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THE CHENG COMMUNAL FAMILY:
SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND
NEO-CONFUCIANISM IN
YÜAN AND EARLY MING CHINA

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AN ideal “communal family” as understood in Yüan and early Ming times was an institution embodying three main dimensions. First, the family commune as an organization was a group of male kinsmen who traced their descent from a common ancestor and shared in the management and usufruct of property held by the family in common; they were a joint lineage (*ho-tsu*) in the sense that the component nuclear families of kinsmen, wives, and children lived in adjoining houses and “shared the stove” (*ho-ts‘uan*); and they constituted a joint family commune in the further sense that no individual or nuclear family was permitted to own private property on the side. The communal family represented an attempted fusion of family and lineage, of lineage and locale; it was an undivided and unsegmented family corporation resting on a foundation of considerable wealth. By establishing itself as a hereditary commune, a family could overcome the economic disadvantages of the usual Chinese inheritance system, which demanded a roughly equal division of property among all sons when a household divided upon the death of the father. Thus the family commune also embodied the dimension of time, in that it was expected to last at least three or four generations as a hereditary and undivided union of kin. The test of durability through time was occasionally recognized by the imperial government’s designation of such a commune as an *i-men*, a “righteous gate” or communal family.¹ Finally, the institution of the hereditary family

¹ The term *i* 義, often translated “righteous,” came to acquire the further connotation of “charitable” or “communal,” especially in such compound terms as *i-t‘ien* (charitable

commune also existed in a moral-ideological plane, for it was generally seen as an ideal form of human organization, a medium through which part of the Neo-Confucian vision of "antiquity" (*ku*) could be made manifest in the present-day world.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the history and organization of one such family commune, the Cheng family of P'u-chiang county, Chin-hua prefecture, in modern Chekiang province; and to elucidate the rather curious ways in which contemporary Neo-Confucian writers of the late Yüan and early Ming periods sought to justify this commune as an orthodox social model. This line of inquiry should have something to reveal about the somewhat uncertain relationship between ideology and concrete reality in the latter part of the fourteenth century, the era of the Ming foundation.

The Cheng family commune at its height enjoyed a very wide celebrity. By the time of the Ming founding in 1368 the commune had upwards of 100 members and had lived some ten generations together as a communal family unit. Its renown was well established earlier, however. This was partly a result of the happy circumstance that its rise coincided with the fourteenth-century Chin-hua "renaissance" of Chu Hsi Neo-Confucianism and *ku-wen* literature, a movement that produced at least a half-dozen major writers and publicists whose works became well known outside the Chin-hua area.² In the works of these writers, who were either prominent officials or important teachers, many epitaphs and other commemorative

fields), *i-shu* or *i-hsüeh* (charitable school), etc. These generally were institutions set up by the stronger and richer for the weaker and poorer within a village or extended family ("clan") context. For the term *i* as "communal," cf. Shimizu Morimitsu 清水盛光, *Chügoku zokusan seido kō* 中國族產制度考 (Tokyo, 1949), 11-36. For the *i-chuang*, cf. Denis Twitchett, "The Fan Clan's Charitable Estate, 1050-1760," in David S. Nivison and Arthur F. Wright, eds., *Confucianism in Action* (Stanford, 1969), pp. 97-133.

² For the Chin-hua school, see Sun K'o-k'uan 孫克寬, 元代之金華學術評 ["Critique of Chin-hua scholarship in the Yüan"], *Yu-shih hsüeh-chih* 幼獅學誌 8 (December 1969).1-34; 元代金華文人方鳳與柳貞 ["The literati Fang Feng and Liu Kuan of Chin-hua in the Yüan Period"], *Chung-hua wen-hua fu-hsing yüeh-k'an* 中華文化復興月刊 3 (April 1970).12-19; 吳萊之才華與學藝 ["The genius and scholarship of Wu Lai"], *ibid.*, 3 (September 1970).15-24; 儒雅雍容之黃○ [see Morohashi No. 17922 for this graph] ["Huang Chin as a model of Confucian refinement"], [*Ssu-li Tung-hai ta-hsüeh*] *T'u-shu-kuan hsüeh-pao* [私立東海大學圖書館學報 11 (1971).81-107.

pieces concerning the Cheng family may be found. Equally important for the Cheng reputation, the Yüan government, pursuant to a new legal stipulation, relieved the family of all labor service obligations in 1336. Chieh Hsi-ssu wrote an inscription in celebration of this event, and “all the great men of the time” added congratulatory poems.³ The spread of the Cheng reputation outside the Chin-hua area was also facilitated by the circulation of their *chia-kuei* or *chia-fan*, a corpus of operational rules compiled by several generations of Cheng family managers. The rules came into the hands of several prominent scholar-officials and literati of the late Yüan period, and their written remarks on them in turn circulated among friends and students, so that the Cheng family became well known at least by hearsay to a fairly broad segment of the gentry by early Ming times.⁴

In the early Ming, the Cheng family rules showed signs of having captured the social imagination of young Confucian zealots. The precocious Hsieh Chin (1369–1415), who passed his *chin-shih* examinations at the age of nineteen, urged the first Ming emperor in a

³ Huang Chin, 鄭氏義門詩序 [“Preface to poems in honor of the Cheng communal family”], *Chin-hua Huang hsien-sheng wen-chi* 金華黃先生文集 (*Hsü Chin-hua ts’ung-shu* 續金華叢書 [hereafter *HCHTS*] ed.) 17.3b–4b; Liu Kuan, 鄭氏旌表義門記 [“Inscription in honor of the conferral of *i-men* status on the Cheng family”], *Liu Tai-chih chi* 柳待制集 (*HCHTS* ed.) 15.8b–10a. The remaining works of Chieh Hsi-ssu 揭傒斯 do not include his inscription for the Cheng that Huang Chin mentions. However, an account of the Cheng written by Chieh is paraphrased in Wang Li 王禮, 鄭氏孝義門表 [“An appreciation of the Cheng communal family”], *Lin-yüan wen-chi* 麟原文集 (*Ssu-k’u ch’üan-shu chen-pen ch’u-chi* ed.) A8.1a–3b. Wang Li (1314–1386) was from Lu-ling, Kiangsi.

⁴ Thus Ch’en Lü 陳旅 (1287–1342) of P’u-t’ien, Fukien, read and admired the Cheng family rules; and Ou-yang Hsüan 歐陽玄 (1283–1358) of Liu-yang, Hunan, wrote a prose-poem in honor of the Cheng after Cheng Shen 琛 showed him a copy of the family rules. Both Ch’en and Ou-yang were well-known court literati in the late Yüan period. Liu Hsien 劉詵 (1268–1350) of Lu-ling, Kiangsi, also saw the rules and commented favorably; Shu Ti 舒○ [See Morohashi No. 43391 for this graph] (1304–1377) of Chi-ch’i (Anhwei) urged a neighbor to organize his family after the Cheng model. Cf. Ch’en Lü, 鄭濤字序 [“On Cheng T’ao’s courtesy name”], *An-ya-t’ang chi* 安雅堂集 (*Yüan-tai chen-pen wen-chi hui-k’an* 元代珍本文集彙刊 ed.), 222–225; Ou-yang Hsüan, *Kuei-chai wen-chi* 圭齋文集 (1749 woodblock ed.) 1.4a–5b; Liu Hsien, 題浦陽鄭氏義門家範後 [“Colophon to the rules of the Cheng communal family of P’u-chiang”], *Kuei-yin wen-chi* 桂隱文集 (ms. ed.) 4.4b–5a; Shu Ti, 胡氏族譜序 [“Preface to the Hu family genealogy”], *Chen-su-chai wen-chi* 貞素齋文集 (1838 woodblock ed.) 2.5b–6b.

memorial he wrote shortly afterward that the Cheng rules, together with a Sung work on village relations, the *Lü-shih hsiang-yüeh*, be issued to the high officials and large lineages of the empire as a necessary step for achieving social harmony.⁵ In another reform memorial, he urged the imperial publication of the Cheng rules, together with Chu Hsi's *Chia li* and the *Yen-shih chia-hsün* of Yen Chih-t'ui, as part of his overall scheme for radical and large-scale social reorganization.⁶ In the Yung-lo era (1403-1424), the statesman Yang Shih-ch'ü, shown a copy of the rules by one of the Cheng descendants, commented that the rules had facilitated the family's longevity and furnished a valuable model for emulation elsewhere.⁷ Hsieh Chin, writing again in about 1407, thought the ability of the Cheng to maintain fraternal solidarity against pressures emanating from wives and children lay behind their success as a joint family, and urged a younger acquaintance to establish this kind of solidarity in his own family.⁸

The Cheng example inspired a few imitators and, perhaps equally important, aroused the admiration of people who wanted to emulate them but found it impossible even to try. T'ung Chi (1324-?) of Chin-hua, writing in the late Yüan, said that the Cheng had gained wide admiration but as yet no outside imitators, and that although he himself would like to imitate them, his own family was too small and weak to attempt it.⁹ Cheng Shen (1314-1361), a member of the family, propagandized the commune when he came through Ning-po in an official capacity in the 1350s; a prominent local man, whose own wealthy family had split up over a property dispute, was moved to unstinting praise of what the Cheng had accomplished.¹⁰ Only two

⁵ Hsieh Chin 解縉, 上萬言封事疏 ["Confidential myriad word memorial"], *Hsieh hsüeh-shih ch'üan-chi* 解學士全集 (Wan-li woodblock ed.) 1.28a-37a.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 太平十策 ["Ten-point plan for internal peace"], 1.37a-44b.

⁷ Yang Shih-ch'ü 楊士奇, 虞氏家範序 ["Preface to the Yü family rules"], *Tung-li hsü-chi* 東里續集 (Ming woodblock ed.) 15.1a-2a. Yang's note on the Cheng rules is on page 18.9b.

⁸ Hsieh Chin, 贈以達倪秀才南還序 ["A departing message for the aspirant Ni I-ta, returning south"], 6.50a-51b.

⁹ T'ung Chi 童冀, 書鄭氏孝義卷後 ["Colophon to manuscript poems in honor of the communalism of the Cheng family"], *Shang-chiung-chai chi* 尚綱齋集 (HCHTS ed.) 2.18ab.

¹⁰ Pei Ch'ung 貝瓊, 故韓處士碣銘 ["Epitaph for Han Hsing 性"], *Ch'ing-chiang Pei hsien-sheng wen-chi* 清江貝先生文集 (1719 woodblock ed.) 30.9b-11a.

other families are known to have organized communes in conscious imitation of the Cheng, and these were both from the same county of P'u-chiang. The Wang family of Shen-ch'i, migrants into P'u-chiang from neighboring I-wu in the late Southern Sung, later organized a family commune exactly after the Cheng model. By around 1400, the Wang commune had endured for five generations.¹¹ The Huang family of Shui-ko, resident in P'u-chiang since at least the T'ang period, organized their commune on Cheng lines early in the Ming, but it attained neither the renown nor the formal *i-men* status of the Cheng and Wang.¹² Although other joint lineages run on communal lines certainly existed in the Yüan and early Ming periods,¹³ contemporary writers who mention the Cheng make no attempt to associate them with this larger social phenomenon, but rather stress their utter uniqueness. As a model family, the Cheng were apparently not to be taken as a pilot project in any seriously intended effort at broad social reconstruction. They were not seen to be a fully workable prototype for other families, insofar as most commentators empha-

¹¹ Liu San-wu 劉三吾, 深溪王氏圖譜序 ["Preface to the genealogy of the Wang family of Shen-ch'i"], *T'an-chai Liu hsien-sheng wen-chi* 坦齋劉先生文集 (ms. ed.), *chüan* 1, no p.; 浦江義門處士王素素墓阡表 ["Epitaph for Wang Shih-lin 士麟"], *chüan* 2, no p.; Sung Lien 宋濂, 浦江深溪王氏義門碑銘 ["Inscription for the stela of the Wang communal family of Shen-ch'i, P'u-chiang"], *Sung Wen-hsien kung ch'üan-chi* 宋文憲公全集 (SPPY ed.) 23.4a-5a; Fang Hsiao-ju 方孝孺, 王氏深溪集後序 ["Postface to the Wang family's *Shen-ch'i chi*"], *Sun-chih-chai chi* 遜志齋集 (*Ch'ien-k'un cheng-ch'i chi* 乾坤正氣集 ed.) 199(13).17b-18b; 書浦江二義門倡合詩後 ["Colophon to poems for the two communal families of P'u-chiang"], 204(18).19b-20a. These Wang were collateral descendants of the Southern Sung prime minister Wang Huai 淮.

