



# THE MILITARY COLLAPSE OF CHINA'S MING DYNASTY, 1618–44

Kenneth M. Swope

# The Military Collapse of China's Ming Dynasty, 1618–44

This book examines the military collapse of China's Ming Dynasty to a combination of foreign and domestic foes. The Ming's defeat was a highly surprising development, not least because as recently as in the 1590s the Ming had managed to defeat a Japanese force considered to be perhaps the most formidable of its day when the latter attempted to subjugate Korea en route to a planned invasion of China. In contrast to conventional explanations for the Ming's collapse, which focus upon political and socio-economic factors, this book shows how the military collapse of the Ming state was intimately connected to the deterioration of the personal relationship between the Ming throne and the military establishment that had served as the cornerstone of the Ming military renaissance of the previous decades. Moreover, it examines the broader process of the militarization of late Ming society as a whole to arrive at an understanding of how a state with such tremendous military resources and potential could be defeated by numerically and technologically inferior foes. It concludes with a consideration of the fall of the Ming in light of contemporary conflicts and regime changes around the globe, drawing attention to climatological factors and developments outside state control. Utilizing recently released archival materials, this book adds a much needed piece to the puzzle of the collapse of the Ming Dynasty in China.

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The importance of Asia will continue to grow in the twenty-first century, but remarkably little is available in English on the history of the polities that constitute this critical area. Most current work on Asia is hindered by the extremely limited state of knowledge of the Asian past in general, and the history of Asian states and empires in particular. *Asian States and Empires* is a book series that will provide detailed accounts of the history of states and empires across Asia from earliest times until the present. It aims to explain and describe the formation, maintenance and collapse of Asian states and empires, and the means by which this was accomplished, making available the history of more than half the world's population at a level of detail comparable to the history of Western polities. In so doing, it will demonstrate that Asian peoples and civilizations had their own histories apart from the West, and provide the basis for understanding contemporary Asia in terms of its actual histories, rather than broad generalizations informed by Western categories of knowledge.

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Please note that the interpretations and conclusions expressed herein are entirely my own and do not necessarily reflect those of any of the granting institutions listed above. If I have unwittingly forgotten anyone, you have my apologies and my thanks!

Kenneth M. Swope  
Hattiesburg, Mississippi

# Ming Dynasty reign titles and dates

<i>Temple name</i>	<i>Reign title</i>	<i>Dates</i>
Taizu	Hongwu	1368–1398
Huizong	Jianwen	1399–1402
Chengzu	Yongle	1403–1424
Renzong	Hongxi	1425
Xuanzong	Xuande	1426–1435
Yingzong	Zhengtong	1436–1449
Daizong	Jingtai	1450–1456
Yingzong	Tianshun	1457–1464
Xianzong	Chenghua	1465–1487
Xiaozong	Hongzhi	1488–1505
Wuzong	Zhengde	1506–1521
Shizong	Jiajing	1522–1566
Muzong	Longqing	1567–1572
Shenzong	Wanli	1573–1620
Guangzong	Taichang	1620
Xizong	Tianqi	1621–1627
Sizong	Chongzhen	1628–1644
Anzong	Hongguang	1645
Shaozong	Longwu	1646
	Yongli	1647–1661

# Latter Jin/Early Qing Dynasty reign titles and dates

<i>Temple name</i>	<i>Reign title</i>	<i>Dates</i>
Taizu	Tianming	1616–1626
Taizong	Tiancong	1627–1636
Taizong	Chongde	1636–1643
Shizu	Shunzhi	1644–1661
Shengzu	Kangxi	1662–1722

# Chinese weights and measures

<i>Chinese unit</i>	<i>US equivalent</i>	<i>Metric equivalent</i>
1 <i>fen</i>	0.141 inches	0.358 centimeters
1 <i>cun</i>	1.41 inches	3.581 centimeters
1 <i>chi</i> (linear)	14.1 inches	35.814 centimeters
1 <i>chi</i> (itinerary)	12.1 inches	30.734 centimeters
1 <i>zhang</i>	141 inches	3.581 meters
1 <i>bu</i>	60.5 inches	1.536 meters
1 <i>li</i>	1821.15 feet	0.555 kilometers
1 <i>mu</i>	0.16 acres	0.064 hectares
1 <i>qing</i>	16.16 acres	6.539 hectares
1 <i>liang</i> (tael)	1.327 ounces	37.62 grams
1 <i>qian</i> (cash)	0.1327 ounces	3.762 grams
1 <i>jin</i> (catty)	1.33 pounds	603.277 grams
1 <i>dan</i> (picul)	133.33 pounds	60.477 kilograms
1 <i>shi</i> (stone)	160 pounds	72.574 kilograms
1 <i>sheng</i>	1.87 pints	1.031 liters
1 <i>dou</i>	2.34 gallons	10.31 liters

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# Stylistic conventions

All Chinese personal and place names are rendered in the *pinyin* system of romanization without tone marks. For the sake of consistency, this includes works published in Taiwan as well as their authors' names. The only exceptions to this rule are books published in English by Chinese authors who use variant forms of romanization. Japanese names and terms are rendered in the standard Hepburn system. For Korean names and terms I use the modified McCune-Reischauer system without hyphens between syllables for personal and place names. For Mongolian and Jurchen/Manchu names and places, I use the system employed in *The Cambridge History of China* volumes. For places well known in the English-speaking world, such as Tokyo and Pyongyang, long vowel indicators are omitted. For translation of Chinese official titles into English, I follow Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*. For converting lunar dates into their Western equivalents, I follow *A Sino-Western Calendar for Two Thousand Years, 1–2000 A.D.*, by Bi Zhongsan and Oyang Yi. Specific dates are generally rendered into their Western equivalents, but when a reference is made to a month, say the 4<sup>th</sup> month, this refers to the lunar month.

With respect to citing specific works, in general I cite them by the modern page numbers if possible. Otherwise, citations are given by *juan* (chapter) and fascicle number within the *juan*. Because the works in question were usually printed on woodblocks, each page had two sides, hence the first side or face of page 12 of *juan* 15 of a work would be rendered 15, p. 12a. In the case of compiled materials such as Liu Qinghua's *Ming shilu Chaoxian ziliaojilu*, the original *juan* and page numbers for the works in question are generally included with the excerpt in question.

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# Introduction

The present book is the product of some two decades of interest in the Ming–Qing transition. It started with my senior independent study thesis completed at the College of Wooster (OH) under the guidance of David Gedalecia (my first teacher of Chinese history), Madonna Hettinger, and John Hondros. At the time, however, my Chinese was woefully insufficient for primary source research so I was obliged to produce a synthetic work that left me hungry to do more. Therefore, when I had the chance to write a Master’s thesis at the University of Michigan, I again turned to the Ming–Qing transition, producing a composite study of five major figures from the era. My subsequent doctoral dissertation focused on slightly earlier events, the so-called Three Great Campaigns of the Wanli Emperor (1592–8). In the dissertation and my subsequent monograph, *A Dragon’s Head and a Serpent’s Tail*, I challenged standard representations of Ming military impotence by examining the important role played by the much-maligned Emperor Wanli (r. 1573–1620), who I argue was a forceful and dynamic leader, particularly in the realm of military affairs.<sup>1</sup> In the process I counter the prevailing interpretation that the Ming military establishment was a lost cause by the turn of the seventeenth century and that the dynasty’s collapse in 1644 was already a foregone conclusion. While both the dissertation and the book have been generally well received, a persistent question at conferences and presentations since the book’s publication has been “If the Ming was still so militarily viable as of 1600, then what happened in the coming decades?” This work is my answer to that question and therefore serves as somewhat of a sequel to my last monograph.

In fact, readers of the previous book will find some of the same historical figures herein. Several of the military commanders who served so ably on behalf of the Ming in the 1590s were still in the field twenty years later, most notably Liu Ting, better known to his contemporaries as Big Sword Liu. The civil commander Yang Hao, no stranger to controversy from his own days in Korea in 1597–8, would be appointed by the aging and sickly Wanli Emperor as the Supreme Commander of the Ming expedition to crush the Jurchen warlord Nurhaci in the spring of 1619. None other than this same Nurhaci had in fact offered to send troops to Korea on behalf of the Ming to battle the Japanese, though his request was denied. Kwanghae, King of Chosôn Korea from 1609,

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had been the crown prince who rallied the populace against the Japanese invaders in the 1590s. And of course Wanli himself was still on the throne, though two decades of bitter factional infighting and controversy had taken their toll on the once vigorous (albeit petulant) monarch.

One of the central conclusions of my research on Wanli was that the role of the emperor remained integral to military success within the Ming system, even as the hereditary military order created by the Ming founder in the fourteenth century declined precipitously. Indeed, with the increasing factionalization of the civil bureaucracy, emperors such as Wanli often turned to military officials to exert their will and devised ad hoc, extra-bureaucratic means of dealing with military emergencies.<sup>2</sup> This made the relationship between the throne and military officials even more important. While some emperors were content to let their civilian bureaucrats run the military show, others, such as Wanli, took a more active interest in military affairs and patronized certain military families and officials to counter-balance the overwhelming power of civil officials in Ming government. But because of the nature of the Ming system, which placed tremendous power in the hands of the monarch and demanded much of its rulers, it could be exceedingly difficult for emperors to effectively exercise this power. Most lacked the interest or acumen to do so. At other times, the empire suffered from a relative dearth of competent, experienced field commanders. Wanli benefited from the happy circumstance of having a fairly tight-knit group of talented commanders who worked well with one another and with at least some of their civilian counterparts.

