

RESEARCH MANUAL SERIES

Ta-tuan Ch'en and Frederick W. Mote
Co-editors

A RESEARCH MANUAL FOR MING HISTORY

by

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I.A: MING SHIH, ch. 163, lieh-chuan 51: Li Shih-mien et al.

(Text #1)(2)

Li Shih-mien, name (*ming*) Mao, went by his courtesy name (*tzu*), (3)

- (2) The edition reproduced here is the newly punctuated and edited *Ming shih* (hereafter MS) in the *Twenty-four Histories*, Peking; the MS appeared in 28 volumes, paginated continuously, in 1974. This edition of the *Twenty-five Histories* has been reprinted (without credits) in Taiwan. It is rapidly becoming accepted as a standard edition for scholarly reference. All references here to any of the twenty-four dynastic histories will be to this edition. Before it appeared, the edition of the *Twenty-four Histories* most widely accepted as standard was the *Po-na pen* 百衲本 published by the Commercial Press, Shanghai, 1936. That is a facsimile of the Palace edition, meaning the *Wu-ying Tien* 武英殿原刊本 original edition of 1739, the same edition that the new Chung-hua edition adopts as the basis for its typeset text. In the case of the MS, unlike that for some earlier dynastic histories, the existence of a well-printed first edition eliminates the problem of determining an authoritative text. Yet typographical and other minor errors exist, as noted in the *Chiao k'an chi* 校勘記 (Record of Textual Emendations) attached to each *chüan* in this and one other modern edition (i.e., the edition punctuated and critically edited at the National Defense Research Institute 國防研究院, Taipei, 1962, in six volumes).
- (3) lit.: *yi tzu hsing*; This shows that "Shih-mien" was Li's courtesy name, not his original formal name, or *ming*. A variety of personal reasons could cause a person to avoid his *ming* and be publicly known by his *tzu*, and unless it was to avoid an imperial taboo, these reasons seldom are recorded.
- (4) An-fu hsien in Chi-an Prefecture is modern An-fu hsien in central-western Kiangsi. Kiangsi officials dominated the Ming Court in the fifteenth century; see James Parsons, "The Ming Dynasty Bureaucracy: Aspects of Background Forces," in Charles O. Hucker, *Chinese Government in Ming Times: Seven Studies*, pp. 175-227. This alerts us to be aware of Li's relations with other members of the "Kiangsi clique" then and subsequently important at the court. Fifty-seven of 130 bachelors selected

and was a native of An-fu.(4) In his teens,(5) during the cold of winter he would wrap his feet in a blanket(6) and place them in a wooden tub [to keep warm], while continuing to chant his lessons(7) without ceasing. He succeeded in the *chin-shih* examination of the second year of the Yung-lo reign [1404].(8) He was selected as Hanlin bachelor(9) and posted for further studies at the Wen-yüan

from the 1404 *chin-shih* list were from Kiangsi, including the top ten names!

- (5) The phrase "*ch'eng t'ung*" is variously defined as "over 8 *sui* or "over fifteen *sui*; the latter, derived from commentary on the *Li Chi*, probably applies here.
- (6) "*ch'in*" or "bedcovers;" here it probably refers to a cotton-padded comforter.
- (7) i.e., to read aloud the classical texts he was set to memorize, in a formalized chanting manner, or "to study."
- (8) He ranked 34th on the third list, or number 130 overall out of 470 who achieved the *chin-shih* that year. See Chu Pao-chiung 朱保炯 and Hsieh P'ei-lin 謝沛林, compilers 編, *Ming Ch'ing chin shih t'i ming pei lu so yin* 明清進士題名碑錄索引, 3 volumes, Shanghai, 1980, p. 2427.
- (9) Here, as elsewhere unless otherwise noted, translations of terms and official titles follow Hucker, "Government Organization." (See list of abbreviations for full citation.) The system of Hanlin bachelors, a Ming innovation, was still taking form in 1404; for a brief account of the institution and lists of those selected in each examination year see Lien-che Tu Fang (Tu Lien-che) 房杜聯誌, "Ming ch'ao kuan hsüan lu 明朝館選錄," *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, new series V, no. 2, December, 1966, pp. 30-119, esp. pages 31-33 and 45. Li was one of the initial group of 28 new *chin-shih* from the 1404 examination selected early in 1405 on imperial command by Hsieh Chin, at that time the emperor's favorite scholar advisor and like Li, a Kiangsi native, for assignment to further study and eventual careers at court. Other groups were added throughout 1405, to a total of about 130, forming the core of what was to become a super elite of merit within the Ming bureaucracy. Cf. *MS*, ch. 70, p. 1695 and 1700; *ch.*

Hall; he participated in the compilation of the *Veritable Record* of the reign of T'ai-tsu.(10) He was then appointed secretary in the Ministry of Justice. He again participated in the rewriting of the *Veritable Record*.(11) When that book was completed, he was transferred to the post of reader-in-waiting in the Hanlin Academy.

73, p. 1788.

