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SSU-K'U CH'ÜAN-SHU EDITIONS OF SUNG
DYNASTY TEXTS
AND THE *YUNG-LO TA-TIEN*

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This paper is concerned with the problem of the reliability of Sung texts edited by Ch'ing scholars. Examining into the reliability of texts from the Sung seems to be easy compared with the same attempt with regard to books from earlier periods. In the case of many Han texts it is extremely difficult to assess to what extent the printed editions which we can dispose of today resemble the original works. Of course, we are in a much better position as far as Sung texts are concerned. Printed copies of books dated to that period have survived in a relatively large number although there are far less extant wood-blocks. Unfortunately, there do remain a much greater number of texts from the Sung as well which cannot be dealt with so easily.

1. Hu An-kuo's *Ch'un-ch'iu chuan*

The works written by three members of the famous Hu 胡 family between 1130 and 1160 in Hu-nan are a case in point. Hu An-kuo 胡安國 (1074–1138) was the founder of this family tradition. His first important work was a famous memorial to emperor Kao-tsung (reigned 1127–1162) in which he demanded that the teachings of the Ch'eng 程 brothers should be recognized as the most important aid for understanding the correct meaning of Confucianism. Not to study Ch'eng-learning, he said, was tantamount to entering a house without using the door.¹ This memorial is considered to have been the first audacious step which almost a hundred years later ended in the official establishment of

1 The full text of the memorial is contained in *Tao-ming lu* 道命錄, Taipei 1981, *chüan* 3, 10b–14a. Compare also *Chien-yen i-lai hsi-nien yao-lu* 建炎以來繫年要錄, Shanghai 1936, *chüan* 8, 200; Hu Yin 胡寅, *Fei-jan chi* 斐然集, Peking 1993, *chüan* 25, 553–555; *Erh Cheng chi* 二程集, Peking 1981, 348–49 and *I Lo yüan-yüan lu* 伊洛源淵錄, Taipei 1968, *chüan* 4, 13a–15b. Of course, this is an allusion to *Lun-yü* 6.17.

the Ch'eng-learning as a state doctrine. Hu An-kuo's second legacy to the School of the Right Way turned out to be an even more important contribution to this movement: Among more than thirty rivalling works written during the period of Sung rule his commentary to the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Ch'un-ch'iu* 春秋) of Confucius which he finished two years before his death in 1138 was to become the most celebrated one, a work which was appreciated by the emperor himself and which seems to have been well known to a large readership almost immediately after its completion. Even Chu Hsi 朱熹 (1130–1200), who otherwise criticized the Hu-nan tradition severely and who clearly considered the followers of the Hu-family to be dangerous competitors to his claim to leadership within what Hoyt Tillman has called the “fellowship” of the Right Way, did not challenge the authority of the Hu An-kuo commentary. Hu An-kuo claimed to have followed the guidelines of Ch'eng I 程頤 (1033–1107) faithfully. So great was the success of this text that later it was frequently simply called the “fourth commentary” and that it was able to supersede the ancient three commentaries *Tso-chuan*, *Kung-yang chuan* and *Ku-liang chuan* as the standard at the palace examinations of the Ming-period.

One feature, however, which originally had fuelled the official acceptance of the *Ch'un-ch'iu chuan* 春秋傳, was to become the major reason for its downfall under the Manchurian Ch'ing: It had been the polemic pamphlet of the hawks who at the early Southern Sung court demanded war against the Churchen in order to recover the lost northern plain which in their opinion was the homeland of Chinese civilization. For this purpose Hu An-kuo had garnished his explanations with rude attacks against the Barbarians (*i-ti* 夷狄) which already Confucius allegedly had criticized in his *Ch'un-ch'iu*. Of course, the *Kung-yang* and *Ku-liang* commentaries had already occasionally interpreted the *Ch'un-ch'iu* in the same way,² but Hu An-kuo's commentary went much further in this respect. It is unnecessary, therefore, to talk about the reasons why the Ming emperors, who had superseded the “barbarian” Mongols, did like this text so much, and it is similarly clear why the Manchu did not allow it to remain their official standard commentary. The harsh judgment on the *Ch'un-ch'iu chuan* which we can read in the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu tsung-mu t'i-yao* 四庫全書宗目體要 reflects the bad feelings which the Ch'ing had about Hu An-kuo:

