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The drastic shift of the Mandate of Heaven in seventeenth-century China provoked an identity crisis among the Chinese literati and forced them to reconsider their socio-political role in an era of dynastic change. Under the influence of Neo-Confucianism, from the time of the Song dynasty (960–1279), the principle of loyalty that emphasized officials’ absolute submission to the throne had gradually come to dominate intellectual discourse concerning the emperor-minister relationship. As a result of imperial indoctrination, the demand upon the ruled to observe the principle of loyalty was further intensified and it became an orthodox ideology governing the behavior of scholar-officials during the Ming (1368–1644).

Notwithstanding late-Ming criticisms of the political misrule resulting from despotism, it was generally believed that loyalty, as one of the important Confucian virtues, was the most essential moral quality of an official. It was not until the downfall of Ming order and the establishment of Qing (1644–1911) rule in 1644 that this Confucian faith shared by the Chinese, in particular by the Han literati, underwent a severe ordeal.

In the past decades, the impact of Ming–Qing dynastic change on the formation of Qing thought drew the attention of scholars of Qing intellectual history. For instance, a number of historians have attempted to examine how and to what extent the social milieu of seventeenth-century China contributed to the founding of Qing scholarship. Apart from the interrelation

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4 As Chen Hanming observes, the influence of loyalism on the late-Ming politics was fully reflected in the Donglin 東林 movement. Criticizing administrative abuse the Donglin elite blamed the eunuch faction in the court instead of the emperor and, faced with political persecution, most of them were prepared to die for their loyalty for the throne. See Chen’s analysis in Zhongguo zhengzhi sixiang shi: Sui Tang Song Yuan Ming Qing juan [History of Chinese political thought: the Sui, Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing periods] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Renmin Chubanshe, 1996), pp.597–8.

5 Wang Chengmian, “Mingmo shidazu zhi jue—lun jinnian Ming-Qing zhuanjie shiqi zhi yanjiu” [The choices of late-Ming scholar-officials: on recent studies of the Ming–Qing transition], Shibuo yuekan fukan 15.9–10 (April 1986): 435–45.

6 Hou Wailu, Zhongguo sixiang tongshi [A general history of Chinese thought], A ver
between socio-political development and academic activities, the response of Han literati to the Manchu invasion and conquest has also aroused considerable discussion in the field. Various approaches and different perspectives have been introduced to explain the moral choices of individuals, especially the martyrs and loyalists, in a momentous period of dynastic transition. Recent research findings derived from a modern interpretation of the available sources not only bring new insights to the study of the complicated mentality of the educated class but also deepen our understanding of cultural development in late imperial China. Although some of these findings may require further examination, on the whole they have refuted the biased arguments that were advanced by the nationalist historians and that prevailed in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

In his study of loyalty in the Ming and Qing periods, Ian McMorran has classified traditional Chinese loyalty into two categories: “absolute loyalty” and “rational loyalty.” The former stresses the absolute supremacy of the ruler and the total submission of his subjects, while the latter emphasizes a “conditional” ruler–ruled relation based on the correct principles of government. By analyzing the words and deeds of the well-known historical figures, he further suggests that as a result of indoctrination, the idea of absolute loyalty retained its dominance in Chinese thought during the Ming–Qing transitional period in spite of the widespread criticism of late-Ming misrule.

In contrast to this assertion, many recent findings have indicated that during the Manchu invasion, collaboration rather than resistance was a popular choice among Han scholar-officials. However, citing Wei Xi’s 魏禧 (1624–1811) writing on revanchism, McMorran argues that the former Ming officials’ compromise with the Manchus after the fall of Beijing in 1644, at least to some contemporaries, could be considered an alternative to revenge for the Ming dynasty on the late-Ming rebels. To a large extent, McMorran’s argument is problematic though “revenge for the Ming” was one of the collaborators’ justifications for their deeds and it was usually mentioned in the Manchu propaganda for their invasion. On the one hand, whether collaboration with the alien regime in the name of avenging the defunct dynasty was generally accepted as an act of loyalty is highly debatable. Up to now, no available source suggests that Wei’s ideas had any influence on the early-Qing discourse on loyalty. On the other hand, the argument also ignores the fact that to many Han Chinese of the time, the submitting Ming officials were considered “remnants” (yimin 遺民) and refused to compromise with the new government. In the discussion of Ming yimin, most historians have noted the classification proposed by Frederick Mote in his study of the eremites in the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368). According to Mote, there were two types of Confucian eremitism in Chinese tradition: “compulsory” and “voluntary.”
While compulsory eremitism was imposed as a moral duty in the name of loyalty on the survivors of a fallen dynasty, voluntary eremitism was an individual decision taken for personal reasons. Mote's assertion is not an innovation as since the early Kangxi period, Qing scholars who were interested in the official Ming history project had seriously criticized the previous biographies of hermits (yinyi zhuan 隱逸傳) in the so-called standard histories for mixing up loyalist yimin with those Taoist hermits, advancing the opinion that in the Ming History that was being compiled, biographies of the former should be separated from those of the latter and placed in a new category entitled yimin zhuan 遺民傳, “remnant bio-graphies”. The differentiation between compulsory and voluntary eremitism in early Qing history is significant, especially in the discussion of the Han literati’s response to Qing rule, but sometimes, the line between these two categories is not clear, and in some cases it is hard to tell whether an individual’s decision to live in seclusion was definitely a political or just a personal choice of life-style. Willard Peterson has pointed out that at least two kinds of hermits should be excluded from classification as loyalist yimin. Firstly, for those “who had retired before the fall of the Ming after repeated failure in the examinations or from a preference for private rather than public life,” their eremitism might come from personal considerations and have nothing to do with their political stance. In addition, there were early-Qing figures who had never served the Ming dynasty and their abstention from the new government was simply due to “a parent’s having died for the Ming cause.” In this sense, eremitism was an act of filial piety rather than an expression of loyalty to the preceding ruling house.

From a historical perspective, the political sentiment of the yimin is exceedingly complicated and except for a small number of hard-liners, the attitude of these loyalists toward the new regime did not remain unchanged in the first few decades after the establishment of Qing authority in Beijing in 1644. The socio-cultural development of the new empire and the proper government policies, which contributed to Manchu-Han reconciliation, accounted for the loyalists’ changing view on the legitimacy of Qing rule. Until the mid-Kangxi period, there were diehard Ming loyalists who adhered to their anti-Qing stance by emphasizing the ethnic difference between the Han Chinese and the Manchus. Nevertheless, the majority of the yimin witnessed a period of socio-economic recovery resulting from Qing rule, which presented a great contrast to the chaos of the Ming society they had experienced. It is important to note that despite personally refusing to cooperate with the Qing, most of them did not oppose their descendants’ attending civil examinations and serving the new court. The early Qing Sinification was highly selective but it is undeniable that the Manchu rulers’ patronage of Chinese cultural activities “gradually eroded Han Chinese resistance and encouraged support of the dynasty.” This was evinced in the changing attitude of the prestigious and influential yimin, such as Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610–95) and Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–82), who insisted...
The cases of Huang and Gu will be discussed in the third part of this paper.


Unlike the *yimin*, those Han Chinese who grew up in the first few decades of the Qing dynasty bore no moral obligation to the fallen Ming and most of them found little difficulty in identifying themselves as Qing subjects. To them, the Manchus were no longer invaders but rulers of “All under Heaven” and the Qing house was the only legitimate authority of their time. Like their predecessors in previous dynasties, these Qing subjects considered serving as an official in government a normal career pattern for the educated elite and did not see any problem in taking office under a Sinicized alien regime. Of course, this is not to say that the history of resistance had no influence on them. It is evident from the oral and written accounts of the Ming survivors that history had left its impress on the minds of the Qing Chinese. The moving deeds of the late-Ming martyrs, who were regarded as the embodiment of Confucian virtue, won the heartfelt sympathy of the public, though the anti-Qing nature of the resistance movement prevented its participants from gaining official recognition from the new government during the Shunzhi 順治 (1644–62), Kangxi, and Yongzheng 雍正 (1723–35) periods. As a result of the imperial denial of Southern Ming history, many early-Qing scholars suffered psychological discomfort caused by a hidden tension between a desire to recognize the Qing legitimacy and sympathy with the late-Ming loyalists and, until the late seventeenth century, there was an ambivalent feeling among the Han literati. The disagreement between political and cultural identities required reconciliation and eventually elicited a discourse on how to interpret the deeds of the Ming martyrs from the perspective of Qing subjects, which brought increasing pressure to bear on the Qing house to review its official policy of evaluating the Southern Ming martyrs in the mid-Qianlong 乾隆 reign (1736–95).

With reference to the written works of the historical figures concerned, the purpose of this paper is to analyze the early-Qing discourse of the Han literati in regard to the Confucian teachings of loyalty, especially in relation to the personal ethics of being a scholar-official, and to see how these traditional Chinese ideas were interpreted and applied by their believers in different times. Within this discourse, the statements of three social groups are worth noting, namely the collaborators, the Ming loyalists, and the Qing subjects. Their statements not only account for a complex interweave resulting in the formation of the Qing concept of loyalty but also reflect the dialectic relationship between individuals and their historical context.
Collaborators and Early-Qing Public Opinion

During the conquest period, Neo-Confucian teachings on loyalty were tested by the challenges of social disintegration and alien invasion. Faced with ceaseless Southern Ming (1644–62) factionalism and successive Manchu military victories, many Chinese literati found themselves in an acute dilemma of conflicting values: should they uphold Confucian principles and cleave to the disintegrating empire at any cost or collaborate with the invading alien dynasty and thereby help avoid unnecessary bloodshed and bring an end to the disorder of the late Ming? Making a decision was no easy task and either choice required ethical justification, which would reflect one’s social responsibilities and moral obligations.

