

**Da Ming huidian**  
**Chapter/juan 20**

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**Translators foreword**

This translation of Chapter 20 of the 1587 edition of the *Da Ming huidian* [Collected statutes of the Ming dynasty] is now made available in a simple version. There are only a few explanatory notes which, I am sure, will leave most readers with many questions. To some of the questions I have answers but I have not had the resources to make a systematic study of recent literature in the field since the first drafts in the middle of the 1970s. So I prefer to leave it this way rather than to give the impression of a more systematic annotated translation.

The first edition of the *Da Ming huidian* was in 1503. The 1587 edition has 228 chapters. Ministry of Revenue (*Hubu*) covers chapters 14 to 42. See: FRANKE Wolfgang 1968 *An Introduction to the Sources of Ming History* Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, p.178.

The section on the Yellow Registers was first published with an introduction and notes as LITTRUP Leif 1977: "The Yellow Registers of the Ming Dynasty — Translation from the *Wan-li Da-Ming Hui-dian*", *Papers on Far Eastern History* 16: 67-106. Andrew FRASER did a marvellous job to help get it into a readable form.

Chinese characters have deliberately been omitted so that the text may be used without such facilities. The *pinyin* transcription of Chinese character have been used throughout the translation. English renderings of titles etc. follow the standard established by Charles O. HUCKER.

The Chinese text is divided according to the year of the Chinese calendar. The translation follows, accordingly, the year of the International Calendar in which we find the corresponding Chinese New Year.

**Translation**

*Da Ming huidian*, chapter 20 . Ministry of Revenue 7.

## Population *hukou* II.<sup>1</sup>

### The Yellow Registers

In the beginning of the dynasty orders were given to the ministers in the Secretariat that during the Imperial sacrifices to Heaven and Earth (*jiaosi*) the population registers and tax registers for the whole empire should be arranged below the altar. When the ceremonial had finished the registers were to be stored in the Palace Treasury. This shows their importance.

In what follows the procedures [for compilation] will be described. Every year the aggregate figures are reported. Every ten years the Yellow Registers are compiled to determine taxes and corvée. There are very detailed provisions to examine whether any property has been concealed in order to avoid paying the tax, or whether any person has moved to another place without permission. These provisions are all listed below.

### The compilation of the Yellow Registers

1381

Imperial Decree of Hongwu 14. All the prefectures, subprefectures and districts in the empire will compile Yellow Registers (*Huangce*) to determine taxes and corvée.

110 households will form one *li*. Ten men from the ten households with the highest number of adult men (*ding*) [and most taxable property (*liang*)]<sup>2</sup> will be designated as leaders. The other 100 households will form ten *jia* each with ten men.

Each year the duty as *li*-leader will be imposed upon one man as corvée. He will administer the affairs of the *li*. In towns this will be called *fang*, in suburbs *xiang* and in the countryside *li*. Ten years will be one rotation. The succession in the rotation will be determined by the number of adult males and the amount of property.

Each *li* will compile a register. At the front of the register there will be a summary chart. Widowers, widows, orphans, and childless persons who are not liable to perform corvée will be enrolled separately from the 110 households. They will be listed below the chart. They will be called "odds and ends" (*jiling*).

When the register is compiled one copy will be sent to the Ministry of Revenue, and one to the provincial administration office, the prefecture, and the subprefecture or district respectively. They will each retain one copy.

1391

Memorial approved in Hongwu 24. Procedures for the compilation of the Yellow Registers.

The responsible officials will first produce a form for one household. It will be printed and distributed to the *li*-leaders in towns, suburbs, and the countryside, and furthermore to all the

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 19 is Population *hukou* I.

<sup>2</sup> The text only states "most *ding*". So do the *Houhuzhi* [Gazetteer of Lake Posterior] 4/1 and *Mingshi* [Ming history] 138/3966 (biography of FAN Min, the acting minister for Revenue, who proposed to introduce the *lijia*). However other sources such as the *Taizu shilu* [Veritable records of the Hongwu period] 1:1381 and *Mingshi* [Ming history] 77/1878 (The economic treatise) state most *ding* and *liang*. All modern scholars seem to agree that the 1381 version read *dingliang*. I am aware of no answer to a question why the 1587-text only mentions the 'adult men'.

*jia*-heads. They will order the household to fill in the forms personally with information on the persons and the property of the household. Afterwards they will hand the form over to their respective administrating *jia*-head.

The *jia*-heads will bind the form from their own households together with the forms from the other ten households into a fascicle (*wence*) and send it to their *li*-leaders in towns, suburbs, and rural subdistricts respectively. The *li*-leaders will each put together the fascicles sent by the *jia*-heads and forward them to the district they belong to.

The officials and lesser functionaries of the district will compare the registers with the Yellow Registers from the previous registration and check and audit them. If there has been an increase in population the figure for the increase will be determined. Concerning fields and similar items, a buyer will have his increase in taxation stated, and a seller will be allowed to transfer the tax on the item of property. Care will be taken lest there should occur any reduction in the original figure.

The duty of *li*-leader serving in rotation will still be performed by those men and households that were originally assigned to the duty in the Yellow Registers. If someone is not able to serve then it is permitted to select among the 100 households one that is near the top in adult men and property.

If in a *li* a household is discontinued it will be replaced by a household from the 'odds and ends'. If there are no 'odds and ends' it is permitted to transfer a household from a nearby *li* as replacement. The division of the people into three tax-classes the upper, the middle and the lower will still be maintained according to the original figures. It is not permitted to make changes. If it happens that a household is not able to fulfil its duties then the authorities will examine the number of adult men and the amount of property and fairly decide the case.

Furthermore at the front of every register the respective districts will according to the prescribed form make a chart summarising the content.

If the responsible officials, lesser functionaries, *li*-leaders, and *jia*-heads of any place dare to conspire during the compilation of the registers and thereby damage the people in the collection of taxes and corvée or if, after a register has been written according to the prescribed form on every point without mistakes, they then erase or make changes in the register in order to evade the collection of taxes or corvée in a malicious way, then it is permitted for the elders to point out the facts, put into bonds the official or lesser functionary who harms the people, go to the Capital with the register and present a memorial requesting that the accused be sentenced to decapitation. If a corrupt and avaricious person makes false accusations in order to damage another person, then he shall be punished appropriately.

If officials, lesser functionaries, *li*-leaders, or *jia*-heads conspire with a household and indulge in corrupt practices such as not reporting clearly transactions about land that was originally registered as domain land (*guantian*), or in general tampering with names, fields, etc.,

in order to reduce or remove the amount of taxes the household has to pay, then these persons will all be sentenced to death. In the household that has committed the tax evasion, the family head will be punished by death and the other members of the household will be exiled beyond the bounds of civilisation.

The *li*-leaders who are responsible for the compilation of the Yellow Registers will be very careful not to go outside their own subdistrict (*du*). If a subdistrict has 600 households then 550 households will be organised into five *li*. The surplus fifty households will be distributed inside their own subdistrict. They will be registered and perform corvée attached to the name of the *li*-leader as supernumeraries (*daiguan*). It is not allowed to supplement from other subdistricts.

As 'odds and ends' it is permitted to register old persons, crippled children below the age of ten, widows, and absentee landlords (*jizhuang*) who own land in another prefecture or district (*jun*). If a person is ten years of age he will be enrolled in the regular register. In this way, a person who in the previous registration was enrolled at the age of ten will now be twenty years of age. Those above ten years will be arranged according to their age. Later when they have grown up, they will all serve as *jia*-heads.

The persons and households whose cultivation is entirely on domain land are also to be registered in the *li* and will participate in the rotation of corvée.