Recent research by Kai Filipiak has suggested that the late sixteenth century in general witnessed the emergence of more militarily competent civil officials whose skill sets meshed well with their military counterparts.<sup>3</sup> In Filipiak's assessment such a state of affairs had five main consequences germane to the present study. First, there was a general increase in military efficiency as experienced bureaucrats working in tandem with competent field commanders were able to plan and supply campaigns in disparate corners of the vast Ming empire. With the promulgation of numerous texts about military affairs, many of which were drawn from the direct experiences of civil officials, military formations were reorganized, often becoming smaller and more flexible, and advances were made in military training, tactical analysis, and technological improvements. Next, the successful collaboration between civil and military officials in the late sixteenth century resulted in the emergence of recognized experts in certain kinds of warfare, who would then be deployed to trouble spots throughout the empire. In contravention of previous Ming practices these men often brought a core of elite retainers with them. The retainers could both train others in their commander's tactics and serve as elite shock troops.

Third, the extensive interaction between civil and military leaders increased the overall prestige and cultural cachet of both sides, particularly the latter. In contrast to their rough-and-ready popular image, many late Ming military commanders were also competent poets, painters, collectors of artwork and patrons of artists. For example, the late Ming artist Xu Wei (1521–93) was

patronized by the famous Ming general Li Rusong, son of Li Chengliang (adoptive father of Nurhaci), and incidentally a veteran of the Ming war in Korea. By cultivating Confucian virtues these military figures facilitated their acceptance by the broader strata of elites and lubricated social relations for more effective cooperation in military matters. On the flip side, in part because of increasing military emergencies but also in response to general social trends, civil literati became more interested in the martial arts and in military affairs in general. Many civil officials apparently practiced martial arts for health or other reasons. Military strategy study societies proliferated. Some literati even wore swords in public so as to effect a more “dashing” appearance.<sup>4</sup> Along with the widespread use of civil officials in military capacities one can trace a general militarization of late Ming culture and society.

Nonetheless, despite these general trends, late Ming politics were still heavily factionalized and often dysfunctional. Even a cursory examination of the primary source record yields abundant evidence of the pervasive sniping and petty backstabbing that was part and parcel of the Ming political landscape. And with such a huge expanse of territory and so many potential military threats, the empire demanded a strong leader aided by a reasonably limited number of forceful competent officials with the monarch’s full backing. Too many competing interest groups would simply cancel each other out, especially in the absence of a good supreme commander. In other words, a despotic political system functioned best only under the strong hand of a despot. While Wanli did not quite fit the bill as well as some of his illustrious ancestors, he was smart enough to back the right military commanders and make his will felt in the military arena. And earlier in his reign at least, he had the good fortune to have the support of several very competent civil officials who worked well with their military counterparts. Wanli’s successors would not be so lucky.

Thus one of the main conclusions of the present study is that imperial leadership after Wanli failed in maintaining the appropriate balance between civil and military officials and in identifying and patronizing the proper commanders to deal with the empire’s mounting military crises. As will be obvious to readers of the following pages, the late Ming, while perhaps not as blessed as the empire of Wanli’s heyday, still could boast of a fair number of skilled, experienced military commanders. And not all the civil officials indulged in the endless skullduggery for which the era is infamous, though sadly, most ended up embroiled in it to varying degrees. But, as the famous Chinese saying goes, “If the cart in front is overturned, how can those behind it hope to stay the course?” In this time of mounting military and environmental disasters, strong leadership was essential and those fated with running the empire could not provide it, despite their best intentions, as will be seen. Simply put, they were commanders-in-chief and they made bad decisions given the information and resources at their disposal. Before offering a preview of what is to come, however, it is worth situating the present study within the broader scope of Chinese and world history and noting how this book fits within the existing English-language historiography of the Ming–Qing dynastic transition.

#### *4 The Military Collapse of China's Ming Dynasty*

The Ming–Qing transition was “an agonized process that involved just about everything that took place in China during the seventeenth century,” that “significantly affected subsequent Chinese views of their culture, society, and polity” in the words of the eminent historian Lynn Struve.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, because of a number of factors, including its relatively recent vintage within the grand scope of Chinese history, the explosion of printing, rising literacy rates, the presence of foreign observers such as the Portuguese and Jesuit missionaries, and the racial backdrop to the conflict, the Ming–Qing transition is by far the best documented such event in traditional Chinese history. Historians benefit from having voluminous sources produced by all the major participants in multiple languages. This has made the Ming–Qing transition a cultural phenomenon quite unlike similar transitions earlier in Chinese history. There are a number of reasons for this.

The first concerns the nature of the Jurchen/Manchu conquerors themselves and ideas of Han Chinese nationalism that emerged in the late nineteenth century. For centuries the Ming has been remembered as the last native Chinese dynasty and even though recent historians of the subsequent Qing period have done a wonderful job in delineating the many innovations of the Manchu rulers, it remains the case that Ming institutions and practices most often served as the models for the Qing. When ordinary people in China think of “imperial” culture, it is most often the Ming that they are thinking of. This makes perfect sense given that such iconic structures as the Forbidden City, the Temple of Heaven, and the Great Wall all date from the Ming and are therefore considered Ming (Chinese) rather than Manchu symbols, though the latter occupied the palace in Beijing and initially modeled their own capital in Shenyang (which one can still visit) after the Ming royal palace. Furthermore, good history begins with good stories. For Chinese the Ming–Qing transition is filled with high drama, heroes and villains, traitors and martyrs. It has captivated audiences for centuries starting with novels and folk tales in the seventeenth century down to modern-day television dramas, documentaries, popular histories, comics, and video games.

In the broader sense the fall of the Ming dynasty corresponds to the fall of several other great states in the seventeenth century. Over the past three decades scholars around the world have devoted increasing attention to climate change and natural disasters as important factors in shaping world history. Scholars such as William Atwell, Jack Goldstone, and, more recently, Geoffrey Parker have noted the multifarious effects of the so-called “Little Ice Age” and the “Seventeenth-Century Crisis.”<sup>6</sup> What these studies have shown is that there were indeed many factors that were simply beyond the logistical capacities of early modern states to handle. But people of the time viewed the world in very different, culturally specific terms. Rather than point to “inconvenient truths” and global warming these people spoke of dynastic cycles, evil portents, and the wrath of God. But modern scientific research and access to a multiplicity of primary source chronicles from around the world have enabled historians to better understand these processes and approach regime changes in new ways. The present work both acknowledges the efforts of these modern historians and seeks to convey the sense that contemporaries in China had of these disasters as they

emerged in their midst. Understanding how people in China experienced the fall of the Ming can be useful for comparative historians looking at other invasions and dynastic transitions.

Military historians can also benefit from a study of the collapse of the Ming dynasty as the era in question falls right in the middle of the period identified by some scholars as the time of the so-called “Military Revolution” in Europe. While scholars such as Peter Lorge, Kenneth Chase, and more recently Tonio Andrade have engaged in that debate as it pertains to Asia, an analysis of technology and tactics utilized by the combatants in these conflicts compared to those used by their counterparts elsewhere in the early modern world can provide a sense of balance and trajectory.<sup>7</sup> As will be seen herein, Ming officials, the Manchus, and the peasant rebel foes of the Ming were all ready adopters of superior firearms technology when they could get it. They also recognized the value of drill and training. Military experts and technicians were recruited, bribed, and richly rewarded. In several cases defectors played key roles in aiding the cause of one side or another, though this writer is loathe to blame “Han traitors” for the ultimate defeat of the Ming as some Han nationalists were wont to do in the past. Given the number and depth of the surviving primary source materials, deeper understanding of the military collapse of the Ming can provide guidance for historians working in other contexts.

As noted above, there is an ever-expanding and voluminous secondary literature on the fall of the Ming dynasty in Chinese. There are also a fair number of excellent secondary studies in English. Nonetheless there were a number of compelling reasons that prompted me to write this book. First and foremost is the simple fact that none of the previous studies has approached the fall of the Ming dynasty from a military perspective. While this is perhaps understandable given the anti-military bias of traditional Chinese historians (and many modern Western historians), it remains puzzling that histories of decades of constant warfare and strife have managed not to foreground the military dimensions of the Ming collapse but have rather concentrated primarily on political, institutional, and cultural factors. I certainly do not wish to divorce the military narrative from these other aspects of the Ming’s collapse (and certainly the reader will find all herein), but it seems that an examination focusing primarily on the military reasons for the fall of the Ming and how they impacted other areas is long overdue. The sheer number of surviving primary documents dealing with military matters alone suggests that this is the proper course. By my estimation 80 percent of the extant Ming archival documents from the period under consideration here (c.1618–44) deal with the military situation, perhaps more. Thus, whatever else was on people’s minds at the time, military exigencies were never far away. Previous studies have often downplayed this simple fact.

Another thing that makes this study unique is the perspective I take, which is that of the Ming court. This might be surprising to historians of other regions, but most studies of the fall of the Ming have not taken the court-centered approach, but have rather focused on specific regions, individuals, or, in the case of Frederic Wakeman Jr’s magisterial *The Great Enterprise*, the perspective of the Qing

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invaders.<sup>8</sup> The author does a remarkable job of showing what the Qing did right, but devotes far too little attention to what the Ming did wrong. After all, at the start of their conflict, the Ming had huge advantages in manpower, resources, and military technology. Yet they failed repeatedly. Additionally, perhaps because of the earlier work of James Parsons in tracing the course of the great peasant rebellions of the late Ming, Wakeman glosses over them and seems to dismiss their significance in the dynasty's fall.<sup>9</sup> Yet many Chinese scholars, most notably Li Guangtao, argue that the peasant rebellions were more important in the minds of many Ming officials and militarily more significant because of their proximity to the economic and commercial heartland of the empire.<sup>10</sup> My own findings suggest that the importance ascribed to the Manchus and peasant rebels respectively varied by official, but on the whole it seems that the peasant rebels were deemed a more serious military threat by Emperor Chongzhen (1628–44) because of their overt challenge to his domestic legitimacy and their ready ability to disappear into the countryside and hide among the people. This was even as most realized that man for man the Manchus were more formidable on the battlefield. But it was widely believed that they could be appeased, bought off, or contained outside the Great Wall.

