

**Politics and Morality during the Ming-Qing Dynastic Transition**

**(1570-1670)**

**by**

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**To my grandmother, Zhu-Wu shi 朱吳氏 (1911- )**

**a strong woman**

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## **List of Late-Ming and Early-Qing Reigns**

### **Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)**

Wanli (1573-1620)

Taichang (1620)

Tianqi (1621-1627)

Chongzhen (1628-1644)

Southern Ming courts

Hongguang (1644-1645)

Longwu (1645-1646)

Yongli (1646-1662)

### **Qing Dynasty (1644-1911)**

Shunzhi (1644-1661)

Kangxi (1662-1722)

## List of Abbreviations

- DSTSJ* *Dingshantang shiji* 定山堂詩集, *SKJH-jibu* 117.
- DSTWJ* *Dingshantang wenji* 定山堂文集, Gong shi Zhanluzhai 龔氏瞻麓齋, 1924.
- HZPWX* *Huang Zhangpu wenxuan* 黃漳浦文選, *TWWXCK* 137.
- MDZJCK* Zhou Junfu 周駿富 ed., *Ming dai zhuanji congkan* 明代傳記叢刊. Taipei: Mingwen shuju, 1991.
- MQSLCB* Shen Yunlong 沈雲龍 compl., *Ming-Qing shiliao congbian chu ji* 明清史料叢編. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1967-1973.
- MS* Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 et al., *Ming shi* 明史. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974.
- MYCTSJ* *Miyang caotang shiji* 峯陽草堂詩集, *SKJH-jibu* 126.
- MYCTWJ* *Miyang caotang wenji* 峯陽草堂文集, *SKJH-jibu* 126.
- SBBY* *Sibu beiyao* 四部備要. Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1927-1936.
- SBCK* *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊. Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, Republican period.
- SKJH* *Siku jinhui shu congkan* 四庫禁燬書叢刊. Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2000.
- SKCM* *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書. Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1996.
- SKWS* *Siku wei shou shu ji kan* 四庫未收書輯刊. Beijing: Beijing chubanshe,



2000.

*TSZXP*      *Tianshan zixu nianpu* 天山自敘年譜, in *MYCTWJ*.

*TWWXCK*      *Taiwan wenxian congkan* 臺灣文獻叢刊, Taiwan yinhang jiji yanjiu shi  
ed. 臺灣銀行經濟研究室 (Taipei: Taiwan yinhang jinji yanjiushi).

## Glossary

Cai Yuqing 蔡玉卿

Cao Yong 曹溶

Chen Mingxia 陳名夏

Chen Qinian 陳其年

Chen Zilong 陳子龍

*chushan* 出山

*cong ni an* 從逆案

*dangren* 黨人

Daogong 道公 (Daokai shangren 道開上人)

Deng Hanyi 鄧漢儀

*Donglin dangren bang* 東林黨人榜

*Donglin dian jiang lu* 東林點將錄

Du Jie 杜芥

Du Jun 杜濬

*duoqing* 奪情

*Erchen zhuan* 貳臣傳

Fang Kongzhao 方孔炤

Fang Wen 方文

Fang Yizhi 方以智  
Fang Zhenru 方震孺  
Feng Quan 馮銓  
Fu Shan 傅山  
*Fushe* 復社  
Gao Hongtu 高弘圖  
Geng Dingli 耿定理  
Geng Dingli 耿定力  
Geng Dingxiang 耿定向  
Gong Dingzi 龔鼎孳  
Gu Mei 顧眉  
*guanggun* 光棍  
Hong Chengchou 洪承疇  
Hongguang 弘光  
Huang Daozhou 黃道周  
Huang Yuanjie 黃媛介  
Jiang Cai 姜埰  
Jiang Gai 姜垓  
Jiang Gui 姜桂  
*jiang zuo san da jia* 江左三大家  
Jiao Hong 焦竑  
Jin Zhijun 金之俊

*jinshi* 進士

*jingshi* 經世

*junzi* 君子

*kai yanlu* 開言路

Li Dingguo 李定國

Li Mingrui 李明睿

Li Shuaitai 李率泰

Li Zhi 李贄

Li Zicheng 李自成

Liu Dongxing 劉東星

Ma Jinglun 馬經綸

Ma Shixu 馬時敘

Mei Guozhen 梅國禎

Mei Danran 梅澹然

*ni'an* 逆案

*nu bian* 奴變

Qian Qianyi 錢謙益

Qian Longxi 錢龍錫

*qingtan* 清流

Ruan Dacheng 阮大鍼

Shen Shoumin 沈壽民

Shi Kefa 史可法

Shi Runzhang 施閏章

(jielu) shoumu (結廬)守墓

shu 疏

Shui hu zhuan 水滸傳

Sun Chengze 孫承澤

Tan Qian 談遷

Tang Nianzu (Ransun) 唐念祖 (髯孫)

Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖

Tang Yunjia (Zuming) 唐允甲 (祖命)

Tao Wangling 陶望齡

Taohuacheng 桃花城

Wan Shouqi 萬壽祺

Wang Guoguang 王國光

Wei Zhongxian 魏忠賢

Wen Zhengming 文徵明

Wen Zhenheng 文震亨

Wen Zhenmeng 文震孟

Wu Da 吳達

Wu Su 武愷

Wu Weiye 吳偉業

wulun 五倫

xiaoren 小人

Xia Yunyi 夏允彝

Xiong Wenju 熊文舉

Xu Shu 徐庶

Xuzhou 徐州

Yan Ermei 閻爾梅

Yan Zhengju 嚴正矩

*yandang* 閻黨

Yang Sichang 楊嗣昌

Yang He 楊鶴

*yimin* 遺民

*yin* 隱

*yin fu yi qi* 隱夫逸妻

Yu Huai 余懷

Yu Xin 庾信

*yuyu* 迂愚

Yuan Chonghuan 袁崇煥

Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道

Yuan Mei 袁枚

Zhang Wenda 張問達

Zhao Fuxing 趙福星

Zhao Erbian 趙爾朴

Zhao Kaixin 趙開心

Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫

Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功

Zheng Man 鄭曼

Zheng Sixiao 鄭思肖

*zhiyin* 知音

*zhiji* 知己

*zhongxing* 中興

Zhou Hongyue 周宏鑰

Zhou Sijing 周思敬

Zhou Sijiu 周思久

Zhu Huaruan 朱華燮

Zhu Shilu 祝世祿

Zhuo Erkan 卓爾堪

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the significance of moral issues in shaping literati-officials' political struggles and behaviors during the Ming-Qing dynastic transition (roughly from 1570 to 1670). Focusing on four literati-officials (Li Zhi, Zheng Man, Huang Daozhou, and Gong Dingzi) and women in their lives, it highlights how the Confucian ideal of the literati official was strained during a time of intense factionalism and loyalism, and the ways in which moral discourse about personal behavior was deployed for political purposes. The roles and responsibilities laid out by the Five Cardinal Relations (*wulun*) were utilized by literati-officials during this dynastic transition to define the political virtue of loyalty (*zhong*) in moral attacks as well for self-protection. This work argues that political struggles, by activating intangible connections among literati's multiple moral virtues, made these virtues—in particular gender norms and sexual morality—relevant to politics and officials' career. Through an investigation of the lived reality of particular literati-officials, this study not only demonstrates how moral issues affected political developments but also exposes and challenges the legacy of what it identifies as “the grand narrative of the Ming-Qing transition”—a moral, political, and historical interpretative framework based on the presumed association between loyalty and morality. This framework shaped the moralistic nature of seventeenth-century literati's historical documentation as well as modern historians' readings of the archive. The methodologies of literary studies, art history, and gender studies are brought to bear in an intertextual examination of a variety of primary sources, including official and non-official histories, court memorials, literati scholarly works, biographies and autobiographies, letters, collections of poetry, artworks, and popular literature. With this range of sources, it is possible to tease out how sensational elements in literary and political rhetoric affected negotiations in court, the symbolism in political language, and the intertwining of the political and emotional dimensions of literati-officials' experience during this time of crisis and transformation.



## Introduction

### Politics, Morality, and the Ming-Qing Transition

On Chongzhen 17/3/19 (1644/4/25), learning that the rebel army led by Li Zicheng had entered Beijing and was quickly approaching the imperial palace, the Chongzhen emperor, accompanied by only one eunuch, rushed out of the northern gate, climbed onto Coal Hill, and hanged himself on a tree. Preparing for his final moment, the last Ming emperor wrote these lines on his white robe: “My inadequate virtues and weak flesh have invited punishment from Heaven. Now the treacherous rebels are invading the capital. My officials have caused all this! I must die, but I am ashamed to face my ancestors. Therefore I take off my crown and cover my face with my hair. Rebels! You can dismember my body, but do not hurt my people.”<sup>1</sup>

As so recorded, the Chongzhen emperor’s final words in the Ming History were meant to remind the reader of his officials’ incompetence and factionalism. They have indeed been deeply carved on the history of the Ming-Qing dynastic transition. Factionalism certainly seems to have directly contributed to the death of the emperor—at one of the last court hearings prior to the fall of Beijing, as the emperor was trying to decide whether he should temporarily leave the capital, factionalism stalled the conversation, just as had happened in countless policy debates over the past several

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<sup>1</sup> *Ming shi* 明史 (*MS* hereafter): *juan* 24/benji 24: “Zhuanlie di II” 莊烈帝二 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), p. 335.

decades. Certain officials accused others of disloyalty for urging the emperor to leave, for they were tempting the emperor to abandon his responsibilities to the people. This factional deployment of the language of loyalty proved effective, and the emperor reluctantly gave up the idea of fleeing.<sup>2</sup> So he became the ultimate sacrifice to the discourse of loyalty, a discourse that was supposed to work to his advantage vis-à-vis his officials.

Yet the suicide of the emperor enabled him to fulfill his roles as a responsible ruler and a filial son to his imperial ancestors. In addition, reports about the ultimate self-sacrifice of the imperial family deeply impressed the Ming loyalists, literati who maintained their loyalty to the Ming by refusing to serve in the Qing government. They dutifully recorded them in historical works to demonstrate that the imperial family indeed served as the moral example for the people:

[His Majesty] sent for his eldest daughter. They wept together. His Majesty wanted to kill the princess, but hesitated for quite a while. Then all of a sudden he jumped up and hacked her twice. The princess raised an arm to defend herself, and the arm was cut off. She fainted on the floor. Then his Majesty began to search around in the palaces. First he saw the empress had already hung herself. Then he went to the Western Palace. The Imperial Consort Yuan did not seem to want to commit suicide. His Majesty slew her with three strokes. But his body and limbs were trembling when he killed her. Then he sent for those imperial consorts who had served him in bed and killed all of them.<sup>3</sup>

The empress fulfilled her duty as a chaste wife. By killing the imperial concubines, who could be violated by the rebels, the Chongzhen emperor made sure no dishonor would be brought to him or his ancestors. Stories of his martyred officials in the capital resembled these palace killings. In some cases the wives and concubines killed themselves when

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<sup>2</sup> Xia Xie 夏燮, *Ming tongjian* 明通鑑 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1999): *juan* 90, p. 2493.

<sup>3</sup> Gu Yanwu 顧炎武, *Ming ji shi lu* 明季寔錄 (SKWS, 2-21): *juan* 2, p. 31.

their husbands died; in others, the officials killed their women before completing martyrdom, as their emperor did before his own suicide.

But not all of the officials chose suicide, the most heroic way to fulfill their duty as subjects; and although some wives and concubines died with their husbands, not all of those martyr officials killed their women. Soon after the fall of Beijing, the Manchu Qing army marched in after defeating Li Zicheng's army with the help of former Ming general and official Wu Sangui 吳三桂. Within two years, it eliminated two most important southern Ming émigré governments and conquered the most heavily populated and prosperous part of Southern China. During this time more literati-officials and their families committed suicide. But still more survived the rebellions and the Manchu conquest. Many survivors used their filial duty toward parents as an explanation for their failure to achieve martyrdom.

After 1644, literati engaged in exhaustive examination of questions such as who should die, who did not have to die, and who should not die. Literati had to assume so many different social and political roles and shoulder so many different public and private responsibilities (through which they also claimed many social, political and economic privileges) that expectations were demanding but options were also abundant.<sup>4</sup> However, because of the centrality of *zhong* 忠 (which will be translated as “loyalty” exclusively in this study) in the Chinese dynastic moral-political universe, especially for literati who had passed the civil service examinations and obtained official positions,

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<sup>4</sup> Ho, Koon-piu 何冠彪, “Should We Die as Martyrs to the Ming Cause?: Scholar-officials’ Views on Martyrdom during the Ming-Qing Transition,” *Oriens Extremus* 37:2 (1994): 123-151. Also see Ho, *Sheng yu si: Ming ji shidafu de jueze* 生與死：明季士大夫的抉擇 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban, 1997).

some kind of explanation for not dying was in order. But no matter how valid the explanation proved to be, many lived in a sense of shame for the rest of their lives.

Although the connection between politics and morality appears eternal and universal in Confucian China, historians need to investigate what kind of historical conditions perpetuated or changed particular forms of their connection. In the case of the Ming-Qing transition, this exploration first of all compels us to provide a more nuanced understanding of the implications of official status for literati-officials. Officials were “officially” the subjects of politics, major thinkers and leaders in prominent schools of political thought, as well as patrons and supporters of certain intellectual developments.<sup>5</sup> But literati-officials also had to conform to a set of very specific behavioral norms, including cautions against immorality and excessive desire, which had been translated into executable laws.<sup>6</sup> This means that moral questions could not only affect the career and life of a literatus-official in very real ways, but they also shaped political negotiations on various fronts. Therefore this study focuses on the experience of officials (and women in their lives) rather than literati in general. This approach has made it possible to not only examine the political importance of fulfilling moral responsibilities for literati-officials, but also produce a nuanced analysis of how moral issues—especially gender and sexual morality—figured prominently in political struggles, which in turn could help secure the centrality of morality in politics.

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<sup>5</sup> William Theodore de Bary, “Individualism and Humanitarianism in Late Ming Thought,” in Wm. de Bary ed. *Self and Society in Ming Thought* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970).

<sup>6</sup> The function of the law in this study differs from the object of Matthew Sommer’s historical inquiry in that I focus attention not on how it allowed gendered behavioral norms to participate in politics, while he examines mainly how society was regulated. However, I would point out that his argument, that “the regulation of sexual behavior amounted to the regulation of status performance,” applied to the political subjects of my historical study. Matthew Sommer, *Sex, Law and Society in Late-imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 8.

A careful examination of literati-officials' experiences as political subjects, husbands, fathers, sons and friends also helps us understand what the Confucian gender system specifically meant for elite men's everyday life and career. It complicates what the scholar Song Geng calls "the official or Confucian masculinity," the ideology that supposedly urges a man to "repress his heterosexual desire in order to achieve genuine manhood in the political and public realm."<sup>7</sup> However, the Confucian moral discourses did not demand repression of literati's heterosexual desire; rather it aimed to manage that desire so that it worked to maintain the Confucian patriarchal system. A literatus-official had to walk a fine line in order to survive and even thrive as both a political and a moral being. Investigating cases of moral persecution in politics clearly exposes the contradictions and tensions among the various roles and duties, which provided political and social opportunities as well as caused many personal tragedies.

The trauma of the Ming-Qing dynastic transition imposed competing moral demands and responsibilities on these men. The tension and connection between the two most important literati duties, loyalty and filial piety, have received most analytical attention from historians of the Ming-Qing dynastic transition. But the widely circulated martyrdom stories of the Chongzhen emperor and some of his officials have another dimension that has been overlooked: what I call gendered concerns were part and parcel of these virtues. I argue that the best way to make sense of the paradoxical mix of the sensational and the moralistic in literati-officials' struggles during the Ming-Qing transition period is to fit a gendered lens into the framework of dominant Confucian discourse: the Five Cardinal Relations (*wulun* 五倫) that defined the proper relationships

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<sup>7</sup> Geng, *The Fragile Scholar*, p. 96.

between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, older and younger brothers, and friends. Such a perspective, by uncovering elements of gender and sexuality in the moral discourses of loyalty and filiality, can help to unravel the complex political and personal lives of the early modern Chinese literati-officials.

The specific duties, roles, and power relations prescribed by the Five Cardinal Relations had certainly changed in the long Chinese imperial history, since the time when the Confucian thinker Mencius first articulated it clearly in his work: “Love between father and son, duty between sovereign and minister, distinction between husband and wife, precedence of the old over the young, and faith between friends.”<sup>8</sup> Through the hands of later thinkers especially the Han philosopher Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 whose efforts to redefine human relationships in hierarchical terms helped consolidate the philosophical foundation for absolute imperial authority, the first named in each of these five relations assumed the dominant role and the second the submissive role except in friendship. The Five Cardinal Relations reflect two Confucian moral principles: on the one hand the hierarchical order in political and social lives, and on the other what Norman Kutcher has named as “the parallel conception of society,” a doctrine that “allowed the state to harness, rather than compete with, the familial bond by stating that the various devotions of people within the state to each other were parallel bonds of mutual obligation.”<sup>9</sup> By the time of the Ming-Qing transition, these relationships had continued to be theorized, negotiated, and practiced through many historical moments of

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<sup>8</sup> *Mencius*: Book III: Part A, transl. D. C. Lau (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 60.

<sup>9</sup> Norman Kutcher, *Mourning in Late Imperial China: Filial piety and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 2.

crisis, change, and disruption, and their interrelations and contradictions had become more complex and blurry.

Loyalty and filial piety, two virtues associated with the first two relationships, have been studied by many to analyze and theorize how the competing hierarchical and parallel models shaped politics and society in Chinese history, but few scholars have explored these five relations together.<sup>10</sup> An investigation of gender norms and sexual morality associated with all the male virtues, by activating the meanings of these interconnected threads, reveals the enormity of the moral weight that the five relationships imposed upon literati-officials. Because this framework *as a whole* defined the lived experience of literati-officials in early modern China, adopting it in our historical investigation offers a more nuanced and less fragmented understanding of the connection between how these men lived and how politics was conducted.

I will demonstrate that the Ming-Qing dynastic transition offers a rich case for historians to further our understanding of the inseparability of politics and morality in early modern China, and that the framework of the Five Cardinal Relations allows a thorough examination of the multi-layered collective and individual experiences of the Chinese elite during the painful dynastic change. I will investigate the two particular socio-political dynamics of the Ming-Qing transition—rampant factionalism, and moral-political struggles over loyalism—through the lens of literati-official gender and sexual

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<sup>10</sup> A recent example of scholarly exploration in this direction in Kenneth J. Hammond, “Virtuous Surrogates: Moral Action and Substitution in the Case of Yang Jisheng,” in Daria Berg and Chloë Starr eds. *The Quest for Gentility in China: Negotiations beyond Gender and Class* (London & New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 117-133. Hammond tries to use the framework of Five Cardinal Relations to analyze the actions of the literatus-official Yang Jisheng, his wife, and another official and Yang’s friend, Wang Shizhen. He emphasizes the strong appeal of the ideal set up by the Five Cardinal Relations tenet to these individuals.

morality. This investigation will illustrate how the intangible connections between these virtues and gender and sexual morality were effectively exploited by literati-officials as both a tool of malicious factional attack and a means of self-protection and survival. The illusion of a perfect fusion of political and moral ideals completely fell apart, when the manipulation of moral discourses in political struggles exposed the near impossibility of the ideal Confucian man. The effectiveness of this political strategy was probably enhanced by the particularity of a time of “the sensational and shocking,”<sup>11</sup> not only as a matter of cultural taste but also as a painful political reality for the seventeenth-century Chinese elite.

### **Seventeenth-Century China: Crisis and Transformation, Dynastic Divide and Transition**

The seventeenth century was a time of transformation. Historians have shown the social, economic, and cultural landscape of a “floating world” in late Ming, which may be best summarized as including:

a thriving commercial and industrial economy; stupendous population growth and intense urbanization; radical views on money, wealth, and luxury, all representing radical departures from traditional dominant Chinese values; new views of life with emphasis on comfort and enjoyment; commercialization of fashion and leisure; new manners with regard to women; liberal attitudes to sex and homosexuality; the emergence of a new Age of Science and Technology among Chinese

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<sup>11</sup> Wm Theodore de Bary uses this to describe late-Ming reading public’s literary taste in his study of Li Zhi. But I think it could be used to characterize the conditions and temperament of this century of crisis and transformation. See de Bary, “Individualism and Humanitarianism in Late Ming Thought,” in *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, ed. Wm. de Bary (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 215.



intellectuals; phenomenal growth of the printing enterprise and attendant growth of popular literacy....<sup>12</sup>

The transformations of the seventeenth century took place at a time of many crises: imperial autocracy, political factionalism, inefficient and corrupt military and bureaucratic systems, intensified social polarity that increasingly threatened rebellions, frontier instabilities, economic and fiscal stresses caused by a combination of natural and human factors, and a Manchu Qing process of conquest that lasted for decades.<sup>13</sup> Historians have been discussing the Chinese crisis as part of a seventeenth-century “General Crisis” that “crossed national boundaries and touched various domains of life,”<sup>14</sup> identifying some trends shared by China and elsewhere. They have also noticed the particularly speedy recovery China made from this global crisis. The late Frederic Wakeman argued that although China, like many other parts of the world during the seventeenth century, experienced severe natural disasters, economic decline, and social and political instabilities, the Chinese literati’s collaboration with Manchu power to preserve their own socio-economic privileges and stabilize society made it possible for China to “recover from the seventeenth-century crisis sooner than any major power in the world.”<sup>15</sup> This century thus offers historians a perfect opportunity to observe how some of the key institutions and ideologies functioned in early modern China.

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<sup>12</sup> Chun-shu Chang and Shelley Hsueh-lun Chang, *Crisis and Transformation in Seventeenth-Century China: Society, Culture, and Modernity in Li Yü’s World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Frederic E. Wakeman, Jr., “China and the Seventeenth-Century Crisis,” *Late Imperial China*, 7:1 (June 1986): 1-23. Chan, Albert, *Glory and Fall of the Ming Dynasty* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982).

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Dewald, “Crisis, Chronology, and the Shape of European Social History” in *American Historical Review* 113:4 (Oct. 2008), p. 1032. For recent historical exploration and discussion of this issue, see the four articles in the same *AHR* issue, pp. 1029-1099. William S. Atwell discusses this issue in the East Asian context in “A Seventeenth-Century ‘General Crisis’ in East Asia?” *Modern Asian Studies* 24: 4 (July, 1990): 661-682.

<sup>15</sup> Wakeman, “China and the Seventeenth-century Crisis,” p. 17.

Chinese official histories, for which dynastic political history is the central organizing factor, always privilege dynastic divides and mark the founding of a new dynasty as the beginning of a new cycle. In historical studies of Ming-Qing transition politics, the dynastic divide has been the most important temporal framework, which often focuses more on the post-1644 era, when the question of loyalty became pressing and central to the literati's political, social, and intellectual lives. With a new ruling house, it is no exaggeration to say that overnight, the literati's political and historical subjectivities completely shifted. Nonetheless, contemporary historians have justifiably and wisely approached the seventeenth century as an important temporal segment as well as a period divided by the traumatic fall of the Ming in 1644.<sup>16</sup> And they have begun to see "internal coherence" in this period: "commercial growth, urbanization, growing number of examination candidates, the wider dissemination of increasingly sophisticated classical scholarship and discussion of 'statecraft,' intellectual nonconformism, mounting efforts to maintain control and discipline in reaction to social disorder and widespread violence during wartime,<sup>17</sup> and moralism among literati thinkers,<sup>18</sup> to name just a few continuities. Meanwhile, social and cultural historians have "de-centered" the dynastic divide to make it possible to study people and phenomena that were not as dramatically affected by 1644 as were the political and social lives of the literati. For instance, Dorothy Ko, in her work on Chinese women and culture, has chosen the seventeenth

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<sup>16</sup> The fall of Beijing and the suicide of the late Ming emperor Chongzhen had such prominent political, historical, and symbolic meanings that although small Southern Ming courts existed from 1644-1661 (Hongguang, Longwu, and Yongli), 1644 clearly carries the deepest psychological force. In addition, in the Qing, it was politically impossible to write about the southern Ming regimes as legitimate extensions of the Ming dynasty.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xvii-xix.

<sup>18</sup> Wang Fansen 王汎森, "Ming mo Qing chu de yi zhong daode yange zhuyi" 明末清初的一種道德嚴格主義 in *Wan Ming Qing chu sixiang shi lun* 晚明清初思想十論 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2004), pp. 89-106.

century as a whole since “the social historian sees change and continuity in a different light” from the political template.<sup>19</sup> Her study suggests that despite the political earthquakes of mid-century, and “[as] seminal as Manchu policies were in the areas of morality and ideology, they did not interrupt the spread of women’s education and women’s involvement in public print culture.”<sup>20</sup> And in the studies of pre-modern Chinese Confucian gender system,<sup>21</sup> the dynastic divide has not been an important factor.

In this study of the relationship between politics and literati-official morality, I not only examine the impact of the dynastic divide on officials’ political subjectivities but also emphasize continuity in literati-official gender and sexual morality across that divide. I will look at the period of 1570-1670, or from the Ming Wanli reign (1573-1620) to early Qing Kangxi reign (1662-1722), to illustrate that the moral construction of loyalty, as well as the sensational look of its opposite, disloyalty, was sustained not only by different forms of factionalism from the late Ming to the early Qing, but also by the post-1644 loyalist movements, post-war recovery, and literati’s historical writing practices. The dynastic divide was one of many intense moments in the seventeenth century that manifested the link between politics and morality with great clarity.

Furthermore, I shall show that the link between loyalty and morality for literati-officials has informed the historical construction of the Ming-Qing transition archive, which catalogs literati-officials as either “loyal and moral” or “disloyal and morally

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<sup>19</sup> Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 22. But Ko also carefully points out that this temporal approach does not dismiss the changes within this period and the internal contradictions (p. 23).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> The so-called Confucian gender system, as represented in the doctrine of Thrice Following, was never a monolithic but a resilient one, as Ko has pointed out (1994). Socially located mainly within the domestic sphere, women’s lived experiences of oppressions and possibilities both derived from the Confucian gender ethics.

corrupt.” The immoral often shows up in indulgence in sexual and other sensual pleasures, or negligence of norms such as proper interaction with women and maintaining status distinction between one’s wife and concubine. Historians have realized that to understand the political developments of the dynastic change, we must study this long seventeenth century because “there were too many weaknesses of documentation, too many cross-currents of change, too many decadences or half-emergence of institutions.”<sup>22</sup> The literati’s world was a world of words. They understood the power of writing in everyday socio-political life, and they understood the power of historical judgment over which they could wield some control only through their own written words. This double consciousness shaped early modern Chinese literati’s political and historical subjectivities and activities. The fact that they lived to create history has led this historian to the realization that the Ming-Qing transition was produced by as well as produced its own historiography from the very beginning of that process.<sup>23</sup> Their political struggles were over; but the moral struggles never really stopped. They must continue in the archive in order to continue to influence how future generations would interpret those political struggles. The inseparability of “the late Ming” and “the early Qing” results from and reflects the inseparability of the moral and the political. This was determined by the centrality of the moral construction of loyalty in literati’s life.

### **Factionalism and the “Donglin”**

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<sup>22</sup> “Preface” in *From Ming to Ch’ing: Conquest, Region, and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century China*, ed. Jonathan D. Spence and John E. Wills, Jr. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), p. xii.

<sup>23</sup> Lynn Struve’s scholarship definitely reflects a similar awareness. See especially, Lynn A. Struve, *The Ming-Qing Conflict, 1619-1683: A Historiography and Source Guide*, Association of Asian Studies Monograph and Occasional Paper Series no. 56 (Ann Arbor: AAS, 1998).

### *The changing face of factionalism from the late Ming to early Qing*

The last Ming emperor was not alone in blaming the fall of his dynasty on factionalism. Factionalism, or *dangzheng* 黨爭, appears repeatedly in Chinese imperial political history. Its devastating impact on both the government and individual officials was emphasized by literati of all generations. In pre-modern Chinese politics a faction (*dang* 黨) was not defined simply by economic, political, or ideological interests. Rather, the basis on which factions were formed was complicated, including “family connections, common origins, patronage relationships, and simple instances of friendship and enmity.”<sup>24</sup> The complex and unstable nature of “faction” in early-modern Chinese politics determined that factionalism was often a highly irrational political phenomenon and has thus proved difficult for historians to analyze.

The late-Ming political environment became notoriously factionalized from the Wanli reign, when officials split into two camps over the issue of whether the leading Grand Secretary, Zhang Juzheng, should take a three-year leave to mourn his deceased father, as all literati-officials were to do upon the death of a parent. Zhang’s political opponents contested the emperor’s order of *duoqing*. They invoked the time-honored principle that “one must seek loyal officials in filial sons” to politicize this issue. Many of those who vehemently opposed the decision by the emperor and the grand secretary received administrative as well as physical punishments. It was this series of events that set in motion late-Ming factionalism.<sup>25</sup> While this protest was ostensibly aimed at Zhang Juzheng’s *duoqing*, historians such as Xie Guozhen and Ono Kazuko have argued that

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 640.

<sup>25</sup> For a concise account of Zhang Juzheng’s *duoqing*, see Ray Huang, chap. 1 in *1587, a Year of No Significance: the Ming Dynasty in Decline* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1981).

late-Ming factionalism in fact emerged in response to the increasing power of the Grand Secretariat and grew with subsequent conflicts between the Grand Secretariat and censorial authorities, the latter supposedly representing “public opinion.”<sup>26</sup> Although Grand Secretary Zhang soon died, the virus of factionalism took on a life of its own, especially after a group of officials—who happened to make the loudest call for opening up channels of criticism—began to lecture about Confucian teachings of moral cultivation and statecraft at the Donglin Academy in southern China. This group was quickly labeled by other factions as “the Donglin clique.” From that point forward, every major policy debate would end up as a factional controversy and lead to some officials’ resignation and punishment.

The mid- to late-Wanli reign was the prime period when factionalism and policy differences reinforced each other and created a vicious cycle. Multiple factions were identified in terms of their leaders, policy stances, and regions, but actually faction membership and allegiance often remained murky.<sup>27</sup> It was in the struggles with the powerful eunuch Wei Zhongxian 魏忠賢 and his official-followers (*yandang* 閹黨) during the Tianqi reign (1621-1627) that the Donglin became most clearly defined, admired, and identified by the whole of society as a collective representing the highest political integrity and morality. Their reputation was only reinforced when many of them

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<sup>26</sup> Xie Guozhen 謝國楨, “Yinlun” (introduction) in *Ming-Qing zhi ji dangshe yundong kao* 明清之際黨社運動考 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 2004), p. 4. Ono Kazuko 小野和子, *Ming ji dang she kao* 明季黨社考 [The Donglin movement and the Restoration Society in the late Ming]. Trans. Li Qing 李慶 and Zhang Rongmei 張榮湄 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> At the time there believed to exist three major factions other than the Donglin, i.e. Qi 齊, Chu 楚, and Zhe 浙. But as some historians have pointed out, such differentiation was not very accurate. Fan Shuzhi 樊樹志, *Wan Ming shi* 晚明史 (1573-1644) (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2005), chap. 6. Shiroy Takashi 城井隆志, “Min matsu no yichi han Toulun ha seiryoku ni tsuyite—Gu Tianjun wo megute” 明末の一反東林派勢力について—顧天峻をめぐって in *Yamane Yukio kyouju taikyu kinen Min dai shi runso* 山根幸夫教授退休記念明代史論叢 (Tokyo: Kyuko shoin, 1990), pp. 263-282.

lost their lives confronting the political machinations of Wei Zhongxian.<sup>28</sup> During the Chongzhen reign, the emperor was faced with trying to control a different kind of factionalism, one with no namable factions except the so-called Donglin, who opposed the leading grand secretaries chosen by the emperor.<sup>29</sup> The Chongzhen emperor feared factionalism to such a degree that for many years he placed all his trust in one official, Wen Tiren 溫體仁,<sup>30</sup> who presented himself as the only non-partisan in government, while actually devoting himself to annihilating rivals identified as Donglin leaders.<sup>31</sup> After Beijing fell, first to a rebel government then to the Manchu Qing, factionalism quickly rekindled in the émigré Southern Ming court in Nanjing between the so-called “pure elements” and former associates of the eunuch Wei Zhongxian, the *yandang*. Factionalism not only distracted officials from governing and building an effective defense against the Manchu invasion, it also led to horrific persecutions of Donglin-identified officials and former members of the Fushe literary society, a literati organization often described as the “Little Donglin.”

Early-Qing factionalism grew out of that of the late Ming, as some officials who had been caught in the capital and served the rebels then the Manchus (the “turncoats”) vehemently opposed the recalling to service of men who had been dismissed as *yandang*

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<sup>28</sup> For a study of the Donglin vs. *yandang* struggles, see John W. Dardess, *Blood and history in china: The donglin faction and its repression, 1620-1627* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002).

<sup>29</sup> Xie Guozhen argues that the Donglin versus *yandang* struggles shaped the factionalism from the Chongzhen reign to the Yongli court (1648-1661). Xie, *Ming-Qing zhi ji dang she yundong kao*, p. 5. But I would argue that although the Donglin-identified literati's suspicion toward former *yandang* forces implicitly shaped politics, this does not necessarily mean that factionalism in Chongzhen reign was dominated by the conflicts between the Donglin and *yandang*.

<sup>30</sup> Wen Tiren served in the Grand Secretariat from Chongzhen 3 to 10 (1630-1637). *MS: juan* 110/biao 11: *zai fu nian biao* II 宰輔年表二, pp. 3384-87.

<sup>31</sup> For comprehensive but detailed accounts of factionalism from the Wanli to Chongzhen reigns, see Fan Shuzhi 樊樹志, *Wan Ming shi* 晚明史 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2005). On factionalism in the southern Ming regimes, see Gu Cheng 顧誠, *Nan Ming shi* 南明史 (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1997), especially Chapters 2, 3, and 5.

during the Chongzhen reign. This factional rancor was further complicated by internal divisions among turncoats who variously positioned themselves in relation to the Manchu rulers and held different attitudes toward Manchu-Chinese conflicts of interest.

Factionalism among Han Chinese officials caused problems for the Manchus, but also offered the latter opportunities to manipulate them politically and consolidate Qing power. As Xie Guozhen points out, “[to] study the early-Qing factionalism, we must first understand that it came from Ming developments, and we also should note that the Han officials engaged in factional struggles against each other.”<sup>32</sup> Some historians call early-Qing factionalism “Southern-Northern factionalism” (*nan-bei dang* 南北黨), because the two rival Han leaders, Feng Quan 馮銓 and Chen Mingxia 陳名夏, came from northern and southern China, respectively. But this was not a regional rivalry in a strict sense, rather it was mainly between former *yandang* followers and former Donglin-Fushe personnel.<sup>33</sup>

Factionalism in the seventeenth century had different dynamics over time, but there were three processes that especially demand the historian’s attention. First, the factions gradually lost sight of specific targets and issues: by the late Chongzhen reign, factionalism was often carried on for its own sake, and Donglin-related figures did behave as a well-coordinated political cohort with functional leaders.<sup>34</sup> Second, moral issues were employed as a weapon of political attack in factional struggles. Third, while

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<sup>32</sup> Xie, *Ming-Qing zhi ji dang she yundong kao*, p. 81.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82. Also see Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, pp. 865-868. Han Hengyu has discussed Chen Mingxia and the “southern faction case” in great detail, in Han Hengyu 韓恆煜, “Chen Mingxia ‘Nandang’ an shulue” 陳名夏 “南黨” 案述略 in *Qing shi lun cong* 7 (1986): pp. 151-165.

<sup>34</sup> For example, the official Wu Changshi 吳昌時 was a very active Fushe member and in the government was believed to have endeavored to promote Donglin political interests. But his demise and eventually execution in Chongzhen 16 (1643) were brought about by some figures also identified as Donglin-Fushe members. See *MS: juan* 308/*liezhuan* 196 “jianchen” 奸臣: Zhou Yanru 周延儒, pp. 7925-7930.



the Donglin faction became less and less clearly defined, the so-called Donglin gradually assumed a mantle of uprightness and political righteousness in seventeenth-century popular literature and historical writings; it became a collective of unequivocally moral literati-officials, an image that still shapes how historians interpret the political actors and events of that era.

### *The making of the Donglin*

The Donglin was the central piece of the seventeenth-century factionalism, whose legacy in turn shaped how the Donglin has been documented in official and unofficial histories and literati writings of all sorts. Since the late Ming, literati debated the membership and the nature of the so-called Donglin. Some rejected this factional label because Confucian political philosophy believed there was no good “faction” and political factions were by nature harmful for the government. Others accepted such a label, arguing that there was a difference between “bad factions” and “good factions,” and that the Donglin represented a “good faction” of literati-officials dedicated to promoting the people’s interests.<sup>35</sup>

The precise nature and membership of the Donglin have always been debated among historians. John Dardess summarizes the different but overlapping meanings of the Donglin in the seventeenth century as: an ethical revitalization movement, a national Confucian moral fellowship, and a Beijing political faction.<sup>36</sup> Early scholarship on the Donglin saw it as representing the reform-minded “new families” in confrontation with

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<sup>35</sup> Charles O. Hucker, “The Tung-lin Movement of the Late Ming Period,” in John Fairbank ed. *Chinese Thought and Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 160-161.

<sup>36</sup> John W. Dardess, *Blood and History*, “Introduction.”

the “old families” at a time of emerging capitalism; in this sense it reflected the struggles among “different classes” at a time of socio-economic transformation.<sup>37</sup> It was also argued that the Donglin emerged as a local movement in the economically prosperous Suzhou area that aimed to return political power to the hands of the gentry class during a time of increasing imperial despotism.<sup>38</sup> But such class-based interpretations of the Donglin’s formation has been challenged by other scholars, most notably, Charles O. Hucker, who understood the Donglin as a movement of literati-officials in response to social disorder and literati corruption, a “moral crusade.”<sup>39</sup> This view has had great influence on later scholarship on the Donglin. Fan Shuzhi has looked at the naming of “Donglin” in both history and historical writing.<sup>40</sup> He rightly points out it was a political strategy of some Wanli officials to give those who had lectured at the Donglin Academy (especially Gu Xiancheng) a dangerously factionalist label; they themselves did not want to be called such because factionalism meant politics driven by association, in turn driven by selfish pursuits.<sup>41</sup> And the Donglin Academy itself was meant to provide not a “political” but an “intellectual” forum.<sup>42</sup> Following historians such as Frederic Wakeman, Fan argues that the Donglin should be called “the Donglin movement” for its socio-political appeals and mobilizing efforts.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Hou Wailu 侯外廬 et al, chap. 25 “Donglin dangzheng de lishi yiyi jiqi shehui sixiang”東林黨爭的歷史意義及其社會思想 in *Zhongguo zhengzhi sixiang tongshi* 中國政治思想通史 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1960).

<sup>38</sup> Miyazaki Ichisada 宮崎市定, “Mindai so-sho chiho no shidafu to minshu” 明代蘇松地方の士大夫と民衆. *Shirin* 37 (June 1954): 1-37.

<sup>39</sup> Hucker, “The Tung-lin Movement,” pp. 132-162.

<sup>40</sup> Fan, Shuzhi. “Donglin shuyuan de shitai fenxi: ‘Donglin dang’ lun zhiyi” 東林書院的實態分析：‘東林黨’論質疑, *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 2001 (2): 188-208.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 189-193.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

Although Fan Shuzhi agrees with Hucker that the Donglin movement was “especially a moral crusade,”<sup>44</sup> by insisting on a “non-political” Donglin Academy categorically separated from the externally imposed “Donglin faction” label, he seems to overlook the real significance of Hucker’s insight, that studying the Donglin movement as essentially a moral crusade requires us to further explore specific manifestations of “the inseparable link between ethics and politics in the traditional Confucian system.”<sup>45</sup> Hucker has rightly pointed out that Donglin leaders’ injection of moral and philosophical notes “into the political situation makes political history from 1605 to 1615 confusing indeed to the modern reader, for clear-cut political or institutional issues tended to be submerged completely by questions of personal character and morality.”<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, Lin Li-yueh takes an opposite approach. She does not attempt to separate the Donglin Academy and the Donglin faction, but rather approaches the Donglin as one intellectual-political phenomenon. To illustrate the most important political philosophy (and practice to some degree) of late Ming as represented by the “Donglin group” (*Donglin pai* 東林派) rather than the “Donglin faction” (*Donglin dang* 東林黨),<sup>47</sup> Lin includes in this collective officials who lectured at the Donglin Academy, those who were labeled “Donglin factionalists” by Wei Zhongxian’s followers, the supporters of the Donglin figures, and opponents of Wei Zhongxian.<sup>48</sup> Lin’s definition of “the Donglin group” is broad enough for her to analyze its primary political thought, which concerned the meaning of rulership, literati moral, social and political responsibilities, as well as policy-making

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>45</sup> Hucker, “The Tung-lin Movement,” p. 157.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 146-147.

<sup>47</sup> “Donglin group” is the author’s own translation of “Donglin pai.” Lin Li-yueh 林麗月, “Ming mo Donglin pai de ji ge zhengzhi guannian” 明末東林派的幾個政治觀念 [The Political Ideas of the Tung-lin Group] in *Lishi xuebao* [Taiwan] 11 (June, 1983): 21-42.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-2.

process and laws. She argues that the Donglin emphasis on the authority and power of the ruler inevitably led to their *only* resorting to moral preaching when dealing with the emperor.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, existing scholarship on the Donglin primarily focuses on its moral and philosophical aspects.<sup>50</sup> And it is often assumed that the Donglin represented late-Ming moral idealism, a vehement reaction and pushback against the iconoclastic and “heterodox” tendencies in late-Ming society.<sup>51</sup> But this assumption has been questioned recently.

In a study of a controversial Donglin-related official Li Sancai 李三才, Harry Miller rightly points out that by studying the Donglin as a philosophical movement or a moral crusade, insufficient attention has been paid to the group’s political activities. Using the morally controversial Li Sancai’s relationship with Donglin leaders as an example, he argues that as a political force they sometimes were willing to make moral compromises to achieve certain political goals, which means that the Donglin was not truly “morally impeccable.”<sup>52</sup> In a more recent work, Miller examines the political and literary careers of one “anti-Donglin” factional leader, Tang Binyin 湯賓尹, to demonstrate that there were some members in the Donglin faction who were morally flawed, and that many innocent “non-Donglin” officials were sometimes discriminated

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>50</sup> One of the best-written works of this type is Mizoguchi Yuzo 溝口雄三, *Chugoku zenkindai shiso no kussetsu to tenkai* 中國前近代思想の屈折と展開 (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1980). Cynthia Brokaw’s study looks at “Donglin partisans” and “Donglin associates.” Brokaw, “Introduction” to *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit: Social Change and Moral Order in Late Imperial China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>51</sup> For example, in addition to the abovementioned works, also see Frederic Wakeman, “The Price of Autonomy: Intellectuals in Ming and Ch’ing Politics” in *Daedalus* vol. 101, no. 2 (Intellectuals and Tradition) (Spring, 1972): 35-70.

<sup>52</sup> Harry Miller, “Newly Discovered Source Sheds Light on Late Ming Faction: Reading Li Sancai’s *Fu Huai xiao cao*.” *Ming Studies* Vol. 47 (Spring, 2003): 126-140. However, there are some works on the Donglin movement that integrate its philosophical, moral, and political aspects, for example, Mizoguchi, *Chugoku zenkindai shiso* and Ono Kazuko, *Ming ji dang she kao*.

against. He argues that because historians have also been limited by the moral dichotomy—i.e., the morally impeccable Donglin versus its morally corrupted opponents, they have failed to challenge the “amorality” of certain Donglin figures.<sup>53</sup>

Miller’s approach is important in two senses. First, he urges us to separate the political from the intellectual to conduct more sophisticated and nuanced investigations of the Donglin as a political force. Second, he warns us that the seventeenth-century sources have idealized (and hence suffer from the moral essentialization of) the Donglin. However, although Miller argues against the Donglin’s “moral façade,” his underlying assumption is that there was a clearly defined “Donglin” membership and identity as early as the late Wanli reign. Actually, Miller’s argument follows some seventeenth-century views on factionalism, such as those of the Ming official and loyalist Li Qing 李清, who, in his historical work, attempted to expose wicked elements within the “Donglin camp.”<sup>54</sup> This is obviously a problem that has affected both seventeenth-century political and historical writings and modern historical studies. Shiroy Takashi is one of the very few who try to look at the Donglin membership problem deeply. By showing the complicated and shifting networking and relationships among and within the factions, he demonstrates the instability of factional labels and coalitions.<sup>55</sup> Although his examination of factions is limited to the late Wanli reign, his findings are applicable to other late-Ming reigns. Following Takashi, I propose that the problem that we must try to ask is not whether the Donglin was a “moral crusade” or “moral façade,” but rather, what can we learn from the shifting boundaries of the so-called Donglin?

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<sup>53</sup> Harry Miller, “Opposition to the Donglin Faction in the Late Ming Dynasty: the Case of Tang Binyin.” *Late Imperial China* 27: 2 (2006): 38-66.

<sup>54</sup> Li Qing 李清, *San yuan biji* 三垣筆記(Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982, 1997).

<sup>55</sup> Shiroy Takashi, “Min matsu no yichi han Toulin ha.”

The historical production of the Donglin official as a loyal and moral man went hand in hand with the struggles of the Donglin faction with emperors and various forces among officials throughout the late Ming. Establishing this figure as a moral exemplar was very important for some officials. They believed the Donglin only consisted of officials whose political integrity and high morality stood in sharp contrast to the moral lack of other officials and therefore should be awarded the most powerful positions in the government. They feared that if less worthy men sneaked into this camp, they would offer the enemies of the Donglin evidence of corruption that would discredit the Donglin agenda and its moral-political appeal. After the fall of the Ming, regardless of whether they condoned how the Donglin operated politically, literati-writers generally were sympathetic to and identified with the moral image of the so-called Donglin. When they compiled historical material and scholarship, eulogies of and romanticizing tales about formerly Donglin-identified officials became prevalent. This necessarily involved retrospectively redefining the Donglin membership and its history.

Indeed, this exemplary image of the Donglin is such a formidable presence in the political history of the Ming-Qing transition that a Donglin-centered framework defines many works by literati-writers and modern historians. It thus seems very odd that the Donglin moral man would also appear in seventeenth-century history as a romantic scholar associated with the most beautiful and talented courtesan in late Ming, as depicted in the line, “Every courtesan married a Donglin!” This was late-Qing literatus Qi Jitang’s famous inscription on *Diverse Records of Wooden Bridge* (*Banqiao zaji* 板橋雜記), the Ming *yimin*

Yu Huai's 余懷 writing on the late-Ming Nanjing pleasure quarters.<sup>56</sup> Although a bit exaggerating, Qin Jitang's inscription does capture the wishful projection of certain newer late-Ming social and cultural ideals for literati onto Donglin-identified officials. The passionate and romantic scholar is more fully represented by the "Little Donglin," the young scholars of the Fushe literary society, in historical memory and in literary works of the seventeenth century. The romanticization of the Donglin faction and some Donglin-identified iconic figures reflects not only the political-social overlap of the Donglin and Fushe communities in the late Ming, but also some early-Qing literati's sympathy with the Donglin as a victim of failed politics caused by morally corrupt officials.

In the seventeenth century, the Confucian moral ideal was represented by and in the "Donglin official." In this process, the Donglin image as the emblem of loyalty and morality was consolidated. The Donglin icon *as a morally constructed ideal*, rather than a clearly defined movement or political faction, is the focus of this study. To understand it requires an appreciation of the central terms of Confucianism known as the "five relationships." In the following sections I discuss these relationships at the intersection of politics and morality in the life of the literati official.

### **The Five Cardinal Relations and Sexual Ethics in the Seventeenth Century**

As Chun-shu Chang and Shelley Hsueh-lun Chang have summarized, Confucian convention exalts the harmonious family as the ideal and the four virtues associated with the family became the criteria for one's moral character in society:

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<sup>56</sup> Annotated translation can be found in Howard S. Levy, *A Feast of Mist and Flowers: the Gay Quarters of Nanking at the End of the Ming* (Yokohama, private publication, 1966).

Theoretically the rules demand kindness on the part of the parents and filial duty from the sons; gentleness from the older brothers and obedience from the younger ones; righteousness from the husband, submission from the wife; thoughtfulness from the elders and deference from the juniors. In reality, the society stressed only the virtues of subordination; it demanded filial piety from the sons, obedience from the younger brothers, submission from the wife, and deference from the juniors.<sup>57</sup>

This was the dominant understanding of men as moral beings in the seventeenth century, despite historical debates, variations and attempts to challenge it.

It is clear that the Five Cardinal Relations is a “male-dominated moral order.”<sup>58</sup> In order to maintain its dominance and operation, many efforts to discipline men and marginalize women had to be made, and the inherent antagonisms and conflicts had to be contained and resolved “in ways that conformed to these values.”<sup>59</sup> The present exploration of seventeenth-century politics and morality focuses on how these antagonisms and conflicts were manipulated outside of the domestic space and familial domain and employed as tools of moral attacks in political struggles, and how specific political, social and cultural dynamics during the Ming-Qing transition sustained the moral tenets that regulated men and women’s lives.

In this study, I use “loyalty” to specifically translate the word, sentiment, and virtue of *zhong*, political loyalty. The most important Confucian political virtue, it is the central theme of the history of the Chinese dynastic transitions. Here, it is important for us to maintain an analytical differentiation between loyalty and loyalism. Martyrdom and

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<sup>57</sup> Chun-shu Chang and Shelley Hsueh-lun Chang, *Redefining History: Ghosts, Spirits, and Human Society in P’u Sung-ling’s World, 1640-1715* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), p. 104.

<sup>58</sup> Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1997), p. 95.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.



political eremitism, two specific and relatively extreme kinds of performance of loyalty, belong to the domain of loyalism. In the Confucian scheme, upon the fall of a dynasty, literati were expected to either commit suicide or refuse to serve the new dynasty. This was done to demonstrate their loyalty to the fallen dynasty, from which they had received government positions, honorary titles, tax exemptions, in addition to the political and social opportunities associated with their outstanding performance at various levels of civil service examinations. During the Ming-Qing dynastic change, many literati, officials or not, killed themselves or fought to death for the Ming cause on the battlefield, including some who had been identified as disloyal traitors previously by their factional enemies in court. Their completion of loyalty was beyond question. Those who did not commit martyrdom themselves in early Qing debated extensively about who should die and who did not have to die for the fallen Ming, because this question concerned whether one could be respected and remembered as a loyal subject without martyrdom. Due to the political, cultural and historical significance of this issue, many factors had to be contemplated. As Ho Koon-piu's careful study has illustrated, it was generally agreed that literati who had not received an official "salary" did not have to die. For literati-officials, rank, position, retirement status, and timing would all count. In addition, fulfilling the virtue of filial piety could also exempt an official from the loyal duty of sacrificing his life.<sup>60</sup> Such carefully delineated criteria were meant to not only uphold the duty of loyalty, but also avoid unnecessary and meaningless sacrifice of life at times of dynastic transition.

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<sup>60</sup> Ho Koon-piu, "Should We Die as Martyrs to the Ming Cause?: Scholar-officials' Views on Martyrdom during the Ming-Qing Transition," *Oriens Extremus* 37:2 (1994): 123-151. Ian McMorran's study of Wang Fuzhi and the Yongli court argues that some prominent *yimin* figures chose loyalty to the emperor's imperial function rather than loyalty to the emperor personally. McMorran, "The Patriot and the Partisans: Wang Fu-chih's Involvement in the Politics of the Yung-li Court," in Spence and Wills, pp. 133-166.

Meanwhile, as Lynn Struve has pointed out, loyalism was not limited to martyrdom. “[Symbolic] death,’ usually in the form of a radical change in life style and adoption of a new set of personal names, was also acceptable.”<sup>61</sup> Accordingly, the term “Ming loyalist” could apply “meaningfully to anyone who pointedly altered his or her life patterns and goals to demonstrate unalterable personal identification with the fallen order.”<sup>62</sup> Wang Fansen also identifies such loyalist self-transformation as in the domain of “structure of feelings” as well as in a series of highly symbolic gestures.<sup>63</sup> The literary historian Zhao Yuan points out that this identity (often called *yimin* 遺民, literally meaning “surviving subject”), shaped by a long rich tradition of *yinyi* 隱逸 (eremitism) and passionately debated among early-Qing literati, was bound to be too essentializing and simplifying to be meaningful in seventeenth-century political, social and cultural life.<sup>64</sup> It was temporally limited because it would eventually disappear with one generation of literati, and its fashioning drew upon a set of narrative and behavioral archetypes, such as ascetism and retreating into Buddhism. Loyalists were believed to represent the highest morality and preserve the values of Confucian culture in an “alien dynasty.”<sup>65</sup>

The discourse of loyalty is much broader and more flexible than loyalism, although the two do overlap in some ways. The Confucian classic *The Analects* discusses loyalty, or *zhong*, not only in terms of loyalty to the ruler but also to others in general,

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<sup>61</sup> Lynn Struve, “Ambivalence and Action: Some Frustrated Scholars of the K’ang-hsi Period,” in Spence and Wills, p. 327.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Wang Fansen, “Qing chu shiren de hui zui xintai yu xiaoji xingwei” 清初人士的悔罪心態與消極行為, in Wang, *Wan Ming Qing chu*, pp. 188-247.

<sup>64</sup> Zhao Yuan 趙園, “Yimin lun” 遺民論 in Zhao Yuan, *Ming-Qing zhi ji shidafu yanjiu* 明清之際士大夫研究 (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1999 & 2006), p. 220.

<sup>65</sup> Wing-ming Chan, “The Early-Qing Discourse on Loyalty,” *East Asian History* 19 (June 2000): 31.

often in conjunction with the principle of trustworthiness (*xin* 信).<sup>66</sup> It is also defined in relation to the virtue of filial piety, to which I will soon return.<sup>67</sup> In early modern Chinese politics, loyalty (*zhong*) could have three meanings: loyalty to a dynasty, to a ruler, and to the goal of promoting the interests of the people. Peaceful times would not generate much substantial discussion about loyalty. Loyalty almost assumes a transhistorical quality over the course of Chinese history. But at times of crisis, certain forms of loyalty would represent *the* principle of loyalty to be followed by the literati. For example, theoretically, an official could claim loyalty if he served in the new regime for the purpose of fulfilling his duty to work for the wellbeing of the common people. Conflicts between loyalty to the ruler and loyalty to the bigger agenda of the dynasty could become significant in difficult circumstances. An official loyal to the interests of the dynasty and people did not necessarily show obedience to the emperor. Although eventually he could enter history as a loyal official, in real-world politics he might be framed and punished as a disloyal man.

The Ming-Qing dynastic transition fully demonstrates the complexity of the discourse of loyalty, because during this long period, while the rulers on their own terms demanded loyalty from officials, many literati-officials and generals switched their allegiance from one ruler to another, in many cases more than once. For example, Pamela Crossley's work on the Manchu imperial ideology clearly delineates how during and after the dynastic change, one's loyalty and identity could be represented and treated differently in the ever-changing political environment.<sup>68</sup> As shown in the analyses by her and other scholars, the most astonishing stories of loyalty came from Han officials

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<sup>66</sup> For example, *The Analects*: 3. 19 and 1.4.

<sup>67</sup> For example, *ibid.*, 2.20.

<sup>68</sup> Pamela K. Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1999), esp. Part I.

committing suicide for the Qing cause in the Manchu government's repression of Three Lords' Rebellions in the late seventeenth century and the official compilation of the notorious *Er chen zhuan* 貳臣傳 (Biographies of Officials Serving Two Dynasties) in the eighteenth century, a volume that listed turncoat officials who served in high-ranking positions in the Qing to expose their disloyalty to the Ming!<sup>69</sup>

In this study, I will focus on how the unstable meanings of loyalty allowed it to be manipulated for particular political, social, and cultural needs. Cases of such manipulation in political struggles and post-war recovery during the Ming-Qing transition manifest how easily it could be tied to literati-official gender and sexuality morality. They bring to light the unarticulated association between the virtues of literati-officials and their women's. They also clearly reveal the interrelations among various virtues defined within the framework of the Five Cardinal Relations.

### ***Ruler-subject, father-son, and brothers***

By the late Ming, in real-world politics, the ruler and subject relationship had come to mean one-directional loyalty. The literati-officials, as bureaucrats, used their administrative skills to help run a benevolent government for the wellbeing of the people. However, literati-officials were also supposed to point out the emperor's political and moral mistakes. Outspoken officials recorded in official dynastic histories had set up moral-political examples for later generations to emulate, even at the risk of sacrificing

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid. For a brief account of some of such officials' experiences, see Wakeman, "'Romantics, Stoics, and Martyrs,'" pp. 116-126. Scholars have also discussed "loyalty" to local and clan interests, but to avoid terminological confusion over "loyalty," I will not discuss them here. For example, see Hilary J. Beattie, "The alternative to Resistance: The Case of T'ung-ch'eng, Anhwei" in Spence and Wills, pp. 236-276.

their own lives. Ideally, literati-officials' honest and selfless challenge to the emperor based on their well-informed judgment should be rewarded; but in reality the challenger could be ignored and even punished. Still, loyalty to the ruler, narrowly or broadly defined, was the rule governing the ruler-subject relationship and remained the most important political virtue in dynastic history.

A literatus-official's performances as a loyal subject and as a filial son were closely related. In imperial China, the ideas that "the emperor rules all-under-heaven with filial piety" and that "one should seek the loyal official in the filial son" prevailed, clearly showing the significance of the moral discourse of filial piety in politics. Although the second cardinal relation specifically regulates the father-son relationship, when we study the meanings of a good son for literati-officials of early modern China, we should expand that to include care and respect for both parents. These were meanings accumulated and elaborated by Chinese men for thousands of years, drawing upon various traditions of thoughts and practices. By the late Ming, being a good son generally meant fulfilling ritual duties of ancestor worship, respect and obedience to parents, taking care of parents, and continuing the patriline. But as historians have shown, literati's particular interests and stakes in moral cultivation, rituals, and politics also led them to take on more filial duties, such as taking a mourning leave from office for three years after the death of a parent, practicing *shoumu* 守墓 (building and living in a hut next to parents' tomb), and bringing honor to the family by passing the civil service examinations.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> For the development of the discourse of filial piety, see for example, Knapp, Keith N. *Selfless Offspring: Filial Children and Social Order in Medieval China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005) and "Creeping Absolutism: Parental Authority as Seen in Early Medieval Tales of Filial Offspring," in Peter D. Hershock and Roger T. Ames ed. *Confucian Cultures of Authority* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), pp. 65-91;

Of particular significance in the political history of the Ming-Qing transition is literati-officials' mourning norms and the *duoqing* 奪情 practice (official being ordered by the emperor to not to take a leave but stay in office during the mourning period), because the two high-profile incidents that produced devastating factionalist consequences in late-Ming politics were the *duoqing* cases of Zhang Juzheng 張居正 and Yang Sichang 楊嗣昌.<sup>71</sup> While many officials strongly believed in the mourning norms, politicizing filial piety by personally attacking the officials in *duoqing* cases also enabled them to protest against the emperor's political decisions without explicitly challenging him. In the late Ming, officials' struggles among themselves and with the emperors surrounding *duoqing* not only were caused by factionalism but also fanned the flames of factionalism. Protesting *duoqing* is a classic example of the uneasy fusion of the virtues of loyalty and filial piety.

But this form of protest finds support in the discursive link between loyalty and filial piety itself. The historical relation between loyalty and filial piety, or between these two sets of relationships and responsibilities, has been well researched. The philosophical correlation of loyalty and filial piety in particular was reinterpreted, refined, and reinforced in practice with increasingly sophisticated state deployment of Confucian teachings to strengthen its control throughout the long history of the Chinese empire. It was advocated that being a filial son would qualify one to be an official. But which one

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Chan, Alan K. L. and Sor-hoon Tan ed. *Filial Piety in Chinese Thought and History* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004); Cole, Alan. *Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); and Kutcher, *Mourning in Late Imperial China: Filial piety and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>71</sup> Kutcher, *Mourning in Late Imperial China*, esp. chap. 2.

should be given priority, between loyalty and filial piety, remained a timeless topic of debate. While in Confucian moral teachings filial piety assumes the status of the top priority, in practice, not only did the subject's political duty top his filial duty; hierarchy and absoluteness clearly dictated these relationships.<sup>72</sup>

Another familial relationship, the fraternal bond, was also transformed, becoming a relationship related to and similar to that of a filial son to his father. As Adrian Davis summarizes, "Fraternal relations were at the core of the highly articulated and state-sponsored conceptualization of kinship relations. Confucian thinkers linked the idea of *ti* (loving fraternity) to that of *xiao* (filial piety), meaning that younger brothers were supposed to display the same obedience to older brothers as they showed to their father or sovereign."<sup>73</sup> Although the brothers' equal claim to their family assets as well as issue of adoption complicated the dominant hierarchical model, the three main expectations of fraternal relationship in imperial China—relative reciprocal fraternity and collaboration, unilateral submissiveness, and fulfilling filial duty by forming harmonious fraternal relationship—co-existed and participated in defining a moral man.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> A lot of scholarship has been focused on this subject. For a concise discussion of this history (to mid Ming), see for example Lee Cheuk Yin, "Emperor Chengzu and Imperial Filial Piety of the Ming Dynasty," in *Filial Piety in Chinese Thought and History*, ed. Alan K. L. Chan and Sor-hoon Tan (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), pp. 141-153. In his research on Ming-Qing officials' mourning practices, Kutcher (*Mourning in Late Imperial China*) suggests there was a gradual tendency toward the lessening of the rule of a three-year mourning period. My research will suggest that this was not the case in late Ming, and in early Qing a great deal of inconsistency can be detected in different emperors' policy and attitude, conditioned by the changing political and social agendas in the first century of the Manchu Qing.

<sup>73</sup> Adrian Davis, "Fraternity and Fratricide in Late Imperial China," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 105, No. 5 (Dec., 2000), p. 1630.

<sup>74</sup> Davis (*ibid.*, pp. 1630-1640) points out that scholars' work on this relationship has been focused on kinship and property, and most of them identify this as "a structural weakness at the very center of the Chinese kinship system" and emphasize competition, tension, and conflicts. For the contradiction between filial responsibility and emotional bond of the adopted son, see Anne Waltner. "The Loyalty of Adopted Sons in Ming and Early Qing China," *Modern China* Vol. 10 Issue 4 (Oct. 1984): pp. 441-459.

The long history of imperial China witnessed cycles of political unification and disunity. Elite men made corresponding efforts to regulate social and familial relationships to maintain authority and control. The priority of ruler-subject relationship and the hierarchical model always faced challenges, but they somehow persisted and remained dominant.<sup>75</sup> Continuous negotiations resulted in discursive ambiguities. By the late Ming, filial responsibilities and political duties had become mutually defined.<sup>76</sup> It is important to remember that such definitional flexibility and ambiguity served specific political and social needs and therefore had very significant consequences. As we shall see in this study, evidence of filial piety could be *read* as proof of one's loyalty, and framing an official as an unfilial son could effectively lead him to be punished for disloyalty. One could argue that it was the political intrigues and their consequences that activated and consolidated the feeble connection between these virtues.

### *Husband-wife*

In contrast to the amount of scholarly attention to the connection between the ruler-subject and father-son relationships, few scholars have historicized how they were related to the relationship between husband and wife. This is surprising given that there was a complicated definition of the unfilial son given by Mencius:

What the world commonly calls undutiful in a son falls under five heads... First, the neglect of one's parents through laziness of limb. Second, the neglect of one's parents through indulgence in the games of *po* and *yi* and fondness for drink. Third, the neglect of one's parents through miserliness in money matters and partiality towards one's wife. Fourth, indulgence in

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<sup>75</sup> For example, see Lee Cheuk Yin.

<sup>76</sup> Lee, p. 148.



sensual pleasures to the shame of one's parents. Fifth, a quarrelsome and truculent disposition that jeopardizes the safety of one's parents.<sup>77</sup>

We certainly cannot take the moral doctrines at face value and consider all of them prescriptive. Many would probably question how many seventeenth-century literati actually used Mencius's definition to cultivate their morality. However, through a careful examination of the lived experience of literati-officials in seventeenth-century political turmoil, I hope to show that some of these principles were indeed exploited by literati-officials in political attacks and self-representation, especially a filial son's proper relationship with his wife and maintaining distance from sensual pleasures.

In imperial China, the principle of "distinction" articulated originally in *Mencius* regarding the husband-wife relationship was enriched, specified, and complicated. I will discuss some of its meanings and implications pertinent to the present study, on emotional and behavioral levels. As Bret Hinsch has pointed out, the emotional bonding between the husband and wife was recognized in Confucian classics, and there had been a long tradition of promoting male fidelity in marriage. Devotion and sense of responsibility were expected from the husband in spite of the fact that gender hierarchy allowed men to have opportunities to explore emotional and sexual outlets outside of the official marriage.<sup>78</sup> This was true throughout the imperial history, and certainly was not weakened but rather strengthened to some degree in the late Ming, when the promotion of the cult of *qing* led to a stronger belief in the importance of emotional devotion to

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<sup>77</sup> *Mencius*: Book IV Part B, pp. 95-96.

<sup>78</sup> Bret Hinsch, "The Emotional Underpinnings of Male Fidelity in Imperial China," *Journal of Family History* 32 (2007): 392-412.

marriage and contributed to as well as benefited from the increasing “privatization of family life” in the seventeenth century.<sup>79</sup>

But the emotional aspect of the husband-wife relationship had to be regulated so that it does not become excessive and disrupt the patriarchal order. One keen concern was sexuality. Hinsch rightly points out that one way to prevent emotional bonding of husband and wife from growing too strong as to disrupt the familial order is to make it into “a kind of chaste loyalty as opposed to bedroom passion,” tying the husband-wife relationship more with conventional marital virtues associated with kinship and ritual.”<sup>80</sup> This tendency would increase from the Song to the Ming-Qing period, when the Cheng-Zhu school of Neo-Confucianism dominated the intellectual world. Prescribing vigorous moral cultivation, Neo-Confucian thinkers advocated a kind of moral philosophy that was perceived and probably practiced by many literati “as advocating sexual asceticism.”<sup>81</sup> As Ping-cheung Lo points out, austere attitudes toward sex featured the ideology and culture of the Ming elite but its philosophical foundation had been challenged by generations of Neo-Confucian scholars, who “articulated an ethics of heavenly principle immanent in human desire.”<sup>82</sup> The development of the Yangming school of Neo-Confucianism and its various left and right branches in the late Ming constituted the most exciting and powerful challenge of this kind. But still, the moralistic tendency in gender and sexual discourses persisted in the seventeenth century not only because the Manchu Qing rulers resorted to Neo-Confucianism orthodoxy to consolidate its ideological control in Chinese

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid; Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, p. 18 and 38.

<sup>80</sup> Hinsch, “The Emotional Underpinnings,” p. 406.

<sup>81</sup> Ping-Cheung Lo, “Zhu Xi and Confucian Sexual Ethics,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 20 (1993), p. 467. Lo argues that although Zhu Xi’s writings do not explicitly discuss sex, “his ethics of ‘preserving the heavenly principle and mortifying human desires’ (*cun tianli mie renyu*) has an implicit sexual ethics” (p. 467). Lo names it as “conditional asceticism” (p. 472).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 473.

society, but also as a result of the evolution of a new kind of moralism within Yangming school itself.<sup>83</sup> Wang Fansen's examination of late-Ming and early-Qing thinkers offers an important insight that many of them promoted desire (*yu* 慾) or emotion (*qing*) but at the same time advocated strict moralistic views. He shows that such thinkers, by advocating *li* and *yu* did not contradict each other, actually argued for and practiced a more critical scrutiny of everyday behavior as a way of moral self-cultivation.<sup>84</sup> Persistent concerns among literati about maintaining sexual morality as a necessary measure to ensure social and familial order inevitably affected literati-officials' behavioral norms in the seventeenth century.

Separating men and women physically as well as in terms of their social functions and differentiation of behavior was deeply rooted in Confucian ideology and practice. Patricia Ebrey's study of marriage and gender in the Song dynasty shows how carefully maintained gender distinctions were "intimately connected to class distinctions" and meant to mark literati's social and cultural distinctiveness by "making its women invisible."<sup>85</sup> Francesca Bray's study of Chinese houses of later period illustrates that the doctrine of gender segregation had become the orthodoxy at all levels of society.<sup>86</sup> Failure to maintain gender segregation could be interpreted as a moral defect and get a literatus-official into trouble.

Meanwhile, Confucian thinkers used yin/yang theory to explain the gender hierarchy between men and women, between husband and wife. The doctrine of Thrice

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<sup>83</sup> Wang Fansen, "Ming mo Qing chu de yi zhong daode yange zhuyi", p. 91.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., pp. 90-116.

<sup>85</sup> Patricia B. Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993), esp. pp. 24-25.

<sup>86</sup> Bray, *Technology and Gender*, p. 129.

Followings—a woman should follow her father before marriage, follow her husband when married, and follow her eldest son after the death of her husband—shaped the life experience of Chinese women in very specific ways. Dorothy Ko has identified separate spheres of “inner”/“outer” and the Thrice Following as “the twin pillars of Confucian gender ethics.”<sup>87</sup> Rituals, sexual division of labor, and behavioral norms defined the husband-wife relationship not only in terms of their mutual obligation but also the wife’s secondary and supportive role.<sup>88</sup> As gender historians of pre-modern China have convincingly argued, “the concept of gender differentiation and gender hierarchy evolved in social environments in which men had much more legal, economic, and cultural power than women. Gender distinctions made these differences in power seem part of nature, part of the unchallengeable way life is.”<sup>89</sup>

The possibility for men to pursue sexual pleasures and emotional outlets outside of marriage is unintentionally granted by the Confucian stress on filial piety. The Confucian master Mencius has said that the most serious way of being a bad son is to have no heir.<sup>90</sup> Literati could take concubines to help fulfill the filial duty of producing a son. However, monogamy was strictly practiced in early modern China. The law and rituals dictated the irreplaceable status of the wife. The relationship between wife and concubine resembles other hierarchical relationships. Allowing the concubine to

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<sup>87</sup> Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, p. 6; Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, pp. 27-29. But gender historians of China have also complicated the concept of separate sphere in premodern China and argue for a “inner-outer continuum” (Ko, p. 13) that best characterizes the inseparability of the public and the private and intimate connection between the state and society. See also Ebrey, *The Inner Quarter*; Bray, *Technology and Gender*; and Deng Xiaonan 鄧小南, “Nei wai zhi ji yu zhixu geju: Song dai funu” 內外之際與秩序格局：宋代婦女, in *Shehui xingbie yanjiu* 社會性別研究, ed. Du Fangqin and Wang Zheng (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe), pp. 254-303.

<sup>88</sup> Bray, *Technology and Gender*, p. 117.

<sup>89</sup> Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, p. 43.

<sup>90</sup> *Mencius*: Book IV Part A: 26, p. 86.

challenge or confuse the authority and superiority of the wife was as dangerous as having two rulers in one country. Clearly, the liaison between a concubine and the literatus formed for the purpose of fulfilling the latter's filial responsibility is legitimized but poses potential threat to the husband-wife relationship. In addition, the nature of sexual union in such a liaison is more pronounced than that in a marriage. It would be easily read as sexual indulgence and therefore vulnerable to moral attacks.

Relationships between literati officials and courtesans also complicate the dyadic relationship between husband and wife. Conventional historiography describes the close social and cultural connections between elite literati and courtesans as a marker of a liberalized gender discourse. Some have even suggested that during the Ming-Qing transition political loyalty became defined by passionate love for women. But if we look at the officials' self-presentation as moral men and see how scandals were framed, we find that in real-world politics, the Confucian familial responsibilities still played a huge role in shaping officials' behavior and careers. Beverly Bossler's research on courtesans and literati-officials in Song China shows that there had always been moral and political concern about officials' personal involvement with government or private courtesans, although it was not illegal. With the fall of the Northern Song and an emerging Neo-Confucian discourse of gender and morality, association with courtesans became problematic for officials. This was less because of class boundary-crossing than because such associations called into question the moral character required of officials who were supposed to help build a good government.<sup>91</sup> In the seventeenth century, as in the Song, literati-official gender norms (including their relationships with courtesans) were often

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<sup>91</sup> Beverly Blosser, "Shifting Boundaries: Courtesans and Literati in Song China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 62:1 (June, 2002): 5-37.

ambiguous and not clearly articulated in law. But they were used to punish officials for the crime of political disloyalty.

The political experiences of all the subjects under examination in this work suggest that moral charges against officials could have real, serious consequences when an intensified political crisis raised the stakes of performing loyalty defined in relation to other Confucian virtues. Personal attacks on one's domestic life could become a convenient and effective political weapon, as shown by the moral scandals studied in this work: the charges against Li Zhi's improper interactions with local gentry women, accusations of Zheng Man's lack of filial piety and gender disorder in his household, and unverifiable charges against several officials' infatuation with their concubines that led to their neglect of wife and family life. The power of employing these scandals lies in their potential to be linked to political disloyalty. Examining such scandals shows how political factionalism made anyone less perfect than the ideal Confucian man, defined by the Five Cardinal Relations, vulnerable to personal attack. It exposes the political stakes of performing morality even as society and culture were going through dramatic changes and challenging moral orthodoxy. Notably, the perpetuation of gender norms even engaged those who were being attacked for sexual immorality. In claiming their political and moral integrity they always resorted to the same moral equation, i.e., loyalty and sexual morality defined and proved each other. Restraint and flexibility co-exist in these rules about gender roles and sexual behaviors. How they regulate literati in everyday life and politics must be studied carefully in specific context. Seventeenth-century literati, through didactic writings and literature, voiced strong concerns about the rampant

practice of concubinage and its potential threats to social and familial order.<sup>92</sup> This study demonstrates that gender and sexuality constituted an important dimension in the intimate connection between morality and politics in early modern China. On the one hand intensive factionalism and loyalism produced an environment in which moral issues, often those related to women and the domestic, were more likely to be exploited to launch political attacks and thus required higher moral performance (moralistic tendency). On the other hand, late-Ming intellectual, cultural, and social developments had definitely created a space for iconoclasm, pursuit of sensual pleasures, and individualism. Literati-officials faced the question of how much they could enjoy this “floating world” without political risks. The unmarked connections among the roles of official, son, and husband crystalized and became consequential when failure to fulfill familial virtues could be exploited as evidence of disloyalty to the monarchy.

### ***Friends***

Friendship, like political loyalty, was implicitly gendered. Friendship between a man and a woman was not considered as friendship. Among the Five Cardinal Relations, the relationship between male friends was unique in that, as Norman Kutcher points out:

The others, those that bound father and son, ruler and minister, husband and wife, older and younger brother, were overtly concerned with the maintenance of China as a *guojia*, literally a ‘state-family’—a state modeled on the principles of family organization... Friendship was

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<sup>92</sup> Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, pp. 106-110.

different. It was neither a family bond nor a state bond, and therefore lay outside the web of parallel devotions that bound these together.<sup>93</sup>

In addition, the voluntary as well as potentially non-hierarchical nature of the relationship between friends makes it different from and even contrary to Confucian principle of maintaining social order with hierarchy and differentiation.<sup>94</sup>

In recent years scholars have grown increasingly interested in friendship.<sup>95</sup> Their attention and research have been mainly focused on two aspects of friendship of the seventeenth century. One focus of the emerging scholarship on friendship is homoerotic sentiment in literature and entertainment as well as social networking through cultural consumption and connoisseurship.<sup>96</sup> Investigating seventeenth-century friendship from the angle of homoeroticism exposes the particularity of the relationship between gender and sexuality discourses in pre-modern China as well as reveals the internal hierarchy among men in terms of class and status, but it runs the risk of not only occluding women from the analysis but also narrowing the emotional aspect of these relationship to the romantic or erotic. The entanglement of the emotional, social, cultural and political dimensions of the relationship between friends in the late Ming and early Qing is one of the running themes of the present study.

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<sup>93</sup> Norman Kutcher, "The Fifth Relationship: Dangerous Friendships in the Confucian Context," *AHR* 105 (5) (Dec. 2000), pp. 1615.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1615-16.

<sup>95</sup> For example, *Nan Nü* journal had a special issue (2007, 9:1) on friendship in the Ming featuring several articles on male friendship. Martin Huang has provided a very helpful overview of the scholarship on male friendship in Chinese studies in "Male Friendship in Ming China: An Introduction," *Nan Nü* 9:1 (2007): 2-33.

<sup>96</sup> Wu Cuncun, *Homoerotic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China* (London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004); Martin Huang, *Negotiating Masculinities in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006). Giovanni Vitiello, "Exemplary Sodomites: Chivalry and love in Late Ming Culture," *Nan Nu* 2:2 (2000): 207-257; Sophie Volpp, "Classifying Lust: the Seventeenth-century vogue for Male Love," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 61.1 (2001): 77-117; "Literary Consumption of Actors in Seventeenth-Century China," in *Writing and Materiality in China: Essays in Honor of Patrick Hanan*, ed. Judith Zeitlin, Lydia H. Liu, and Ellen Widmer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), pp. 153-83. Craig Clunas has an excellent study on literati social networking through art and calligraphy: *Elegant Debts: The Social Art of Wen Zhenming, 1470-1559* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004).



The second issue of friendship attracted historians' attention is its subversive potential. In particular such scholarship sheds light on how homosocial bonding was formed in late-Ming flourishing academies and lecture halls. Such friendship not only threatened the hierarchical relationships defined by the Five Cardinal Relations but also risked being seen as leading to factionalism.<sup>97</sup> The most prominent problem with the emphasis on friendship's subversiveness is the definition of "friend," which already utilizes the modern concept of "friend" that assumes the relationship between friends did not overlap with and therefore was meant to be radically different from other sanctioned relationships. Thus appears the sentimental observation that somehow "friendship," in order to last in Confucian society, eventually must be transformed from an egalitarian bond into one "whose function was the service of others."<sup>98</sup> This problem partly may have derived from the way that modern historians read the sources. The many examples examined to substantiate the abovementioned arguments have been chosen often because they treat male-male relationship that either literally contains the term "friend" or has already been flagged as clearly separate from other male relationships. But in reality friendship diffused into all sorts of relationships and it often did not necessarily assume the appearance of "friendship" in the modern sense. This becomes clear if we closely look at the seventeenth-century social and political networks, which consisted of literati who formed bonds through their fathers and relatives' marriage alliances, political affiliations, social connections, and patronage, on top of their shared interests in learning and studying for civil service examinations, literature and poetry, art, theater, etc.

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<sup>97</sup> Martin W Huang, "Male Friendship and Jiangxue (philosophical debates) in Sixteenth-Century China," *Nan Nü* 9:1 (2007): 146-78. Kutcher, "The Fifth Relationship."

<sup>98</sup> Kutcher, "The Fifth Relationship," p. 1616.

The discourse of friendship is extremely complicated precisely because the concept of friend was so fluid. In the limited amount of scholarship on friendship of the Ming-Qing transitional period, different approaches have resulted in different conclusions about how friendship was perceived. Historical scholarship has found strong voices that either recognized the legitimacy of friendship or expressing antagonism against it.<sup>99</sup> As Martin Huang rightly points out, some Confucians saw friendship as parallel to the fraternal relationship in the Five Cardinal Relation and therefore compatible with that order, while others worried that the real fraternal bond would be weakened by friendship.<sup>100</sup> Historians' discussions on how friendship was read and practiced in early modern China have largely focused on the contention between family and social networking, and between government and kinship. They agree that friendship intersects with and also poses problems for relationships of ruler-subject, father-son, and brothers. How it interacted with the husband-wife relationship has received little attention.

My research will explore how the relationship of friends was formed through and also participated in defining, articulating, and strengthening other "proper" relationships during the Ming-Qing transition. This helps illuminate why friendship constitutes an important part of the discussion about political and morality. First, my study of late-Ming writer Li Zhi shows how friendship was conceptualized as a male-exclusive ideal that helped create a social space safe from suspicions of gender impropriety and sexual immorality that could render literati-officials vulnerable in intensive political struggles.

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<sup>99</sup> In "Male Friendship in Ming China: An Introduction," Huang offers a very good comparison of the works by Kutcher and McDermott (esp. pp. 9-10). Kutcher, "The Fifth Relationship." Joseph P. McDermott, "Friendship and Its Friends in the Late Ming," in *Jinshi jiazu yu zhengzhi bijiao lishi lunwen ji* 近世家族政治比較歷史論文集, ed. the Institute of Modern History of Academia Sinica (Taipei: the Institute of Modern History of Academia Sinica, 1992), pp. 67-96.

<sup>100</sup> Huang, "An Introduction," p. 14.

Second and related to the first point, in my study of Gong Dingzi's friends and his concubine Gu Mei during the post-war era, I demonstrate how friendship was confirmed, on the one hand, by supporting each other's proper fulfillment of a husband's responsibilities prescribed by the Five Cardinal Relations, and on the other hand, by offering emotional compensations for the pain caused by conforming to the gender norms.

Third, I study several iconic figures' social and political activities to illustrate how friendship was legitimized by and promoted through literati-officials' shared commitment to filial piety. Friendship between filial sons made them appealing examples of good, loyal officials. In the late Ming, sensational display of filial piety was a highly political gesture. For example, vivid description of filial deeds by Donglin officials such as Huang Daozhou and Ni Yuanlu at the time of national crisis was widely circulated among their factional admirers. Some prominent Fushe leaders made a parade of fervent filial devotion to their deceased fathers, Donglin officials persecuted by the powerful eunuch Wei Zhongxian, through the public display of a copy of *The Book of Filial Piety* written in blood. After the fall the Ming, the friendship of two *yimin* Yan Ermei and Wan Shouqi became well known because they supported each other's filial commitment through calligraphic work and writing. They were thus named "the Two Yimin of Yuzhou" (*Yuzhou er yimin* 徐州二遺民). These examples clearly demonstrate the discursive ties among a literatus's virtues as a loyal subject, a filial son, and a good friend.

Finally, could two men loyal to two different dynasties remain friends? This is the fourth question about friendship examined in the present study. Through a careful examination of turncoats-*yimin* friendship, I question the view that only *yimin* represented the Confucian traditional values and ethics. It was precisely the practice of

friendship as defined by the Five Cardinal Relationship that made it possible for literati to overcome political differences and rebuild their community after the dynastic change. Expression of loyalty to the lost land, a traditional literary and artistic trope, effectively enabled turncoats to articulate their dedication to the *yimin* friends.

Given the prominence of Buddhism in seventeen-century Chinese history, a brief discussion of Buddhism and the Five Cardinal Relations is in order. During the last decades of the Ming, literati who actively pursued Buddhism faced serious criticism that Buddhist exploration prevented them from fully engaging in the study and practice of Confucian statecraft. But many scholars have also pointed out that nearly all late-Ming popular Buddhist masters, never attempted to use Buddhism to overthrow Confucianism. The most influential Buddhist masters tried to defend Buddhism as complementary to the rule of Confucianism.<sup>101</sup> How much Buddhism reshaped literati's sense of responsibilities as sons, fathers, and husbands is a complicated question. As Kenneth K. S. Ch'en has clearly summarized, since the early medieval period the ideal Buddhist layman easily fit into the image of a perfect Confucian gentleman, "being pure in self-discipline, obedient to all the precepts, a householder with wife and children yet learned in the dharma," and so on.<sup>102</sup> In the environment of late-Ming factionalism, literati-officials' spiritual exploration in Buddhism was not a significant factor, but the experience of literati-officials studied here demonstrates that how well they could maintain the image of a Confucian family man with unharmed Buddhist practice did have impacts on their career.

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<sup>101</sup> For example, de Bary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism," p. 218.

<sup>102</sup> Kenneth K.S. Ch'en, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 208.

In the area of literati friendship and social networking, a large number of literati-officials not only study but also practice Buddhism. They were not only intellectual friends with Buddhist masters, but also major patrons of Buddhist institutions over all China.<sup>103</sup> Buddhist practices after the change of regime were politically sensitive for a number of reasons. A large number of elite literati assumed monkhood as a way to actively or passively engage in Ming loyalism, especially after the traditional political eremitism no longer allowed them to avoid wearing Qing clothing and having their heads shaved, symbols of having lost their Han cultural and social identities. The Qing court even issued an imperial order that prohibited men from freely becoming Buddhist or Taoist monks.<sup>104</sup> This order indicates the phenomenon was widespread and perceived as threatening the Manchu governance. The interaction between Han literati-officials and Buddhist monks necessarily underwent changes in the post-1644 era. The question of how these changes took place requires a different research. But the intellectual, social, and cultural ties between Buddhist monks and literati-officials remained a prominent feature in the post-1644 world. This research will focus on how friendship between officials and Buddhist monks overlapped with and helped negotiate the friendship within literati community.

### **Loyalty in Action**

Frederic Wakeman describes the political difference between the two groups of elite Chinese men after 1644, whom he calls “the romantics” and “the stoics:” “[Most]

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<sup>103</sup> See for example, Timonhy Brook, *Praying for Power*.

<sup>104</sup> *Shizu zhang huangdi shilu: juan 68*: Shunzhi 9/9, p. 537-38.

romantics chose to collaborate with the Manchus, while stoics generally remained loyal to the fallen dynasty.”<sup>105</sup> The romantics, with their natural “sybaritic laxity and aesthetic sensuality” which then often led to attachment to “the life of the senses,” included figures such as Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 and Wu Weiye 吳偉業, two of the most prominent poets-literati-officials of the seventeenth century. The stoics, though they might also be romantic at heart, also “felt deeply committed to public duties, the *wai* or outer realm of Confucian responsibilities.”<sup>106</sup> Such commitment led them to maintain a loyalist stance reflecting the formlessness of the post-Ming life they had to endure. Here, Wakeman raises three literati, Wan Shouqi, Yan Ermei, and Gu Yanwu as examples, all of whom were *yimin*, the “surviving subjects of the Ming.”<sup>107</sup>

This was exactly how many seventeenth-century literati writers characterized the moral-political differences between the loyal and the disloyal in their historical documentation, a characterization particularly prominent in the grand narrative of the Ming-Qing transition. The construction of the so-called Donglin faction as a collective of moral and loyal officials is closely related to the moral, political and historical construction of the traitors and turncoats. Their close link could not be made more apparent than in Wakeman’s echoing the early Qing scholar Huang Zongxi: “After all, the best of loyalist impulses had sprung from the moral and spiritual heroism of the

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<sup>105</sup> Frederic Wakeman, Jr., “Romantics, Stoics, and Martyrs in Seventeenth-Century China” in *Telling Chinese History: A Selection of Essays*, Lea H. Wakeman ed. (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2009), p. 99.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>107</sup> Wakeman also looks at a third group, the martyrs. The martyrs examined by Wakeman are the Han Bannermen who devoted their lives to the Qing loyalist cause. One has to wonder how Wakeman would discuss the Ming loyalist martyrs in comparison to the romantics and the stoics.

Donglin movement...’’<sup>108</sup> Given that factionalist and moralist sentiments have shaped the contents of our archive, we have to adopt a more critical approach to accounts of literati-officials’ personal lives. We should historicize this type of personality analysis and explore: to what degree is the connection between different moral performances and political choices constructed in Ming-Qing transition politics, historiography, and popular memory?

I will examine some political scandals and policy debates in the late Ming and early Qing to illustrate how the morally constructed notion of loyalty was deployed as a political language and shaped political negotiations in the government. The Confucian virtue of loyalty had a history; it was not a monolithic doctrine or empty ideal. It had a part in everyday politics, and it got redefined and reconsolidated in politics. This is an aspect of loyalty that has not received adequate analytical attention. Historians also need to study in what manner the multiple histories of loyalty extend into and are intricately related to personal and intimate matters. In particular, because Confucianism promoted the moral self-cultivation of the individual—from the emperor to the officials—as essential to maintaining a benevolent government, the connection between loyalty and morality deserves more careful historical investigation. In fact, examining moral discourses is indispensable, because the Five Cardinal Relations defined Confucian moral character, which qualified literati-officials as loyal political subjects. But like loyalty, these relations did not exist in vacuum and needed to be sustained by certain social and political conditions. Thus the central question of this study: How did the political virtue

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<sup>108</sup> Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 1084.

of loyalty and literati-officials' personal morality interact during the particular circumstances of the Ming-Qing transition?

This research attempts to deepen our understanding of the discourse of loyalty by analyzing two of its understudied aspects. First, loyalty was clearly and intimately linked to the *reading* of officials as fathers, sons, friends, and husbands in late-Ming and early-Qing political struggles in and outside the court. It was used as powerful political language in a time of crisis. Second, in the early Qing, loyalty functioned as a literary and artistic language, rather than a monolithic moral-political doctrine dividing loyalists and turncoats. It helped some turncoats articulate their commitment to Confucian values such as filial piety, gender propriety, and friendship, through which literati as a community could reconnect and rebuild. To continue its leadership in local and national lives, the literati community had to find ways to reconnect and rebuild. They communicated via the languages of loyalty, filial piety, friendship, and fraternal love, languages that they grew up speaking and living with, to eventually rebuild the social ties damaged by the conquest and the subsequent conflicts of political interest. As a literary and artistic language, rather than a political doctrine, "loyalty" enabled turncoat officials to articulate their commitment to Confucian ethics. Exploring the discourse of loyalty in these two new ways not only enriches our understanding of how gender and sexual morality affected the ways political relationships and identities were negotiated during the Ming-Qing transition, but also shows the moralistic bias of many historical sources from that era. It exposes how gendered moral and political assumptions underlay the grand narrative of the Ming-Qing transition.



## Chapters

This dissertation consists of three parts. Part I examines the life of Li Zhi, a retired official and provocative writer of the Wanli reign. Li Zhi's intellectual, religious, and social activities exhibit some of the most important literati cultural traditions as well as popular literati cultural and social practices in the late Ming. His tragedy, caused by attacks on his sexual morality, shows us the impossibility of the ideal Confucian man who could perfectly fulfill the roles and responsibilities as defined by the Five Cardinal Relations. Laying the groundwork for this study of the intertwining personal and political experiences of literati-officials during the Ming-Qing transition, my analysis of Li Zhi explores the competing political and moral discourses that shaped elite Chinese men's struggles at a time when Chinese society was going through dramatic changes and crises. Utilizing new and old cultural and social tools, Li Zhi attempted to become a perfect moral being: a loyal subject, filial son, responsible husband, and a great friend. However, he was condemned as the most immoral in all accounts. The paradigm of virtues turned out to be the paradigm of failed virtues. Part I not only closely examines Li Zhi's limited success and ultimate failure in his self-cultivation efforts, but also exemplifies how literati-official gender norms and sexual morality could be employed as both a weapon of attack and a device of self-defense.

Part II, "The Confucian Loyal Man at the Time of Crisis (1621-1646)," looks at the rampant factionalism in the Tianqi (1621-1627) and Chongzhen (1628-1644) courts through the contrasting experiences of Zheng Man and his friend Huang Daozhou. The arrest and execution of the official Zheng Man demonstrate how "loyalty" defined in connection with moral behaviors (especially sexual morality) was deployed in

sensationalized factionalist politics. The case shows specifically how the roles of the loyal official, filial son, and responsible husband and father were read and represented as mutually defining, a political strategy employed by all the parties: the Chongzhen emperor, the criminal/victim Zheng Man, his factional enemies, and his friends. Parallel to this investigation, the examination of Huang Daozhou's engagements with the Chongzhen emperor, his factional enemies, and the Fushe scholars delineates the historical formation of "the upright Donglin man" as the emblem of the literati-official ideal. It demonstrates how the moral, political and historical creation of this ideal involved purging the "imperfect men" in order to purify the Donglin identity in both late-Ming politics and early-Qing literati historical writing practices.

Part III studies two literati communities, turncoats and the Ming loyalists, with a focus on the personal and political lives of the official Gong Dingzi immediately before and after 1644. His experience demonstrates how various political powers exploited the moral construction of loyalty to make political appeals in the most turbulent years of the dynastic change. Turncoats were persecuted as disloyal men but the evidence of their disloyalty was often their failure to fulfill their moral responsibilities, especially their violation of gender and sexual morality. Then, a close investigation of the circulation of the art of Gu Mei (Gong Dingzi's concubine) in the early Qing years shows how the language of loyalty, now functioning as a literary and artistic expression of friendship, helped literati—loyalists and turncoats—reconnect and rebuild friendships and socio-cultural networks. This investigation demonstrates how the post-war recovery process reproduced the connection between the political virtue of loyalty and literati-official virtues as a good son, husband, and friend.

**Part One**

**Before the “Conservative Turn”:  
Li Zhi’s Tragedy and the Late Ming**

## Chapter 1

### A Late-Ming “Real Man:” Writing, Naming, and Classifying

The sixteenth-century thinker<sup>1</sup> Li Zhi (1527-1602) is known to have written provocatively about society and human relations, especially about women. His thoughts about women seems to also concern men, which he never clearly articulates in writing. In the passage cited below, his terminology “real man” may puzzle many modern readers.<sup>2</sup> Even so, they probably can appreciate this early-modern Chinese literatus’s urge to acknowledge extraordinary women’s achievements, especially in terms of the moral examples they set for both men and women.

Wuji’s mother, Ban Zhao, Huang Chao’s women followers, Sun Yi’s wife, Li Xinsheng, Li Kan’s wife and Mother Lü of Haiqu, each of these women can indeed be considered a “real man” (*zhen nanzi*). Men are everywhere in the world. How many of those who call themselves “real men” actually are not? And how many men in this world can be considered “real men?” If I do not use the word “real” (*zhen*) here, I am afraid that ordinary men

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<sup>1</sup> Mizoguchi Yuzo wonders if the word *shisou jin* 思想家 rather than *shisou ka* 思想家 is more accurate to characterize Li Zhi. The character *ka* grants a sense of recognition of one’s intellectual accomplishments, while *jin* hesitates to judge him and maybe even tries to honor his iconoclastic spirit. This certainly reflects the vast disagreement among scholars on how to evaluate Li Zhi’s thoughts, writing, and historical status. Mizoguchi, *Chugoku zen-kindai shisou*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Some have suggested to me that *zhen nanzi* could be translated as the “manly man,” which more clearly exposes the stakes of manly self-fashioning on Li Zhi’s part. However, if we consider Li Zhi’s naming of some women as *zhan nanzi* or *zhen zhangfu*, which will be analyzed in depth in this chapter, “manly” seems to simplify the rich meanings of *zhen*.

would think I were a “man” (*nanzi*). This is why I put “real” in front of “man.”<sup>3</sup>

Modern intellectuals have used this kind of writing as evidence to argue that Li Zhi held progressive views about women that challenged the prevalent, unjust treatment of them in his time.<sup>4</sup> Many maintain that in the midst of confrontations between “conservative” and “progressive” social and political forces among the late Ming literati, the morally impeccable Li Zhi, having been falsely accused of promiscuous behavior and obscene teaching by conservatives who feared his unorthodox views of history, society, and Confucian doctrines, paid the ultimate price for his progressiveness—soon after being imprisoned in the capital, he committed suicide.

Scholarship on Li Zhi closely reflects larger historiographical (and political) debates in Chinese politics over the past one hundred years.<sup>5</sup> As Hok-lam Chan summarizes, while Confucianists dismissed him “as a heretical rebel against the orthodox

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<sup>3</sup> Li Zhi 李贄, *Chu Tan Ji* 初潭集: *juan* 4: “Kuhai zhu ao” 夫婦四 . 苦海諸媪, p. 35. Wuji’s mother 無忌母 never revealed to him that the powerful Wang family had killed his father, in order to preserve her son from likely disaster. *Jinshu* 晉書: *juan* 37 / *Liezhuan* 7 Zongshi 列傳第七/宗室/譙剛王遜/承子烈王無忌 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), p. 1106. Ban Zhao 班昭 wisely chose to stay away from the emperor to avoid trouble in the imperial house. Sun Yi’s 孫翊 wife plotted to kill the men who had murdered her husband. *Sanguozhi jiao jian* 三國志校箋: *Wu zhi* 吳志: *juan* 51/ *Zongshi* 宗室 . 孫韶 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2001), p. 1654. Li Xinsheng 李新聲, a courtesan, tried to persuade her master not to follow a rebel. Li Kan’s 李侃 wife reproached him for not taking up the responsibilities as the county magistrate. Mother Lu of Haiqu 海曲呂母 spent all of her fortune over a period of some years, determined to recruit young men to kill the county official who had wrongfully executed her son.

<sup>4</sup> See for example, Chen Guibing 陳桂炳, “Li Zhi de funü guan” in Quanzhou shi shehui kexue lianhehui ed. *Li Zhi Yanjiu* 李贄研究〈李贄的婦女觀〉 (Beijing: Guangming ribao chubanshe, 1989); Pauline Lee, “Li Zhi and John Stuart Mill: A Confucian Feminist Critique of Liberal Feminism” in Chenyang Li ed. *The Sage and the Second Sex: Confucianism, Ethics, and Gender* (Chicago and La Salle, IL.: Open Court, 2000), pp. 113-132.