Concerning the content of the registration form. There will be a space for each item such as fields, hills, ponds, houses, wagons, and boats. If there is such an item in the household, the local officials will according to the prescribed form write it down. If there is no such item in the household then it is not permitted to make a false report.

When summarising increases and decreases for districts and subdistricts, they are only expected to write down the aggregate figures for persons and property. It is not necessary to give details for each tax-paying household.

When the subprefectures and districts have completed the summarising chart for each *li*-register, they will still according to the prescribed form collect the figures for population and property together, and from them make a summarising register. In this register they will give the total figures of persons and property for each subdistrict. The regular officials, the secretarial officials<sup>3</sup> and lesser functionaries will personally check and compare, and at the end of each *li*-register and each summarising register of the subprefecture or district they will sign their name and stamp their seal. They will then send the registers to the prefecture.

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<sup>3</sup> The regular officials (*zhengguan*) in subprefectures or districts were the magistrate, the vice-magistrate and the assistant magistrate. The secretarial officials (*shoulingguan*) were the registrars, *limu* in subprefectures and *dianshi* in districts. The *limu* had the rank 9b, the *dianshi* was not ranked. The *dianshi* was in charge of receiving and sending documents. He could act as vice-magistrate or assistant magistrate if these positions were vacant.

The responsible regular officials, the secretarial officials,<sup>4</sup> and lesser functionaries in the prefecture will personally inspect, audit and compare all the registers produced in the subprefectures and districts. The prefectures will furthermore, according to the prescribed form, compile a summarising register in which they will clearly specify the collected figures for population and taxable property in each subprefecture and district. At the end of each register produced in subprefectures or districts they will write the year and month, sign their name and stamp their seal.

In independent prefectures and subprefectures, the prefecture will depute one official to conduct the officials and lesser functionaries who in every subprefecture and district have supervised the registration to the capital, where they will present the registers personally.

Prefectures and subprefectures under the jurisdiction of a provincial administration office will send the registers there. The officials and lesser functionaries of the office will personally inspect, check and compare the registers. According to the prescribed form they will compile a summarising register clearly specifying the total figures for population and property in every prefecture and subprefecture.

On the summarising registers compiled in every prefecture and subprefecture they will sign their name and stamp their seal. They will depute one official to conduct the officials and lesser functionaries from the prefectures, subprefectures and districts to the capital, where they will present the registers personally. They will arrive before the end of the year.

Concerning Buddhist nunneries and monasteries and Daoist [Taoist] temples. If the monks or priests to whom certificates have already been issued own property they will be entered in the Yellow Registers and pay taxes and perform corvée with the *lijia*. In the space under household they will write: one household such-and-such nunnery, monastery, temple, monk or priest will in what years serve as *li*-leader and *jia*-head. Those with no fields or property will be enumerated as "supernumerary odds and ends" (*daiguan jiling*).

Concerning the written characters and the shape of the Yellow Registers. Everything will be written with a clear hand. The size of the registers and the length of the lines will be according to the prescribed form. On the front page of the register will be printed according to the prescribed form the name of the subdistrict, *bao*, etc.

It is not permitted to paste an extra slip of paper on the register.

Each subprefecture and district will make two kinds of register from those compiled in the *li*. The copy sent to the capital will have a yellow front page. The copies retained by the

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<sup>4</sup> The regular officials in the prefecture were the prefect, the vice-prefect, the assistant prefect, and the prefectural judge. The secretarial officials were the *jingli* and *zhishi* in the Registry, the *zhaomo* and the *jianjiao* in the Record Office, the gaoler *siyu* in the Gaol Office. The *jingli* 8a, the *zhishi* 9a, and the *zhaomo* 9b had ranks.

provincial administration office, the prefecture, and the subprefecture or district will have a green (or blue) front page.<sup>5</sup>

1393

Ruling of Hongwu 26. Concerning the population in every district. Each year a thorough investigation will be undertaken. Total figures will be presented divided into the figures for the last registration the increases, the decreases, and the present figures. The district will report the total figures to the subprefecture. The subprefecture will add together the figures and report them to the prefecture. The prefecture will add the figures and report them to the provincial administration office. The provincial administration office will add the figures and report them to the Ministry of Revenue. Proceedings will be instituted for the investigation.

Furthermore, every ten years the Ministry of Revenue will prepare a memorial with instructions to the provincial administration offices, the prefectures, subprefectures and districts about the compilation of the Yellow Registers, about the organisation of the *lijia* and about the division of the households in the three tax-classes, the upper, the middle, and the lower. When corvée is conscripted it will be levied according to this division. If anybody has moved away illegally the local authorities will thoroughly investigate to find out where they have gone. They will send a communication to the authorities there asking them to arrest the fugitives, bring them before the responsible official and punish them according to the law. They will order them back to resume their profession.

1451

Memorial approved in Jingtai 2. About the population in every *li*. It is permitted to register separately and render corvée accordingly in the following cases:

If the parents are both dead and the sons have for several years maintained separate households.

If the parents are still alive and the sons have in recent years established separate households.

If a person who has previously been adopted as a son-in-law because the parents-in-law only had an infant son, and he now, because the son has grown up, returns to his ancestral lineage and establishes a separate household.

If a person who has been adopted by a family with another surname because they did not have a son themselves, and he now, because they have produced a son, returns to his ancestral lineage and establishes a separate household.

Concerning the establishment of separate households by brothers. Official notice will be taken of the members of the family. If they are not soldiers, artisans, or persons assigned to

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<sup>5</sup> The provisions from 1381 and 1391 are translated with a different wording and a few different interpretations in ELMQUIST Paul Oscar 1963 Rural Control in Early Modern China DISS: Harvard University, pp.269-276. The 1381 provisions are translated in Ping-ti HO 1959 *Studies on the Population of China, 1368-1953* Cambridge MA, p. 7. The 1391 provisions are paraphrased in O. Berkelbach VAN DER SPENKEL 1963 "Population Statistics of Ming China," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 15.2: 309-310.

similar kinds of corvée who would be inclined to evade and obstruct the law, then if they want to divide the family, this will be permitted. If the number of adult men is small and if the families are assigned to perform corvée as soldiers, artisans, etc., who wish to evade and obstruct the law, then they will continue as before and they will not be permitted to live separately.

Concerning the original number of households in a *li*. If the *li* is not complete when the households that have been discontinued and the households in which all members have been sent into exile as soldiers are removed from the register, then it is permitted to unite it with another *li* and perform corvée accordingly. The surplus households from the amalgamation will be supplied to and registered in neighbouring *li*-registers. It is not permitted to let them remain absentee landlords.

If anybody has illegally taken another family and personal name, then it is permitted to report this to the authorities and correct it. If anybody wants to sell to local people who will make a living from the land, this will be allowed except for those registered as absentee landlords. If anybody disregards the regulations concerning absentee landlords, then the local authorities will apprehend them and their land will be confiscated.

Concerning persons in the families of military officers, and the old and young supply-soldiers (*yuding*) in the families of the regular soldiers. If they have already bought fields in nearby subprefectures or districts, and if they want to register (*fuji*) persons and property in the subprefecture or district where they are presently staying, and if they agree to pay tax and render corvée, this will be allowed.

