

Please share your stories about how Open Access to this article benefits you.

The Transformations of Messianic Revolt and the Founding of the Ming Dynasty

by John Dardess

1970

This is the published version of the article, made available with the permission of the publisher. The original published version can be found at the link below.

Dardess, John. "The Transformations of Messianic Revolt and the Founding of the Ming Dynasty." *Journal of Asian Studies* 29 (1970), 539-558.

Published version: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2943243>

Terms of Use: <http://www2.ku.edu/~scholar/docs/license.shtml>

The Transformations of Messianic Revolt and the Founding of the Ming Dynasty

JOHN W. DARDESS

IN 1368, after seventeen years of civil war, the recently established native Ming Dynasty of Chu Yüan-chang at last forced the heirs of Genghis Khan and their Yüan Dynasty from the dragon throne of China. The Yüan emperor and some remnants of the Yüan imperial establishment abandoned Ta-tu (Peking) during the night of September 10, and reached the pillaged summer capital of Shang-tu on September 27, after a disconsolate and rain-soaked journey.¹ Further harassment by Ming forces at length compelled the Yüan court to withdraw from Shang-tu and retreat further north to Ying-ch'ang, which it reached on July 23, 1369.² The Yüan emperor, after a reign of thirty-six years, died on May 23, 1370, a few weeks before Ming troops succeeded in taking Ying-ch'ang.³ For some years thereafter the Yüan, in spite of its retreat to Mongolia, continued to consider itself the legitimate reigning dynasty in China. The reign-title of Hsüan-kuang which the next emperor adopted shows that the Yüan still hoped, too late, for a dynastic revival or "restoration" (*chung-hsing*); for Hsüan-kuang alluded to King Hsüan of Chou and Emperor Kuang-wu of Han, who "restored" their respective dynasties.⁴

But it was the former peasant rebel Chu Yüan-chang, with his capital in the city later known as Nanking, who was in fact emperor of China. The new dynasty which he established bore a strange name. Almost all earlier dynastic names had official explanations; not so the Ming.⁵ The vagueness must have been deliberate and political. One can derive at least two sorts of meaning from the word "ming"—on the one hand, philosophical and Confucian, "bright, clear, discerning"; on the other, as Wu Han points out, religious and non-Confucian: a reference to the heretical *ming-chiao* (Manicheism) and the triumph of light (*ming*) over the darkness of the Yüan Dynasty.⁶ The "Ming" Dynasty thus easily accommodated the two very different social elements which the founder had brought together in the successful military and political movement which in 1368 succeeded the Yüan.

At least in name, therefore, the Ming purported to represent both a Confucian desideratum and a Manichean-style fulfillment. It would, however, be wrong to say that in 1368 the Confucian and Manichean connotations equally balanced each other.

John W. Dardess is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Kansas.

The following abbreviations will be used in the notes: *MS*, *Ming Shih* (Taipei, Kuo-fang yen-chiu-yüan, 1962); *TTSL*, *Ming T'ai-tsu shih-lu* (Academia Sinica ed.); *YS*, *Yüan shih* (Po-na-pen ed.); *YTC*, *Yüan üen-chang* (Sung-fen-shih ts'ung-k'an ed.).

¹ Liu Chi, *Pei-hsün ssu-chi* (Yün-ch'uang ts'ung-k'o ed.), 1a. Shang-tu was situated near To-lun, in present-day Inner Mongolia.

² *Ibid.*, 5a. Ying-ch'ang lay west of present-day Ching-p'eng hsien in western Jehol province.

³ *TTSL* III, 1021.

⁴ Wada Sei, "Mindai no Mōko to Manshū" ["Mongolia and Manchuria in the Ming"], *Tōashi Ronsō* (Tokyo, 1943), p. 307.

⁵ A famous exception is Wang Mang's "Hsin" Dynasty, A.D. 8–23.

⁶ Wu Han, "Ming-chiao yü Ta-Ming ti-kuo" ["Manicheism and the Ming Empire"], *Tu-shih cha-chi* (Peking, 1961), p. 267.

In 1351, the Manichean promise had lain with a very different movement, the White Lotus Society. The White Lotus Society instigated the earliest in a series of riots which the Yüan Dynasty by itself proved incapable of suppressing. Manicheism (or Buddho-Manicheism) predicted the doom of the old order and the beginning of a new millennium of peace and prosperity. But Manicheism was itself incapable of providing the organizational rationale whereby the new era might actually be brought into being. Where Manicheism failed, Confucianism stepped in. It is the purpose of this article to discuss why and how this transformation came about.

The rise of the Ming Dynasty has never been adequately discussed in terms of the larger context of events which took place in China between the years 1351 and 1368. Such a discussion is not easy. The history of the early years of the rebellions must be painfully put together from a variety of diverse sources: the standard histories, local gazetteers, and various private writings. The official sources on the rise of the Ming (i.e., the *shih-lu*, or Veritable Records) are voluminous and relate everything except those facts which we should most like to know. Using the *shih-lu* alone, for example, one would never discover that the Ming founder had gotten his start by leading an obscure side action on behalf of someone else's rebel dynasty and that he had subordinated himself to this dynasty until as late as 1366. There is a need to view the Ming movement not only in its own terms, as if its eventual success were somehow fated, but also in terms of the major changes in events in China as a whole. This larger sequence of events seems, generally, to be orderly and comprehensible. It can be seen that when the popular riots had run their course by 1354 and when the Yüan pacification effort had collapsed late in that year, the two main centers of the original rebel leadership abandoned their Buddho-Manichean ideologies and attempted to establish dynasties of the traditional Confucian sort. In this they failed; yet both of these movements in turn spawned side actions which made stronger bids for imperial power. One of these side actions was led by Ch'en Yu-liang, and the other by Chu Yüan-chang. Chu defeated Ch'en in 1364. By the time Chu declared the Ming Dynasty in January 1368, most of China proper was in his hands. In a sense, therefore, the name "Ming" encapsulates the whole history of the civil war from 1351.

The Social Origins of the Anti-Yüan Risings. The White Lotus sectarians initiated a rising in 1351 which, thanks to Yüan ineptitude, spread and engulfed much of China by 1354. These riots have sometimes been termed peasant rebellions, which is not quite accurate.⁷ The Yüan rulers themselves perpetuated yet another misconception: long after their retreat to Mongolia, they preferred to remember that a grand and sudden conspiratorial rising had toppled them overnight and driven them out of China.⁸ Insofar as it reflects the paranoia which seized certain high Mongol dignitaries when the risings first grew to serious proportions, this legend bears a certain psychological truth, but as a matter of historical fact it too is completely wrong.⁹ There was neither a planned conspiracy, nor was there a great rural jacquerie. The risings

⁷ Cf. James P. Harrison, *The Communists and Chinese Peasant Rebellions* (New York, 1969), pp. 64, 210-11, 228, 291-2.

⁸ H. Serruys, "Mongols in China during the Hung-wu Period," *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques*, XI (1956-59), 23.

⁹ Meng Ssu-ming, *Yüan-tai she-hui chieh-chi chih-tu* [*The Social Class System of the Yüan Dynasty*] (Peking, 1938), p. 219. Cf. also the unfounded plot of 1310 to "kill all of the Tartars and Moslems" reported in YTC 41. 12b-14a.

were unplanned, and the rebel groups were by no means largely peasant in composition at the initial stages. Rather, judging from what can be gathered from the sources, the early participants were footloose types, commonly associated with cities and market towns. They were the uprooted and the disinherited.

According to contemporary sources, some twenty local uprisings broke out in China after 1279, the year of the Yüan unification of South China.¹⁰ In the majority of these, the leaders are reported to have incited their followers with religious or magical propaganda—prophecies of doom, claims of personal divinity, assurances of magical protection, and so forth. In some cases, the leaders went so far as to adopt dynastic names and reign titles, thus advertising an overt political challenge to the incumbent dynasty. Of these risings, four can be linked either with the White Lotus Society, or else with leaders who proclaimed the imminent descent into the world of the Maitreya Buddha, an article of faith preached by the White Lotus. What the sources do not tell us is what sort of people took part in these affairs, or why.¹¹ We are simply given names, dates, and a few indications of the leaders' political or religious pretensions. It would be very difficult to make any meaningful general statements on the basis of information as meager as this.

Yet the problem can, in an overall way, still be approached. The Yüan Dynasty and the Confucian scholar-officials did look upon certain social situations, and some sectors of society, with apprehension. For its part, the dynasty appears to have been particularly concerned with the immediate problem of unauthorized crowds, and the scholar-officials with a long-range but related problem, a superabundance of socially parasitic elements.

