A Case History of Revolt in China
The Late Ming Rebellion of Chang Hsien-chung

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The Early Life of Chang Hsien-chung and the Beginning of His Rebellion

Chang Hsien-chung[1] was born in northern Shensi probably in 1606[1]. Very little reliable information is available concerning his pre-rebel life, which is to be expected in view of the nature of traditional Chinese historiography. After all, he was unimportant until his illegal actions gained him attention. Furthermore, the main sources for his rebellion were written (or compiled) by scholars who had never known him, whose homes were in Chekiang and Kiangsu far away from his native Shensi, and who relied mainly on government reports for source material[2].

1 WU Wei-yeh[9], *Sui k'ou chi lüeh*[10] (Chao-kuang-ko[11], K'ang-hsi period), ch. 9, p. 1a. If the day date contained in CHI Liu-ch'i[12] *Ming chi pei lüeh*[13] (Peking, Liu-lü-ch'ang, probably late Ch'ing), ch. 16, p. 13a is correct, he was born November 8, 1606.

2 Obviously no definitive bibliography can be given here. However, it should be mentioned that the four most important sources for Chang's rebellion are the two given in footnote 1; P'ENG Sun-i[14] *P'ing k'ou chih*[15] (Peking: National Library, 1931); and TAI Li[16] and WU Shu[17], *Huai-ling liu-k'ou shih chung lu*[18] in *Hsüan-lan-t'ang ts'ung-shu*[19] (Nanking: National Central Library, 1947). Information concerning these works as well as less important works may be obtained in HSIEH Kuo-chen[20] *Wan Ming shih chi k'ao*[21] (Peking: National Library, 1933), ch. 7, 8. and in Wolfgang Franke, *Preliminary Notes on the Important Chinese Literary Sources for the History of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)* (Chengtu, West China Union University, 1948). In addition, one should mention SUN Yüeh[22] *et al* (eds.), *Ming mo nung-min ch'i-i shih-liao*[23] (Peking: K'ai-ming shu-tien 1952). This work is a collection of Ming archival materials, but it has only incidental information concerning Chang Hsien-chung and is primarily devoted to Li Tzu-ch'eng. However, the introduction suggests that a volume dealing with the other late Ming rebels will appear subsequently. There have been several works published during the last few decades which are of value in a study of Chang's rebellion. The most important of these is LI Wen-chih[24], *Wan Ming min pien*[25] (Shanghai: Chung-hua shu-chü,
It is true that some stories, often quite detailed, do exist concerning his youth. But the majority of these are rather obviously imaginative inventions which developed after he became famous. For example, one story contained in the Shu pi recounts how Chang as a young boy accompanied his father to Szechwan where they were engaged in selling a type of date. When the father was unjustly beaten by the servants of a certain wealthy household, Chang swore that he would one day return and exact revenge. This story is almost certainly a rationalization for Chang's subsequent invasion of Szechwan. To make it all the more suspect, it is quite similar to a story recounted about Li Tzu-ch'eng. There is a possibility that it is accurate in indicating that Chang was of petty merchant background, for other sources contain references to his having engaged in commerce. However, there are also inferences which suggest that he was of peasant background.

What seems to be the most reliable information given about Chang's pre-rebel life is that which concerns his having become a soldier as a young man. His military career was destined to be a short one, however, for he soon got into trouble apparently as a result of participating in a mutiny. As a punishment, he was at first condemned to death, but eventually was merely dismissed from the army after having been given a severe beating.

Shortly after his dismissal, which occurred probably in 1630, Chang gathered together a band of at most a few hundred men and began raiding villages in northern Shensi. There was nothing novel in this move, for peasant disturbances had been underway in the area for at least a year before Chang assumed a role in them. The most immediate cause of

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1948). This is an excellent study of the late Ming rebellions in general. Its only defect is the author's occasional uncritical use of the sources. Erich Hauser's Li Tzu-ch'eng und Chang Hsien-chung. Ein Beitrag zum Ende der Mingdynastie, AM II (1925), pp. 437-498, and III (1926), pp. 268-287 is a translation of the biographies of Li Tzu-ch'eng and Chang Hsien-chung from the Ming shih. As a translation Hauser's work is quite satisfactory, but its value as an analysis of Chang's rebellion is limited by a lack of interpretation and the natural official bias of the Ming shih biography. Li Kuang-t'ao's Chang Hsien-chung shih shih [29], CYYY XV (1954), pp. 21-30 is a consideration of certain specialized aspects of Chang's rebellion, particularly concerning the occupation of Szechwan. Finally, there is the article by SHIMIZU Taiji [21], Mindai no ryūmin to ryūzoku [22], SZ XLVI, 2 (Feb., 1935), pp. 192-230 and 3 (March, 1935), pp. 348-384.