Concerning all the offices which settle the population from other prefectures to live within their territory. In dealing with the family members, younger brothers, sons, and brothers' sons of civil officials and military officers who have been left behind because of unspecified incidents (*shigu*), transfer, etc. If they have already bought fields and established a family profession then it is permitted to let them register as temporary settlers (*jiji*). The persons and their property will be reported to the officials. They will be organised in *lijia*, pay taxes and render corvée. In the space under "household in the register there will be a note about their original place of registration and their original registration as soldiers, civilians, artisans, salt producers, etc., and the reason why they have now been registered again. It is not permitted just to call them absentee landlords. If these provisions are disregarded the local provincial officials will report this to the capital. The offenders will be banished to military service beyond the Great Wall and their fields and property will be confiscated.

Concerning the compilation of the Yellow Registers. If there are treacherous powerful households that together with *li* tax registrars (*shushou*) have tampered with the registration of fields (*guiji tiandi*), have falsely distributed their tax upon other households (*feizou shuiliang*), have concealed adult men or women in order to avoid corvée service, have changed their

professional registration in order to avoid corvée services as soldiers or artisans, or have changed their place in the rotation for the *lijia* duties, then they are permitted to report this personally, correct it, and have it entered into the registers accordingly. They will be exempted from punishment.

The provincial administration office, the prefecture, the subprefectures and districts will each depute one official and lesser functionaries to act for him to ensure that the tax registrars and tax assessors in the *li* compile the registers according to the facts. Furthermore, they will first compile a list with the names and places of registration of the supervising officials and the tax registrars and tax assessors and send it to the Ministry. If any of them are suspected of having previously been corrupt, then when this is discovered they will be sentenced to military service.

1452

Order of Jingtai 3. To all the districts, etc., that compile Yellow Registers. If it is discovered that the officials or lesser functionaries, the tax registrars in the *li*, etc., pretend to do one thing but actually do something different, or if they change the existent into the non-existent, or change the non-existent into the existent, then the local legal official will report this to the capital and sentence them to banishment as civilians beyond the Great Wall.

1461

Memorial approved in Tianshun 5. Concerning the vagrants in every district, etc., and the families left behind by civilian officials or military officers who have met with unspecified incidents. If they have already been organised into *lijia*, have brought new land under cultivation and for a long time made a profession of it, then each prefecture will depute an official to measure the land, all according to the most lenient scale. From every *mu* of land the autumn tax will be collected at the rate of 0.033 *shi* of rice and one *jin* of hay. This information will be entered in the Yellow Registers and they will pay tax and render corvée accordingly.

If any of them continue to register as temporary settler and do not take out the regular registration, they will be returned to their original place of registration and profession. Their fields and property will be confiscated.

Concerning the summarising registers from provincial administration offices, prefectures, subprefectures, and districts. They will each depute an official or lesser functionary to bring them to the capital [Beijing] in person. In addition an official will be deputed to bring the *li*-registers directly to the Ministry of Revenue in Nanjing.

1491

Memorial approved in Hongzhi 4. If during the [decennial] registrations in previous years anyone has failed to report adult males or other persons, or has distributed his own tax burden upon others without their knowledge, or has changed his place in the rotation for the *lijia* duties, then such a person will be permitted first to write a statement with the causes for the errors and then to give himself up to the authorities in his subprefecture or district. These will



report to their respective provincial administration office and prefecture. The case will be investigated and compared with the registers, and if it is unerringly corrected there will be no punishment.

If officials, lesser functionaries, tax registrars in *li*, etc., conspire for corruption then they will be punished according to the regulations.

On the day the registration is completed every subprefecture and district will count the number of persons in each household and fill in a registration card, one for each household. On the back of the card they will write the year and month and the surname and personal name of the responsible official and the tax registrar and stamp the seal. The cards will be sent to the provincial administration office and prefecture for information, and they will then be issued to each household to be personally received as a certificate so that the household may know the figures for the previous registration, for increases and decreases, and the figures for the present registration for adult males and property. They will pay tax and render corvée according to this certificate. In the next registration each household will copy the certificate item for item and send it to the subprefecture or district. It will serve as evidence.

1500

Order of Hongzhi 13. Concerning the compilation of the Yellow Registers. For military households the authorities will be very careful that they write which person and which household will on which year, month and day perform which kind of service and report to which guard and battalion. If there are cases of unspecified incidents, this will be written down in every detail to facilitate investigations.

1511

Memorial approved in Zhengde 6. Instructions to the *li*-leaders serving in rotation. If Buddhist monks or Taoist priests own fields and property they will be enrolled in the Yellow Registers and they will pay tax and render corvée together with the *lijia*. Those who have no fields or property will be entered in the list of supernumerary odds and ends..

If an old and great family has divided into small households in order to evade the heavy corvée, then they will be allowed to report themselves to the authorities, correct this and unite again.

1520

Recommendation from a court deliberation approved in Zhengde 15. Concerning the organisation of the *lijia*. The officials will arrange the division into tax-classes only on the basis of the actual existing adult males and property of the households. If the number of households in a *li* is not sufficient for ten *jia*, then they will take households from neighbouring *li* and come up to the standard. As to divided household registers, no matter within the *li* (*benli*), another *tu* (*tatu*) or this *tu* (*bentu*), if exhaustion occurs it is permitted to reunite them.

1530

Memorial approved in Jiajing 9. If in subprefectures and districts throughout the empire it is discovered on investigation of exhausted *li* that there are *jia* which are not up to standard, then the adult males and property will be examined and mergers made. It will be strictly ensured that eleven households form one *jia*.

1531

Order of Jiajing 10. Regional inspectors will proclaim in details to the provincial administration offices and to the northern and southern independent prefectures, subprefectures and districts that this time the Yellow Registers will be according to the ancient form and that they will be compiled on the basis of the *jia*. The officials of the Lake Posterior Archives will hold an inquiry into offenders.

1562

Order of Jiajing 41. On the day the compilation of the Yellow Registers is completed and they have arrived at the Lake Posterior Archives, the officials in charge of the registers will immediately calculate the total figures and copy them in presentable writing. First they will write the total figures for population, fields and taxable property since the Dynastic Founders. Next they will write down the figures for the present. They must check them carefully and then present them to the emperor.

Previously there were only 110 artisans in the Lake Posterior Archives so it has been difficult to expose the registers in every storehouse to drying by the sun and air even once every two years. Henceforth when thirty storehouses are built during a new registration the quota of artisans will be increased by forty-two. They will be distributed among the registrars (*shushou*) who examine the registers. Two registrars will direct eight artisans in preserving and drying the registers. When they have completed one round they will go back again to the beginning. This rule will be perpetual. If any of them indulge in corrupt practices such as destroying or mutilating registers, etc., then this will be regarded as subject to the same legal penalties as for throwing away or destroying an imperial decree.

### **Concerning officials deputed to investigation and compilation**

1447

Memorial approved in Zhengtong 12. The Ministry of Revenue may select forty students from the National University in Nanjing to participate in the scrutiny of the Yellow Registers which have arrived from all the local offices. The Ministry of Revenue [in Nanjing] will depute one official to supervise the further copying and auditing.

If a register is returned to the respective provincial administration office, prefecture, subprefecture or district, then the local authorities will correct it according to the regulations and send a lesser functionary to bring it directly to the Ministry of Revenue in Nanjing. Furthermore, after they have likewise corrected the summarising registers they will send them

to the Ministry [in Beijing] for inspection. The officials, lesser functionaries, etc., who are responsible for errors will be investigated and punished.

1490

Memorial approved in Hongzhi 3. The responsibility for registration all over the empire will be with the regular officials of the general surveillance circuit and general administration circuit, and with the prefect. As officials supervising the registration in subprefectures or districts, they will appoint officials who have shown dignified behaviour and intelligent management and who have had long experience. These officials alone will manage the registration no matter whether they are the subprefecture or district magistrates or their deputies.