The *Yüan tien-chang*¹² indicates the dynasty's view that crowds should not gather without official knowledge and permission. For example, the government was concerned that two great Buddhist convocations, held illegally in Shensi province in 1309 and 1311, attracted large numbers of "mixed crowds" (men and women, religious and lay) into an area in which food was in short supply and armed protection insufficient.¹³ Similarly, religious pilgrimages to the sacred Mount T'ai in Shantung brought hordes of peasants, artisans, merchants, singing girls, army deserters, and boxers together for unauthorized ritual observances. The government feared that "when these ignorant and deluded people gather together, there will always be criminal elements among them. This situation not only offends the gods, but there is a danger of trouble starting."¹⁴ In South China, street processions on religious occasion elicited similar responses from the authorities. Here, the documents make explicit the connection between crowd gathering and the sort of political-religious "rebellion" mentioned above.¹⁵ Regulations against such gatherings were repeatedly issued.¹⁶ There were also official injunctions against the writing and dissemination

¹⁰ YS, YTC, and the anonymous *Chao-pu tsung-lu*. On this latter work, see H. Franke, "Some Aspects of Chinese Private Historiography," *Historians of China and Japan*, ed. W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank (London, 1961), p. 119. Franke translates the title: "General Account of Police Actions."

¹¹ The rebellion of Ts'ai Wu-chiu in 1315, however, appears to have had the backing of the Kiangsi landlord gentry as their means of protesting an impending land survey; see H. F. Schur-

mann, *The Economic Structure of the Yüan Dynasty* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 32.

¹² The *Yuan tien-chang* is a corpus of Yüan administrative law with illustrative cases.

¹³ YTC 57.42a-43b.

¹⁴ YTC 57.56b-57a.

¹⁵ YTC 57.54a-b; *hsin-chi*, *hsing-pu* 90a.

¹⁶ YTC 57.43b, 45b, 46b; *hsin-chi*, *hsing-pu* 84a; *T'ung-chih t'iao-ko* (Peking, 1930), 27.21b-22a; 28.14b-16a.

of heretical religious works and prophetic books predicting the rise and fall of dynasties.¹⁷ There is nothing novel or startling in the Yüan attitude toward popular gatherings and religious heresies; similar attitudes were adopted by earlier (and later) dynasties. Yet it is significant that the government was suspicious, above all, of urban gatherings and mass religious pilgrimages. We find no regulations against, for example, peasant protest movements or rural tenant-farmer insurrections—a fact which can hardly occasion surprise since, as H. F. Schurmann points out, such movements were not at all common during the Yüan period.¹⁸

Probably because of the more intimate concern of the scholar-officials with the perennial Confucian task of maintaining an orderly and docile peasant society, these persons on their own probed a bit more deeply into aberrant social phenomena than did the dynasty, which was interested mainly in the immediate issue of its own security and which confined itself largely to the issuing of prohibitory regulations.¹⁹ Indeed, Confucians were particularly sensitive to the problem of social parasitism since it was they who in the classical social hierarchy were the chief parasites and the chief recipients of the produce and services of the other classes. Generally, Confucian doctrine demanded a maximum of producing peasants and tolerated only a theoretical minimum of artisans and merchants. Although the latter two elements were still considered part of legitimate society, the poorer members—small itinerant craftsmen, vendors, peddlers, etc.—tended to be lumped together in the Confucian mind with the followers of such despised occupations as begging, acting, musicianship, prostitution, or yamen-running. These latter occupations were outside of legitimate society; in fact, those engaging in them constituted something close to hereditary castes.²⁰ A contemporary scholar-official, Hu Chih-yü, offered a long list of parasitic social classes which he observed in North China late in the thirteenth century.²¹ Wang Chieh wrote in alarm and outrage of the “shiftless young scoundrels” (*wu-lai o-shao*) and “drifters in trivial occupations” (*yu-shou mo-shih*) that he saw in North China. Young men, he said, were abandoning the agricultural pursuits of their forbears and were migrating to the cities where their pursuit of gambling and vice eventually compelled them to learn fisticuffs or swordfighting in preparation for a life of crime.²² The *Yüan tien-chang* noted: “if there is someone especially proficient in the use of spears and sticks, everyone pays him money and begs him to become his master. . . . If violent customs are not practiced and the arts of violence not transmitted, then the people will be tame and risings will not occur. . . .”²³

In sum, there are notices concerning a number of riots that took place in the Yüan period after 1279, and there is evidence that the government and certain of the

¹⁷ YS 52.8b; 105.21b-22a; *T'ung-chih tiao-ko* 28.29b; Wang Yün, *Ch'iu-chien chi* (Sou-pu t'ung-k'an ed.), 86.31a; Paul Ratchnevsky, *Un Code des Yuan* (Paris, 1937), pp. lxxxv-vi; YTC 32.14b.

¹⁸ Schurmann, p. 32.

¹⁹ Note, however, that during the reign of Qubilai (1260-94) the government attempted to extend control down to the village level through the institution of the *shü* (community) system, which in addition to inculcating better farming methods was intended to act as a police system and curb shiftless

and immoral behavior. See Schurmann, pp. 43-48.

²⁰ See T'ung-tsu Ch'ü, “Chinese Class Structure and its Ideology,” *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. J. K. Fairbank (Chicago, 1967), pp. 235-50.

²¹ Hu Chih-yü, *Tsu-shan so-ch'uan-chi* (San-i-t'ang t'ung-shu ed.), 22.22b. The biography of Hu Chih-yü (d. 1293) is in YS ch. 170.

²² Wang Chieh, *Wang Wen-chung chi* (Sou-k'u ch'uan-shu chen-pen ed.), 6.7a, 21b, 23b-24a. See YS ch. 178 for his biography.

²³ YTC 57.50b.

scholar-officials considered cities, market towns, and religious centers as areas of special social danger, owing mainly to the concentration in those places of persons of ambiguous social status. These people were particularly susceptible to religious heresies and to millenarian propaganda. Upon occasion, religious or millenarian belief found overt political expression in riot or rebellion.

It remains to consider the White Lotus Society, and its part in the popular risings of 1351. By late Yüan times the White Lotus Society in North China purveyed a heretical and composite messianic ideology which embodied at least two main elements. The first centered about an ancient belief in the imminent descent into the world of the Maitreya Buddha and his establishment of an earthly paradise, free of all disease, strife, suffering, and hardship.²⁴ Somehow connected with this idea was the Manichean belief in the coming triumph of the forces of light over the forces of darkness, over which a Prince of Radiance (*ming wang*) would preside.²⁵ Second, there was the idea, not clearly millennial in its implications, of a restoration of the defunct Northern Sung Dynasty (960-1126). The Han family, hereditary chiefs of the White Lotus, claimed direct blood descent from the Sung Emperor Hui-tsung, who in 1126 had been captured by the Jürcheds and exiled to Manchuria. It is tempting to see in this last motif an appeal on the part of the Society for the support of the peasants, who may have regarded the Sung Dynasty as a golden age of justice and prosperity. Unfortunately, for this period there is very little reliable documentation about the White Lotus Society or its ideology. None of its heretical scripture survives, and only one genuine proclamation: that issued to the Korean court in 1359.²⁶

About the kinds of people involved in the White Lotus Society in the north, we know nothing. The Han family originally had its seat at Luan-ch'eng, but sometime during the Yüan period it was exiled to Yung-nien, about fifty miles southwest, probably as punishment for its activities.²⁷ The control of the Han family did not extend into the Yangtze region, which did not appear to have a comparable organization until a heretical monk-healer by the name of P'eng Ying-yü helped to found one at Ma-ch'eng in 1338 or shortly thereafter.²⁸

We know a bit more about P'eng and his group in Ma-ch'eng than we do about the Han family's group in Yung-nien. An extant tale about P'eng Ying-yü describes at length his working of miracles and his evangelization on behalf of the Maitreya.²⁹

²⁴ See the *Fo-shuo Mi-lo hsia-sheng ching* [*Sutra on the Descent into Life of the Maitreya as Expounded by the Buddha*], translated by Chu Fa-hu in the Western Chin period (A.D. 265-313), in *Taishō shinshū dai zōkyō*, XIV, 421-23.

²⁵ For the fusion of Manicheism with Maitreya lore that came about during the S. Sung (1127-1278), see Shigematsu Toshiaki, "Tō-Sō jidai no Miroku kyōhi" ["Maitreya Religious Bandits during the T'ang and Sung"], *Shien*, No. 3 (Dec. 1931), p. 98. For a general view of heretical religion, C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society* (Berkeley, 1967), pp. 229-43, is illuminating.

²⁶ *Koryō sa* (Tokyo, 1908-9), I, 596. I am advised that an important article on the history of the White Lotus will soon be published by Chan Hoklam of the Ming Biographical History Project.

²⁷ MS III, 1560. Luan-ch'eng is about 200 miles southwest of Peking. The Yüan government at times

tolerated and at times suppressed the White Lotus; cf. Wu Han, "Yüan ti-kuo chih peng-k'uei yü Ming chih chien-kuo" ["The Collapse of the Yüan Empire and the Founding of the Ming"], *Ch'ing-hua hsüeh-pao*, XI (May, 1936), p. 392.

²⁸ For a regional and ideological schema of Yüan secret society activity, see Shigematsu Toshiaki, "Sō-Gen jidai no kōkingun to Gemmatsu no Miroku-Hakuren kyōhi ni tsuite" ["The Red Turban Army of Sung and Yüan and the Maitreya—White Lotus Religious Bandits of Late Yüan"], *Shien*, No. 27 (Nov. 1941), p. 140.

