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.
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 (pian), 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 (pien-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)

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. 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.

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 Yuan and earlier dynasties. The first work of this kind was the Official history of the Yuan 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 gaiketsu (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 Yuan dynasty (Li tai ming ch'ien 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, Yuan, and early Ming history that otherwise would have been completely lost. These include materials on the postal organization of the Yuan period from the Ching shih ta tien of 1331 and other works that permit a reconstruction of the Yuan 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

---

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—229, 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) or the *Hsien chang lu* (1.3.1) by Hsieh 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. 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. 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 tuan* 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*.

---

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), 11, 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.

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 chwi 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

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 Yuan 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 hsii, ed. T'ao 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'ang shu chi ch'eng, Taipei, 1986).


\(^{17}\) 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.\(^9\) 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, Hsu 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 hsueh 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 Yuan periods, Sung Yuán 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).

---

20 DMB, p. 811. 21 ECCP, pp. 351-54.
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 shib yung pien (6.6.4) of 1604 by Feng Ying-ching, and many others. Ching-shib 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-
portunial 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, 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-wu 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."

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, 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. Chiao Hung's catalogue of works written by Ming authors up to his time, Kuo shih ching chi chib (1590), reveals his wide reading and bibliographic competence, and it ranks among the most important bibliographic works of the period. It was later partly superseded by Huang Yü-chi's 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


26 DMB, pp. 1531–35.


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**

(KUO-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.\(^3^0\) 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.\(^3^1\)

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-chiu 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.\(^3^2\) 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 Yuan-chang's formal accession to the throne, first- and second-class compilers (hsiu-chuan, tien-pu, and pien-hsiu) were appointed.\(^3^3\) 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.\(^3^4\) These officials continued

---

\(^3^0\) Otto Franke, "Der Ursprung der chinesischen Geschichtsschreibung," Sitzungsberichte der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften [Berlin], Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, 23 (1925), pp. 276–309.


\(^3^4\) Chai Shan, comp., Chu ssu chib chang (1380; rpt. Vols. 43–50 of Hsiüan-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. 344 (p. 79), and 10, pp. 8a–10a (pp. 196–97); Hucker, "Governmental organization of the Ming dynasty," p. 40.
HISTORICAL WRITING DURING THE MING

737
to be appointed throughout the Ming period, but their numbers varied according to the requirements of the compilations under preparation. Thus, for example, in 1529 the number of second-class compilers and of correctors was fixed at six each. Sometimes, however, there were many more. First-class graduates in the metropolitan examinations (i-chia chin-shib) were often appointed as first-class compilers, second-class graduates (erh-chia chin-shib) as second-class compilers and correctors.

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.

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 Yuan-chang had set up the office of supervising secretary for keeping audience records (ch'i-chü chu chi-shib chung). 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 Yuan-chang initially attached to it.

The importance of this office is also evidenced by the rather high rank of 5a which was given to its incumbents in 1367. The same rank was held at that time by the academicians (hsiieh-shib) 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. Some years later, this institution was abolished, probably prior to 1393, since it is not mentioned in the government statutes (chu-ssu chib-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 shib lu, 14, p. 181. On the audience records of the Ming period, see the relevant article by Imanishi Shunji, "Minki sandai kikyo chuko," in Mindai Man-Mö shi kenkyü, ed. Tamura Jitsuji (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 shib lu, 27, p. 412. 42 MSL, T'ai-tsu shib 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 shih wen pien.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—ga.
44 The memorial is dated 7 April 1575. As recently discovered by Li Cho-jan [see “Chiao Hung chih shih hsüeh ssu hsiang,” Shu 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’ai-p’ing shih wen pien (1638; rpt. Taipei, 1964), 373, pp. 1a-5b (see below, p. 758). 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’uang shu, Taipei, 1968), 4, pp. 55-56. For less complete texts, see MSL, Shen-t’ung shih lu, 35, pp. 825-31; Sun Ch’eng-te, Ch’ing 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 kikyo chuko,” 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'i fang in the east and the Chih-ch'i 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; rpr. 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, 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). 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).

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. A number of fragmentary copies of audience records from the Wan-li, Tai-ch'ang, and T'ien-ch'i periods have been pre-

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.
50 Shen Te-fu, (Wan-li) yeh hua pien (1619; rpt. 1869), 8, pp. 25b–26a.
served in several libraries in China and Japan. 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*).