They will first order the tax registrars in the *li* to copy the old registers and give the copy to the official supervising the registration. The *li*-leaders serving in rotation will be subpoenaed to personally attest to the registers stating in detail the reasons for fluctuations in the population figures and for increases or decreases in taxable property. If there have been irregularities in the old registers then it will be permitted to report this personally to the authorities, and correct them. They will not be punished.

The officials supervising the registration will, after examining the materiel in detail, collate a draft of the registers. Afterwards they will select a clerk with clear hand-writing, who has not participated in the previous registration work, to copy it. This will be finished within a time-limit of two to three months and then sent to the prefecture.

The prefect will personally audit the registers and furthermore subpoena information from the *lijia* serving in rotation and re-examine this carefully. He will send the registers to the offices of the general surveillance circuit and the general administration circuit. They will examine, seal, and forward them all together.

If the officials and lesser functionaries handling the registers are not careful with the auditing, so that the tax registrars in the *li* can make changes or deletions in the original registers resulting in an increase or reduction in the number of adult men and other persons or the disappearance of fields from the registers or disorders in the household registers, then the offenders will be banished to military service in a nearby guard or battalion. The tax registrar of the *li* will be banished as a civilian beyond the Great Wall. If the officials supervising the registration are also involved in the irregularities, they will suffer the heavy penalties for corruption.

The written characters of the Yellow Registers will be in the seal script prescribed for memorials to the emperor.

When all this has been done, an official from the provincial administration office and the prefecture will be deputed to conduct the officials and lesser functionaries who have managed the registration to the ministry before the end of the year.

The ministry will refer then to the Lake Posterior Archives for investigations. If on investigation it is discovered that characters have been erased or that the time-limit has been exceeded, then those who have been sent with the registers will be punished first. If serious cases of cheating with military service or taxes are involved, then all those connected with the registration will be investigated and punished according to the regulations.

The Yellow registers will be bound in thick paper on the front and back according to the law. Furthermore above the name of the subdistrict and *li*, the registers will have inscribed the name of the prefecture, subprefecture or district, and [what other divisions there might be such as] *li* or *bao*, and the professional registration such as soldiers, civilians, artisans, salt producers, etc., in order to facilitate the auditing.

1530

Memorial approved in Jiajing 9. The Ministry of Personnel will appoint an official from each provincial administration office of Zhejiang and the other provinces. The name of these officials will be reported to the throne for approval. In the southern and northern metropolitan areas, the regional inspectors and the grand coordinators will together appoint one official of each prefecture or subprefecture from among the deputy officials. Their names will be reported to the throne for approval. They will supervise and administer the great compilation of the Yellow Registers. It is not permitted to assign them to other duties.

Furthermore an Imperial Command was issued to all the officials deputed to registration work to facilitate the execution of the task. If there are frauds like bleached paper, deviations, delays, etc., the officials who administer the registration in the Lake Posterior Archives are allowed to impeach by name, and no matter whether or not they have already been promoted or transferred, offenders will be degraded or dismissed without mercy.

### Concerning areas exempted from registration

1391

Memorial approved in Hongwu 24. All the prefectures of Yunnan will compile Yellow Registers. In parts of a prefecture that are sufficiently under the control of a circulating office or native office the compilation will be according to the prescribed form. In distant and wild places governed by native officers where the *lijia* is not organised according to the prescribed form, registration will be undertaken according to the circumstances.

Guishou Pacification Office will not compile registers. In Bozhou [Zunyi] Pacification Office those in the vicinity who understand Chinese will be registered. The other barbarians are not to be registered.

1455

Memorial approved in Jingtai 6. Weizhou Subprefecture and Baoxian District in Sichuan will be exempted from the compilation of Yellow Registers in respect to the barbarians at the farthest border.

### **Taxes and corvée.**

In the beginning of the dynasty the Yellow Registers were compiled every ten years in order to adjust the taxes and to determine the corvée. The families were divided into three tax-classes, the upper, the middle, and the lower. The corvée were all determined according to the registers. After the law had been promulgated a long time elapsed and then the evil practices arose. The succeeding reigns all had their reform work like

commutation of corvée with silver,  
rendering of corvée in labour  
payment of money instead of corvée when there is no demand for the work,  
the ten-parts tax system,  
the single-whip method of taxation, and  
the difference in conscription between North and South.

The laws are surveyed in the following.

#### **Concerning the investigation and organization of taxes and corvée.**

1370

Imperial Order of Hongwu 3 concerning soldiers and civilians everywhere. If there is anybody who is not entered in the registers and does not perform corvée, then it is permitted for them to give themselves up to the authorities.

1384

Imperial Order of Hongwu 17 concerning taxes and corvée in all offices. They will examine the number of adult men and taxes and the amount of property in order to equalize the burdens. If anybody offends against this, they shall be punished.

1385

Imperial Order of Hongwu 18. The authorities are to divide the families into 3 tax classes as a register for taxes and corvée. It shall be stored in the court room of the Magistrate. When corvée is conscripted, they will use the register as evidence, in order to remove corruption by the lesser functionaries.

1388

Imperial Order of Hongwu 21 to the Merchant Tax Offices in Prefectures, Subprefectures, and Districts concerning the escort soldiers for the transportation of taxes. They shall only select prosperous families from the towns to this service. It is not permitted to assign peasants to this duty.

1391

Imperial Order of Hongwu 24 concerning the absentee landlords. Besides the corvée prescribed in their original registers in the neighbourhood and tithing, they shall perform the miscellaneous corvée according to their fields and property.

It was also ordered concerning the officials in Provincial Administration Offices, Provincial Surveillance Offices, Prefectures, Subprefectures, and Districts outside the border. They shall all be supplied with public funds to buy horses. The townsmen shall look after and raise them.

1393

Imperial decision of Hongwu 26 that the authorities in all offices shall when they compile the Yellow Registers divide the families into 3 tax-classes, the upper, the middle, and the lower.

Furthermore they shall make registers for soldiers, civilians, salt producers, artisans, etc.

Besides the duties performed in rotation in neighbourhoods and tithings that are rendered in proper sequence, the great and small miscellaneous corvée shall each be conscripted according to the division into the upper, the middle, and the lower tax classes.

1398

Imperial order of Hongwu 31 to every Regional Military Commission, Guard, and Battalion concerning the soldiers on service in the camps. Besides the regular soldiers and those who represent small families, all others are to perform corvée.

1440

Imperial order of Zhengtong 5 to every Prefecture, Subprefecture, and District. Every year they shall investigate the remaining families. If some of them are assessed to taxes but their property has vanished or they are registered to service by an adult man, and the family is impoverished, then they shall be changed into poor and overtaxed families and are only to do light corvée.

1450

Imperial order of Jingtai 1 that the idle adult men in the families of the neighbourhood leaders shall all render corvée together with the adult men in the families of the tithing heads. If any of them are concealed from conscriptions then it is permitted for the tithing heads to turn informers.

It was also ordered to the authorities who in all offices administer the horsemen of the Postal Service. 20 adult men shall buy one horse, and 10 adult men shall raise it. They shall all be assigned among the townsmen.

1465

Memorial approved in Chenghua 1 concerning the control with the duties like taxes and corvée, other than soldier and artisan services. From now on, only the neighbourhood leaders and tithing heads in service shall be ordered to supervise and stimulate the fulfilment of the duties. It is not permitted to force it on the other neighbourhood leaders and tithing heads in the ten years rotation.

1470

Imperial order of Chenghua 6 to the authorities who administer the horsemen of the Postal Service. It is not allowed for rich families with many adult men, who are conscribed to this service, to commute it to monthly payments of silver.