To her credit Lynn Struve adopts a court-centered approach in her seminal work, *The Southern Ming*, but she begins her account in 1644, after the fall of Beijing.<sup>11</sup> In fact, the major reason I decided to end this study with the fall of Beijing is because of the fine work done by these historians on the subsequent course of the Ming resistance and Qing consolidation of power. Yet no one has seriously studied the reasons behind the strategies and tactics employed by the Ming against its foreign and domestic foes from 1618 to 1644. Given the nature of the Ming political system and the importance of a strong supreme commander in the form of the emperor, I think it is integral to examine the military collapse of the Ming from the perspective of the court because they had the broadest perspective on the empire and its problems. Regional officials were most concerned with their jurisdictions. While central officials certainly had their own personal interests, biases, and animosities, they still had a better general grasp of the big picture and were empowered to act on that. So throughout this book I attempt to convey what they knew and how they acted upon that information and to show the pros and cons of various stratagems and positions and how they related to the bigger strategic picture.

At the same time I will readily admit that there are problems with taking the court-centered approach. First, short shrift is given to trouble spots on the far reaches of the empire, particularly in the southwest and southeast. Even though there were major aboriginal minority uprisings and outbreaks of piracy respectively in these regions, they are often given cursory attention in the major annalistic chronicles, official court records, and the like. In other eras such disturbances would have warranted more attention to be sure, but it was a matter of priorities. An aboriginal uprising in Guizhou, no matter how large, did not directly threaten the government's legitimacy in Beijing. A Jurchen raid on the capital did. In my defense on this count, my major concern here was to trace the reasons for the

collapse of the Ming government in Beijing. Other studies of the Qing conquest devote far more attention to activities in the south. Additionally, I will direct my attentions to the southwest in my next study, which will examine Zhang Xianzhong's bloody reign in Sichuan and its aftermath.

The next problem with adopting the perspective of the court concerns the objectives and strategies of its major rivals. I have endeavored to consider the perspectives of all the major players, but my first and foremost aim has been to discern what went wrong from the perspective of the court. Others have done an admirable job of identifying the many strengths of the Manchus, but have too easily dismissed the strengths of the Ming or ignored the fact that, despite its many problems, the Ming state managed to hold out for decades against a dizzying array of military and environmental challenges. The fact that the Qing retained so many Ming practices and institutions testifies to their continued viability. So I firmly believe it is just as important to trace why the Ming collapsed militarily as it is to determine how the peasant rebels and Qing succeeded. So more attention is devoted to their efforts and failings than to issues of Jurchen state-building and peasant rebel mobilization of the masses, though the latter topics are of course covered as they pertain to the issues at hand.

Finally, the last major contribution I hope to make concerns introducing Western readers to an array of heretofore obscure and only recently published primary sources. Historians of the Ming and Qing are particularly blessed in that various universities, departments, and publishing houses in China are still churning out collections of documents. Some of these are digitized, but being old-fashioned (and soon just plain old) I prefer the fine facsimile and typeset modern editions of Ming documents that continue to appear. One example is the wonderful collection of Ming documents from the Number One Archives in Beijing. Recently published by Guangxi Normal University, this collection encompasses 102 volumes at an average of around 500 pages of facsimile documents. The vast majority of these documents date from the period under consideration here and pertain to military affairs. Chronological biographies and the collected works of late Ming scholar-officials also continue to appear, often in easy-to-read modern typeset editions. A good example of such a work is the two-volume modern edition of the collected works of Minister Yang Sichang, previously only available in a handful of manuscript copies in East Asia. I have also attempted to draw upon a fair amount of the recent secondary literature in Chinese, most notably the excellent works of scholars such as Fan Shuzhi and Yan Chongnian. The latter has become so popular in China that he has hosted a CCTV series on Ming history. Since so much of this work has appeared in the past twenty years, it is my hope that the inclusion of these sources can help to update the pioneering work undertaken by the other scholars referenced in this introduction.

Concerning the organization of the present book, I have opted for a basic narrative approach. This is due both to my natural predilections as a military historian and to the simple fact that the story is just so damn good. Therefore I decided to jump back and forth between theaters of war within chronologically delimited chapters rather than split the chapters between topics or foes. To obviate potential

## 8 *The Military Collapse of China's Ming Dynasty*

confusion I have included subheadings throughout the chapters. The advantage of such an approach in my opinion is that the reader gets a better sense of how the Ming emperors and their advisers must have felt as events unfolded around them. There often seemed little time to breathe with tigers at the front door, wolves at the back, and snakes in the closet. We will now turn to a brief preview of the rest of the book, which is filled with spoilers. Those interested in jumping right into the story should skip to [Chapter 1](#) now. Researchers interested in specialized aspects of the fall of the Ming or in particular topics may want to continue reading.

The [first chapter](#) sets the context for the war between the Ming and the Jurchen leader Nurhaci and traces the first few years of their struggle. In it the place of the Jurchens within the Ming East Asian world order is discussed as are Nurhaci's efforts at state-building and Ming efforts to stymie him. The chapter also includes discussions of the Ming campaign to wipe out Nurhaci in the spring of 1619 and its aftermath, which saw the rapid expansion of Jurchen power in the northeast. [Chapter 2](#) looks at the changing fortunes of the two belligerents as the Ming scrambled to stabilize the northeast while being hamstrung by a mentally deficient emperor and a deeply factionalized court. At the same time they found themselves confronted with military challenges in other parts of the empire including a sectarian rebellion in Shandong, a massive aboriginal revolt in the southwest and a resurgence of piracy along the southeast coast. Despite these problems the Ming not only stabilized the northeast front, but managed to score their biggest victory of the entire war against the Jurchens under the famous commander Yuan Chonghuan, who remains one of China's national heroes.

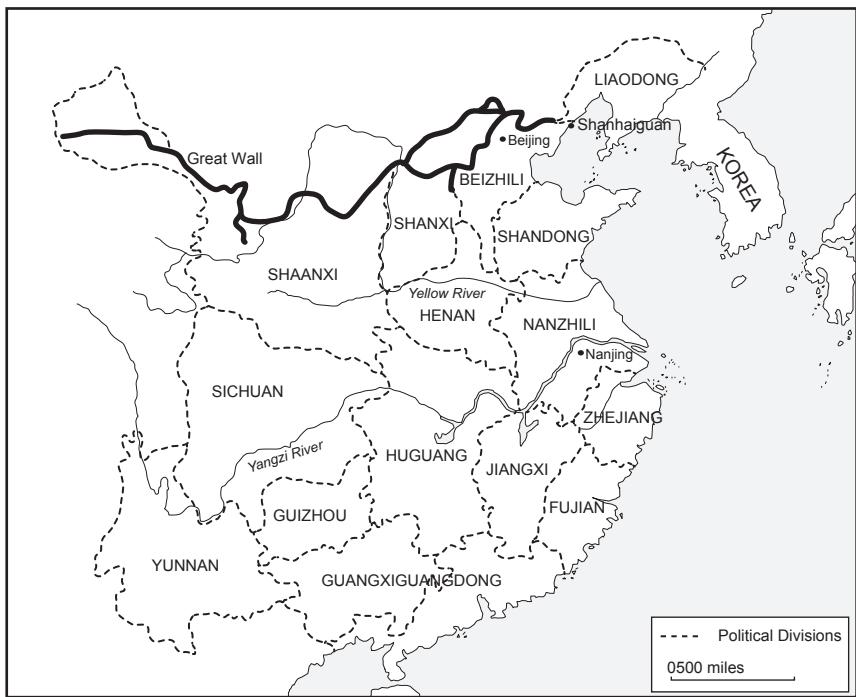
In the wake of the Ming victory at Ningyuan and with the ascension of a new emperor just over a year later, they decided to take the offensive against the Jurchens and their new khan, Hung Taiji, son of Nurhaci. [Chapter 3](#) chronicles the reasons the Ming decided to pursue the so-called "forward strategy" and how it ultimately backfired owing to more questionable command decisions on the part of both Yuan Chonghuan and, more seriously, the emperor himself. This chapter also covers another seminal event in the history of the late Ming: the rise of the peasant rebellions in the drought-ravaged northwest. The next chapter begins with a discussion of renewed Jurchen offensives in Liaodong after the execution of Yuan Chonghuan and continues through the outbreak, suppression, and aftermath of the infamous Wuqiao Mutiny, which resulted in the defection of several key commanders and their men to the Jurchen side at a critical juncture in their war with the Ming. It also offers a brief look at Hung Taiji's state-building efforts. It then looks at the ebb and flow of Ming efforts against the peasant rebels in northwest China and traces the rise of the most prominent peasant rebel leaders. The chapter ends with the Ming capture of the Ming rebel leader Gao Yingxiang and preparations for their most ambitious campaign to date against the peasant rebels.

Drawing extensively from Yang's own collected works, [Chapter 5](#) chronicles the tenure of the controversial Yang Sichang as Minister of War. Yang was the architect of the ill-conceived "Ten-Sided Net" and favored rapprochement with

the Manchus, two mistakes that have severely tarnished his historical reputation. Yet, as argued in this chapter, he was able to gain the favor of the mercurial Chongzhen emperor in part because, unlike many of his counterparts, he at least had plans and recommendations. Poor judge of character and leader that he was, Chongzhen backed the only horse who at least seemed willing to run the race, no matter his chances for victory. This chapter also discusses the worsening situation in Liaodong and the reasons for the failure of peace talks between the Ming and the newly created Qing.