The consideration of the large number of Ming scholar-officials who submitted to the Manchus during the conquest period of 1644–62 has recently led historians to note the discrepancy between theoretical ideal and historical reality in an epoch of general crisis. According to the Cheng–Zhu Neo-Confucian teachings, the monarch-minister relationship that stresses the unquestioning loyalty of the latter to the former is the chief component of the “Three Cardinal Bonds” (san gang 三綱) and “Five Human Relationships” (wu lun 五倫) which embody “Heavenly Principles” (tianli 天理), and under no circumstances should these supposedly fixed relationships be ignored.20 Ironically, in contrast to this doctrine of loyalty, when Li Zicheng 李自成 (1606–45) seized Beijing in April 1644, most of the Ming officials in the northern capital surrendered themselves to the rebels and even took office in the new court.21 As soon as the Manchus established the Qing dynasty after defeating Li in the same year and conquered the south in the following two decades, the vast majority of the social élite chose to accept and collaborate with the alien regime.22 The political realignment of these former Ming subjects considerably shaped the history of the Ming–Qing transition and remains an interesting topic for the study of early-Qing thought.

Wan Sitong 萬斯同 (1638–1702), a prominent early-Qing historian, was disappointed by the fact that in spite of a long period of government indoctrination, the moral consciousness of the literati in the late Ming was deeply affected by the social environment and, when in dire straits, it was extremely difficult to expect the majority to observe moral principles.23 For those Chinese who experienced the historical catastrophes caused by wars and rebellions, the mid-seventeenth century was indeed a period in which “the heavens split and the earth cracked open.”24 The upheaval not only destroyed public order but also resulted in moral disintegration in the society. In the face of human disaster, the orthodox Neo-Confucian ideology of loyalty eventually lost its dominance. It is understandable that in response to the Manchu advance, individual survival, personal career opportunities, and


21 According to Ji Liuqi 許立形 (b. 1622), of those scholar-officials who were in Beijing, twenty committed suicide while about four thousand surrendered. See Ji Liuqi, Mingji bedue [An outline of the northern Ming] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1984), juan 20, p.472, pp.475–5, 481–2; juan 21a, pp.503–48; and juan 22, pp.598–641. See also Wu Han, comp., Chaoxian Li chaoshiluzhongde Zhongguoshibiao (Sources on Chinese history in the Veritable Records of the Korean Yi dynasty) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1980), vol.9, pp.3735–7.

22 As Martin Martino (1614–61), the Italian Jesuit who visited China in the mid-seventeenth century, observes, the Chinese in the south did not at first refuse to cooperate with the Manchu regime, the local resistance movement later being incited by the government hair-cutting order. See Bellum Tartaricum, or the conquest of the great and most renowned empire of China, English trans. (London: John Crook, 1654), p.127.


24 The Chinese terms tian beng di li 天崩地裂, tian beng di xian 天崩地陷, and tian beng di jie 天崩地解 were widely employed by early-Qing writers to describe the social disintegration during the Ming–Qing transition. Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–92), Wang Chuanshan shi wen ji [Collected prose and poetry of Wang Fuzhi] (Hong Kong: Zhonghua Shuju, 1974), vol 1, wenji 文集, juan 2, 28, Huang Zongxi, Mingwu xue'an, in Huang Zongxi quanj [Complete works of Huang Zongxi], ed. Wu Guang et al., vol 8 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Guji Chubanshe, 1992), juan 60, p.838.
family safety were factors affecting the political choices of the collaborators. However, it is an oversimplification to conclude that their collaboration was nothing more than a pursuit of self-interest.

The rationale for the collaboration of Han Chinese with the Manchus was complicated. In defense of their decision to surrender to the Qing in 1645, Zhao Zhi long 趙之龍 (d.1654), the Southern Ming count, and his colleagues in Nanjing argued the following:

Are there any of our governors-general who are not loyalists and filial sons? [Yet, we] know that this [the collapse of the Ming dynasty] is Heaven’s Will and nothing can be done about it. Surrendering to those who have the Mandate of Heaven to save millions of lives [from wars] is what benevolent gentlemen with lofty ideals should do and what great men consider when making their choices. 26

Regardless of whether these were the true motives behind the collective action of Zhao and his followers, to a certain extent “following Heaven’s Will” and “working for the best interests of the people” provided sound arguments for the Han Chinese to justify their compromise. These rationalizations implied that in a time of cataclysm, the welfare of the people should always be placed ahead of any political principle. In most cases, the political choices of the collaborators were a mixture of private and public considerations. At least, apart from self-interest, one of their concerns was how to save the society from violent wars. Disappointed in the corrupt Southern Ming regimes and their unruly forces, many local elite came to believe that collaboration with the new authorities was the only way to end the calamity and quickly restore social order. Moreover, from a culturalist perspective, some true believers in Confucianism might also have regarded their service to the newly-founded polity to be a means to educate the “barbarians” into developing an appreciation for Confucian values and thereby facilitate the conversion of the alien rulers to the Chinese way of rule. 28

Although later, following the high Qing, the collaborators were generally criticized, or even condemned, for their disloyalty to the Ming, it is a misconception that their attitude of compromise had garnered little support from the public at that time. On the contrary, as we are going to discuss, the available materials indicate that during this turbulent period, collaboration, as a way to avoid wars and disorder, was an acceptable option, which was tolerated and even endorsed by the society at large. In addition to the huge number of collaborators in the conquest period, the contemporaries’ admiration for some collaborators’ contributions to social welfare also refuted the post-Qianlong perception that all collaborators in the dynastic transition were generally condemned by the public for their “shameless deeds.” For instance, Qiu Junsun 丘俊孫 (1606–86), who as county magistrate negotiated with the Qing troops and saved the people of Luhe 六合 county, Jiangsu, from a massacre after their surrender, 29 and Wang Zhonghui 王仲橿 (1599–1667), who successfully saved Gaotang county 高唐, Shandong, from war, 30 were highly honored for their wisdom and benevolence. Nevertheless,
according to the epitaphs and biographies written by their contemporaries, Qiu and other former Ming officials like Zhu Jiazheng 钱嘉徵 (1602–84) and Fang Rujing 方如京 were admired by the public for their outstanding local services during the Qing.32

The close association between some collaborators and the Ming loyalists further indicates that during the dynastic transition, people tended to take a sympathetic and relatively less dogmatic perspective in considering the moral deeds of those former Ming officials who involuntarily collaborated with the Qing government under political pressure. The post-1644 social networks of Qian Qianyi 钱谦益 (1582–1664) and Wu Weiyue 吴伟業 (1609–72) provide two valuable case studies which reveal the attitudes of early-Qing literati toward these collaborators.

Qian Qianyi was a controversial figure who began his official career under the Ming and became an influential scholar-official in the mid-seventeenth century. When the Qing armies entered Nanjing in 1645, he surrendered himself to the Manchus and served the new regime in Beijing during 1646–47.33 It was believed that his compromise might enable him “to defend fellow literati suspected of loyalist activities.”34 Qian’s service in the Qing court was short-lived and after his submission, he retained certain connections with the resistance movement. Resigning from office, he retired to his home county, Changhu, Jiangsu, but was soon accused of assisting the resistance movement and was subsequently imprisoned in 1648.35 Due to a lack of evidence, he was released from prison in the same year. This period of incarceration did not prevent him from keeping in touch with the Ming loyalists and he maintained these relationships until his death.36 Consequently, despite his taint of collaboration,37 Qian did not fail to win the friendship of men of moral integrity, including Huang Zongxi and Gui Zhuang 鯤莊 (1613–73), who were the eminent loyalists of the time.38

Wu Weiyue was best known for his paintings and poems. He was a leader of the late-Ming literati and one of the founders of the literati grouping called the Fushe 復社 (Restoration Society).39 Being a Ming official, he planned to

take his own life when the Ming house fell in 1644 but was prevented from doing so by his mother. Owing to official pressure from Beijing, according to his own words, he took office under the Qing against his own will during 1654–57. In 1657, on the occasion of his mother’s death, he took the opportunity to resign and return home. As his later writings show, Wu deeply regretted having served the Qing and condemned himself for failing to uphold the principle of loyalty. Yet, his short-term service in the new court did little to influence his friendship with Ming loyalists like Tan Qian 談遷 (1594–1658), and the Buddhist monk Jiqì 繼起 (Li Hongchu 李洪儲, 1604–72). His confessional poetry also moved the literati of his time.