2 *Kung-yang* had declared that Ch'in 秦 and Ch'u 楚 were barbarian (*i* 夷) countries (Duke Hsi 21/6 and Duke Chao 5/7). To these two important states *Ku-liang* added the name of the state of Wu 吳 (Duke Ai 13.3). Interestingly, however, the commentary which became most influential, namely the *Tso-chuan*, does not use the binom *i-ti* and generally does not use polemic rhetorics against the “barbarians”.

Our dynasty generously sponsors the art of explaining the classics. The *Ch'in-ting Ch'un-ch'iu chuan shuo hui-tsuan* 欽定春秋傳說彙纂 (*Imperially edited compilation of collected commentaries to the Annals*) is the first work which has in many cases rejected and corrected the old explanations of Hu An-kuo. It has suppressed the flawed stones and taken the jewels, it has accepted the pure essentials. This is enough to summarize the original book. Because it has been circulating in the world for a long time already it cannot be thrown away completely. Respectfully we have collated and registered it in order to keep the words of one school [among many others!]. As far as the depraved passages in it are concerned, the *Ch'in-ting [Ch'un-ch'iu chuan-shuo] hui-tsuan* has already exposed them without leaving out a single item and has made them known to everybody living between the seas. They need not be discussed here again.”³

The sentence “Because it has been circulating in the world for a long time already it cannot be thrown away completely” makes quite clear that the authors of this text certainly did not like the contents of the *Ch'un-ch'iu chuan* but that it was much too well-known not to be included in the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu*. However, there is a hint that the editors did more than just preserve an old and useless book. What is meant by the words that the imperially sponsored *Ch'un-ch'iu chuan shuo hui-tsuan* had “suppressed the flawed stones and taken the jewels” becomes clear only when one compares the *Ssu-ku ch'üan-shu*'s Wen-yüan ko 文淵閣 edition of the *Ch'un-ch'iu chuan* with the version contained in the *Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an* 四部叢刊 which is based on a Sung print: The reader will soon discover many commentaries attacking the “I and Ti barbarians” which have either been changed into nicer language or suppressed altogether in the later edition.

This finding is not very spectacular. It seems only to reflect the usual proceeding of the *Ssu-k'u* editors. It is, however, interesting to note that not all *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* editions of the text have the same changes. The *Ch'un-ch'iu ta-ch'üan* 春秋大全 (henceforth: text A), for example, which was compiled by the Ming-scholar Hu Kuang 胡廣 (1370–1418) and which is severely attacked by the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu tsung-mu t'i-yao* because it simply copied the text of Hu An-kuo and the commentary of Wang K'e-k'uan 汪克寬 (1304–1372) without adding any new ideas from other sources, is clearly the text which has been affected most by the censoring of the Ch'ing. This is important, because the edition of Hu Kuang had certainly been the most widespread one among candidates for the palace examinations of the Ming. I counted eleven passages

3 *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu tsung-mu* 四庫全書總目, 2 vols., Peking 1965, vol. 1, *chüan* 27, 219–220.

on barbarians which are simply missing in this edition⁴ and three in which the text has been completely reformulated.⁵ In countless other instances it was possible to keep the text without deleting whole passages. In these cases, sentences in which the words “*i-ti*,” “*jung-ti* 戎狄” etc. occurred have only been rephrased using more acceptable language, e.g. the words “foreign territories” (*wai-yü* 外域), foreign states (*wai-kuo* 外國), Man and Ching 蠻荆, Ching and Ch’u 荆楚, and so forth. The word “Man-barbarian” seems not to have had a negative smell as far as the Manchu emperors were concerned, clearly because it referred only to Southern barbarians. Therefore, it was easy for the censors to change many phrases in which Hu An-kuo had used the binom “*i-ti*” in this way without changing the meaning too much.

