chiu-te's *Wo pien shih lüeh* (7.8.9) over Mao's works.

The various accounts of Yen Sung's actions present a similar problem. The veritable record for the Chia-ching reign was begun under the supervision of Yen Sung's nemesis, grand secretary Hsü Chieh, and finished under Hsü's student, grand secretary Chang Chü-cheng. The selection and omission of materials as well as the editorial comments were intended to show Yen Sung in the worst possible light. Yen Sung's biography in the official history was based almost entirely on a draft biography written by Wang Shih-chen. Wang Shih-chen's father was put to death for incompetence while Yen Sung was chief grand secretary, and Wang Shih-chen held Yen responsible for failing to secure a reduction or suspension of his father's death sentence. Officials who had in any way associated with Yen Sung were treated similarly. Consequently it is almost always necessary to find out whether contemporary opinions and the opinions expressed in later works about such figures agree. Often they do not. It has recently been

11 See Shen Te-fu, comp., (*Wan-li*) *yeh huo pien* (1619; rpt. Peking, 1959), pp. 464–67, and Hsü Hsueh-mo, *Shih miao shih yü lu* (1608; rpt. Taipei, 1965), 4, pp. 92–142 (pp. 103–13).

argued that Yen Sung's power and influence at court was far more circumscribed than later sources suggest and that many decisions attributed to him in the records actually originated with the emperor.¹²

Many of the important passages from the veritable records about fiscal problems and attempts to remedy them have been assembled in Yü Chiteng's *Tien ku chi wen* (2.2.7). Yü worked on the compilation of the 1587 edition of the *Collected Statutes of the Ming dynasty* and hence had access to the veritable records and other court documents for a long time. Problems in the military administration during this period (in particular the loss of revenues from military fields) are discussed at length in Wang Yü-ch'üan's studies.¹³ The best summaries of the growth and development of agriculture and commercial life during the sixteenth century, particularly in the Yangtze drainage, appear in Fu I-ling's studies.¹⁴

The first sixteenth-century European descriptions of China also date from this period. The earliest accounts appear in letters written toward the end of 1524 by two members of the Pires embassy who were being held in a prison in Canton.¹⁵ A slightly later account by Galeote Pereira, who was held prisoner in South China from 1549 to 1552, presents the events surrounding Chu Wan's disgrace from a Portuguese point of view. In March 1549 Pereira was captured by a Ming coastal defense unit and taken to the capital of Fukien province, where he remained in prison until Chu Wan's demise. Then he and some other prisoners were exiled to Kuei-lin in Kwangsi province. In 1552 he managed to escape to the coast and to rejoin the Portuguese community there. It is interesting that Pereira, unaware of the circumstances behind his release from prison, concluded:

For wheresoever in any town of Christendom should be accused unknown men as we were, I know not what end the very Innocents' cause would have; but we in a heathen country, having for our great enemies two of the chiefest men in a whole town, wanting an interpreter, ignorant of that country [sic] language, did in the end see our great adversaries cast into prison for our sake, and deprived of their offices and honour for not doing justice, yea not to escape death, for a rumour goeth, they shall be beheaded—now see if they do justice or no?¹⁶

12 See So Kwan-wai (Su Chün-wei), "Ta hsüeh shih Yen Sung hsin lun," in *Ming Ch'ing shih kuo chi hsüeh shu t'ao lun hui lun wen chi* (Tientsin, 1982), pp. 822–62.

13 See *Ming tai chün t'un* (Peking, 1965).

14 See *Ming tai Chiang-nan shih min ching chi shih t'an* (Shanghai, 1957) and *Ming Ch'ing nung ts'un she hui ching chi* (Peking, 1961).

15 See Donald Ferguson, *Letters from Portuguese captives in Canton, written in 1534 and 1536 (alias 1524): With an introduction on Portuguese intercourse with China in the first half of the sixteenth century* (Bombay, 1902).

16 Charles R. Boxer, ed., *South China in the sixteenth century, being the narratives of Galeote Pereira, Fr. Gaspar da Cruz, O.P., Fr. Martin de Rada, O.E.S.A.* (London, 1953), pp. 20–21.

Such complex misperceptions colored much of the information about China that reached Europe in the sixteenth century and shaped later opinions about the Chinese empire.