²⁹ Ch'üan Heng, *Keng-shen wai-shih* (Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng ed.), p. 4; YS 39.13b. H. Schulte-Uffelage, *Das Keng-shen Wai-shih. Eine Quelle zur Späten Mongolenzeit* (Berlin, 1963), should be used with caution owing to errors in translation and annotation.

He appears as the chief organizer of a rising which took place at Yüan-chou in Kiangsi province in 1338, in which he set up a figurehead "king" and through magical means sought to assure his men of immunity from attack.³⁰ After the authorities put down this rising, P'eng escaped and made his way north to Ma-ch'eng, where according to a somewhat garbled account, he helped to organize a White Lotus Society.³¹ At Ma-ch'eng, P'eng became a mentor to a group which seems to have been a sworn brotherhood and was already in existence there. Among the members were the leader Tsou P'u-sheng, a blacksmith; Hsiang P'u-lüeh, also known as Nu-erh, "son of a slave"; Ou P'u-hsiang, alias Tao-jen, "the Taoist"; Ch'en P'u-ts'ai, a fisherman (and father of the later warlord Ch'en Yu-liang); and Chao P'u-sheng, alias Shuang-tao or "double-knife," to name a few.³²

It is evident that a nucleus of rebel leadership had begun to emerge at Ma-ch'eng. The men gathered around P'eng were, no doubt, of that vague category which the Confucians would label "drifters in trivial occupations;" at least none of them is mentioned as being engaged in the "fundamental occupation" of agriculture. P'eng's group on the Yangtze resembled that of the Han family in North China very closely in ideological matters, except that there was no program for a Sung restoration in the south; in their organization, however, the two groups appear to have been completely independent. In any event, these were the two most important instigators of mass revolt in 1351; and in 1355, both groups attempted to transform themselves into organized Confucian imperial movements by establishing separate "dynasties."³³

The Popular Outbreaks (1351-1354). The Yüan government itself provided the opportunity for the crowd gathering that set the scene for the 1351 rebellions. In the spring of that year, on the order of the Chancellor of the Right Toghto, a labor force consisting of some 170,000 men was called up to rechannel the Yellow River, which in 1344 had shifted its course to the north of the Shantung peninsula, causing widespread flooding and destruction.³⁴ It was an unfortunate time for such a project. There had been an increase in banditry in recent years, particularly in the Shantung area, and certain of these outlaw groups had succeeded in openly demonstrating the ineffectiveness of the once-feared Yüan armies by their provocative actions.³⁵ In 1348, moreover, when the Yüan government failed embarrassingly in its attempt to suppress the Chekiang pirate Fang Kuo-chen, it granted him a title instead and thus

³⁰ Ch'üan Heng, p. 4. Yüan-chou is now I-ch'un, Kiangsi.

³¹ See the notice in *Yüan-chou fu-chih* (Kiangsi, 1874), 5.12b. Ma-ch'eng is in present-day Hupei province.

³² Ch'ien Ch'ien-i, *Kuo-ch'ao ch'üan-hsiung shih-hsié* (Shih-yüan ts'ung-shu ed.), 3.22; Chao Fang, *Tung-shan ts'un-kao* (ms. ed.), "K'o-fu Hsiu-ning hsién pei" ["Sicé on the Reconquest of Hsiu-ning Hsien"], no ch. or p. There are other references to Hsiang. *TTSL* 1, 30, 197; *Ming T'ai-tsu shih-lu ch'iao-t'ao chi* [*Collection notes to the Ming T'ai-tsu shih-lu*], ed. Huang Chang-chien (Academia Sinica, 1965), I, 37. I am indebted to Prof. Kuo Ting-ye of Academia Sinica for pointing out to me that the *yu* element in the rebels' names suggests that they were a sworn brotherhood. Yet not

all of the rebels bore this as part of their name. Thus there were Ni Wen-chün, a fisherman; and Hsiung T'ien-jui, from a family of registered musicians. See Yeh Tzu-ch'i, *Ts'ao-mu-tzu* (Ch'ing ms. ed.), 3.8b; *MS* III, 1567.

³³ For a slightly different interpretation, cf. F. W. Mote, *The Poet Kao Ch'i* (Princeton, 1962), p. 13.

³⁴ *YS* 42.6b; 66.1a-b. I hope in a later study to deal with the important subject of late Yüan politics.

³⁵ Cf. Kuo Qonichi's exploit in *YS* 41.4a-b; and that of the Hua-shan bandits near Nanking in *YS* 41.13a, and T'ao Tsung-i, *Cho-keng lu* (Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng ed.), p. 443. Kuo "Qonichi" (lit. "shepherd") is a not untypical hybrid Sino-Mongolian name of the Yüan period.

in effect surrendered to him control over its own food supply.³⁶ When under these circumstances Toghto not only called out a huge labor force but also then even neglected to provide adequate military protection on the spot, he was indeed asking for trouble.

The White Lotus chieftain Han Shan-t'ung did not pass up the opportunity which the Yüan government afforded him. He and his followers came south from Yung-nien to the scene of the diggings in order to win converts from among the laborers. One device which they used was to bury a stone figurine of a one-eyed man at the scene of the works where the laborers would be sure to dig it up. On the back of the figurine were inscribed the words: "Do not say that the stone man has only one eye; when this is dug up, the empire will rebel."³⁷ This was apparently intended as a reply to a popular children's rhyme which had been circulating since 1350. The rhyme went: "A stone man with one eye; when they channel the Yellow River, the empire will rebel."³⁸ That Han Shan-t'ung did not succeed in winning over very many of the workers is evident from the fact that the project continued on without interruption until it was completed in December 1351; but he did induce some of them to desert, possibly those whom the officials had deprived of their rations.³⁹

The White Lotus Society was again active after about a decade of quiescence. As can be gathered from the tale of the figurine, it was predicting a collapse of the reigning dynasty. It was spreading Buddho-Manichean messianic propaganda about the expected arrival of the Maitreya and his earthly paradise. Its hereditary chieftain Han Shan-t'ung boasted direct descent from the emperors of the Northern Sung. And this was not all. A direct appeal to the poor and oppressed was put forth in the slogan: "While poverty is extreme in Kiangnan, wealth is boasted in Sai-pei."⁴⁰

Although the White Lotus insurgents went so far as to "sacrifice a white horse and a black ox, and make oaths to Heaven and Earth," and to wrap red cloths around their heads (hence their epithet, "Red Turbans") and burn incense in honor of the Maitreya (hence their other epithet, "Incense Army"), they did not strike out on their own in open and overt rebellion until local officials forced their hand by seizing and arresting Han Shan-t'ung.⁴¹ The rest of the Red Turbans then decided that they had either to rebel at once or be arrested in turn. On May 28, 1351, barely a week after the assembling of the 170,000 laborers, the rebels captured the Huai-area city of Ying-chou.⁴² After Han Shan-t'ung's arrest, his wife took their son Han Lin-erh and fled for safety.⁴³ The leadership of the rebellion was then taken over by two men: Liu Fu-t'ung, of whom nothing is known, except that he was a sectarian (*yao-jen*) and a native of Ying-chou; and Tu Tsun-tao, of whom one account relates that he had

³⁶ YS 143.15b; 186.2a; MS III, 1570.

³⁷ Reported in Yeh Tzu-ch'i, 3.7b.

³⁸ Reported in YS 66.11a-b. It would be difficult to assert the authenticity of the figurine story.

³⁹ YS 66.2a; Yeh Tzu-ch'i, 3.7b.

⁴⁰ Yeh Tzu-ch'i, 3.8a. Kiangnan and Sai-pei, here used in a figurative sense, are antithetical geographical expressions. It seems safe to interpret them as referring to the common people on the one hand, and the Mongol government on the other. This introduces both an anti-Mongol note and a suggestion of economic grievance. Both elements are revealed in the rebel proclamation issued

to the Korean court in 1359: "With grief we note that the common people have long been captives of the barbarians. . . . Everyone has come over to us, like starving men after food or sick men after medicine. . . ." See *Koryō sa* I, 597; also again in III, 367.

⁴¹ Yeh Tzu-ch'i, 3.7b-8a; Ch'üan Heng, p. 14; MS III, 1560. Not all Red Turbans were necessarily White Lotus followers, however. Cf. *Lien-chiang hsien-chih* (Fukien, 1927), 3.39b.

⁴² YS 42.7a. Ying-chou is now Fou-yang, Anhwei.

⁴³ Lu Shen, *P'ing hu lu* (Ts'ung-shu ch-ch'eng ed.), pp. 9-10.

once submitted a memorial to the government recommending reforms in the military system and had been offered a minor official post as a result.⁴⁴

It was twenty days before the Yüan emperor could be reached to authorize the dispatch of forces against the rebels, and thus the government lost the initiative.⁴⁵ Before the summer was over, the rebels had captured a large bloc of territory along the upper reaches of the Huai and its tributaries, comprising some half dozen cities and about 50,000 square miles of land. What might otherwise have been only one more item in the catalogue of Yüan "religious riots" had turned into a major insurrection.

