

From Loyalist to Traitor: Shang Kexi in the Ming-Manchu Wars

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Od lojalistu k zradcovi: Shang Kexi v mingsko-mandžuských vojnách

Resumé Štúdia sa vracia k okolnostiam, ktoré viedli mingského vojenského veliteľa Shang Kexiho k tomu, že sa vzdal Mandžuom, ktorí dobyli Čínu a založili dynastiu Qing. Autor sa usiluje na základe citlivého pochopenia kontextu rozhodnutí Shang Kexiho, ktoré viedli k tomu, že býva obviňovaný zo zrady, ukázať, že v skutočnosti svojimi činmi prejavoval princíp zhong 忠 ('lojálnosť') rôznorodými spôsobmi vo vzťahu k rozličným aktérom týchto historických udalostí.

Abstract This paper revisits the circumstances that led to Ming dynasty military commander Shang Kexi's surrender to the Manchus, who conquered Ming China and founded the Qing Dynasty. By seeking a context-sensitive comprehension of Shang Kexi's decisions, which led to his being excoriated as a traitor, this article suggests that he expressed zhong 忠 ('loyalty') in myriad ways toward different affiliations.

Keywords China, History, 17th c., Manchus, Ming dynasty, Bohai 渤海, Liaodong 遼東 · Shang Kexi 尚可喜 (1604–1672) · loyalty (zhong 忠)

Introduction

Shang Kexi has been a controversial figure in late imperial Chinese history. To some historians, he had been a Ming loyalist throughout his military career in

Liaodong 遼東 but was forced to surrender to Hong Taiji 皇太極 (*reg* 1626–1643) as a result of internal factionalism. To others, he was nothing but a traitor—a collaborator with the Manchus—who brought about the downfall of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644).

In modern China and Taiwan, historical figures are harnessed in the service of nationalism. Ralph C. Croizier has shown how the life of Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功 (1624–1662) could continue to affect the writing or interpretation of Chinese history. To the People's Republic of China (PRC), Zheng Chenggong (Koxinga) was a Ming loyalist who represented an enlightened clan of nascent capitalists who resisted Dutch (and by extension, Western) imperialism. To the Republic of China (ROC), the example of Zheng Chenggong symbolized its status as a last bastion, as well as its last glimmer of hope of mainland conquest—at least for a period in the mid-twentieth century.¹ Paul A. Cohen introduces another historical figure of contention, King Goujian of Yue 越王句踐 (*reg* 496–465 BCE), whose story has been used by Chinese historians and politicians to illustrate the persistent theme of nationalism. According to Cohen, the example of Goujian, who recovered his kingdom by 'sleeping on firewood and tasting gall' (*wo xin chang dan* 臥薪嘗膽), has been «a familiar expression of which the appropriation, reshaping, and wide dissemination of stories of heroic figures from the past, with a view to shoring up sagging Chinese spirits in the present.»²

The list of nationalist heroes and villains goes on, ranging from Guan Yu 關羽 (160–220),³ whom the Chinese exalted as having epitomized the highest level of *zhong* 忠 (loyalty), to the more controversial figures of Zeng Guofan 曾國藩 (1811–1872), Li Hongzhang 李鴻章 (1823–1901), and Empress Dowager Cixi 慈禧太后 (1835–1908).⁴ Nationalism makes patriots (loyalists) and traitors out of

1 For analyses of Zheng Chenggong's legacy in contemporary PRC and ROC, see Ralph C. Croizier, *Koxinga and Chinese Nationalism: Myth, History, and the Hero* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977); Tonio Andrade, »Koxinga's Conquest of Taiwan in Global History: Reflections on the 350th Anniversary«, *Late Imperial China* 33,1 (2012), 122–140; Xing Hang, »The Contradictions of Legacy: Reimagining the Zheng Family in the People's Republic of China«, *Late Imperial China* 34,2 (2013), 1–27.

2 Paul A. Cohen, *Speaking to History: The Story of King Goujian in Twentieth-Century China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 41.

3 Prasenjit Duara, »Superscribing Symbols: The Myth of Guandi, Chinese God of War«, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 47,4 (1988), 778–795.

4 Guo Yingjie, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary China: The Search for National Identity Under Reform* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).

historical figures, even if it means doing so in teleological fashion; this partially explains Prasenjit Duara's call for »rescuing history from the nation«. ⁵ Shang Kexi is controversial in the context of nationalism, which is morally deterministic and defined by its claim to universality. While *zhong* is now mechanically translated as 'loyalty', the word had more complex ethical meanings in earlier Chinese usage. ⁶ Nationalism has a parochial definition of *zhong*—loyalty to both superiors and inferiors, in the strictest observance and execution of one's familial and social responsibilities—and recognizes only loyalty to the imagined nation. By not imagining Shang Kexi as a 'Chinese' or 'national' figure, we may be able to circumvent the parochialism of nationalist teleology.