1479

Imperial order of Chenghua 15 to all offices concerning the corvée. The families are divided into 9 tax-classes and in three categories after profession. When it happens that the upper authorities levy for the purchase of goods, they shall be careful to follow the number of the ordered, and determine a rotation for the people to pay. It is not permitted to collect in one year the money to the officials for different years.

1488

Imperial order of Hongzhi 1 to all offices to examine and organize the equal corvée. They shall investigate the amount of corvée services for each year and distribute them among the families who in the respective years shall perform the equal corvée. On the families that have plenty of adult men and property, they shall only levy corvée according to their tax-classes. It is not permitted unduly to add extra payments of silver. From the poor and overtaxed lower people and on the number of disappeared families the conscription shall be according to their idle capacity. It is not permitted to collect silver. When silver is collected instead of corvée in cases where there is no need for the labour, then it is not permitted to collect an excessive amount etc.

Those who offend against this shall be investigated and sentenced by the Grand Coordinators and the Regional Inspectors, and they shall submit a memorial to the Emperor asking for transfer of office. Those who do not approve it shall be punished. It is not permitted for the offices of the Grand Defenders to interfere with the equal corvée.

It was also ordered that those who have settled in the Capital as companions to standard-bearers and escorts, young soldiers, and cooks. When these are prevented from service, the companions shall return and perform corvée. If they hide in the capital falsely pretending to be soldiers or artisans, they shall be sent home.

1492

Imperial order of Hongzhi 5 concerning the people in Shuntian Prefecture who voluntarily have enlisted to service as Imperial Tomb keepers, vegetable gardeners, brave men, escorts, and military cooks, and therefore are exempted from taxes and corvée. Apart from the persons who perform the corvée, the other members of the families shall pay taxes and render corves as before.

1494

Imperial order of Hongzhi 7 to the Provincial Administration Offices, to the Provincial Surveillance Offices, and to those who administer the horsemen in every Prefecture. They shall, in the Subprefectures and Districts under their jurisdiction, select families of the middle tax-class with three adult men. Ten families shall together pay 40 *liang* of silver and send it to the office of the seal-keepers who shall distribute it to the officials. These shall then buy and raise the horses themselves .

If Subprefectures and Districts conscribe in separated prefecture parts, they shall also collect silver and send it to the seal-keeper for distribution to buy and raise horses.

1500

Memorial approved in Hongzhi 13 to the seal-keepers in the Provincial Administration Offices and the Independent Prefectures and Subprefectures. When the ministries send for the levying of supplies in kind, they shall consider it in a fair manner and collect according to the size and capacity of the families. If there are lawless rascals who plan for their own profit and bribe the lesser functionaries to make false impositions, so that the levies on the families under the lesser functionary become unequal, and they thereby hurt the people, then they shall all be sentenced to military service in a nearby Guard and Battalion. If the respective seal-keepers have knowledge of it and approve it, then they shall be impeached, investigated and punished.

1527

Imperial order of Jiajing 6 that the officials, who administer the provinces and keep them under surveillance, shall examine every Subprefecture and District. If the following is ordered to the neighbourhood leaders and tithing heads on duty in addition to the original levied corvée that they in turn shall share in the supply of rice noodles, firewood, lamp oil, vegetables, etc. or, when intimate friends come and leave, serve the guest at the passage and arbitrarily provide for a part of the further journey, and arrange a banquet with farewell gifts of the local products, so that the officials increase their prestige, then they shall be arrested and dismissed from office. If the officials in the two provincial offices pass it over indulgently and do not deal with the case, then the Grand Coordinator and the Regional Inspector shall make a tardy and weak report.

It was also ordered concerning the payment of silver in the purchase of newly reclaimed white land in the vicinity of the capital. The Regional Inspectors shall thoroughly investigate and enlighten the cases so that they stop.

1530

Imperial order of Jiajing 9 that all the respective Provincial Administration Offices, Prefectures, Subprefectures, and Districts shall examine and organize the corvée. First they shall investigate the annual amount of each kind of corvée and how much silver is used. Then they shall investigate how many adult men and how much property are actually registered in the Yellow Registers, and the amount of corvée levied on the adult men and the property, apart from those who are exempted as the ranking officials, the students at the National Universities, Bachelors, registrars in Subprefectures and Districts etc., and the poor and overtaxed people.

According to the demand for silver for commutation of the corvée, they shall determine how much silver has to be paid for each adult man and for each *mu* of land. The whole amount will be distributed for collection.

If anybody by fraud takes for themselves the surplus silver collected when there is no use for the corvée in labour then, when the case is discovered, it shall be investigated according to the law, and decided by heavy punishment.



1536

Memorial approved in Jiajing 15 concerning the examination and organization of the equal corvée now and in the future. It is absolutely necessary to follow the law and make the prohibitions clear.

For example, in a certain Subprefecture or District the original amount of corvée in labour and commutation silver, and the amount of actually spent silver shall be examined fairly. It shall be printed in a register to be proclaimed to each Prefecture, Subprefecture, and District.

Later on, when they shall examine and organise the corvée, they shall only take the number for the actual spent silver and use it as the figure for the commutation money, and they shall divide the families in three tax classes and nine subclasses. They shall take the number of adult men, the amount of property, and the weight of the corvée burdens, and be careful to distribute the burden equally on rich and poor according to their capacity. It is not permitted to make the distribution one-sided and tiresome for anybody. Those who offend against this shall be investigated and punished.

1537

Proposition from a court deliberation was approved in Jiajing 16 about the commutation money that was levied every year in the Changping Subprefecture, altogether 1549.0 *liang* for all kinds. They shall be reduced by one third and in order to cushion the effect, it shall be distributed among the Subprefectures and Districts in the Shuntian Prefecture to make up the original amount.

1536

Imperial order of Jiajing 17 concerning the corvée in the Guards and Battalions in Liaodong. They shall be examined and organized once every five years like in the interior.

1558

Memorial approved in Jiajing 37 about the regular land-taxes in the Empire. The families shall supply information on the conditions. First they shall tell how many *mu* of fields and how many *shi* of taxes. Further more it shall be divided into taxes in kind and in commutation to money, so that the people all know how much they shall pay in tax.

The temporary extra taxes are not to be collected in a disorderly way. They shall be distributed equally on everyone disregarding whether it is families of officials, Licentiates, Bachelors, or lesser functionaries. Besides, a sealed receipt shall be issued to the people for reference. When the matter that has caused the extra tax has ended, the tax shall be abolished.

1561

Memorial approved in Jiajing 40 concerning the equal corvée service as storehouse keeper in Henan. Wealthy and powerful families shall be selected to assist each other with the service. The seal keeper shall prepare an empty account book in two copies and send them to the office of the Regional Inspector. He shall print his seal upon them and send them to those who administer the collection of commutation money for corvée. When an official is send on

business, they shall immediately pay the public expenses and enter them into the account book. These are to be audited by the Regional Inspector and the officials in the General Administrative Circuits and the General Surveillance Circuits.

Concerning the weighers in the granaries. They shall all be ordered to hand over the position to the successor at the end of the year. Thereafter all receipts and disbursements shall be administered by the person on duty. It is not permitted to hold on to the former duty.

It was also ordered to the Palace Treasury, and to each Directorate, Office, Bureau, Depot in the palace etc., that the number for every kind of artisans on corvée duty shall be fixed at 17.100, the number of escorts in the Embroidered-Uniform Guard to 16.400, the number of cooks in the Court of Imperial Entertainment to 3.600, and the number of cooks in the Court of Imperial Sacrifices to 1.100. These shall all be the standard. If there are irregular incidents, then it is only permitted to seek out adult men who are in surplus in their registers to fill the vacancy. It is not permitted to exceed the standard and receive too many.