From the cases of Wu and Qian, it would appear that during the Shunzhi and early Kangxi periods, instead of rigidly applying Neo-Confucian moral principles, early-Qing scholars tended to adopt a humanistic approach in tackling the vexatious issue of loyalty. Of course, despite the public sympathy for their difficult situation, those former Ming officials who served in the Qing court could not escape from being commented on and pilloried by the moralists for betraying the previous dynasty. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that the collaborators were usually ashamed of having served two dynasties. It is important to note the political realignment of these “former ministers” (jiuchèn 舊臣) later was also unacceptable to Qing state orthodoxy based on Neo-Confucian ethics though their collaboration had contributed significantly to the victory of the Manchus and the legitimacy of Qing rule, and during the dynastic transition had been recognized by the conquerors as an act according to “Heaven’s Will” (tianmíng 天命). Needless to say, when the Qing empire had completed its military conquest of China and moral restoration became central to the social agenda in the late seventeenth century, the collaborators’ justifications for serving two dynasties no longer merited imperial recognition or popular support.

**Ming Loyalists and Their Reflections upon Loyalism**

Surrounded by a huge number of collaborators, the Ming loyalists were obviously a political minority. They formed only a small proportion of the Han Chinese population. As Lynn Struve suggests, the term “Ming loyalist” may never be known, the available sources do provide some clues. According to the records of the Qinding shengchao xunjie zhuoben lu [Records of all officials (and subjects) who died out of loyalty to the fallen dynasty, authorized by the emperor (Qianlong), comp. Shu Hede 舒赫德 (1710–77) et al. (Qianlong edition, repr. Taipei: Chengwen Chuanshe, 1969), and the Ming yimin zhuojuan suoyin [Index of the biographies of Ming yimin], ed. Xie Zhengguang (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1992), the number of Ming martyrs was about three thousand seven hundred while the number of Ming yimin was about two thousand. See also He Guanbiao, Sheng yu si: Mingji sbidafu de jueze, pp.15–28.


The available sources indicate that some of the anti-Qing activists took part in the resistance movement due to political ambition and personal interest rather than loyalty. See the biographies of “Twice-serving Ministers” and...
should apply only to those who “pointedly altered his or her life patterns and goals to demonstrate unalterable personal identification with the fallen order.” By this definition, not all anti-Qing activists can be classified in this category. At least, those political opportunists who joined the resistance movement out of personal ambition should be excluded.

Unlike the collaborators, the staunch loyalists insisted upon the principle of loyalty in the historical tragedy of the Ming demise. They firmly refused to give up their pro-Ming stance in spite of the fact that their desperate struggle for the restoration of the dynasty proved fruitless because neither could it prevent the Ming empire from disintegrating nor could they save themselves from a tragic fate. Apart from those participating in the Ming restoration movement, a number of loyalists offered their resistance in the form of martyrdom for the Ming cause or by withdrawing from active public life in order to avoid collaboration with the conquerors. Despite employing different ways to defend the same principle, all of them paid a high price for their Confucian faith. During the years 1645–62, many loyalist activists involved in anti-Manchu activities were arrested and executed by the Qing. Those who were lucky enough to escape death or imprisonment fled their home counties. Moreover, when the Southern Ming forces were finally crushed and Qing rule was consolidated, to express their unshakable loyalty to the preceding dynasty and to signify a form of passive resistance to alien domination, the Ming survivors, who were usually known as the Ming “remnants” or yimin, had no option but to renounce their former gentriness status and official careers. Refusing any possibility of compromise or cooperation with the newly-established authorities, some became peasants, peddlers, or medicine men while others chose to live as Taoist eremites or Buddhist monks in order to escape harassment by the new regime.

In memory of the history of resistance and its martyrs, many loyalists in their retirement began to recount Southern Ming events based on their personal experiences and other available sources. From the mid-seventeenth until the second decade of the eighteenth century, except for the eight-year Oboi 驍拜 regency of 1661–69, which represented the most extreme expression of Manchu-oriented rule, the Qing government adopted a lenient state policy toward these writings on Southern Ming history. This provided


52 For an analysis of responses of the diehard Ming loyalists to alien invasion, see my article “Kangkai fu si yi, congrong jiu yi nan-l un Nanming zhuchen de jueze” [It is easier to die a hero’s death than to tread the path of virtue calmly—on the choices of the Southern Ming diehards]. Jiu zhou xuekan 6.3 (Dec. 1994): 61–76. The resistance movements in central China may serve as case studies of their activities. See Jerry Dennerline, The Chia-ting loyalists: Confucian leadership and social change in seventeenth-century China (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1981), pp.342–3, and Ono Kazuko, “Settō no reisutsu ni” [The Zhedong resistance movement], in Minmatsu Shinsbo no shakai to bunka [Society and culture of the late Ming and early Qing], ed. Ono Kazuko (Kyoto: Kyōtō Daigaku Jibun Kagaku Kenkyūjo, 1996), pp.61–104. According to Qinding shengchao xunjie zhuchen lu, apart from those who were captured and executed by the Qing government, most of these people committed suicide when the Qing troops moved southward.

53 Quan Zuwang, Jieqing ji, wabiian 外編, vol.2, juan 8, p.757.

54 In the seventeenth century, the term yimin denoted those loyalists who remained loyal to the fallen dynasty. For the origin and development of the term, see He Guanbiao, “Lun Ming yimin zhi chuchu,” pp.102–5, n.2.


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58 A number of accounts of Southern Ming are extant. A considerable number of these come from "yimin". See Xie Guozhen, Zengding wan Ming shiji kao [Studies on late-Ming histories, revised and enlarged edition] (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1981). See also Xie Guozhen, Ming-Qing biji tancong [Collected conversations on Ming-Qing scholarly jottings] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1962), and Lynn Struve, "Uses of history in traditional Chinese society: the Southern Ming in Ch'ing historiography," PhD. diss., University of Michigan, 1974.


60 For instance, Qu Dajun 屈大均 (1630–96) was proud of his association with the Ming martyrs in Guangdong. Qu Dajun, Huang Ming sichao chengren lu [Records of martyrdom in the four imperial Ming courts], in Ye Gongchuo 葉恭绰 (1880–1968), comp., Guangdong consbu di er ji [Guangdong collectanea, series 2] (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1947), vol.6, juan 8, 294b-5a, and vol.7, juan 10, 361b–2a. See also Ou Chu and Wang Guichen, eds, Qu Dajun quanji [Complete works of Qu Dajun] (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1996), vol.3, pp.157–9.

61 Huang Zongxi quanji, vol.1, pp.410–14, and Mingsbi, juan 245, pp.6360–4


63 Quan Zuweng 蒲增宗, jieqiting ji [Entanglements and political desprestige] (1578–1645), a noted and respected Neo-Confucian scholar, who committed suicide by fasting to death after the Qing occupation of Nanjing in 1644. See also Ou Chu and Wang Guichen, eds, Qu Dajun quanji [Complete works of Qu Dajun] (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1996), pp.187–89.

64 Huang Zongxi quanji, vol.2 (1986), pp.1–110. For the discussion on the writing date of this work, see Wu Guang's article in the same volume, pp.550–4, and his Huang Zongxi zhuzuo hui kao [Collected monographs on Huang Zongxi's works] (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1990), pp.89–92.

65 Huang Zongxi quanji, vol.2, pp.111–208 See also Wu's discussion in the same volume, pp.554–73, and Huang Zongxi zhuzuo hui kao, pp.93–114.

a fairly open atmosphere and favorable conditions for the development of private historiography regarding the Ming–Qing transition. As a result, a number of primary accounts were compiled in the form of "rustic history" (yeshi 野史) or "scholarly jottings" (biji 筆記). Influenced by the personal sentiments of the authors, these writings intentionally conveyed a sense of deep sorrow for the dynastic change and considerable respect for the resistance activists despite their eventual failure. In some senses, the memory of the Ming martyrs and the glorification of their moral deeds also connoted a strong message of self-recognition, that is, the authors' self-affirmation of their own strenuous efforts in carrying out a mission to defend Confucian virtues during this "period of darkness."

Loyalist studies of Southern Ming history included their reflections on the causes of the Ming collapse and the Qing success. In examining the events of the past, they could not avoid such critical questions as: "Why did the resistance movement of 1644–62 fail despite the wholehearted support of the loyalists?" "Who should be held responsible for the disasters?" and, more importantly, "Why did the Ming empire lose the Mandate of Heaven?" As a result of their deep reflection, they were forced to conclude that late-Ming politics was indeed a conglomeration of court factionalism and administrative abuse, which eventually led to the fall of Beijing and the total failure of the Southern Ming resistance. Although "pernicious cliques" (nidadang 逆黨) in the late Ming were usually blamed for demolishing the political order of the dynasty and corrupting the people's morals, the loyalists were also frustrated by the weak and incapable imperial rulership which directly gave rise to political chaos and opportunism. Thus, a complex sense of both love and hatred characterized their narratives of this history. I would suggest that the writings of Huang Zongxi and Wang Fuzhi reflect well the prevailing sentiments shared by most of the loyalist scholars.