¹² Su Po-heng 蘇伯衡, 黃氏家範序 ["Preface to the Huang family rules"], *Su P'ing-chung chi* 蘇平仲集 (*Chin-hua ts'ung-shu* [hereafter *CHTS*] ed.) 4.25b-27b; 一心堂記 ["Inscription for the I-hsin t'ang"], 7.9a-11b. Fang Hsiao-ju mentioned the Huang family in 1380, but made no comment on their communal organization; 199(13).12b-13a. The sons of Wang I 禕 (1323-1374) of I-wu in Chin-hua prefecture made moves gradually to remodel their family after the Cheng, but it is unclear how far this effort succeeded; cf. Wang Shen 紳, 上仲兄請立家廟家法第一書 ["Letter number one to my elder brother proposing the establishment of a family temple and a family law"], *Chi-chih-chai chi* 繼志齋集 (*HCHTS* ed.) B.7b-8b.

¹³ Contemporary literature easily provides at least a dozen examples of communal families who were not known to have been influenced by the Cheng. As in the case of the Cheng, these families were not typically organized by officials or ex-officials.

sized that few could ever hope to follow their lead. Rather, the Cheng were considered an unusual phenomenon, a rare species whose excellence demonstrated the permissible heights of human social organization and provided a yardstick other families might use to become better aware of their own shortcomings.¹⁴ If few families could reach the Cheng, many might hope to try, and that in itself was stimulus enough for social improvement.

Government could help this attenuated form of social improvement through its power to honor and advertise the original model. Three imperial courts knew of the Cheng and what they purported to represent. The Southern Sung court in the Ch'ien-tao period (1165–1173) gave the first official honors to the family when it awarded commendation and a posthumous name to Cheng Ch'i, the founder of the joint enterprise, for outstanding filial piety.¹⁵ It was the Yüan court, however, that designated the family a communal *i-men* in 1311, and, as was mentioned, permanently exempted it from all labor service obligations in 1336.¹⁶ Yüan officialdom remained solicitous of the Cheng to the end of the dynasty; Yü Ch'üeh visited the Cheng family compound at Pai-lin Creek in 1350 in the course of supervising a major tax reform in the Chin-hua prefecture, and wrote for them five large calligraphic characters saying, "the best family in Che-tung," which the local officials had inscribed into stone and placed in the Cheng courtyard.¹⁷ In 1352 Örüg Temür, Chief Administrator of Chiang-che province, preoccupied as he was with the Red Turban rebellions raging at the time, still thought it worthwhile to remind the Cheng of their loyalty to the dynasty and took the time to write eight calligraphic characters for them (reading: the entire gate es-

¹⁴ For the Cheng as a rarity, cf. Chang Tan 張統, 麟溪集序 ["Preface to the *Lin-ch'i chi*"], *Ming wen-heng* 明文衡 (photoreprint, Taipei, 1962) 41.8a. Wang Li remarked that special geomantic conditions in P'u-chiang must have had something to do with the Cheng commune's success; "if not," he asked, "then why is it no other lineages can reach them?" Cf. *Lin-yüan wen-chi*, A8.3a.

¹⁵ *Sung shih* (*Po-na* ed.) 456.25b-26a.

¹⁶ Sung Lien, 浦江人物記 ["Account of P'u-chiang personalities"], 53.4a; Liu Kuan, 15.8b-10a.

¹⁷ Tai Liang 戴良, 題余廉訪五大篆後 ["Colophon to five large-seal characters written by Yü Ch'üeh 闕"], *Tai Chiu-ling chi* 戴九靈集 (*Ch'ien-k'un cheng-ch'i chi* ed.) 150(4).2b-3b; Hu Chu 胡助, 跋余廉訪所篆浙東第一家大字後, *Ch'un-pai lei-kao* 純白類稿 (*CHTS* ed.) 19.13b-14a.

teems *i*; nine generations they have lived together) and have the scrolls sent by special courier from the provincial capital at Hang-chou.¹⁸ Six years later, in 1358, the forces of the future Ming founder Chu Yüan-chang captured P'u-chiang county. They took care to protect the Cheng from casual military depredation and so win their support for the new regime. General Li Wen-chung personally secured the Cheng property and sent an officer with 2,000 troops to Chu-chi, twenty-five miles northeast, where most of the family had fled for safety, to escort them all back to their home.¹⁹ During the early Ming the family received various tokens of esteem from the emperor: Cheng Lien, for example, on his yearly trips to the Ming capital at Nanking to offer birthday greetings to the throne, was permitted to stand in the same file as the descendants of the ancient Confucians Yen Hui and Tseng-tzu, an arrangement considered to be a signal honor for the Cheng.²⁰

That there were, however, tensions between society and social ideology at this time becomes particularly evident in the Cheng family case, because although praised as an "antique" phenomenon, the family commune in fact had no institutional roots in antiquity. Not only did history's first known family commune, organized by commoners like the Cheng, not appear before the sixth and seventh centuries A.D., but almost every element of the commune as a concrete organization can be shown to derive from some non-Confucian, latter-day tradition and not from high classical antiquity at all. Even more, the notion of an undivided family persisting indefinitely through time flatly contradicts the grand sage of Neo-Confucianism, Chu Hsi (1130-1200), whose authoritative *Family Rituals* (*Chia li*) implicitly recognizes individually held property and the dispersion of kin after four generations.²¹ Yet such Neo-Confucian writers and ideologists of the Chin-hua school as Liu Kuan (1270-1342), Huang Chin (1277-

¹⁸ Wang I 王禕, 鄭氏義門碑後記 ["Further inscription on the Cheng communal family stele"], *Wang Chung-wen kung chi* 王忠文公集 (*Ch'ien-k'un cheng-ch'i* ed.) 172(7).2b-3a.

¹⁹ Sung Lien, 鄭都事墓志銘 ["Epitaph for Cheng Hsüan 鉉"], 24.7a-9a; *Ming T'ai-tsu shih-lu* (Academia Sinica ed.), 1, 66 [hereafter *TTSL*].

²⁰ P'u-chiang hsien-chih || 縣志 (Chekiang, 1905), *hsiao-yu* 孝友 8.12b-13a [hereafter *PCHC*].

²¹ Shimizu, pp. 85-87.

1357), Hu Han (1307–1381), Sung Lien (1310–1381), and Fang Hsiao-ju (1357–1402), while fully aware of these discrepancies, were still able to argue the case for the antique legitimacy of the family commune. Their ability to take this position provides us with some good clues to the real meaning of the slogan “restoring antiquity” (*fu-ku*) as it was understood at a time when the Ming state, with its acceptance of Confucian ideology and its tendency toward imperial despotism, was being founded and consolidated.

An investigation of the early history of the Cheng indicates that they originally lacked sufficient resources for a large joint family. Their acquisitive drive for landed property seems to have been an unpleasant affair carried out at their neighbors' expense. This was not a form of activity easily tolerated by a Neo-Confucian ideology generally committed to the equal distribution of landed wealth and always opposed to the violent and grasping tendencies inherent in estate building (*chien-ping*). In view of the Chengs' acceptance as a moral and social ideal, a study of their origins is important because it points up a certain reluctance in Confucian theory to deal directly with actual social processes.

In the Sung period, before their settlement in P'u-chiang, the Cheng ancestors showed a tendency toward frequent division and migration. In the Sung, the Cheng genealogy traced itself back to one Cheng Ning-tao of Ying-yang in Honan province who was made a magistrate in Hsi county (Anhwei) and consequently made his home there. His son Cheng Tzu-yung, who held no office, moved from there to Mu-chou (Chien-te, Chekiang), about seventy miles east. The further migration to P'u-chiang, twenty-five miles further east, was undertaken by three grandsons of Cheng Tzu-yung in the Yüan-fu era (1098–1100) of the Northern Sung. One of these grandsons, Cheng Huai, was the ancestor of the branch that later established the joint family. The three immigrant Cheng brothers settled themselves in the district of Kan-te in the eastern part of P'u-chiang county, along a tributary of the P'u-yang River that Cheng Huai renamed Pai-lin Creek, “in order to show that he had ancestors.”²² The de-

²² Huang Chin, 青田尉鄭君墓志銘 [“Epitaph for Cheng Te-chang 德璋”] 37.1a–2b, says that Cheng Huai 淮 was the youngest brother; the *PCHC* (*i-hsing* 義行) 9.2b–3a says that he was the eldest. For the name “Three Cheng,” cf. Liu Kuan, 15.8b–10a. The Cheng claimed, and Sung Lien sought to prove, that the family was

scendants of Cheng Huai's two brothers became members of the Cheng "clan" (*tsu*), the so-called "Three Cheng," but not of the joint family. By some means the accounts do not discuss, Cheng Huai acquired a large tract of land, but later sold 1,000 *mou* (ca. 160 acres) of it in order to finance local famine relief in 1126–1127, the troubled period of the Southern Sung foundation. This act sufficed to earn the name "Jen-i li" ("Benevolent and Righteous Township") for the area of the Cheng settlement, but it also seems to have left Cheng Huai's descendants with a reduced property base, a situation not reversed until some six generations later.

It was in this period of reduced economic circumstances that Cheng Huai's grandson Cheng Ch'i established the joint family commune that later became so famous. What little is known of the life of Cheng Ch'i derives from family tradition, and though its authenticity is open to doubt, his life as we have it is important for understanding the sense of moral obligation that helped dissuade his descendants from going their separate ways as earlier Chengs had done. Cheng Ch'i was believed to have performed three major and heroic acts of moral righteousness in his lifetime. One of these, ultimately equivalent to a will to suicide, may be described as an unhesitating determination to take upon oneself the punishment rightfully due a father or elder brother. Cheng Ch'i's father, involved in some litigation of which we do not know the details, was arrested by the prefectural officials in Chin-hua and was awaiting execution. Cheng Ch'i wrote the prefect, offering himself for execution in place of his father. The prefect, however, reexamined the case and released both father and son: this was a fortunate but not inevitable outcome of the son's initiative. The second act was less likely to prove fatal, but again demanded the sacrifice of all "private" pleasures and affections; this was the utter devotion to parents (or, as later, to the collective family rules) known as *hsiao* or filial obedience. Cheng Ch'i's filial endeavor was exemplified in his divorce of two successive wives who failed to please their mother-in-

descended from Cheng Pai-lin 白麟, a last scion of the Cheng of Ying-yang, one of the great aristocratic clans of the T'ang period. Cf. Sung Lien, 19.5a and 53.4ab; Ou-yang Hsüan, 題白麟溪三大字後 ["Colophon to the three characters 'Pai-lin ch'i' (written by the former prime minister Toghto 脫脫)"] 14.5ab; *Hsin T'ang shu* (*Po-na* ed.) 75A.4a.

law in certain minor matters; the first, for example, earned her ouster by being late in serving the crippled old lady her meals. "But this," says his biography, "is how he was in not tolerating the slightest departure from normative behavior (*li*)." Cheng's mother was thirty years a victim of paralysis and was totally incapacitated, and for thirty years Cheng Ch'i carried her everywhere, even holding her while she performed her natural functions. The third act was a miracle; in a drought, Cheng Ch'i wept and so caused the water to flow again from his mother's favorite well, thereafter called the Hsiao-kan ch'üan, "Spring of Sympathetically Retributed Filial Piety."²³ In his turn, however, Cheng Ch'i imposed a heavy burden of obligation on his descendants. An old man, he called them together in the ancestral hall, opened a vein, let the blood drip into wine, and passed a goblet of this mixture to each of the juniors to drink in turn. Then looking skywards he made an oath, swearing that if any one of them were unfilial, unfraternal, or refused to "share the wealth and eat together," Heaven should destroy them. When he finished speaking, he was still a long time: he was dead.²⁴

This is what the commune came to recall of its founder; his descendants are said to have faithfully maintained the family commune over the next several generations, but all we know of the Cheng for most of the rest of the Sung period is a bare succession list. Apparently the family remained small and poor. Not until the generation of Cheng Ch'i's great-great-grandsons, who flourished in the last half of the thirteenth century, was the property expanded and the material foundations for an enlarged joint family laid.

The hard-scrabbling drive for cultivated fields was the work of Cheng Te-chang (1245-1305), whose efforts paralleled in time the troubled and anarchic years of the Southern Sung collapse and the establishment of the Mongol conquest. His acquisition of property, about which few details are known, was surely facilitated by his ability to control local rioters and marauders—"evil youths who gathered as bandits"—in the last years of the Sung. In reward for his

²³ Wang Li, for one, was willing to accept the idea that such sympathetic responses from the natural world were proof of the transforming powers of moral endeavor; cf. A8.2a, where he comments on this story.

²⁴ Cheng Po 鄭柏, *Chin-hua hsien-ta chuan* || 先達傳 [*Biographies of the former great men of Chin-hua*] (HCHTS ed.) 2.3ab; PCHC, *hsiao-yu*, 8.3b-4a.

work in village protection, a local official recommended Cheng to the Sung court, which appointed him police captain (*wei*) in Ch'ing-t'ien, a county 100 miles south of P'u-chiang. But Cheng, no Sung loyalist, declined the post on the ground that the Sung dynasty was about to collapse.