1565

Proposition from a court deliberation approved in Jiajing 44 concerning the introduction of the law on the ten-parts-tax registers in Jiangnan. The amount of commutation silver and corvée in labour shall be calculated for each year, and a collected account of the fields in the ten tithings shall be made. The duties shall be distributed at a fixed rate. If a tithing has a surplus, it shall be retained for the tithing following it in the rotation. If it does not have enough then they shall be supplied from the following tithing.

The gentry, that have exemptions for fields are only exempted from the taxes in one year of the ten and only for their proper family.

Concerning land owned by absentee landlords, no matter whether it is in the same Prefecture or in different Prefectures. If the owner already has used his privileged exemptions in the original registers, then it is not permitted also to exempt the land in the other places.

It was also ordered concerning vagrant families, who have settled temporarily in a place. They shall be examined and entered in the registers and assist in performing the equal corvée. The adult men and taxes shall be allocated proportionally.

1567

Imperial order of Longqing 1 to the offices Huang, Fu, and Chuan etc. where the river is navigable. They shall construct twenty boats. Each shall be manned by four men as corvée. This shall be entered in the corvée regulations for the Jiazhou Subprefecture, the Shanmu District, the Fugu District, the Wubao District, the Mizhi District, the Suide Subprefecture, etc. They shall be assigned to the boats. They are each permitted exemption for payment of four *liang* commutation silver for corvée. If they are to go a little too far from home then if they are willing to pay silver to hire substitutes, the officials shall do what is most convenient.

1570

Memorial approved in Longqing 4 concerning the different kinds of corvée in the Prefectures, Subprefectures, and Districts under the Jiangxi Provincial Administration Office. They shall measure comparatively one by one the weight of the burdens. If it is corvée in labour, then they shall calculate the expenses to wages for replacements. The measure shall be for the sake of increase and decrease. If it is commutation silver, they shall calculate the expenses for transportation and collection and add the wastage. They shall make an overall calculation of the amount of silver used in one year and distribute it according to the adult men and property.

A tax-bill shall be issued to each family with a fixed time-limit for the payment.

A thorough investigation and correction shall be made concerning those who in the registrations in previous years were assigned to certain corvée, and which families were the most important families and the assistant families. If they have adult men but no property, then they shall be registered in the lower tax-class, and they shall still pay silver for the adult men. If they have adult men and property, then they shall be registered in the middle tax-class, and if the property is great, but the adult men few, or if there is a great amount of both, they shall be registered in the upper tax-class. They shall all pay according to both adult men and property. This shall all be a fixed rule.

This was the beginning of the Single Whip method of taxation.

#### **Concerning the privileged exemptions from corvée.**

1368

Imperial decree issued in Hongwu 1 that if among the civilians there is a person above the age of 70, then it is permitted to let an adult man take care of him. He shall be exempted from the miscellaneous corvée.

1369

Imperial order of Hongwu 2 concerning persons among the civilians who are above the age of 80 and only have one son. If they have fields that are liable to corvée, then it is permitted to hire another person to be his substitute and let this person present himself to the officials. If they do not have fields, then it is permitted to retain the son to take care of the old. He shall be exempted from the miscellaneous corvée.

1370

Decision of Hongwu 3 concerning the widows among the civilians that remain faithful to a husband who has died before she was 30 years of age. If she becomes 50 years old and has not remarried, then an Imperial testimony of her chastity shall be set on her paternal dwelling, and her own family shall be exempted from corvée.

1371

Imperial order of Hongwu 4 that the descendants of Confucius in Queli, altogether 26 families, shall be exempted from corvée.

It was also ordered concerning the soldier families in every Prefecture and District. Three *qing* of field shall be the standard. Apart from the taxes they shall be exempted from all the miscellaneous corvée. For the surplus land they shall render corvée together with the civilians.

1374

Imperial order of Hongwu 7 that the regular soldiers in Shandong all shall be exempted from corvée. The support soldiers shall be exempted up to 100 *mu* of land. For surplus land they shall render corvée together with the civilians.

It was also ordered that when an official dies, his family shall be exempted for corvée in three years.

1380

Imperial order of Hongwu 13 that the officials in the six ministries, the Censorate (49), the Yingtian Prefecture together with the two Districts, the Court for Imperial Entertainment, the Court of State Ceremonial, and the Messenger Office together with the court officials shall be completely exempted from all the miscellaneous corvée, but not from the taxes, their families shall pay together.

Also concerning the meritorious officials in all offices. If their families have fields and land then, apart from the collected taxes and the service as pasture men for government horses, they shall be exempted from all services as tax collectors, neighbourhood leaders, and the Postal Service on land and water.

The civilians in the two prefectures Fengyang and Yangzhou and He Subprefecture who raise one horse, shall be exempted for two adult men.

1383

Imperial order of Hongwu 16 that the civilians in the Fengyang District and the Linzhun District shall be exempted from the miscellaneous corvée.

1410

Imperial order of Yongle 8 to the authorities who administer the soldier artisans in the Guards everywhere. When they render corvée in the capital, their families shall be exempted from the miscellaneous corvée.

1411

Imperial order of Yongle 9 that those who voluntarily move to Beijing as civilians, and those who choose exile there in change beatings with the heavy bamboo, shall be exempted from corvée for five years. Those who are exiled temporarily or permanently, and move there, shall be exempted for three years.

1424

Imperial order of Yongle 22 that the families who plant trees at the Tianshou Mountain shall be exempted from the miscellaneous corvée.

1426

Imperial order of Xuande 1 that the families who serve as corvée at the altar to Heaven and Earth shall be exempted from the miscellaneous corvée.

1428

Imperial order of Xuande 3 concerning soldiers and surplus civilian men who have gone north and later returned and now have been enrolled in the eunuch Directorate of Stables as brave men. The adult men in their families shall be exempted from the corvée in their original Guards or registers.

1429

Imperial order of Xuande 4 concerning the soldiers in each Guard and Battalion. Their families shall be exempted from corvée for one adult man. If they have a supply soldier in the camp, they shall be exempted for one more to cover the expenses.

1436

Imperial order of Zhengtong 1 concerning the descendants of Confucius who live in other places [than Queli], and the descendants by legal wives of the former worthies ZHOU Dunyi, CHENG Hao, CHENG Yi, SIMA Guang, and ZHU Xi. The local authorities shall exempt them all from corvée.

1439

Imperial order of Zhengtong 4 concerning the aboriginal cavalry in Yunnan who have enlisted with their own saddle, horse, weapon, and provisions. Their family shall be exempted from corvée for 4 adult men.

1441

Imperial order of Zhengtong 6 that the aboriginal soldiers in Shaanxi shall be exempted by privilege for 5 men. The surplus shall perform the levied corvée.

1442

Imperial order of Zhengtong 7 that astronomers and magicians shall be exempted for one man.

Concerning the surplus men in the aboriginal soldier and civilian families in Shaanxi. If the family has men who participate in exercises at the border, then they shall be exempted from the miscellaneous corvée.

1445

Imperial order of Zhengtong 10 that the families of students at the National Universities shall be exempted from corvée for two adult men.

1446

Imperial order of Zhengtong 11 concerning the left-behind wives, sons, and family members of officials in Jiaozhi who are old and ill and have retired from official life. They are permitted to register with the offices where they live. Without regard to the number of adult men they shall all wait for three years after the death of the official before they shall render corvée. Sons and grandsons who are registered in small families, shall be given fields, farm tools and seeds, and they shall also wait three years before they shall perform corvée.