It is possible to pinpoint some of the mechanics of this phase of the rebellion. The original nucleus of White Lotus partisans began to gather concentric rings of followers, or Red Turbans. There were the deserters from the Yellow River project; there were numbers of clerks recently dismissed from their jobs as a result of a government policy of closing down unnecessary offices; there were "illiterate loafers from the countryside" who overran at least one city, looted or threatened to loot the homes of the rich and forced them to inscribe their banners for them.⁴⁶ Local bandits took advantage of the uproar to come into the open and plunder.⁴⁷ Both men and women took part in forcing open the local government granaries and in the killing of local officials. In some places, people gathered in crowds of hundreds to chant the Lotus Sutra, possibly in order to hasten on the Maitreya's arrival.⁴⁸ A contemporary commentator has it that because of the great inequality between the rich and the poor, many of the poor were "glad to join the rebellion."⁴⁹

Word of the conflagration in the upper Huai area soon spread and ignited secondary centers of rebellion. Hsü-chou, an important city of the eastern Huai located on the Grand Canal, fell on August 31 to Sesame-seed Li (so called because his family owned a granary of sesame); Chao Chün-yung, a *she-chang*, or community leader; and P'eng Ta, a kind of local strongman.⁵⁰ Local crops could not be planted owing to a labor shortage caused by the Yellow River project, and promised government relief was not forthcoming. One account emphasizes, however, that the three men were after "riches and honor" and decided to seize Hsü-chou only after hearing of the events to the west. At Hsü-chou they set up a banner, recruited a mob and, soon after, overran some half dozen cities of the eastern Huai.⁵¹

Other rebel power centers sprang up in the eastern Huai area. Hao-chou fell in March 1352 to a group of rebels which included Kuo Tzu-hsing, whose father was a well-to-do fortune-teller and mother a rich family's unwanted blind daughter. Kuo was a "swashbuckling type who enjoyed keeping retainers about him." Indeed, Kuo attached to himself the future Ming founder Chu Yüan-chang when he came to Hao-chou seeking to join the rebels.⁵² During 1353, the ex-salt-smuggler Chang

⁴⁴ Ch'üan Heng, p. 9; T'ao Tsung-i, p. 439. Cf. also Yen Han-sheng, "Liu Fu-t'ung fen-mu tiao-ch'a hsiao-chi" ["Short Note on the Investigation of Liu Fu-t'ung's Tomb"], *Li-shih chiao hsüeh* (Aug. 1955), p. 8.

⁴⁵ YS 42.6b, 7b.

⁴⁶ YS 194.11a-b; Ch'üan Heng, p. 14.

⁴⁷ *Kuo-yang feng-t'u chi* (Anhui, 1924), 15.6b.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.6a; YS 141.4b.

⁴⁹ Yeh Tzu-ch'i, 3.8a-b.

⁵⁰ For the *she-chang*, cf. note 19 above, and Schurmann, p. 44.

⁵¹ YS 42.8a; Ch'üan Heng, p. 14; *Hsü tzu-chih t'ung-chien*, ed. Pi Yüan (Peking, 1957), VI, 5721. Hsü-chou is in northwest Kiangsu province.

⁵² MS III, 1559; *TTSL* I, 4-7; Romeyn Taylor, *The Social and Political Origins of the Ming Dynasty* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Chicago, 1960), pp. 20-1. Hao-chou is now Feng-yang, Anhwei.

Shih-ch'eng and his brothers seized control of a rebel movement originally led by one Wang K'o-jou, a member of a wealthy clan of T'ai-chou. Chang by 1353 occupied an arc of territory which stretched north of the important Grand Canal and Yangtze River city of Yang-chou. Early in 1354, Chang declared a Great Chou Dynasty, with its capital at the Grand Canal city of Kao-yu.⁵³ With the Grand Canal blocked by the rebel occupation of Hsü-chou and Kao-yu and the sea lanes under the control of the pirate Fang Kuo-chen (and after 1354, Fang for the first time established himself permanently on land), the Yüan capital lost its food supply entirely.⁵⁴

Finally, P'eng Ying-yü's group at Ma-ch'eng rose up in the autumn of 1351 and triggered a social explosion of truly stupendous proportions. A cloth peddler of impressive size and demeanor by the name of Hsü Shou-hui was discovered by P'eng and his men (according to one account, Hsü was observed emitting a strange light while he was taking a bath in a river) and was installed as figurehead emperor of the rebels' newly declared T'ien-wan Dynasty.⁵⁵ "Tien-wan," meaning something like "heaven-preserved," as a dynastic name was as untraditional as the riots carried out in its behalf were unprecedented. By piecing together notices from the *Yüan shih*, the local gazetteers, and the extant private writings of the landlord gentry, one can get a good if not unbiased view of the full extent of these disorders. In all, the T'ien-wan occupied some 200,000 square miles from the area of the modern province of Hunan east to the sea. This territory was not under centralized control, for at this stage the T'ien-wan in reality was not a government. From the Ma-ch'eng center there marched forth at least six different rebel columns (one was led by Tsou P'u-sheng and P'eng Ying-yü in person; it seems that P'eng was killed enroute).⁵⁶ As each column proceeded, it picked up hordes of new adherents (Red Turbans) from among the bandits, idlers, and "shiftless and evil youths," together with others, presumably peasants, who were "stupid and deluded," as the gentry writers put it. Everywhere, "shiftless scoundrels" took advantage of the situation to rise up, fashion makeshift weapons, dress themselves in red cloth, and join the conflagration.

It is not difficult to discover that the chief victims of this mass outburst were the local officials on the one hand and the Chinese landlord gentry on the other. As for the officials, it was the policy at least of the T'ien-wan commander Hsiang P'u-lüeh (or Hsiang Nu-erh) to humiliate them publicly by forcing them to acknowledge Hsü Shou-hui as emperor and killing them if they refused.⁵⁷ The landlord gentry were occasionally massacred⁵⁸; more often, as is evident from the private writings of the early Ming period, the rebels simply pillaged and destroyed thier homes, because the owners had fled beforehand. An inscription describes succinctly the rebel entry into the city of Shao-wu, located in Fukien near the Kiangsi border:

On June 3, 1352, they sent bandits waving flags and carrying placards to the border to Shao-wu, where they forced some three hundred commoners to carry

⁵³ Wu K'uan, *P'ing wu lu* (Chieh-yüeh shan-fang hui-ch'ao ed.), 1a-3b; T'ao Tsung-i, p. 439; Yeh Tzu-ch'i, 3.9a. T'ai-chou is now T'ai-hsien, Kiangsu.

⁵⁴ YS 42.14a ff. and passim; *T'ai-chou fu-chih* (Chekiang, 1936), 133.3b-7a.

⁵⁵ Yeh Tzu-ch'i, 3.8a.

⁵⁶ YS 42.11b; 144.13a; *Nan-ch'ang fu-chih* (Kiangsi, 1873), 18.31a-32b.

⁵⁷ YS 188.18a-b; 195.9a-b.

⁵⁸ *Liu-yang hsien-chih* (Hunan, 1873), 13.4a; *Nan-ch'ang fu-chih*, 18.30b; *Chi-an fu-chih* (Kiangsi, 1876), 20.28a; Sung Lien, *Sung Hsüeh-shih ch'üan-chi* (Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng ed.), p. 841.

white cudgels and enter the city shouting and yelling. Upon hearing of the approach of the rebels, the officials and people took their families and fled ahead of time. The rebels took advantage of this and occupied the local government yamen. The next day, in order to gather more adherents, the rebel leaders announced that they were going to overthrow the rich and benefit the poor. Since the penniless folk all wanted riches, and all of those nursing hatreds wanted revenge, they rose up in flocks to join the rebels. They soon gathered a large number of people and entered and plundered the homes of the wealthy. No one was spared.⁵⁹

Yet it is also true that the anarchy unleashed by the T'ien-wan went deeper; there are reports of tenant-farmer insurrections, real jacqueries which were only remotely connected with the T'ien-wan riots.⁶⁰ And too, in those places where the original followers of P'eng Ying-yü were able to maintain a presence, the religious element seems to have mitigated the class war aspects of the rebellion. Thus when Hsiang P'u-lüeh entered the famous city of Hangchow, he and his men seem to have been more intent upon proselytizing than destroying. According to reports, they distributed copies of the "prophetical scriptures" and entered the names of the converts to the Maitreya faith into registers. On departing Hangchow, however, they were careful to take with them cartloads of gold and silk, together with official documents.⁶¹ Hsiang and his men continued north from Hangchow, opening granaries and distributing grain to the poor as they went.⁶² Hsiang was captured and executed shortly afterward while returning westward; his enraged followers then took revenge by destroying the villages of all those involved in his arrest.⁶³

In sum, between the years 1351 and 1354, there took place largely disorganized and spontaneous revolts which engulfed the whole heartland of China from the Yellow River south. These rebellions were sparked by the White Lotus Society from two original centers, Yung-nien and Ma-ch'eng.⁶⁴ As the rebellions spread, they picked up more and more followers: first the "shiftless" elements, as the Confucians termed them, who appear to have been mainly young fellows; then, these rioters in turn encouraged the outbreak of rural protest movements, including bandit activity and tenant farmer risings.⁶⁵ According to the Ming founder Chu Yüan-chang's own account, "masses of the people dropped their farming, seized weapons, and ran to join the rebel leaders."⁶⁶ The landlord gentry had upon occasion during the Yüan period supported, or threatened to support, local rebellions until their demands upon the government were met. It appears, however, that the popular rebellions of 1351 and later took them by surprise. If the gentry attempted to make contact with the rebel leaders, they obviously did not succeed; indeed, they bore the brunt of the violence. In consequence, the gentry were obliged to side with the Yüan government

⁵⁹ *Shao-wu fu-chih* (Fukien, 1897), 13.20b.