As a 'traitor', the figure of Shang Kexi remains inextricably linked to the Chinese narrative of loyalty or disloyalty; his service to both the Ming and Qing (1644–1912) emperors is the most striking feature of his biography. He is one of 120 officials listed in the Qianlong 乾隆-era *Erchen zhuan* 二臣傳 (Biographies of Twice-Serving Ministers), which marks his historical reputation as an early-Qing Han collaborator and traitor, and represents the Chinese official historiographical acts of 'praise and blame' (*baobian* 褒貶)—the imperial prerogative of rewarding or punishing a minister both in his lifetime and posthumously. ⁷ For his association with the Three Feudatories Rebellion (1673–1681), Shang Kexi was unflatteringly placed in the 'top' category of *Erchen zhuan*. The Qianlong emperor (*reg.* 1735–1796) realized that a number of the officials involved in the Rebellion were also twice-serving ministers, and his condemnation of their lack of loyalty led to the compilation of *Nichen zhuan* 逆臣傳 (The Biographies of Rebellious Officials), in which Shang Kexi was again included—another posthumous punishment that the imperial house imposed on traitors. ⁸ Yet just decades ago, in 1682, the Kangxi 康熙 emperor (*reg.* 1661–1722) visited the Thousand Mountains (Qianshan 千山) in northeastern China and held a memorial ceremony for Shang Kexi to celebrate his loyalty to the Manchus. ⁹ Later

5 Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

6 Paul R. Goldin, »When *Zhong* Does Not Mean 'Loyalty'«, *Dao* 7,2 (2008), 165–174.

7 Chan Wing-ming, »Official Historiography and Ideological Indoctrination in High Qing«, *Oriens Extremus* 44 (2003), 256–257.

8 Chan Wing-ming, »Official Historiography«, 259.

9 Liang Ji 梁驥, »Kangxi di youli Qianshan yu jidian Shang Kexi guanxi lunlüe« 康熙帝遊歷千山與祭奠尚可喜關係論略 [On the Relationship Between the Kangxi Emperor's Visit to the Qianshan Mountains and His Memorial Ceremony for Shang Kexi], *Ansban shifan xueyuan*

generations of Chinese historians and non-specialists seem to share Qianlong's and not Kangxi's opinion of Shang Kexi. Chinese drama serials depict Shang Kexi as a treacherous person.¹⁰ In 2004, when the descendants of Shang Kexi opened the Shang Kexi Memorial Hall in Haicheng 海城 (Shang Kexi's birthplace), some Chinese protested the approval by the Haicheng authorities to construct the hall. Others are more receptive of the idea that Shang Kexi, despite his massacre of Southern Ming defenders and inhabitants of Guangzhou in 1650, had stabilized the early Qing regime and brought peace to the Chinese with his defection.¹¹

This paper argues that Shang Kexi, in the context of the Ming-Manchu wars of the 1620s and 1630s, was much more than either a Ming loyalist or a Manchu sycophant. The vague concept of loyalty enjoyed almost no currency in the volatile world of the Ming-Manchu wars. The reading of *zhong* can be problematic in our interpretation of the actions and intentions of historical figures, including Shang Kexi. Shang Kexi expressed *zhong* in myriad ways toward different affiliations—clan, followers, and superiors, among others—if not necessarily toward one particular dynastic house.

The Ming-Manchu Wars

The military success of the Manchus in 1644 and the subsequent expansion of the Qing empire were rooted in two centuries of multilateral Jurchen relationships with Chinese, Koreans, and Mongols in northeastern China. By the

xuebao 鞍山師範學院學報 18,3 (2016), 39–45.