Huang Zongxi was a native of Yuyao 餘姚, Zhejiang. He was the son of Huang Zunzu 黃尊素 (1584–1626), a victim of late-Ming political factionalism who was framed by his opponents and died in prison in 1626, and the student of Liu Zongzhou 劉宗周 (1578–1645), a noted and respected Neo-Confucian scholar, who committed suicide by fasting to death after the Qing troops occupied Nanjing. Under the influence of both his father and his teacher, Huang took part in the resistance activities of Nanjing and Zhejiang during 1645–49 but was deeply frustrated by the grim reality of the situation. As an active member of the highly-politicized literati society Fushe, he could not free himself from the factional politics of the Hongguang court in Nanjing. Soon, when Ruan Dacheng 阮大铖 (1578–1646), the follower of the eunuch clique and political opponent of the Fushe, came to power in 1645, Huang was persecuted for his anti-Ruan stance and forced to flee for refuge. After the fall of Nanjing, he joined the Southern Ming Lu court in Zhejiang and served as the vice-president of the Censorate for three years. Realizing the hopelessness of the resistance movement and worried about the safety of his mother following the promulgation of a Qing order to arrest Ming loyalists
and their families, Huang decided to abandon his political activities and retired to his home county when the Lu regime came to an end in 1649.63

During his retirement, Huang devoted much of his time to the study of Ming history and thought, compiling a large number of books on these topics. Among these were three works concerning the Southern Ming history, namely *Hongguang shilu chao* (Copies of the Veritable Records of the Hongguang [Reign], 1658),64 *Xingchao lu* (Records of the Peripatetic Courts, c.1683),65 and *Sijiu lu* (Record of Thought about Past Acquaintances, 1692 or 1693).66 These works aimed at preserving a reliable account of the history of the resistance. They clearly reflected the author's ambivalence in evaluating the performance of the Southern Ming regimes. On the one hand, Huang, from a pro-Ming perspective, had no doubt about the political legitimacy of the “peripatetic courts,” though under

66 Huang Zongxi quanj, vol.1, pp.338–96. See also Wu’s discussion in the same volume, pp.437–41, and Huang Zongxi zhu zuo biao, pp.79–88.

Figure 1

Letter from Huang Zongxi to Xu Qianxue, reflecting Huang’s changing attitude toward the Qing house (from Wu Guang, ed., Huang Zongxi Nanlei zazu gao zhenji [Manuscripts of Huang Zongxi’s miscellaneous writings], Hangzhou: Zhejiang Guji Chubanshe, 1987, pp.159–61)
the attack and pursuit of the Qing forces, they were short-lived and their activities confined to southeast China. On the other hand, however, he could not deny that from its inception, the resistance movement was bound to fail due to its inherent corruption and the conflicts among its political factions. While Huang whole-heartedly acknowledged the Southern Ming Longwu Emperor (Zhu Yujian 朱聿鍵, 1623–62, r.1645–46) for his brilliance and respected the Ming martyrs for their courage and selflessness in fulfilling their commitments to the defunct dynasty, he also bitterly reproached traitors to the cause for their shameful behavior and severely criticized the Hongguang Emperor (Zhu Yousong 朱由崧, 1607–46, r.1644–45) for his depraved and dissolute life.

Wang Fuzhi was descended from a respectable family of scholars in Hengyang, Hunan. He obtained the degree of juren (舉人) in 1642, two years before Beijing fell to the rebels. Hopeful of restoring the Ming, he raised an army in Hengshan, Hunan, in late 1648 but was soon defeated by the Qing forces. He then joined the Ming remnants in Guangdong and Guangxi provinces and was appointed a junior official in the Yongli court for several months. Shortly thereafter, Wang’s efforts were frustrated by court factionalism and he came to realize that the situation was far from what he had hoped for. Faced with the witch-hunt launched by his political opponents and disappointed by court politics, he decided, in 1650, to withdraw from the anti-Qing movement and retired to live as a hermit in his native place.

In the later part of his life, Wang pursued his studies and wrote several books on Chinese philosophy and history. Most of these were not published until the late nineteenth century. Among them, a history entitled Veritable Records of the Yongli Reign (Yongli shilu 永曆實錄) and presented in an annals-biography (ji zhuàn 續傳) style was compiled between 1673 and 1678. The sources of this work were the author’s personal experiences and materials he collected during his service in the court. The Veritable Records was dedicated to the memory of Prince Gui (Zhu Youlang 朱由榔), 1623–62, the Yongli Emperor, r.1646–62) and the anti-Qing activists at the Yongli court. Like the writings of Huang Zongxi, Wang’s accounts mingled strong emotions of lament and indignation. By using the Yongli reign title in his chronology, Wang implied that the Southern Ming, rather than the Qing, was the legitimate government of China. This was consistent with the author’s radical political stance, an uncompromising ethnocentrism opposed to any form of alien rule. Nonetheless, although insisting upon the legitimacy of Yongli, he could not see any hope for its success. While praising his upright colleagues who devoted their lives to saving the dynasty, Wang unsparingly condemned the corrupt cliques at court, who he indicated were to be blamed for the political deterioration suffered during the Yongli reign and the total collapse of the resistance movement in south China.

Compared with the writings of Huang and Wang, the criticisms of the Southern Ming regimes by Zhang Dai (張岱 1579–1642) were much more
radical. Zhang was a loyalist historian who served the Lu regime for two or three months in 1645. Losing his confidence in the Southern Ming regime, he abandoned his family properties in Shanyin (山陰), Zhejiang, and took to the mountains as a hermit.76 Severely censuring Prince Fu (the Hongguang Emperor) for his profligacy and other princes for their incompetent leadership, Zhang, in a famous work entitled Shiguishu bouji 石艮書後集 (Writings Stored in a Stone Case, Continued), reached the sad conclusion that the Ming dynasty fell in 1644 due to its loss of Heaven’s blessing. He further affirmed that in spite of their desperate struggle, the Southern Ming courts were doomed to failure and none of them could claim to be a legitimate regime.77

Notwithstanding the passion for the previous dynasty, loyalist criticism of the Ming house extended from the weak Southern Ming leadership to the autocratic Ming institutions and included a sweeping condemnation of Ming despotism, which was considered to be the historical root of the socio-political chaos following the Wanli (萬歴) period (1573–1619).78 The abhorrence of autocratic rule was fully reflected in Huang Zongxi’s critical work, Mingyi daifang lu 明夷待訪錄 (Waiting for the Dawn).79 In his discussion of the basic principles of humane governance, Huang, drawing arguments from the ancient Confucian principle that “all the world’s goods are shared” (tianxia weigong 天下爲公) and “the people are more important than the ruler” (min gui jun qing 民貴君輕),80 indirectly criticizes the Ming autocrats:

In ancient times all-under-Heaven was considered the master, and the prince the servant. The prince spent his life working for all-under-Heaven. But now the prince is the master, and all-under-Heaven is but the servant. Because of the prince, no one can find peace and happiness anywhere. In order to get whatever he wants, he maims and slaughters all-under-Heaven and breaks up their families—all for the aggrandizement of his personal fortune. Without the least feeling of pity, the prince says, “I’m just establishing an estate for my descendants.” Yet when he has established it, the prince still extracts the very marrow from people’s bones, and takes away their sons and daughters to serve his own debauchery. It seems entirely proper to him. It is, he says, the interest on his estate. Thus the one who does the greatest harm in the world is the prince.81

After a comprehensive examination of the Ming political system, Huang says in his concluding remarks that “The origin of misrule under the Ming lay in the abolition of the prime ministership by [the founder] Gao Huangdi (高皇帝, Taizu 太祖, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, 1328–98, r.1368–98).”82 The abolition of the prime ministership in 1380 marked the beginning of the Ming autocracy, placing as it did the power of government decision-making solely in the hands of the emperor.83 This over-concentration of power gave the eunuchs, who increasingly gained access to the imperial house, an opportunity to seize absolute authority in periods of weak emperorship and allowed them to make use of their power to develop their connections with court factions.84

This condemnation of despotism naturally led to a reconsideration of the ruler–minister relationship and challenged the Cheng–Zhu doctrine of absolute
loyalty. Huang, attempting to redefine the role of a minister, further argued that

The reason for ministerialship lies in the fact that the world is too big for one man to govern so governance must be divided up among officials. Therefore, when one goes forth to serve, it is for all-under-Heaven, not for the prince; and it is for all the people, not for one family. When one acts for the sake of all-under-Heaven and its people, one cannot agree to do anything contrary to the Way even if the prince explicitly forces one to do so . . . And if it is not in keeping with the true Way, one should not even present oneself to the court—much less sacrifice one's life for the ruler. To act solely for the prince and his dynasty, and attempt to anticipate the prince's unexpressed whims or cravings is only what a eunuch or palace maid will do. "When the prince brings death and destruction upon himself, if one follows and does the same, one simply does what a mistress or some such favorite will do." That is the difference between one who is a true minister and one who is not . . . Whether there is peace or disorder in the world does not depend on the rise or fall of dynasty, but on the happiness or distress of the people . . . If those who act as ministers ignore the "plight of the people," then even if they should succeed in assisting their prince's rise to power or follow him to final ruin, they will still be in violation of the true Way of the Minister.85

In other words, Ming despotism was an outcome of the ruler's selfish motives and insatiable desire for power, which were opposed to fundamental Confucian principles of rulership. Demand upon ministers to give their absolute loyalty to the private interests of the ruler was, therefore, also a violation of Confucian ethics. To Huang, the proper relationship between the ruler and his ministers should be one established on a solid foundation of a reasonable division of labor and fair sharing of responsibilities. Loyalty, in this sense, was an ethical concept that denoted the moral quality of an official in discharging his duties according to a reinterpretation of Confucian principles of ministerialship, which was different from the prevailing orthodox Cheng–Zhu doctrine.86

