I. Purpose of the Survey

This survey of the Ming civil service 1) was undertaken in the hope of finding answers to the four following questions:

(1) from what provinces, and from what lower administrative areas (州 chou and 縣 hsien) within them were the occupants of certain high-ranking provincial posts drawn; and in what numbers?

(2) to what extent was the civil service of Ming times ‘urban’ or ‘semi-urban’ in its composition?

(3) would an analysis of provincial appointments give any indication that regional considerations materially affected the pattern of provincial postings? Although an official was of course not normally allowed to serve in his native province, this restriction still left a wide choice of fourteen provinces to which one could be sent. The question is: whether the appointing authority, the 吏部 Li pu or Board of Civil Office, regarded all members of the service as interchangeable units, equally well fitted to be sent to any part of the Empire where they might be needed; or alternatively, whether there is evidence to show

1) A preliminary report of the findings of this survey was presented at the Padua Conference of Sinologists in September 1958.
that Northerners were predominantly chosen to serve in the North, Westerners in the West and so on. Further, if the latter should prove to be the case, does the record also show a significant interchange of personnel between adjacent provinces?

(4) finally, can any conclusion be arrived at concerning the presence or otherwise of influential kin-groups in particular chou or hsien? Do we, for example, find certain surnames occurring with impressive frequency in the lists of high office-holders in certain counties? And, if so, what inferences will we be justified in drawing?

II. Sources Used for the Survey

The sources on which the survey was based were the relevant parts (i.e. those relating to the high provincial offices listed in III below) of the Tables of Office-Holders (職官表 chih kuan piao) in the following six Provincial Gazetteers:

1. The Shan-tung t'ung-chib in 200+1+1 chapters by Yang Shih-hsiang, first printed in Hsüan-t'ung 3rd year = 1911 and re-issued by the Commercial Press of Shanghai in 1915. Material from: ch. 47, 1674b-1702b; ch. 48, 1703a-1731a; and ch. 49, 1733a-1761a.

2. The Ch'ih-hsiu in 100+1 chapters by Liu Yii-yi and Shih Yi-chih, printed in Yung-cheng 13th year = 1735. Material from: ch. 22, 21a-50a.

3. The Ch'ung-hsiu Kuang tung t'ung-chib in 204+22 chapters by Ch'ang Ming, printed in Chia-ch'ing 21st year = 1816. Material from: ch. 100, 1a-45a.

4. The Ch'ung-hsiu Chiang-bsi t'ung-chib in 180+5 chapters by Liu K'un-zi and Li Wen-min, printed in Kuang-hsi 7th year = 1881. Material from: ch. 12, 5b-62a; and ch. 13, 1a-39b.

5. The Ch'ung-tung t'ung-chib in 334+1 chapters by Juan Yuan, printed in Tao-kuang 2nd