Juan González de Mendoza's *Historia de las cosas más notables, ritos y costumbres del gran Reyno de las China*, first printed in 1585, was the account of China most widely read in Western Europe during the sixteenth century. Mendoza's *Historia* was based for the most part on two Portuguese works: Gaspar da Cruz's *Tractado em que se cõtam muito per esteco as cousas da China*, printed in 1569 or 1570, and Martín de Rada's reports on his three-month stay in Fukien in 1575.

Gaspar da Cruz's *Tractado* was itself based in part on Galeote Pereira's account and supplemented with some additional information drawn from the author's own experience. Da Cruz spent several months in South China in 1556. Although his *Tractado* was the first book printed in Europe devoted exclusively to the description of Chinese civilization, it did not circulate widely, in part because it was written in Portuguese. However, it was incorporated into such popular histories as Mendoza's and appeared in an English translation in Samuel Purchas's *Hakluytus posthumous, or Purchas his pilgrimes* in 1625.

The earliest Western European descriptions of China after Marco Polo's derived for the most part from these three accounts. Two of them recorded impressions gained during relatively short sojourns to the South China coast. The third, Pereira's, which misconstrued the circumstances of his interrogation, subsequent release, and exile, was commended by Purchas when he reproduced it in English for its account of the administration of Chinese justice. Although later writers added more detail to the knowledge available about China, many of the first and lasting impressions about Chinese civilization came from these few works.¹⁷

9: THE LUNG-CH'ING AND WAN-LI REIGNS, 1567-1620, BY
RAY HUANG

It is difficult to present a satisfactory overview of the sources for the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. A cursory survey cannot adequately convey the richness of the large and varied body of printed material available for this period. It must suffice here to note some general problems in the sources.

A sampling of the studies and sources of this period can be found in the

¹⁷ For a fuller account of these authors and their works, see Boxer, *South China in the sixteenth century*, pp. xvii-xci. The full bibliographic information on these titles appears on pp. 344-48.

bibliography for 1587, *a year of no significance: The Ming dynasty in decline*, but this is not an exhaustive list. It can serve, however, as an introduction to the range of materials available.¹⁸ The sources for fiscal history are treated briefly in the bibliographic note in *Taxation and governmental finance in sixteenth-century Ming China*, where the most important works on the subject are briefly discussed.¹⁹ The greatest difficulty in using the wide range of sources for this period lies in the great differences in quality among different types of material. Local gazetteers were produced for most regions in the late sixteenth century, but their quality varies. Wealthy prefectures and counties could afford to hire qualified scholars to compile such histories, whereas poor and remote areas could not. Hence gazetteers compiled in wealthy areas tend to be comprehensive, to contain detail about local conditions and customs, and to excerpt more documents. Gazetteers from poor regions are almost useless; they contain statistics without any commentary, or worse, statistics from the last gazetteer compiled in the region.

The many compilations of documents on different topics or subjects that appeared in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries present similar problems. The compilers often included material without assessing its value, a task they felt that the readers of their day could undertake on their own. Modern readers, however, must try to reconstruct the sources for important collections and assess the reliability of the materials on a case by case basis. Thus, although there is a great deal of material conveniently assembled by topic or period of time, it cannot be used indiscriminately.

Chang Chü-cheng and his fiscal reforms have been widely studied. There is a large body of scholarship on this topic in Chinese, Japanese, and Western languages. Two works, one early and one more recent, suggest the range of these studies. Chu Tung-jun's biography of Chang Chü-cheng was the first modern attempt to write a biography in Chinese in the style of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western literary biographies. It draws on a wide range of sources, including Chang's political writings, letters, poems, and notes, and paints a vivid and sensitive portrait of the man and his times.²⁰ The effects of Chang's fiscal reforms at the local level have been studied in the context of local tax reform in the sixteenth century in Leif Littrup's monograph, *Subbureaucratic government in China in Ming times: A study of Shandong province in the sixteenth century*. Such local history studies

18 See R. Huang, *1587, a year of no significance: The Ming dynasty in decline* (New Haven and London, 1981), pp. 261–65.

19 See R. Huang, *Taxation and governmental finance in sixteenth-century Ming China* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 367–76.