<sup>5</sup> For a good review of how scholarship on Li Zhi reflects political changes in China from early twentieth century to the 1980s, see Pei-kai Cheng, “Continuities in Chinese Political Culture: Interpretations of Li Zhi, Past and Present,” *Chinese Studies in History* 17: 2 (Winter 1983-84): 4-29.

ideology and a treacherous renegade to the dynastic order,” modern scholars who wanted to treat Li Zhi favorably as a “progressive thinker outside the established tradition” often allowed their political agendas and ideological tendencies to guide their studying of him in equally problematic ways.<sup>6</sup> For example, typical of the time, Marxist scholars in the newly founded People’s Republic of China praised him lavishly “as a dualistic progressive thinker as revealed in his courageous and unremitting attacks on the Confucian orthodoxy and the decadent feudal institutions.”<sup>7</sup> In the meantime, later generations of historians have tried to explore the “failures” of the late Ming period through Li Zhi’s tragedy: its failure to govern without violence, its failure to emancipate individuals, and its failure to move China further into “modernity.” Fundamentally, it appears that, as the historian Ray Huang has suggested, it failed to bring about (or did not allow) institutional changes.<sup>8</sup> Even in works that attempt to avoid casting this time as a “failure,” there exists an air of frustration over the so-called repression of individuality by institutions and groups that held on to the Neo-Confucian ideologies of imperial rule, government, family, and so on.

Meanwhile, Li Zhi has always enjoyed the reputation of being a “pro-women” thinker among his contemporaries and modern scholars.<sup>9</sup> There also exists the

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<sup>6</sup> Hok-lam Chan, “Preface” in *Li Chih in Contemporary Chinese Historiography: New Light on His Life and Works* (White Plains, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1980), p. xiv. The most radical case of political manipulation is in the 1970s mainland China, during waves of political campaign, he was applauded as “an ardent champion of the Legalist schools against the Confucian tradition in the camouflage of the power struggle by the hardline leftists...” “Introduction,” p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Hok-lam Chan, “Introduction,” p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Ray Huang, *1587*.

<sup>9</sup> Historians who have attempted to analyze Li Zhi’s “gender views” usually in one way or another stop at reading him as promoting equality between men and women. Eng Chew Cheang’s study of Li Zhi as a social critic holds that Li Zhi was the first in Chinese history to campaign “for the cause of female equality in intelligence,” and that he upheld women’s freedom of remarriage. Chen Qinghui’s examination of Li Zhi’s thoughts further argues that Li Zhi’s promotion of equality between men and women expressed his stance against “feudal oppressions” and “male superiority.” This approach does not explore the historical

conception that this “pro-women stance” helped bring about his tragedy, a conception that emerged in the early twentieth century when Chinese intellectuals were reinventing history in their search for modernity. In her work on late-Ming and early-Qing women’s writing and reading, Dorothy Ko challenges the May Fourth framework of portraying women as victim and thus symbolic of the oppressive “feudal Confucian” systems, a framework that has to a large degree shaped our understanding of gendered power in Chinese history.<sup>10</sup> It is not surprising that the modern literary critic, major voice for the New Cultural movement Zhou Zuoren 周作人 used Li Zhi’s praise of some historical women figures as a reason to call him a “progressive” thinker and to attack the repression of independent minds by a hopeless Confucian system. Zhou Zuoren’s statement that a literatus’s thoughts should be evaluated based on what he says about women exemplifies the May Fourth framework Ko has challenged.<sup>11</sup>

The dramatic and colorful life of Li Zhi, like his time, fascinates and also challenges our intellectual capacities to understand the complexity of human beings and historical processes. A native of Fujian, Li Zhi passed the civil service examination on the provincial level in Jiajing 31 (1552) at the age of twenty-six. Still lacking a *jinshi*

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meanings of “equality” or “superiority” in late-Ming literati discourse and practices, and imposes our own analytical frameworks rigidly on a pre-modern case. Ray Huang correctly points out that scholars have misunderstood Li Zhi’s attitude toward women: “[His] enumeration of exceptional cases [of intelligent women in history] in no way constituted a campaign for women’s emancipation. At times he also echoed the traditionalists by commending widows who chose suicide over remarriage.” However, Huang only uses this as an example to show the “inconsistency” in Li Zhi’s thoughts. Similar to other historians, he also fails to take this “inconsistency” more seriously by connecting Li Zhi’s gender subjectivity with his social criticisms in thought and action. See, Eng Chew Cheang, “Li Zhi as A Critic: A Chapter of the Ming Intellectual History.” Diss. U of Washington, 1973, pp. 27-39. Chen, Qinghui, *Li Zhuowu shengping jiqi sixiang yanjiu* 李卓吾生平及其思想研究 [A Study of Li Zhi’s Life and His Thoughts] (Taipei: Wenjin Chubanshe, 1993), pp. 524-26. Huang, 1587, p. 208.

<sup>10</sup> See Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, especially “Introduction.”

<sup>11</sup> Zhou Zuoren, “Tan Li Zhuowu *Chu Tan Ji*” 談李卓吾初潭集 [Notes on Li Zhi’s *Chu tan ji*] in *Yaotang zawan* 藥堂雜文 (Beixin Shuju, 1943), p. 123.

degree, with his family in financial difficulties, he had to take up an official position as district director of schools in Henan three years later.<sup>12</sup> Although he eventually got the coveted promotion to the capital, he did not enjoy the bureaucratic life there. The year Longqing 4 (1570) marked a change of fortune, when he obtained an official transfer to the cultural center of southern China (and the alternate capital of the Ming dynasty), Nanjing, where he served as an assistant director at the Board of Punishment. Here he began to build a decent intellectual and social network, and started to give lectures. From the mid-1570s he began to seriously engage in Buddhist studies. In Wanli 5 (1577), he was transferred to Yunnan as the prefect of Yao'an. Three years later, at the age of fifty-five, he resigned from his official position and soon moved to Huang'an and then Macheng (in modern Hubei). The Huang'an-Macheng area witnessed rapid growth in the number of literati who had passed the provincial and metropolitan examinations and become well-known officials.<sup>13</sup> Among them, the intellectually active Geng brothers (Geng Dingxiang 耿定向, Geng Dingli 耿定理 and Geng Dingli 耿定力), Zhou Sijiu 周思久, Zhou Hongyue 周弘鑰 and Mei Guozhen 梅國楨 boasted not only affluent family backgrounds but also great reputations as officials. In the year Wanli 16 (1588), Li Zhi's wife having died alone in their hometown a little earlier, Li Zhi shaved his head. He resided for many years as a master figure in a Buddhist monastery sponsored by some local wealthy literati. Intellectually, he maintained many ties with the Taizhou school of thought, a leftist strand of the Yangming Confucianism. He advocated individualism and

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<sup>12</sup> Lin Haiquan 林海權, *Li Zhi nianpu kaolue* 李贄年譜考略 (*nianpu kaolue* hereafter) (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1992), p. 31.

<sup>13</sup> William Rowe, *Crimson Rain: Seven Centuries of Violence in a Chinese County* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), esp. chap. 2.



challenged established doctrines on human desire and human relations in his historical commentaries in *Cang shu* 藏書 (A Book to Hide), whose partial publication in Wanli 18 (1590) provoked an uproar among conservatives angered by his “iconoclastic” views.

As Li Zhi more clearly and openly articulated his views on history, society, and Confucian scholars while interacting with his Buddhist followers more freely in Macheng, some locals began to challenge and attack Li Zhi intellectually and socially. While Li Zhi’s writings and ideas attracted immense attention in the literati community, the last fifteen years of his life were filled with controversy over his thoughts and behaviors, especially his interactions with women Buddhist practitioners. He was seen a social deviant defying Confucian moral principles. Attacks became personal and physical, forcing him to leave his residence from time to time. He traveled to places where his admirers and patrons held office or resided whenever hostilities mounted to a threatening degree in Macheng. Eventually, not long after he settled down in the vicinity of Beijing with financial support from a retired official, Ma Jinglun 馬經綸, literati-officials in the central government submitted memorials to the Wanli emperor, requesting that measures be taken to contain his iconoclastic influence. In the face of these requests, the Wanli emperor ordered Li Zhi arrested in the spring of Wanli 30 (1602) on charges of heterodox teaching and immorality. Within roughly a month, Li Zhi committed suicide. He was seventy-six years old.

My approach to Li Zhi’s life does not presume his victimization by morally “conservative” Confucian literati-officials at the dawn of the Donglin movement. Instead, it treats him as an ambitious and idealistic literatus-official who enjoyed and exploited

the social possibilities provided by a time of “crisis and transformation.”<sup>14</sup> I use Li Zhi’s case to study the implications of some prominent trends in late-Ming literati’s social, cultural, and intellectual explorations, such as the advocate of human desire, championing worthy and talented women, heroism, male friendship, and so on. Having served as an official but choosing to retire early to fully engage in intellectual explorations, Li Zhi’s life presents us with the full range of traditions and experiments both appreciated and resisted by literati of his time. It shows literati’s endeavor to, on the one hand, maintain their gender and class specific privileges and on the other, rethink the moral responsibilities imposed on them by Confucian tenet of Five Cardinal Relations. Rather than searching for a clear and coherent political agenda behind his arrest, I will discuss how his enemies and friends among literati-officials read the personas he created with his writings and poetry, and how sexual morality and gender behavioral norms for literati-officials could be deployed in political and social struggles. These languages, strategies, and dynamics would appear repeatedly in a more intense manner during the national political crises of the seventeenth century, as we shall see in later parts of this study.

### **Confusions of the Literatus Subject**

Yuan Zhongdao 袁中道, a late-Ming official, famous poet, and a close friend of Li Zhi’s, expresses confusion over the many contradictions that Li Zhi manifested in his thought, personality, and everyday behaviors. He recalls that Li Zhi had given up pursuing a

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<sup>14</sup> Here I borrow a phrase from the title of Chang and Chang, *Crisis and Transformation*.

political career, but still passionately talked about statecraft; Li Zhi kept sensual pleasures out of his life and dismissed lust, but he adored stories about young men and women's love and intimacy.<sup>15</sup> An influential work, *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi* 中國思想通史 (A general history of Chinese thought) by a team of scholars led by Hou Wailu 侯外廬, one of the most prominent Marxist historians of Chinese thought, cites Yuan's depiction of Li Zhi to argue that the fundamental contradictions in Li Zhi's thought "reflected the struggles between the old and new and reflected how the new was confined by the old,"<sup>16</sup> struggles that demonstrated late-Ming clashes of thoughts within the elite class themselves. This view represents earlier scholars' seeing history as a progression and Li Zhi as a victim of conservative efforts against progressiveness. Later many historians, not necessarily adopting the Marxist progressive historical view, have found more nuanced ways to illustrate how the inconsistency in Li Zhi's writings and thought was determined by and reflected the drastic social and cultural changes at the time. Two questions drive my analysis of the inconsistency in Li Zhi's articulation of his thought and the inconsistency between his words and actions: Were the social and cultural ideals that Li Zhi attempted to realize deviant from those defined and implied by the Confucian Five Cardinal Relations? How were his writing and behavior read differently by literati with different political agendas?

To explore these questions we must keep in mind the centrality of words in literati-officials' everyday life and their political subjectivities. The struggles of literati-

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<sup>15</sup> Yuan Zhongdao, "Li Wenling zhuan" 李溫陵傳 cited in Hou Wailu et al., *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi* vol. 4, pp. 1056-57. Also see, *Xu Fenshu* 續焚書: Appendix, pp. 131-135.

<sup>16</sup> Hou Wailu et al, p. 1057.

officials often took the form of “textual warfare,” whose distinction from action was certainly blurred. This shaped late-Ming literati-officials’ social interaction and self-presentation as men of the “male-centered text-based universe of *wen*.”<sup>17</sup> If, to borrow the observation of Mizoguchi Yuzo, Li Zhi was intellectually searching for “something” that was fundamental to his understanding of self-existence but always *beyond* the theoretical expressions that he was able to articulate,<sup>18</sup> could that reflect a sense of frustration over one’s inability to control how his words would be received by others?

Thus, I do not think it is necessary or possible to definitively explain his usage of gendered terms. Historicizing his chaotic “naming” of gender and his incoherent views of women may however shed light on how literati struggled with the gender norms and sexuality morality implied in one of the Five Cardinal Relations, the husband-wife relationship. Li Zhi’s “feminism” is questionable. His interest in “discussing men and women’s affairs” and writing about their “intellectual equality” was quite in line with the trend to valorize worthy women current among late Ming literati.<sup>19</sup> His staggering efforts reflect the “obsession during the seventeenth century with classifying and naming women” that “bespoke a need to create order out of gender confusion.”<sup>20</sup>

## Writing about Women

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<sup>17</sup> *Wen*, originally meaning “pattern,” then carried more meanings. Here we use it as “text” or “words.” Ko, “Footbinding as Female Inscription,” in Benjamin A. Elman, John B. Duncan and Herman Ooms (eds.) *Rethinking Confucianism: Past and Present in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam* (UCLA Asian Pacific Monograph Series) (Los Angeles: UCLA International Institute, 2002), p. 177.

<sup>18</sup> Mizoguchi, 1980, pp. 207-08.

<sup>19</sup> Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, pp. 123-24.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

Li Zhi was probably the strongest voice of his time who claimed that intelligent women deserved recognition. In his historical commentaries and conversations with other men, he constantly commends such women in history and in his time, which has earned him among modern scholars the reputation as a literatus for “gender equality.” For example, in the biography of an official Song Jing 宋璟 of the Tang dynasty, Li Zhi famously praises Empress Wu of the Tang dynasty as a “sagacious empress” (*shenghou* 聖后) because she recognized Song Jing’s administrative talents.<sup>21</sup> In *Chu tan ji* 初潭集, Li Zhi compiles the stories of many talented and virtuous women from the official histories, grouping them in his own categories. He creates a section called “Talented and Insightful” (*caishi* 才識) in which he praises twenty-five historical women whose “intelligence and talents surpassed ordinary men” and whose “views were sharp.”<sup>22</sup> In addition to writings like this, the letter “Responding to Your View on Women Learning the Buddhist Way” (答以女人學道為見短書)<sup>23</sup> circulated deliberately to show his praise for women committed to studying Buddhism, is most frequently cited by modern scholars to demonstrate Li Zhi’s efforts to promote gender equality.

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<sup>21</sup> *Cang shu*: juan 34: “Ruchen zhuan” 儒臣傳 2 “Xingye ruchen” 行業儒臣: “Song Jing,” p. 654.

<sup>22</sup> *Chu tan ji*: juan 2 “Fufu 2”: “Caishi,” p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> *Fen shu*: juan 2, pp. 54-55. *Dao* 道 in many of Li Zhi’s writings examined in this study often refers to the Buddhist Way. I use “the Buddhist Way” to translate this word, to distinguish from the Confucian or Daoist usages of the same Chinese word.

In this famous letter, Li Zhi expresses his disagreement with the view that women have poor judgment (*jian duan* 見短) and therefore they lack the ability to learn the

Buddhist Way:

It is all right to speak of a human being as either a male or a female. But can opinions be said to have male and female qualities? It is all right to speak of one's opinions as either superior or inferior. But can one say that a man's opinions are always superior, and that a woman's always inferior?<sup>24</sup>

In Li Zhi's view, both men and women should be judged as human beings; and as human beings, they all have the potential to learn Buddhist teachings. Elsewhere he also argues: "Good (*shan*) and evil (*e*) are a pair, just like *yin-yang*, "soft" (*rou*)-"hard" (*gang*), and man-woman. Two make a pair. Since there are two sides, we should not render one of these two names meaningless in order to establish a distinction. For example, one person's name is Zhang San and the other Li Si. Can we say Zhang San is a person but Li Si is not?"<sup>25</sup> This argument underscores Li Zhi's view on women's equal competence to learn and be enlightened; in his letter he further points out that the female body does not exclude women from learning and excelling. In line with his view that the labels of "good" and "evil" do not apply to people determined to learn *ren* 仁,<sup>26</sup> he suggests that "superior" and "inferior" do not apply to people learning the Buddhist Way, regardless of their sex. Therefore, this statement should be—and probably was—understood as

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<sup>24</sup> *Fen shu: juan 2*: "Da yi nuren xue dao wei jian duan shu," p. 54. Translation by Cheang.

<sup>25</sup> *Fen shu: juan 1*: "You da jing you" 又答京友, p. 20.

<sup>26</sup> The Confucian notion of *ren* could be translated in many ways, because it refers to many different qualities and virtues that an educated man should achieve. The simplest way to translate it is "benevolence."

applying to women's intellectual and moral capacities in general rather than only to women studying Buddhism.<sup>27</sup>

So far, it all sounds good. But below I will argue that Li Zhi's views cannot be simplified to promoting the notion that "men and women are equals." In fact, a deeper analysis of Li Zhi's rhetorical technique, incoherence, and contradicting messages even suggests that he accomplished little more than playing with ambiguity and inflammatory statements. In addition, his writings serve as an example to show that because he could not create a framework of gender that stood outside of Confucian framework of the Five Cardinal Relations and the Thrice Following, his views about women's capacities were not as meaningful as many claim.

In *Chu tan ji*, Li Zhi places several sections on historical women at the very beginning of the book, before his commentaries on male officials in history. This structural arrangement is coherent with his argument about the relationship between husband and wife in this book: in the "General Introduction" to these sections on women, Li Zhi begins with the view that the husband-wife relationship lays the foundation for proper human relations.<sup>28</sup> This is hardly novel, for Confucian classics and didactic writings promote this idea; it had long been a central tenet of Confucianism. For example, the Confucian classic *Liji* 禮記 maintains: "The observances of propriety commence with a careful attention to the relations between husband and wife. They built the mansion and its apartments, distinguishing between the exterior and interior parts."<sup>29</sup> In his discussion

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<sup>27</sup> In fact, these two in Confucian teachings are not separated.

<sup>28</sup> *Chu tan ji*: juan 1: "Fufu pian zong lun" 夫婦篇總論, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> *Li ji* 禮記: "Neize' 內則: 禮, 始於謹夫婦, 為宮室, 辨外內."

about husband and wife, Li Zhi appropriates the language of Confucian classics to make his arguments sound deriving from the essential Confucian teachings to gain legitimacy.

In this “General Introduction,” Li Zhi writes: “Humans commence with the relationship between *fufu* 夫婦 (husband and wife),” which sounds close to a reiteration of the abovementioned doctrine in *Liji*. Then he elaborates:

First, there is the relationship between *fufu* (husband and wife). Then there are father and son. There are father and son, then come the elder brother and the younger brother. There are the elder brother and the younger brother, then come the superior and the inferior. Only if the relationship between husband and wife is correct could the proper order of everything in the world thrive. This explains why the relationship between husband and wife is the basic principle of the world.... Therefore, when I think about the basic principle of the world, I believe everything starts with *fufu* (husband and wife). Thus, *fufu* refers to *er* (“Two”), not *yi* (“One”) or *li* (“Principle”).<sup>30</sup>

There are several twists in this piece of writing and its messages. At the first glance, Li Zhi seems to be conveniently invoking the language of *Liji* in order to prepare the reader for a substantially subversive reinterpretation. He starts out reiterating that the proper relationship between husband and wife lays the foundation or serves as the model for all other relationships, but then he redefines the “proper relationship” (*zheng* 正) between husband and wife as that between two human beings (Two, or *er* 二), reversing

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<sup>30</sup> I translate this passage literally precisely because Li Zhi’s play with the classics could (and maybe was meant to) be read in various ways, subversive or orthodox, depending on the reader’s agenda and sensitivity. And I do not think we should attempt to read it as a coherent articulation of his thoughts. This passage is another example of Li Zhi’s inability to find an ideal (and safe) vocabulary to articulate his views on gender. The original reads: 夫婦，人之始也。有夫婦然後有父子，有父子然後有兄弟，有兄弟然後有上下。夫婦正，然後萬事萬物無不出於正矣。夫婦之為物始也如此... 故吾究物始，但見夫婦之為造端也。是故但言夫婦二者而已，更不言一，亦不言理。



the Confucian teaching that husband and wife form an unbreakable One (*yi*, 一), just like father and son. If Li Zhi continues on this line, he would have to risk losing ambiguity (and hence explicitly challenge the existing Confucian social norms) in this treatise. But he returns to ambiguity by giving an orthodox conclusion that if each of *fufu* observes proper behavioral norms, they can maintain a proper relationship as a couple, which is the model for other proper relationships.<sup>31</sup>

In the above passage he also clearly borrows the language of another Confucian classic, *Zhongyong* 中庸, which says: “The Way of the Superior Man starts with the common people (or men and women, *fufu*), but in its absoluteness, it is observed throughout the universe.”<sup>32</sup> One should note that in this passage from *Zhongyong*, *fufu* as a word refers to ordinary men and women, i.e. all people, a genderless term. However, Li Zhi uses *fufu* here to refer to “husband and wife,” or gender relations, not “all people” as in *Zhongyong*. He clearly knew that the term *fufu* had different meanings in the classics. With this appropriation, he again tries to claim an authoritative voice. This style of argumentation is very typical in Li Zhi’s writings: on the one hand, he manipulates the established Confucian moral language and terminology to make a seemingly subversive point; on the other hand, the subversiveness is always compromised by the attempt to avoid explicit challenge to moral orders.

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<sup>31</sup> “Fufu pian zong lun” 夫婦篇總論, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> 君子之道，造端乎夫婦。 *Zhongyong*: chp. 12. Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu jizhu* 四書集注 (*Zhongguo zixue mingzhu jicheng zhenben* 中國子學名著集成珍本 018 vol. 1, *Zhongguo zixue mingzhu ji cheng bian yin jijinhui* 中國子學名著集成編印基金會 ed.): *Zhongyong* 中庸, p. 60.

One has to ask next: what kind of individual roles and what kind of relationship between husband and wife should be defined as “proper?” Li Zhi does not clarify. Or, he does not know. We may detect a hint of individualism and egalitarianism in Li Zhi’s formulation of husband-wife relationship, but this does not necessarily make this view “pro-women.” A closer examination of specific contents of the sections on historical women in *Chu tan ji* suggests that Li Zhi’s definition of the “proper” stays within the Confucian orthodoxy, within the literati gendered cultural tradition.

First of all, Li Zhi titles all these sections on women “Fufu,” literally meaning “On Husband and Wife.” This follows the convention of using the “husband-and-wife,” for discussion of women-related matters, which was one of the few vocabularies available to literati to discuss women (and men-women relationship). The historical women that he comments on here not only include wives and widows, but also daughters. The ways he categorizes these women show that literati writing conventions greatly limited Li Zhi’s ability to discuss women outside their traditional roles and familial relations. Moreover, he did not necessarily *think* of women outside of these roles and relations, either.<sup>33</sup>

This becomes clear when we look at how he categorizes historical women. Li Zhi evaluates “women’s talents” within the Confucian social and cultural frameworks. For example, in his comments on the twenty-five women grouped in “Talented and Insightful” (*caishi* 才識), he uses the term “Madam” (*furen* 夫人) to refer to them,

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<sup>33</sup> William T. de Bary argues in his analysis of this structural and thematic arrangement of the book: “On the moral level Li thus disputes the usual primacy given to the parent-child or ruler-subject relation which tend to exemplify a patriarchal or paternalistic system, and stresses a relationship of equality or complementarity.” de Bary, “Li Chih: Arch-Individualist” in *Learning for One’s Self: Essays on the Individual in Neo-Confucian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 214. In my view, Li Zhi is conveniently citing *Li ji* here. My reading fundamentally differs from de Bary’s, who writes: “[Beyond] the cosmogonic dualism of male and female nothing whatever can be predicted, and Li therefore feels no urge to construct a new metaphysics.” de Bary, “Li Chih,” pp. 214-215.

showing a sense of respect and recognition. However, in another section, “Women of Literature and Learning” (*wenxue* 文學), where he lists several historical women figures accomplished in the field of literature and scholarship, he uses the word *po’niang* (referring to “women” but not used for women of culture).<sup>34</sup> One of these literary women, Cai Yan 蔡琰, appears more than once in Li Zhi’s works. In “Women of Literature and Learning,” he includes the popular story that Cai Yan had memorized her deceased father’s huge book collection and was able to reconstruct it after the books disappeared in the political turmoil. Cai Yan also appears in the section called “Suffering Women” (*kuhai zhu ao* 苦海諸媪), in which Li Zhi lays out accounts of women who experienced unusual hardship and refers to them by *ao*, a word usually applied to old women. Here, Li Zhi curiously chooses an anecdote in which Cai Yan, only six years old, tells her father which of the zither’s strings has broken by simply listening to it, an anecdote that actually seems to belong with the “Talented and Insightful” stories rather than those of “Suffering Women.” He drops an oblique reference to Cai Yan: “Can Wenji (Cai Yan) and Wang Mingjun<sup>35</sup> both were women of high society. It is very sad that they had bad luck in their lives.”<sup>36</sup> How does Li Zhi evaluate Cai Yan historically? In “Suffering Women” he obviously adopts a tone of Buddhist sympathy, as the section title suggests. But another essay, “Written after *Hujia shi ba po*,” clarifies Li Zhi’s attitude toward Cai Yan:

She was relocated from her home country and fell into shameful situations.  
She was first married to a Chinese husband but then lived with a barbarous

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>35</sup> This refers to Wang Zhaojun, a court lady that was married to an alien leader by an emperor of the Han dynasty, a political practice to maintain peace in border area.

<sup>36</sup> *Chu tan ji: juan* 4, p. 36.

man.<sup>37</sup> Although she possessed unrivaled talents and knowledge, these are not worth mentioning! I meticulously record her story here to show people who attempt to learn (Buddhism) that life is difficult as such, but we have to live through...<sup>38</sup>

After all, Li Zhi evaluates this extraordinary woman not for her talents but in accordance with the conservative view of female chastity. Cai Yan's marriage with a "barbarian man" is why he would not include her to join those twenty-five "virtuous" daughters, mothers, and wives in the "Talented and Insightful!" In deed, Li Zhi devotes the section of "Talented and Insightful" solely to daughters, wives, mothers and grandmothers who proved their wisdom in support of men in their families, which follows the convention set by some of the most conservative didactic teachings for women such as *The Classic of Filial Piety for Women* (*Nü Xiaojing* 女孝經).<sup>39</sup>

The terms and names used by literati already reflect contemporary gendered views and are often gendering and sexualizing markers. While Li Zhi felt the need to create for men like himself a better term than "man" (as we have seen in his coining the term "*zhen nanzi*" or "real man"), he comfortably applied bias-laden terms that literati had long conventionally used for women. One telling example is the Empress Wu Zetian (re. 690-705). He calls her "Empress Wu" when he mentions her intelligence in the biographies of certain officials of the Tang dynasty (618-907). But when compiling the

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<sup>37</sup> The leader of the Xiongnu, a non-Han people living to the north and west of China at the time, captured Cai Yan and married her.

<sup>38</sup> *Xu Fenshu*: juan 4: "Shu *Hujia shi ba po hou*" 書胡笳十八拍後, p. 90. Cai Yan is generally believed to be the author of this musical and literary masterpiece. For discussions about her authorship, see the anthology, *Wenxue yichan bianjibu* ed., *Hujia shi ba po taolun ji* 胡笳十八拍討論集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959).

<sup>39</sup> *The Classic of Filial Piety for Women* is attributed to a woman Zheng (ca. 730). This work, while "implying that women's moral power is comparable to men's" (Ebrey, "Translator's Preface," p. 48), most explicitly evaluates women based on their fulfillment of wifely duty to admonish their husbands, motherly responsibility to educate their children, and commitment to female chastity.

biography for her in his *Cang shu*, Li Zhi wants the reader to remember her as, as the title clearly indicates, “Wu Cairen<sup>40</sup> of the emperor Tang Taizong” (唐太宗才人武氏).<sup>41</sup> For his literati readers, this unmistakably wants to draw attention to Wu Zetian’s sexual service to an emperor (as well as widely circulated accounts of her sexual relationships with two emperors and some of her officials). Li Zhi calls her “sagacious empress” in political criticism when he, as a Confucian literatus, comments on political men. But when he writes her biography using her title within the imperial household, which specifically points to her sexual services to ruling men, Li Zhi writes history *as a man*.

Since Liu Xiang 劉向 (79-8 B.C.) began the tradition of compiling worthy women’s biographies in scholarly works, Chinese literati had been using this method to promote feminine virtues as defined by the patriarchal system. By doing so, they assumed the role of moral arbitrator.<sup>42</sup> Compiling historical women helped Li Zhi self-position in the gender hierarchy and enabled him to confirm his membership in literati society by demonstrating his familiarity with the gendering techniques *a la lettre*. Following the literati tradition of collecting women’s stories from the histories, his practice of naming, classifying, and evaluating exemplifies the ways literati tended to gender women, rather than posing a challenge to the Confucian gender order. As Ko has insightfully pointed out, literati efforts of this kind “were hardly adequate to reconstitute the gender order. The

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<sup>40</sup> *Cairen* (Lady of Talents) was a designation occasionally awarded to an imperial consort, ranked 5a then 4b in Tang times.

<sup>41</sup> *Cang shu*: *juan* 63 “Qin chen zhuan” 親臣傳 4 “Houfei” 后妃, p. 1197.

<sup>42</sup> See Sherry J. Mou, “Writing Virtues with Their Bodies: Rereading the Two Tang Histories’ Biographies of Women” in *Presence and Presentation: Women in the Chinese Literati Tradition* (New: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), pp. 109-147.

struggle to redefine a woman's place had to begin with larger contestations over the very meaning of domesticity, the traditional root of a woman's identity and *raison d'être*.”<sup>43</sup>

In contrast to his conventional categorizing of historical women, Li Zhi often distances himself from conventional gender categories, *men* and *man* (*nanzi*). In his writings, *nanzi* usually refers to unenlightened men. In “Responding to Your View on Women Learning the Way,” after arguing that views should not be differentiated as male/superior and female/inferior, he contends:

A woman could have a female body (*nuren qi shen* 女人其身) but also have male insights (*nanzi qi jian* 男子其見), who likes a discussion about serious views and thus knows the bareness of vulgar talks, who wants to learn the Buddhist teaching and thus realizes this floating world is not worth pursuing. I am afraid that before them, today's men (*nanzi*) would feel shameful and shut their mouths.<sup>44</sup>

From the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter, we have already seen how Li Zhi endeavors to highlight the difference among men, i.e., between *nanzi* (man) and *zhen nanzi* (real man). What begs our attention is that he excludes himself from the category of *nanzi*. In other words, he must be described with other terms. Besides his favorite term, “real man,” he applies to himself terms that do not literally contain the word “male” or “man;” instead, they highlight seniority (hence intellectual superiority, the most valued quality). For example, he often uses words such as *daren* 大人 and *zhangzhe* 長者<sup>45</sup> to refer to himself and differentiate him from other men. But he certainly struggled to find right terms for his unnamable self-identity.

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<sup>43</sup> Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, p. 117.

<sup>44</sup> “Da yi nuren xue dao wei duanjian shu,” pp. 54-55.

<sup>45</sup> *Daren* is a respectful salutation to the elders or a man with noble character and lofty aspiration. *Zhangzhe* refers to venerable elder and influential figure.

In the conclusion to the sections on women in *Chu tan ji*, Li Zhi explains why he publishes these commentaries on women. Note that he uses two alternative names in this commentary for himself, “Li Wenling” 李溫陵 and “Zhuo Lao” 卓老.

Li Wenling comments: People who study the Buddhist truth consider life and death as suffering in order to reach *nirvana* without going through *samsara*. If people constantly worry about life and death, they not only indulge themselves in the extremes of sex and wine, but also get mired in suffering. Even those chaste widows and female martyrs, who Zhuo Lao praises and admires as having accomplished something that only a *real man* (*zhen nanzi*) could, suffer tremendously in this life. He puts these three enlightened women’s stories at the end of this part of the book to show the suffering of this life and teach people how to realize ultimate happiness. [If you grasp this message,] Zhuo Lao has achieved his goal in compiling these sections on “Husband and Wife.”<sup>46</sup>

Li Zhi’s language reflects the deep influence of Buddhist literature, implying his usage of “real man” is tainted by Buddhist beliefs, which elevates women who supposedly have been enlightened by Buddhist teachings above ordinary men and women. Li Zhi clearly uses “the real man” to describe a category of human beings who are superior in quality, regardless of their sex.

His use of two alternative names in the commentaries in *Chu tan ji* is interesting. “Li Wenling” is used to further comment on the historical commentaries by “Zhuo Lao.” As “Li Wenling” in the preface to *Chu tan ji* painstakingly reiterates, “Zhuo Lao/Zhuowu zi” is fundamentally a true Confucian literatus, despite his head-shaving: “Zhuowu had his reasons to shave his head. Although he shaved to become a monk, he is truly a Confucianist... Zhuowu, more than anyone else, knows how to read Confucian books and

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<sup>46</sup> Following the example of the great Han historian Sima Qian, literati often begin their historical commentaries with “I comment” and the “I” is often replaced by a literary name. *Chu tan ji: juan 4*, p. 37.

articulate moral caliber.”<sup>47</sup> “Li Wenling” is the Confucian historian and literatus in Li Zhi; “Zhuo Lao” is the enlightened Buddhist in Li Zhi. These two names represent different identities but neither of them speaks against Confucian moral order.

The “real man” (*zhen nanzi*) appears in Li Zhi’s historical commentaries in many places. But in most cases he uses it for historical women who excelled in their intelligence and morality. In the section on the “Talented and Insightful” in *Chu tan ji*, Li Zhi comments:

These twenty-five women possessed extraordinary intelligence and sharp vision. If some could be trusted with important military and political responsibilities, they would have achieved success. That among them, Zhao E, a girl who had no one to depend on, single-handedly exacted revenge on the person who killed her father, is especially amazing. Li Zhuowu *zhangzhe* remarks: These are *real men (zhen nanzi)*! *Real men!* He then comments again: “Men (*nanzi*) could not have accomplished what these women did!”<sup>48</sup>

He was not the first to praise some women as better than ordinary men, or to use “manly man” (for example, *zhangfu* 丈夫) on extraordinary women in such comparisons. The scholar Beata Grant has discussed the rhetoric of gender and the seventeenth-century Chinese Buddhist practices. She points out the Chinese term *da zhangfu* 大丈夫 had been used since earlier periods by Buddhist masters to refer to “honorary men” or “great men,” who possessed the ideal qualities to be attained by both men and women. Li Zhi’s usage of *zhen nanzi* seems to resonate *da zhangfu*. Grant rightly points out that the employment of the term *da zhangfu*

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<sup>47</sup> *Chu tan ji*: “Chu tan ji xu”初潭集序, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Chu tan ji*: *juan* 2, p. 16.



by male and female Buddhist masters showed “a range of ambivalent, and sometimes confused ideas which point to a continued awareness of, and unease about, the misfit between a universal and non-dualistic metaphysical vision of ultimate reality and the traditional gendered binary divisions and hierarchies so central to the traditional Chinese social order.”<sup>49</sup> My reading of Li Zhi in many ways supports her observation. Literati in historical writings and literature had always used this phrase to praise extraordinary and worthy women. But I would argue that Li Zhi was not only concerned about women studying Buddhism or women’s learning in general. He was also struggling with his own social and spiritual identities when he juggled the gender categories and roles. What stands out is the loud insistence that he, Li Zhi, a “real man,” should not be confused with a “man,” as we have repeatedly seen in his writing.

The term “real man” is reserved for the most extraordinary people in Li Zhi’s historical writings. But besides some historical women and himself, the only male historical figure praised by Li Zhi as a “real man” in *Cang shu* is Lin Xiangru 蔺相如, a politician and strategist of the Warring States Period (c.a. 403 B.C.- 221 B.C.) whose intelligence and bravery prevailed against the almighty King of Qin. Li Zhi considers Lin Xiangru a “real man” and a “true sage,” also calling him “bodhisattva” and “Buddha!”<sup>50</sup> The multiple labels and categories for Lin Xiangru most vividly reveal how Li Zhi’s notion of “real man” blends the rhetoric of Buddhist enlightenment and the late-Ming

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<sup>49</sup> Beata Grant, “*Da Zhangfu*: The Gendered Rhetoric of Heroism and Equality in Seventeenth-Century Chan Buddhist Discourse Records,” *Nan nü* 10 (2008), p. 186.

<sup>50</sup> *Cang shu*: *juan* 11 “Dachen zhuan 大臣傳 5:” “Zhongcheng dachen” 忠誠大臣, Li Zhi’s comments, p. 219.

passion for heroism. Unlike many others who had abandoned this worldly life, Li Zhi could not totally give up his literatus-official identity, an identity that would continue even after his retirement, for that of a Buddhist monk. Theoretically he could wander back and forth between these identities, in reality he had to abide by stricter behavioral norms because of his social status as a literatus-official. In addition, as many have pointed out, late-Ming Buddhism community did not attempt to overthrow Confucian moral order but insisted on the foundational significance of Confucian teachings in human relations. Furthermore, because there had already been sensational accounts circulating in society about the morally dangerous interactions between Buddhist monks and laywomen, gender boundary-crossing was a socially sensitive issue for the Buddhist community as well. For Li Zhi, distancing himself from the category of ordinary men in Buddhist rhetoric enabled him to claim cultural superiority, an obsession he seemed to share with men of his class in the late Ming. But he could not tap into Buddhist discourse to fundamentally challenge literati behavioral norms within the Confucian notion of social and moral order.

### **“It’s Not That I Don’t Want to Do It!:)” Li Zhi as a Family Man**

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, in many ways Li Zhi resembled Deng Hequ and Fang Zhanyi, two controversial Buddhist literati active in the Huang’an-Macheng region before his arrival. It is not surprising that his non-conventional attitude toward his wife, Madam Huang, would trigger an accusation of “abandonment” (*qi* 棄) from some opponents, like those against Deng and Fang. In Wanli 15 (1587) Li Zhi sent his wife

back to their hometown, Quanzhou. At this point, Li Zhi had just shaved his head to show his determination to cut off all mundane ties, including family matters.<sup>51</sup> But he maintained that the separation of their bodies, their living space, and even their goals did not count as “abandonment,” a point that he would make again and again to rebut his opponents.

His attackers described him as someone who “abandoned human relations and drove away his wife” (*qi renlun li qishi* 棄人倫離妻室). Fighting charges of “abandonment,” Li Zhi wrote to a friend:

Fortunately, I have buried my parents properly and my seven younger brothers and sisters have secured their marriages. They have sufficient clothes and food and have given birth to sons and grandsons. However, although I have had four sons and three daughters, only one daughter has survived. I am approaching sixty, and I am always physically weak. Since I have many brothers and cousins, I feel satisfied. I want to accomplish it (to be with his wife and produce male offspring) but I am not able to do it. It is not that I can but do not want to do it. Only this one important matter has had no good result. It makes me feel restless.<sup>52</sup>

He then confessed that he quit his official position and went to live in Macheng to find an intellectual solution to the anxiety and depression caused by his inability to produce a son to fulfill his responsibilities as a filial son.<sup>53</sup> Li Zhi’s confession defies the sweeping argument that he was “anti-Confucian.” This letter shows how much he cared about those familial responsibilities; claiming Confucian virtues was very important for him. But he was also frustrated by the imperfection caused by the lack of son. Therefore it is not

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<sup>51</sup> In the third poem of a set of four poems titled “Shaving My Head,” Li Zhi says: “As a Confucian I spent half of my life/Craving for wealth I wasted many years/Now I will pursue a Buddhist life/I cut off ties with my wife and children.” *Fen shu: juan 6* “Tifa” 薙髮 (其三), p. 220.

<sup>52</sup> *Fen Shu: juan 1*: “Fu Deng Shiyang” 復鄧石陽, p. 9.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

surprising that he felt obliged to answer the question of “abandonment” and demonstrate he had at least been a good husband.

To fight the charge of “abandonment,” he began to use Confucius’s example to justify his separation from Madam Huang. In a letter to a long-time friend, he mentions that Confucius had only one son when his wife passed away. “But we don’t hear that Confucius remarried; neither do we hear that he took concubines. In terms of spousal intimacy (*shijia zhi qing* 室家之情), Confucius was quite uninterested.”<sup>54</sup> He also used Confucius to justify his cause when writing to Geng Dingxiang, his major intellectual and social enemy.<sup>55</sup> And in response to a native Macheng literatus who expressed a desire to become a monk the same year Li Zhi shaved his head, Li Zhi wrote:

I have heard that you want to shave your head. This is really wrong. You have a wife, concubines, and properties, but you haven’t got a son. If you don’t have a son, who will take care of your wife and concubines? If you have a wife, concubines, and properties but abandon them without good reason, you are not only unrighteous but also immoral.<sup>56</sup>

He then argues that he was able to become a “monk” because he, an old man who had fulfilled his duties, did not have to be nor should be burdened with mundane responsibilities. Finally he tells this friend: “You are at the best age, the right time to have sons, to become a good man, and to move upward in your life.”<sup>57</sup> Li Zhi portrays himself as an exceptional man who could freely pursue Buddhist practice while upholding Confucian familial and social expectations for others.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>55</sup> *Fen shu: juan 1*: “Da Geng Sikou” 答耿司寇, pp. 26-36.

<sup>56</sup> *Fen shu: juan 2*: “Yu Zeng Jiquan” 與曾繼泉, p. 48.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

When his wife died in Quanzhou, thousands of miles away in 1588, Li Zhi did not even bother to go back for her funeral. His daughter took care of the funeral, and Li Zhi asked his son-in-law to pass on the epitaph he had composed.<sup>58</sup> Still he felt the need to rebut the charge that he had abandoned his wife and did not care about his familial roles. In a set of poems written upon learning of her death, he states: “Poor friends should not be deserted; even more so, a wife in difficult years.”<sup>59</sup> He explains their farewell: “A man should aim for accomplishments outside of home. I regret that you could not follow me!”<sup>60</sup>

Li Zhi’s continued anxiety over fulfilling these responsibilities testifies to the impossibility of negating the Confucian ethics for a literatus-official as father, son, and husband. His confessions hardly show him as uninterested in sex: he was sexually active with his wife and impregnated her seven times, at least for the purpose of obtaining a son. But literati-officials must discuss their sexuality within the framework of filial piety, walking a fine line between sexual indulgence and fulfilling familial responsibilities in their rhetoric. Li Zhi’s denial of the charges that he had “abandoned” his wife shows how carefully this had to be handled. The death of his wife did not exempt him from moral scrutiny. Soon sexual scandal replaced the charges of “abandonment” in moral attacks against Li Zhi. As we will see in the course of the following chapters, this hewing to line would become a key political strategy in intense factional struggles. But let us first look at the “sex scandal” that led to Li Zhi’s tragedy.

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<sup>58</sup> Li Haiquan, *Nianpu kaolue*, p. 194.

<sup>59</sup> *Fen shu: juan 6*: “Ku Huang Yiren” (no. 5) 哭黃宜人 (其五), p. 221.

<sup>60</sup> *Fen shu: juan 6*: “Ku Huang Yiren” (no. 6) 哭黃宜人 (其六), pp. 221-222.

## A Textual/Sexual Scandal: To Write, or Not to Write

Writing about women and championing women's learning fit well into late-Ming literati social and cultural trends. However, as I will discuss below, when Li Zhi took a step further from writing about women's learning to actually instructing women to study Buddhism through letters, he rendered himself as an easy target of criticism. In the world of *wen*, where text and act shared blurred boundaries, producing texts with women (real or symbolic) per se could constitute a violation of sexual boundaries and might be interpreted as immoral, especially if they happened to come into play in intensive social and political struggles. The female presence in a text penned by a man, whether a real woman or a "symbolic woman" who exists only textually, whether a literary trope or an object, lurks as a potential threat to maintaining gender norms and sexual morality, because in the Chinese cultural context she has a virtual relationship with the literatus. The textual battles that Li Zhi engaged in did not involve physical transgressing of sexual boundaries. However, the practices that helped him gain popularity and friendship among many literati threatened gender propriety in the most real way in a society where words mattered as much as deeds. The biggest "sex scandal" concerned Li Zhi's involvement with several gentry women in Macheng, who devoted themselves to Buddhist learning and practices. Of particular note is Mei Danran 梅澹然, the second daughter of Mei Guozhen 梅國禎, Li Zhi's friend and a late Ming literatus-official who became nationally famous for supervising a successful military campaign in the northwestern frontier region in Wanli 20 (1592). While many historians readily dismiss these charges as mere slanders,

I study them more closely in order to better understand the creation, implication, and manipulation of sexual scandals in literati's public life.

Mei Danran, Mei Guozhen's beautiful and talented daughter, devoted herself to Buddhist studies after she became a young widow. She and other women in the Mei family discussed Buddhist learning with Li Zhi via letter correspondence. Mei Guozhen supported his daughter's spiritual pursuits. According to the Macheng local history: “[Mei Guozhen] was familiar with Buddhist teachings in his late years. His daughter, Mei Danran, turned herself into a stay-at-home nun during her widowhood. Mei Guozhen did not attempt to prohibit her from doing so. Mei Danran strictly observed the moral rules and reached a notable level accomplishment in her Buddhist pursuits. The father and the daughter also discussed Buddhist teachings in their correspondence.”<sup>61</sup> In late Ming society, a young widow from a prestigious gentry family could earn respect for her piety and female chastity by devoutly pursuing Buddhism, as long as she did not violate Confucian behavioral norms.<sup>62</sup> Mei Danran guarded her chastity and proved her talents and intelligence in Buddhist worshipping and learning. Her father Mei Guozhen could find no reason to oppose to his daughter's choice. No evidence remains regarding his attitude toward contact between his daughter and Li Zhi. But Li Zhi's poems dedicated to their friendship seem to suggest a strong mutual understanding and trust among the

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<sup>61</sup> Zheng Zhong compiled and Yu Jinfang edited, *Minguo Macheng Xianzhi Qianbian* 民國麻城縣志前編 [Macheng Gazetteer, Part One], reprinted in *Zhongguo Difangzhi Jicheng* 中國地方志集成 (Nanjing: Jiangsu Guji Chubanshe, 2001), p. 175. Obviously the father and the daughter were very close. Shen Defu 沈德符 records an interesting story about how the Mei father and daughter plotted to humiliate an imprudent suitor, who tried to approach her by sending a concubine to Mei Danran's place in disguise as a Buddhist disciple. *Wanli ye huo bian* 萬曆野獲編: *juan* 23 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959 & 2004), p. 594.

<sup>62</sup> Jian Ruiyao 簡瑞瑤, *Mingdai funu fojiao xinyang yu shehui guifan* 明代婦女佛教信仰與社會規範 (Taipei: Daoxiang chubanshe, 2007), chap. 4.

three.<sup>63</sup> In Wanli 24 (1596), responding to suspicions about his motives for interacting with the Mei women, Li Zhi published *Guanyin wen* 觀音問, a compilation of his letters over several years to the Mei women, in which he discussed Buddhist learning. Meant to show Li Zhi's innocence, the very publication of this book eventually came to be used as evidence of his immorality.

The issue of sexual morality was central to all the controversies surrounding Li Zhi after he settled down in the Macheng-Huang'an area in the 1580s. The many implicit and explicit attacks on him have been attributed to the Confucian scholar and official Geng Dingxiang, who was a friend with Li Zhi largely because of Li Zhi's strong connection and friendship with his brothers. A Confucian scholar of the Yangming school, Geng Dingxiang had been attacking Li Zhi for some years before Li Zhi shaved his head in 1588. His main criticism of Li Zhi focused on instances of the latter's teaching that challenged Confucian orthodoxy in extremely blatant language. They exchanged debates and attacks via letter correspondence and other forms of writing. Philosophical discussion put aside, in terms of their social views, their fundamental difference lay in how they conceptualized the individual man. Geng Dingxiang wanted to discuss the individual in relational terms, in line with Confucian ethics of Five Cardinal Relations. Li Zhi's individualism, theoretically, engaged the universal individual above these human relationships (even though in reality he could not abandon this framework, as we have seen). Geng Dingxiang's unhappiness with Li Zhi can be considered part of a continuing battle against the latter's words that potentially provided young men with theoretical support for their pursuit of sensual pleasure or for condemnation of the

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<sup>63</sup> The poems will be discussed in detail in next chapter.



doctrine of self-restraint, which Geng Dingxiang feared would lead to neglecting familial and social responsibilities. Not accidentally, the two prominent figures who had disseminated new ideas in this region before Li Zhi, Deng Hequ 鄧豁渠 and Fang Zhanyi 方湛一, had both become devoted Buddhist teachers and as a result left their familial responsibilities behind. Geng Dingxiang had harshly labeled Deng Hequ's teachings as "encouraging sensual pursuits and abandoning self-discipline" and therefore extremely threatening to social stability.<sup>64</sup>

Geng Dingxiang saw Li Zhi as part of this dangerous trend rather than merely a follower of Deng and Fang. Nonetheless the similarities of these men were obvious to him: head-shaving, traveling, abandoning familial responsibilities, promoting Buddhism, and preaching the legitimacy of desire. But Geng's cautions aimed at the big picture instead of the specifics such as whether literati should not study Buddhism or whether "desire" should be recognized; his views on these issues were rather complicated. He was most concerned about practical matters: what was happening on the ground in local communities, among scholars, and in the government as a whole. Li Zhi's letters to his friends and implicit references in other people's writings portrayed Geng Dingxiang as

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<sup>64</sup> For example, see Geng Dingxiang's letters to friends: *Geng Tiantan xiansheng wenji* 耿天臺先生文集 (Shen Yunlong 沈雲龍 ed. *Ming ren wenji congkan* 明人文集叢刊 20 (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1970): juan 3: "Yu Zhou Liutang" 21 與周柳塘 (二十一首), pp. 314-369; juan 4: "Yu Wu Shaoyu" 與吳少虞 (四首), pp. 377-393. In addition, he composed the biographies of these men, in which he emphasizes their deviance: Deng Hequ did not go back to formally mourn for his deceased father, did not arrange marriage for his daughter, and indulged himself in a homosexual relationship with a young male servant surnamed Zhu. In the case of Fang Zhanyi, Geng Dingxiang highlights that he neglected his responsibility as a husband and abandoned his wife. *Geng Tiantan xiansheng wenji*: juan 16: "Lizhong san yiren" 里中三異人, pp. 1621-1648. Also see Shimada Kenji 島田虔次, "Yinin Tou Katsukyo ryakuden" 異人鄧豁渠略傳, in *Chugoku shiso shi no kenkyu* 中国思想史の研究 (Oriental Research Series No. 59: *A Study for the History of Confucianism in China*) (Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2002), pp. 206-223.

personalizing intellectual debates and organizing moral persecutions against Li Zhi based on fabricated rumors.<sup>65</sup> But it seems that Geng Dingxiang did not consider Li Zhi someone he really wanted to debate since the latter had been “too seriously bewitched.”<sup>66</sup> He did not care about Li Zhi as much as the education of the local youths. For example, after hearing that Li Zhi had socialized with prostitutes and even encouraged local youths to follow suit, in a letter to Zhou Sijiu, their shared friend who had followed Li Zhi for a long time, Geng Dingxiang clearly articulated what he considered the stakes were:

As to the question of hanging out with prostitutes, it is fine in Zhuowu’s (Li Zhi) case, but not proper for you. I insist on this differentiation. This differentiation has broad and small implications that are difficult to explain.... Zhuowu’s intellectual endeavors only need solve his own problems; they are not meant to help others. We could simply let him be. But can you, a widely influential figure in our hometown, set an example like this for young men? That would be as serious as killing them! If Zhuowu hears what I am saying here, he will probably mock me again. This doesn’t matter. But you only have one son whose physical powers are not settled yet. Where do you want to lead him to with this kind of teachings? My son understands this point very well and therefore is being very careful.<sup>67</sup>

The exchanges between Li Zhi and Geng Dingxiang (sometimes through and mediated by their correspondence with shared friends) about Confucian philosophy, Buddhism, and proper social behavior were intertwined, but Geng Dingxiang debated with Li Zhi about

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<sup>65</sup> Lin Haiquan, *Nianpu kaolue*, pp. 226-227. Historians have also pointed out that Geng Dingxiang, (like many in the government and later in the Donglin camp) increasingly tilted toward a moralistic stance and self-discipline in the face of the widespread social unrest in late Ming society, encouraging these moral attacks against Li Zhi. For example, Rowe, *Crimson Rain*; Jin Jiang, “Heresy and Persecution.”

<sup>66</sup> Geng Dingxiang, *Geng Tiantan xiansheng wenji*: juan 6 “Shudu” 4 書牘四: “Da youren wen II” 答友人問 (又), p. 688.

<sup>67</sup> Geng Dingxiang is citing a phrase from *The Analects*, where Confucius says about manhood: “There are three things which the superior man guards against. In youth, when the physical powers are not yet settled, he guards against lust. When he is strong and the physical powers are full of vigor, he guards against quarrelsomeness. When he is old, and the animal powers are decayed, he guards against covetousness.” *The Analects*: 16: 7 “Ji shi” 季氏第十六. *Geng Tiantai xiansheng wenji*: juan 3: “Yu Zhou Liutang” 與周柳塘 (又), p. 359.

Confucian teachings or Buddhism only to make his practical points.<sup>68</sup> He followed a typical Confucian *jingshi* (statecraft) path and his priorities were clear: in the government, he was worried about corruption, irresponsibility and bad politics, as reflected in his warning against increasingly personal attacks based on rumors about someone's sexual morality in officials' memorials; in the local community, he advocated education and scholarship that would emphasize filial piety and fraternal respect so that youths would not "consider their families as burdens" or "detest Confucianism as shackles."<sup>69</sup>

The letters by Geng Dingxiang and Li Zhi, in which these debates occurred, were circulated widely and quickly among their friends. But circulating and publishing were different things. In Wanli 18 (1590), Li Zhi published *Fen shu* 焚書 (A Book to Burn), a collection of essays, poems, and letters, which included his letters responding to Geng Dingxiang. Now in the public eye, Li Zhi had become the victim of persecution by Confucian orthodoxy against his intellectual and spiritual independence. From this point, Li Zhi began to face threats from Geng Dingxiang's followers, whose main accusations focused on his "heresy" and "immorality."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Huang Zongxi rightly points out that Geng Dingxiang never aimed to engage in the metaphysical aspect of Confucian studies. He believes that Geng Dingxiang tried to firmly root his words in the most fundamental and practical Confucian teachings (for example, the golden mean, i.e. *zhongyong*) when debating with Li Zhi's wild Chan Buddhism. However, he argues, because Geng Dingxiang did not fully think through some important philosophical issues, and because he could not adamantly repudiate Buddhism, he failed to defeat Li Zhi. Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲, *Ming ru xue an* 明儒學案 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985): *juan* 35 "Taizhou xue'an 4" 泰州學案四: "Gongjian Geng Tiantai xiansheng Dingxiang" 恭簡耿天臺先生定向, pp. 815-816.

<sup>69</sup> *Geng Tiantan xiansheng wenji*: *juan* 4: "Yu Wu Shaoyu" 與吳少虞 (pp. 377-393) and "Yu neihan Yang Fusuo" 與內翰楊復所 (pp. 393-402).

<sup>70</sup> But whether Geng Dingxiang explicitly instructed his students and the local gentry to attack Li Zhi needs to be studied more carefully case by case. Geng Dingxiang even wrote a public letter to those who blamed

Today, it is difficult to verify the details of these accusations, especially because those allegedly attacked Li Zhi did not leave much writing of their own. Rumors, exaggeration, speculation, and facts intermingle in sensational discussions about Li Zhi. The scholar-official Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 cites the words of Yuan Zhongdao, one of Li Zhi's most intimate literati-official friends, in his biography of Li Zhi:

Throughout his life, he detested hypocritical teachings. When he went to the academy or lecture hall, he would put on his Confucian scholar outfit. If a student went up to him with questions about the Classics, he would wave his sleeves and say, "Oh, I would rather spend time with singing girls and dancing ladies, sipping wine and singing songs." Once he saw a student walking up with a prostitute. He smiled and said, "This is at least better than having a Confucian scholar as company." Therefore, in Macheng and Huang'an counties, the lecturers hated him to the bone. Thus appeared the malicious charge that he preached indecency and corrupted society. How could these smears, like the waste discharged by frogs, contaminate Li Zhi?<sup>71</sup>

Qian Qianyi, Yuan Zhongdao, and many others helped keep alive the public image of a "deviant" Li Zhi; they did not witness these incidents; but the very fact that they considered them worth citing shows the prevalence of such an image.

Li Zhi himself certainly used exaggerated and provocative rhetoric to advocate his so-called "anti-Confucian-hypocrisy" stance. Although he vehemently denied the charges of promiscuous teaching and sexual immorality in his letters to friends,<sup>72</sup> his own words provided evidence his attackers could use. In a letter to Zhou Hongyue 周弘禴, a

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him for those (physical and textual) attacks on Li Zhi to defend himself. *Geng Tiantan xiansheng wenji*: juan 6: "Qiu jing shu" 求儆書, p. 696-698.

<sup>71</sup> Qian Qianyi, *Liechao shiji xiao zhuan* 列朝詩集小傳: *Run ji* 閩集: "Yiren san ren" 異人三人, p. 744.

<sup>72</sup> See for example, "Da Zhou Liutang" 答周柳塘 in *Fen shu: Zengbu 1* 增補一, pp. 253-256.

Macheng native who served as a metropolitan official and had written to Li Zhi to criticize him, Li Zhi explains the relation between his intellectual-spiritual exploration and his “deviant” behaviors. He uses his own experiences to illustrate how he became enlightened in a unique way:

When I was in Huang’an, I secluded myself from the world and thus could not blend in with others (*yu zhong tong chen*). Then after I moved to Macheng, when I enjoyed mundane pleasures to achieve deliverance and frequented the brothel, I began to blend in with others but failed to be in line with the prevailing Confucian philosophy of life. Why? Because I was still arguing with the Vice Censor-in-Chief (Geng Dingxiang) about the learning of the Classics.<sup>73</sup>

Here, Li Zhi describes the earlier stages of his pursuit of the ultimate Way. Living as a recluse and retreating from the world temporarily did not yield true enlightenment. Nor did leading a life of pleasure-seeking bring him peace because orthodox Confucians detested it. Therefore, he had to resort to another strategy to achieve disengagement from society: “Playing around makes me the same as others but disgusts orthodox Confucians. If I shave my head and ruin my appearance, I am detested not only by orthodox Confucians but by everyone. The true way of transcending the mundane is no other than this.”<sup>74</sup> Thus, Li Zhi publicly acknowledged that on his path to enlightenment, he had experimented with lifestyles, from seclusion to pleasure-seeking to head-shaving; but these experiments were integral to his intellectual and spiritual exploration.

The phrase “frequencing the brothel” here is explosive. The historian Jin Jiang argues that this passage demonstrates that Li Zhi, inspired by the example of layman

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<sup>73</sup> *Fen shu: Zengbu* 1: “Da Zhou Erlu” 答周二魯, pp. 251-252. This letter was written around Wanli 16 (1588). Li Zhi indicates he was sixty-two.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* In his discussion, he uses Laozi’s words, such as *heguang* and *tongchen*, which appear in the fourth chapter of *Dao de jing*.

Vimalakirti, associated “commoners and their presumably worry-free life style, symbolized by wine and sex,” with “nature, enlightenment, and health.” He suggests that Li Zhi tried to “legitimize such ‘deviation’ against orthodox morality” and this “action of theorization could constitute an offense to the moral dominance of the Confucian elite as a whole.”<sup>75</sup> While “frequenting brothel” is a common didactic Buddhist practice for men in training for enlightenment, it might not have been read as such by others in Li Zhi’s controversy. We have to take into consideration that the image of the layman Vimalakirti in Chinese Buddhism had been transformed in China to help reinforce the Confucian gentry manly virtues and had had great appeal for literati since the early medieval period.<sup>76</sup> More importantly, regardless of what model Vimalakirti served for Li Zhi, interpreting this phrase literally—deliberate misinterpretation as a strategy—was precisely what Li Zhi’s attackers in Macheng and later in the central government did to incriminate him.

A consistent feature in Li Zhi’s own and his friends’ representations of him is his lack of interest in sensual pleasures, especially sex, and his obsession with cleanliness, features typical of the Confucian rhetoric of a moral man. I will discuss this further later in this chapter. Here it suffices to point out that Li Zhi employed both Confucian and Buddhist rhetoric in his discussion about women’s learning and his own behavior as a literatus. With Buddhist rhetoric, he even went so far as employing the language of Buddhist esotericism to emphasize his spiritual transcendence and successful enlightenment. A blunt testing of the social tolerance toward the moral grey area created

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<sup>75</sup> Jin Jiang, “Heresy and Persecution in Late Ming Society: Reinterpreting the Case of Li Zhi,” *Late Imperial China* 22:2 (2001), p. 14.

<sup>76</sup> Ch’en, *Buddhism in China*, chap. VII.

by some Buddhist practices, this language provided his enemies “hard evidence” of his licentious behavior. In a culture where words mattered, Li Zhi should have known that his correspondence with literati-officials always constituted a public performance and debate. But he nonetheless corresponded with others in a provocative and sensational way that sounded like a heretic extremist and frivolous literatus popular in socially liberal regions. Geng Dingxiang understood Li Zhi’s rhetorical choice. This is why in the letter to Zhou Sijiu discussed above, Geng Dingxiang clearly shows no interest in debating Li Zhi but stresses how Li Zhi’s words would be *received* by young men. Li Zhi’s enemies deliberately misinterpreted his rhetoric, taking his words as “fact” and evidence of his promiscuity. Eventually Li Zhi’s rhetoric backfired. Visiting prostitutes became a hot topic in a debate that focused on whether this was a proper way to pursue enlightenment. No one seemed to question whether Li Zhi actually “frequented brothels.”<sup>77</sup> That was taken as an article of truth.

In the year Wanli 19 (1591), the hostility to Li Zhi in Macheng ran so high that during a trip he took to nearby Wuchang with Yuan Hongdao, he was physically assaulted and run out of town. This incident only enhanced his fame. Yuan Hongdao had already gained fame as a poet and literatus-official. His willingness to go through this ordeal with Li Zhi only added another layer of cultural sainthood to the latter. Liu Dongxing, then serving as the Senior Provincial Administration Commissioner in the region, went to visit him and soon became his patron and admirer. Eventually Liu’s protection enabled Li Zhi to live safely and comfortably for a while in Wuchang. Meanwhile, Li Zhi made efforts to reach out to Geng Dingxiang and they resumed

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<sup>77</sup> It seems that even Li Zhi’s good friend Zhou Sijiu thought it was true. See Geng Dingxiang’s letter to Zhou Sijiu: *Geng Tiantan xiansheng wenji*: juan 3: “Yu Zhou Liutang” 與周柳塘 (又).

friendship, at least on the surface. In Wanli 21 (1593) he returned to Macheng, probably feeling more secure than before. With a wealthy local friend's help, he had the local monastery renovated and a new hall built. The Yuan brothers visited him together, which further fueled people's interest in Li Zhi as an icon. It was in this year that the "scandals" surrounding him and Mei Danran suddenly emerged.

When Mei Danran heard that Li Zhi would build a statue of Guanyin (Avalokiteshvara) in the newly renovated monastery, she decided to become a stay-home nun. From then on, Mei Danran and several other Mei women wrote often to Li Zhi to discuss Buddhist teachings. Their correspondence attracted gossip and criticism. They suggested he and Mei Danran were behaving improperly. As noted earlier, the phenomenon of women studying Buddhism was commonplace in late Ming Macheng. Li Zhi should have realized that his enemies' criticisms did not necessarily rest on these women's spiritual and intellectual pursuits but targeted Li Zhi himself; his presence in these women's lives, even only "textual," aroused suspicion and was taken as evidence of immorality. Some people threatened to tear down the Zhifo Yuan, the monastery where Li Zhi resided.<sup>78</sup> However, he did not surrender. In Wanli 24 (1596) he compiled and published seventeen letters to his female students, in which he answered their questions about Buddhist learning and praised their devotion and accomplishment. This book was called *Guanyin wen*. Li Zhi also wrote a series of letters and essays arguing for women's capacity to study the Buddhist teachings. And not only did he continue to correspond with these women, the publication of *Guanyin wen* was a slap in the face of his attackers executed before all the reading public. To his opponents who suggested forcing him back

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<sup>78</sup> *Xu Fenshu: juan 1*: "Yu Zhou Youshan" 與周友山, p. 10.



to his hometown to “restore morality” (*zheng fenghua*, 正風化) in Macheng, Li Zhi protested that he was but an old and lonely “monk” who posed no threat to moral order.<sup>79</sup> And he continued discussing the issue of women’s learning to justify his association with these women. But by inserting the issue of women’s learning into debates about his own morality, Li Zhi effectively made it impossible to disentangle himself from them and from the related issue of sex scandals. Maintaining gender boundaries had to be carried out even in words.

For Li Zhi, the association with Mei Danran symbolized his enlightenment, his progressive views on women, and his free spirit. In the following years, in his writings Li Zhi repeatedly referred to the Mei women, especially Mei Danran. In Wanli 24 (1596), the same year the controversial *Guanyin wen* went to print and he began to feel trapped in Macheng, he created a list of principles concerning management of the temple and Buddhist practices in an essay, “Agreement Made Beforehand” (*Yu yue* 豫約), which he immediately sent out to his literati-official friends.<sup>80</sup> This essay was intended to elaborate his views on Buddhist teaching and learning. More importantly, he reflects on his life experience and considers this writing as his *nianpu* (chronological biography), a document accessible for literati of later generations who would be interested in him.<sup>81</sup> He used the opportunity to reiterate his respect for women like Mei Danran:

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Lin, *Nianpu kaolue*, p. 310. These friends included Fang Hang 方沆 (1547-?), Zhou Sijing 周思敬 (1532-1597), Pan Shizao 潘之藻 (1537-1599) and Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道.

<sup>81</sup> *Xu Fenshu: juan 1*: “Yu Zhou Youshan,” p. 10.

Mei Danran is an enlightened *zhangfu*.<sup>82</sup> Although she was born a woman, men (*nanzi*) cannot easily surpass her. She has devoted herself to learning the Buddhist Way and has demonstrated accomplishment in this. I do not have any worries. She has never formally made me her mentor—she knows that I do not want to become a mentor, but she sends people from thirty miles away to ask me questions about Buddhism. I have to respond even if I did not want to. She silently treats me with proper manner toward a mentor. Although I will not take in one single disciple—and she knows this—it is difficult for me not to respond to her inquiry. Therefore, in our correspondence on Buddhist learning, she calls me *shi* 師 (master or teacher) and I call her “Master Danran” (*Danran shi*) in order to avoid violating my principle of not mentoring.<sup>83</sup>

Li Zhi then goes on to talk about the other Mei women, whom he calls *pusa* (bodhisattva). He tells the monks in his monastery that it is rare even among extraordinary men (*qi nanzi* 奇男子) to demonstrate such persistence as these women from rich and prestigious families, who have devoted themselves to Buddhist learning and practice at home. They really deserved respect. While Li Zhi uses these examples to urge other men to dedicate themselves to Buddhism, he does not forget to blame his attackers: “Because these bodhisattvas were born as women, relatives who envy them generate gossip too disgraceful to listen to.”<sup>84</sup> By defining the nature of this scandal as “family gossip,” Li Zhi portrays himself as an innocent victim implicated in attacks against women’s learning and spiritual pursuit.

Considering that he hoped later generations would read this public essay as a sort of autobiography, the section where he reflects on his life experiences must be critically

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<sup>82</sup> See earlier discussion on the usage of this word in the late Ming.

<sup>83</sup> *Fen shu: juan 4*: “Yu yue” 豫約, p. 171.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

important for framing his image.<sup>85</sup> Li Zhi describes the Mei women as not only virtuous and dedicated to their families but also persistent Buddhist practitioners who respected him as a master. Li Zhi hoped that people would remember him as a Buddhist master whose morality should not be questioned. However, curiously, he rarely promotes himself as a master for male Buddhist learners; he only uses women as his examples. In some literati's thinking, this rhetoric would only enhance his iconic image because associating with talented women and promoting women's learning were fashionable among men of culture at the time. But from his opponents' point of view, the repeated mentioning of this association with women testified to his immorality and deviance. These references reinforced the public suspicion that he was involved with her.

The wide circulation of a story about a local female poet, Mao Yulong 毛鈺龍, most clearly reflects how Li Zhi was seen as a social deviant, a self-important literatus obsessively interested in meeting educated gentry women. In the biography of Li Zhi, Qian Qianyi quotes two Macheng literati as his sources to record Li Zhi's relationship with Mao Yulong. One of them is Qiu Tan 丘坦, a passionate supporter and friend of Li Zhi. He praises Madam Mao's virtue as a chaste widow and her talent as a poet.<sup>86</sup> But the other source, Zhou Hongyue, offers the following story:

Madam [Mao] worshipped Buddha in her later years. She followed the commandments and lived a quiet life. A master visiting this region preached Buddhist teachings, which excited a lot of men and women. He informed Madam Mao that he wished to visit her in person. She rejected

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<sup>85</sup> "Yu yue: Gankai pingsheng" 感慨平生, pp. 173-176.

<sup>86</sup> Qian Qianyi, *Liechao shiji xiaozhuan: run ji*: Xianglian I 香奩上: Liu Wenzhen mao shi 劉文貞毛氏, p. 771.

his suggestion. He then asked to correspond with her. This she also refused.<sup>87</sup>

Qian Qianyi tells the reader that this “master” was actually Li Zhi.<sup>88</sup> The late-Ming and early-Qing scholar and historian Tan Qian 談遷 (1594-1658) also documented this story.<sup>89</sup> Tan Qian explicitly records that Li Zhi attempted to visit the lady.

Tan Qian and Qian Qianyi’s works, published almost half a century after Li Zhi died (1644 and 1649, respectively), allow us a glimpse at the notoriety of Li Zhi’s “improper attempt” at contacting a chaste and literarily talented widow. Historians who argue that local political struggles led to Li Zhi’s persecution have always used this story as one example of the scandals fabricated by his enemies, including Zhou Hongyue, whose clan was in local competition with the Mei family. But Zhou Hongyue’s role in local Macheng politics was not clear. Mei Guozhen’s memorial seems to suggest that he and Zhou Hongyue were political allies at court.<sup>90</sup> Although Zhou Hongyue thought Li Zhi’s “deviant” behavior and his zeal for Buddhist learning would bring disaster,<sup>91</sup> we have no evidence to prove his involvement in any specific attacks. More importantly, Zhou Hongyue did not object to women’s learning. According to the Macheng gazetteer, from the mid-Ming this area had produced many talented women. Zhou Hongyue’s wife, along with the poet Madam Mao, enjoyed a high literary reputation and respect in the area. The above quote very clearly demonstrates that Zhou Hongyue did not reject women’s studying Buddhism. What Zhou Hongyue and Qian Qianyi have passed along is

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid. pp. 771-772.

<sup>88</sup> Some editions include this line of note in the quote of Zhou Hongyue.

<sup>89</sup> Tan Qian, *Zaolin zazu* 棗林雜俎: Yi ji “Tongguan”彤管: “Wudingqiao liefu”武定橋烈婦, p. 283.

<sup>90</sup> See memorial no. 3 in Mei Guozhen, *Xi zheng ji* 西征集.

<sup>91</sup> Shen Fu 沈鈇, “Li Zhuowu zhuan” 李卓吾傳 as cited in Lin, *nianpu kaolue*, p. 283.

a widely popular image of the “immoral” Li Zhi, an image that even repulsed literati-officials who supported women’s learning and Buddhist pursuit. The mentioning of the chaste Madam Mao’s refusal to correspond with Li Zhi obviously serves to contrast Li Zhi’s suspicious involvement with the Mei women via letters. It does not mean to question the talented and devoted Madam Mao; on the contrary, it praised her as a moral model. Therefore, when rebutting his attackers, Li Zhi’s efforts to portray himself as an enlightened man who believed in women’s capability to learn were misplaced: the focus of debate was not women’s learning but his own “deviance.” He employed the popular language of promoting women’s learning in self-defense, a language that in his view would resonate with literati in general. But this language only reinforced his image as a moral threat. The more he talked about these women, the more he irritated and disgusted the local conservatives. He should have kept a distance—including in text—from those women.

The scandals surrounding the Mei women and Madam Mao finally resulted in Li Zhi’s forced exile from the Huang’an-Macheng area. From Wanli 24 to Wanli 28 (1596-1600), he traveled to Shanxi, Nanjing, and Shandong, where his patron-friends such as Mei Guozhen, Jiao Hong, and Liu Dongxing lived and worked. Away from the troubles and from the women intellectually associated with him, he now socialized with literati-officials. A close reading of his poems shows him a typical man of letters, who could employ “symbolic woman” in literary self-expression, a quality admired in the late Ming literati world. But these poems would also become incriminating evidence.

Writing poems about flowers was a great literati tradition. Flowers do not necessarily always symbolize women, but they always serve as a common medium for

literati self-expression. The ability to employ this medium with skillful use of classic literary allusions shows the cultivated temperament and sensitivity of a man of letters. Since Li Zhi did not employ this trope often, his poems taking flowers as their theme might suggest sentiments absent in his writings of other genres. He composed most of these poems during the years away from Macheng, after the eruption of the scandals.

Li Zhi's poems on the peony, written during his visit to Mei Guozhen on the northwestern frontier, offer one example of his gender performance as a literatus through poetry. Two poems titled "Peonies (*shaoyao*) in a Temple in Yunzhong"<sup>92</sup> were composed during this period.

Two peony flowers blossom in the courtyard  
Of the Buddhist temple where we chat  
I stop knocking the temple block  
As the wind brings me your aroma and message of love.

Your smile mesmerizes the city and the country  
You quietly lean on trees and banisters in sorrow  
When you open two flowers at once  
I come to visit across rivers and mountains.<sup>93</sup>

*Shaoyao*, a variety of peony, often symbolizes romantic love. Phrases such as *qing guo qing cheng* 傾國傾城 (a beautiful woman that could cause the downfall of a country) and *yi shu ping lan* 倚樹憑欄 (lean on trees and banisters) have long been figures for

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<sup>92</sup> "Yunzhong" 雲中 refers to the region that Mei Guozhen was governing. Mei's own poems often use this name for this region.

<sup>93</sup> *Fen shu: juan 6*: "Yunzhong sengshe shaoyao er shou" 雲中僧舍芍藥二首, p. 227.

beautiful women. While we cannot tell if Li Zhi implies feelings towards a particular woman in these lines, he clearly means to show his sensitivity to beauty and romantic sentiment, as well as his familiarity with conventional literary allusions related to particular kinds of flowers. Peony flowers were traditionally a “symbolic woman” in literati culture, a vehicle through which literati framed their masculine gaze and formulated their masculine self. Regardless of the actual message hidden in such poems, the act of employing this vehicle *per se* is a manly performance.

We may try to interpret this kind of sentiment and self-expression against the reconfiguration of aesthetic discourse in the late Ming. According to Mao Wenfang’s study, one characteristic of late Ming literati aesthetic expression is “displacement,” and using “a beautiful woman” as the object of aesthetic displacement was most popular in this historical period.<sup>94</sup> In a time of emerging commodity society and economic affluence, with heightened interests in an art of living that could help define their status-specific manliness,<sup>95</sup> literati aesthetic experience, imagination of the self, perception of objects and conceptualization of “the feminine” became more intimately interconnected. For example, Li Zhi’s contemporary, the connoisseur and literatus-official Wen Zhenheng 文震亨, in his famous work on the art of living *Zhangwu zhi* 長物志, writes in detail about the important place of flowers and plants in cultivated literati life. He argues, “*Youren* 幽

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<sup>94</sup> Mao Wenfang 毛文芳, *Wanming xian shang meixue* 晚明閒賞美學 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 2000), p. 258.

<sup>95</sup> For in-depth discussions about late Ming art of living and literati status definition, see Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things*; Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure*.

人 (a sophisticated man of culture) should assume the task of supervising the gardener and managing the plants.”<sup>96</sup> Comparing peach flowers and plum flowers, he writes,

Peach flowers are indispensable, just like beautiful women who are essential for singing and dancing entertainments. In contrast, plum flowers, like a Taoist nun who must be placed in scenic nature where the recluse resides, should not be overplanted.<sup>97</sup>

Elsewhere he comments, “Among the flower companies of *youren*, plum blossoms indeed monopolize his romantic affection (*zhuanfang*, 專房).”<sup>98</sup> The word *zhuanfang* literarily means a woman monopolizing a man’s bedroom, i.e., being the only (and the most favored) sex partner. In Wen’s symbolic world, the textualized dwelling place of a man of culture, *youren* represents the supreme literati virtues and tastes. The special relationship between literati and plum flowers is most famously encapsulated in the figure of the Song poet Lin Bu 林逋 (967-1028), whose lifestyle was turned into a well-cited phrase, “plum flowers as his wife and cranes as his sons” (*mei qi he zi* 梅妻鶴子). Men of letters of later generations often resorted to this literary imagery to help depict their detachment from the vulgar world.

Most of the flower poems Li Zhi composed, interestingly enough, deal with plum flowers. These poems, with their conventional literary tropes, situate him in a textually romantic relationship with the plum flowers. Considering that the Chinese name for plum flowers, *mei*, is the family name of Mei Danran, Li Zhi’s beautiful and talented female

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<sup>96</sup> Wen Zhenheng, *Zhangwu zhi* 長物志 (Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 2004): juan 2 “Huamu” 花木, p. 35.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.



correspondent, these poems send a mixed message. To his friends, they demonstrate his familiarity with literati literary tradition and a sophisticated temperament. But to his enemies, they could substantiate the suspicion that he actually had romantic feelings toward Mei Danran, who indeed received at least four of such poems from Li Zhi.

Now, let us closely read these poems.

Most of Li Zhi's plum flower poems were composed during his exile from Macheng. In Datong with Mei Guozhen, he wrote two poems titled, "Ode to *Song-mei* (pine trees and plum flowers)":<sup>99</sup>

A nameless young woman of sixteen years old  
Playing a tune of northwestern sound  
Please do not play this song  
For it sends the homeless man into melancholy.

Full moon of the eighth month shines in the sky  
Who would not buy a moment of peace?  
The truly beautiful complexion and voice  
Belong to the pine trees and plum flowers in the moonlight.<sup>100</sup>

The imagery of a northwestern girl playing minority music can be traced to Lin Bu's famous plum flower poem. Against this imagery, Lin Bu contrasts the unique beauty of the plum flowers. Lin Bu's most cited poem, "Shanyuan xiaomei" 山園小梅, in which he employs imageries such as moon and music, portrays an intimate relationship between

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<sup>99</sup> *Song* refers to pine tree and *mei* means plum flowers. In the Chinese literary tradition, they symbolize someone's virtuousness and nobleness. *Fen shu: juan 6*: "Fu songmei er shou" 賦松梅二首, p. 226.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

the literatus and the plum flowers in his backyard: “Fortunately in my chanting verses we become intimate/Even without the intoxicating music and wine.” Such allusions have the flavor of sexual intimacy. Within this literary tradition, Li Zhi’s poems posit him as a man of letters who can differentiate the high and low cultures and beauties, and possesses a fine sensitivity.<sup>101</sup> Our reader may remember Yuan Zhongdao’s testimony about the inexplicable contradiction between Li Zhi’s strong interests in romance and an ascetic appearance. It seems very similar to that between the poetic intimacy and physical distance maintained in literati flower poems.

Literati’s discerning eye could easily find that the imagery of pine trees and plum flowers together seems a bit odd in these poems, because all the key literary allusions point to plum flowers instead of pines. This loss of poetic balance and integrity betrays Li Zhi’s attempt to disguise his particular passion for the plum flowers. In addition, this poem clearly was written in mid-fall,<sup>102</sup> a season when plum trees would not blossom. Therefore, while the *song-mei* imagery could be meant to compliment the Mei father and daughter, especially at the moment when Li Zhi learned that Mei Guozhen had dismissed the “sex scandals” as mere slander on him and Li Zhi. Still, the awkward insertion of the pine tree imagery seems to suggest something more. If Li Zhi had any romantic feelings toward Mei Danran, this would have been an opportunity to express his appreciation of her special quality, and these poems might have been interpreted precisely as such by his enemies and provided ammunition to his enemies.

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<sup>101</sup> Ko has an interesting analysis of early modern male scholars’ masculine subjectivity in traveling and writing about courtesans of Datong and the borderland “Northwest.” See Ko, *Cinderella’s Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2005), chap. 5.

<sup>102</sup> “The full moon of the eighth month” tells us this was dated the fifteenth day of the eighth month in Chinese lunar calendar, which could be from mid September to early October. Also, evidence suggests Li Zhi stayed in Shanxi the fall of that year. See Lin, *Nianpu kaolue*, p. 310.

Toward the end of this long trip away from Macheng, Li Zhi wrote four plum flower poems directly to Mei Danran in response to her letters that tried to persuade him to return to Macheng. These could be read as the most damaging evidence of his “sexual fantasy.” The poems sounded very romantic to the reading public. Let us read some of his lines:

Your letter travels down to Jiangnan and reaches me  
But we could not chat in person when you were nearby  
Envy that beautiful Vasumitra  
Determined to meet with Qu Tan.<sup>103</sup>

Flying snow in the wind lightly brushes through  
Like a beautiful woman, plum flowers wear the rain like makeup  
Busy visitors at the door are not worth mentioning  
The *zigui* bird is calling Spring to return.

You are the Guanyin we long to see  
The lotus belongs to someone as beautiful as flowers.<sup>104</sup>

The unthinkable happened. Li Zhi naively included these letters and poems in the second edition of *Fen shu*, which was published in Jiangnan in Wanli 28 (1600). This edition became an instant national hit. Months later when Li Zhi returned to Macheng, local opponents had rekindled the flames of persecution, based on the charge that “monks and nuns engage in immoral activities.”<sup>105</sup> One cannot but wonder if these plum flower poems contributed to consolidating Li Zhi’s image as a “licentious monk.” As his

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<sup>103</sup> Qu Tan 瞿曇 refers to Sakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism.

<sup>104</sup> *Fen shu*: *juan* 6: “Que ji” 卻寄 ( 四首 ), pp. 233-234.

<sup>105</sup> Lin, *Nianpu kaolue*, p. 386.

enemies were burning down his monastery, destroying his pagoda, and forcing him into hiding, he took refuge in the mountains until Ma Jinglung came to help. At this point, Li Zhi was still writing to Mei Guozhen and his nephew Mei Zhihuan 梅之煥 praising Mei Danran, whose recent death was, according to Li Zhi's sympathizers, attributed to vicious gossips spread by Li Zhi's antagonists.<sup>106</sup> In the letter to Mei Zhihuan, he writes:

You are an extraordinary man. And you especially respected Danran. From now on Danran's great reputation will exist forever. Without testing it on tough wood, one cannot tell how sharp a tool is. You should celebrate Danran because of this [incident]. She was really intelligent, really strong, and truly virtuous. Surprisingly Hengxiang (Mei Guozhen) had such a daughter and has a nephew like you. I marvel at him and admire him!<sup>107</sup>

By portraying Mei Danran as a victim of false accusation and hence a martyr, Li Zhi again frames this "scandal" as a question of ignorant and vicious people against women's learning. But in his attackers' eyes, Li Zhi was hopelessly immoral and must be expelled.

### **Desexualizing Sex Scandals: Li Zhi as a Moral Scholar**

In the face of such moral charges, Li Zhi tried to defend himself by framing his enemies' attacks as unenlightened opposition to women's learning, and his friends and admirers directly challenge the falsity of those charges. Li Zhi himself began to emphasize his lack of desires and "purity," and his friends elaborated on this image. In an essay that records a conversation between him and Yuan Zhongdao, explaining why he wants to be a vegetarian, Li Zhi says, "Throughout my life I have been obsessed with cleanliness.

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<sup>106</sup> According to Yuan Zhongdao, "Mei's enemies spread gossip and his daughter Danran died because of her Buddhist learning. [Mei] mourned her: There is devil if there is Buddha. The non-believers of course want to smear our reputation." This story is not substantiated.

<sup>107</sup> *Xu Fenshu*: juan 1: "Yu Mei Changgong" 與梅長公, p. 29.

Mundane things such as alcohol, sex, and money cannot pollute me a bit.”<sup>108</sup> Yuan Zhongdao considered Li Zhi’s lifestyle a symbol of his integrity and a rare accomplishment.<sup>109</sup> After Li Zhi died, he composed a biography of him and recalled:

He liked sweeping the floor so much that he would use more blooms than several men could make for him. He had his clothes washed in the river so that they stayed extremely clean. He washed his face and body so frequently that it appeared he had a fixation with water. He did not like vulgar guests. If such arrived without notice, he would at once ask them to sit well away from him because he considered them dirty.<sup>110</sup>

Despite the element of exaggeration in this portrayal, it successfully highlights Li Zhi’s particular pursuit of the unworldly and his detachment from vulgarity. The obsession with cleanliness corresponds with Li Zhi’s reputation as a lofty man who loathes “vulgar men” (*suren* 俗人).<sup>111</sup>

“Cleanliness” was transposed into Li Zhi’s purity of character, which was collaborated by his lack of sexual desire, as Yuan Zhongdao implies:

He had a very slender figure. He was not interested in sensual pleasures, but was obsessed with cleanliness. Therefore, he was disgusted at intimacy with women. So he did not take any concubines even though he had no son.<sup>112</sup>

At the end of this biography, Yuan Zhongdao elevates Li Zhi’s morality to the highest level:

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<sup>108</sup> *Xu Fenshu*: *juan 2* “Shu Xiaoxiu Shoujuan Hou” 書小修手卷後, p. 65.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Xu Fenshu*: Appendix: Yuan Zhongdao, “Li Wenling zhuan” 李溫陵傳, pp. 131-132.

<sup>111</sup> See for example, Jiao Hong’s 焦竑 “Shu Hongfu *Gaoshangce* hou” 書宏甫高尚冊後 and Zhou Sijing’s 周思敬 “Wei seng Mingyu shu fayu” 為僧明玉書法語 in *Li Wenling wai ji* 李溫陵外紀: *juan 2*: pp. 137-142 and pp. 145-148.

<sup>112</sup> Yuan Zhongdao, “Li Wenling zhuan,” p. 131.

As a Confucian literatus and an official, he preserved his integrity. But we passively try to put up with things we do not like and behave just like ordinary men. This is the first reason why I was not able to follow him. He never fondled young girls or beautiful boys. But we indulge in desire and sexual companionship. This is the second reason why I was unable to follow him. He understood the ultimate Way and grasped the great principles. But we confine ourselves to words and fail to see the deep meanings. This is the third reason why I was not able to follow him.<sup>113</sup>

Qian Qianyi quotes Yuan Zhongdao in his biography for Li Zhi:

Yuan Xiaoxiu (Yuan Zhongdao's literary name) once told me: "Li Zhi constantly suffered from illness and lacked sexual desire. His married Madam Huang and together they had one daughter. After his wife passed away, he never approached women. His self-discipline was as strict as any monks."<sup>114</sup>

This obviously erases the fact that Li Zhi and his wife had seven children together. We can clearly see how Li Zhi and his friends together identified his moral character with lack of interest in sensual pursuits, especially sexual desire. After he died, his friend Tao Wangling told his brother that Li Zhi was an extraordinary man whose behavior was "immaculate."<sup>115</sup> Another friend Jiao Hong also wrote, "His [Li Zhi's] behavior was as immaculate as the ice and snow (*qi xing ru bingxue*). This especially has earned my admiration."<sup>116</sup> Such sentiment was reflected by Shen Defu years later: "Because he (Li Zhi) discussed Buddhism with women from gentry families in town and even published

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>114</sup> Qian Qianyi, *Liechao Shiji Xiaozhuan*, p. 745. Qian Qianyi mistook his wife's family name as "Zhuang" 莊.

<sup>115</sup> Tao Wangling 陶望齡, "Yu Junshi Di" 與君爽弟, *Li Wenling wai ji*: juan 4, p. 259.

<sup>116</sup> Jiao Hong, "Da Xu Shengzhai" 答許繩齋 in *Li Wenling wai ji*: juan 4, p. 297.

books for them such as *Guanyin wen*, those who detested him suspected sexual liaisons. But this gentleman was untainted like iron. His name could not be smeared.”<sup>117</sup>

As hostility from his enemies intensified to the point of threatening Li Zhi’s safety, the language of sexual morality appeared more frequently and more strongly in his friends’ defense of him. The retired official Ma Jinglun, Li Zhi’s supporter and friend who accommodated him in Beijing before his arrest and later attempted to rescue him from prison, wrote probably most explicitly and specifically to defend Li Zhi’s “purity.” In several letters addressed to officials on behalf of Li Zhi, Ma Jinglun vehemently argued for his innocence and dismissed the charges as vicious fabrications by enemies in Macheng.

In “A Letter to the Official in Charge,” Ma Jinglun complains: “People in Macheng, in order to incriminate him, call him a ‘deluder of society’ (*huo shi* 惑世) and smear him with charges of ‘blatantly engaging in sexual immorality’ (*xuan yin* 宣淫).”<sup>118</sup>

He argues that the attackers have presented these rumors as “public opinion” (*gonglun* 公論) to defame him and Mei Guozhen.<sup>119</sup> He repeatedly challenges the falsity of these charges: “It is truly laughable that these people would accuse this seventy-year-old man

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<sup>117</sup> Shen Defu, *Wanli huoye bian*: juan 27 “Shi Dao”: “Er da jiaozhu” 釋道 . 二大教主, p. 691. Shen Defu was also from Fujian, like Li Zhi. His sympathy also had much to do with the regional rivalry between the far south and Jiangnan in the late Ming.

<sup>118</sup> Ma Jinglun, “Yu Dangdao Shu” 與當道書 in *Li Wenling waiji*: juan 4, p. 267.

<sup>119</sup> Ma Jinglun, *Qian Ming Henandao jiancha yushi Chengsuogong wenji* 前明河南道監察御史誠所公文集 (*Chengsuo gong wenji* hereafter) (Ma Qi 馬騏 ed., Kangxi 43 edition, National Library of China rare collection): juan3: “Yu Daguang shangren” 與達觀上人, pp. 31a-34a.

of sexual indulgence and seducing gentry women.”<sup>120</sup> Again, he directly points out that the honorable Mei Guozhen was the real target of the vicious attacks. In his appeal to some powerful officials, Ma Jinglun wrote specifically why they should believe in Li Zhi’s innocence, his “immaculate behavior,” and “painstakingly preserved integrity.”

He had official status but he gave it up. He had a family but left it behind. He had hair but he shaved his head. These only prove his innate loftiness. Why shouldn’t he be allowed to do so? People in this world enjoy official positions as if they were candies. If they do not lie with a woman for even a few days they feel like they might die. They even put on makeup to appeal to their bosses for one day’s attention and to please their concubines for a moment’s intimacy. These have become trends; even Confucians cannot avoid them. Don’t they feel ashamed when comparing themselves with Master Li’s spotless life?<sup>121</sup>

He then questions why people in the capital should worry that an old man like Li Zhi might “seduce women of gentry families:” “Can gentry women in the capital be seduced by a seventy-six year-old, sick, and ugly man?”<sup>122</sup> Then, contrasting him with officials who were womanizers and fame-chasers, Ma Jinglun highlights Li Zhi’s lack of interest in fashion and in women to elevate him above ordinary literati-officials and represent him as the most respectable of Confucian men.

Most interestingly, Ma Jinglun forcefully argues that a man like Li Zhi, who devotes all his life to intellectual and spiritual exploration, could not possibly enjoy intimacy with women:

How can a man who dedicates all his energy to scholarly work and has published almost a hundred books indulge himself in sexual immorality? Not to mention his old age. Even a young man seriously engaged in study

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> *Chengsuogong wenji: juan 3* “Yu zhangke Li Linye zhuan shang Xiao sikou” 與掌科李麟野轉上蕭司寇, pp. 36a-38b.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.



will not be interested in women. Young men who like women must dislike study. People consider Li Zhi's writing a crime; they charge him with sexual immorality. They criticize his head-shaving and accuse him of seducing women. These charges contradict themselves and are truly ridiculous!<sup>123</sup>

Ma Jinglung's petition suggests that he expects this representation of Li Zhi to convince powerful officials of his innocence and exonerate him. His rhetorical strategy attempts to define a moral man with no interest in sensual pleasures and women. This kind of defense shows that, because a literatus's dedication to scholarly learning and interest in sex were conventionally considered and represented as mutually exclusive, Li Zhi's moral character had been proven by his dedication to scholarship.

Moreover, increasing hostility among certain literati-officials toward Buddhism required Ma Jinglung to resort to a different image that would emphasize Li Zhi's Confucianist identity rather than that of a literati Buddhist practitioner. During the last decades of the Ming, literati who actively pursued Buddhism faced serious criticism that Buddhist exploration prevented them from fully engaging in the study and practice of Confucian statecraft. Take Li Zhi's good friend and famous scholar Jiao Hong as an example. Despite his fame as a scholar-official, his Buddhist exploration courted criticism.<sup>124</sup> Tao Wangling, Li Zhi's long-time friend and adamant supporter, lamented Li Zhi's tragedy and his own political disillusionment in two letters after his death. In the first, he praised Li Zhi's resolve to study the Way and his "sturdy character and immaculate behavior"; he was an "extraordinary man."<sup>125</sup> In the second, he expressed

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> *MS*: juan 288/*liezhuan* 176 "Wenyuan 4", p. 7392.

<sup>125</sup> Tao Wangling, "Ji Junshi Di" 寄君爽弟, p. 259. The art historian Wang Shiqing has written about the conflict between this group of literati-officials and their powerful superiors in the government, such as the

concern with the increasing hostility toward him and other literati-officials who dedicated themselves to Buddhist study, including Li Zhi's friends, the Yuan brothers.

Here a lot of people take on the trendy mission of assaulting Chan Buddhism and expelling monks. Although we are not pronounced Buddhists, we are actually among those to be chased away. A few friends who share with me the same goals (*tongzhi*) have joined together and left.<sup>126</sup>

Therefore, Ma Jinglun's attempt to portray Li Zhi as a Confucian moral man makes a perfect strategy, for that would be the eternal ideal beyond any criticism.

Ironically, Ma Jinglun's own views on literati-officials' gender and sexual behaviors were very conservative. He did not agree with Li Zhi on the theory of *qing*. He had written in moralistic terms about restraining one's desire and emotion. He painstakingly tried to achieve Confucian "sagehood" by becoming *wu-qing* 無情 (emotionless).<sup>127</sup> He even wrote an essay against literati re-marriage based on the principle of self-restraint. He also argues, "A great man who wants to succeed in huge undertakings must keep his own body clean; wife and concubines are the heaviest burden."<sup>128</sup> Ma Jinglun's defense of Li Zhi with the rhetoric against *qing* adds a layer of irony to this tragedy and shows the political and social power of the image of a moral man uninterested in sex.

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Grand Secretary Shen Yiguan and the President of the Board of Rituals Feng Qi. Wang Shiqing 汪世清, "Huang Hui de shengping he shufa yishu" 黃輝的生平和書法藝術, *Gugong bowuyuan qikan* 2001 (1) (no. 93): 9-21; Li Ming 李鳴, "Putaoshe shimo chu kao" 葡萄社始末初考, *Journal of Guangzhou City Polytechnic* vol. 1 (3) 2007: 54-60.

<sup>126</sup> Tao Wangling, "Ji Junshi Di."

<sup>127</sup> Ma Jinglun, *Chengsuogong wenji*: juan 2 "Yulu" 語錄, pp. 1b-2a.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

Li Zhi's "deviant" qualities, such as his passion for Buddhist exploration, vocal promotion of talented women, and interaction with educated women, were becoming widely common among the late Ming literati. On both individual and collective levels, from the mid-sixteenth century on, literati faced the task of re-interpreting who they were, both as political subjects and as gendered social beings. What did not really change in the seventeenth century political history is that Confucian ethics, literati culture and practices, and established literati-official behavioral norms together created a complicated web of relationships and duties that elite men must navigate with care and caution. Once becoming literati and especially after entering officialdom, men were held to high moral standards as the price they paid for the economic and social privileges granted by the state. Heated philosophical and social debates about "desire" and "the individual" among late-Ming literati reflected their conflicted relationship with Neo-Confucian moral doctrines. On the one hand, they were tempted to explore the material and sensual pleasures of this "floating world;" on the other hand, they had to abide by literati behavioral norms, especially those engaged in a political career. Although, in response to the new socio-economic conditions and human relations, late-Ming Confucian thinkers to a large degree legitimized "desire" in human life and thus shook the foundational teaching of Cheng-zhu Neo-Confucianism, translating this change into a transformation of political culture was not successful.

Li Zhi, a retired literatus-official striving for manly heroism and individualism, was determined to be extraordinary in every respect. But at the same time, he himself was striving to be seen as a moral man defined by Confucianist discourse. It becomes clear that Li Zhi's terminological "confusion" and experimentation are symptomatic of his

conflicting actions, revealing how difficult it was for late-Ming elite men to break away from the traditional intellectual, political, and social frameworks of human relationships. In addition, Li Zhi underestimated his enemies' interpretative authority. Words mattered. Text was as material as act for literati, its danger as real. Li Zhi's language of promoting women's learning did not prevail, because failing to textually distance himself from women rendered him vulnerable to attacks. In contrast, his enemies' language of immorality operated effectively in intense struggles. We can identify this phenomenon at the local level in this case, and we will examine its function in national politics in other chapters.

## Chapter Two

### Performing Friendship: Li Zhi's Ten-year Death Drama

With the status of a literatus-official, Li Zhi had tried to explain his lifestyle and his writings as not challenging but rather practicing the political, familial and social duties defined for a literatus by the Confucian Five Cardinal Relations, one of which was male friendship. Literati friendship was on the one hand a very significant part of late-Ming literati socio-cultural life, and on the other increasingly attracting political suspicions in late Ming factionalist atmosphere. Although scholars have argued that friendship, being the only relationship cultivated outside of two most important Confucian institutions of family and state, was “particularly vulnerable to criticism and suspicion,”<sup>1</sup> friendship was actually a diffused notion and practice much broader than how it was defined by some early-modern literati who wrote to warn against a more tangible form of independent male bonding. As I will show in this chapter and the rest of the study, literati friendship provided a flexible and safe zone through which literati-officials’ intertwining gender, political, and historical subjectivities were articulated. In this chapter, I will examine Li Zhi’s conceptualization and practice of friendship during his search for “an ideal way to die,” to show how this relationship was intimately connected with other cardinal relationships in early modern China.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin W. Huang, “Male Friendship and *Jiangxue*,” p. 150.