- 10 »Zuxian xingxiang bei chouhua: Shang Kexi houyi yao “Kangxi wangchao” buchang sunshi« 祖先形象被醜化: 尚可喜後裔要《康熙王朝》補償損失 [Image of Ancestor Tarnished: Shang Kexi's Descendants Demand Compensation from the Production Crew of *Kangxi wangchao*], <<http://ent.sina.com.cn/v/2002-01-28/71214.html>> (last retrieval 8 Dec 2016).
- 11 »Bu de renxin de bingtai—Qingshi zhuanjia Li Zhiting: Guangzhou da tusha zhizaozhe Shang Kexi shi yingxiong« 不得人心的病態—清史專家李治亭: 廣州大屠殺製造者尚可喜是英雄 [A Morbid Fascination—Qing Historian Li Zhiting: the Butcher of Guangzhou Shang Kexi is a Hero], <<http://bbs.tianya.cn/post-worldlook-1082300-1.shtml>> (last retrieval 8 Dec 2016). For a summary of the controversies surrounding Shang Kexi, see Liu Haisong 柳海松, »Shang Kexi yanjiu zhong de jiaodian wenti chutan« 尚可喜研究中的焦點問題初探 [On the Major Problems of the Study on Shang Kexi], *Sbaanxi xueqian shifan xueyuan xuebao* 陝西學前師範學院學報 32,6 (2016), 118–122.

early seventeenth century, Nurhaci 努爾哈赤 (1559–1626), a principal founder of the Qing Dynasty, had shifted from seeking wealth and local power to pursuing the vision of an empire, and toward this end he created a socio-military organization capable of unifying the Jurchens. Having laid the foundation for a political system which allowed Chinese and Mongol participation in his endeavor, Nurhaci died, leaving his son Hong Taiji to defeat the Ming militarily and consolidate the conceptual and institutional foundation for the Qing empire by drawing heavily on Ming traditions.¹²

A turning point for the Manchus had come in 1619, when Ming China launched its disastrous Liaodong campaign to punish Nurhaci, then the leader of a Jurchen group, for ransacking Fushun 撫順 in northern China. Nurhaci routed the Ming invaders, demanding that the Ming grant concessions of land along the northeastern border and pay indemnities in gold, silver, and silk brocades. With Nurhaci's later assimilation of the last significant Jurchen tribe—the Yehe 葉赫—into his confederation, the unification of the Jurchens was complete. The Liaodong campaign thus brought an end to Ming China's unchallenged military dominance in the region, raising the Manchus to the status of formidable rivals.¹³

Despite the full conquest of Liaodong in the 1620s, the Manchus encountered tremendous difficulties in holding their territorial possessions and securing the allegiance of their populations. The Chinese population in southern Liaodong rebelled; Chinese-Manchu relations remained tense; famine was widespread; and there was endemic banditry. On the borders, Korea supported a Ming force led by Mao Wenlong 毛文龍 (1576–1629), and the Mongols raided Manchu territories in the east. In 1626, Nurhaci commanded an ill-fated attack on Ningyuan 寧遠, which Yuan Chonghuan 袁崇煥 (1584–1630) successfully defended with new Portuguese cannons. Ming China received a morale boost, and Ligdan Khan («Lindan Han» 林丹汗, 1588–1634) of the Chahars was emboldened to try to unify the Mongols. Mao Wenlong, boosted by Manchu defeat and Korean support, penetrated deeply into Manchu territories.¹⁴ Upon Nurhaci's death, Hong Taiji initiated peace negotiations with the Ming in order first to pursue control over Korea and the Mongol tribes.

12 Gertraude Roth Li, »State Building before 1644«, in *The Cambridge History of China*, 15 vols. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1978ff), 9 («The Qing Dynasty to 1800», ed. by Willard J. Peterson; 2002): 9.

13 Ray Huang, »The Liao-tung Campaign in 1619«, *Oriens Extremus* 28 (1981), 30–54.

14 Roth Li, »State Building before 1644«, 42–43.

In the 1620s, Mao Wenlong led small guerrilla units against isolated Manchu fortresses and settlements, inflicting minor casualties and sometimes capturing supplies. However, records show that he often exaggerated his military victories to acquire more official recognition and essential supplies from Beijing. Yuan Chonghuan became frustrated with Mao Wenlong's actions and lack of concrete achievements. On the pretext that Mao Wenlong had engaged in illicit trade and expropriated military funds, Yuan Chonghuan executed him in 1629. However, many Chinese and Korean officials feared that Mao Wenlong's death might bring more instability to the Liaodong area, as indeed came to pass in the 1630s.¹⁵

Yuan Chonghuan had risen to prominence after his successful defense of Ningyuan in 1626. He promised both the Tianqi 天啟 (*reg.* 1620–1627) and the Chongzhen 崇禎 emperors (*reg.* 1627–1644) that he would recover Liaodong from the Manchus within a few years. However, Mao Wenlong had accepted and accommodated vast numbers of Chinese refugees from Liaodong and used them to launch attacks, depriving the Ming armies of scarce resources and inviting Manchu attention to the tributary Korean state. Yuan Chonghuan saw these attacks as adventures of dubious military and limited strategic value. While Mao Wenlong's execution allowed Yuan Chonghuan to assume greater control of Ming troops in northeastern China, it also threw the frontier into turmoil. Deserters from Mao's army became freebooters to plunder on their own. In 1629, Hong Taiji and his troops broke through Yuan Chonghuan's defenses in Ningyuan, which were comprised of Mao Wenlong's former generals and their armies. Yuan Chonghuan's subsequent defeat indirectly resulted in his execution.¹⁶