Once the Mongols founded the Yüan dynasty and reimposed order, however, one of the personal enemies Cheng Te-chang had made in the preceding years of property expansion denounced him to the imperial authorities, who in turn sentenced him to removal to Yang-chou and execution. Whether this sentence was a just one is never seriously discussed. The whole case was robbed of significance and relegated to mere technicality by Cheng's elder brother Cheng Te-kuei's dramatic self-sacrifice. Te-kuei, an assistant magistrate in Lung-yu county (fifty miles southwest of P'u-chiang) in the late Sung, used deception to convince his younger brother that he knew better how to handle the case and should proceed to Yang-chou in his stead; but actually, we are given to believe, the older brother knew all along that the case was hopeless and willingly delivered himself into execution in order to spare the younger brother, whose life was more important to the future of the family. Too late, Cheng Te-chang realized the deception and rushed to Yang-chou only in time to bring Te-kuei's corpse back to P'u-chiang for burial.²⁵ Cheng Te-kuei's sacrifice was perhaps intended as atonement for the social crimes committed by the family in its drive for land, and the Cheng neighbors may have accepted it as such. Yet the sources give no indication that the sacrifice in fact had this meaning. Rather, the lesson of the sacrifice was directed inward upon the family itself, imposing an enormous burden of moral obligation which the members could in no way escape. This burden of obligation was used freely within the family by its managers (*chia-chang*) to sanction obedience to the imposition of severe forms of discipline and control.

It was Cheng Te-chang who, besides acquiring property, also initiated the development of an organizational apparatus and regimen of routine within the family. These helped the Cheng survive intact the whole period of political breakdown that accompanied the Sung-to-Yüan transition. There is little doubt that, once the Yüan dynasty

²⁵ Huang Chin, 37.1a-2b; *PCHC*, *hsiao-yu*, 8.4a-5a; Cheng Po, 2.3b-4b.

reinstated political order and security, Cheng Te-kuei's self-sacrifice served to inhibit the growth of centrifugal tendencies within the enlarged joint family that the return of peaceful conditions might otherwise have encouraged. Succeeding acts of sacrifice in times of stress by later Cheng descendants probably had cumulatively the same effect, renewing the sense of mutual obligation and rededicating the family to its original moral commitments. The Yüan court's award of the *i-men* designation in 1311, moreover, assured the Cheng as a joint family preferred treatment by the government and thus added an important material deterrent against their division or dispersion.

Neo-Confucian ideology thus sidestepped the troublesome moral problems inherent in land acquisition by a shift of emphasis. Instead of viewing rapid land acquisition as a violation of social harmony, as it might have done, in this case it focused its attention upon the family virtues the Cheng displayed in the course of acquiring land. The moral value of the voluntary individual sacrifices the Cheng made for the sake of their growing family organization seems to have outweighed any possible claim to moral justice on the part of the Cheng victims.

The communal organization of the Cheng family was gradually elaborated over the Yüan period. The rules of Cheng Te-chang, the first formal family manager, were fairly simple. He instituted a daily routine: every morning a gong was struck, the family gathered at the ancestral hall, and all paid obeisances in turn; they listened to a reading of the ancestral instructions (*tsu-hsün*); then all retired to breakfast. Asked by a junior his precepts for running the family, Cheng opened his eyes wide and shouted: "Do not subvert the family system (*chia-fa*) by listening to the words of wives; every succeeding generation must have one man to take charge of the family government."²⁶ By mid-Yüan times, a total of fifty-eight rules were for the first time written down by Cheng Ta-ho, the third family manager. These and further additions by the fifth and seventh managers, Cheng Ch'in and Cheng Hsüan, were cut into stone. A final revision by the ninth manager, Cheng Lien, and five others of his generation, produced a

²⁶ *PCHC*, *hsiao-yu*, 8.4b-5a. Asked by the Ming founder his rules for family administration, the ninth manager, Cheng Lien 濂 (1310-1393), replied in similar fashion: "Diligently observe the ancestral instructions; do not listen to the words of wives" (*ibid.*, 8.12b-13a).

manual of 168 articles in 1379, and it is this version which has been reprinted in various quarters in more recent times.²⁷

The rules aim generally to institute within the family a modern facsimile of "antique" society, a regime enforcing not so much the letter as the spirit of some fundamental ancient prescriptions concerning human relations. Among these prescriptions, the Cheng appear to have considered most fundamental the idea that not wealth or influence but sex- and age-precedence constitute the only legitimate standard of discrimination between one individual and another. The majority of the Cheng rules seem designed ultimately to enforce the latter set of discriminatory criteria against the former. The institution of communal ownership of property, erasing wealth differences, was central to this whole scheme. No member was allowed to own private property in the form of cultivated fields, money, commodities, or housing; the family manager was empowered to confiscate such, and if necessary he could appeal to outside governmental authority if resistance were met within the family.²⁸ All property was centrally managed through a "public treasury" (*kung-t'ang*), which was both a receiving agency for gifts, purchases, rents, and earnings and a disbursing agency aimed at ensuring an austere but equal share of necessities to each nuclear family within the commune. Each newly married couple was assigned living quarters, and all articles of daily use were issued to them from centrally purchased supplies; it was forbidden to "exceed one's portion by vying to obtain or purchase fine goods and thus excite envious strife."²⁹ Husbands and wives could not take meals in their own homes; each repaired to separate

²⁷ Sung Lien, 旌義編引 ["Introduction to the *Ching-i pien*"], 26.9ab. The *Chin-hua ts'ung-shu* reprints the Cheng family rules under the name *Ching-i pien* by Cheng T'ao; the same work, entitled *Cheng-shih kuei-fan* || 規範 and ascribed (by courtesy) to Cheng Ta-ho 大和 (also called T'ai-ho 太和) is reprinted in the *Hsüeh-hai lei-pien* 學海類編. Both editions carry Sung Lien's introduction. In Ming times, the rules were also published in full or in part in the *Shuo-fu* 說郛 and in an anonymously edited family encyclopedia known as the *Chü-chia pi-pei* 居家必備. These two editions I have been unable to check.

²⁸ *Cheng-shih kuei-fan* (*Hsüeh-hai lei-pien* ed.) 4b.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 22a, 23a. It was probably this *kung-t'ang* that was named the Shih-chien t'ang 師儉堂. Lu Chen 魯貞 of K'ai-hua, who had read the Cheng family rules, wrote an inscription for it in 1354. Cf. Lu Chen, *T'ung-shan lao-nung chi* 桐山老農集 (*Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu chen-pen ch'u-chi* ed.) 1.9b-10b.

public dining halls where all received the same fare. The preparation of delicacies or snacks for private consumption was not permitted, although there were special dispensations for pregnant and nursing mothers and for the aged. A standardized clothing and footwear issue similarly took account only of individual differences based on sex- and age-precedence; women in addition received a uniform issue of cosmetics and ornaments.³⁰ Marriages, funerals, and other ceremonies involving the nuclear family were centrally funded and subject to centrally prescribed regulations aimed at frugality and uniformity of standards.

Together with these sumptuary rules, courtesy regulations (*li*) reinforced the idea that status relationships must be based upon inalterable, commonly recognized, and nature-given grounds, and not upon idiosyncratic or chance factors. Primarily this entailed the subordination of females to males, children to parents, and, within each sex group, the subordination of juniors to seniors. Women were categorically excluded from almost all aspects of communal affairs or decisions. A new wife was given six months to become familiar with the family rules, and if she failed to know them in that time, her husband was held accountable. A graded series of punishments, ending in compulsory divorce, was in store for wives who were involved in dalliances, or persisted in ostentation, spitefulness, gossiping, rumor-mongering, interference in communal affairs, and, for those under fifty, drinking wine. Concubinage was discouraged, except when regular wives had produced no sons by the age of forty. Separate mess, bath, and latrine facilities and various other restrictions, such as the prohibition against exchanging gifts, ensured strict segregation and minimal physical contact between the sexes. Moreover, in order to forestall the spread of subversive ideas, wives were at all times forbidden to receive each other as visitors in their private quarters.³¹

Among males, the family rules emphatically demanded the subjection of juniors to seniors, so much so that a member only one day younger than another was forbidden on pain of flogging to disobey or argue with his senior, and was obliged to submit meekly to a senior's reproof even when the senior was acting wrongly in so doing. Seniors

³⁰ *Kuei-fan*, 10b, 11a, 19b, 21b.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 13a-14b, 22b-23a, 25b.

and elders who went to excess in this, however, were first to be warned, and as a last resort humiliated by flogging in the presence of the family manager and the entire assembly of males.³² Provision was also made that members who were retired imperial officials were still subject to family discipline like everyone else and were not allowed to “presume on their honors, hold themselves in high esteem, or act arrogantly towards their kinsmen” on the pain of being charged with the punishable crime of unfiliality (*pu-hsiao*).³³

Thus the family rules aimed to obliterate all status distinctions based upon riches and poverty, fame and obscurity, or strength and weakness within the communal family group. The danger that these factors might override the legitimate status distinction of age-precedence was of course always present and grew as the family size increased with each generation. (There appear to have been three males in the generation of Cheng Te-chang, the first manager; the next generation had five; the third generation eleven; and the fourth, in which the final edition of the rules was made, at least twenty-nine.³⁴) Provision had to be made to neutralize increasing threats to the harmony of the communal system on the part of incorrigible, intractable, or unusually talented individuals. The rules provided for the remand of incorrigibles to the local government, the deletion of their names from the genealogy, and their banishment from the family, but we have no information on how often this was in fact done.³⁵ For the unusually talented, the imperial bureaucracy served as an outlet; thus Cheng Shen (1314–1361), widely resented at home for his arrogance and lack of restraint, was sent by a sympathetic uncle (Cheng Ch'in, later family manager) to the Yüan capital where he eventually became a client of the prime minister Toghto and a Confucian pre-

³² *Ibid.*, 17b.

³³ *Ibid.*, 14b.

³⁴ In the absence of a full Cheng genealogy, these figures derive from the evidence available to me and no doubt err on the side of omission. Niida Noboru's reconstruction of the Cheng genealogy is based on even less adequate evidence. See Niida Noboru 仁井田陞, *Shina mibunhō shi* 支那身分法史 (Tokyo, 1943), 114. Lo Hsiang-lin in *Shu-mu chi-k'an* 書目季刊 6.1 (1971).3 lists a Cheng genealogy (*tsu-p'u*) as a holding of the Library of Congress. This is in fact an error, as the Library of Congress has no such work. Professor Lo seems actually to have been referring to a copy of the *Ching-i pien*.

³⁵ *Kuei-fan*, 5a.

ceptor in the imperial palace. Cheng Shen spent very little time at home but did excellent work making his family known among such high court literati as Chieh Hsi-ssu, Ou-yang Hsüan, and Wei Su, and received on behalf of himself and his family calligraphic scrolls and other personal gifts from the emperor, the heir apparent, and the prime minister.³⁶

But the energies of the majority of family members were absorbed on the spot by the family itself, whose daily and seasonal activities, closely regimented, represented a great elaboration upon Cheng Te-chang's early system. A new gong, cast in 1338, with an ethical poem in ancient style by Sung Lien inscribed upon it, was struck twenty-four times to arouse the family early each morning, then four more times to signal face-washing, and finally eight times to summon all males and females to their respective positions in the assembly hall. There they listened while an adolescent male read out moral exhortations, and a monitor (*tu-kuo*) watched the group for signs of yawning or whispering or other commotion. At the end of this daily ceremony, males and females filed quietly to their dining halls. Evenings were devoted to family business meetings.³⁷ Seasonal observances, such as the birthday of the first local ancestor, Cheng Huai, and other special occasions called for more elaborate ceremony. The family manual for such occasions has been preserved; the illustrations of ceremonial gear and order of parade and the chart demonstrating the ritual butchering of an ox indicate that the solemn family observances must have been large and impressive.³⁸ As a spectator at one of the formal Cheng ceremonies, Sung Lien found himself deeply moved by their perfect order and faultless execution, with each Cheng in his proper

³⁶ A full career biography of Cheng Shen may be found in Sung Lien, 故江東僉憲鄭君墓志銘 ["Epitaph for Cheng Shen"], 49.6b-9b. Cf. also Ou-yang Hsüan, 14.5ab; 題太師右丞相畫墨竹 ["Colophon to an ink painting of bamboos done by the prime minister Toghto"], 14.5b-6a; 御賜石刻千文搨本後題 ["Colophon to an imperial gift, a rubbing of a stone inscription of the Thousand Character Classic (written by the Ch'en dynasty monk Chih-yung 智永)"], 14.6ab; 跋眉壽二大字 ["Colophon to the two characters 'mei shou' (written by the heir apparent Ayuširidara 愛猷識理達臘)"], 14.9a-10a; 麟鳳二大字贊 ["Appreciation of the two characters 'lin feng' (written by Ayuširidara)"], 15.1b-2a.

³⁷ *Kuei-fan*, 1b, 3ab, 5b-6a; *PCHC*, *chin-shih* 金石, 14.2b-3a.