⁶⁰ Li Ch'ü, *Yün-yang chi* (ms. ed.), 8.34a-36a.

⁶¹ Cf. Tao Tsung-i, p. 437; Yang Wei-ch'en, *Tung-wei-tsu wen-chi* (Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an ed.), 22.14a-b; YS 42.18b.

⁶² Yin K'uei, *Ch'iang-chai chi* (ms. ed.), 4.3a-4a; also cf. Wang Ch'ung-wu, "Lun Yüan-mo nung-min ch'i-i ti fa-chan shui-pien chi ch'i tsai li-shih-shang so ch'i ti chin-pu tso-yung" ["The Development and Transformation of the Late Yüan Peasant Risings and their Progressive Effect on History"],

Li-shih yen-chiu, No. 4 (1954), p. 99.

⁶³ Chao Fang, *loc. cit.*, note 22 above.

⁶⁴ Actually, the whole area around Ma-ch'eng was declared Lien-t'ai (Lotus Platform) province, and the T'ien-wan capital was established at Ch'i-shui, a hsien about 40 miles south of Ma-ch'eng.

⁶⁵ On banditry as a social phenomenon, see E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (New York, 1965).

⁶⁶ Quoted in Meng Ssu-ming, p. 212. Chu's remark applies to the area around Hao-chou.

against the rioters. The cases of the pirate Fang Kuo-chen and the salt-smuggler Chang Shih-ch'eng were, however, a little different; neither was a sectarian adherent, and each quickly gained local support and established himself as a regional warlord.

Yet there seems to have been a fundamental ambiguity in the early mass outbreaks. If millennial doctrine was embraced and rebellion initiated by monks, artisans, and people engaged in nonessential occupations, and these in turn incited other distressed groups, then it would also appear that the groups further removed from the core of the rebellion were the less firmly committed to it. The peasants were particularly swayable; and herein lay the key to the next stage. There was no natural alliance between the local peasants and the local "shiftless elements" who guided invading Red Turbans to the homes of the rich and destroyed them. Indeed the local gentry, frightened by the rebels' approach, very frequently succeeded in patronizing the peasants, including especially the poorer ones, by spending their own resources upon them. Even more, peasants who had already joined the rebel ranks could be shamed, pardoned, and offered inducements to join the gentry side as militia. If there were competition between rebels and gentry for the allegiance of the peasants, the gentry would appear to have the advantage.⁶⁷

The Transformations of Popular Rebellion. The great riots briefly described above were for the most part ended by 1354. The Yüan government had, in the circumstances, no recourse but to allow the Chinese landlord gentry to recruit, train, and lead peasant militia forces (*i-ping*) against the marauding Red Turbans. These gentry-led militia, frequently in cooperation with local officials, succeeded in pacifying large enclaves around the chief prefectural cities in China south of the Yangtze from 1354 onward, but in the process they left a highly fragmented pattern of political power. No one man arose politically supreme in South China. In the Huai region, by contrast, the White Lotus advance was turned back by militia forces under the command of a landowner named Chaghan Temür, a man apparently of Uighur origin.⁶⁸ By the time of his assassination in 1362, Chaghan Temür had succeeded in dominating the anti-rebel effort to such an extent that he was able to establish a warlord regime of his own over much of North China. After his death, his political and military machine passed into the hands of his nephew, Kökö Temür.

Imperial Yüan armies under central control did see limited action against the Red Turban rebels in north and south. The Yüan court, moreover, attempted to maintain some control over the process of militia formation either by forming its own units, or by granting military rank to private individuals (often merchants) who were able to field a certain number of men.⁶⁹ Yet the conclusion seems inescapable that the dynasty had, in spite of these efforts, allowed the preponderance of military power to fall into outside hands. The landlord gentry, hitherto forbidden any contact with military affairs, were now suddenly in charge of large bodies of mili-

⁶⁷ There are many references to this phenomenon: cf. Cheng Yü, *Shih-shan chi* (1535 printed ed.), 18.5a-b; Li Chi-pen, *I-shan wen-chi* (Hu-pei hsien-cheng i-shu ed.), 6.12b-13a; Yin K'uei, 4.3a-4a; Sung Lien, pp. 637-38.

⁶⁸ Chaghan Temür's biography is in YS ch. 141.

⁶⁹ YS 44.3a; 92.8a-18b; 184.13a; 186.3a;

187.13a-14a; Liu Sung, *Ch'a-weng wen-chi* (1522 printed ed.), 16.17b-18a; Liu O, *Wei-shih chi* (Ch'ien-k'un cheng-ch'i-chi ed.), 117(1).2a; Yü Ch'üeh, *Ch'ing-yang chi* (Ch'ien-k'un cheng-ch'i-chi ed.), 132(4).8b. Also cf. D. M. Farquhar. "The Official Seals and Ciphers of the Yüan Period," *Monumenta Serica*, XXV (1966), 380.

tia forces. As a result, the Chinese gentry and the Mongol imperial commanders soon found that their interests conflicted in spite of their common opposition to the Red Turbans. In addition, the Yüan government was in many cases unable to exert any real measure of control over its own militia units, which were obliged to see to their own food supply. Yüan militia commanders on the whole had to fend for themselves, and often they did not hesitate to disobey orders or even change sides if it suited their interests. Yüan hopes for a "restoration" could not, therefore, be placed in these men; only a Mongol of towering prestige, whose personal fortunes were intimately connected to the salvation of the dynasty, and who at the same time had support among the Chinese landlord gentry, had any real chance of reviving the Yüan state.

It appeared for a time that the Chancellor of the Right Toghto himself might be this person. In August 1352, a full year after the beginning of the risings, Toghto received imperial permission to command an expedition against the rebel-occupied city of Hsü-chou. Leading a force of 20,000 men, including salt workers, river project laborers, and "city ruffians," Toghto recovered Hsü-chou on October 29.⁷⁰ Then he made long and careful plans for the reduction of the other Grand Canal city of Kao-yu, occupied by Chang Shih-ch'eng, and for this purpose he assembled a large army consisting of Koreans, Central Asians, and Tibetans in addition to the regular imperial forces. But Toghto's whole career had built upon the opening of bureaucratic career opportunities to large numbers of officials (including especially many Chinese) through his great projects—the Yellow River project of 1351 was one, and the Hsü-chou and Kao-yu campaigns can be considered as two others. These enterprises antagonized many conservative Mongols, who felt threatened by the influx of Chinese in government. In December 1354, just as Kao-yu was about to succumb, Toghto's enemies engineered his downfall. He was divested of all ranks and titles and banished to his estates. Several contingents of his army deserted and turned outlaw. Whatever its real prospects, all hope for a Yüan restoration was now gone.⁷¹

By 1354, none of the sectarian rebellions was in a flourishing state. The great mass outburst had run its course. In many places, particularly in South China, pacification was nearly complete and reconstruction had already begun. The White Lotus rebels of the north now held little more than the city of Po-chou,⁷² and the T'ien-wan leaders, driven from their capital at Ch'i-shui, were forced to find refuge in the nearby mountains. When the Yüan government, by its dismissal of Toghto, decided not to sponsor the repression, it in effect forfeited its mandate and compelled the landlord gentry to discover new sources of leadership.

We now arrive at a crucial point; into the vacuum which the Yüan Dynasty had created there now stepped the very rebel leadership elements which had originally opposed both the gentry and the dynasty. Now largely shorn of their former mass support, these leadership elements made a complete strategic reversal. They dropped their messianic programs and for the first time began to organize seriously. Instead

⁷⁰ YS 42.18b; 138.29b; TTSL I, 276, Ch'üan Heng, p. 16. See also the stele, "Yüan T'o ch'eng-hsiang p'ing-Hsü sung-te-pei" ["Laudatory stele on Yüan Chancellor Toghto's Pacification of Hsü-chou"], of which Academia Sinica in Taiwan possesses a rubbing.

⁷¹ YS 43.12a-b; 138.31b; 139.5b; 187.3b; *Koryō sa* I, 584-5; Ch'ang-ku Chen-i (pseud.), *Nung-t'ien yü-hua* (Pao-yen-t'ang mi-chi ed.), B.5a-b; T'ao tsung-i, p. 440; Ch'üan Heng, p. 18; Wu K'uan, 4a.

⁷² Now Po-hsien, Anhwei.

of attacking the landlord gentry, they now tried to win them over by building with their advice embryonic imperial regimes of the traditional kind. This new development began shortly after the collapse of the Yüan campaign against Kao-yu.