20 See Chu Tung-jun, *Chang Chü-cheng ta chuan* (Wuhan, 1957).

offer an interesting contrast to discussions of fiscal reform at the imperial court.²¹

The conclusion of a treaty with the Mongols in 1570–71 has been studied in detail by Henry Serruys in “Four documents relating to the Sino-Mongol peace of 1570–1571” and is referred to in his other writings as well.²²

IO: THE T'AI-CH'ANG, T'IEN-CH'I, AND CH'UNG-CHEN
REIGNS, 1620–1644,
BY WILLIAM S. ATWELL

Among twentieth-century students of late Ming history, one name stands out above all the rest: Hsieh Kuo-chen. For nearly six decades prior to his recent death in Peking, Professor Hsieh produced a steady stream of meticulously researched books and articles on seventeenth-century China, many of which remain classics in their fields. Of particular relevance for this chapter are his *Wan Ming shih chi k'ao* (Peking, 1932, and subsequent editions), and his *Ming Ch'ing chih chi tang she yün tung k'ao* (Shanghai, 1934, and subsequent editions). The former work is an annotated bibliography of more than 1,100 primary sources for the study of late Ming history and is an indispensable research aid for students of the period. The latter is a detailed study of late Ming and early Ch'ing politics that has become the starting point for virtually all subsequent research on the subject. Shortly before he died, Professor Hsieh published a collection of essays entitled *Ming mo Ch'ing ch'u ti hsüeh feng* (Peking, 1982), which contains new and previously unpublished articles on a wide variety of seventeenth-century topics.

Although a good deal of important work on late Ming history was produced in the People's Republic of China during the 1950s and early 1960s, the upheavals of the so-called Cultural Revolution seriously affected both its quantity and quality. Happily, the last few years have seen a significant reversal in this trend. For a summary of recent scholarship on the late Ming with some bibliographical details, see Frederic Wakeman, Jr., ed., *Ming and Qing historical studies in the People's Republic of China* (Berkeley, 1980), especially pp. 87–112. See all the sections on Ming history in Chung-kuo shih-hsüeh hui, ed., *Chung-kuo li shih-hsüeh nien chien*

²¹ See Leif Littrup, *Subbureaucratic government in China in Ming times: A study of Shandong province in the sixteenth century*, Instituttet for sammenlignende kulturforskning, Serie B: Skrifter, LXIV (Oslo, 1981).

²² See Henry Serruys, “Four documents relating to the Sino-Mongol peace of 1570–1571,” *Monumenta Serica*, 19 (1960), pp. 1–66.

(Peking, 1981–); and the quarterly review *Shih hsüeh ch'ing pao* (1982–), which is also published in Peking.

Significant work on late Ming history has also been produced in Taiwan, most notably by Professor Li Kuang-t'ao. Particularly relevant to this chapter are Professor Li's *Ming chi liu k'ou shih mo* (Taipei, 1965), his *Hsiung T'ing-pi yü Liao-tung* (Taipei, 1976), and several essays on military and political history in his *Ming Ch'ing shih lun chi* (Taipei, 1971). Information concerning current work on late Ming history in Taiwan can often be found in the journal *Ming shih yen chiu chuan k'an*, which is also published in Taipei. Future research on this period will be greatly aided by the fact that publishers in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the People's Republic continue to reprint a wide variety of primary and secondary materials on Ming history, some of which is directly relevant to the issues discussed in this chapter.

As in most other branches of Chinese studies, Japanese scholarship on seventeenth-century China has been prolific and, more often than not, of outstanding quality. For a general overview of this scholarship as it relates to the late Ming, see Yamane Yukio, "Trends in postwar Japanese studies on Ming history: a bibliographical introduction," *Acta Asiatica*, 38 (1980), especially pp. 104–10, 118–23. See also Mori Masao, "The gentry in the Ming," and Taniguchi Kikuo, "Peasant rebellions in the late Ming," both of which appear in *Acta Asiatica*, 38 (1980), pp. 31–68; and the relevant articles in Linda Grove and Christian Daniels, ed., *State and society in China: Japanese perspectives on Ming-Qing social and economic history* (Tokyo, 1984).

For more than four decades now, Western students of seventeenth-century China have been profoundly grateful for the existence of Arthur W. Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing period*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1943–44). Despite its misleading title, this magnificent collaborative work contains biographies of a number of prominent late Ming figures, complete with short bibliographies indicating where further information on each of them might be found. These biographies are complemented but not entirely superseded by those in L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming biography*, 2 vols. (New York and London, 1976). Modeled on the Hummel volumes, the *DMB*, as it is fondly known, is one of the two most important reference works on Ming history in any Western language. The other is Wolfgang Franke, *An introduction to the sources of Ming history* (Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, 1968), which contains brief descriptions of many of the primary and secondary sources used in the preparation of this chapter. See especially Professor Franke's discussions of the *shih-lu* for the T'ai-ch'ang, T'ien-ch'i, and Ch'ung-chen reign periods on pp. 32–33, and of T'an Ch'ien's *Kuo ch'üeh* on p. 38.