A little bit better than in text A is the situation in the *Ssu-k’u ch’üan-shu* version of the *Ch’un-ch’iu Hu chuan fu-lu tsuan-shu* 春秋胡傳附錄纂疏, edited by Wang K’e-k’uan (henceforth: text B), which omits only four passages completely.⁶ The *Ch’un-ch’iu chuan* is also contained in the *Ssu-k’u ch’üan-shu* separately without a commentary (henceforth: text C). In this edition eight passages are missing. Only one of these is also missing in text A and B.⁷ Of the other seven missing passages three belong to the passages which are also missing in text A. The reason for leaving out three more passages is probably not their content but simply the fact that they directly follow two missing entries.⁸ One possible explanation why the compilers of this edition in these two cases decided to cut out more than just one passage with clearly anti-barbarian content could be that they wanted to have the reader acquainted with the original text believe that this absence was accidental and not intended. I assume that the last missing entry in text C is actually an example of an accidental slip.⁹

It seems clear, therefore, that the editors of these three editions worked independently. They probably had the same guidelines but were free in their handling of them. The editions B and C are certainly better than text A, but in the cases of the passages which they contrarily to text A do contain they nevertheless often heavily changed the meaning of the text. This shows that they simply used another strategy for translating the anti-discrimination-guidelines into action than texts B and C. Interestingly, the *Ssu-k’u ch’üan-shu hui-yao* 四

4 Namely two entries on a meeting and a covenant with the Jung 戎 in Duke Yin 2, three entries in Hsi 23, 24, and 33, in Wen 8, in Cheng 3 and 9, in Hsiang 7, and in Ai 10 and 13.

5 These three entries occur in Hsüan 3 and Hsüan 11 (2 entries).

6 Hsi 23 and 24, Wen 8, and Ch’eng 3.

7 Wen 8.

8 Wen 8 the two entries following, Ai 13 one entry following.

9 The last entry in Chao 12 is missing without having a “barbarian” context.

庫全書薈要, which was the edition for the special use of the emperor, contains the complete text of the *Chun-ch'iu chuan* (henceforth: text D) without there being a single missing entry. Occasionally, text D, too, had to change the text but in most instances it followed the original in a surprisingly close way even where its contents must have sounded extremely insulting to the imperial ears.¹⁰

2. The case of the *Chih-yen* of Hu Hung

That *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* editions should not be trusted too much is a fact which has long been recognized. It is, however, interesting to see how much the *Ch'un-ch'iu chuan* has been tampered with when it was edited by the scholars from Ch'ien-lung's time when we consider that the latter's judgments are accepted almost universally in the case of another text written by a member of the Hu family. The *Chih-yen* 知言 ("Knowledge of Doctrines")¹¹ written by Hu An-kuo's son Hu Hung 胡宏 (1105–1161) probably during the fifties of the twelfth century is today by many considered to be the second-most important philosophical treatise of the Tao-hsüeh 道學 movement of the Sung after Chang Tsai's 張載 (1020–1078) *Cheng-meng* 正蒙 (*Correcting the Unenlightened*).¹² Although it might seem that its importance has—due to Chu Hsi's negative influence—been recognized only as late as the twentieth century, we have to acknowledge that we do not know very much about the dissemination of this text during the time of the late Ming and the Ch'ing. It is likely that the *Chih-yen* has always had its admirers.