3 P'ENG Tsun-chiu [23], Shu pi [24] (Place and date of publication not stated, but probably late Ch'ing), ch. 3, p. 6a-b. The Shu pi was written about a century after Chang's rebellion and is particularly given to fanciful stories. A German translation of the Shu pi has been made by F. Weiss under the title Shu Pl. Das kostbare Heidenblut von Shu (Berlin: Heymanns, 1929). This translation has been reviewed by Ferdinand D. Lessing in OZ XXI, 3/4 (1935), p. 156.

4 P'eng k'ou chih, ch. 2, p. 5b, ch. 12, p. 6b; Sui k'ou chi lüeh, ch. 10, p. 1a; and Ming shih (ed. Wu-chou T'ung-wen chü, 1903), ch. 309, p. 24b.

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[19] 李光濤
[20] 張獻忠史事
[21] 清水泰次
[22] 明代の流民と流賊
[23] 彭遼西
[24] 蘇碧
these disturbances was a series of natural calamities which descended upon the area in the late 1620's. However, these calamities were probably no more severe than similar misfortunes which had occurred at various times earlier in the dynasty, and it was only because they were combined with aggravating factors that they now brought into being serious local peasant uprisings. The most important aggravating factors were governmental corruption and inefficiency and the presence of large numbers of lawless bands, composed, in part, of army deserters.

Having embarked upon rebellion, Chang adopted for a title or nickname "Eight Great Kings" or "Eighth Great King" (Pa-ta-wang). It has not been possible to ascertain with any degree of certainty the derivation or significance of this term, though it may be a corruption of the Buddhist term Pa-ta-ming-wang. At any rate, in choosing such a nickname he was but following a general rebel custom.

Chang seems to have soon attained a position of some importance in the peasant disturbances. However, there were other leaders who were more prominent, and it must be made clear that one of the essential features of the late Ming uprisings during the first few years was absolute disunity. The Ming shih aptly describes this condition when it states:

At this time the rebel groups had no single leader, and when they met the government army, everyone fought for himself. If they conquered, then they strove to advance; and if defeated, they fled to the mountain ravines. They did not support each other. When the government armies met the rebels and pursued and killed them, even they did not know what rebels they were chasing. The rebels at times divided and at times joined together, and rushed from east to west.

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5 The most competent treatment of the conditions fostering rebellion in northern Shensi is contained in LI Wen-chih, Wan Ming min pien, pp. 1-9. Among other points, Li contends that most of the offices in the area were understaffed and that relatively inferior officials were pawned off on the region.

6 Hua-i-ling liu-K’ou shih chung lu, ch. 4, p. 11b; Ping K’ou chih, ch. 1, p. 9a; and Ming chi pei lueh, ch. 8, pp. 6b, 7a. Actually Chang’s full title was “Eighth Great King of the Western Camp” (Hsi-ying-pa-ta-wang) and there were three other Pa-ta-wang. Chang was, of course, by far the most famous of the four, and he is usually referred to merely as Pa-ta-wang.

7 The Pa-ta-ming-wang are bodhisattvas represented in a fierce aspect as guardians of Vairocana. This quality of fierceness would seem to offer a reason why Chang might have been attracted to the term.

8 The nick-names adopted by the late Ming rebels are as colorful as those appearing in the Shui hu chuan, and there are a few instances of the same name occurring both during the late Ming period and in the Shui hu chuan. Some of the more interesting examples of nick-names are: “King who puts the heavens in disorder” (Heng-t’ien-wang), “Nine dragons” (Chiu-t’iao-lung), “Old Moslem” (Lao-hui-hui), “King who changes the world” (Kai-shih-wang), and “Star that passes through the heavens” (Kuo-t’ien-hsing).

9 Ming shih, ch. 309, p. 23a.
There was some conception of rank among the rebels and often two or more groups would unite with the head of one band serving as a kind of over-all leader. Usually such alliances were extremely unstable and were only resorted to through expediency.