Huang's ideas were largely shared by his yimin circle of friends, such as Gu Yanwu, who also wrote extensively on government and economics.87 In 1676, when Gu read the manuscript of Waiting for the Dawn, he agreed with Huang's critical perspective and considered the book an excellent guide for governance.88 In his discussion of traditional dynastic changes, Gu also attempted to distinguish "the fall of a dynasty" (wang guo 亡國) from "the fall of all-under-Heaven" (wang tianxia 亡天下). He advanced the view that the former was only the business of the ruler and ministers concerned, and had nothing to do with the public. The latter, however, was a public affair, relating as it did to the survival of human civilization and the welfare of all people.89 To him, the perpetual transmission of Chinese culture and the livelihood of all-under-Heaven were much more important than the rise or fall of a dynasty. They should be the chief concern of literati.90

From the angle of intellectual history, the historical significance of these loyalists' reflections upon loyalty came from their consensus on the general
interests of the people. It allowed the loyalists a relatively rational approach to the consideration of a political legitimacy based on culturalism. To a certain extent, it also offered an ethical justification for their later reconciliation with the new court in the mid-Kangxi period. Of course, loyalists’ criticisms of Ming despotism and its baneful influence on late-Ming politics did not necessarily imply their open departure from a pro-Ming political stance. Nor did these critiques indicate their liberation from the orthodox Cheng–Zhu ideology of absolute loyalty. In fact, it is a misunderstanding that anti-despotic ideas had a substantial impact on the social behavior of the yimin during this time. At least, as their deeds show, most of them, even Huang Zongxi and Gu Yanwu, regarded as the most “progressive” thinkers of the time, were, in practice, bound by a strong passion for the previous dynasty and conformed to the traditional stereotype of a loyalist.91

In the early Qing, the misfortune of the Ming yimin elicited the sympathy of the people and their moral courage was admired by their contemporaries as an embodiment of Confucian virtue.92 Because of their moral probity, they enjoyed high prestige in the society despite their avowed withdrawal from public life. For those yimin who devoted their recluse lives to study and teaching, their distinguished academic achievements also added to their fame as eminent scholars. For example, Sun Qifeng, 黃宗羲 (1685–1675), Huang Zongxi, 李鴻 (1627–1705), the so-called “three great masters” of early-Qing thought, were well known for both their integrity and scholarship.93 To many Chinese, the yimin were the transmitters as well as defenders of Confucian culture and its traditional values. This social image gave the yimin a stereotyped role and put an additional moral burden on them.94 Being conscious of their moral obligations and social image, they became intensely cautious about the social consequences of their deeds and worried about being unable to live up to social expectations. Given this, it was hardly possible for them to make any open compromise with the Qing court, for such an action might raise popular doubts as to their moral integrity as well as incurring the risk of ruining their good name. Such misgivings were evinced in Gu Yanwu’s advice to his best friend Li Yindu 李因篤 (1631–92), who was recommended by the Qing officials to the emperor in 1678.95 In a letter to Li, Gu reminded Li of his yimin status and warned him that the acceptance of a government position at court would cause irreparable damage to his reputation.96

The hostile attitude of yimin toward the alien regime was, however, softened by the cultural policy of the Kangxi period. During the Kangxi reign, the burgeoning reputation of the yimin aroused imperial concern. Having attempted to cultivate its popularity after the military victory over the Southern Ming in 1662 and the fall of Manchu conservatism in 1669, the Qing government gradually adopted a lenient policy toward the Ming loyalists and repeatedly attempted to absorb them into the bureaucracy.97 In 1678, three years before the suppression of the Three Feudatories Rebellion, the Kangxi Emperor ordered an examination for those of “broad learning and vast
erudition (boxue bongci 博學鴻詞) be conducted and, in the following year, he announced the reopening of the Ming History Office (Mingshi guan 明史館). Both measures aimed at attracting the eremites into government service. Although only a few celebrated loyalist scholars responded to these recruitment efforts and the majority of the best-known yimin rejected the government’s enticements, the emperor’s friendly gesture did mollify to an extent the Han Chinese and further pacify the anti-Qing sentiment of the yimin.  

The Kangxi period marked a turning point in the history of Manchu-Han reconciliation. Under the leadership of a tireless emperor, the government had greatly impressed the Han literati by its socio-cultural achievements. The suppression of the Three Feudatories and the consolidation of Qing rule in 1681 brought a long period of peace to the mainland. Post-war economic development took place and the livelihood of ordinary people was much improved. Witnessing this rapid social recovery and cultural advancement, the yimin could not deny the contributions made by the alien regime, especially when they compared Qing achievements with the late-Ming administrative abuses and factionalism they had experienced. The flourishing empire also challenged the ethnocentric prejudice of the diehard Ming remnants. Moved by the “sage-emperor” and his “rule of virtue,” many yimin in the Kangxi period underwent a psychological struggle and gradually gave tacit consent to the legitimacy of Qing rule in spite of intentionally keeping a distance from the government. Therefore, by the late seventeenth century, their abstention from the Qing government should not be considered simply as being either a denial of Manchu legitimacy or a passive protest against alien rule. The political compromises of Ming loyalists inevitably

98 Maqi et al. comp., Shengzu Renhuangdi shilu, in Qing shilu, vol.4, juan 71, Kangxi year 17, month 1, p.910, juan 80, Kangxi year 18, month 3, p.1023. The Mingshi Office was first established in 1645 but, at that time, the Qing government was preoccupied with other domestic affairs and paid little attention to the compilation of the Ming history. See Shiizu Zhanghuangdishilu, in Qing shilu, vol.3, juan 16, Shunzhi year 2, month 3, pp.141–2. Li Chin-hua, Mingshi zuanxu kao [A study on the compilation of the Ming dynastic history] (Peiping [Beijing]: Yenching Journal of Chinese Studies Monograph Series no.3, 1933). As Yang Lien-sheng observes, the compilation of a history of the preceding dynasty had two propaganda uses. Firstly, it announced the end of the former dynasty and the orthodox line of succession of the new dynasty. Secondly, it attracted the loyalists of the fallen dynasty into government service because “the compilation of a good history was considered the duty of such a loyalist.” See Yang, “The organization of Chinese official historiography: principles and methods of the Standard Histories from the T’ang through the Ming dynasty,” in Historians of China and Japan, ed. William G. Beasley and Edwin G. Pulleyblank (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p.48.


100 This was evinced by Huang Zongxi’s and Gu Yanwu’s attitude toward the official Mingshi project. Despite having refused direct participation, Huang encouraged his favorite student Wan Sitong to work for the project and sent his third son Huang Biaijia 黄百家 (1643–1709) to assist Wan. Moreover, Huang also showed his support by providing sources and advice regarding the compilation to Wan and the Mingshi editors. HuangZongxi quanji, vol.11 (1993), pp.290, 68–70; and vol.10, pp.205–6, 211–15, 529–44. See also Huang Biaijia 黄百家 (1815–93), Huang Lizhou xiansheng niupu [A chronological biography of Huang Lizhou (Huang Zongxi)], in Huang Zongxi quanji, vol.12 (1994), p.47. In the case of Gu Yanwu, his nephews Xu Qianxue 徐乾學 (1631–94) and Xu Yuanwen 徐元文 (1634–91) came to hold high positions in the Mingshi Office and his disciple Pan Lei 潘禾 (1646–1708), having passed the boxue bongcixianamination, also took part in the Mingshi project. In response to the inquiries of the Xu brothers, Pan, and other Mingshi editors, Gu provided some sources and made suggestions for the compilation of the history. See Gu Tinglin shi wen ji, wenji, juan 3, pp.51–7, juan 4, pp.79–80.

101 For example, in 1690, Huang Zongxi was impressed by the Qing government’s efficiency in sending relief to flood victims in Zhejiang. HuangZongxi quanji, vol.10, pp.136–8.


103 According to the studies of Willard Peterson, in some cases the early-Qing eremites refused to serve the new dynasty simply because their parents had died for the Ming cause and thus their primary justification for abstention from the Qing government was “filial piety rather than loyalty to a ruling house.” Peterson, “Life of Ku Yen-wu,” pt 1, p.144. To a certain extent,
required them to reinterpret their moral obligations to the defunct dynasty and to redefine their relationship with the new power-holders. To strike a balance between insisting on their yimin status and accepting Qing legitimacy, they finally came to the solution that they would keep themselves away from government office but allow, or even encourage, their descendants to take official careers in the Qing bureaucracy to serve the public.\textsuperscript{104} By then, as Huang Zongxi argued, the Ming yimin asserted that their moral obligations to the defunct dynasty should be restricted to not taking official positions under the new order.\textsuperscript{105}

The Ming loyalist struggle for self-identity in the second half of the seventeenth century reinforced Cheng–Zhu teachings on loyalty. Despite their criticism of late-Ming politics and Ming despotism, most of the yimin throughout their lives did comply with Cheng–Zhu Neo-Confucian principles regarding the emperor–minister relationship. Their tacit consent to Qing legitimacy was accompanied by a presupposition that they would “not serve the new dynasty.” If their anti-despotic ideas had challenged the orthodox doctrine of absolute loyalism, it was only on the theatrical level, and it had little influence in practice.

\textit{Qing Subjects and the Formation of a Shared Qing Perspective on Loyalty}

The life experience of the educated Han Chinese who reached their majority under Qing rule was different from that of their predecessors. For them, the Manchus were legitimate rulers rather than invaders. They saw themselves as Qing subjects and did not feel they owed anything to the Ming. Although they were living under alien rule, by identifying with the prevalent culture, they had no difficulty in justifying their participation in the Manchu government, which had adopted a policy of Sinification before its troops advancing through the Great Wall in 1644, becoming fully Sinicized during the Kangxi reign.\textsuperscript{106} Encouraged by Kangxi-era cultural policy, many Chinese literati then took part in the civil examinations and accepted office in the government just as their predecessors had done under the Ming.