One of the distinguished contributors to the *DMB* was Professor Charles

O. Hucker, who has long been regarded as the unofficial dean of late Ming studies in the English-speaking world. Beginning with a series of important articles in the mid-1950s, Professor Hucker has spent much of the past three decades examining the intricacies of Ming political and institutional history. Of particular relevance to this chapter are his "Su-chou and the agents of Wei Chung-hsien: A translation of the *K'ai tu ch'uan hsin*," *Silver jubilee volume of the Zinbun Kagaku Kenkyusyo* (Kyoto, 1954), pp. 224–56; "The Tung-lin movement of the late Ming period," in John K. Fairbank, ed., *Chinese thought and institutions* (Chicago, 1957), pp. 132–62; and *The censorial system of Ming China* (Stanford, 1966), especially pp. 152–234. Professor Hucker also edited the symposium volume *Chinese government in Ming times: Seven studies* (New York and London, 1969), which contains a number of articles that touch on important aspects of seventeenth-century institutional history.

Other fields of late Ming history have also been well served by symposia volumes. For intellectual history, see Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed., *Self and society in Ming thought* (New York and London, 1970), and *The unfolding of neo-Confucianism* (New York and London, 1975). For social and political history, see Frederic Wakeman, Jr., and Carolyn Grant, eds., *Conflict and control in late imperial China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975); and Jonathan D. Spence and John E. Wills, Jr., eds., *From Ming to Ch'ing: Conquest, region, and continuity in seventeenth-century China* (New Haven and London, 1979).

Within the past few years, three important monographs dealing with late Ming history have been published in English: Willard J. Peterson, *Bitter gourd: Fang I-chih and the impetus for intellectual change* (New Haven and London, 1979); Hilary J. Beattie, *Land and lineage in China: A study of T'ung-ch'eng County, Anhwei, in the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties* (Cambridge, 1979); and Jerry Dennerline, *The Chia-ting loyalists: Confucian leadership and social change in seventeenth-century China* (New Haven and London, 1981). Two new works will also add greatly to our understanding of this period: Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *The great enterprise: The Manchu reconstruction of imperial order in seventeenth-century China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985); and Lynn A. Struve, *The Southern Ming, 1644–1662* (New Haven and London, 1984).

II: THE SOUTHERN MING, 1644–1662,
BY LYNN A. STRUVE

A number of circumstances have conspired to make the study of Southern Ming affairs frustratingly complex from a bibliographic point of view. First, the years from 1644 through 1662 were extraordinarily turbulent, with

events that erupted over an immense geographical area. No individual personally experienced more than a small fraction of those events, and most figures who were intimately involved in Southern Ming political and military activities did not survive to tell their own tales or to gainsay those told by others. In short, the written record of this interval, though extensive, is extremely fragmented and of dubious authenticity. This is illustrated by the fact that, although the chief bibliographic guide to late Ming and Southern Ming writings, Hsieh Kuo-chen's *Wan Ming shih chi k'ao*, lists over 1,100 titles of works which are known to have been extant from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, we possess not so much as a single original document from any of the Southern Ming courts. Our knowledge of the content of Southern Ming memorials, edicts, proclamations, directives, and so on comes entirely from copies of these made by private persons. In other words, the Southern Ming historical record consists almost wholly of works which variously are called *pieh-shih*, *yeh-shih*, *wai-shih*, or *pai-shih*, – that is, personal, unofficial, by-the-wayside accounts that vary widely in their quality and value as historical sources.

This is in direct contrast to the sources on the Ch'ing side of the struggle against the Southern Ming. There we have *only* government documents and official historical records, but no firsthand personal accounts by anyone who served the Ch'ing effort. Because of this remarkable difference, it is essential to combine carefully the information that we find in the unofficial Southern Ming sources with that in the official Ch'ing sources. Many of the surviving Ch'ing documents from the Shun-chih reign, which were preserved in the archives of the grand secretariat in Peking, have been published by the Institute of History and Philology of the Academia Sinica in the ten-part series *Ming Ch'ing shih liao*.²³ The unseasoned inquirer can easily become lost in these voluminous documents, however, and might prefer first to explore the Ch'ing side through the more manageable veritable records (*shih-lu*) of the Shun-chih and early K'ang-hsi reigns, which were reprinted in 1964 as the fourth through seventh volumes of the *Ta Ch'ing li ch'ao shih lu*.

