Chu Yuan-chang's Ladder of Success: From a Commoner to an Emperor

In the history of China, there were two ordinary people who became emperors. One of them was Liu Pang (劉邦 BC. 256–BC. 195), the progenitor of Han Dynasty, the other was Ming Tai Tsu (明太祖) Chu Yuan-chang (朱元璋 AD 1328–AD 1398). They might have become kings as a result of circumstances or they might have become kings as a result of their own efforts and merits. This leads us to a consideration of the question of whether a "hero" is made by circumstances or whether a "hero" creates "circumstances" himself. This essay tries to examine this question by looking at the various factors leading to the success of Chu Yuan-chang as the progenitor of Ming Dynasty.

This essay is divided into four chapters as below:

First Chapter: This chapter describes how Chu Yuan-chang conquered the enemy and established the Ming Dynasty.

Second Chapter: This chapter describes the background of the time and the factors leading to the success of Chu Yuan-chang in revolution. The political putrefaction, economic collapse and domestic disturbances at the end of the Yuan Dynasty provided a good opportunity for Chu to succeed in his Strife.

Third Chapter: This chapter studies the reasons behind the failure of each competing army in revolution and the factors behind Chu's success. The success of a man is connected with the unsuccessful person's ability and doings. Under the comparison of the strong and weak, capable and the incapable, we can understand of the factors behind Chu's success. Therefore in addition to the political and economic setting, each other competing army in revolution had committed serious blunders in strategy: these were also factors behind Chu's success.

Fourth Chapter: This chapter studies Chu's success from the viewpoint
of Chu's inherent qualities. Although that kind of situation provided
him an opportunity to rise, he had a lot of competitors for the throne.
Finally, he was the only one to rule the empire, this was because of
his outstanding ability.

Chu used "revolution of Nationalism" to be his slogan. This
policy of propaganda was more practical than the policies of "re-birth
of Ming Wang (明主 ) and "the re-birth of the Mi Le Fo (弥勒佛 )
which had been proposed by his competitors. This was why he obtained
the support of the public.

In respect of military affairs, his positive military discipline
gained consistent popular support. Chu Yuan-chang was smart in obtaining
people's confidence and his well-prepared military stratagem enabled him
to destroy the others.

In dealing with people, he realized that faithful followers were
very important in a revolution, therefore he tried hard to make his
subordinates to be faithful to him. The establishment of the Ming
Dynasty was dependent on the help of the talented people.

In conclusion: We can say that Chu Yuan-chang was successful
partly because of favourable circumstances, but it was his eminent ability
which was the determining factor in his success.