Most likely because the Ming had scored few clear military victories in the 1620s, later historians have tended to view Yuan Chonghuan's execution of Mao Wenlong as a grave mistake that devastated the Ming in the northeast. If Mao had not been executed, Geng Zhongming 耿仲明 (1604–1649), Kong Youde 孔有德 (?–1652), and Shang Kexi might not have submitted to Hong Taiji who benefited from their experience and followers. Mao Wenlong's demise also decisively cut Korea off from Ming naval and logistical support, and exposed it to

15 Kenneth M. Swope, *The Military Collapse of China's Ming Dynasty, 1618–1644* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 83.

16 For more on Yuan Chonghuan's execution of Mao Wenlong and the rise and fall of the two generals, see Frederick Wakeman, Jr., *The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 126–131.

Manchu invasion.¹⁷ In 1630, falling victim to trumped-up charges and factional intrigue at court, Yuan Chonghuan was executed in Beijing. After Mao's and Yuan's deaths, the Ming had no one who could deal effectively with border affairs and military issues in the northeast.¹⁸ Shang Kexi had been one of the 'turncoat' generals who switched to the Manchu side after Mao Wenlong's demise, and it is to him that our attention now turns.

Shang Kexi in the Ming-Manchu Wars

Shang Kexi was born in Haicheng, Liaodong. His father, Shang Xueli 尚學禮 (1574-1625), was Mao Wenlong's subordinate, stationed for the defense of Liaodong. In 1621, the Manchus pillaged Haicheng, where members of Shang Xueli's family, except his sons then in active military service elsewhere, were captured and relocated to Manchu territories. In 1625, Shang Xueli led a failed attack on the Manchu capital Hetu Ala 赫圖阿拉 and was killed in battle.¹⁹ After his father's death, Shang Kexi remained in Mao Wenlong's service and became responsible for a garrison post in Pidao 皮島, an island off the southern coast of Liaodong. Many parts of the Liaodong peninsula, including Dengzhou 登州,²⁰ Guangludao 廣鹿島, Laizhou 萊州, and Lushun 旅順, had fallen under Mao Wenlong's control in the 1620s.²¹

17 Swope, *The Military Collapse of China's Ming Dynasty*, 84. Chen Shengxi 陳生璽 argues that Yuan Chonghuan executed Mao Wenlong because the latter had held secret negotiations with the Manchus discussing the possibility of surrender. See his *Ming-Qing yidaishi dujian* 明清易代史獨見 [Unique Views of Ming-Qing Dynastic Change] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006), 199-213; see also Li Chengyan 李成燕, »Shang Kexi zhi xiang yu Mao Wenlong zhi si« 尚可喜之降與毛文龍之死 [The Surrender of Shang Kexi and the Death of Mao Wenlong], *Anshan shifan xueyuan xuebao* 鞍山師範學院學報 4,2 (2002), 44.

18 Swope, *The Military Collapse of China's Ming Dynasty*, 89-90.

19 Liu Haisong 柳海松, »Lun Shang Kexi pan Ming gui Qing« 論尚可喜叛明歸清 [Discussing Shang Kexi's Ming Betrayal and Qing Submission], *Liaoning daxue xuebao* 遼寧大學學報 33,2 (2005), 98.

20 Dengzhou was the largest seaport of late-Ming Shandong province and the principal supplier of grain to the Dongjiang island garrisons and surrounding towns. See Christopher S. Agnew, »Migrants and Mutineers: The Rebellion of Kong Youde and Seventeenth-Century Northeast Asia«, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 52,3 (2009), 520.

21 Unless otherwise stated, this account of Shang Kexi derives mainly from *Qing shigao* 清史稿

Little is known about Shang Kexi's early life, except that he joined Mao Wenlong's army at a young age. In 1622, Mao Wenlong established the Dongjiang 東江 garrison post on Pidao, which was known to be »a point of strategic importance« where one could defend Dengzhou and Laizhou southwards, stay in communication with Korea eastwards, and attack the Manchus northwards. With Korean support, Mao Wenlong launched military campaigns in offshore Liaodong, but the Manchu conquest of Lüshun, a strategically more important island for strengthening the southern frontier against the Manchus, limited the impact of his campaigns.²² Nevertheless, the island chain worked to defend Ming China from Manchu maritime offensives, and maintained the material links between Chinese and Koreans.