The fact that we have only unofficial sources on the Ming side and only official sources on the Ch'ing side points to the political sensitivity of Southern Ming writings, a second major circumstance that creates bibliographical problems and complexity. Of course the Ch'ing were victorious, and consequently were in a position to place the power and influence of a unified empire behind the formulation of a largely self-serving history of

23 For a brief description of each part's contents, see Li Kuang-t'ao, "Ming Ch'ing tang an yü Ch'ing tai k'ai kuo shih liao," in *Ming Ch'ing lun chi* (Taipei, 1971), II, pp. 419–24.

the conquest period. Ch'ing officials apparently found it prudent to write memorials rather than memoirs. Southern Ming sympathizers, however, justly feared that the history of the Ming struggle would be lost or suppressed completely unless individuals recorded their knowledge in the hope that it would survive to inform a future epoch. As will be mentioned below, the Ch'ing did take measures to alter and expunge historical writing about the Southern Ming. But they did so in such a sporadic, inconsistent, and vague manner that the threat of censorship or persecution was felt very unevenly by different authors, publishers, or book collectors at different times. Consequently, while some works were published immediately after they were written, more were circulated only in manuscript form (and thus were hand copied many times, with many errors); others were hidden away so skillfully that they were not brought to light until the twentieth century. And among those works which did circulate, especially those in printed form, the degree of alteration to which they were subjected in order to accord with perceived Ch'ing policy is incalculable. Moreover, the political sensitivity of Southern Ming writings caused many authors to write anonymously or pseudonymously, and cases of false attribution were not likely to be litigated. Such conditions have given rise to innumerable problems in establishing authorship and textual authenticity in Southern Ming studies.

Of course, the Ch'ing would not have had to bother with censorship if the conquest had not been so deeply significant to the Han Chinese and if stories from the Southern Ming had not been so persistently popular. These two factors, national significance and celebrity, have complicated the historian's task through the Ch'ing dynasty to the present day. The Ch'ing conquest directly affected the lives of more Chinese people, and more *literate* Chinese people, than any previous such upheaval in the history of the East Asian subcontinent. The tremendous growth of the Chinese population during the late Ming and Ch'ing periods and the marked increase in publishing during that time help substantially to account for the profusion of writing on the Southern Ming.

On the positive side, this has resulted in the survival of more information about the Ch'ing conquest and the Southern Ming than about any previous period of interdynastic struggle. On the negative side, this has caused extensive abuse of Southern Ming writings by unprincipled publishers and booksellers, who have not been loath to falsify works in various ways and unabashedly to promote piracy and plagiarism—all in the interest of catering to an enthusiastic but largely indiscriminating reading public. Moreover, modern secondary writing on the Southern Ming, even that which pretends to scholarship, has been dilettantish and journalistic in

quality, aiming mainly to edify or inspire and exhibiting at best only a weak sense of the distinction between primary and secondary, genuine and falsified source materials. Consequently, in examining old texts from the Ch'ing, as well as books and articles from the Republican and Communist periods, the serious student of the Southern Ming is faced with the task of winnowing through a great deal of chaff to obtain the few kernels of evidence that can be used to build a truly veritable record.

For a listing of the best currently available primary sources on Southern Ming history, and of the most valuable twentieth-century scholarship on that period, readers should consult the bibliography in Lynn Struve's book, *The Southern Ming, 1644–1662* (New Haven and London, 1984). In evaluating those sources and other writings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is helpful to realize that different colorations and biases have characterized the study of that period in successive phases from the Shun-chih era to the present.

The majority of firsthand accounts naturally were produced in the 1650s and 1660s in the aftermath of the events they portray. Those authors who, in the midst of turmoil, were able to steer a firmly objective course in their writing were rare. Most gave vent to strong biases and resentments, contending against others for the sympathy of posterity in assigning blame for what had happened. The sense of guilt that pervaded the erstwhile Ming intelligentsia gave rise to numerous self-vindicating tracts which correspondingly condemned the actions of personal nemeses, partisan adversaries, or certain government sectors and social elements. Moreover, because in the early Ch'ing private manuscripts circulated and were preserved most effectively through remnant networks of the late Ming politico-literary societies, the record that we have received probably is more highly partisan than originally was the case.