³⁸ Cheng Yung 鄭泳, *Cheng-shih chia-i* || 家儀 (*HCHTS* ed.)

place according to age-precedence, whatever his fame or obscurity in the outside world.³⁹

More than routine or ceremony, however, it was the Cheng family bureaucracy that kept the members busy day after day. The bureaucracy absorbed and harnessed to communal ends talents that might otherwise have been dissipated in private accumulation or outside employment. Thus Cheng Jui (1289–1320) used his bookkeeping talents to devise the cross-checking system of accountancy used within the communal family.⁴⁰ Cheng Chu (1300–1356), a younger member of the same generation, put his business acumen to work for the commune as a whole, engaging in wholesale commodity speculation to finance the further purchase of land for the Cheng clan charitable estate.⁴¹

The institution of a formal bureaucracy within the restricted milieu of a family may appear at first sight a startlingly artificial development, perhaps the result of an urge by upward-striving parvenus to ape the ways of the imperial state. The family bureaucracy may well have been established to satisfy a will to power emanating from within; its structure and functions strongly resembled those of the imperial bureaucracy, giving one to suppose that the Cheng organization may have represented some sort of legitimated anti-state, an apparatus created by the powerless in an era of gradually increasing imperial despotism. The Cheng bureaucracy was something more than this, however, because it was not so much built as part of a power contest with the imperial state, but rather grew in response to problems of control within the family itself.

At its height in 1379, the Cheng bureaucracy counted some twenty-five formal positions, a number that probably made it nearly equal to the number of adult males living at home at any one time. It may be described as a rationalized bureaucracy, in that the rules carefully outlined the duties inherent in each post, established criteria for the selection of office-holders, and specified their terms in office. The most important office was that of family manager. His position in the

³⁹ Sung Lien, 53.4a.

⁴⁰ Ou-yang Hsüan, 鄭銳墓志銘 [“Epitaph for Cheng Jui”], 10.4a–7a.

⁴¹ Sung Lien, 元故行宣政院照磨兼管勾承發架閣鄭君墓銘 [“Epitaph for Cheng Chu 銖”], 42.4a–5a.

family was a little like that of the emperor in the state, in that he (and his two assistants) had no specified term, and he alone was authorized to make decisions. All subordinate officials were required to petition the manager in cases demanding a decision and could not “appropriate or concede things privately” (*ssu-ko ssu-yü*).⁴² The manager held exclusive powers of appointment, and he was held ultimately responsible for the operations of the bureaucracy, for general family behavior, and for maintaining the integrity and well-being of the commune. The family rules allowed him to inflict corporal punishment upon erring members and to seek the aid of the local government when necessary to deal with serious offenders or defiant champions of private property.⁴³

The family manager and his two assistants (*tien-shih*) constituted what might be called the ruling level in the Cheng family government.⁴⁴ All of the other positions were ultimately no more than specialized extensions of the executive authority. Below the manager was the family censor (*chien-shih*), an office with a two-year term whose holder was required to be someone at least forty years of age and with sufficient “sternness and impartiality to carry conviction with the family crowd.”⁴⁵ It was the censor’s duty to provide a continual upward flow of publicly stated criticism, hiding nothing. He was obliged to provide frank admonition to his superior, the manager, and to keep detailed account of the behavior and performance of

⁴² *Kuei-fan*, 4a. The managerial succession generally proceeded from older to younger within a generation, continuing to the next generation only when the earlier one became defunct.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 4b.

⁴⁴ “Two *tien-shih* will be set up to assist the family manager in an executive capacity. For this, men must be selected who are upright and fair-minded, talented enough for family rule, and who are natural leaders within the family group. They will be selected without regard for age or term of office. They will participate in all family affairs, large or small. Every night they must have completed all their duties before they may retire. For violations, the family manager will determine a punishment. Every night when gathering a meeting, the *tien-shih* will face the group and determine what things will be done on what days and write this in a register. The things written in the first half of the month will be done in the second, and those written in the second half of the month will be done in the first half of the next month. This way there will be no laxity in affairs and no reluctance in those things that must be carried out” (*Kuei-fan*, 5b–6a).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 6a.

everyone else. In line with this latter duty, the censor kept an "Early-rising Register" (*su-hsing pu*), a kind of time-sheet that each member was required to sign every morning; a "Register of Merits and Demerits" (*ch'üan-ch'eng pu*), which he wrote up each month and posted on a special board for all to read; and a "Register of Extended Benevolence" (*t'ui-jen pu*), which itemized the members' good deeds toward outside clansmen and neighbors.⁴⁶ For violations, the censor could apply corporal punishment.

Next were the upper-level managerial personnel. These consisted of two finance officers (*hsin-kuan*), two rites officers (*chiu-kuan*), one supply officer (*hsiu-fu chang*), and one estate officer (*chang men-hu-che*). The finance officers were men between the ages of twenty-five and sixty appointed for one-year terms, although they could not leave office until the censor audited and cleared their account books. Their main tasks were concerned with the detailed accounting of rental and other income and its disbursement for family consumption or tax payment. The prescribed methods of bookkeeping were to be so exactly followed that "even through a series of finance officer replacements it should look as though everything were done by the same hand, with no fraud or cheating."⁴⁷ The rites officers had the easier duty of managing the various ceremonies, together with a few lesser tasks.⁴⁸ The supply officer had charge of the distribution of clothing and other allowances among the individual households, and kept account of the cotton and silk fabrics manufactured by the women.⁴⁹ The estate officer was the family's chief liaison with the county government, to which he sent the taxes; he was also responsible for nonarable lands, commercial earnings, and the purchase of new fields.⁵⁰ Finally, there was a series of minor posts: an accounts clerk (*chu-chi*), two commissary supervisors (*chang-shan*), two managers of money and goods (*chang ch'ien-huo*), two business managers (*chang ying-yün*), one livestock and orchard supervisor, two guest-house managers (*chih-pin*), together with some very low positions such as nightwatchman, fire warden, and the female posts of mess-

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 6b, 17a, 18a.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 10a.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 8a, 9a, 12a, 24b.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 10a-11a, 24a.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 7a.

steward (*chu-k'uei*) and "chief mother" (*chu-mu*), who supervised female labor.⁵¹

The family rules sanctioned the concentration of an almost despotic authority in the hands of the family manager, and some of the earlier managers did rule with harshness. The third manager, Cheng Ta-ho, succeeded his older cousin when he was over seventy years of age and is said to have applied the whip liberally for even the slightest infractions. Sung Lien writes that under Cheng Ta-ho the family compound was as tense and alert as a government yamen.⁵² In order to guarantee the unlimited power of the manager, the bureaucracy had built into it an implicit system of checks. The censor was the chief watchdog over the family bureaucracy. But aside from him, one may note that no one man had exclusive jurisdiction over any one crucial function. There were, for example, not one but two finance officers with precisely the same post and precisely the same duties. Moreover, the receipt and disbursement of grain boxes was not only checked by the two finance officers, but also separately witnessed and recorded by the accounts clerk.⁵³ The finance officers kept not one but three interrelated accounts registers which could be checked against each other, and these registers were kept under close review by the censor and the family manager himself. Yet although the rules provided for and guaranteed the concentrated power of the manager, they also provided that the otherwise powerless bureaucrats, dissolved into the "family crowd" in assembly, constituted the conscience of the family commune and the ultimate repository of correct opinion. The rules gave the assembly of adult men group authority to exert itself against and even remove an incompetent or capricious family manager or family censor, thus bringing the chain of family power full circle.⁵⁴

Given the original Cheng goals, the family bureaucracy cannot be viewed as an artificial intrusion into an otherwise serene family life. Rather, it was an outgrowth of the expansion of the family population beyond the capacity of the family manager to handle alone, and was designed to be the tool of the manager, rather than an independent force in its own right. Without this bureaucracy run on fully "public"

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 6b-7a, 11a-12a, 22a-23b.

⁵² *PCHC*, *hsiao-yu*, 8.6ab; Sung Lien, 53.4a.

⁵³ *Kuei-fan*, 6b-7a, 9a.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 2a, 4a, 6a.

and impersonal lines as the Cheng bureaucracy was, it would certainly have been impossible to prevent socially or temperamentally powerful juniors from asserting themselves over weaker seniors; it would have been difficult to block the rise of talented and strong-willed wives over weaker husbands; and it would have been hard to stop the accumulation of "private" property and power and the subsequent disintegration of the joint commune. The need to assert Confucian family ideology over the vagaries of human nature, to keep a constant and uniform set of ethical rules dominant over individual tendencies, seems to have been chiefly responsible for generating the power apparatus of family manager and bureaucracy that totally overshadowed individuals and nuclear families within the larger family commune. If a will to power existed within the family it was enhanced and at the same time regulated by Confucian ethical ideals.

The Cheng compound at Pai-lin Creek was a walled, self-enclosed community whose dealings with the outside world were subject to controls. This was particularly the case with the wives. Cheng males had a good deal more freedom, yet limits were placed upon the kinds of associations they might make and the sorts of activities they might engage in. They were forbidden to consort with actors, singers, entertainers, or other purveyors of pleasurable arts. They were forbidden to engage in Buddhist or Taoist activities or in geomancy, or to visit the local gods' temples to pray for blessings; they could not listen to or practice "vulgar" music, gamble or play games, or raise dogs or falcons for hunting. They were not to read lascivious or prognosticatory books, use dialect, wear improper dress, make violent movements with arms or legs, or engage in arguments. No Cheng was permitted to become a government clerk, Buddhist or Taoist priest, or butcher. All guests visiting the Cheng compound had to have the approval of the family manager; guests could not stay in the host's private quarters but had to be put up in the guesthouse. The entertainment of guests was strictly limited in expense and in the amount of permitted drinking; the rites officers were made responsible for surveillance and curfews on parties.⁵⁵

That the social relations of the Cheng men were restricted in these ways did not at all imply an ideal of total isolation, but rather a desire

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 22b, 24b-25a (restrictions on wives); 14b, 18ab, 19a, 20ab, 21a (activities forbidden to males); 18b (forbidden occupations); 12a, 20a (rules on guests).

to avoid contamination by the vulgar customs and heterodox beliefs of the un-Confucianized. On this level the Cheng family was a conscious exception to the everyday world, a model project in Confucian moral improvement, and as such felt threatened by the seductive counter-attractions of common society. Yet the Cheng aloofness from the casual ways of the vulgar did not preclude pervasive contacts of other kinds. The family rules, far from demanding a total communal self-sufficiency, made the Cheng dependent in many ways upon the outside world for protection, livelihood, education, and careers, and strongly urged upon the family members an attitude of charity toward their local neighbors.

The Cheng commune did not enjoy full economic self-sufficiency. It may have grown most of its own food, but this cannot be said for certain. In the production of textiles by the wives, however, the commune had important connections with the outside market economy. The family's silk output may have been destined for sale, but this is not stated. The worm eggs were hatched in the individual households, then brought to a special room when ready for the cocoon stage. The households were rewarded on a so-called "ten-one" system according to the number of insects they delivered. When the cocoons were ready, they were taken to a common working area for the wives to spin. When the spinning was finished, the weaving began. At this time the family treasury also distributed cotton (*mu-mien*) to the women; whether the commune grew or bought the cotton is unknown. For weaving standard bolts of silk and cotton fabric, the women were required to assemble together under the supervision of the chief mother so that "the diligent and lazy might be discovered, and selfish tendencies eliminated." The supply officer kept account of the quality and amount of each worker's output, rewarding those who met their quotas on time and penalizing the laggards. The destination of the silk cloth is not specified. The cotton cloth, however, was sold on the market and the money realized used to purchase ready-made clothing for redistribution to the various households. Fine tailoring was permitted to males over forty, who received a special allowance to have it done professionally.⁵⁶ In addition, the

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 10b, 23b-24a. There were nineteen households of registered professional tailors in P'u-chiang in 1522; cf. *PCHC*, *hu-k'ou* 戶口, 11.4ab.

family treasury funded commercial ventures such as moneylending and shopkeeping; the finance officers audited the profits and earned interest and deposited them into the family treasury.⁵⁷ The family manager was responsible for hiring outside labor for construction and building repair.⁵⁸ In view of these rather random indications, the Cheng family appears to have been heavily committed to the local market economy and monetary system.

Quite apart from its peculiar status as a communal family, the Cheng belonged to the general social category of rural gentry, and as rural gentry their place and function in society probably did not differ in any fundamental way from the place and function of other southern gentry families of the time. As rural gentry, the Cheng probably derived the most important part of their income from land rents. They used these rents to support a leisured gentry life-style, but they also put a certain portion of income back into society in the form of local charity and philanthropy. This overall pattern was common enough, but the Cheng version of it is important to examine in view of its advertisement as a model order of its kind.