After Mao Wenlong's execution in 1629, the Ming court sent Huang Long 黃龍 (?–1633) to replace him as Regional Commander.²³ Huang Long's critics accused him of coveting booty and often acting selfishly or in a self-willed manner²⁴ He was once detained by his own men in his private residence for having embezzled their salaries and for withholding monthly rations.²⁵ Some of Mao Wenlong's former retainers staged a mutiny. Major problems faced by

[Draft History of the Qing], *juan* 234 (Taipei: Hongshi chubanshe, 1981), 9408–9416; *Qingshi liezhuan* 清史列傳 [Biographies of Qing History], *juan* 78 (Taipei: Mingwen shuju, 1985), 6438–6442. Shang Xueli left Haicheng for Liaoxi 遼西 to join Mao Wenlong's army in the later years of the Wanli 萬曆 reign (1572–1620). See Liu Haisong, »Lun Shang Kexi pan Ming gui Qing«, 97.

22 Jung Byung-chul, »Late Ming Island Bases, Military Posts, and Sea Routes in the Offshore Area of Liaodong«, in *The Perception of Maritime Space in Traditional Chinese Sources*, ed. by Angela Schottenhammer and Roderich Ptak (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 43–45. The exact year of Shang Kexi's entry into Mao Wenlong's army is likely to be 1623. See Liu Haisong, »Lun Shang Kexi pan Ming gui Qing«, 97.

23 Agnew, »Migrants and Mutineers«, 519–520; see also Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉, *Mingshi* 明史 [Ming History] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), *juan* 271: 6966–6967.

24 Huang Long had been known to coerce his starving soldiers to seek out ginseng for sale in the border markets. See Liu Haisong, »Lun Shang Kexi pan Ming gui Qing«, 99. For more information on the ginseng smuggling and trade in the northeastern Chinese frontier, see Seonmin Kim, »Ginseng and Border Trespassing Between Qing China and Choson Korea«, *Late Imperial China* 28,1 (2007), 33–61; see also David Bello, »The Cultured Nature of Imperial Foraging in Manchuria«, *Late Imperial China* 31,2 (2010), 1–33.

25 Huang Yi-long, »Sun Yuanhua and Xu Guangqi's Military Reform«, in *The Statecraft and Intellectual Renewal in Late Ming China: The Cross-Cultural Synthesis of Xu Guangqi (1562–1633)*, ed. by Catherine Jami, Peter Engelfriet and Gregory Blue (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 246–247.

Huang Long included mounting Manchu military pressure and a lack of supplies from the Ming and Korea. In the absence of regular supplies, steady trade, and sound leadership, some of Huang Long's men started to raid Korea or secretly trade with the Manchus, as Geng Zhongming, a former retainer of Mao Wenlong, supposedly did. Huang Long imprisoned Geng Zhongming for the latter's clandestine dealings; Geng's brother, Geng Zhongyu 耿仲裕 (dates unknown), then attacked Huang Long and cut off his nose and an ear. After the mediation of Shang Kexi, Geng Zhongyu released Huang Long, who continued to enjoy decorations and favors from Beijing. Recalcitrant officials such as Geng Zhongming and Kong Youde were transferred to Dengzhou, which is closer to the Shandong peninsula.²⁶

In 1631, Sun Yuanhua 孫元化 (1582–1632), Governor of Denglai 登萊, dispatched Kong Youde to relieve a Manchu siege of Dalinghe 大凌河. Under-supplied, Kong Youde's troops stole chickens and dogs from commoners for food, and when local authorities threatened to punish them, they forced Kong Youde into mutiny. Kong Youde then led these troops to conquer Dengzhou, capturing Sun Yuanhua, who was released but later executed by the Ming court for failing to quell the mutiny. Kong Youde proceeded to besiege Laizhou, but Ming reinforcements forced the rebel forces back to Dengzhou. By then, Geng Zhongming had left Huang Long to join forces with Kong Youde and Mao Wenlong in Dengzhou.²⁷ Ming troops finally conquered Dengzhou, but Geng Zhongming and Kong Youde managed to flee.²⁸ Capitalizing on the Ming victory and moving his base to Lüshun, Huang Long sent Shang Kexi to attack Guangludao, which fell without effective resistance. Pursued by Chinese and Korean troops, Kong Youde and Geng Zhongming surrendered to Hong Taiji in 1633.²⁹

Determined to conquer Lüshun, Hong Taiji, acting on the advice of Kong Youde and Geng Zhongming, dispatched both land and naval forces—the first-ever Manchu land-sea operation—to attack the city. The strategy worked, and Manchu forces annihilated the defenders. Huang Long committed suicide, and

26 Swope, *The Military Collapse of China's Ming Dynasty*, 96.

27 *Qing shigao*, juan 234: 9409.