Chang's first attempt at rebellion ended badly. He suffered several severe defeats at the hands of government forces and was reduced to such straits that early in 1632 he was forced to surrender. This outcome aptly illustrates how helpless the rebels were when faced with really determined opposition from the Ming forces. Yet the policy of allowing them to surrender ended by weakening the position of the government. Originally, this policy had been, in part, a sincere recognition that many of the rebels were in reality only peasants forced into illegal actions by famine. However, it came to be used by officials and military commanders as a means of acquiring what they considered order at "bargain basement" prices. Later on, Chang was even successful at times in bribing officials into allowing him to surrender. As a consequence, the surrender policy was used by the rebels as a ruse for gaining a needed respite from government attacks. For example, a few months after Chang surrendered in early 1632 he resumed his rebellion and was properly launched on a rebel career which was to last with one major interruption until 1647.

The Disorganized Raiding Phase of the Rebellion

Chang's rebellion until roughly 1643 is best described as disorganized raiding. By 1633 his activities were no longer confined to his native Shensi, but included Shansi as well. A year or so later, the areas affected by his raiding embraced large sections of Honan, Hupeh, Anhwei, Kiangsu, and Szechwan. We have in this expansion of the rebellion much more than just geographical spread, for in moving into the north China plain, and especially into the Yangtze valley, the rebels were striking at the heart of Ming China. They were thus posing much more of a threat than if they had remained in the isolated and backward areas of northern Shensi.

It is apparent that rapid movement was of prime importance to Chang. It was a rare year that did not see him cover several thousand miles and appear in at least three provinces. A particularly favorite plunder route led from south-eastern Shensi into Honan and then on to Hupeh, Anhwei, and Kiangsu. Once in Kiangsu, he would turn around and return to Shensi over a somewhat different route. It is obvious that his forces must have been almost entirely mounted to permit this rapid movement.

10 Loc. cit.; and Sui k'ou chi lüeh, ch. 10, p. 1a.
11 In Ming times the modern provinces of Anhwei and Kiangsu were not separate and had the name Nan-chih-li. Likewise, modern Hupeh and Hunan were joined under the name Hu-kuang.
12 In the summer of 1643 Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou[39], one of the principal commanders in the anti-rebel campaigns, submitted a report which declared that all the rebels were mounted while only roughly one-third of the government troops were supplied with horses. Cf. Ping k'ou chih, ch. 1, p. 16a.

[39] 洪承畴
There is only scanty information available concerning the organization of Chang's group. This is to be expected, for the writers of the official reports concerning his rebellion would have limited opportunity to become informed in regard to the internal workings of a rebel band. Furthermore, there was undoubtedly considerable variation in organization depending, for example, upon good or ill fortune. Still, it is possible to say that the group was not merely a disorganized rabble. Training exercises were undertaken and there were definite disciplinary regulations. A description of a camp site indicates some care in planning\textsuperscript{13}. The camp is said to have occupied a strategic position on a mountain side with a steep cliff behind and a stream in front. One rebel officer was detailed to serve as a rear guard and ninety men were on watch at the campground proper. An additional safeguard was provided by placing mounted scouts at intervals for about seventy miles in all directions.

Leadership remained firmly in the hands of Chang and a select few, mostly natives of Shensi, who had been associated with him since the early years of his rebellion. One description of tactics adopted by the group indicates that when an attack was being planned, five or six leaders would be singled out, assigned men, and given the little ling-t'ou-tzu\textsuperscript{14}, a colloquial term characteristic of the unsophisticated nature of the rebellion during the earlier period. If three ling-t'ou-tzu failed to take an objective, the attack would be abandoned.

It is extremely difficult to arrive at any reasonable estimate of the size of Chang's group. This is partly due to the careless and inconsistent fashion in which statistics are handled in the sources. But also there was wide fluctuation. It is doubtful if the group ever numbered more than a few thousand during the disorganized raiding phase of the rebellion, and upon several occasions following a particularly severe defeat, it was reduced to a few hundred. However, it was always possible to attract new recruits from famine refugees and various dissident elements. These recruits were picked up in most of the areas where raids were conducted and thus over the years the group came to have diverse geographical origins. This diversity was a factor which frequently made for strife within the group, but considerable stability was derived from the fact that the Shensi element provided continuity in leadership.

