

奉天承運，皇帝制曰：《易》稱積善餘慶，《傳》紀教子義方，人臣績學登朝，孰不本之父哉！朝廷推恩，必遯其本，以示報也。爾贈奉直大夫河南彰德府磁州知州趙叔寬，乃戶部陝西清吏司員外郎範之父，惇倫重義，循理好修，里薰德而善良，家式穀以昌熾，雖捐祿養，宜享榮名。茲加贈爾為奉直大夫戶部陝西清吏司員外郎，載錫龍章，用光燕翼。

The Emperor obeys heaven's will and receives its mandate, He decrees: "The *Book of Changes* says that accumulating merit will lead to an excess of blessings.<sup>1</sup> The *Zuo Commentary* records teaching the son the ways of duty.<sup>2</sup> Whenever an official ascends to court by accumulating knowledge, his achievement always originates from his father! When the court extends kindness, it must trace this back to its origin to show reward [to the father].

You, who were granted [posthumously] the titles of Grand Master for Forthright Service<sup>3</sup> and Subprefectural Magistrate of Cizhou in Zhangde Prefecture in Henan [Province], Zhao Shukuan, are the father of [Zhao] Fan, [who is] Vice Director of the Shaanxi Bureau of Pure Functionaries in the Ministry of Revenue. You respected moral norms and valued righteousness, followed principles and were fond of self-cultivation. Your neighbors were influenced by [your] virtue and became good. Your family was raised well and thrived. Even though you did not benefit from an official salary, it is fitting that you enjoy a title of honor. Now, you are promoted [posthumously] to the titles of Grand Master for Forthright Service<sup>3</sup> and Vice Director of the Shaanxi Bureau in the Ministry of Revenue<sup>4</sup>. We bestow the dragon's script [the Emperor's edict], to bring honor to your relatives."

制曰：前母于子，雖不當世，起家之澤，與有勞焉。敷慶臣寮，榮得並逮。爾蘇氏乃戶部陝西清吏司員外郎趙範之前母，卓有令儀，嬪于哲士，佐夫種德，誕發善祥，後嗣登崇，慶源有在。茲贈爾為宜人，誕膺綸綍之華，永播幽潛之德。

It is decreed: "As for the late mother's<sup>5</sup> relationship to her son, even though she is no longer alive, she participated in and contributed to the beneficial influences causing the family's rise. When granting blessings to officials, honors should also reach her. You, Lady Su,<sup>6</sup> are the late mother of Zhao Fan, Vice Director of the Shaanxi Bureau of of Pure Functionaries in the Ministry of Revenue. You were distinguished by an elegant appearance and were married to a wise gentleman. You assisted your husband to plant the seeds of virtue, and gave birth to good fortune. As for your descendant's promotion, here lies the origin of this glory. Now you are granted [posthumously] the title of Lady of

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Lynn, trans., *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 146.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, and David Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition/Zuozhuan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), 27.

<sup>3</sup> Prestige title for civil officials. Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 213.

<sup>4</sup> One of the Six Ministries that were the general-administration core of the central government. In the Ming dynasty, bureaus in the Ministry of Revenue were named on the basis of territorial jurisdictions, one per province. Each bureau directed and monitored fiscal administration in the province for which it was named. The Vice Director of the Shaanxi Bureau of Pure Functionaries was ranked 5b in the Ming dynasty. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 174, 258.

<sup>5</sup> Zhao Fan's father had two wives, the first one had died before he was married to the second; the "late mother" (*qianmu* 前母) here refers to his father's first wife, and the "mother" (*mu* 母) below refers to his father's second wife, who was also Zhao Fan's biological mother.

<sup>6</sup> Maiden's family name. Robert Henry Mathews, *Chinese-English Dictionary* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1996), 807.

Suitability<sup>7</sup>. You honorably receive the splendor of the Emperor's edict, to spread profound virtue forever."

制曰：婦德不外見，必有托而斯顯。故子獲登儁則，母有令名。爾封太宜人黃氏乃戶部陝西清吏司員外郎趙範之母，行孚異順，德利坤貞，有子亢宗，官評允暢，三釜為悅，再命宜申。茲仍封爾為太宜人，誕旌機杼之勞，茂衍岡陵之筭。

It is decreed: "The virtue of a woman does not appear on the outside. It must rest on something [else] to become manifest. Therefore, when a son is able to rise to an outstanding standard, his mother will have an excellent reputation. You, who has been granted the title of Great Lady of Suitability<sup>8</sup>, Lady Huang<sup>5</sup>, are the mother of Zhao Fan, Vice Director of the Shaanxi Bureau of Pure Functionaries in the Ministry of Revenue<sup>4</sup>. Your behaviour is truly humble and submissive, and your virtue contributes to the chastity of womanhood. Your son brings honor to the clan. His reputation as an official is fair and upright. [A meager salary of] three pots [of grains] delights him. This should be extended for a second promotion. Now, you retain the title of Great Lady of Suitability. This is to honor you greatly for the labor of weaving, so your magnificence will last as long as mounds and hills."

萬曆十年十一月初二日。

鈐印：制誥之寶、廣運之寶

In the tenth year of the Wanli era (1573-1619), in the eleventh month, on the second day [26 November 1582]

Seal: the treasure seal of the imperial decree, the treasure seal of far-reaching influence.<sup>9</sup>

Translation by Jelle Kuiper

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<sup>7</sup> Honorific title that was granted to the wife or mother of a 5<sup>th</sup>-rank official. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 267.

<sup>8</sup> This honorific title was granted to the mother of a 5<sup>th</sup>-rank official, if the father of the official had already died. Zhang Tingyu, comp., *Ming shi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 72/1737.

<sup>9</sup> The transcription is based on the website of Christie's, with changes in the punctuation: [Ming Imperial Edict \(16th Century\)](#).