28 Swope, *The Military Collapse of China's Ming Dynasty*, 96–101.

29 Hong Taiji dispatched a crack force to help Geng Zhongming and Kong Youde beat off their pursuers, giving them gold, feasts, and promises of land for settlement near Liaoyang if they joined the Manchus. See Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, 199.

Shang Kexi's brother, Shang Kejin 尚可進 (?–1633), perished in battle.³⁰ The Chongzhen emperor then named Shen Shikui 沈世魁 (?–1637) who was to replace Huang Long in defending Pidao against Manchu incursions. Shen Shikui, like many military commanders from Beijing, distrusted Mao Wenlong's former aides and lieutenants, who included Shang Kexi. Shen Shikui decided to strike at Shang Kexi, who was entrenched in Guangludao.³¹ After receiving news of Shen Shikui's impending attack, Shang Kexi contacted the Manchus and proposed to surrender. Hong Taiji gathered his Manchu, Han Chinese, and Mongol ministers and declared:

Guangludao Deputy General Shang brings his followers to surrender not because our country has excess clothes and food, but because of Heaven's will. The eight Banner Princes have already offered four thousand *shi* of grain. Those households that have accumulated grain should offer some of it to give [to Shang Kexi].³²

In early 1634, Shang Kexi transported his entourage of several thousand households by boat to the Liaodong mainland and reached Shenyang 瀋陽 (Mukden), the Manchu capital.³³ Hong Taiji received Shang Kexi at 10 *li* from the city gates, and allowed Shang to retain control of his 2,000 men, now renamed the Heavenly Assistance Troops (*tian zhu bing* 天助兵).³⁴

Shang Kexi, like Geng Zhongming and Kong Youde, received illustrious titles and retained autonomy under the Manchus. Some 'older' Han Chinese—those who were already in Manchu-controlled territories during Nurhaci's time—and the Manchu Banner Princes disliked and were perhaps suspicious of the surrendered generals, thinking that their capitulation had been forced by desperation and hence was insincere. The privileges that Hong Taiji had

30 *Qing shigao*, *juan* 234: 9409. See also Hosoya Yoshio 細谷良夫, »Qianlun guifu houjin de Hanren« 淺論歸附後金的漢人 [A Brief Discussion of Han People Who Submitted to the Latter Jin], tr. by Wang Guiliang 王桂良, *Shehuikexue jikan* 社會科學輯刊 53,6 (1987), 66.

31 Li Chengyan, »Shang Kexi zhi xiang yu Mao Wenlong zhi si«, 44; Liu Haisong, »Lun Shang Kexi pan Ming gui Qing«, 101.

32 *Qing shigao*, *juan* 234: 9409.

33 Another source claims that Shang Kexi had only 500 men under his command. See [author unknown] »Pingnan wang Shang zhuan« 平南王尚傳 [The Biography of Shang {Kexi}, The Prince Who Pacifies the South], in *Wu Geng Shang Kong si wang quanzhuan* 吳耿尚孔四王全傳 [The Complete Biographies of the Wu, Geng, Shang, and Kong Princes; ca 18th c.] (repr. Taipei: Bank of Taiwan, 1967), 23.

34 Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, 199–200; *Qing shigao*, *juan* 234: 9409.

bestowed on them, according to these critics, were excessive.³⁵ Despite the financial difficulties that the Manchus were facing in the 1630s, Hong Taiji built lavish residences for Shang Kexi, Geng Zhongming, and Kong Youde. By then, it was obvious that Hong Taiji was trying to attract and incorporate Mao Wenlong's old lieutenants into his camp. This served two main purposes: to weaken or even dismantle the island defense of Shandong Province and the mainland, and to use the geographical and military knowledge of the surrendered generals in further Manchu advances.³⁶ The strategy worked: most, if not all, of Mao Wenlong's former armies went over to the Manchu side by 1633, and although Hong Taiji never launched an amphibious assault on Shandong province, the maritime routes between China and Korea were effectively paralyzed, if not severed.