- (10) This appears to refer to the second of the two Yung-lo period revisions of the *T'ai-tsu shih lu* (completed 1418), the original of which had been completed in 1399 under the Chienwen emperor. See W. Franke, *Sources*, pp. 8-23, and 1.1.1, p. 30. The first revision had been hastily issued in 1403, before Li received his *chin-shih* degree.
- (11) This seems to say that Li had "participated in" (*yü* 與) the compilation of the first Yung-lo revision of the *Shih lu*, issued in 1403 (but not referred to as a revision at that time, since the usurper did not acknowledge the existence of the first version of 1399, compiled under his predecessor) and then again participated in the second revision that appeared only in 1418. But that is not possible, since the first of those had appeared in 1403 before Li was appointed at court. It seems more plausible to assume that Li was assigned to the commission set up in 1411 to prepare the second revision, served with it, then was appointed to the low-ranking (6a) post of secretary in the Ministry of Justice, and after a period of service there, rejoined the *Shih lu* commission sometime before its new revision was presented to the throne in 1418, and the commission disbanded. But this is speculation, forced upon us by the lack of precision in the wording of *MS* at this point. For background, see Wu Han 吳晗, "Chi Ming Shih lu" 記明史錄 reprinted in his *Tu shih cha chi* 讀史劄記 (Peking, 1957, esp. pp. 186-196).

Some other biographies (e.g. *Ming shu*, Shanghai, Commercial Press, 1937, ch. 121, p. 2415) state that Li left office to observe mourning after being assigned to the *Shih lu* commission, then returned to hold the Ministry of Justice position, and subsequently again was summoned to assist in the *Shih lu* compilation.

He was by temperament resolute and outspoken, warm-heartedly genuine(12) in looking upon the whole world as his responsibility.(13) In the nineteenth year [of the Yung-lo reign, 1421] the three palaces burned;(14) the emperor issued an edict calling for frank criticism.(15) Li submitted a memorial which, section by section,(16) dealt with fifteen current concerns. Ch'eng-tsu(17) had already determined that he would make Peking the

(12) *k'ai-jan*, an "untranslatable" word; here it is somewhat extended in translation to mean both "emotionally engaged" and "sincere."

(13) "*yi t'ien-hsia wei chi jen*," commonly used to describe persons of resolute moral responsibility. The *locus classicus* appears to be *San Kuo Chih* 三國志, *Wei Shu (chih)* 魏書(志), "Biography of Yang Fu" 楊阜傳 (p. 708); this builds on *Analects VIII/7/1-2*.

(14) On 9 May 1421 the three main audience halls of the newly completed Peking Palace, to which the emperor was preparing to move from Nanking, burned in a fire of unexplained origins. Cf. *MS 7*, p. 100.

(15) Calling for criticism was a conventional response to so inauspicious an event as the fire that destroyed the new palace; cf. the sequence of events, including extensive quotation of Li's remonstrance, as recorded in *Kuo ch'üeh*, pp. 1179-81, where Li is praised as the most incisive of all the remonstrators on that occasion.

(16) *t'iao*; here the word means "subdivisions" or "topics," and refers to the manner of presenting the content of the remonstrance memorial.

(17) The *MS* correctly (from the point of view of Ch'ing period historians) uses the Yung-lo emperor's posthumous honorific title "Ch'eng-tsu" 成祖 to which he was elevated only in 1538; on his death in 1424 he had been awarded the posthumous title of T'ai-tsung. In either case, the use of a posthumous title for a living emperor is an anachronism demanded by Chinese historiographical and ritual convention. See also note #39, below, for more on this point.

capital,(18) and just at that time was summoning people to come there from afar. Thus Li Shih-mien's saying that the construction work was wrong, and that it was not appropriate to have people from distant states who had come to offer tribute residing in clusters in the capital, ran afoul of the emperor's wishes. After some time, the emperor went on to read the other issues discussed there, most of which hit squarely(19) on current defects. He threw it to the floor, then repeatedly picked it up to examine it again, and in the end implemented many of its proposals. Subsequently, Li was slandered(20) and sent to prison. After more than a year he gained his release, and on the recommendation of Yang Jung was restored to his official position.(21) In the first year of the Hung-hsi reign -----

(18) *tu*, here a verb.

(19) *chung*, modern fourth tone: "to hit (the target)."

(20) "slandered," *pei ch'an*; falsely accused of infractions of the laws or the proprieties. The suggestion is that ambitious politicians knew Li had once aroused the imperial anger and therefore considered him a vulnerable target.

(21) Yang Jung, 1371-1440, was at this time a grand secretary and Hanlin chancellor, high in the emperor's regard. See *DMB* biography by Charles Hucker. The reader should take this as a hint to refer to Yang's biography in *MS* 148, where the "Three Yangs" share a chapter. What does the reader find there? The account of Yang's life makes it clear that he was Li's direct superior at a number of points in Li's career. Yang Jung's behavior during the fire strengthened the emperor's confidence in him; he also responded, but not critically, to the request for "frank criticism." *MS* credits Yang with having saved the life of Li Shih-mien on a subsequent occasion when Li aroused an emperor's wrath.