[Chapter 6](#) covers the rapid expansion of the peasant rebellions across central and northern China after the death of Yang Sichang and the climactic battle of Song-Jin in Liaodong that marked the real turning point in the Ming–Qing conflict. From late 1642 onwards the Ming were on their heels in the northeast and even as certain capable commanders were attempting to stabilize the theater in the northwest to buy time for new strategies to be devised, the emperor was bowing to pressure from hawks to launch another offensive against the peasant rebel leader Li Zicheng, now deemed the most serious military threat in the eyes of the court. This chapter also looks at the efforts by Li and his rival Zhang Xianzhong to build support for their nascent regimes.

[Chapter 7](#) covers the final ignominious four months of Ming rule over all of China. Portents mounted and harebrained schemes proliferated as the once proud dynasty crumbled in the face of foes that were far from invincible. To the end Chongzhen's shortcomings as a leader, strategist and evaluator of talent plagued his efforts to stem the tide and save his state and his family. In the long run his suicide on Longevity Hill behind the Forbidden City probably did more for saving his reputation than any other act of his troubled reign. The somewhat anticlimactic battle between the forces of Li Zicheng and the Manchus (aided by the Ming turncoat Wu Sangui) at Shanhaiguan ends the chapter and the narrative proper. The conclusion offers suggestions for further research and situates the fall of the Ming within the broader scope of world history.



*Figure 1.1* Map of Ming dynasty political divisions

# 1 A gauntlet is cast down: The rise of the Latter Jin, 1618–21

## The storm begins

In the fourth lunar month of 1618, the water in the moat around the city of Beijing, capital of the largest, wealthiest empire on the planet, turned blood red from the Xuanwu to the Zhengyang gates, the latter located just south of the main entrance to the emperor's residence, known to Westerners as the Forbidden City.<sup>1</sup> To residents of the capital this was reportedly terrifying, yet another portent of the gloom that was engulfing the dynasty.<sup>2</sup> After all, despite a series of impressive military triumphs in the 1590s, the government had degenerated into faction-ridden gridlock in the ensuing decades.<sup>3</sup> The Emperor Wanli (r. 1573–1620) had engaged in a running series of disputes with his officials over everything from the naming of his heir to annual merit evaluations for officials, to official appointments, to his controversial practice of employing eunuch tax collectors to essentially shake down the wealthy tax dodgers in a practice euphemistically called “opening mines” (*kuang shui*).<sup>4</sup> And just three years before a mysterious intruder had been apprehended in the Forbidden City where he was ostensibly seeking to kill the heir apparent. The intruder was executed amid controversy in this so-called “Case of the Attack with a Club.”<sup>5</sup> In the ensuing years the emperor had become even more reclusive as pressures and challenges mounted on multiple fronts. Nonetheless the Ming state retained its preeminence in East Asia, at least for the time being.

As it turned out, the flashpoint for the conflict that would ultimately destroy the Ming was a frontier town in the northeast. The town was called Fushun and it was one of the 18 key fortresses established by the august founder of the Ming, Zhu Yuanzhong, who reigned as Emperor Hongwu (r. 1368–98) in the region the Chinese called Liaodong.<sup>6</sup> Fushun was targeted by an upstart frontier khan from a tribe known as the Jianzhou Jurchens named Nurhaci (1559–1626), an erstwhile vassal of the Ming who had challenged Ming authority in the region two years before by virtue of his proclamation of the state of the Latter Jin (Golden kingdom) in reference to a dynasty controlled by his Jurchen forebears in the past (1126–1234).<sup>7</sup> But until this point Nurhaci had remained at least outwardly loyal to his nominal Ming tributary overlords. His attack on Fushun, however, was the culmination of years of effort and planning. Among other things Nurhaci had

established military farms (*tuntian*) to raise supplies, allocated cattle among his men, and detailed some two hundred men to cut down trees for the fashioning of siege equipment.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, in addition to constituting his first overt military challenge to Ming authority in Northeast Asia, Nurhaci's attack on Fushun was connected to his strategy of assimilating rival Jurchen tribes such as the Haixi. Indeed, the attack was prompted in part by necessity because, according to contemporary Korean records, heavy rains had ruined harvests and Nurhaci's people were starving.<sup>9</sup> Nurhaci now had an estimated 60,000 men under arms in addition to the civilians under his purview and he could ill-afford further delays that might undermine his efforts at expanding his authority. In terms of its strategic locale, Fushun offered a good springboard because it was more isolated and less well-protected than other Ming fortress towns in the region. It was defended by a military official named Li Yongfang, ostensibly a mid-ranking mobile corps commander (*youji jiangjun*) but in practice a commandant (*shoubei*) with only about 1,200 men under his command. Nurhaci decided to lead 20,000 men against Fushun. Additionally, not trusting anything to chance, Nurhaci, who had regularly traded at Fushun as a Ming vassal in the past, had already conducted discussions with the Ming commander about holding a horse trading market, a relatively common arrangement.

Nurhaci asked Li to hold the market in the middle of the fourth month of 1618. Nurhaci's plan was to send fifty men to the city disguised as horse traders. Then he would creep outside the city with another 5,000 men and wait for a prearranged cannon signal. He hoped to save as many men as possible in this initial gambit. Siege ladders and great shields were manufactured for the impending assault. In the meantime Nurhaci curried favor with local Mongol and other Jurchen chiefs to keep them neutral and secure his flank. Ming strength in the region was nominally 90,000, but in fact numbers were much lower, their quality was poor, and their pay and rations were months in arrears.<sup>10</sup>

Announcing his Seven Grievances against the Ming to Heaven, Nurhaci departed his capital of Hetu Ala on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> month of 1618 (May 7).<sup>11</sup> He also issued orders to his men not to rape, pillage, or harm commoners.<sup>12</sup> He divided his army into two columns, leading the right wing himself, which would attack Fushun proper. The Jin forces were hampered by heavy rains and forced to slog through the mud all night but they still managed to reach the city gates by the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> when the fifth columnists opened the gates for them, ostensibly simply for the purpose of trading horses. As soon as the gates opened, the troops hidden in the forest around the city assailed the walls with their scaling ladders. Li Yongfang vacillated over what to do as several of his subordinates gave their lives in a hasty defense. Eventually Li and his lieutenant, Zhao Yipeng, decided to surrender. In a letter to Li Nurhaci noted, "I know you are a man of many talents and have had many experiences and my state is in search of talent, as we are lacking in capable officials and are looking to employ capable generals." He added "What purpose will your death serve? But if you surrender, you and all your soldiers will be

safe.”<sup>13</sup> When he got the letter Li Yongfang said he would surrender at the south gate but he kept his troops on alert. He then opened the gate as the Jin attacked the Ming loyalist troops. When he met Nurhaci he allegedly agreed to surrender only if the people were spared. Nurhaci honored his promise, though many were taken as captives to Hetu Ala.<sup>14</sup>

Some 590 Ming soldiers were killed or captured in the attack. Those who did not surrender were slaughtered. Jurchen losses were small.<sup>15</sup> For his efforts in facilitating the Jin capture of the city Li Yongfang received the position of commander in the Jin army and a granddaughter of Nurhaci as his concubine.<sup>16</sup> Li would be the first prominent Ming commander to openly join the Jin side and his deal would set a precedent for many later defectors.<sup>17</sup> In addition to their military advice and expertise, many scholars attribute Chinese defectors such as Li great importance in transmitting Chinese values, ways of life, and institutions to the Jin royal family, without which they may not have succeeded in establishing their empire.<sup>18</sup> As one scholar notes, “the chief importance of the Chinese in the Manchu state was that they furthered bureaucracy and bureaucratic development and diminished the feudal element in Manchu society.”<sup>19</sup>

Two nearby forts quickly fell as well and Nurhaci detailed some 4,000 men to hold Fushun temporarily while he waited for the Ming counter-attack. He did not have to wait long. Within three days the Ming grand coordinator heard of the fall of Fushun and dispatched commander Zhang Chengyin to recapture the city. The Ming led 10,000 troops in five columns against the city, arriving on the 21<sup>st</sup>. They set up three camps, dug trenches, and arrayed their firearms around Fushun. Their initial assault inflicted heavy casualties but the Jin forces under Nurhaci’s sons Hung Taiji (1592–1643) and Daisan (1583–1648) cut through the Ming units and routed them. It was estimated that barely 20 percent of the relief force survived the fierce Jin assault.<sup>20</sup> The victorious Jin army returned to Hetu Ala on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> month and rested for just over a month before setting forth in search of more conquests.