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*, grand secretaries were to serve as supervisors of compilation (*tsung-ts'ai*) and the academicians of the Hanlin Academy (*Han-lin hsueh-shih*) as vice-supervisors of compilation (*fu tsung-ts'ai*). They were appointed by imperial order (*ch'in-ming*) and had to fix the regulations for the compilation and to check the

---


53 *TMHT*, 221, pp. 3b–4a (p. 2938).
drafts prepared by the compiling officers (tsuan-hsiu kuan) 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. 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. Of the two vice-supervisors (ifu tsung-ts'ai), one was a Hanlin chancellor (5a) and the other an expositor-in-waiting (shih-chiang hsiieh-shih, 5b). Of the forty compiling officers (tsuan-hsiu), eight were readers-in-waiting (shib-chiang hsüeh-shib, 5b). Of the forty compiling officers (tsuan-hsiu), eight were readers-in-waiting (shib-tu, 6a), three were first-class compilers (hsiu-chuan, 6b), twenty-one were second-class compilers (pien-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 pien-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 kenkyu."
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 regis-
trars in the Court of State Ceremonial (Hung-lu ssu chu-pu, 8b), twelve ushers
(hsi-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 indi-
cates 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 offi-
cers 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 contro-
versies 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-tsuan), 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 hsiün)\(^59\) 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-shib 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 Yu Ju-chi, *Li pu chib kao* (1602; rpt. cases 73–77 of *Ssu-k' u ch' uan shu chen pen ch'en chu chi*, Shanghai, 1933), 22, pp. 16a–21a; and MSL, *Shih-tung shib lu*, pp. 4004–06.

\(^{59}\) On the precious injunctions, see below p. 745.


\(^{61}\) *Li pu chib kao*, 39, pp. 10a–11a; 37, pp. 5b–6a.
had participated in the compilation had to be present. 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 Chun (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. 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. 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 Chun 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. 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." 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.

62 See the various quotations by Wu Han, Tu shib 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 TMHT 221, p. 4a (p. 2938); Sun Ch'eng-tse, Ch'en 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 Yuan T'ung-li, "Huang shih ch' eng chi," Tu thu kuan hsüeh chi k'un, 2, No. 3 (September 1928), pp. 443—44; and Imanishi Shun'ı and Ono Shōnen, "Bungenkaku, Jukōden, Kōshisei o miru no ki," Tōyō shi kempyō, 5, No. 1 (1939), pp. 78—79 and 81—82. Photographs of the Huang-shih ch' eng are also in Chuan Kuo-jui, ed., (Kw kung po wu yun wen hiten kuan hsien ti'un) Ch'ing tai shih lu isung 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 Yuan dynasty was compiled by a history bureau that was housed in a Buddhist temple at Nanking. 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. But when in 1597 a fire in the palace destroyed all drafts and materials, the project was suspended and apparently never taken up again. 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). 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. 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 (1.1.14) included in the printed editions was a private compilation. It is not necessary to discuss the thirteen shih-lu individually here, since this has

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 kenkyû," pp. 1–133.
72 W. Franke, An Introduction, p. 23.
been done elsewhere. 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'e (1940 edition) or 133 volumes (1963 edition).

In the arrangement of the materials, the veritable records follow the annalistic pattern (pien-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

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 chiian 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 chiian 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 deposed 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 Yii Ch'ien (1398–1457) 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. Yii 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, 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
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. 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. 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. 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), 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-hsiuh, Ssu ch'ao ta cheng lu (2.8.18) (early seventeenth century; rpt. No. 46 of Kuo hsüeh wen k'u, Peking, 1937), pp. 38–42.
78 DMB, pp. 233–34.
79 Shen Te-fu, "Pu-i," (Wan-li) yeh hua pien (1619; rpt. 1959), 1, p. 801.
80 ECCP, pp. 182–85; Chu I-tsun, "Shu liang ch'ao ts'ung hsii 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.  

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), Cheng Hsiao (1499–1566), Lang Ying (1487–ca. 1566), Shen Te-fu (1578–1642) and others condemn the Ming shih lu as a whole. The criticism by T’an Ch’ien (1594–1658), 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.

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. Although certain eunuchs were considered “good eunuchs,” on the whole a

---

81 ECCP, pp. 240–41.  
82 DMB, pp. 1343–47; Wang Ao, Chen tsu 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, Chi‘hiu 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), 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-tsong [shih lu], Hsiian-tsong [shih lu], Ying-tsong [shih lu], and Hsien-tsong 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 yuán 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. The frequent and considerable discrepancies found in the existing manuscripts of the veritable records probably came about in this way.

It is noteworthy that the Ch'ien-ch'ing t'ang shu mu by Huang Yü-chi, 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 (shi-hu), 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.

The first of the other products of the Ming Historiography Bureau was the Yüan shih (Official history of the Yuan) 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.

The Hsiu tsu 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-

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-yuan t'ang ts'ung shu; rpt. Vol. 1 in Shu mu ts'ungpien, Taipei, 1967), 177, pp. 1—6. According to editor Chang Chüan-heng's postscript, this catalogue was the main source for the “I wen chi” of the Ming shih. See also Wang Tsem-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 Mote, 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 chih chuan su 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 kung mu*, to have been based on his famous rules of compilation (*fan-li*), and to have covered the Sung and Yuán 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 Yuán 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); 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*). 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 ssu hsin 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, *Chūgoku zen hô no kenkyū* (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 fang 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 nonofficial 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.
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 hsin 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 hsin 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 Yuan 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 chüan 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 Hsieh Ying-ch'ı (1.3.1), which covers to 1521; the *Chao tai tien tse* 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 *Lungfei 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-ch'i'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-ch'en ch'ang pien* (1.4.9), an annalistic record of the Ch'ung-ch'en 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

---


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). 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) 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. In biographical writing, often no
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-pian), 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

\(^{109}\) 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 (hsin-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.  