There exists a painting by Hsieh Huan, executed in 1437 in Yang Jung's garden and entitled, "A Literary Gathering in the

period [1425] Li again submitted a memorial discussing certain matters.(22) Emperor Jen-*tsung*, in intense rage, summoned Li to appear before him in an informal audience chamber; Li answered him without yielding. The emperor ordered his military attendants to beat him with the "golden gourd,"(23) breaking three ribs; he was dragged away, close to death. On the following day he was reassigned [investigating] censor for the circuit [i.e. province] of Chiao-chih.(24) He was commanded to adjudicate one trial and

Apricot Garden" (Hsing-yüan ya-chi t'u). It includes Li Shih-mien among the eight eminent court figures depicted there. This painting exists in two known versions. One is in a private collection in the U.S., and is discussed by James Cahill in *Parting at the shore*, pp. 24-25, and page 257, note 7. A detail of it is reproduced there as color plate 2. The other version, held by the Chen-chiang Museum in China, has been published in *Wen wu*, 1963/4, with a brief article by Lu Chiu-kao, "Hsieh T'ing-hsun hsing-yüan ya-chi t'u-chüan." Princeton art historian Matthew Kercher brought this to our attention. Yang Jung's noted garden in the suburbs of Peking is mentioned in his biography by Charles Hucker in *DMB*, pp. 1519-22.

(22) the term "*yen shih*" suggests criticism, and the vagueness about his criticism justifies the interpolation of "certain." The *MS* authors avoid specific detail because it would reflect badly on the character of the Jen-*tsung* emperor. This has been analyzed by Charles Hucker in his *DMB* biographies of Li (pp. 865-67) and the emperor, Chu Kao-chih (p. 339) and at greater length in his *Censorial System*, esp. p. 13.

(23) A mace-like weapon.

(24) The Yung-lo emperor attempted to annex Annam, proclaiming it the Province of Chiao-chih in 1407. Under the persuasion of the "peace party" led by Yang Jung and others, China withdrew from Annam, abandoning the province of Chiao-chih in 1427. Assignment to provincial government there was looked upon as hardship.

submit one memorial each day.(25) After three memorials had been submitted, he was then committed to the prison of the Palace Guard.(26) A certain(27) battalion commander of the Palace Guard had been befriended by Li; this battalion commander now came to the prison, tears in his eyes, and secretly summoned a physician who treated him with a medicine, "dragon's blood," from abroad,(28) thus enabling him not to die. When the emperor Jen-tsung was close to death, he said to Hsia Yüan-chi,(29) "Li humiliated me before the court." Having so spoken, he suddenly fell into a rage; Hsia spoke soothingly to dispel his anger. That evening [29 May 1425]

(25) Hucker calls this form of Li's punishment "perhaps as an ironic gesture," suggesting that if Li was to be so outspoken he should serve in office as a "speaking" (i.e. remonstrating) official, i.e. a censor.

(26) That is, the "ironic punishment" was suspended, after one day according to other sources; he was not intended to go to Annam (see Charles Hucker, "Governmental organization of the Ming dynasty," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 21 [1958], p. 49). That might have been preferable to incarceration in the notorious prison of the imperial secret service, on which there is a vast literature. For an introduction to the topic, see Wu Han 吳晗, "Ming tai ti chin-yi-wei ho tung-hsi ch'ang" 明代的錦衣衛和東西廠 in his *Teng-hsia chi* 燈下集 (1961), pp. 83-93.

(27) *mou*, an unnamed person.

(28) *Hsüeh-chieh*, literally, "congealed blood," the inspissated juice of the dragon tree, *dracaena draco*, a red sap that looks like blood, and reputed to be effective in treating wounds.

(29) See his biography by Wang Gungwu in *DMB* (pp. 531-34), and in *MS 149*. The latter does not name Li Shih-mien, who had been Hsia's subordinate on the *T'ai-tsu shih lu* commission, but it mentions Hsia's strenuous efforts on several occasions to prevent the imperial wrath from harming honest officials who for good reasons had opposed imperial policy.

the emperor died.

More than one year after the accession of emperor Hsüan-tsung, someone mentioned to the emperor the circumstances of Li's having antagonized the late emperor. The emperor, in a fit of rage, ordered his attendants: "Have him bound and brought before me. I shall interrogate him in person. I am determined to execute him." Somewhat later he gave another order that commander Wang should at once take him bound to the western market(30) and behead him, without having him brought in [to the court] for audience. Commander Wang departed by the western Tuan Gate,(31) while the previously deputed person who had already brought Li, bound, was entering the court via the eastern Tuan Gate, so they did not meet. The emperor, espying Li from afar, berated him, saying: "You, a mere petty official, dared to offend the late emperor! What did your [remonstrance] memorial say? Quickly, tell me." Li kowtowed, and spoke: "Your servitor said that while in the mourning residence(32) it is not appropriate for the ruler to have contact

(30) *hsi-shih*, the "western market," perhaps the one outside the Hsi-chih Gate. See Map #1 (included in the accompanying Character Texts) for the location of this gate relative to Peking in general.

(31) See Map #2. The phrase "western Tuan Gate" refers to the fact that the gate had multiple passages, which correlated to the directions. The Imperial causeway leading into the Forbidden City and the gates across it were extremely wide. Notice also the considerable distance between the southern part of Peking city, where the prison was located, and the Hsi-chih Gate.