1447

Imperial order of Zhengtong 12 that the aboriginal officials in Yunnan shall have the following exemptions by privilege from *corvée*: Grade 4 and above: 16 adult men; Grade 5 and 6: 12 adult men; Grade 7: 10 adult men; and Grade 9: 8 adult men. Miscellaneous positions: 6 adult men. For surplus men a special register shall be established, and they shall render *corvée* together with the civilians.

1450

Imperial order of Jingtai 1 to all offices concerning the families that have men participating in militia training. For each man they shall be exempted from the miscellaneous *corvée* for three adult men.

1466

Imperial order of Chenghua 2 that the tomb keeper families in the Wanping and Changping Districts shall be exempted from the miscellaneous *corvée*.

1488

Memorial approved in Hongzhi 1 that the relatives of the Imperial Princes shall be exempted from the equal and miscellaneous *corvée* for two adult men. The relatives of Princes of the Second Degree shall be exempted for one adult man. For the relatives of the following degrees of descendants of an Emperor, the father of the wife shall be exempted for one adult man.

The tomb keeper families etc. in the Changping District shall be exempted for three adult men. It is not permitted to exempt the whole family by privilege.

Imperial order that the firemen in the Capital and the brave men who raise horses in the eunuch Directorate of Stables shall be exempted for two adult men besides themselves. The other present adult men shall render *corvée* with those who do not raise horses.

Concerning the cooks in the eunuch Directorate of Foodstuff and the Court of Imperial Entertainment, the generals, escorts, bridge watchmen, standard bearers, widows, registrars in Subprefectures and Districts etc, and the artisans performing highly skilled *corvée* in the eunuch Directorate of Ceremonies, the eunuch Directorate of Wood, Ivory, and Bone Carving, and the eunuch Office of Gold and Silversmiths. They shall all be exempted for themselves. The other present adult men shall be organized for service.

The present adult men among soldiers and civilians of every kind and among the shop assistants of every kind shall be registered for service.

Concerning the tithing administrator of the firemen. They shall serve once a year. They shall work in the family profession and stop it when they are called for service.

1500

Imperial order of Hongzhi 13 that the families rendering *corvée* as wine families in the Court of Imperial Entertainment shall be exempted from *corvée* for two adult men. Those who are not able to serve shall be dismissed, and replacements shall be appointed.

1502

Imperial order of Hongzhi 15 concerning the Imperial Tomb keeper families, gardener families, tomb keeper families, temple families, altar families, park gardener families, melon families, fruit families, rice families, lotus root families, pottery families, and sheep families. Every family shall be measured and retain two or three adult men to perform the corvée. The surplus adult men shall all be sought out to render corvée. If anybody assists in concealing them from the corvée, then they shall be banished to a distant border as soldiers.

1505

Proposal from a court deliberation was approved in Hongzhi 18 that the present incumbent officials, and those who have retired according to propriety, shall be exempted from the miscellaneous corvée according to the law.

Officials who have been degraded to civilians or to military service because irregular incidents etc., and have returned to their place of registration and have started to build shops which they rent out to soldiers or civilians, shall according to the regulations lift up jingling bells and act as a master. It is not permitted to have exemptions by privilege in a false way.

Proposal from a court deliberation was also approved concerning the collection of the salt tax and the corvée of the adult men among the salt producers. The families shall have the following exemptions by privilege: 1-3 adult men: 70 *mu* of land per man; 4-6 adult men: 60 *mu* of land per man; 7-10 adult men: 50 *mu* of land per man; 11-15 adult men: 40 *mu* of land per man; 16-19 adult men: 30 *mu* of land per man; and if it has 20-30 adult men, the whole family shall be exempted by privilege.

1510

Proposal from a court deliberation was approved in Zhengde 5 concerning the miscellaneous corvée of the Imperial Tomb keeper families and the tomb keeper families. Besides the person in service, they shall be exempted for two adult men. The adult men in excess shall all render corvée.

1530

Memorial approved in Jiajing 9 concerning each salt producer family. If in the family they have a Licentiate, a student at the National University, a Bachelor, or a *shengji* lesser functionary, they shall all together be exempted by privilege from corvée according to the regulations for the authorities.

Imperial order to examine all the Imperial Tomb keeper families, the tomb keeper families, the park gardener families, and the husbandmen families. The original number of families who perform these services shall be ascertained. When the equal corvée is examined and organized they shall, according to the demands in the Subprefectures, Districts, or other offices they belong to, be divided into grades and substitutes shall be selected. The families that are replaced shall perform other corvée services.

Concerning families who have cheated with the land registration, and the families, who have given up their status and have changed into tenants under the Duke of Dingguo or the Earl of Huian to avoid the service for themselves and the surplus adult men. They shall all render corvée together with the civilians.

1536

Imperial proclamation of Jiajing 15 to all offices concerning the tombs of Emperors and Princes, and the graves of famous virtuous of former generations, and Dukes, Marquis, Earls, and high civil and military officials from the present dynasty who have been buried by Imperial decree. The local authorities shall, according to the regulations, select one adult man from a nearby family to look after the grave. He shall be exempted from the miscellaneous corvée. The tax on the *mu* of land where the tomb or grave is shall be abolished all together.

1545

A court deliberation determined in Jiajing 24 the principles for the exemptions by privilege. The exemptions shall be as follows:

Officials in the Capital:

- Grade 1: 30 *shi* of grain and 30 adult men,
- Grade 2: 24 *shi* of grain and 24 adult men,
- Grade 3: 20 *shi* of grain and 20 adult men,
- Grade 4: 16 *shi* of grain and 16 adult men,
- Grade 5: 14 *shi* of grain and 14 adult men,
- Grade 6: 12 *shi* of grain and 12 adult men,
- Grade 7: 10 *shi* of grain and 10 adult men,
- Grade 8: 8 *shi* of grain and 8 adult men,
- Grade 9: 6 *shi* of grain and 6 adult men.

Palace Officials and Palace Attendants shall be likewise exempted. Officials outside the Capital shall be exempted by one half of the above-mentioned. Professors at local schools, students at the National Universities, Licentiates, and Bachelors shall each be exempted for 2 *shi* of grain and 2 adult men.

Persons functioning as officials but without rank, *shengji* officials, yamen servants, seal keepers, and registrars in Subprefectures and Districts etc. shall each be exempted for one *shi* of grain and one adult man.

Those who have retired from office according to propriety shall be exempted by 70 per cent of the above mentioned and those on leave by one half.

Those who have been dismissed because they have abused their office for their own profit are not included in the exemptions by privilege.

If the number of adult men and the amount of property in the family do not reach the numbers for exemptions, then they shall only be exempted for the actual present number.



If there are many adult men but a little amount of property, then it is not permitted to let adult men be equivalent to property.

If there are few adult men but a large amount of property, then it is not permitted to let property be equivalent to adult men.

The exemptions by privilege are only for the adult men and property in the family proper of the official. It is not permitted, in a disorderly way, to exempt all the families who live separated or isolated, or are distant relatives.

1549

Proposal from a court deliberation was approved in Jiajing 28 concerning the Imperial Tomb keeper-families, the park gardener families, and the gardener families. They shall only measure their exemptions in adult men. It is not permitted to transfer the exemptions to the fields.

1553

Imperial order of Jiajing 32 to examine the civilian fields bought by the salt producers. No matter whether they have been bought a long time ago or recently, and no matter how many *mu*, they shall be organized and pay taxes together with the civilians.