As has been indicated previously, Chang's fortunes, like those of all the rebels, fluctuated wildly during the disorganized raiding phase of the rebellion. During periods of good fortune he was often able to capture walled towns. For example, already in 1635 Feng-yang-fu\textsuperscript{15} in modern Anhwei was occupied. The capture of this town was a considerable

\textsuperscript{13} Huai-ling liu-k'ou shih chung lu, ch. 15, p. 15a; and Ping k'ou chih, ch. 5, p. 9a.
\textsuperscript{14} Huai-ling liu-k'ou shih chung lu, ch. 14, p. 11a-b.
\textsuperscript{15} Ming shih, ch. 23, p. 10a, ch. 309, p. 7b.

[33] 頭頭子 [34] 鳳陽府
blow to Ming prestige, for it was the ancestral home of the imperial family. Furthermore, upon at least one occasion he was able to defeat an important government army. This success came in 1639 at Lo-ying-shan in the mountains of western Hupeh where he ambushed a force led by Tso Liang-yü. Tso's army of several thousand men was effectively crushed and supplies, said to have been worth more than 100,000 taels, were captured.

But success during the 1630's and early 1640's accorded few permanent advantages. The towns were rarely occupied more than a few days when the approach of government forces made it necessary to abandon them. The victory at Lo-ying-shan becomes much less impressive when one realizes that it was largely the result of luck and Chang could not follow it up. Furthermore, there were long periods of ill fortune and the government upon several occasions very nearly succeeded in destroying him. In fact, for a time in 1638 it seemed that the authorities might be able to end the whole rebel movement. Many of the leaders, including Chang, were forced to surrender at this time, and others found it necessary to take refuge in isolated areas. However the government success was more apparent than real. Chang, for example, was able to drive a hard bargain in exchange for his surrendering. He was allowed to retain his forces, was accorded a position in the official military system, and was permitted to occupy Ku-ch'eng-hsien in northwestern Hupeh as a kind of personal preserve. Thus, his military potential remained not only undestroyed but was even enhanced during the year (1638—39) that he remained peacefully at Ku-ch'eng.

After the resumption of Chang’s rebellion in 1639 the government embarked upon its most grandiose attempt to crush the rebel movement. The drive was headed by Yang Ssu-ch'ang, a competent and relatively honest bureaucrat, who at the moment was the emperor’s favorite minister. He had served as president of the Board of War and as early as 1636 had proposed a comprehensive anti-rebel plan of operations. This plan was very elaborate, but in essence it called for a huge ring of fortified points to be held by permanent garrisons, and in addition there was to be a special mobile force which would attack the rebels caught within the ring. The plan does not seem to be without merit, but it was never really put into operation even when Yang himself assumed actual command of the campaign. In fact, Yang's efforts as a field commander bogged down in a morass of bickerings among his subordinate officers and unwise

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[35] Ming shih, ch. 309, pp. 26a, 27b; Ping k'ou chih, ch. 3, p. 9b; Huai-ling liu-k'ou shih chung lu, ch. 12, p. 7b; and Sui k'ou chi lüeh, ch. 6, p. 26b.
[36] Huai-ling liu-k'ou shih chung lu, ch. 11, p. 6a; and Ming shih, ch. 309, p. 27a.
[37] Huai-ling liu-k'ou shih chung lu, ch. 11, p. 4b; Ping k'ou chih, ch. 3, p. 5b; and Sui k'ou chi lüeh, ch. 4, p. 6a.
[38] Huai-ling liu-k'ou shih chung lu, ch. 10, p. 20b; and Ming shih, ch. 373, p. 2a.
strategy. Eventually, in the spring of 1641 he lost so much prestige when Chang, in a lucky surprise stroke, managed to capture Hsiang-yang in northern Hupeh that he committed suicide.

Yang’s campaign against the rebels is quite typical of all the anti-rebel drives of the 1630’s and early 1640’s. The government armies won engagement after engagement and were able to destroy many rebel groups. Yet despite all these individual successes, a decisive victory, ending the rebel movement once and for all, was never achieved.

At this point the question arises as to why the government failed in its attempt to crush the rebels. Actually, this question is but another way of asking why the Ming dynasty fell, a problem obviously of such magnitude that we cannot do more than suggest briefly some of the more basic factors involved here. First, and probably most important, there was political instability. For example, the average term of office for the presidents of the Six Boards was only 0.89 years for the T’ien-ch’i period (1621-27) and 1.5 years for the Ch’ung-chen (1628-44) period. These were the lowest averages for the entire dynasty and contrast strikingly with the 6.0 year average for the Yung-lo period (1403-1424). Secondly, there was the problem of defense against invasion. Possibly the Ming military forces, though admittedly deficient in many respects, could have suppressed the peasant uprisings if they had not been simultaneously faced with the Manchu threat from the outside. Finally, the government suffered from a serious financial situation and the country was plagued with continuing natural calamities. The combination of all these and other factors over a period of years meant that the Ming administration was increasingly unable to cope with challenges facing it.