Chih-yen has come down to us in two editions: one which is contained in the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* and the other one which the Ming scholar Ch'eng Min-cheng (1445–1499) 程敏政 published in 1490. Ch'eng Min-cheng is said to have been the person who rediscovered *Chih-yen* which had fallen into oblivion

10 E.g. Wen 8, missing in all other *Ssu-k'u* editions.

11 In my forthcoming book on the Hu family I argue that it is better to translate this quotation from *Meng-tzu* 2A.2 in this way than as "Understanding Words"—as is usually done. There is much evidence that Hu Hung understood the passage as being directed against doctrines of the enemies of Confucius' teachings.

12 Following Mou Tsung-san, many Chinese scholars have adopted this position. It should be pointed out, however, that for most Western scholars who have worked on the Sung during the last thirty or forty years, Hu Hung has not been an influential person. An exception is Hoyt Tillman, who deals lengthily with Hu Hung in his book on *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendancy*, Honolulu 1992 (p. 29–36).

sometime during the Sung or Mongol-period. The main difference between the two editions is that Ch'eng Min-cheng's text which is spread over six *chüan* is divided into fifteen chapters with headings,¹³ whereas the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* text, while also spread over six *chüan*, does not have any chapter headings. This difference does not at first sight seem to be very important. Neither does a second feature look very spectacular, namely that the short sayings of the first *chüan* containing chapters one to three of the *Chih-yen* are arranged in a slightly different order in the two editions.

Ch'ing scholars, however, liked to repudiate Ming scholars, and twentieth-century Western Sinology has usually chosen to follow the judgments of Ch'ing scholars. What the latter say about the value of a text is most often accepted as truth without further looking at the arguments leading to the judgment. The reason for this is probably that Ch'ing scholars were considered to have been closer in time to the original and that they lived in an atmosphere resembling the time of its origination closer than Western scholars do. Moreover, Ch'ing scholars are given to using strong language whenever they seem to discover a flaw in the argumentation of their predecessors, a device which makes it difficult to oppose them as long as no really sound evidence speaking against them is at hand. However, to believe in these judgments can be dangerous sometimes, too. Firstly, in many cases Ch'ing scholars were actually much more removed from the subjects they were discussing than we may think, and secondly, as seen in the example given above, they often had unscholarly motives for dismissing or censoring texts.

The differences between the edition of the *Chih-yen* used by the *Ssu-k'u* editors and the traditionally transmitted one which may look small to us were considered important by them:

But when Ming scholars transmitted and engraved old books they liked to revise the text in a disorderly manner. This print, too, contains chapter headings which have been forced upon the text by an irresponsible person, who also turned the order upside down and confused characters and sentences. The true nature [of the text] has been completely lost.¹⁴

Fortunately, the editors add, they found a manuscript in the *Yung-lo ta-tien* 永樂大典 which still transmitted the original order of the Sung-text.

13 This edition is contained for example in the *Ao-ya t'ang ts'ung-shu* 奧雅堂叢書 but also in many other collectanea.

14 *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu tsung-mu*, 782. The text is also contained in *Hu Hung chi* 胡宏集, Peking 1987, 348–349.

Let us have a look at the fate of this statement in modern times. Although the modern editors of Hu Hung's works decided to print the text together with the chapter headings and clearly relied on the *Ao-ya t'ang ts'ung-shu* edition, in their preface they dryly state that the headings are "the result of the treatment of the text by Ming scholars".¹⁵ Since they do not advance any evidence for this claim, this sentence shows that they simply accept the judgment of the *T'i-yao*. The same is true for secondary literature on the *Chih-yen* if, what seems usually not to be the case, the author is aware that there is a problem at all. *Chih-yen* has always been treated as if no chapter headings were there. Mou Tsung-san 牟宗三 (1908–1995), for example, who is certainly the single most important scholar to have worked on the *Chih-yen*, was not interested in them at all. A reading of his work *Hsin-t'i yü hsing-t'i* 心體與性體 shows that his arguments are exclusively based on the abridged version contained in *Sung Yüan hsüeh-an* 宋元學案—obviously he did not have the full text at his hands. Although Mou's students clearly did have the complete text they did not want to depart from the interpretation of their master and hence did not even think about considering the chapter headings as genuine and about the consequences which this possibility might entail for the text of the *Chih-yen*.