In the case of the T'ien-wan, it is apparent that the new opportunities afforded the rebel leaders by the failure of the Yüan pacification effort produced a crisis within their camp; some of the old rebel chiefs were averse to the betrayal of their original messianic ideals and opposed the shift in strategy which the more opportunistic elements wanted. Consequently, it was necessary for the latter to shunt aside, or to murder, the advocates of the old messianism. Early in 1355, we find Ni Wen-chün initiating this process within the T'ien-wan camp. During 1355 and 1356, he recaptured a number of cities along the Yangtze west of Ch'i-shui and in the area of modern Hunan province; and after moving the T'ien-wan capital west to Han-yang, he installed the emperor Hsü Shou-hui there as his captive. Ni failed in an attempt to induce the Yüan government to grant him the title of Administrator (*p'ing-chang*) of Hukuang province. He also failed in an attempt to assassinate Hsü Shou-hui. Shortly after, Ni was himself murdered by a lieutenant, Ch'en Yu-liang, son of one of the original Ma-ch'eng brethren.⁷³

Ch'en Yu-liang, far from reversing the new T'ien-wan trend toward empire, continued it. But where Ni had sought to base his empire in the Hunan area, Ch'en concentrated upon the richer and more strategic area of Kiangsi to the east. By 1358 he had taken most of it.⁷⁴ Ch'en, however, expanded his territory very rapidly and sacrificed tight control for mere acreage. Instead of compelling the Kiangsi landlord gentry to trade their local power positions for posts within his central administration, Ch'en simply gave them offices and official seals and left them where they were. His conquests brought about the downfall only of the local Yüan officials. The gentry were therefore at liberty to negotiate with someone else as soon as Ch'en's leadership drive should falter. One Kiangsi gentryman, who had built a village self-defense system, recruiting, supplying, and rewarding his own men, stated it this way: "The view of the local magnate (*hao-chieh*) is this—to rule his own area, await the purification of the empire, and then choose carefully the one to whom he will render allegiance."⁷⁵

By 1359, the revived T'ien-wan regime fell into distinct western and eastern halves, with the emperor Hsü Shou-hui and his supporters in control of the former and Ch'en Yu-liang in charge of the latter. In these circumstances, Hsü tried to transfer his capital from Han-yang east to Lung-hsing (now Nan-ch'ang) in Kiangsi, in order to ensure the incorporation of Ch'en's newly won territory as well as Ch'en's own continued subordination to the T'ien-wan cause. Ch'en met the emperor half-way, and there in a sudden move he murdered all of Hsü's close supporters, leaving the emperor a puppet in his hands. Ch'en Yu-liang then named himself King of Han,

⁷³ YS 44.1b-44.5b, passim; 186.20a; Yeh Tzu-ch'i, 3.8b; Ch'üan Heng, p. 19.

⁷⁴ YS 144.14b; 187.14a; 196.1a-2a; Kung Shih-t'ai, *Wan-chai chi* (Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu ed.), 9.10a-13b; 10.38a-39a; Wang Li, *Lin-yüan wen-chi* (Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu chen-pen ed.), addendum, 1b-2b; Liu Yen-ping, *Ch'un-yü-hsien chi* (Ch'ing-feng-t'ang printed ed.), preface, 1a; Sung Lien, p. 674.

Also see *Jui-chou fu-chih* (Kiangsi 1873), 6.7b; *Chien-ch'ang fu-chih* (Kiangsi, 1872), 5.9b-10a; and esp. *Kan-chou fu-chih* (Kiangsi, 1873), 32.24b-26b; *Chi-an fu-chih* (Kiangsi, 1876), 20.29b.

⁷⁵ Ch'en Mo, *Hai-sang wen-chi* (Ch'ing ms. ed.), "Hsiao Chin hsiung-ti ai-tz'u" ["Lament for Hsiao Chin and his Brother"], no ch. or p.

appointed a central bureaucracy of his own, and established his capital at Chiang-chou (now Chiu-chiang).

The name "Han" is not without significance in this context. Much of Ch'en's support came from the Kiangsi landlord gentry, who had been supporters of the Yüan cause in 1352. The dynastic name "T'ien-wan" was both ungainly and untraditional. The name "Han," by contrast, recalled the first of China's great dynasties and was practically synonymous with China itself: an appeal to gentry rather than chiliastic lower-class sympathies. In 1360, while engaged in a major (and unsuccessful) assault upon Chu Yüan-chang to his east, Ch'en dropped all pretense, assassinated the former cloth peddler Hsü Shou-hui, and assumed for himself the position of emperor of the Han Dynasty.⁷⁶ The shift was now complete. The poor man's T'ien-wan had become the landlord gentryman's Han. Few symbols of the old order remained.⁷⁷

The T'ien-wan was one sectarian leadership nucleus that underwent drastic transformation after 1355. The other was the White Lotus Society of North China, which originally started the riots of 1351; and here the situation was a bit more complex, perhaps because we are more fully informed about certain parts of it. The White Lotus chieftains, it will be remembered, claimed descent from the Sung emperors; yet significantly it was not until 1355 that Liu Fu-t'ung and Tu Tsun-tao went so far as to establish formally a new Sung Dynasty. Han Lin-erh, in hiding since 1351, was enthroned as Great Sung Emperor with the reign title of Lung-feng (Dragon and Phoenix: both imperial symbols). The new Sung capital was established at Po-chou, not only because it was the only city the rebels were in firm control of, but probably also because of its having been the capital of the ancient Sung state during the spring and autumn period (722-484 B.C.). Early in 1355, Liu murdered Tu and thus came into complete control of the Sung central government. There is no indication that Han Lin-erh (commonly known as *hsiao ming-wang*, or Lesser Prince of Radiance) ever wielded power in his own right.⁷⁸

Liu Fu-t'ung's Sung regime was short-lived but spectacular. His strategy was to make alliances with remaining rebel groups wherever they happened to be, give official ranks and badges of authority to their leaders, and assign them certain areas for attack. Thus a group of rebels at Hsiang-yang on the middle Han River invaded the important Wei River valley of Shensi during 1356 and 1357; a group of Red Turbans located in the Liaotung Peninsula was invited to cross the Gulf of Chihli and occupy Shantung in 1357; and a group of Szechwan rebels known as Green Turbans during the same year marched north through the mountains and briefly overran the far western end of the Wei River valley.⁷⁹ Liu himself mounted an offensive north across the Yellow River and into the T'ai-hang mountains.⁸⁰ During 1358,

⁷⁶ *TTSL* I, 98-102; also F. W. Mote, p. 28 for a graphic description of the assassination.

⁷⁷ The original brotherhood leader Tsou P'u-shang remained visible, with the honorary title of Grand Preceptor (*tsai-shih*). We know practically nothing of the men in Ch'en's government, with a few exceptions: one Buyan Buqa (a Mongol?) had charge of Ch'en's fisheries monopoly; Chan T'ung, a Kiangsi landlord gentryman, was a Hanlin Academician and concurrent Censor (Liu Ch'en, *Kuo-ch'ao shih-chi*, Chieh-yüeh shan-fang hui-ch'ao ed.,

342; *MS* III, 1719).

⁷⁸ *MS* III, 1560; Lu Shen, pp. 9-10; T'an Ch'ien, *Kuo ch'ueh* (Peking, 1958), I, 267.

⁷⁹ *YS* 44.10a-15a; 45.1a-7b; 141.5a-6a; 142.2b-7a; 183.7a-b; 188.7a; *Hsieh-chou chih* (Shansi, 1881), 13.22a; *Kuo-ch'ao hsien-cheng-lu*, ed. Chiao Hung (Taipei, 1965), 11.20a; *Koryō sa* I, 593; Li Shih-cham, *Ching-chi wen-chi* (Hu-pei hsien-cheng i-shu ed.), 1.4a; *MS* III, 1636-38.

⁸⁰ *YS* 45.3b-6b; Ch'üan Heng, pp. 20-21; *Lu-ch'eng hsien-chih* (Shansi, 1885), 3B.55b-56a.

while Liu moved the Sung government and imperial entourage into the former northern Sung capital of Pien-liang (K'ai-feng), his Shantung allies attacked and nearly succeeded in taking the Yüan capital, while a grand expedition under "Master" Kuan and "Broken-head" P'an overran the Fen River valley of Shansi.⁸¹

The year 1358 marked the high point of the Sung effort; from 1359 there was a rapid decline. The very nature of the Sung strategy on the one hand, and the growing power of Chaghan Temür on the other, quickly erased the fruits of conquest. The Sung capital of Pien-liang, together with the Sung empress, five thousand Sung officials and their families, and a large number of seals, tallies, and precious goods fell to Chaghan Temür in September 1359.⁸² Liu Fu-t'ung and the figurehead emperor Han Lin-erh then fled south. Only in Shantung, apparently, did the Sung have time to set up the rudiments of an orderly traditional-style administration: a tax of one-fifth upon all private lands; the establishment of military-agricultural colonies; the honorific burial of Yüan zealots; the search for employable talents.⁸³ But the chief Sung provincial official in Shantung was murdered by a rival in 1359, and Shantung fell into anarchy.⁸⁴ The invasions of Korea in 1359 and 1361 (the latter led by Kuan and P'an) were unsuccessful individual actions.⁸⁵

The Sung imperial movement itself failed, yet its activities indirectly benefited other pretenders. Through its wide-ranging attacks it kept the Yüan Dynasty fighting for its life, and Chaghan Temür tied down in North China. The Huai region immediately to the south, the scene of the 1351 risings, was now too ravaged to support a dynastic movement, and by 1355 almost all of the rebel groups had evacuated it. The double cordon which resulted effectively sealed off South China from any interference from the north; and it was in South China that the two great rivals for the Mandate of Heaven—Ch'en Yu-liang and Chu Yüan-chang—fought for supremacy alone.

