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Letter of Support for:

Chinese-English Dictionary of Ming Government Official Titles

Dr. Ying Zhang

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The Chinese-English Dictionary of Ming Government Official Titles project, led by Dr. Ying Zhang, has made an important contribution to the infrastructure for the international study of Ming history. It is more extensive than the set of Ming official titles in Hucker's dictionary. It provides the structure of the Ming bureaucracy. It provides consistent English translations. As a relational database the China Biographical Database (CBDB) project, which has almost 200,000 Ming persons, relies on code tables. For offices we have adequate code tables and hierarchies for Tang, Song and Yuan. We are close to finishing Qing. The Ming has been our great lack. Dr. Zhang and her collaborators have provided the solution. We are immensely grateful.

As the proposal points out, the Dictionary can take advantage of the technology of online systems to allow correction and additions to the online dictionary. In addition through the use of application programming interfaces (APIs) other online systems can incorporate the Dictionary and be updated in real time as the Dictionary is updated. CBDB is one example of what I expect will be a growing number of online databases which, through APIs, will be able to speak to each other. A brilliant example of this is MARKUS (<https://dh.chinese-empires.eu/markus/beta/>) which allows users to upload Chinese texts and automatically annotate the references to people, places, and offices in the text.

The international cyberinfrastructure for Chinese studies, which we are now building with the support of Chaoxing.com and an international advisory committee that I chair, depends on the willingness of online databases to offer APIs. This proposal will ensure that the Dictionary becomes part of that cyberinfrastructure. I strongly recommend support for this project.

Peter K. Bol

Charles H. Carswell Professor of East Asian Languages and Civilizations

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