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. 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

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 Hsu 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 lieh 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-ming 115 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 (tzu-pu). It is nonetheless evident that most of these notebooks give important information on historical subjects:

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

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.\ref{118}

Another much-quoted notebook of this kind is the *Yung ch'i'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.\ref{119} Probably the most voluminous notebook is the *Hsi yüan wen chien lu* of 1632 by Chang Hsüan (4.1.7).\ref{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 *Yii-t'ang ts'ung yü* (4.2.6)\ref{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 hsii lei kao*

\begin{itemize}
  \item \ref{118} New punctuated edition by Chung-hua shu-chü (Peking, 1959; 2nd ed., Peking, 1980).
  \item \ref{119} Modern printed editions (Shanghai, 1935) and (Peking, 1959).
  \item \ref{120} First printed in Peking in 1940 by the Harvard-Yenching Institute.
  \item \ref{121} ChiaoHung, *Yii t'ang ts'ung yü* (1618) was reprinted in a punctuated edition in Peking in 1981 and pirated in Taiwan in 1982.
\end{itemize}
(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-ch'un, the Wu tsa tsu (4.3.11) of ca. 1600 by Hsieh Chao-che, and the Chiao-shih pi sheng (4.3.13) of 1606 by Chiao Hung. Such notebooks as Liu ch'ing jib 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 Hui 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-chün 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. 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).
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). 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'e); communications to other government offices (chieb, chi); drafts of imperial orders (yii, chao, ch'iib); 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. 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 Hsiian-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


\(^{129}\) 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'ın 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.


130 See also Huang Chang-chien, Ming tai lu li hui pien, 2 vols. (Taipei, 1979), listing 72 titles of extant editions known to him.
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, 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 tsu 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 chuang shih 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 yu kuan Yün-nan li shih tsu liao tai 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 *T'eng t'ian 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 Yuan-i, 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, Wang Ch'iung, or Hsiao Ta-heng. Hsiao's work provides firsthand information on the customs and habits of the Mongols and their relations with China. 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.
amples of such works include the *Chiu pien t'u lun* (7.3.7) of 1534 by Hsü Lun, 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 Yuan 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 lueh* (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 chiou 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. Similar works exist for other frontier regions, including the "third" or maritime frontier. 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.
139 The expression "third frontier" has been coined by Bodo Wiethoff, *Chinas dritte Grenze: Der traditionelle chinesische Staat und der küstennahen Serraum* (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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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,\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{140} Available in French translation by Camille Sainson, Nan-tchao ye-che, Histoire particulière 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).
\textsuperscript{141} DMB, pp. 1026—27.
\textsuperscript{142} The most up-to-date annotated translation has been prepared by J. V. G. Mills, Ma Huan, Ying-ya Sheng-lan: The overall survey of the ocean's shores (1433) (Cambridge, England, 1970).
\textsuperscript{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’én K’án, who led an embassy to Ryūkyū in 1533—34, and Kung Yung-ch’ing’s 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, 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-tseng 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 hsi 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. 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)
of 1609 was compiled by Wang Ch'i,\(^\text{150}\) 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)\(^\text{151}\) of 1613 by Chang Huang,\(^\text{152}\) 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.\(^\text{153}\)

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.\(^\text{154}\) 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.\(^\text{155}\) 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,\(^\text{156}\) 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*.\(^\text{157}\) The most elaborate

---

\(^{150}\) *DMB*, pp. 1355-57.


\(^{152}\) *DMB*, pp. 83-85.


\(^{154}\) See above, p. 735.


\(^{156}\) *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 Hsu Kuang-ch'i (1562–1633), 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 i'i*, 4, No. 5 (June 1981), pp. 32–76; 4, No. 6 (December 1981), pp. 130–40.
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,\(^\text{163}\) is an illustrated work on
various rural and urban industries, and features a wide range of manufactur-
ing 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 achieve-
ments of Chinese material culture during the late Ming period.

**WORKS ON LOCAL HISTORY**

With the exception of a limited number of biographical collections, note-
books, 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 diver-
sity, had particular problems. The tension between centripetal and cen-
trifugal 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 state-
ments. 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. 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.\textsuperscript{165}

Based on the information provided by various catalogues, in particular the \textit{Ch'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

\textsuperscript{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 Hsiieh-ch’iian, 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’uan-chou prefecture, Fukien, from 1570 to 1573, and the *Hsing ko t’iao li* by Hai Jui on his experiences in Ch’un-an county, Yen-chou prefecture, Chekiang, where he was magistrate from 1558 to 1562, are two such works. 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-
Although many commoner families had compiled genealogies as early as the Sung period, this custom became widespread during the sixteenth century. The passage from Wang Shih-chen's critical discussion of Ming historiography 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*), 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. This may be another illustration of a feature to be observed in many countries to the present day. A book listed as prohibited is

169 See above, pp. 731-32.
170 Huang Yu-chi, *Ch'ien-ch'ing t'ang shu mu*, 10, pp. 43a-48a.
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* (1.3.11) of ca. 1870 by Hsia Hsieh (1799–1875), and the *Ming chi* (1.3.12) 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) 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).