Now, unfortunately these chapter headings are not as innocent as one might think when recognizing this complete scholarly disregard of them: The text starts with a chapter on "*t'ien-ming* 天命" which, of course, is an allusion to the first sentence of the *Li-chi* 禮記 chapter *Chung-yung* 中庸, but which also can be translated as "The mandate of heaven". And, *Chih-yen* ends with a chapter on "*Chung-yüan* 中原," the central plain. When keeping in mind what the editors of the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* did to Hu An-kuo's *Ch'un-ch'iu chuan*, it becomes immediately clear what the *Ssu-k'u* editors meant when they said that the "chapter headings have been forced upon the text by an irresponsible person" living during the Ming period: Of course, they charge this person with having made a political pamphlet against the Mongols out of a text which originally was purely philosophical. But then, their argument can be turned against themselves. Firstly, as stated above, we do know that the Hu were strongly anti-barbarian. For the reader of the *Ch'un-ch'iu chuan* of Hu An-kuo, it would not come as a big surprise if a philosophical treatise of his son Hu Hung would show similar traits as the former text. Secondly, we have seen that the Manchu disliked texts with an anti-barbarian orientation. For the scholar who knows the practice of, and also the probably existing guidelines for, text-editing by the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* editors, it looks very likely that they

15 *Hu Hung chi*, preface, 8.

themselves were desperately looking for a text which did not contain the fatal chapter headings, and that they intentionally blamed some unspecified Ming scholar for having forced them upon the traditionally received text in order to enhance the authority of their own text.

Our suspicion must grow when we take a closer look at the argumentation of the *Ssu-k'u* team: Ch'eng Min-cheng, they say, was the first person to rediscover the *Chih-yen*. Furthermore, Ch'eng is known to have been the one who brought the text into the arrangement which we have today: He decided to publish *Chih-yen* without altogether eight paragraphs which had been criticized by Chu Hsi, and which Chu Hsi had circulated among his students as an independent work together with his own criticisms and those of Lü Tsu-ch'ien 呂祖謙 (1137–1181) and Chang Shih 張栻 (1133–1180).¹⁶ Instead, he appended them to the text together with the criticisms. Now it does not seem that after Ch'eng Min-cheng the text has ever been changed again. When the *Ssu-k'u* editors reproached an unspecified Ming person who added the chapter headings, they most likely had Ch'eng Min-cheng in mind. But as it happens, the chapter headings have been chosen after the same principle which was used during the compiling process of the *Confucian Analects* (*Lun-yü* 論語): The compilers simply used the first two characters of the chapters as a heading. However, in the case of *Chih-yen*, there are two chapters where this is not true, namely chapters one and four which are headed by the words “*t'ien-ming*” (“The Mandate of Heaven,” or: “What Has Been Ordained by Heaven”) and “*hao-wu* 好惡” (“Likes and Dislikes”).

On the other hand, we do find paragraphs beginning with these words among the eight sayings which Ch'eng Min-cheng had removed from the original text and appended to it instead because they had been criticized by Chu Hsi. Moreover, when reading the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* edition we learn that these short sayings must have stood at the beginning of *chüan* 1 and 2 of the total six *chüan*. A comparison of these and the following entries with their equivalents in the other, allegedly later edition, shows that the “mandate of heaven” and “likes and dislikes”-entries must have been the passages with which chapters 1 and 4 of this edition began. Is it really probable that Ch'eng Min-cheng removed these paragraphs and attached chapter headings to the text afterwards, without following his own new arrangement? Although we can not completely exclude this possibility, this procedure does not seem very plausible.