A Side-Current: Chu Yüan-chang. Chu Yüan-chang was born in 1328 to a poor but socially ambitious peasant family of the Huai region.⁸⁶ Pestilence and famine in the 1340's left him the only surviving member of his immediate family, and so he entered a local Buddhist monastery as a novice in order to keep himself alive. Forced to leave the monastery when it too ran out of food, he took his staff and begging bowl and spent several years traveling about the Huai region. Some scholars presume that the young monk came into contact with the White Lotus Society and possibly even with P'eng Ying-yü during this time; Chu left behind several short memoirs of his early years, but he always passes over these several *Wanderjahre* in silence. His known connection with popular rebellion began only in 1352, after his return home, when someone denounced him to the authorities as a rebel and a friend invited him to join the Red Turbans at Hao-chou. Chu began as a private soldier, but he rapidly became a principal commander and advisor to his patron, Kuo Tzu-hsing.

⁸¹ YS 45.9a-12b; 140.6a; 141.6b; 142.7a; 188.6b-8a; 207.3a; *Hsieh-chou chih*, 13.22b; Lu Shen, p. 12; K'o Shao-min, *Hsin Yüan shih* (Erh-shih-wu-shih ed.), 225.5a-6b.

⁸² YS 141.8a; MS III, 1560-61.

⁸³ YS 45.8a-b. We are in ignorance of the activities of the Sung central government; however, both the Sung and T'ien-wan minted copper coins.

⁸⁴ YS 45.14b-16b; 141.8b.

⁸⁵ For a different interpretation, see Lu Nan-ch'iao, "Yüan-mo hung-chin ch'i-i chi ch'i chin-chün Kao-li ti li-shih i-i" ["The Red Turban Risings of Late Yüan and the Historical Significance of their Armed Advance upon Korea"], *Wen-shih-che*, No. 6 (1954), pp. 32-8; No. 7 (1954), pp. 45-8.

⁸⁶ Cf. Chu's reminiscences in *TSL* I, 336; II, 1290.

He also became Kuo's son-in-law by proxy; Kuo married to Chu a ward left in his custody by a friend, a man of violent temper who had joined the rebels because he was wanted for murder.⁸⁷ Chu's personal tie to Kuo, one of the chief Hao-chou rebel leaders, was crucial to the early stages of his career. He furthered himself by his successes in battle against the Yüan forces; by his personal recruitment of a large number of men; and, not least, by exploiting the animosities that existed among Kuo and the other Hao-chou rebel chiefs.⁸⁸

Chu's realization of the stupidity of the Hao-chou leadership awakened his appetite for power, while his openness to advice from his own personal entourage enlarged it.⁸⁹ Chu began attracting a staff of semi-intellectuals of the Huai area about him while he was still in Kuo Tzu-hsing's service. Around 1353, Feng Kuo-yung joined him. Feng was "fond of study" and "thoroughly versed in the military classics." His advice was simple and timeless. "Advocate benevolence and righteousness," Feng cautioned. "Win over men's minds, refrain from the pursuit of luxury, and the pacification of the empire will be no difficult matter."⁹⁰ Li Shan-chang, studious as a youth, was particularly well read in the statist philosophy of Legalism, and advised that Chu take Liu Pang, the peasant founder of the Han Dynasty (202 B.C.-A.D. 220) as his personal model.⁹¹ Fan Ch'ang, grandson of an obscure Huai-area Confucian gentleman, suggested that it is the basic nature of man to love life and hate killing. "The empire is now in turmoil, and people are anxious and afraid because they cannot protect themselves. You must concentrate upon dispersing disorder and saving the people; you must cease all unnecessary burning and slaughter. Select good troops; have half of them fight while the other half guards the cities. Select lenient elders for local officials. Then the people will be able to plow and harvest in peace, and their crops will not be stolen by marauders; men will gather from the four quarters, and the empire will be easy to pacify."⁹² Within two years after he first joined the rebellion, Chu had his own "brain trust," which included some ten men.⁹³

Chu's staff did more than offer advice; they were also administrators. Thus Mao Ch'i had charge of granaries and acted as a kind of military censor, checking up on commanders who failed in battle.⁹⁴ Li Shan-chang was, among other things, responsible for interviewing the various bandit chiefs and local defense commanders who sought to join Chu. Li also saw to it that none of the rest of the civilian staff monopolized communications between Chu and the various field commanders in such a way as to impede military operations.⁹⁵

The further away Chu was from the formal leadership of the Hao-chou rebels, the brighter his prospects became. He was at least in part responsible for the decision to reduce Ch'u-chou in 1353; and when food ran out there, of Ho-chou in February 1355.⁹⁶ He also strongly favored crossing the Yangtze in July 1355, and after that he

⁸⁷ Cf. the epitaph in *Ming wen-heng*, ed. Ch'eng-min-cheng (Taipei, 1962), 63.4b-5b.

⁸⁸ For the often-told story of Chu's earlier years, see Wu Han, *Chu Yüan-chang chuan* (Hongkong, n.d.), chs. 1 and 2; in English, see Motz, pp. 30-6, and Roscyn Taylor, "Social Origins of the Ming Dynasty 1351-1360," *Monumenta Serica*, XXII (1963), 8-15. I am more in debt to Wu Han than specific citations might indicate.

⁸⁹ For Chu's own words, see his *Ming T'ai-ssu yü-chih wen-chi* (Taipei, 1965), p. 450.

⁹⁰ MS III, 1635.

⁹¹ MS III, 1615.

⁹² Wang I, *Wang Chung-wen-kung chi* (Ch'ien-k'un . . . ed.), 169(4).18a-19a; Fu Wei-lin, *Ming shu* (Shanghai, 1937), III, 2345-46. Material in quotes paraphrased by author.

⁹³ MS III, 1713-15.

⁹⁴ MS III, 1714.

⁹⁵ *Kuo-ch'ao hsien-cheng-lu*, II.12a-b.

⁹⁶ Now Ch'u-hsien and Ho-hsien, in eastern Anhwei north of the Yangtze.

was eager to move downstream at once and capture the great and strategic city of Nanking. Chu took Nanking in April 1356. On the march, and in the heat of battle, Chu managed to rise to a position of supremacy among the rebels. The course of his upward progress is difficult to reconstruct because the official accounts would like us to believe that Chu's rise was foreordained and did not need lubricating by the blood of rivals. But by 1357, Chu was supreme in Nanking; the old Hao-chou leaders were dead, and both the eldest son and brother-in-law of Kuo Tzu-hsing, who were Chu's superiors in Ho-chou, had conveniently perished during the Nanking assault. Finally, in 1357 Kuo's second and remaining son, nominally Chu's superior in Nanking, was executed for "rebellion."⁹⁷

Yet there is more to the story. Partly in order to stabilize and legitimize their rankings, the rebels while at Ho-chou had entered into negotiations with Liu Fu-t'ung's newly founded Sung Dynasty, and accepted appointments from it. From 1355 until 1367, Chu Yüan-chang acted in the name of the restored Sung Dynasty, ruling his own domain as a civil and military provincial appointee on behalf of the emperor Han Lin-erh. All rewards and appointments, it appears, were given out only with Sung authorization. Chu's position resembled that of Ch'en Yu-liang: where Chu led a side-action on behalf of the transformed Sung, Ch'en led one on behalf of the transformed T'ien-wan. In both cases the offspring eventually swallowed the parent.

Beyond this point, however, the superficial resemblances between Chu and Ch'en cease. Unlike Ch'en, Chu was able to fuse together his old military machine and his new landlord gentry adherents under his own personal control. The organizational arrangements necessary to achieve this were created gradually. The first step was taken at T'ai-p'ing, the first city Chu and his men captured after crossing the Yangtze. There a dual civil-military bureaucratic structure was set up. The civil side was headed by eighty-year old Li Hsi, a well-known local Confucian philosopher and teacher.⁹⁸ The military side, distinct from Chu's own conquest forces, was organized as a Wing Commandery (*i-yüan-shuai-fu*), whose purpose was to stay behind in a newly conquered city in order to rebuild fortifications, recruit men for local defense, and carry out subsidiary mopping-up operations. Li Hsi had many students and acquaintances, some of whom were recommended and employed in both the local prefectural government and in the Wing Commandery.⁹⁹ Here in T'ai-p'ing in 1355 lay the seed of what was to come later; here also came the first contacts with the larger world of Confucianism. Later on, scholar-gentry of greater renown and ambition would overshadow these men.