In summing up the disorganized raiding phase of Chang’s rebellion, certain basic considerations should be emphasized. In the first place, Chang’s rapid movements during this period were not just a series of senseless moves from place to place. They were employed for valid reasons and were resorted to by all the rebel groups. Swiftly moving guerilla type raiding was the best tactics that the rebels could employ. We have seen that throughout the 1630’s the government armies were usually superior in organization and equipment and it was rare indeed that the disunited rebel groups could defeat them in pitched battles. Thus, any attempt of the rebels to hold fixed positions would have invited disaster.

In addition, the rebels were mere raiders because of the limitations of their own intellectual backgrounds. After all, they were largely unedu-

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20 Huai-ling liu-k’ou shih chung lu, ch. 14, pp. 5a, 6a; Ming shih, ch. 272, p. 13a; and Ping k’ou chih, ch. 4, pp. 5a-6a.  
21 These averages are based on the lists of board presidents contained in Ming shih, ch. 112. For a general consideration of the question of office-holding in the Six Boards during the Ming period cf. O. Berkelbach van der Sprengel’s “High Officials of the Ming: a Note on the Chi Ch’ing Nien Piao of the Ming History,” BSOAS XIV, pt. 1 (1952), pp. 87-115.  

[39] 襄陽
cated peasants who had embarked upon their rebel careers in order to keep from starving or because they saw a chance for easy plunder. At first none of them had anything more than the vaguest notion of overthrowing the government and establishing a new dynasty. For instance, in 1634 a great rebel conclave was held in Honan and was attended by all the major leaders. Their deliberations were almost entirely confined to drawing up a plan of co-ordinated attack on the Ming forces to insure better raiding conditions. There was no real conception of any more basic policy. Incidentally, even the plan of united operations against the government was never seriously put into effect. In like manner, the rebels generally regarded the people only as sources of plunder and made no serious attempt to win their support. Still, to be entirely fair, it must be said that there are instances when Chang was on good terms with the people in the neighborhood of his camp. Also, on at least two occasions he is said to have distributed substantial amounts of loot to assist famine sufferers. And certainly if we can put any credence in the late Ming proverb, "The rebels comb coarsely, but the government armies comb finely," the people preferred the rebels to the troops of the regular army.

But by the early 1640's circumstances altered and Chang's rebellion entered a new phase.

The Dynastic Ambitions Phase of the Rebellion

Only two of the late Ming rebels ever really developed any more serious purpose than mere raiding. These two were Chang and Li Tzu-ch'eng. In Chang's case the more serious turn in his rebellion became officially apparent in 1643, for he then declared himself "King of the West" (Hsi-wang) and attempted to set up an administration first at Wuchang and later at Changsha. Neither of these attempts at founding a government had any great success, but the final try, which took place at Chengtu in the following year, 1644, showed greater promise and endured for two years.

What prompted Chang to cease being a mere raider and develop at least some conception of establishing an organized government of the traditional Chinese style? Why did he attempt to make a more serious appeal to the people and no longer regard them solely as suppliers of booty? Such a development is obviously not result of Chang's suddenly deciding one day that he would like to found his own dynasty. Instead,

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22 Sui K'ou chi lüeh, ch. 2, p. 10b; and Ming shih, ch. 309, p. 7a.
23 Huai-ling liu-K'ou shih chung lu, ch. 14, p. 3b; Ping k'ou chih, ch. 4, p. 3b; and Ming shih, ch. 309, p. 30b.
24 Ping K'ou chih, ch. 2, p. 4b.
25 Huai-ling liu-K'ou shih chung lu, ch. 16, pp. 11a-b, 17b, 18a; Ping k'ou chih, ch. 16, p. 9a-b, ch. 7, p. 4a-b; Ming chi pei lüeh, ch. 19, p. 51a; Ming shih, ch. 309, pp. 30b, 31a; and KU Ying-t'ai [46] Ming shih chi-shih pen-mo [41] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1934), ch. 57, pp. 51, 52.
it is the product of a gradual evolution and indicates basic changes within the rebel movement. To make the development clearer, two fundamental considerations prompting it might be suggested. First, there was the acquisition of greatly enhanced military potential, and second, there was the obtaining of gentry support\(^{26}\).