Once the abrasive Cheng Te-chang had aggressively expanded the family's landed holdings and provided basic economic security, his successors could proceed more cautiously and circumspectly with further property acquisitions. This change is already evident with the fourth manager, Cheng Ch'in, whose large-scale acquisitions sometime in the mid-Yüan period went to support charitable activities rather than to swell the family's direct holdings.⁵⁹ Consequently by the time the rules were reedited in 1379, the editors could state as a matter of principle that extreme care ought to be taken when acquiring new properties for the commune. The rules assumed that more properties would have to be obtained as the family expanded, that any acquisition by the Cheng was a loss for some other family, and that in these circumstances the Cheng, assumed to be the stronger party in any negotiation, must be sure not only to inspect closely the lands being purchased, secure a clear deed and register it at once, but must also be sure to pay a fair price and not haggle. "Otherwise," say the

⁵⁷ *Kuei-fan*, 11b.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 5ab.

⁵⁹ *PCHC*, *hsiao-yu*, 8.7a.

rules, "the way of Heaven will have revenge, and even if we get the land [at a bargain price], we will inevitably lose it in the future."⁶⁰ The Cheng fields were, of course, worked by tenant families "summoned in" by the Cheng finance officers. The tenants paid fixed quota rents calculated in grain and partly payable in cash or live animals. The family was forbidden arbitrarily to raise the quotas, make extra collections, or add interest to unpaid rents. The rules stated: "The hardships of the tenants can hardly be stressed enough. If you try to be too exacting with them, the returns you get will hardly be worth the extra effort they must make. The finance officer must be pitying and sympathetic and not willfully overdemand, for even if you get what you want, what will other people say? You will only leave behind a legacy of resentment that will end in jeopardizing the way of the family."⁶¹ Again, the established preeminence of the Cheng was the assumption behind the rules warning members against acting aggressively in the outside villages or attempting to gain advantages there in improper ways: "The descendants must not devote themselves to the making of local alliances, using their positions as rural officers to work their own will, for this flouts the penal statutes and will bring destruction to the family, so I say this again and again, and be sure to remember it well."⁶²

Charitable activities were those undertaken for purposes other than the direct support of the family proper. The Cheng for the most part financed charity from properties especially acquired for the purpose, rather than by making deductions from their own communal income. Cheng Wen-t'ai, later fourth manager, was the first known member of the joint family to engage in charitable works. With the concurrence of his cousin, the second manager, Cheng Wen-ssu, Cheng Wen-t'ai prepared gruel for distribution among "several hundred people" during a famine in the Ta-te (1298-1307) period.⁶³ The fifth manager, Cheng Ch'in, put charity on a more permanent basis, establishing an

⁶⁰ *Kuei-fan*, 7b-8a.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 9b.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 18b, 20a, 21a. The Cheng were exempted from unpaid rural services in the late Yüan, but were made responsible for them in the early Ming.

⁶³ In view of the fact that there were 11,750 distressed families in P'u-chiang in the famine of 1307, the Cheng contribution would seem to have been a decidedly minor one. Cf. *PCHC*, *kuan-chi* 官蹟, 7.3ab.

estate (the Chia-li *chuang*) of 3,000 *mou* (ca. 480 acres) to finance relief and aid for distant clansmen and non-kin. This included food supplements, clothing, and free education for outside clansmen as well as housing, burial plots, and interest-free loans for the locally indigent who were not related to the Cheng.⁶⁴ The seventh manager, Cheng Hsüan (1295–1364), a son of Cheng Wen-t'ai, gave alms to the blind and crippled and is said never to have tired of feeding the starving who gathered daily at his gate. He also took in a destitute Mongol family who remained his dependents for thirty years.⁶⁵ The eighth manager, Cheng Wei (1306–1377), brought into the commune the orphans of distant clansmen, holding their rental incomes in trust until they came of age.⁶⁶ The family rules in addition provided for the establishment of a free clinic and dispensary and teahouses on the local thoroughfare to convenience travellers in the summer months. Family members were expected to contribute to the upkeep of roads and bridges, and to equalize local grain prices by buying in quantity at harvest time when prices were low and reselling to the destitute at the original price in times of scarcity. The family censor kept a special register for recording such benevolent acts, as was noted above.⁶⁷

The semi-invalided Cheng Yüan (1326–1373) is reported to have been one of the family's Good Samaritans, easily moved to action by the misfortunes of others. On the road with his teacher one day, he encountered a dozen weeping flood victims with their children on their backs, who on inquiry said they had been unsuccessful in getting relief from the county government and had not eaten for two days. Cheng gave them all the money in his purse. On another occasion, Cheng Yüan paid a visit to a family of small villagers who had too many sons, and was so shocked at the pitiful wailing of a baby about to be drowned by his parents that he delivered them an admonition and gave them grain. The family, it is said, spared the baby. In other acts of charity, Cheng Yüan took in and clothed a freezing scholar he met on the road in winter; and he had his wife make some clothes for a

⁶⁴ *PCHC*, *hsiao-yu*, 8.7a–8a.

⁶⁵ Sung Lien, 24.7a–9a.

⁶⁶ Sung Lien, 故浦江義門第八世鄭府君墓版文 [“Epitaph for Cheng Wei 渭”], 27.8b–9a.

⁶⁷ *Kuei-fan*, 15a–17a, 20a.

half-naked old widow he found on the family temple steps one day. Though he made these smaller charitable gestures on impulse, he was also active in the more institutional fields of charity, where he was careful to do nothing without the authorization of the family manager.⁶⁸

Thus an almost religious sentiment inspired many of the Cheng charities, and a strongly religious line of reasoning justified the expenditure of effort and money for ends of only peripheral concern to the commune itself. The rules invoked Heaven as sanction against the unwillingness of members to fulfill their charitable duties.⁶⁹ Cheng Ch'in's attitude was that the people (*min*) were all his brothers (*t'ung-pao*), and he was obligated to share grief and joy with them.⁷⁰ Fang Hsiao-ju, a great admirer of the Cheng family, wondered rhetorically in a letter to the ninth manager, Cheng Lien (1310–1393), why the Cheng, unlike other P'u-chiang families, had managed to last so long. Answering his own question, Fang suggested that Heaven had refrained from putting an end to the Cheng precisely because of their many charities. Fang noted that Heaven gives birth to men and hopes they will flourish, yet it cannot prevent the rise of social and economic inequalities among them; nevertheless Heaven is not oblivious of injustice, and when those who have give to those who have not, Heaven tends to be pleased.⁷¹ Disinterested charity was not seen as a waste of family resources, but rather as a means to help provide a favorable social environment in which the Cheng might perpetuate their commune. Outside society had some material stake in the Cheng survival.

The Cheng also had official ties with the outside world. Contrary to the warnings given in many of the "clan rules" of the Ch'ing period, the Cheng family rules encouraged a close relationship with the local government and urged the members to gain first hand experience of its functions and operations. "All of the juniors in turn," stated the rules, "should go with the estate officer to the local government seat to become conversant with its affairs. Then there will be no trouble

⁶⁸ Sung Lien, 鄭仲涵墓志銘 ["Epitaph for Cheng Yüan 淵"], 11.3b–4a.

⁶⁹ *Kuei-fan*, 17a.

⁷⁰ *PCHC*, *hsiao-yu*, 8.7a–8a.

⁷¹ Fang Hsiao-ju, 196(10).1a–3a.

stemming from ignorance about these matters."⁷² The rules also anticipated that members themselves would take up government office from time to time. The commune was pledged to underwrite the expenses of office-seekers and the salaries of office-holders if their pay was inadequate. Members who were government bureaucrats were enjoined to "diligence day and night in order to requite the state. They must compassionately soothe the lower people just like a mother over her baby." Members guilty of official malfeasance were to have their names erased from the genealogy and their tablets removed from the ancestral hall.⁷³ Thus the Cheng entered into a kind of *quid pro quo* arrangement with the imperial state, the state placing its authority behind the family regulations, and the family guaranteeing the support and conduct of members taking positions in the state.

Cheng Shen and Cheng T'ao, Confucian preceptors in the Yüan imperial palace in the early 1350s, achieved the widest celebrity of any of the Cheng officials. No Cheng ever passed a civil service examination, and most of the Cheng servants of the state held office of very low rank. The first Cheng to gain office since the migration to P'u-chiang seems to have been Cheng Te-kuei, appointed assistant magistrate of Lung-yu county in the late Southern Sung.⁷⁴ Cheng Ta-ho held the minor posts of commerce tax collector and Confucian school official in the early Yüan before he succeeded to the managership of the family.⁷⁵ Cheng Ying, who became tenth manager in 1393, had held a low office in Chiang-che province late in the Yüan period.⁷⁶ The Cheng were clients of the prime minister, Toghto, and Cheng Ying presumably got his position through him. Cheng Ying's uncle Cheng Chu obtained the posts of auditor (*chao-mo*) in the Office for Buddhist and Tibetan Affairs, and later the palace position of supervisor of ricefields in the Yangtze delta, both through Toghto's patronage.⁷⁷ Cheng Yung, a cousin of Cheng Ying, was also a personal

⁷² *Kuei-fan*, 7a.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 14b-15a.

⁷⁴ *PCHC*, *hsiao-yu*, 8.4ab.

⁷⁵ Huang Chin, 37.1a-2b; *PCHC*, *shih-chieh* 仕藉, 6.4a.

⁷⁶ *PCHC*, *hsiao-yu* 8.16ab.

⁷⁷ Sung Lien, 42.4a-5a.

client of Toghto's and received a minor local position through him.⁷⁸ It is evident that some of these humble posts obtained by the Cheng through patronage were of the sort that demanded personal honesty and financial managerial expertise. These were qualities and capabilities developed and used in the family bureaucracy as well. Experience in family management seems to have been easily applied to low-level state management and vice versa.

The educational process also forced the Cheng males out of the communal nexus. The rules clearly implied that the males would go outside the family for Confucian masters and further anticipated that the juniors' pursuit of education might necessitate extended leaves from the compound.⁷⁹ Several Cheng juniors were students of the great literary men and ideologues that P'u-chiang produced in the Yüan period: Fang Feng (1240-1321), Wu Lai (1297-1340), Liu Kuan.⁸⁰ In 1335, however, the third manager, Cheng Ta-ho, engaged Sung Lien to teach the classics to all of the promising juniors. Although Sung Lien lived only a half-day's journey away in Chin-hua prefecture, in 1350 he moved his family to Lo-shan, close by the Cheng compound, in order that his family and descendants might be "imbued with their filial piety and communal righteousness (*hsiao-i*)."⁸¹ As resident preceptor to the commune, Sung Lien's close presence no doubt helped contribute to family unity.⁸²

As rentiers with a full staff of household servants, the Cheng men had the means to lead a life free of labor and the leisure to regulate themselves, cultivate moral excellence, and develop individual literary and artistic talents. After Cheng Te-chang in effect refounded the commune in the late Sung, the more mundane capabilities gradually tended to lose value, so that by 1379 the rules specifically channeled family wash-outs from Confucian study into its financial and manage-

⁷⁸ *PCHC, wen-yüan 文苑*, 9.25b-26a.

⁷⁹ Cf. *Kuei-fan*, 19ab, 22ab.

⁸⁰ Cheng T'ao was a student of Liu, Wu, and Huang Chin; Cheng Chien 程鑑 was a student of Fang Feng. Other examples could be cited.

⁸¹ Sung Lien, 蘿山遷居志 ["Why I moved to Lo-shan"], 26.10ab.

⁸² Similarly, Sung Lien's student Liu Kang 劉剛 served as a resident preceptor to the Wang family commune; cf. Hu Han 胡翰, *Hu Chung-tzu chi 胡仲子集* (CHTS ed.) 6.25b.

rial bureaucratic positions.⁸³ There was a distinct possibility, however, that as the Cheng more and more came to assume the cultural styles typical of gentry they might fracture their unique communal organization. Cheng Chien, a grandnephew of Cheng Te-chang, is a case in point. Cheng Chien (d. 1350) was the first member of the commune to pursue study in the leisured, unpurposive way then typical of established gentry.⁸⁴ He was a student of Fang Feng, a member of a famous P'u-chiang literary circle whose cult of loyalty to the fallen Sung dynasty was bound up with an attitude of complete withdrawal from contemporary worldly affairs.⁸⁵ In tune with the fastidious spirit of his teacher, Cheng Chien abjured office, studied calligraphy, collected books and old paintings and inscriptions, and housed these in a separate villa (*pieh-yeh*) he built to entertain his guests. Cheng Chien's day-long poetry and wine sessions and other eccentricities were serious enough to occasion a warning from the local government authorities at the time *i-men* honors were conferred upon the family in 1311.⁸⁶

Yet as the P'u-chiang literary movement turned from puristic withdrawal to ideological concern for the world's problems as the generation of Wu Lai and Liu Kuan succeeded that of Fang Feng and his associates, there was less danger that the personal proclivities of the Cheng men as aspirants to gentry culture might end in destroying the group cohesion of the Cheng as an *i-men* or family collective. As the content of P'u-chiang gentry culture shifted in the mid-Yüan period, the Cheng as students of the local cultural leaders found that they could no longer use that culture as an excuse to escape their family responsibilities, as Cheng Chien seems to have attempted to

⁸³ *Kuei-fan*, 19ab.