The next phase, roughly from the 1670s through the 1710s, was ameliorative in two aspects. First, partisan strife, which was seen as a major affliction of the late Ming, was condemned by government and public alike. Second, the K'ang-hsi emperor sought conscientiously to reintegrate the Chinese intelligentsia under the Ch'ing aegis by assuaging the animosity and fear that many still felt toward his Manchu-dominated regime. As part of that effort, he successfully launched a large-scale project to compile the standard *Official history of the Ming* and took extraordinary steps to enlist the cooperation of widely respected scholars who were known to harbor Ming sympathies. Moreover, he attempted to assure the scholarly community that the Ming courts after the Ch'ung-chen reign would be treated magnanimously under his direction and that no one need fear the recurrence of such persecutions of historians as occurred in 1661–63. In such an

atmosphere of comparative leniency, interest in the Southern Ming flourished. By this time, the generation that had experienced the conquest was aging and would not much longer be able to give firsthand testimony about events; moreover, it had become clear to many that, although the K'ang-hsi court had condoned research on the Southern Ming, in fact that period would not be given adequate treatment in the *Official history of the Ming*. These circumstances provided the motivation for Wen Jui-lin to write the *Nan chiang i shih* (completed around 1711), which stands as the most important synthetic work on the Southern Ming to be produced in the first two centuries of the Ch'ing dynasty.²⁴

This phase in the development of Southern Ming studies was marked by romanticism and the concomitant embellishment of fact with a good deal of fancy. Men of the more settled K'ang-hsi period looked back on the Southern Ming as a time of heroism and self-sacrifice, of social mixing and leveling, when men of all stripes had chances to show their mettle. Ambivalent feelings toward both the Ch'ing and the late Ming generated a high level of pathos not only in historical writings, but also in one of the most popular operettas of late K'ang-hsi times, *T'ao hua shan* (The peach blossom fan), by K'ung Shang-jen.²⁵

Interest in the Southern Ming receded markedly in the second decade of the eighteenth century and reached perhaps its lowest point in the Yung-cheng and early Ch'ien-lung reigns. This seems to have been due largely to the disappearance of those who had experienced the conquest years as children, and also to the passing of the K'ang-hsi emperor, whose tolerant policies fell victim to an extremely bitter and treacherous struggle over the succession to his throne. In this atmosphere a Hanlin academician, Tai Ming-shih, was indicted by political enemies for "raving madly" about the Southern Ming in his published writings and was executed for sedition in 1713. The Yung-cheng emperor absolved all those who had suffered implication in this case when he assumed the throne in 1723, but later he created an even larger issue over the relation between old writings sympathetic to the Ming and the current danger of sedition and rebellion. In 1729 a native rebel in Hunan, Tseng Ching, was found to have been inspired partly by the anti-Manchu content of certain writings by a deceased Chekiang littérateur, Lü Liu-liang (1629–83). The Yung-cheng emperor skillfully turned this incident to the advantage of his dynastic house. His pronouncements and

24 The *Nan chiang i shih k'an pen*, published in 1829–30 by Li Yao (rpt. Taipei, 1969), is a complete reworking of a mere 20 *chüan* manuscript of Wen Jui-lin's 56 *ch. Nan chiang i shih* (1711; rpt. Shanghai, 1960 and Tokyo, 1967).

25 Lynn A. Struve, "History and *The peach blossom fan*," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, and Reviews*, 2, No. 1 (January 1980), pp. 55–72.

publications regarding this case constituted the first attempt by the Ch'ing to utilize late Ming writings, some regarding the Southern Ming, for the purpose of expounding Manchu–Ch'ing political ideology.

The little original work that was done on the Southern Ming during these and subsequent decades tended to take the comparatively innocent form of local, discrete commemoratives for those who had died in the Ming–Ch'ing conflict. Ironically, it was through a cumulation of this sort of “social biography” that Ch'üan Tsu-wang (1705–55) made the most important contribution to Southern Ming studies in the eighteenth century. Ch'üan's *Chieh-ch'i t'ing chi*,²⁶ and especially the outer compendium (*wai pien*) to that work, exhibit a thoroughness in textual research that was becoming characteristic of the most respected scholars of his day. Almost alone among major scholars of the time in his fascination with the Ming resistance, Ch'üan served Southern Ming studies best by rescuing from oblivion much historical information about supporters of regent Lu and the resistance in eastern Chekiang.