In response Wanli made General Li Rubo (d. 1619) the Commander of Liaodong and Yang Hao (d. 1629) the Military Affairs Commissioner (*jinglue*).<sup>21</sup> These were understandable, if somewhat controversial, appointments. Both men were acknowledged favorites of the Wanli emperor but had been scandalized as the result of a botched siege against the Japanese in Korea some twenty years before. The political fallout had ended the career of Yang Hao (despite Korean protests) and Li Rubo had assumed a much lower profile as a regional commander in Liaodong.<sup>22</sup> Complicating matters further was the fact that the Li clan had very close ties to Nurhaci. In fact Rubo’s father, the famous Ming general Li Chengliang (1526–1618), had served as a surrogate father and mentor to the Jin khan in his younger days.<sup>23</sup> The Ministry of War then released 200,000 taels of silver for raising armies and ordered two more famous military commanders, Du Song (d. 1619) and Liu Ting (1554–1619), to hasten to the frontier at once.<sup>24</sup> The Court of the Imperial Stud supplied 60,000 more taels for the purchase of war horses. The Ming hoped to amass a force of 130,000 for a full counter-attack. They also looked into building ships for military and transportation purposes.<sup>25</sup>

But due to shortages in the capital the Ming court had to requisition mounts, weapons, and supplies from auxiliary bureaus in Nanjing, the secondary capital.<sup>26</sup>

Acting Minister of War Bi Sancai also told the emperor that salaries for the Liaodong garrisons were already three months in arrears so they would have to be creative with financing.<sup>27</sup> The Ministry of War had barely one-fifth of what they needed now and could get only 47,000 more taels in short order. So Bi hoped that Wanli could dip into the imperial privy purse for funds. Wanli countered by saying that the coffers were empty and that the Ministries of Revenue and War needed to find the funds.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, more bad omens appeared around the capital, portending invasion.<sup>29</sup> By this time Nurhaci's grievances and demands had reached Beijing and the Ming were making more serious preparations to curtail Jin actions.

Nurhaci then decided to go after the fortress of Qinghecheng, now reinforced with 6,400 troops from its original strength of several hundred. Yang Hao had advised the commander of the fortress Zou Chuxian to lay an ambush for the Jin in the mountain pass nearby to better take advantage of superior Ming firepower, but he ignored this advice. When the enemy did approach, Zou refused to let his men sally forth, opting for a passive defense strategy. Nurhaci arrived on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month and commenced the attack the next day. The defenders fired cannon and hurled logs and boulders at the enemy but Nurhaci refused to retreat, despite sustaining heavy casualties. His men were finally able to breach the wall in the northwest corner before the Ming could reload their heavy cannon. A bloody street fight ensued but Zou and his commanders were defeated and died in the fighting. Qinghe fell and most of those within were slaughtered.<sup>30</sup> Fingers were pointed back in Beijing.

The Jin then fanned out and took eleven more isolated towns in short order though the Ming commander He Shixian killed 154 in one battle and drove them back north. Li Rubo then killed 76 outside Shenyang and reinforced that strategically important city against another assault.<sup>31</sup> Yang Hao killed a Ming officer who had fled Fushun earlier in the year, to set an example for the men.<sup>32</sup> Liu Ting arrived at Shanhaiguan, the pass which marked the border between China proper and Liaodong and began training operations with units from distant Sichuan province, though he feared he lacked the numbers needed. He also stressed that the troops needed more time to train. Most ominously for the subsequent course of the Ming dynasty, the Ministry of Revenue initiated its first tax hike, a mere three-hundredths of a tael per *mu*, to help fund training and supply costs for the troops in Liaodong.<sup>33</sup> The court also put a price of 10,000 taels on Nurhaci's head.<sup>34</sup>

In the centuries since these events took place, much has been made of the apparent unreadiness of the Ming in the face of the challenge posed by Nurhaci. Wanli and his officials have come under heavy criticism for supposedly failing to anticipate Nurhaci's actions and for failing to check his state-building efforts sooner. But in fact, as the following brief survey will demonstrate, the Ming had taken note of Nurhaci's actions and had engaged in multiple efforts, both military and diplomatic, to contain him. Moreover, this was in accordance with standard

Ming operating procedures in the northeast for the previous two centuries, procedures that had more or less succeeded in maintaining the peace. The Ming empire would present seals of authority and grant trading privileges to local tribal leaders in exchange for military assistance and tributary products such as ginseng, furs, pearls, or horses. They would also often facilitate marriage alliances between tribal leaders, though individual groups did this on their own initiative as well.<sup>35</sup>

## **From vassal to rival**

As noted above, the Jurchens of the Ming were descended from those who had ruled a large part of north China in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries before falling before the Mongol onslaught. They were semi-nomadic and engaged in hunting and farming in the northeast, trading with both the Chinese and the Koreans and sometimes fighting with both. Accordingly, both the Ming and the Chosôn rulers established tributary relations with the various Jurchen tribes both to ensure some level of frontier stability and encourage positive economic exchanges. In addition to horses and ginseng, the Jurchens sold camels, furs, wax, honey, mushrooms, lumber, pearls, gold, silver, copper, walrus tusks, mercury, cinnabar, and hunting falcons. In return the Chinese and Koreans traded foodstuffs and livestock, textiles, iron implements, draft animals, and agricultural tools. Although the trading of weapons, fine silks, ironware, and copper cash was technically illegal, the Ming and Koreans often looked the other way when such items were traded. Or they were simply obtained through back channels.<sup>36</sup> As T. C. Lin notes, “trade and tribute were instruments of politics in the hands of Chinese statesmen” and the main interest of the Ming in such cases was to ensure a reasonable level of stability by keeping potential enemies divided and conquered.<sup>37</sup> Trade, in other words, was “an inducement to an ordered and pacified life.”<sup>38</sup>

In the Ming period there were three major Jurchen tribes: the Wild Jurchens who lived in northernmost Manchuria; the Haixi, who lived along the Haixi (Sungari) River and its tributaries in what is modern Heilongjiang province; and the Jianzhou Jurchens, who lived along the Mudan River and the region around Changbaishan.<sup>39</sup> Over the first two centuries of Ming rule, there was considerable migration within Manchuria towards the frontier between the Ming and Chosôn that precipitated Ming and Korean efforts to “manage” their neighbors by extending various degrees of official recognition, including investing tribal leaders as commanders and creating guards and battalions (*wei-suo*) along Ming lines.<sup>40</sup> At its height the Ming had over two hundred guards, stations, posts, and camps in Manchuria, though these declined over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Many scholars contend that these structures were integral in helping the Jurchens organize and in providing a model for later emulation. One scholar also notes that the key weakness of such an approach was that it “localized privileges more than responsibilities” and therefore undermined Ming influence even as it extended it.<sup>41</sup> On a social level the constant migration of Jurchens and Mongols south and Han Chinese and Koreans north created a dynamic group of trans-frontiersmen whose loyalties were often quite negotiable, as will be seen below.<sup>42</sup>

This increasing ethnic diversity, weakening of clan identity, and loosening of Ming control facilitated the building of confederations by ambitious chieftains in the sixteenth century. The two major confederations that emerged were the Hulun confederation of the Haixi Jurchens and the Jianzhou Confederation.<sup>43</sup> In 1548 one Wang Tai, chieftain of the Hada tribe, emerged as hegemon over the Hulun confederation. Contracting marriage ties with both Jurchens and Mongols he co-opted his rivals and expanded his influence, eventually assuming the title of khan during the process of which he both managed to annex one of the Jianzhou tribes and acquire all the Haixi patents of investiture from the Ming.<sup>44</sup> In return he aided the Ming in battling troublesome Mongol groups in the northeast.

As was often the case in such confederations, however, his authority was personal and when he died in 1582 his son quickly lost control of the confederation and it passed to a pair of brothers from the Yehe tribe who formed their own confederation and gained recognition (and the privilege of border markets) from the Ming. The Ming decided to open separate markets to divide Hulun power, but this had the unfortunate consequence of aiding the rise of the Jianzhou confederation to the east. The Jianzhou leader Wang Gao (d. 1575) had often assailed Ming positions in the west with his Mongol allies. But after he captured and killed the Ming commander at Fushun in 1573, the Ming counter-attacked and drove him from his bastion. He fled to Hada territory where Wang Tai captured him and handed him over to Li Chengliang, who executed him in 1575. Li also opened new markets with the aim of driving the Jianzhou Jurchens out of the Lower Yalu River valley, granting them favored tributary status in the process.<sup>45</sup>

As was the case with Wang Tai, Wang Gao's death provoked another power struggle among the surviving Jianzhou chieftains. The major contenders were Wang Gao's son Atai, Nikan Wailan (d. 1586), and Giocangga (d. 1583), who controlled the city of Hetu Ala and had served as a delegation leader at Fushun. In 1582 Atai plundered Ming lands and Nikan Wailan offered to join the Ming under Li Chengliang in a punitive expedition.<sup>46</sup> Giocangga and his son Taksi, also allies of Li, joined in the attack on Atai's stronghold at Gure. Li reportedly offered a Ming investiture to whomever killed Atai. Though Atai was in fact killed in the operation, so were Giocangga and Taksi, grandfather and father, respectively, of Nurhaci.<sup>47</sup> The Ming claimed that their deaths were accidental and Li Chengliang even acted as a surrogate father of sorts to Nurhaci afterwards. But the event provided the future leader with a convenient grudge for exploitation.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, Nurhaci first emerges as a significant figure in 1583 receiving his father's inheritance, along with horses and other gifts from the Ming. While one must always treat later accounts of his youth with caution, it is said that Nurhaci was a gifted mounted archer from youth, but was also poly-lingual, being proficient in the Jurchen, Mongol and Chinese tongues. He also reportedly enjoyed reading Chinese literature, including the famous Ming novels *Water Margin* (*Shuihu zhuan*) and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi*).<sup>49</sup> Some sources suggest that Nurhaci had actually lived in Li Chengliang's household in Fushun in his youth and perhaps gained his literacy in Chinese as a result of this

experience.<sup>50</sup> Despite their investiture of him, however, the Ming refused to turn over Nikan Wailan to Nurhaci for execution and in fact they considered declaring Nikan Wailan khan of all the Jurchens in a move designed to keep their potential enemies divided.<sup>51</sup>

