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C. A. Curwen

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PREFACE

When the research for this book started (it was originally a Ph.D. thesis for London University) there was no general history of the Taiping Rebellion in any Western language which could remotely be called adequate. My purpose was to present for the use of students of Chinese history a complete and accurate translation (as opposed to an elegant one) of Li Hsiu-ch'eng's Deposition, a unique account of the Rebellion from the inside; to annotate it and examine its accuracy so that it might serve as raw material for anyone seriously interested in the Taiping Rebellion. This is the reason why the reader is burdened with such an inordinate quantity of endnotes, some of them very long. I hope that no one will be unduly discouraged: the notes contain a great deal of material translated here for the first time or otherwise rather inaccessible. An example is the long note on the dissension among the Taiping leaders, which contains a report published in an extremely rare China-coast newspaper, which has not since been republished, seems to be unknown in China, but which at secondhand was the basis for what little information we have about this important event.

Place-names have been transliterated in the Wade–Giles system, with the exception of the most common, such as Canton, Nanking, Peking and Shanghai. A *li* is a third of a mile. The numbers in the margin of the text of the Deposition refer to folios in the facsimile edition (discussed in Appendix III), although the folios in the original were not numbered.

I owe a debt of gratitude to too many people to list, but none so great as that I owe to Brenda Stones, who has lavished such patient care on the preparation of the manuscript for publication.

July 1976

C.A.C.

四性不應從林紹璋去爾相辭
 少時林紹璋在相辭金多遊尺
 五從周東王地王兩字相奇此
 是大性
 六性覆王而王不和居匡相而志
 覆起猶將合朝好又亦將無年之
 此後至六
 六性王不信外匡用其兵先法
 元為輔此女未有才情不能保固兩
 七性王不問政事
 八討王太又此王大性
 九性王不用殿木
 十性王不問天命者
 田十性三曲而起而性命無遲

This page of the manuscript of Li Hsiu-ch'eng's Deposition (fo. 144) shows Tseng Kuo-fan's editing in grey and a line, not in Li's hand, which was added, probably by one of Tseng's secretaries. (Discussed on page 43.)