(32) Jen-tsung at that time had been on the throne only a few months, and was supposed to be observing the mourning

with his consorts and female attendants, and that the imperial heir should not be far removed from the emperor's presence."(33) On hearing this, the emperor's countenance became a bit brighter.(34) Then Li slowly reviewed in sequence all the items [in his offending memorial to the late emperor] until they came to the sixth, where he stopped. The emperor commanded that he set the matter forth in full. Li answered: "Your servitor in fear and trembling has difficulty in recalling all in detail." The emperor's mind was even more relieved; he said: "It is of course a matter difficult to speak about, but where is your draft copy?" Li answered: "I burned it."(35) The emperor heaved a sigh of deep relief, and -----

regulations for his father, the Yung-lo emperor. *Liang-an* refers to the ritually prescribed "hut" where the emperor dwelt while in mourning and, by extension, to the mourning period and all its restricted activities, including abstention from sex.

(33) The then "imperial heir" is the emperor now angrily interrogating Li. The latter point, about being "far removed" refers to Li's having urged the late emperor not to keep the heir far away in distant Nanking. Both points were, in the eyes of the late emperor, unwarranted interference into his private affairs (with nuances of immorality in the former point). But the latter could be seen by the present emperor as advice spoken in his interest, in view of the threat that his younger brother, Chu Kao-hsü, might contest the succession, as he in fact did, rebelling in 1426. Yet, the charge about his father consorting with his palace women while in mourning was a potential embarrassment to the son, hence his relief (below) on learning that no incriminating drafts of the offending memorial still survived, and Li had not indulged in loose talk about those matters.

(34) *chi*, "to put aside a measure of one's anger;" but it means, more literally, "clearing after rain," hence, the compromise translation "brighter."

praised Li for his loyalty, pronouncing a full pardon on the spot, and restoring him to the office of [Hanlin] reader-in-waiting. By the time(36) commander Wang returned, after having gone to the prison, Li had already assumed his official cap and belt(37) and was standing at the entrance leading to the imperial dais.(38)

In the fifth year of the Hsüan-te reign period [1430] when the compilation of the *Ch'eng-tsu shih lu*(39) had been completed, Li

(35) It is difficult to capture in English translation the finality conveyed by the final literary "yi," in English translation, hence it is omitted, in want of a good solution. Take this as a challenge: try to construct what the two really said in spoken Chinese.

(36) *pi* here in the meaning of 笏 ;

(37) These two items stand for the complete set of official court dress.

(38) The translation expands on the words "*chieh ch'ien*," literally "in front of the stair (or secluded passageway)," to convey a fuller sense of what is implied. Both *MSK* and *MSLC* have *pi-ch'ien*, "in front of the throne" or "in front of the steps to the throne," which may be preferable, but all editions of *MS* use "*chieh-ch'ien*."

(39) The translation follows the punctuation in the modern *MS* text, taking *Ch'eng-tsu shih lu* to be a book title. That involves a certain inaccuracy, since the *Shih lu* was submitted in 1430 under the title *T'ai-tsung Wen-huang-ti shih lu*. As this was never published until facsimile reproductions appeared in 1940 (Nanking) and 1961-67 (Taipei), we know that the title on some manuscript copies was not changed when the emperor's posthumous title was changed from *T'ai-tsung* to *Ch'eng-tsu* in 1538, and it is known today by the *T'ai-tsung* title (see Franke, *Sources*, p. 30). In any event, the actual title for the work submitted in 1430, and as it existed thereafter, had to be *T'ai-tsung Wen-huang-ti shih lu*; the title that appears here merely displays the 17th and 18th century *MS* compilers' conventional sense of what the book by that time should be called, but it is not consistent in that; cf. reference to "*T'ai-tsung shih lu*" in *MS* 148, p. 4139.

was transferred to the post of Hanlin reader-in-waiting.(40) The emperor, on a visit to the Historiography Bureau, scattered coins as a gift(41) to the group of academicians(42) there. They all stooped to pick up the coins, except Li Shih-mien who alone remained standing upright. The emperor thereupon took all the remaining coins and bestowed them upon Li. In the third year of the Cheng-t'ung reign [1438] when the *Hsüan-tsung shih lu* had been

(40) The implication is that after having been pardoned late in 1426 (Hsüan-tsung ascended the throne on 27 June 1425, and the incident described in the foregoing paragraph is dated only "more than a year" thereafter), Li was assigned to the *Shih lu* commission which had been established in June of 1425, and after that work was completed in 1430 was reassigned to his original post in the Hanlin Academy. But note that although the precise date of Li's pardon cannot be determined from the *MS* and allied works, the *MTC* (p. 808) and *KC* (p. 1309) assign the dramatic encounter with the emperor to the date 17 November 1426 (winter, 10th lunar month, day *wu-yin*). Both are based, of course, on the *Shih lu* entry for that date (*Hsüan-tsung Hsien-huang-ti shih lu*, ch. 2, p. 8a; Taipei edn, p. 585). *MTC* was compiled in the 19th century, and quotes the story as given in *MS*. *KC*, compiled in the 17th century, cites only the blander version of Li's release from prison as given in the *Shih lu*. Hucker (*DMB*, p. 866) states that the full story as reported in *MS* was not known to historians until the 18th century.