⁸⁴ The Cheng were never totally unlettered. The joint family founder, Cheng Ch'i 紉, whom Tai Liang called "an impecunious scholar," was a student of the *Ku-liang Commentary* on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and wrote a tract upon it, now lost, whose title ("That the *Ku-liang Commentary* deserves the status of a classic") shows it to have been something of a polemic, perhaps aimed at official recognition for its author. Cf. Tai Liang, 重刻冲素處士墓銘後題 ["Colophon to the reengraving of Cheng Ch'i's tombstone"], 150(4).3b-4a.

⁸⁵ Cf. Sun K'o-k'uan's article on Fang Feng cited in note 2 above.

⁸⁶ *PCHC*, *yin-i* 隱逸, 9.2b-3a.

do.⁸⁷ In fact, it became more and more usual for the cultural leaders of P'u-chiang and Chin-hua to identify family communal organization with the highest of gentry cultural values. Ideal existence was not to be found outside the obligations of the family group, but within them. Thus Sung Lien's move of his household from Chin-hua to P'u-chiang in 1350 added a symbolic touch to what was already being achieved in fact: a unity of family culture and general culture, a merger of family and society in the realm of ideal value.

The rules, curiously, have nothing to say about the Cheng males' continued habit of building private or semi-private studios for study and relaxation. This tendency was certainly within bounds, perhaps partly on the understanding that the retreat of the males from their nuclear family circles lessened the possibilities for husband-wife fights, or wife-inspired resistance to communal life and organization. In any case, Sung Lien himself gave his blessing to the tendency, suggesting the name "Ti-hua hsien," after an allusion to fraternal harmony in the *Book of Odes*, for a studio shared by his pupil Cheng Yüan (1326–1373) and some of his brothers.⁸⁸ It would appear that whatever threat the studios may have posed to communal solidarity, whatever concession to individualism they may have represented, was offset by their public function. For the studios served not only as private retreats but also as public reception rooms where the more presentable members of the Cheng family entertained teachers and important guests. In the studios, away from the everyday hustle and commotion of the compound, guests met their Cheng students and friends. Few outsiders ever encountered the Cheng commune undiluted, as it were, but at a remove from the family nexus where, sur-

⁸⁷ Cheng Yung styled himself after Fang Feng when he retired from Yüan government service upon Toghto's dismissal in 1355. But Cheng Yung devoted part of his retirement to the ideologically serious purpose of editing the family's book of ceremonies. Cf. Shen-t'u Cheng 申屠徽, 半軒集序 ["Preface to the *Pan-hsüan chi*"] in *Ming wen-heng* 39.11b–12b. Fang Feng was, to be sure, an admirer of the Cheng commune, as his poem, one of the earliest literary references to the Cheng, attests. Cf. Fang Feng, *Ts'un-ya-fang i-kao* 存雅堂遺稿 (HCHTS ed.) 1.3a.

⁸⁸ Wu Ch'en 吳沈, 棣華軒記 ["Inscription for the Ti-hua hsüan"], *Ku-ch'uan chi* 澱川集 (ms. ed.) *chüan* 7, no p. In all respects save the name, Wu Ch'en's 華萼軒記 ["Inscription for the Hua-o hsüan"] in *Ming wen heng* 32.9b–10b is the same piece. *Hua-o* also alludes to fraternal harmony.

rounded by books and curios and under the effect of moderate servings of wine, they and their hosts wove the coarse stuff of the family and its history into moralizing reminiscence and ethical platitude.⁸⁹ The private studios thus in part served communal ends, sealing off the inner life of the family, and permitting it to present only its best possible face to the ideologues and literary men of the outside world.⁹⁰

In conclusion, it is the manifold linkages between the Cheng commune and outside society that are most striking. Just as the ideology of the Confucian family came to articulate smoothly with the ideology of gentry society, the techniques of family management were functionally interchangeable with those of state management. The result was that on the levels of both ethical theory and technical practice the family as collective represented not a withdrawal of protest against state and society, but quite the opposite, a concentration of moral energy and managerial expertise that sought to contribute to society's moral and technical uplift. Though self-consciously unique and in many ways aloof, the Cheng were most emphatically a part of a larger world.

The later history of the Cheng commune is difficult to reconstruct, although some aspects of it are relatively clear. The rise of the Cheng communal family to power and eminence paralleled closely in time

⁸⁹ Or poems celebrating the harmonious atmosphere of the family. Shen Meng-lin 沈夢麟 of Wu-hsing, when he visited in 1372, wrote at least ten poems about the Cheng. Cf. his *Hua-ch'i chi* (*Chen-pi-lou ts'ung-shu* 枕碧樓叢書 ed.), *passim*.

⁹⁰ The Cheng men authored at least twenty-four literary works of various sorts, none of which seems to have survived. The *PCHC*, *shu-mu* 書目, 14.1a-9b, lists these by author and title. The Cheng literary production began with Cheng Chien, who also built the first semiprivate studio. Some of the later Cheng literature had a high ideological content; thus Cheng Chien's son T'ao, a student of Wu Lai and Liu Kuan, served as a preceptor in the Yüan imperial palace and edited the Confucian maxims he delivered before the emperor into a work called the *Ching-yen lu* 經筵錄. Prefaces to this may be found in Wang I, 168(3).6a-7a, and Tai Liang, 148(2).6b-8a. Art, too, tended to reflect ideology; Cheng Ying's 瀛 *Ch'in-p'u* [*Guide to the Lute*] repudiated contemporary popular music and sought to revive the refined and ancient style of Hsi K'ang, as Sung Lien points out in his colophon to the work (39.2ab). In a similar way, Cheng Ying's cousin Cheng Chi 濟 pointed his calligraphic talents in classical directions, reediting the *Ta hsüeh* in accordance with Sung Lien's ideas and transcribing it in ancient script for printing and circulation; cf. Fang Hsiao-ju, 題大學篆書正文後 ["Colophon to a rectified ancient-character version of the *Ta hsüeh*"], 204(18).1ab.

the period of the Mongol Yüan dynasty in China (1279–1368). Cheng Te-chang's work was carried out in the years of the Mongol invasions, and it was the Yüan court that made the Cheng an *i-men* in 1311 and exempted them from local service obligations in 1336, when Cheng Ta-ho was manager. The fifth manager, Cheng Ch'in, established a 3,000 *mou* charity endowment and further set up a special estate of 150 *mou* to support the Cheng ancestral temple.⁹¹ The second, third, and fourth managers were in the second generation after Cheng Te-chang; Cheng Ch'in was the eldest member of the third generation. Their terms as manager all fell in the Yüan period. In it the Cheng gained their privileges, expanded their holdings, and placed members of the third and fourth generations into Toghto's personal service. Through Toghto, at least five Cheng men gained an official post of one sort or another.

The Cheng did not weather the troubles of the Yüan-Ming transition of 1351–1368 as well as they had the Sung-Yüan transition period of the 1270s. Irregularities crept into the managerial succession. With Cheng Ch'in's death, the family headship passed to a younger cousin, Cheng Chü, formerly an executive assistant to the fourth manager, Cheng Wen-t'ai, and a favorite of Cheng Ch'in. Cheng Chü maintained the internal family order until his death sometime after 1351, in the civil war period.⁹² His younger brother Cheng Ming was in line to succeed him, but Cheng Ming's circumstances precluded this. Cheng Ta-ho had put Cheng Ming out to study under Wu Lai, but after completing his studies he took up residence in the family of his wife, becoming an adopted heir to his father-in-law who had no sons of his own. There he spent his days idly sulking and dreaming of success in the outside world. When his mother died, he decided to abide by the severe mourning abstinences required by the Cheng family rules. Accordingly he cloistered himself away from further contact with his adopted family, angering his father-in-law in so doing. He later inherited one-third of his father-in-law's estate, and this he donated to the communal Cheng holdings when he returned home upon Cheng Chü's death. Although in line to succeed as manager, Cheng Ming decided, or was persuaded, that he was too

⁹¹ Cheng Yung, *Cheng-shih chia-i*, 27b–28a; *PCHC*, *tz'u-miao* 祠廟, 13.50a–51a.

⁹² Sung Lien, 鄭彥宏墓版文 [“Epitaph for Cheng Chü 鉅”], 42.11b–12a.

unfamiliar with the family's operations to undertake the task of managing it. A decision was then made to appoint a member of the fourth generation, Cheng Wei (1306–1377), as manager. Cheng Wei had had long experience in family financial management, but he declined formal acceptance of the position of manager out of deference to Cheng Ming, and consequently "the position was left vacant."⁹³ The family then came under the acting rule of Cheng Hsüan (1295–1364), an older cousin of Cheng Ming. Cheng Hsüan was a seasoned family financial administrator who also had close connections at the Yüan court.⁹⁴ As head of the Cheng family, Cheng Hsüan was able to trade on his influence with Toghto to threaten a Yüan commander who moved into P'u-chiang around 1355 and urge him to plan better strategy and make his troops cease marauding.⁹⁵

When, however, the forces of the future Ming founder Chu Yüan-chang conquered P'u-chiang in 1358, the commune was in a state of political confusion. As a Yüan loyalist, Cheng Hsüan evacuated most of the family to Chu-chi, on the road leading to Hang-chou. He left behind his son Cheng Ying with token forces to maintain the properties and forward food supplies. Cheng Huan, a cousin of Cheng Ying's, remained in the P'u-chiang area and was for a while in the service of the Chu-chi warlord Hsieh Kuo-hsi. Cheng Hung, a son of Cheng Ch'in, was taken into Li Wen-chung's staff at Chien-te as a military advisor. Cheng Hsüan never returned to give allegiance to Chu Yüan-chang's regime, but died and was buried in Chu-chi in 1364. Cheng Wei, a supporter of Chu Yüan-chang, thereupon succeeded him as family manager.⁹⁶ Thus in contrast to the dynastic transition period of the 1270s, when the Cheng were free of entang-

⁹³ Sung Lien, 27.8b–9a; 鄭景彝傳 [“Biography of Cheng Ming 銘”], 30.7a–8a; *PCHC*, *hsiao-yu*, 8.8b–9a, 12ab. Hu Han wrote an epitaph for Cheng Ming, but this is not to be found in his collected works. Cheng Ming, the youngest member of the third generation after Cheng Te-chang, and Cheng Wei, as one of the oldest of the fourth, may have been about the same age. However, we do not know Cheng Ming's exact dates.

⁹⁴ When his son Cheng Yung and nephew Cheng Shen were serving as tutors in Toghto's household, Cheng Hsüan paid a visit to the capital and established close rapport with the high literati Chieh Hsi-ssu and Huang Chin. Cheng Hsüan's visit must have taken place before 1344, when Chieh died.

⁹⁵ Sung Lien, 24.7a–9a.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*; *PCHC*, *hsiao-yu*, 8.16ab; *cheng-shih* 政事, 9.13b–14a, 21b.

ling connections with the Sung court, the period of the 1360s found the commune suffering a crisis in leadership and a severe fragmentation of political loyalty.

The outwardly admiring attitude Chu Yüan-chang and the early Ming government showed to the Cheng family has been described earlier in this paper. Yet official Ming reverence for the Cheng could not hide the fact that in the transition period the Cheng had fled their rural stronghold and were unable to come under Ming rule as a unified family group strong enough to guarantee local order and security as they had done when Yüan rule was imposed some eighty years before. The Yüan founders had had to accept the Cheng for what they were: the key to local order in their part of P'u-chiang. The Ming founders were in no such debt to the Cheng, because in view of the Cheng default it was the Ming armies and not the Cheng that imposed order in P'u-chiang.⁹⁷

The weakened and vulnerable position of the Cheng was not lost on Chu Yüan-chang's local officials. Chu's prefect in Chin-hua, Wang Tsung-hsien, under pressure to raise heavy taxes for military purposes, singled out the Cheng as a specially lucrative source for money and military supplies and made them pay what the Cheng claimed was ten times the amount demanded from other landlords. Cheng Ying protested, but Wang Tsung-hsien arrested and shackled him. His cousin Cheng Huan likewise resisted, only to be stripped and exposed to the sun and later flogged.⁹⁸ After the Ming was formally founded in 1368, the exemptions from unpaid services the Cheng had enjoyed in the late Yüan were not renewed, and the Cheng were made "tax captains" (*liang-chang*) responsible for quota tax deliveries from their part of P'u-chiang to the government.

In other respects too, the early Ming was a period of torment for the Cheng. True, neither the Ming policy of harassing large landlords nor the great purges that periodically swept through the Ming bureaucracy actually ruined the commune, but merely extracted individual victims from it. This was a form of sacrifice the Cheng, given their

⁹⁷ A military commandery set up in P'u-chiang in 1359 consisted of local militiamen and their leaders, but no Cheng are mentioned in connection with it (*TZSL* I, 74).