For some historians, 1644, the year the Ming house in Beijing collapsed, was a watershed that delineated the difference between Ming and Qing subjects: those who reached their majority before 1644 were to be regarded as Ming subjects (or Ming yimin under Qing) whilst those after 1644 were Qing subjects.\textsuperscript{107} Nonetheless, such an assertion is problematic in so far as it fails to explain the political identity of two particular categories of historical figures. On the one hand, there were resistance activists who reached their majority during the transitional period 1644–62. They considered themselves Ming subjects and were regarded by their contemporaries as Ming loyalists. Xia Wanchun 夏完淳 (1631–47), who joined the resistance movement at the
When Xia was captured by the Qing in 1647, he refused to surrender and was executed. Xia's loyalist attitude was obvious in his poems. See Xia Wanchun ji jianjiao [Collected works of Xia Wanchun], annotated by Bai Jian (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1991), esp. juan 1, pp.1–2; juan 4, pp.171, 174, 178, 198; and juan 5, pp.235, 238. For a biography of Xia, see Lin Yongkuang, "Xia Wanchun," in Qingdai renwu zhuangao, vol.2, pp.238–43.


This is evinced by many writings of the early-Qing literati. In fact, not only those who had a successful official career admired the exploits of the empire. Even those who were frustrated in officialdom also acknowledged the contributions of the Qing regime to a stable and prosperous society. For instance, Quan Zuowang, who left officialdom in 1737 when he failed to get a place in the Hanlin Academy, wrote several poems in 1749–51 to glorify early-Qing history. Quan, jieguoting ji, vol.1, juan 1, pp.1–20.

Gu Yingtai 谷應泰 (1620–90), Mingshi jishibenmo [Narratives of Ming history from beginning to end] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1977), vol.1, Author's Preface, p.1; Xu Bingyi 徐秉義 (1633–1711), Mingmo zhonglie jishi [True accounts of the late-Ming martyrs] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Guji Chubanshe, 1987), fanli 凡例, p.1; Wen Rulin 温睿臨 (1705–1746), Nanjiang yishiben [Neglected history of the southern frontiers] (Hong Kong: Chongwen Shudian, 1971), Author's Preface, pp.1–2; Quan
educated under Confucianism and moved by the romance of the resistance movement, which was colored by many heroic deeds, they also acknowledged the Ming loyalists, especially the late-Ming martyrs, for their courage and integrity in insisting on the Confucian ideal during the “dark period” of the late Ming.117 It was particularly ambivalent for those descendants of the resistance activists, who honored their predecessors for loyalty to the Ming while they themselves attended civil service examinations and took office under the alien reign.118 Consequently, since the founding of the Qing dynasty, among the Chinese literati, there had been a general psychological discomfort generated by the hidden tension between a desire to recognize the Qing legitimacy and to sympathize with the late-Ming loyalists. The disagreement between political and cultural identities required reconciliation and eventually created a discourse on how to interpret the deeds of the Ming martyrs from the perspective of the Qing subjects.

Although the compilation of the official Ming History project began in 1645, the second year of the Shunzhi reign, conquest history was a taboo to many Chinese scholar-officials in the early Qing because any expression of sympathy for the resistance movement might be taken to imply a de facto recognition of the “rebellious” stance. Thus one could easily lay oneself open to factional attack and, more importantly, arouse imperial suspicion. In 1658, Gu Yingtai published his Mingshi jishi benmo 明史紀事本末 (Narratives of Ming History from Beginning to End). It was one of the earliest writings by a Qing historian on the history of the Ming dynasty. Three years later, Gu was impeached by the censor Dong Wenji 董文騏 for his account of the peasant rebellions of 1644, accused of ignoring the Manchu contribution to the suppression of Li Zicheng. As Dong’s impeachment was not supported by adequate evidence, the Shunzhi Emperor, following an investigation, dismissed the charge against Gu.119 In 1663, under the Oboi regency, a period during which the new government adopted harsh measures against all anti-Manchu ideas and activities, another case regarding the writing of Ming history broke into the open. A work entitled Mingshi jilue (A Brief Compiled History of the Ming), initiated by Zhu Guozhen 朱國標 (1557–1632) and revised under the name of Zhuang Tinglong 莊廷鑈 (d. c.1660) with additional materials covering the late- and Southern Ming, was printed in 1660 by the Zhuang family. By using the Southern Ming reign titles in its chronology, referring to the Manchu emperors by their personal names, and depicting the pre-1644 Manchus as but one tribe under Ming rule, the book was taken as obviously treasonable by the new dynasty. When the case was reported to the court by the opportunist Wu Zhirong 吳之榮, a former magistrate of Gui’an 歸安 who had failed to levy blackmail on the Zhuang family, all those involved in the compilation and printing of the book, together with their family members, were arrested and sentenced to death or exile.120 The cases of Gu and Zhuang were reminders to late seventeenth-century Chinese literati, in particular those in the Court, of the sensitive nature of conquest history, which required handling with particular care.
To avoid imperial suspicion of their motives, from the beginning of the Qing, the scholar-officials who called for official recognition of the activities of the Southern Ming martyrs emphasized the moral education dimension of the issue. In his 1655 memorial concerning the compilation of the Ming biographies of the official Ming History, Tang Bin affirmed that the resistance loyalists had demonstrated how ministers should behave in conditions of extreme difficulty, thereby establishing models of behavior for the public. He argued that despite their uncompromising attitude toward “Heaven’s Will,” these loyalists were different from rebels from among the Qing population for, being Ming subjects, the former had a moral obligation to defend the fallen dynasty. To Tang, the Southern Ming martyrs, along with the late-Ming martyrs who died for the imperial house during the peasant rebellions in or before 1644, had performed their duty according to Confucian teachings on loyalty. Drawing examples from the standard histories, Tang pointed out it was a traditional practice in Chinese history that when a new dynasty compiled the history of the previous dynasty, biographies of the former resistance activists would also be included, regardless of the political attitudes of these figures. Therefore, he argued, the Office of Ming History should not hesitate to record the words and deeds of Southern Ming loyalists.121

After 1669, under Kangxi’s cultural policy in which moral restoration became a significant government task, Tang’s arguments were further developed by Han scholar-officials who took part in compiling official Ming history. In discussions as to how Southern Ming loyalists should be dealt with, Xu Qianxue, nephew of the famous yimin Gu Yanwu and one of the officers-in-charge of the Ming History Office in the Kangxi period, said:

The resistance diehards opposed to the Zhou were loyal to the Shang [dynasty]. So, when the Yuan 元 dynasty [1260–1368] recounted events of the Song, [Song loyalist] ministers like Zhang Shijie 张世傑 [d.1279], Lu Xiufu 麗秀夫 [1238–79], Wen Tianxiang 文天祥 [1236–83], and Xie Fangde 謝枋得 [1226–89] were admired; when [the Ming dynasty] compiled history of the Yuan, [Yuan loyalists like] Yu Que 余闕 [1303–58], Fu Shou 福壽 [d.1356], Shimo Yisun 石抹宜孫 [d.1359], and Puyan Buhua 普顏不花 [1295–1358] were praised. Facing the advances of the [Qing] armies, the subjects of the Ming dared to resist. It may be said that they were ignorant of Heaven’s Will. Yet, each man has his own allegiance and should fulfill his own duty just those diehards of the Shang did in ancient times ... 122

In other words, from the angle of moral education, moral quality rather than political stance was the most important criterion for determining whether a historical figure should be included in the standard history. Therefore, Xu suggested to the emperor that the Ming History include the biographical memoirs of the late-Ming loyalists and that the virtues of these former officials be fully recognized by the government. Xu’s proposal won the support of his colleagues in the Ming History Office. Peng Sunyu 彭孫遹 (1631–1700), who participated in the Ming History project after his success in the boxue bongci examination,123 shared these views and went a step further by advocating that these biographies in the Ming History should be put under a separate

category entitled “the loyal and righteous” or *zhongyi* 忠義 so as to highlight the loyalists’ moral achievements.\(^{124}\) Wang Hongxu 王鴻緒 (1645–1723), who was in charge of the Ming History Office for more than ten years (1694–1709) and continued his work on Ming history after his dismissal in 1709,\(^{125}\) even suggested that to promote moral education among the people and to demonstrate the government’s support for Confucian values, the heroic deeds of the late-Ming loyalists should be mentioned not only in the biographies concerned but also in the basic annals of the *Ming History*.\(^{126}\)

This ethical perspective provided solid ground for the Qing scholars to justify their interests in the study of late-Ming figures and acted as an encouragement for them to work on the topic. When Xu Bingyi 徐秉義, a member of the famous Xu clan in Kunshan 昆山, Jiangsu, was absent from office during 1682–94, he devoted much of his time to collecting historical materials relating to the Ming martyrs.\(^{127}\) Like his elder brother Xu Qianxue and younger brother Xu Yuanwen, Bingyi had served in the Ming History Office for several years and, during this time, he developed a keen interest in the topic. In 1694, after twenty years of hard work, he completed a collection of biographies of the seventeenth-century Ming martyrs entitled the *Mingmo zhonglie jishi* 明末忠烈紀實 (True Accounts of the Late-Ming Martyrs). As Xu states in the “explanatory preface” (*fanli*), the main objective of this book was to give a comprehensive and reliable account of the historical figures who died as martyrs to the Ming cause and prevent their deeds from being forgotten by the people.\(^{128}\) The order of the biographies was carefully considered. Over five hundred records of male martyrs were arranged into eighteen *juan* according to the period of martyrdom while hundreds of biographical sketches of the female martyrs were incorporated in the last two *juan* along with geographical references. For the narrative itself, special emphasis is put on the moral courage of these late-Ming or Southern Ming figures, whose were considered to be the embodiment of Confucian virtues of loyalty.\(^{129}\)

Apart from the Chinese élite in the court, those Qing historians who were outside the literary circle of the upper social stratum also attempted to recount Southern Ming history from an ethical perspective. Among them, Wen Ruilin’s work entitled *Nanjiang yishi* 南疆逸史 (Neglected History of the Southern Frontiers) and Quan Zuwang’s Southern Ming biographical epitaphs are excellent examples that demonstrate how the history of the mid-seventeenth century was depoliticized in the early eighteenth century.

