With reference to its origin, purpose and content, analyse the value and limitations of the source for an historian studying late-Ming social life.

*The undersigned, \_\_\_\_, from \_\_\_\_ county, \_\_\_\_ village, is unable to raise his own son \_\_\_, aged \_\_\_ years, because of poverty. After consulting his wife and relatives (uncle/brother \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_, etc.), he has decided to sell the child, through a mediator, to \_\_\_\_ as an adopted son.*

*On this date the undersigned received \_\_\_ amount of money from the second party, and the transaction was completed. The second party agrees to raise the child, who will be at his disposal for marriage, will be as obedient to him as a servant, and will not avoid labor or run away. This contract is signed out of the free will of both parties, there being no prior sales, and no questions as to the origin of the child; nor is the seller forced by a creditor to sell the child as payment for debts. From now on the child belongs to his new owner; alive, he shall never return to this original family; dead, he shall not be buried in the graveyard of his original family. Should he run away or be kidnapped, only the seller and the mediator are responsible; should the child die of unexpected circumstances it is his fate, and not the responsibility of his owner.*

*This contract, stamped with the palm prints of the child, is to be held by the owner as evidence of the transaction.*

From: Buckley Ebrey, Patirica (ed), *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (2nd Edition), New York, The Free Press, 1981