The Manchus achieved the final subjugation of Korea, without effective Ming intervention, in 1636, eliminating a possible threat to their concentrated, massive offensive against Ming China. Although the Chinese soldiers who joined Hong Taiji between 1631 and 1633 enhanced the Manchus' capacity to wage war, they constituted an additional drain on the Manchu economy. The Manchu victories over the Chahar 察哈爾 Mongols in 1634–35 alleviated some of the Manchus' worst economic woes; the Chahar breeding grounds were taken over, and horses were sold to southern Mongols in exchange for grain and silk.³⁷ Ginseng also made a critical contribution to the Manchu economy.³⁸

It should be evident by now that military commanders in northeastern Ming China from Mao Wenlong to Shang Kexi had pledged only nominal allegiance to the Ming court, either out of respect or for tangible profit, and always had the option of breaking loose from central or regional control. Sun Yuanhua was able to enlist some deserters from Mao Wenlong's former army, as did the Manchus under Hong Taiji. After Mao Wenlong's death, the loose confederation that he had held together simply fell apart, free for all other forces to assimilate or inherit. Although Shang Kexi remained in nominal service to the Ming, he continued to wield tremendous clout in Liaodong; he easily persuaded Geng Zhongyu to release Huang Long, and remained in close contact with the re-

35 Hosoya, »Qianlun guifu houjin de Hanren«, 65–68.

36 Li Chengyan, »Shang Kexi zhi xiang yu Mao Wenlong zhi si«, 45.

37 Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, 201–202.

38 The Liaodong conquests enabled the Manchus to control the trade in ginseng, pearls, pine nuts, and sable pelts, which augmented their power and wealth. See Bello, »The Cultured Nature of Imperial Foraging in Manchuria«, 6.

bellious Geng Zhongming and Kong Youde. Yet he fought on the Ming side, recovering Guangludao and Lüshun from the rebels and almost capturing Kong Youde in a sneak attack, until circumstances forced him into submission to the Manchus.³⁹

As Shang Kexi himself lamented, his father was lost in the defense of the Ming's northern frontier. He had no news of the members of his clan who had been abducted to Manchu territories. He was grateful for Mao Wenlong's benevolence and recognition, and he had been loyal to Huang Long, having fought the rebels alongside his brother, who died in battle. Shang Kexi's wife also died in the fall of Lüshun to the rebels. He acknowledged the strenuous efforts of Chongzhen and his court to strengthen border defenses against the Manchus. Yet Shen Shikui was appointed to be his superior and, for some reason, grew increasingly distrustful of him. That, accordingly, left him with no choice but to surrender to the Manchus, who warmly received him despite past animosities.⁴⁰

One way to analyze his decisions is to absolve him of the dichotomy between loyalty—a tenet of nationalism—and disloyalty. Although critics may contend that Shang Kexi chose not to be loyal, which seems to imply that he ought to have committed suicide or died in battle with Shen Shikui rather than surrender to the Manchus, we need to distinguish between a choice of action and a choice of being.⁴¹ When Shang Kexi chose to submit to Hong Taiji, he was not choosing to be disloyal. Instead, he chose to perform a set of actions toward the Manchus, which did not necessarily mean that he had the goal of being disloyal. Shang Kexi needed to choose in any case; even indecision was a choice. His surrender to the Manchus was not in itself loyal or disloyal. He simply made the calculated, practical choice to save himself and his men from possible slaughter at the hands of Shen Shikui.

Mutineers and the Maritime Economy of Bohai

Christopher S. Agnew argues that Kong Youde's mutiny of 1631–33 against the Ming state was the result of social tensions between local populations and the people displaced by war in the Bohai 渤海 gulf area—the coastal littoral stret-

39 Liu Haisong, »Lun Shang Kexi pan Ming gui Qing«, 100.

40 Liu Haisong, »Lun Shang Kexi pan Ming gui Qing«, 101–102.

41 This is an extension of Sartrean existentialism. See Zheng Yiwei, *Ontology and Ethics in Sartre's Early Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 42.

ching from northern Shandong west toward Tianjin, and from there east around the Liaodong peninsula to the coastline along the Yellow Sea, leading to the western coast of the Korean peninsula.

According to Agnew, the Bohai region of the late Ming was a nexus in which contending economic and political forces sought to assert hegemony. Dengzhou had become a critical port through which the Chinese, Koreans, and Manchus transported men and supplies across the sea to the Liaodong peninsula. The shipment of food and supplies for military garrisons in the northeast led to increased merchant activity in the Bohai region. The same ships might carry goods for both Ming and Manchu military needs, and the military exigencies of the early 1600s had given rise to an elaborate network of trade routes in Bohai, under Ming auspices. Manchu expansion in the northeast spurred a wave of migration of people from Liaodong to the Bohai island chains and to northern Shandong cities such as Dengzhou. Ming officials were suspicious of these Liaodong migrants, who also caused a strain on resources from the local authorities. Social tensions between local and migrant populations resulted in a series of mutinies and rebellions, violent expressions of the ambivalent relations between the Ming state and the displaced populations of Bohai. It remains a matter of contention whether Mao Wenlong had strengthened or undermined Ming authority in Bohai, but the coastal disturbances indicate that the Ming state's resettlement program had failed to provide the transferred population with any form of livelihood.