⁹⁸ *PCHC*, *hsiao-yu*, 8.14ab; *TZSL* II, 474-475. Cheng T'ao too maintained an attitude of Yüan loyalism; cf. Chu T'ing-hsin 祝廷心, 葯房居士集序 ["Preface to the *Yao-fang chü-shih chi*"], *Ming wen-heng* 40.4b-6a.

family traditions, were ready to make, and one the Ming emperor Chu Yüan-chang was ready to admire. When Cheng Hung, who had become a supervisor in the Ming palace treasury, was executed for reasons unknown, the emperor praised Cheng Hung's wife, who committed suicide to follow her husband in death, as "a true *i-men* wife."⁹⁹ In 1381, in answer to charges that the family had had financial connections with the executed prime minister, Hu Wei-yung, both the family manager, Cheng Lien (1327-1382), and his cousin, Cheng Shih (1327-1382), hastened to the capital where, in conscious imitation of Cheng Te-kuei and Cheng Te-chang over a century before, each vied with the other to undergo the pain of trial. The emperor was well impressed with their demonstration of fraternal self-sacrifice and pardoned them both. On the spot he created a special position in the Fukien provincial bureaucracy for Cheng Shih.¹⁰⁰ On another occasion, a Cheng junior offered himself for punishment in place of the manager Cheng Lien, who was late with his delivery of local tax grain that he as *liang-chang* was responsible for. Again, the emperor ordered their pardon and release.¹⁰¹ Then in 1386 Cheng Lien was once again summoned to the capital on the charge that he had conspired with the tax assessors to falsify the register of family holdings; this time his younger cousin Cheng Wei (1334-1386), who insisted upon going in his place, was summarily executed in the capital.¹⁰²

If the Cheng were helplessly dependent upon the emperor's personal intercession to escape an otherwise certain destruction at the hands of the bureaucracy, they were also at his beck and call to provide men to fill the largely decorative positions he reserved for them. In 1393, for example, the emperor sent an envoy to P'u-chiang to requisition all Cheng males over the age of thirty. When twenty-four

⁹⁹ PCHC, *chen-lich* 貞烈, 10.1b.

¹⁰⁰ Fang Hsiao-ju, 采苓子鄭處士墓碣 ["Epitaph for Cheng Lien 濂"], 208(22). 22a-24a; 故中順大夫福建布政司左參議鄭公墓表 ["Epitaph for Cheng Shih 澁"], 208(22).24a-25b; TTSI v, 2145.

¹⁰¹ PCHC, *shih-i* 拾遺, 15.22a.

¹⁰² Fang Hsiao-ju, 貞義處士鄭君墓表 ["Epitaph for Cheng Wei 洵"], 208(22). 25b-26b. In 1370, Cheng Wei had visited the capital and arranged to print and circulate locally at family expense a tract containing Ming T'ai-tsu's educational maxims that he received from the throne at that time. Cf. Wang I, 送鄭仲宗序 ["A departing message for Cheng Wei"], 169(4).24b-25b.

Cheng men arrived at the capital, the emperor said to them: "There are many talented ones in your family, and your family is one of the most highly acclaimed in the empire for filial piety and righteousness. You may yourselves select your most worthy and virtuous members for a position in my grandson's [the future Chien-wen Emperor's] service." The next day, Cheng Ying offered three names, and from them Ming T'ai-tsu selected Cheng Chi on the basis of his having the widest experience. The others were sent home.¹⁰³ Similarly, in 1397 the family sent up Cheng I in response to the emperor's call for large taxpaying households to send members to the capital for bureaucratic appointment. "Your family is one of great filial piety and righteousness," said the emperor, "and has lived communally several generations. Although some of you gained office under the former dynasty, none achieved a truly eminent position, so now We are going to make you great and noble." Cheng I was thereupon made President of the Board of Rites, only to be removed from that office and sent home upon the accession of the Chien-wen Emperor the following year.¹⁰⁴ These were rather egregious favors, of which the family was perhaps as much the victim as beneficiary. The psychic frustrations of an apparently meaningless eminence may have been too much for Cheng Chi, for by 1393 he lost faith in his Confucianism and became a Buddhist devotee, quite in violation of the Cheng family rules.¹⁰⁵

Although the Cheng survived the first Ming emperor's reign (1368–1398), having offered several proofs of their fraternal solidarity for the emperor's delectation, they were left the weaker for it in that they were made to suffer continued bureaucratic harassment on the one

¹⁰³ *PCHC*, *shih-i*, 15.7b–8a. The gazetteer here quotes a certain 義門鄭氏聖恩錄 ["Record of imperial favors received by the Cheng communal family"], compiled by Cheng Ch'ung-yüeh 崇岳, an *i-men* descendant who flourished in the sixteenth century. The work, now apparently lost except for the *PCHC* quotations, purports to give the emperor's actual words in spoken style. A member of the Wang family commune of P'u-chiang was also put into the heir-apparent's service at the same time (*TTSI* VIII, 3356).

¹⁰⁴ *PCHC*, *shih-i*, 15.8a; *cheng-shih*, 9.21b–22a; *TTSI* VIII, 3670–3671. Cheng I was a son of Cheng Chu. Under the Yung-lo Emperor, he returned to court briefly as a palace tutor.

¹⁰⁵ Fang Hsiao-ju, 答鄭仲辯二首 ["Two letters in reply to Cheng Chi"], 196(10). 4a–7b. The date is roughly calculable from the statement in the second letter that Fang was thirty-seven *sui* at the time.

side and the emperor's capricious rescues and dubious honors on the other. The Yung-lo imperial usurpation of 1402 brought more dangers: Cheng Ch'ia, a Hanlin official, accompanied the fleeing Chien-wen Emperor and, according to legend, hid him in a well in the Cheng compound so that the Yung-lo Emperor's partisans could not find him. Whatever Cheng Ch'ia's connection with Chien-wen, it was close enough to make his family disown him; he was not rehabilitated and readmitted into the family genealogy until the Wan-li period (1573-1620).¹⁰⁶ Yung-lo's men are said to have searched the Cheng premises and only by chance missed a cache of weapons stored in boxes. Thus the Cheng came within a hair's breadth of complete annihilation.¹⁰⁷

Because information about the Cheng becomes increasingly meager in the fifteenth century, we do not know precisely how or why the family finally divided its property and put an end to its career as a hereditary joint commune. All of the Cheng who served the first Ming emperor were members of the fourth generation after Cheng Te-chang, or the eighth after the commune founder Cheng Ch'i. This generation numbered some twenty-nine males in all; at least four of them held offices under the Yüan and seven under the Ming. The next generation, the ninth from Cheng Ch'i, had twenty-eight male members, of whom at least five gained positions in the Ming bureaucracy. Twenty-three males are known for the tenth generation, of whom only one gained office; this was Cheng Shen, who held a series of middle-rank court positions under the Yung-lo, Hung-hsi, and Hsüan-te Emperors (ca. 1403-1435).¹⁰⁸ Of the eleventh generation only four members are known, and beyond this point the generations are no longer traceable.¹⁰⁹ The *Chin-hua hsien-min chuan* [*Biographies of former residents of Chin-hua*], compiled in 1558, has no Cheng biographies to add to those already listed in Cheng Po's *Chin-hua*

¹⁰⁶ PCHC, *chung-lich* 忠烈, 8.9ab.

¹⁰⁷ PCHC, *hsiao-yu*, 8.16ab.

¹⁰⁸ PCHC, *cheng-shih*, 9.23b-24a.

¹⁰⁹ The managerial succession went from the ninth, Cheng Lien 濂 (d. 1393); to the tenth, Cheng Ying 瑄 [See Morohashi No. 17790 for this graph]; eleventh, Cheng Kan 幹; and twelfth, Cheng K'ai 楷, who came into the post sometime after 1405. Cheng K'ai may have been succeeded as manager by Cheng Po 柏, but after this point the succession of managers is no longer traceable in the sources (PCHC, *wen-yüan*, 9.29b-30a).

hsien-ta chuan [*Biographies of distinguished men of Chin-hua*] of 1428; and moreover it states categorically that the Cheng remained a joint family fourteen generations from the Chien-yen era (1128–1162) through the Cheng-t'ung period (1436–1449). This means, presumably, that at the time of the family's dissolution there were some very young members in it who were of the fourteenth generation.¹¹⁰ A certain Cheng Ch'ung-yüeh, who styled himself a member of the fifteenth generation, appears to have recovered the family's temple properties, recompiled its genealogy, and reissued the family rules in an unsuccessful attempt to resuscitate the commune.¹¹¹ The Cheng remained in P'u-chiang as ordinary gentry, however, for the P'u-chiang gazetteer makes occasional mention of them down to the time of its compilation in 1905.

Unlike the case of an imperial dynasty, no history of the Cheng commune was ever written, nor were the causes of its breakup contemplated in retrospect. The remaining evidence gives the misleading idea that the Cheng commune gradually withered and faded and finally expired very quietly at some vague point in the fifteenth century. This ending, though misleading, rings true in a sense, for the Cheng age of greatness coincided in time with the heyday of the Chin-hua school of Confucianism and literature; and when Fang Hsiao-ju, the last heir of that school, was executed by the Yung-lo Emperor in 1402, the Cheng were deprived of strong moral and ideological support from outside their own ranks, and lost the assurance of literary immortalization that they used to enjoy. It may be no accident that the commune scarcely lasted beyond those youngest generations whom Sung Lien and Fang Hsiao-ju had known personally. The Cheng were to a high degree creatures of Confucian literary publicity and seem to have striven for several generations to live up to the ideal that publicity had helped create for them. Thus whatever the proximate reasons for the fall of the commune, the Cheng had already ceased to exist as a family of unique significance when the last of the Chin-hua school died out and the mountain county of

¹¹⁰ Ying T'ing-yü 應廷育, *Chin-hua hsien-min chuan* 金華先民傳 (HCHTS ed.) 5.3b.

¹¹¹ Cheng Ch'ung-yüeh's inscription for the sacrificial fields is appended to Cheng Yung, *Cheng-shih chia-i*, 28b–29a. Cf. also *PCHC*, *cheng-shih*, 9.26ab.

P'u-chiang, once a major center of letters and ideology, slipped back into its original state of obscurity.

But so much did the Cheng communal family in its heyday symbolize a Neo-Confucian social ideal that Sung Lien held it up as a living embodiment of the "great communality" (*ta-t'ung*) of high antiquity, proof of the belief that the people of the present time were no different from the people whom the sage rulers had once organized into a perfect society. "In the age of *ta-t'ung*," wrote Sung Lien, alluding to a famous chapter in the *Book of Rites*, "people considered not only their own parents as parents nor only their own sons as sons. They did not inevitably keep wealth to themselves, nor did they demand that others do things for them. But when the Great Way later became obscure, passion and deceit arose in its place, causing Confucius to regret the impossibility of ever experiencing [the age of *ta-t'ung*]. Nevertheless, the innate moral endowment of men is perennial and timeless; and even though [morality] has variously risen and declined through the ages, the Way has never once been totally destroyed. Thus surely the Cheng of P'u-chiang represent in their own family the Three Dynasties [of antiquity]." ¹¹² The Cheng family here seems to be looked upon as a revived specimen of the classical social order, a sudden new sprout on a stump long feared dead.

There were, however, two ideological difficulties, here ignored by Sung Lien, that made the full acceptance of the Cheng commune into "antique" orthodoxy somewhat problematical. On the one hand, the strands of received tradition that converged to produce the "Confucian" family commune were heterogeneous in the extreme. Buddhist monastic institutions, for example, furnished the prototypes for the communal treasury (*kung-t'ang*) and the communal dining hall, and the post of family manager seems to have been modeled to some degree on that of the Buddhist abbot. ¹¹³ The family bureaucracy

¹¹² Sung Lien, 24.7a.

¹¹³ A poem written for the Cheng in the Yüan period says in two of its lines: "As strict as a government yamen in its giving of orders / As quiet as a Buddhist refectory in its gathering for meals and dispersing" (*PCHC*, *fang piao* 坊表, 5.4a). In a comparison of church estates with family estates, Huang Chin stated that the reason why church estates continue for millennia while most family estates are subject to fragmentation after a few generations is that the church has a means for ensuring succession through dependable men whereas families do not. Cf. Huang Chin, 淨勝院莊田記 ["In-

was almost an imperial bureaucracy in miniature, with its internal checks and controls and its reservation of all decision-making powers to a sole ruler or manager. This system of organization was derived from the Legalist rather than the Confucian tradition. Imbedded within it was an unsung but very concrete sub-tradition of bookkeeping and accountancy, taken from government clerical practice and the world of commerce. This very practical expertise was of course crucial to the continued maintenance of the family commune.¹¹⁴ History's first known joint communal family of commoners, embodying some or all of these traditions, was that of the Chang of Tung-p'ing, who flourished in the Northern Ch'i, Sui, and early T'ang (sixth-seventh centuries A.D.), an era the antiquity-minded ideologues of Sung times and afterwards otherwise dismiss for its barbarism, heterodoxy, and chaos.¹¹⁵ As an organization, the communal family clearly represented nothing antique, but was rather a composite of various latter-day systems.