(41) *ssu (tz'u)*, to bestow from superior to inferior. The idea of old scholars stooping to gather up coins scattered by their young emperor is not attractive.

To translate *chin-ch'ien* 金錢 literally as "gold coin," would in this case be to over-translate. We know of no minting of coins other than copper cash at any time during the dynasty. (*Chin* in fact can often mean "bronze" or "metal" in general.)

(42) *chu hsüeh-shih*, here in the inclusive sense; i.e. all those Hanlin Academy personnel who at that time were associates in the *Shih-lu* commission.

completed, he was promoted to the rank of academician, given supervision of Academy matters, and concurrently lecturer on the classics.(43) In the sixth year [1441] he succeeded Pei T'ai as chancellor of the National Academy.(44) In the eighth year [1443] he requested permission to retire;(45) that was refused.

(43) *ching-yen kuan*; this post is not mentioned in Hucker, "Governmental Organization." It is an office that had at best an irregular existence in Ming government. The Ch'ing imperially-commissioned work on the history of offices, the *Li tai chih kuan piao* 歷代職官表, ch. 24, in the section on the Ming dynasty, quotes the *Hsü wen hsien t'ung k'ao* 續文獻通考, which states that the office of *ching-yen* was established for the first time in the Ming in 1436; it names Li Shih-mien as one of the initial group of classics lecturers, and gives his title as junior supervisor of instruction to the heir apparent (*shao chan-shih*) and concurrently expositor-in-waiting (*shih-chiang hsüeh-shih*) in the Hanlin Academy. The former carried rank 4-a, and the latter rank 5-a. If correct, this usefully supplements information about Li given in MS 163.

(44) Hucker, "Governmental Organization," p. 38, translates this as "chancellor (*chi-chiu*, literally "libationer") of the National University (Kuo-tzu chien). Here that translation is modified because "university" suggests too broad an educational activity for what went on in the Kuo-tzu chien. The title *chi-chiu* goes back to Warring States times; as an honor annually bestowed on the most eminent scholar of the famous Chi-hsia Academy of the 3rd century B.C. state of Ch'i, it was thrice held by the philosopher Hsün Tzu. See (*Shih-chi* 史記, ch. 74, and Chao Yi 趙翼, *Kai-yü ts'ung k'ao* 陔餘叢考, ch. 26, "Chi-chiu."

(45) *chih-shih*, "at the limits of service;" it usually meant "to retire" at the regulation retirement age, traditionally at age 70 *sui*, which Li, born in 1374, attained in 1443.

(46) *ch'u*, a device to introduce a flashback, frequently employed in historical prose.

(47) *kai-chien*, rebuild, alter, or renovate; the inscription on the

Previously,(46) Li had requested permission to rebuild(47) the National Academy. The emperor(48) commanded Wang Chen(49) to go there to inspect. Li in his treatment of Wang added no special courtesies.(50) Wang harbored resentment, sought any evidence of Li's shortcomings, but obtained none. Li had on one occasion trimmed some side branches from the trees by the Yi-lun Hall.(51) Wang consequently charged Li with having cut down government-owned trees without authorization to do so, for use in his own home.(52)

) stele erected to commemorate the completion of this work in 1444 (cited in note 68 below) makes it clear that this was a complete rebuilding of the Academy on the old site, dating from Yüan times.

(48) The youthful Ying-tsung, the Cheng-t'ung emperor, who had come to the throne before his eighth birthday in 1435. He was sixteen in the year 1443.

(49) The villain of the piece, the chief eunuch (*ssu-li chien t'ai-chien* 司禮監太監), had begun to assert himself following the death of the grand empress dowager Chang, the emperor's grandmother, late in 1442; she had been the last significant restraining influence on Wang Chen's usurpation of powers. See W. Franke's biography in *DMB*, pp. 1347-49, and *MS* 304, pp. 7772-74.

(50) That is, Li treated him simply as a eunuch envoy of the emperor. *MS* 304 tells how Wang forced high officials to kneel before him, and otherwise display unwarranted deference to his actual, but illicit powers. Our hero was having none of that!

(51) The main hall of the National Academy; see ground plan given in Map #4a and the trees depicted there. Note the great size of the Academy by examining Map #4, which, unlike #4a from a Ch'ing gazetteer, is proportional. For the location of the Academy within Peking, see Map #1.

(52) The trumped-up charge apparently was that Li had stolen branches, for firewood? "*Ju chia*," "had taken them into his residence," is expanded slightly in the translation.