The increased military potential came about in part as a result of the attainment of greater rebel unity. This greater unity was perfectly apparent by the early 1640's, for by then leadership, which we have seen was originally so diverse, was concentrated in the hands of Chang and Li Tzu-ch'eng. The other rebel leaders had suffered various fates. Many had been killed by the government forces, some had been persuaded or forced to join the groups of Chang and Li, and a few continued independant operations. These independants, however, were weak and could not attract new recruits in a wholesale fashion as Chang and Li were doing. For example, when Chang invaded Szechwan in 1644 he probably had as many as 100,000 men in his army.

The second element in the increased rebel military potential was the deterioration of the Ming administration which has already been briefly discussed.

The most obvious illustration of the change in rebel strength vis à vis the government can be observed in the holding of fixed positions. We have seen that throughout the 1630's the rebels were frequently lucky enough to capture walled towns, but could never hold them. Even Hsiangyang, whose fall was so important that it caused Yang Ssu-ch'ang to commit suicide, was not occupied by Chang for more than a few days. By the early 1640's, however, Chang and Li could and did assert their control over an area of considerable size.

It is axiomatic that gentry support was essential if any of the late Ming rebellions were to succeed. After all, the gentry were the transmitters of political tradition and the possessors of administrative experience. A peasant rebel could hardly develop a political system of his own in a vacuum, and as a matter of fact, was likely never to be anything more than a mere raider if gentry advisers did not awaken in him more serious purposes. Of course, this gentry influence, if really successful, meant that the peasant rebel became a member of the gentry himself and consequently his rebellion was never "revolutionary" in the sense of attempting radical social changes\(^{27}\). In Chang's case, we certainly do

\(^{26}\) The term "gentry" has won wide acceptance in sinological literature, though it is often ill-defined. In the present context the term connotes an elite group possessing in varying degrees special status in political, social economic, and intellectual spheres. An excellent summary of the gentry's role in Chinese history is contained in Wolfram Eberhard, Conquerors and Rulers. Social Forces in Medieval China, (Leiden: Brill, 1952), pp. 122-125.

\(^{27}\) The classic example of a peasant rebel developing into a gentry member with the attainment of political power is, of course, Chu Yuan-chang, the founder of the Ming dynasty. For a consideration of important recent studies of Chu and the founding of his dynasty cf. Wolfgang Franke, Neuere chinesische Arbeiten zur Geschichte der frühen Ming-Zeit, Asiatica (1954), pp. 131-141. Special attention is called to the works of WU Han and WANG Ch'ung-wu.
not find that he was the proponent of any policies which could be properly termed "revolutionary", nor were the gentry, as we shall see, able to transform him into a member of their own group.

Chang had some contact with the gentry apparently from the early period of his rebellion, for one of his officers, a man named Hsieh, was of a prominent Shensi family. His relations with the gentry became even closer during 1638-39 when he had temporarily made peace with the government and was occupying Ku-ch'eng-hsien. He took advantage of local family conflicts to become on good terms with at least three members of the gentry from whom he is said to have obtained information concerning military affairs and war material.

But, of course, Chang's really important relations with the gentry were initiated in 1643 when he began attempting to establish a government. Most of the office-holders in his Wuchang and Chengtu administrations were local gentry members. They undoubtedly accepted offices for a variety of reasons. Some were apparently forced into accepting, but others must have seen that political changes were in the offing and were thus willing to attach themselves to a rebel leader with some prospects of success. Of course, it might be asked why the gentry themselves did not start a rebellion. There were minor gentry led uprisings, but on the whole, loyalty was given to the Ming until the most opportune time for revolt had passed. That is, any time after the early 1640's a gentry led rebellion would have very likely been crushed either by Chang or Li Tzu-ch'eng before it had a chance of getting started properly.