In addition, the ideal society of orthodox high antiquity had no room for such an institution as the hereditary, undivided communal family. There was no Confucian substitute for the heterodox traditions that produced such family communes as that of the Cheng. Yüan and Ming Confucian ideologues were uneasily aware that this

scription for the estate fields of the Ching-sheng yüan"], 13.5a-6a. Thus the family manager, chosen like the abbot on the basis of qualification rather than simple inheritance, gave the family much better prospects for long-term survival than would otherwise be the case.

¹¹⁴ Family communes were not necessarily tied to landed wealth. The family of Lu Hsiang-shan, which as a joint communal family lasted at least ten generations down to the 1240s, at first derived most of its income from a drug business. Cf. Lu Chiu-yüan 陸九淵, *Hsiang-shan ch'üan-chi* 象山全集 (SPPY ed.) 28.2ab, 36.34b-35a. Su T'ien-chüeh 蘇天爵 (1294-1352) noted that most communal families in north China made their living not from agriculture but commerce. Cf. *Tzu-ch'i wen-kao* 滋溪文稿 (Shih-yüan 適園 *ts'ung-shu* ed.) 28.14b-15a.

¹¹⁵ The Cheng were well aware of the Chang precedent. According to a well-known story, T'ang Kao-tsung once paid a visit to the Chang family and asked its head, Chang Kung-i 張公藝, how it had managed to last nine generations as a joint commune; whereupon Chang took out a brush and wrote the character 忍 [forbearance] one hundred times. The fourth manager, Cheng Wen-t'ai 文泰, had this story in mind when he had the character 忍 hung in each of the component households. Cf. *PCHC*, *hsiao-yu*, 8.7a.

was the case. Writing elsewhere, Sung Lien noted that the landholding and extended family systems of antiquity were entirely unconnected institutions. Ancient families were forced to divide after a few generations because holdings under the "well-field" system of equal land distribution could tolerate neither the landlordism nor the indefinitely expanding property demands of a hereditary communal family. When ancient families were obliged to segment themselves, separate systems of ritual organization for the common-descent group served to preserve kin consciousness and provide mutual aid.¹¹⁶

Connected with this difficulty was the further problem that in antiquity the upkeep of the ancestral cult for an entire patrilineal-descent group (*ta-tsung*) was the prerogative of the hereditary nobility. Huang Chin remarked on the social dualism inherent in the classical kinship system: that while the lineal descendants inherited noble social status and maintained the grand cult of the *ta-tsung* for as many generations as had elapsed from the original ancestor, the collateral descendants were made to fall to successively lower statuses and could practice only the family cult of the *hsiao-tsung*, whose most distant ancestor, never further removed than the great-great-grandfather, changed with each succeeding generation. The unification of the entire common-descent group (*ho-tsu*) was the exclusive right of the lineal descendants, and this they accomplished symbolically through their ritual sacrifices to the original ancestors, ceremonies in which the lower status collateral lineages could participate only vicariously. Only in postclassical times did the meaning of the term *ho-tsu* shift and come to refer to the physical as well as ritual unification of an entire common-descent group in which no component lineage held hereditary noble status.¹¹⁷ Thus modern ideologues were aware that the sages of antiquity, when they created the norms for human society, had never envisioned a joint family commune. In these circumstances, were the Cheng acting in violation of the sagely norms, or were they justified in their revision of terms and their usurpation of what in antiquity were the prerogatives of nobles?

At least during the heyday of the Cheng the question was never definitively resolved. Cheng Chi's colleague Chang Tan suggested in

¹¹⁶ Sung Lien, 23.4b.

¹¹⁷ Huang Chin, 17.3b-4b.

1396 that precisely because of the postclassical origins of the communal family it had no sage-given norms to follow in regulating itself, and so had to resort to various “provisional devices” (*ch'üan-tu*) in order to cope with recurring crises and prevent division.¹¹⁸ In an inscription for his family's ancestral hall, Cheng Yung discussed the various orthodox rules applying to the ordering of the ancestral tablets, including Chu Hsi's rule allowing only four enshrined ancestral generations at any one time, and Ssu-ma Kuang's, allowing only three. Finding it impossible to follow either authority, Cheng Yung dismissed them and arranged, apparently, for the enshrinement of nine generations, beginning with the original local ancestor, Cheng Huai. But he modestly declined to offer his revision as a normative model for the rest of society, simply justifying it as an “improvisation” (*yin-shih chih-i*).¹¹⁹

However, one of the Chin-hua Confucian ideologues, Hu Han, went so far as to circulate a letter among his friends and colleagues suggesting the need for a reinterpretation of the antique ancestral cult, one that would go beyond Chu Hsi and permit the full celebration of the *ta-tsung* cult to the commoners of the present day.¹²⁰ Elsewhere, Hu Han argued that the rise and spread of the ancestral hall (*tz'u-t'ang*) in the postclassical Han and Sung periods was a justifiable innovation because it permitted commoners without hereditary status or bureaucratic office to pay the utmost of respects to their ancestors, an impossibility under the antique system.¹²¹ Thus by the late thirteenth century, some Confucians were ready to go beyond Chu Hsi (whose respect for ancient institutions prevented him from permitting any more than the truncated *hsiao-tsung* cult to modern gentry society) and support the demands of the non-office-holding gentry for adequate ritual expression. There was no known attempt to restore the antique family in an institutional sense, bringing to life again the exaltation of enfeoffed nobility and the debasement of

¹¹⁸ *Ming wen-heng*, 41.8ab.

¹¹⁹ *PCHC*, *tz'u-miao*, 13.50a–51a. For Chu Hsi's arrangement of the ancestral cult and the Cheng revision, cf. also Shimizu, pp. 85–87.

¹²⁰ Hu Han, 興許門諸友論宗法 [“Letter to my friends who were students of Hsü (Ch'ien 謙) concerning the ancestral cult”], 3.20b–22b.

¹²¹ Hu Han, 深溪王氏祠堂記 [“Inscription for the ancestral hall of the Wang family of Shen-ch'i”], 7.1a–3a.

commoners that the *ta-tsung* and *hsiao-tsung* cult systems and the noble temple (*miao*) and commoner altar (*ch'in*) reflected and reinforced. It was felt that the modern rural gentry, devoted to Confucian ideology but lacking fiefs or inheritable claims to office, was no degenerate remnant of an antique ideal, but rather an indication of a sort of moral and social progress since antiquity, a deepening of Confucianism by its acceptance at the commoner level. Thus the Chin-hua Confucian Wang I (1328–1374) noted exuberantly that antiquity's one example of a hereditary joint family belonged to the nobility of Spring and Autumn times (722–481 B.C.) and lasted only five generations, whereas the Cheng, mere commoners, had lasted twice as long, thanks to their system of family government.¹²² Fang Hsiao-ju put this plebeian sentiment into an authoritative form of utterance: "Where modern ritual is generous and ancient ritual less so [as in antiquity commoners sacrificed only to their parents and grandparents], then modern ritual is preferable. . . . Modern ritual, where generous, though not antique, is *like* antiquity."¹²³

These ideas, however, fell short of according full legitimacy to the social institutions of the modern world. Carried far enough, the tendency to modernize antiquity for the convenience of the landlord-gentry might have to end in an admission that the ancient sages had established norms for a form of society that had since become obsolete, and failed to foresee the lines of future social development that gave rise to the modern gentry class. An overt challenge to the sages' credentials was, of course, out of the question. Perhaps the most satisfactory resolution of the problem was that provided by the school of Chu Hsi's famous protagonist Lu Hsiang-shan (1126–1191), himself a member of a communal family. Lu's "idealist" version of Neo-Confucianism tended to relax the grip of sagely doctrine upon concrete institutional forms and restrict its scope to the realm of general ideas, thus permitting any number of modern variants on antique institutions without calling sagely doctrine itself into question. According to Tai Liang (d. 1383), it was the Lu school of "mind study" (*hsin-hsüeh*) that worked out the idea that the rise and fall of the family is based in "virtuous sharing" (*te-i*) rather than in wealth and

¹²² Wang I, 麟溪集序 ["Preface to the *Lin-ch'i chi*"], 168(5).5b.

¹²³ Fang Hsiao-ju, 187(1).12b–13a.

nobility (*fu-kuei*).¹²⁴ The Lu school indeed had some influence upon the early formation of the Cheng commune, at least insofar as Cheng Te-chang is said to have based his family instructions in the doctrine of Lu Hsiang-shan.¹²⁵

However, the teachings of the Lu school could not be openly and fully embraced in the Chin-hua area because Chin-hua was already heavily committed to the transmission of the Chu Hsi orthodoxy.¹²⁶ Partly in view of this commitment, the Chin-hua ideologists did not fully endorse the tendency of the Lu school to reduce antiquity's concrete institutions to mere archaicisms. Modern society had to be served, but the ultimate legitimacy of the antique institutional order also had to be guarded. Therefore, the prevailing ideological position on the legitimacy of the modern family commune resolved itself into a curious blend of provisional acceptance and ultimate rejection.

Taken as a whole, modernity was definitely seen to represent a decline from antiquity. No families were singled out for the *i-men* designation in antiquity because the total complex of antique institutions ensured that every family was, in its moral essence, an *i-men*. The new communally organized *i-men* were special cases, products of the postclassical age of decline, when unselfish sharing became the exception rather than the rule.¹²⁷ Communal families were a righteous response by ordinary commoners to the disorder and anarchy of postclassical state and society. By organizing their families on communal lines, mere commoners were showing that "innate principle" (*t'ien-li*) really did persist in human minds despite the degeneracy of the world round about.¹²⁸ Unable to bear watching their kin disperse as cold and hungry strangers into the world outside, unselfish men

¹²⁴ Tai Liang, 題楊慈湖所書陸象山語 ["Colophon to the words of Lu Hsiang-shan as recorded by Yang Chien 簡"], 160(14).3ab.

¹²⁵ Huang Chin, 37.1a-2b.

¹²⁶ Chin-hua claimed itself the home of Chu Hsi orthodoxy through a direct master-to-disciple line of transmission. This line began with Chu Hsi's son-in-law and disciple Huang Kan 黃幹 (1152-1221) and was brought to Chin-hua by Huang Kan's student Ho Chi 何基 (1188-1269). From Ho Chi, the line went to Wang Po 王柏 (1197-1274), Chin Lü-hsiang 金履祥 (1232-1303), and Hsü Ch'ien 許謙 (1270-1337).

¹²⁷ Liu Kuan, 15.8b-10a.

¹²⁸ Hu Han, 黃巖戴氏合族詩序 ["Preface to poems in honor of the Tai joint family of Huang-yen"], 4.18b-20b.

gathered them in just when the antique system would require their segmentation.¹²⁹ This was *like* antiquity in the moral impulses behind it, but it was not antiquity.

Thus the *i-men* was viewed as an isolated moral and social phenomenon, one not hinged into a total societal ideal but free-floating in the disordered morass of the modern world. This seems to point to the reason why contemporary Neo-Confucian ideology had rather little to say about the aggressive process of land acquisition that established the Cheng family's economic base. The question was avoided because, in the absence of the antique system of equal land distribution by the state, there was no other way a family could gain the means to set itself up communally. The communal family represented not a return to antiquity, but simply an indication that antiquity could be returned to. What was antique was not the institution itself, but the inspiration, energy, and moral purpose invested in it. The communal family adumbrated the *ta-t'ung* of antiquity and reflected *t'ien-li* in its suppression of women and juniors and in its minimization of selfishness, private ownership, and devotion to one's own parents, wife, and children—at the expense of the senior generations and ancestors as a collective. The heterodox origins of the commune were a matter of little moment; what counted was that the family's regulatory apparatus was harnessed to the service of a commanding Confucian ideal and sanctioned an ancient Confucian morality that was otherwise sanctioned in antiquity. Given modern conditions, no alternative was possible. Thus, at the social level, the term *fu-ku* contained a fundamental ambiguity; although literally meaning "restoring antiquity," it in fact meant something less, and it further assumed that antique moral ideals could not themselves be vitiated by the alien, postclassical systems of regulation and coercion that facilitated their revival.

Ideologically, the family commune did not develop much beyond a temporary makeshift, an attempted accommodation to an unsatisfactory social environment. It was never established as truly normative, but remained only a symptom of the survival into postclassical times of timeless human moral qualities. It perhaps gave a slim hope that someday all of the institutions of antiquity might in some way be

¹²⁹ Sung Lien, 23.4b.

restored in the world, for the principles that inspired modern family communalists were the same principles that, more fully and perfectly displayed, informed antiquity in all its aspects. Kings and nobles had fallen short; mere commoners like the Cheng had picked up the burden of the Way.