Wang obtained an internal imperial order(53) to have Li, together with vice-chancellor Chao Wan and Academy steward Chin Chien, placed in cangues before the entrance gate of the Academy. When the guard officers arrived, Li was seated in the Eastern Hall(54) engaged in correcting the student papers. He calmly called out the various students' grade evaluations and rankings, looking back over his shoulder to his attendant staff as he decided on "A's" and "B's," and saw that these rankings were posted before he would leave. It was just at the hottest time of summer, and for three days the cangues were not taken off. Academy student Li Kuei and others, to the number of more than one thousand, went to the palace walls to beg for a reprieve from their punishment.(55) There was -----

(53) *Ch'ü chung-chih*, "took (i.e. without proper authorization from the boy-emperor) an internal directive," i.e. an imperial command that had not gone through the inner court Secretariat, to be acted upon through executive agencies of the court. This way of bypassing the usual procedures was an abuse of power regularized by eunuchs, notably Wang Chen, and later greatly expanded by Liu Chin and other eunuch dictators of the 16th and early 17th centuries. See the discussion of "*chih ts'ung chung ch'u*" 旨從中出 in Su T'ung-ping 蘇同炳, *Ming tai hsiang ch'üan wen t'i yen chiu* 明代相權問題研究, in his *Ming shih ou pi* 明史偶筆 (Taipei, 1970), esp. pp. 20-25. Cf. also the comment by Ho Ch'iao-yüan 何喬遠 quoted in *KC*, p. 1649.

(54) A part of Yi-lun Hall. Again see Map #4a and compare it with #4. Aside from proportionality, the two are quite close in the arrangement of the buildings. If Li Shih-mien had to be taken from Yi-lun Hall (or perhaps from the Tung-wu depicted in the eastern sector of the Academy) all the way to the main gate, then the long walk itself might have been an emotional event for the students and staff present that day.

(55) Whether to use brackets in this sentence and the next (and throughout), for all English words not precisely matched by a

one person [among the students] called Shih Ta-yung who submitted a memorial saying that he was willing to substitute for Li. The students crowded together at the gate of the court, shouting so that they could be heard all the way into the palace courts. Wang Chen, learning that the students were protesting injustice,(56) feared that it might stir up an incident. Then, when the Office of Transmission submitted Shih Ta-yung's memorial,(57) Wang was overcome by anxiety.(58) An Academy instructor, Li Chi, had appealed for help to the Marquis of Hui-ch'ang, Sun Chung. Sun was the father of the empress dowager.(59) It was Sun Chung's birthday, and the empress dowager sent persons delivering gifts to Sun's residence. Sun attached [to his thank-you reply] a message to the empress dowager, and the empress dowager spoke of the matter to the emperor. Prior to this the emperor had had no knowledge of the matter; he immediately had Li and the others released.

Chinese equivalent is not a matter of precision in translation, so much as one of style, something about which the translator has some latitude in making his choices.

(56) *pu-p'ing*, "resentment aroused by injustice;"

(57) Wang could not easily suppress this, since the Office of Transmission had copied it for the relevant agencies.

(58) *Ts'an* can mean "shame, remorse," something unlikely in Wang Chen, hence this translation.

(59) The empress dowager Sun was the actual mother of the boy emperor, Ying-tsung, hence Sun Chung was his maternal grandfather. Cf. MS 300, "Wai-ch'i lieh-chuan" pp. 7666-67.

Li Chi was not a stickler for discipline, for which Li Shih-mien on occasion had admonished him. Li Chi had not found it possible to accept that whole-heartedly, but nonetheless in his heart he had been moved by Li's words. At this juncture, in spite of everything,(60) Li had gained Li Chi's assistance. Shih Ta-yung was a native of Feng-jun.(61) He was somewhat naive and lacking in refinement, up to this time quite unnoticed in the six departments,(62) but at this time his name and fame(63) now shook the capital city. The following year he passed the provincial examination,(64) and held successive offices leading up to that of secretary of the Ministry of Revenue.(65)

In the ninth year (1444) the emperor inspected the Academy. Li Shih-mien offered a lecture(66) on the *Book of Documents*; both his expression and his thought were limpid and resonant. The emperor

(60) *ching*.

(61) A county of eastern Hopeh, about one hundred miles east of Peking.

(62) The six departments comprising the Academy.

(63) *ming*, both name and fame.

(64) The triennial provincial examinations awarded the *chü-jen* degree, and admitted persons to the *chin-shih* examinations; the implication is that rustic Mr. Shih did not succeed in subsequent *chin-shih*, or metropolitan examinations, despite his moral courage.

(65) *Chu-shih* carried the rank of 6-a, not very exalted!

(66) *chin chiang*, "advanced to lecture;" this was a formula for having the honor of lecturing before the emperor or others of the imperial family.

was pleased, and he bestowed rewards generously. (67) Li repeatedly memorialized requesting retirement; all were refused. But (68) then in the spring of the twelfth year (1447) he succeeded in his request. Court officials and Academy students who attended the farewell feast for him outside the gate of the capital city numbered almost three-thousand, and some even accompanied him as far as the point at which he embarked on the boat, to say their farewells, waiting until the boat departed before they left. (69)