Li Zhi had carefully studied and written about the deaths of many historical figures. While historians have discussed extensively his unabashed criticism of hypocritical scholars and officials, few have paid attention to his interest in and comments on death per se. These are scattered in the massive writings of *Cang shu*, but are drawn together in one essay, “Five Ways to Die” (*Wu si pian* 五死篇), which summarizes his vision of the ideal ending of a man’s life.<sup>2</sup> Li Zhi identifies in admirable historical figures five acceptable ways to die. The most desirable is exemplified in the stories of Cheng Ying 程嬰 and Gongsun Chujiu 公孫杵臼, Ji Xin 紀信 and Luan Bu 欒布, and Nie Zheng 聶政 and Qu Yuan 屈原.<sup>3</sup> Li Zhi does not elaborate on why he regards their deaths as the most desirable. These men, except Luan Bu, were remembered in Chinese history for dying for their adamant belief in loyalty and integrity. If Li Zhi shared any characteristic with these men, it would be their idealism and heroism.

Li Zhi’s examples of the next two admirable types of death—men who died courageously on the battlefield and men who gave up life rather than surrender—show their righteousness; but the former advanced without weighing the power of the enemy, and the latter died bitterly because they were out-powered by vicious forces. Although Li Zhi considers these two ways of dying less desirable, he argues that dying with integrity like these men surpasses the death of ordinary men. Ranked the next in Li Zhi’s list are

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<sup>2</sup> Li Zhi, *Fen shu* 焚書:juan 4: “Wu si pian”五死篇, pp. 153-154.

<sup>3</sup> For biographies of Cheng Ying and Gongsun Chujiu, see *Shi ji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959): juan 43 “Zhao shijia”趙世家, pp. 1783-1785; Luan Bu, see *Shi ji*: juan 100/ Ji Bu Luan Bu liezhuan 40, pp. 2733-34; Nie Zheng, see *Shi ji*: juan 86 Cike liezhuan 26, pp. 2522-25; Qu Yuan, see *Shi ji*: juan 84/ Qu Yuan Jia Yi liezhuan 24, pp. 2481-91.

the deaths of Wu Zixu 伍子胥 and Chao Cuo 晁錯, who both remained loyal to their ruler but died as a result of diatribes against them. Li Zhi ranks them the fourth because these men did not really know the hearts of their rulers. The last group, men like Shang Yang 商鞅, Wu Qi 吳起 and Wen Zhong 文仲,<sup>4</sup> who died in the attempt to establish merit and fame, ranks the fifth because these men—although heroic—did not know where to stop. Li Zhi argues that wise men must choose from these five options one good way to die. Although they are not equally admirable, they should be considered “a good death” (*shansi* 善死).<sup>5</sup> Li Zhi worried that he would not be able to die like these men because of his senior age. But he was thinking and trying to create the best possible script for his death drama: “I will not be able to die in these (good) ways; dying in other ways is not what a heroic man (*yingxiong hanzi* 英雄漢子) should do. Then how do I die? I figure probably I can only ‘strike some small deal’ ...”<sup>6</sup>

He envied these historical heroes because they could create a blast with their deaths and he lamented that he would probably have no such luck. With no *zhiji* 知己 (friends who truly understand each other) to die for, he saw himself possibly dying at the hands of some nameless men. Still Li Zhi knew what he did not want. Along with specifying these admirable ways to die, Li Zhi wrote that he despised ordinary men who would allow themselves to pass away in a sick bed, surrounded by women and children. This

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<sup>4</sup> Here Li Zhi adopts the view of Cai Ze, a famous strategist during the Warring State era, as recorded and agreed upon by the great historian Sima Qian. See *Shi ji: juan 79/liezhuàn* 19, pp. 2418-25.

<sup>5</sup> Li Zhi, “Wu si pian.”

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

differentiates his usage of “not dying in the hands of women” from others’; he turned this gender- and class-specific behavioral rule into a homosocial ideal. He truly believed that “a man is born for a reason; thus he has to die for a reason.”<sup>7</sup> And his death must be a great manly act. The determination to die in an “extraordinary” way, to die in a manly way, persisted in Li Zhi’s writings and actions from that time forward.

Exiled from Macheng, Li Zhi spent his last days near Beijing, living under the support of the retired official Ma Jinglun. Soon however, he was arrested for immoral teachings and behavior at the order of the emperor. He killed himself with a razor in prison. But I shall look at his death drama as an event that spanned more than ten years; this part of his story encapsulates how the connections among the implicitly gendered ideal of loyalty, the practice of friendship, and literati’s historical subjectivity played out against the backdrop of late-Ming homosocial temperament of heroism and idealism.

### **The Fin-de-Siècle Intellectual and Political Atmosphere**

I consider the beginning of the drama in the year of Wanli 16 (1588). At that point, Li Zhi obviously had not been able to define for himself the ideal way to die. But his head-shaving in this year signaled the beginning of his long experiment with death. But to first look at the historical context of Li Zhi’s tragic ending, let us fast-forward to his arrest. In the second month of the year Wanlin 30 (1602), Zhang Wenda 張問達, a censor on the Board of Rituals, submitted a memorial warning the Wanli emperor of Li Zhi’s subversive thought and immoral behavior. This memorial listed Li Zhi’s “crimes,”

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



including his dangerous and anti-orthodox, anti-Confucian interpretations of historical figures that had damaged literati morality and threatened social order. Then he says:

Most horrific of all is his immoral behavior during his stay in Macheng. He loitered in Buddhist temples with bad men and bathed with prostitutes by day. He seduced the wives and daughters of local gentry families to his temple to attend theological seminars. Some of these women even stayed overnight. The situation was horrendous. He also published a book called *Guanyin wen*, Guanyin referring to the wives and daughters of some gentry families. Local youths like and promote his frivolity. Things have gone so wrong that they even steal people's money and wives. It is not exaggerating to say that they are no better than beasts!<sup>8</sup>

Zhang Wenda's rhetorical strategy does not identify Li Zhi's unorthodox view of Confucian teachings as the most incriminating evidence. Instead, he stresses on Li Zhi's immoral conduct itself as truly dangerous, contaminating, and punishable. Upon receiving this memorial, the emperor Wanli ordered Li Zhi's books to be destroyed and had Li Zhi arrested.

How to interpret Li Zhi's tragic end has become a problem of how to historically interpret and evaluate the intellectual, cultural, social and political dynamics of the late Ming. Because he was such a controversial and influential person, historians have been tempted to attribute his arrest to some important political and intellectual dynamics, for example, the emergence of the Donglin movement and its moral, philosophical, and political agendas. Indeed, at the turn of the seventeenth century, the most important development in political-moral theorizing occurred in the seminal Donglin literati-official community in both Beijing and Jiangnan. The so-called South that represented the latest

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<sup>8</sup> *Ming Shenzong shilu* 明神宗實錄: juan 369, pp. 6917-19. The early Qing scholar Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 includes this into his work *Ri zhi lu* 日知錄 (juan 18). He was extremely critical of Li Zhi's iconoclastic thoughts and behaviors.

intellectual and cultural trends was indeed Jiangnan. In the vastness of Chinese history, this area enjoyed its own trajectory of intellectual and cultural development, distinct from that of the North, the birthplace of Confucian ideology. Economically affluent and highly urbanized, Jiangnan in late Ming times was in the vanguard of reform. One could argue that if the political-moral thought in Jiangnan had been geared toward purism and self-discipline in reaction to transformations in socio-economic domains, as was later manifested by the most influential of the Donglin literati-officials, the national political culture would have faced “a conservative turn.”<sup>9</sup> In history and in modern times, movement in more liberal directions in thought and practice always triggers an opposing reaction. In the case of the late Ming, the development of individualism and reactions to it were heightened by the deteriorating political atmosphere from the mid-Wanli reign; this deterioration facilitated the “turn” toward the necessity of moral discipline among literati-officials. This was a dialectical process fueled by historical contingency, and not predetermined in any sense.<sup>10</sup>

Seen in view of the last fifty years of Ming political history, Li Zhi’s arrest and death anticipated the rise of the Donglin movement. But one has to be careful when conceptualizing the link between the two. Li’s arrest at best foresees the future Donglin leaders’ emphasis on moral self-cultivation. In the discussions of Zhang Wenda’s memorial against Li Zhi, historians have come to consider Zhang a Donglin figure and his memorial a preview of the Donglin attacks on its philosophical rivals.<sup>11</sup> This claim is

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Kai-wing Chow, *The Rise of Confucian Ritualism in late Imperial China: Ethics, Classics, and Lineage Discourse* (Stanford: Stanford U Press, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> William T. Rowe uses this phrase to describe the Donglin: “intellectually conservative and politically radical.” Rowe, *Crimson Rain*, p. 85. This observation points to the necessity of studying both thoughts and practices when we examine the political development of this period.

<sup>11</sup> For example, Mizoguchi, *Chugoku zen-kindai shisou*, esp. Part II: chap. 1, p. 225.

anachronistic, however, because Zhang Wenda's political stance would come to be seen more in tune with Donglin position only after the powerful eunuch Wei Zhongxian 魏忠賢 had begun to persecute uncooperative officials in the Tianqi reign, including Zhang Wenda.<sup>12</sup> But when he memorialized against Li Zhi, Zhang was but a young censor from a northern town, Jingyang 涇陽 (in today's Shaanxi), affiliated with no clique but following the northerner's typically conservative political tradition. He was just not as blunt as many others, for example, his equally conservative *tongnian* and *tongxiang*<sup>13</sup> Luo Yuren 雒于仁, who loudly criticized the Wanli emperor for indulging in sensual pleasures.<sup>14</sup>

Zhang Wenda once served in the same branch of the government as Liu Dongxin 劉東星, Li Zhi's major patron and admirer in the 1590s, who supervised river work and transportation as president of Board of Works until he died on the job at the end of Wanli 29 (1601), a little before Zhang Wenda submitted his memorial.<sup>15</sup> Zhang Wenda came from a county that had a long tradition of managing river work and irrigation. He was

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<sup>12</sup> Before then, Zhang Wenda agreed with the Donglin stance on a number of issues, but also upset some officials in the Donglin camp with his pro-emperor decision on the Zhang Chai 張差 case. This is one of the controversial Three Cases (三案). After many years of difficult negotiation between the Wanli emperor and the bureaucrats over the issue of heir apparent, the emperor eventually agreed to establish his eldest son Changluo, rather than the son by his favorite consort, Madame Zheng. But the bureaucrats always suspected that the emperor or his consort would find a way to get rid of Changluo. In Wanli 43 (1615), a man named Zhang Chai broke into the imperial palace where Changluo resided and injured one of the guards. He was arrested on the spot. Zhang Wenda was in charge of this case as the President of the Board of Punishment. *Ming tongjian* 明通鑑: *juan* 75; *MS*: *juan* 241/*liezhuan* 129, pp. 6260-62.

<sup>13</sup> *Tongnian* refers to men who obtained degrees at the civil service examinations in the same year; *tongxiang* means men from the same region. These are two important lines of literati-official social and political networking.

<sup>14</sup> *MS*: *juan* 234/*liezhuan* 122, p. 6098.

<sup>15</sup> *MS*: *juan* 223/*liezhuan* 111, p. 5879.

knowledgeable in this area and had offered many suggestions on the management of major rivers in northern China, which were causing huge problems during the Wanli reign. Before Liu Dongxing died, Zhang Wenda had memorialized to impeach his ability to efficiently conduct the projects on Jiahe River.<sup>16</sup> Considering Zhang Wenda's familiarity with Liu Dongxi's work and life, he must have learned a great deal about the unusually close ties between Li Zhi and Liu (as well as Liu's sons). Indeed, several months before Liu's death, Li Zhi visited and stayed at his official residence in Shangdong. During this time he was portrayed as a flamboyantly self-important mentor to Liu Dongxing.<sup>17</sup> But Zhang Wenda did not bring up the charges against Li Zhi until his former superior had passed away and he himself had been transferred to the Board of Rites.

Some have interpreted contemporary officials' harsh criticism of Li Zhi in terms of how it reflected the Donglin philosophical-moral stance, which saw "the human nature" firmly within Confucian ethics of *gangchang* 綱常 ("constant obligations of morality"), whereas Li Zhi adopted an opposite view.<sup>18</sup> The president of the Board of Ritual, Feng Qi, is often considered one of the early members of Donglin movement (although it only began to be explicitly referred to as such in the year Feng Qi died). As Zhang Wenda's superior, Feng himself memorialized to the emperor, stressing the

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<sup>16</sup> *MS: juan 87 zhi 63/hequ 5/Jiahe* 洧河, p. 2122. Also see Liu Mao 劉懋 compl., *Jingyang xianzhi* 涇陽縣志: *juan 12 liezhuan-guanshi* 列傳 . 官師 (reprinted) (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1969) for Zhang Wenda's biography, pp. 555-556.

<sup>17</sup> Lin, *Nianpu kaolue*, p. 381. Li Zhi's *tongxiang* Xie Zhaozhe detested Li Zhi's self-important performance at Liu Dongxing's official residence. Xie Zhaozhe 謝肇淛, *Wu za zu* 五雜俎: *juan 8*, p. 341.

<sup>18</sup> Mizoguchi, *Chugoku zen-kindai shisou*, Part II: chap. 1.

seriousness of the problems presented by Li Zhi.<sup>19</sup> Since the central phenomenon explored in this study is how issues of morality become a handy means of attack when political tensions intensify, my discussion of Li Zhi's arrest is meant to clarify the political (ir)relevance of his case and so foreground the significance of morality issues in public life.

Many have argued that Li Zhi's arrest reflects the rising hostility among more conservative officials toward those who practiced Buddhism. The Wanli emperor himself suggested that he would not punish literati-officials for pursuing teachings other than Confucianism. They should quit their official jobs and pursue Buddhism or Taoism in reclusion; but "righteous and loyal officials" must follow Confucius' teachings.<sup>20</sup> It was also possible that the Wanli emperor was trying to use Li Zhi's case to show how much he cared about morality (especially concerning sexual morality, since his officials had been annoying him with fierce criticism of his pleasure-seeking and infatuation with his favorite woman, Imperial Consort Zheng). In the tenth month of Wanli 29 (1601), the emperor appointed Feng Qi—someone also considered as Donglin—to the powerful position of the President of the Board of Rites after a long battle with the bureaucrats over the establishment of his eldest son, the Prince Changluo, as the crown prince—instead of Consort Zheng's son, his favorite. The emperor's personal agenda and the

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<sup>19</sup> Some believe that Zhang Wenda memorialized at the request of the Grand Secretary Shen Yiguan, whom Li Zhi criticized in a letter to Jiao Hong (Jiao Hong was in the South) in the year Wanli 26. For example, *Fujian tongzhi* 福建通志 (Daoguang edition): *juan* 214 "Li Zhi zhuan" as cited in Lin, *nianpu kaolue* pp. 416-17. But no evidence suggests that Shen Yiguan personally instructed Zhang to do so. In addition, the case of Chu prince successor was unfolding at the time. Zhang Wenda's friend and colleague at the Board of Rituals Guo Zhengyu famously fought against Shen Yiguan. See *MS*: *juan* 216 and 226 for the biographies of Feng Qi and Guo Zhengyu respectively. Also see *Ming Tongjian*: *juan* 73 for the case of Chu prince. Feng Qi's memorial is in *Ming Shenzong shilu*: *juan* 370.

<sup>20</sup> *Ming Shenzong shilu*: *juan* 370. This edict was issued late in the third month of Wanli 30, twelve days after Li Zhi's suicide in prison.

various political and intellectual dynamics in and outside the capital taken together produced the incident of Li Zhi's arrest. But after his arrest, no one seemed to know what to do with him next, until rumors started that some officials suggested he be deported to his hometown in the remote south. His case was not turned to any factional purposes. Li Zhi did not suffer from torture in prison; he even had access to pen and paper.<sup>21</sup> Such evidence compels us to heed the different political implications of Li Zhi's arrest and that of the Buddhist Master Zibo's, which are often lumped together in discussions about the late Wanli hostility toward literati-official Buddhist practices in both seventeenth-century and modern historiography. Instead of emphasizing differences between Li Zhi and officials of moral conservatism, I would like to point to their similarities. The "socially deviant" Li Zhi and the aspiring Donglin officials resembled each other in terms of seeing morality (or self-representation of it) as central to their own being as public men. As Confucian men they had been shaped by the same Confucian ethical doctrines and political culture, as well as literati tradition and contemporary literati culture.

While imprisoned in an increasingly volatile political environment, Li Zhi himself was responsible for the timing and manner of his death, for he had been determined to live like a "real man" and die like a "real man" for a long time, as I will soon demonstrate. Exactly one year after Li Zhi's suicide, when Feng Qi was dying of a chronic illness and ordered his brother to prepare his body for his last moment, he murmured the same words Li Zhi had—"I will not die in the hands of women!"<sup>22</sup> This "coincidence" in the deaths of two very different men (at least portrayed as such in history) demonstrates the

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<sup>21</sup> Huang, 1587, p. 218.

<sup>22</sup> 吾不死于婦人之手 . "Xingzhuang" 行狀 (biography) in Feng Qin 馮琦, *Beihai ji* 北海集 (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1970): juan 16, p. 2478.

complicated relationships among gender ideology, rhetoric, and practice. Although the Ming laws on death rituals for officials stipulates that “A man should not die in the hands of women,”<sup>23</sup> in the cases of Li Zhi and Feng Qi, both literati-officials, this rule was practiced differently. Feng Qi used it to show his adherence to literati-official gender propriety; Li Zhi used it more as a homosocial rhetoric, as we will see below.

But I will first discuss two key issues of literati culture to provide the historical background against which Li Zhi’s death is to be understood, i.e. heroism and friendship. The late Ming period had witnessed heated debates about and some serious attempts to theorize and practice individualism since the rise of the Yangming school of Confucianism in the midst of booming economic growth and socio-cultural developments. The power of Wang Yangming’s teachings lies in his approach to “sagehood” proceeding from a new perspective. His idea of the “unity of knowing and acting” advocates learning and pursuing sagehood in experience and this opens up the possibility that all men may achieve sagehood through learning. The Taizhou school, the “left-wing” strand of the Yangming school, advocated practicing Confucianism as a personal way of life. Compared to Wang Yangming, its founder Wang Gen 王艮 stressed the self more “as the active center of things.”<sup>24</sup> Two other prominent figures of this school, He Xinyin 何心隱 and Li Zhi, not only attached more importance to individual agency, but also enacted the particular male homosocial belief in late-Ming

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<sup>23</sup> 男子不絕於婦人之手. *Ming Huidian* 明會典 (Wanli edition) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989 & 2007): *juan* 99/*Libu* 禮部 57: *Sangli* 喪禮 4: *Pinguan* 品官, p. 553. This refers to the proper way to handle the last moment of a person. According to custom, someone had to take the hand of the dying person, and they had to be of not the same sex. This does not appear in the laws for commoners.

<sup>24</sup> De Bary, “Individualism and Humanitarianism,” p. 163.

individualism: friendship and heroism.<sup>25</sup> I stress “enactment” precisely because as the late Ming intellectual debates about the individual’s self-cultivation were moving toward a way of living, “action” assumed more importance.<sup>26</sup> As William de Bary and Shimada Kenji have observed, while Wang Yangming’s followers saw him as a heroic figure, his disciple and the founder of the Taizhou school, Wang Gen 王艮, believed that the “great man” “acts according to the nature of his inner self, whose absolute subjectivity is at once the basis of his perfect freedom and unlimited joy, and of his outgoing desire to rescue others from their sufferings.”<sup>27</sup> Another major figure of this school whom Li Zhi greatly admired, He Xinyin, by actions such as participating in the ouster of the notoriously corrupt Grand Secretary Yan Song 嚴嵩, relived the legacy of Wang Yangming, who established his heroic image as a literatus-official through military success and political activities in his career.<sup>28</sup>

Another important phenomenon in literati culture at this time was male friendship.

Recent studies of the late Ming milieu of literati homosociality have shed light on the

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<sup>25</sup> From late Ming thoughts on the individual, sagehood and the development from Yangming teachings to the Taizhou school, see for example, de Bary, “Individualism and Humanitarianism;” Chow, *The Rise of Confucian Ritualism*; Ronald G. Dimberg, *The Sage and Society: The Life and Thought of Ho Hsin-yin* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1974).

<sup>26</sup> Joanna F. Handlin has discussed another kind of “action” in her study of the late Ming scholar and official Lü Kun 呂坤 (1536-1618): statecraft-writing for literati-officials as a way to bridge the gap between office and learning. Lü Kun’s “fact-centered” method of self-cultivation gives a meaning to and highlights the importance of “action” in the cultivation of moral leadership. Handlin, *Action in Late Ming Thought: The Reorientation of Lu K’un and Other Scholar-Officials* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

<sup>27</sup> Shimada Kenji 島田虔次 as quoted in de Bary, “Individualism and Humanitarianism,” pp. 170-71.

<sup>28</sup> For good analyses of the life experiences of Wang Yangming and He Xinyin, see Tu Weiming, *Neo-Confucian thought in action: Wang Yang-ming's youth (1472-1509)* (Berkeley: University of Berkeley Press, 1976); Dimberg, *The Sage and Society*.



increasing importance attached to friendship.<sup>29</sup> Although friendship had always been an important Confucian value,<sup>30</sup> various elements contributed to an increasingly prominent ethos of friendship in late Ming social life, including the popular activities of literary societies and academies, the rise of individualism with the popularization of the Yangming school, economic development that allowed more career alternatives, etc. But does this mean that literati generally began to have a different stake in their performance of the ideal Confucian man? Changes of this kind could interact with other cardinal relationships in complicated ways.<sup>31</sup> Celebrating friendship “with unprecedented enthusiasm”<sup>32</sup> in the late Ming could have various reasons and implications. In particular, the relationship between friendship and political loyalty was very complex and varied in the different stages of the Ming-Qing dynastic transition. This study of seventeenth-century political culture suggests that Li Zhi’s interest in and practice of friendship at the beginning of this historical juncture was but one of the ways that friendship was practiced and explored. In several senses literati male friendship reinforces the hierarchical model of human relationships and gender boundaries.

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<sup>29</sup> See for example, Martin Huang, “Male Friendships in Late Ming: An Introduction” and “Male Friendship and *Jiangxue* (Philosophical Debates) in Sixteenth-Century China,” *Nan Nü* 9 (2007): 2-33 and 146-178.

<sup>30</sup> The main principle of Confucian ethic of friendship is *xin*, trustworthiness.

<sup>31</sup> Joseph P. McDermott has made similar points in “Friendship and Its Friends in the Late Ming,” in the Institute of Modern History of Academia Sinica (ed.), *Jinshi jiazhu yu zhengzhi bijiao lishi lunwen ji* (Taipei: the Institute of Modern History of Academia Sinica, 1992), pp. 67-96. McDermott argues that the flexibility of the late Ming understanding of friendship presented new possibilities to critique the imperial rule. Two points of insight beg our attention: equality was not the defining feature of the new discourse of friendship; realignment of traditional moral values not necessarily meaning a “more modern political order.” Handlin’s discussion about Lu Kun also suggests that Lu Kun’s caution against literati friendship and networking primarily derived from his criticism that these prevented scholars from maintaining an independent spirit, fostered frivolity, and encouraged aimless philosophical discussions. See her *Action in Late Ming Thought*.

<sup>32</sup> Martin Huang, “Male Friendships in Late Ming: An Introduction,” p. 17.

## Searching for “a Good Death”

During the year of Wanli 16 (1588), when his wife passed away, Li Zhi seemed to have come to a conceptualization of a homosocial outlook for his death drama: a truly manly farewell to the world indeed meant a homosocial accomplishment. If shaving one’s head symbolically excluded the possibility of dying in the hands of his wife, now his wife’s death enabled him to get past not only the question of “abandonment” but also the scenario of dying in an “unmanly” way. In a letter written in Wanli 17 (1589) to Gu Yangqian 顧養謙 (1537-1604), a patron-friend, Li Zhi mentions the two ways of dying he detests the most:

Old and friendless here, I spend all my time reading. This is nonetheless not what an old man should do and I am only waiting to die. I don’t want to die in the hands of women;<sup>33</sup> nor do I want to die in the hands of hypocritical Confucians. Then how should I die? You should know me well. Why do I have to stay in Jiaoshan<sup>34</sup> until I die? ... In history, Jizi was buried between Ying and Bo. He wanted to die in his desired place. How can I, as a living being, go to a place I don’t like? Liang Hong wanted to be buried next to Yao Li’s tomb. Even a dead person’s bones were admired so much. How can I make you company me, while your extraordinary talent is needed by government? I have made up my mind.”<sup>35</sup>

Here again, he loathes dying in the company of women as much as at the hands of “hypocritical Confucians.” In his view, ordinary men die in these ways. As one who over his whole life strove to stand out, he could not envision himself leaving the world like a

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<sup>33</sup> Literally he writes “in the hands of wife and concubine,” which I believe in this case should be generally understood as “women.”

<sup>34</sup> Jiaoshan is a famous town in today’s Zhenjiang city. At the time, Gu Yangqian was promoted as Vice Director of the Board of Revenue in Nanjing. He invited Li Zhi to live a recluse life in Jiaoshan. But Li Zhi refused to go because he was “not fond of Jiaoshan.”

<sup>35</sup> Li Zhi, *Fenshu zengbu I* 焚書增補一: 1: “Shu Changshun Shoujuan Cheng Gu Zhong’an” 手書常順卷 呈顧冲庵, p. 258.

“common sort.”<sup>36</sup> Li Zhi’s discourse on death suggests his self-identification as a “real man” was predicated on two things: homosociality and anti-“Confucian hypocrisy,” though as many have noted Li Zhi did not in any fundamental ways challenge the basic Confucian values such as loyalty and filial piety.<sup>37</sup> What he really detested was “hypocrisy,” a highly subjective (and convenient) moral judgment based on his own criteria of “authenticity.” Many of his friends would turn up “hypocrites” if judged by his theoretical standards. So, if there was one indispensable and executable element in Li Zhi’s death drama, it was homosociality, implying physical detachment from “women.” Li Zhi’s statement of Wanli 17 (1589) thus reiterated a commitment to male bonding rather than advocating celibacy. Homosocial commitment was not a means to justify voluntary withdrawal from the familial and social responsibilities of literati. It was the end, a literati cultural ideal and virtue that Li Zhi set out to realize.

The gesture of detachment from women appears in the historical commentaries that Li Zhi made on the historical figures that he admired for their ways of dying. Take his comments on Wang Zhang 王章, an official of the Former Han dynasty (206 BC- AD 24), as an example. Wang Zhang appears in the chapter of “Honest and Chaste Famous Ministers” (*zhijie mingchen* 直節名臣) in Li Zhi’s *Cang shu*, parts of which came into print around the year Wanli 18 (1590). Wang Zhang’s story in *Cang shu* closely follows his biographical passage in the *Han shu* 漢書, the official history compiled by the historian Ban Gu 班固 (32-92). According to his official biography, as a student, Wang

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<sup>36</sup> Li Zhi, “Wu si pian.”

<sup>37</sup> For example, see Mizoguchi, *Chugoku zen-kindai shisou*, Part II: chap. 1.

lived with his wife in the capital, Chang'an. He fell sick and because they lived in poverty, in winter he had to lie under a cover made from grass. He wept in front of his wife and his wife angrily scolded him for weeping instead of striving for success. Later Wang advanced in office and became the top official in the capital. When he tried to impeach another influential official, his wife suggested: "You should be content now. Don't you forget the days when you were weeping under the grass cover!" Wang Zhang replied: "This is not something a woman can understand." He turned in his memorial and as a result was put in prison. His wife and children were jailed as well. One night his youngest daughter, who was only twelve, started to cry in her cell. She said: "Usually they called the numbers of the prisoners, from one to nine. Today they only called eight. My father is known for his unyielding character. He must be the first to be executed." It was later confirmed that Wang Zhang had indeed died that day.<sup>38</sup>

Ban Gu originally commented that Wang Zhang's death was tragic because having served as the top official in the capital for only two years, he died under a false accusation.<sup>39</sup> But Li Zhi disagrees:

I believe Wang Zhang deserves our admiration. Ban Gu's criticism is wrong. Although Wang Zhang did not listen to his wife's advice and died, this does not change the fact that both of them were worthy. Alas! [Wang] Zhang was able to die well, because he was wise and his wife and daughter were wise as well!<sup>40</sup>

In Li Zhi's view, Wang Zhang died in an ideal way, and his wife and daughter's wisdom added value to his death. Interestingly, it is noteworthy that their wisdom and presence were detached, not close enough to threaten or damage the materialization of Wang

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<sup>38</sup> Ban Gu, *Han shu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962): *juan 76/liezhuan* 46, pp. 3238-39.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Cang shu*: *juan 28* "Ming chen zhuan": "Zhi jie ming chen": Wang Zhang, p. 536.

Zhang's moral accomplishments: his wife's warning did not deter him from doing what was right, and his daughter's intelligence proved true only when he was already dead. In addition, they were detained in separate prison cells. Wang Zhang did not die "in the hands of women!" About ten years after *Cang shu*'s publication, Li Zhi died in prison. When he was thrown into prison in Wanli 30 (1602), there was no question of his dying in the midst of tears from wife or daughter. His wife had died, and his daughter was thousands of miles away. This juxtaposition of Li Zhi and Wang Zhang's deaths does not necessarily suggest that Li Zhi consciously modeled his death after that of historical figures he admired. However, it does conform to an ideal that Li Zhi championed.

Multiple factors determined the timing and manner of Li Zhi's death. He could have waited. Ray Huang points out the inexplicability of his suicide. "At the end of the trial the judge recommended no harsher penalty than that the accused be escorted back to his district of origin, in this case [Quanzhou in Fujian]. Customarily such a recommendation meant a suspended sentence, with the offender placed under the surveillance of local officials for life. For unknown reasons these papers were held in the emperor's office."<sup>41</sup> Li Zhi clearly struggled over making a heroic death or returning in dishonor to his hometown; in the end he chose to slash his own throat and so complete the death drama of a heroic man. The eight poems he composed during his prison days reveal the depths of the struggle between his desire to live and to die. Two of them suggest that he had hoped for the mercy from the emperor. In one poem, he writes: "Zeng Shen could be made to live or die/How dare I die if His Majesty spares me?/I only wish that my books are read carefully/You would certainly change your mind and learn the

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<sup>41</sup> Huang, 1587, p. 220.

truth.”<sup>42</sup> In another poem, he says: “I still lie in bed while the sun rises to lighten up the window/My true friends (*zhiji*) filled my dreams/Thinking that I have not accomplished much after a lazy and meandering life/As usual I am reading while waiting to hear from His Majesty.”<sup>43</sup>

Li Zhi invokes the references to Confucian literati virtues, filial piety and loyalty, to appeal to those who controlled his life, including the Wanli emperor. The reference to Zeng Shen, one of Confucius’ favorite students, is particularly interesting in terms of its multiple implications. Literati writers sometimes invoked this reference to imply victimization of slander.<sup>44</sup> In Confucian tradition, it is believed that Zeng Shen not only lived as an example of filial piety but also best illuminated the meaning and importance of filial piety in written words. *The Book of Filial Piety*, a work he allegedly wrote, teaches two key and mutually constitutive literati virtues: filial piety and loyalty, as the notion of “seeking a loyal official in a filial son” shows. Historical representations of Zeng Shen also exemplify how the roles of a son, father, and husband were connected. According to his biography in *Kongzi jia yu* 孔子家語, Zeng Shen took very good care of his stepmother, but he divorced his wife because she failed to cook food in the proper way. When someone challenged him that his wife’s conduct did not fall in the punishable

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<sup>42</sup> Zeng Shen 曾參 was one of Confucius’s most able students. Confucius guided him in his learning, considering him as truly grasping the way of filial piety. See *Shi Ji: juan 67 / Zhongni dizi Liezhuan* 7, p. 2205. This biographical record claims that Zeng Shen wrote *The Book of Filial Piety*. However, scholars since the ancient times have debated about the authorship. In any case, Zeng Shen represented the virtue of filial piety. *Xu Fenshu: juan 5*: “Xi zhong ba jue” 系中八絕: “Shu xing xi lan” 書幸細覽, p. 116.

<sup>43</sup> *Xu Fenshu: juan 5*: “Xi zhong ba jue”: “Lao hen wu cheng” 老恨無成, p. 117.

<sup>44</sup> See for example, Donald Sutton’s analysis of such usage in literati poetry in “A Case of Literati Piety: The Ma Yuan Cult from High-Tang to High-Qing,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, and Reviews (CLEAR)* vol. 11 (Dec. 1989), p. 92.

categories of the “Seven Outs” (*qichu*, 七出)<sup>45</sup> and therefore she should not be divorced, Zeng Shen said her failure to follow his command demonstrated that she was not a good wife. Zeng Shen never remarried after the divorce, because history had taught him that the second wife might lead the father to distrust and estrange his filial son.<sup>46</sup> Li Zhi could be comparing his case with that of Zeng Shen, suggesting that people have misinterpreted his virtues as a good father, a good son, and a good husband.<sup>47</sup>

Near the end, Li Zhi’s self-representation highlights the ideas of heroism and friendship. The last in this set of poems, entitled “Not a Heroic Man,” states: “Men of ambition will not forget the hardships/Men of bravery will not want to leave go of principles/Why do I wait instead of dying now?/I wish to soon go to the Yellow Springs.”<sup>48</sup> This poem reveals the intensity of his inner struggle. Upon hearing that the authorities might order him deported back to his hometown, he must have begun to panic: he would have to live with his daughter and her family, and eventually die in her home! He would have to die “in women’s hands” after all. To die in a “manly” state, Li Zhi had to kill himself in the prison.

So he did.

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<sup>45</sup> The seven reasons to divorce a wife are: no son; having extramarital affairs; failure to obey the parents; talking too much; theft; jealousy; serious illness. The phrase *qi chu* and these requirements did not enter the law until the Tang dynasty, but they came from the Confucian classic *Da dai li ji* which had a different name.

<sup>46</sup> *Kongzi jiaoyu* 孔子家語 (Yang Chaoming 楊朝明 ed., Taipei: Wanjuanlou tushu gufen youxian gongsi, 2005): *juan* 9: “Qi shi er dizi jie” 38 七十二弟子解第三十八, p. 435.

<sup>47</sup> Ironically, when commenting on Bao Yong’s story of filial piety in *Chu tan ji* (Bao Yong divorced his wife because the latter used harsh language to discipline a dog in front of his stepmother. This was remembered as an example of filial piety.), Li Zhi dismissively writes: “Bao Yong craves for fame. He did this probably for another purpose.” Indeed, the project of *Chu tan ji* deliberately downplays the importance of the virtue of filial piety. *Chu tan ji*: *juan* 6 “Fuzi 2”: “Xiaozi,” p. 47.

<sup>48</sup> *Xu Fenshu*: *juan* 5: “Xi zhong ba jue” 系中八絕: “Bu shi haohai” 不是好漢, p. 117. “Yellow Springs” (*huangquan*) refers to the netherworld.

## Die in the Hand of a True Friend

As Li Zhi had envisioned and planned, male friendship structured and completed his death drama. Over the years, Li Zhi had developed a wide circle of friends, patrons, and admirers. Since he had settled in Macheng, homosocial activities replaced family ties and responsibilities as the center of his life. Even in the face of charges of abandonment, he was able to achieve fame and status partly through his association with literati-officials known for their intellectual accomplishment, such as the Geng brothers, Jiao Hong, and the Yuan brothers.<sup>49</sup> From the year Wanli 18 (1590), when parts of his controversial *Cang shu* went to print for the first time, to Wanli 27 (1599), when Jiao Hong helped him publish the completed *Cang shu* in Nanjing, his association with the famous Yuan brothers and his influence on their literary theory enhanced his reputation in literati society. Literati-officials better known for statecraft than scholarly accomplishment also expressed admiration for him and became his patrons, Liu Dongxing and Mei Guozhen prominent among them. Friendships with famous intellectuals and officials became his hallmark. Li Zhi depended on this network for intellectual and financial reasons, and more importantly, to fashion himself into an extraordinary man.

But Li Zhi's determination to have friendship as the central part of his deathbed scenario ironically resulted in a serious clash between the superficiality and idealism of that wish. By the end of the Ming, the literati had had a long, rich history of male friendship. A giant gallery of historical figures from a wide range of sources—Confucian

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<sup>49</sup> Yuan Zongdao, Yuan Hongdao and Yuan Zhongdao.



ethics, official and unofficial histories, and literature—contributed to the discourse of friendship that featured devotion, trustworthiness, and rapport. In addition, though never explicitly articulated, friendship also had its practical aspects (through marriage and networking) that brought political, social, and financial benefits. In his self-representation, Li Zhi drew upon various idealized meanings of friendship. For example, in Wanli 24 (1596), Jiao Hong helped repel a violent attempt at persecution against Li for his allegedly immoral interaction with young women of Mei Guozhen's family.<sup>50</sup> After the incident, in his letter to Jiao Hong, Li Zhi reiterates the idea of not dying in the company of women and children but in that of “true friends.”

I heard you managed to placate those who wanted to kill me. I am grateful. However, I believe although I am a Chinese, I do not have anyone in China that truly understands me. I would rather travel abroad and die in a foreign land. Why do you have to persuade me to return to Longtan?<sup>51</sup> Longtan is not necessarily where I [wish to] finally settle down and die. A place where I could find friends who surpass me and truly understand me is where I eventually belong.... If I cannot die with true friends, dying in prison or on a battlefield would be nice. You really did not have to save me. I want people to remember me as a warrior and a martyr after I die; dying in Longhu (Longtan) does not even compare with that. Generally speaking, those who do not want to die in the hands of wife and children should determine to die in the hands of true friends. This is obvious.<sup>52</sup>

His rhetoric employs the conventional trope of *zhiyin* (true friend) and stresses that he is searching for his *zhiyin* and devoted to extraordinary friendship. This belongs to the idealistic, heroic tradition of literati male friendship. The use of the *zhiyin* trope here presents Li Zhi as a morally lofty and uncompromising man. But from the perspective of

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<sup>50</sup> Lin Haiquan, *Nianpu kaolue*, p. 321.

<sup>51</sup> Longtan was where Li Zhi resided in Macheng. Jiao Hong tried to persuade Li Zhi to return there after he calmed down the situation for him.

<sup>52</sup> *Fen shu: juan 2*: “Yu Jiao Ruohou” 與焦弱侯, p. 58.

the reader, he seems to suggest that he is still searching for such “a true friend.” This self-presentation starkly contrasts with the impressive number of friendships he had and maintained, including the patronage that supported him and the admiration from his patron-followers.

Li Zhi’s friendship with Mei Danran’s father, Mei Guozhen, is an interesting example to show what emotional and practical needs Li Zhi found in a “friend.” A Macheng native who obtained his *jinshi* title in Wanli 11 (1583), Mei Guozhen had also mastered military theories and martial skills. After serving as magistrate and then censor in the central government, he had to return to Macheng to observe the three-year mourning for his deceased mother. This offered the first opportunity for him to meet Li Zhi. But evidence suggests that in the beginning their interaction was not substantial. In retrospect, Mei Guozhen said, “At the time when I was staying at home, we did not socialize much. When we met, I did not even know he knew Buddhism, not to mention his knowledge about the military.”<sup>53</sup> This suggests that at the time of their early encounters, Li Zhi was perceived as a popular social figure more than anything else.<sup>54</sup>

But they became “friends” after Mei Guozhen’s involvement in the military actions on the northwestern frontier, Ningxia. As a soldier rebellion was breaking out in the region and quickly joined by non-Han tribe leaders, the Wanli emperor dispatched high-ranking officials and generals to suppress the rebels. But the military campaign was

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<sup>53</sup>Pan Zenghong 潘曾紘 (ed.), *Li Wenling wai ji* 李溫陵外集: juan 2: “Sunzi cantong qi xu” 孫子參同契序 (Taipei: Wei-Wen Books & Publishing Co. Ltd., 1977), p. 176. Lin Haiquan, *Nianpu kaolue*, p. 182.

<sup>54</sup> During the years when Mei Guozhen was in Macheng (1588-1590), Li Zhi’s most controversial works and exchanges with his attackers were being published and circulated. Mei Guozhen, like many local literati, obviously did not see him as an outstanding scholar or teacher of Buddhism.

poorly executed and initially frustrated.<sup>55</sup> Mei Guozhen's advice to the emperor, as well as his excellent performance as the army inspecting censor (*jianjun*) in this campaign, proved crucial to its ultimate success; the efforts are remembered as one of the Three Major Military Campaigns of the Wanli reign.<sup>56</sup> When the emperor approved Mei Guozhen's request to personally participate in leading the campaign and appointed him the army inspecting censor, many officials in and outside the capital questioned his motives and his competence to lead.<sup>57</sup> Li Zhi, who was living in Macheng at the time, believed Mei Guozhen would bring success. He was very excited upon learning Mei Guozhen's appointment to the frontier and told a local official, "The western region should be safe now. Kesheng (Mei Guozhen's courtesy name)<sup>58</sup> has gone there as the inspecting censor!" When officials in the Macheng area expressed their anxiety over the situation in the frontier, Li Zhi said: "Since Censor Mei is with the army, you shouldn't be worried." Later he recalled: "People did not know Kesheng; nor did they know me.

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<sup>55</sup> The Japanese historian Okano Masako has delineated the timeline of how various rebellions began and overlapped as well as the development of a series of political and military events in the suppression campaign. See Okano Masako 岡野昌子, "Manreki nijū nen Chōka heihen" 萬曆二十年寧夏兵變 [The Ningxia Mutiny of Wanli 20 (1592)], in Ono Kazuko 小野和子 (ed.) *Minmatsu Shinsho no shakai to bunka* 明末清初の社会と文化 [Society and Culture in the Late Ming and the Early Qing Period] (Kyoto: Kyoto Daigaku Jinbun Kagaku Kenkujo, 1996), pp. 587-624. For a detailed study of the 1592 Ningxia mutiny, see Kenneth Swope, "All Men are not Brothers: Ethnic Identity and Dynastic Loyalty in the Ningxia Mutiny of 1592," *Late Imperial China* 24:1 (2003): 79-129. Also see Swope's dissertation on the Wanli military campaigns, "The three great campaigns of the Wanli Emperor, 1592-1600: court, military, and society in late sixteenth-century China" (Diss., University of Michigan, 2001).

<sup>56</sup> Wu Yingji 吳應箕, "Mei Hengxiang Xiansheng Xi zheng ji xu" 梅衡湘先生西征集序 in *Xi zheng ji* 西征集 (Hishi copy of the original in Naikako Bunko, Tokyo), p. 1. Also see *MS*: juan 228/liezhuan 116 (pp. 5978-81) for details of this campaign and officials involved.

<sup>57</sup> Mei Guozhen himself wrote in a memorial to the emperor discussing this. See his memorial (numbered the eighth of his memorials concerning this campaign) in *Xi zheng ji*.

<sup>58</sup> 客生 or 克生.

How could they believe what I said! But soon word about victory in the west arrived. The situation was indeed mostly put under control.”<sup>59</sup>

Mei Guozhen provides a similar account of their friendship in his preface for Li Zhi’s book on Sunzi’s military theories.<sup>60</sup> He writes:

When I am away in the military, I have no one to talk to. I always think that [Li Zhi] is the best company. When he was living in Chu,<sup>61</sup> people worried about the bandits [in the west]. [Li Zhi] said, “Don’t worry. [Mei] has been ordered to go over there. He definitely will be able to handle the bandits.” This shows the faith we had in each other, although we hadn’t talked much.<sup>62</sup>

In this preface, he calls Li Zhi “my friend” and explains to the reader the significance of their friendship: because “military theories and Chan Buddhism are similar” in that their essence cannot be described in language if the author does not thoroughly master them, he and Li Zhi, who is “a master of Chan Buddhism,” could truly understand each other.<sup>63</sup>

The publication of these two prefaces took place in the year of Wanli 25 (1597), after local hostility against Li Zhi had intensified to threatening levels in Macheng, and Mei Guozhen invited Li Zhi to Datong (Shanxi), where he served as the provincial governor (*xunfu*). Mei Guozhen not only took Li Zhi to historical sites, but also helped him get *Cang shu* copied and *Sunzi cantong* printed.<sup>64</sup> The trip, the publications, and prefaces for each other publicly sealed the friendship between the two. Although Mei

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<sup>59</sup> Li Zhi, “Hou yu” 後語 in *Xi zheng ji*.

<sup>60</sup> Sunzi is traditionally considered to be the author of *The Art of War*, an important book on military strategies.

<sup>61</sup> Historically the area where Macheng is located was called “Chu.”

<sup>62</sup> Mei Guozhen “Sunzi cantong qi xu,” p. 176.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> *Xu Fenshu*: juan 1: “Yu Geng Zijian,” 與耿子鍵, p. 43. Li Zhi’s letter in the Shanghai Museum, as cited in Lin, *Nianpu kaolue*, p. 331.

Guozhen entered officialdom with a *jinshi* title, his fame derived largely from his successful military campaigns. As a literatus-official he did not really enjoy the same veneration for intellectual accomplishment as did other powerful men in his home region, such as the Gengs and Zhous. Given that Buddhist knowledge and practice were considered a quality of the “exquisite literati” in the late Ming, friendship with Li Zhi, a cultural personality, definitely elevated Mei Guozhen’s status in the literati world. For Li Zhi’s part, Mei Guozhen’s reputation and achievements as a military literatus-official seemed too heroic to resist, and Mei’s wealth and status in Macheng provided a kind of indispensable convenience for him as well. Although, as William Rowe has pointed out, Mei Guozhen was a social conservative and Li Zhi a relentless critic of literati-landlord hypocrisy,<sup>65</sup> both of them strove to maintain and develop their friendship.

Their mutually beneficial friendship developed in the midst of controversies about Li Zhi’s relationship with his female students in the Mei family. In a set of three poems written in Datong during this trip, Li Zhi repeatedly confirms this friendship: “Empty the wine cups/Write poems when the music stops/I wish to send Zhong Ziqi<sup>66</sup> the zither tones/Along with the river flowing northwards”;<sup>67</sup> “I cannot leave for home yet/I found a *zhiyin* here.”<sup>68</sup> When Li Zhi’s *Cang shu* was published in Nanjing two years later, Mei Guozhen wrote a preface, calling Li Zhi “my friend” and a “hero and outstanding man of ideals and integrity” (*haojie zhishi* 豪傑志士).<sup>69</sup> This was significant because the other two prefacers, Jiao Hong 焦竑 and Zhu Shilu 祝世祿, were nationally famous scholars

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<sup>65</sup> Rowe, *Crimson Rain*, p. 107.

<sup>66</sup> Zhong Ziqi’s name has been used to refer to *zhiyin*, or intimate friends who truly understand each other.

<sup>67</sup> *Fen Shu: juan 6*: “Qianlou wan tiao 2” 乾樓晚眺其二, p. 240.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, “Qianlou wan tiao 3,” p. 240. *Zhiyin* refers to friends who truly understand each other.

<sup>69</sup> Mei Guozhen, “Preface” to *Cang shu*, p. 3.

and officials. Mei Guozhen, along with Jiao Hong, had supported the publication of this work financially. The inclusion of these prefaces affirmed their friendship before the national literati community, at a time when the alleged sex scandals provoked a great deal of suspicion and hostility. The accusation that Li Zhi had tried to seduce women from gentry families, specifically Mei Guozhen's widowed daughter Mei Danran, did not affect their friendship, and Mei Guozhen publicly denounced the accusation as false. Both men naively believed that since Li Zhi was involved only in Mei Danran's Buddhist study, a very popular pursuit among gentry men and women of late-Ming Macheng,<sup>70</sup> there was no need to take the rumors and attacks seriously. In the same set of poems in which Li Zhi portrays Mei Guozhen as his *zhiyin*, Li Zhi writes: "The rumors that entered our ears, fortunately/ Never disturbed the great men's hearts."<sup>71</sup> This seems to refer to this incident. Fending off the rumors together might have provided an opportunity for them to reinforce their friendship based on homosocial heroism and a shared appreciation for women's pursuit of learning.

"Friendship" in Li Zhi's life was thus both an ideal to strive for and a matter of pragmatism. These two aspects, of equal material importance for Li Zhi, competed and clashed, and he eventually settled upon a retired literatus-official, Ma Jinglun, a person of no significance, to be his "true friend" at his death. He delivered the ideal death that he laid out in his letter to Jiao Hong. The rhetoric of "still in search for a true friend" was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it makes him stand out as an unusual man whose friendship was precious and unaccessible. On the other, it provoked confusion among his

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<sup>70</sup> Rowe has pointed out that almost all major social-political figures in this region at the time were interested in Buddhism, including those who disliked Li Zhi. Rowe, *Crimson Rain*, Chapter 3.

<sup>71</sup> *Fen Shu: juan 6*: "Qianlou Wan Tiao3," p. 240 .

long-time literati-officials friends such as Jiao Hong, Tao Wangling, and Yuan Hongdao. Consequently, when Li Zhi faced persecution in the capital, these intellectually prestigious friends “conceded” the role of “true friend” to Ma Jinglun, an outsider to their circle.

In Wanli 30 (1602), immediately before his arrest and imprisonment, Li Zhi fell ill at Ma Jinglun’s residence near Beijing. He composed “Will” and “After the Will.” Then he made copies and sent them to many people.<sup>72</sup> These writings not only served as guidelines for his death rites, but also circulated as a final self-representation to the reading public. In the will, Li Zhi specifies the size and layout of his tomb, what to write on the tombstone, and his funeral clothes. He mentions only two important friends, Ma Jinglun and Jiao Hong. Jiao Hong was designated as the one to write his name on the tomb, not a surprising request given Jiao Hong’s fame as a scholar and former Expositor for the Heir Apparent. By giving Jiao Hong this role and circulating this will through Jiao Hong to other parts of the country, Li Zhi cemented their tie in this final public textual appearance. They would travel through history together.

Ma Jinglun becomes Li Zhi’s “true friend” (*zhiyin*) in this will. At its opening, Li Zhi tells his monk followers, “Illness has been haunting me since spring. I want to leave this world soon. Fortunately this time I will rest in the hands of my best friend. This is difficult, but also most fortunate for me. You must respect him.... If you want to keep vigil at the tomb for me, you must be sincere. If you sincerely desire to keep vigil at my

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<sup>72</sup> *Xu Fenshu*; *juan* 4 “Shu yiyang hou” 書遺言後, pp. 90-91, and “Li Zhuowo xiansheng yiyang” 李卓吾先生遺言, pp. 96-97.

tomb, Mr. Ma will definitely support you and ease your anxiety.”<sup>73</sup> In “After the Will,” Li Zhi affirms his appreciation of Ma Jinglun’s friendship. He details the residence that the Ma family had provided for him and says, “Alas! They allow me a place to rest after my death; provide me with support and continuous offerings to the temple. These are the Ma father and son’s intentions.”<sup>74</sup>

These wills produced their expected results. When Li Zhi was arrested, Ma Jinglun volunteered to accompany him and attempted fearlessly to get him exonerated by repeatedly writing to concerned officials on Li Zhi’s behalf. Ma Jinglun followed Li Zhi’s wishes and buried him near a temple west of Lushui.<sup>75</sup> Li Zhi’s friends believed this proved that Li Zhi “indeed had foresight” about his death.<sup>76</sup> Ma Jinglun read Li Zhi’s wills and felt “both happy and anxious.” “I was happy that he died here and was buried here. I was anxious that he would not die and be buried here.... Although I am shallow and slow, I understand his wishes. He urgently needed friends and this need increased with age. He had tremendous expectations for me.”<sup>77</sup> The death of Li Zhi went beyond a personal tragedy, a suicide incident. It became a stage where Li Zhi could put the final stroke on his image as a heroic icon of his time and publicly enact his devotion to the ideal friendship.

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<sup>73</sup> “Li Zhuowu Xiansheng Yiyuan,” P. 96.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> *Dijing jingwu lue* 帝京景物略 compiled by late-Ming literati-officials Liu Tong 劉侗 and Yu Yizheng 于奕正, who actually visited the tomb, briefly describes the tomb and documents some poems contributed to Li Zhi after he died. *Dijing jingwu lue* (Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 1983 & 2001): *juan* 8 “Jifu mingji” 畿輔名蹟: “Li Zhuowu mu” 李卓吾墓, p. 366-368.

<sup>76</sup> A friend’s notes (possibly those by Tao Wangling) on the Will after Li Zhi died. “Li Zhuowu Xiansheng Yiyuan,” p. 97.

<sup>77</sup> Ma Jinglun, “Shu Zhuowu xiansheng yiyuan hou” 書卓吾先生遺言後.



Before these wills finally mobilized Ma Jinglun, Li Zhi's other writings had already begun to shape the "friendship" between these two men. Compared to figures like Mei Guozhen, Jiao Hong and the Yuan brothers, Ma Jinglun could boast little fame as a scholar or official. The official Ming history only mentions that his persistent criticism of the Wanli emperor earned him quick demotions from censor to commoner.<sup>78</sup> That he played a vital role in the last episode of Li Zhi's life was significantly downplayed by literati-officials of later generations.<sup>79</sup> From Li Zhi's perspective, this friendship guaranteed financial resources and shelter from his persecutors. Who else other than this wealthy former official with huge assets near the capital could help him more at this crucial point, when returning to Macheng had become dangerous and unattractive and his friendships with many others had been fading?

It seems that some did understand that Ma Jinglun was Li Zhi's only *zhiyin*, someone that Li Zhi had searched for his whole life. For example, late-Ming literati-officials Liu Tong and Yu Yizheng begin their description of Li Zhi's tomb with this statement: "Zhuowu (Li Zhi) spent his whole life looking for a true friend. Eventually late in his life, he was able to find in Ma Jinglun."<sup>80</sup> But Li Zhi's long-term friends did not feel this way. Yuan Hongdao expressed some confusion at Li Zhi's suddenly discovered friendship with Ma Jinglun. In a letter written in Wanli 29 (1601), he inquired:

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<sup>78</sup> *MS: juan 234/liezhuan 122*. The Wanli emperor, angry at his criticism, took away his official status, which happened very often at the time. The official status could easily be restored.

<sup>79</sup> The literati-officials (including Fang Bao 方苞, Wu Hanfen 伍涵芬 and several other famous literati-officials) who composed prefaces for his collection of works when his grandson published it in Kangxi 43 (1704) spent much ink criticizing the Wanli emperor's lack of sense of responsibility as a ruler. (*Chengsuogong wenji*: "Xu" 序). The "omission" of Li Zhi from Ma Jinglun's life probably had to do with early-Qing intellectuals' antagonism toward him and many other late-Ming literati because their teachings supposedly corrupted generations of men and led to the fall of the Ming.

<sup>80</sup> *Dijing jingwu lue: juan 8*: "Li Zhuowu mu," p. 366.

“Someone from Baixia (Nanjing) told me that you had left for the capital. I wonder where you will be staying. Someone said you were heading for Tongzhou (a county near Beijing). Given your age, you might not find that a reliable place to stay. Is it true you do not have real friends here? Why did you go to that kind of place!”<sup>81</sup> Yuan Hongdao obviously knew who the nameless fellow in the north was, because that “someone from Baixia” who discussed this with him could well have been Jiao Hong himself. Yuan Hongdao felt perturbed that a man like Li Zhi would consider Ma Jinglun his only *zhiyin*. Another prominent friend of his, the great literary figure and official Tao Wangling, later lamented about Li Zhi’s death and suggested that he did not appreciate the “friendship” between Li Zhi and Ma Jinglun, either.<sup>82</sup>

Meanwhile, Ma Jinglun had to be thrilled because he had become the “chosen one.” His social views were significantly different from Li Zhi’s, but the sentiment of heroism and idealized friendship bound them. A adamant admirer, he must have read Li Zhi’s famous work, *Cang shu*. The biography of Li Gu 李固 related in that book and Li Zhi’s enthusiastic commentaries about his friendships surprisingly parallel the relationship between Li Zhi and Ma Jinglun. Li Gu is another figure that Li Zhi passionately celebrates in the section “Frank and Outspoken Ministers.” His biography of Li Gu follows that in *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 compiled by Fan Ye 范曄 (398-445); Li Zhi copied the entire official biography and added his own comments. Li Gu, an official of

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<sup>81</sup> Yuan Hongdao, *Yuan Hongdao ji jian jiao* 袁宏道集箋校 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1979): juan 22 *Pinghuazhai ji* 10 “chidu” 瓶花齋集之十·尺牘: “Li Longhu” 李龍湖. The editor of Yuan’s collection footnotes that this letter was written in Wanli 28. This is wrong. Li Zhi did not leave Nanjing until early the next year. See Lin, *nianpu kaolue*, Wanli 29.

<sup>82</sup>Tao Wangling, “Yu Junshi Di 4,” in *Li Wenling waiji*: juan 4, p. 247.

the Later Han dynasty (25-220), was wronged and executed by a powerful minister, Liang Ji. Two of his sons died in prison and a third fled and hid. Liang Ji exposed Li Gu's corpse publicly and threatened to arrest anyone who dared to visit it. A student of Li Gu's, Guo Liang, was only fifteen years old. He pleaded for permission to retrieve the body but was turned away. So he went to cry by his master's body and observed the mourning rites. When asked by a police chief stationed there how he dared violate the order, Guo Liang replied when he had to answer a righteous call, he would not be afraid of death. The police chief sympathized with him and the imperial dowager gave an order not to kill him. Another student, Dong Ban, also went to mourn for Li Gu and asked to remove the corpse. Eventually the emperor and dowager empress sympathized with the two youths and allowed them to take and bury the body. These two young men earned great reputations for their actions.<sup>83</sup>

In his commentaries, Li Zhi offers a reinterpretation of the meaning of Li Gu's death. Where the original biography celebrates the integrity of a virtuous, unyielding official, Li Zhi transforms it into a compelling story of friendship. Several times in the text he inserts the comment in a phrase, "life-and-death friendship" (*shengsi zhi jiao* 生死之交). Below are examples of his textual intervention from *Cang shu* (the words in parentheses are Li Zhi's inserted comments):

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<sup>83</sup> *Cang shu*: *juan* 29 "Mingchen zhuan" 名臣傳 8: "Zhi jie mingchen" 直節名臣: "Li Gu, Du Qiao" 李固 杜喬, pp. 550-553. Also see the original biography of Li Gu in Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965): *juan* 63/*liezhuan* 53, pp. 2073-2088.

His student Wang Diao from Bohai put on *xie*<sup>84</sup> to petition [life-and-death friendship], in order to prove that Li Gu was innocent.

Zhao Cheng and a dozen others from Henei [life-and-death friendship] also carried *foxue*<sup>85</sup> to the government to petition.

[Li Gu died.] His student Guo Liang from Ru'nan [life-and-death friendship] pleaded for his body.

Dong Ban from Nanyang also went to cry for Li Gu. [life-and-death friendship]

Wenji (Li Gu's daughter) told her father's student Wang Cheng: "You served my father with the kind of integrity that ancient people had. Now I want to trust the boy (her youngest brother Li Xie) to you. The continuity of our Li family lies in your efforts." Wang Cheng was moved by her fearlessness [life-and-death friendship]. He took Li Xie eastward by the Yangzi River into the border of Xuzhou.<sup>86</sup>

To conclude this biography, Li Zhi writes: "This is great! [Li] Gu died, but he had life-and-death friendships with people such as Guo Liang, Dong Ban, the local police chief, and Wang Cheng. Wang Cheng really acted like Cheng Ying and Wang Diao acted like Zhao Cheng. Among Li Gu's students there were so many virtuous men. Maybe they simply resembled their teacher."<sup>87</sup>

Although Li Zhi's historical work merely copies the official biography, by inserting these notes and thus creating a new text, he has transformed this famous story and injected it into contemporary popular conceptualization and intellectual discussion of friendship. It is not difficult to find the similarities between Ma Jinglun's actions after Li

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<sup>84</sup> Tools used on criminals for torture and confinement.

<sup>85</sup> Same as *xie*.

<sup>86</sup> *Cang shu: juan 29* "Mingchen zhuan": "Zhi jie mingchen:" pp. 551-552.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

Zhi's death and those of Li Gu's students. In this sense, Li Zhi and Ma Jinglun relived a great historical episode and enacted a drama of ideal male friendship. None of Li Zhi's more prestigious friends could accomplish this finale with him. Ma Jinglun was the only friend who understood Li Zhi during his last days. This bonding should not surprise us. Ma Jinglun's memorial as recorded in the official Ming history demonstrates that he was an idealistic official who followed the classical model of the moral and unyielding Confucian man. Ma Jinglun had a very different approach from Li Zhi to issues such as "desire" and self-cultivation; one could even argue that their views were opposite. However, it was through their belief in manly idealism and heroism—the spirit of late Ming literati society—that the life paths of these two very different men converged. Some literati even believed that Ma Jinglun died in sorrow following Li Zhi's suicide.<sup>88</sup>

To substantiate the legitimacy of this friendship vis-à-vis the relationship with his more prestigious friends, Li Zhi made Ma Jinglun into his intellectual companion as well. In "After the Will," a public letter, he told those friends that Ma Jinglun had a house built near Li Zhi's dwelling, which was called Ma Jinglun's "Exquisite Quarter for Reading the *Book of Changes*."<sup>89</sup> It was during Li Zhi's stay with Ma Jinglun that he finished his final work on the *Book of Changes*. Regardless of whether these two men actually had discussions about this Confucian classic and regardless of the intellectual quality of their discussions, the very mention of Ma Jinglun's "Exquisite Quarter" gives Ma Jinglun credentials as Li Zhi's friend. As we have seen, Li Zhi and many in the literati community considered reading the *Book of Changes* a consummately manly activity. Li Zhi's public letter about reading the *Book of Changes* with Ma Jinglun clearly suggests

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<sup>88</sup> Liu Tong and Liu Yizheng's *Dijing jingwu lue* is one such example.

<sup>89</sup> Li Zhi, "Shu yiyuan hou," p. 90.

that his friendship with Ma could indeed be compared to his much-admired friendship with Jiao Hong. Li Zhi saw in Ma Jinglun a friend-follower whose devotion and courage would serve as a medium through which he could become the second Li Gu in Chinese literati history.

Li Zhi's death was based on a script inspired by the literati's socio-cultural tradition. He was a contradictory figure, but his actions had their precedents in historical examples and writings, as well as in late-Ming homosocial interactions. His tragic death, as Yuan Zhongdao has observed, "did not result from his works."<sup>90</sup> Okuzaki Yuji suggests that Li Zhi strove to perform well in the drama of his death, based on the script he himself had written.<sup>91</sup> I would further argue that the script of Li Zhi's death drama was one that reflects a spirit of heroism, individualism, and idealism characteristic of late Ming literati culture. If late-Ming discourse of friendship had two strands that saw friendship as either threatening or manifesting political virtue of loyalty, Li Zhi certainly belonged to the latter. He even went as far as replacing filial piety with friendship as the constitutive virtue for loyalty: "There is no faithful friend (*zhenyou* 貞友) who could not serve the emperor loyally. Therefore, the loyal official must be sought among faithful

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<sup>90</sup> "Li Wenling Zhuan," p. 6. For a brief but insightful discussion of the banning of Li Zhi's works in the late Ming and early Qing, see de Bary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism," pp. 214-215.

<sup>91</sup> Okuzaki Yuji, "Ri Takugo wa naze jisatsu shitaka" 李卓吾はなぜ自殺したか [Why Did Li Zhi Commit Suicide?], *Tokyo kyoiku daigaku bungaku-bu kiyō*, 106 (3): 1-24. Reprinted in *Chugoku kankei ronsetsu shiryō*, Vol. 18, P.t 3A: 317-29. Lin Qixian uses sociological, Buddhist, and psychological theories to analyze his suicide. Lin Qixian 林其賢, "Li Zhuowu zisha yuanyin shi tan" 李卓吾自殺原因初探 in Zhang Jianye ed. *Li Zhi xueshu guoji yantaohuui lunwen ji* 李贄學術國際研討會論文集 (Beijing: Shoudu shifan daxue chubanshe, 1994), pp. 313-335.

friends!”<sup>92</sup> This is obviously sabotaging the fundamental Confucian teaching, “to seek the loyal official among filial sons.” Friendship remained the most explicitly, vehemently promoted ethos in Li Zhi’s words and action, his longing for great friendships permeating his writings of all genres. If there was only one script that Li Zhi successfully and thoroughly executed, that would be the death drama with male friendship as its central motif. Although he dared to propose that friendship was more important than filial piety for loyalty, his enemies did not attack him on that. They seized upon the most provocative and sensational issue of sexual morality to successfully defeat him.

Decades after Li Zhi’s death, factionalism and national crises made loyalty, filial piety, friendship, and sexual morality extremely important for literati-officials and deprived them of the luxury to theoretically or intellectually experiment on these questions. That will be the central phenomenon under investigation in the rest of this study. Li Zhi’s textual personas help us understand, at the dawn of the Ming-Qing dynastic transition, how these issues were connected discursively. The historian Wm de Bary’s observes:

Li [Zhi]’s individualism did then enable him to achieve a large measure of intellectual independence, to rise considerably above the traditional limits of his culture (above most of the cultural determinants of Buddhism as well as Confucianism) and to envisage a new world—one might almost say a modern world—transcending most of the parochial limits of the traditional culture. Nevertheless, having stripped himself of all social or cultural support, he stands there naked and alone, without the means to create any new order or to protect himself from the old, and without as much freedom of mind as he supposes.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *Chu tan ji: juan 19* “Shi you 9” 師友九: “Zhiji” 知己, p. 195. Structurally, this work places much more emphasis on friendship than filial piety. There are four chapters on filial piety but ten chapters on friendship.

<sup>93</sup> De Bary, “Individualism and Humanism,” p. 222.

However, our analysis of Li Zhi's struggles with and writings about women and friends seems to suggest that he drew upon various literati social and cultural traditions in pursuing a unique personality, to claim as many virtues as he could. The Chinese "tradition" was not a coherent body of practices and ideas. It was impossible for literati to negate all of them, as most clearly shown by their stakes in fulfilling the roles and responsibilities defined by the Five Cardinal Relations.



## **Part Two**

### **The Confucian Loyal Man at the Time of Crisis (1621-1646)**

## Chapter 3

### Shaping the Zheng Family Tragedy: Late-Ming Factionalism and Sensational Politics

In the year Chongzhen 8 (1635), the Chongzhen emperor ordered to jail the Hanlin Bachelor Zheng Man 鄭曼 for allegedly beating his mother, one of the most heinous crimes under Ming law.<sup>1</sup> His case was brought to the emperor in the midst of a storm of factional struggles by the anti-Donglin Grand Secretary Wen Tiren 溫體仁, who had won the emperor's trust by posing as simply a loyal minister with no factional leanings. But as the case proceeded through official investigations and discussions in and outside the government, what had really happened became less and less clear: there was neither solid evidence nor credible witnesses. Meanwhile, sensational stories circulated in the forms of gossip, biographical accounts, and political novels about Zheng Man's sexual immorality; these became "circumstantial evidence" for his lacking filial piety, and the sensational accounts of his depravity and breach of familial ethics ranged from the rape of his daughter-in-law to seducing his father's concubine. Punishing a literatus-official for domestic "immorality" was not unheard of, and persecution by dubious accusation was

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<sup>1</sup> Under Ming penal law, killing one's parents and grandparents was categorized as demanding the "death penalty without delay," and fell under the subcategory "death by slicing" (*lingchi*). But the emperor had the power to decide on any penalty. Given that Zheng Man did not kill a parent but allegedly beat his mother, theoretically he did not deserve *lingchi*. *Ming hui dian* 明會典 (Wanli edition, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989, 2007): *juan* 173-174 "Xingbu 刑部 15-16, pp. 882-890.

likely to occur whenever political struggles intensified. This had happened repeatedly in the long dynastic political history, as late-Ming literati-officials well knew. Still, when the charges against Zheng Man were first leveled, few could foresee that four years later he would be publicly executed in the cruelest way—“death by slicing” (*lingchi* 凌遲)<sup>2</sup>—even without substantial evidence to prove his crimes. In addition, every factor that could work in his favor—the Donglin identity and associations, his literary and political fame, and his social connections—ended up working against him. One must wonder: What went wrong?

One historian has used the word “joke” to describe the whole incident,<sup>3</sup> while another scholar borrows what citizens in the capital were saying at the time to explain the puzzle: “The emperor Chongzhen has fallen victim to a pestilence!”<sup>4</sup> This study proposes seriously reconsidering these seemingly “ridiculous” events, using them as a window on late Ming political culture. It re-opens Zheng Man’s case not to establish a more reliable version of this story, but to put forward a different approach to understanding Chinese dynastic political history, in which the intertwining of morality and politics played a deciding role. Neither the seventeenth-century literati-officials nor contemporary historians have adequately reviewed how the “private affairs in the inner chambers” (*fangwei si shi* 房幃私事) in Zheng Man’s case were discussed in court and in society. I

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<sup>2</sup> It is debatable in what sense this penalty constituted the most severe punishment in early modern China. About the symbolic meanings of (the severity of) *lingchi*, see Timothy Brook, Jerome Bourgon, and Gregory Blue, *Death by a Thousand Cuts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Xie Guozhen 謝國楨, “Chongzhen chao zhi dang zheng” 崇禎朝之黨爭 in *Ming-Qing zhi ji dang she yundong kao* 明清之際黨社運動考 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2004), p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> Fan Shuzhi 樊樹志, *Wan Ming shi: 1573-1644* 晚明史 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2005), p. 888.

believe that by examining seventeenth-century representations of Zheng Man, we can learn how and why the linkage between loyalty and literati-official morality was activated and articulated at a crucial phase in dynastic political history. Earlier I examined Li Zhi's life experience and showed that how late-Ming literati wrestled with moral concerns and their familial roles in a social and cultural world floating away from it. While Zheng Man's case resembles Li Zhi's in the sense that sexual scandal was the strategy of attack, Zheng Man's tragedy more clearly exemplifies the high stakes of this strategy for literati-officials at a time of serious political crisis. Examining Zheng Man's tragedy shows that the conduct of politics changed tremendously in the first four decades of the seventeenth century, into something I identify as "sensational politics." Rumors became the basis of official memorials that could bring down factional enemies. Political weaponry also took the forms of vernacular novels and biographies, which both produced "evidence" of immorality and sensationalized national politics. Ironically, the vernacular novels that Li Zhi had helped popularize were turned into a key instrument of sensational politics.

As in Li Zhi's case, we find that the attacking and attacked sides both made recourse to the issue of morality, especially the association among sexual morality, filial piety, and loyalty. One unintended consequence of these political maneuverings in the late Ming and early Qing was the reaffirmation of political-moral code embodied in the ideal moral man defined by the Five Cardinal Relations. Furthermore, with the Ming-Qing change of regime, loyalty became the most important social, political and historical issue for literati and would remain so throughout the seventeenth century. Zheng Man's immorality was one of those cases through which literati pressed the dichotomy of the moral-loyal man verse the immoral-disloyal man in their political and historical

criticisms. To instate the Donglin official—Zheng Man used to be considered one of them—as an emblem of Confucian virtues, literati set out to erase morally questionable figures like Zheng Man from the history of “the righteous.” The erasure of Zheng Man provides an example of how a moralistic narrative of the Ming-Qing transition was being constructed in both contemporary politics and historical memory, an ongoing process that would keep reviving the past to frame the present.<sup>5</sup>

In this chapter, I will first examine late-Ming factionalism through the Zheng father and son’s political experience. Then I will analyze various presentations of Zheng Man’s immorality, considering the political, social and cultural factors that fed the sensational politics of the time. I hope to illuminate the erasure of Zheng Man (and some other officials) from the history of the Donglin in seventeenth-century historiography. The truth of Zheng Man’s tragedy is forever lost to us. But the different representations and interpretations of his story throw some light on the political and historical characterizations of the Donglin faction and the understanding of late-Ming politics that modern historians have inherited.

### **The Zheng Father and Son in Late-Ming Factionalism**

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<sup>5</sup> It is not accidental that intellectuals of the early Republican period eulogized Chen Zilong and Xia Wanchun as their political and moral ancestors. It should be noted that both have been remembered as loyal martyrs and filial sons whose manly self-discipline valorized rather than got compromised by the late-Ming romantic sentiments so prevalent among Fushe scholars. For a most recent, detailed analysis of the turn-of-twentieth-century imagination of the late Ming, see Qin Yanchun 秦燕春, *Qing mo min chu de wan Ming xiangxiang* 清末民初的晚明想象 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2008).

Zheng Man's father Zheng Zhenxian 鄭振先 served in the Wanli government until Wanli 39 (1611). Zheng Man obtained his *jinshi* title and earned the coveted status of the Hanlin Bachelor in Tianqi 2 (1622).<sup>6</sup> Both the father and son were initially associated (though in different ways) with the politically righteous image of the Donglin, until they fell victim to complicated factional disputes and intrigue. Their personal and family tragedies reveal how late-Ming factionalism gave rise to a culture in which dubious accusations of sensational nature became the order of the day. They also bespeak the complexity of the Donglin identity itself and offer us a unique window into the relationship between gendered self-discipline and political success in dynastic China.

Zheng Zhenxian had been associated with what historians call the Donglin movement since it first took shape during the late Wanli reign. While serving in the Bureau of Ceremonies at the Board of Rituals, Zheng Zhenxian submitted a famous memorial in Wanli 36 (1608) that criticized former and residing Grand Secretaries as a group of venomous associates who abused political power.<sup>7</sup> Zheng Zhenxian was demoted to remote Sichuan because of this memorial. Arguably, in the Wanli 30s, the formation of the so-called “Donglin” was underway. Ono Kazuko has argued that the publication of a well-received volume *Memorials of the Wanli Court* (*Wanli shu chao* 萬歷疏鈔), compiled by Wu Liang 吳亮, for the first time created a powerful and

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<sup>6</sup> Zheng Man 鄭鄭, *TSZXP* 天山自敘年譜, in *Miyang caotang wenji* 崋陽草堂文集 (hereafter *MYCTWJ*) (*SKJH*-ji 126): *juan* 16, pp. 486-487.

<sup>7</sup> Zheng Zhenxian 鄭振先, “Zhi fa gujin di yi quan jian shu” 直發古今第一權奸疏, in Wu Liang 吳亮 ed., *Wanli shu chao* 萬歷疏鈔 (Wanli 37 edition) in *Xu xiu Siku quan shu* 續修四庫全書 468: Shi bu 史部 Zhao ling zou yi lei 詔令奏議類 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002): *Juan* 18, pp. 721-725.

distinctive voice for Donglin-identified officials who supported opening up channels of censorial oversight (*kai yanlu* 開言路), against the double repression of censorial authority by both the emperor and the Grand Secretariat.<sup>8</sup> Wu Liang had very close social and political ties with some of prefacers and contributors to this volume, literati-officials such as Qian Yiben 錢一本, Gu Xiancheng 顧憲成 and Gao Panlong 高攀龍, who were and are considered the founding Donglin members. A strong supporter of Gu Xiancheng and other Dinglin icons, Wu Liang bluntly told the Wanli emperor in a memorial: “I am indeed one of the Donglin. My opinions might be narrow-minded. But I speak only from the Donglin perspective.”<sup>9</sup>

By including Zheng Zhenxian’s memorial into this collective political statement, Wu Liang made Zheng Zhenxian one of their kind.<sup>10</sup> Socially, the Zheng family was also

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<sup>8</sup> Ono Katsuko, *Ming ji dang she kao*, chap. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Wu Liang, *Zhiyuan ji* 止園集: *juan* 8: “Baobing wen yan ping xin pou li shu” 抱病聞言平心剖理疏, p. 36a- (Tianqi edition, National Librery of China rare collection)

<sup>10</sup> Some historians argue that Zheng Zhenxian actually belonged to a different political clique, the Kun faction 昆黨, because he was close to the leader of this faction, Gu Tianjun 顧天峻, with whom he consulted about political situations in the government. See for example, Shiroy Takashi, “Min matsu no yichi han Toulin ha. Shiroy Takashi argues that Zheng Zhenxian associated himself with Kun faction, which was forming and breaking political coalitions with other factions, such as the Donglin and Qin factions. Ye Jun and Fan Shuzhi also hold this view. Fan Shuzhi, 2005, p. 884. Ye Jun, 2002. However, as Ono Katsuko has delineated in the chronology of the emergence of Donglin, at this point both Donglin’s shape and membership remained murky. Gu Xiancheng considered Zheng Zhenxian an “esteemed friend” of his circle. Given that Wu Liang knew the multiple connections among literati-officials fairly well and used this anthology to create a clearer Donglin voice and image, we have reasons to believe that some did not consider Zheng Zhenxian a Kun faction member. I would like to suggest that the murkiness of Zheng Zhenxian’s political affiliation serves as a perfect example of how the Donglin was always “in the making,” with its membership being defined and redefined over history. When Zheng Man was imprisoned and compiling his chronological autobiography, he did not hesitate to record his father’s social and cultural interactions with the most prominent Kun faction leaders in his autobiography. He also mentioned that his father took him to their gatherings. In fact, gatherings with the Kun faction leaders were the only item that he recorded under the entry of Wanli 35, when he was only fourteen. I suspect that Zheng Zhenxian’s factional affiliation was not as clear as historians have suggested, and both father and son might have attempted to maintain a flexible and non-factional political voice. While the dominant historical narrative about this period gives “Donglin” a very positive evaluation and many assume that “Donglin” was a

tied to this group by Zheng Zhenxian's marriage to the daughter of Wu Zhongxing 吳中行, father of Wu Liang. The elder Wu rose as a national hero when being severely punished for impeaching the powerful Grand Secretary Zhang Juzheng in the early Wanli years, when Zhang failed to observe the three-year mourning period for his deceased father, a blatant violation of literati-official filial piety that triggered confrontations between the emperor and the bureaucrats. The Wu, Qian, and Zheng families, all from the Wujin County, had strengthened their socio-political connections by multiple marriages.<sup>11</sup> Upon demotion, Zheng Zhenxian received several poems from Wu Liang. In these poems, Wu Liang praised Zheng Zhenxian's integrity as a fearless and loyal literatus-official.<sup>12</sup> He also dedicated some poems to his sister, Zheng Zhenxian's wife, in which he praised her ideal womanhood, whose Confucian motherly virtues should compel literati-officials to diligently perform their duties in politics.<sup>13</sup>

When the triennial evaluation of bureaucrats took place in Wanli 39 (1611, the year *xinhai*), a factional reconfiguration was under way. Officials of several factions positioned themselves against what they roughly defined as the Donglin group. President of the Board of Personnel, Sun Piyang 孫丕揚, had enjoyed the Wanli emperor's trust as

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coveted label among literati-officials, factional labels were in fact diligently avoided by clear-minded officials of the time because forming factions was always considered poisonous and politically dangerous.

<sup>11</sup> Ono has discussed the marriage alliance between Wu and Qian families in her book. The Zheng family was tied to the Wu family by Zheng Zhenxian's marriage to Wu Liang's sister, and to the Qian family by the marriage between Zheng Man's sister and a son of the Qians. Ono, *Ming ji dang she kao*, p. 97. Also see Ye Jun 葉軍, *Zheng Man yanjiu: Jian lun Ming dai hou qi dangzheng* 鄭鄭研究：兼論明代後期黨爭 (Ph.D. diss., Fudan University, 2002).pp. 84-86.

<sup>12</sup> Wu Liang, *Zhiyuan ji: juan 2*: "Song Zheng libu Taichu yan shi zuoqian" 送鄭禮部太初言事左遷, p. 21a.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, "Zheng taijun shi" 鄭太君詩, p. 26b.



a fair and incorruptible official, but by recommending the impeachment of many officials identified with anti-Donglin cliques, Sun and his team triggered a series of criticisms from all factions.<sup>14</sup> The *xinhai* evaluation marked the apex of factionalist politics in the Wanli court. Zheng Zhenxian, already demoted to Sichuan, received a negative evaluation and another demotion.<sup>15</sup> This came as an unexpected blow. Zheng Man later recalled:

After the evaluation in the year *xinhai*, Father often fell into depression. He said, “Officials who bravely express their criticisms are often punished. But how could they use the occasion of triennial evaluation to punish these officials? Even Jiangling’s<sup>16</sup> followers did not treat Wu (Zhongxing) and Zhao (Yongxian) in this way.<sup>17</sup> People in charge of the evaluation favor those from their own hometowns or those in their own cliques. However they shouldn’t try to please the powerful.” Father sounded regretful about not remaining on Emei Mountain. Repeatedly he attempted to become a recluse. Mother talked him out of such ideas.<sup>18</sup>

Zheng Zhenxian decided to study Buddhism at home. According to Zheng Man, his father no longer visited other officials or met with local elites; he would not wear Confucian headwear and did not show up at family gatherings.<sup>19</sup>

It was during this period that Zheng Zhenxian was also allegedly alienated by literati-officials associated with Donglin, a political mystery that has resulted in various

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<sup>14</sup> Some scholars suggest that Sun Piyang represented the Qin faction, which was forming an alliance with the so-call Donglin at the time.

<sup>15</sup> See *Ming tongjian*: *juan* 74, p. 2077. Qian Qianyi 錢謙益, *Chu xue ji*: *juan* 58: “Feng anren Wu shi muzhiming” 封安人吳氏墓誌銘, pp. 1427-29.

<sup>16</sup> Jiangling refers to Zhang Juzheng.

<sup>17</sup> Wu Zhongxing and Zhao Yongxian 趙用賢 were the most adamant critics of the former Grand Secretary Zhang Juzheng, when the latter refused to fulfill his mourning duty.

<sup>18</sup> Zheng Man, *TSZXNP*, p. 483.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

explanations and much speculation.<sup>20</sup> Scarce sources concerning this matter defy a clear conclusion. And in fact, Wu Liang himself seems to remain unwavering in claiming alliance with Zheng Man.<sup>21</sup> But in the view of factionalists and moralists, whose writings were more likely to survive and influence the vision of historians, such ambiguity should not exist. Explanations and speculation about Zheng Zhenxian's relationship with the Donglin themselves reflected and perpetuated factionalism. For example, a sensational narrative about the Zheng family claims that Zheng Zhenxian attacked his colleagues in order to obtain an important censorial position, and in the wake of this betrayal his old friends at court felt ashamed to work with him. He became known as the "Bai Sheng of

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<sup>20</sup> Historians often rely on the Grand Secretary Ye Xianggao's 葉向高 documentation that Zheng Zhenxian's famous memorial against power abuse contained dishonest charges and exaggerated rhetoric. See Ye Xianggao, *Ju bian* 彙編: juan 2 (Taipei: Weiwen tushu chubansh youxian gongsi, 1977), pp. 46-48. However, I think Ye's documentation of Zheng Zhenxian should be read in a more complicated way. Ye Xianggao managed to maintain a nonjudgmental and faction-neutral stance throughout his political career. This helped him navigate factionalism and tensions between the emperor and the bureaucrats in order to get things done. This particular work by him takes the form of chronological documentation of government affairs, not intended to be read as his personal perspective. Ye is careful enough not to explicitly discuss his own judgments. For example, he puts "it is said" or "someone said to someone that..." before those passages about Zheng Zhenxian. Ye might have agreed with others' observations, but I do not believe his documentation alone could determine how to explain Zheng Zhenxian's demise.

<sup>21</sup> In Wanli 39 (1611), his old friend and relative by marriage Wu Liang was forced to resign because of his adamant defense of the Donglin reputation and an influential official closely connected with it, Li Sancai 李三才 (*Zhiyuan ji*: juan 8: "Baobing wen yan ping xin pou li shu" 抱病聞言平心剖理疏. P. 36a-). In his resignation memorial Wu Liang reiterates his pro-Donglin view and even Donglin self-identification. He emphasized, "I am even 'guilty of' being Zheng Zhenxian's relative by marriage! Zheng Zhenxian will explain himself and deal with his own enemies. [His case] has nothing to do with me. A criminal's own clan (*jiuzu* 九族) could be eliminated, but his remote relatives (*sandang* 三黨) should be exempted." It is difficult to tell whether Wu Liang remained sympathetic with Zheng Zhenxian from his memorial, but he adopts precisely the right tone to avoid appearing factionalist. A clearer indication of their continued good relations can be seen in the content of Wu Liang's collected work, *Zhiyuan ji* 止園集. Wu's poems to Zheng's family and his memorials were published in this collection at his own expense in Tianqi 1 (1621), when the Donglin-identified officials enjoyed a brief period of political dominance at court and the label "Donglin" had become equivalent to political righteousness. Wu would have edited out those poems had Zheng Zhenxian done something notoriously repulsive to the Donglin—but he kept them. Wu Liang's collection not only retains the poems dedicated to Zheng Zhenxian's family, it also includes his biography of Qian Yiben, an official prominently identified as the founder and leader of the Donglin (*Zhiyuan ji*: juan 19 "Xingzhuang" 行狀). Wu Liang obviously thought his connections to both men should be known and remembered.

the Donglin faction.”<sup>22</sup> Bai Sheng 白勝 is a character in one of the most popular vernacular novels, *All Men Are Brothers* (*Shui hu zhuan* 水滸傳), who under torture betrayed his rebel friends. However, when Zheng Zhenxian was serving in the central government, officials who were called “Donglin” resisted such a factional label<sup>23</sup> and hence would by no means have called Zheng Zhenxian the “Bai Sheng of the Donglin faction.” This appellation seems to have been a retrospective one, based on hearsay and bias.<sup>24</sup>

Years later, when his son Zheng Man was included in the notorious blacklist of Donglin officials, a list created by the eunuch Wei Zhongxian with which to persecute his official enemies, Zheng Man was also given the name of a character from this same novel! Not only were the political misfortunes of father and son similarly intertwined with sensationalized politics at the time; their personal lives were both sensationalized. Once Zheng Zhenxian turned to Buddhism after giving up his political career out of frustration over factionalism, “[all] kinds of heretics amassed in his place. Rumors

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<sup>22</sup> Zhang Xia 張夏 compl., *Yuqiao hua* 漁樵話 (handcopied ms, National Library of China): *Fu lun xinshi* 扶倫信史.

<sup>23</sup> In Chinese political history, discussions about the differences between “friendship” and “faction” are abundant. Because Confucius states that a gentleman should not form factions, it was very important for literati to claim a distance from factional labels. The historian Fan Shuzhi has discussed this issue in detail. Fan Shuzhi, “Donglin shuyuan.”

<sup>24</sup> Shen Defu has briefly documented Zheng Zhenxian’s case. He suggests that Zheng fabricated accusations in his famous memorial in order to represent himself as a courageous official. *Wanli ye huo* bian: *juan* 9 “Neige”內閣: “Yanguan lun ren” 言官論人, pp. 233-34. He also suggests that Zheng Zhenxian was instructed by a certain faction leader to do so, without giving any names. It is difficult to verify these assertions. Shen Defu’s book was originally written and published around late Wanli 34, before Zheng’s “notorious” memorial was even submitted (Wanli 36). It was reprinted in the late Chongzhen reign, when this item about Zheng Zhenxian was obviously added.

rampaged everywhere. This invited the family disaster.”<sup>25</sup> Zheng Man himself also documents that his parents’ trip to Buddhist sites elicited many rumors about his father’s excessive Buddhist piety, sexual indulgence in concubines, and chaotic family relations.<sup>26</sup> The gossip concerning Zheng Zhenxian resembled that later circulated about his son in terms of its sensational nature, especially the disproportionate attention given to their spirituality, domestic relations, and sexual behaviors. The striking points of similarity between the misfortunes of father and son compel us to look beyond the individual and into the political culture of factionalism and sensationalism for the cause of their demise.

When Zheng Man began to serve in the central government in Tianqi 2 (1622), the Donglin-identified officials were struggling to extend their brief period of political dominance. Some of them successfully helped enthrone the young Tianqi emperor after the emperor Taichang had unexpectedly died. Emboldened by their sudden political success and eager to restore the bureaucratic authority and order severely crippled during the years of the Wanli reign, these officials alienated some of their peers and rekindled factional discord. Meanwhile, the young emperor’s reliance on the eunuch Wei Zhongxian and his nanny Madame Ke 客氏<sup>27</sup> triggered fierce criticism from the bureaucrats, the most vocal of whom were identified as Donglin. Wei Zhongxian gradually built alliances with officials who either were marginalized by the Donglin or were after easy promotions. This group of Wei Zhongxian’s followers was named and punished as *yandang* 閹黨 (Associates of the Eunuch) later by the Chongzhen emperor.

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<sup>25</sup> Tang Xiuye, “Miyang yuanyu bian III” 峯陽冤獄辨三 in *MYCTWJ* 峯陽草堂文集: juan 16, pp. 512-13.

<sup>26</sup> *TSZXP*, p. 483.

<sup>27</sup> Madame Ke was Tianqi emperor’s nanny and confidant. It was believed that she collaborated with Wei Zhongxian in his agenda against the righteous Donglin bureaucrats.

Soon after Zheng Man took up his first government job, he submitted a fearless memorial backing his friend Wen Zhenming's 文震孟 criticism of Wei Zhongxian's political intrusion. This move earned him the reputation of an honest and outspoken official at the very outset of his political career. Donglin-identified officials persisted in their campaign against Wei Zhongxian, but within a couple of years many of them had been demoted, arrested, and even murdered. The most shocking and horrific cases were the bloody murder of six officials.<sup>28</sup> Zheng Man composed the poem *Huangzhi ge* 黃芝歌 to commemorate them.<sup>29</sup> Because of this effrontery, he faced similar persecution and had to flee.

When the Chongzhen emperor came to power and set out to punish the *yandang*,<sup>30</sup> he made it clear that the government needed to rid itself of factionalism to focus attention on pressing issues such as rebellions and border security. He learned from the Wanli and Tianqi reigns that there was no “good” faction in factionalism, because factionalism itself was poisonous. For him, loyalty meant—specifically and above all—bipartisanship. For this reason the Donglin reputation became a political burden for those identified with it. The urgency to achieve loyalty through bipartisanship would also test the time-honored association between literati-officials' loyalty and other virtues, such as filial piety and

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<sup>28</sup> These officials were: Yang Lian, Zuo Guangdou, Gu Dazhang, Yuan Huazhong, Zhou Chaorui, and Wei Dazhong. They were all arrested and tortured to death in prison at Wei Zhongxian's order.

<sup>29</sup> Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲, *Nanlei wen ding* 南雷文定三集二: Vol. 3: 2: “Zheng Miyang xiansheng mubiao” 鄭峯陽先生墓表 (*Sibu beiyao-ji* 285 四部備要) (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1927-1936).

<sup>30</sup> The emperor initially tried to solve this problem more tactically, but was forced by the Donglin-identified officials to take more swift and clear action, as presented in a memorial by Ni Yuanlu.

familial responsibilities.<sup>31</sup> These must be kept in mind when we examine factionalism and Zheng Man's tragedy in the Chongzhen reign.

The Chongzhen emperor summoned Zheng Man back to the capital after his enthronement. But Zheng Man could not resume his official position because he had to observe two mourning periods for his parents' deaths. When he finally returned, chief Grand Secretary Wen Tiren was in competition with Wen Zhenmeng, Zheng Man's close friend and political ally, for the emperor's trust. The emperor had just promoted Wen Zhenmeng to the position of Grand Secretary. Wen Tiren was concerned that Zheng Man would, with his two good friends Wen Zhenmeng and Huang Daozhou 黄道周, both considered Donglin leaders, work to erode his imperial favor. As a result of maneuvers by Wen Tiren, the emperor demoted Wen Zhenmeng merely three months after the latter had been promoted. But Wen Tiren was determined to use Zheng Man to score a thorough victory in the competition with his Donglin rivals. Rumors about Zheng Man's family disputes reached his searching ears, and he submitted a memorial that included a shocking story about Zheng Man beating his mother, a serious crime against filial piety. In Chongzhen 8/11 (1635), the emperor ordered Zheng Man thrown into the jail of the Board of Punishments. Officials on the Board said: "We should not prosecute a grave crime against ethics based on gossip. We would like to ask officials from [Zheng] Man's

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<sup>31</sup> Ye Jun argues that the Chongzhen emperor prioritized practicality over morality in terms of personnel decisions (*Zheng Man yanjiu*, p. 15). We have to keep in mind that these two aspects could not be separated in early Chinese politics, because morality was one of the most effective and "practical" political tools. Chongzhen often resorted to morality rhetoric and performance himself.

hometown to verify the details.” The emperor reprimanded them for protecting Zheng Man and had him moved to another prison.<sup>32</sup>

But gradually the emperor realized the Zheng Man case could not be substantiated. Wen Tiren’s efforts to produce evidence proving Zheng Man’s lack of filial piety and sexual immorality had not convinced the emperor. In Chongzhen 10/2 (1637), on learning that Wen Tiren had ordered Zheng Man transferred to the prison of the Imperial Bodyguard, where his life could be more easily taken, the emperor issued an edict prohibiting any further harm to Zheng Man. Six months later, after the emperor learned about Wen Tiren’s secret conspiracies against other officials, he forced Wen into retirement.<sup>33</sup> The official in charge of the prison of the Imperial Bodyguard, Wu Mengming 吳孟明, submitted a new report at the request of the Chongzhen emperor and explained Zheng Man’s innocence.<sup>34</sup> While there were officials defending Zheng Man as a moral and loyal official, including his uncle Zheng Zhenyuan 鄭振元 and his friend Huang Daozhou, to his disadvantage, sensational stories about his immorality were already circulating widely around the country. But politically, at the beginning of the post-Wen Tiren era, the situation tended to slightly favor Zheng Man.

As the emperor was trying to decide what to do with Zheng Man, unfortunately, another power struggle over filial piety and loyalty was intensifying. In the summer of

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<sup>32</sup> For the official version of Zheng Man’s arrest, see *Ming tongjian*: *juan* 84, p. 2239. Zheng Man was moved to *zhaoyu*, the prison for offenders whose arrest had been ordered by the emperor.

<sup>33</sup> For a simple but clear account of Wen Tiren’s tenure as the Grand Secretary, see Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, pp. 126-136.

<sup>34</sup> Zheng Man, *TSZXP*, p. 494; Sun Chengze 孫承澤, *Chunming meng yu lu* 春明夢餘錄 (Hong Kong: Longmen shudian, 1976): *juan* 45: “Chongzhen 11 nian Jinyi Wu Mengming hui zhou Zheng Man zhang mu shu” 崇禎十一年錦衣吳孟明回奏鄭鄴杖母疏, p. 730.

Chongzhen 11 (1638), Donglin-identified officials, led by Huang Daozhou, were negotiating with the emperor over key official appointments, including the positions of Grand Secretary and President of the Board of War. They challenged the emperor's decision to appoint Yang Sichang 楊嗣昌 and Chen Xinjia 陳新甲, who should both have been observing a three-year mourning period for their deceased parents. They argued that loyal officials must be found in filial men.<sup>35</sup> The defiant Chongzhen emperor, justifiably suspicious of Donglin factionalist agenda, used Zheng Man's "immorality" to challenge the motives of the discontents and rhetorically frustrate them. In his exchanges with the emperor, Huang Daozhou failed to defend either Zheng Man's moral innocence or his own political stance.<sup>36</sup>

From today's vantage point, this round of exchanges in court about filial piety and loyalty could only have hurt Zheng Man and adversely affected his fate. At that point, the emperor had in front of him two sets of testimony—one by Wen Tiren's accomplice, literatus named Xu Xi 許曦, which accused Zheng Man of a lack of filial piety and sexual immorality; the other offered by Wu Mengming, who summarized the testimony of two key witnesses, Zheng Man's countrymen, the officials Lu Wanxue 陸完學 and Wang Zhang 王章, who admitted that they did not like Zheng Man personally but confirmed the charges were groundless. The emperor made a moral-legal decision through a political

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<sup>35</sup> *Ming tongjian*: juan 86, pp. 2776-78. This teaching had had a long history in Chinese political philosophy. For a review, see, for example, Lee Cheuk Yin, "Emperor Chengzu and Imperial Filial Piety of the Ming Dynasty," in Alan K. L. Chan and Sor-hoon Tan ed. *Filial Piety in Chinese Thought and History*, pp. 141-153.

<sup>36</sup> This exchange has been well documented in many contemporary sources. Sun Chengze's *Chunming meng yu lu* (juan 33, pp. 392-94) probably provides the most detailed documentation of it.



one. He chose to endorse the first testimony to upset Huang Daozhou and his Donglin-identified associates, who had used the moral rhetoric of filial piety to challenge the emperor's personnel choices.<sup>37</sup> As a result, Huang was demoted and dismissed, and in Chongzhen 12 (1639), Zheng Man was executed as an offender of the first degree.<sup>38</sup> Two years later, after Yang Sichang repeatedly failed to lead the Ming army to military success against the rebels, he defended his loyalty only by committing suicide. Another four years later, Huang Daozhou himself became Grand Secretary of the Longwu Southern Ming court, stubbornly pushing forward his poorly executed military actions against the Manchus until he was defeated, captured, and executed. Among these three men with sad endings, only Huang Daozhou entered history as a morally perfect Donglin.

### **Politics Meets Literature: the Problem of Sensational Politics**

The historical verdicts passed on these political figures by literati of the seventeenth century are an important part of the Ming-Qing transition narrative and a legacy of late-Ming factionalism. Yang Sichang is described as incompetent and unfilial. The emperor should not have entrusted Yang to the most important positions at a crucial point in the

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<sup>37</sup> There is detailed documentation of this historic conversation in *Chunming meng yu lu*: *juan* 33, p. 394. It was very obvious that the emperor decided to go with Xu Xi's testimony instead of his officials' report to win this political and moral debate. He said: "The other day Xu Xi and others provided clear evidence of Zheng Man's crimes. These staff persons without bureaucratic grade (*zazhi*) have a just opinion; you officials do not have a just opinion. Shame on you!"