Shang Kexi, Geng Zhongming, and Kong Youde were Mao Wenlong's Liaodong recruits. The dissatisfactions of the displaced migrants of Bohai, whose attempts to create a regime independent of the larger polities of northeast Asia had failed, facilitated the Manchu conquest of China in the 1630s and 1640s.⁴² Indeed, the history of the political conversion of Shang Kexi and others should be understood from the perspective of the social contexts that made their decisions meaningful, rather than from that of later nationalist historiography that interprets them simply as traitors.⁴³ The regional integration and socio-political processes of Bohai influenced the Ming-Manchu wars in profound ways that warrant deeper analysis.

In the 1620s, the large numbers of Mao Wenlong's troops in Bohai stimulated considerable maritime trade in the Liaodong-Korean borderlands. Mao received exorbitant sums of silver from the Ming, and grain, ginseng, guns,

42 Agnew, «Migrants and Mutineers», 505-541.

43 Ibid., 537-538.

horses, and ships from Korea. Mao Wenlong also opened two new frontier markets in Pidao and Tieshan 鐵山, attracting merchants from Huainan 淮南, Jiangsu, Tianjin, and Zhejiang. The Manchus, on their part, also tapped into this coastal commerce in order to obtain much-needed supplies. Thus, the death of Mao Wenlong sparked off not only a military or political vacuum but also an economic crisis. Hong Taiji, alert to the rebellious climate in Bohai after Mao Wenlong's death, set out to win over former Liaodong Chinese migrants, Mao Wenlong's former lieutenants, and the Liaodong-Shandong merchants to the Manchu side. At the very least, even if the garrison commanders did not switch sides, the Manchus could still trade in the region with their fur, ginseng, and other produce for outside goods.⁴⁴

Conclusion

The Bohai Sea assumed an important role in East Asian geopolitics during the Ming-Qing period. In terms of historical significance, it may compare to Fernand Braudel's (1902–1985) Mediterranean Sea or Anthony Reid's (b1939) South China Sea—a »vast, complex expanse« where exchanges of culture and commodities took place (*South East Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450–1680*, 2 vols, 1988/93). Because the Manchus were primarily a land force, we tend to neglect, if not forget, the maritime links that they had with Ming China and Korea, which became vital when overland routes were disrupted by dislocation, violence, and war. Mao Wenlong and his lieutenants had used the region around the Bohai Sea to fuel their economic and military ambitions. It is precisely in this context that we should examine Shang Kexi's perceived 'betrayal' or 'treachery', away from nationalist historiography.

Conventional wisdom has it that the Ming was a totalizing regime, intolerant of alternative *foci* of power; even if these *foci* existed, they were in southwest China under the *tusi* 土司 system. Yet in the Bohai-Liaodong region, centrally appointed Ming officials, despite their skepticism about the loyalty and reliability of the semi-autonomous regional commanders, found themselves having to negotiate and accommodate those commanders' interests in order to secure Ming China's northeastern frontier. They were flexible in their policies and strategies, quick to reward frontier commanders who scored military

44 Carol Benedict, »Between State Power and Popular Desire: Tobacco in Pre-Conquest Manchuria, 1600–1644«, *Late Imperial China* 32,1 (2011), 25–27.

victories, but equally swift to punish them when they lost. On the other hand, the Ming court, owing to corruption and factionalism, was often negligent or slow in sending military provisions to frontline troops. In the 1630s, the lack of coordination and trust between the Ming court and its frontier officials and commanders resulted in low morale and deep resentment, which were manifested in the mutinies and rebellions of the Bohai-Liaodong region after the death of Mao Wenlong.

This short survey of the events preceding Shang Kexi's surrender to the Manchus shows the wide range of concerns that the Ming authorities had to manage on the northeastern frontiers. These demands were made more complex by the regional trade nexus, and were exacerbated by the emergence of the Manchus as a strong contender for the Chinese empire. A supposedly 'loyal' official was forced to switch sides because of circumstances he could not dictate. The interpretations of nationalist historiography are revealed as possibly fallacious with regard to historical figures.

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