Even more important is, however, a last finding: As I have mentioned above, the last chapter of *Chih-yen* in its traditionally received version bears the

16 On Chu Hsi's handling the *Chih-yen* compare Tillman, *Confucian Discourse*.

title of “The central plain” (*Chung-yüan*). And it begins with one of the most famous statements of Hu Hung: “When the Central plain did not have the Way of the Central plain anymore, the barbarians entered the Central plain. When the Central plain walks on the Way of the Central plain again, the barbarians will return to their territory (or: they will give this territory back)¹⁷.” But in the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* edition this passage is missing!

Without this saying, the chapter heading “The Central plain” does not make any sense. We have seen how much the *Ssu-k'u* editors have tampered with the text of Hu An-kuo's *Ch'un-ch'iu chuan* whenever the text contained words which might have sounded unpleasant to the Manchu emperors. After this reading experience it seems undebatable that it is much more likely that the same editors also cut out this crucial anti-barbarian sentence from the *Chih-yen* than that a Ming scholar added it. The *Ch'un-ch'iu chuan* has come down to us in a Sung edition. Hence, we definitely know that at least Hu An-kuo used sentences like the one just quoted. The same language is known from the works of Hu Yin. It is obvious, therefore, that this must be an original saying of Hu Hung.

What I want to suggest is that the Ch'eng Min-cheng version of the *Chih-yen*, which contains chapter headings, does represent an old state of the text—in my opinion probably a Sung version. According to our knowledge Ch'eng was the first person to rediscover the *Chih-yen* after the Sung or the Yüan, and because of the reasons stated above it seems not very likely that the chapter headings were added by him. He would have chosen other titles for chapters 1 and 4: Chapter 1 would have had the heading “*ch'eng-che*” 誠者 (Sincerity) and chapter 4 the heading “*kua-yü*” 寡欲 (Few Desires). Otherwise he must have thought that the reader of his edition was familiar with the older edition and knew why the chapter headings in these two cases were wrong. But why then invent them anyway? Moreover, this reader would have also known that the first entry in chapter 15, which was the basis for the heading of that chapter, had been invented by Ch'eng Min-cheng. All this does not make any sense.

But then, what about the statement of the *Ssu-k'u* editors that they rediscovered the original version of the text in the *Yung-lo ta-tien*? When Kuo Pokung in 1938 published his important booklet *Researches on the Yung-lo ta-tien* he came to the conclusion that there had never existed more than two copies of this huge encyclopedia. Since its compilation, hardly any scholar has had the opportunity to read the texts contained in it until during the cataclysm of the Ming the original copy was burned. The one and only copy which had been

17 The meaning of the word *kuei* 歸 is ambiguous.

made at the end of the sixteenth century survived but was not accessible either. The first scholars who were allowed to rediscover the collection and to evaluate its materials were the members of the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* team. They must have seen thousands of books which nobody had opened before them.¹⁸

Given the clear evidence for the tampering with texts done by these scholars, on the one hand, and their exclusive access to the *Yung-lo ta-tien*, on the other, I wonder whether we should really believe in the validity of their claim that they “rediscovered the original text” of the *Chih-yen* in that encyclopedia. This claim looks very much like an attempt to mask what was in reality the production of a purged version of a text which was too important not to be included in the imperially sponsored encyclopedic collection of the literary treasuries of the Ch'ing. The one and only person who would have been able to discover that something was not correct here, would have been Ch'ien-lung himself. But whether he was interested in doing so is questionable. He had carefully limited the extent to which the *Yung-lo ta-tien* should be used: Only those books “which were of help for opening the doors for later students, and which broadened the knowledge of those who had heard much already” should be recompiled, no other works.¹⁹