1567

Imperial order of Longqing 1 that the authorities in the Empire shall examine and audit the old rules for the exemptions by privilege. They shall make adjustments leniently, and fix them within certain limits.

Each person shall only be exempted for the land the family has within its own neighbourhood. It is not permitted to exempt for the land in other neighbourhoods or villages.

Those who have cheated by distributing their land to others without their knowledge, are permitted to give themselves up to the authorities and shall escape punishment.

1571

Imperial order of Longqing 5 concerning the gardener families under the Directorate of Imperial Parks. The families established in the Yongle and Xuande periods (1403-1436) and the families added in the Zhengde period (1506-1522) shall be completely exempted from corvée, if they perform the service as gardeners themselves. If they are added later on, measures shall be taken, so that they are exempted for three adult men. The surplus men and property shall all be registered together with the civilians.

### **Marriages**

1369

Order of Hongwu 2 concerning marriages. In every case it shall be the grand-parents or the parents who arrange the marriage contract.

If the grandparents and the parents are all dead, another relative shall arrange the marriage contract.

If the father has died or is absent and therefore unable to take the daughter to the home of the groom, then the mother of the girl shall arrange the marriage contract.

If they have already been betrothed but have not yet married, and the young man or the young woman dies, then the betrothal presents shall not be returned.

If a betrothed man becomes a robber and is sentenced to temporary or permanent exile away from the village then, if the family of the woman wishes to break off the betrothal, it shall be allowed and the betrothal presents shall be returned.

If a betrothed woman commits adultery and a verdict is passed on this act then, if the family of the man wishes to break off the betrothal, the betrothal presents shall be returned.

If five years pass after the betrothal and the man without any reason does not marry the woman or if the man has escaped and has not returned within three years, then it is allowed to ask the official who administrates these affairs, to issue a certificate that permits to arrange for another marriage without returning the betrothal presents.

Concerning the summoning of a son -in-law. It is necessary to rely on a matchmaker to clearly arrange the marriage contract. It shall be written whether he shall care for the parents-in-law until they die or whether he shall leave the family after a certain time.

If there is only one son in a family then he is not permitted to take the place of a son in another family.

If the husband of a daughter is summoned to care for her old parents then they shall still appoint a man from their own family to be their heir. He shall perform the sacrifices to the ancestors. The property of the family shall be equally divided between the heir and the son-in-law. If the father-in-law dies before he has appointed an heir, then the clan elder shall appoint one according to the law.

Concerning marriages between a man and a woman. Each has their time. If anyone points at the belly and tears off the collar of the gown in order to become a relative then it shall be prohibited for both of them.

1372

Order of Hongwu) 5 to those with Mongol names and with names of the people who followed the Mongols and still live in China. They are permitted to marry Chinese. They are not permitted to marry people of their own kind. If they offend against this, then the family of the man and the woman shall be seized as public slaves.

Mutual marriages within the accompanying people Qipchak are not under these restrictions.

1393

Decision of Hongwu 26 concerning marriages between men and women among the civilians. They are not permitted to marry if they have the same family name or if they are related on the

maternal side and of different generations. The law has common regulations to deal with those who offend against these regulations.

1406

Imperial proclamation of Yongle 4 to the people in Beijing and Shandong etc. concerning those who have moved to another place to find food. If they have married their daughter to local people assisted by a matchmaker and following the matrimonial ceremonies, and if she has already given birth to a son or a daughter, then a thorough investigation shall be guaranteed. Furthermore it is permitted to keep the family together and it is not mandatory to send it back to its original place of registration.

1439

Order of Zhengtong 4 that military officers are not allowed to marry women in the families of the regular soldiers under their command.

1446

Order of Zhengtong 11 to the senior officials in the Pacification Offices in Yunnan, Sichuan and Guizhou, and to the barbarian Prefectures, Subprefectures and Districts under aboriginal officials at the border. No matter whether it concerns officials, lesser functionaries, soldiers, or civilians, when their men and women wish to marry, it shall all be according the rituals and laws of the Court. The offenders shall be punished.

1498

Order of Hongzhi 11. If there are accusations that a marriage has been accomplished in a mourning period for the relatives of one of the spouses then, if the illness of the relative is already dangerous, and the marriage is arranged by an uncle in order to summon a son-in-law or in order to let the son take a wife, then only the person who have arranged the marriage contract shall be punished. The married couple shall not divorce.

If the relative is dead and even if they have not started the mourning, then the marriage contract shall be cancelled and they shall according to the law be sentenced to divorce.

### **Reading the law**

1371

In Hong-wu 4 it was ordered concerning the laws and regulations and the subsequent use in action of the paragraphs.

The administrating officials and lesser functionaries shall read them so that they learn the details and clearly understand their meaning. The Investigating Censors and the officials in the Provincial Surveillance Offices shall, wherever they come, order them to explain and peruse the law. If there is anybody who does not understand them thoroughly, he shall be sentenced according to the law.

1388

In Hongwu 21 the Great Ordinance *Dagao* was bestowed on the military subjects in the Empire ordering their sons and younger brothers to learn it by recitation.

1391

Order of Hongwu 24 it was ordered that the Licentiate *shengyuan* shall together read the regulations in the Ordinance *Dagao*.

1392

Imperial proclamation of Hongwu 25 ordering the families with an official to read aloud the three parts in the Great Ordinance.

When there are wine drinking ceremonies in the village one man shall read it aloud, and the crowd shall all listen, so that everyone knows how to pursue a good fortune, shun the course of calamity, and not violate the penal code.

The Licentiate shall instruct their sons and younger brothers and take them to the Capital for examination. If they can memorize one part, two parts, or the whole, they shall receive a reward. Besides the reward their name and the number of memorized parts shall be made known all over the Empire.

1393

Order of Hongwu 26. Among the people it is necessary to explain and peruse the regulations in the Great Ordinance.

By Imperial decree it was notified that the village elders shall write a placard to be set up upon all the professional tablets of the present adult men, and he shall go from door to door and be sure that they fully understand the meaning of the law.

Furthermore the authorities were instructed to supervise them in due time.

1403

Order of Yongle 1 to the Professors and Assistant Instructors in all offices that they shall first instruct, peruse, explain, and hear, and thereafter they shall examine.

Licentiate from cities and villages shall be carefully instructed together. If they do not memorize by rote and by the examination of their knowledge they make excuses and do not proceed, they shall be punished.

1419

Order of Yongle 17 to the authorities in all Guards and Battalions. All placards issued in the Hongwu period shall be hung up and preserved, respectfully. If anybody conceals them, or removes and destroys them and does not hang them up, he shall be sentenced to slow death by torture.

1465

Memorial approved in Chenghua 1. All offices shall repair the placard houses and copy and suspend the placards, that on several occasions have been issued in the Hongwu, Yongle, and Zhengtong periods, so that the crowd may know them thoroughly.

1468

Memorial approved in Chenghua 4 to the authorities in all offices. Every time they go to the schools on the first day and the fifteenth day of the lunar month to burn incense, they shall order

the teachers and students to read aloud from the Code of the Ming Dynasty and from books given by the Emperor, so that the officials, the lesser functionaries, and their subordinates, etc. may be fully acquainted with the principles of the laws. The offenders shall be punished.

1529

Memorial approved in Jiajing 8. In all Subprefectures and Districts the hamlets shall arrange meetings on the first day of every lunar month. The hamlet leaders shall preside over the participants at the meeting and hold in both hands and read the placards written by the Imperial Ancestors with instructions to the people, so that they are admonished and cautioned.

If anybody resists this, then in grave cases it shall be reported to the officials. In light cases they shall be fined to pay rice to the public granaries for distribution to the distressed.