(67) The *Ying-tsung shih lu*, first day of the third lunar month [20 March 1444], (*ch.* 114, pp. 1a-4b; Taipei edn, v. 27, pp. 2287-2294) contains an extraordinarily long and detailed account of this visit which, according to *KC* (p. 1662) was occasioned by the completion of the building of the new Academy, the project that had been initiated by Li more than a year earlier, and begun in the 8th lunar month of 1443, just after Li's release from Wang Chen's cangue. Cf. *KC* p. 1652, 8th lunar month, day *yi-yu*, and p. 1657, 12th lunar month, day *ting-yu*. But, compare the entries #6 and 7 in *MTC*, pp. 944 and 945, on discrepancies in dates, etc. (The *Shih lu* account also includes the text of the stele erected to commemorate this rebuilding of the Academy. The felicitations and responses altogether covered the span of four days.) It is useful to compare the *Shih lu*'s rounded account of what the event signified in the career of the emperor and the life of the state, with what the biographer has extracted from that for his quite different purposes. According to *MSK*, Li had been sick; that he was able to speak clearly under the stress of this situation seems to have been a triumph of the will.

(68) *nai*, indicating both sequence and consequence; here it is translated by the sentence-opening "but then." It would not be unjustified to add "at last" to the translation.

(69) We may speculate that the farewell feast took place outside one of the eastern gates, on a road leading to T'ung-chou, the northern terminus of the Grand Canal, on which Li would have traveled by boat south to the Yangtze, then upriver to the Poyang Lake and south from it on the Kan River to Chi-an, the seat of the prefecture in which his native An-fu is located. Cf. *KC*, pp. 1717, year 1447, 3rd lunar month, day *kuei-wei*,

When the emperor Ying-tsung undertook his northern tour,(70) Li was deeply moved by grief day and night. He dispatched his grandson, Li Chi, to the capital to submit a letter in which he urged the emperor to select generals and train troops, to draw close to superior men and distance himself from petty men, to praise and publicize exemplars of loyalty and morality, to welcome the returning chariots [of the captured Ying-tsung], and to take revenge so as to expunge the humiliation. In the first year of the Ching-t'ai reign period [1450] there was received an imperial edict responding with commendation, but Li had by that time died,(71) in his seventy-seventh year. He was granted the posthumous honorific title Wen-yi ("cultivated and resolute"). In the fifth year of the Ch'eng-hua reign period [1469], on the request of his grandson, Li Yung, his honorific title was changed to Chung-wen ("loyal and cultivated"), and he was granted [the posthumous] office of vice-

for the notice of Li's retirement.

(70) *pei shou*, a euphemism for the military campaign of 1449 that ended disastrously at T'u-mu; See F.W. Mote, "The T'u-mu Incident of 1449." Note the early meaning of "*shou*," from which this usage derives. Li's letter was written to the new Ching-t'ai emperor, on learning that Ying-tsung was a captive of the Mongols, or, euphemistically, was still on his "northern tour of inspection." The advice to the new emperor reflects Li's sense of the captured emperor's deficiencies and mistakes. See *MSL*, "Ying-tsung shih-lu," *ch.* 190, Ching-t'ai 1 (1450), 3rd lunar month, day *kuei-yu*. (Taipei edn., v. 31, p. 3928.)

(71) His death was reported to the court on the day *chia-shen*, the twenty-first day of the fourth lunar month (21 May 1450); the *Shih lu* entry covering that is among the materials presented in the Character Text, as Text #9.

minister of the Ministry of Rites.(72)

Li served as Chancellor for six years; he set forth four watch words:(73) thoroughness in study, dedication, sincerity, uprightness; in instruction and in exhortation he was intensely rigorous. He venerated integrity and the sense of shame, discouraged unprincipled pursuit of advancement, drew the line between the worthy and the unworthy,(74) and made manifest [the principles of] persuasion and punishment. When among the students there were some too poor to pay for weddings and funerals, he skimped on his food allowance in order to contribute to their support.(75) By his overseeing students and urging them to study, their lamps stayed lighted until the dawn, and the sound of chanting their texts aloud was never broken. Talent emerged more abundantly than in past times.

(72) A vice-ministership carried rank 3-a, considerably higher than the rank 4-b he had attained as chancellor of the National Academy. This advanced Li, if only posthumously, into the level of officialdom that carried honors and privileges for his heirs.

(73) *lieh ... ssu hao*; "listed ... four slogans." Other translations of the four "watchwords" are possible. Unless an essay explaining what Li intended by them can be found, it may not be possible to arrive at a definitive translation of them, especially of the first two, here taken in the sense of: (1) *ko-wu* 格物 or *ko-chih* 格致; and (2) *chih-li* 致力. But, the first might with equal plausibility be taken in the sense of *ko-hsin* 格心, "to correct the heart-mind."

(74) 否 here read *p'i*, "evil," the opposite of *hsien*.

(75) *shan-chi*, to contribute or maintain; supply and support.

At the beginning of the dynasty, (76) T'ai-tsu appointed Sung Ne to be the chancellor; (77) he enjoyed the utmost fame. After him, Chang Hsien-tsung of Ning-hua (78) clearly articulated the Academy regulations; people compared him with Sung Ne. Also, Hu Yen in the reign of Ch'eng-tsu was accorded special praise as a model teacher. (79) Yet, as one for the extent of whose reputation for forthrightness and moral principles all scholar officialdom placed trust, none can be compared to Li Shih-mien. (80) The Duke of Ying-

(76) *shih*, "the beginning," functions like *ch'u* 初; These words introduce flashbacks, in this case either the beginning of the Ming dynasty or the earliest phase of the history of the Ming National Academy; my translation opts for the former.