We do not know whether Ch'ien-lung, when making this restrictive statement, simply wanted to save time and labour or whether he thought that a too liberal use of the *Yung-lo ta-tien* could be harmful to his dynasty. Be that as it may, it is clear that in the atmosphere of censorship prevailing at his court it would certainly not have been difficult to forge a new edition of a text as long as it served the dynasty's purposes. However, it is not necessary to assume that forgery took place. Maybe the *Yung-lo ta-tien* copy was really there. But even if that was the case, this did not mean that the version of the *Chih-yen* which had been transmitted for several centuries before the finding of a different edition was a Ming-fake. In my opinion we have to take this edition at least as seriously as the one contained in the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu*—and given the many reasons enumerated above it is necessary to be very critical of the claims which the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu tsung-mu* makes in that case. In order to substantiate the suspicion voiced above that the recompilations done on the basis of *Yung-lo ta-tien* may be problematic it would seem necessary to wait for more detailed research into other “originals” which were discovered in this encyclopedia and

18 See also the succinct summary by R. Kent Guy, *The Emperor's Four Treasuries. Scholars and the State in the Late Ch'ien-lung Era*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1987, 61 f.

19 Kuo Po-kung 郭伯恭, *Yongle dadian kao* 永樂大典考, Taipei 1962; Kent Guy, *The Emperor's Four Treasuries*, 62.

for comparisons with their allegedly corrupted traditionally transmitted texts. One interesting example would be a commentary to the *Ch'un-ch'iu* written by a contemporary of the Hu's, namely by Kao K'ang 高閔 (1097–1153), a grandson-student of Ch'eng I. We know this commentary only because it has been recompiled on the basis of a version contained in the *Yung-lo ta-tien* which had then been included in the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu*. Interestingly, there is a note by the editors that two parts of the commentary are missing, namely the years 14 to 33 of duke Hsi 僖 and 16 to 33 of duke Hsiang 襄, both of which, incidentally, are those parts where many of the most aggressive anti-barbarian comments are concentrated in the case of Hu An-kuo's commentary to the *Ch'un-ch'iu*. Given the fact that almost nobody had access to the *Yung-lo ta-tien*, how—and probably more importantly why—should parts of this commentary have been lost? Did the *Ssu-k'u* editors not like parts of this text which otherwise looked much more acceptable to them than Hu An-kuo's *Ch'un-ch'iu chuan*?

Another case in point is the famous *Chien-yen i-lai hsi-nien yao-lu* of Li Hsin-ch'uan 李心傳 (1167–1244), which was also edited by *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* editors on the basis of a copy in the *Yung-lo ta-tien*. Charles Hartman has pointed to the fact that this text contains a picture of the infamous chancellor Ch'in Kuei which is much more favourable than that of other sources such as for example the *Sung-shih*. Inserted into the text are several commentaries which try to paint the picture of Ch'in Kuei darker than the main text of Li Hsin-ch'uan. The *Ssu-k'u* editors say that these commentaries are from the hand of the *Yung-lo ta-tien* compilers—Ming scholars—although Charles Hartman convincingly argues that they were probably written under the Sung.²⁰ Once we have understood how the *Ssu-k'u* editors worked, it is easy to see why they declared these commentaries to be Ming additions: Ch'in Kuei had worked out a compromise with the Jurchen, who were the ancestors of the Manchus. Therefore, the Manchus looked upon him much more favourably than Ming-scholars. The *Ssu-k'u* editors liked the *Chien-yen i-lai hsi-nien yao-lu* precisely because it served to correct the dark picture which the *Sung-shih* had painted of Ch'in Kuei. That the negative commentaries were written as late as under the Ming was a conclusion which fitted the Ch'ing vision of Ming scholarship but which does not necessarily correspond to the truth.

20 Charles Hartman, "The Making of a Villain: Ch'in Kuei and the Tao-hsüeh," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 58 (1998), 59–145, on p. 80. Compare also Hartman's article "Bibliographical Notes on Sung Historical Works: The Original Record of the Way and its Destiny (Tao-ming lu) by Li Hsin-ch'uan," *Journal of Sung and Yüan Studies* 30 (2000), 1–61.

Only when further research into this difficult subject is done and when more texts recompiled from the *Yung-lo ta tien* in the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* have been analyzed will we be able to assess whether the task of the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* was a more scholarly or a more political one.