Disregarding the advice of some of his relatives, Nurhaci went to war with Nikan Wailan, forcing him to flee to Ming protection.<sup>52</sup> The Ming killed him a couple years later but Nurhaci continued to expand his influence, steadily wiping out smaller tribes while simultaneously currying favor with the Ming by personally leading tribute missions to Beijing, a practice he continued until 1608.<sup>53</sup> He also delivered Ming captives back to the proper authorities and even offered to lead troops against the Japanese in Korea, though that offer was refused owing in part to Korean misgivings.<sup>54</sup> As early as 1591 Nurhaci controlled a swathe of territory stretching from Fushun to the Yalu River, provoking combined assaults of some 30,000 Yehe against his positions that he turned back after initial reverses.<sup>55</sup> By 1595 he was invested as a “dragon-tiger general” by the Ming and was regarded as a useful, albeit dangerous, ally.<sup>56</sup>

As of 1599 Nurhaci controlled the Hada but allowed the Ming still to invest their leaders, giving the illusion of Ming sovereignty. He moved his base of operations to the city of Hetu Ala in 1603.<sup>57</sup> In 1606 he received recognition as a tributary overlord from various Mongol tribes. In 1607 he defeated the Wula and the next year he erected a stone boundary around his territory to distinguish it from Ming lands because Chinese settlers were allegedly harvesting pearls and ginseng from his territory.<sup>58</sup> It is said that as he continued to consolidate his power and the Ming border officials refused to stop him, Nurhaci grew increasingly arrogant and came to lightly regard them.<sup>59</sup> He also sent letters to the Ming court complaining that the Koreans were harboring Jin fugitives and asking for justice. This brought more concern from the Korean side and even an impeachment of Li Chengliang (who had come out of retirement to stabilize the situation in Liaodong) for failing to act to counter Nurhaci and for allowing him to occupy Ming lands, but little came of it at this juncture.<sup>60</sup> The Ming court even offered letters of condolence upon the death of Nurhaci’s brother, Surhaci, in 1611.<sup>61</sup> But they were disturbed by the pomp and grandeur of Jurchen receptions of Ming envoys at Hetu Ala and the Ming started to revise their policy, among other things dismissing Li Chengliang from his post in 1608 and eventually replacing him with an official named Xiong Tingbi (d. 1625) who would play a major role in the region over the next decade.<sup>62</sup> Xiong worried that heavy-handed Ming punitive campaigns and military exactions were actually driving people to seek Jurchen protection.<sup>63</sup> He was also a staunch critic of Li Chengliang and his policies. Xiong worked actively over the next few years to forge alliances with Mongol and other Jurchen chieftains to frustrate Nurhaci’s ambitions.<sup>64</sup>

But after Nurhaci stopped submitting tribute in 1611 and when his own expansion efforts started bumping up against Han Chinese settlements in Manchuria, the court became more concerned, especially after Nurhaci defeated the Ula tribe in 1613.<sup>65</sup> In response the Ming began mustering men and supplies of their own for possible counteraction as Wanli himself expressed concerns



图1 努尔哈赤像

*Figure 1.2* Nurhaci. Adapted from Teng Shaozhen, *San fan shilue*.

over the lack of supplies and rations for the frontier troops.<sup>66</sup> Among the more fateful decisions they made at this time was to dispatch Li Yongfang to Fushun to help mediate disputes.<sup>67</sup> This allowed him to make the acquaintance of Nurhaci. Their fears were given credence in 1616 when Nurhaci declared the foundation of his Later Jin with its capital at Hetu Ala and started referring

to the Ming as merely the “Southern Dynasty” (*nan chao*), implying equality with his own state. There were various portents that year including floods and crimson snow falling in Nanjing.<sup>68</sup> Wanli apparently even had dreams about Nurhaci’s state replacing the Ming.<sup>69</sup>

Regardless of Nurhaci’s political ambitions and the challenge he posed to the Ming, perhaps his most significant action in this period of state-building was his creation of the banner system, which facilitated the accumulation and mobilization of political, military, and economic resources.<sup>70</sup> The banners derived from the *niru*, or arrow, a designation for small Jurchen hunting bands. Though details are not completely clear, sometime around 1600 Nurhaci began organizing his new troops into permanent cavalry and infantry companies of around three hundred men.<sup>71</sup> These were subdivided into units of 75. Household residents and servants were also enrolled as members of the company. These units evolved into what became known as the Banners. Originally there were only four banners: yellow, white, red, and blue. In 1615 borders were added to the flags (i.e. bordered yellow) so that the number of Banners increased to eight. As the Jin khanate evolved into the Qing empire Mongol and Han Chinese Banners would be added in the 1630s.<sup>72</sup> Older scholarship suggests that the banners were modeled after the Ming *wei-suo* system and were designed to undermine traditional tribal customs with respect to leading followers into battle and the like.<sup>73</sup> More recent interpretations emphasize their evolutionary and Central Asian dimensions. In any case, while the Banners would become the root of the Jin military and social hierarchy, Nurhaci also created an advisory council that was to meet with him every five days to discuss matters of war and governance.<sup>74</sup> So the force that the Ming readied to face at the start of 1619 was already fairly sophisticated and now had the momentum.

## The battle of Sarhu

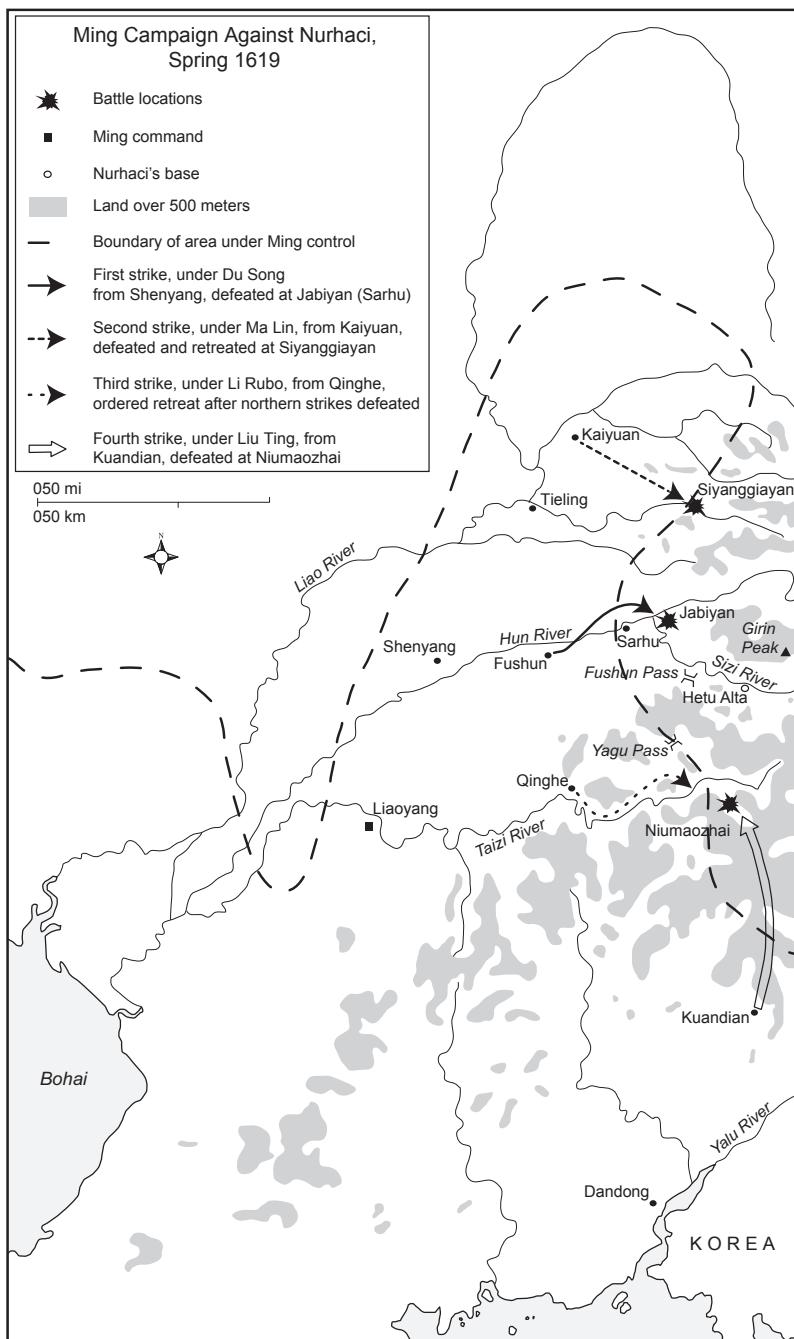
In the 1<sup>st</sup> month of 1619 Yang Hao and his associates decided that the Ming expeditionary army would set out on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> month, allowing for ten days of mustering just beforehand. In fact there had been much wrangling over the preceding months about when and how to proceed. The official Fang Congzhe clamored for an immediate attack in the autumn of 1618, but Yang demurred, assembling supplies, troops, and soliciting possible battle plans, though it seems that the one finally adopted was Yang’s own. Yang decided to divide his forces into four columns and surround Nurhaci outside Hetu Ala. Ma Lin would lead the northern column advancing from Kaiyuan. Du Song would head east from Fushun, leading the western column. Li Rubo would set forth from the recovered bastion of Qinghe towards Yagu Pass then drive towards Hetu Ala from the southwest. Liu Ting would come from Kuandian in the southeast, his units bolstered by some 13,000 Korean auxiliaries led by Kang Horip.<sup>75</sup> Thus would the Ming call upon their tributary allies to repay the debt owed from two decades before. The Ming had initially hoped to assemble a force of some 470,000 (and some later Qing accounts claim it was this big), but in fact their

numbers were around 90,000 to 100,000 against perhaps 60,000 or so on the Jin side.<sup>76</sup> Before he set forth, Wanli asked Yang Hao to bring back Nurhaci's body so that the Ming ruler could see if the upstart khan really had three heads and six arms as the tales claimed.<sup>77</sup> Brandishing the double-edged sword of authority he had received from the emperor, Yang Hao convened meetings with his commanders at Liaoyang in advance of the campaign and they ritually slaughtered cattle to ensure their success. Strict orders regarding discipline were issued to the troops.<sup>78</sup>

Despite this, however, Yang had his misgivings. He did not think that his troops were adequately trained or supplied.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, commoners who came out to see Du Song and his troops before their departure were unimpressed and saw Du as an illiterate, rude, covetous, incompetent brute.<sup>80</sup> Heavy spring snows slowed their initial advance but his commanders all seemed overly eager for glory. And though Yang had no way of knowing this, the night before his units set forth, sandstorms erupted in Beijing that cast a reddish pall over the city and turned people the color of blood.<sup>81</sup> It seemed that even Heaven had misgivings about the enterprise.