<sup>38</sup> Here, only verifiable information about Zheng Man's case is included to leave the unverifiable and controversial stories to a more detailed analysis in the rest of this chapter. But for the official account of this case, see *Ming tongjian*: *juan* 84, p. 2239. The historian Fukumoto Masakazu 福本雅一 has juxtaposed various accounts of Zheng Man's case to argue that this was the most notorious verdict of injustice in late Ming. Fukumoto, *Ming matsu Shin sho Vol. II* 明末清初二集 (Kyoto: Douhousha chuppan, 1993), pp. 55-74.

Ming's campaigns against the rampant rebels and the Manchus.<sup>39</sup> Although literati writers always praise Huang Daozhou's uncompromising character, moral perfection, and loyalty, their views on Huang Daozhou's relationship with Zheng Man vary. At the time when the debates were occurring, within the Donglin-identified literati, some were sympathetic with Zheng Man and insisted the non-Donglin officials had fabricated the charges, seeing Zheng's case as one example of the Donglin officials' sacrifice and frustration in their attempts to influence the emperor on behalf of the people's interests. Others felt disgraced by Zheng Man's alleged sexual immorality—but not lack of filial piety!—and denounced his Donglin membership. They were especially irritated by the charge that Zheng Man's execution confirmed that the Donglin officials were not as moral and loyal as they had claimed, and that Zheng Man's immorality demonstrated why the emperor would not entrust the most important positions to Donglin members. These different views were inherited by literati writers during the post-1644 era.

Historians have approached the problem of Zheng Man's inexplicable execution as either justified or unjustified. Most follow the views of seventeenth-century Donglin sympathizers and adopt two related assumptions when writing about this case—that Zheng Man was wronged, and that his case was relevant only as evidence of factional persecution.<sup>40</sup> Not only does this approach fail to explain Zheng Man's tragedy. More importantly, it perpetuates the misconception that the so-called Donglin and its factional enemies employed fundamentally different moral rhetoric. One account of the case

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<sup>39</sup> It has been pointed out that the Qing government's manipulation of historical writing through literary inquisition projects also helped perpetuate this image of Yang Sichang. Zhang Xianqing 張顯清, "Preface" to Yang Sichang, *Yang Sichang ji* 楊嗣昌集, Liang Songcheng compl. (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2005), p.31.

<sup>40</sup> For example, see Fukumoto and Ye Jun.

produced in the seventeenth century attributed Zheng Man's tragedy to the collapse of gender boundaries and order in his household. Rather than explaining the emperor's rationale for executing Zheng Man, the author curiously documents that on his death, "Zheng Man was very fat, like a pig. He must crave money and sex!"<sup>41</sup> Concluding Zheng Man's biography, which focuses on the presence of too many young women in his household, the author laments: "How sad that until today when people talk about Zheng Man, they still consider him a Donglin!"<sup>42</sup> The connection between sexual morality, gender propriety, and the loyal official made in this biography could be found in political discussions everywhere, regardless of factional attachment. However, accounts by the Donglin-identified officials who criticized Zheng Man's immorality have not been carefully studied. And the specifics of the gossip about Zheng Man have not received much analytical attention either because of their sensational nature and falseness. We are compelled to ask: How did a particular kind of gossip become so important in politics at this historical juncture? How did moral values affect the ways in which others perceived Zheng Man's political status? How do we understand the relationship between sexual morality and late-Ming factionalism?

It is ironic that moralism and sensationalism in political culture would often go hand in hand. Indeed, the underlying logic behind labeling the father Zheng Zhenxian the "Bai Sheng of the Donglin faction" and the attempts to deny the son Zheng Man's association with Donglin icons was same: the assumed impeccable morality of a unitary

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<sup>41</sup> Zhang Xia, *Yuqiao hua*: "Zheng Man ben mo." Ye Jun believes that this biography originated from another source, "Miyang shi hui" 峯陽事會 in *Kan hua xingzhe tan wang* 看花行者談往, or *Hua cun tan wang* 花村談往, because "Miyang shi hui" has more details. (Ye Jun, p. 17 n. 9.) But it seems that "Zheng Man benmo" draws upon several sources and the editor omitted some contents. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

Donglin identity. The representation of Zheng Zhenxian as the clownish literary figure Bai Sheng from *All Men Are Brothers* did not necessarily reflect the majority view at the time, but the practice of using the language of popular literature to discuss politics signaled a dangerous development in political culture. If the famous literatus-official and artist Dong Qichang 董其昌 did call the political theater of factionalism “a live performance of *All Men Are Brothers*,”<sup>43</sup> it should not surprise us that at the apex of factionalist struggles there would appear the notorious *List of Notorious Donglin Persons* (*Donglin dian jiang lu* 東林點將錄), a blacklist of officials identified as “Donglin” in which each official was assigned a name and role from that same popular novel. Nor should it astonish anyone when Zheng Man as a targeted Donglin figure was himself named after a not-so-manly protagonist in literature. This was one strategy of political persecution that marked the era of “sensational politics” in the Tianqi and Chongzhen periods.

Sensational politics in the late Ming had two aspects. First, it tolerated unrestrained political intrusion into personal matters, which often involved “dubious accusations” concerning officials’ sexual morality. One key element of late-Ming sensationalized politics was an obsession with gender boundary-crossing and sexual behavior. But let us first look at the second aspect of sensational politics, the increasing literary production of sensational stories in political discussion. While helping to draw public attention to important political issues such as wars on the frontier and struggles with eunuch power at court, sensational accounts of political events and figures in the forms of novels, dramas

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<sup>43</sup> Shen Defu, *Wanli ye huo bian*, p. 234.

and biographies also became weapons of political attack; these literary forms played an important role in shaping sensationalized politics, with often fatal results for literati-officials deeply entangled in serious political struggles.<sup>44</sup> The way in which charges against Zheng Man were put forward in court and the sensational narratives about his personal life produced at the time all exemplify this particular phenomenon in late-Ming political culture.

In the late Ming, the booming print culture complicated the landscape of political and cultural negotiations. On the one hand, vernacular literature fed the political imagination of the public with information from official accounts of history and contemporary politics.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, novels, dramas, and folk songs were all used to substantiate political charges and as tools of political attack. In the Chongzhen reign and Southern Ming years, plays and dramas composed as caricatures of the prominent figures of political cliques served as a means to mobilize sympathizers, ridicule the enemy, and gain public attention.<sup>46</sup> The best-known cases all involved Donglin and Fushe core members. They were not purely victims of literary ridicule but sometime penned such literature as well.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Wang Hongtai has pointed out the “publicizing” effects of novels and dramas were realized and utilized by officials themselves against each other outside the court since the mid-Ming. I think what begs our attention here in the late Ming is that “local knowledge” produced in this way entered official politics. Wang Hongtai 王鴻泰, “Shehui de xiangxiang yu xiangxiang de shehui” 社會的想像與想像的社會, esp. pp. 140-141.

<sup>45</sup> Chang, Shelley Hsue-lun. *History and Legend: Ideas and Images in the Ming Historical Novels* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990).

<sup>46</sup> See Wang Hongtai, “Shehui de xiangxiang yu xiangxiang de shehui.”

<sup>47</sup> For example, Lu Shiyi’s *Fushe ji lue* documents how Wen Tiren’s brother Wen Yuren wrote *Lu mudan* [The Green Peony] to ridicule certain Fushe youths. How Ruan Dacheng’s conflicts with the famous Fushe Four Scholars were intertwined with his plays such as *Chun deng mi* and *Yanzi jian* has been well-documented in many sources, and even by the concerned parties themselves. For example, see essays compiled in Mao Xiang’s *Tongren ji*. Some of these incidents will be discussed throughout the chapters.

Therefore, sensational politics affected both the pro-Donglin and anti-Donglin camps. But since its deployment by the latter has taken a prominent place in the historical narrative about brutal political persecutions in the late Ming, a narrative in which the Donglin camp was always the victim, the pro-Donglin use of it has come to seem justified and therefore has not attracted enough critical attention among historians. Although historians have noticed the employment of novels and dramas by pro-Donglin literati outside the court, there has been little recognition that they engaged in a sensational politics that, in my view, corroded late Ming political culture.

The power of sensational politics for the first time manifested itself on the national stage quite dramatically when Zheng Man had just entered officialdom in the early Tianqi period. National politics during the Tianqi years gave rein to the most blatant and brutal employment of the sensational political strategy; this was when Wei Zhongxian mounted ruthless attacks on literati-officials who refused to cooperate in his agenda. In Tianqi 5 (1625), Wei made public the *Donglin dangren bang* 東林黨人榜, a list of the so-called Donglin literati-officials, corrupted and evil officials against whom he declared war on behalf of the emperor. Those on the list were to be deprived of their official titles, and, if they were alive, could face imprisonment. Those who were already dead would lose the titles and honors previously endowed upon them. This notorious list instantly became the definitive register of “the Donglin faction.” Zheng Man appeared on it and on other similar blacklists as a Donglin member.<sup>48</sup> He not only lost his official

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<sup>48</sup> “Ni dang Wei Zhongxian Donglin dang renwu” 逆璫魏忠賢東林黨人物 in Chen Ding 陳鼎 ed., *Donglin liezhuan* 東林列傳 (Zhou Jufu 周駿富 ed. *Ming dai zhuanji congkan* 明代傳記叢刊) (Taipei: Mingwen shuju, 1991), pp. 15-22. The list was dated Tianqi 5/12/1.

position, but also had to leave home and travel into the mountains to avoid further persecution when Wei Zhongxian and his associates cast a nationwide net to catch their enemies.<sup>49</sup>

Prior to this, in Tianqi 4 (1624), the *List of Notorious Donglin Persons* had already appeared, adding a sensational dimension to the increasingly grim power struggles between the Donglin-identified officials and their enemies. The author of this piece, the literatus-official Wang Shaohui 王紹徽, substituted the names of the Donglin members in a well-known roster of rebel leaders from the popular novel *All Men Are Brothers*. He assigned each of the Donglin-identified officials a character from the rebel organization, distinguished by a unique sobriquet and a role. For example, Zheng Man was assigned “the Peculiar star among the Stars of Earth called the White-Faced Goodman” 地異星白面郎君, sobriquet for the character Zheng Tianshou 鄭天壽; Zheng’s colleague and good friend Wen Zhenmeng became “the Learned star among the Stars of Earth called the Magic Scribe” 地文星聖手書生, the sobriquet for Xiao Rang 蕭讓.<sup>50</sup>

Instead of dismissing Wang Shaohui’s project as ridiculous or pathetic, we should try to understand its logic and consequences, approaching it as a political and *literary*

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<sup>49</sup> This experience is documented in *TSZXP*; Huang Zongxi, “Zheng Miyang xiansheng mubiao”; Qian Qianyi 錢謙益, *Chu xue ji* 初學集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2003): *juan* 58: “Feng anren Wu shi muzhiming” 封安人吳氏墓志銘, pp. 1427-28.

<sup>50</sup> “Donglin dian jiang lu” 東林點將錄 in Chen Ding ed. *Donglin liezhuan* (Appendix) (*MDZJCK-Xuelin lin* 3) (Taipei: Mingwen shuju, 1991), p. 922. The translations of these sobriquets adopt those by Pearl S. Buck, *All Men Are Brothers* [*Shui hu chuan*] (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1937), pp. 1266-1272.

project.<sup>51</sup> Wang Shaohui was born into a prestigious family that had already produced a president of the Board of Rituals, his grandfather Wang Yongbin 王用賓.<sup>52</sup> He was an aspiring official when factionalism began to plague the government. After he obtained the *jinshi* title in Wanli 26 (1598), he worked his way from magistrate of the Zouping County to the Supervising Censor at the Board of Revenue. He was considered an official with political integrity. During the controversial *xinhai* evaluation of officials supervised by Sun Piyang, Wang Shaohui became a victim of factionalism. Attempting to curb factionalism, Sun Piyang demoted officials close to the Kun faction leader, Tang Binyin 湯賓尹, including Wang Shaohui who was Tang Binyin's protégé and disciple.<sup>53</sup> Wang Shaohui refused to go to his new position in Shandong.<sup>54</sup> Later he resorted to Wei Zhongxian's protection, like many other officials who considered themselves victimized by the Donglin faction. Once having stepped onto this path, Wang Shaohui could not help but get increasingly involved with Wei Zhongxian. It was said he obtained the position of the president of the Board of Personnel under Wei's patronage and his obedience to the

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<sup>51</sup> We cannot exclude the possibility that some matches are not as perfect as the ones that we see here. Why the matches so revealingly reflect literati's enjoyment in skillful literary allusion demands our analytical attention. A thorough study of the patterns with which the characters of the novel and the listed officials were matched will be conducted in a separate project.

<sup>52</sup> "Ni dang Wei Zhongxian Donglin dang renwu."

<sup>53</sup> It has been pointed out in many scholarly works that these efforts to "purify the bureaucracy" hurt many junior officials who were associated with factional leaders merely as disciples defined by the customs of the civil service examinations system. For example, Chen Guanghong 陳廣宏, "Wan Ming wenxue bianzou de zhengzhi kaocha—Zhong Xing, Tan Yuanchun yu wan Ming dangzheng zhi guanxi pingyi" 晚明文學變奏的政治考察. 鐘惺、譚元春與晚明黨爭之關係平議, *Nanjing shifan daxue wenxueyuan xuebao* [Journal of School of Chinese Literature and Culture Nanjing Normal University] (2006): 1: 121-131. Studies of anti-Donglin or non-Donglin figures have been scarce, partly because so few of their works have survived partisan literary erasure by Donglin sympathizers. Harry Miller has nicely discussed this problem and Tang Binyin's oblivion in literary history. Miller, "Opposition to the Donglin Faction in the Late Ming Dynasty: the Case of Tang Binyin. If Kin Bunkyo's analysis proves correctly that Tang Binyin's alleged sexual immorality could also be a fabrication, then Tang Binyin could also be a victim of late-Ming sensational politics.

<sup>54</sup> *MS: liezhuan* 194 "Yandang" 閹黨.



powerful eunuch earned him the nickname of “Wei’s wife Wang,”<sup>55</sup> probably created by the anti-Wei officials to ridicule Wang Shaohui. This gendered nickname might have been informed by Wei’s own remarks: “Board President Wang, as lovely and charming as a woman, can write very critical work. He is truly a treasure.”<sup>56</sup> There could be no more serious insult to literati-official masculinity than these remarks, since Chinese political history had always represented eunuchs as an effeminate, corrupting, and politically dangerous force.

What begs our attention is that Wang Shaohui did not randomly assign his enemies’ names to these characters. He obviously took this project seriously and enjoyed matching up the men with the appropriate rebels in the novel. To some degree, the assignment of the sobriquets was intended to indicate the officials’ different political importance, interconnections, and personal characteristics. The character matched with Wen Zhenmeng, for instance, is the calligrapher Xiao Rang. Wen Zhenmeng’s grandfather, Wen Zhengming 文徵明, was the most accomplished calligrapher and painter of the Ming dynasty. Wen’s own writings had garnered him a national reputation and earned him the first place in the civil service examinations in his *jinshi* cohort. Zheng Man’s corresponding character, Zheng Tianshou, obviously was carefully chosen for him as well. They shared the same surname, but Zheng Tianshou also appears in the novel in a gang of three,<sup>57</sup> which coincides with the well-known trio of Zheng Man, Wen Zhenmeng, and Huang Daozhou. Zheng Man’s family was one of the wealthiest in his

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<sup>55</sup> Chen Ding, notes to “Donglin dian jiang lu,” in *Donglin liezhuan*, pp. 926-27.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> This is in Chapter 33 of the novel.

hometown, and the choice of Zheng Tianshou also seems to reflect the perception that Zheng Man was a man who had the money and leisure to take care of his appearance.

Pleasure and cruelty seemed to go hand in hand in Wei Zhongxian and his associates' pursuit of their prey, especially when the Donglin officials flaunted their status-based notion of manliness vis-à-vis the eunuch's apparent lack of masculinity, which effectively emasculated their collaborators. Wang Shaohui's dedication to fabricating the notorious list of Donglin-identified officials in such an entertaining manner ushered in a kind of political puppet theater in the central government. His presentation of a political blacklist trivialized the political actors and consequently made persecution a "fun" and normal project—in this case, a literary game that literati all could aspire to master. Although the vernacular novel did not enjoy the prestige of poetry in literati culture, in late Ming, especially once Li Zhi had edited and published his commentaries on popular novels including *All Men Are Brothers*, many literati-officials also engaged in this literary endeavor as an entertaining new fad. At the time of political crisis, though, the fad backfired! More importantly, I would suggest that it was this same violence-legitimizing logic that ten years later made Zheng Man's execution a "reasonable" punishment for his alleged immorality.

After the newly enthroned Chongzhen emperor removed the Eunuch Wei and his associates from power, everyone from literati-officials to common people once again became optimistic that the new emperor would set out to promote the officials who had

narrowly escaped Wei Zhongxian's claws. Having been included in those blacklists<sup>58</sup> now suddenly became a badge of honor, a symbol of political integrity, and naturally, Donglin membership. The contrast between loyal and evil officials could not be clearer when the Chongzhen emperor ordered a list of Wei's associates in the government compiled. This was the famous *Ni'an* 逆案 list (Traitors' Case).<sup>59</sup> Seventeenth-century literati and modern historians believe that the Chongzhen emperor's enthronement marked a clear-cut break from Tianqi-era politics dominated by the eunuch Wei Zhongxian. However, if we approach the political culture of these two reigns in terms of their usage of political language, we find that the sensationalized political culture cultivated in the Tianqi era continued to haunt the Ming court.

The Chongzhen emperor feared factionalism to the point of paranoia, but he did not really know how to control or deal with it other than relying upon officials who appeared to be non-factional. Early edicts issued by the Chongzhen emperor show that he knew very well that dubious charges against officials' character would not only make it impossible for him to tell the loyal from the disloyal, but also create an uneasy political environment.<sup>60</sup> However, exactly at this point when fear of factionalism and when the

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<sup>58</sup> For example, Chen Ding noted that seven versions of blacklist compiled by Wei's group had been widely distributed (“七錄者曰天鑿曰雷平曰同志曰薙稗曰點將曰蠅蚋曰蝗蝻”) in *Donglin liezhuan*, pp. 005-007.

<sup>59</sup> For example, Jin Risheng's 金日升 published a twenty-four chapter book praising the efforts to restore political order in Chongzhen 2. Zheng Man appears in this volume. Jin Risheng describes Zheng Man's heroic action against Wei Zhongxian and his followers. He also provides a rare observation about Zheng Man's temporary retirement, in which he says that back in his hometown, Zheng Man did not socialize much but concentrated on writing. His loyalty, affection, and compassion are manifested in his writings. Jin Risheng, *Song tian lu bi* 頌天臚筆 (Chongzhen 2 edition, *Skjh: shi 5-6*): juan 13: “Zheng taishi” 鄭太史, p. 690.

<sup>60</sup> For example, *Chunming meng yu lu*: juan 25: “Chongzhen yuan nian jiu yue yu” 崇禎元年九月諭, p. 291.

Ming government's inability to cope with the deepening internal and external crises had raised the stakes in performing loyalty, sensational narratives of officials' moral behavior became a convenient way to define (dis)loyalty. Meanwhile, degrading and sensational language filled conversations at court. For example, factional attacks on the famed scholar and official Qian Qianyi as early as Chongzhen 2 (1629) conjured up so much gossip that the emperor even called this reputable scholar and poet a "rascal" (*guanggun* 光棍), a term that in late Ming hinted of single men's unregulated sexual desire and behavior.<sup>61</sup> In Chongzhen 15 (1642), with Zhou Yanru's 周延儒 reappointment as Grand Secretary supported by the Donglin-identified officials, many Donglin icons such as Liu Zongzhou 劉宗周, Huang Daozhou and Ni Yuanlu 倪元璐 received appointments to key positions. Those who disliked them created the "Theory of the Twenty-four *Qi*" (*Er shi si qi shuo* 二十四氣說), something very similar to the list that had matched Donglin officials with fictional characters during the Tianqi reign, and circulated it in and outside the government. Each of these twenty-four officials was assigned to represent one specific evil force/energy. For example, Ni Yuanlu, whose relationship with his wife and concubine was sensationalized and politicized, represented the energy of promiscuity.<sup>62</sup>

This sensationalization of political culture resulted in some literati-officials making counter-efforts to frame Donglin officials as the emblem of highest morality, as

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<sup>61</sup> *Chunming meng yu lu: juan* 24, pp. 272-275. For a gender analysis of this term, see Matthew Sommer. Also see Chen Baoliang 陳寶良, *Zhongguo liumang shi* 中國流氓史 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1993), esp. pp. 160-166.

<sup>62</sup> *Yin qi* 淫氣. *Ming tongjian: juan* 88, p. 2449. Ni Yuanlu's family disputes also found ways into factional politics.

the representation of officials such as Huang Daozhou has demonstrated. Ironically, precisely because the so-called Donglin had a strong sense of moral mission and have been considered the emblem of morality (“the righteous”), this inevitably encouraged focus on the claim of moral perfection for a large assortment of officials who for one reason or another were seen as Donglin. “Donglin” is a political and historical construction, and the central part of this construction is precisely its moral perfection, which is in part defined within literati gender boundaries.

## **Loyalty, Filial Piety, and Sexual Morality in Literature and Autobiography**

### *Literary attacks*

The historian Xie Guozhen has reminded us to pay attention to the fact that sensational stories about Zheng Man’s mother-beating and sexual immorality traveled widely and that there were many books written about it at the time.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, in the years between Zheng Man’s arrest and his execution, various versions of these stories emerged. Zheng’s autobiography, compiled in prison, painstakingly addresses the issues of loyalty, filial piety, and sexual morality, and can be considered a gesture of self-defense against those stories. Dubious accusations, sensational stories, and the defense of Zheng by his friends were all presented to the Chongzhen emperor to be judged by him. In this section, I will first look at some of the sensational stories that circulated in society, followed by Zheng Man’s autobiographical self-presentation as self-defense, which foregrounds the interconnecting virtues of loyalty, filial piety, and proper gender behaviors.

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<sup>63</sup> Xie Guozhen 謝國楨, *Ming-Qing zhi ji dangshe yundong kao*, p. 54.

Grand Secretary Wen Tiren instructed an Imperial Student, Xu Xi, to fabricate some spiteful novel and insert Zheng Man's name in the stories.<sup>64</sup> While it might seem the sort of intrigue frequently employed in political struggles, for literati-officials in the Chongzhen court, it immediately provoked alarming memories of the so-called “*yuanyou* factionalism” 元祐黨爭 of the Song dynasty, an extraordinary episode of brutal and costly factional struggles. Zheng Man compares his case to the experience of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), the great Song Neo-Confucian thinker and literatus-official, who experienced relentless attacks on his character launched by political enemies. Zheng Man recalled:

I remember Censor Li Jijing sent me a copy of *Dao ming lu* 道命錄,<sup>65</sup> which contains several memorials against Huiweng.<sup>66</sup> These memorials alleged that he seduced and then married two Buddhist nuns. They also accused him of allowing his son to steal cows. This testifies the serious nature of factional struggles at the time.<sup>67</sup>

The notorious memorials mentioned by Zheng Man recounted the misconduct allegedly committed by Zhu Xi, which included lacking filial piety, disloyalty, and sexual immorality.<sup>68</sup> Despite the several memorials submitted by officials to defend Zhu Xi, he was still stripped of his official titles. Literati-officials of later generations all knew these

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 495.

<sup>65</sup> This work was compiled by a Song scholar-official, Li Xichuan 李心傳, a collection of memorials and official documents concerning Zhu Xi's late political life.

<sup>66</sup> Huiweng 晦翁 refers to Zhu Xi.

<sup>67</sup> *TSZXNP*, p. 495.

<sup>68</sup> Li Xinchuan, *Dao ming lu* 道命錄: *juan 7 1 I*: “Shen Jizu he Huian xiansheng shu” 沈繼祖劾晦庵先生疏 (Wang Yunwu ed. 王雲五, *Congshu ji cheng chu bian* 叢書集成初編) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1936), pp. 67-69.

stories well. Zheng Man saw many similarities between his and Zhu Xi's circumstances, and argued that the attacks he suffered were even worse. He felt bitter and desperate because it "was unheard of" for factionalist officials would stoop so low as to produce a vernacular novel to press and circulate charges against him; this was a situation that Zhu Xi never faced.<sup>69</sup> Below I will focus on widely circulated narratives depicting Zheng Man's immoral behavior, two novels and several biographies, and consider these narratives within the context of late-Ming political culture.

Zheng Man's enemies cooked up two novels about him, *Fang Zheng xiao shi* 放鄭小史 (hereafter *Fang Zheng*) and *Da yingxiong zhuan* 大英雄傳. The full texts do not exist any more, but we have the titles of all forty chapters in each novel, which tell us much about their contents.<sup>70</sup> It is generally believed that the two novels were both written by Wen Tiren's accomplices after Xu Xi's efforts.<sup>71</sup>

*Fang Zheng* begins with Zheng Man's father, Zheng Zhenxian. It depicts Zheng Zhenxian as a sly politician, a womanizer, and an unhappy retired literatus-official gone astray in Buddhism.<sup>72</sup> Zheng Man appears as a sex maniac and a predator who seduced not only his father's concubine but also his daughter-in-law. He beat his mother out of jealousy at her love for his younger brother. The novel also seems to attribute his parents'

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<sup>69</sup> *Tianshan zixu nianpu*, p. 495.

<sup>70</sup> Sun Kaidi 孫楷第, chap. 2 "Ming-Qing jiang shi bu" 明清講史部, in *Zhongguo tongshu xiaoshuo shumu* 中國通俗小說書目 (Beijing: Guoli Beiping tushuguan, 1933), pp. 85-86.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 85.

<sup>72</sup> See titles of Chapter 1-11 of *Fang zheng xiao shi* 放鄭小史, in Tang Xiuye 湯修業, *Zheng Man shiji 1* 鄭鄭事蹟一 in *Gu xue huikan* 古學彙刊 (Vol. 1-6, Part I) (Shanghai: Shanghai guocui xue bao she, 1912), pp. 1a-2b.

deaths to Zheng Man's sexual immorality. In addition, he is portrayed as a political opportunist who attaches himself to respectable literati-officials to advance his career. Wen Tiren, the Grand Secretary, is portrayed as the truly loyal official in this story, in contrast to the vicious Huang Daozhou, Zheng Man's good friend and defender.<sup>73</sup>

The other novel, *Da yingxiong zhuan*, creates more fictional characters than *Fang Zheng*, stringing together people from a wide range of social strata, from monks and neighborhood rascals to gentry women and courtesans.<sup>74</sup> It reads like a *gong'an xiaoshuo* 公案小說, a popular vernacular genre of the late Ming that fictionalized legal cases.

While *Fang Zheng* represents real people and elaborates on the official charges against Zheng Man, *Da yingxiong zhuan* does not seem to primarily aim at political intervention, because it obviously was packaged and sold as cheap fiction, something to be read for entertainment. Chapter titles such as “Madame Lu Beat Up Her Lover Out of Jealousy” and “A Gentry's Daughter Gets Naked to Have Her Virginity Checked”<sup>75</sup> would be sensational enough to feed readers' voyeurism, especially in Ming society where taboos against openly discussing sexuality remained strong. This novel focuses so much on stories of promiscuity that, at least in what we can tell from the surviving chapter titles, Zheng Man and his political tragedy were not the main story. They only offered some convenient narrative elements on which an entertaining pornographic work was constructed.

Although these two novels are fictional, they could affect what assumptions the public would bring to discussions about contemporary politics. Whether or not these

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<sup>73</sup> Title of Chapters 18, 20, 35, 37 and 38.

<sup>74</sup> Chapter titles in *Da yingxiong zhuan*, *Zheng Man shiji* 4, pp. 3a-4b.

<sup>75</sup> Titles of chapter 19 and 22 in *Da yingxiong zhuan*.



novels depict Zheng Man's real experience is less important than the simple fact that these stories were in circulation and *suggested* the plausibility of his sexual scandals. Once the imaginary linkage between Zheng Man and promiscuity was established, it took on a life of its own and would influence politics in a very real way. This effect remains even if we admit the difficulty of distinguishing the intended from the unintended effects of sensational literature on political events.

In the Chinese tradition of historical writing, the representation of either a historical or contemporary figure always straddles the boundary of historical documentation and fiction, since it targets literati who read both for knowledge and pleasure. This can be seen in the sheer number of biographical accounts concerning Zheng Man, his family, and his daughter-in-law. *Fulun xinshi* 扶倫信史 (“An Honest History Condemning Immorality”), a biography of Zheng Man crafted in classical Chinese, ends with an account of Zheng Man's execution. Therefore one can conclude that its intended readers were well-educated people and it was not fabricated to incriminate him but was composed as historical documentation.<sup>76</sup> It provides a coherent narrative of how the wicked characters of the Zheng father and son led to their political downfall and in a broader perspective how a family lacking Confucian moral values embarked on the path to self-destruction. Two major story lines intertwine in this “factual documentation,” one political and the other familial. The political story line follows the traditional literary trope of good vs. evil in political struggles, pitting the Zheng father and son against upright Donglin literati-officials such as Huang Daozhou and Sun

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<sup>76</sup> *Fulun xinshi* 扶倫信史 in Zhang Xia, *Yuqiao hua*.

Shenxing 孫慎行. Their social and political connections are interpreted as a result of Zheng Man's successful deception and manipulation. *Fulun xinshi* offers an explanation for Zheng Zhenxian's worsening relationship with the figures associated with the emergence of "Donglin." It was here that Zheng Zhenxian was dubbed Bai Sheng after a literary figure in the most popular novel of the time, for his contemptible political behavior.

The familial story line consists of a sexual thread and a religious thread. It reads like a cheap vernacular novel feeding the reading public's sexual voyeurism. *Fulun xinshi* even names the two young women allegedly seduced and raped by Zheng Man and provides details about the incidents. It also suggests that Zheng Man sexually harassed his younger sister. Entwined with this narrative of sexual scandal is a message about dangerous religious practices that targets both Daoism and Buddhism, the two important cultural-spiritual traditions in contemporary literati lives and the Zheng father and son's spiritual exploration. In this account, Zheng Man is bewitched by Daoism and tricks his father into beating his mother; Zheng Man is also blamed for making his father so deluded that he becomes a monk. This wicked behavior reaches the ears of the Zheng family friend and relative Wu Liang, causing a rift between the two families. Wu Zongda 吳宗達, a member of the Wu clan who was at the time serving in the powerful position of Grand Secretary, was particularly dismayed and therefore exposed the scandal to chief Grand Secretary Wen Tiren. In this way, Zheng Man's deviation from sexual morality, filial piety, and Confucian teachings became mutually constitutive. It is suggested that his evil character disqualified him to be a Donglin.

Texts of a similar nature written about Zheng Man in the late Chongzhen period elaborate on his alleged affairs with his father's concubine and his attempt to rape his daughter-in-law, a young woman surnamed Han, the daughter of Zheng Man's good friend and countryman Han Zhongxun 韓鐘勳.<sup>77</sup> The accusation of Zheng Man's crime against the Han daughter "inspired" at least three biographies of her, *Min jie waishi* 愍節外史, *Han lienu zhuan* 韓烈女傳, and *You zhuan* 又傳. The biographies of the Han daughter offer juicy details about Zheng Man's attempts to rape her and claim that she committed suicide to guard her chastity against Zheng the sexual predator.<sup>78</sup> Given the

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<sup>77</sup> Zhang Xia, *Yuqiao hua*. This young woman lost her parents, moved into the Zheng household, and shared a chamber room with Zheng Man's fourth daughter until she would become old enough to formally marry Zheng Man's second son. A certain Lu family in the same region tried to hold onto the things this young woman's deceased mother had left with them for her. The Han daughter unsuccessfully challenged the Lu family and died in depression soon afterwards. This incident happened to involve the daughter-in-law of Lu Wanxue 陸完學, a powerful official whom Zheng Man believed was Wen Tiren's major accomplice. *Tianshan zixu nianpu*, pp. 492, 495. Many years later, the early Qing scholar Gu Yanwu confirmed that a certain Lu Laifu 陸來復 actually drafted the charges provided by Xu Xi and his boss Wen Tiren. Lu Laifu seems to have been Lu Wanxue's relative. See Gu Yanwu 顧炎武, *Gu Tinglin shi jian shi* 亭林詩文集 (SBBY): *Tinglin shiji* 亭林詩集: juan 4: "Lu gongshi Laifu shu xi nian dai Xu sheren Xi cao shu gong Zheng Man shi" 陸貢士來復述昔年代許舍人曦草疏攻鄭鄴事, p. 284.

<sup>78</sup> One piece of evidence in question is the age of the Han daughter. Some argue that she was only twelve, and therefore could not be raped by Zheng Man. (For example, Ye Jun) Ye Shaoyuan 葉紹袁, a late Ming official, kept a diary during the days when he was living outside of the city to avoid the Qing army. In one of the entries of *Shunzhi* 3 (1646), he records that a friend brought a man surnamed Han to his place. It is said that this man was a son of the Han family, the older brother of Zheng Man's daughter-in-law. According to this man, after his sister committed suicide at the age of 16, the family submitted request to the Chongzhen emperor for imperial recognition of her chastity. Zheng Man's autobiography tells us that the Han daughter was not yet 15 years old; that was why she was living with Zheng Man's widowed mother-in-law and his fourth daughter. Zheng Man's second son, to whom the Han daughter was engaged, was born in *Tianqi* 2 (1622). The Han daughter's age was "close," which means, according to Chinese custom, the age difference between two young people could be as large as five or six years. Therefore in *Chongzhen* 7 (1634) when she died, her age should be between 13-17. The alleged Han son could have got the young woman's age right, but I suspect that it was a guess. In any case, the authenticity of this man's identity begs questioning. It is not likely that an older brother would want to talk about something like rape concerning his sister, even if she was a victim. See Ye Shaoyuan, *Jia xing ri zhu* 甲行日注: juan 4: *Shunzhi* 3/12 丙戌十二月. *Li dai riji cong chao* 歷代日記叢鈔 Vol. 10 (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe), p. 172.

number of such biographies written about the Han daughter, it is not hard to imagine that among the reading public, there was a strong excitement about and demand for this kind of sensational stories about a nationally important political figure.

Ignoring the existence of narratives of a sensational nature in our historical investigation of late Ming leads to underestimating the political power of moral discourses, especially when the conventional avenues of political negotiation had broken down. What eventually made Zheng Man's case famous and consequential was its sensational nature, especially the issue of sexual morality indicated in the stories.<sup>79</sup> And we must remember that at least one such story was presented to and manipulated by the Chongzhen emperor himself, and that Zheng Man in prison was worried about the circulation and political impacts of these novels. Popular sensational literature obviously influenced the interpretative context of the accounts of Zheng Man. We cannot make a definitive claim about who first created such plots and why; nor can we differentiate fact from fiction to reconstruct the truth. However, these widely circulated narratives eventually became credible as "local knowledge" that was utilized as "truth" by outsiders.

### *Autobiography as counter-attack*

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<sup>79</sup> It is not accidental that the historian Fukumoto Masakazu, when mentioning Zheng Man's case, often uses "Beating mother and sexually interacting with father's concubine" 杖母蒸妾, unlike most historical accounts (including official histories and contemporary scholarship) that only mention "beating mother." These two charges indeed became inseparable.

Modern readers may wonder why Zheng's own family and associates could not clarify the matter for the public and repudiate the rumors.<sup>80</sup> We must again remember the culture to which a loyal Confucian adhered. The literatus-official was supposed to refrain from "talking about other people's private matters" (*tan ren guiwei* 談人閨闈) and "not criticizing people of superior status" (*wei zun zhe hui* 為尊者諱). No serious literati-official would want to publicly discuss topics such as the beating of a mother or the rape a daughter-in-law, even if they knew the allegations were false, because then they would then have to openly address the private content of these kinds of incidents, especially sexual conduct. This may explain the reticence of Sun Shenxing 孫慎行, the president of the Board of Rituals and Zheng Man's neighbor who happened to be at home when these alleged crimes occurred. When the Board of Punishments asked him to provide first-hand information, Sun responded that he did not interact with anyone during his temporary retirement and therefore could offer no "local knowledge."<sup>81</sup>

In defense of Zheng Man, insisting on the principle of not to bring in domestic relations into political discussion, Huang Daozhou submitted a memorial to illustrate the connection between loyalty and the "correct" way of conducting politics.

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<sup>80</sup> Two public statements by the Zheng clan in Wujin, released several months after Zheng Man's execution, are included in Zheng Mans' collected works as appendix. They strongly and explicitly condemning Zheng Man's brother for the part he played in incriminating Zheng Man and causing his tragedy. "Zheng shi tong zu ji wen" 鄭氏通族祭文 and "Zheng shi tong zu zhu bu di Zheng Yiqian xi" 鄭氏通族誅不弟鄭一謙檄, in *MYCTWJ*, pp. 504-507.

<sup>81</sup> The Chongzhen emperor could not determine what happened, because no one could fully substantiate the charges. So he ordered the Board of Punishment to obtain the testimony of a number of Wujin natives. It seems unlikely that Sun Shenxing avoided answering the question in order to imply Zheng Man's crime, because in Chongzhen 8, upon departing for the capital at the emperor's request, he invited Zheng Man to travel together. *TSZXP*, p. 492.

Han Qi, an official of the Song dynasty, held office in the Grand Council. Every time he came across memorials that exposed other officials' personal mistakes, he would cover those words with his hands. The emperor Renzong called him "a loyal official." Yan Zhenqing in the Tang dynasty once attacked Li Heji for lacking filial piety. But later he admitted his attack was improper words spilled out as a result of drunkenness. In other words, letting on others' personal problems should not happen in a good political environment. Nowadays, locals enjoy getting together and gossiping to entertain themselves. Everywhere, dishonest men fabricate smears to make a profit. Idle and vicious culture is a hotbed for disorder. It must be put under control quickly.<sup>82</sup>

Here, Huang Daozhou tried to define "loyalty" by the moral principle that a righteous man should not defame others, especially regarding personal matters. By doing so, Huang Daozhou suggested that those who tried to implicate Zheng Man with the charges of lacking filial piety and sexual immorality were "disloyal." Two years after Zheng Man's execution, upon receiving a promotion to Senior Vice-president of the Board of Personnel, Liu Zongzhou memorialized to the Chongzhen emperor and invoked Zheng Man's case to argue that the virtues of filial piety and loyalty would be jeopardized should the practice of prosecuting officials based on dubious charges of personal immorality persist. He suggested that the emperor Chongzhen's intention to punish immorality and promote filial piety to restore political order in the country might have been manipulated by vicious officials. To achieve the ideal governance set by *The Book of Filial Piety*, the emperor had to promote both loyalty and filial piety. The political responsibility of the emperor includes the ability to differentiate loyal subjects from evil officials, which would require that he have faith in his officials and refrain from

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<sup>82</sup> Huang Daozhou, "Gongyu Huang gong Daozhou jiu Zheng Man shu" 宮諭黃公道周救鄭鄭疏 in *MYCTWJ: juan 16*, p. 502.

punishing them for groundless accusations of sexual immorality.<sup>83</sup> But the Chongzhen emperor could not truly understand his officials' political insights.

Thus, in contrast to the proliferating sensational narratives, those who could provide more reliable information about Zheng Man had to abide by literati-official behavioral norms and remain silent. Sympathizers with the Zheng family and Zheng Man himself could hardly discuss his father's conflict with his mother over a concubine, even if it did happen and had serious consequences. When Zheng Man was arrested, his father Zheng Zhenxian had already died, and it would have been disrespectful to talk about a deceased parent in an even slightly negative way. We have a Wujin gazetteer and a Changzhou gazetteer that offer inconsistent, if not deliberately confusing, information about the Zheng father and son.<sup>84</sup> In the same vein, the Wujin native Tang Xiuye 湯修業 (who compiled the material to prove Zheng Man's innocence) also had to refrain from offering too many details about locally prominent people's private lives and their disgruntlement toward each other. He stays away from discussing Zheng Zhenxian's personal matters as well.<sup>85</sup> Taboos of this kind in historical writing and political criticism

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<sup>83</sup> Liu Zongzhou 劉宗周, "Yuan ren gongbu zuo shilang Liu gong Zongzhou xi gao pou xin ken qi sheng jian shu" 原任工部左侍郎劉公宗周席稿剖心懇啟聖鑒疏 in *Miyang caotang wenji*: juan 16, p. 503.

<sup>84</sup> The Wujin County gazetteer, revised and reprinted in Kangxi 22 (1683), notes under Zheng Man's uncle's name in the chapter on the successful candidates at civil service examinations that another chapter includes his biography. But that biography was deleted. Under the names of Zheng Zhenxian and Zheng Man, there are only their official titles; no biographies were ever compiled for them. In the Changzhou District gazetteer (Wujin was one of its counties), again, Zheng Man has no biography. The biography of his father apparently (and maybe deliberately) created such a different life for him that one could hardly recognize it as Zheng Zhenxian. *Wujin Xianzhi* 武進縣志 (Kangxi 22 edition) in *Xi jian Zhongguo difangzhi huikan* 稀見中國地方志匯刊 (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1992); *Kangxi Changzhou fuzhi* 康熙常州府志 (Kangxi 34 edition) in *Zhongguo difangzhi jicheng: Jiangsu fu xian zhi ji* 36 中國地方志集成 . 江蘇府縣志輯 3 6, ed. Yu Kun 于琨 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubenshe, 1991).

<sup>85</sup> Tang Xiuye, "Zheng Man shiji 1," p. 4b.

leveled by serious literati pose problems for historians. However, these taboos are also informative, since they reveal an effort to keep the political and the private separate to some degree in early Chinese political practices.

Eventually, decades after the death of Zheng Man, when the early Qing historian and political critic Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610-1695) composed an epitaph at Zheng Man's son's request, he ignored the tradition of "not criticizing people of superior status" because it prevented people from seeking truths and learning lessons from history. He wrote a very straightforward documentation of Zheng Man's family dispute. According to Huang Zongxi, Zheng Zhenxian's wife was jealous of his love for a concubine. She made so much trouble in the household that her husband took the concubine with him on a tour of Buddhist temples. Zheng Zhenxian asked a female friend of his wife's, a Daoist practitioner, to help him settle this domestic conflict. Huang identifies this as the source of the gossip that Zheng Man used a "Daoist trick" to discipline his mother. Zheng Man could not disclose these details to clear himself, because that would have been a violation of filial duty. Attempting to provide the most truthful historical account of this case, in the epitaph that he composed for Zheng Man, Huang Zongxi explains why he feels obliged to detail the confrontation between Zheng Man's parents over his father's infatuation with the concubine, which fostered rumors and provided material for vicious accusations against Zheng Man later:

Writing about [Zheng Zhenxian's] infatuation with his concubine and his wife's jealousy, i.e. mistakes made by the parents, is a minor problem. Considering that [Zheng Man] has been subjected to public ridicule, isn't it obvious that we should differentiate the minor problem from the serious problem? Therefore, it would be our mistake if we failed to clarify what



happened in his case and expose the evil doings of the vicious Grand Secretary.<sup>86</sup>

I do not privilege Huang Zongxi's account as more truthful than the others, since Huang Zongxi's historical criticism is known to be heavily shaped by his own factional bias. But Huang Zongxi rightly hints at Zheng Man's reluctance to do damage to his father's reputation. Zheng Man would have suffered more had he admitted his parents' domestic conflicts, because that would have been a violation of filial piety.

To fulfill his filial duty and at the same time claim a voice against the manipulation and appropriation of his family matters by political enemies, Zheng Man compiled his chronological autobiography (*nianpu*) in prison after completing an annotated biography of the great Song literatus-official Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101). This autobiography was dated Chongzhen 11/8/15 (1638), almost exactly one year before his execution.<sup>87</sup> Zheng Man knew the dubious nature of the charges against him, but he also knew that his release would depend on how the emperor Chongzhen would use Zheng Man's case to demonstrate his own moral judgment and Confucian commitment to "government by filial piety." Zheng Man was aware that Huang Daozhou and others had taken political risks by submitting memorials to defend him. As long as his filial piety and sexual morality were beyond suspicion, he would survive the mishap that resulted largely from factional struggles. When Zheng Man was compiling his autobiography, the

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<sup>86</sup> "The evil Grand Secretary" obviously refers to Wen Tiren. Huang Zongxi, "Zheng Miyang xiansheng mubiao."

<sup>87</sup> According to Huang Daozhou's epitaph, Zheng Man died on the twenty-sixth day of the eighth month in the twelfth year of Chongzhen (1639). Huang Daozhou, "Zheng Miyang nianxiong ji yuanpei Zhou ruren muzhi 鄭峯陽年兄暨元配周孺人墓志, in *MYCTWJ: juan* 16, p. 509. The last date mentioned in Zheng's autobiography is Chongzhen 11/8/20. Between 8/15 and 20, Zheng Man recorded how he and his son were waiting in prison to hear about the result of the decision of the Board of Punishments and the emperor's final word on his case. But unfortunately, no final decision was made then. *TSZXNP*, p. 499.

emperor had not made up his mind, so its narrative could serve as a useful self-representation with a noticeable emphasis on literati virtues of loyalty, filial piety, and sexual morality.<sup>88</sup>

Zheng Man's autobiography explicitly attributes his father's political disillusion to factionalism and indirectly defends his father's moral character. It would not matter whether his documentation was considered truthful by others. The action of defending his father's reputation was itself fulfilling the great mission of filial piety, and his filial act seems even more courageous and manly for his decision not to discuss what happened in his father's inner chambers. In addition to defending his father's loyalty (as political integrity), Zheng Man represents him as a filially pious son and almost austere in terms of worldly matters. He presents an ideal father and literatus-official as the first step to establish a moral and upright family tradition. Below are some entries in the autobiography:

*Wanli 44* (1616): Father came down to Jinling<sup>89</sup> where I was studying Daoist classics. News came that my grandmother, Madame Dong,<sup>90</sup> had passed away. We immediately returned upon hearing the news. Because Grandmother was living with my younger uncle before she died, Father took me with him to Qingjiangpu. We waited there for the arrival of her [body].

*Wanli 45* (1617): Father buried Madame Dong at Chenwan where he recently purchased a piece of land for this purpose. He always had me with him when he dealt with difficult matters and explained the

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<sup>88</sup> Imprisoned officials were aware that their behavior and writings would be watched and reported, if necessary, to the emperor. This will be discussed in next chapter.

<sup>89</sup> Nanjing.

<sup>90</sup> Zheng Man's grandmother was granted the title of *yiren* 宜人, literally translated by Charles O. Hucker as Lady of Suitability (Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985). This title was given to wives of officials of the fifth degree. For the sake of simplicity, I use Madame where such titles are used.

procedures to me meticulously. “Some day, you will have to do this.” He said. After the burial, he told me, “One must be with his mother after death. When I die, you must bury me here.”

*Wanli 46* (1618): Father built a house and moved in, so that he could be close to Chenwan, where grandmother’s tomb was. Since returning from Yunqi, Father and Mother both turned to vegetarianism. Now in mourning, they devoted themselves even more to it.<sup>91</sup>

This documentation establishes the family value of filial piety as transmitted patrilineally. It is embedded in the seamless transition of the autobiographical focus from father to son, from the father’s filial piety to the son’s. The self-representation of filial piety gradually gains weight in Zheng Man’s narration of seven years of mourning in a row after both of his parents died. In addition, the object of filial piety shifts to the mother figure after the death of Zheng Man’s father. Zheng Man states that he faithfully buried his father next to his grandmother, Madame Dong. Zheng Man’s mother, and Lady Wu,<sup>92</sup> moved in with Zheng Man and his family the next year. The recollection of some events in the year Chongzhen 4 (1631) highlights Zheng Man’s filial piety toward his mother. In that year, Zheng Man had completed his three-years of mourning for his father. In his account, Lady Wu urged him to prepare to return to the capital.

I told Mother that her sixtieth birthday was coming the next year. I should not leave for the north. Mother said: “In principle, you are right. But you can celebrate my sixtieth birthday in advance this year.” I informed our relatives of Mother’s intention. They therefore gathered in the eighth month and held the ceremony. As soon as we were done with the celebration, Mother fell ill.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> *TSZXP*, pp. 484-85.

<sup>92</sup> His mother’s official title was *anren* 安人, usually translated as Lady. This title was given to wives of officials (or former officials) of the sixth degree.

<sup>93</sup> *TSZXP*, p. 490.

Lady Wu passed away before Zheng Man's departure. According to Zheng Man, during the next long mourning period, he composed an essay to teach the virtue of filial piety and showed it to his sons.<sup>94</sup> Given all these filial attitudes and acts in the Zheng father and son, how could the reader believe that Zheng Man, such a filial son, had beaten his mother?

Not surprisingly, Zheng Man's memory of his parents ends with an anecdote about Huang Daozhou, Zheng Man's most vehement defender in court who was then already emerging as a Donglin icon known for his filial piety and loyalty.

Many years ago, Huang Shizhai 石齋 (Huang Daozhou) took a leave to accompany Aunt<sup>95</sup> to the south. At the time Father and Mother were still alive. Shizhai performed the *shengtang* rite.<sup>96</sup> Father had for a long time shied away from visitors. Among those in my *jinshi* cohort, he only received Zhanchi 湛持<sup>97</sup> and Shizhai, partly because they insisted on paying him a visit. Later when Shizhai was on his way back to the capital, he mourned my father. His wife paid a visit to my mother and stayed with her for ten days. The next time when they came, they had to mourn my mother.<sup>98</sup>

By this time, Huang Daozhou and Wen Zhenmeng had come to symbolize the upright Donglin man because both were known for their filial devotion and political integrity. By associating himself with these two figures, Zheng Man combines the images of a filial son and a loyal official in his self-representation. This representation invokes the Confucian political idea that a ruler must seek, and would only find, loyal officials

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 491. But for some reason, this essay does not appear in the complete collection of his works.

<sup>95</sup> Shizhai is Huang Daozhou's literary name. Here, Zheng Man uses *bomu*, literally meaning aunt, to refer to Huang Daozhou's mother. This usage suggests respect and more importantly strong personal ties between the two families.

<sup>96</sup> *Sheng tang zhi li* 升堂之禮 is often referred to as *sheng tang bai mu* 升堂拜母. In premodern China, when intimate friends visited each other, they usually went to the back hall and met with the friend's mother. This etiquette was called *sheng tang bai mu*.

<sup>97</sup> Zhanchi is Wen Zhenmeng's literary name.

<sup>98</sup> *TSZXP*, p. 491.

among filially pious sons. Zheng Man reiterates this principle by quoting the two officials who defended him and Wen Zhenmeng in the Tianqi reign, after they memorialized against the powerful eunuch Wei Zhongxian. They reminded the emperor that Wen Zhenmeng was the grandson of the great literatus-artist Wen Zhengming 文徵明 and Zheng Man's father Zheng Zhenxian submitted the famous memorial against power abusers during the Wanli reign. "The offspring of loyal officials would only want to become loyal officials!"<sup>99</sup>

While the official charge against Zheng Man was that he lacked filial piety, Zheng Man rightly realized that rumors about his sexual immorality had become circumstantial evidence of his lacking filial piety. Zheng Man's autobiography not only asserts his filial piety for his parents but also defines it in connection with sexual morality. Thus in the autobiography, we find Zheng Man spending some ink describing how, as a filial son, he would not have violated literati-official gender norms; on the contrary, he was a moral man in all accounts and educated not to become indulgent in sexual desire and pleasure seeking. He recalls a promise he made to his father before he departed for Nanjing to study at the age of nineteen:

Father said: "Do not be distracted by courtesans. Once you get contaminated, you will suffer in your whole life." I respectfully listened to his instruction. I arrived at my teacher's residence a bit later than my studymates. Those from the eastern Guangdong, such as Chen Shunhu, got me drunk. They asked Qiu Xiaoyu, a courtesan, to take off her clothes and lie down in the same bed. I was not aware of this until waking up in the morning. I immediately put on my clothes and got up. Later when I traveled to Wulin, my friend Zhang Juxing ordered opera singers to serve me in bed. He said: "It is raining very hard. You can't go anywhere." I

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid. p. 488.

awkwardly rejected his offer. People told others these stories and considered me a strange person. They did not know that I always remember Father's instruction and have never violated it.<sup>100</sup>

Here, filial piety and sexual restraint are defined mutually. Quite revealingly, this anecdote about lack interest in a courtesan is almost the same as a story circulated among post-1644 loyalists about Huang Daozhou's rejection of the famous courtesan Gu Mei 顧眉, which we will encounter in next chapter. But Zheng's story was never cited by anyone, while Huang Daozhou's was often included in literati writings to delineate the image of a loyal man. The contrast between the representations of these two close friends shows that the dichotomies of loyal vs. disloyal were politically, morally and historically constructed together.

Zheng Man's defense of his parents' spousal harmony and of his own morality became one inseparable battle. In the autobiography, Zheng Man explains how groundless were the assumptions about his parents and himself. In Wanli 42 (1614), disappointed by the demotion and frustrated by some property disputes in his hometown, Zheng Zhenxian sought spiritual peace in Buddhism. At the time, many literati in the south followed a Buddhist scholar, Master Lianchi 蓮池大師. Lianchi's wife, a pious Buddhist, also enjoyed great popularity among gentry women. Zheng Man's parents decided to visit the couple together. He accompanied his parents until they arrived in Wulin.<sup>101</sup> Then his father told him to go to Kunshan to study.

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p. 482.

<sup>101</sup> He is referring to Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲祿宏 (1535-1615), a Buddhist master who played the most important role in the lay religious movement among the gentry. For more on Master Zhuhong's interactions

Father and Mother exhausted all scenic places in the region over several months. On their way back, Father stopped at Kunshan and took me back with him. As soon as we returned, we began to realize that rumors were flying around. Some said Father had shaved his head and became a monk. Some said I also became a monk or Mother had become a nun. There were also people who gossiped that Father was involved in disputes over some maid. All kinds of stories were circulated. Father and Mother laughed them off. But the rumors never died and continued to spread. It was probably the family conspiring to obtain that property that spread the rumors.<sup>102</sup>

The representation of Zheng Man's parents in his autobiography fits well in the contemporary ideal of *yin fu yi qi* 隱夫逸妻 (a couple in reclusion), an interesting historical variation on the cultural practices of *yin* 隱 (eremitism; withdrawal from the mundane world) popular in the late Ming and early Qing. Traditionally the gender of *yin* culture and identity is assumed to be male, because the practice of *yin* often constituted a political action in defiance of a bad or illegitimate government that could only be initiated by male subjects. During the Ming-Qing transitional period, a new gender identity was emerging for the recluse. Wu Weiye 吳偉業 (1608-1671) observed the changed lifestyle of *yin*, saying that unlike the hermits of old, contemporary hermits do not leave behind parents or wife and children.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, literati couples' retreating into semi-rural environment or retiring in an urban setting had gained cultural respectability and popularity in literati society, as the lifestyles of the famous Jiangnan literati Chen Jiru and

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with the gentry of late Ming, see Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993). See the couple's influence among gentry men and women in Jian Ruirao, *Mingdai funu fojiao xinyang*.

<sup>102</sup> *TSZXP*, p. 483.

<sup>103</sup> Wu Weiye 吳偉業, *Mei cun jia cang gao* 梅村家藏藁 (*SBCK*): juan 37: "Chen Quean zunren qi shi xu" 陳確菴尊人七十序, pp. 5a-6a.

Zhao Huanguang show. Literati interest in creating a *yin* environment in the domestic sphere transformed the outlook of the domestic, physically and emotionally. Such a transformation was connected to increasing interest in Buddhist pursuits. In this sense, Buddhist devotion not only provided a space for literati to gather for their favored cultural practices,<sup>104</sup> it also provided a new cultural space for married men and women in gentry society.

The existence of such a space was not free from criticism, however. The interaction between Buddhist monks and gentry laity had become “grist for sensationalist mills.”<sup>105</sup> As we have seen in Li Zhi’s case, literati-officials always had to accommodate their fashionable Buddhist pursuits within Confucian morality,<sup>106</sup> especially in terms of familial and political duties. It is therefore understandable that in Zheng Man’s account of his parents’ Buddhist practices, he stresses their harmonious spousal relationship and their emphasis on filial piety as the Zhengs’ central family value. In the meantime, his depiction of his own relationship with his wife also draws on classical allusions to spousal harmony, responsibility, and loyalty. For example, in a set of ten poems written in the voice of his wife, Zheng Man describes her as an intelligent and virtuous woman who supported his loyal devotions: “My husband commits his life to repaying his Majesty’s favor/How can I worry about small matters and exhausting trips/Selling all my

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<sup>104</sup> Brook, *Praying for Power*, p. 105.

<sup>105</sup> Brook, *Praying for Power*, pp. 94-95; Jian Ruiyao, chap. 3.

<sup>106</sup> Both Ko and Jian Ruiyao have discussed in different ways how literati and women in literati families endeavored to pursue social, cultural, literary, emotional and religious practices within an environment where Confucian tenets were merging with those of Buddhism and Daoism. Ko, *Teachers in the Inner Chambers*, esp. pp. 197-200. Although the synthesis of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism in late Ming was certainly a powerful trend and reality, as many scholars have pointed out, literati-officials had to grapple with Song Confucians’ criticism that Buddhism encouraged literati to abandon their political, social, and familial duties.



jewelry to prepare for his journey/Dear husband mind your health to fulfill loyalty.”<sup>107</sup> In the short preface to these poems, Zheng Man compares her with the wife of the famous recluse Yang Pu 楊樸 (921-1003), who respected the emperor’s call to the capital. Yang Pu’s wife did not try to stop his trip but worried that he could lose his life. Similar to but slightly different from Yang Pu’s story, Zheng Man’s self-representation emphasizes that his filial piety motivated him to answer the Chongzhen emperor’s call.<sup>108</sup> In this way, Zheng Man conflates his two kinds of moral self-defense—filial piety and loyalty—in one autobiographical narration. His narrative indicates that he was aware that the formal charges brought at court, like the sensational narratives circulated in society, described him as a sexual predator whose immoral behavior against his father’s concubine and his daughter-in-law disrupted familial order. He simultaneously defends his parents’ reputation and his own performances of a loyal official, a filial son, and a responsible husband.

### **A History of the Donglin: Only for the Morally Impeccable**

The Chongzhen emperor ordered Zheng man executed in the eighth month of Chongzhen 12 (1639). Most literati in the seventeenth century believed that Zheng Man was a victim of the Grand Secretary Wen Tiren’s conspiracy against the growing power of the Donglin, especially the combined forces of iconic figures such as Wen Zhenmeng and Huang Daozhou. But they had differing views on the particular charges against Zheng Man and

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<sup>107</sup> *MYCTSJ: juan 15*: “Dai nei ji shi shi shou” 8 代內寄詩十首其八, p. 636.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 635.

his “Donglin” status. For example, Lu Shiyi 陸世儀 believed that another political faction, the Zhe faction 浙黨, feared that the return of the reputable Zheng Man to the capital would give the Donglin political advantage over them. Therefore they selected Wu Zongda, Zheng Zhenxian’s relative by marriage who personally disliked Zheng Man, to be one of the Grand Secretaries. Wu Zongda later helped Wen Tiren frustrate Wen Zhenmeng’s attempt to obtain a promotion for Zheng Man.<sup>109</sup> Another prominent literatus, Jiang Pingjie 蔣平階,<sup>110</sup> believed that rival officials attacked Zheng Man’s moral character because they wanted to use his case to prevent Wen Zhenmeng and Huang Daozhou from gaining more power in the government.<sup>111</sup> Li Xunzhi 李遜之, son of the widely recognized Donglin leader Li Yingsheng 李應升, agreed with Jiang Pingjie that Zheng Man’s misconduct in his hometown allowed Wen Tiren to create a dilemma for the upright Donglin officials and made Wen Zhenmeng and Huang Daozhou politically vulnerable.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Lu Shiyi 陸世儀, *Fushe ji lue* 復社紀略(TWWXCK-259): juan 3, p. 84.

<sup>110</sup> A student of Chen Zilong’s, Jiang Pingjie was a famous member of Jishe, a literary society that had a very close but complicated relationship with Fushe. See *Qing shi gao*: juan 502/liezhuan 289: “Yishu 1” 藝術一.

<sup>111</sup> Jiang Pingjie, *Donglin shi mo* 東林始末(TWWXCK-259), p. 27(“十二年八月”條). Part of the contents is the same as Ji Liuqi’s *Ming ji bei lue*.

<sup>112</sup> Li Xunzhi 李遜之, *Chongzhen chao ji shi* 崇禎朝記事(SKJH-shi 6): juan 2, p. 509. Interestingly, Li Xunzhi reported that his fellow officials from the same hometown did not stand up to correct the false charges, and Zheng Man was jailed in the prison at the Imperial Bodyguards after “gentry and commoners from his hometown submitted a public memorial.” Li Xunzhi considered Xu Xi’s memorial to the emperor as representing public opinion. As I will discuss in the next chapter, this second testimony by Xu Xi to further incriminate Zheng Man contained a lot of sensational details that had nothing to do with the mother-beating charges.

These historical works circulated other literati's documentation of events as well as hearsay; they all contained obviously false information about Zheng Man's case. But what should concern the historian is that during the seventeenth century, taken together, they offered an influential perspective and supported a sweeping argument central to the Ming-Qing transition grand narrative, i.e. the evil anti-Donglin partisans employed horrendous strategies to attack and persecute the morally impeccable Donglin. The moral perfection of ideal Donglin figures like Huang Daozhou remained intact regardless of Zheng Man's (mis)conduct, for Zheng Man's case would be primarily cited to demonstrate the evilness of the anti-Donglin officials. This might have partly contributed to the lack of interest among pro-Donglin literati to ask hard questions about Zheng Man's case. On many occasions, in order to differentiate Huang Daozhou from Zheng Man, literati writers represented Zheng as deceptive, a person who had fooled Huang Daozhou with a façade of filial piety. During the Ming-Qing transitional period, before and after the fall of the Ming in 1644, moralistic literati tried to further establish the morally exemplary "Donglin man" and in doing so strove to represent Zheng Man negatively and attempted to erase him from the history of the Donglin. In this section, I will examine the moralistic interpretations of Zheng Man's case by two works to further discuss this point.

After the change of regime, literati devoted themselves to historically reflecting on the years leading up to 1644 to explain the demise of the Ming. Writing about Zheng Man's case helped them represent that past. The most inclusive collection of documents about Zheng's case was *Yuqiao hua* 漁樵話, compiled by Zhang Xia 張夏, a literatus who lived through the most turbulent years of the Ming-Qing dynastic transition. Zhang

Xia studied with a prominent Donglin-identified official, Ma Shiqi 馬世奇<sup>113</sup> in their hometown Wuxi. Then he entered the Donglin Academy to further his study. After his mentors Ma Shiqi and Gao Shitai 高世泰 committed suicide upon the fall of the Ming to fulfill their commitment to loyalty, Zhang Xia was elected to fill in the position of the chief instructor at this great institution. After the Qing took over the south, he cooperated with Han officials in the local government and taught at the official academy in Suzhou. Zhang Xia received recognition from the Qing as an orthodox Confucian scholar, which can be seen by the inclusion of his works into the *Siku* project.<sup>114</sup> At the same time, he was also considered a *yimin*.<sup>115</sup>

A product of and post-1644 leader of the Donglin Academy, Zhang Xia understandably identified himself as a Donglin-style Confucian and took on the task of advocating orthodox Confucianism. One prefacer of his work writes, “[Zhang Xia]’s Confucian studies follow orthodoxy. He has inherited the Donglin legacy and taken upon himself the mission of elucidating Confucian doctrines for many years.”<sup>116</sup> The two works by Zhang Xia included in the *Siku* collection are devoted to promoting the Cheng-

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<sup>113</sup> In *Donglin lie zhuan*, Chen Ding includes a biography of Ma Shiqi, in which he documents how he committed suicide with his two concubines when Beijing fell in 1644. Chen Ding: *Donglin liezhuan*: juan 8: “Ma Shiqi zhuan” 馬世奇傳, pp. 427-431.

<sup>114</sup> *Siku* project was commissioned by the Qing Qianlong emperor to compile important intellectual works. It has been considered a project of literary inquisition. The two works by Zhang Xia included in the *Siku* are: *Luomin yuan liu lu* 雒閩源流錄 (*SKCM-shi* 123) and *Song Yang Wenjinggong Guishan xiansheng nianpu er juan* 宋楊文靖公龜山先生年譜二卷 (*SKCM-shi* 86).

<sup>115</sup> At least these two sources identify Zhang Xia as a Ming loyalist. Sun Jing’an 孫靜庵 (ed.) *Ming yijin lu* 明遺民錄: juan 5 (Shanghai: Shanghai xin zhonghua tushuguan, 1912). Also see his biography in *MS*: juan 480/liezhuan 267 “Rulin 1” 儒林一. The identity and status of *yimin* have always been a difficult problem, because different criteria could be adopted to define this term. Two studies have dealt with this issue in depth: Zhao Yuan, *Ming-Qing zhi ji shidafu yanjiu*; Pan Chengyu, *Qing chu shi tan*.

<sup>116</sup> Peng Long 彭瓏, “Luomin yuan liu lu xu” 雒閩源流錄序, in *Luomin yuan liu lu*, p. 3.

Zhu Neo-Confucianism. Zhang compiled a chronological biography for the great Song Confucian scholar Yang Guishan 楊龜山,<sup>117</sup> whose Donglin Academy inspired and was carried forward by late-Ming literati-officials such as Gu Xiancheng, Qian Yiben, and Gao Panlong in their efforts to restore literati morality and sense of political-social responsibility in the late Ming by lecturing on Confucian teachings. The other work, *Luomin yuan liu lu* 雜閩源流錄, compiled the biographies of Confucian thinkers of the Cheng-Zhu school in the Ming dynasty. His preface suggests that the Qing state's promotion of orthodox Confucianism encouraged Zhang Xia to compile this work to support righteous governing and restore proper human relations.<sup>118</sup> Therefore, upon the first glance it seems puzzling that Zhang Xia, a conservative Confucian, would dedicate himself to compiling information about Zheng Man, especially since this work contains sensational, unverifiable accounts of Zheng's personal life. However, a careful study of the selection, arrangement, and editing of material in this book suggest a moral-political intention on Zhang Xia's part.

The first and most widely cited piece in this book is “Zheng Man benmo” 鄭鄴本末 (A Complete Account of Zheng Man's Life), which mainly draws upon “Miyang shi hui” 峯陽事會 (Key Issues in Zheng Man's Case), a work from a collection of late Ming anecdotes compiled by someone with the pen name “Hua cun kan xing shi zhe” 花村看

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<sup>117</sup> Zhang Xia, *Song Yang Wenjinggong Guishan xiansheng nianpu er juan*.

<sup>118</sup> Peng Long, “Luomin yuan liu lu xu” in *Luomin yuan liu lu*, p. 7.

行侍者 (abbreviated as Huacun hereafter). “Miyang shi hui” offers very detailed explanations of three major moral charges against Zheng Man: beating his mother, seducing his daughter-in-law, and raping his sister. Huacun attempts to expose the falsity of the three charges from a relatively objective historical perspective. He does not include any obviously moral or political judgments about Zheng Man. From his comments on the tragedy, cited below, we can tell that he means to examine a lesson of failed late-Ming politics, which seems consistent with the goal of his whole book.<sup>119</sup>

Chen Meigong writes in *Dushu jing*<sup>120</sup>: In the Song dynasty, Zhao Shuping and Ouyang Wenzhonggong<sup>121</sup> both served in the Hanlin academy. Ouyang looked down upon Zhao because he was reserved and not a proliferate writer. Soon, an incident involving Ouyang’s nephew triggered gossip. Officials who did not like Ouyang reported them to the emperor. The emperor grew very angry, but no one in the court defended Ouyang. Only Zhao memorialized: “[Ouyang] Xiu became close to your Majesty because of his outstanding literary skills. He should not be humiliated by attacks citing dubious matters of the inner chambers. [Ouyang] Xiu and I do not socialize with each other much; he does not treat me well. What I want to save is the integrity of the court.” Thanks to this memorial, the criticisms of Ouyang faded. A prosperous country is blessed with such loyal and sincere views. Unfortunately, the Chongzhen court did not have anyone like this. Officials threw unverifiable things into their memorials,

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<sup>119</sup> This book is a collection of many anecdotes about literati-officials in the late Ming. In “Miyang shi hui,” he indicates that this was composed about thirty years after Zheng Man’s execution (p. 29a). That puts the time of the work in the early Kangxi period. The author’s point of view is definitely not a Ming loyalist one. In addition, in his comments on the Ming examinations system, he writes: “The Ming court treats literati poorly. Consequently literati only considered their own interests when serving in government” Hua cun kan xing shizhe 花村看行侍者, *Hua cun wang tan* 花村往談: *juan* 2, p. 2a.

<sup>120</sup> Chen Meigong 陳眉公 refers to the late Ming literatus Chen Jiru 陳繼儒, a prolific writer and well-recognized connoisseur. *Dushu jing* 讀書鏡 is a book on history.

<sup>121</sup> Zhao Shuping 趙叔平 refers to Zhao Gai 趙概. Ouyang Wenzhonggong 歐陽文忠公 refers to Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修. They served as Academicians at the same time.

scandalizing their superiors and insulting respected officials. This is the most serious symptom of a failing government.<sup>122</sup>

This work on Zheng Man begins with these cautionary lines: “In this world many incidents originate from trivial and vague things. Once women become involved, disasters are sure to occur. Zheng Man’s ruined reputation and horrific death presents the biggest and most extreme of such cases!”<sup>123</sup> At the end of his analysis, Huacun writes, “There exists no limit to the evil that women can do,” and he warns that people enjoy spreading gossip about matters of the inner chambers.<sup>124</sup> Zhang Xia’s version retains these cautionary lines from Huacun’s account and emphasizes their message through careful editing. However, while believing that these moral warnings are important, Zhang seems to disagree with (or choose to ignore) Huacun’s political insights. “Zheng Man benmo” recognizes that the charges of sexual immorality and lacking filial piety were groundless slander and that Zheng Man was a victim of factional politics in the Chongzhen court. But it does not include Huacun’s observation that the most important lesson from Zheng Man’s case lies in the danger of bringing private matters into political discussions. Instead, Zhang Xia’s editing adds anecdotes about Zheng Man’s hypocrisy as well as his insatiable desire for sex and money, and ends the account with a very different kind of comment: “How sad that to the present day when people talk about Zheng Man, they still consider him a Donglin!” Although “Zheng Man benmo” largely draws on “Miyang shi hui,” it offers the exact opposite in historical and political observations. Considering Zhang Xia’s self-consciousness as successor to the Donglin

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<sup>122</sup> *Hua cun wang tan: juan 1*: “Miyang shi hui,” p. 31a.

<sup>123</sup> *Hua cun wang tan: juan 1*: “Miyang shi hui,” p. 25a; “Zheng Man benmo.”

<sup>124</sup> “Miyang shi hui,” p. 28b.

legacy, his book certainly represents an effort to define Zheng Man in relation to—rather than identify him with—the Donglin.

Upon first look, *Yuqiao hua* appears to adopt a nonjudgmental stance by including a wide range of relevant sources, regardless of their attitudes toward Zheng Man. Zhang Xia also includes some supposedly unbiased historical documentation of how Zheng fell victim to political power struggles between the Grand Secretary Wen Tiren and the Donglin partisans. A chapter titled “Political Defamation” (“Zhu di” 誅適)<sup>125</sup> cites Wen Bing’s 文秉 historical work *Liehuang xiao zhi* 烈皇小識, which questions the integrity and honesty of Zheng Man’s attackers.<sup>126</sup> Another chapter, Qian Renlin’s 錢人麟 biographical account of Zheng Man, cites parts of Li Qing’s *San yuan biji* in order to illustrate the entanglement of personal tragedy with political struggles.<sup>127</sup> Then Zhang Xia includes several prefaces to Zheng Man’s various collected works, all published posthumously. These essays praise Zheng’s literary talent and attempt to defend his reputation.<sup>128</sup> It is difficult to challenge Zhang Xia’s neutral political self-positioning as demonstrated in his editorial effort, if not in his moral messages.

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<sup>125</sup> Zhang Xia, “Zhu di” 誅適 in *Yuqiao hua*.

<sup>126</sup> Wen Bing was Wen Zhenmeng’s son, a loyalist after the change of regime. Wen Zhenmeng, as I mentioned in previous chapter, was considered a Donglin leader and admired for his moral character.

<sup>127</sup> Qian Renlin 錢人麟, “Zheng Man zhuan” 鄭鄭傳 in *Yuqiao hua*.

<sup>128</sup> These essays are: *Qian Lucan* 錢陸燦, “Miyang caotang shu jing gao xu” 峯陽草堂書經稿序; Hu Xie 胡澥, “Miyang caotang shu jing gao xu” 峯陽草堂書經稿序; Zhao Ding 趙鼎, “Fujia bu gong zhuan Zheng Miyang *Shangshu* gao xu” 附駕部公撰鄭峯陽尚書稿序; Zhao Ding 趙鼎, “Miyang xiansheng shi ji xu” 峯陽先生詩集序; Fu Shu 馮舒, “Hou yuzhongcao xu” 後獄中草序.



However, the inclusion of the sensational narratives about his sexual immorality and unorthodox behaviors in this volume makes a decidedly negative impression on the reader. Zhang Xia includes *Fulun xinshi* (“An honest history condemning immorality”), *Min jie waishi* (“The unofficial biography of the woman Han”), *Han lienu zhuan* (“The biography of the chaste woman Han”), and *You zhuan* (“Another biography of the chaste woman Han”). A late-Ming reader familiar with popular literature would easily recognize the sensational nature of these narratives. The title seems to suggest that Zhang Xia presents the volume as documentation, some verifiable and others unverifiable. But it is precisely the ambiguous boundary between fiction and historical documentation that grants these accounts a sense of truth and permanently stamps sexual immorality onto Zheng Man’s case.<sup>129</sup> Why would Zhang Xia want the reader to remember the dubious charges?

Like many others during the Ming-Qing transition, Zhang Xia actively participated in the project of consolidating the Donglin image and reputation. The *Siku* editors rightly point out that although Zhang Xia carefully presents his historical work on Ming Confucian thinkers as “politically neutral,” Zhang has deliberately confused morality (loyalty in this particular context) and intellectual achievement by including famous Donglin-identified literati-officials such as Yang Lian 楊漣, who were very obviously partisan bureaucrats undistinguished by intellectual scholarship.<sup>130</sup> This view may also explain Zhang Xia’s editorial intention in *Yuqiao hua*.

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<sup>129</sup> The title literally means “the dialogue between a fisherman and a lumberman.” But it suggests that the content of the text may be similar to hearsays.

<sup>130</sup> *Luomin yuan liu lu*, pp. 304-05.

Neither of the Zheng father and son conformed to the ideal “Donglin man” image. Zheng Man’s autobiography admits that his father devoted himself to Buddhist learning and practices for many years. Zheng Zhenxian traveled all over the country with his wife (and his concubine, according the historian Huang Zongxi) to visit Buddhist temples. Although this was common practice and even fashionable among literati families during the late Ming, the dominance of orthodox Confucian political culture threw into a certain degree of disrepute literati Buddhist pursuits. Meanwhile, Donglin socio-political thinking advocated Confucian orthodoxy and aimed to restore literati socio-political morality in order to save the Ming from collapsing. Prominent Donglin-identified officials and leading young Fushe scholars all expressed concern about Buddhist pursuits, for they likely led literati away from fulfilling their social responsibilities.<sup>131</sup>

In terms of unorthodox spiritual pursuits, Zheng Man was also known for his involvement with both Daoist and Buddhist figures of his time, which was very common among literati-officials in the late Ming. Even after he was jailed, he received visits from a Buddhist monk.<sup>132</sup> In numerous poems composed in prison, he nostalgically remembered the days he traveled to places favored by Daoist and Buddhist practitioners, and alluded to an alias he used back in those days, Wang Xiaoxian 王小仙.<sup>133</sup> The word *xian*, meaning “immortal,” has a strong Daoist flavor. Ye Jun has suggested that Zheng

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<sup>131</sup> For example, Gao Panlong repudiated literati-officials’ Buddhist practices in his parental precepts (*jia xun*). Shen Shoumin, a leading Fushe member and then a famous *yimin*, wrote against such practices after the fall of the Ming as well. I will discuss later in other chapters.

<sup>132</sup> *MYCTSJ: juan* 16: “Seng Dadao liu shi qi yi” 僧大道六十七矣, p. 495.

<sup>133</sup> *MYCTSJ: yu zhong cao* 獄中草: “Dai nei ji shi shi shou”, pp. 635-636.

Man's interest in religions, including his social interaction with Christian missionaries, made him appear unorthodox.<sup>134</sup>

Nor did Zheng Man's family can be seen as an ideal. As documented in his autobiography, he had three adopted daughters by the time he turned thirty. His wife, Madame Zhou, failed to conceive in the first six years of their marriage. His grandmother, Madame Dong, had his wife adopt a girl from the Dong family.<sup>135</sup> Then Zheng Man and his wife adopted two infant girls from her remote relatives, girls who were to be drowned after their births due to their families' poverty.<sup>136</sup> They followed the local wisdom of "raising girls to bear boys" (*ya nü sheng nan* 壓女生男) to fulfill the filial duty of continuing the patrilineal line.<sup>137</sup> Later, his daughter-in-law, Han, lost her parents and moved into the Zheng household before the official wedding ceremony. In addition, Zheng had at least two concubines. His wife and concubines together produced six daughters.<sup>138</sup> Therefore, Zhang Xia is correct in pointing out that women (including maids and nannies) of various ages and social strata resided in Zheng Man's house.<sup>139</sup> This certainly did not look like the family of the ideal Donglin man, who should live in a modest and asexual environment. Huang Daozhou, who lived in a hut near his parents' tomb on a mountain, was an exemplar of this ideal.

Zheng Man's divergence from the Donglin ideal man is also reflected in his identification with Su Shi, an unorthodox but highly appreciated manly ideal among

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<sup>134</sup> Ye Jun, chap. 4, esp. section 2.

<sup>135</sup> *TSZXP*, p. 486. Zheng Man's first child was a boy, born in Wanli 45 (1617).

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 486.

<sup>138</sup> *TSZXP* documents these daughters under the years of Tianqi 1, Chongzhen 3, Chongzhen 6, Chongzhen 7, and Chongzhen 9.

<sup>139</sup> Zhang Xia, "Zheng Man benmo."

literati of later generations. Su Shi's literary achievement and spiritual pursuits in Buddhism intertwined with a difficult political life that suffered from the factionalism that was rife in the Song government. Zheng Man's strong identification with Su Shi was expressed explicitly and repeatedly in his writings and poems. Among the many parallels between Su Shi and himself, Zheng Man highlighted two. First, he noted that both of them suffered from factionalist politics and fell victim to vicious accusations put forth by evil officials. Secondly, both of them had a loyal concubine who stayed with them through tough times. The dedication of Zhaoyun 朝雲 to Su Shi and his indulgence in her love and care in remote southern China had fascinated generations of Chinese literati. When Su Shi was demoted to Huizhou, Zhaoyun was the only concubine who did not leave him. Su Shi expressed tremendous gratitude to her in numerous poems. Upon her death, Su Shi wrote the famous "Dao Zhaoyun shi" (Elegy poems for Zhaoyun) to commemorate her. These historical anecdotes inspired the literary and cultural imagination of many late-Ming literati.

Zheng Man obviously saw parallels to Su Shi in his relationship with one of his concubines, Lady Liang. Like Zhaoyun, Lady Liang was a pious Buddhist. She lived in the Beijing vicinity so that she could attend to Zheng Man's needs in prison. Her residence was near that of the wife and daughter-in-law of Guo Zhengyu 郭正域, who was the central figure and victim in the infamous factionalist battles over the "Case of Books of Condemned Teachings" and the "Case of the Authenticity of the King of Chu" in the Wanli era. Zheng Man befriended his son, Guo Wushang, in prison. Women of these two families read Buddhist sutras together and prayed for the two men. Guo

Wushang's wife, Madame Xiong, hand-copied the Buddhist sutra *Jingang jing*<sup>140</sup> for Lady Liang. In return, Zheng Man gave Madame Xiong the same sutra in a copy that was a reprint of one in Su Shi's calligraphy and for which Zheng Man wrote a prologue at Guo Wushang's request.<sup>141</sup> Zheng Man points out that it was likely that Su Shi had hand-copied the sutra while he was in the imperial prison, again highlighting similarities between himself and the famous Song official.<sup>142</sup> The exchange of the sutra copies between the women of two families created an emotional and political bond. The image of Lady Liang with a sutra not only enables such an exchange, but also makes material the imaginary bond between Zheng Man and Su Shi as literati-officials and as *men*.

Upon Lady Liang's death, Zheng Man wrote a poem in prison to remember her, as Su Shi had done for his beloved Zhaoyun. Not only did Zheng Man allude to Zhaoyun's story in this poem, he also composed a second poem using the same rhyme as Su Shi's poem for Zhaoyun to stress the parallels in their experiences.<sup>143</sup> In these two poems, Lady Liang is represented in such a way that she relived Zhaoyun's emotional bond with and feminine devotion to a politically frustrated literatus-official/husband, and pious Buddhist pursuit. The death of Lady Liang, like that of Zhaoyun, completes in Zheng Man a kind of literati manly ideal represented by historical figures like Su Shi, a non-orthodox literati manly ideal. It had great appeal for many generations of refined literati-officials, but did not fit well with the image that many seventeenth-century writers like Zhang Xia attempted to construct for the Donglin man, that noble figure who

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<sup>140</sup> 金剛經, *The Diamond Sutra*.

<sup>141</sup> *MYCTWJ*: *juan* 9: "Su shu Jingang jing ba" 蘇書金剛經跋, p. 413.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>143</sup> *MYCTSJ*: *juan* 17: "Wen qie Liang shi si shi yi dao zhi" 聞妾梁氏死詩以悼之 and "Yi Dongpo dao Chaoyun shi fu ci yun" 憶東坡悼朝雲詩復次韻. Pp. 668-669.

endeavored to reestablish orthodox Cheng-Zhu Confucianism in society and government. Zheng Man's messy life and meaningless death disqualified him for membership in the circle of the ideal Confucian men and were taken as symptomatic of the decadent literati lifestyle that led to the fall of the Ming dynasty.

Zhang Xia's attempt to elevate the Donglin-identified figures to the highest moral, political, and intellectual levels seems to define how he documents the Zheng Man case. He has excluded important memorials submitted by Huang Daozhou and Liu Zongzhou, and the epitaphs written by Huang Daozhou and Huang Zongxi. These defenses of Zheng Man should carry heavier political weight than other sources in the volume, because the authors are clearly identified as Donglin icons, men who were widely respected. Therefore, on the one hand Zhang Xia purifies the Donglin image by distancing its iconic figures from Zheng Man. On the other hand, he implicitly challenges Zheng Man's Donglin status. The most important message of "Zheng Man benmo" is that the entire tragedy originates from the fact that too many women from different backgrounds lived under the same roof in his household, and it was impossible to seek truth in such a messy situation. Zheng Man himself "should be the one to blame for what happened to him,"<sup>144</sup> because after all it was his disrespect for orthodox behavioral norms led to his tragedy. In his eyes, Zheng Man's physical appearance suggests the cause of his misfortune: "Zheng Man was very fat, like a pig. He must crave money and sex!"<sup>145</sup> Zhang Xia's effort to purge Zheng Man from the Donglin roster becomes most clear at the end of "Zheng Man benmo," when Zhang Xia challenges those who still remember him as a Donglin member.

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<sup>144</sup> "Zheng Man benmo."

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

Compared to Zhang Xia's project, Chen Ding's 陳鼎 (1650-?) twenty-four-chapter biographical account of the so-called "Donglin officials," *Donglin liezhuan* 東林列傳, articulates his moral-political agenda more explicitly. This is an important historical work that aims to pass on stories of the "loyal and fearless" (忠烈) Donglin men during the Ming-Qing transition.<sup>146</sup> It certainly succeeded in its goal because even today, it is consulted by historians as the authoritative documentation of the Donglin heroes. In his preface, Chen Ding explicitly describes his historical project as "biased" against immorality. Chen's long list of Donglin men includes most of the names that appear on the notorious *qilu* (七錄, the "Seven Lists")<sup>147</sup> that anti-Donglin forces generated to better persecute their political enemies from the Tianqi reign to the Hongguang southern Ming court. Chen Ding, however, insists on a high moral standard: "Some people have appeared in these Seven Lists but I do not include their biographies in this book if they did not make any meaningful suggestions to the emperor, did not suffer from the eunuch's persecution, or did not have impeccable moral characters."<sup>148</sup> Among his principles for selection, two deserve our special attention.

This collection of biographies excludes men who, although included in the Seven Lists and *Dangren bang* 黨人榜 (the Donglin partisans),<sup>149</sup> started

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<sup>146</sup> Chen Ding, *Donglin liezhuan*, p. 003.

<sup>147</sup> *Donglin liezhuan*: "Fanli" 凡例. These seven lists are: 七錄者曰天鑒曰雷平曰同志曰雜稗曰點將曰蠅蚋曰蝗蝻". P. 005-007.

<sup>148</sup> *Donglin liezhuan*: "Fanli", pp.007-008.

<sup>149</sup> This list was compiled by Wei Zhongxian's follower Lu Chengqin 盧承欽 and submitted in the form of a memorial in Tianqi 5. It includes about the names of three hundred literati-officials.

right but ended wrong, started as a *junzi* but ended up *xiaoren*, or whose despicable behavior belied their moral statements. Posthumously judged by their character, they either deserved a miserable ending, or their characters and behaviors did not qualify them as exemplary “righteous literati-officials” (*qingliu* 清流, or pure elements), even if the powerful eunuch labeled them “Donglin.”

This collection of biographies concerns itself with Confucian teachings (*mingjiao* 名教). It strictly excludes those who ended up in Buddhist or Daoist pursuits. However, it promotes those who originally followed Buddhist or Daoist teachings but eventually returned to the Confucian orthodoxy, for example, Xiong Kaiyuan 熊開元 and Jiang Cai 姜埰. Men like Fang Yizhi 方以智 were in the beginning righteous literati-officials but turned themselves into monks at a senior age. This book does not include them. Others such as Zhang Rujin 章如金 grew up Daoist but became Confucian and engaged in Confucian scholarship. Therefore men of this kind are included.<sup>150</sup>

Not surprisingly, Chen Ding has omitted Zheng Man and Qian Qianyi, both of whom were named in the “List of the Donglin Partisans” compiled by Wei Zhongxian and in other such lists as well. Chen Ding seems to have applied the above two principles to Zheng Man’s case. Like Zhang Xia, he adopts a moralistic view in his judgment of Zheng Man’s political fate. Zheng Man’s alleged lack of filial piety and sexual immorality, although unverifiable, were, after all, declared punishable by the emperor Chongzhen and led to his execution. His spiritual practices, deviant from Confucian orthodoxy, became one of many factors that literati of the late Ming and early Qing identified as contributing to the moral and political collapse of the Ming dynasty. In these moralists’ eyes, Zheng Man could not, and should not, be considered a Donglin. Chen

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<sup>150</sup> “Fanli,” p. 011.



Ding's historical documentation is yet another example of the seventeenth-century literati's efforts to distance Zheng Man from the ideal Donglin image. In this way, literati in the early Qing accomplished the task of establishing the ideal Donglin man by their erasure of figures like Zheng Man from the history of the morally perfect Donglin.

Moralist endeavors to idealize the Donglin man during the seventeenth century not only assumed but also further cemented the association between literati-official gender propriety and loyalty. Those who challenged the morally perfect image of the so-called Donglin would repeatedly invoke this association. One such voice was Li Qing 李清 (1602-1683), who served in the Chongzhen government and the southern Ming Hongguang court before he claimed a high reputation as a Ming loyalist. A *jinshi* of Chongzhen 4 (1631), he held positions in the Board of Punishments, the Board of Personnel, and the Board of Works. After the fall of the Ming, he retreated to his hometown in Xinghua (in modern Jiangsu province) and compiled several historical works, while socializing with other high-profile Ming loyalists in Jiangnan region. He published several influential works on the Tianqi, Chongzhen, and Hongguang reigns. Many consider his works reliable sources on late Ming politics because he somehow earned the reputation of a relatively unbiased observer and provider of first-hand information. But his relationship with the Donglin faction shaped how his historical work represents controversial figures like Zheng Man.

Li Qing had a very complicated relationship with Donglin-identified officials. In Chongzhen 4 (1631), he nearly lost the opportunity to obtain the *jinshi* title at the civil service examinations because the examiners failed to recognize his talents. Then, Ni

Yuanlu, widely recognized as one of the most outstanding Donglin who happened to be one of the examiners, came across Li Qing's tests. He saw potential in Li Qing and passed him. Li Qing acknowledged Ni Yuanlu as his mentor.<sup>151</sup> However, Li's political career began in the shadow of the Chongzhen emperor's eradication of Wei Zhongxian's literati-official followers. Li, like others, realized that factional politics hurt many officials by categorizing them into Donglin and non-Donglin camps, his father being one of the latter. In his petition on behalf of his father, Li Qing seems particularly unforgiving toward certain controversial Donglin figures,<sup>152</sup> especially those who were not morally perfect. In his historical documentation of late-Ming politics, he especially ridiculed three figures: Zheng Man, Qian Qianyi, and Gong Dingzi 龔鼎孳.<sup>153</sup> Li's portrayal of Zheng Man as an immoral man in the Donglin camp in particular enables him to articulate views on late-Ming factionalism and his relation to it.

In his most important and influential work, *San yuan biji* 三垣筆記, Li Qing specifically documents what he heard about Zheng Man. His information about Zheng Man's evil character allegedly comes from "local knowledge" provided by Wang Zhang 王章, a native of Wujin, Zheng Man's hometown. In this record, Wang Zhang explained that the widely respected official Sun Shenxing, also a native of Wujin, was deceived by

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<sup>151</sup> Xie Zhengguang and Fan Jinmin (eds.) 謝正光, 范金民, *Ming yimin lu hui ji* 明遺民錄彙輯 (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 1995), pp. 253-54.

<sup>152</sup> Wen Bing 文秉, *Jiayi shi an* 甲乙事案 in Huang Zongxi ed. 黃宗羲, *Nan Ming shi liao ba zhong* 南明史料八種 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1997), p. 510.

<sup>153</sup> Gong Dingzi will be examined more closely in later chapters of this study.

Zheng Man's phony intellectual quality.<sup>154</sup> He also presents the report of "some righteous natives" of Zheng's hometown, about how Zheng Man put on a mask of filial piety to impress Huang Daozhou. Li Qing emphasizes that he offers the most reliable information, because he served in the Chongzhen and Hongguang governments. What is critical here is not Li Qing's very negative view of Zheng Man, but rather, that he used Zheng Man's case to frame the moral imperfection of the Donglin partisans. By the time Li Qing published this work, Wang Zhang had already died: He was one of the officials who committed suicide upon the fall of Beijing in 1644. There is no way to verify whether he had indeed made such critical assertions about Zheng Man. The official record says that Wang Zhang did not know anything about Zheng Man's family matters. More importantly, Wang allowed his name to appear as one of the proofreaders of Zheng Man's collected works, specifically, of a whole volume of poems that Zheng Man had composed in prison.<sup>155</sup> This can only be interpreted as an important gesture of friendship, recognition, and memory. I do not intend to draw a final conclusion about whether Li's reported "local insights" are false or true; instead, I would like to note that these allegations, even if true, could not justify Li Qing's remarks that the late Chongzhen emperor made a resolute and wise decision to execute Zheng Man because he had seen through Zheng Man's attempt to attach himself to Huang Daozhou.<sup>156</sup> This is not "first-hand information," as he claimed, but a political representation of the Chongzhen emperor as an astute ruler who did not surrender to an immoral man misidentified as a Donglin.

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<sup>154</sup> Li Qing, *San yuan biji* 三垣筆記: "Chongzhen" 崇禎 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982, 1997), p. 18.

<sup>155</sup> *MYCTSJ*: *juan* 19, p. 682.

<sup>156</sup> Li Qing, *San yuan biji*, p. 72.

Li Qing's bias against Zheng Man reflects the continued bitterness among former Ming literati-officials caused by factionalism in the last decades of the Ming, a deeply damaging political culture that literally made it impossible for them to speak from a middle ground. After the fall of the Ming, Li Qing served in the Hongguang southern Ming court (1644-45). In one of his memorials, Li Qing sarcastically compared Huang Shu's 黃澍 attack on Ma Shiying 馬士英, to Zheng Man's defense of Wen Zhenmeng in the Tianqi period: "These people had their own agendas. Defending a *junzi* and attacking a *xiaoren*<sup>157</sup> are not very different because they are simply used as an excuse [to promote self-interests]."<sup>158</sup> He made a similar observation that Zheng Man's criticism of Wen Tiren was essentially hyperbole aimed at gaining political attention.<sup>159</sup> Zheng Man's alleged crimes against his parents and the young women in his family were assumed to be true in Li Qing's exploitation of the Zheng Man tragedy to challenge the established authority of the Donglin faction. Indeed, it was precisely because of the literati's critical reflection on factionalism (including that carried out in the name of Donglin ideals), by the early Qing, that seemingly neutral writers like Li Qing looked like reliable sources of historical information.

The Qing historian Quan Zuwang 全祖望 has complained that Li Qing went overboard in his writing about Zheng Man's case; he asserted that Huang Zongxi's

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<sup>157</sup> *Junzi* and *xiaoren* literally mean "the noble man" and "the lesser man" respectively.

<sup>158</sup> Li Qing 李清, *Nan du lu* 南渡錄: juan 1 in Huang Zongxi ed. 黃宗羲, *Nan Ming shi liao ba zhong* 南明史料八種 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1997), p. 171.

<sup>159</sup> Li Qing, *San yuan bi ji*, p. 161.

biographical account of Zheng was more reliable.<sup>160</sup> In fact, it is precisely this misplaced focus on probing “truth” rather than pursuing the problem of dubious charges that prevents more people from taking the most important historical and political lessons from late-Ming sensational politics. Although Li Qing’s challenging the moral perfection idea of the Donglin was definitively a minority voice compared to the popular view, he was with the majority when he presumed and confirmed the connection between loyalty and gender morality. Zheng Man is but one of the many politicians suffering political and historical erasure on this account.

Zheng Man’s death marked a new low in terms of how politics was conducted. In a most revealing and surreal way, it shows the terror created and sustained by the sensationalization of politics, a strategy and culture that perpetuated the factionalist mentality of bureaucrats and the emperor’s paranoia, effectively disabling political communication. The execution of Zheng Man on dubious charges pushed this trend to its bloody extreme, while this kind of political culture lingered until the fall of the southern Ming court.

Late-Ming social, cultural, and intellectual conditions definitely destabilized norms and tested boundaries of all sorts. However, at a time of intensified factionalism, for officials, the most effective political self-defense against dubious charges of one’s sexual immorality seemed to be showing evidence of its opposite, compliance with established, most conservative behavioral norms that emphasized gender boundaries. The

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<sup>160</sup> Quan Zuwang 全祖望, “Ba” 跋 in *San yuan biji*, p. 251.

accused must speak in the moral language they shared with the accuser, because their struggles had to be fought within the same Confucian moral-political framework. The interconnections of Confucian virtues for literati, however intangible, had existed for a long time, but they did not necessarily generate specific political effects when the performance of loyalty mattered little, i.e. when no significant political struggles or crisis raised the stakes of performing loyalty. It was actively deployed in political struggles as late Ming internal and external crises intensified, producing the material conditions that crystallized what kind of moral behaviors would help define the “loyal official.” Zheng Man, his accusers, and his defenders all presumed and confirmed the association between loyalty and morality, though for different purposes and in different forms. Furthermore, the same moral-political framework has also shaped the seventeenth-century historical documentation of late Ming politics, the Donglin, and the experience of the individuals swept into this extremely eventful history.

## Chapter 4

### The Making of an Ideal Confucian Man: Imaging and Imagining Huang Daozhou

Zheng Man was executed by his ruler. Years later his friend Huang Daozhou, captured by the Manchus and refusing to become a turncoat, was executed by the new ruler of China. In the vast corpus of historical documentation from and about the Ming-Qing transition, Huang Daozhou stands out as *the* loyal literatus-official, *the* impeccable Confucian man. Sun Qifeng 孫奇逢 (1584-1675), a widely respected *yimin* and Confucian philosopher, identified Huang Daozhou as one of two Ming figures along with Fang Xiaoru 方孝孺 “whose loyalty is complete” (*zhong dao zuse* 忠到足色).<sup>1</sup>

Fang Xiaoru served the Jianwen emperor as his most trusted political and military consultant. When Emperor Jianwen was dethroned by his uncle the Prince of Yan (later the Yongle emperor, r. 1403-1424), Fang Xiaoru remained loyal to the Jianwen emperor by adamantly refusing to collaborate with the usurper. The Yongle emperor, outraged at Fang Xiaoru's recalcitrance, ordered him dismembered. Fang's wife and sons committed suicide prior to his execution, and his two daughters threw themselves into the Qinhuai

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<sup>1</sup> Sun Qifeng, *Xiaofeng xiansheng ji* 夏峰先生集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004): juan 4: “Lin shu chao xu” 麟書鈔序, p. 121.