(77) The exemplar of Academy chancellorship for all Ming times, Sung Ne was a famous figure of the Hung-wu era. See his biography in *MS* 137, pp. 3952-53. He was not the first chancellor, however, following after Hsü Ts'un-jen, and Wei Kuan, the latter mentioned in the *tsan*, or "encomium" to *MS* 163 (included in Text #1). Sung was appointed to the chancellorship in 1383, and died in office at 80 *sui* in 1390. He was famous for compiling and enforcing the strict regulations demanded by the Ming founder, but simultaneously establishing a genuine respect for learning. See Wu Han 吳晗, in his "Ming *ch'u* ti hsüeh hsiao" 明初的學校 (1948), reprinted *Tu shih cha chi* 讀史劄記 (1961), pp. 317-341, and the important bibliography cited there. The entire article is included in the Character Text as Text # 16.

(78) Chang has no *MS* biography; he died in 1409 after serving in various offices, but was chancellor at the end of the Hung-wu period. See his biography in *Kuo ch'ao hsien cheng lu* 國朝獻徵錄, ch. 103, p. 84. *MS* is inconsistent here in naming Chang's native place (Ning-hua in Fukien) but not naming that of Sung Ne and others. Why?

(79) See Hu's biography by Hok-lam Chan in *DMB*, p. 641-43.

(80) or "none surpassed Li Shih-mien;" This sentence is more awkward in English than in Chinese.

kuo, Chang Fu, together with many of the nobility,(81) submitted a memorial stating that they would be happy to accompany the emperor in a visit to the National Academy to attend lectures. The emperor ordered that they should go there on the third day of the third lunar month.(82) Li Shih-mien ascended to the instructor's seat, and the students all stood ranked by seniority, while he lectured on one passage from each of the Five Classics. At the conclusion wine and food were set out. The assembled nobles all deferred,(83) saying: "In this place of instruction it is more appropriate that we take our seats within the ranks of the students." Only Chang Fu

(81) *chu hou po*, "the various marquises and earls;" here it is translated in a more inclusive sense to refer to the nobility of merit at the court of Ying-tsung. Chang Fu's biographies do not mention this event, but speak of his growing resentment of Wang Chen in the 1440's. This proposal may be seen as a way of derogating Wang, after the release of Li Shih-mien, on the emperor's visit to the Academy on the first of the 3rd lunar month of 1444, by honoring and identifying with those who shared Chang's hatred for Wang Chen. Chang Fu was the most senior and most respected noble of the realm at this time; he died at T'u-mu, in 1449.

(82) *MTC*, p. 955-56, item #8, speculates about Chang Fu's proposal, concluding that it must refer to the ceremonial visit of the emperor to the Academy on the first, or the third, day of the 3rd lunar month in 1444, even though the account of what Li and others did on this occasion does not precisely agree with the *Shih lu* account. It may be considered poor editing (in the generally well-edited *MS*) that this item appears here without date, and that the reader is not told it is a further comment on the account of the imperial visit narrated above. Had the emperor departed, leaving the nobles to eat with the Academy personnel?

(83) Deferred, that is, to the instructors of the Academy instead of taking the places of honor at the tables. This ostentatiously contrasts with Wang Chen's behavior.

himself was regarded as Li's equal. (84) The students sang the "Luming Ode." (85) Hosts and guests were graciously harmonious, and did not take their leave and disperse until the end of the day. People all praised it as a great event of a splendid era. (86)

I.B: *Comments on the MING SHIH KAO, ch. 143*

(Text #2)

The *Ming shih kao* (MSK) 明史稿 is the penultimate product in the long process of official compilation of a history of the Ming dynasty that was commenced in 1645 with the creation of a Ming History Office (Ming-shih kuan) 明史館. MSK was submitted in 1723, under the general editorship of Wang Hung-hsü, as a "draft" awaiting imperial approval in order to become the official dynastic

(84) *Yü k'ang li*, "to treat as an equal," "to dispense with proprieties" that would apply to superior and inferior; that is to say, Li was honored, in this setting, as the equal of the senior noble of the realm.

(85) *Odes*, "Minor Odes of the Kingdom," Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. IV, *The She King*, p. 245. Legge describes this ode as follows: "A festal ode, sung at entertainments of the king's ministers, and guests from the feudal states."

(86) Note that in the "Encomium" (*tsan*) appended to ch. 163, the MS places Li Shih-mien in the company of other chancellors of the National Academy, and evaluates his place in history almost exclusively in that context, even though that position occupied only the final six years of his official career. Why? As an exercise, translate the *tsan* at the end of MS 163. There the historian-compilers express their evaluation of Li and Ch'en Ching-tsung in the context of the chancellorship of the two National Academies (Nanking and Peking) up to this point in Ming history. (Ch'en's biography also appears in this chapter.)