Meanwhile, Nurhaci had much better intelligence of Ming plans and decided to negate their numerical advantage by concentrating his own forces to pick off one Ming column at a time.<sup>82</sup> He also realized that the terrain could facilitate his plan. Therefore he detailed a mere 500 men to intercept Liu Ting in the southeast and slightly larger contingents to slow down Ma Lin and Li Rubo while concentrating his efforts on the northernmost army of Du Song, which Nurhaci deemed the greatest threat. Thus he deployed some 15,000 troops near Sarhu in advance of the Ming arrival.<sup>83</sup> With its steep peaks and forested mountains, this was the ideal place for an ambush.

After a delay of some ten days due to the snow, Du Song's army set forth from Fushun with a force estimated at 25,000 to 30,000 in early April. Supposedly he disobeyed Yang's orders and advanced early because he wanted the glory of killing Nurhaci himself.<sup>84</sup> He reached the Hun River and saw that the Jin had erected defenses to slow him down. But Du believed that the river was low enough to cross and began doing so, against the advice of subordinates and despite the fact that evening was fast approaching.<sup>85</sup> One source even charges that Du was drunk that night, which affected his leadership and decision-making.<sup>86</sup> He left 20,000 men with the artillery train and baggage on the other side of the Hun River and led the remainder against the Jin defenses. The commander in charge was supposed to follow Du, but he later said he could not cross due to the heavy current of the river.<sup>87</sup> Seeing Du's aggressiveness, Nurhaci detailed his sons Daisan and Hung Taiji to engage Du and entice him into an ambush, while he personally led the other six banners to attack the main force camped near Sarhu. Du's units enjoyed some initial successes and they rushed forward into an ambush that drove them back into the river. In the first clash the Jin killed one hundred Ming troops before their force of just 1,400 drove the larger Ming army back towards the river.<sup>88</sup> The beleaguered Ming troops tried to form up ranks and fired their guns, but the Jin flanked them and shattered their ranks with a cavalry charge bolstered by arrow fire.<sup>89</sup>



Adapted from: Mote and Twitchett, Vol. 7 of *The Cambridge History of China*.

*Figure 1.3* Map of Liaodong campaign of 1619

Du and his vice commander fell as they tried to occupy the high ground before the river. Then “corpses piled up like a mountain and the fields were drenched in blood.”<sup>90</sup> The victorious Jin forces pursued the Ming remnants for some twenty *li* before reforming their ranks and proceeding to their next target, Ma Lin’s forces at Xiangjiayan. Du himself was presumed dead, though rumors circulated that he shaved his head and became a monk. Du later received much of the blame for the debacle, but in fact, though he had been overly aggressive, the decision to leave the baggage train was not his and he had expected more artillery support.

Ma Lin had actually received word of Du’s defeat and attempted to establish a defensive position at Xiangjiayan (Siyanggiayan). Again making adroit use of intelligence and his knowledge of the terrain, Nurhaci first sent 1,000 cavalry forward to dismount and advance cautiously, drawing Ming gunfire. Then he sent others to engage in reconnaissance to ascertain Ming positions within the camp. Once he determined their dispositions he launched a rapid joint infantry-cavalry assault from the surrounding hills, advancing so fast that the Ming troops could get off only one shot before the cavalry were upon them.<sup>91</sup> The Ming forces panicked and were routed. Ma Lin barely escaped alive and several officers died as the nearby river turned crimson with their blood.<sup>92</sup> Censor Pan Zongyan and his Yihe (Jurchen) allies tried to effect a rearguard action, but they were shattered too and Pan was slain, allegedly by an arrow in the back.<sup>93</sup> Pan had allegedly foretold Ma’s defeat, believing that Ma was an incompetent dandy who held his position only because of his father’s rank. Thus he foolishly deployed his units and was routed easily.<sup>94</sup> Other sources, however, indicate that in fact Ma chose a more favorable defensive position, but that Pan forced him to relocate his forces some three *li* outside the defenses where they got cut off and where Ma’s mobile scouts were less effective.<sup>95</sup>

After these victories, the Jin moved their whole force south to engage the forces of Li Rubo and Liu Ting. Nurhaci sent his nephew Amin and his son Hung Taiji towards Liu’s forces with 2,000 men to support the 1,000 scouts previously dispatched. Nurhaci himself returned to Hetu Ala with around 4,000 troops. Meanwhile, Yang Hao had already issued commands to retreat to the surviving Ming columns, but Liu Ting’s force never got the message. Though delayed himself by snow and urged by his Korean allies not to advance owing to lack of supplies, Liu had actually enjoyed limited success early on, with his force of 14,000 defeating advance scouts and driving hapless commoners before them to seek refuge in the mountains.<sup>96</sup> His Korean allies urged caution but Liu was in high spirits and pushed forward.<sup>97</sup>

He killed fifty in a skirmish and kept advancing.<sup>98</sup> Liu actually advanced as far as Niumaozhai, a stockade barely 60 *li* south of Hetu Ala, where Nurhaci laid an ambush for him. According to some sources, the Jin enticed him further by sending him a false letter purportedly from Du Song, suggesting that Du’s forces were on the verge of taking Hetu Ala.<sup>99</sup> Liu therefore sent half his force ahead to loot and they stumbled right into the Jin ambush.<sup>100</sup> Liu allegedly withstood the first cavalry charge, but was flanked by Hung Taiji’s cavalry and surrounded.

The Chinese and Koreans fired away with their guns and held their own until a great wind arose and blew smoke back into the faces of the defenders. They could no longer see the cavalry to get accurate shots.<sup>101</sup> Successive charges finally broke Liu's ranks. Liu went down fighting and his Korean allies surrendered after they were captured.<sup>102</sup>

Li Rubo was the only commander who had actually received Yang's withdrawal order in time and he was able to avoid disaster, although he still lost as many as a thousand troops and fifty horses as he encountered advance units.<sup>103</sup> All told the Ming lost some 45,000 troops, 300 officers, and 28,000 horses.<sup>104</sup> The Jin claimed only 200 losses though better estimates suggest the Ming killed around 5,000 of the enemy, still a lopsided defeat.<sup>105</sup> The Ming court was rocked by the defeat and Yang Hao was ordered to be arrested by the dreaded Embroidered Uniform Guard, essentially the emperor's secret police force. Li Rubo was impeached as well, officials arguing that the only reason he survived was because of his personal relationship with Nurhaci.<sup>106</sup> Yang would languish in prison for a decade before he was executed. Li committed suicide before he was put on trial.

As fingers were pointed in Beijing, Nurhaci congratulated his retainers and made more plans in Hetu Ala. He quickly sent a messenger to the King of Korea asking why they had helped the Ming and announcing his grievances against them.<sup>107</sup> Not wishing to anger their neighbor too much, the Koreans sent a return envoy congratulating Nurhaci on his victory, but the Korean court remained ambivalent about recognizing his regime at this point.<sup>108</sup> Over the next 18 years the kingdom of Chosôn would find itself embroiled in the Ming–Jin conflict and it would have serious domestic ramifications.

In evaluating the Battle of Sarhu and the Liaodong campaign, several key conclusions can be derived. Intelligence and mobility were most important. Nurhaci had a much better idea of where his enemies were and he used this knowledge, coupled with his familiarity with the terrain, to his advantage. He was also much better at coordinating his operations, largely because he kept the majority of his force intact most of the campaign. That allowed him to negate the Ming's numerical advantage, which, in any event, was not great. His troops also enjoyed higher morale, having come off a series of victories the previous year and by virtue of fighting on their home turf. The Ming commanders, by contrast, moved a bit slower and did not coordinate their efforts efficiently. Nor did they appear to make much use of intelligence. In other words, Nurhaci's ability to dictate the time and place of battle was critical.<sup>109</sup>

Some scholars have also noted the discord between the Ming civil and military officials, though I do not see that being a major deciding factor here in part because the campaign was so short.<sup>110</sup> Others note the problem of divided command authority, either with respect to civilian oversight and military field command, or with regard to the fact that the route commanders were essentially equals so were not inclined to take orders from one another. While this was the case and would be an enduring problem for the Ming military, again in this instance it does not seem that it was a fatal shortcoming. Wanli's inactivity and

shortsightedness has also been amply criticized but in his defense he appointed the empire's most distinguished commanders – all men he trusted and had patronized in the past – to lead this important campaign so it is hard to fault him for the debacle in the field.<sup>111</sup> Contemporaries such as Xiong Tingbi blamed the commanders for choosing the wrong time to launch the campaign, thinking they should have attacked in better weather conditions.<sup>112</sup> As things turned out Xiong would have the opportunity to make things right.