River. Hundreds of relatives and friends were implicated and executed.<sup>2</sup> Fang Xiaoru's heroic loyalty earned him unsurpassed reverence during the Ming and in literati-officials' political memory. Late-Ming political and historical writings about the violent usurpation of imperial power by the Yongle emperor and his ruthless purging of officials loyal to his nephew the Jianwen emperor always indicate their authors' self-positioning in relation to imperial authority.

Why did Sun Qifeng choose to highlight Huang Daozhou? Sun Qifeng explains that both Fang Xiaoru and Huang Daozhou represented the highest accomplishment of Confucian learning, an intellectual and moral achievement specifically manifested in their extraordinary martyrdom. But compared to Fang Xiaoru, Huang Daozhou occupied a far less important political and symbolic position; so many equally, if not more, excellent, literati-officials died just as heroically upon the fall of the Ming. Exploring the similarities and differences between Fang and Huang may shed light on some of the less fully articulated criteria of the ideal Confucian man.

What we have in official and unofficial records of Huang Daozhou tells us little about his contributions to the country, but much about his moral character and learning. We know that Tianqi 2 (1622), at the age of thirty-eight, Huang Daozhou passed the highest level of the civil service examinations and obtained the *jinshi* title. This cohort of *jinshi* included some of the most iconic literati-officials of the last two decades of the Ming. As the political chaos caused by *yandang* (eunuch power) was escalating, two of Huang's friends in the government, Zheng Man and Wen Zhenmeng (from the same *jinshi* cohort), were dismissed for criticizing Wei Zhongxian. Huang promised to join

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<sup>2</sup> MS: juan 141/liezhuan 29: "Fang Xiaoru," pp. 4017-20.



them in their anti-eunuch efforts, but he first had to help move his mother and wife to the capital from his home province far in the south, Fujian, and therefore kept silent when they made their play. This obviously caused Huang a great deal of stress and sense of guilt afterwards.

As a Hanlin Compiler (*bianxiu*), Huang Daozhou participated in lectures before the Tianqi emperor. Fortunately when he challenged the practice that the Lecturer should kneel when presenting texts to the emperor, Wei Zhongxian was alerted by Huang's challenge<sup>3</sup> but did not take any action against him. At the height of Wei Zhongxian's bloody persecution of the Donglin-identified officials, in Tianqi 5 (1625) Huang Daozhou requested a leave to take care of his mother and extended it to observe the mourning period after she died.<sup>4</sup> In Chongzhen 3 (1630), he returned to the capital. Soon, his memorial in defense of the Grand Secretary Qian Longxi 錢龍錫 in the case of General Yuan Chonghuan 袁崇煥 irritated the Chongzhen emperor and earned him a demotion. In Chongzhen 5 (1632), he again asked for a leave and returned to Fujian. Over the next four years, he spent most of his time repairing and guarding his parents' tombs, and lecturing to pupils in his hometown area.

Soon after re-entering the government in Chongzhen 10 (1637), Huang Daozhou got deeply involved in a series of political struggles between Donglin-identified officials and other officials such as Wen Tiren and Yang Sichang whom the Donglin crowd

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<sup>3</sup> *MS*: juan 255/liezhuan 143: "Huang Daozhou," pp. 6592-6600. Huang's biography in *Ming shi* inaccurately states that he returned home to mourn the death of his mother. His mother passed away a year after he went back to Fujian.

<sup>4</sup> Zhuang Qichou 莊起儔 compl., *HZPWX: Zhangpu Huang xiansheng nianpu (Huang nianpu hereafter)* 漳浦黃先生年譜, in *Taiwan wenxian shiliao congkan* Vol. 8 臺灣文獻史料叢刊第八輯 (Taipei: Taiwan Datong shuju), pp. 414-15.

considered unworthy and incompetent factionalists. After failing to impeach Yang Sichang for his violation of mourning rules and failing to rescue Zheng Man, Huang Daozhou received one more demotion. He submitted yet another request for leave and went back to Fujian. But a year later he was arrested for suspicion of factionalism when Xie Xuelong 解學龍, then Jiangxi provincial governor, suggested to the emperor that Huang Daozhou's qualities and loyalty deserved an important government position.<sup>5</sup> Impulsively, the Chongzhen emperor not only imprisoned Huang Daozhou for a year and half but also punished several other officials by imprisonment, flogging, and exile.<sup>6</sup> In late Chongzhen 14 (1641), when the emperor granted an amnesty, Huang Daozhou was freed and allowed to serve out his penalty at a remote military station. This exile was later waived and the emperor tried to get him back to work in his court. But he excused himself on account of illness and returned home. He then spent most of his time in Fujian writing and lecturing, until the Ming fell and the Southern Ming Hongguang court in Nanjing summoned him. After the Manchus conquered Jiangnan, Huang Daozhou joined the Longwu court in Fujian and became a Grand Secretary. The military campaigns he organized and led against the Manchu Qing in southern China quickly failed, leading to his capture and execution in 1646.<sup>7</sup>

How did such a rugged political life, with few substantial contributions to policy making, earn Huang Daozhou a great reputation as an official? Huang Daozhou was a

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<sup>5</sup> *MS: juan 275/liezhuan 163*: "Xie Xuelong," pp. 7042-45.

<sup>6</sup> *MS: juan 255/liezhuan 143*: "Huang Daozhou"

<sup>7</sup> Yang Haiying has evaluated his military strategies and the causes of his failure. Yang Haiying 楊海英, "Longwu zhengquan de zhongxing zhanlue jiqi pomie—guanyu Longwu 'bing fa wu lu' shoufu Nanjing jihua de yanjiu" 隆武政權的中興戰略及其破滅-關於隆武"兵發五路"收復南京的研究 in *Zhongguo shehui kexue yanjiuyuan ed. Gu shi wen cun 古史文存: Ming-Qing juan II* (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2006).

renowned scholar and teacher of the Confucian classics, and a widely admired calligrapher. He was also known for being upright and uncompromising in his service to the government. But he was not an intelligent political leader. Still, in official and unofficial historical memory, he appears to be an ideal Confucian official, praised for his statecraft, loyalty, integrity, and filial piety. Eventually the *yimin* Sun Qifeng would pair him with Fang Xiaoru as the two most exemplary loyal Confucian officials in the Ming history. The obvious dissonance and discrepancy here are not merely a problem of rhetorical exaggeration in historical representation; more importantly, they manifest two realities of the literati-officials at the time. First, the most widely recognized officials were often excellent scholars and morally exemplary; whether they surpassed others in political skills and administrative ability was less relevant. Second, the time-honored framework, Confucian Five Cardinal Relations, sets up interconnected roles and responsibilities that any literatus who aspired to become a Confucian official would be pressured to perform well: those of official, father, son, husband, brother, and friend. Meant to regulate both public and personal behaviors, these interlocking and mutually defining Confucian moral-political ideals were so lofty that only a small number of these men could realize them, often with the help of historical myth-making.

Huang Daozhou was a perfect example of this moral-political ideal. A true believer in Confucian teachings, Huang Daozhou had always aimed to become a sage.<sup>8</sup> In the political sphere, this was often articulated as a dream of being “a prime minister (*xiang* 相) at the time of crisis” (*wei shi zhi xiang* 危時之相). It was said that when his

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<sup>8</sup> “以聖賢自命”. Zhang Dai 張岱, *Shiguishu hou ji* 石匱書後集: juan 37: “Huang Daozhou and Jin Sheng liezhuan” 黃道周金聲列傳

fame had just begun to rise locally, a fortune-teller in Taoist garb visited him. Huang was “very pleased” to hear the prediction that one day he “would become a *xiang* of the time of crisis.”<sup>9</sup> The title of *xiang* would not only bring political power and prestige but also define how one would be remembered by later generations. Since the highest title a literatus-official obtained in his political career would also define his place in the hierarchies of historical documentation and memory, historical self-consciousness deeply shaped literati-officials’ everyday life. Huang Daozhou seemed to have been allured by this title, this symbol of ultimate political, personal, and historical achievement. His Donglin-identified colleagues, sharing the same moral-political view, all thought of him as an ideal candidate for this position, because as one prominent colleague said, “his incorruptible and honest character was extraordinary and there was no book that he hadn’t read!”<sup>10</sup>

The fall of Beijing may have ended the life of the Chongzhen emperor, but ironically it revived the political aspirations of many formerly ostracized officials and brought them back into government, now at small Southern Ming courts. Huang Daozhou was fully aware of the risks but a sense of duty and ambition also pulled him in that direction.<sup>11</sup> Called upon by the Hongguang court, he departed from Fujian for Nanjing, but at one point regretted his decision and almost returned. At that moment, he recalled and described to his disciples a dream he had had decades before. In this dream, he

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Wu Weiye 吳偉業, *Sui kou ji lue 綏寇紀略*: juan 7 “Kaixian bai” 開縣敗.

<sup>11</sup> In one of the poems he composed upon departure he wrote, “This old official, with all the passion he can muster/Will come back from vast distances when he sees the nation revive”. *Huang Shizhai gong kangli wei kan gao* 黃石齋公伉儷未刊稿 (Taipei: Guoli zhongyang tushuguan te cang zu zhenben, 1974): “Huang Shizhai wei ke gao” 黃石齋未刻稿: “Fu zhao liu bie qin you jian shi Baishi” 赴召留別親友兼示白石, p. 23.

became a Grand Secretary and went to Nanjing. He was ordered to draft a memorial but his refusal to comply cost him both arms. According to Huang Daozhou's disciples, he told them that earlier when he was thrown into prison by the late Chongzhen emperor, he did not fear losing his life because he believed that he would survive the ordeal and this dream would come true.<sup>12</sup>

What is fascinating about his dream is that it replicates the loyal actions of heroic Fang Xiaoru, except that Fang was executed for refusing to draft a memorial for the usurper, the Yongle emperor, whereas in Huang's dream, he *only* lost his arms for the sake of loyalty. This partial replica of a figure of loyalty seems to not only reflect Huang Daozhou's lack of faith in the despotic Chongzhen emperor but also to foretell the lesser prestige of Grand Secretary title that he would later receive from the fugitive, short-lived Southern Ming Longwu court in 1645. Despite this disparity between Fang Xiaoru and Huang Daozhou in terms of political achievement, their life stories share important cultural symbolism, which was important for making the ideal Confucian man in official and unofficial histories. At the heart of this cultural symbolism lies in their impeccable personal moral lives. Huang Daozhou's image as a moral paragon stands in stark contrast to that of the anti-Donglin officials and disloyal turncoats, and more interestingly, to that of the Fushe youths who were politically identified with Donglin while socially and culturally associated with late-Ming new trends. An investigation of his life and career will help historicize the intimate relationship between literati-officials' morality and their politics, which shaped not only political developments of the period but also the Ming-Qing dynastic transition has been documented.

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<sup>12</sup> *Huang nianpu*, p. 452.

This chapter will argue that Huang Daozhou became a Donglin-identified icon not only because he tried to practice Confucian moral-political ideals at a “perfect” level, but also because he was made such in the writings of seventeenth-century literati, the same men who attempted to purge morally ambiguous figures like Zheng Man and their scandals from the Donglin history. Huang Daozhou’s image as a loyalist martyr, a filial son, and a man rejecting sexual pleasures supports the grand narrative of the Ming-Qing transition, which attributes the demise of the Ming to the factionalist repression of morally impeccable, loyal Donglin officials, who made the ultimate sacrifice to defend their dynasty against vicious officials and the Manchus.

### **The Place of Friendship, Filial Piety, and Loyalty in a Guilt Complex**

Huang Daozhou’s political career began with the dramatic story of a failed commitment to friendship and loyalty. The first important political test of his Tianqi 2 (1622) cohort of *jinshi* was the attempted impeachment of the powerful eunuch Wei Zhongxian by Huang’s good friends Wen Zhenmeng and Zheng Man. Huang Daozhou had promised that he would join his friends in their efforts but then hesitated because he had become concerned about his mother. Torn between loyalty and filial piety, he chose the latter and did not join his friends as he had promised.<sup>13</sup> “I composed three memorials but burned them all because I had to bring my mother to the capital,”<sup>14</sup> he later recalled. This act of prioritizing filial responsibility over loyalty (to the system and to his friends) kept him from participating in that heroic confrontation with Wei Zhongxian. Huang afterward

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<sup>13</sup> Hong Si 洪思, *HZPWX*: “Huangzi zhuan” 黃子傳, p. 365.

<sup>14</sup> *HZPWX*: *juan* 1: “Jiu Zheng Man shu” 救鄭鄭疏; *Nianpu*, p. 413.

repeatedly mentioned that Zheng Man had considered his failing cowardly.<sup>15</sup> Huang Daozhou's failure to support his friends became for him a life-long moral and emotional burden. This early guilt complex in his friendship with Zheng Man, who was later imprisoned and executed for the crime of lacking filial piety, might have made Huang more determined to insist on the inseparability of loyalty and filial piety, not only in his politics but also in his self-presentation.

This determination heavily shaped Huang Daozhou's personal and political behavior when he reentered politics after the Chongzhen emperor succeeded to the throne and recalled many Donglin-identified officials to the capital. In Chongzhen 3 (1630), on his way northward to Beijing, Huang Daozhou and his family visited Zheng Man, who was observing the three-year mourning period for his father. Arriving at Zheng's garden, Huang Daozhou was eager to express his admiration for Zheng Man's political integrity and their friendship.<sup>16</sup> At the end of the stay he produced a calligraphy scroll for Zheng Man, and later extended it twice. This calligraphic work is arranged very artistically, showing some degree of formality (Figure 1).<sup>17</sup> It compiles fifteen old and new poems composed for Zheng Man over a ten-year period, beginning with poems dedicated to him upon his departure from the capital in Tianqi 2 and ending with new poems crafted during this reunion.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Huang Daozhou, *Huang Zhangpu ji* 黃漳浦集, ed. Chen Shouqi 陳壽祺 (published 1875-1911): *juan 39*: "Piling jian Miyang zai jia si zhang" 毗陵見峯陽在家四章, p. 7a.

<sup>17</sup> See Fu Hongzhan's 傅紅展 discussion of Huang Daozhou's calligraphic works (作品考釋), in Liu Zhengcheng 劉正成 ed. *Zhongguo shufa quan ji* 中國書法全集 Vol. 56 The Ming Dynasty: Huang Daozhou *juan* (append. Cai Yuqing) 明代編黃道周卷 (附蔡玉卿) (Beijing: Rongbaozhai, 1994), pp. 298-299.

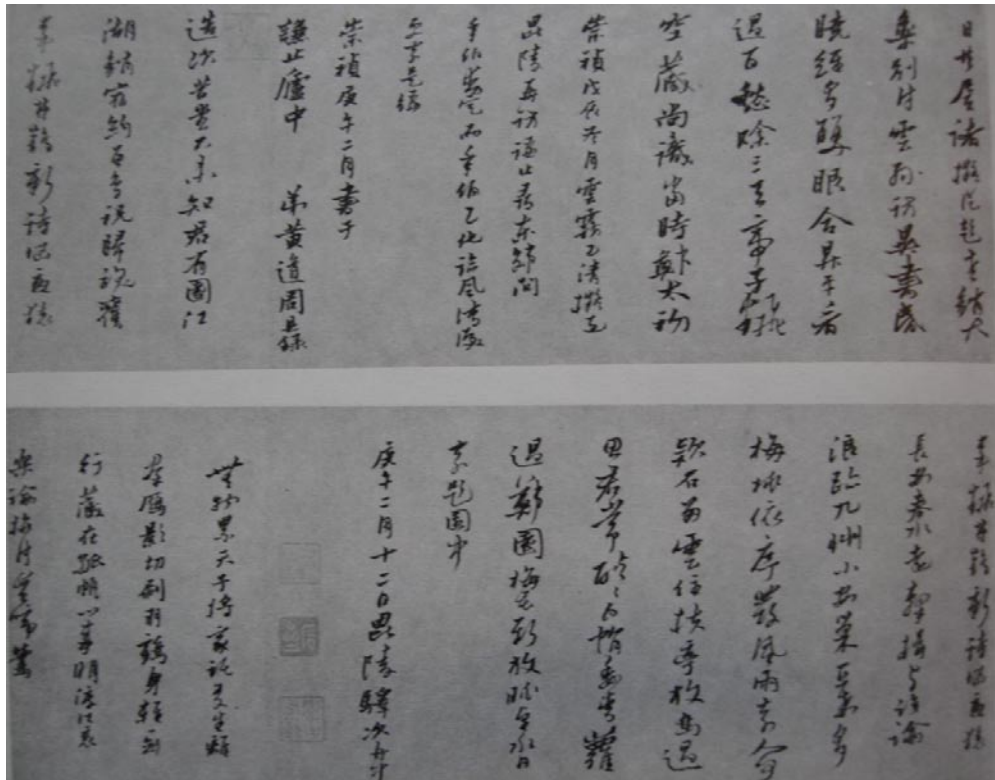


Figure 1. The end of section one and beginning of section two of the scroll. From *Zhongguo shufa quan ji* 中國書法全集 Vol. 56 The Ming Dynasty: Huang Daozhou juan (append. Cai Yuqing) 明代編黃道周卷 (附蔡玉卿)

The scroll as a whole consists of three sections. The first section, the main part, arranges several poems in chronological order and provides a record of the men’s friendship from Tianqi 2 to Chongzhen 3 (1622-1630), i.e., from the year when Zheng Man and Wen Zhenmeng were dismissed from the government to Huang’s visit to the Zheng family in Piling (modern Wujin in Jiangsu province). The first poem in section one begins by praising Wen and Zheng for their courage to stand up to power abusers at court: “Elder brother Wenqi is outstanding / younger brother Qianzhi upright and



outspoken.”<sup>18</sup> The rest of this section painstakingly portrays Zheng Man as a loyal official, suggesting that he deserved as much recognition as that given to Wen Zhenmeng, the great-grandson of the legendary literatus-artist Wen Zhengming, who became a political superstar when he placed the first in the metropolitan examination in Tianqi 2: “People of our time give honor only to Wenqi / How can they know of Qianzhi’s superior virtues? / Risking his life and serving the emperor without reserve / How can a real man attach himself to people of power?”<sup>19</sup> Then he goes on to remind the reader that Zheng Man in fact came from a family of most loyal officials: his maternal grandfather, Wu Zhongxing, gained enormous admiration among literati-officials for challenging Zhang Juzheng’s *duoqing* in early Wanli reign; his father, Zheng Zhenxian, most sincerely submitted politically controversial advice to the Wanli emperor but was demoted for doing so.

The next poem turns to their friendship, emotionally recalling how Zheng Man, upon being forced out of the capital as a result of factional persecution, still remembered to offer money to help Huang Daozhou rent a horse!<sup>20</sup> The next three poems were written during a short visit to the Zheng father and son when Huang Daozhou withdrew from the government and returned to the South in Tianqi 5 (1625). They reiterate the men’s friendship and Huang’s respect for Zheng’s father. These poems, read together with Zheng Man’s recollection of this particular visit, reveal the strong political and personal

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 299. Wenqi refers to Wen, and Qianzhi refers to Zheng.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Fu Hongzhan, p. 299.

bonds between them.<sup>21</sup> The last part of section one contains half of the poems that Huang Daozhou composed during his visit to Piling.<sup>22</sup> Section one as a whole presents a coherent narrative in chronological order, demonstrating that their persistent friendship and mutual sympathy not only survived but also became strengthened during their most chaotic years in politics. Huang Daozhou repeatedly alludes to the Huang-Wen-Zheng friendship and praises his friends' heroic action against the *yandang* several years before.<sup>23</sup>

The second section contains just one long poem, composed before Huang departed from Piling for the capital, leaving his family behind with the Zhengs out of concerns for their safety, given the difficult situation on the road north, where Manchu military aggression had begun to threaten the capital. Section three, finished upon coming back to fetch his family, is a long poem drafted in response to an earlier one from Zheng Man that recalled Huang Daozhou's visit.<sup>24</sup> The core segment of this scroll is section one, which presents a complete narrative of the long-term bonds expressed through the Confucian virtues of loyalty, filial piety, and friendship. Documentary by nature, it depicts the consistency and strength of their political and personal bonds, helping to smooth away that old incident, Huang's early failure as an official and as a friend.

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<sup>21</sup> Zheng Man recalls how Huang Daozhou called to inquire about his mother's health three times a day and how Zheng Man visited him on his boat. *MYCTSJ: juan 9*: "Huang Shizhai huan chao guo fang" 黃石齋還朝過訪, p. 595.

<sup>22</sup> These poems are slightly different from the versions in the collection of Huang's works compiled by his students. It seems likely that Huang Daozhou revised them later. See *Huang Zhangpu ji: juan 39*: "Kunling jian Miyang zai jia si zhang," p. 7a.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. Also see Appendix in Lai, Xiaoyun 賴曉雲, *Cong Huang Daozhou shu Xiaojing lun qi shufa yishu* 從黃道周書〈孝經〉論其書法藝術. (MA thesis, National Taiwan University, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. For these poems from Zheng Man to Huang Daozhou, see *MYCTSJ: juan 9*: "Huang Shizhai huan chao guo fang" 黃石齋還朝過訪, p. 595.

Initially Huang Daozhou had only planned to present section one, but he later added the other two sections, with poems that are more lyrical. The poetic voice in these two shorter sections does not narrate stories of friendship but is fairly relaxed, savoring a friendship sealed. Their farewell messages upon Huang's departing the Zheng family garden in Chongzhen 3 (1630) would be the last exchanged between them as both friends and political allies. Only years later, when Zheng Man was arrested on dubious charges would Huang Daozhou have to deal with friendship and politics together again. But the social and artistic gestures employed in the process of overcoming Huang's guilt seem to have anticipated his consistent invocation of loyalty and filial piety as political languages over the rest of his political and personal life.

### **Between Tombs and the Court: Filial Piety in Politics**

On his return to politics, Huang Daozhou forcefully emerged as a unique political character; he was extremely outspoken and uncompromising at court on one hand, and on the other, keen to perform rituals of filial piety during periods of temporary retirement at home. His contemporary Zhang Dian 張 tells us: "From that point (when he took a leave in Tianqi 5), the master (Huang Daozhou) would leave this place only when going to offer his criticisms to the emperor, and he would resume attending to the tombs when he returned. One could say that in this place gathered the noble spirits of a hundred years."<sup>25</sup> In the course of his political career, Huang Daozhou experienced four major ups

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<sup>25</sup> *Huang nianpu*, p. 414. The biography of Huang Daozhou in the gazetteer of his home in Zhangpu County documents: "From a very young age, he had been following the principles of loyalty and filial piety dutifully. He left home only when going to offer his criticisms to the emperor; he returned home only to

and downs. The language of “leaving the tombs behind and stepping out of the mountains” (*qimu chushan* 棄墓出山) and “building a hut and taking residence in the tomb area” (*jielu shoumu* 結廬守墓), with which he and his admirers describe his trips to and from the capital (and thus in and out of the center of political struggles), reveals the inseparability of his two identities—a loyal political man and a filially pious son. The metaphor of “mountains” in this phrase happens to coincide with the fact that he had indeed built and lived in a hut by his parents’ tombs in the mountains to fulfill his filial devotion. The chart below shows the pattern of his political and personal fortunes.

Tianqi 2	<i>jinshi</i> /official status	→ Tianqi 5 leave/ <i>shoumu</i>
Chongzhen 3	<i>chushan</i>	→Chongzhen 5 leave/ <i>shoumu</i>
Chongzhen 9	<i>chunshan</i>	→ Chongzhen 11 demotion/ <i>shoumu</i>
Chongzhen 13	imprisonment/ <i>chushan</i>	→ Chongzhen 15 exile-amnesty/ <i>shoumu</i>
Chongzhen 17	Southern Ming/ <i>chushan</i>	

This pattern of movement between the tombs and the court creates a powerful image, for not only his conscious moral-political endeavors but also in the collective construction of the ideal Donglin man in the grand narrative of the Ming-Qing transition. The pattern begins in the year of Tianqi 5 (1625), with his leave and return home in

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attend to the tombs.” *Zhangpu xianzhi* 漳浦縣志 (Guangxu edition), ed. Shi Xiwei 施錫衛 (1936): juan 15 Renwu I 人物上, pp. 30b-31 a. Multiple sources share this phrase.

passive protest against eunuch power. He buried his father in the Beishan Mountains,<sup>26</sup> built a hut, and carried dirt himself there to construct the tomb. He erected a stele there on which he had inscribed his father's virtuous deeds. When carving this inscription, he would pause after each character and kowtow one time. The tomb site was a long-term, carefully designed project, taking him many years to accomplish. Huang Daozhou had built and arranged everything with his own hands, and felt that by residing next to the tombs he was being with the deceased parent.<sup>27</sup> The next year his mother passed away. He confined himself longer in the Beishan and continued to build the site. From Tianqi 7 (1627) to Chongzhen 1 (1628), he buried his mother, grandmother, uncles, and his deceased first wife in this place. He told others that fulfilling these filial responsibilities was his only worldly interest.<sup>28</sup> It was in this difficult period that his persistent and rigid practices of loyalty and filial piety merged. They would define Huang Daozhou's political activities, his reputation, and the record he has left in history ever since.

The peculiar combination of the old guilt complex, factionalism, and the imperial autocracy of the Chongzhen reign all helped shape Huang Daozhou's particular political personality. By the third year into the Chongzhen reign (the year that Huang Daozhou resumed his position in the government), the emperor's weaknesses had crystallized. His sense of moral-political responsibility and ambition to save the empire in crisis were so

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<sup>26</sup> According to the Zhangpu County gazetteer, this site was located in the northern suburb of the county. Huang Daozhou later converted the hut into a study and had a garden constructed behind it. *Zhangpu xianzhi: juan 19 Zazhi* 雜誌: "Beishan bie ye" 北山別業.

<sup>27</sup> *Huang Zhangpu ji*: juan 19: "Fu dai yu xiong shu" 赴逮與兄書, pp. 9a-b.

<sup>28</sup> *Huang nianpu*, p. 415.

urgent that he sought only instant successes and simple solutions.<sup>29</sup> He was critical of himself. Meanwhile, he did not trust his officials, especially those who challenged his policies and decisions in moral terms. Part of this deeply rooted distrust resulted from his intense frustration at the chronic factionalism of late-Ming politics. These characteristics led to his impulsive arrests of officials and explicit contempt toward their tortuous criticisms that were characteristically replete with self-righteous moral preaching.<sup>30</sup> With such a ruler, the Confucian moral exemplar Huang Daozhou could not but clash repeatedly. In court Huang used the political language of filial piety in policy debates to claim high moral ground vis-à-vis the emperor and Donglin's factional enemies.

Their first major clash took place in Chongzhen 3 (1630). Huang Daozhou memorialized to defend the Grand Secretary Qian Longxi, who had been imprisoned in the Yuan Chonghuan treason case.<sup>31</sup> Earning serious political attention for the first time, Huang's persistent challenges to the emperor, seen as even more heroic with his subsequent demotion by the irritated ruler, generated an extremely powerful image of the ideal Donglin man. Huang's symbolically important actions—directly provoking the emperor, his uncompromising attitude, and suffering a demotion—had made him into an

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<sup>29</sup> Liu Zongzhou, then governor of the Imperial Prefecture of Shuntian, spelled out this observation very sincerely in a memorial in fall of Chongzhen 2. The Chongzhen emperor “recognized his loyalty but could not follow his advice.” *Ming tongjian*, p. 2261.

<sup>30</sup> See for example, the early Qing historian Zha Jizuo's comments on the Chongzhen emperor. Zha Jizuo 查繼佐, *Zui wei lu 罪惟錄*, in Wang Yunwu ed. *Si bu cong kan xu bian* (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1966): *juan* 17/ *ji* 17 “Yizong ji” 毅宗紀, p. 46a.

<sup>31</sup> Yuan Chonghuan was arrested and executed on a charge of treason because he was accused of plotting against the emperor. Before he provoked the emperor's suspicion by offering to defend him as the Manchus were threatening the capital, he killed a general, Mao Wenlong, without asking the emperor's permission. Many believed that Yuan made a strategic mistake by killing this general stationed in the northeastern frontier. While literati-officials were ambivalent about how to deal with the emperor's suspicion toward and dissatisfaction with Yuan Chonghuan, they were also hesitant to speak for Qian Longxi, the grand secretary falsely accused by his political enemies of plotting with Yuan Zhonghuan. The treason charges against Yuan were both very serious and extremely complex.

ideal Confucian official. At this particular historical moment, that ideal became specifically associated with Donglin-identified political icons. However, a careful examination of Huang Daozhou's memorials as well as the language of his exchanges with the emperor will show that, as the early-Qing historian Zhang Dai has pointed out, Huang Daozhou unwisely put himself in rhetorical and moral competition with the emperor, a habit that would prevent him from making meaningful contributions to late-Ming politics.<sup>32</sup>

His first attempt to petition on behalf Qian Longxi angered the emperor, who demanded that he write two additional memorials to justify the arguments presented in the first one. That first memorial tried to warn the emperor about the serious political consequences of imprisoning and even executing a Grand Secretary on the basis of frontier-related controversies; it raised the historical examples of two emperors who had killed their prime ministers irrationally, one of them being the Ming Jiajing emperor (re. 1522-1566).<sup>33</sup> He suggests that the Jiajing emperor's inconsistent frontier policy and obsession with Daoist practices were the real reasons contributing to his execution of then Grand Secretary Xia Yan 夏言. Huang also bluntly suggested that some of his colleagues might be trying to "borrow the emperor's hands" to eliminate their factional enemy, the Grand Secretary Qian.<sup>34</sup> By this, he meant to attack former *yandang* officials who hated Qian Longxi for his role in punishing them.<sup>35</sup> The emperor wrote an extremely

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<sup>32</sup> *Shiguishu hou ji*: juan 37: "Huang Daozhou Jin Sheng liezhuan"

<sup>33</sup> The other example he refers to is the Han Emperor Wu. *HZPWX*: juan 1: "Jiu Qian Longxi shu" (Chongzhen 4/1/13), pp. 1-3.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *MS*: juan 251/zhuan 139; *Huang Shizhai xiansheng chidu* 黃石齋先生尺牘 (Shanghai: shangwu yinshuguan, Republican period): "Yu Qiao Kepin" 與喬可聘, the third letter. (Page number unavailable)

harsh response to this memorial, singling out Huang Daozhou's use of the late Jiajing emperor as a historical reference and criticizing his disrespect in commenting on the emperor's personal life. He demanded a second memorial and clarification.<sup>36</sup>

In the second memorial, Huang Daozhou was able to explicitly argue that some officials' impeachment of Qian Longxi had little to do with frontier policy debates and was rather a factional strategy, but he also had to spend much ink addressing trivial terminological issues and apologizing at length for his reckless references in the first memorial.<sup>37</sup> The emperor was not in a mind to easily let him off the hook and went on to score again in this contest. In response to the second memorial, he accused Huang Daozhou of being evasive and continued to press Huang to explain his reference to the Jiajing emperor.<sup>38</sup> In the third memorial, Huang Daozhou replied that he did not dare to explain the earlier reference to the Jiajing emperor because the present emperor had already admonished him for improperly commenting on his personal life.<sup>39</sup> After these exchanges about the late Jiajing emperor, the Chongzhen emperor dismissed Huang's arguments and self-defense and did not even bother to discuss the real question at issue, the case of Grand Secretary Qian Longxi. He demoted Huang three degrees of official rank.<sup>40</sup> These exchanges, failing to address any substantive issues, show that the relationship with the emperor at this point had become one of rhetorical rivalry and psychological battle rather than loyalty. Huang Daozhou's combative and unproductive interactions with the Chongzhen emperor nonetheless exemplified the "uncompromising"

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<sup>36</sup> Chongzhen's response is cited in Hong Si's footnote to Huang Daozhou's next memorial, "Jiu Qian Long xi" 救錢龍錫 (Chongzhen 4/1/18), p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> "Jiu Qian Longxi shu" (Chongzhen 4/1/18), p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, cited in notes by Hong Si, p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> "Jiu Qian Longxi" (Chongzhen 4/1/27), pp. 5-7.

<sup>40</sup> The emperor's response is cited in Hong Si's notes to this memorial, pp. 7-8.



quality considered a hallmark of the ideal Confucian official. As Zhang Dai lamented years after the fall of the Ming and the deaths of both the emperor and Huang, “From that point on, His Majesty became increasingly mean and impatient. He only focused on trivial details. Prosecution and imprisonment of officials frequently took place.”<sup>41</sup> But the ruler-subject relationship had long been a hierarchical one de facto. Officials had to be mindful of this and strove to fulfill their roles as honest advisors to the emperor without appearing disrespectful.

These memorials offer us the earliest examples of how, in addition to deploying the metaphors of *shoumu* and *chushan*, Huang Daozhou managed to redefine the political virtue of loyalty by politicizing the personal virtue of filial piety, a strategy that positioned him in competition with the emperor for the role of moral judge. When the emperor demanded that he submit a second and even a third memorial to explain himself, Huang Daozhou proudly claimed, “having attended to the tombs (*shoumu*) for three years and served in the government for only six years (*chushan*), I strongly believe a wise ruler deserves honest officials to serve him.”<sup>42</sup> He defended his political integrity by contrasting the silence and irresponsibility of many officials with his own actions: Even while filially living by his parents’ tombs in the mountains, he had not stopped reading government briefings.<sup>43</sup> Then in a memorial submitted immediately after these frustrating exchanges, he requested leave so that he could go back and “be close to the parents’ tombs.”<sup>44</sup> By this strategy Huang Daozhou claimed for himself the Confucian ideal that

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<sup>41</sup> *Shiguishu hou ji*: “Huang Daozhou Jin Sheng liezhuan”

<sup>42</sup> “Jiu Qian Longxi shu” (Chongzhen 4/1/18), p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, (Chongzhen 4/1/27), p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> Huang Daozhou, *HZPWX: juan 1*: “Ni tai rong lan qing su du yi zu junxu shu” 擬汰冗濫清宿蠹以足軍需疏, p. 16.

held official filial piety and loyalty to be inseparable and mutually constituted virtues. The *shoumu-chushan* metaphor clearly reflects the tradition of using “filial piety” as political language to stage political protest.

Huang Daozhou’s fame as an iconic Donglin figure grew quickly in the next few years. Back in Fujian, he shuttled between the lecture hall and the location where he continued to live next to and maintain the family tombs and well as hold discussions with his disciples.<sup>45</sup> His lectures in Jiangnan also earned him a passionate following among the young Fushe scholars, some of whom considered Huang their mentor because they had passed their provincial-level examinations under his supervision several years previously.<sup>46</sup> In Chongzhen 8 (1635), the emperor summoned him back to the capital. But Huang Daozhou hesitated and ended up waiting a year before answering the call. When he eventually arrived in the capital just before the New Year of Chongzhen 10 (1637), several officials had just failed to impeach the Grand Secretary Wen Tiren for incriminating Zheng Man based on unverifiable charges. One of these was the most influential of the Donglin-identified officials, Liu Zongzhou.<sup>47</sup> Liu Zongzhou’s memorial, extremely sharp and straightforward, criticized Chongzhen’s blind confidence in the self-described non-factionalist Wen Tiren, who had actually formed his own clique and relentlessly eliminated his political opponents. This memorial angered the emperor so much that he stripped Liu Zongzhou of his official status.<sup>48</sup> Returning to the center of national politics at this moment meant nothing but difficult political negotiations for

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<sup>45</sup> *Huang nianpu*, pp. 418-421.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 416.

<sup>47</sup> Zheng Man himself gives these specific dates in his preface to the first chapter of collected poems written in prison: *MYCTSJ: juan 15*, p. 632. His poems also document some officials’ efforts to rescue him. See *MYCTSJ: juan 16*, pp. 653-654.

<sup>48</sup> *Ming tongjian: juan 85/ji 85*, pp. 2352-53.

Huang Daozhou, a poor candidate for this daunting task because of his inadequate communication skills and dogmatic conception of loyalty as absolute honesty with the emperor.

At this moment, two important events in Huang Daozhou's political and social life both concerned "filial piety." The first was Zheng Man's arrest for being unfilial, and the emperor's decision to disrupt Yang Sichang's mourning for his deceased parents by appointing him the president of the Board of War.<sup>49</sup> Both took place around the same time in late Chongzhen 9!<sup>50</sup> Huang had to not only defend Zheng Man but also memorialize against Yang's promotion and the emperor. He decided to engage the latter first. The language of filial piety had not been so central to the Ming politics since Zhang Juzheng's *duoqing* controversy in late 1570s.

Huang Daozhou did not memorialize against Yang Sichang's *duoqing* case until after Yang arrived in the capital and laid out his military strategies. His memorial consisted of two parts: The first part argues against Yang Sichang's appointment on the principle that *duoqing* violates the basic moral-political conventions, while the second part criticizes Yang's proposals to raise funds for military campaigns.<sup>51</sup> Huang Daozhou attacked Yang Sichang for not observing mourning after the loss of both his parents. During the several months prior to this point, Yang Sichang had repeatedly submitted memorials begging the emperor to reconsider his politically controversial appointment.

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<sup>49</sup> Yang Sichang's father, Yang He 楊鶴, the former president of Board of War, died in late Chongzhen 8 (1635); his stepmother died in Chongzhen 9/9 (1636). See Yang Sichang, *Yang Sichang ji*: juan 9: "Jing wen zhaoming feichang lixue kongci shu" 驚聞召命非常瀝血控辭疏, p. 194.

<sup>50</sup> Zheng Man was arrested in Chongzhen 9/11. Yang Sichang was appointed the president of the Board of War in Chongzhen 9/10.

<sup>51</sup> Huang Daozhou, "Ni lun Yang Sichang bu ju liang sang shu" 擬論楊嗣昌不居兩喪疏, pp. 24-28.

The emperor continued to urge him to follow the order and rush to the capital. Finally, he accepted the appointment and embarked on the journey; when he neared Beijing, he stopped and memorialized one more time. In that memorial, he reflects on some *duoqing* precedents in Ming history, reminding the emperor that these cases, though justified by military emergencies, always provoked controversy at court and had negative impacts on the individuals so recalled.<sup>52</sup> By the time Huang Daozhou had submitted his protest against Yang Sichang's violation of filial duty, the emperor had already received and rejected several petitions from Yang Sichang himself. The historical examples Huang used in his memorial to make the case against Yang had been cited by Yang himself already! No wonder the emperor shrugged off Huang's moral attack.

Secondly, to raise funds for the military operations, Yang Sichang had proposed new taxes. At this moment, the Ming government needed to mobilize more troops and resources to fight on multiple fronts against the Manchus as well as rampant rebel actions in the central plain. Whether Yang Sichang's tax proposals were practical or not, Huang's criticisms of them sound nearly naive: he suggested that to ensure suppression of the rebels, the emperor only needed to promote some outspoken and courageous officials, assigning them the prerogative and responsibility to coordinate agencies, army, and resources. This memorial also suggests that the devastating droughts that had been occurring were Heaven's negative reaction to the emperor's promotion of an unfilial son and his inability to listen to critical voices in the government.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Yang Sichang ji: juan 9*: "Weichen yi ru jinei shu" 微臣已入畿內疏, p. 197-199.

<sup>53</sup> Huang Daozhou, "Ni lun Yang Sichang bu ju liang sang shu."

The Chongzhen emperor simply ignored Huang Daozhou's moral suggestions on policy-making and went with Yang Sichang's proposals, without bothering to punish Huang. So Huang Daozhou moved to his next task, rescuing Zheng Man. In the next month, Huang Daozhou submitted a series of memorials following the rhetorical tradition of the remonstrative genre, on the one hand requesting a sick leave and on the other urging the emperor to practice benevolent rule by promoting upright loyal men, rejecting the smears of Donglin officials and Fushe scholars,<sup>54</sup> and in particular releasing officials who had been imprisoned based on dubious charges.<sup>55</sup> In this series of memorials, Huang Daozhou gradually made his ultimate agenda clearer: he wanted to help Zheng Man. The first two memorials did not mention Zheng Man's case at all; they were more tortuous. The third listed Zheng Man as one of the worthy officials who surpassed Huang himself and deserved to be given important government positions. The fourth memorial, written after Huang had received a fuming response from the emperor at his praise of Zheng Man in the previous memorial, explicitly defended Zheng's record of loyalty and filial piety. News quickly traveled to the prison and Zheng Man gratefully composed a poem, praising Huang Daozhou's friendship, expressing gratitude that the emperor had not punished Huang for defending him, and accusing Wen Tiren of factionalist plotting.<sup>56</sup> In response, the Chongzhen emperor restrained himself to warning Huang Daozhou that he should focus on solving the pressing issues of the country and leave Zheng Man's case

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<sup>54</sup> *Ming Tongjian* (juan 85, p. 2360) points out that at this moment Wen Tiren was hiring people to incriminate Donglin-Fushe men.

<sup>55</sup> Four memorials from this month: "Shen xin yi hui tian shu" 慎喜怒以回天疏, "Qiu yan xing xing shu" 求言省刑書, "San zui si chi qi bu ru shu" 三罪四恥七不如疏, and "Jiu Zheng Man shu" 救鄭鄴疏.

<sup>56</sup> Zheng Man obviously read the memorial script, because his poem alluded to how Huang Daozhou specifically provided evidence of his filial piety. *MYCTSJ*: juan 16: "Huang Shizhai gongyu te shu jian li Tiren yu bing xian zhi lai shengzhu fu zui ye" 黃石齋宮諭特疏見理體仁欲並陷之賴聖主弗罪也, p. 654.

alone! And as the emperor Wanli used to do in similar situations, he warned Huang not to try and achieve fame by initiating meaningless moral challenges.<sup>57</sup> In other words, by asserting his privilege as *the* moral judge, the emperor frustrated Huang Daozhou's attempts to contest his claim of the virtue of "governing with filial piety." Eventually this moral competition led Huang Daozhou to fail in his attempt to rescue Zheng Man, and his tactless praise of Zheng in this particular memorial would be repeatedly invoked over the next several years until it led to Zheng Man's execution.

Huang Daozhou was but one of the many literati-officials who strongly believed that a literatus-official's two destinations, his parents' tombs and the court, forged his ultimate one destiny. But this belief alone cannot sustain a dynasty or guarantee that an official's loyalty would produce necessary results in everyday politics. Frederic Wakeman's insight that the Donglin officials' abstract invocation of Neo-Confucian loyalty only led to elitism and their failure to form political institutions to effectively counterweigh imperial power only partially explains the impasse of late-Ming politics.<sup>58</sup> What was invoked at times of political crisis and prevented fundamental changes to imperial political culture was a narrow understanding of loyalty. This narrow understanding was not shared universally, but it was dramatically promoted and embodied by a few eulogized exemplars. In this political culture, literati-officials had limited rhetorical power vis-à-vis the emperor even in the area of morality, and politicizing morality in policy debates proved to be fatal for individual officials as well as for the government.

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<sup>57</sup> The Chongzhen emperor cited in Huang Daozhou's memorial, *HZPWX: juan 1*: "Qiu yan xing xing shu," p. 30.

<sup>58</sup> Wakeman, "The Price of Autonomy: Intellectuals in Ming and Ch'ing Politics."

## **The Power and Limits of Politicizing Morality**

The struggles between the ruler and his subjects over moral authority only became more violent and involved higher political and personal stakes as factionalism and imperial autocracy intensified in the face of the deepening national crises the in mid-seventeenth century. Looking into the particular metaphors, tone, and chain of responses in the exchanges between them will help us think about some crucial questions in early-modern Chinese politics: how much power could literati-officials generate by politicizing morality? Where did the limits of that power lie? What were the political consequences of struggles between the emperor and his officials over moral authority? The repeated invocation of Huang Daozhou's memorial "On my three faults, four shameful actions, and seven defects" (San zui si chi qi bu ru shu"三罪四耻七不如疏, hereafter the "Seven Defects") in a series of political debates provides an excellent case for exploring these questions.

The "Seven Defects" was Huang Daozhou's first explicit attempt to rescue Zheng Man. In this memorial, "seven defects" is a self-depreciative rhetoric meant to advise the emperor to promote more worthy men. These men made up a list of literati whom Huang Daozhou praised for their various talents and virtues. But this list also happened to include some names irritating to the emperor: three officials (Liu Zongzhou, Fu Chaoyou, and Wu Zhiyu) had been punished precisely for their criticism of the decision to imprison Zheng Man; Huang also mentioned Zheng Man and Qian Qianyi, two officials punished

for alleged moral scandals!<sup>59</sup> Huang Daozhou told the emperor that he admired these two officials for their literary talents and stamina.<sup>60</sup> As I mentioned earlier, the emperor had branded Qian Qianyi a “rascal” and stripped him of official status on groundless moral charges launched by anti-Donglin faction. From the emperor’s perspective, including Zheng Man and Qian Qianyi in this list of “worthy men” must look not only lunatic but also insulting. By including these two names in his Donglin-partisan list, Huang Daozhou specifically challenged the emperor’s authority as a moral judge.

Huang Daozhou ends the memorial with his characteristically self-deprecating label of “stodgy and dull-witted” (*yu yu* 迂愚) in a self-righteous tone:

Your Majesty may pardon me for my coldness. But I pardon myself for another reason. An official’s purity and loyalty (*qingzhen* 清貞) is similar to a woman’s adherence to chastity (*zishou* 自守). Once she is married, her self-seclusion and chastity would be useless if she could not please her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law with pleasant and beautiful appearance, or if she could not provide for the family with her skills and labor. My mediocrity and incompetence can only be called “stodgy and dull-witted.” I believe that while the whole world values expediency, I must remain stodgy; while the whole world values cleverness, I must remain dull-witted.<sup>61</sup>

“Stodgy and dull-witted” would become Huang Daozhou’s signature phrase.<sup>62</sup> Literary historians have written extensively about the metaphor of the “complaining wife” (*yuanfu*

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<sup>59</sup> These officials are, according to their order of appearance on the memorial: Liu Zongzhou, Ni Yuanlu, Wei Chengrun, Zhan Erxuan, Wu Zhiyu, Chen Jiru, Zhang Xie, Li Rucan, Fu Chaorou, Qian Qianyi, and Zheng Man. “Seven Defects” pp. 35-36.

<sup>60</sup> “Seven Defects” p. 36.

<sup>61</sup> “Seven Defects.”

<sup>62</sup> For example, *HZPWX: juan 1*: “Bu du chen yan shu” 補牘陳言疏 (Chongzhen 11/2), “Zun zhi hui zou shu” 尊旨回奏疏 (Chongzhen 11/3), and “Qi xiu shu” 乞休疏 (Chongzhen 11/8)



怨婦) to illustrate the power hierarchy and emotional-psychological dynamics of the ruler-subject relationship in early Chinese politics.<sup>63</sup> Here we find Huang Daozhou employing a similar metaphor but comparing himself at once to the virtuous wife, daughter-in-law, and sister-in-law. A woman's virtue is meaningless unless she can meet everyone's expectation in complicated familial networks. Similarly, an official's integrity means nothing if he does not try to go with the flow and please others. Like a literatus-official, a chaste wife had very limited power when negotiating with the patriarchal order and authorities. Interestingly, the husband, i.e., the emperor, is absent in Huang's complaining wife-style narrative. Indeed, Huang Daozhou does not complain about the emperor/husband who is absent. Rather, he blames those officials who have abused the power and positions they had received from the emperor. The husband must have faith in his devoted, chaste wife; likewise, the emperor should trust loyal, virtuous officials like Huang Daozhou.

The Chongzhen emperor of course interpreted the pleading words in his own way.

He harshly responded:

Rites and music, military expedition and sense of honor are the important means for the government to ensure civilization and moral order. Huang Daozhou holds a *Hanlin* position but instead of repaying imperial favor, he has been extreme and in compliant to obtain personal fame. This memorial, as well as his earlier ones and attached explanations, is full of ambiguous language. He confuses the right and the wrong, and even claims that he is not as good a person as someone who has violated

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<sup>63</sup> For example, Geng Song, *The Fragile Scholar* and Martin Huang, *Negotiating Masculinities*. They have studied the parallel between the representation of power relation of the sad wife/concubine vs. the male master and that of the official vs. the ruler in Chinese literary works. Also see Jowen R. Tung, esp. chp. 1, pp. 30-40.

fundamental ethics by beating his mother, and a betrayer of the teachings of the sages! What is on his mind?!

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This round of exchange between Chongzhen and Huang Daozhou exemplifies how they framed Zheng Man's case differently for their own political purposes. In the face of literati-officials prone to employing morality (filial piety) as a political language, the emperor found a compelling political talking point in Zheng Man's immorality. Also, in the fierce factional competition of the day, could Huang Daozhou's political enemies have found a more convenient way to challenge Huang's moral judgment than singling out his sympathy for Zheng Man?

Huang Daozhou did not receive punishment for his unwavering defense of Zheng Man, however. On the contrary, the emperor promoted him again.<sup>65</sup> In Chongzhen 10/7 (1637), Wen Tiren was ordered to "retire" and the Donglin-identified officials felt ready to put one of theirs into this powerful position. The emperor could appoint Huang Daozhou to this position as his colleagues had desired, if he felt it was worth attempting. Huang Daozhou gradually came to embody the Confucian official ideal by his high morality, at a time when the emperor urgently needed officials with rich experience in military and administrative areas. Ideally, and according to the Confucian political philosophy, filial men were ideal candidates for loyal (and hence, competent) officials. However, real-world administrative work and politics required broader qualities than filial piety. The Chongzhen emperor knew that Huang Daozhou could not assume responsibility as a "prime minister at the time of crisis" because of his rigid adherence to

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<sup>64</sup> Cited in Huang Daozhou's next memorial, "Jiu Zheng Man shu", p. 37.

<sup>65</sup> This confirms my observation that initially the Chongzhen emperor was not determined to execute Zheng Man over unverifiable charges.

“moral principles.”<sup>66</sup> He did not see Huang as a good replacement for Wen Tiren. The Donglin-identified officials were disappointed and anxious. Zhang Zhifa 張志發 and Xue Guoguan 薛國觀, two other Grand Secretaries, were seen as party to Wen’s anti-Donglin factionalism. Specifically Zhang Zhifa “became” an anti-Donglin factional figure by virtue of his questioning Huang Daozhou’s defense of Zheng Man during a debate about another personnel decision.

In Chongzhen 10/10 (1637), the emperor appointed several literati-officials as mentors of the Heir Apparent. This honor, representing the imperial recognition of the appointees’ virtue, talent, and political potential, was bestowed on some of the most accomplished scholars in court.<sup>67</sup> Upon the release of the name list, one of them, the Donglin-identified official Yang Tinglin, submitted a memorial attempting to convince the emperor that Huang Daozhou was the most qualified for such an honor and expressed his willingness to concede the position to Huang. This action exhibited the Donglin-identified officials’ enthusiasm for replacing the “vicious and incompetent” grand secretaries with their own hopeful, Huang Daozhou.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Chen Ding, *Donglin liezhuan*: juan 12: “Huang Daozhou,” p. 622. Others also noticed that the emperor did not act on any of Huang Daozhou’s policy suggestions. For example, “Chi xiu Huang Daozhou liezhuan zan” 敕修黃道周列傳贊 in *Rongtan wen ye* 榕壇問業 (compl. Qianlong 15).

<sup>67</sup> *Chunming meng yu lu*: juan 33: p. 389. These officials were: Jiang Fengyuan 姜逢元, Yao Minggong 姚明恭, Wang Duo 王鐸, Qu Keshen 屈可伸, Fang Fengnian 方逢年, Xiang Yi 項煜, Wu Weiye 吳偉業 and Yang Tinglin 楊廷麟.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. Xiang Yu also submitted a memorial of similar content, see Ji Liuqi, *Ming ji bei lue* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984, 2006): juan 13, p. 222. Huang Daozhou’s memorial (Chongzhen 10/10) in which he renounces any part in this seemingly partisan gesture also mentions both Xiang Yu and Yang Tinglin. *HZPWX*: juan 1: “Qing gao shu” 請告疏, pp. 39-41.

The Grand Secretary Zhang Zhifa submitted a memorial to counter such a move.<sup>69</sup> While acknowledging Huang Daozhou's impeccable character, he accused Huang of "bigotry" (*pianzhi* 偏執). He cited Huang Daozhou's old memorial "Seven Defects," and asked whether Huang Daozhou really understood filial piety as the ultimate Confucian manly virtue and hence, whether he was qualified to serve as the Heir Apparent's mentor.<sup>70</sup> Feng Yuanbiao 馮元勳, another popular Donglin-identified figure, denounced Zhang Zhifa's attack. He told the emperor that Huang Daozhou's reputation as a filial son was an indisputable, widely recognized fact. Questioning Huang Daozhou's filial devotion and loyalty was nothing but factionalist political machination.<sup>71</sup> Zhang Zhifa's attack on Huang Daozhou's judgment was seen as a challenge to the Donglin, although he was merely repeating almost word-for-word the emperor's response to Huang Daozhou's memorial!<sup>72</sup> Feng Yuanbiao even threatened to resign when the emperor failed to respond to his memorial.<sup>73</sup>

"Factionalism" in the Chongzhen reign was very different from that in Wanli and Tianqi reigns. The Chongzhen emperor continuously appointed to the position of grand secretary officials whom Donglin-identified officials considered hostile, factionalist, and incompetent compared to widely respected Donglin icons, such as Huang Daozhou and Ni Yuanlu. It almost seems that the protests submitted to the emperor against one grand secretary after another kept "Donglin" a relevant political identification. In the grand

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<sup>69</sup> *Ming tongjian* documents that another grand secretary, He Fengsheng 賀逢聖, drafted this memorial for Zhang Zhifa. *Ming tongjian*: juan 86, p. 2371.

<sup>70</sup> *Chunming meng yu lu*: juan 33, p. 390.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 390-391.

<sup>72</sup> See Chongzhen's response cited in Huang Daozhou's memorial in "Jiu Zheng Man shu," p. 37.

<sup>73</sup> *Chunming meng yu lu*: juan 33: p. 390.

narrative of the Ming-Qing transition, “anti-Donglin” officials had to be so labeled. But late-Ming factionalism was a changing phenomenon. Zhang Zhifa was seen by some as affiliated to one of the anti-Dongli factions in the Wanli reign (the Qi faction 齊黨), but he avoided collaborating with the *yandang* during the Tianqi reign.<sup>74</sup> In the biographies of the fifty grand secretaries of the Chongzhen reign compiled by Cao Rong 曹溶,<sup>75</sup> the author observes that Zhang Zhifa was a tolerant person and embraced an independent political stance, and that he never attempted to join a political clique throughout his career.<sup>76</sup> But his confrontation with Huang Daozhou made him an “anti-Donglin” figure.

Although Zhang Zhifa did not win out and Huang Daozhou’s superb reputation as a filial son and loyal official was further elevated by his Donglin-identified colleagues, Zheng Man’s “immorality,” which was invoked again and again in such debates, remained unchallenged, and the dubious nature of the charges now even seemed less relevant. Some officials strove to establish Huang Daozhou as an emblem of filial piety and loyalty, a strategy that would prove effective regardless of how the emperor felt about Zheng Man’s case. A stark contrast between Huang Daozhou and Zheng Man—replacing their relationship as factional allies and friends—inevitably emerged. Some Donglin-identified literati-officials felt they needed to choose between these two friends

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<sup>74</sup> *MS*: juan 253/liezhuan 141: “Zhang Zhifa,” pp. 6533-34.

<sup>75</sup> Cao Rong’s observation is worth considering because he was identified as a member of Donglin-Fushe community. Cao Rong later collaborated with the Manchu Qing. But he was obviously recognized as a Donglin. His name appears in the list of readers for the awesome collection of political essays, 皇明經世文編, compiled by Chen Zilong 陳子龍. This collection reflected and represented the Donglin *jingshi* goals, political thought, and policy positions. The list of readers can be considered a complete list of well-recognized Donglin and Fushe figures during the Chongzhen reign. Chen Zilu (ed.), “Jiandiing ming gong xingshi” 鑒定名公姓氏 in *Huang Ming jingshi wen bian* 皇明經世文編 (Chongzhen edition, *SKJH*-ji 22)

<sup>76</sup> Cao Rong 曹溶, *Chongzhen wu shi zaixiang zhuan* 崇禎五十宰相傳 (*SKCM*- *Shi* 119), p. 8.

for one “true” Donglin and one “fake” Donglin so that Huang Daozhou and Donglin’s political future would not be jeopardized. One such example is Chen Zilong, the famous Fushe leader who later became a loyalist martyr. Chen tried to convince Huang Daozhou, his mentor, that they should “abandon this one man (meaning Zheng Man) to protect the reputation of righteous officials.”<sup>77</sup>

Meanwhile, by picking away at Huang Daozhou’s memorial “Seven Defects,” the emperor was also trying to establish himself as the ultimate moral judge. His insistence on associating Zheng Man with a lack of filial piety enabled him to assert his moral authority vis-à-vis his discontents, literati-officials self-presented as moral exemplars. When the political stakes of filial piety were unusually high, for both the ruler and his dissenting subjects, manipulating the language of filial piety could have fatal consequences. This can be shown vividly in the last invocation of Huang Daozhou’s unfortunate memorial “Seven Defects,” just before Zheng Man’s execution.

Ever since the Chongzhen emperor had assumed power, he had exhorted filial piety as the ultimate virtue, the virtue that helped him secure the Mandate of Heaven and restore good governance. Disciplining himself constantly with self-blame and later living an austere lifestyle, the last Ming emperor consistently resorted to morality—especially to self-discipline—as his political language of choice.<sup>78</sup> Wen Tiren must have realized that accusing Zheng Man of lacking filial piety would evoke the most intense reaction from the emperor. And he was right. The emperor threw Zheng Man into prison as soon as he read the memorial. But he was also a sensitive ruler. When witnesses failed to prove

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<sup>77</sup> Chen documents this suggestion in his chronological autobiography, under the entrance of Chongzhen 10. *Chen Zilong nianpu (zi zhuan)*, p. 656.

<sup>78</sup> See for example, documentation by Sun Chengze in *Siling dianli ji* 思陵典禮記: juan 2.

Zheng Man's crimes, the emperor knew he had to find a way to deal with the case more carefully. He ordered that Zheng Man's health should be attended to and that his life should not be endangered in prison.

According to Zheng Man's recollection, early in Chongzhen 10 (1637), attempts to end his life were intensifying under orders from the Grand Secretary Wen Tiren. In the second month, he was moved from the prison of the Board of Punishments to the Imperial Prison supervised by the secret service, where prisoners faced harsher treatment and a had higher likelihood of dying without due process. Zheng Man learned from his informants that Wen Tiren had instructed his guards to torture him and hasten his death. However, when the emperor heard of Zheng Man's illness, he ordered that his health be taken care of and that the official in charge would be severely punished should Zheng Man die.<sup>79</sup> Several months later, Wen Tiren was forced to retire. It was at this crucial moment that another wave of political debates surrounding "filial piety" broke out, as some officials protested against Yang Sichang's promotion to the position of grand secretary, igniting old and new charges in late Ming factional politics and making Zheng Man's case a political chip.

The last round of exchanges between the emperor and Huang Daozhou over filial piety occurred in just these circumstances. Huang Daozhou memorialized against Yang Sichang's promotion to become the new Grand Secretary and hence took up this political language again to offer a fresh challenge to the emperor's moral authority. Upon being nominated grand secretary, Yang Sichang promoted Chen Xinjia 陳新甲, an official who

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<sup>79</sup> Zheng Man was tortured and remained paralyzed until his death. *TSZXP*, p. 494.

was considered by many to be an old accomplice of Wei Zhongxian, to supervise the war efforts in key strategic regions of Xuanda and Shanxi. No surprise that the literati-officials roared in protest, their collective trauma from Zhang Juzheng's *duoqing* and Wei Zhongxian's atrocities being provoked by this move. Huang Daozhou submitted two protests: one against Yang Sichang's *duoqing ruge* 奪情入閣 (becoming a grand secretary in violation of the mourning norm) and the second against Chen Xinjia's improper promotion.<sup>80</sup>

Yang Sichang's close ties with the so-called former *yandang* officials and his inability to manage urgent military and diplomatic crises may have contributed to efforts by the Donglin to remove him.<sup>81</sup> But rather than frame the case against Yang in terms of policy, Huang Daozhou and his friends attempted—consciously or unconsciously—to imitate their predecessors who had raised “heroic” resistance to Zhang Juzheng's *duoqing* nearly six decades earlier: they chose to rhetorically frame Yang's failing in terms of violation of filial responsibilities. Huang Daozhou based his arguments on the Confucian principle that filial piety and loyalty defined and sustained each other. He maintained that Yang Sichang could follow the principle of three-year mourning period less strictly when stationed at the frontier, but as the chief official of the Board of War he should in no way violate it. If his violation could be somehow tolerated as the chief official of the Board of War, it should not be tolerated when he entered the Grand Secretariat; if as an individual

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<sup>80</sup> HZPWX: *juan 1*: “Lun Yang Sichang shu” and “Lun Chen Xinjia shu,” pp. 52-56 and 54-57.

<sup>81</sup> Huang Zongxi clearly describes this in the epitaph he wrote for former Fushe leader Shen Shoumin 沈壽民, a young literatus who impeached Yang Sichang before any officials made the move. Huang Zongxi, *Nanlei wen ding: qian ji 7* 前集七: “Zhijun Shen Gengyan xiansheng muzhiming” 徵君沈耕嚴先生墓誌銘, esp. pp. 2b-3a.



case this could be allowed, it was absolutely unacceptable that Yang brought in Chen Xinja whose promotion would also violate this principle. Such compounding of violations would create a dangerous “world of *duoqing*.”<sup>82</sup>

Ironically, for Yang Sichang himself, fulfilling the duties as a filial son had been the very factor that motivated him to accede to the emperor’s order of *duoqing*. Yang’s father, Yang He 楊鶴, was once the emperor’s most trusted military official. He was appreciated for his incorruptible character, but he did not really know military strategy. His missteps in dealing with rebels in central China only worsened the situation. For such failures he was arrested, imprisoned, and then exiled to Yuanzhou, where he eventually died.<sup>83</sup> It was the filial Yang Sichang’s repeated plea to die in the place of his father that Yang He was eventually exempted from the death penalty.<sup>84</sup> Yang Sichang’s memorials show that he had to justify his loyalty and *duoqing* with his particular form of filial devotion, i.e., to reclaim the Yang family honor. It was to redeem his father’s reputation and repay the imperial favor bestowed upon the Yang family that he had to answer the emperor’s call and tackle the daunting task of defending the dynasty against the rampant rebels.

In this round of moral attacks, Huang Daozhou cited several *duoqing* examples in recent Ming history—those of Zhang Juzheng, Cui Chengxiu 崔呈秀, and Yuan Chonghuan—to explain his opposition:

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<sup>82</sup> “Duoqing shijie 奪情世界”. *Ming tongjian*: juan 86, p. 2378.

<sup>83</sup> *MS*: juan 260/liezhuan 148: “Yang He,” pp. 6725-27.

<sup>84</sup> *MS*: juan 252/liezhuan 140, p. 6509.

Zhang Juzheng ruined his own accomplishment by *duoqing*. For the next seventy years, literati abided by the rules and the frontiers remained secure. However, in the late Tianqi years, Yuan Chonghuan's rise in Youtun<sup>85</sup> and Cui Chengxiu's shameful promotion to a high metropolitan government position both came with violations of mourning rules. They were executed and despised. This was in the recent past!<sup>86</sup>

Let us think about these three examples carefully. Zhang Juzheng's *duoqing* controversy marked the beginning of late-Ming factionalism. It is an exaggeration on Huang Daozhou's part to claim that it was the Wanli emperor's decision to punish Zhang posthumously that helped bring relative peace in the frontier region! The *duoqing* case of Cui Chengxiu, a former associate of Wei Zhongxian, differs somewhat. Cui supervised the construction of an imperial palace and continued to serve as President of the Board of Works after his mother's death. No one dared to challenge that abnormal political situation, and it was not until the Chongzhen emperor came to power that an official Wei Yang Weiyuan 楊維垣, came out to impeach Cui for his *duoqing*. This was a theatrical performance put on by former Wei Zhongxian followers to test the new emperor's intentions and also to distance themselves from Cui. To stabilize and bring the situation at court under his control, the new emperor did not punish Cui Chengxiu immediately but instead allowed him to stay in his position for some time. Eventually, the Chongzhen emperor identified Cui as one of the most punishable officials on the list of "Traitors' Case" (*ni'an* 逆案), which took place after the deaths of both Wei Zhongxian and Cui

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<sup>85</sup> Youtun was a military town in the northeast frontier region. In Tianqi 5 Yuan Chonghuan requested a mourning leave but was ordered to stay and got promoted to the position of Surveillance Commissioner (*an cha shi*) later that year. See *MS*: juan 259/liezhuan 147, p. 6709.

<sup>86</sup>Huang Daozhou, "Lun Yang Sichang shu", p. 52.

Chengxiu.<sup>87</sup> Everyone knew why the case against Cui had been initiated; it was a political game familiar to all. Obviously Huang Daozhou's use of Cui's *duoqing* as an example to impeach Yang Sichang was both awkward and unnecessary. Lastly, Yuan Chonghuan's persecution. This proved to be a fatal mistake for Chongzhen, since it deprived him of one of his best generals. Yuan Chonghuan's *duoqing*, like that of Cui Chengxiu, occurred as the powerful eunuch Wei Zhongxian controlled the Tianqi court and ran the government with his associates. By invoking these two examples in his memorial Huang only makes a very weak case and makes himself look very desperate.

Since Huang Daozhou framed the argument as an issue of "filial piety," Yang Sichang could use Zheng Man's case to effectively counter-attack. When the emperor summoned them to a face-to-face debate, Yang Sichang cited Huang's "Seven Defects" memorial and suggested that Huang Daozhou might best steer clear of talking about his appointment or filial piety, since Huang had claimed he was "not as good as Zheng Man," which just showed his poor judgment.<sup>88</sup> At this point, Huang Daozhou rushed to correct the record: He never said "he was not as good as Zheng Man"; his original language read that his "literary skill was not as good as Zheng Man's."<sup>89</sup> He went on to liken his admiration for Zheng Man's literary skill to Confucius's praise for Zaiyu's 宰予 communication skills. Zaiyu was one of Confucius's disciples, whom, it was said, Confucius recognized for his ability to communicate well.<sup>90</sup> But the Confucian classic *The Analects* contains a most unpleasant conversation between the two men, in which

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<sup>87</sup> MS: juan 306/liezhuan 194 "Yandang" 閹黨: Cui Chengxiu, p. 7848.

<sup>88</sup> *Ming tongjian*, p. 2377.

<sup>89</sup> *Chunming meng yu lu: juan 33*, p. 393.

<sup>90</sup> *The Analects*, 11:3.

Confucius was annoyed by Zaiyu's rejection of the idea of observing three years of mourning for deceased parents.<sup>91</sup> Obviously, Huang Daozhou's historical reference was a poor choice. In his verbal wrestling with the Chongzhen emperor, he repeatedly failed to successfully challenge the emperor's claims about Zheng Man's crime against his mother, and more importantly, he clumsily cited the wrong classical references, as if in agreement about Zheng Man's unfilial behavior. Toward the end of this long debate, when the Chongzhen emperor mentioned Xu Xi's second sensational testimony<sup>92</sup> that excoriated Zheng Man as "having abandoned all the Five Cardinal Relations" (*wulun jin jue* 五倫盡絕), Huang Daozhou did not challenge Xu Xi's allegations but instead switched tracks to defend his own loyalty.<sup>93</sup>

In the end of this face-to-face debate, the emperor sided with Yang Sichang and dismissed Huang Daozhou's protest. The format and etiquette of "conversation" between emperor and official were such that it was difficult to challenge the emperor's moral judgment once rendered. Politicizing filial piety at this crucial moment in the policy-making process did not produce positive results. Although on moral grounds the emperor and his literati-officials were equal subjects, the emperor had the political power to assume the role of the ultimate moral judge and convict Zheng Man of immorality. Not only did Huang Daozhou lose his battle against Yang Sichang; Zheng Man's alleged

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 17:21.

<sup>92</sup> Zheng Man's chronological autobiography mentions that Xu Xi submitted additional testimony to incriminate him, this time inserting more detail about Zheng Man's sexual immorality. This entry in his autobiography is Chongzhen 11, which can be substantiated by Wu Mengming's memorial. *TSZXNP*, pp. 494-495.

<sup>93</sup> *Chunming meng yu lu: juan* 33, p. 394.

crimes—beating his mother and sexual immorality—were again invoked and their validity consolidated in the emperor’s mind.

Following Huang Daozhou’s defeat, several other officials were disciplined or arrested because of their loud opposition to the emperor and Yang Sichang’s *duoqing*.<sup>94</sup> This revived terrible memories of the 1570s, when factionalism escalated dramatically around Zhang Juzheng’s *duoqing* and left a permanent scar in late Ming politics. At this time of crisis, reproducing the drama of protesting *duoqing* would not bring about any meaningful political results. It could only establish the fame of officials like Huang Daozhou and deepen factionalism, as had happened to the officials who memorialized against Zhang Juzheng. As a result of their protest Zhang’s opponents had been considered by literati across China to be loyal men and ideal Confucian officials. As the compilers of *Ming shi* succinctly put it: “[They] all got punished because of their criticism of Zhang Juzheng. The heavier the punishment, the higher the fame.”<sup>95</sup> The history of factionalism and literati-officials’ familiar methods of resistance to the emperor led the Chongzhen emperor to question the motives of Huang Daozhou and his colleagues. In addition, the emperor probably felt personally hurt that in this war of words over “filial piety,” Huang Daozhou was attempting to claim the higher moral ground. The emperor expressed bitter defiance in a self-deprecating response to Huang’s preaching: “I did not have enough education when I was young, but I have learned from

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<sup>94</sup> These officials include Liu Tongsheng 劉同升, Zhao Shichun 趙士春, Cheng Yong 成勇, and Fan Jingwen 范景文.

<sup>95</sup> *Ming shi: juan 229/liezhuan 117*, compilers’ comments, p. 6008.

teachings at the Classics Colloquium....”<sup>96</sup> The emperor must have felt unfairly judged and looked down upon by his erudite officials!

These exchanges between Huang Daozhou and the Chongzhen emperor demonstrate that while using the language of filial piety could help individual literati-officials gain the moral high ground, it could also serve the ruler well in disciplining his subjects. It is difficult to generalize about the circumstances in which the high moral ground could coalesce into political power, but history has ample accounts of how strategies of moralization impeded effective policy-making.<sup>97</sup> In Zheng Man’s case we also have an example of how it could lead to personal destruction. The Chongzhen emperor ordered Zheng Man executed in the eighth month of Chongzhen 12 (1639). By then the emperor had lost any reason or opportunity to acquit Zheng Man. In the meantime, he was bestowing one honor after another upon Yang Sichang in the eighth and ninth months of that year to secure and enhance the loyalty and dedication of this Grand Secretary. Zheng Man’s execution had little to do with punishing a literatus-official who lacked filial piety. Rather, it signaled the emperor’s unreserved favor toward whoever he believed would save his empire as well as his resolve vis-à-vis obstructionist discontents.<sup>98</sup>

### **Filial Piety in Calligraphic Performance**

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<sup>96</sup> Cited in *Huang nianpu*, p. 426.

<sup>97</sup> Waldron (1990, chapter 7) offers a good discussion on the Jiajing reign frontier policies, factionalism, and the generals and officials involved.

<sup>98</sup> Fukumoto suggests that by executing Zheng Man, Chongzhen was trying to assure Yang Sichang of his trust and support. Fukuyama, p. 66.

When Huang Daozhou learned about Zheng Man's execution in Chongzhen 12, he had already returned to Fujian, to "attend to the tombs." He began to compile *Xiaojing da zhuan* 孝經大傳 (Collection of Works on the Book of Filial Piety) in the fall of Chongzhen 11 (1638) after his clumsy debate with Yang Sichang in front of the emperor.<sup>99</sup> This served as a way to express his wish that the emperor realize the importance of "governing with filial virtue." Huang Daozhou also lectured to his students on *The Book of Filial Piety*.<sup>100</sup> But his most legendary expression of filial piety was in his calligraphic legacy.

In Chongzhen 13 (1640) when the provincial official Xie Xuelong memorialized that Huang Daozhou was an outstanding and competent official and should be returned to the government, suspicious of further factionalism, the angry emperor had Xie Xuelong, Huang Daozhou, and several others thrown into the prison. There Huang Daozhou suffered eighty lashes and additional torture.<sup>101</sup> This punishment nearly killed him and left him partly paralyzed. Realizing his powerlessness and the undeliverable promise of literati-official moral authority, he began to hand copy *The Book of Filial Piety*. Because he was already a famous calligrapher, the prison staff took the copies out and sold them for a good price. It was said that he copied *The Book of Filial Piety* one hundred and twenty times.<sup>102</sup> In this way he not only physically reproduced this Confucian classic, so significant to his political career, but also reinforced his own image as a loyal official and

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<sup>99</sup> *Huang nianpu*, p. 429 and p. 439.

<sup>100</sup> See for example, a compilation of conversations between him and his students about specific questions on this Confucian classic. *Huang Zhangpu ji* 黃漳浦集: *juan 30*: "Xiaojing bian yi" 孝經辯義

<sup>101</sup> *Huang nianpu*, p. 434.

<sup>102</sup> *Huang nianpu*, p. 433; also, see *Donglin shu yuan zhi* 東林書院志 (*SKQS-shi* 246-247): *juan 22*: "Zhu xian yi shi" 諸賢軼事.

filial man. This clearly represented a conscious effort on his part, since he carefully numbered the copies made in his prison cell (Figure 2).<sup>103</sup>

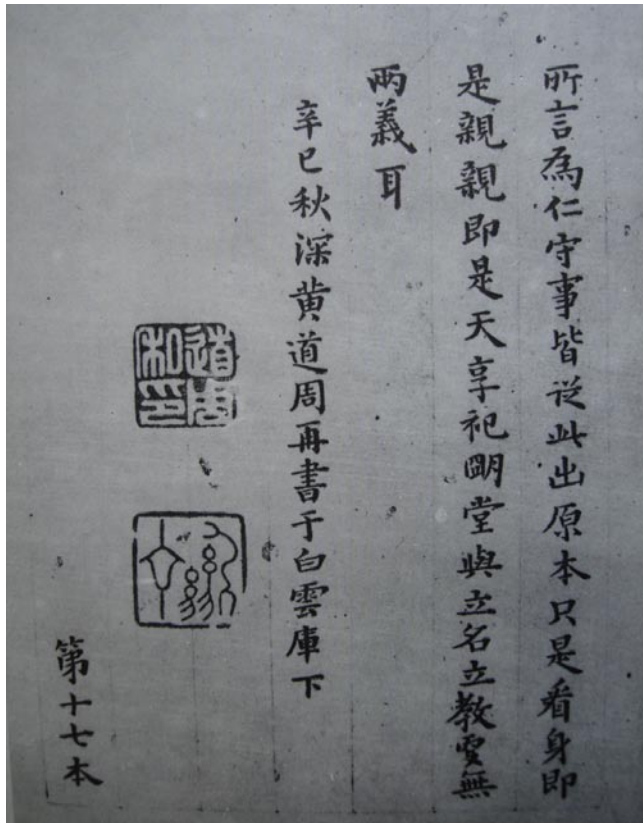


Figure 2: Last page of *Xiaokai Xiaojing ce* 小楷孝經冊, 1641. From Zheng Wei, 1992.

As art historians have argued, by this “calligraphic performance” Huang Daozhou was able to mount a political protest to show his resolve and rally the public’s moral support.<sup>104</sup> That there are few copies from prior to and after his prison time also demonstrates that this performance of filial piety was a conscious effort.<sup>105</sup> Lai Xiaoyun points out that from this point Huang came to realize the usefulness of calligraphy as a

<sup>103</sup> See for example, a reprint of such a copy (numbered the 17<sup>th</sup> copy) compiled in Zheng Wei ed., *Huang Daozhou moji da guan* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1992), p. 72.

<sup>104</sup> Lai Xiaoyun, p. 25.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 28.



means to spread Confucian teachings.<sup>106</sup> While Huang Daozhou's calligraphic works for his friends were often produced on large scrolls, a format that allowed him more explicit self-expression,<sup>107</sup> he produced *The Book of Filial Piety* mainly on small pamphlets in regular script (*kaishu* 楷書).<sup>108</sup> This calligraphic style made it easier for the reader to comprehend the content, which perfectly suited Huang Daozhou's didactic purposes.<sup>109</sup> This finally seemed to produce his intended political results, at least according to seventeenth-century literati writers. Upon the death of Yang Sichang, and with the political comeback of the former Grand Secretary Zhou Yanru 周延儒 supported by the Donglin-Fushe communities, several officials mentioned these copies of *The Book of Filial Piety* to the emperor and helped secure Huang Daozhou's release.<sup>110</sup> Eventually, his performance of filial piety saved his life.

It has become clear now that one official's employment of the discourse of filial piety could not necessarily influence the emperor's decision-making. However, it did play a central role in the literati's image building, which to some extent could help shape the outcome of political negotiations in and outside court. After Chongzhen 15 (1642), although the emperor had pardoned Huang Daozhou and reappointed him to his previous post, Huang never returned to Beijing. But neither did he stay in Fujian "attending to the tombs." He spent much time in Jiangnan, socializing within the Donglin-Fushe community. In the winter of Chongzhen 15, Huang Daozhou lectured at the Dadi Academy. On Ni Yuanlu's mother's birthday, he composed a long poem for her and

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>108</sup> Square character, a style of Chinese calligraphy that is neat and regular in writing.

<sup>109</sup> Lai Xiaoyun, p. 123.

<sup>110</sup> *MS*: "Huang Daozhou zhuan"

delivered it as a calligraphic silk pamphlet.<sup>111</sup> Earlier that year, before departing for the Beijing to help secure the capital, which was then under major military assault by the Manchus, Ni Yuanlu asked his mother's permission to leave. Such a classic story of integrating loyalty and filial piety fascinated and was disseminated by literati in Jiangnan instantly. Huang Daozhou's calligraphic pamphlet, therefore, not only showed his friendship with another Donglin icon wildly popular among the Fushe youths, it also connected them by political loyalty and their shared commitment to filial piety. Around the same time, upon hearing the news that the emperor had reappointed Huang, the Donglin-Fushe community was so excited that many of them wrote poems to celebrate.<sup>112</sup> Some explicitly reiterated their expectation that Huang Daozhou would be promoted to the position of Grand Secretary.<sup>113</sup>

By this point, Huang Daozhou's self-fashioning into the ideal Confucian political man had been completed. But refinement of this ideal continued. The story of the hundreds of copies of the *Book of Filial Piety* Huang made in prison became a national legend and the calligraphic reproduction of this Confucian classic became iconic of Huang's political-moral virtues. Cai Yuqing, his wife, an educated woman who had always shown an interest in politics in crisis times,<sup>114</sup> imitated Huang's handwriting and

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<sup>111</sup> *Shiguishu hou ji: juan 22*: “Ni Yuanlu liezhan”倪元璐列傳; Chen Zilong 陳子龍, *Chen Zilong shi ji: juan 10* has several poems documenting this.

<sup>112</sup> For example, Cao Rong, *Jingtang shi ji 靜惕堂詩集 (SKCM-ji198)*: juan 29: “Huang Shizhai xiansheng cihuan ji sheng”黃石齋先生賜環紀盛, p. 261. Du Jun 杜濬, *Du Chacun xianshi quanji 杜茶村先生全集*: juan 3: “Huang Shizhai xiansheng cihuan ji sheng”黃石齋先生賜環紀盛, p. 2b.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.* 2b.

<sup>114</sup> Her poems in *Huang Shizhai kangli wei ke gao* shows she was well informed about contemporary politics and also learned about national politics through correspondence with her husband. For example, “Shang shi”傷時 and “Man yi tiaoliang you nian reng wei fu tianzhu qun chen fu guo ye”滿夷跳梁有年未伏天誅群臣負國也, pp. 35-36.

made many copies of *The Book of Filial Piety* in his name while he was in prison. Art historians such as Fu Hongzhan and Lai Xiaoxun argue that by closely imitating Huang's calligraphy, Cai Yuqing attempted to not only demonstrate her wifely virtue but also extend Huang Daozhou's political undertaking as a loyal Confucian man.<sup>115</sup> It was said that Cai Yuqing always signed her calligraphic works with her husband's name, because she believed that "it would not be proper to disseminate a woman's name."<sup>116</sup> This also displayed her perfect Confucian wifely virtues, which was characterized by chastity and modesty, and focused on helping complete her husband's Confucian virtues. Such efforts intensified after Huang's martyrdom.

### **The Making of an Ideal Confucian Man**

The making of Huang Daozhou as the emblem of Confucian virtues and loyal official continued after his death. Huang Daozhou's disciples Zhuang Qichou 莊起儔, Hong Si 洪思 and others, compiled and annotated his chronological biography and collection of works, representing him not only as a loyal official but also a man that had begun to cultivate his moral character since young age. For instance, the author of Huang's biography includes excerpt of a letter to Zhang Shaoke 張紹科, in which Huang wrote:

"When I was about fifteen or sixteen, I still asked my mother why a man and a woman

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<sup>115</sup> It has been argued that Cai Yuqing used Huang Daozhou's signature partly because she could sell such pieces and make enough money to get by. Lai Xiaoyun, p. 126; Fu Hongzhan, "Cai Yuqing ji qi xiaokai *Xiaojing* 蔡玉卿及其小楷《孝經》 in *Zhongguo shufa*, vol. 56 Ming dai Huang Daozhou 明代黃道周, p. 27.

<sup>116</sup> *Zhangpu xianzhi: juan 16*: "Renwu" II 人物下, p. 16.

would become a pair (*nan nü pipei* 男女匹配). Today when I think about this, I find it very funny.”<sup>117</sup> The biographer comments: “Following the sage’s warning against engaging sexual activities at a young age, Master Huang had long passed the phase of being affected by *xueqi* 血氣.”<sup>118</sup> *Xueqi*, literally meaning “blood and energy,” was often used figuratively to refer to the “animal spirit,” the opposite of being cultivated and civilized. The Confucian classic *The Analects* conveys the following teaching: “There are three things the gentleman should guard against. In youth when the blood and *qi* are still unsettled he should guard against the attraction of feminine beauty. In the prime of life when the blood and *qi* have become unyielding, he should guard against bellicosity. In old age when the blood and *qi* have declined, he should guard against acquisitiveness.”<sup>119</sup> Though not all literati lived their lives following this cautionary advice, this canonical allusion enabled Huang Daozhou’s biographers to eulogize his moral self-cultivation. Huang Daozhou’s indifference to sexual attraction joined his characteristic “stodginess” in defining his loyalty and filial piety, marking a clear distinction between him and many of his contemporaries who pursued sensual pleasures and justified such pursuits with new interpretations of “desire.”

The early Qing scholar Fang Bao 方苞 (1668-1749) compiled anecdotes of admirable people of the fallen Ming dynasty, among whom many were Donglin-identified figures who sacrificed their lives in struggles against the eunuch Wei Zhongxian, in military campaigns against the Manchu invasion, and during the fall of the

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<sup>117</sup> *Huang nianpu*, p. 402.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *The Analects*, Book 16.

Ming. He provides an interesting account of Huang Daozhou in the unusual setting of the pleasure quarters. It relates how years before the fall of the Ming, Huang visited friends who had just organized a literary club in Nanjing, a city famous for its beautiful and talented courtesans. Because he was known to strictly follow rules of proper manly behavior, his friends wanted to test him. They got him drunk and asked the most beautiful courtesan Gu to seduce him. But Huang showed unbelievable self-control. The courtesan was deeply moved and told the scholars after the incident: “You are famous scholars, but you enjoy nothing other than writing poetry and drinking. Only Mr. Huang will eventually become a Confucian sage and fulfill the duties of loyalty and filial piety.” It is said that this incident transformed the courtesan. When the rebels besieged the Ming capital, she had already been married to an official and moved there as his concubine. She told her husband: “If you want to become a martyr, I am willing to hang myself first.” But he would not listen to her.<sup>120</sup>

In the post-1644 years, any literatus would recognize the courtesan in this anecdote as Gu Mei 顧眉, one of the most famous courtesans in the late-Ming Nanjing pleasure quarters. She witnessed and was part of the late-Ming literati’s rich socio-cultural life, in particular the intertwining pursuits of sexual pleasure and political ambitions of the Fushe scholars that lingered in the popular memory of that past. “The official” in Fang Bao’s account was apparently Gong Dingzi, an aspiring Ming literatus-official who failed to kill himself upon the fall of Beijing but instead served in the governments of the rebel leader Li Zicheng and then the Manchu Qing. Gu Mei married

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<sup>120</sup> Fang Bao, *Wangxi xiansheng wenji* 望溪先生文集 in *Wangxi xiansheng quanji* 望溪先生全集 (SBBY-ji 6): *juan* 9 “Ji shi” 紀事: “Shizhai Huang gong yishi” 石齋黃公逸事, pp. 3a-4a.

him as his concubine and joined him in the capital about half a year before the fall of the Ming.

Fang Bao's account was written several decades after Huang Daozhou's martyrdom. It recalls what Huang did in prison between his capture by the Manchus and his heroic death. The contrast between the loyalist Huang Daozhou and the turncoat Gong Dingzi, mediated and articulated by Gu Mei in this story, perpetuates a very familiar dichotomy in literati-official morality: chastity and debauchery, loyalty and disloyalty. Huang Daozhou then represents an archetype. The representation of Huang Daozhou's indifference to sexual distraction was intended to distinguish him from a particular kind of image in the late Ming, namely that of the romantic scholar associated with an elite courtesan. Traditionally the Confucian official's moral character is partly established by the presence of a supportive and virtuous wife, which could not be replaced by a devoted concubine. Marrying and indulging in courtesans became a prominent feature of the late Ming cultural-political landscape, as both a lived experience and an attractive new manly ideal. But the leading figures of the Donglin in the turmoil of factionalism underwent intense scrutiny and relentless criticism in this regard. Therefore, it was especially important that Huang Daozhou, as a Donglin icon, should be fashioned as indifferent to sexual distractions.

Indeed, scrutiny of literati-officials as husbands, in particular whether they complied with laws and maintained the proper distinction between their wife and concubine, became a useful tool during the political struggles of the late Ming. In late Ming history, we find victims of sexual immorality charges among high-ranking officials,

such as Wei Zhaocheng 魏照承 and Ni Yuanlu. Wei Zhaocheng became a grand secretary in Chongzhen 12 (1639), along with Zhang Sizhi 張四知 and Yao Minggong 姚明恭. The Chongzhen emperor promoted these three officials to the Grand Secretariat more out of his fear of factionalism than to show confidence in their competence. Despite their poor performance, which was bitterly criticized by the Donglin-identified officials, the Chongzhen emperor kept both Zhang and Wei in that powerful position for four years in defiance of the censorial officials.<sup>121</sup> In Chongzhen 15 (1642), military crises in China proper and along the frontiers had mounted to such a degree that the emperor replaced all the Grand Secretaries with widely recognized Donglin figures such as Jiang Dejing 蔣德璟, Huang Jingfang 黃景昉, and Wu Shen 吳甡. (It was in this year that Huang Daozhou received his reappointment but he chose to remain in retirement.) Wei Zhaocheng was made to “resign,” but his “resignation” directly resulted from Censor Xu Dianchen’s 徐殿臣 exposure of the scandal that Wei had abandoned his wife for a concubine with whom he had become infatuated.<sup>122</sup> Wei’s pitiful performance in office itself deserved impeachment, but it was the sex scandal that offered the emperor an excuse to dismiss him.

Another noteworthy case is that of Ni Yuanlu, Huang Daozhou’s colleague and friend. Ni enjoyed the highest reputation among Donglin literati-officials and Fushe

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<sup>121</sup> *MS: juan 253/liezhuan 141*, p. 6546.

<sup>122</sup> *Ming tongjian*, p. 2438.

scholars in the last years of the Ming. The Chongzhen emperor admired Ni Yuanlu's talents, personality, and character. Over several years, Ni Yuanlu received steady promotions to prestigious and powerful positions. In Chongzhen 9 (1636), the emperor seemed ready to assign Ni to a more important position, very likely that of grand secretary.<sup>123</sup> The vicious grand secretary Wen Tiren, feeling threatened by Ni Yuanlu's quick ascendance to power, instructed Meritorious Minister Liu Kongzhao 劉孔昭 to memorialize against Ni. They accused him of illegally obtaining an honorific title for a concubine he had established as his second wife, when in fact he had not really divorced his official wife as he had claimed.<sup>124</sup> Many officials maintained that Ni Yuanlu had not violated the law and that Wen Tiren manufactured the imperial order against Ni Yuanlu based on a fabrication.<sup>125</sup> The biographical accounts composed by his sympathizers—Huang Daozhou included—often dance around the question of whether the charge of his inappropriately obtaining a title for his second wife was true.<sup>126</sup> Some literatus-officials speculated that Ni could have been pressured by his mother to divorce his first wife but

<sup>123</sup> *MS*: *liezhuan* 153, p. 6840.

<sup>124</sup> *MS*: *liezhuan* 153; *Zaolin zazu*; *Donglin liezhuan*: juan 8; *Shiguishu houji*: juan 22: “Ni Yuanlu *liezhuan*,” Appendix in *Ni Yuanlu nianpu*.

<sup>125</sup> For example, Li Changxiang 李長祥, *Tianwenge ji* 天問閣集: juan I: “Jiashen tingchen zhuan” 甲申廷臣傳: “Ni Yuanlu” cited in *Ni Yuanlu nianpu* (Appendix), p. 90. Jiang Shiquan 蔣士銓 (cited in *Ni wenzhen gong wenji* 倪文貞公文集首卷), a renowned scholar and poet of High Qing, even goes further to note that the Chongzhen emperor detected the falsity of the charge and allowed Ni Yuanlu to keep his official status but retreat temporarily from the government back to his hometown.

<sup>126</sup> 烏程遂以事中公免官, in Huang Daozhou, “Ming hubu shangshu jian Hanlinyuan xueshi zeng te jin guanglu dafu taibao libu shangshu shi Wenzheng Hongbao Ni gong muzhiming” 明戶部尚書兼翰林院學士贈特進光祿大夫太保吏部尚書諡文正鴻寶倪公墓誌銘, *Ni Yuanlu nianpu* (Appendix), p. 82. Ji Liuqi documents that Wen Tiren, irritated by Ni Yuanlu's sharp criticism of him in a memorial, mobilized Liu Kongzhao to “use the *fengdian* case to impeach Ni” 以封典事劾公. *Mingji bei lue*: juan 21: I: “Xunnan wenchen.” It is equally ambiguous that an early-Qing prominent literatus-official Xu Bingyi records Liu Kongzhao, driven by personal grudge, “dug out Ni Yuanlu's divorce case in a memorial” 上疏復理其出妻事. Xu Bingyi 徐秉義, *Ming mo zhonglie jishi* 明末忠烈紀事: juan 11.



he might not have wanted to completely sever ties with her or perhaps even hoped for a reunion after his mother's death!<sup>127</sup> Although it was unwise for Ni to hide these complications and appear to have breached the hierarchy of official wife and concubine, they agreed that Ni had not committed any serious misdemeanors. It was obvious to them that officials on the Board of Personnel had manipulated due process to please the powerful Meritorious Minister Liu.<sup>128</sup> But without much probing into this matter, the Chongzhen emperor allowed his favorite official to be forced out of the government into temporary retirement on the dubious charges.<sup>129</sup>

Ni Yuanlu's sudden fall from imperial favor as a result of factional maneuvers compels us to take seriously the relationship between literati-officials' domestic behavior and politics. This "scandal" cost Ni the prospect of becoming a grand secretary, but did

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<sup>127</sup> Yang Shicong 楊士聰, *Yu tang hui ji* 玉堂薈記 (in Shen Yunlong 沈雲龍 ed. *Ming-Qing shiliao congbian chu ji* 明清史料叢編初集 Vol. 3, Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe): juan 6: pp. 1602-03.

<sup>128</sup> As Yang Shicong pointed out in his historical work, if Ni had actually violated the law, he would have been punished more severely than temporary retirement. *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> This seems to have been a very complicated issue for all parties involved. According to the account provided by the Ni family, Ni Yuanlu had first married a daughter of the prestigious Chen family but soon divorced her at his mother's request because the daughter-in-law was not filial and respectful. But Chen's name still appeared on his exam records when he passed the provincial-level examinations. By the time he obtained the highest degree, the *jinshi* title, he had remarried. For complicated reasons, his first wife's name could not be deleted from the provincial-exam record. Now his full exam records included both his ex-wife Chen and second wife Wang. This was naturally a serious concern for Ni Yuanlu and the reason why in Chongzhen 4 (1631) when he followed the official procedures to request honorific titles for his family, to avoid potential troubles and confusion, he only planned to request a title for his mother, not yet for his second wife Wang. But under the advice from a colleague then serving as the president of Board of Personnel, who convinced him it would not be a problem, Ni Yuanlu decided to request the honorific title for his wife Wang. This planted the seed for the later controversy stirred up by Wen Tiren. Ni Yuanlu's letter to his mother about the issue of the honorific title hints that he and his mother had kept something secret from other family members. Very likely they did not violate the law, but perhaps out of concern for social and cultural custom they failed to offer a clear explanation about or even announce the divorce to protect family reputation. See Liu Heng 劉恆, *Zhongguo shufa quanji Mingdai bian Ni Yuanlu juan* 中國書法全集明代編倪元璐卷 (Beijing: Rongbaozhai chubanshe, 1999), p. 224-225. Also curiously, in Ni's chronological biography compiled by his son Ni Huiding, not only is Ni's first wife Chen absent; there is also no record of his second wife Wang. In early China some literati did not include their mothers in the family history because they were not considered important. It is perhaps the case that Ni Yuanlu's son had to avoid mentioning a sensitive issue in his father's life, in effect committing a filial act such as what we have witnessed in Zheng Man's silence about his father's domestic disputes.

not do much damage to his historical reputation. Yet we can still find literati-historians' discomfort with his case. Ni Yuanlu committed suicide upon the fall of Beijing and that martyrdom and heroic performance of loyalty should have exempted him from slander about his gender impropriety. But the comments by the late-Ming/early-Qing historian Tan Qian 談遷 are suggestive: “*Junzi* (gentlemen) would feel sorry for Ni Yuanlu because that incident has left a stain on his admirable character!”<sup>130</sup> This comment reflects the continued centrality of gender norms in literati-officials' political lives and historical legacy, at least as a useful political language. We should note that the fact of the emperor allowing Wen Tiren to manipulate his order and discipline Ni Yuanlu demonstrates that literati-official gender norms had a real role on the stage of imperial politics.<sup>131</sup> When a “scandal” was exposed in factional struggles, even the emperor could not easily ignore those norms.

Stories of officials' effort to obtain an official title for a beloved concubine rather than a wife, an action threatening proper domestic order and therefore suggesting a literatus-official's moral failure, had always bothered those who documented and commented on the political achievements of literati-officials. During the Ming-Qing

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<sup>130</sup> Tan Qian documents that Liu Kongzhao managed to take away the official title previously bestowed upon Ni's concubine/second wife during the short-lived Hongguang reign. We cannot verify this documentation, but given the terrible political environment spoiled by continuing sensational politics in the Hongguang court, this would not be entirely impossible. An additional factor that could have triggered Liu Kongzhao's vengeful action is that it was the Donglin-identified Grand Secretary Jiang Yueguang 姜曰廣 who drafted the Prince Fu's order to bestow imperial condolence to Ni Yuanlu's family to honor his martyrdom (See footnote to *Fuwang zengxu ling* 福王贈卹令, in *Ni Yuanlu nianpu*: Appendix, p. 80). Later Jiang himself was subjected to humiliating charges of sex scandals in factional politics. These details will be analyzed in next chapter.

<sup>131</sup> The early Qing literatus-official Zhao Jishi's documentation that this was purely Wen Tiren's manipulation and the Chongzhen emperor did not have to take any responsibility seems too biased: It seems unlikely that the suspicious emperor would easily allow a Grand Secretary to determine for him the fate of a favorite candidate for this position. Zhao Jishi 趙吉士, *Xu Biaozhongji* 續表忠記: *juan* 7, cited in *Ni Yuanlu nianpu*, Appendix, pp. 107-108.

dynastic transition, living in shame and remorse under the Manchu rule, the search for an impeccable manly figure had important symbolic and psychological significance for the literati. Thus, Huang Daozhou's perfect moral image captured the imagination of post-1644 literati for good reasons. The "fashioning" of Huang Daozhou immediately before and after the fall of the Ming proceeded under the joint efforts of family, friends, and students. In constructing this ideal Confucian man and ideal Donglin figure, family was central. We have seen how Huang Daozhou perfected his filial son image in political struggles; his political "accomplishments" depended largely on his deployment and demonstration of the filial piety discourse. Now we turn to how his image as a husband and father helped complete this iconic image.

Huang Daozhou's wife Cai Yuqing is remembered as the ideal wife for a loyal Confucian. After her husband's martyrdom Cai Yuqing began to use her own name in signature on her calligraphy, but she never gave signed works to people other than close relatives.<sup>132</sup> One should note that Cai Yuqing's activities in art and politics were informed not only by her husband's political experience but also by local gender ideology. Their hometown Zhangpu had always enjoyed a reputation as "the *Zou-Lu* on the seashore" 海濱鄒魯. "Women very rarely show up in the city. If you occasionally see a woman, she must cover her face with a handkerchief. Such local customs resemble those of the North, and have inherited the ancient practices of the central plain."<sup>133</sup> The Cais, one of the most influential local clans from which Cai Yuqing hailed, had passed on traditional family

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> *Zhangpu xianzhi: juan 19*: "Za zhi"

and gender norms, as their manuals on these matters show.<sup>134</sup> In turn, her ideal womanhood helped enhance the reputation of this locality as a place nurtured by true Confucian teachings.