In July 1356, the Sung regime authorized the establishment of Kiangnan province, with Chu as chief administrator. The provincial bureaucracy, of which a list remains, was clearly dominated by civilians from Chu's own Huai area to the north.¹⁰⁰ By 1359, when his confrontation with Ch'en Yu-liang began, Chu had set up twenty-one more Wing Commands, together with seven higher military bureaus known as Branch Military Secretariats (*shu-mi fen-yüan*) which were part of the offensive

⁹⁷ *TZSL* I, 34-8; *MS* III, 1559; Ch'ien Ch'ien-i, I, 13b; Ch'en Chi, *I-po-chai kao* (Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an ed.), 20.4a-b; Chang Ta-t'ung, *Ming-hsing yeh-chi* (Academia Sinica microfilm), 5b-6a.

⁹⁸ See his biography in Fu Wei-lin, IV, 2873-74.

⁹⁹ The rebels also hired students of the Yüan official and Confucian teacher Yü Ch'üeh (d. 1358); his biography is in *YS* ch. 143.

¹⁰⁰ *TZSL* I, 45-6.

military structure.¹⁰¹ Both the local civilian governments and the offensive and defensive military bureaus pyramided in Nanking.

The chief method Chu used to ensure the loyalty of this organization was to assign men of competing interests to any one place, with the expectation (often realized) that they would check and inform upon each other. For example, a typical large city in his domain would have one or more military offices, whose chief, always a Huai man, would find that it was part of his duty to discover and forward to Nanking the talented members of the local scholar-gentry.¹⁰² The general's family, meanwhile, was kept in Nanking as hostage to his good behavior; similarly, the chief local clans were obliged to send sons to serve as ceremonial guards (actually hostages) at Chu's court. In addition, Chu assigned to each major city one of his personal wards—young orphans—whose functions are obscure but who seem to have been intended to act as informers. Further, Chu usually did not allow local men to serve in their own areas.¹⁰³ It would appear that Chu also made divisions of function among his adherents that took into account regional (and educational and economic) differences. Whereas positions in the provincial bureaucracy were filled largely by Huai men, who were neither members of powerful clans nor especially well educated, the great gentry leaders of South China had ready and informal access to Chu and were consequently in a position to formulate policy for the embryonic dynasty. Chu also used capable southerners for important special assignments. The southern scholar-gentry, by being given an important political role on a central level, were the more easily persuaded to donate their private militia forces, along with their loyalties, to the regime.¹⁰⁴

From his capture of Nanking in 1356, Chu wore two faces. To his generals, he faithfully maintained the pretense of acting as the emperor Han Lin-erh's obedient servant. After their brilliant defeat of Ch'en Yu-liang before the gates of Nanking in 1361, Chu's generals clamored to bring the Sung emperor down from the Huai region, where he presided over a steadily losing northern movement, and install him in Nanking. Han Lin-erh came; he upgraded Kiangnan province to the central province (*chung-shu-sheng*) of the Sung Dynasty and granted Chu the title of Duke.¹⁰⁵ The southern scholar-gentry were outraged, and with Chu's obvious permission shipped the emperor back under cover of Chu's subsequent expedition westward. Han visited Nanking again in 1363 after Chu had dropped other plans to rescue him from a siege, and again the hapless emperor was sent away after Chu departed on another expedition.¹⁰⁶ What is the explanation for Han Lin-erh's popularity among the generals? A few may have believed in his Buddho-Manichean divinity, but this cannot have been the whole answer, because only a small fraction of Chu's commanders in 1361 were known participants in the early religious risings; many

¹⁰¹ This number excludes a few temporary Wing Commands set up for small local power holders who surrendered to Chu. Cf. also Taylor, "Social Origins . . ." pp. 20-3.

¹⁰² Witness the role of Chu's nephew Li Wen-chung (MS III, 1598-1601); and that of Hu Ta-hai (Hu Han, *Hu Chung-tsu chi* [Chin-hua ts'ung-shu ed.], 7.3a-b; 9.21a-b).

¹⁰³ Most of this information comes from Liu Ch'en, *Kuo-ch'u shih-chi*; Liu was an advisor to

Li Wen-chung; his biography is in MS III, 1840.

¹⁰⁴ Note Chang I and Hu Shen's donations; Liu Ch'en, 29b.

¹⁰⁵ *Kuo-ch'ao hsien-cheng-lu*, 9.4a; Ch'ien Ch'ien-i, 1.29b; Wada Sei, "Min no Taiso to kōkin no zoku" ["Ming T'ai-tsu and the Red Turban Rebels"]. *Tōyō Gakuhō*, XIII (July, 1922), 135.

¹⁰⁶ Wada, p. 137; Wu K'uan, 9b; Lin Ch'en, 12a-13a; MS III, 1561.

more were former militia commanders who had originally opposed the rioters.¹⁰⁷ Rather, it appears that as uneducated military men of the Huai region they felt overwhelmed and threatened by the increasing adherence of the southern scholar-gentry and their determination of policy. Loyalty to the powerless Han Lin-erh was a means of opposition. For the time being, Chu went along with them.

But Chu had another face, which he exposed exclusively to the southern scholar-gentry. To them, he made very plain his intention of eventually assuming imperial power by acting as if he were, in fact, emperor already.¹⁰⁸ He announced to them his candidacy for imperial rule at a time when final victory was not at all certain. Yet without offering at once the opportunity of personal association with the possible future dynastic founder, Chu would probably have found himself regarded in southern eyes merely as one more regional warlord (like Chang Shih-ch'eng, who had moved into the Yangtze Delta, and Fang Kuo-chen), and thus he would have failed altogether in the crucial task of enlisting their support.

Chu destroyed Ch'en Yu-liang's Han Dynasty in 1364, and was promoted from Duke to King. Chang Shih-ch'eng was defeated in October 1367, and two months later Fang Kuo-chen surrendered. In November 1367, the simultaneous conquest of North China and the rest of South China began. The Sung Dynasty had meanwhile come to an ignominious end. In January 1366, Han Lin-erh's boat overturned as he once again approached Nanking, and he drowned.¹⁰⁹ Beginning in 1367, Chu ceased using his reign title and issuing orders in his name, and ordered the systematic destruction of all written reference to the very existence of the Sung Dynasty.¹¹⁰

On January 23, 1368, Chu formally assumed the throne as Emperor of the Ming Dynasty, under the reign title "Hung-wu," or "Great Martiality." The official *shih-lu*, in noting the sources of acclaim for this move, mention the "ministers," and later the ministers on behalf of the people.¹¹¹ Nothing is said of the generals, who in the *shih-lu*'s spurious version of Chu's becoming Duke in 1356 (rather than in 1361) were said to have supported that move.¹¹² Chu frankly told his military men that "at decisive turns of events" their wisdom was sometimes lacking, and that they would simply have to accept being overshadowed by others.¹¹³ The majority of Chu's meritorious generals died in the purges of later years.

The possible Manichean associations in the word "Ming" were not to be taken seriously, for the Manichean promise had ended in a Confucian fulfillment. The old White Lotus leaders were officially condemned.¹¹⁴ Liu Fu-t'ung, once Chu's superior, shows up along with Ch'en Yu-liang in a long list of conquered rivals and warlords intended as an announcement to the gods.¹¹⁵ The human material that had joined the 1351 riots, or opposed the rioters by joining local militia forces, was alike swallowed up and neutralized by being given hereditary military status in the Ming state. But millennial doctrine soon found new converts, and the process continued. No sooner

¹⁰⁷ See the tables in Taylor, "Social Origins . . .," pp. 25-7.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Chu's letter of 1356 to Ch'en Yü, quoted in Ch'ien Mu, "Tu Ming-ch'u k'ai-kuo chu-ch'en shih-wen-chi" ["On the Literary Works of the Ministers Involved in the Ming Founding"], *Hsin-ya hsüeh-pao*, VI (Aug., 1964), 259-60.

¹⁰⁹ *MS* III, 1639 and the extended commentary on pp. 1646-47.

¹¹⁰ Liu Ch'en, 47a.

¹¹¹ *TSSL* I, 175; II, 478, 750.

¹¹² *TSSL* I, 45.

¹¹³ *TSSL* I, 185; II, 536.

¹¹⁴ See the public announcement of June 1366 copied verbatim in Chu Yün-ming, *Yeh-chi* (Li-tai hsiao-shih ed.), 6b.

¹¹⁵ *TSSL* II, 478.

was the Ming Dynasty established and a new dynastic order reassembled, than these illegal groups began causing trouble once more, some of them even prophesying the imminent appearance of the Maitreya Buddha as the chiliasts of the Yüan period before them.¹¹⁶ The riots had come full circle.

¹¹⁶ Some of these disturbances show close geographical and organizational correspondences with the Yüan risings. Thus in April 1373, there was a Maitreya rising in Lo-t'ien, in the old T'ien-wan heartland (*TTSL* IV, 1458); in July, 1388, another Maitreya rising broke out in Yüan-chou,

scene of the monk P'eng Ying-yü's early activities (*TTSL* VII, 2876). A serious rebellion in Szechwan in 1379 had as its leader one Fang P'u-kuei; the *p'u* element in his name suggests some link with the early T'ien-wan sworn brotherhood (*TTSL* V, 1989, 2005).