It would be interesting to know just how much influence this contact with the gentry had upon Chang personally, but unfortunately very little information is provided concerning this question. Possibly Chang acquired at least semi-literacy as a result of his gentry associations, for the two Jesuit fathers, who became intimately acquainted with him after his invasion of Szechwan in 1644, maintain that he could read the Christian tracts which they gave him. Certainly it would seem reasonable to sup-

28 *Huai-ling liu-k'ou shih chung lu*, ch. 11, p. 4b; and *Sui K'ou chi lüeh*, ch. 10, p. 2a.
29 *Huai-ling liu-k'ou shih chung lu*, ch. 12, p. 5b; *Ping K'ou chih*, ch. 3, p. 7a; *Sui K'ou chi lüeh*, ch. 6, p. 21a; and *Ming shih*, ch. 309, p. 27a.
30 Martin Martini, *Bellum Tartaricum or the Conquest of the Great and Most Renowned Empire of China by the Invasion of the Tartars*. Translated from Latin (London: Crook, 1654), pp. 207—208. Martini's work was originally published in Latin and appeared only a few years prior to the English translation cited above. The portion of the work dealing with Chang's rebellion is based on an unpublished account by Gabriel de Magalhaens, one of the Jesuit fathers associated with Chang in Szechwan. The manuscript of this valuable eye-witness account, entitled *Relacao das tyrannias obradas por Cang-hien chungo . . .*, was brought back to Europe in the late 1640's by Martini. It is unfortunately presumably lost, as a search of the Archives of the Society of Jesus in Rome failed to produce any trace of it. The other Jesuit father who shared the adventures of de Magalhaens at Chang's court in Szechwan was Louis Buglio. Biographies of both de Magalhaens and Buglio are contained in Louis Pfister, *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de l'ancienne mission de Chine*, 1552-1773, Variétés sinologiques nos. 59 and 60. (Shanghai: Imprimerie de la mission catholique, 1932-34).
pose that there was some expansion of his intellectual horizon as a result of his contact with the gentry.

How successful was Chang in translating military potential and gentry support into the formation of a government? His Chengtu administration showed considerable promise of success at first. The Six Boards, Grand Secretariat, Ministers of the Left and Right, and several lesser offices were established. Chengtu was renamed "Western Capital" (Hsi-ch'ing[^42]), Ta-shun[^43] was adopted as a nien-hao, and "Great Western Country" (Ta-hsi-kuo[^44]) was declared the name of the new state[^31]. Also, the great expansion of his troop strength made necessary a much more complex army structure than had ever been the case during the 1630's. He is said to have divided his forces into 120 camps and to have set up a definite command organization[^32]. The Jesuits made the following estimate of his early efforts:

... he began his rule with such liberality, justice, and magnificence by which he captivated all hearts that many mandarins famous both in civic as in military affairs whom fear was keeping concealed left their hideouts and flew to his side. And surely he was so equipped by nature with such virtues that had not clemency been wanting and more than beastly savagry and inhuman cruelty taken its place in his soul, he had seemed made king by nature[^33].

However, despite the initial success of the Chengtu administration, it was destined to fail largely as a result of Chang's inability to identify himself with his gentry followers. He was never able to suppress a bitter personal hatred of the gentry. For example, he is said to have become so enraged at the sight of the luxurious ancestral home of Yen Hsi-ming[^46], who was serving as his Minister of the Right and Grand Secretary, that he ordered him executed[^34]. He was also particularly unfortunate in the fact that no gentry adviser of the stature of Li Yen[^47], the adviser of Li Tzu-ch'eng, ever emerged. On the contrary, he was most influenced by a man named Wang Chao-ling[^48], who urged him toward violence instead of

[^31]: CHI Liu-ch'i, Ming chi nan lüeh[^45] (Peking: Liu-li-ch'ang, probably late Ch'ing), ch. 12, pp. 27a, 28a; Shu pi, ch. 2, pp. 15a-b, 16b; Sai k'ou chi lüeh, ch. 10, pp. 20b, 21a; and Ming shih, ch. 309, pp. 31b, 32a.

[^32]: Huai-ling liu-k'ou shih chung lu, ch. 18, pp. 22b, 28b; Sai k'ou chi lüeh, ch. 10, p. 20b; and Ming chi nan lüeh, ch. 12, p. 27a.

[^33]: Thomas Ignatius Dunin Spot, Collectanea Historiae Sinensis 1641 ad 1700 (Microfilm of the unpublished manuscript in the Archives of the Society of Jesus, Rome) two volumes, Vol. I, p. 100. This work, written in 1710, contains considerable information concerning Chang's rebellion again based on the account by de Magalhaens mentioned in footnote 30.