But Cui's "faking" her husband's handwriting and signature prior to his martyrdom can be further complicated. We should note that this account of her is a historical construction made by seventeenth-century literati writers to promote moral-political dichotomies that this study has set out to problematize. Cai Yuqing in fact *had* signed her work with her own name before her husband died. For example, Wang Shizhen has documented that in Kangxi 39 (1700) he obtained Cai Yuqing's calligraphic presentation of a short poetry volume, in *kaishu* style. The signature reads: "Chongzhen *bingzi* year (Chongzhen 9, 1636), autumn, the eighth month, Cai Yuqing in the Shiyang Mountains."<sup>135</sup> How well Cai Yuqing could imitate her husband's calligraphy is probably not a key issue here. Despite their similarities, it is relatively easy to tell Huang Daozhou's work from Cai Yuqing's in terms of handwriting and style. A seasoned literati eye could easily differentiate the authentic work. On the one hand, faking her husband's calligraphy was a public act that enabled her to claim a Confucian political wifeness that complemented and helped define her husband's political manliness; it was important for her husband's image as a Confucian ideal. On the other hand, the fairly obvious evidence of her "forgery" could allow her to cultivate a distinct political and cultural persona, as a proper woman and wife. In the late Ming and early Qing sensational tales about heroic and moral women were much championed in literati world. Her "forged works" would be

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<sup>134</sup> See for example, Zhang Shizai 張師載 and Xu Tong 徐桐 ed. *Yi zheng bian* 亦政編: *Ke zi sui bi jie chao* 課子隨筆節鈔: juan 6 (SKWS-5:9).

<sup>135</sup> Wang Shizhen 王士禎, *Jushi lu* 居士錄.

sought after as something worth collecting precisely because of the story about her husband behind them. Even the Qianlong emperor later had her calligraphy in his palace collection and personally appreciated it!<sup>136</sup> The silence of literati writings on this kind of gendered consumption of gentry women's art, unlike their more romantic representation of courtesan arts and poetry with which the public was fascinated, helps us understand how idealized Confucian figures like Huang Daozhou were constructed in accordance with the proper husband-wife relationship.

Cai Yuqing's later works demonstrate more than feminine chastity and modesty. After her husband's death, Cai began to sign the last page of *The Book of Filial Piety* with her own name and the official title bestowed on her husband by the Longwu court: "Written in fasting room in the Shiyang Mountain, by Cai Yuqing, wife of Huang Daozhou, former Earl of Wenming and the Grand Secretary of the Wuying Hall of the Ming, posthumous honor title *Zhonglie* (Loyal and Fearless)" 明忠烈文明伯武英殿大學士黃道周妻蔡氏玉卿書于石養山中之齋室 (Figure 3). Huang Daozhou, his Donglin friends and Fushe followers had always believed that he was the most qualified candidate for the role of Grand Secretary. Ironically, it was in the hopeless Hongguang and Longwu courts that he held nominally important positions for a short period of time before his death. (The Longwu court granted him the meritorious title *Wenming Bo* and designated *zhonglie* (loyal and fearless) as his posthumous honorific title.) By Cai Yuqing's signature on *The Book of Filial Piety* she claims for herself a political-moral status, putting Huang Daozhou's honorary titles in front of her name and telling the reader that

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<sup>136</sup> See the seal of Qianlong emperor on Cai Yuqing's calligraphy in Fu Hongzhan, "Cai Yuqing jiqi xiaokai *Xiaojing*," p. 293.

she now occupies the space where he used to study, write, and fulfill his filial duties. She has not only preserved the space that marked her husband's Confucian virtues, but has also enhanced its political significance. In a series of poems composed after Huang Daozhou's death, Cai Yuqing juxtaposed her deceased husband's meritorious title with her own honorific, "Court Lady." These gestures all suggest Cai Yuqing did not simply complement her husband's ideal Confucian political virtue but integrated it in her own political and social self-identification. Seventeenth-century literati writings on Huang Daozhou were much more interested in promoting his image as a Confucian moral man than Cai Yuqing's self-articulation as a gentry woman with strong political leanings. But Cai Yuqing's calligraphic performance and wifely virtues were recognized as constituting Huang Daozhou's loyalty and moral character.

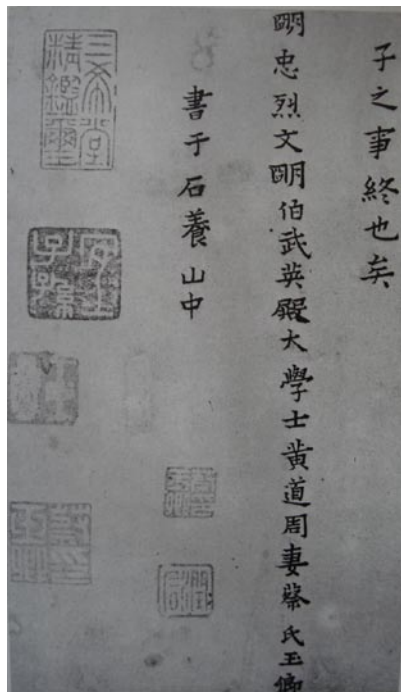


Figure 3: Cai Yuqing's signature on *The Book of Filial Piety*, from *Zhongguo shufa quan ji* 中國書法全集 Vol. 56

The joint efforts to create an ideal Confucian couple in Huang Daozhou and Cai Yuqing are manifested most clearly in the biography of Cai Yuqing, supposedly narrated by their son Ziping 子平, but polished by Huang Daozhou's disciple Hong Si 洪思.<sup>137</sup>

The first half of this biography is devoted to describing Cai's husband's political activities and his noble character. Adopting an elegant literary style, the narrative is a series of conversations between Cai and her son. In other words, the biography of Cai Yuqing uses her voice to tell the life story of her husband! This "biography" highlights the virtue of filial piety, embodied in Huang Daozhou and now to be passed to future generations through his wife's mentoring, traditionally considered an integral part of Confucian motherhood. Filial piety as a family virtue, symbolized in the Beishan Mountain tomb site, is loudly broadcast here. Cai Yuqing (and Huang Daozhou's disciple/author of biography) was familiar with how the metaphors *chushan* (leaving the mountains) and *shoumu* (attending to the tombs) were employed repeatedly by Huang Daozhou in his exchanges with the Chongzhen emperor in court. Not only did Cai Yuqing help transmit the filial virtue to her sons through this metaphor; she also used it to claim a political identity of her own when she said to her sons after Huang's death and the defeat of the Southern Ming courts: "Now we should go further into the mountains!"<sup>138</sup>

We find two additional interesting passages where Cai Yuqing attempted to elevate the Huang family to a high historical status by pairing her husband's family with

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<sup>137</sup> Hong Si 洪思, "Wenming furen xingzhuang" 文明夫人行狀, included in *HZPWX*.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381.

that of Wen Tianxiang 文天祥, the preeminent paragon of loyalty in Chinese history.

When Cai Yuqing heard a rumor that her two sons had died, she said: “Wen Tianxiang’s two sons, Daosheng and Fosheng, died in military confrontations on the same day. Now, my husband’s two sons, Mi and Xia, also died in military confrontations on the same day. Did Heaven mean to inflict the families of Wen and Huang with the same calamity? It must be our fate! This is so sad!”<sup>139</sup> Cai Yuqing’s references to Wen Tianxiang and her husband both as *zhonglie gong* 忠烈公, the posthumous honorary title they shared, emphasize the similarity between the two men and a predetermined historical connection between these two loyal families. Her biography also describes how she often told her two sons in tears that the Heaven had signaled this was not the kind of world to which the Wen and Huang families should belong, and she and the two surviving boys had to retreat into the deep mountains in order to remind future generations of their ancestors’ loyalty.<sup>140</sup> With this, she demonstrates her determination to remain devoted to her martyred husband, which would help the Huang family achieve the eternal reputation of loyalty.

Among all the prominent figures of the Ming-Qing transition, Huang Daozhou best exemplifies ideal Confucian man—as a loyal official, a filially pious son, and a husband with a wife who represented ideal Confucian womanhood compatible with his image. Their domestic story also fits neatly with the late Ming literati cultural ideal, in which gentry women pursued their own intellectual and literary interests and claimed social-emotive space in an increasingly privatized family life. In contrast, literati-officials

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.



who not only failed to remain loyal to their Ming emperor but also associated themselves with women who did not fit the ideal of Confucian womanhood (in the political-moral sense) would not be seen.

The aforementioned anecdote penned by Fang Bao about Huang Daozhou, Gu Mei, and Gong Dingzi, the mediated encounter of a martyr and a turncoat, illustrates the significance of eulogizing figures like Huang to construct a gendered dichotomy of loyal vs. disloyal that proved so central to the grand narrative of the Ming-Qing transition.

Fang Bao, the author, points to the *yimin* Du Jie 杜芥 as his source. Du Jie's brother Du Jun 杜濬, a literatus well connected among *yimin* community as well as among early-Qing officials, enjoyed a degree of fame and popularity as a talented poet and essayist in late Ming and early Qing Jiangnan.<sup>141</sup> Less known and more subdued in personality, Du Jie also maintained connections among famous literati such as the Fangs of Tongcheng.<sup>142</sup> Both enjoyed a life-long friendship with Gong Dingzi, though Du Jun seemed much more committed to it. But Du Jie's role in transmitting this anecdote, which represents Gong Dingzi negatively, does not necessarily speak badly of his friendship with Gong Dingzi or his honesty and sincerity. On the contrary, I would suggest, that highlighting Huang Daozhou as the loyal and moral Confucian man, rather than

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<sup>141</sup> The Du brothers moved to Nanjing from Huanggang in Hubei in the seventh year of Chongzhen and stayed there the rest of their lives. See *Du Yuhuang nianpu* 杜于皇年譜 and Hu Shaoding's 胡紹鼎 "Du Chacun xiansheng zhuan" 杜茶村先生傳 in *Bianyatang quan ji* 變雅堂全集 (Daoguang 23 edition): juan 1, pp. 1a-10b.

<sup>142</sup> Fang Bao 方苞, "Du Canglue xiansheng muzhiming" 杜蒼略先生墓誌銘 in *Wangxi xiansheng wenji* 望溪先生文集: juan 10, pp. 3b-4a.

denigrating the turncoat official, was his ultimate goal. Typically this would have to involve clarifying the gender-coded rationales of loyalty vs. disloyalty.

The Huang/Gu/Gong story consists of three small anecdotes: the gathering in Nanjing that I described briefly above; Huang Daozhou confined in a Nanjing prison before his execution by the Manchus; and a conversation between Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei on the fall of Beijing. Neither Fang Bao nor Du Jie claims that this was a verified story. Du Jie could not possibly have been a witness. A careful examination of the first component should lead us to believe it is unreliable hearsay: it was documented as coming from Yu Dacheng 余大成 and Tan Yuanchun 譚元春 who started a literary club in Nanjing and plotted to get Huang Daozhou drunk so that Gu Mei could seduce him. Tan Yuanchun died in Chongzhen 10 on his way to Beijing to take the metropolitan civil service examinations. So these events had to have occurred by that year. Nanjing, where this prank allegedly took place, was Yu Dacheng's hometown. After some years of frustrating political experience in the capital and exile at the frontier, he returned there in retirement and could have been present in late Chongzhen 9 for Huang Daozhou's trip northward to Beijing.<sup>143</sup> But it is hard to imagine that immediately after suffering such hardship, Yu Dacheng would be up to testing Huang Daozhou's self-restraint! Although

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<sup>143</sup> In the fifth year of Chongzhen, the insurgent general Kong Youde 孔有德, who had broken with the Ming in the previous year, conquered major cities in Shandong. The emperor partly attributed this military disaster to Yu Dacheng's inexperience in warfare and misjudgment at a time of emergency. He ordered him arrested, jailed, and then sent to the southern frontier in Chongzhen 7. It is not clear when he returned to the Jiangnan area. But in Chongzhen 9, he and Huang Duanbo 黃端伯 invited the prominent monk Xueguan 雪關禪師 to reside in Hangzhou. See *Ming tongjian juan*83; *Juren zhuan* 居人傳: juan 40: "Xueguan chanshi yulu" 雪關禪師語錄 and "Xueguan chanshi zhuan" 雪關禪師傳. This anecdote also appears in mid-Qing literatus Gu Gongxie's 顧公燮 collection, *Danwu biji* 丹午筆記 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1985), entitled "Yu zhongcheng yi ji shi Huang Shizhai shi" 余中丞以妓試黃石齋事" (p. 138). At the end of the piece, Gu adds that this courtesan was Gu Mei and the official was Gong Dingzi.

Yu Dacheng indeed established an academy named Guanshe 觀社 with some Donglin-identified literati-officials in Nanjing,<sup>144</sup> the depiction of the young scholars in this particular anecdote seems to have been imagined after the model of the Fushe literary society, which was known for its passionate scholar-courtesan liaisons. Noteworthy here is that in addition to representing the gendered moral contrast between Ming martyrs and the turncoats, the first anecdote also makes a distinction between the Confucian moral ideal and the image of the Fushe scholar as romantic, pleasure-seeking man.

The second anecdote of this account, about Huang Daozhou in prison, is one of many stories with the identical moral message about Ming martyrs during the Manchu conquest of Jiangnan. The third anecdote, describing Gu Mei's own regret and her "loyalty" to the Ming compared to her husband's "disloyalty," is impossible to verify. For the purposes of constructing a coherent Huang Daozhou image, information from various sources has been woven into a narrative of ideal Confucian moral man defined by sexual morality, loyalty, and filial piety. Remembering the past by casting particular figures as ideal Confucian men became the *yimin*'s major undertaking. The central tropes in their representation of Huang Daozhou were an asexual (almost ascetic) character and the stark contrast between loyalty and disloyalty. This story shows sexual morality and gender propriety to be a central aspect of the ideal Confucian figure in the seventeenth century, and it is one of many anecdotes that eventually were woven together to substantiate the grand narrative of the Ming-Qing transition.

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<sup>144</sup> Chen Ding 陳鼎, *Liuxi wai zhuan* 留溪外傳: juan 7: "Yu Zhongcheng zhuan" 余中丞傳, p. 362.

In works by seventeenth-century literati, we see glory accorded to the campaign against Yang Sichang's *duoqing* in the collective memory of Donglin in the late Chongzhen years. The great poet Wu Weiye composed a long poem depicting Huang Daozhou's "heroic" challenge to the emperor and Yang Sichang: "Heroic spirit instantly filled the master's chest/ He read out the impeachment and rebuked the likes of Wang Anshi/ Duty guards and generals, whiskers bristling and halberds stretching out/ stepped back trembling!"<sup>145</sup> Even after the Ming fell, early-Qing *yimin* society, whose most prominent members were identified with the Donglin-Fushe community, continued to frame the confrontation in the same way.<sup>146</sup> There were literati-officials who had a different view about Yang Sichang, who did not see the Huang-Yang conflict as a struggle over moral principles but rather different policy approaches caught up in a moral-political war of rhetoric. But those voices got buried by the powerful filial piety discourse and were lost in the Donglin vs. non-Donglin interpretive framework of the Ming-Qing transition grand narrative. Huang Daozhou's Donglin colleagues, literati writers, and his family together helped build a perfect image for Huang Daozhou—and for the Donglin—as the most loyal and moral by erasing and reframing other political men's experiences.

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<sup>145</sup> Wu Weiye 吳偉業, *Wu Meicun shiji jian zhu* 吳梅村全集: *juan 2*: "Dian shang xing" 殿上行, pp. 40-41 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990). For the background, see Feng Qiyong 馮其庸 and Ye Junyuan 葉君遠, *Wu Meicun nianpu* (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1990), pp. 88-89.

<sup>146</sup> For example, Shen Shoumin. Again, see Huang Zongxi's epitaph.

### **Part Three**

#### **Dividing and Uniting: Loyalty in Dynastic Change (1644-1670)**

## Chapter 5

### Disloyal, Unfilial and Self-Indulgent: How Gong Dingzi Became a Turncoat

Many sensational stories about the fall of Beijing in the spring of 1644 were circulated in society and in literati's writings. The *yimin* Li Qing, one of the authors we have already encountered in the chapter on Zheng Man, includes the following passage in his widely circulated historical work *Nan du lu* 南渡錄.

The gentry's greediness, aggressiveness, and shamelessness had reached an unprecedented level at the end of our late [Chongzhen] emperor's reign. They formed factions to pursue personal interests and engaged in bribery and corruption. These behaviors ultimately led to a failed politics and brought disaster to our country. When Li Zicheng's rebel army entered the capital, only a few officials killed themselves out of loyalty; more than half of them just surrendered. Many of those who had served the emperor in prestigious positions in the metropolitan bureaucracy, as administrative and censorial officials, and had always posed as upright gentlemen (*junzi*), surrendered to the rebels. ... After Gong Dingzi surrendered, he always defended himself like this: "I meant to kill myself, but my concubine would not allow me to."<sup>1</sup>

This was an excerpt from a memorial submitted by the Grand Secretary Ma Shiyong of the Southern Ming Hongguang government, entitled "Execute the Turncoat Officials." Li Qing not only cites this anecdote but also makes sure that the reader understands this

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<sup>1</sup> Li Qing, *Nan du lu* 南渡錄 in *Nan Ming shi liao ba zhong* 南明史料八種, ed. Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1997): *juan* 1, p. 165. The same text is included in Feng Menglong eompl. *Zhongxing shilu* 中興實錄, *Nan Ming shi liao ba zhong* 南明史料八種, ed. Huang Zongxi ed. 黃宗羲 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1997), p. 648.

“concubine” of Gong Dingzi’s was Gu Mei, a former Nanjing courtesan.<sup>2</sup> The last sentence of this passage, the depiction of Gong Dingzi and his concubine, appears in many historical accounts of the seventeenth century and is still being quoted as “fact” by modern historians of the Ming-Qing dynastic transition. Now our reader may also recall the anecdote from Fang Bao’s *Wang xi ji*, in which Gu Mei is portrayed as being influenced by Huang Daozhou’s loyalty and morality, and so attempted to persuade her husband Gong Dingzi to become a martyr at the fall of the Ming, even offering to kill herself first.

What do we make of these very different accounts of Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei upon the fall of Beijing? Some might dismiss this question on the ground that this kind of variation is quite common in literati writings. But I would argue that it tells us much about the intersection of morality and politics in early modern China. In this and the next chapter, I will not only trace the experience of Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei during the most critical years of dynastic change, but also examine how their story was interpreted, represented, and circulated by different political forces over the course of the Ming-Qing transition.

But telling the couple’s story in the changing socio-political environment is a secondary goal. My key interest here will be continuing to explore how the association of loyalty and literati-official gender and sexual morality was invoked during the most turbulent years of transition. Ultimately what I hope to illustrate is how the morally

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<sup>2</sup> He writes: “My concubine’ [in Ma Shiyong’s memorial] refers to Gu Mei, a courtesan from Nanjing that Gong Dingzi married when he was a censor in the Ming government.” *Nan du lu*, p. 165. Similar notes also appear in Ji Liuqi 計六奇, *Ming ji bei lue* 明季北略: *juan* 22, p. 631. But in the original memorial, Ma Shiyong did not mention Gu Mei’s name. See Feng Menglong, *Zhongxing shilu*, p. 648. This memorial as quoted in Xu Zi’s 徐鼐 *Xiaotian ji nian fu kao* 小腆紀年附考 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1957 & 2006) (*juan* 7, p. 222) does not mention Gu Mei’s name, either.

constructed virtue of loyalty not only figured in the southern Ming resistance and the process of the Manchu power consolidation, but also how it shaped the histories of individuals as they have been documented to mold the grand narrative of the Ming-Qing transition. Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei are two such individuals. Their relationship has been represented in such a fragmented way that even providing a brief description of it is challenging, because the peculiar political developments of the dynastic transition have left us with historical sources replete with rumors, distortions, and silences—especially in the sources that treat a turncoat official and his courtesan-turned-concubine, two figures especially vulnerable under the loyalist and moralistic scrutiny of the anti-Qing writers of both the seventeenth and early twentieth centuries. Even today, historians still are largely constrained by the same political-moral framework.<sup>3</sup>

A couple of years before the fall of the Ming, Gu Mei, at the height of her career as an elite courtesan in Nanjing, decided to marry Gong Dingzi, an aspiring literatus-official who very impressively obtained his *jinshi* title at the age of twenty in Chongzhen 8 (1635) and boasted both literary talent and administrative competence. Gong Dingzi served as the magistrate in Qishui County 蕪水 (in modern Hubei province) for seven years. His job performance received a high evaluation and earned him promotion to Supervising Censor at the Board of War. Although they had fallen in love and made plans for Gu Mei to join Gong Dingzi in Beijing, Gu Mei was delayed due to safety concerns and did not reach the capital until the fall of Chongzhen 16 (1643). Shortly after their happy reunion, Gong Dingzi submitted a memorial that angered the Chongzhen emperor

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<sup>3</sup> Zhao Shiyu 趙世瑜, “Shi lun Chen Que de zhenjie guan” 試論陳確的貞節觀, in Zhao, *Xiao lishi yu da lishi: Quyue shehui shi de linian, fangfa, yu shijian* 小歷史與大歷史：區域社會史的理念、方法與實踐 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2006), pp. 297-307.



so much that he ordered Gong arrested and imprisoned for over three months. He was released not long before Beijing fell into the hands of Li Zicheng's rebel army.<sup>4</sup>

Gong Dingzi was one of the many former Ming officials who appeared on the list of collaborators with Li Zicheng's Shun regime, which would soon withdraw from the capital after major defeats by the Manchu armies. In the early Qing court, from the beginning of his service to the Dorgon regency, Gong became deeply involved in factionalism. Early-Qing factionalism grew out of the interplay of Manchu-Han interest conflicts, differences between pro-Han and pro-Manchu officials, and some officials' lingering anti-*yandang* sentiments. Gong Dingzi's political activities during this time centered on attacking former *yandang* such as Feng Quan and Sun Zhixie as well as protecting Han interests.<sup>5</sup> For this reason he became a target of personal attacks and suffered demotions. Upon returning from the south after years of mourning for his deceased father, he found his administrative talents noticed and welcomed by the Shunzhi emperor, who had just reclaimed imperial authority after the death of his uncle Dorgon in Shunzhi 7/12 (1652). Gong Dingzi reached the powerful position of President of the

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<sup>4</sup> Dong Qian 董遷, *Gong Zhilu nianpu 龔芝麓年譜* (hereafter as *Gong nianpu*) (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1971). There is a hand-copied version of this chronological biography at the Rare Collection of the National Library of China, titled slightly differently as, *Hefei Gong Duanyi gong ninapu gao 合肥龔端毅公年譜稿*. It was dated the summer of 1940 (民國第一庚辰首夏), while the published edition was dated 1941 (民國第一辛巳首夏). There are few differences between these two versions. This chapter only draws upon the printed version.

<sup>5</sup> For a brief description of factionalism before Shunzhi 3, see Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, pp. 865-872. It is questionable that the rivalries between the so-called "northern party" centering around Feng Quan and "southern party" led by Chen Mingxia (*nan bei dang* 南北黨) affected Gong Dingzi much at this point, because those rivalries only came to be framed in this way after the Dorgon era. The Hefei county gazetteer contains an early memorial of this kind written by him when he was serving as the Supervising Censor in the Board of Rites. *Hefei xianzhi 合肥縣志* (Yongzheng 8/1730 edition), ed. Zhao Liangshu 趙良璧, in *Xijian Zhongguo difangzhi huikan 20 稀見中國地方志匯刊 20* (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1992): juan 20, pp. 233-234.

Censorate in Shunzhi 11 (1654). But a year later he was subjected to a series of demotions, partly because of his pro-Han stance. In the early Kangxi reign, during the governance of the Four Regents, Gong Dingzi began to gain recognition and important promotions. He served as the President of the Board of Wars, Board of Punishments, and then Board of Rites (in that order) before he died in Kangxi 12 (1673).<sup>6</sup>

Gong Dingzi is remembered, together with two other great seventeenth-century poets, literati-officials, and turncoats—Qian Qianyi and Wu Weiye—as one of the “The Three Major Poets of the Lower Yangzi” (*jiangzuo san da jia* 江左三大家). Like the other two, he is also recorded in Qing official history as an *er chen* 貳臣 (“officials serving two dynasties”). Their appearances in *Er chen zhuan* 貳臣傳 (Biographies of Officials Serving Two Dynasties) commissioned in the Qianglong reign (1736-1795) fully demonstrate the treacherous nature of the discourse of loyalty in early modern China. This compilation documents the political, military, and administrative contributions of these turncoats to the Qing, i.e., their loyalty to the new Manchu regime, but primarily serves to condemn their “disloyalty” to the fallen Ming, a persistent label overshadowing their many accomplishments. The author of Gong Dingzi’s chronological biography in early twentieth century thus lamented that for this reason no earlier biography had been compiled for this important historical figure.<sup>7</sup>

Information about Gong’s concubine Gu Mei is scarce. Typically in cases of courtesan-turned-concubines, it is difficult to verify their early life stories. The Gong-Gu

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<sup>6</sup> The Kangxi emperor relied heavily on Gong Dingzi’s service, so much so that he was not granted a sick leave even when his illness turned serious in Kangxi 11. Eventually he was able to get a temporary leave in Kangxi 12, but before he could return to the south, he passed away in Beijing. *Gong nianpu*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>7</sup> Dong Qian, “Preface” to *Gong nianpu*, p. 1.

liaison has not received as much attention as that of Qian Qianyi and Liu Rushi, for which the historian Chen Yinke wrote *Liu Rushi biezhuàn* 柳如是別傳, which reconstructs her life story, partly because Liu was promoted as a heroic woman committed to the Ming cause. The peculiar sexual-political culture of late-Ming Jiangnan gave rise to a fad among courtesans to seek association with Donglin-Fushe figures. But a highly sought-after courtesan like Gu Mei did not have to settle for marriage as a concubine unless the man really stood out. Gu Mei's decision to leave the courtesan world demonstrated her confidence in Gong Dingzi, that he would rival Qian Qianyi in terms of political potential and Mao Xiang (Dong Bai's husband) in terms of social popularity.<sup>8</sup> But unlike the famous "Four Fushe Scholars," or the sons of the six heroic Donglin officials persecuted during the Tianqi period by Wei Zhongxian,<sup>9</sup> Gong Dingzi never stood out among the Fushe youths. He was too young to be active in the large Fushe gatherings when Fushe emerged forcefully in early Chongzhen years. For example, he does not appear on the list of attendees at the Fushe's grandiose convention in Nanjing in Chongzhen 3 (1630).<sup>10</sup> After obtaining the *jìnshì* title at the age of twenty, Gong Dingzi, unlike most promising literati-officials at the beginning of their political career, did not wait for an opportunity to become an Academician. Instead, he chose to serve as the District Magistrate of Qishui.<sup>11</sup> During his seven years of service in Hubei (Chongzhen 8-14), when the rebels led by Zhang Xianzhong repeatedly assaulted this

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<sup>8</sup> Qian Qianyi and Mao Xiang married Nanjing courtesans Liu Rushi and Dong Bai respectively.

<sup>9</sup> These young scholars, including Huang Zongxi, had led the efforts to oust Ruan Dacheng from Nanjing in Chongzhen 11.

<sup>10</sup> Lu Shiyi 陸世儀, *Fushe jilue* 復社紀略 (TWWXCK 259): *juan* 1.

<sup>11</sup> *Gong nianpu*, p. 6. Since Gong Dingzi came from a relatively wealthy family, this move certainly was not motivated by financial concerns but more likely by his own political ambition and vision.

region, he demonstrated extraordinary administrative and military competence.<sup>12</sup> He also worked with two nationally recognized literati-officials, Wu Weiye and Song Mei, to supervise a regional civil service examination.<sup>13</sup> Given that this region (Huguang) was known to have been nurturing important poets, scholars, and officials, Gong Dingzi's participation in supervising the exams would gain him popularity among literati in the south. In addition, it seems that Gong Dingzi's extraordinary performance as the Magistrate of Qishui and close ties with the Tongcheng Fang family, which formed as a result of working with the provincial governor of Huguang, Fang Kongzhao 方孔炤, in military campaigns against the rebels, enhanced his fame among Fushe members. One record of Fushe's convention in the spring of Chongzhen 15 (1642) in Hangzhou identified Gong Dingzi as one of the "professors" (*xiansheng* 先生, literally meaning "teacher") who had patronized the gathering.<sup>14</sup> In fact, Gong Dingzi had arrived in Beijing just at this time and could not have attended that gathering. Nonetheless, even such questionable documentation points to his rising fame among Fushe youths at the time. All these factors made him a good marriage prospect for Gu Mei.

It is not clear when Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei began to entertain the idea of marriage. An article written in 1934 by the historian Meng Sen has been the only

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<sup>12</sup> *Hefei Gazetteer* 合肥縣志 (Jiaqing 8/1803 edition), ed. Zuo Fu 左輔 et al. (reprint 1920) in *Zhongguo difangzhi congshu: Huazhong difang 628* 中國地方志叢書·華中地方·628 (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1985), p. 978. Gong Dingzi's official documents (orders, memorials, essays, legal judgments, etc.) from this period are compiled into a volume entitled *Xichuan zheng pu* 浣川政譜 (Baojintang 寶謹堂, Daoguang 15 edition, reprinted Guangxu 7).

<sup>13</sup> *Gong nianpu*, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Du Dengchun 杜登春, *She shi shi mo* 社事始末. Du Dengchun lists several officials—Zheng Chaozong, Li Wen, Fang Yizhi, Gong Dingzi, and Chen Mingxia—and calls many participants "the disciples of the abovementioned teachers." Sun Zhonglin, an extremely gifted and popular literatus from Tongcheng, also appears here but he did not obtain the *jinshi* title until the early Qing.

scholarly attempt to reconstruct their pre-1644 history.<sup>15</sup> He suggests that they began to discuss marriage around the years Chongzhen 12-13 (1639 or 1640), when Gong Dingzi visited the Nanjing pleasure quarters. According to one literatus *biji* account, Gu Mei, in answer to Gong Dingzi's courting message conveyed in a poem inscribed on her portrait in Chongzhen 12, made an explicit commitment in the same format on a painting dated Chongzhen 13/1.<sup>16</sup> But this documentation is not reliable, because in those two years, Gong, serving as the Magistrate of Quishui, was not only leading the local defense against the repeated assaults of Zhang Xianzhong's rebel force; he was also working closely with Fang Kongzhao in coordinated regional campaigns.<sup>17</sup> He could not have sneaked off to Nanjing's pleasure quarters to court his favorite courtesan! Both the *biji* documentation and Meng Sen's confidence in it as a source reflect Chinese male intellectuals' abiding fascination with romantic relationships between elite courtesans and Donglin-Fushe figures, and their moralistic stereotyping of a turncoat official's vulnerability to sexual pleasures.

It seems more possible that the formal marriage commitment was made in late Chongzhen 14 (1641).<sup>18</sup> Gong Dingzi arrived in Beijing that winter and began his term as a Supervising Censor at the Board of War in Chongzhen 15. But before he went north, he could have stopped in Nanjing. Fang Kongzhao's son Fang Yizhi 方以智, one of the

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<sup>15</sup> Meng Sen did not intend to conduct thorough research on Gong and Gu; he only tried to establish a timeline for their relationship. Meng Sen, "Hengbo furen kao" 橫波夫人考, in *Xinshi cong kan* 心史叢刊 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), pp. 123-163.

<sup>16</sup> Lu Yitian 陸以湑, *Lenglu za zhi* 冷廬雜識 cited in Meng Sen, "Hengbo furen kao," pp. 134-35.

<sup>17</sup> *Huangzhou fuzhi* 黃州府志: juan 13: "Yi guan zhuan" 秩官傳, as cited in *Fang Yizhi nianpu* 方以智年譜, compl. Ren Daobin 任道斌 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1983), p. 88. See Fang Kongzhao's biography in *MS*: juan 260/liezhuan 148. Also, Gong Dingzi, *Dingshantang shiji* 定山堂詩集 (*DSTSJ* hereafter, *SKJH*-ji 117): juan 16: "Huai Fang Mizhi shi" 懷方密之詩, pp. 263.

<sup>18</sup> *Gong nianpu*, p. 8.

famous Four Fushe Scholars, had known Gu Mei fairly well; they belonged to an “Orchid Club” consisting of literati and courtesans enthusiastic about orchid paintings.<sup>19</sup> Fang Yizhi and Gong Dingzi became friends when the former joined his father and Gong briefly in their military campaigns in the fall of Chongzhen 12 (1639).<sup>20</sup> It is possible that through these various connections Gong and Gu quickly became intimate during Gong’s short visit in Nanjing, and a formal commitment began to look quite feasible. Finally, in the fall of Chongzhen 16 (1643), half a year before the fall of Beijing, Gu Mei arrived in Beijing and joined Gong Dingzi.<sup>21</sup> They remained together through years of terror and hardship until Kangxi 2 (1663). As Gong Dingzi was beginning his most successful years as an official in the Manchu Qing government, Gu Mei died.

One should not be surprised by how few historical studies have approached the Gong and Gu liaison from a political historical perspective, except for a few fleeting comments acknowledging Gu Mei’s support of Gong Dingzi’s efforts to help Ming loyalists, or generalizing references to their relationship in discussions of late Ming literati and courtesan culture. Gu Mei poses a moral complication for the popular eulogy of late-Ming elite courtesans as “patriotic” and “loyal” during the dynastic transition, praise that has been invested with heavy “national ethics” by modern Chinese male intellectuals.<sup>22</sup> For example, Meng Sen, in his characterization of the relationship

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<sup>19</sup> Yan Liquan 閻立群, “Qing run xiu ya, yun wei du ju: Gu Mei he ta de Lanshi tu” 清潤秀雅，韻味獨具 – 顧眉和她的《蘭石圖》，in *Shoucang jie* 收藏界 66 (June 2007): 60. This orchid painting club, established in Nanjing by a Fushe member Zheng Chaozong 鄭超宗, was called “Xue zhao lan she” 雪朝蘭社. Also see *Fang Yizhi nianpu*, p. 84.

<sup>20</sup> *Fang Yizhi nianpu*, p. 88.

<sup>21</sup> *Gong nianpu*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>22</sup> Qin Yanchun 秦燕春, *Qing mo Min chu de wan Ming xiangxiang* 清末民初的晚明想象 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2008), p. 223. Wai-ye Li, “Introduction” to Wilt L. Idema, Wai-ye Li and

between Gong and Gu, like seventeenth-century literati writers, tells a familiar story of a turncoat official lacking political loyalty, indulging in sex and entertainment, and shamelessly showing off his woman, literary skill, and status in the early Qing. Moralistic and “nationalist” bias often leads to simplifying the experience of Gong and Gu in historical inquiries and reduces their experience to that of a typical narrative about a disloyal official associated with a courtesan.

I propose that it may be useful to read the representations of this couple’s experience against the grain, not for the purpose of offering a “truer” account of their story, but rather to rethink how politics shaped and was shaped by the discourse of literati-official morality at a time of crisis, violence, and recovery. Gong Dingzi’s success in politics and social networking in the early Qing reflects the needs of the country and society for practical approaches to a wide range of political and social problems during the transitional period. At the same time, the woman associated with this man played an important if private role in the recovery and rebuilding of the literati social fabric in the wake of dynastic change. The stories of Gong and Gu, as well as those of their friends in both the turncoat and loyalist communities, tellingly shows how their moral responsibilities and roles gained specific meanings in the process of political struggle and survival. The sharp moral difference represented by the Ming-Qing transition grand narrative between the two political communities of turncoats and *yimin* erases their many similarities: they all had to fulfill their roles defined by the Five Cardinal Relations, and their friendship urgently needed and built jointly by both sides. It was the shared commitment to the Confucian moral values, embodied in the “cardinal relationships,”

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Ellen Widmer eds. *Trauma and Transcendence in Early Qing Literature* (Cambridge, Mass and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), esp. pp. 65-69.

that united them. Meanwhile, in this process, the political virtue of loyalty, devoid of its political connotations, became a useful expression of commitment to literati's shared moral social values.

### **Pre-1644 Years: The Donglin-Fushe Community and Sexual Morality**

In the grand narrative of Ming-Qing transition, the Donglin cohort was the victim of factionalism in the late Ming and southern Ming Hongguang courts. “Donglin” became the shorthand for those loyal literati-officials who fearlessly took on the forces of corrupt political power and imperial autocracy, engaged in anti-Manchu movements, and paid the ultimate price in the name of their fallen country. These were also supposedly men of high morality in private life. At the same time, looming large in popular memory is the quip famously delivered by the Qing literatus Qin Jitang's 秦際唐, “Every courtesan married a Donglin man!”<sup>23</sup> As I discussed earlier, with the era of Wen Tiren coming to an end in Chongzhen 10 (1637), and especially after Yang Sichang's death in Chongzhen 14 (1641),<sup>24</sup> “Donglin” lost a powerful nemesis, which had helped define the group's agenda and membership. In addition, certain officials formerly identified as “Donglin” came to be also considered leaders of the Fushe scholars. This blurring of political identities led the public (and later historians) to conflate their images. A sexualized Donglin image was transposed from the popular representation of the romantic Fushe scholar. This wishful combination of the Donglin political appeal with Fushe sexual freedom implied that a relaxed social and sexual life would not undermine “the Donglin man's” moral self-

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<sup>23</sup> Qin Jitang 秦際唐, “Ti Yu Danxin *Banqiao za ji*” 題余澹心板橋雜記: “家家夫婿是東林”

<sup>24</sup> *MS*: juan 110/Biao 11: “Zaipu nianbiao” 2 宰輔年表二.



cultivation and authority; rather, it would manifest his sincerity and passion, which could be transformed into political devotion, i.e., loyalty.

This particular understanding of the connection between loyalty and literati-official morality is actually quite different from many literati-officials' lived experience. But it was taken for granted as a commonplace in late Ming and early Qing times. For example, the literary scholar Kang-i Sun Chang lists several literati and their courtesans who seem to embody this ideal image during the Ming-Qing transition, from which she argues, "[The] late-Ming intellectuals found little conflict between love for a woman and love for the nation."<sup>25</sup> But we should note that none of those couples substantiate the imagined place a sexualized Donglin image could have in real world politics. Of this group, Mao Xiang (with Dong Bai) and Hou Fangyu (with Li Xiangjun) never entered officialdom. Wu Weiye (with Bian Cai) and Chen Zilong (with Liu Rushi) had to sever ties with their courtesan lovers to fulfill filial duties and realize career goals. Qian Qianyi and Gong Dingzi were subjected to political attacks for their political disloyalty and moral defects related to their association with courtesan-concubines. In the early Qing, Gong Dingzi was the only active high-ranking official associated with a former Ming elite courtesan. Yet this liaison brought him nothing but personal slander at court. These discrepancies compel us to explore more carefully the lived experience of these men and women, as both political subjects and gendered beings, to understand how the discourses of literati-official gender norms and sexual morality shaped seventeenth-century political developments and political historiography.

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<sup>25</sup> Kang-i Sun Chang, *The Late-Ming Poet Ch'en Tzu-lung: Crises of Love and Loyalty* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. xii. The examples given are in chapter 1, p. 13.

### *Image transformation as a couple*

In Chongzhen 16 (1643), Gong Dingzi memorialized that the emperor should call back certain highly competent and upright officials, who had been stripped of their positions and remained at home in temporary retirement; these included Liu Zongzhou, Qian Qianyi, Yang Tinglin, and Fang Zhenru, all of whom were iconic Donglin-identified figures.<sup>26</sup> Their reappointment would generate powerful political and psychological effects among the literati, even if little real change in policy-making followed in the near term. Considering that in the last years of the Chongzhen reign one could suffer serious punishment simply for recommending an official previously dismissed by the emperor, Gong Dingzi's memorial took a considerable risk. He also memorialized against the emperor's use of imprisonment and flogging to punish his subjects, citing Huang Daozhou's paralyzing injuries from his imprisonment as a sad example to argue for benign treatment of officials. This memorial also attempted to persuade the emperor to tolerate two imprisoned officials, Jiang Cai 姜采 and Xiong Kaiyuan 熊開元, the most recent recipients of the emperor's excessive and impulsive punishment for having personally provoked him.<sup>27</sup> Eventually, in early winter of that year, an additional series of memorials against the current Grand Secretaries irritated the emperor so much that he

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<sup>26</sup> The names include: Zhang Zhengchen, Hui Shiyang, Liu Zongzhou, Jin Guangchen, Qian Qianyi, Yang Tinglin, Fang Zhenru, etc. Yan Zhengju 嚴正矩, "Dazongbo Gong Duanyi gong zhuan" 大宗伯龔端毅公傳, in *Hefei Gong Duanyi gong zongshu* 合肥龔端毅公奏疏 (Qingyutang 慶餘堂, Daoguang 14), pp. 4b-5a.

<sup>27</sup> Sun Chengze, *Chunming meng yu lu*: juan 45: "Xingbu II" 刑部二: Gong Dingzi "Qing ba zhaoyu tingzhang shu" 請罷詔獄廷杖疏, pp. 715-716. For the arrest and imprisonment of Jiang Cai and Xiong Kaiyuan, see *Ming tongjian*: juan 88, pp. 2449-2451.

threw Gong Dingzi and some others into prison.<sup>28</sup> Gong's dedication to the Confucian *jingshi* ideal is clearly manifested in the poems he composed in prison. A long poem written on one of many sleepless nights spent in confinement explicitly expresses deep concern at the grim military and political situation and a sense of hopelessness over the dysfunctional government.<sup>29</sup>

Back in Chongzhen 15 (1642), freshly arrived in the capital as a new member of the metropolitan bureaucracy, Gong Dingzi received special recognition from the emperor, such as getting important assignments and accompanying his majesty on the New Year's Eve. He was apparently quite motivated to fulfill his duties as a censor. He submitted as many as seventeen memorials in one month offering policy suggestions to the emperor.<sup>30</sup> But over the course of the next year, though Gong continued to submit provocative memorials, he was probably beginning to lose faith in the system. While the rebels, conquering one county after another, were quickly approaching the capital, and the Manchus were annexing ever more Ming territory within Qing borders, individual officials could do nothing but follow bureaucratic routines, as if the crises would somehow dissolve before they could reach the palaces of the Son of the Heaven. Toward the end of his life and his reign, the Chongzhen emperor had yet to find a way to work with his officials and generals to devise sensible military strategies. Gong Dingzi, coming

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<sup>28</sup> There were several officials on the list of Grand Secretariat in this year. It is very likely that he memorialized against two of them, Chen Yan and Wei Zaode. See *MS*: juan 110/Biao 11: "Da xueshi nianbiao"

<sup>29</sup> *Gong Dingzi shi* 龔鼎孳詩, ed. Chen Minjie 陳敏杰 (Yangzhou: Guangling shushe, 2006): juan 5: "Guiwei shi yue chu qi ri yi yan shi xia yu" 癸未十月初七以言事下獄, pp. 126-127.

<sup>30</sup> Yan Zhengju, "Da zongbo Gong Duanyi gong zhuan," p. 4b. Charles O. Hucker explains that such positions were meant to be filled by junior metropolitan officials because they were new to the system and were encouraged to voice their criticisms more directly. Hucker, *The Censorial System of Ming China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966). But offering criticisms to the emperor could be interpreted negatively as a ploy to gain fame and self-satisfaction.

to the capital with rich military and administrative experience, found himself idling in the belly of the bureaucracy.

Such was the experience of the last generation of Ming literati-officials, many of whom had a Fushe background and came with ambitions to bring about change. In Chongzhen 15 (1642), Ming politics seemed to be seeing some light, when the emperor and the “comeback” Grand Secretary Zhou Yanru re-appointed many officials considered as Donglin-Fushe members, hoping that these men would be able to revive the government and dynasty. This boosted the popularity and success of young Fushe scholars, the “Little Donglin.” However, hopes were soon dashed by reality. The emperor continued to abuse his officials with impulsive arrests; his conflicts with them were complicated by their factionalism and power abuse, which led to the imprisonment (and later execution) of Wu Changshi 吳昌時, a well-connected Fushe member and Donglin-identified official, as well as the ultimate execution of Zhou Yanru.<sup>31</sup> What had seemed a hopeful political prospect quickly turned out to be worse than an illusion. A new generation of young officials, such as Gong Dingzi and Fang Yizhi, were not able to change anything. By the time Gu Mei arrived in Beijing, Gong Dingzi had already witnessed and experienced the impossibility of sensible political negotiation inside the Chongzhen court.

If these young men were not able to change politics, did they reshape the discourse of literati-official morality? Was their reputation as scholars fond of talented

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<sup>31</sup> For example, the arrests of the President of the Board of Personnel, Li Rixuan 李日宣, and several others for failing to recommend proper candidates for the Grand Secretariat as well as those who tried to defend him; imprisonment of Jiang Cai and Xiong Kaiyuan; dismissing Liu Zongzhou for attempting to defend Jiang and Xiong. (Chongzhen 15); executing Zhou Yanru and Wu Changshi in Chongzhen 16.

women and pleasure-seeking tolerated and continued? A careful examination of Gong and Gu's life together may shed light on these questions. Gu Mei joined Gong Dingzi two months before he was arrested. The brief happiness of the reunion and their new life together filled Gong's writings. Since he showed little hesitancy about expressing his affection for Gu Mei, much of his poetry of this period undoubtedly falls in the category of "luscious poetry" (*yan ci* 豔詞). Modern historians have much mocked a set of ten poems titled "Some Thoughts in the Office on an Autumn Night," dedicated to Gu Mei. These poems are indeed quite audacious, considering that he composed these love poems during the night shift at the office!<sup>32</sup>

But such anecdotes cannot fully describe Gong Dingzi's personal life before the fall of Beijing. The poems he composed for Gu Mei in prison show her to have been a dedicated companion. In one, he expresses gratitude toward her because, out of concern about the cold weather, she made a warm quilt and had it delivered to the prison.<sup>33</sup> In a set of ten poems written for Gu Mei's birthday, again composed in prison, he praises her courage, care, and noble mind, so unusual in a woman whose husband had been thrown into prison for political reasons.<sup>34</sup> But their relationship has always been understood not

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<sup>32</sup> *Gong Dingzi shi*: juan 36: "Qiu ye sheng zhong fu huai" 秋夜省中賦懷, pp. 1120-1122. *Dingshantang wenji* 定山堂文集 (*DSTWJ* hereafter) (Gong shi Zhanluzhai 龔氏瞻麓齋, 1924): juan 6: "Ti qiu ye sheng zhong shi jueju hou" 題秋夜省中十絕句後, pp. 76a-b. As a Supervising Censor of the Board of War, a position relatively low in rank (7b), Gong had to spend considerable number of nights each month in his office.

<sup>33</sup> *Gong Dingzi shi*: juan 36: "Han shen Shanchi jun song bei ye wo bu cheng mei kou zhan da zhi" 寒甚善持君送被夜臥不成寐口占答之, p. 1125.

<sup>34</sup> *Gong Dingzi shi*: juan 36: "Shengshen qu" 生辰曲, pp. 1123-1125. Their birthdays were both in the eleventh month. (See *Gong nianpu*, p. 4.) Therefore, the undated ten poems entitled "Shengshen qu" 生辰曲 immediately before the poem about the quilt in his poetry collection (juan 36) should be written in prison to celebrate Gu Mei's birthday.

through this kind of everyday life detail but in terms of his “notorious infatuation” with her. This, I would argue, is actually a retrospective judgment of a disloyal official’s moral defect laid out by early-Qing literati writers and modern historians.<sup>35</sup> If we look at their self-presentation from the time Gong first entered the metropolitan bureaucracy, we realize that both of them were quite aware of the political stakes of literati-official gender norms and consciously cultivated a conservative self-image. Gong and Gu transformed themselves into an orthodox *couple* to meet those expectations, although she was not and would never be able to become his official wife. This is evident in their correspondence with an iconic Donglin figure, Fang Zhenru 方震孺 (Fang Yizhi’s uncle).

The social and political connections between the Gong and Fang families had begun in the previous generation. Gong Dingzi’s uncle had been a supporter of Fang Zhenru. When serving as a censor, he memorialized to draw the emperor’s attention to Fang’s qualities and character.<sup>36</sup> Besides Gong’s connection with the Fang father and son, his personal tie with Fang Zhenru developed as a result of their shared politics. In Chongzhen 11 (1638), a popular Donglin icon Fan Jingwen 范景文 was stripped of official status and lost his position as the President of the Board of War in Nanjing, because he supported Huang Daozhou’s protests to the emperor and memorialized against Yang Sichang.<sup>37</sup> Gong Dingzi composed a poem that offered Fan Jingwen moral support. Fang Zhenru thought highly of this poem and had it printed.<sup>38</sup> The title of Gong Dingzi’s poem tells the reader that Fang Xiaoru had dedicated a poem to Fan and Gong

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<sup>35</sup> For example, Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise* v. 2., p. 871.

<sup>36</sup> *Gong nianpu*, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> *MS*: juan 265/liezhuan 153, pp. 6834-35.

<sup>38</sup> *Gong Dingzi shi: juan* 33: “Ku Fang Haiwei xiansheng” 哭方孩未先生（用王弇州哭李于鳞一百二十韻），p. 1094 note.

Dingzi adopted the same rhymes used by Fang.<sup>39</sup> This poetic correspondence among the three men unmistakably signaled political solidarity and social bonding. For Gong Dingzi, Fang Zhenru was a mentor figure, toward whom he had profound respect and admiration. When Gong got engaged to Gu Mei, Fang Zhenru wrote him a letter warning him not to circulate Gu Mei's paintings outside their home to show off her poetry and paintings.<sup>40</sup>

From Chongzhen 16/10 to about Chongzhen 17/1, Gong Dingzi spent three months in prison. After he was released, he inscribed and sent a painting by Gu Mei to Fang Zhenru, who was governing Guangxi on the southwestern frontier.<sup>41</sup> In the inscription, he told Fang Zhenru that since Gu Mei had joined him in the capital, they had followed Fang's advice and kept a low profile, only enjoying her art and poetry in private: "Since our reunion in my residence in the capital, we have been each other's simple but sincere companion. We do not have many sensual pleasures around; we have ignored the coral pen-rack and crimson stationary. Things that we occasionally paint to entertain ourselves are all put aside as idle items behind the bedroom screen."<sup>42</sup>

Then, Gong Dingzi recalls that fifty days after Gu Mei's arrival in Beijing, he was arrested and imprisoned. He describes Gu's womanly virtues—her modesty, dedication,

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<sup>39</sup> *DSTSJ*: juan 16: "Fan Zhigong sima kang shu di gui ji huai er shou he Fang Haiwei xiansheng yun 范質公司馬抗疏謫歸寄懷二首和方孩未先生韻, p. 519. These two poems appear in Chapter 16 of Gong Dingzi's poetry collection, a chapter dated from Chongzhen 14. Gong Dingzi's old poems got lost when he was trying to flee from Beijing when the capital fell. A few poems survived and they have been compiled into this collection. It seems that these two poems should be dated in Chongzhen 11, when Fan Jingwen received the official demotion.

<sup>40</sup> *DSTWJ*: juan 6: "Ti hua ji Fang Haiwei zhongcheng" 題畫寄方孩未中丞, p. 31a. Also, *Gong Dingzishi*, "Ku Fang Haiwei xiansheng," p. 1099. Gong Dingzi's note within this poem says Fang Zhenru wrote to him and warned them not to show off poetry and paintings.

<sup>41</sup> Fang Zhenru's resistance to Wei Zhongxian and his suffering during the Qianqi period are well known. Recommended to the Chongzhen emperor by Shi Kefa, Fang Zhenru was called out of retirement and assigned the position of Assistant Administration Commissioner in Guangxi. But he was soon promoted to the position of Assistant Censor in Chief and assumed the responsibilities as the Guangxi Governor. *MS*: juan 248/liezhuan 136: "Fang Zhenru"

<sup>42</sup> Gong Dingzi, "Ti hua ji Fang Haiwei zhongcheng," p. 31a.

and stamina, as well as the noble spirit of her art and poetry. She stopped having delicate food, never complaining about their financial stress. She confined herself to Buddhist vegetarianism and prayers. She displayed a strong sense of devotion and filial piety. She did not assume a shy and needy look in front of her husband. Her heroic spirit truly deserved recognition and put to shame those whining men! Because she had such a noble character, Gong asked her to draw a painting for Fang Zhenru and had it delivered to Guangxi. Concluding the inscription, he promises that after this painting, he and Gu Mei would put away their brushes and silk so they “would not provoke his mentor’s harsh scolding!”<sup>43</sup>

The act of sending a painting by Gu Mei to Fang Zhenru with such an inscription, an inscription that disapproves of the very act of sending it and the painting itself, shows a strong commitment to the behavioral norms of Confucian literati-officials. This commitment is reinforced by replacing Gu Mei the talented elite courtesan with traditional (gentry) womanly virtues and a de-feminized kind of heroism. As Gu Mei is transformed into a woman suitable for a literatus-official, Gong Dingzi also molds himself in the fashion of a Confucian moral man that following proper behavioral norms. This is not simply a moral self-representation for a favorite mentor. Months before he sent this painting and inscription to Fang Zhenru, the ten poems Gong composed in prison for Gu Mei’s birthday had already depicted her in a markedly similar way. In fact, the inscription to Fang Zhenru draws on those birthday poems in several places.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 31a-31b.

<sup>44</sup> Gong Dingzi, “Shengchen qu,” pp. 1123-1125.



In addition, Gu Mei's art would become a source of emotional comfort for this politically frustrated man over the rest of his career. On one night immediately before Gong Dingzi's arrest, he returned home from an emergency meeting called by the emperor upon receiving worrisome news from the battlefield. Several friends happened to be at his house: one had just failed the examination and had to return home; two of them were taking off for new posts in the south. Gu Mei painted a landscape for the occasion on the theme "morning breeze and crescent" (*xiaofeng canyue* 曉風殘月), a traditional expression of sorrow at parting. Gong Dingzi confesses his frustration in his inscription on this piece, comparing the experience of watching Gu Mei paint it to the "Drums of Yuyang" (*yuyang gusheng* 漁陽鼓聲), a famous historical reference to an official of the second century who, unfairly demoted to drum-player, drummed a touching but indignant song.<sup>45</sup> If we compare the nuanced sentiments shown in this inscription and a long poem Gong composed around the same time about that same emergency meeting with the emperor,<sup>46</sup> it is not difficult to discern the psychological comfort Gu Mei's art and companionship provided. Gu Mei was Gong Dingzi's confidant and shared his political ambitions and frustrations. Her art created a space for them to express shared emotions, not frivolity. During the most depressing years of the dynastic change, Gong Dingzi would continue to pen similar messages on Gu Mei's art, and these will be considered in the next chapter.

Gong Dingzi's efforts at self-fashioning therefore are quite different from those of the flamboyant Fushe scholars. Despite the popularity and prevalence of the literatus-

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<sup>45</sup> *DSTWJ*: juan 6: "Ti hua" 題畫, p. 30a. The historical reference is Ni Heng 禰衡.

<sup>46</sup> *Gong Dingzi shi*: juan 34: "Han ye bu mei" 寒夜不寐 (癸未初冬日作), p. 1106.

courtesan romance in the late Ming, one detects a difference between the notion of gender propriety for literati in general and that for literati-officials. In next section, we will see that even in this age of transformation, concerns about proper behaviors persisted. Debates over the moral conduct of literati-officials among certain prominent Fushe leaders tellingly demonstrate strong commitment to and the political stakes of conforming to the rules defined by the Five Cardinal Relations and the centrality of sexual behavior.

### *The danger of sensual pleasures*

Zhang Zilie 張自烈 (1597-1672), a Fushe leader admired for his knowledge, intelligence, and independent spirit, brings our attention to how literati-officials' moral character was being discussed among elite men. In his letter "To a Friend, on Staying away from Sensual Pleasures" ("Yu youren lun yuan shengji shu" 與友人論遠聲伎書), Zhang Zilie crafts a powerful treatise on why this unnamed friend, whom he praises for administrative and military talents, should stop wasting time and energy on pursuing sensual pleasures, especially sex.<sup>47</sup> He gives several examples to illustrate how people reacted to such self-indulgence. This unnamed literatus's hometown fellows failed to persuade him to

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<sup>47</sup> Zhang Zilie, *Qishan wenji* 芑山文集 (SKJH-ji 166): juan 5, pp. 113-115. Zhang's work has been heavily edited for this particular edition published in early Qing. The *Yuzhang congshu* edition of this collection of works seems to be less censored, but it is different from other editions in many places. Xie Canglin 謝蒼霖, one of the editors of the Yuzhang Series, has written an article to explain the differences between the two major versions of Zhang Zilie's collection of works. "The Correction Record of *Qishan Collected Works of Yuzhang Series*" 《豫章叢書》本《芑山文集》點校後記 in *Journal of Jiangxi Institute of Education (Social Sciences)* 2005 Vol. 26 Issue 2: 60-63. As Xie points out in this article, Zhang Zilie's work quickly became the target of inquisition in early Qing. For political concerns, his editors changed the contents to avoid trouble not only for themselves but for those appear in these works.

distance himself from such activities and his mother had become deeply concerned about his behavior. His most dissipated conduct might not have reached Zhang Zilie's ears, but what Zhang had learned was already bad enough for him to compose this long missive.

Zhang Zilie argues:

I believe you possess such extraordinary talents that indulgence in sensual pleasures might not affect them at all. But I also think that because we are facing so many crises, no talent should be wasted on useless matters.<sup>48</sup> Those less learned literati, whose talents cannot be compared with yours, may make you a topic of gossip. Not only would you not stand as a strong exemplar, should they make the mistake of self-indulgence, it would be as a result of your bad example. In addition, a gentleman's good judgment and resolve, if spent on improper indulgence, will not be employed for honorable causes; if spent on entertainment, it will not be employed for difficult tasks. If you continue indulging in entertainment, the most sagacious men of our time will think that you want to retreat from *jingshi* and pursue detached leisure, and therefore are not suitable. They will not nurture you and help you accomplish important things. Meanwhile, [as you sink] deeper and deeper into such indulgence, you will lose your energy and eventually fail to stand out. . . . Many of our friends have no sense of self-esteem and know no restraint when engaging in promiscuous activities day and night. When senior scholars hear about this, they see us as thinking too highly of our talents and having little knowledge and little prudence. They will think that we do not work hard to cultivate morality and improve our scholarship, and therefore we won't be able to fulfill our responsibilities for the country. . . . Our political enemies will secretly celebrate and take advantage of this opportunity to accuse us of factionalism and enjoying undeserved fame. This will defeat us and make us bring shame to the Confucian tradition.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> One version of this letter seems to suggest that Zhang was referring to wise use of wealth, but another seems to refer to the use of talents in the most needed way.

<sup>49</sup> Zhang Zilie, "Yu youren lun yuan shengji shu," p. 114.

In this letter Zhang Zilie mentions several other Fushe leading figures who shared the same promiscuous lifestyle,<sup>50</sup> all close friends of the addressee. Zhang asks him to pass on this criticism.<sup>51</sup>

Zhang's argument builds from two premises: First, indulgence in sex undermined literati's commitment to and fulfillment of the Confucian *jingshi* ideal. Second, senior literati-officials only nurtured and mentored men they took seriously, who demonstrated political potential, one condition of which was sexual morality. Zhang Zilie highlights two contemporary political factors—national crises and factional struggles—to reinforce his cautionary message. Such criticism made very good sense given that in recent times, as recently as Wen Tiren's administration, charges against Fushe scholars for their corrupt and immoral lifestyle had been leveled in front of the emperor.

Who was this unnamed friend? Based on information cited in the letter, we can conclude that it was none other than Fang Yizhi. Zhang Zilie mentions how this young scholar had joined his father Fang Kongzhao in his military efforts to suppress the rebels in Huguang area. His talent had been recommended to the emperor. Then he returned to his hometown in that spring and soon visited another famous Fushe leader Wu Yingji 吳應箕 in Guichi (in the same province). Soon afterwards he went to Nanjing and began to indulge in sex and other entertainment. This young man had also told a mutual friend, Ma Sanheng 麻三衡, not to let Zhang Zilie know about his recent dissipation.<sup>52</sup> Fang Yizhi's

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<sup>50</sup> Three of these names were erased in this publication.

<sup>51</sup> Their names are erased in the most common editions of this book. The edition in 豫章叢書 (Hu Sijing Tuilu 胡思敬退廬, Republican period) (juan 8, pp. 8b-11a) shows these names, including Wu Yingji 吳應箕 and Zhou Lixun 周立勳.

<sup>52</sup> Zhang Zilie, "Yu youren lun yuan shengji shu," pp. 113-114.

travels and socializing during this period fit perfectly into this timeline.<sup>53</sup> Zhang Zilie's letter obviously was written sometime in fall of Chongzhen 12 (1639), when he learned about the drinking parties and sexual liaisons between those well-known Fushe leaders and elite Nanjing courtesans. Fang Yizhi had gone to Nanjing earlier that year to take the provincial-level civil service exams. It was during that stay in Nanjing that the sex lives of the "Four Fushe Scholars" began to fascinate the public.<sup>54</sup>

Zhang Zilie's criticism, a gesture of sincere friendship, exemplifies the expectations of many for aspiring Fushe scholars, the "Little Donglin" in the last years of the Ming. The words of three commentators included in the printed version of this letter elaborate on this same message. These three men are Zhang Zilie's brother and the Fushe leaders Shen Shoumin 沈壽民 and Xia Yunyi 夏允彝. Xia Yunyi, known for his strong *jinshi* commitment, had been considered one of the most promising young officials by the Board of Personnel.<sup>55</sup> In his comments on Zhang Zilie's criticism of indulgence in sensual pleasures, Xia Yunyi exhorts the historical example of Zhuge Liang, who married an unusually ugly but virtuous wife and became one of the most accomplished prime ministers in Chinese history. In contrast, he suggests, that the last emperor of the state of Chen, who notoriously indulged in poetry, wine, music and women, deserved no better than to lose his country.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Fang Yizhi nianpu*, pp. 88-94.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>55</sup> Xia Yunyi died in Hongguang 2 (1645) as a martyr. Therefore it seems that these comments were ready to be published when Zhang Zilie was about to put his collected works in print. The scholar Xie Canglin has pointed out that parts of this collection had already been printed and circulated around 1644. Xie Canglin, p. 61. Xia Yunyi became a *jinshi* in Chongzhen 10 (1637) and served as the magistrate of Changle County in Fujian for five years until he had to resign his post to return home to observe mourning for his mother. For a brief biography of Xia Yunyi, see *MS: juan 277/liezhuan* 165, p. 7098.

<sup>56</sup> Zhang Zilie, "Yu youren lun yuan shengji shu," p. 115.

Another of the commentators, the equally renowned Fushe leader Shen Shoumin, makes moral conduct a key issue for literati-officials. He cites examples of model Confucian officials of the Song dynasty:

Staying away from sensual pleasures alone is not enough. Sima Wengong (Sima Guang) at the age of forty had not been able to have a son. His wife took a concubine for him but he never approached her. Cheng Yichuan (Cheng Yi) was physically fragile from childhood. But because he insisted on controlling his desires, he remained strong after seventy. Liu Yuancheng (Liu Anshi) stopped his sexual activities when he was forty and his self-control never wavered. These models were literati who never took a second woman [as concubine into their household] but still strove to reduce pleasure-seeking [outside]. How can one justify giving in to sensual pleasures and not regret such unrestrained indulgence!<sup>57</sup>

Lastly, Zhang Zilie's brother echoes Shen and Xia's comments, and suggests that literati-officials should take this criticism seriously.<sup>58</sup> These comments show that Fushe literati, whether they eventually became officials or not, held strong views about whom they should model themselves after. Literati like Zhang, Xia, and Shen, all extremely popular and influential men in the Fushe society at the time, not only believed in the importance of sexual morality for literati-officials as an essential teaching of the Confucian sages, but also realized there could be serious political consequences for failing to uphold high moral standards.

Meanwhile, Gong Dingzi and Fang Yizhi's lives in the capital as officials prior to the fall of the Ming show that neither of them wanted to be seen as a "romantic scholar" paired with a talented courtesan. Gong Dingzi led a quiet bachelor's life until Gu Mei came to join him in late Chongzhen 16 (1643), and their life together was not a

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 114-15.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

stereotypical literatus-courtesan liaison. Fang Yizhi did take in a concubine in Beijing in the fall of Chongzhen 15 (1642), an occasion celebrated by his Fushe friends including the officials Gong Dingzi, Cao Rong, and Jiang Gai as well as Yan Ermei and Du Jun, two non-official literati.<sup>59</sup> However, after that, and especially once he moved his family to Beijing, no similar incidents or gatherings were recorded. Both men led their private lives as disciplined metropolitan officials were supposed to.

But everything would soon change dramatically with the fall of Beijing.

### **Beijing-Jiangnan in 1644-1645: The Turncoats' Case**

The year 1644 changed Gong Dingzi's life in an extraordinary way, not only because he served three different regimes in the first six months of that year, but also because he became the poster child of the disloyal and corrupt official, an image created by the highly publicized story that he decided not to die a loyal martyr at the behest of his concubine Gu Mei. This story would define all Gong's activities in Ming-Qing transition history and this image of him has been invoked ever since.

When Li Zicheng's rebel army captured Beijing on Chongzhen 17/3/19 (1644/4/25), Gong Dingzi was among the many who were captured and forced to serve in the short-lived Dashun government. Political dramas were swiftly unfolding in northern China: there was the emperor's suicide, the martyrdom of some officials, the surrender and torture of a large number of surviving officials, the invasion of the Manchus with the aid of the former Ming general Wu Sangui, the defeat and withdrawal of Li Zicheng from

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<sup>59</sup> *Fang Yizhi nianpu*, pp. 112-113.

Beijing, and the takeover of the capital by the Manchus. Literati-officials in the south were shaken and anxious as they tried to decide how they might set up a Southern Ming court in Nanjing. This process took more than a month, and ended with the Prince of Fu established as Regent around the same time the Manchus entered Beijing. He was soon enthroned as the Hongguang emperor of the Southern Ming court. Political controversies of all sorts clouded Jiangnan as a series of decisions had to be made: Which prince was most qualified in terms of lineage to inherit the crown? Which officials should be honored as loyal martyrs or punished as disloyal turncoats? Should former *yandang* officials be allowed to serve in the émigré court? Tangled negotiations over these issues inevitably led to the re-emergence of factionalism, which in turn quickly led many individuals and the Southern Ming regime itself into its fatal problems. What many had hoped would be a regime of Restoration (*zhongxing* 中興) turned into one of power abuse, corruption, and persecution.<sup>60</sup> Our analytical focus here will be on how the political language of sexual morality was employed in Southern Ming politics and in resistance movements. Examining these dynamics will shed light on how the gendered moral dichotomy of the loyal versus the disloyal shaped not only what was happening on the ground but also how historical figures and events would be documented and represented in the historiography and the historical materials on the period in the archives.

***The establishment of the Prince of Fu and early factionalism in the Southern Ming court***

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<sup>60</sup> For a good summary of Hongguang regime, see Lynn A. Struve, chap. 1 of *The Southern Ming: 1644-1662* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984).



Ten days after the fall of Beijing and the Chongzhen emperor's suicide, officials and commoners in the South began to get the news, but for many it was hard to believe. Then after another ten days or so, the news was confirmed, which meant that a new government had to be created.<sup>61</sup> The most powerful man in Jiangnan at the time was Shi Kefa 史可法, President of the Board of War in Nanjing. He had befriended many in the Donglin camp before his term in the South.<sup>62</sup> Literati-officials, whether in office or in retirement to this point, publicly and privately debated which prince should be enthroned.<sup>63</sup> The Chongzhen emperor's three sons were being held captive in Beijing, and in terms of imperial lineage, the Prince of Fu was the most proper relative to inherit the throne. But Donglin-identified officials were suspicious of him, because his deceased father had been the direct cause of one of the conflicts between the Wanli emperor and the emerging Donglin faction decades before. Surviving sources are insufficient to allow us to explore deeper, but literati documentation of this subject suggests there was perceived to be a moral contrast between the Prince of Fu and the Prince of Lu, who was favored by many Donglin-identified officials. Some officials decided to choose the "worthier" prince, the Prince of Lu, over the Prince of Fu, claiming the latter "had a reputation for lasciviousness, ignorance, and irresponsibility." These officials listed seven reasons why the Prince of Fu should not be the ruler: Greed, promiscuity, alcoholism, lacking filiality, abusing subjects, no interest in learning, and intervening in legal

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<sup>61</sup> Struve, *Southern Ming*, p. 16.

<sup>62</sup> In fact, Fang Yizhi was one of the officials who saw him off in Beijing suburb in the summer of Chongzhen 14. *Fang Yizhi nianpu*, p. 105.

<sup>63</sup> A lot of under-the-table discussions and negotiations were happening at the time among various groups of officials in different locales. See *Ming tongjian*, p. 2526.

processes.<sup>64</sup> However, as the Qing scholar Xu Zi 徐鼎 sharply points out, this action produced terrible political consequences of the self-righteous, naïve behavior of those who favored the Prince of Lu. Imperial succession had to strictly follow the rules; any violation was bound to cause controversy and disaster. Among the officials supporting the Prince of Lu, some believed their sincere loyalty itself justified such a violation, but many others simply exhibited moral hypocrisy, since they stood to benefit from their closer ties with the Prince of Lu. Those men dove into whitewashing the fact that their choice's lifestyle was hardly that of a moral exemplar, either.<sup>65</sup>

Shi Kefa was one of those in favor of the Prince of Lu on the grounds that he was morally more fit than the Prince of Fu. He made this argument very clearly to Ma Shiyong, the Viceroy of Fengyang, whose military muscle would become a determining factor in Jiangnan politics. Shi's move would eventually give Ma Shiyong, a supporter of the Prince of Fu, an upper hand in political negotiations in court. As the historian Gu Cheng rightly points out, Shi Kefa's professed opposition to enthroning the Prince of Fu determined the lukewarm relationship between them ever after. For the prince was certainly disgraced by that list of moral charges against him, which had been widely circulated among literati-officials.<sup>66</sup> Shi Kefa's opposition was not only a violation of imperial succession rules and a naïve political miscalculation, I would further argue that Shi's reference to the gender morality of the future ruler proved dangerous. It injected gender morality into politics at precisely the wrong occasion and on the wrong man,

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<sup>64</sup> Struve, p. 18. Also see *Ming tongjian*, p. 2562.

<sup>65</sup> Xu Zi, *Xiaotian jinian fu kao*: juan 5, pp. 157-158.

<sup>66</sup> Gu Cheng 顧誠, chap. 2 in *Nan Ming shi* 南明史 (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1997). Huang Daozhou documents about Ma Shiyong's efforts to instigate suspicion in the Prince of Fu toward Shi Kefa by showing the former Shi's letter of supports for the Prince of Lu. *Huang Zhangpu ji*: juan 22: "Xing yuan ji lue" 興元紀略, p. 1a-2b.

contributing to a new cycle that sensationalized politics and politicized personal morality at a moment of dynastic vulnerability. The early-Qing scholar Huang Zongxi rightly suggests that later persecution of the official Lei Yanzuo on charges of lacking filial piety may be considered backlash; the very political strategy used by Donglin-Fushe men had been taken up by their political enemies!<sup>67</sup>

### ***The Jiangnan public condemning turncoats***

As the political and military situation was dramatically unfolding in the summer of 1644, it was very difficult for those in the South to get accurate information about their fellow officials trapped in the capital. In this state of confusion, references to turncoat officials as morally corrupt soon surfaced in official and unofficial political rhetoric. The public's condemnation of men who had surrendered to Li Zicheng emerged spontaneously in various counties across Jiangnan, as hearsay about some officials' activities trickled south from Beijing. The historian Kishimoto Mio has carefully reconstructed the timeline over which news of the Chongzhen emperor's suicide was disseminated in Jiangnan.

According to her study, the process took more than a month, and on 5/4 when the Prince of Fu issued a national mourning order, he officially confirmed what had been suspected by many.<sup>68</sup> In the midst of this anxiety and confusion, two kinds of reaction were triggered by the official confirmation of the emperor's death: the lower classes rebelled against the wealthy (*nu bian* 奴變) and assaults were launched on the families of turncoat

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<sup>67</sup> Huang Zongxi, *Hongguang shilu chao* 弘光實錄鈔 in *Ming dai yeshi congshu* 明代野史叢書 (Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 2002): juan 2.

<sup>68</sup> Kishimoto Mio 岸本美緒, "Chongzhen shi qi nian de Jiangnan shehui yu guanyu Beijing de xinxi" 崇禎十七年的江南社會與關於北京的信息 in *Qing shi yanjiu* 清史研究 Vol. 2 (1999): 25-32.

officials.<sup>69</sup> Before the Southern Ming court could decide what to do about the turncoats in the north, people issued public statements against those officials and took action. When more detailed information about the fall of the capital reached Jiangnan and more people (including some of the turncoats) escaped as the Manchus drove Li Zicheng out of the capital, local attacks on the turncoats saw a drastic escalation.

For the purposes of this study, I will focus on the use of gendered political language in the widely circulated proclamations because they produced a generalized correlation between literati-official morality and political behavior, a correlation that helped shape the discourse of loyalty during the turmoil of dynastic transition. These proclamations condemned two kinds of men: the rebels and the turncoats. Their authors emphasize the rebels' uncontrollable lust for treasures and women. But they went to much greater lengths to expose the political-moral crimes of the turncoat officials, detailing their corrupt lifestyle and contemptible methods they used to please the rebel leaders.

Twelve days after the fall of Beijing, Shi Kefa issued the "Proclamation of Nanjing" (*Nandu gong xi* 南都公檄) on behalf of a collective of prominent officials.<sup>70</sup> Because news about the capital and the emperor had not been confirmed, this proclamation was aimed to mobilize officials' and common peoples' support for the emperor. Forty-five days later, as the severity of the situation became clear; enemies were identified. Shi Kefa, appointed by the newly established Southern Ming court as a Grand

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<sup>69</sup> Kishimoto argues that the latter could be considered a kind of 民變 or 士變 that occurred over anxiety that Li Zicheng's army and possibly the Manchu's would undertake an invasion of the south. Ibid. p. 29.

<sup>70</sup> Feng Menglong, *Zhongxing shilu*, pp. 582-584. In the Second Capital of the Ming, Nanjing, different from the government in Beijing, the most powerful official was the President of the Board of War.

Secretary, issued another proclamation, before he departed northward to Yangzhou to build a defense base and to launch possible expeditions to recover the north. In this statement, he enumerates the rebels' many atrocities but highlights two "most heinous crimes": attacking and robbing the literati-officials in the capital, and rape.<sup>71</sup> Both of these proclamations explicitly state: Let's prove there are still "real men" in this country who can put up a good fight!<sup>72</sup> They resort to the traditional image of men as defenders of the country and the people to mobilize the public.

But more sensational references to the problem of turncoat officials soon appeared in official and unofficial political rhetoric. The most widely circulated proclamations employed a language of loyalty that portrays turncoats as violating literati-official gender norms, making a connection between their corrupt lifestyle and disloyalty to the fallen Ming dynasty. The "Proclamation Rebuking Turncoat Officials"<sup>73</sup> drafted by literati in one county denounced such men by describing their corruption before the fall of the capital: they had only cared about networking; in and outside the office they imprudently talked about factional alliances and antagonisms; they exploited people's wealth to support their indulgence in prostitutes and concubines; they and their friends discarded statecraft but engaged in vulgar entertainment.<sup>74</sup> Evidence of their corruption and promiscuity was symptomatic of their disloyalty.

Another proclamation that circulated in Changshu County condemns four native sons, Chen Biqian 陳必謙, Shi Min 時敏, Zhao Shijin 趙士錦 and Gui Qixian 歸起先,

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<sup>71</sup> Shi Kefa, "Chushi xi" 出師檄 in *Zhongxing shilu*, p. 585.

<sup>72</sup> Shi Kefa, "Nandu gong xi" (p. 583); "Chushi xi" (p. 586).

<sup>73</sup> Lang Xingwei 郎星偉, "Tao xiang zei zhu chen xi" 討降賊諸臣檄 in *Zhongxing shilu*, pp. 595-597.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 600.

all of whom held important positions in the metropolitan government in Beijing. Their debauchery prior to the fall of the capital had anticipated their disloyalty: Shi Min was said to have engaged in intimacy with other men to obtain favor, and exchanged and slept with his friends' wives and concubines. He was especially close to the executed grand secretary Zhou Yanru because he had a pretty face.<sup>75</sup> Chen Biqian's immoral behavior included using profane language and obsessively gossiping about inner chamber matters, building connections with bribery, and sharing his bed with both men and women. It is noteworthy that the morally corrupt Chen Biqian was described as "striving to attach himself to the Donglin," a phrase that we have seen used repeatedly in the portraits of officials whom seventeenth-century literati writers tried to separate from the morally impeccable Donglin.

Meanwhile, in Songjiang (modern Ningbo), the local literati put forth similar proclamations in which they named several officials, Yang Zhiqi 楊枝起, Zhu Ji 朱積, and Yang Rucheng 楊汝成. In particular, two proclamations singled out Yang Rucheng, who served in the Ming as Vice President of the Board of Rites and Academician Reader-in-Waiting. They associated his corruption and sexual promiscuity with evidence of his disloyalty, including joining Wei Zhongxian's clique and surrendering to the rebels. He and his cousin Yang Zhiqi faced charges of sexual immorality very similar to those leveled against Shi Min: he was greedy and corrupt, and his whole family was sexually promiscuous.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> "Changshu xian tao pan gong xi" 常熟縣討叛公檄, in *Zhongxing shilu*, pp. 606-607.

<sup>76</sup> "Changshu xian tao pan gong xi".

It was often suggested that these officials not only subjected themselves to the commands of the rebel leaders, but also offered their wives and concubines to the rebels. The proclamation against the turncoats in Songjiang was accordingly entitled “Rebuking Turncoat Officials Who Surrendered Themselves and Offered Their Wives to the Rebels!”<sup>77</sup> The rebel was portrayed as a rascal from the countryside becoming a bloodthirsty, raping bandit, while the turncoat was represented as having no political integrity or manly character, serving as the new ruler’s subject and his wife offering service to the rebels.<sup>78</sup> These statements claim that the rebels spared the turncoat’s life because he had offered concubines, reinforcing the terrifying image of the rebels’ dangerous masculinity and the surrendered officials’ lack of Confucian manliness.

In addition, the reversed power relations between the bumpkin rebels and the turncoat elites, symbolized by the exchange of women, show the breach of the social status hierarchy in the most startling way. In the Confucian philosophy of politics and society, disorder and boundary crossing were considered most dangerous. The image of the immoral and disloyal official in the fallen capital was powerful precisely for this reason. Playing with people’s fear of social disorder, this particular portrait of disloyalty effectively produced the horrific scenario of a subverted social hierarchy, and this mobilization strategy quickly provoked local antagonism toward the families of the turncoats. Literati and commoners in the city of Suzhou burned and looted the houses of several such officials. In Changshu County, people attacked one turncoat’s residence and burned four coffins that represented three generations of his family. In Haiyan County,

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<sup>77</sup> “Songjiang tao xian qi xiang zei xi” 嵩江討獻妻降賊檄.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 身請為臣，妻請為妾，結歡之狀堪憐。臣 and 妾 originally meant male and female slaves in ancient China. Here, these two terms could be understood as a general expression for being in the service of the rebel ruler.

another turncoat's house was burned and looted, and the coffin of his deceased father was dug up and burned. All these officials were accused of both disloyalty and promiscuity.<sup>79</sup> When the early-Qing scholar Ji Liuqi compiled his historical work, *Ming ji bei lue*, he carefully added a note to warn his readers about one such proclamation put out by literati in Jiaxing Prefecture. The rhetoric of the piece was so inflammatory and ferocious that Ji wrote, "It is fine to over-praise others, but one should not go overboard in criticism. This kind of language! Young men should not miss much if they did not read it. I include this proclamation here, not to endorse its relentlessness, but rather because it shows an admirable familiarity with historical references. It is a pity that the author only wanted to show off his writing skills and didn't care about the life and death of others! Experienced readers should be mindful of this."<sup>80</sup> Ji Liuqi apparently knew of the horrific consequences such heated rhetoric could have in a time of national crisis.

### ***The Turncoats' Case: factionalism and sensational politics in the Southern Ming***

As these proclamations against turncoat officials were emerging spontaneously in various communities, literati-officials began to assume their new positions in the Southern Ming Hongguang court. Upon the establishment of this émigré court, many civilian officials and generals became preoccupied with matters of personal interest rather than collaborating to recover northern China. Factions and factional intrigues emerged as soon as appointments were made, and perhaps the most pressing and sensitive question was

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<sup>79</sup> Gu Yanwu 顧炎武, *Sheng an ben ji* 聖安本紀 (*Jingtuo yishi* 荆駝逸史 9-11): *juan* 1, Annex to "Jiashen 5/11" "甲申五月十一日" 附錄. This documentation appears in the form of "annex" under "1644/5/11."

<sup>80</sup> Notes to "Jiaxing fu shenjin gong tao wei hu zhengfu siwu xi" 嘉興府紳衿公討偽戶政府司務檄, *Ming ji bei lue*: *juan* 22, p. 613.



whether officials who had been associated with the evil eunuchs in 1620s should be appointed to government posts. The so-called “pure elements” argued that such officials had been named in the “Traitors’ Case” (*ni’an* 逆案) by the martyred Chongzhen emperor and therefore should be barred from office. Bitter confrontations between the pure elements and others erupted and quickly revived the old factional divides, at a time when officials should have been deliberating on meaningful measures to organize and mobilize the court’s political, military, and financial resources to defend the South and retake the lost North.

Among the many disagreements and conflicts, the controversy over the appointment of Ruan Dacheng 阮大鍼 proved the most fatal. Ruan’s association with the eunuch Wei Zhongxian in the Ming had been minimal. He was a talented literatus-official who aimed at nothing more than building connections so he might quickly obtain a good post, which did not necessarily earn him an evil reputation. But at the height of their fame, some reckless Fushe leaders had enjoyed singling him out, mocking and reducing him to a public enemy in Nanjing before the Ming fell. The Southern Ming grand secretary Ma Shiyong had close ties with Ruan Dacheng and enabled Ruan to re-enter politics. This revived the old Donglin versus *yandang* factional animosity. Eventually, Ruan would take bloody personal revenge against the Fushe scholars who had relentlessly harassed him. Therefore, the construct of “the immoral turncoat” in the Ming-Qing transition must also be considered part of the background to the notorious “Turncoats’ Case” (*Cong ni an* 從逆案), an incident that was a product of factionalism in the Southern Ming court, in which the political language of loyalty operated as a weapon of political persecution.

The “Turncoats’ Case” was officially opened in Chongzhen 17/6 by the Grand Secretary Ma Shiyong, a confidant of Ruan Dacheng’s. As many of their contemporaries keenly observed, Ruan Dacheng and Ma Shiyong manipulated the discourse of loyalty to avert attention from Ruan Dacheng’s troublesome political past. Their ploy was to confuse the earlier “Traitors’ Case” with a new “Turncoats’ Case,” though these cases were of a completely different nature.<sup>81</sup> Ruan Dacheng had allegedly claimed that in response to attacks against him based on his appearance in the “Traitors’ Case,” he would propose a “Collaborators Case”<sup>82</sup> (*shun*). *Shun* literally means “compliance” (the opposite of *ni*), but it is also the name of the short-lived government established by the rebels, *Shun*. The rhetorical effect of such irony—that the self-proclaimed loyal officials became collaborators yet they persistently accused others of disloyalty—would be quite strong. But this was eventually referred to as the “Turncoats’ Case” officially (*Cong ni an* 從逆案). From this point factionalist retaliations began.

Ruan Dacheng’s advancement into the Hongguang government had turned the political arena into a familiar factionalist scene. The political environment quickly became poisoned like that of the Tianqi era: while the “pure elements” protested having Ruan as their colleague and threatened the Hongguang emperor with their immediate withdrawal from the government, the other party (loosely labeled as the “evil associates of Ma-Ruan”) in response manipulated the language of literati-official morality. Ruan Dacheng understood that many called “turncoats” were the friends and relatives of the

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<sup>81</sup> These two names look and sound very similar in Chinese, 逆案 and 從逆案 respectively. The former refers to the case of Wei Zhongxian and his associates during the Tianqi period, as well as the list created by the Chongzhen emperor himself that listed officials who joined the powerful eunuch’s clique. The latter literally means “the case of officials who followed the rebels.” The similarity of these two names has effective rhetorical impacts.

<sup>82</sup> *Nan du lu: juan 1*, p. 165.

“pure elements” in the Southern Ming government, who did not want to prosecute those accused before they could verify the charges. If the pure elements hesitated to punish the turncoats, how could they repudiate officials incriminated in the “Traitors’ Case” two decades ago? Ma Shiyong, the most powerful Grand Secretary in the southern Ming court, being heavily influenced by Ruan, submitted the memorial entitled “Execute the Turncoat Officials,” part of which I cited at the beginning of this chapter.<sup>83</sup> This memorial set the tone for the “Turncoats’ Case” and its subsequent purges. It pointedly condemned many officials who had presented themselves as “pure elements” to earn important government positions in the Chongzhen court, and claimed that they had actually betrayed the martyred emperor’s faith and surrendered to the rebels. In particular it identified Gong Dingzi as one of these moral hypocrites, a self-indulgent official who had abandoned loyalty to please a courtesan-concubine. Like the political rhetoric used against turncoats elsewhere, this example offered an easily recognizable archetype.

After a tentative name list and plan of punishment was submitted, Li Weiyue 李維樾, an official of the Board of Works in the Southern Ming court, expressed a concern shared by many. He argued that the word *ni* (traitor) should not be applied broadly because it imposed arbitrary and rigid moral standards on complicated situations. For example, those who were forced to fill a position in the rebel government were considered “traitors,” while those who were merely humiliated by the rebels were not. Therefore,

The state is supposed to be careful in measuring punishments; it should be made sure to be fair. Officials most cherish their reputations; labels must

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<sup>83</sup> Ma Shiyong, “Qing zhu nin chen shu.”

be properly given. If they really are traitors and we don't renounce and punish them, how can the hypocrites who eagerly surrendered to offer their service to the rebels be punished justly? If they are not traitors, they should only be given the labels that they deserve and be punished in accordance with official evaluation rules. If we call all of them "traitors," we are doing something similar to calling women who have lost homes but maintained their chastity "unchaste!" That would be most unfair.<sup>84</sup>

The literary historian Zhao Yuan, in a discussion about the "chaste woman complex" among post-1644 literati, points out the similarity between the ways women were supposed to guard their chastity and how literati feared "losing their chastity" by having contact of any sort with Qing officials.<sup>85</sup> It was a political language all literati-officials were familiar with. For example, we have this famous depiction of the moment before the official Xia Yunyi preserved his loyalty by committing suicide after Qing officials pressed him for a meeting.

The Qing official said: "It is your decision whether you want to collaborate or not. We only want to meet with you. What is the big deal?" Xia Yunyi answered: "Let's say there is a chaste woman (widow). Someone wants to marry her off but she does not agree. So she is told: 'You don't have to follow the arrangement. You only have to show your face.' Would this chaste woman come out from behind the curtain? Or would she keep out of sight by killing herself?" He composed a farewell poem and committed suicide.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *Nan du lu*: juan 3, p. 237.

<sup>85</sup> Zhao Yuan, *Ming-Qing zhi ji shidafu yanjiu*, pp. 267-270.

<sup>86</sup> There are many versions of the stories about the martyrdom of Xia Yunyi and his son Xia Wanchun. For a good summary and analysis of the making of these two loyalist exemplars, see Sun Huei-min 孫慧敏, "書寫忠烈：明末夏允彝、夏完淳父子殉節故事的形成與流傳" [Making the Martyrology of Two Late-Ming Loyalists: Hsia Yun-i and Hsia Wan-ch'un], *Taida lishi xuebao* 臺大歷史學報 Vol. 26 (Dec. 2000): 263-307. The passage quoted here is from Xu Bingyi 徐秉義, *Ming mo zhonglie ji shi* 明末忠烈紀實 cited in the footnote in Xia Wanchun, *Xia Jiemin quanji* 夏節愍全集, compl. Zhuang Shiluo 莊師洛 (Guangxu 29): juan 3: "Liu ai" 六哀: "Xian kaogong" 先考功. But Hou Xuanhan 侯玄涵, a relative to the Xias, seems to have penned this particular account first (cited in Sun's article, pp. 274-75). *Ming mo zhonglie jishi* is slightly briefer than Hou's account. Another version that Sun does not include in her analysis is

The loyal versus disloyal framework did not allow room for the complexity of the turncoat officials' experience. As argued in Li Weiyue's memorial, defining certain actions as treason was controversial, arbitrary, and ambiguous, and thus remained vulnerable to political manipulation. History has proved that many of these turncoats were competent literati-officials, filial sons, and responsible husbands. But the dominant rhetoric of the turncoat case insisted on framing loyalty, filial piety, and sexual morality as one issue, one cohesive moral-political practice. What we often miss is that the framing of these moral-political scandals actually follows the same logic as in those eulogies for martyrs and loyalists.

The imperial order issued in the name of the Hongguang emperor urged the Board of Punishment to finalize the list of turncoat officials. It explained its unforgiving attitude toward disloyal behavior:

The turncoat officials led the army to surrender and offered strategies (to the rebel leaders). Their crimes cannot be treated with any tolerance, regardless of their official rank. Commanders-in-chief and generals who surrendered to the rebels have committed serious crimes. Their crimes cannot be considered in the second degree. Metropolitan officials such as ministers, censors, circuit intendants and Hanlin members accepted positions in the rebel government. Their punishment should be heavier than hanging. Governors-generals and governors of provinces who were quick to flee when facing the rebels. Their punishment must be more severe than exile. For those who offered their daughters and maids, the crime should be punished with more than imprisonment and labor. The

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written by Chen Zhenhui, one of the Fushe Four. It documents that Xia Yunyi, upon hearing the news of the fall of Nanjing, gathered many famous people in his garden and treated them with a banquet and entertainment. Well into the banquet, he left his guests and threw himself into the river. This account is less sensational, but Chen Zhenhui praises Xia Yunyi as "a real man!" Chen Zhenhui, *Shanyang lu* 山陽錄 (MDZJCK): "Yiyou si junzi zan" 乙酉四君子贊, p. 628.

officials have betrayed their country to such a degree that a judgment must be delivered and shown to the people.<sup>87</sup>

This simplistic categorization of the turncoats greatly pained many in Hongguang court politics. That it remained in force into another Southern Ming regime, the Longwu court, is evident here in the Longwu emperor's vexation: "The rhetoric about the turncoats in the two capitals (Beijing and Nanjing) can only work against mobilizing the people!"<sup>88</sup> The Longwu emperor recognized the serious consequences of this disheartening policy of the Hongguang government toward the so-called turncoats. Those measures had not only prevented the unification of former Ming officials but had also hurt loyalist morale. The "Turncoats' Case" was significant in two respects: It generated despair among officials because its guidelines made fairness nearly impossible, when attempting to differentiate men who actively collaborated from those who, for various reasons, were forced to surrender. Through its personal attacks on morality, the whole process had injected sensationalism back into politics, but now with an extra dose of wartime terror.

Strangely, instead of trying to find a way to muster bipartisan efforts, the most prominent and respected Donglin leader, Liu Zongzhou, also joined the action against the turncoat officials. His action reflects how late-Ming bureaucrats (especially Donglin types) engaged in politics: they patently lacked the flexibility and sophistication indispensable for any meaningful political negotiations due to their prioritizing of a perfect personal moral image over effective political engagement. As the official Li Zhan 李沾 lamented in one of his memorials, officials of the Hongguang court willfully placed

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<sup>87</sup> Gu Yanwu, *Sheng an ben ji: juan 2*, p.14b.

<sup>88</sup> Xiong Kaiyuan 熊開元, *Yushan sheng gao* 魚山剩稿: juan 2.

their factional debates above the national interest at a time when “the officials should not indulge in a fracas.”<sup>89</sup>

Ma Shiying’s memorial that initiated the “Turncoats’ Case” paved the way for a series of factionalist attacks later, mainly against Donglin-Fushe figures in the government. During the ruthless persecutions carried out in the name of punishing turncoat officials and immoral men, Zhou Biao and Lei Yanzuo 雷演祚 were ordered to commit suicide in prison.<sup>90</sup> Related charges against the sexual immorality of senior officials such as Liu Zongzhou and Jiang Yueguang 姜曰廣 resulted in their angry resignations and enabled the Ma-Ruan group to monopolize power. Ma Shiying instructed Zhu Tonglei 朱統 , a member of the imperial family, to submit a memorial against Jiang Yueguang, who was also a Grand Secretary and a harsh critic of Ma. In this memorial, Zhu Tonglei listed five major crimes. The first two accused Jiang of being disloyal to the emperor, based on rumors that he and his Donglin conspirators had attempted to control the government and the military. The third charge was covering for the turncoats. The fourth, bribery. The fifth was an accusation that he had raped his daughter-in-law.<sup>91</sup> Officials were all astounded at this attack.<sup>92</sup> But we seen this happen to Zheng Man during the Chongzhen reign. Both Ma Shiying and Ruan Dacheng submitted memorials that impeached Lei Yanzuo and eventually led to an order for him to commit suicide in prison. Ruan Dacheng’s memorial, “Condemning the Most Disloyal, Unfilial and Treacherous Official,” maintains that in Chongzhen 8 (1635), when the

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<sup>89</sup> Li Zhan 李沾, “Dachen qu liu shen zhong shu”大臣去留甚重疏 in *Zhongxing shiliu*, p. 647.

<sup>90</sup> Wen Bing 文秉, *Jia yi shi an* 甲乙事案 (in Huang Zongxi compl. *Nan Ming shiliao*): juan ii, p. 544.

<sup>91</sup> Huang Zongxi, *Hongguang shilu chao*, p. 204.

<sup>92</sup> Li Qing, *Nan du lu*: juan 2, p. 224.

rebels assaulted the Taihu Lake area, to save their own lives, Lei Yanzuo and his wife put on shabby clothes but dressed his father in new clothes so that the rebels would let them go and torture his father for money. It then goes on to suggest that while in the Hongguang government, Lei Yanzuo plotted with Jiang Yueguang against the emperor.<sup>93</sup> This memorial reiterates the interconnection among literati-officials' responsibilities as officials, husbands, and sons, a strategy employed and reinforced over a wide range of political expression of the time, regardless of political party or agenda.

### *Dismissed confessions of the turncoats*

By pointing to the story that Gong Dingzi became a collaborator because of his indulgence toward the courtesan-turned-concubine, Ma Shiyong made it the defining narrative for Gong Dingzi, the turncoat official. It quickly circulated around and came to stand for the mutually constitutive disloyalty and immorality in turncoats, despite the fact that many of their peers had hesitated to pass judgment. Eventually, thanks to negotiation by the President of the Board of Punishment with Ma-Ruan, Gong Dingzi and two dozen other officials fell in the category of "Undecided" on the list of the "Turncoats' Case," meaning that the Board would need more time to consider specific circumstances of surrender to determine the nature of those cases.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Wen Bing, *Jia yi shi an: juan ii*: "Bu zhong bu xiao da ni yuan xiong shu" 不忠不孝大逆元凶疏, p. 543. The author Wen Bing, in his comments after this documentation, suggests that he could not verify whether these charges were true or false. But he strongly questions Ruan Dacheng's reliability.

<sup>94</sup> Xu Zi, *Xiaotian ji nian fu kao*: juan 7, p. 223. The President of the Board of Punishment at the time was Xie Xuelong.



When Li Zicheng's army conquered the capital, Gong Dingzi had just gotten out of prison, stripped of his official status. Gu Mei had devoted herself to taking care of him from the day he entered the prison and went through that time of terror with him. By examining Gong Dingzi's experience, we can recover some of what the moral dichotomy of loyal vs. disloyal has erased. An important question the metropolitan official must face upon learning of the death of the emperor was whether he should also die. Even before the fall of Beijing, many officials had already begun to ask themselves this question as the situation looked increasingly hopeless. Gong Dingzi's mentor, Xiong Wenju 熊文舉, visited his own mentor Meng Zhaoxiang 孟兆祥 (Junior Vice-President of the Board of Punishment) days before the fall of the capital and asked what he should do in case the city was taken. Meng Zhaoxiang replied: "No need to discuss such a topic now. We should make our own decisions. ... You have aged parents thousands of miles away from here and you are not holding a key position in the government. So you have more options."<sup>95</sup> Eventually, when Beijing fell, Meng Zhaoxiang, his son the new *jinshi* Meng Zhangming 孟章明, and many in the Meng family hanged themselves.<sup>96</sup> According to Xiong Wenju, he twice tried to kill himself, but was rescued and stopped.<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile,

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<sup>95</sup> Xiong Wenju 熊文舉, *Xuetang xiansheng wenji* 雪堂先生文集 in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan* 北京圖書館古籍珍本叢刊集部 *jibu*-122, ed. Beijing tushuguan guji chubanshe 北京圖書館古籍出版編輯組 (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1998): *juan* 18 "Bo zhen diao Meng Xiaoxing laoshi" 泊鎮弔孟肖彤老師, p. 466.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. Also see Gu Yanwu, *Ming ji shi lu*: *juan* 1, p. 19.

<sup>97</sup> Xiong Wenju, *Xuetang xiansheng wenji*: *juan* 19: "Huai Lansheng shi" 懷蘭生詩 (p. 475); *juan* 22: "Wang er Dinghua xun yi zhi" 亡兒鼎華殉義志 (pp. 522-524), "Yu menren Han Shengqiu zhonghan" 與門人韓聖秋中翰 (p. 535); *juan* 23: "Tu dazhongcheng zhuanlue" 涂大中丞傳略 (p. 543).

Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei attempted suicide by throwing themselves into a well but their neighbors rescued them.<sup>98</sup>

Given that many officials at the time used stories of attempted suicide to explain their failure to become a martyr, such accounts have been interpreted critically by both their contemporaries and modern historians. But it seems that some did contemplate suicide and even attempted it, but they were not sufficiently determined to succeed. For example, in a post-war book, a literatus Xu Yingfen claims that Xiong Wenju's friend and colleague Tu Bihong 涂必泓, who tried to escape with Xiong Wenjun and Gong Dingzi when Li Zicheng's army was retreating from Beijing, told him that Xiong had had no intention to commit suicide.<sup>99</sup> But Xiong Wenju was able to provide the names of his rescuers, a student of his and also a metropolitan official. Gong Dingzi's cowardly behavior upon the fall of Beijing is so notorious that no one attempts to consider his confession in Buddhist prayers, a genre of writing that is usually fairly reliable. The concurrent moral and psychological struggles in those days of terror and uncertainty often produced inconsistent thoughts and narratives as well as an incoherent course of action. What is certain is that many of these officials did not want to surrender and serve a new

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<sup>98</sup> Gong Dingzi's student and biographer, an official Yan Zhengju, writes that Gong Dingzi's family (meaning he and Gu Mei) threw themselves into a well but some commoners rescued them. While we need to question the reliability of such accounts, in Gong Dingzi's case, his confessions written in Buddhist prayers lend credibility to this account because as a pious Buddhist, Gong had to be relatively honest in such writings to make sure his prayers would be effective. See Gong Dingzi, *Dingshantang guwen xiaopin* 定山堂小品 (Qingyutang 慶餘堂, Daoguang 14): *juan* I: "Qi shou bao an shu" 祈壽保安疏 (pp. 5a-5b), "Luan hou de jia shu wei shuang qin qi fo shu" 亂後得家書為雙親祈佛疏 (p. 7a); *Dingshantang xiaopin xiji* 定山堂小品續集 (Qingyutang 慶餘堂, Daoguang 14): "Huan yuan li fo shu" 還願禮佛疏 (pp. 31a-32b); "Qi zi shu" 祈子疏 (pp. 33a-33b); "Qi si wen" 祈嗣文 (pp. 37a-38b).

<sup>99</sup> Xu Yingfen 徐應芬, "Yu bian ji lue" 遇變紀略 in Gu Gongxie 顧公燮 compl. *Dan wu biji* 丹午筆記 (Suzhou: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1985), p. 35.

ruler; morally and psychologically they did not resemble the stereotypically strategic turncoat image so prevalent and powerful in official and unofficial rhetoric in the South.

In his preface to a poem dedicated to Fang Yizhi entitled “Remembering Fang Mizhi” composed soon after the establishment of the Qing in Beijing, Gong Dingzi recalls how he became a turncoat.<sup>100</sup> Because he was stripped of official status when he had been thrown into prison by the late Chongzhen emperor and thus should not have appeared on the roster of officials, he hoped he would not be searched by the rebel leaders and could sneak out of the capital. At that point, Fang Yizhi and a few friends were plotting against the rebels, but the rebels managed to track down many officials, including Fang.<sup>101</sup> Fang Yizhi was then forced to reveal Gong Dingzi’s whereabouts, which directly led to Gong’s arrest.<sup>102</sup> Gong Dingzi recalls that when the rebels came to get him, Fang Yizhi appeared and shouted: “Xiaosheng (Gong Dingzi’s courtesy name)! Let them kill us together! Now I have fulfilled my moral responsibilities of *jun-chen*, *fu-fu*, and *pengyou*!”<sup>103</sup> “*Jun-chen*, *fu-fu*, and *pengyou*” literally refer to the ruler and the subject, husband and wife, and friends. Here they are used to mean Confucian moral principles and duties in general.

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<sup>100</sup> *Gong Dingzi shi*: juan 16: Preface to “Huai Fang Mizhi shi,” pp. 545-547. Gong Dingzi mentioned that Yizhi has fled to the far south and Chen Mingxia was hiding in north. Since Chen Mingxia surrendered and began to serve in the Qing government in the beginning of Shunzhi 2, this poem seems to be written in late 1644.

<sup>101</sup> According to some witnesses, servants of metropolitan officials 長班 were very evil. When Li Zicheng’s rebel army took over the capital, these servants told them officials’ hiding places to get rewards. See Zhang Yi 張怡, *Sou wen xu bi* 諛聞續筆 in *Ming mo shi shi za chao san zhong* 明末史事雜鈔三種 (chao ben, National Library of China rare collection).

<sup>102</sup> Both of them went through torture, but Gong Dingzi did not appear on the list of “tortured officials” compiled by their contemporaries. But both were on the list of “turncoat officials.” See for example, Gu Yanwu, *Ming ji shi lu*: juan 3 “Cong ni zhu chen kao” 從逆諸臣攷 and “Xing ru zhu chen kao” 刑辱諸臣攷.

<sup>103</sup> *Gong Dingzi shi*: juan 16: preface to “Huai Fang Mizhi shi.”

The “turncoats” bitterly resisted being labeled and judged by their fellow officials in the South. Gong Dingzi defends Fang’s loyalty and manliness, arguing that when Fang Yizhi managed to escape, he left behind his family and went south to join the Southern Ming government. But the Southern-Ming officials and generals there, instead of mustering their forces to fight the rebels, preferred to spend their time blaming helpless officials trapped in Beijing for failing to commit suicide.<sup>104</sup> Back in the South, upon releasing the “Turncoats’ Case” list, Ma and Ruan were not happy that Ruan’s long-time Fushe enemy, Fang Yizhi, was not put in the “most punishable” category. After having narrowly escaped Ruan Dacheng’s persecution in Nanjing, Fang Yizhi himself used the metaphor of “chaste woman” to defend his loyalty. In a letter to his Fushe friend Zhang Zilie, he wrote: “In the ninth month, when Ruan Dacheng became powerful, the chaste woman was slandered as a licentious woman! This is really unjust! Unjust!”<sup>105</sup> As early as the establishment of the Southern Ming court, around the same time Fang Yizhi successfully reached Nanjing, Fang found himself barred from the court by certain officials. He wrote to a friend, Li Wen 李雯, “A chaste woman is smeared as a licentious woman! This is like the land sinking to the bottom of the sea. How unjust!”<sup>106</sup>

Eventually, after the Manchus conquered Nanjing and eliminated the Hongguang government, the Longwu court restored Fang’s reputation and official status.<sup>107</sup> But Fang Yizhi paid a heavy price for his political “chastity”—he had abandoned his wife and

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<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Fang Yizhi 方以智, *Fushan wenji qian bian* 浮山文集前編 (SKJH-ji 113): juan 8: *Ling wai gao* 嶺外稿卷中: “Ji Zhang Ergong” 寄張爾公書, p. 606.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, juan 7 *Ling wai gao* 嶺外稿卷上: “Ji Li Shuzhang” 寄李舒章, p. 584.

<sup>107</sup> *Fang Yizhi nianpu*: juan 4, p. 133.

children to claim his manly loyalty. In a long poem composed to remember his escape from Beijing, Fang Yizhi describes the scene of departure:

Wife and children knelt and wept/ “Stay here a while together!  
Heaven and earth are upside down/ Can your journey be safe?”  
“My destiny is to die a thousand deaths/ To avenge disgrace on the battlefield.  
Once out of the tiger’s lair/ I’ll follow the back roads.”  
Reunion seems so far away/ It’s dusk, the sun sinking in the west.  
She cried at my leaving her/ Seizing a knife to stab her heart.  
“If you die, how will it help?/ Look after our children!  
After many changes in the world / Maybe you’ll see me again, an old man.”  
I knew this was goodbye forever/ A wife separated from her husband.  
Said only “I will miss you!”/ And swallowing my sobs, I waved farewell.<sup>108</sup>

These lines vividly portray a loyal Confucian official, prioritizing duty over family, while his wife, determined to be chaste and devoted to him, contemplated committing suicide but eventually gave up the idea for the sake of his children. This is exactly how a loyal official wanted to be remembered in history.

Seventeen days after Fang Yizhi’s escape, Gong Dingzi, Xiong Wenju and Tu Bihong also tried to leave the capital.<sup>109</sup> However, an encounter with some militia in Beijing suburb left them with severely injuries and frustrated their plan. As the Manchus were driving Li Zicheng out of Beijing, they called upon former Ming officials to attend the Chongzhen emperor’s funeral. These men went to mourn for their martyred emperor and found themselves trapped.<sup>110</sup> At this point, they had no choice but to accept official appointments from the Manchu ruler, because if they committed suicide now, strictly speaking, it could be considered an expression of loyalty to the Dashun rebel regime they had been forced to “serve,” an extremely awkward and problematic political move. The

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<sup>108</sup> “Fang Yizhi Mizhi shichao: ji nan”方以智密之詩鈔·紀難 cited in *Fang Yizhi nianpu*, p. 125.

<sup>109</sup> Xiong Wenju, *Xuetang xiansheng wenji*: juan 22: “Yu Menren Han Shengqiu zhonghan,” p. 535.

<sup>110</sup> *ibid.* Also see *juan 23*: “Tu dazhongcheng zhuanlue,” p. 543-544. This was indeed staged by the Qing as a means to trick the officials back to the capital. See for example, documentation in Peng Sundai 彭孫貽, *Liu kou zhi* 流寇志 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1983): *juan 12*.

experiences of Gong Dingzi and his colleagues demonstrate a very complicated course of action up to the point when they officially began to serve in the Qing government. This path, and how things unfolded, varied for each person, because these men was at once officials, fathers, sons, and husbands, situated in multiple discourses of morality that shaped their political and personal decisions.

The account of their attempted escape is instructive, however. Xiong Wenju's description gives the impression that the three men (Xiong, Gong, and Tu) left behind their women and families, just as Fang Yizhi had done, exhibiting similar manly resolve. But according to Xiong's secretary Xu Yingfen's recollection, the three officials took with them their secretaries and families, including wives and concubines. He specifically remembers that Gu Mei stopped frequently to pick up dirt and splotch her beautiful face.<sup>111</sup> Xiong Wenju's ambiguous account of the escape suggests fear that they would be seen as not heroic enough, that is, the truly loyal official should abandon his family to fulfill his political obligations. Strictly speaking, this omission does not constitute a lie; the decision to omit cannot have been an easy one. Late-Ming literati loved to praise husband and wife for going through hardships together. Leaving out these women who underwent the terrors of trying to escape with them must have been painful. However, explicitly admitting that they were not loyal enough to leave these women behind would only prove what had been assumed about their lack of character, that they only cared about their women.

Not only were the turncoats not able to claim loyalty; they could not claim filiality, either. The dramatic political developments of the summer of 1644 left few options for

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<sup>111</sup> Gu Gongxie, *Danwu biji*, p. 39.

these men. Persecutions and factionalism at the Hongguang court, as well as the conflicts among different Ming military forces caused huge losses of life and suffering in Jiangnan area; they provided little opportunity for men like Gong Dingzi to return. The turncoat officials who managed to flee to their hometowns in the South were received with suspicion and hatred.<sup>112</sup> Adding more confusion and complexity to factional politics inside the government were cases in which opportunist local officials help escalate the terror created by the “Turncoats’ Case.” For example, Xiong Wenju’s father was detained in a local prison on the charge his son had collaborated with the rebels. Xiong Wenju’s young son went to the local officials and offered to stay in prison in the place of his grandfather and father. The son’s chronic disease, without proper treatment in prison, soon led to his death.<sup>113</sup>

### **Factionalism in the Early Qing Court**

The moral dichotomy of the loyal vs. the disloyal was perpetuated by political developments in the early Qing, now a new environment for factionalism. The Manchu Qing retained many of the officials who had been captured by the rebel government after it marched into Beijing and began to establish rule in China proper. Gong Dingzi was one of them. Appointed a Supervising Censor at the Board of Rites,<sup>114</sup> he was supposed to begin his service in government in Shunzi 1/5 (1644). However, with the excuse that he was sick from worrying about his parents, he remained in his residence, all the while

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid. Many believed that they were sent to the south as spies by the Qing government.

<sup>113</sup> Xiong Wenju, *Xuetang xiansheng wenji: juan 22*: “Wang er Dinghua xun yi zhi,” pp. 522-524. This incident took place in the eleventh month of 1644.

<sup>114</sup> He was first assigned to the position of Supervising Censor at the Board of Personnel, but was soon reassigned. *Gong nianpu*, p. 13.

submitting requests to return home to visit his parents. To one of his requests submitted in the seventh month, the Regent Dorgon replied: “Gong Dingzi has received imperial orders to serve with devotion. Why is he making these requests for leave for personal matters? He must immediately attend to his job.”<sup>115</sup> However, Gong Dingzi waited for another two months before he finally reported to his post.<sup>116</sup>

The early Qing government urgently needed administrative talents like Gong Dingzi, whose competence had been proven by his previous performance in the Ming government. But struggles among the surrendered Han officials started almost as soon as the Qing took over Beijing and its metropolitan bureaucracy. The Han officials had very complicated relationships with and various attitudes toward the Manchu rulers. Some actively pursued their new ruler’s recognition; some reluctantly joined but wanted to watch and see how the situation developed; still others only wanted to save their own skins and were always looking for opportunities to leave. In the beginning, Gong Dingzi seemed to belong to the second group, and his friend Chen Mingxia 陳名夏 to the first. After joining the government in Shunzhi 2/1, Chen Mingxia immediately memorialized and suggested that Regent Dorgon himself should replace the young Shunzhi emperor to assume the highest rank in the Qing government. Although Dorgon rejected this proposal, he rewarded Chen Mingxia by immediately promoting him.<sup>117</sup> This created quite some controversy at the time. Other officials tried to show their loyalty to the new dynasty by

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<sup>115</sup> Gong Dingzi, *Hefei Gong Duanyi gong zhushu*: juan 1: “Ken en gei jia xing qin yi zhan zi qing yi guang xiao zhi shu 懇恩給假省親以展子情以廣孝治疏, pp. 22a-b. Li Qing’s documentation in *Nan du lu* (juan 3, p. 216), that Gong Dingzi had worked for the rebels and began to serve the Manchus in the fifth month of that year reveals how these turncoats experiences were assumed by those in the south.

<sup>116</sup> *Shizu Zhang huangdi shilu* 世祖章皇帝實錄 (Shunzhi 1/10)

<sup>117</sup> *Shizu Zhang huangdi shilu*: juan 17: Shunzhi 2/1-2.



volunteering to shave their heads to assume the Manchu hairstyle. (At that time, head-shaving as a mandate had been suspended nationally by the Qing after this order triggered new waves of vehement anti-Manchu resistance among the Han Chinese literati.) But some officials, such as Sun Zhixie 孫之獬 and Li Ruolin 李若琳, quickly had their heads shaved. These officials emboldened the Manchus and made life more difficult for their resistant Han colleagues.<sup>118</sup>

Conflicts among Han officials had intensified by Shunzhi 2/6 (1645). In this month, Sun Zhixie submitted a memorial that urged Dorgon to consider forbidding the officials to “form personal relationships” (*sijiao* 私交). An imperial order approved the request, warning officials to discontinue “the Ming factionalist practices” and stop banqueting for the purpose of networking for personal ends.<sup>119</sup> On the one hand, the bonds between certain Han officials and Dorgon were strengthening. Chen Mingxia and Sun Zhixie were among the few who were given gifts and promotions under Dorgon. Sun then jumped to the position of President of the Board of War and Vice Censor-in-chief of the Censorate.<sup>120</sup> This led to a factional rift between pro-Manchu officials and their pro-Han colleagues.

Meanwhile, news of the fall of Nanjing and the elimination of the Hongguang Southern Ming regime arrived in Beijing. The surrender of some high-ranking Southern Ming officials quickly became a factor in factional confrontations. In Shunzhi 2/7,

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<sup>118</sup> Chen Shengxi 陳生璽, “Qing chu ti fa ling de shishi yu Han zu dizhu jieji de paixi douzheng 清初剃發令的實施與漢族地主階級的派係鬥爭”, in *Ming-Qing yi dai shi du jian* 明清易代史獨見 (增訂本) (Shanghai: Shanghai shiji chubanshe & Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006), pp. 262-280.

<sup>119</sup> *Shizu Zhang huangdi shilu*: juan 17: Shunzhi 2/6.

<sup>120</sup> *Shizu Zhang huangdi shilu*: juan 17: Shunzhi 2/ run 6.

Dorgon instructed that the Southern Ming Hongguang emperor and his top officials be brought to the capital. The Censor of the Zhejiang Province Circuit, Wu Da 吳達, memorialized against reappointing any officials who had been identified by the late Chongzhen emperor in the “Traitors’ Case” and had been involved in devastating the Hongguang court.<sup>121</sup> He argued that careful screening would be required once the Qing army took control of the Jiangnan area and more literati-officials became available. He singled out Ruan Dacheng in this vehement warning, hinting at the unusually intimate ties between the pro-Manchu Grand Secretary Feng Quan, a former *yandang*, and the notorious Ruan.<sup>122</sup>

Then in the eighth month, the Supervising Censor of the Board of Revenue, Du Lide 杜立德, attacked Feng Quan for attempting to recruit Ruan Dacheng and Ma Shiyong.<sup>123</sup> Soon several other censors joined him in memorializing against Feng. The leading charge cited his affiliation with the powerful eunuch Wei Zhongxian in the Ming. Sun Zhixie and Li Ruolin were also attacked for associating with Feng Quan to further their own financial and political interests.<sup>124</sup> Because of Feng, Xie, and Li’s shared identity as former “followers of Wei Zhongxian” and their intimate connections, this confrontation was factionalist in two senses: it was a struggle between the “pure elements” and the former *yandang* intertwined with that between pro-Manchu and pro-Han officials in the Qing court. The official Li Senxian 李森先 employed the strongest

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<sup>121</sup> *Qing shi gao*: juan 244/liezhuan 31, p. 9620.

<sup>122</sup> *Shizu Zhang huangdi shilu*: juan 19 Shunzhi 2/7

<sup>123</sup> Jiang Liangji 蔣良驥, *Shi er chao Donghua lu* 十二朝東華錄 (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1963): juan 1/Shunzhi 2, p. 47.

<sup>124</sup> *Shizu Zhang huangdi shilu*: juan 20 Shunzhi 2/8

rhetoric in his attacks, in which he requested that Feng Quan and his son be executed.<sup>125</sup>

When the confrontation between two camps erupted, the Regent Dorgon summoned the officials and questioned them. At that audience, he decided that this was a case of factional slander aimed at pro-Manchu officials who had shaved their heads and ordered their families to don Manchu clothes ahead of the rest of officials. Dorgon questioned the Censors as to why they again indulged in the factionalism of the Ming and attempted to incriminate these pro-Manchu officials. At this moment,

The Supervising Censor Gong Dingzi replied: “Feng Quan associated himself with the evil eunuch Wei Zhongxian.” Feng Quan retorted: “Why did Gong Dingzi surrender to the rebels, who killed the late emperor, and serve in the rebel government as Censor of the Northern District of Capital?” The Regent asked Gong Dingzi, “Is this true?” Gong Dingzi answered: “Yes. But I was not the only one that surrendered. Who didn’t? Wei Zheng surrendered to emperor Tang Taizong.” The Regent said: “One has to establish himself as a loyal and chaste man before criticizing others! Gong Dingzi compares himself to Wei Zheng, and likens Li Zicheng to Tang Taizong. This is despicable. How does this kind of man get to speak about others? He should just step back and sit quietly to avoid being criticized.”<sup>126</sup>

These exchanges testify to the difficult political environment of the time, when the Manchu ruler intervened in factionalism by employing the political language of loyalty against the Han Chinese officials themselves. The treacherous nature of the discourse of loyalty is most clearly demonstrated here. “Loyalty” could be defined in connection to one ruler, one dynasty, or a legitimate regime. In the early-Qing context, surrender to the rebel government was definitely “disloyal,” while service at the Qing court could be defined in multiple ways. For some diehard Ming loyalists, collaborating with the Manchus was no doubt a disloyal act. For other Ming loyalists, if an official

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<sup>125</sup> Jiang Liangji, *Shi er chao Donghua lu*: juan 1/Shunzhi 2, p. 48.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

could use his service to benefit the people, then his efforts under the Manchu Qing could be remembered as loyal. Qing rulers had to decide how to label former Ming officials serving in their court depending on the changing ideological and political agendas.<sup>127</sup> When the above exchanges took place, a strong commitment to promoting Qing interests was the condition for “loyalty,” and previous service to the Ming or even in the rebel government could be considered irrelevant, if convenient for the Manchu rulers. Gong Dingzi was admonished because he had placed factional interests above those of the Qing court, even though his opposition to the former *yandang* was based on loyalty to the political system and to the martyred Chongzhen emperor. The Dorgon regency showed considerable mastery of the language of loyalty and took advantage of the flexibility of this discourse to secure its control over the turncoats, while at the same time preventing the old anti-*yandang* factional framework from interfering with the Manchu governing. Still, against Dorgon’s will and best efforts, factionalism continued to grow in the early Qing. When forced to take sides, Dorgon had to favor the pro-Manchu officials. The conflict between Manchu and Han interests conflict made early-Qing factionalism different from that of the late Ming. It was in this particular context that Gong Dingzi’s moral-political standing was challenged by his factional enemies.

Gong Dingzi’s father died on Shunzhi 3/4/15 (1646), but the news did not reach Beijing until three months later.<sup>128</sup> Following the custom of requesting an official honor for the deceased parent, he submitted a memorial, before taking a leave to return home to

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<sup>127</sup> Pamela Crossley’s work offers a good analysis of the discourse of loyalty in early and mid-Qing. *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>128</sup> *Gong nianpu*, p. 15.

mourn.<sup>129</sup> But then from an unexpected quarter a serious critique of Gong's behavior and loyalty was launched, submitted by the Supervising Censor of the Board of Works, Sun Poling 孫珀齡, who argued that Gong's request should be denied:

Gong Dingzi was a traitor to the Ming dynasty; he served as a Censor in the rebel government. This government appointed him to the position of Censor and then promoted him to the Court of the Imperial Stud. However, he does not devote himself to work to pay back the imperial favor. Instead, he only knows banqueting and drinking, as well as chasing actresses and actors. Years ago he spent one thousand ounces of gold to buy a courtesan, Gu Mei. He was infatuated with her and lavishing gifts upon her. His infatuation for her made him the laughingstock of Jiangnan. He has ignored his parents, his wife, and children. Even having heard about his father's death, he has not stopped carousing. Now he had the audacity to ask for an official honor for his father so that he can show off in his hometown.<sup>130</sup>

This memorial at once questioned Gong Dingzi's ability or intention to fulfill the roles of a loyal subject, a filial son, or a responsible husband and father. His infatuation with his beloved concubine Gu Mei defined his moral defects and led him to ignore his filial and familial responsibilities, which in turn called into question his loyalty to both the fallen Ming and the Manchu Qing. Earning an altar from the emperor for one's deceased father was an important filial duty and honor for a literatus-official. Gong Dingzi was deprived of this privilege because of his sexual indulgence.

Gong Dingzi was also demoted two degrees in rank.<sup>131</sup> The Regent firmly sided with the pro-Manchu faction by allowing his political enemies to land this heavy blow. Gong's attacker, Sun Poling, was the son of Sun Zhixie, a former *yandang* who had made

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<sup>129</sup> Gong Dingzi, *Gong Duanyi zongshu*: juan 1: "Kou qi sheng ci zhaoli en xu yi guang quan rang shu" 叩乞聖慈照例恩恤以光泉壤疏, pp. 26a-27a.

<sup>130</sup> *Er chen zhuan* 貳臣傳, ed. Qing Guoshiguan 清國史館 (*MDZJCK*): juan 12, pp. 806-807.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

his way into a high position in the Qing government by leading the pro-Manchu faction. His was both a personal disparagement and political attack, a retaliation against Gong Dingzi for leading the opposition to Feng Quan and Sun Zhixie. Sun Poling had only passed the metropolitan level of civil service examination in Shunzhi 3/3 (1646) and received his first official appointment in Shunzhi 3/5. Merely one month later he submitted the memorial against Gong Dingzi.<sup>132</sup>

The contrasting political experiences of Gong Dingzi and Feng Quan, the Manchu ruler's favorite and a pivotal figure in early Qing factionalism, shows the aggressive disruption of literati-official gender norms by an "alien" ruler. The "Traitors' Case" was believed to be the Chongzhen emperor's most applauded and least controversial political move in his seventeen years of rule. In that case, Feng Quan was identified as a follower of Wei Zhongxian, for which he lost his official status.<sup>133</sup> Feng's political performance in the last twenty years of the Ming revealed a very troubling career history from the perspective of the "pure elements." As factionalism among Han officials was brewing, Feng Quan's loyal service to the Qing court earned him marriage to a Manchu lady arranged by the Regent Dorgon (called *ci hun Manzhou* 賜婚滿洲) himself.<sup>134</sup> The two

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<sup>132</sup> *Shizu Zhang huangdi shilu*: juan 25 Shunzhi 3/ 4-5. Sun Poling passed the exams and was appointed the Supervising Censor of the Board of Works. The Grand Secretary Feng Quan was one of the Grand Examiners that year. See Jiang Qingbo 江慶柏, *Qingchao jinshi timing lu* 清朝進士題名錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007); *Zichuan xianzhi* 淄川縣志, Qianlong 8 (microfilm, National Library of China) & Qianlong 41 editions in *Zhongguo difangzhi jicheng: Shandong fu xianzhi* 6 中國地方志集成·山東府縣志輯 6 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2004); Kangxi 26 edition (microfilm, National Library of China) doesn't have his name under "Xuanju-juren" category.

<sup>133</sup> *Qing shi gao*: juan 245/liezhua 32, p. 9630.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* This marriage had taken place by the first month of Shunzhi 3, because in a memorial submitted that same month, Feng Quan mentioned this honor. *Qing shi gao*: juan 245/liezhuan 23. See Yang Haiying 楊海英, *Hong chengchou yu ming-qing yidai yanjiu* 洪承疇與明清易代研究 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshu guan, 2006). Also see Yang's article, "Hong Chengchou Liu shi furen kao" 洪承疇劉氏夫人考 in Zhu

Han grand secretaries in the early Qing court, Feng Quan and Hong Chengchou, were accorded this honor. The historian Yang Haiying is probably right to suggest that this not only demonstrated the Manchu intention to win their loyalty, but also provided the Regent a means of surveillance and control. Since both men were already married, their Manchu ladies could not have been subjected to the hierarchy of wife and concubine, so some sort of alternative arrangement had to be made, and this moral dilemma and the breach of literati-official gender norms caused by such an “honor” had to be carefully managed.<sup>135</sup> In the terror of early-Qing times, even the most diehard Confucians among the Han officials could not challenge this morally problematic practice. In the face of such complications, it must have brought incredible dismay that Feng Quan’s most vocal factional enemy, Gong Dingzi would be charged with political defect and moral stain because of his relationship with a Han concubine.

In the fall of Shunzhi 3 (1647), demoted and humiliated, Gong Dingzi embarked on his first trip back south after the dynastic change, in Gu Mei’s company. In a poem sent to his closest friend, another turncoat official, Cao Rong, Gong Dingzi bitterly reflected on how his personal life had become the subject of political ridicule and factional attack.<sup>136</sup> Months later, in another poem, Gong Dingzi again lamented on this

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Chengru ed. 朱誠如, *Qing shi lun ji: qinghe Wang Zhonghan jiaoshou jiu shi huadan* 清史論集：慶賀王鐘翰教授九十華誕 (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 2003), pp. 262-271. Tan Qian mentions this in his documentation of the trip to Beijing: when this Manchu woman died in Shunzhi 10 (1653), she was given a posthumous title as a first-rank lady. Tan Qian suggests that this was wrong, since Feng’s official wife had received an official title from the Ming and his concubine/Manchu bride earned a prestigious official title from the new government. Tan Qian, *Bei you lu* 北遊錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), p. 381.

<sup>135</sup> Yang Haiying, *Hong Chengchou*, pp. 100-102.

<sup>136</sup> *DSTSJ: juan 33*: “Nan gui zhou zhong shu huai ji Qiuyue shi” 南歸舟中述懷寄秋岳詩, p. 499.

traumatic political and personal experience.<sup>137</sup> Meng Sen has likened the sentiment expressed in Gong's poem to that of Wu Sangui, whose rage at losing his concubine, the former Nanjing courtesan Chen Yuanyuan, to Li Zicheng, allegedly led to his collaboration with the Manchus in their conquest of Beijing. This has been famously represented by the great poet Wu Weiye in his poem: "His headgear was raised by one rush of anger, all for the sake of the fair-faced one."<sup>138</sup> Meng Sen writes that, likewise, the only commendable character trait of the turncoat Gong Dingzi was his manly chivalry! Although this sounds like harmless mockery between Chinese literati, it is emblematic of the serious influence the political-moral language of literati-official manliness as used by early-Qing rulers and literati writers has had on modern historians. Gong Dingzi's turncoat identity—his disloyalty and sexual indulgence—was crafted not only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but has also been cemented by historians' repeated celebration of a gendered moral understanding of loyalty and Ming-Qing transition political history.

### **The Past through the Loyalist and Moralism Lens**

In the seventeenth-century historical representations of these two aspiring officials, Gong Dingzi and Fang Yizhi, we find two strikingly different patterns of re-imagining. Gong Dingzi comes out as more conservative than Fang Yizhi in his personal life prior to 1644s. Both Gong and Fang were taken captive by the rebels with the fall of Beijing, and it was

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<sup>137</sup> *Gong Dingzi shi: juan 19*: "Chun ri shan you ji shi" 春日山遊即事, p. 615.

<sup>138</sup> Meng Sen, "Hengbo furen kao," p. 143. Wu Weiye's line in Chinese is 衝冠一怒為紅顏. I adopt Waiyee Li's English translation from her work, "Women as Emblems of Dynastic Fall in Qing Literature," in David Der-wei Wang and Shang Wei eds., *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation: From the Late Ming to the Late Qing and Beyond* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), p. 98.



Fang Yizhi who delivered Gong Dingzi into rebel hands. Even so, it is Gong Dingzi who was portrayed and ridiculed as disloyal and self-indulgent, while Fang Yizhi was eventually remembered and eulogized as a loyal man of the highest morality in post-1644 historical writings.

The early-Qing literati editorial efforts to hide Fang Yizhi's name from that particular letter are revealing. Qing literary censorship certainly forced the editors to expunge politically sensitive language and contents, and this can be seen in many other works from this period. But the erasure of names from this particular letter seems to derive from a different concern. For example, one of the expunged names, that of Wu Yingji, appears in other letters in the same chapter. Yet Zhang Zilie and his editors left few clues to the identity of the addressee of this letter. This move may well have been taken to protect the loyalist Fang Yizhi's moral-political reputation. When this collection went to print in the early Qing, many of his Donglin-Fushe friends had either died as martyrs or were engaged in anti-Qing movements. The idealization of heroic loyalists was typical among *yimin* literati. The editorial effort by early-Qing literati to conceal the addressee of Zhang Zilie's letter strongly suggests how important it was for early-Qing literati (especially *yimin*) to maintain for someone like Fang Yizhi. For how could they allow an image of licentiousness to be associated with Fang Yizhi, one of the most legendary of those loyalists?

The stark contrast between turncoats and loyalists in the Ming-Qing grand narrative was created by loyalist and moralistic hands, whose lasting impact continue to be felt in today's scholarship. They created a convenient ideological and historiographical framework that not only helped perpetuate Confucian ideals but also met the Manchu

Qing rulers' desire to consolidate their control by promoting Confucian orthodoxy. One example is the uncritical evaluation of Shi Kefa. Shi Kefa's upright character and later martyrdom are promoted in seventeenth-century historical and literary representations of him; as an ideally loyal Confucian official, he is placed on the "righteous" side of the moral-political dichotomy. Historical documentation and commentaries by loyalists and moralists have exaggerated his achievements and ignored his political and military blunders during the crucial years of 1644-1645, especially in launching moral charges against the Prince of Fu, blunders that proved strategically narrow-minded and fatal.<sup>139</sup>

The disloyalty and immorality of the turncoats also stood in stark contrast to the representation of martyrs. They have entered the historical record (official and unofficial) as hypermasculine heroes, accompanied by their loyal wives and concubines. Some of these officials would take the lives of their wives and concubines before taking their own so that the whole family would remain chaste. The martyrs would compose poems before they took their own lives (and their women's) to make a last manly statement. It was documented that the Chongzhen emperor himself, before taking his own life, made sure to slay with his own hands every imperial consort in the place he had ever touched.<sup>140</sup> Such stories and poems were widely circulated by literati in the seventeenth century.<sup>141</sup> In some cases, the moral power of the martyred official is idealized to a dramatic degree. For example, one literatus-official documents in the form of diary, that when the rebels first entered the capital, they first grabbed prostitutes and singing girls. Then their lust extended to the women of good families. Later young men of good families who were

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<sup>139</sup> Gu Cheng, p. 91.

<sup>140</sup> Gu Yanwu, *Ming ji shi lu* 明季寔錄 (SKWS, 2-21): *juan 2*, p. 31.

<sup>141</sup> Xu Zi's *Xiaotian ji nian fu kao* (*juan 4*, pp. 96-97) not only lists these officials but also provides several historical works that contain detailed descriptions of the suicides of these officials and their families.

good-looking also fell victim. The bodies of women who died of rape filled the wells, gutters, hallways, and houses. In one night, three hundred and seventy women died in Anfu Lane. The wives and concubines of surrendered officials were not exempt, either. They bitterly complained to their husbands and tried to flee. However, the rebels did not dare assault the women whose husbands had died as martyrs following their emperor.<sup>142</sup> The grand narrative of Ming-Qing transition thus offers a generalizing and moralizing depiction: upon the turncoats' surrender, "their women" were used either to secure their (political) safety or raped as a result of their husbands' surrender. The turncoats' women themselves had no stories. By contrast, the loyalists' wives were as chaste as their husbands. In this way, through the fates of women, a contrast was created not only between the officials and rebels, but also between the martyred officials' moral prowess and the turncoats' lack of it.

Historians have tried to analyze the psychology, rhetoric, and behavior of literati-officials surrounding the issue of martyrdom in the years immediately after the fall of the Ming. Some of these works have discussed the rhetorical use of filial piety as a means to justify one's failure to die upon the fall of the dynasty.<sup>143</sup> It will take more detailed research to obtain a fuller picture of how exactly these hundreds of literati-officials "became" the turncoat officials during this time and afterwards. Here it suffices to point out that the rhetorical power of sexual morality often overrode literati-officials' performance as filial sons. The fact that Gong Dingzi's sense of filial responsibility

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<sup>142</sup> Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Yan du ri ji* 燕都日記 (edited and enlarged by Moli shanren 莫釐山人, printed copy by Liulichang, *Jizai huibian I* 琉璃廠排字本《紀載匯編》), under the entry of Chongzhen 3/25.

<sup>143</sup> For example, Ho Koon-piu 何冠彪, *Sheng yu si: Ming ji shidafu de jueze* 生與死：明季士大夫的抉擇 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban, 1997).

earned the highest praise from a respected *yimin* Yan Ermei did not matter much.<sup>144</sup> Ultimately it was his disloyalty defined in connection to his alleged sexual immorality, not filial piety, that determined his lasting reputation in the public eye and in historical memory.

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<sup>144</sup> Yan Ermei 閻爾梅, *Yan Gugu Ji* 閻古古集, ed. Zhang Xiangwen 張相文 (Beijing: Zhongguo dixuesuo, 1922) vol. 4: *Nan Zhili ji* 南直隸集: “Da Gong Xiaosheng wu shou” 答龔孝升五首, pp. 5b-6a.

## Chapter 6

### Inscribing and Reinscribing Loyalty: Friendships in Orchid Paintings

The practice of loyalty had various socio-political meanings and consequences in the early Qing years. For a small group of diehard Ming loyalists, it meant not to serve the Manchus and not to interact with Qing officials (including turncoats). In the case of most *yimin*, they had to walk a fine line between refusing to serve the Qing and maintaining their socio-cultural ties with Qing officials. For the turncoats, once they began to assume official positions in the new dynasty, they had to show loyalty to the new ruler, the legitimate guardian of the people's interests, while at the same time representing themselves as victims of wars that forced their disloyalty to the fallen Ming. Many scholars have shown how the interpretations and practices of “loyalty” became the single most important political, social, and intellectual issue of the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> The stakes in this concept remained high for literati (official or not) because they *had to* be judged in life and in history by their performance of it. Therefore, literati society had to find ways to rebuild itself across political divides without jeopardizing its members' image as “loyal” men—regardless of the object of that loyalty. An examination of the importance of literati friendship will not only shed light on differences and connections between the rhetoric of loyalty and the practice of literati networking, it can also deepen

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<sup>1</sup> See for example He Guanbiao, *Sheng yu si*; Wang Fansen, *Wan Ming Qing chu sixiang shi lun*; and Zhao Yuan, *Ming-Qing zhi ji shidafu yanjiu*.

our understanding of the importance for both turncoats and *yimin* to create a tissue that would reconnect them via the language of loyalty. We shall see, in the post-1644 era, “loyalty” was not only a belief and an ideology that structured literati’s socio-political life, but also a means of communication through which literati of different communities could negotiate possibilities of reconnection. To understand the reintegration of turncoat literati-officials and the *yimin* community into a relatively unified literati society, as well as the psychological recovery of both parties from terror, violence, and political antagonism, I propose an examination of how the literati community strengthened their social bond by employing the shared languages of loyalty, filial piety, and fraternal love in their practice of friendship. Educated women acted as valuable mediums in this project and the domestic was an important site in which political recovery could safely proceed.

The historical evaluation and interpretations of Gu Mei’s life have been complex. They mainly fall into three kinds. Some discuss her artistic achievements as an elite courtesan, especially her orchid paintings. Some look at her life experience as a courtesan, an identity with particular gender and class associations, and these often emphasize the benefit she gained from her liaison with Gong Dingzi. For example, in her creative analysis of the late-Ming courtesan as “an invention for a cultural ideal,” Wai-yee Li cites Gu Mei as an example of successful self-invention, who was able to position herself as a lady of high social status, in contrast to Liu Rushi, who became a symbol of independence and freedom.<sup>2</sup> Gong Dingzi’s political career was a tough struggle until the early Kangxi years. During the early Qing years in the capital, he was heavily involved in factionalist fights and suffered politically from his insistence on protecting Han people’s

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<sup>2</sup> Wai-yee Li, “The Late Ming Courtesan: Invention of a Cultural Ideal” in Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chang ed. *Writing Women in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 46-73.

interests to the maximum. Outside the capital, he faced the task of getting the *yimin* community to accept him. This was not easy, since rumors that he used Gu Mei as an excuse to avoid committing suicide had circulated widely, for which he was ridiculed. And on Gu Mei's side, the "high social status" that accrued from a concubine's liaison with a literatus-official simply did not mean as much during this period of fear, guilt and struggle as it would have in peaceful times. This is an aspect of dynastic transition that we need to take careful note of.

Some historians have recognized Gu Mei's active role in Gong Dingzi's efforts to protect loyalist literati in the early Qing, especially in the cases of Yan Ermei and Fu Shan 傅山. But they have not gone much beyond brief mentions of Gu Mei's *assistance* to her husband in these high-profile "political" cases.<sup>3</sup> This study, by exploring the social-political networks Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei maintained and developed during the transitional period, adopts a different approach. I intend to show how elite women figured, both on practical and symbolic levels, as agents of social-political networking and rebuilding efforts, with specific social and cultural roles, in the midst of the era's frustrations, confusion, fear, and sorrow. Specifically, I will analyze how Gu Mei's artistic skill was engaged in the immense task of political recovery that in part took place through the process of social and cultural interaction between the *yimin* community and literati-officials in the new regime. Women's independent, active and substantial presence suggests a process of transition and recovery that differs from and is sidelined by the conventional political history that largely excludes them.

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<sup>3</sup> Qianshen Bai, for example, in his study of Fu Shan: *Fushan's World: The Transformation of Chinese Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asian Center, 2003).

My analysis of Gu Mei's orchid paintings will proceed on various fronts. First, the circulation of her paintings demonstrates that a shared cultural heritage in many ways sustained or reconstituted the social-political ties of elite men and women. Second, artistic and literary expressions of certain political and moral sentiments helped literati-officials like Gong Dingzi negotiate the issue of "loyalty," which had become a political dilemma for the turncoats and a social dilemma for the *yimin*. Third, as has been firmly established in studies of the seventeenth century, elite women's literary and artistic achievements had reached a high level of accomplishment. By considering the joint efforts of literati and their women's employment of traditional Chinese artistic and literary tropes as means of moral expression, my analysis aims to illustrate how the political recovery *had to* take place in multiple, interconnected ways—political and socio-cultural, material and symbolic, and between men and between women.

Before I proceed to the main part of my analysis, a few words on the nature of the source materials are necessary. The pictorial contents of some of the paintings I discuss here are not available to us any more. I examine Gong Dingzi's inscriptions and poems written on and about Gu Mei's paintings, which provide limited information about the details of their pictorial contents but rich information about the contexts of these paintings. Thus my analysis of the paintings is not as definitive as I would like. However, I take this "unfortunate opportunity" to approach the textual part of these paintings seriously.<sup>4</sup> Doing so forces us to look at her paintings in three ways simultaneously: as her art, as his art, and as this couple's joint work.

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<sup>4</sup> The art historian Craig Clunas, in his book on how the great Ming artist-scholar Wen Zhengming used his artistic skill to build his social world, nicely articulates the importance of the textual aspect of Chinese



## The Melancholic Loyal Man

As we have already seen, Gong Dingzi's careful representation of Gu Mei's paintings reflected expectations that demanded he repudiate frivolity and not allow a woman (or her talents) to define his image. To be an ideal Donglin man like his mentor Fang Zhenru, Gong Dingzi emphasized Gu Mei's (and his) reluctance to show off her artistic skills as *his* assets. Although the circulation of her works among their social peers remained relatively low-key, Gu Mei's artistic skill continued to bolster Gong Dingzi's self-representation as the Confucian moral man. But what would this have accomplished during the time of transition, under conditions drastically different from those of the late Ming? What did Gong Dingzi and his literati friends *need* to present about themselves to each other and to later generations? A careful examination of the circulation of Gu Mei's orchid paintings leads us to the post-1644 literati-officials' negotiation of friendship and family relations as they wrestled with the issue of (dis)loyalty. This struggle, both internal for the individual and as a public gesture, constituted a necessary demonstration of the turncoat's willingness to be re-integrated into the larger literati community. Moreover, this demonstration of loyalty *had to* be mediated to avoid appearing disloyal to the new regime. Ideally, it took place in non-political forms, such as Gong Dingzi's inscriptions on Gu Mei's paintings.

A little more than one month after the suicide of the Chongzhen emperor, the Manchus drove Li Zicheng and his rebel army out of the capital and began to establish its

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painting and calligraphy for understanding the meaning of a work. Craig Clunas, *Elegant Debts: The Social Art of Wen Zhenming, 1470-1559* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), p. 8.

authority in China proper. Gong Dingzi and his close friend and colleague Cao Rong were kept in Beijing, in the appointed positions they had held before the change of regime.<sup>5</sup> Cao Rong brought Gong Dingzi a scroll and had him ask Gu Mei to paint on it. The inscription, by Gong Dingzi himself, is dated the summer of *jiashen* (1644).<sup>6</sup> Various sources help us narrow the timeframe down to the late fifth or early sixth month, before Cao Rong assumed his official appointment.<sup>7</sup> The content of the painting is not available any more, but it was likely an “orchid painting” for which Gu Mei was well known, since in his inscription Gong Dingzi alludes to this important metaphor for the loyal Confucian subject.<sup>8</sup>

The most important sentiment conveyed in this gift—the painting and the inscription—is sorrow. It artistically and literarily employs the political language of loyalty in self-expression. Gong Dingzi’s inscription utilizes the literary allusion to the

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<sup>5</sup> Cao Rong served as a Ward-inspecting Censor of Western Beijing (*yushi xunshi xicheng* 御史巡視西城) before Li Zicheng seized the capital. Gong Dingzi was a Supervising Censor at the Board of War before he was imprisoned. Gong Dingzi was in temporary retirement at home after being released until the peasant army took over Beijing. In fifth month of Shunzhi 1 (1644/6), he received the appointment as a Supervising Censor at the Qing Board of Personnel. (*Erchen zhuan* 貳臣傳: *juan* 6 & 12) Unlike Cao Rong, Gong Dingzi did not immediately begin to serve in the Qing government. According to some sources, he officially started several months later. I will discuss this below.

<sup>6</sup> *Dingshantang wenji* 定山堂文集 (hereafter *DSTWJ*, Gong shi Zhanluzhai 龔氏瞻麓齋, 1924): *juan* 6: “Ti hua yu Cao Qiuyue” 題畫與曹秋岳, p. 33a.

<sup>7</sup> In the Chinese lunar calendar, summer refers to the fourth, fifth and sixth months of the year. The first sentence of the inscription suggests that the two were stuck in Beijing, but not in as dangerous a situation as before the Manchus replaced the rebels to control the capital. Also, the term *fuqiu* (war prisoner) that Gong Dingzi uses to describe themselves tells us that they had not assumed official appointments yet. In addition, *The Veritable Records* of the sixth month of this year documents that Cao Rong submitted a memorial on the *gengchen* day of the sixth month, i.e., the twenty-fourth day of that month (July 27, 1644). *Qing Shizu zhang huangdi shilu* 清世祖章皇帝實錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985): *juan* 5. Gong Dingzi delayed taking his post as long as he could by requesting leaves to take care of his parents and claiming illness. But these repeated requests were rejected and he eventually assumed the job later in the year. *Qing Shizu zhang huangdi shilu*: *juan* 5: Shunzhi 1/10, p. 105.

<sup>8</sup> The orchid as a metaphor for loyalty has a long history, probably since the time of Qu Yuan (ca. 343-277 B.C.), a loyal and righteous official who committed suicide after the capital of his state was conquered by another state. “The orchid” in his *chuci* style poems symbolizes gender- and status-specific manly virtues. See Geng, *The Fragile Scholar*, chap. 2.

historical Yu Xin 庾信.<sup>9</sup> Some suggest that very few literati-officials in the early Qing would refer to themselves via the Yu Xin image as comfortably as did Cao Rong.<sup>10</sup> This argument presumes that the historical Yu Xin represented first and foremost a turncoat figure. In fact, the power of this historical reference lies in the helplessness and sorrow expressed in Yu Xin's famous *fu* style poem, *Ai Jiangnan fu* 哀江南賦 ("The Lament for the South"), in which he proclaims his "reluctant disloyalty." Gong Dingzi used this allusion quite often in the early years of Qing. As former Ming officials who failed to commit suicide and went on to serve in the new regime, Gong Dingzi and Cao Rong represented themselves as helpless victims of war, melancholic men lamenting the loss of their country and their martyred emperor, by the reference to Yu Xin and his famous poem. Citing Yu Xin suited Gong Dingzi and Cao Rong's situation very well: on the one hand, Yu Xin made the politically disloyal decision involuntarily; on the other hand, his poem became a classic literary expression of sorrow over the loss of one's homeland. The appearance of these references in Gong Dingzi's inscription, therefore, demonstrates these officials' defiance at being too easily categorized as "disloyal."

In addition to the expression of sorrow, self-representation as the war victim also complicates the turncoat identity and story. When the painting and inscription were made, neither Gong Dingzi nor Cao Rong had had the opportunity to go back south and face the

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<sup>9</sup> Xu Yin (513-581) served the Liang regime (502-557). He was sent to the Western Wei (535-556) as an envoy but retained there against his will. During this time, the Western Wei conquered the Liang. Forced to serve the new ruler, he was given high positions. But he was ashamed of having served two dynasties and sad that he could not return to the south. See William T. Graham, Jr., *"The Lament for the South": Yü Hsin's "Ai Chiang-nan Fu"* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

<sup>10</sup> For example, Xie Zhengguang 謝正光, "Qing chu erchen Cao Rong ji qi 'yimin menke'" 清初貳臣曹溶及其「遺民門客」 in *Qing chu shiwen yu shiren jiaoyou kao* 清初詩文與士人交遊考 (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2001), p. 261.

moral-political criticism leveled against turncoats in the anti-Qing stronghold areas. But they must have heard how the Hongguang Southern Ming government and the public were persecuting turncoats and their families.<sup>11</sup> Gong Dingzi's inscription pleads for understanding of their complicated political decision through an imagined conversation between the turncoats and the loyalists. He textually allowed the lament of officials like himself to be challenged, even mocked, by two literary figures famous for being political recluses, "Chrysanthemum of the East Bamboo fence" and "Thornferns of the Western Mountains" (*dongli ju xishan wei* 東籬菊西山薇)<sup>12</sup>—in this case they clearly stand in for the Ming loyalists:

We lament in front of the grass and flowers, sobbing, sighing, and confessing. All our emotions are full of sorrow; no poems are without pain. The chrysanthemum of the East Bamboo Fence and the thornferns of the Western Mountains must be laughing at us, at [the orchids accompanying] these two frustrated fellows.<sup>13</sup>

Literati-officials like Gong Dingzi and Cao Rong lived in the shadow of the "turncoat" political identity. The discourse of loyalty rewarded martyrdom and political eremitism, thereby predetermining a discursive power imbalance between the "collaborators" and loyalists. While Gong Dingzi's voice, representing the fragile and somewhat schizophrenic turncoats, admits their disadvantage vis-à-vis the morally impeccable loyalists, he characterizes their situation as one of helpless "prisoners of

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<sup>11</sup> See the previous chapter for the discussion of these persecutions in the south.

<sup>12</sup> "Chrysanthemum of the East Bamboo Fence" is an allusion to Tao Qian (Yuanming) of the Eastern Jin dynasty, who chose to live a reclusive life over serving in the government. "Thornferns of the Western Mountains" refers to Bo Yi and Shu Qin, who upon the fall of the Yin, protested against the succeeding dynasty (Zhou) and refused to serve. They lived a recluse life in the Shouyang Mountain, eating thornferns instead of grain grown on Zhou land. See their biographies in *Shiji: juan* 61.

<sup>13</sup> Gong Dingzi, "Ti hua yu Cao Qiuyue," p. 33a.

war,”<sup>14</sup> rather than turncoats. Gu Mei’s orchid painting, then, becomes a meaningful platform for Gong Dingzi’s self-expression and self-representation as a man who is loyal at heart.

The “presence” of Gu Mei in the painting to Cao Rong reinforces the message of sorrow and involuntary disloyalty. First, Gu Mei witnessed Gong Dingzi and Cao Rong’s “passive” involvement in the Qing government and their sorrow at the loss of their country; she stands as an important witness in Gong Dingzi’s inscription. Immediately after the fall of the Ming, compromised officials had to prepare a narrative that would explain their political decision to be “disloyal,” to their literati fellows. The idea of having a witness help explain their failure to successfully commit suicide obsessed many of these men such as Xiong Wenju, Gong Dingzi’s mentor, who on multiple occasions refers to a disciple—the man who supposedly rescued him—as witness to his suicide attempts upon the fall of Beijing.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Gu Mei’s role as a witness was important in Gong Dingzi’s narrative.

Secondly and more significantly, Gong Dingzi’s inscription comments that Gu Mei’s painting is “artistically marvelous but cannot be considered a truly good piece of work,” due to its unrestrained expression of sorrow and depression.<sup>16</sup> The art historian James Cahill has noted that the significance of replacing “emotion” (*qing* 情) with “exhilaration” (*xing* 興) as the ultimate Confucian ideal in literati art theory lies in the

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<sup>14</sup> “Shen zuo qiu fu” 身作俘囚, *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Xiong Wenju, *Xuetang xiansheng wenji: juan 19* “Huai Lansheng shi you xu” 懷蘭生詩有序, p. 475; *juan 22* “Nan huan Hanshang yu tongxiang zhu lao shu” 南還邗上與同鄉諸老書 (pp. 534-35) and “Yu menren Han Shengqiu zhonghan” 與門人韓聖秋中翰 (pp. 535-36).

<sup>16</sup> Gong Dingzi, “Ti hua yu Cao Qiuyue,” p. 33a.

fact that *xing* “denoted an undefined intensity of feeling which, embodied in a work of art, could instill in that work a quality of subtle excitement without suggesting an unseemly display of strong and particularized emotion.”<sup>17</sup> Gong Dingzi’s evaluation situates the painting within the literati art tradition and presents him as adhering to the orthodox Confucian art theory when he hints that Gu Mei’s unrestrained expression of sorrow in the painting fails to go beyond *qing*. More significantly, by pointing out the problem with unrestrained emotions in the painting, Gong Dingzi actually strengthens their moral self-defense, because it is through the emphasis on the “excessive sorrow” that he manifests true loyalty and pleas for loyalists’ understanding. In other words, what renders Gu Mei’s painting artistically imperfect was precisely what demonstrates their love for the fallen country and commitment to its cultural traditions.

In addition, this comment strengthens Gong Dingzi’s moral image and Gu Mei’s conventional feminine virtues. Gong Dingzi did not forget the promise he made to Fang Zhenru, that he would not circulate Gu Mei’s paintings to show off her talent.<sup>18</sup> In *Shunzhi* 2 (1645), upon learning of Fang Zhenru’s death, he composed a long poem to memorialize him, in which he reiterated this commitment. In the funeral oration for Fang Zhenru, Gong Dingzi yet again cited this commitment.<sup>19</sup> Gu Mei’s paintings were mainly given to close family and friends within a small circle. As we have seen, before the fall of Ming, representations of Gu Mei as the virtuous woman of an imprisoned upright official helped construct Gong Dingzi’s identity and image as an ideal Confucian official. Now, in the instance of the painting presented to Cao Rong, Gu Mei’s artistic skills are

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<sup>17</sup> James F. Cahill, “Art and Letters: Confucian Elements in the Theory of Painting” in Arthur F. Wright ed. *Confucianism and Chinese Civilization* (New York: Atheneum, 1964), p. 93.

<sup>18</sup> See the previous chapter for the exchanges between them before the fall of Beijing.

<sup>19</sup> Gong Dingzi, *DSTWJ*: *juan* 4: “Ji Fang Haiwei Zhongcheng wen” 祭方孩未中丞文, pp. 46a-47b.

carefully downplayed in the reserved comments on her art. At the same time, what is being highlighted is the fact that Gu Mei shares the same political sentiments—sorrow over the loss of country and nostalgia for the South/unconquered part of China, all signs of her political virtue. The way that Gong Dingzi has presented Gu Mei’s artistic skill shows caution regarding possible moral attacks at a time of political instability. Maybe he had already foreseen that his relationship with Gu Mei would become a target of ridicule in the forming factionalist struggles.

As a gift, the painting further bound these two officials together by declaring their shared story and experience. Before the fall of the capital, Gong Dingzi and Cao Rong already belonged to the same social-cultural circle in Beijing. Having gone through similar experiences in the traumatic months of 1644 strengthened their bond. Importantly in this painting to Cao Rong, the emotional bonding established with it was based on Gong Dingzi and Cao Rong’s shared political identity and experience; it became a part of their joint efforts to confess and pleas to anyone who chanced to see the painting, against the charge that they had voluntarily welcomed and served the invaders. Gong Dingzi did not readily give out Gu Mei’s paintings as gifts. They went to his family and closest friends and did not necessarily benefit him politically or socially; rather, they were gifts of emotional bonding. This painting was no exception. Such an expression of bonding, in itself sincere and altruistic, could serve as an important socio-political gesture. The painting given to Cao Rong was definitely not an isolated incident of “altruistic gifting.”<sup>20</sup> Another orchid painting went to Hao Jie 郝傑, a Beijing native and

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<sup>20</sup> This is a term used by Natalie Zemon Davis in *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), p. 131.

compromised official serving as a censor in the Board of Revenue. Hao Jie had given Gong Dingzi some wine in the winter and had joked that Gong Dingzi could pay him back with a painting by Gu Mei<sup>21</sup> (Figure 4). In these cases, the transfer of Gu Mei’s art contributed to the psychological and emotional healing of and mutual supports as friends among these traumatized men.



(Figure 4) Judith G. Smith ed. *Tradition and Transformation: Studies in Chinese Art in Honor of Chu-Tsing Li*.

### Reclaiming Familial Virtues

Gu Mei’s art reflected and constituted part of Gong Dingzi’s negotiation of “loyalty” not only in bonding with his colleague and friend, but just as importantly in strengthening

<sup>21</sup> See the painting and translation of Gong Dingzi’s inscription in Judith G. Smith ed. *Tradition and Transformation: Studies in Chinese Art in Honor of Chu-Tsing Li* (Seattle and London: Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas in association with The University of Washington Press, 2005), pp. 96-97. For the biography of Hao Jie, see Qian Yiji 錢儀吉 (ed.), *Bei zhuan ji 碑傳集*: juan 10: “Hubu you shilang Hao Jie Muzhi” 戶部右侍郎郝傑墓誌; *Da Qing Jifu xianzhe zhuan 大清畿輔先哲傳*: juan 2: “Hao Weine (fu Jie) 郝維訥 (父傑) .



fraternal love with his brothers. This latter point was very important in Gong Dingzi's case because his role as a loving eldest brother, integral to his identity as a filial son and loyal man, became politically salient during the factionalist struggles. In the winter of Shunzhi 3 (1646), Gong Dingzi returned to his hometown Luzhou as a mourning son, his first trip back south after the fall of the Ming. As I have detailed in the previous chapter, immediately prior to departure, Gong Dingzi experienced personal humiliation at the hands of his factional enemies in the Regent Dorgon's court, when he memorialized a request for an honor to commemorate his father. Gong Dingzi had expressed his sorrow over the fall of Ming as a gesture of loyalty to the dynasty he used to serve; he now needed to prove his loyalty to the new regime he had already served for two years. On another front, the virtue of filial piety also transcended the times. Thus, Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei's trip to the south would prove these two pledges of loyalty via their demonstrations of filial responsibility.

The moral charges that Gong Dingzi neglected his filial responsibilities as a result of his infatuation with Gu Mei indeed betrayed the reality. As the eldest son, Gong Dingzi had a strong sense of responsibility toward his parents and family. Unable to attend to his parents during the war, he composed several *shu* (prayer scripts to be burned by Buddhist monks) to pray for his parents' safety and express gratitude to the Buddha in this time of turmoil.<sup>22</sup> On his way south, Gong Dingzi sent poems to his longtime friend, the *yimin* Yan Ermei, seeking understanding and reconnection. To Gong Dingzi's relief,

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<sup>22</sup> Gong Dingzi, *Dingshantang Wenji*: juan 5 "Qi shou bao an shu" 祈壽保安疏, "Luan hou de jiashu wei shuangqin qifo shu" 亂後得家書為雙親祈佛疏, and "Huanyuan lifo shu" (the year of *yiyou*) 還願禮佛疏 (乙酉). The religious nature of this kind of primary sources determines that his confessions and expressions are genuine and close to reality. I therefore interpret these documents literally. Although these prayers were to be burned, the author could copy them to include in his collection of works.

in reply to his letter, Yan Ermei sent back five poems, in which he showed sympathy and understanding toward Gong Dingzi's decision to serve in the Qing government. Yan Ermei made it very clear that he would reject any invitation to work for the Qing government, but he suggested that their friendship should remain despite their different political positions. In particular, Yan Ermei used the time-honored allusion to a historical figure Xu Shu 徐庶, who had to serve a different ruler to fulfill his filial responsibility.<sup>23</sup>

In one of the notes to this set of poems, Yan Ermei emphasizes that he alluded to the story of Xu Shu because "at the time when the capital was conquered, Xiaosheng's (Gong Dingzi's courtesy name) parents were both still alive,"<sup>24</sup> suggesting that Gong Dingzi had a legitimate reason (filial piety) to not to commit suicide for the fallen Ming and martyred emperor.

Gong Dingzi's fraternal bonding with his brothers was also related to filial responsibilities.<sup>25</sup> He had two brothers, Gong Dingsi 龔鼎 (Xiaoxu 孝緒) and Gong Dingjian 龔鼎璠 (Xiaoji 孝積). Upon arriving home, he had Gu Mei make an orchid painting for the youngest brother Xiaoji, who had been taking care of their mother while he, the eldest son, was serving in Beijing. When Gong Dingzi returned to mourn their father, another brother Xiaoxu had begun to serve in the government in Hangzhou. Thus, Xiaoji was the only one of the brothers to stay in their hometown and take care of the

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<sup>23</sup> Yan Ermei, "Da Gong Xiaosheng wu shou". Quite ironically, the change of regime made it particularly difficult for Gong Dingzi to realize his filial duties. Wars prevented him from returning to take care of his parents. Factionalist politics took away the honor he should have earned for his deceased father. Later, the grave military and political struggles that threatening the rule of the Qing government during the years of transition from the Shunzhi to the Kangxi reigns did not allow him to go back to mourn for his mother.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Since early China, fraternal love had been defined as a filial act.

household. That Gu Mei produced an orchid painting specially for Xiaoji upon arriving in Luzhou shows the couple's intention to strengthen the sense of fraternity and filial piety with Gong Dingzi's family. Gong Dingzi particularly wanted Xiaoji to know how much he cherished their fraternal love, because it was Xiaoji who had shouldered most of the filial responsibilities during the time of war, an effort that truly impressed and moved Gong Dingzi.<sup>26</sup> Strengthening their fraternal love was also meant to express appreciation for their shared filial piety.

After their father's death, Gong Dingzi as the eldest son became the head of the household. But the relationship between the brothers resembled that of intimate friends. Xiaoji spent time socializing with Gong Dingzi and his literary circle during his stay in Jiangnan. The brothers found each other a valuable source of emotional support, fraternal love, social and cultural companionship.<sup>27</sup> During the early Qing years, Gong Dingzi composed numerous poems for his brothers using rhyme schemes that the great Tang poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770) had used in poems to his brothers. The use of these rhymes was meant to draw a parallel between his case and that of Du Fu. When the Tang military commissioner An Lushan 安祿山 rebelled, Du Fu left his family in the care of a friend and went alone to join the Emperor Suzong 肅宗. However, on the way he was captured by the rebel army and detained in the capital (756-757). Finally he managed to flee the

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<sup>26</sup> Gong Dingzi, *DSTSJ: juan 6*: "Wen jing yi Xiaoji yong Shaoling de shedi xiaoxi yun" 聞警憶弟孝積用少陵得舍弟消息韻自注, p. 119. Gong Dingzi footnotes: "It has been seven years since the year of *renwu* (1642). [During these years] our home has experienced three major attacks. My brother never left my parents' side."

<sup>27</sup> Xiaoji also participated in editing and publishing Gong Dingzi's collected poetry. In addition, in some *yimin* literati's collected works, we can find evidence that he had social and literary exchanges with those who maintained a close friendship with Gong Dingzi. For example, see Fang Wen's 方文 *Tushan ji* 鱸山集.

fallen capital and join his family. Gong Dingzi's usage of these rhyme schemes therefore had double implications: they represented his reluctance to serve in the Qing government, and the fraternal bond with his brothers. For example, on his way back from the capital to his hometown, learning that Xiaoxu had arrived in Hangzhou to begin his official position there, Gong Dingzi composed three poems, using the rhymes schemes of those that Du Fu employed to congratulate his brother Du Guan's reunion with his wife and children.<sup>28</sup> In these poems, Gong Dingzi expressed sorrow over the loss of country and his father, as well as eagerness to see his brother. He did not hesitate to describe his situation as "having happily escaped the mouth of a monstrous dragon."<sup>29</sup>

In the winter of 1646, when Gu Mei and Gong Dingzi had just returned to Luzhou and reunited with Xiaoji, Gong Dingzi asked her to make a painting for Xiaoji and inscribed the painting himself.<sup>30</sup> In the inscription, Gong Dingzi used two historical references to describe this reunion: Du Fu's reunion with his family, and the Song literatus-official Su Shi's meetings with his son and brother during his exile in the far south.<sup>31</sup> In the reference to Su Shi, who suffered politically and personally from the factionalist politics of the Song government, the message again highlights victimization and familial bond. These allusions present Gong Dingzi as not only a victim of both dynastic tragedy and factionalist politics but also as a caring elder brother. In the latter part of this inscription, he beautifully depicts the peaceful and harmonious scene in their

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<sup>28</sup> Du Fu 杜甫, *Du gongbu shiji* 杜工部詩集 (Hong Kong: zhonghua shuju, 1972): juan 16: "Shedi Guan fu Lantian qu qizi dao Jiangling xi ji san shou" 舍弟觀赴藍田取妻子到江陵喜寄三首, p. 667.

<sup>29</sup> *DSTSJ*: juan 17: "Cong Huaiyin mufu de shedi Xiaoxu dao Hangzhou xiaoxi xi ji san shou yong Shaoling yun" 從淮陰幕府得舍弟孝緒到杭州消息喜寄三首用少陵韻, p. 274.

<sup>30</sup> Gong Dingzi, *DSTWJ*: juan 6: "Ti Hualan yu Xiaoji di" 題畫蘭與孝積弟, p. 35b.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

home: he and Xiaoji stand side by side, “as intimate as various strands of the incense smoke lingering in the air,” watching the talented and virtuous Gu Mei painting the orchids for Xiaoji.<sup>32</sup>

The conferring of this orchid painting—Gu Mei’s signature theme—as a gift to Xiaoji not only reaffirmed the bond between the brothers, but also gave Gu Mei a respectable status in the family. Gong Dingzi’s moral defects and Gu Mei’s former courtesan status had famously become part of his political humiliation. The couple not only faced the task of triumphing over these charges and the trauma they entailed, but they also had to deal with a practical issue: How would Gu Mei gain the status of a respectable spouse and member of the Gong family? This question had assumed political meaning now, for it concerned whether Gong Dingzi was moral and loyal enough to serve in the government.

The *yimin* Yu Huai has left us a rare record of Gong Dingzi’s formal wife Madam Tong 童夫人 in his famous book on the pleasure quarters of Nanjing in the late Ming, *Banqiao zaji* 板橋雜記. According to Yu Huai, when Gong Dingzi received his appointment in the Qing government, his wife refused to go to the capital to receive an official title and stated that she would concede to Gu Mei the opportunity of receiving honorable titles from the new alien government.<sup>33</sup> Yu Huai claims that eventually Gu Mei received the official title, and thus was called Madam Gu by their friends.<sup>34</sup> Historians ever since have used this as an example of some women (like Madam Tong) having more

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Yu Huai, *Banqiao zaji*, p. 34.

<sup>34</sup> As a well-established practice, the government bestowed titles of honor on a literatus-official’s parents and grandparents as well as his wife.

political integrity than turncoat officials, without questioning the story.<sup>35</sup> However, given the severity of the moral and political charges against Gong Dingzi before his journey home, his attackers would have gleefully included this as evidence of blatant violation of the law had Gu Mei in fact received such a title.<sup>36</sup>

Madame Tong died in the year of Kangxi 3 (1644). She was living in Gong Dingzi's hometown with her mother-in-law at the time when Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei returned.<sup>37</sup> But in a set of three poems expressing his feelings upon returning "home," Gong Dingzi does not follow the convention of this poetic theme, making no reference to his wife Madame Tong at all. As Gong Dingzi's wife, she resided in this place called *jia* (home) but remained invisible. In these poems, Gong Dingzi talks primarily about the complicated feelings of sorrow and shame upon returning as a compromised official. He also remembered to devote a line to Gu Mei, reminding the reader that his beloved

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<sup>35</sup> For example, the historian Meng Sen did not question Yu Huai's documentation in his writing about Gong and Gu, the most thorough examination of this couple's experience immediately after the fall of the Ming. Meng Sen, "Hengbo furen kao."

<sup>36</sup> There could be several possibilities to interpret this particular anecdote. It could be that because the early Qing government allowed a concubine like Gu Mei to wear the same outfits designated for the wife of an official, people imagined that she had received an official title as his wife. This story could derive from the literati representation of the alien ruler as "lacking civility," as shown in forcing marriage alliances with elite Manchu women upon important Han officials to control and monitor them, as well as elicit loyalty. Also, thinking about the case of Ni Yuanlu who was accused of obtaining an honorific title illegally for a concubine, one could also speculate this was a similar case of framing an official's violation of gender norms caused by his infatuation with a concubine. *Shizu zhang huangdi shilu* 世祖章皇帝實錄 (Beijing: Zhongguo shuju, 1985): *juan* 9.

<sup>37</sup> Yan Zhengju wrote the funeral oration for Madam Tong. Based on the information provided in this oration, and Gong Dingzi's poem to his friend written in early Kangxi 3 (1664), "Song Li Suchen gui Babao" in *Dingshantang shiji*: *juan* 30, we can conclude that Madam Tong died in Kangxi 3. Yan Zhengju, *Sheyuan ji* 涉園集 (National Library of China rare collection): *juan* 25: "Ji Gong Dasikou yuanpei Tong furen wen" 祭龔大司寇元配童夫人文, pp. 18b-20b; *DSTSJ*: *juan* 30: "Song Li Suchen gui Bagao shi Nangong yi *juan* fu shi jian zhi daowang liao zhi tongbing zhi gan" 送李素臣歸八寶時南宮已雋復失兼值悼亡聊志同病之感, p. 466. Meng Sen suggests that the *daowang* 悼亡 in this poem, which should be composed in spring, refers to the death of Gu Mei. But Gu Mei died later in the seventh month of that year. I would suggest that this *daowang* refers to the death of Madam Tong, which happened in early Kangxi 3. Meng Sen, "Hengbo furen kao."

concubine, a heroic and dedicated woman, accompanied him through the traumatic time of losing his country and being forced to serve the alien rulers.<sup>38</sup> One can imagine how awkward these women might have felt living under the same roof. It is therefore not surprising that Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei soon left for Nanjing. Gu Mei's painting, especially Gong Dingzi's vivid description of the brothers and Gu Mei in his studio in the inscription, obviously proclaimed the familial bond among the Gong brothers and Gu Mei, a bond that subtly excluded Madame Tong, his formal wife. The gift confirms Gu Mei's legitimate status within Gong Dingzi's familial world; the painting, the inscription and poems all defy the insults hurled by his political enemies—that he was led astray by a woman from the pleasure quarters and ignored his proper familial ties.

Gu Mei's paintings provided the means through which Gong Dingzi, in response to the charges made against him in factional struggles, could reposition himself as a political man with a strong sense of loyalty and filial piety. As a Confucian man, he fulfilled his responsibilities as a good son and a good brother. Such an image was necessary in the ongoing reconfiguration of the literati social and political world after 1644, for it allowed literati of different communities to communicate comfortably via the languages of loyalty and filial piety, the languages that they grew up speaking and living with, to eventually rebuild the social ties damaged by the conquest and the subsequent conflicts of political interests. Conveying political messages in the forms of art and gifts tapped into the healing power of that cultural language and the Confucian ethics of fraternity and friendship. The advantage of this strategy in *yimin*-turncoat interactions

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<sup>38</sup> Gong Dingzi, *DSTSJ: juan 17*: “Chu fan juchao ganhuai”初返居巢感懷其三, p. 275. Several allusions borrowed the story of a Tang emperor, Xuanzong, who was forced to flee to the southwest during the An-Shi War. He had to order his beloved woman, Yang Yuhuan, killed in order to please his generals. He also uses the literary reference of *mei* (female brows); *mei* has to refer to Gu Mei.

manifests itself clearly when we compare how Gong Dingzi and Chen Mingxia, both turncoat officials, positioned themselves differently in relation to the *yimin* in the early Qing years. My discussion below will consider how the practice of Confucian friendship helped reconfigure “loyalty” in specific social and cultural conditions.

## **Remapping Loyalty: The Turncoats and Their *Yimin* Friends**

### *Completing an unfinished orchid scroll*

Daogong 道公,<sup>39</sup> a Buddhist master, formally converted Gu Mei in Chongzhen 15 (1642) while she was still a courtesan in Nanjing. When Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei went to Hangzhou in early Shunzhi 4 (1647), they visited Daogong at his temple, where they encountered an orchid painting that Gu Mei had made for Daogong at the time of her conversion.<sup>40</sup> It was on this occasion that Gong Dingzi and Daogong’s friendship began. Since Gu Mei had “not completed” the painting, Daogong paid the couple a visit to ask her to finish it. Two years later, the completed orchid painting and Gong Dingzi’s inscription went to Daogong as a gift.<sup>41</sup> But it is quite likely that the painting was not necessarily “incomplete” in the first place. This orchid painting form could always be extended. “Completing the unfinished orchid painting” was an accepted way to negotiate a friendship, in this case, for a social cause.

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<sup>39</sup> Usually, the term *daogong* 道公 refers to Buddhist masters in general. But it seems that Daogong in Gong Dingzi’s poems was actually the respectful name for Master Daokai 道開上人, a Buddhist master in Hangzhou, as suggested, for example, in *DSTSJ: juan* 18: “Yu zhong fan zhou kan hua yin zhi Daogong fangzhang reng yong qian yun” 雨中泛舟看花因至道公方丈仍用前韻, p. 293.

<sup>40</sup> Gong Dingzi, *DSTWJ: juan* 6: “Tihua zeng Daogong” 題畫贈道公, p. 33a.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*



Like many literati-officials and their families in the Ming-Qing transition, Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei interacted with many Buddhist masters in both Beijing and Jiangnan. These Buddhist masters socialized in the literati world as excellent poets, artists, and spiritual companions. The limited amount of information provided by Gong Dingzi's writings reveals that Daogong, a skillful painter, calligrapher, and zither-player, was one of those who socialized with elite literati quite actively.<sup>42</sup> The exchanges between Daogong and this couple suggest one of the ways Buddhist masters continued to be part of the social-cultural landscape immediately after the change of regime: these exchanges assumed an unofficial (or unintended) political task as literati urgently needed to repair their social networks and preserve their cultural prestige. Elite literati and the women in their circles continued to be important patrons of Buddhist masters. Therefore, the reunion of Daogong and Gu Mei, the completion of the orchid painting, and the attachment of Gong Dingzi's inscription to this gift connected the experiences and relationships before and after 1644, between those in and outside the formal political arena.

In the years immediately after the fall of the Ming, the friendship among literati officials, Buddhist monks and *yimin* functioned as one of the many kinds of social lubricants that helped not only to preserve intellectual ties but also to ease tensions among various socio-political groups that enacted their loyalty differently.<sup>43</sup> The relationship between Gu Mei and Daogong from the pre-1644 era paved the way for the friendship between Daogong and her husband. It was Gu Mei's painting that initiated the

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<sup>42</sup> There are poems documenting their gatherings in Gong Dingzi's poetry collection. *DSTSJ: juan 7*, 18, 25, 39.

<sup>43</sup> For example, the historian Xie Zhengguang has discussed the joint efforts of various parties, including Gong Dingzi, in reprinting the collected works of the late Ming Buddhist master Deqing Hanshan. Xie Zhengguang, "Qing chu erchen Cao Rong ji qi 'yimin menke'."

social networking and cultural exchange between them.<sup>44</sup> Gong Dingzi's inscription is at once a gesture of friendship, a confession to a confidant, and an expression of public defiance against his political attackers:

In these past seven years (since 1642), during the period when I was serving in the [Ming] government and imprisoned in the Board of Punishment as well as during the time of horrific wars, Gu Mei and I experienced a great deal of loss and turmoil. On the day that our country fell, we jumped into a well, hand in hand, swearing to die together. But we were rescued. This experience was truly soul-stirring, sorrowful, and panicked. We have gone through all kinds of difficult situations, and she has been a strong emotional support when I was dealing with political hardship. However, ignorant people made us a topic of amusement. Some even manipulated the facts to make charges against me. I inscribed on one of her orchid paintings: "Drinking the mountain dew together in the fall/Facing endless frustrations in my life."<sup>45</sup> These paintings can be seen as the veritable records [for history writing].<sup>46</sup>

Gong Dingzi's confessions on the painting could serve as the necessary precursor to his re-integration into the Jiangnan literati community. Such confessions—of their aborted martyrdom, their tested love and bonding, and their sorrow at the loss of the country as well as his particular factionalist stance in the early Qing government—were very important because they constituted a public gesture of identification and plea for sympathy on which friendship could be rebuilt regardless of political identity. The effects of this gesture become clear when we compare Gong Dingzi to another friend of Daogong's, Chen Mingxia.

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<sup>44</sup> In a poem written in the fourteenth year of Shunzhi in memory of Daogong, Gong Dingzi hinted that that they had met as ten years earlier. Therefore we can conclude that they did not know each other until the fourth year of Shunzhi, when Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei went to the south the first time after the fall of the Ming. *DSTSJ: juan* 39: "Yu Fagong Qiuyuantang zhuyi Daogong" 遇法公秋遠堂追憶道公, p. 566.

<sup>45</sup> The poem on Gu Mei's orchid painting to which Dingzi refers in this passage seems to have been written after the summer of Shunzhi 2 (1645). It is entitled "Ti Shanchi jun hua lan" 題善持君畫蘭. *DSTSJ: juan* 17, p. 270. The poems immediately before it suggest that at the time Gong Dingzi was concerned about factionalism coming back.

<sup>46</sup> Gong Dingzi, "Tihua zeng Daogong."

Chen Mingxia, a widely admired former Fushe figure and related by marriage to one of the most heroic *yimin*, Fang Yizhi, as well as a good friend to Gong Dingzi, quickly became the leader of the pro-Manchu literati-officials despised and ostracized by the *yimin* community.<sup>47</sup> It is true that, as Xie Zhengguang has argued, the complicated literati networks built upon marriage could survive the political blow generated by dynastic transition.<sup>48</sup> In fact, even the model loyalist Fang Yizhi would maintain contact with Chen Mingxia after the latter notoriously suggested that Regent Dorgon should become the emperor, which gained him instant promotions and imperial favors.<sup>49</sup> Literati, officials or not, were so deeply embedded in networks built through marriage, localism, the civil service examination system, and so on, that almost all of them (except diehard loyalists) had to find comfortable ways to accommodate their turncoat brethren.<sup>50</sup> But the turncoats themselves had to use the literati community's common language to express their willingness to maintain and appreciate these ties. Unlike Gong Dingzi, Chen Mingxia did not try to communicate with *yimin* on their common terms, especially with proper employment of the political language of loyalty.

Between Gong Dingzi and Chen Mingxia, both turncoats, "loyalty" should not have become an issue. But because of their divergent approaches to their roles as Han officials in the new Manchu government, their differences eventually turned into a loyalty issue, especially once Dorgon exalted Chen Mingxia (and his political faction) as

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<sup>47</sup> Chen Mingxia was quite active as a Fushe young scholar before he was placed the second in the civil service examination in the sixteenth year of Chongzhen.

<sup>48</sup> Xie Zhengguang, "Qing chu erchen Cao Rong ji qi 'yimin menke'," p. 292.

<sup>49</sup> *Qingshi gao: juan 245/ liezhuan 32*. For discussion of the relationship between Gong Dingzi and Chen Mingxia in the early Qing factionalism, see See Zhang Sheng, "Chen Mingxia yu Gong Dingzi, Yan Ermei 'juejiao' kao."

<sup>50</sup> Zhao Yuan has discussed the strict rules concerning *jiaojie* (交接, contact) in her in-depth analysis of the psychology and practice of *yimin* during the Ming-Qing transition. Zhao Yuan, *Ming Qing zhi ji shidafu yanjiu*, p. 267-273.

model “loyal officials” and Chen Mingxia’s followers attacked Gong Dingzi personally. One of ways that Chen Mingxia eagerly pledged loyalty to the Manchus (and hurt his *yimin* friends’ feelings) was to repeatedly recommend the *yimin* to the court to serve in the Qing government, in contrast to Gong Dingzi who sought only sympathy and forgiveness from in his old friends. If both of them represented disloyalty to the fallen Ming, showing loyalty to the Manchus too quickly and too submissively for political gain distinguished Chen Mingxia from Gong Dingzi. And Gong Dingzi’s willingness to sacrifice his own political interests for core Han values such as friendship separated them even further. Eventually, it became a battle of political loyalty to the new dynasty versus cultural loyalty to the fundamental Confucian values cherished by and sustaining the literati community.

The estrangement of Gong Dingzi and Chen Mingxia occurred gradually and reached the point of complete breakup when Gong Dingzi was impeached in disgrace before returning to mourn for his father. Both Gong Dingzi and Chen Mingxia lost a parent in the year Shunzhi 3 (1646), but they received very different treatment from the Regent Dorgon and his loyal collaborators among Han turncoats. Gong Dingzi experienced personal and political attacks when requesting an altar for his deceased father, while Chen Mingxia was told to keep his official position and was granted a short leave to take care of the burial ceremony in his hometown, with his wife and children in Beijing receiving special subsistence during his leave.<sup>51</sup> He also failed to defend Gong Dingzi when the latter was humiliated in court. Therefore, although Chen Mingxia visited the south and stayed for a period in Nanjing, he and Gong Dingzi seemed not to have met.

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<sup>51</sup> *Qingshi gao: juan 245/ liezhuan 32.*

It is in this context that I consider Master Daogong's interaction with Gong and Gu and the gift of the orchid painting. Daogong had requested an "unfinished painting" to be "completed" in order to begin to negotiate a compromise for Gong Dingzi and Chen Mingxia, leading figures of two political cliques in the early-Qing court. He was well connected in the Jiangnan literati community in late Ming. Fang Yizhi, very close to both Gong Dingzi and Mingxia before the fall of the Ming, had socialized with Daogong before 1644, as his poems suggest.<sup>52</sup> Chen Mingxia and Daogong already knew each other quite well prior to 1644, too.<sup>53</sup> Daogong's relationship with these leading Fushe figures also explains his acquaintance with Gu Mei. He had to enjoy some kind of popularity among the Fushe elites in that area to attract a patron like Gu Mei, one of the most recognized courtesans associated with the Fushe circle.<sup>54</sup>

Daogong seemed to have used his special status to attempt to persuade Gong Dingzi to reconcile with Chen Mingxia and resume their friendship. Immediately after their first encounter via Gu Mei and the "unfinished" orchid painting in the spring of Shunzhi 4 (1647), Daogong invited Gong Dingzi over for a drink and suggested that he compose poems using the same rhyme schemes Chen Mingxia had used during his recent trip to the south. This was obviously an attempt to help mend their friendship. Gong Dingzi did compose the poems, but only after getting drunk.<sup>55</sup> Many literary allusions in

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<sup>52</sup> Fang Yizhi, *Fangzi liuyu cao* 方子流寓草 (SKJH-ji 50): *juan* 5: "Ti Daokai shangren" 題道開上人, p. 704.

<sup>53</sup> Chen Mingxia 陳名夏, *Shiyunju shiji* 石雲居詩集 (SKCM-ji 201): *juan* 2: "Huqiu Daokai fangzhang yunzi ji zhuyou fushi yu gui jinling" 虎丘道開方丈雲子集諸友賦詩予歸金陵.

<sup>54</sup> As early as 1637, she joined the "Orchid Club" organized by one of the Fushe leaders, Zheng Yuanxun. Yan Liqun, "Gu Mei he ta de *Lan shi tu*," p. 60. Fang Yizhi was associated with this club as well.

<sup>55</sup> *DSTSJ*: *juan* 18: "Daogong zhaoyin Huqiu yi Baishi bi jian yun suohe guilai bozui shuaier cheng pian zheng shi Baishi jian zhi dang xiao kuangnu fangtai ye" 道公招飲虎丘以百史壁間韻索和歸來薄醉率爾

these poems point to Gong Dingzi's (and probably many others') disapproval of Chen Mingxia's subservient attitude toward the Manchu rulers and his thirst for power. His poems reveal how fragile and sensitive their relationship had become. Political difference has been considered the key to understanding their breakup: Chen Mingxia's career success depended on his active collaboration with the Manchus, while Gong Dingzi's career hardship resulted from the opposite attitude.<sup>56</sup> But it remains unclear why Gong Dingzi could not tolerate Chen Mingxia and years later might have even helped prosecute Chen's case.<sup>57</sup> One could imagine that the personal humiliation that Gong Dingzi experienced as a man—a husband, and a son—traumatized him in a way that was particularly bruising to these crucial aspects of literati manliness. Gong Dingzi's inscription on Gu Mei's orchid painting for Daogong clearly expresses his grievance at the factionalist attacks that Chen Mingxia had helped fuel, made particularly painful because of their terrible personal impact on him and Gu Mei. Gu Mei experienced all kinds of hardships with Gong Dingzi after she joined him in Beijing: his imprisonment, the fall of Beijing, the rebel leaders' terror policy, the Manchu conquest, and their suicide attempt. Yet their love and bond were distorted and used against Gong in political struggles. Gu Mei became the "bad woman," and their relationship was portrayed as the

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成篇正使百史見之當笑狂奴放態也 (p. 292) and "Zai yong qianyun chou Daogong jian huai Baishi" 再用前韻酬道公兼懷百史 (p. 292).

<sup>56</sup> Zhang Sheng, "Chen Mingxia yu Gong Dingzi, Yan Ermei 'juejiao' kao," pp. 157-167. Zhang's analysis ignores the fact that some officials attacked Gong Dingzi not because they wanted to please the Manchus but because they were trying to win Chen Mingxia's favor. This further complicates how we read the political landscape at the time. Gong Dingzi has made it very clear that Chen Mingxia did not hold much against him after they ended their friendship. It was "those who disliked Gong Dingzi who created conflicts in an attempt to please Chen Mingxia." See *DSTWJ: juan 2*: "Ren Chunchen shi xu" 任春臣詩序, pp. 12b-13b.

<sup>57</sup> Zhang Sheng, *ibid.* Chen Mingxia was charged with plotting against the Manchus and executed in Shunzhi 11 (1654), as a result of ruthless factionalist struggles in court and the Manchu emperor's suspicion.

epitome of failed loyalty and a violation of literati-official gender norms. Chen Mingxia for his part earned promotions and favor by choosing not to defend Gong Dingzi and remaining silent.<sup>58</sup> Gong Dingzi's hurt feelings show clearly in the many poems that he composed during this trip. The friendship between Gong Dingzi and the Buddhist master initiated and secured through Gu Mei's painting could not repair this rift. Daogong failed to bring Gong Dingzi and Chen Mingxia together, but his friendship with Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei lasted until he died.

Gong Dingzi both maintained his old friends and made new ones in the early Qing. He stood out among the early-Qing Han officials because of his passionate friendships with many people in and outside government, which were built upon literati's shared mentalities at this crucial moment of transition. For instance, he remained a close friend to Zhao Erbian 趙爾抃, Zhao Kaixin's 趙開心 son, who took civil service exams held by the Longwu southern Ming court and almost cost his father his political career in the Qing government. The turncoat official Zhao Kaixin was Gong Dingzi's *tongnian*<sup>59</sup> and had a rough political life in the early Qing court partly due to his outspoken style and pro-Han attitude that kept testing the tolerance of early Qing rulers. Gong Dingzi's poems show that he never attempted to distance himself from the Zhao father and son; instead, they were his most frequent guests and closest friends. Then, in the case of Wu Da 吳達,

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<sup>58</sup> Zhang Sheng seems to have mistaken Sun Changling for Gong Dingzi's attacker Sun Poling. Sun Poling passed the exams and entered the government as a censor at the Board of Works in Shunzhi 3, and he remained in the government until in Shunzhi 15 when he was charged with misconduct in a notorious exam-related case and was dismissed to the northeast. Sun Poling did not necessarily enjoy the close relationship with Chen Mingxia suggested by Zhang. Ibid. See *Zichuan xianzhi* 淄川縣志 (Qianlong 41 edition) : *juan* 6 "Xu xiaoyou" 續孝友: "Sun Danling" (Sun Poling's younger brother) 孫琰齡 ( 珀齡弟 ) 條 (microfilm, the National Library of China); *Qing Shilu*: *juan* 121 (Shunzhi 15).

<sup>59</sup> *Tongnian* refers to classmates who passed the civil service examination in the same year.

a *tongxiang* (fellow-countryman) and of the same political faction as Gong Dingzi in the early Qing,<sup>60</sup> Gong Dingzi helped keep secret the fact that Wu Da's brother participated in anti-Qing activities in Jiangnan. For this Gong Dingzi was impeached in Shunzhi 13 (1656).<sup>61</sup>

During the dynastic transition, friendship assumed great importance as a means of survival, rather than an ideal that one could experiment with theoretically, as Li Zhi and others had attempted in their attempt to rethink the traditional understanding of the Five Cardinal Relations a half century before. Within the literati community, friends sought refuge with friends or lived in the mountains as neighbors, where they developed increasingly dense connections with each other through patronage and marriage. The *yimin* community more readily embraced those turncoats who remained loyal to friends even at the risk of appearing disloyal to the new regime than those who prioritized loyalty to the new ruler over friends. Gong Dingzi and Chen Mingxia best exemplify these two types. Friendship in action figured no less importantly than the notion of dynastic loyalty in everyday literati life.

The breakup of Gong Dingzi and Chen Mingxia's friendship and their different receptions among literati in general suggest that the most important factor that enabled the two camps of literati community to heal and rebuild was its ability to prioritize social and cultural ties, sympathy, and mutual identification over political differences. Chen Mingxia's career benefited but his reputation and connections among *yimin* were damaged because of a philosophy of self-interest, a political strategy that distanced him

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<sup>60</sup> Wu Da was a key figure in the struggles with major Dorgon followers in the central government, such as Feng Quan, Sun Zhixie, and Chen Mingxia. See the previous chapter.

<sup>61</sup> *Shizu zhang huangdi shilu: juan* 101 Shunzhi 13/5-8, pp. 781-801.



from the *yimin* community to earn political security.<sup>62</sup> Gong Dingzi's popularity among *yimin* shows that the Confucian value of friendship based on regional and generational ties that guaranteed the recovery and continuity of literati society in the early Qing; it provided a kind of social and cultural stability that made the dynastic transition less difficult for both individuals and society as a whole. And, as I will discuss below, the connections between literati-officials and the sons of *yimin* also demonstrate the sensitivities and delicate efforts involved in the process of re-integration in the dynastic transition.

### **Orchids to the “Generation of Transition”**

In the summer of Shunzhi 13 (1656), Gong Dingzi added several poems to an old orchid painting by Gu Mei and gave them to a young man, Tang Nianzu 唐念祖 (Ransun 髯孫 was his courtesy name), one of his many young protégés in Beijing, before the latter took off for a position as personal secretary in eastern Guangdong, one of the southern frontier battlefields at the time.<sup>63</sup> From the title of the poems, “Inscribing the Orchid Painting again for Ranrun's Departure,” and reference to a poem composed in Shunzhi 2 (1645) (the one that Gong Dingzi mentioned on the painting for the Buddhist master Daogong), we can almost be certain that Gong Dingzi gave Tang Nianzu a personally important painting made by Gu Mei. What would motivate Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei to treat this young man so specially? How did such patronage and care impact their social life?

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<sup>62</sup> Zhang Sheng, “Chen Mingxia yu Gong Dingzi, Yan Ermei's ‘juejiao’ kao.”

<sup>63</sup> *DSTSJ: juan 38* “You tihua hou song Ransun” 又題畫蘭後送髯孫 (p. 550). The old poem “Ti Shanchi jun hua lan” 題善持君畫蘭 is in *juan 17*.

As many have keenly observed, the phenomenon of *yimin* was temporally sensitive,<sup>64</sup> because only those loyalists who had passed at least the lowest level of the civil service examinations and obtained the titles of *zhusheng* 諸生 (a low-level degree holder) and above in the Ming could qualify as *yimin*. Most of their sons, who either had not matured enough to take the exams during the Ming or were born after 1644, faced the problem of survival as literati. Would they follow their loyalist fathers' steps and insist on an anti-Manchu life and politics? How would they make a living, when their fathers' generation was already struggling under the loss of wealth from the wars and their refusal to collaborate with the Qing government by becoming bureaucrats? These were serious questions of survival for the literati in and outside government in the first fifty years of the Qing. Some of the idolized *yimin* watched their sons suffer. For example, Fu Shan's eldest son, the talented and filial Fu Mei 傅眉, had to refrain from socializing in Beijing at his father's behest.<sup>65</sup> Yan Ermei's sons suffered from long-term depression and alcoholism.<sup>66</sup> Others adopted a more realistic attitude and encouraged their sons to seek opportunities in the government. Many sons did this, becoming advisors or unofficial secretaries (*muke* 幕客), without taking the Qing-administered civil service examinations, which would mean explicit recognition of Manchu legitimacy. Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei supported such *yimin* sons. This kind of support demonstrates a commitment to core Confucian ethics of friendship. Again, Gu Mei's art served as the medium.

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<sup>64</sup> See, for example, Zhao Yuan, *Ming-Qing zhi ji shidafu yanjiu*.

<sup>65</sup> Bai Qianshen, *Fushan's World*, Chapter 4.

<sup>66</sup> *Baida shanren nianpu*, pp. 14b-15a.

Tang Nianzu's father, Tang Yunjia,<sup>67</sup> was one of most prominent members of the Xuancheng 宣城<sup>68</sup> literati circle, which had been producing nationally popular literati figures for generations. Before the Manchus conquered the south and finished the Hongguang reign, Tang Yunjia and his best friend (also a Xuancheng native) Shen Shoumin 沈壽民 rose to national fame as Fushe leaders and Donglin alliances. Shen Shoumin represented the typical Donglin-Fushe ideal man during the Ming-Qing transitional period: he campaigned against Ruan Dacheng in Nanjing and mobilized the campaign against the Grand Secretary Yang Sichang in the Chongzhen government; after the capture of Beijing he led a fugitive life to avoid Ruan Dacheng's political purge and Manchu troops, and finally, he lived as a loyalist recluse in the most stoic way for thirty years.<sup>69</sup> After the fall of the Ming, in response to Chen Mingxia's invitation to serve in the Qing court, Shen Shoumin famously returned Chen's letter without opening the envelop.<sup>70</sup> Tang Yunjia's experience was not as dramatic but very similar. He and Shen Shoumin were among the Fushe leaders who drafted and disseminated the famous "Proclamation against Treachery in Nanjing" (*Liudu fang luan xiwen* 留都防亂檄文), initiating the first open confrontation between the Fushe youths and Ruan Dacheng in

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<sup>67</sup> In Chongzhen 10 (1638), Fang Yizhi composed a poem for Tang Yunjia to celebrate his thirtieth birthday. It means that Tang Yunjia was born in 1608. Fang Yizhi, *Liuyu Cao: juan 3*: "Zeng Zuming sanshi" 贈祖命三十, p. 686.

<sup>68</sup> Xuancheng is located in the southeast part of modern Anhui province.

<sup>69</sup> Huang Zongxi composed an epitaph for Shen Shoumin. It was said that Shen Shoumin was the first literatus to condemn Yang Sichang, the Grand Secretary who failed to retreat from office to mourn his father's death, and that his courageous position motivated Huang Daozhou to make a more audacious move in court against Yang Sichang and the Chongzhen emperor. *Ming Tongjian* 明通鑑: *juan 86* (Chongzhen 11/7).

<sup>70</sup> *Xuancheng xianzhi* 宣城縣志 (Qianlong edition): "Ru lin" 儒林.

Chongzhen 11 (1638). In 1644, Gao Hongtu 高弘圖, a Grand Secretary of the Hongguang government, courted Tang Yunjia and brought him to the Southern Ming capital Nanjing, where Tang Yunjia helped draft many imperial edicts.<sup>71</sup> But threatened with persecution by Ruan Dacheng, Tang Yunjia had to give up on his political career even before the fall of the Hongguang reign in 1645.<sup>72</sup>

While the change of regime—military conquest and resistance, and repression of literati socio-economic interests in general—resulted in tremendous losses for the Xuancheng literati circle, it managed to survive by maintaining connections with sensitive and attentive turncoat officials like Gong Dingzi. For example, Shi Runzhang 施閏章, Gong Dingzi's close friend and new colleague in the Qing government, was a Xuancheng native. He was also Shen Shoumin's pupil and Tang Yunjia's close friend.<sup>73</sup> This tightly knit socio-cultural community was well connected with literati-officials in the early Qing government. Gong Dingzi apparently had unusual ties with many leading *yimin* figures from this community. As soon as he returned to the south in Shunzhi 3 (1646), Gong Dingzi reconnected with the Tang father and son. In the spring of Shunzhi 4 (1647), Tang Yunjia took a concubine in Yangzhou. Gong Dingzi composed a set of

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<sup>71</sup> *Xuancheng xianzhi* (Guangxu edition): “Wen yuan” 文苑.

<sup>72</sup> Shi Runzhang 施閏章, *Shi Yushan xiansheng wenji* 施愚山先生文集: *Xue yu wenji* 學餘文集: *juan 5* “Tang sheren Gengwu ji xu” 唐舍人耕塢集序 ; Shi Yunzhang, *Yuan ya san bian* 宛雅三編 (*SKCM-ji* 373): *juan 4*, pp. 185-188 ; Sun Tinglu 孫廷璐, “Preface” to Shen Shoumin's *Xian dao lu* 閒道錄 (*SKCM-zi* 15).

<sup>73</sup> According to the Xuancheng gazetter, both Shi Runzhang and Shen Shoumin wrote prefaces for Tang Yunjia's collected works. *Xuancheng xianzhi* (Guangxu edition); *Qing shi gao: Liezhuan* 271: “Wen yuan 1.” Unfortunately, we cannot locate the collection of works by Tang Yunjia.

seven poems to congratulate him.<sup>74</sup> Months later, just as Tang Yunjia's boat set off for his hometown, Gong Dingzi dedicated two poems to him. Then he stopped by Tang Yunjia's boat and wrote another one.<sup>75</sup> Some literary historians have stressed that Gong Dingzi wrote too many poems for occasions of social intercourse, which renders his poetry less interesting and sincere. Even if this observation could apply to some of his poems, the poetic exchanges between Gong Dingzi and Tang Yunjia show the importance of this friendship to both of them. Tang Yunjia's son Tang Nianzu's presence in Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei's life further proves this.

