Li Xiucheng was a brilliant general of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in the mid-19th century China. He joined the Taiping Army at the age of twenty-nine as an ordinary soldier, but was promoted to one of the highest generals in the Kingdom when he was thirty-six years old. After the death of general Chen Yucheng in 1862, he launched several military actions against his enemies, the imperial forces of the Manchu Dynasty. When the eventual fall of Nanking came in 1864, he, in order to help the young Monarch to escape, was captured and executed.

There are many different opinions regarding his contributions toward the Kingdom. This is due to the fact that when he was captured, he wrote an important, detailed confession which gave his interpretation of the Taiping successes and failures. As a result, he is regarded even today by some critics as a traitor and his contributions to the Kingdom are completely denied.

This Academic Exercise attempts to study the military career of Li Xiucheng in the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in order to clarify many of the controversial points and to give him a fair assessment.

Chapter one is an introductory chapter describing the aims and scope of this study.

Chapter two studies his family and socio-economic background of his era. It also explains why he became a soldier of the Taiping Army.

The next three chapters examine his military achievements in the following three periods: 1851 to 1858, 1859 to 1861 and 1862 to 1864.
The concluding chapter makes an evaluation of his major contributions and points out some of his serious mistakes, so that a more objective assessment of him can be presented.

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