The persecutions and manipulations of the late K'ang-hsi and Yung-cheng years had been sporadic and had not resulted in the establishment of any clear official policy toward writings on the late or Southern Ming. Such perilous ambiguity could only have discouraged work on those periods. But in the late Ch'ien-lung reign, especially in the 1770s and 1780s, certain large-scale projects were undertaken which, in carrot-and-stick fashion, went far to remove ambiguity in this regard.

First, the court sought to disseminate an imperially sanctioned interpretation of Southern Ming events that accorded great dignity to those who had died for their state on the Ming side, but that made clear that the demise of the Ming (and the compensatory rescue of the Chinese people by the Ch'ing) was a foregone matter. Indeed, the very hopelessness of the late Ming moral and governmental conditions had made the strivings of the martyrs even more admirable and poignant. The end of the Ming dynasty was set at the fall of the Hung-kuang court, and the subsequent Southern Ming courts were allowed historicity but not legitimacy.

Second, and even more ambitious, was the Ch'ien-lung emperor's attempt to uplift the quality of literature in his realm, on one hand by having the best books collected and recopied for a stupendous *Ssu k'u ch'üan shu* (Complete corpus in four treasuries), and on the other, by simultaneously searching out and having destroyed or altered various kinds of writing

26 For a thorough study of a rare manuscript of this work, see Wang Pao-hsien, “Chi Chung yang yen chiu yüan li shih yü yen yen chiu so ts'ang 'Chieh-ch'i t'ing chi' p'ing chiao pen,” *T'u shu kuan hsüeh pao*, 3 (July 1961), pp. 119–78.

that were considered undesirable. The latter category naturally included historical works that reflected unfavorably on the Manchus or their Jurchen ancestors, or that otherwise did not accord with the Ch'ien-lung interpretation of the Southern Ming.²⁷

The degree to which Southern Ming materials were altered, in small or large ways, as a result of the Ch'ien-lung prohibitions is inestimable. But the effect on the overall survival of works from the early Ch'ing was negligible, probably because works that already had weathered a century and a half of the hazards all premodern texts faced—fire, flood, worms, poverty, and neglect—were not likely to have been eradicated from such a literature-rich culture by the unevenly enforced prohibitions of a few years (maximally, 1774–88). Rather, the effects of Ch'ien-lung policies on Southern Ming studies seem to have been more positive than negative. The *Four treasures* project greatly stimulated interest in all kinds of old texts. Furthermore, scholars who were inclined to study the Southern Ming tended to be gratified by the broad spirit of Ch'ien-lung sanctions rather than cowed by the narrow letter of the prohibitions.

In any case, the decades directly following the Ch'ien-lung reign exhibited a marked revival of interest in the Southern Ming among men who had been reared in an intellectual atmosphere that valued the collection, comparison, collation, and recension of problematical old texts. The first comprehensive textual research on Southern Ming materials was done by a scholar of late Ch'ien-lung and Chia-ch'ing times, Yang Feng-pao (1754–1816), and he was succeeded in such work by the nineteenth-century bibliophiles Li Tz'u-ming (1830–94) and Fu I-li (1826–98).²⁸ Moreover, the early nineteenth century generated the first wave of published collectanea (*ts'ung-shu*) that featured or exclusively contained late Ming and Southern Ming works, as well as the first publications of the collected works of several outstanding Southern Ming martyrs. This activity bore fruit in the production of a great summation of Ch'ing knowledge about the Southern Ming, the *Hsiao t'ien chi nien fu k'ao* by Hsü Tzu (1810–62).

Through such work, textual ground was prepared for the last decades of Ch'ing rule, when interest in the Southern Ming took a decidedly anti-Ch'ing, anti-Manchu, antiforeign cast. Such fervid revolutionaries as Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (1873–1929), Chang Ping-lin (1868–1936), and Liu Shih-p'ei (1884–1919) then pointed to the Southern Ming to remind their compa-

27 For an index to the works banned, see Wu Che-fu, *Ch'ing tai chin hui shu mu yen chiu* (Taipei, 1969).

28 See Yang Feng-pao, *Ch'iu shih chi* (Hu-ch'eng, Chekiang, 1885), ch. 2–3; Li Tz'u-ming, *Yüeh-man t'ang tu shu chi* (Late Ch'ing [1644–1911] period; rpt. Taipei, 1961), ch. 3; and Fu I-li, *Hua-yen nien shih t'i pa* (Yü-hang, 1909; rpt. No. 8 of *Shu mu san pien*, Taipei, 1969), ch. 2.

trials that the Ch'ing was a barbarian conquest dynasty and that the Han Chinese of the seventeenth century had shown a spirit for resistance against foreign intruders which well could be emulated in the present. Certain figures who had participated in and written about the Ming resistance became lionized, and a second wave arose in the publication of Southern Ming collectanea and the collected works of Ming loyalists.