[^34]: Huai-ling liu-k'ou shih chung lu, ch. 18, p. 19b.
moderation. Wang was from a prominent Anhwei family and had been captured by Chang's group when he was a young man. Apparently the time he had spent in the rebel band had robbed him of his gentry orientation and he became enamoured of violence in place of order.

But probably most important of all, for the gentry to have acquired significant influence over Chang would have had as a corollary the lessening of the power of his old group. Such a development he was never able to accept, and though he attempted to rule in traditional fashion with ministers, a court, official examinations, and a bureaucracy, his first loyalty was always to his old group.

Chang's relations with the gentry worsened steadily. He became increasingly distrustful of their motives, and his disposition was not improved by his discovery of a secret message sent to Li Tzu-ch'eng by several prominent Chengtu citizens inviting him to invade Szechwan. As a consequence of this and other incidents, Chang adopted a terror policy. Among the first victims of this policy were several thousand gentry members who were massacred after having been enticed to Chengtu by the ruse of announcing the holding of an official examination. Once started, the terror policy could not be halted and was eventually directed against the population in general. By the latter part of 1646 the Chengtu administration had fallen apart, most of the officials had been executed, and the city was abandoned.

But if Chang failed in his attempt to establish a government, his fellow rebel, Li Tzu-ch'eng, achieved much greater success. In April, 1644 Li captured Peking and reached the apex of his power. If the rebel movement had been allowed to proceed its own course without external distractions, Li would have undoubtedly crushed Chang and probably founded a dynasty. However, the trump card in the situation was held by an outside force, the Manchus, whose organization was more carefully constructed than that of the rebels, who were militarily stronger, and who impressed the gentry as being at least no more alien to Chinese tradition. Thus, the

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35 Hua-liu-kuou shih chung lu, appendix, p. 7b; and Fei Mi Huang shu (Chengtu: Lian-fang, probably 1860), p. 12a. The latter work is primarily confined to Chang's invasion and occupation of Szechwan, events to which the author was an eye-witness.
36 Hua-liu-kuou shih chung lu, ch. 18, p. 19b; Ping k'ou chih, ch. 11, p. 13b, Sui k'ou chü lüeh, ch. 10, p. 26a-b; and Martini, Bellum Tartaricum, pp. 211-212.
37 The Ming shih, ch. 309, p. 32b states that more than 600,000,000 (sic!) people were killed during Chang's occupation of Szechwan. This fantastic figure was never intended to be taken literally. Rather, it is a stereotyped exaggeration expressing the traditional opposition to rebels and violence. Undoubtedly, however, the loss of life in Szechwan was heavy, and Li Wen-ch'ih in Wan Ming min pien, p. 168 places the figure at 1,000,000, which seems a reasonable estimate in the light of a total Szechwan population of 3,102,073 (for 1578) given by Ming shih, ch. 43, p. 1b. However, it should be remembered that disturbed conditions continued in Szechwan during the 1650's and 1660's. So only a portion of the loss of life in the province should be attributed to Chang Hsien-chung.

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normal course of the rebel movement was interrupted by the Manchus. Li's power was effectively destroyed at the Shan-hai-kuan battle in May, 1644. Chang survived until January, 1647 when he was surprised and killed by a Manchu advance party on the Shensi-Szechwan border. After his death, his group merged with Southern Ming forces and offered unsuccessful resistance to the Manchus.

To recapitulate briefly, the rebellion of Chang Hsien-chung began ca. 1630 and until 1643 was characterized by disorganized raiding over wide areas of North China. Such raiding was the logical result of both the realities of the military situation and Chang's intellectual limitations. In 1643 his rebellion took on a more serious turn when he attempted to found a government. This development was made possible by an enhanced military potential and the obtaining of gentry support. However, he was not successful in making a transfer from raiding to organized administration. Thus, his government remained a powerless trapping and soon collapsed in failure. Finally, in 1647 he was killed by the Manchus. As a personality Chang, of course, cannot be considered as particularly important. However, it is hoped that a study of the rebellion which he headed will enable us to understand better the general question of unrest in traditional China.

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38 Huai-ling liu-k'ou shih chung lu, appendix, p. 7b P'ing k'ou chih, ch. 12, p. 8a; Sui k'ou chi lüeh, ch. 10, p. 29a; Ming shih, ch. 309, p. 33a; Huang shu, pp. 20b, 21a; Martini, Bellum Tartaricum, pp. 220-222; and Dunin Spot, Collectanea, Vol. I, p. 129.