Wen Ruilin was a native of Wucheng 烏程, Zhejiang. Some members of the Wen clan had resisted the Manchu invasion and committed suicide during the conquest period. Shortly after, when Qing rule was consolidated, the Wen family immediately gave up identifying with the fallen dynasty and sent its children to attend the new local examinations. Obtaining his *juren* degree in
131 Chen Xunci and Fang Zuyou, Wan Sitong
niangju [A chronological biography of Wan
Sitong] (Hong Kong: Chinese University
132 Wen Ruilin, Nanjiang yishi, fanli, p. 3.
The English translations are cited from Lynn
Struve with modifications, see Struve, “Uses
of history,” pp. 44–5.

1705, Wen was unable to rise through the civil examination and never obtained
any prestigious position in officialdom.130 Wen’s interest in Southern Ming
history was stimulated by his mentor Wan Sitong, who worked for the official
Ming history project during the years 1679–1702 but consistently refused to
accept any official position.131 Through his involvement in the Ming History
Office for more than twenty years, Wan Sitong came to realize that the events
of the Southern Ming regimes would be greatly neglected in the official Ming
History due to the political considerations of the Qing house. In order to
preserve a reliable history of the Southern Ming, Wan suggested that Wen might
work on this topic and produce an unofficial history of the regimes. As Wen
recalled, initially, he worried that such a history would be prohibited by the
authorities because it would inevitably involve sensitive narratives of resistance
activities against the Qing. Yet, Wan Sitong argued:

What era is without the rise and fall of states? Each man has his own
sovereign. Whenever a new dynasty emerges, there can be no anger at this;
men must follow their convictions . . . . When the [Qing] dynasty first estab­
lished its rule, it began by praising those ministers who had died loyally for
their state [under attack by rebels] to arouse public emulation. There simply
was no time to pay attention to others who died in this changeover. They
could at one and the same time be praised [for their loyalty to their cause]
and executed [for resisting the Qing]. What’s more, when the History Office
was opened, it was ordered that various private accounts be sent to the [Rites]
Ministry and that none be disapproved because they violated prohibitions.
What harm could there be in collecting and editing them?132

Wen Ruilin was convinced by Wan Sitong’s arguments and began actual
writing shortly after Wan’s death in 1702. The completion date of the work
is not clear but evidence indicates that the draft was circulated in Zhejiang
in 1738 and further material was added in the following years.133

Although in his writings Wen Ruilin used Southern Ming reign names for
dating and referred to the princes by their imperial titles, he, unlike the yimín
historians, did not see this as a form of de facto recognition of Southern Ming
legitimacy. He argued that:

In the ancient histories, those accounts of the emperors are called “basic
annals” [benji 本紀] and those of the ministers the “biographies”
[liezhuan 列傳]. A basic annal gives a summary of the government orders
of a period while a biography only records [the deeds] of a person and the
events concerned. Basic annals are distinguished [from biographies]. Yet, the
revered Court Historian [Taishi gong 太史公, i.e. Sima Qian] gives his
account of Xiang Yu 項羽 [233 BC–202 BC] as a basic annal. It is because he
[Xiang] gave commands [to all-under-Heaven] during the time and many
[historical] events are recounted in detail there. Now, although the three
rulers of Nanjing [the Hongguang emperor], Fujian [the Longwu emperor],
and Guangdong [the Yongli emperor] did not have good endings, they were
emperors over their territories and set the rules of governance. It is
reasonable to record them in basic annals. If [the deeds of these three rulers]
are attached in the basic annal of Huaizong 懷宗 [the Chongzhen 崇禎
Emperor], there will be no record in the biographies, let alone the basic
annals. This is not the normal practice in writing the history of an era. Therefore, there are “brief annals” in the first [three] jüan [of this book]. They are not called “basic annals” thus avoiding giving any offense to our [Qing] dynasty. They are “brief” annals because the available materials are not adequate to provide greater detail.134

As the title Neglected History of the Southern Frontiers reflects, the author is taking a Qing perspective in his writing. In the preface, Wen explains his stance clearly in a question-and-answer form

Why is this called Neglected History of the Southern Frontiers? It is an account of the events under the three [political] entities, the Hongguang, the Longwu, and the Yongli. Why not use “courts” [in the book title]? [It is because they did] not constitute courts. Why is it called “Southern Frontiers?” Their rule was restricted to the South and [they] never reached the North.135

To Wen, the main reason for writing the history was to examine the causes of the rise and fall of the Southern Ming regimes and to praise and blame (bào bian 褒貶) the figures based on their deeds. Stressing the educational functions of history, he believed that by expressing admiration for the loyalists and condemning the traitors, his work would promote Confucian ethics in the society at large.136

Quan Zuwang was a descendant of Ming loyalists. According to Quan, members of his family had participated in anti-Qing activities in Zhejiang during 1644–45 and they maintained close relations with the resistance activists until 1662. When the resistance movement was suppressed, they became yimin under the Qing.137 Like many other descendants of the yimin, Quan participated in the Qing examinations and obtained his jinsbi degree in 1736.138 His intensive research and writing on Ming loyalists can be traced back to the year 1738, when he was mustered out of the Hanlin Academy and quit Beijing for Zhejiang.139 After returning home, he devoted much of his time to researching the local history of Zhejiang in the transitional period and relied on writing epitaphs of the Ming loyalists for much of his income. Since the year of 1744 would be the hundredth anniversary of the events of 1644, many descendants of late-Ming loyalists were preparing for commemoration activities and asked Quan to write epitaphs for their ancestors. In response to these requests, he wrote a great number of accurate and sympathetic biographies of the historical figures who were prominent in the local and regional resistance movements.140

In his writings, Quan revealed not only a considerable level of professionalism but also a passionate sincerity in searching for the moral principles related to human relationships (renlun 人倫) through the study of history, which is a responsibility of historians and more than just a personal interest or a way of making a living. In evaluating the Southern Ming figures, he purposely attempted to employ an ethical principle, which can be summarized as one of “not serving two dynasties,” to erase the tension caused by the pro-Ming/pro-Qing political conflict. To Quan, the term “loyalist” simply denotes a person who “would not serve two dynasties” (bu shì er xìng 不事二姓).141 He argued that if one who had served the former dynasty

134 Wen, Nanjiang yishi, jianli, p.4.
136 Ibid., p.2.
137 Quan Zuwang, Jiqitingji, vol.2, waibian, jüan 8, pp.758–9; and Quan Zuwang, ed. Xu Yongshang qijiushi [Poetry of the Ningbo elderly, continued] (Siming Wenxianshe, 1918), vol.8, jüan 24, pp.1a–2a.
138 Zhu Baojong and Xie Peilin, Ming-Qing jinsbi timing heilu suoyin [Index of names in the epitaphs of Ming–Qing jinsbi] (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1989), vol.3, p.2705, and Jiang Tianshu (1903–88), Quan Xieshan nianpu [A chronological biography of Quan Xieshan (Zuwang)] (Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1932), p.57.
139 Jiang Tianshu, Quan Xieshan nianpu, pp.67–71.
141 Quan, Jiqitingji, vol.2, waibian, jüan 42, p.1300.
insisted on the principle of not transferring his loyalty after the dynastic change, he could be regarded as a loyalist no matter whether he was a martyr or an yimin.\textsuperscript{142} On the contrary, if one violated this principle, one should be considered a renegade and condemned by the public.\textsuperscript{143} Following this principle in his evaluation of historical figures, Quan even criticized Huang Zongxi, the Ming yimin who was highly respected by the Qing intelligentsia, for his \textit{Waiting for the Dawn} as the Chinese term “\textit{daifang}” could be interpreted as “waiting for the visit of a new ruler.”\textsuperscript{144} In defense of the anti-Qing attitude of the loyalists, Quan repeats the Qing scholars’ assertion that “The diehards opposed to the Zhou were the loyalists of the Shang dynasty.” He further argued that though the loyalists might be arrested and executed for their anti-government activities, grave offenses in the eyes of the newly established authorities, their moral courage should be admired nevertheless. As the embodiment of Confucian virtues, their loyalist deeds should be made known to the public, he argued, and recorded in history.\textsuperscript{145}

The principle of loyalty that Quan advanced was closely related to his idea of history. Educated in the Confucian tradition, Quan believed that the meaning of history lay in its moral educative function.\textsuperscript{146} Moral education, to him, meant the teaching and learning of the Confucian ethics and the art of maintaining the five human relationships (\textit{wu lun}) in society, in particular the relationship between monarch and official, as well as that between father and son. Therefore, in his study of history, he paid special attention to the issues concerning loyalty and filial piety which, to him, were the concrete moral achievements of human beings and the essence of Chinese culture. According to Quan, it is the historians’ responsibility accurately to preserve accounts of those who put these Confucian moral principles into practice.