Naturally, enthusiasm for resurrecting this literature further increased after the downfall of the Ch'ing dynasty in 1911–12, as the new republic took its first unsteady steps in constant fear of intervention by the Western powers. Such collectanea as the trenchantly titled *T'ung shih* (Histories of pain) virtually were in press as the dynasty toppled. Several others followed, which collectively include many works previously banned by the Ch'ing. In the 1930s and 1940s, however, the primary motivation for promoting knowledge of the Southern Ming took a new turn, as stories of that era were employed by such scholar-publicists as Liu Ya-tzu to fan nationalistic feelings of resistance against the Japanese.

This sudden surge of popular interest in Southern Ming works and the almost frenzied publication of all manner of manuscripts—often with little or no attempt to verify authorship, authenticity, or quality—soon elicited bibliographic studies by two outstanding patriot scholars. Hsieh Kuo-chen's exhaustive *Wan Ming shih chi k'ao*²⁹ and Chu Hsi-tsu's more selective *Ming chi shih liao t'i pa* remain our best modern guides to late Ming and Southern Ming materials.

After the success of the Communist revolution in mainland China and the consequent movement of the Nationalist government to Taiwan in 1949, the nature of Chinese interest in the Southern Ming diverged markedly. In Taiwan, people who had fled from the mainland looked for historical analogy to the saga of the maritime resistance. The native Taiwanese, having recently been released from Japanese colonial control, found in Cheng Ch'eng-kung not only a great folk hero to reinforce their sense of Chinese ethnic identity, but also a symbol of uncompromising resistance against domination by force from the mainland. In both social sectors, the southeastern maritime theater loomed large in conceptions of the history of the Southern Ming. Concomitant with this interest was publication of by far the largest and most important collectanea in Southern Ming studies, the *T'ai-wan wen hsien ts'ung k'an* (1957–) by the Economic Research Office of the Bank of Taiwan.³⁰

29 Hsieh's preface to his work is a good introduction to the study of the late Ming. Also see his article, "Ming Ch'ing shih liao yen chiu," *Chin-ling hsüeh pao*, 3, No. 2 (November 1933), pp. 311–29.

30 A helpful index to this series has been published. See Li Yung-lin and Lin Jui-mei, comp., "T'ai-wan wen hsien ts'ung k'an mu lu chi tso che so yin," *Shih chi k'an k'ao*, 6 (June 1978), pp. 118–48.

In mainland China, on the other hand, the influence of the thought of Marx, Lenin, and Mao Tse-tung led historians to emphasize the “feudal” injustices that underlay the widespread sociopolitical unrest of late Ming times. Elements which theretofore had been disparaged as bandits became admired as “peasant rebels” and were credited with being the most progressive social force of that time. (In this vein, most helpful to students of Southern Ming conditions is Hsieh Kuo-chen’s compilation, *Ch’ing ch’u nung min ch’i i tzu liao chi lu.*) Thus, the true story of the Southern Ming tended to become that of the surviving portions of the late Ming rebel armies. They were judged to have been correct in attacking the “landlord-bureaucratic class” and in overturning “corrupt, feudal” Ming government before the Manchus entered North China; and after that point they were also seen as correct in holding the “national struggle” paramount and joining with the Southern Ming regimes to oppose the “foreign enemy.”

This view, however, entailed numerous interpretational difficulties. Various “contradictions,” so to speak, are best seen in criticisms of the only general history of the Southern Ming yet published in Chinese in the twentieth century, Hsieh Kuo-chen’s *Nan-Ming shih lüeh*, and in the lengthy controversy over evaluating Shih K’o-fa.³¹ Arguments became especially heated during the years of the Cultural Revolution and the so-called Gang of Four in the 1960s and the 1970s. Having encountered so many interpretational problems in dealing with the Southern Ming, scholars in mainland China by 1980 had turned to the work of locating and preparing for publication new textual and documentary evidence to serve a more gradual, conceptually tentative approach to the history of the mid-seventeenth century.

31 The main arguments in this controversy can be seen in the *Shih K’o-fa p’ing chia wen t’i hui pien* (Hong Kong, 1968), a collection of articles selected by Liu Hui and others from 1966 issues of the *Wen hui pao*.

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