Born with “a face as fine as that of a [beautiful] woman,” “with red lips and bright complexion,” according to his father, Tang Nianzu often attracted praise for his appearance.<sup>76</sup> Shen Shoumin has also mentioned that Tang Nianzu's courtesy name, Ransun 鬻孫, literally means “the grandson of [a man with a] fine beard,” the “man with a fine beard” referring to his paternal grandfather, the reputable literatus-official Tang Yixiang 唐一相.<sup>77</sup> Good-looking and talented in art and literature, Tang Nianzu mastered martial arts but was not bulky in build. His father's writing reveals that he had a chivalrous spirit, and could be very devoted to those he liked.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *DSTSJ: juan 18* “Zuming na ji Wuling wei fu zuizhuangshi” 祖命納姬吳陵為賦催妝詩.

<sup>75</sup> *DSTSJ: juan 18*: “Song Tang Zuming nan gui” 送唐祖命南歸 and “Guo Zuming zhou zhong zai die qianyun” 過祖命舟中再疊前韻 (p. 286).

<sup>76</sup> Shi Runzhang ed. *Yuan ya san bian: juan 9*: “Tang Yunjia wang er xinglue” 唐允甲亡兒行略, p. 245-46. Tang Nianzu died around Shunzhi 14.

<sup>77</sup> Shen Shoumin 沈壽民, *Gushan yi ji 姑山遺集 (SKJH-ji 119): juan 11*: “Tang Zuming gao xu” 唐祖命稿序, p. 123.

<sup>78</sup> Shi Runzhang, “Tang Yunjia wang er xinglue” 唐允甲亡兒行略.

Tang Nianzu grew up under the high expectations of his father and his father's Fushe friends. Shen Shoumin was especially fond of this young man and introduced him to the leading literary figures in Fushe. As early as Chongzhen 15 (1642), in his preface to a collection of works by Tang Yunjia, Shen Shoumin praised three men of the Tang family—Tang Yixiang (the grandfather), Tang Yunjia, and Tang Nianzu,<sup>79</sup> for what he saw as an example of a great literati tradition that continued across three generations along a patrilineal line. However, the fall of the Ming shattered the world of this prodigy, just as it did to the sons of many Fushe leaders. From that time forward, Tang Nianzu often traveled with his father and socialized with his *yimin* friends. During this first trip back to Jiangnan, Gong Dingzi composed three poems for Tang Nianzu, in which he praised Tang Nianzu's literary talents and recalled their times together.<sup>80</sup> In the fall of Shunzhi 5 (1648), Tang Nianzu again visited Nanjing, and Gong Dingzi composed two poems to express his joy.<sup>81</sup>

Because much documentation and many of the poems have been lost (in many cases deliberately destroyed out of political concern), it has become impossible to fully reconstruct the overlapping socio-political-cultural communities in the early Qing. Documentation of Tang Nianzu's life supposedly existed in the biographies of Shen Shoumin and another *yimin* Wu Sugong 吳肅公, but these accounts of Tang Nianzu do not survive.<sup>82</sup> Apparently, the biographies in the local history had to be heavily edited for political reasons in early Qing. After the change of regime, Tang Nianzu gave up on

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<sup>79</sup> Shen Shoumin, "Tang Zuming gao xu." Tang Yixiang served in the Wanli government.

<sup>80</sup> *DSTSJ: juan* 18: "Zengbie Tang Ransun" 贈別唐髯孫, p. 286.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid. juan* 20: "Xi Tang Ransun zhi Baixia" 喜唐髯孫至白下, p. 319.

<sup>82</sup> Xuancheng county gazetteer, in Tang Yunjia's biography, refers the reader to Shen and Wu's biographies for more information about Yunjia's son, Nianzu.

building a political career based on passing the civil service exams, but he did not participate in the anti-Qing movement either. In Shunzhi 12 (1655), he traveled to Beijing, probably to try to find a job with Gong Dingzi's help to ease financial difficulties at home. He relayed a poem to Gong Dingzi from his father.<sup>83</sup> Tang Nianzu exemplifies the experience of this "generation of transition," men younger than the former Fushe scholars but old enough to hold a relatively strong opinion about the Manchu conquest. Gong Dingzi, in the meantime, was a key figure in supporting this "generation of transition."

But at this point Gong Dingzi's own political career was encountering setbacks in power struggles in the Shunzhi court. A series of demotions for Gong Dingzi began in the winter of Shunzhi 12 (1655) and continued into early next year. Priorly Gong Dingzi had been promoted to the powerful position of the President of the Censorate between Shunzhi 10 and 12 (1653-55), but by the summer of Shunzhi 13 (1656), he had reached a low point in his career: being accused of factionalism and of being unfairly protective of the Han; he was demoted to the Office of Imperial Parks (Shanglinyuan 上林苑), eleven ranks below the powerful and prestigious position of President of the Censorate he had held before. The Shunzhi emperor complained in his edict reprimanding Gong Dingzi, "Every time I read through memorials from the Board of Punishment, I find Gong Dingzi always proposes different views. If the matter concerns the Manchus, he agrees with his Manchu colleagues and suggests heavy punishment. If the matter involves Han people, he often disagrees and distorts amnesty articles in the law."<sup>84</sup> Evidence suggests that Shunzhi considered Gong Dingzi a factional leader, and his going so far to protect the

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<sup>83</sup> Footnote to the ninth poem in "Chun xi Ransun guo yin shi jiang fugui" 春夕髻孫過飲時將賦歸 in *DSTSJ: juan 38*, p. 547.

<sup>84</sup> *Qing shilu: juan 94* Shunzhi 12/10 (1655/11).

Han might be undermining Manchu interests.<sup>85</sup> In the fourth month of Shunzhi 13, Gong Dingzi began to work at the Office of Imperial Parks. From this position, he still worked after the same aims, memorializing that the imperial family should return twenty-two farms to the Han peasants.<sup>86</sup>

Tang Nianzu must have arrived in Beijing during this time, since he first appeared at gatherings in Gong Dingzi's residence around the New Year of Shunzhi 13 (1656).<sup>87</sup> He stayed on in the capital and socialized with Gong Dingzi and his friends until late spring, when he decided to depart for home.<sup>88</sup> Gong Dingzi composed twelve poems for him. Many of these poems remember his *yimin* friends in Jiangnan, especially Du Jun, the late Wan Shouqi, and Tang Nianzu's father Tang Yunjia.<sup>89</sup> However, apparently Tang Nianzu changed his plan. We find him among Gong Dingzi's intimate circle at a drinking party under the wisteria flower in the Gong garden in early summer.<sup>90</sup> The next time the friends gathered, they held a farewell party for Tang Nianzu, who would soon set off for

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid. In the next several months, Gong Dingzi was impeached in several cases, over his factionalism, for his poor judgment in recommending Gu Ren 顧仁 (the bribery case eventually broke and implicated Cao Rong as well), and for keeping secret the anti-Manchu activities of his colleague and friend Wu Da's brother.

<sup>86</sup> *Gong nianpu* Shunzhi 13 (1656).

<sup>87</sup> *DSTSJ: juan 24*: "Renri Youyi Yuanci xie ju guo Zunzhuo zai zhaotong zhongdiao Ransun Yanyou xianyun" 人日友沂園次攜具過尊拙齋招同仲調髯孫燕友限韻, p. 368.

<sup>88</sup> Gong Dingzi, "Chunxi Ransun guo yin shi jiang fu gui." He composed twelve poems, some dedicated to his friends in the south. The second poem talks about Kou Mei, an elite courtesan, who generated legendary stories during the period of regime change and was living in Nanjing at the time. Interestingly, Qian Qianyi visited Nanjing earlier in the spring and devoted his last poem to Kou Mei as well. Qian Qianyi's poems are in *Youxue ji* 有學集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2003): *juan 6*: "Bingshen chun jiuyi Qinhuai yu Ding jia shuige jia liangyue linxing zuo jueju sanshi shou bie liu ti bu fu lunci" 丙申春就醫秦淮寓丁家水閣浹兩月臨行作絕句三十首別留題不復論次, pp. 280-290.

<sup>89</sup> Wan Shouqi was most close to Yan Ermei. See the section about Gu Mei's funeral later in this chapter. See Gong Dingzi, "Chun xi Ransun guo yin shi jiang fugui."

<sup>90</sup> *DSTSJ: juan 24*: "Chu xia zhai zhong tenghua da kai zhao Wu Daiguan Zhang Dafeng Zhao Youyi Tang Ransun tong yin qi xia" 初夏齋中藤花大開招吳岱觀張大風趙友沂唐髯孫同飲其下, p. 372.



eastern Guangdong to fill the position of *canjun* 參軍 (adjutant).<sup>91</sup> It was then that Gong Dingzi re-inscribed the orchid painting by Gu Mei and presented it to Tang Nianzu.

When this painting was first made by Gu Mei in Shunzhi 2 (1645), Gong Dingzi and his faction of Han officials were fighting with their political enemies over the head-shaving policy, the appointments of former “eunuch followers,” and the issue of ordinary Han people’s livelihood, which had been disrupted by a whole range of economic and social policies favoring the Manchus. The original poem Gong Dingzi composed for this painting shows that he saw himself as an outspoken and honest official who, like the lonely orchid standing in front of the door, had to be removed.<sup>92</sup> The newly inscribed poems express feelings of sorrow and sympathy between Gong Dingzi and this young man. He seemed to recognize in Tang Nianzu a younger Gong Dingzi—handsome, straightforward, talented at literature, ambitious, and tenacious. He was undoubtedly fond of this *yimin*’s son and was trying to help him begin a career of some form in the government. But Gong Dingzi gradually realized that his demotions might last longer and his standing could even take a turn for the worse as political struggles continued to unfold. His optimism began to wane. In such circumstances he would not be much help to Tang Nianzu. He hoped this painting and his poems would encourage the young man to stand up to the challenges ahead.

Even in straitened circumstances, Gong Dingzi’s patronage extended to young men like Tang Nianzu. And the latter’s story shows how much they relied on such

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<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, juan 24: “Ransun canjun Yuedong tong Dongmen Youyi Dafeng Yuanci Yuankang fu bie” 髯孫參軍粵東同洞門友沂大風園次元康賦別, p. 373.

<sup>92</sup> The last line of this first poem and the last line of the poems added in Shunzhi 13 for Tang Nianzu both use the literary allusion of “the orchid blocking the door.”

assistance. Tang Nianzu's father Tang Yunjia describes his son's trip to the southern frontier as having been "pushed by Governor-general Wang,"<sup>93</sup> but curiously his son returned home from Guangdong within less than a year in order to take care of his parents, and he soon died from sorrow over his mother's death.<sup>94</sup> In fact, the trip seemed to be motivated by the patronage of Gong Dingzi and his close friends in the government. It seems that Tang Nianzu eventually made up his mind to take on the position in Guangdong upon learning that Gong Dingzi was going to Guangdong soon as well, and he left that position because of the departures of his major patrons.<sup>95</sup>

In early fall of Shunzhi 13, Gong Dingzi was appointed as an imperial envoy to Guangdong to issue an edict. This mission probably followed from a series of military victories that helped the Qing government secure the southern frontier.<sup>96</sup> Earlier, Gong

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<sup>93</sup> Governor was Wang Guoguang 王國光. Shi Runzhang, "Tang Yunjia wang er xinglue."

<sup>94</sup> One archetype of a filially pious son was one who stayed with and took care of his parents. But there coexists another, opposite archetype, who fulfills his filial duty by passing the exam, obtaining the *jinshi* title, and serving in government.

<sup>95</sup> In the poem that Gong Dingzi composed when the two met in Guangdong, Gong Dingzi suggests that Tang Nianzu left Beijing in early fall. Gong Dingzi learned about his own mission around this time. *DSTSJ: juan 25*: "Duanzhou xi Yansun chu wu" 端州喜唐壽孫出晤, p. 389.

<sup>96</sup> Guangdong had been one of the most bloody and strategically crucial battlegrounds at the time, because the anti-Qing military forces led by Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功 had their bases there and nearby, in addition to the eastward advance of the army of the Yongli 永曆 southern Ming court. After a series of military successes in Jiangnan and Guangdong at the end of Shunzhi 12 (1655) and early Shunzhi 13 (1656), Qing military officials made some re-deployments to the southern fronts. Following the Grand Secretary Hong Chengchou's 洪承疇 suggestion, the Shunzhi emperor ordered the Governor-general of Liangguang 兩廣 (Guangdong and Guangxi) to move the headquarter from Guangzhou 廣州 (eastern Guangdong) to Wuzhou 梧州 in eastern Guangxi. The emperor also rewarded the former Governor-general of Liangguang (Li Shuaitai) and reappointed him to the position of Governor-general of Zhejiang and Fujian 浙閩. Wang Guoguang became the new Governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi in Shunzhi 13/2 (*Qing shi gao: juan 197 Biao 37* "Jiangchen nianbiao 1" 疆臣年表一). By the spring of Shunzhi 13, not only was Zheng Chenggong's force driven out of the Guangdong area; the resistance army of the Yongli 永曆 southern Ming court, had also been frustrated in Guangdong. From then on, Guangdong was more securely controlled by the Qing government, and major battles were now focused in Fujian and Zhejiang. Personnel changes at the Governor-general level point to the more secure situation in Guangdong. In early summer, more good news came from Guangdong. A Ming prince Zhu Huaruan 朱華燮 surrendered with more than one hundred and fifty officials. In the first half of the year, the central government kept busy evaluating the

Dingzi's closest friend Cao Rong had received a promotion to serve as a Provincial Administration Commissioner in Guangdong and had just left the capital.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, at this point, going to Guangdong for a position recommended by and under the protection of the new Governor-general was not a bad option for Tang Nianzu. Possibly Gong Dingzi had found this opportunity for him. Although the Governor's office had been moved from Guangzhou to Wuzhou, the highest-ranking officials in the province seem to have been still holding office in Guangzhou, a more economically and culturally prosperous city.<sup>98</sup> At this point, it seemed a good decision for Tang Nianzu to go.

And he did, but stayed there for less than a year. Tang Nianzu had already begun to serve in eastern Guangdong when Gong Dingzi arrived in the spring of Shunzhi 14 (1657). It is not clear exactly to which locale he was appointed. But he managed to meet up with Gong Dingzi in Duanzhou 端州, not far from Guangzhou where Cao Rong's office was located. Gong Dingzi happily composed a poem when they reunited.<sup>99</sup> This is the last appearance of Tang Nianzu in Gong Dingzi's life. Soon after Gong Dingzi accomplished his mission and headed back, Cao Rong received a demotion and had to transfer out of Guangdong to the north.<sup>100</sup> Tang Nianzu left soon after his main patrons'

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generals and officials' merits and showering them with awards (*Shizu zhang huangdi shilu*, from Shunzhi 13/2 to Shunzhi 13/6).

<sup>97</sup> *Erchen zhuan: juan 6*: Cao Rong. Although the appointment, personally decided by Shunzhi emperor, was made in late Shunzhi 12, for various reasons (political and administrative), the confirmation was delayed. Cao Rong arrived in Guangdong in the fall of Shunzhi 13. *DSTSJ: juan 24* "Du youren ji huai Qiuyue shi he jian Qiulao" 讀友人寄懷秋岳詩和東秋老. In the footnote of these poems, Gong Dingzi suspects that Cao Rong was just entering Guangdong. And because these poems were composed after he took off on his mission to Guangdong in early fall, we can conclude that Cao Rong took off in the spring.

<sup>98</sup> Gong Dingzi's poems composed in Guangdong show that he socialized with Governor-general Wang and Cao Rong in Guangzhou area.

<sup>99</sup> Gong Dingzi, "Duanzhou xi Yansun chu wu."

<sup>100</sup> Cao Rong's demotion occurred in Shunzhi 14/9 (1657/10). Xie Zhengguang has discussed Cao Rong's whereabouts during this time period. Xie Zhengguang, "Qing chu erchen Cao Rong ji qi 'yimin menke'" in *Qing chu shiwen yu shiren jiaoyou kao*, p. 267. Another piece of evidence is that Gong Dingzi visited Tang

departures and died at home within a year. Gong Dingzi did not have another opportunity to help his career. Very little do we know about this young man's time in Guangdong and after his resignation from that job. Tang Yunjia did not want to talk much about his son's "service" probably in attempt to downplay it. His conventional account of his son's filial piety justifies a literatus' withdrawal from serving the new government, revealing the anxiety among *yimin* and their sons about the loyalty issue: young men of the "generation of transition" needed employment in the government to make a living but were concerned about how they would look in loyalists' eyes. Nonetheless, Tang Nianzu's experience shows that the patronage of Han officials in the early Qing government, mainly because of the friendships they maintained with older-generation *yimin*, became an important and reliable resource for the "generation of transition" in the literati community. In the meantime, connections of this sort contributed to further integrating the communities of turncoats and *yimin*, despite the ongoing and even strengthened military assaults launched by anti-Qing forces.

Gong Dingzi's official trip to the south lasted almost one year. One has to marvel at the sheer amount of attention and the warm receptions he received: Deng Hanyi 鄧漢儀, a former Fushe member but longtime friend to Gong Dingzi and a widely respected *yimin*, accompanied Gong Dingzi throughout the trip; friends gathered to see him off at every stop in Jiangnan; literati leaders such as Wu Weiye and Qian Qianyi composed poems for him. Gu Mei traveled with Gong Dingzi until they reached Jiangnan and waited there for him to return. On his way back, there were more gatherings, arranged by

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Nianzu's father in the month when Cao Rong's demotion was issued. But it appears that Tang Nianzu had not returned yet. *DSTSJ: juan 40* "Guo Zuming yuzhai" 過祖命寓齋, p. 570.

the most famous *yimin* figures such as Mao Xiang 冒襄, Du Jun, and Yu Huai, and these became the main subject of his poems of this time. The trip ended with a grand birthday party for Gu Mei in Nanjing and a send-off gathering at the Yanziji port led by Qian Qianyi.<sup>101</sup>

In the years Shunzhi 13-14 (1656-1657) and immediately afterwards, although resistance efforts led by Zheng Chenggong continued and even stirred up excitement and activities among Ming loyalists in the Jiangnan area,<sup>102</sup> the social interactions surrounding Gong Dingzi's trip seem to tell a different and much more complex story about the realignment of social and political relations among the elite literati. As Lynn Struve has clearly delineated, from Shunzhi 12 (1655) Zheng Chengzhong stepped up his assaults on Qing authority in the southeast, and made his refusal to collaborate with the Qing ruler much more explicit than ever before.<sup>103</sup> While Gong Dingzi was traveling from Beijing to Guangdong and then visiting in Jiangnan, Zheng Chenggong was launching powerful attacks. When Gong Dingzi and his friends were celebrating the *chongyang* festival by making several trips to the mountains, Zheng Chenggong was gaining ground by his attacks in Zhejiang.<sup>104</sup> But months later when hundreds of guests showed up in the Zhonglin Hall 中林堂 to celebrate Gu Mei's birthday, Zheng

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<sup>101</sup> *DSTSJ: juan 40*: "Muzhai xiansheng ji tongxue zhuzi wangsong Yanziji. Yuexia ji yin, kouhao si shou" 牧齋先生及同學諸子枉送燕子磯。月下集飲，口號四首，p. 572.

<sup>102</sup> Chen Yinke's analysis of Qian Qianyi and his friends' activities during this time period convincingly tries to demonstrate how widely and intensively they were engaged in resistance movement. Chen Yike 陳寅恪, *Liu Rushi biezhuàn* 柳如是別傳, vol. 3 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2001).

<sup>103</sup> Struve, *The Southern Ming*.

<sup>104</sup> All these took place in the ninth and tenth months of Shunzhi 14.

Chenggong's expedition had just withdrawn from Zhejiang due to a disappointing loss of a key strategic region in Fujian.<sup>105</sup>

How could a (turncoat) Qing official enjoy this level of popularity and attention in the heartland of the Ming loyalist movement, particularly when traveling as an imperial envoy to the militarily sensitive southern frontier? If we look at all these events together, we must pause and wonder what these gatherings—consisting of Qing officials loyal to the Manchu regime, close friends to the Qing officials, and Ming loyalists—meant for the people in these co-existing, competing, and overlapping relations. Suddenly, the anti-Qing “mobilization” activities described by Chen Yinke in his interpretation of the activities of Qian Qianyi and Liu Rushi seems to have been a vague dream of the majority of the literati circle, a dream they always entertained in one way or another but hesitated to pursue whole-heartedly. In this sense, Gu Mei's birthday party captures the transitory character of the period: the literati community was reconnecting and rebuilding without openly discarding Ming loyalism or the legitimacy of the Manchu rule.

The fact that the *yimin* community fully embraced Gong Dingzi at a time when the resistance campaign led by Zheng Chenggong was succeeding in the same region suggests that the literati community had socially moved on despite their different political

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<sup>105</sup> Yu Huai, *Banqiao zaji* describes the event as being well attended not only by famous official-literati and *yimin* (including himself) but also musical performers and courtesans who had become renown since the late Ming. *Banqiao za ji* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2000), p. 30. However, I question Yu Huai's recollection about Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei enjoying Gong Dingzi's student Yan Zhengju's kow-tow and calling himself *jianzi* 賤子 (your humble son). Yu Huai says Yan Zhengju was on his way to his new post in Zhejiang. But evidence shows that Yan Zhengju was an Administration Vice Commissioner of the Jiangxi Lingbei Circuits 江西嶺北道參政 at the time. Yan got a promotion to become the Judicial Commissioner of Guangdong in early Shunzhi 15. See *Qing shilu: juan* 115: Shunzhi 15/3 (1658/4). This also proves that for very personal reasons (probably out of jealousy), Yu Huai has made up information about Gong-Gu in this book, including the documentation that Gu Mei had received the official title from the Qing.

allegiances. During the trip to Guangdong and through all the social interactions related to it, Gong Dingzi's status in the networks of elite literati had been consolidated, a process that testifies to the difficult realignment of social-political forces in this community, which Gong Dingzi worked out through friendships confirmed in the transfer of Gu Mei's orchid paintings. Although the recipient of one such painting and patronage, Tang Nianzu, soon died, his father and Gong Dingzi managed to see each other at least two more times in Jiangnan, including once in Kangxi 5 (1665) at Gu Mei's funeral.<sup>106</sup>

### **The Orchids Touched by Women**

Gu Mei did not go to the far south with Gong Dingzi but stayed in Jiangnan and waited for his return. This was her last visit to this region before she died. She visited the south only twice after the fall of Beijing. Jiangnan continued to be the land where talented women thrived in literati world. During her first trip back to the south, in Shunzhi 5 (1648) she made an orchid scroll but did not dedicate it to any specific person. But several prominent gentry women, whose lives range across the whole seventeenth century, contributed poems to this beautifully crafted scroll (Figure 5). They include Cai Yuqing, the wife of Huang Daozhou, the independent woman poet and artist Huang Yuanjie 黄媛介,<sup>107</sup> as well as Jiang Gui 姜桂, great-granddaughter of the *yimin* Jiang Cai.<sup>108</sup> This was

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<sup>106</sup> One meeting took place on Gong Dingzi's way back to the capital on this mission. See Gong Dingzi, "Guo Zuming yuzhai" 過祖命寓齋. The other time was when Gong Dingzi went back to his hometown in Kangxi 5.

<sup>107</sup> Ko has examined Huang Yuanjie's literary activities in the context of women poets and the Ming-Qing transition. Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*. Shi Runzhang composed the biography of Huang Yuanjie, in which he documented that Huang Yuanjie socialized with and had many literary exchanges with Wu

later named by a high-Qing woman artist “Bamboo, Rock and Lonely Orchid” (*Zhu shi you lan* 竹石幽蘭). It is not clear how this painting circulated from one woman to another, especially in the case of Cai Yuqing who resided in Fujian after Huang Daozhou’s death, while Huang Yuanjie and Jiang Gui both were longtime residents of Suzhou. This scroll painting tells a story about dynastic change that may not be dramatic or political but that is equally important, since it shows a different relationship between culture and politics for individuals. These women had different experiences of the Ming-Qing dynastic transition, but their artistic and literary marks on Gu Mei’s painting recognize a cultural tradition that should not be disrupted by any change of regime.



Figure 5 (the last section of the scroll) From *Zhongguo minghua wai ji* volume 39 “Gu Hengbo nushi lan zhu shi juan” (Yale University Library)

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Yanzi, a friend of Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei. Shi Runzhang, *Xue yu wenji* 學餘文集: juan 17 “Huang shi Jieling xiao zhuan” 黃氏皆令小傳, pp. 13b-14a.

<sup>108</sup> Shanghai Youzheng shuju ed. *Zhongguo minghua wai ji* 中國名畫外集 volume 39 “Gu Hengbo nushi lan zhu shi juan” 顧橫波女史蘭竹石卷 (Shanghai, Shanghai youzheng shuju, 1928?).



The painting itself has a subtle political message. Although the orchid had always been the favorite theme for literati, since it symbolized purity, chastity, and the uncontaminated elegance of the ideal literatus, orchid paintings were not necessarily meant to primarily convey political sentiments. Take Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322) and Zheng Sixiao 鄭思肖 (1241-1318) of the late Song and early Yuan as representative of contrasting approaches. After the Mongols conquered the southern Song in 1279, Zheng Sixiao retreated into reclusion, while Zhao Mengfu, a descendant of the Song imperial family, accepted the Yuan rulers' summons and served in high official positions in the alien government. Zheng's most remembered orchid painting was made in 1306 (Figure 6). Famously, his orchids are shown "ungrounded" against the blank silk, because the "land" was occupied and ruled by foreigners. The orchid, the symbol of the *junzi* (noble gentleman), stubbornly thrives here on its own spirit, refusing to accept sustenance provided by the "illegitimate ruler." Also, the signature did not include the emperor's reign year, but instead is dated by the *gan*zhi system.<sup>109</sup> This in itself constituted a political gesture. Zheng Sixiao's name and loyalism gained fanastic popularity in the last years of the Ming, when his book *Xin Shi* 心史 ("The History of My Heart") was dramatically discovered in an old well in Suzhou in Chongzhen 11 (1638), more than three hundred years after he died.<sup>110</sup> Zheng Sixiao's name thus entered the rosters of

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<sup>109</sup> The *gan*zhi system was used for counting a 60-year cycle.

<sup>110</sup> Some dispute that this book was forged. But Donglin official Zhang Guowei considered this collection of work important and had it quickly reprinted. Many believed that Zheng Sixiao compiled all his works into this collection and put it in an iron case. The poems and essays in this collection demonstrate his

those displaying dynastic loyalty. But Zhao Mengfu, one of the greatest masters of painting and calligraphy in Chinese history, was also worshipped in the literati cultural orthodoxy. In terms of artistic achievement, he certainly surpasses Zheng Sixiao and represents the highest achievement in art. The blemish in his political life, though sometimes used as a negative moral-political example, never really damaged his status in Chinese literati cultural history. In his most admired orchid painting, painted four years before Zheng's, he did not hesitate to use the Yuan emperor's reign year in his signature. (Figure 7)



Figure 6 Zheng Sixiao's "rootless orchid"



loyalty and filial piety. Because the Ming dynasty also faced tremendous internal and external crises at the time or its discovery, this work was immediately embraced and generated widespread political discussion.

Figure 7 Zhao Mengfu's orchids and rocks

When Gu Mei painted her scroll, Gong Dingzi had already been serving with the Manchu Qing. She makes an interesting statement with her signature. She explicitly indicates that this piece of work “imitates the spirit of Zhao Songxue’s art” (Figure 5). “Songxue” 松雪 was Zhao Mengfu’s literary name. In spite of his tarnished political reputation, Zhao Mengfu and his orchids represent the established Chinese artistic tradition, which claims a transcendent position and prestige in Chinese history. As the art historian Tan Shule has pointed out, in the late Ming and early Qing, “imitating” earlier artists became a major trend in painting. *Fanggu* (“to imitate the ancient artist or style 仿古”) has a variety of meanings and implications in the history of Chinese painting.<sup>111</sup> This particular scroll has not only inherited the spirit of Zhao Mengfu’s orchid painting in terms of its brushwork, but it also elaborates on Zhao Mengfu’s most famous work of this kind. Still, Gu Mei did not sign with the Qing emperor’s reign year; she used the traditional *ganzhi* for Shunzhi 5 (1648). Her urge to avoid the identity of a Qing subject and her attempt to create an orchid painting of supreme aesthetic value that would transcend the dynastic cycle constitute a subtle political view. This move was symptomatic of the subtlety and complexity of socio-political negotiations ongoing in the literati community, between the turncoat officials and *yimin*.

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<sup>111</sup> Tan Shule 譚述樂, “Preface” and Chapter 4 of *Wang Shigu huihua fengge yu zhenwei jianding* 王石谷繪畫風格與真偽鑒定 (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 2007).

This subtlety in the relationship between political orthodoxy and cultural orthodoxy explains the inscriptions of both Cai Yuqing and Huang Yuanjie (1620-1669). Dorothy Ko has detailed Huang Yuanjie's life as an itinerant poet, teacher, and artist. As her careful analysis has demonstrated, during the transitional period, Huang Yuanjie not only earned admiration and recognition from Gong's best literati friends Qian Qianyi, Shi Runzhang and Wu Weiye, but she also became an active member in many prominent, erudite women's circles, be it domestic, social, or "transitory public,"<sup>112</sup> which at least maintained ties to Gu Mei's world. For example, Wu Shan 吳山, who accompanied Gu Mei during the couple's stay in Jiangnan, had befriended Huang Yuanjie around the same time.<sup>113</sup> Huang Yuanjie could have gotten access to Gu Mei's scroll through Wu Shan soon after Gu Mei painted it in Shunzhi 5 (1648). She inscribed a poem that uses literary allusions common for an orchid painting. It actually reworks a poem by the great artist Zhao Mengfu himself on one of his acclaimed orchid paintings.<sup>114</sup> Not only did she use the exact first line from the Zhao poem as her first line, she also repeated the basic sentiments and literary elements that focused on nothing other than eternal beauty and virtues. As a gentry woman who had suffered tremendously during the dynastic transition, including possible rape and forced prostitution, Huang Yuanjie needed to claim respectability and a means of survival more than anything else, as Ko has carefully argued.<sup>115</sup> Like Gu Mei, she was also seeking the meaning of her own existence in

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<sup>112</sup> Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, p. 121 and 291.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284-285. Gong Dingzi composed a lot of poems during this time in response to Wu Shan's poems.

<sup>114</sup> Zhao Mengfu's poem appears in Gao Shiqi 高士奇, *Jiang cun xiaoxia lu* 江邨消夏錄 (Taipei: Hanhua wenhua, 1971): *juan* 3: "Zhao Wenmin gong lan zhu" 趙文敏公蘭竹, p. 376.

<sup>115</sup> Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, pp.118-123.

something that transcended the turmoil of the dynastic transition, something as eternal as the aesthetics of the orchid and orchid masterpieces.

Cai Yuqing's inscription is also a poem, supposedly written by "someone from the past."<sup>116</sup> It also employs conventional literary allusions to orchid, but Cai Yuqing's very participation in inscribing this scroll demonstrates the transcendent power of a shared artistic tradition. Politically, Gu Mei was the woman of a turncoat official, while Cai Yuqing presented herself as and was an established exemplar of political loyalty and ideal feminine chastity. According to the local gazetteer, she did not sign calligraphic works with her own name until she reached old age, because she believed that "a woman's name should not be circulated outside the inner chamber."<sup>117</sup> The question is: when did she inscribe this orchid painting?

According to Cai Yuqing's biographer, after the martyrdom of Huang Daozhou in Shunzhi 3 (1646), Cai Yuqing knew there was very little hope of restoring the Ming; even the temporary southern Ming regime could not provide security. She told her sons to move to the remote mountains with her. But the eldest and second eldest still wandered near the town and did not want to leave. One day, to escape the armies, they crossed the river and there they disappeared.<sup>118</sup> The historian Tan Qian has documented in his diary account of a visit to Beijing that Wu Weiye informed him that Huang Daozhou's two sons were eaten by the local people during the famine in Shunzhi 12 (1656); only the

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<sup>116</sup> We cannot speculate on the identity of the author based on the limited information available. This person "from the past" could be a female friend, her martyr husband, or even herself.

<sup>117</sup> "Old age" is a literary usage here. It probably refers to her widowhood. *Zhangpu xian zhi*: juan 19.

<sup>118</sup> Hong Si, "Wenming furen xingzhuang" 文明夫人行狀 in *Huang Zhangpu wenxuan* 黃漳浦文選 (TWWXCK 137), p. 381. This is feasible because struggles between the Qing armies and Zheng Chenggong's anti-Qing military remained intensive in this area at the time.

youngest of the three sons survived.<sup>119</sup> Wu Weiye could have heard a dramatized version of what happened to those two young men when the military confrontations between the Qing armies and the resistance forces in Fujian and Guangdong were escalating. Cai Yuqing's own writing indicates that her eldest son went to collect his father's remains in Jiangnan in the summer of Shunzhi 7 (1650) and returned months later.<sup>120</sup> She also admitted that when she moved into the deepest part of the mountains, she only had one son and one grandson with her.<sup>121</sup> These records seem to confirm that she lost those two sons during the intensified military struggle between the Qing and Zheng Chenggong's forces. From that time on, as a gesture of devotion to the fallen Ming and to her husband Huang Daozhou, Cai Yuqing vowed to "never step into the city... and stay in the mountains until leaving this world."<sup>122</sup> She came across this painting at some point before Shunzhi 12 (1655). Did someone take it from Jiangnan to the far south? This person did not own this painting; nor did he or she leave a seal or signature on the scroll. This piece of work mysteriously traveled to the southern frontier and then returned to Jiangnan. Or, did Cai Yuqing herself secretly travel northward, sometime between Shunzhi 5 (when this painting was made) and Shunzhi 7, in attempt to locate and fetch her martyr husband's remains by herself? There could be so many possibilities and stories. In any case, inscribing a poem by "someone from the past" conveys a sense of nostalgia, for a time when the literati community was not torn apart by politics and wars. The surprising "touch" of Cai Yuqing on this orchid scroll, in an interesting way, tells how political

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<sup>119</sup> Tan Qian, *Bei you lu: Jiyou II* 紀郵下, p. 117.

<sup>120</sup> *Huang Zhangpu wenxuan*: "Ming zhongliiegong furen Cai shi zi Jieshi ti Hou tairuren yi shi" 明忠烈公夫人蔡氏字介石題侯太孺人遺詩, p. 383.

<sup>121</sup> Hong Si, "Wenming furen xingzhuang."

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*

tensions were partly resolved via the medium of shared cultural heritage, even between women in politically opposed circles.

Outside the official “political” arena, and outside literati socio-political negotiations, “dynastic transition” transpired in the “women’s sphere” in very subtle ways. This process tells us that the Chinese society recovered and rebuilt itself quickly because the shared cultural tradition and Confucian ethics in society help people heal socially and psychologically. It would be overreaching to say that inscribing this orchid painting created a tangible bond that had some material effects. But certainly it demonstrates the undercurrent of sympathy and continuity across dynastic change that ran in the cultural spheres and could remind people in the literati-official and *yimin* communities of their ties and common interests. The discourse of dynastic loyalty was not omnipotent, especially when compared to the strength of Chinese cultural tradition, and more importantly, in the crises of dynastic change. It could be true that “[to] many Chinese the *yimin* were the transmitters as well as defenders of Confucian culture and its traditional values.”<sup>123</sup> But this study has shown that people at the time realized that the turncoats *also* embodied and practiced various elements of the vast “Confucian culture and its traditional values.” For otherwise the transition would not have been completed in the way it was.

Men and women of the literati world encountered different obstacles in the recovery process. But no one community monopolized the language of loyalty, or the responsibility to preserve Chinese cultural tradition and values. The Ming-Qing political transition was completed through the recovery of social and familial bonds, the

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<sup>123</sup> Wing-ming Chan, “The Early-Qing Discourse on Loyalty,” in *East Asian History* 19 (June 2000), p. 41.

strengthening of Confucian ethics of friendship, and by mobilizing the traditional cultural means of political expression. It was these very Confucian values and ethics, as well as the orthodox literary and artistic traditions, that provided means for literati, the leaders of both national and local communities, to survive this politically difficult time and cope with their new identity as Qing subjects.



## Chapter 7

### Gendered Destinies: Herstory and History

#### Herstory

In the fall of Kangxi 1 (1662), the four Manchu Regents who were ruling the Qing in the place of the young Kangxi emperor, raised Gong Dingzi's official rank to that of a board vice president. In Kangxi 2/6 (1663), Gong resumed the position of the President of the Censorate. In Kangxi 3/11 (1664), he became the President of the Board of Punishment, in Kangxi 5/9 (1666), the President of the Board of War, and in Kangxi 8 (1669), the President of the Board of Rites.

Gu Mei died in 1664, four months before Gong Dingzi assumed the position of the President of the Board of Punishment, and therefore did not live to witness Gong Dingzi's best years in his political career. She had just accompanied her husband through the toughest time. After a series of demotions, Gong Dingzi served as a low-ranking Instructor at the Imperial Academy of Learning from Shunzhi 15 to Shunzhi 18 (1658-1661). This was the lowest point of his political career. The demotions resulted from the Shunzhi emperor's observation that Gong Dingzi chose to sacrifice Manchu interests to help the Han people, especially in terms of implementing legal decisions. The emperor's other primary concern about Gong Dingzi was his factional leadership. By Shunzhi 15 (1658), Gong Dingzi's major factional enemies among the Han officials had been

expunged by the emperor for their part in the factionalism, and his close friend Jin Zhijun 金之俊 had already become not only a Grand Secretary, but also the President of the Board of Personnel.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, had the Shunzhi emperor not been so firmly opposed to Gong Dingzi, he would not have had waited for so long in those insignificant bureaucratic positions. After the death of the Shunzhi emperor, the Four Regents adopted a politics of pragmatism and immediately promoted capable officials like Gong Dingzi to important positions during a time when the Manchu rule was facing its most serious challenges.

Gong Dingzi's stepmother Madame Wang died several days after the death of the Shunzhi emperor in Shunzhi 18 (1661), but he was not granted a mourning leave. Nor did he get a leave to bury his wife Madame Tong or Gu Mei in Kangxi 3 (1664). The political situation suddenly looked grim when the Temple Lament Case (*Ku miao an* 哭廟案) provoked suspicion and in the Statement of Accounts Case (*Zou xiao an* 奏銷案), repressive measures against literati in Jiangnan, quickly reached the level of terror with thousands of arrests.<sup>2</sup> Gong Dingzi had to postpone returning to his hometown and leave

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<sup>1</sup> Guoshiguan ed. 國史館校注 *Qing shi gao jiaozhu* 清史稿校注 vol. 7 “Daxueshi nianbiao” 大學士年表 (Taibei: Taiwan guoshi guan). Jin Zhijun maintained ties with both Chen Mingxia and Gong Dingzi in the Shunzhi years. Even at the highest point of factional conflicts between Chen Mingxia and Gong Dingzi's circle in and outside the government, Jin Zhijun and Gong Dingzi maintained their friendship. For example, in Shunzhi 9 (1652), Jin composed an essay to celebrate the completion of Gong Dingzi's new studio, *Zunzhuo zhai* 尊拙齋. Jin Zhijun, *Jin wentonggong ji* 金文通公集 (Huaitiantang 懷天堂, Kangxi 25 edition, National Library of China rare collection): *juan 7* “Zunzhuo zhai ji” 尊拙齋記. Gong Dingzi wrote a preface for Jin Zhijun's essay on the Hengshan Mountains in Kangxi 1 (1662). *Jin Wentonggong wenji*: *juan 6*: (Gong Dingzi) “Preface to ‘You Nanyue ji’” 〈遊南嶽記〉及附錄龔序.

<sup>2</sup> For a concise description of this attack on Chinese gentry privileges, see Wakeman, *the Great Enterprise*, pp. 1067-1073.

Gu Mei's coffin resting at a Buddhist temple in Beijing, the Changchun Temple 長椿寺.

In the meantime, in these urgent situations, he used his new power in the government to help *yimin* and support young Han scholars in the capital.

In the summer of Kangxi 5 (1666), though still unable to obtain an official mourning leave, Gong Dingzi received a three-month short leave to go back to Luzhou to arrange his mother's funeral. Just prior, Gong Dingzi had helped forestall another lawsuit against Yan Ermei. Fortunately, Gong Dingzi could use his power as President of the Board of Punishment, and he submitted a memorial on Yan Ermei's behalf. In late Kangxi 4 (1665), the case was finally resolved.<sup>3</sup> Yan Ermei and his sons celebrated the New Year with Gong Dingzi in Beijing. It seems that the friends spent a lot of time together remembering Gu Mei. Gong Dingzi's own poem noted that they talked about Gu Mei's generous support of these friends. On the night of the Lantern Festival (the fifteenth day of the first month), the friends gathered for a feast, where they composed poems using the rhymes of "Dengping ci" (燈屏詞), a set of poems written by the great poet Qian Qianyi for Gu Mei in Shunzhi 12 (1655), in which Qian described the deep love between Gong and Gu.<sup>4</sup> While Gong Dingzi's poems were full of sorrow, Yan

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<sup>3</sup> Yan Ermei, *Yan Gugu quanji: Bei zhili ji: juan 4*: notes on "Gong Sikou wei yu titu de yu xi ji yi shi bao yu yu yiyun da zhi" 龔司寇為余題疏得允喜極以詩報余余依韻答之自注時乙巳十二月二十日, p. 3a. Wei Yijie, then a Grand Secretary, and two other friends, Ji Bozi and Bai Zhongdiao, also made efforts in this case.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, juan 3: "Biwu yuanxiao yu Xiaosheng, Bozi, Zhongdiao yong Qian Muzhai Dengping jiu yun" 丙午元宵與孝升伯紫仲調用錢牧齋鐙屏舊韻 (p. 1a-b). Gong Dingzi footnotes in his poems that Qian Qianyi wrote those poems for Gu Mei. Qian Qianyi, *You xue ji: juan 5* "Dingping ci shi er shou" 燈屏詞十二首, pp. 227-231.

Ermei expressed his gratitude and appreciation for Gong Dingzi's friendship through eulogizing Gu Mei.

On the day of *qingming*,<sup>5</sup> the day of remembering the deceased, the friends went to visit the Miaoguang Pavillion 妙光閣 at the Changchun Temple and mourned there, because this pavilion had been built under Gu Mei's patronage.<sup>6</sup> Gu Mei's coffin was still in this temple, waiting to be taken back to the south. She had been known as a pious Buddhist and a generous patron of this temple, located on Xiejie Street 斜街 where Gong Dingzi used to reside. As John Kieschnick has pointed out, Buddhist monasteries were “repositories of memories and associations with unusual events of the past,” often linked “to various sights, smells, and sounds, regardless of whether or not these were the product of what we would classify as Buddhism. Few other buildings in premodern China could boast this level of social incorporation or general prominence in public life.”<sup>7</sup> Situated in a temple built by the Ming imperial family and beloved by literati-officials since the late Ming period,<sup>8</sup> the pavilion itself had become a place of remembering—

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<sup>5</sup> On the fifteenth day of the second month, people went to memorial sites (usually tombs) to remember friends and relatives who had passed away.

<sup>6</sup> *DSTSJ*: juan 31: “Qingming tong Gugu Bozi Zhongdiao Tuchuang zhu zi deng Miaoguang ge gan dao er shou” (note: the pavilion was built by Gu Mei) 清明同古古伯紫仲調兔牀諸子登妙光閣感悼二首 (注閣為善持君所建), p. 478.

<sup>7</sup> John Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). 187.

<sup>8</sup> The Changchun Temple was built by the Xiaoding Empress 孝定皇后 in Wanli 40 (1612) for the Buddhist master Shuizhai 水齋. The Wanli Emperor named it “Changchun” and bestowed purple gowns on the master. Its most noted treasure, “shenjin duo bao fota” 渗金多寶佛塔, was moved to the Wanshou Temple 萬壽寺 by the Kangxi emperor. Sun Chengze 孫承澤, *Tianfu guangji* 天府廣記: juan 38 (reprint, Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1962); Liu Tong and Yu Yizheng, *Dijing jingwu lue*: juan 3; *Beijing Changhe Wanshousi shi* 北京長河·萬壽寺史 (Beijing: Rongbaozhai chubanshe, 2006)

remembering the personal and collective traumas of dynastic change, which made Gu Mei's philanthropy especially precious and touching. In turn, the name of the pavilion, Miaoguang, was becoming the conventional reference to Gu Mei.<sup>9</sup> Gong Dingzi had been there with Wei Yijie 魏裔介 (1616-1686), a very important Han official of the late Shunzhi and early Kangxi period, who befriended and actively collaborated with Gong Dingzi on many key political issues.<sup>10</sup> Chen Qinian 陳其年, son of the former Fushe leader Chen Zhenhui and Gong-Gu's protégé, went there in Kangxi 7 (1668) in frustration over homesickness and his failure to obtain a stable livelihood in the government.<sup>11</sup> He expressed the sentiment provoked by the views at the pavilion: "The jade-stone laces in the sutra hall dance like flower rains; Flames of war on the southern seashore rest with the dust of battle."<sup>12</sup> This was the prevalent sentiment among men and women of the literati-official world in the seventeenth century. The transition was approaching its end, and Gu Mei, as well as her footprint in the Buddhist temple, had become an integral part of Beijing's socio-political fabric during the transition.<sup>13</sup>

Between Shunzhi 18 and Kangxi 3 (1661-1664), within four short years, three important women in Gong Dingzi's life passed away: his stepmother Madame Wang, his

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<sup>9</sup> For example, Yan Ermei's poem "Taohuacheng wanci" (no. 1) contains this literary allusion: 金臺鐵井路茫茫，千里秋帆引妙光。

<sup>10</sup> *DSTSJ: juan 13* "Wei Shisheng zhongcheng yu hou wang guo xiao zhai jian shi xin yong he da san shou" 魏石生中丞雨後枉過小齋兼示新詠和答三首 (p. 219) and *juan 14* "Qiuri tong Shisheng zhongcheng deng Miaoguangge heyun" 秋日同石生中丞登妙光閣和韻 (p. 224-25).

<sup>11</sup> Ma Zuxi 馬祖熙, *Chen Weisong nianpu* 陳維崧年譜: Kangxi 7 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Chen Weisong, *Chen Weisong shi* 陳維崧詩 (Yangzhou: Guangling shushe, 2006), p. 466.

<sup>13</sup> The Miaoguang Pavilion was demolished sometime after 1949. Now standing on its old site is a hospital that provides the best medical service to the public. There could not be a better use of the land to replace Gu Mei's Buddhist pavilion, considering that she devoted herself to philanthropy work.

wife Madame Tong, and Gu Mei. Officially his trip to the south was to arrange the funeral for Madame Wang. But the sad presence of Gu Mei's coffin in Gong Dingzi's company seemed to attract more attention in his social circle. In contrast to a belated oratory for Madame Tong by Yan Zhengju, Gong Dingzi's disciple, poems and memories were dedicated to Gu Mei by the most famous *yimin*. When Gong Dingzi was about to leave for the south, the monk Liuru 六如 held a Buddhist ritual for Gu Mei and exchanged poems with Gong Dingzi at the ceremony.<sup>14</sup> Then, on his arrival in Luzhou,<sup>15</sup> a number of Gong-Gu's closest friends were waiting, including the four famous *yimin* Yan Ermei, Du Jun, Tang Yunjia, and Fang Wen 方文, who had come from their different locales to take part in the funeral. These four *yimin* were among the most respected and popular in the *yimin* community for their unwavering Ming loyalism and their literary (and artistic) achievements.

Among them, Yan Ermei in particular was widely recognized as an ideal *yimin*, a representative of Confucian morality that the turncoats supposedly lacked. Yan Ermei's entire life experience could be considered emblematic of Confucian ideal. First, judged from any perspective, Yan Ermei remains an impeccable political man of the late Ming. He passed the provincial exam and obtained the *juren* title, but soon gave up on an official career because of his uncompromising stance against former followers of the powerful eunuch Wei Zhongxian. This position invited explicit and implicit exactions of revenge in the early Chongzhen years. Though not pursuing an official political career,

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<sup>14</sup> *DSTSJ: juan* 31: "Shanchi jun chen nan gui Liuru shangren lichan you zuo yin he yuan yun" 善持君欄南歸六如上人禮懺有作因和原韻, p. 479.

<sup>15</sup> Louzhou is in modern Anhui province. At the time, it belonged to the Northern Zhili administrative region.

Yan Ermei socialized with not only the most active Fushe members such as Chen Mingxia and Fang Yizhi, but also with some of the best-known Donglin officials such as Huang Daozhou and Ni Yuanlu. Yan Ermei's established political reputation as an anti-*yandang* and pro-Donglin scholar made him the perfect political man in this historical context. With the fall of the Ming, he went to work for the anti-Qing resistance led by the General and Grand Secretary Shi Kefa of the Hongguang southern Ming government, hence joining the "politically righteous" side of the factional battle between the Donglin camp and the Ruan-Ma clique. But soon he left Shi Kefa when the latter failed to adopt a more sensible military strategy.<sup>16</sup> After the Manchu conquest of southern China, Yan Ermei organized and participated in all kinds of anti-Qing military activities. His rejection letter to the turncoat Wu Su 武愷 circulated widely in the south, as one of the most passionate proclamations against officials who had surrendered to the rebels.<sup>17</sup> His dismissal of Chen Mingxia's repeated invitations was also often cited to exemplify the Ming loyalists' determination to resist the Manchus and their Han agents.<sup>18</sup> Yan Ermei's image as a Confucian man loyal to the Ming defies any challenge.

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<sup>16</sup> The Chinese historian Gu Cheng 顧誠 has examined the political and military causes of failure for Shi Kefa in his work, *Nan Ming Shi* 南明史. Yan Ermei was certainly not alone in recognizing Shi's political and military incompetence, never mind his reputation as an upright Donglin leader. Zhang Zilie 張自烈, the widely-admired Fushe leader I mentioned in the previous chapter, explicitly expressed disagreement and worries in his letters to Shi Kefa. See his collected works *Qishan wenji* 芑山文集.

<sup>17</sup> Gu Yanwu, *Ming ji shi lu: juan 1*: "Xuzhou xiaolian Yan Gugu ming Ermei yi Wu Su shi" 徐州孝廉閻古名爾梅貽武愷詩.

<sup>18</sup> The historian Zhang Sheng proposed a different view of the relationship between Yan Ermei and Chen Mingxia. He suggests that they did not really cut off their friendship. Both pretended that they did not remain friends because Chen Mingxia was concerned about his own political career in the Qing government despite his limited efforts to gain forgiveness from the *yimin* community. See Zhang Sheng 張升, *Gu Cheng xiansheng jinian ji mingqingshi yanjiu wenji* 顧誠先生紀念暨明清史研究文集: "Chen

Second, Yan Ermei stood out as a man of filial piety. He and Wan Shouqi (1603-1652), another noted former Fushe scholar, shared a strong commitment to filial piety through meritorious practices such as supporting each other's commitment to practice *shoumu* (guarding the deceased parents' tomb). Yan Ermei and Wan Shouqi together were called the "Two *yimin* of Xuzhou" (*xuzhou er yimin* 徐州二遺民). Ming loyalism and filial piety virtually defined these two figures in the early Qing.

Third and in association with the previous two aspects, not only did Yan and Gong represent two types of political men, they were also cast as different kinds of family men (husbands). In Shunzhi 12 (1656), when news about Yan Ermei's arrest arrived, his wife and concubine committed suicide together. This was their second attempt at suicide together for their husband: the first took place in Shunzhi 9 (1653), but they were rescued and their husband was soon released. After their deaths, Yan Ermei buried them in the same tomb. In the poems he composed to remember these two women, he praised their "loyal minds" and determination, which made him more manly than Wen Tianxiang, the loyal prime minister and martyr of the Southern Song dynasty, because Wen's wife failed to commit suicide and was taken to the capital of the Yuan government!<sup>19</sup> Thus, the heroic action of Yan Ermei's women enhanced his manly loyalty. This point was dramatically reflected in the diehard *yimin* Zhuo Erkan's 卓爾堪

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Mingxia yu Gong Dingzi, Yan Ermei 'juejiao' kao" 陳名夏與龔鼎孳、閻爾梅"絕交"考 [A study on the "termination" of Chen Mingxia's friendships with Gong Dingzi and Yan Ermei] (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 2005), 157-167.

<sup>19</sup> Yan Ermei, *Yan Gugu quanji: Nan zhili ji: juan 3* "Wen liang shiren lie si ku zhi" 閻兩室人烈死哭誌, p. 6a. Yan Ermei's use of the word *zhong* on this occasion is ambiguous. It could refer to the women's devotion to him which supported his loyal commitment, or he is implying these women were "loyal" to the fallen Ming.



documentation of an exaggerated account in Yan Ermei's biography he compiled for *The Collection of Yimin Poetry (Yimin shi 遺民詩)*.<sup>20</sup> Zhuo Erkan records that upon his arrest, Yan Ermei "slew his beloved concubine" (*shou ren ai qie 手刃愛妾*).<sup>21</sup> This exemplifies the gendered imagination of the *yimin* character among elite men at the time, a particular kind of expression of political and moral strength that echoed the fundamental ethos of the stories of martyrdom that had been circulated after the fall of the Ming. In contrast, the rumor that Gu Mei did not allow Gong Dingzi to achieve martyrdom made Gong Dingzi the poster boy for slack loyalty and moral failure. Despite all these apparent differences, however, Yan Ermei, the model *yimin*, never hesitated to express his friendship with and appreciation for Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei.

Unlike Yan Ermei's trip to mourn Gu Mei, the visits of Du Jun, Fang Wen, and Tang Yunjia are rarely mentioned; they were not even noticed by Yan Ermei's or Gong Dingzi's biographers. But their appearance in Gong Dingzi's hometown on this occasion is truly significant. These three *yimin* represented the three major literati communities: Du Jun from Nanjing, Fang Wen of the Tongcheng Fang family, and Tang Yunjia from Xuancheng. Nanjing, the social, cultural and political center of southern China in the seventeenth century, became the second hometown for many *yimin* after the fall of the Ming, while Xuancheng and Tongcheng rivaled each other as the birthplaces of great scholars and officials; the literati communities there maintained close connections. Gong

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<sup>20</sup> Zhuo Erkan was considered one of the few who held very strict criteria for the category *yimin*. For a detailed analysis of Zhuo Erkan and the *yimin* poetry collection that he compiled, see Pan Chengyu 潘承玉, *Qingchu shitan: Zhuo Erkan yu Yimin Shi yanjiu 清初詩壇：卓爾堪與〈遺民詩〉研究* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> Zhuo Erkan 卓爾堪, *Yimin Shi 遺民詩*.

Dingzi's unusually close ties with both these communities were not disrupted, as a result of their mutual efforts to maintain friendships. Gong Dingzi and Fang Wen's friendship, built on the strong connections between Gong Dingzi and many other famous Fang family members in the early Qing, was confirmed and cemented partly through social and cultural exchanges in the domestic sphere. For example, in Shunzhi 4 (1647), when Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei returned south for the first time after the change of regime, Fang Wen wrote a poem to Gong Dingzi and sent an embroidered Buddha figure with it.<sup>22</sup> The embroidered Buddha figure seemed to be the work of Fang Wen's concubine. There could not have been a better present for Gu Mei, the pious Buddhist, especially during this period when she was so desperately trying to conceive a boy for Gong Dingzi. Then in Shunzhi 14 (1657), when Gong Dingzi stopped in Jiangnan on his way back from the mission to Guangdong, he inscribed four poems on an old painting by Fang Wen's deceased concubine, who seemed to have been a devout Buddhist as well.<sup>23</sup> Fang Wen and Yan Ermei both noted that they had admired each other for many years and even wrote poems for each other before they eventually met in Luzhou in the fall of Kangxi 5.<sup>24</sup> It seems that Fang Wen did not realize that Yan Ermei was going there, and so it was because of Gu Mei that their meeting could ever take place. They went to Gu Mei's tomb together and in the Town of Peach Blossoms wrote poems to commemorate the trip.

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<sup>22</sup> *DSTSJ*: juan 33: "Da Fang Erzhi" (footnote) 答方爾止 (自注), p. 507.

<sup>23</sup> *DSTSJ*: juan 40: "Ti Fang Erzhi jiren baoyuantu" 題方爾止姬人抱鴛圖四首, p. 573.

<sup>24</sup> Yan Ermei in "Taohuacheng qiu ye zeng Fang Erzhi chushi" says he had learned about Fang Wen from Chen Mingxia and Fang Yizhi thirty years before but had only gotten to actually meet him now. Yan Ermei, *Baida shanren shiji shijuan wenji er juan* 白耄山人詩集十卷文集二卷 (*SKJH-ji* 119): juan 4: "Taohuacheng qiu ye zeng Fang Erzhi chushi 桃花城秋夜贈方爾止處士, p. 401; Fang Wen, *Tushan xuji* 廬山續集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1979): juan 2 "Zeng Yan Gugu zhang" 贈閩古古丈, p. 972.

In the meantime, Tang Nianzu's father Tang Yunjia also came to the funeral from Xuancheng. Fang Wen's poem to Tang Yunjia is the only existing documentation of this trip. According to the poem, it seems that they were happily surprised to find each other in the same lodge near Luzhou, and thereafter spent some time together.<sup>25</sup> After the death of his beloved son, Tang Nianzu, Tang Yunjia would be the one to own the orchid painting that Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei had given his son. The painting could constantly remind him of the care that Gong and Gu had lavished on Tang Nianzu and sons of other former Fushe leaders. Gu Mei continued to play an important role in strengthening the friendship of these men, men who were tremendously influential and symbolically important in the official and *yimin* communities over the years of the dynastic transition.

The presence of these prominent *yimin* visitors at Gu Mei's funeral is also significant when we consider the fact that Gu Mei was not buried in the Gong family cemetery; instead, she was laid to rest miles outside Luzhou, at a place beautifully named the Town of Peach Blossoms (*Taohuacheng* 桃花城). In the end, Gong Dingzi did not violate the norms. He complied with the principles of a filial son by refraining from burying his beloved concubine together with his parents and his formal wife. In contrast, Yan Ermei had been able to bury his wife and concubine together in the family cemetery,<sup>26</sup> because these two women committed suicide together out of sacrifice for his loyalist commitment. Yan Ermei, a man deeply committed to Confucian teachings, understood that although in principle he should not bury his concubine along with his

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<sup>25</sup> Fang Wen, *Tushan xuji: juan 4* "Hefei zeng Tang Zuming zhang" 合肥贈唐祖命丈, p. 1095.

<sup>26</sup> Yan Ermei, *Yan Gugu quanji: Nan zhili ji: juan 3*: "Lian shiren Zhang shi Fan shi yu Nanzhuang" 殮室人張氏樊氏於南莊, pp. 6b-7a.

wife, the concubine's devotion to him had earned her a space in his family history and so the family cemetery.

But Gu Mei was not so "fortunate." Despite her good relations with Gong Dingzi's brothers, her superb reputation among the *yimin* community, and her position as Gong Dingzi's true companion throughout their life together, she had taken no extraordinary action that would possibly change her status from concubine to something completely different, for instance, political martyr. Nor did she produce a son. If she had, she would fall into the category of, for example, "mother to a son of the Gong family." Gong Dingzi, a disciplined Confucian literatus-official, knew too well that he had to bury her somewhere else. But Gong Dingzi's *yimin* friends rewarded her, and more importantly rewarded *him*, by acknowledging her status in their own way, within the boundaries of gender and status propriety sanctioned by the behavioral norms of their class. They made a special trip to attend her funeral.

On Gong Dingzi's arrival, the friends went to the Town of Peach Blossoms (Taohuacheng), where Gu Mei was to be buried. This place was located southwest of Luzhou city. In addition to remembering Gong Dingzi's partnership and love for Gu Mei during their twenty years together, Yan Ermei's poems composed for this occasion, entitled "Elegiac Poems from the Town of the Peach Blossom," particularly highlighted Gu Mei's literary and artistic talents, her pious Buddhist pursuit, and her joining with Gong Dingzi in support of Han literati. In the end, he fondly recalled his first encounter with Gu Mei. According to this poem and its footnotes, Yan Ermei first met Gu Mei in Chongzhen 15 (1642), one year before Gong and Gu's reunion in Beijing. Twenty-five

years later, Yan Ermei was still proud of the remarks Gu Mei had made, that his reputation had reached everyone's ears.

In the fourth month of the year of *renwu* (1642), I was staying in Nanjing on a visit. Several friends, including Wang Muru and Wu Zhoufang, invited me for a drink at Qinhuai.<sup>27</sup> In the moonlight we took a stroll and visited Meisheng (Gu Mei). Meisheng asked who I was. My friends answered, "This is Yan." Meisheng immediately asked, "Is this the gentleman [Yan] Gugu?"<sup>28</sup> I inquired why she thought so. She made a *gongshou*<sup>29</sup> gesture and replied, "Who hasn't heard of you?"<sup>30</sup> We all burst into laughter. This is a quite pleasant memory.<sup>31</sup>

Yan Ermei wrote many poems during this period for Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei. In Kangxi 5 (1666), he had already traveled twice to the capital to meet with Gong Dingzi. Then in the summer he went down to Luzhou prior to Gong's trip home—some records state explicitly that he went to help arrange Gu Mei's funeral. In the thirty poems composed for Gong Dingzi during his stay in Luzhou, "Thirty Poems for Gong Xiaosheng (Dingzi) from Summer-Autumn, Composed in Luzhou," Yan Ermen details Gong Dingzi's extraordinary accomplishments as a Confucian official, especially the important role that Gong Dingzi played in saving lives at the Board of Punishment and his political integrity in the early Qing.<sup>32</sup> As a political man, Gong Dingzi was considered

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<sup>27</sup> Qinhuai refers to the pleasure quarters in Nanjing.

<sup>28</sup> Gugu 古古 is Yan Ermei's 閻爾梅 literary name.

<sup>29</sup> Obeisance is made by cupping one hand in the other before chest.

<sup>30</sup> Gu Mei here cites a famous line, *Tianxia heren bu shi jun* 天下何人不識君, from a poem by Gao Shi 高適 of the Tang dynasty (618-907).

<sup>31</sup> Yan Ermei, *Yan Gugu quanji* 閻古古全集, ed. Zhang Xiangwen 張相文 (Beijing: Zhongguo dixuesuo, 1922): *Bei Zhili ji* 北直隸集: (footnotes of) "Taohuacheng Wanci" 桃花城輓詞 (自注), pp. 2a-3a.

<sup>32</sup> Yan Ermei, *Yan Gugu quanji: Nan Zhili ji* 南直隸集: *juan* 8: "Lujun xia qiu shi sanshi shou wei Gong Xiaosheng zuo" (no. 2) 盧郡夏秋詩三十首為龔孝升作其二, pp. 7b.

different from Xie An 謝安<sup>33</sup> who indulged himself in prostitutes, or Du Yu 杜預,<sup>34</sup> who cared too much about whether history would remember his personal achievements.<sup>35</sup>

We have seen how Gong Dingzi came to epitomize the lack of literati-official morality in the late Ming and early Qing, a designation resulting from the political spin given his failure to become a martyr for the fallen Ming and his pro-Han factionalist politics. Two decades later, as Yan Ermei's poems suggest, Gong's reputation was resuscitated to represent the Confucian ideal: he is loyal to the people and the government, filially pious, a devoted spouse but a man not interested in pursuing sensual pleasures—a radically different image from the one imposed on him in the first years of the Qing. Considering the reverent status of the ideal Donglin official in the grand narrative of the Ming-Qing transition, it is truly extraordinary that twenty-two years after the fall of the Ming and Gong Dingzi's surrender to the Qing, Yan Ermei referred to him as a Donglin, the identity that represented the highest morality.<sup>36</sup>

Gu Mei was a lucky woman in light of this very public observation of her importance in Gong Dingzi's life. Other women in his life were not as fortunate, and few mentions of them can be found. His formal wife, Madame Tong, only appears once in Yu Huai's writings. Among other women in Gong Dingzi's life, existing archival material has allowed me to identify only one Lady Du, but I suspect there were two more

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<sup>33</sup> Xie An (320-385) was a prominent administrative and military official of the Eastern Jin dynasty (317-420).

<sup>34</sup> Du Yu (222-284) was an important official of the Western Jin dynasty (265-316), praised for his literary, military and administrative talents.

<sup>35</sup> Yan Ermei, "Lujun xia qiu shi sanshi shou wei Gong Xiaosheng zuo" (no. 2).

<sup>36</sup> Yan wrote these lines in a poem for Gong: "President of the Board (*shangshu*, i.e. Gong) can be seen as the Big Dipper/ Lujun (Gong's hometown) is the Donglin!" Yan Ermei, *Baida shanren shiji shi juan wenji er juan* 白奪山人詩集十卷文集二卷 (SKJH-ji 119): juan 5: "Lujun xia qiu shi wei Gong Xiaosheng zuo" 盧郡夏秋詩為龔孝升作 no. 25, p. 432.

“nameless” concubines. In the year of Shunzhi 4 (1657), after Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei settled down in Jiangnan, Gong took a concubine surnamed Du.<sup>37</sup> When he headed north after completing the mourning period for his deceased father, Lady Du accompanied Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei. Over the next seven years, in Gong Dingzi’s words, aside from playing zither,<sup>38</sup> all she did was neatly managing the household. When Gong Dingzi traveled to Guangdong, Lady Du confined herself in the house in the capital (Gu Mei accompanied Gong Dingzi to the south as far as Jiangnan) and resorted to Buddhist prayers for Gong Dingzi’s safe return. Soon after Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei had returned to Beijing, Gong Dingzi’s daughter Longyin 隆印 died at a very young age.<sup>39</sup> In Shunzhi 16, Lady Du died. From Gong Dingzi’s funeral oratory, it seems that, like many literati of this time, out of concern for continuing the family lineage, he had obtained this concubine for the purpose of producing male offspring. As the eldest son, he had to feel anxious because he had had only one son. He and Gu Mei visited many temples during their stay in Jiangnan, mainly because they desperately wanted to have a son together. The Buddhist prayers Gong Dingzi composed during this time prove this. In the meantime, Gong Dingzi took Lady Du, who lived with them ever after. During their brief stay in Gong Dingzi’s hometown before heading for Beijing, Lady Du fulfilled their filial

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<sup>37</sup> Gong Dingzi composed a funeral oratory for this woman “Ji Du ruren wen” 祭杜孺人文, which remains the sole record of this concubine. *Ruren* was often used not as an official status for a low-ranking official’s wife but rather a respectful way to refer to a married woman at the time. If not otherwise footnoted, information about Lady Du presented here comes from this oratory. *DSTWJ: juan 4*, pp. 84b-85b.

<sup>38</sup> Gong Dingzi wrote *tiaoqin* 調琴, which could mean 1) to play zither; 2) the couple enjoyed a harmonious relationship.

<sup>39</sup> Gong Dingzi’s daughter died in the second month of Shunzhi 15. This daughter seems to be born between Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei. When Gu Mei accompanied Gong Dingzi on part of his journey to Guangdong, she appears to have had this daughter with her. *DSTSJ: juan 11* “Yueye Hulin yu Shanchijun yan bie” 月夜虎林與善持君言別. Also see juan 40: notes to “Huazhao yi jueju” 花朝一絕句之自注; *DSTWJ: juan 4* “Ji Du Ruren wen.”

responsibilities by serving Gong Dingzi's mother. Because Gu Mei's health was quite poor, it was probably Lady Du who managed the household those years in Beijing, a task which earned Gong Dingzi's unreserved praise in the funeral oratory.<sup>40</sup>

However, unlike Gu Mei, Lady Du was never part of Gong Dingzi's public life. She played the traditional womanly roles. But she failed to produce a son for the Gong family, and Gong Dingzi only eventually had his second son in the year of Kangxi 5,<sup>41</sup> after both Gu Mei and Lady Du had passed away. Clearly there had to be another concubine in Beijing. But this mother's name never appears in Gong Dingzi's poems or those by any of his friends'.<sup>42</sup> Neither does a fourth concubine, who died in Shunzhi 17 (1660).<sup>43</sup>

Compared to the oblivion of these "insignificant" women in Gong Dingzi's life (including his official wife and his sons' mothers), the unofficial tribute paid to Gu Mei by his friends is significant. Nonetheless, in the literati friends' networking, women could only become "friends" to either other women or to their own husbands.<sup>44</sup> Gu Mei had played the *role* of a friend to many literati, but their relationship could not be categorized and appreciated as friendship. The relationship between Gu Mei and those she helped had to be mediated by Gong Dingzi and his friendship with them.

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<sup>40</sup> Gong Dingzi, "Ji Du Ruren wen."

<sup>41</sup> *Gu nianpu*, p. 41; Du Jun 杜濬, *Bianyangtang ji 變雅堂集: 補遺*: "Ji Gong taifuren wen" 祭龔太夫人文, p. 6a. Du Jun also composed poems to see off Gong Dingzi, in which he mentioned the birth of Gong's new son.

<sup>42</sup> But they did make some joyful reference to the birth of this boy in their poems written during this trip.

<sup>43</sup> *DSTSJ: juan 40* "Xueye Changchunsi wei Wenyi lichan gandao si shou" 雪夜長椿寺為文漪禮懺感悼四首, p. 577. Gong Dingzi notes in these poems, that he lost two concubines in Shunzhi 16 and 17. Lady Du died in Shunzhi 16. We have no evidence to help identify the other woman.

<sup>44</sup> I would suggest the "friend"-like relationship between spouses was more clearly articulated since the late Ming.



In addition, she had served as a symbolic woman in the literati homosocial world. When Gu Mei was alive, it was widely known that she had always supported and assisted in Gong Dingzi's efforts to help Han literati and loyalists.<sup>45</sup> The High Qing literatus Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716-1797) recorded an anecdote about Gu Mei's active involvement in rescuing Yan Ermei. It is said that Gu Mei hid Yan in a side room at a critical moment, and he thus narrowly escaped arrest. This sensational story may not be true, but its wide circulation among literati shows how "the loyal men" would be rewarded. They would be represented by their fellows as being admired by extraordinary women, just like the Donglin icon Huang Daozhou, who was said to have morally transformed the former courtesan Gu Mei in that famous anecdote. This kind of cultural reward reveals how literati gender ideal was constructed in relation to "loyalty," and this changed little despite and maybe was reinforced during the dynastic transition: political loyalty supposedly not only educates and transforms women but also enhances literati's cultural standing. Such use of "woman" to help depict the perfect fusion of morality and loyalty in the ideal literatus-official is so vividly captured in the opening of Kong Shangren's *Peach Blossom Fan* (*Taohuashan chuanqi* 桃花扇傳奇), the most popular drama of the Ming-Qing transition: "In late Ming, even women and girls knew to admire the Donglin!"<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *DSTSJ*: juan 30, notes on "Tong Gugu, Bozi zhu jun ye ji xianyun" (sixth) 同古古伯紫諸君夜集限韻其六自注, p. 471.

<sup>46</sup> Kong Shangren 孔尚任, "Preface" to *Taohuashan chuanqi* 桃花扇傳奇 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1971), p. 1.

Such is the stories of some women in a literatus-official's life in the seventeenth-century. Famous as well as obscured in different ways, women have become an integral part of the gendered politics and the gendered history of the Ming-Qing transition. Although the subjects of this herstory are remembered only in relation to their men, they have helped sustain the particular history of literati in early-modern Chinese politics, about how these men existed and were documented at once as loyal subjects, son, friends, husbands, and fathers. Without this subdued herstory, the moral construction of the political virtue of loyalty would have been completely different. The historian cannot generalize which women would be forgotten and which would be remembered. Our heroines still had room to wrestle with a seemingly unshakeable system and fight for their own legacies.

And so did our heroes in creating their own history.

## **History**

In the early twentieth century, the Shanghai Youzheng Publishing House published a series of paintings and calligraphic works that had not been included in previous editions of *Famous Chinese Paintings* 中國名畫集, and called this series *Additional Collection of Famous Chinese Paintings* 中國名畫外集. Accidentally, both Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei's works appear in this collection.<sup>47</sup> Volume 39 presents a single scroll painting by

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<sup>47</sup> Shanghai Youzheng shuju ed., *Zhongguo minghua wai ji* 中國名畫外集 volume 39 (Shanghai, Shanghai youzheng shuju, 1928?).

Gu Mei, the “Bamboo, Rock and Lonely Orchid” scroll. Volume 40 features the joint work of three literati-officials, Qian Qianyi, Wu Weiye and Gong Dingzi, the so-called “The Three Major Poets of the Lower Yangzi.” Wu Weiye’s painting, Qian Qianyi’s inscription of his twenty poems, and Gong Dingzi’s calligraphic presentation of a poem by Qian Qianyi.

The “Three Major Poets of the Lower Yangzi” shared many points of similarity in addition to their literary accomplishments: their socio-political involvement in the Fushe-Donglin community, their turncoat identity, and their special relationships with elite courtesans.<sup>48</sup> But their political experiences were actually very different. Wu Weiye, under tremendous pressure from the Manchu ruler, had to go to Beijing to serve, mainly on projects such as making paintings and poems at the request of the Shunzhi emperor (an admirer of his literary and artistic talents), compiling the imperial edicts issued by earlier Qing rulers, and editing the Confucian classics. He served in the capital between Shunzhi 11 (1654) and Shunzhi 13 (1656).<sup>49</sup> His highest title in the Qing was the augur of the Imperial Academy of Learning,<sup>50</sup> a revered position that showed imperial recognition of a literatus-official’s extraordinary literary and scholarly reputation. Because Wu Weiye obeyed the imperial order to serve the Manchus, and because of his particular reverent status within the literati community, his service in Beijing invited fierce criticisms from certain *yimin*, including Yan Ermei. But Wu Weiye did not bear a historical and political burden as shameful as that of Qian Qianyi, who had been admired

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<sup>48</sup> Wu Weiye and the courtesan Bian Yujing 卞玉京 were never able to officially live together as a couple like the Qian-Liu and Gong-Gu liaisons.

<sup>49</sup> Feng Qiyong and Ye Junyuan ed 馮其庸、葉君遠, *Wu Meicun nianpu* 吳梅村年譜 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1990).

<sup>50</sup> Guozijian jijiu 國子監祭酒. *Ibid.*, p. 336.

as a Donglin leader in the Chongzhen reign but became a political opportunist in the southern Ming Hongguang government. Wu Weiye resigned from the Hongguang government before it was defeated by the Manchus; so he was not involved in the surrender of the Nanjing Ming government. Meanwhile, however infamous Qian Qianyi's performance upon the fall of the Ming—he led the surrender to the Manchus in Nanjing, he went on to actively participate in anti-Qing activities for some time, getting more politically involved than Wu Weiye in the early Qing years.

During the period between Shunzhi 6-7 (1649-1650), Qian Qianyi seemd to have actively participated in the anti-Qing movement.<sup>51</sup> On one trip related to these activities, he composed twenty poems under the title “Miscellaneous Poems from West Lake” (*Xihu zagan* 西湖雜感).<sup>52</sup> In Shunzhi 17 (1660), Wu Weiye visited Qian Qianyi in the fall.<sup>53</sup> Qian Qianyi hand-copied those twenty poems on the scroll, followed by Gong Dingzi's calligraphic representation of another poem by Qian from the same trip.<sup>54</sup> He asked Wu Weiye to make a painting scroll based on the main theme of these poems.<sup>55</sup> Gong Dingzi's inscription is dated Kangxi 2 (1663). He did not have an opportunity to meet with the other two after the trip to Guangdong. Therefore, this painting probably was

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<sup>51</sup> For a detailed illustration, see Chen Yinke, *Liu Rushi biezhuàn*.

<sup>52</sup> Chen Yinke has provided a great amount of details concerning Qian Qianyi's trip to Jinling and a careful analysis of these poems, in which he suggests that Qian was actively involved in anti-Qing activities at the time.

<sup>53</sup> *Wu Meicun nianpu*, p. 387.

<sup>54</sup> Qian Qianyi, *You xue ji: juan 3* “Liu ti hu fang” (no. 2) 留題湖舫其二.

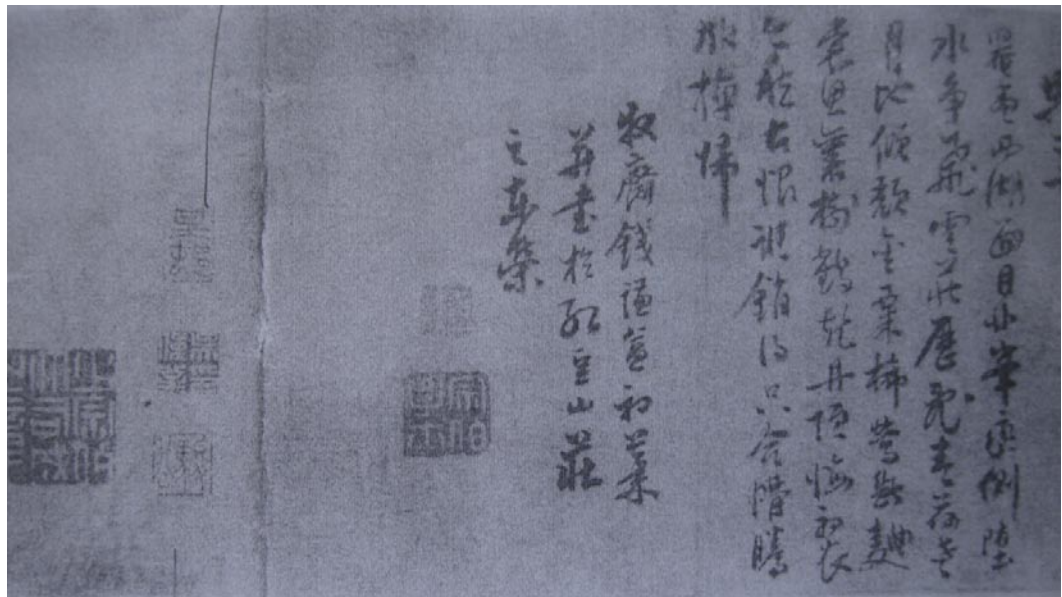
<sup>55</sup> Qian Qianyi's signature does not include the year when this was completed. But it indicates that he hand-copied the poems on the scroll at his Redbean Mansion 紅豆山莊. He did not move in to this house until Shunzhi 13. Therefore this had to happen after Shunzhi 13. (Chen Yinke cites a different version of the preface, which in the end states 特倩梅村祭酒作圖以為緣起，今並錄之, instead of 是月晦日，記於塘棲道中 (《有學集》卷三). I suspect that the version cited came from someone who combined Wu Weiye's inscription on the painting with Qian Qianyi's own preface.

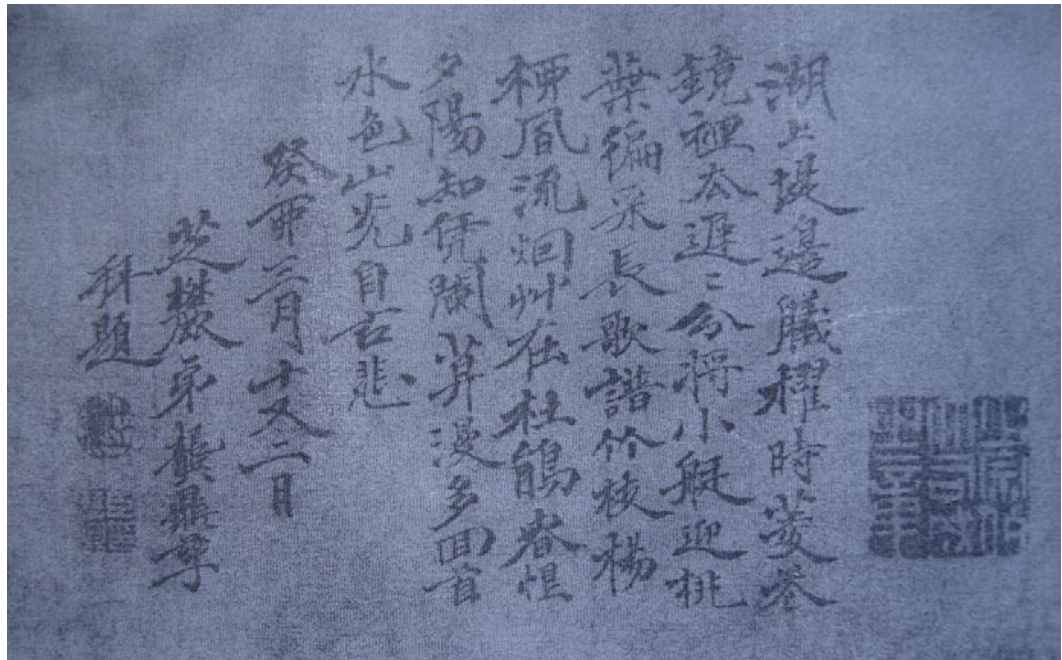
taken to him at Qian Qianyi's request sometime between 1660 and 1663. Qian Qianyi died in Kangxi 3 (1664).

The work was initiated in Shunzhi 17 (1660), after Zheng Chenggong's military campaign failed to recover Jiangnan from Qing rule in the year of Shunzhi 15-16 (1658-59). Powerful and threatening an assault on the Manchu rule, it almost reclaimed the former Ming southern capital Nanjing. But this campaign ended up in rapid fading of well-organized military efforts by Zheng Chenggong and its eventual failure. Those in China proper whose loyalist hopes were rekindled by this campaign had to face the cruel reality that they would probably remain Qing subjects forever. These twenty old poems by Qian Qianyi, composed ten years before, originally expressed two intertwining sentiments: expectations for himself to assume the historical role of a loyal official for restoring the fallen dynasty, and longing for love and recognition from his concubine Liu Rushi, whose commitment to the loyalist movement encouraged and "pushed" him to act. At this historical point, reinscribing these poems bespeaks a sense of hopelessness on his part. But maybe more importantly, the hand-copied poems on Wu Weiye's painting were meant to enter history as a testimony to Qian Qianyi's political loyalty: although he had failed, he tried. Wu Weiye's painting of the West Lake offered him a medium for proclaiming his "unsuccessful loyalism."

This joint project by the three turncoat literati-officials was an attempt to make a statement about both their self-perception in relation to the dynastic transition and self-positioning in the imperial history. In addition to their personal seals with names only, Qian Qianyi used a seal that indicates his former official position as the President of the Board of Rites in the Hongguang regime, a title that in many people's eyes was a mark of

shame because it came as a result of pleasing the evil official Ruan Dacheng. Wu Weiye used the seal of the Vice President of the Board of Rites and the augur of the Imperial Academy of Learning, titles that he had obtained from the Manchu Qing (See Figure 8 & 9).





(Figures 8 & 9) *Zhongguo minghua wai ji* 中國名畫外集 volume 39

Both men wanted to be remembered in history as possessing these precious titles. These seals expose an irony of the literati-official historical subjectivity: they wished to be identified as loyal subjects, while still longing to be recognized as accomplished in their own right, as individuals whose names and titles would transcend time.

Willowtrees, charm lingers in the misty green  
 The setting sun knows cuckoo's bereavement  
 Idle by the banisters and look back over and again  
 The beautiful water and mountains witness the eternal pain.<sup>56</sup>

Gong Dingzi copied at the end of this scroll these particular lines by Qian from

these poems on the West Lake, a site that had become the standard reference to Hangzhou, the capital of several states and dynasties in Chinese history that had many times “witnessed” the transfer of ruling power from one house to another. When he

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<sup>56</sup> *Zhongguo minghua wai ji* 中國名畫外集 volume 39. The poem is Qian Qianyi, *You xue ji: juan 3* “Liu ti hu fang” (no. 2).

copied the poem in Kangxi 2 (1663), he expressed a historical understanding of the Han literati-officials of the post-1644 era from the perspective of a dynastic cycle: after all, as a collective, they did not have the courage, opportunity, or power to persist in their pursuit of the loyalist cause. And as a collective, they had to move on and come to terms with the new dynasty. Although Gong Dingzi was the only one actively serving in the Qing government and had begun to see a promising political future, he only used his personal seals. His political career had just risen to a new height and would probably end with many honors and precious official titles. For now, he only signed with a self-deprecatory expression: “Zhilu [Gong’s courtesy name], your humble brother Gong Dingzi, with salutations.”<sup>57</sup>

Soon after the change of regime, a detached Ming loyalism, rather than active participation in efforts to restore Ming/Han rule, came to prevail among the literati community. What literati-officials would eventually want (or be able) to leave as their mark in history were the highest official titles of their careers, no matter which ruler had granted those titles. The dynastic cycles would continue, and the personal experience of individual literati and the collective history of their community would again and again manifest their tragic powerlessness, a powerlessness that always haunts the discourse of loyalty. The Qian-Wu-Gong collaboration clearly reveals the end of Ming literati-officials’ political and psychological struggles, which came down to a lament for their impotence vis-à-vis the omnipotence of the “dynastic cycles.”

The notion of the “dynastic cycle” is key to understanding the lived experience of the historical continuities and discontinuities in early modern China. The historian

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<sup>57</sup> “*Zhilu di Gong Dingzi baiti 芝麓弟龔鼎孳拜題*”. *Zhongguo minghua wai ji 中國名畫外集* volume 39.



Shelley Hsueh-lun Chang has nicely summarized it in her work on early modern Chinese historical novels:

The concept of dynastic cycles stemmed from an ancient observation over the mysterious cyclical process of nature. As nature shows its way by the established rhythm of the four seasons, so does life, through the cycle of birth, growth, maturity, senescence, and death. In the same vein of cyclical process, the rise and fall of dynasties is viewed as following an established rhythm of genesis, expansion, prosperity, and decline. On the surface, the dynastic cycle is a life-cycle analogy: politics, like men, follow an established rhythm prescribed by the mysterious natural forces of the universe. But at closer view the Chinese never interpreted the dynastic cycle as merely following the laws of nature; for them the dynamics behind the dynastic changes were moral, and the lessons to be drawn from them were moral lessons.<sup>58</sup>

Our historical subjects understood the “dynastic cycle” as a powerful filtering force that would leave their stories differentiated and categorized, based on their political choices during the dynastic transition. But they also understood that dynastic cycles had been sustained by some core social-cultural traditions, encapsulated in “moral dynamics.”

Although Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei’s life stories do not necessarily represent the experience of the entire generation of turncoats, their particularity most clearly demonstrates various dynamics in play during the process of dynastic transition. Even if Gong Dingzi and Gu Mei’s personal experience cannot be included in the morally glorious history of the *yimin*, they were socially integrated into that community. The modern historian must see these two layers of reality, as did the people who lived through the seventeenth-century transition and had read about this particular aspect of the “dynastic cycles” in the histories of all the dynasties before them: there would always

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<sup>58</sup> Shelley Hsueh-lun Chang, *History and Legend: Ideas and Images in the Ming Historical Novels* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), p. 34.

exist two narratives about dynastic transition, one written in accordance with the discourse of loyalty, the other unarticulated but lived. Both were rational; both were real.

In different ways, men and women's experience as individuals are both subsumed in the continuous moral dynamics of early modern China. Women did not have to directly engage the prescriptions of dynastic loyalty because they could not hold public office and therefore did not have the problem of "serving a new ruler." But they still participated in the production of loyal and moral Confucian man as the eternal ideal. In contrast, literati as a whole had to eventually realign themselves so that their cultural and political temporalities torn apart by the dynastic transition could begin to merge and complete the full recovery and reintegration of their community, a process where their historical consciousness shaped by the concept of dynastic cycles played an important role.

## Conclusion

### The “Grand Narrative” of the Ming-Qing Transition

In this study, we have examined a group of historical figures whose life stories spanned the 1570s to the 1660s. During and after their lives, they were either condemned as morally corrupt officials, or revered as ideal, loyal Confucian men. Their tragedies, tragic in various senses as we have seen in these chapters, showcase the competing political-moral discourses that shaped the actions, words, and choices of the Chinese elite men of the time. I have tried to read these individuals’ varied personal and political stories against “the grand narrative,” whose underlying framework is the alignment of political loyalty and literati-official morality (especially sexual morality) implied in the ideal Confucian man defined by the Five Cardinal Relations. Because of literati’s strong historical consciousness, this grand narrative was in making since the beginning of the transition process. The historical and political criticisms left by literati, ideologies promoted by the Qing court to consolidate its power, and the popular literature of the seventeenth century together created, promoted, and perpetuated this grand narrative. Therefore, not only did the moral/immoral framework participate in the political struggles of factionalism and resistance movement; it also served as a filtering device through which individuals’ political experiences were simplified to fit in the dichotomous

framework of the moral/the immoral in the documentation and writing of the political history of this dynastic change.

The grand narrative of the Ming-Qing dynastic transition consists of three key components, namely, 1) The so-called Donglin faction was a collective of loyal officials with impeccable moral character; 2) Turncoats' sexual immorality and disloyalty were mutually constitutive; 3) In the post-1644 era, the notion of "loyalty" served to morally distinguish turncoat officials from the Ming loyalists who became the "defenders of Confucian culture and its traditional values." These generalized characterization of political figures, political developments, and individuals' morality are closely connected. The sensational nature of eulogy for the loyal and demonization of the disloyal are the two sides of the same coin. Together they reflect the moralistic legacy of seventeenth-century factionalism and loyalism.

The grand narrative of the Ming-Qing transition presents a conventional story about the fall of a dynasty, in which morally corrupt officials were also disloyal to their emperor and to the country, whereas morally righteous officials expressed their loyalty by fighting what they saw as evil forces at the court and after the fall of the dynasty, either by becoming martyrs or by refusing to serve the new regime. Emperors, literati-officials, literati in general, and even the reading public in the late Ming and early Qing all contributed to the construction of this grand narrative, although they had different political stakes in the project. Therefore, to reexamine how moral issues shaped the political developments during the Ming-Qing transition, we have to reconsider many historical figures dismissed by the seventeenth-century writers who are dominating our archive; key to our endeavor is to dissect the moralistic framework that has shaped the

historical records. But this is a difficult task. The narrative about good versus bad officials in the Ming-Qing transition seems to have assumed the status of truism in popular historical memory. It is so powerful that modern historical scholarship on the seventeenth century rarely questions this narrative or the historical sources substantiating it. The eulogies and scandals that we find in the archive are often taken as “truthful documentation.”

But “deconstructing” this narrative is not the ultimate goal. Deconstructing helps us reconstruct the historical conditions that allowed political actors to use moral issues as a strategy for achieving political goals—in particular annihilating factional enemies with sexual scandals and charges of violation of behavioral norms—and how such efforts and the efforts countering them together reconsolidated the connection between politics and personal morality. The ideal moral man defined by the Five Cardinal Relations—a filial son, responsible husband, caring brother and trustworthy friend—was mobilized to level moral charges in political attacks. In turn, literati-officials’ efforts to claim moral accomplishments in self-protection reassured that moral issues would always be relevant in politics. The mechanism in early-modern Chinese government installed to prevent moral attacks (especially those related to domestic and sexual matters) from interfering with political and policy debates failed in the face of intensive factionalism.

### **“The Political” and “Loyalty” in Gendered History**

Recent scholarship on early-modern Chinese gender and masculinity has much to offer to enrich the study of political history. Endeavors in the field of literary and cultural studies

to explore the construction of masculine identities have deepened our understanding of how the “symbolic woman” was utilized in literati’s political and social self-reflection during the Ming-Qing transition in their search for the causes of and remedies for the Ming demise as well as in their contemplation of their own (poor) performance at times of national crisis.<sup>1</sup> Many works have shown how literati-courtesan liaisons became a prominent symbol of the good times before the dynastic change and a focal point of nostalgia for many after the fall of the Ming in non-official historical writings and literature.<sup>2</sup>

Historically, Susan Mann has argued, the importance of homosociality in shaping men’s culture makes studying men *as men* especially important in early Chinese history.<sup>3</sup> Recent scholarship on early Chinese masculinity has largely followed this approach and has been inspired by Western theories on masculinity and historical scholarship on friendship. Their analysis of the symbolic use of wife/concubine image in literati-officials’ political self-identification in relation to the ruler sheds light on the emotional-psychological dynamics of the ruler-subject relationship in early China.<sup>4</sup> But historians have also warned against re-placing men at and as the center of historical studies.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wai-ye Li, “The Late Ming Courtesan: Invention of a Cultural Ideal,” in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, ed. Ellen Widmer and Kang-i Sun Chang (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 46-73.

<sup>2</sup> Oki Yasushi, “Mao Xiang and Yu Huai: Early Qing Romantic Yimin,” in *Trauma and Transcendence in Early Qing Literature*, ed. Wilt L. Idema, Wai-ye Li and Ellen Widmer (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), pp. 231- 248.

<sup>3</sup> Susan Mann, “The Male Bond in Chinese History and Culture,” *American Historical Review* 105: 5 (2000):10.

<sup>4</sup> Huang, 2006, esp. Part One; Song Geng, *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), esp. chap. 2.

<sup>5</sup> For a good discussion of the risks of the new men’s history, see Toby Ditz, “The New Men’s History and the Peculiar Absence of Gendered Power: Some Remedies from Early American Gender History,” *Gender & History* Vol. 16 No. 1 (April 2004), pp. 1-35.

Focusing on male activities in public spheres leaves out a major site where the male subject was constructed discursively and materially, domesticity.

Thus historians are challenged to rethink how “the political” could be approached from a gender perspective in an early modern Chinese context where women were largely excluded from official political sphere. Aware of the Confucian emphasis on the importance of morality for good governance, gender historians have produced abundant works on the state’s promotion of female virtues such as filial piety, modesty and chastity.<sup>6</sup> Asking similar questions about the political functions of literati virtues will give political historians a new opportunity to probe into how politics was conducted in early modern China. Scholars of this field find in our sources a unique paradigm that could open up new analytical opportunities, the Five Cardinal Relations. Examining literati-officials career through their entangled roles as officials, sons, husbands, brothers, and friends allows us to complicate the study of political history without reinforcing the public/private and socio-political/domestic dichotomies.<sup>7</sup> This research has conducted its exploration in this direction by looking at the moral construction of loyalty.

The grand narrative of the Ming-Qing transition tells this history from a male-centered perspective, which frames and presents *zhong*, the political loyalty, as a manly virtue accomplished through literati’s political action and moral cultivation. This study has revealed the ways in which women participated in helping men achieve loyalty, although women themselves were largely excluded from politics and could not claim the

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<sup>6</sup> Many women’s and gender historians of premodern China have analyzed this question. I only give two examples here: Mark Elvin, “Female Virtue and the State in China,” *Past & Present*, 104 (Aug., 1984): 111-152. Theiss, Janet M. *Disgraceful Matters: The Politics of Chastity in Eighteenth-Century China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Mann, Susan. “The Male Bond in Chinese History and Culture,” *American Historical Review* 105: 5 (2000): 1600-14.

virtue of loyalty as such. Political crises during the transition clarified meanings of not only the intangible connection between literati-official loyalty and morality, but also the connection between women's virtuous behavior and their husbands' moral and political virtues. This shows the political significance of the husband-wife relationship.

The literatus could enhance his image as a loyal man by showing that his wife, a devoted spouse, supported her husband's loyal actions with her chastity and selflessness. Zheng Man's depiction of his wife's encouraging words upon his departure for the political turmoil in the capital and Yan Ermei's eulogy of his wife and concubine's suicides when learning about his arrest reveal the deep moral basis of their loyalty. The wife's emotion and love are controlled and guided to ensure the moral and political accomplishments of her husband, as shown in Fang Yizhi's poem describing how he prevented his wife from committing suicide so that she could look after their children. Female chastity serves the need of the husband's higher call of loyalty (and filial piety), requiring the wife to adopt the most proper and considerate action. The literatus's wife contributes to her husband's loyalty also by performing domestic duties as a wife and mother. Cai Yuqing educated her sons about loyalty as a political virtue of the Huang family. She identified the similarities between the political sacrifices of the Huang family and those made by the family of Wen Tianxiang during the Song-Yuan dynastic transition to build a strong loyal image for her husband's lineage.

The link of loyalty and morality seemed to be a self-sustaining system that would not allow for fundamental change. The historian Frederic Wakeman has used seventeenth-century Donglin as an example to argue that Chinese intellectuals' failure to create political institutions powerful enough to challenge the monarchy largely resulted



from their belief in the virtue of loyalty.<sup>8</sup> Throughout this present work I have argued that the Ming-Qing transition history shows the interconnected discourses of loyalty and morality perpetuated each other. Then, could one argue that the discourse of loyalty, defined often in relation to literati virtues such as filial piety and sexual morality, have determined the impossibility of fundamental change in Chinese system? Not necessarily. This study has shown that the discourse of loyalty to the monarchy could not be sustained without other dominant moral discourses and practices in society. More importantly, the discourse of loyalty defined by morality also contained a mechanism that could prevent moral attacks from creating political chaos. It is informative to historians that the system actually could resist moral attacks as a violation of loyalty. The principle of not bringing domestic matters into politics sets limits to political intrusion into private domains, because it is often difficult to investigate domestic conduct, as it was most likely subjective to distortion when political struggles made moral attacks a convenient strategy. Officials must walk a fine line between caution against sensational politics and insistence on the inseparability of moral and political virtues. Meanwhile, the emperor could choose not to tolerate moral attacks. These examples suggest that the discursive linkage between loyalty and sexual morality was historically contingent.

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<sup>8</sup> Wakeman, "The Price of Autonomy."

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