It is also worth noting that by taking a culturalist approach and emphasizing the significance of loyalty, Quan did not find it difficult to reject the ethnocentric claim made against the alien rule of the Manchus. This is evinced in his comments on the political identities Xu Heng 許衡 (1209–81) and Liu Yin 劉因 (1240–93) of the Mongol Yuan dynasty. Examining the lives of Xu and Liu, Quan says:

Xu Wenzheng 許文正 [Heng] and Liu Wenjing 劉文靖 [Yin] were two great Confucians of north [China] in Yuan times … . These two masters were never Song subjects, [thus] for them to serve under the Yuan in no way harmed [their good name].\textsuperscript{147}

Xu took a government position under the alien regime but Liu did not.\textsuperscript{148} To Quan, it was simply a matter of personal choice. Liu elected to live as a hermit because he had no confidence in Yuan politics and his decision did not involve any ethnic consideration. In response to the ethnocentric criticisms of Xu, who was a Han Chinese but accepted the Mongol offer, Quan argues that:

Xu Wenzheng and [Liu] Wenjing were people of the Yuan dynasty. Why shouldn’t they serve the Yuan government? The criticisms based on making distinctions between barbarians and Han Chinese [\textit{yixia zhi shuo} 夷夏之說]}
ignores the relationship between the monarch and his officials [which is] imposed by Heaven [tian zuo zhi jun zhi yi 天作之君之義]. How could a Yuan subject give loyalty to the Song? This is arrant nonsense.\footnote{Quan, Fiegting ji, vol. 2, waibian, juan 33, p.1129.}

These arguments can be considered as a projection of Quan’s own pro-Qing political stance.\footnote{In the past decades, many Chinese historians have tended to consider Quan’s sympathy for the late-Ming loyalists as an expression of his anti-Qing attitude. This is a misconception. For an analysis, see my article “Quan Zuwang’s ‘Su fù minzu qijie’ shuo pingyi” [The issue of Quan Zuwang’s political loyalty], Jiuzhou xuekan 5.1 (July 1992): 41-52.} To a certain extent, they also indicate that, by the early eighteenth century, given the political conditions of alien rule, Han literati were attempting to bypass the sensitive topics of ethnicity in their discourse on loyalty.

\textit{Notions of Loyalty in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries}

The changing concept of loyalty in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries demonstrates the dialectical relationship between individuals and their time. The fall and restoration of orthodox Neo-Confucianism during this period were not simply the result of a government fiat but the result of complex interactions among social groups in that particular environment.

The dynastic change in mid-seventeenth-century China had shaken the social foundations of Neo-Confucian ideology. In a period of political and social turmoil, pragmatism became a governing principle in social action and government policy. To many Han Chinese, collaboration with the Manchus was the sole, rational alternative to disorder. To reduce resistance and seek support from the social élite during the process of the subjugation of China, the Manchu conquerors also rewarded former Ming officials for their collaboration. Consequently, in the first decades of the Qing, the Cheng–Zhu teachings of loyalty failed temporarily to gain imperial support and lost their dominance in the living culture. Although the promotion of loyalty and filial piety was an avowed state policy of the new dynasty, it was merely a cultural tactic employed to pacify the conquered Han Chinese.\footnote{In fact, before advancing across the Great Wall, the Manchus had adopted a policy of encouraging the Chinese to submit themselves to the Manchus. See, for example, Ledehong et al., comp., Taizong wenhuangdi shilu [Veritable records of the Nurhaci reign], in Qing shilu, vol.1, juan 5, Tianming year 3, month 4, p.70; year 6, month 3, juan 7, p.102; Tuhai 圖海 (d.1682) et al., comp., Taizong wenhuangdi shilu [Veritable records of the Ahabai reign], in Qing shilu, vol.2, Tiancong year 1, month 5, juan 3, p.48; year 3, month 10, juan 5, pp.76-80; year 4, month 4, juan 6, 95; year 5, month 9, p.juan 9, p.135; intercalary month 11, juan 10, p.146; year 7, month 6, juan 14, p.192; p.194; year 8, month 4, juan 18, p.238; Zongde year 1, month 11, juan 32, p.404; year 2, month 7, juan 37, pp.486-487; year 3, month 4, juan 41, p.541; and year 3, month 7, juan 42, p.505.} It seemed inconsistent that the newly-established Qing government on the one hand praised the Ming martyrs of 1644 for insisting on remaining loyal to the Ming, but on the other hand called on Ming officials to surrender.\footnote{For example, in the first year of the Shunzhi reign, several edicts were issued praising the 1644 Ming martyrs and appealing to the Ming officials. See Shizu Zhanghuangdi shilu, in Qing shilu, vol.3, juan 5, Shunzhi year 1, month 5, p.57; pp.59–60; juan 6, month 7, p.66; juan 11, month 10, p.103, and juan 11, month 11, p.106.} To both the Manchu conquerors and their Chinese collaborators, political realignment was an act of “obeying Heaven’s Will.”\footnote{Shizu Zhanghuangdi shilu, in Qing shilu, vol.3, juan 5, Shunzhi year 1, month 10, p.103, and Ji Liuqi, Mingji nanliie, juan 2, pp.141–142.}

Unlike the collaborators, the Ming loyalists were true believers in Neo-Confucian loyalism. Apart from those who sacrificed their lives for the Ming dynasty during the conquest period, the survivors did not give up their Confucian principles under the aliens. Nonetheless, the post-1644 socio-economic environment and the examination of the causes of the Ming fall gradually softened their anti-Qing attitude. The emphasis on the “welfare of the people” finally made them give tacit consent to the legitimacy of Qing rule, even while it still remained unacceptable for former Ming officials to serve the new regime.

To scholars of Chinese intellectual history, one of the characteristics of late seventeenth-century thought was the rise of “anti-despotic ideas” among
such prominent thinkers as Huang Zongxi.\textsuperscript{154} In fact, Huang’s advocacy of humane governance, especially his critique of Chinese despotism, presented a critical challenge to dogmatic Cheng–Zhu ideology. However, the historical influence of such anti-despotic ideas should not be exaggerated. Initially, the circulation of Huang’s \textit{Waiting for the Dawn} was restricted to the circle of \textit{yimin} in certain regions and it only became widely known in the late Qing and early Republican periods.\textsuperscript{155} Moreover, bounded by the heavy burden of defending Confucian culture and its traditional values in practice, most \textit{yimin} could hardly be expected to free themselves from the doctrine of absolute loyalty.

The cultural policy of the Kangxi Emperor after 1669 marked the restoration of Cheng–Zhu Neo-Confucian ideology in Chinese historiography. Official praise for the martyrdom of Fan Chengmo (1624–76) and Ma Xiongzhén 馬雄鎭 (1634–77), the Qing martyrs who died in the Three Feudatories Rebellion, confirmed the government’s full-blown recognition of the Cheng–Zhu teachings on loyalty.\textsuperscript{156} The state policy of promoting loyalty and filial piety was then implemented after the consolidation of Qing rule. Imperial attempts to employ Confucianism as a means of ideological control was further developed during the Yongzheng reign and this later became a principal guideline for official cultural activities in the Qianlong era.

It was the adoption of Neo-Confucianism that helped the Manchus foster the legitimacy of their rule and win the political fealty of their Han subjects.\textsuperscript{157} To those Han Chinese who grew up under the Qing, the early history of the dynasty evinced the fact that the Mandate of the Heaven was in favor of the Qing. Despite their sympathy for the Ming loyalists, they had not served the Ming and so were not obliged to take the political stance of the Ming \textit{yimin}. In order to solve the conflict between appreciation of the Ming loyalists and recognition of Qing legitimacy, Qing scholars attempted to employ an ethical perspective in evaluating the deeds of the Ming loyalists. From Tang Bin to Quan Zuwang, it is obvious that a shared Qing interpretation of Southern Ming history based on the Cheng–Zhu Neo-Confucian doctrine of loyalty gradually evolved.

Comparatively speaking, depoliticization and moralization were two noticeable characteristics that distinguished the discourse of Qing subjects from that of the Ming \textit{yimin}. To the latter, the significance of the resistance history was both political and ethical, but to the former, it was only ethical and had nothing to do with politics. The Qing scholars tried to bypass sensitive pro-Ming/pro-Qing political disputes and emphasized instead the personal moral commitment of late-Ming figures as well as the embodiment of Confucian cultural values in their deeds. As part of the tradition, the Han élite never tired of using history to advance what they regarded as an ideal social order and moral behavior. In glorifying the Southern Ming heroes, they argued that admiration for the deeds of the loyalists would promote moral education in the society. And, given these circumstances, there was a general demand in the society for official recognition of the deeds of the Southern Ming loyalists.