### **Assuming a defensive posture**

The Jin commemorated their conquests by erecting more boundaries around lands they claimed. In the 6<sup>th</sup> month of 1619, the Jin captured the city of Kaiyuan, where they captured and killed Ma Lin.<sup>113</sup> The Jin attacked the city in a heavy downpour. The Ming dispatched a tiny relief column of 100 soldiers but the Jin cut them off, killing thirty and capturing two. The Jin hit Kaiyuan with scaling ladders, forcing their way through the east gate of the city. Again Ma Lin lined up his forces outside the city, eschewing the more defensible position.<sup>114</sup> Thus, by the time the fighting started, there were too many people outside the city and not enough to defend the walls. Censor Zheng Zhifan was the first Ming officer to flee. As he breached the walls, Nurhaci sent another column out to intercept a Ming force dispatched from Tieling. Kaiyuan was pacified within three days. Nurhaci then met with his advisers to discuss strategy and consider ideas for establishing a new capital.<sup>115</sup>

The town of Tieling, ancestral home of the famed Li clan, fell the next month and more Ming officers chose to follow the example of Li Yongfang (who was not one of the Tieling Li) in defecting to the Jin side.<sup>116</sup> The Ming tried to defend the city with cannon but again they were not able to get enough shots off before the walls were breached. Li Ruzhen, one of the last scions of the once great Li clan, fled the town ignominiously.<sup>117</sup> The Ming commanders present were slain and Nurhaci spent three days distributing booty to his followers. The next month Nurhaci finally wiped out the Yihe, taking their city of Xicheng as the terrified populace fled before his Banner forces. Nurhaci himself braved a hail of arrows in leading the assault against the east wall that brought the city down.<sup>118</sup> Again the Jin braved cannonfire, catapults, and other artillery to take the city. This time Nurhaci spared the general populace, though he executed those Ming soldiers who had fought alongside the Yihe.<sup>119</sup>

Nurhaci and his advisers decided to make the more centrally located city of Shenyang their new capital, though it was still in Ming hands. As Ming officers and Mongol chieftains defected to his banner Nurhaci proclaimed that this was a sign of the justness of his cause. Such defectors received lands, titles, farm implements, slaves, livestock, and cash in accordance with their rank and origins.<sup>120</sup> Through the rest of 1619 Nurhaci sent envoys to neighboring Mongol tribes to gain allies, stressing that the Ming were their common enemy and that all could benefit from exploiting its riches.<sup>121</sup> Alliances were often sealed with ritual feasts, highlighting the common Central Asian origins of the participants.

Yet at the same time it is worth noting that famine also stalked Jurchen lands at this time so Nurhaci's campaigns were as much about survival as conquest at this juncture.<sup>122</sup>

The Ming court countered the Jin attacks by appointing Xiong Tingbi to be the Military Affairs Commissioner (*jinglue*) of Liaodong.<sup>123</sup> Xiong was a veteran of Liao affairs, a skilled commander, an ambidextrous archer, and a savvy negotiator. He was one of the few late Ming officials who combined civil and military talents. But he could also be arrogant and heavy-handed in his dealings with fellow officials. Based on his previous experience there Xiong's initial plan revolved around establishing a stout defense and "soothing the hearts and minds of the people." He emphasized the psychological aspects of warfare, telling the emperor that the people of Liao needed to know that they were valued subjects who would be succored and protected by the monarch. Then they would work with officials. Simply bringing in outside troops would not work.<sup>124</sup> This would be accomplished by "using the people of Liao to defend Liao and by using the resources of Liao to support Liao." He initially hoped to use Kaiyuan as the root of this defense plan, even though it had been captured once by the enemy. Upon reaching the front in the 8<sup>th</sup> month Xiong executed a pair of Ming commanders for desertion.<sup>125</sup> He also arrested Li Ruzhen for not staying to defend Tieling, though there were those who defended Li and he himself had killed some of the enemy in a clash outside Shenyang.<sup>126</sup>

Xiong estimated that the Jin had at least 100,000 troops at the time and while the Ming should have had 180,000 in the region, actual strength was around half that and many of these were unfit for service. Xiong was given 400,000 taels to raise a new army though he requested more troops still to bolster the 90,000 or so supposedly stationed around Liaodong at the time.<sup>127</sup> In fact, Xiong actually wanted 1.2 million taels and ripped into the Ministry of Revenue for saying they could not come up with that much. Xiong argued that the court could not expect results without an investment and if the soldiers did end up mutinying, it would be on the hands of the Ministries of War and Revenue. After he got his initial disbursement of 100,000 taels, Xiong was still irate and he laid into the bureaucrats again.<sup>128</sup> The Ming Minister of War suggested dipping into revenues normally retained in the localities to fund the army and also recommended raising more contributions from the likes of princely houses, hereditary nobles, and aboriginal chieftains, as well as contributions from ordinary officials.<sup>129</sup> Xiong eventually got around 600,000 taels.

Over the next several months Xiong ordered the construction of military carts, the manufacture of firearms, and the repair of many moats and walls. Some 37,000 carts of supplies, pulled by 74,000 oxen, arrived that winter. Nonetheless the frigid winter claimed many soldiers' lives.<sup>130</sup> Still, overall, military regulations were tightened and the general state of Ming defenses improved. Xiong also requested the dispatch of 180,000 more troops to establish a southern line of defense from Fushun to Fort Zhenjiang, which would provide ready access to the sea.<sup>131</sup> All Xiong's requests were approved, including the one to extract more resources from aboriginal chieftains, though officials remained stymied in

getting direct access to the emperor, who complained of illness and remained deep within the palace.

Xiong's plans called for a gradual recovery of lost territory, starting from Fushun and Qinghe. He hoped to augment his own forces with pressure from the Mongols in the north and the Koreans to the east, thereby forcing the Jin to fight a multi-front war. But he was wary of using the Mongols and emphasized the defensive aspects of his plan. He then laid out key defense nodes and chokepoints, including Fort Zhenjiang on the Korean border. The king of Korea, Kwanghaegun, memorialized Wanli about the dire threat to his realm, beseeching the Ming to send aid. Wanli assured him that the Ming would act with all due haste.<sup>132</sup> Unfortunately though, the 17,400 troops sent to reinforce Fort Zhenjiang mutinied and the official who recruited these Liaodong men, Liu Guojin, was impeached by Xiong Tingbi.<sup>133</sup>

As Wang Zaijin, the Pacification Commissioner of Shandong, stressed, the Ming held a big advantage with respect to the ability to transport men and supplies by sea so they should take advantage of that.<sup>134</sup> This would also help the Ming cope with the refugee problem as many people were fleeing due to the military threat, poor harvests, and starvation. Keeping sea lanes open would help the masses as well as the troops, reasoned Wang.<sup>135</sup> He was also concerned about Chinese spies and collaborators, observing, "Defending against barbarians is easy but defending against Chinese is hard."<sup>136</sup> Echoing the concerns of others, Wang noted that the Yuan dynasty had been established with the help of Chinese collaborators. China's strength lay in planning so she should highlight that and bolster coastal defenses in the process.<sup>137</sup>

Though he stressed the use of Liaodong folk, Xiong also thought that different points could be manned by troops from different parts of the empire so as to take advantage of their different skill sets. For example, in heavily forested areas they could use Sichuanese aboriginal troops.<sup>138</sup> Along the coast they could use troops from Zhejiang whereas in the north they would deploy forces from the north. A system of beacons and watchtowers was needed for communication and to coordinate defense efforts.<sup>139</sup> Xiong thought that Shenyang would be hard to defend because it was basically empty, but others argued that it could not be lightly abandoned. As part of his plan for an integrated positional defense, Xiong asked the Ministry of War to investigate the logistics of manufacturing another 4,500 cannons.<sup>140</sup>

Unsurprisingly given the political climate of the times, Xiong's plans were attacked from multiple quarters. Among his critics was a young southern official named Yang Sichang (d. 1641) who would become very important in the coming decades. In one memorial Yang addressed the difficulties of paying for and transporting aboriginal troops from the distant southwest. In another he complained about the ineffectiveness of the tax increases and the burdens they caused for the people. Yang wanted concrete results, not empty paper increases.<sup>141</sup> He expressed his alarm at the situation in Liaodong and concerns over systemic shortcomings at every level of administration. But now, lamented Yang, the soldiers cannot be relied upon, nor can the generals. And as place after place fell to the Jin and more

were imperiled, “who even dares to stand up the enemy?” asked Yang.<sup>142</sup> Yang went on to quote Sunzi, saying only money could motivate the troops, arguing, “If good rewards are bestowed, then certainly there will be bravery.”<sup>143</sup>

Yang then called the emperor out, saying that while officials were responsible to the monarch, he was responsible to the ancestors and he should therefore heed the advice of his officials. Yang said that they had already asked for funds from the Taicang vault. If the emperor insisted upon being stingy, then “all of Liaodong could fall tomorrow and the capital will be plunged into chaos next year.” He added that “simply making sacrifices before the ancestors is no kind of plan to rescue the empire.”<sup>144</sup> He then audaciously asked the emperor to release 10 million taels immediately from the coffers and listen to plans from his commanders in order to rouse the morale of the troops so that “today’s disaster can be turned into good fortune.”<sup>145</sup> Yang concluded that if the emperor was able to rise to greatness “then his name will resound amongst the ancestors for myriad generations and the officials would not dare to continue their incessant chatter.”<sup>146</sup>

The emperor did not respond to Yang’s plea and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of 1620 the land tax was raised again in part because of complaints from Xiong Tingbi that he lacked funds. Xiong claimed he could not fight or bolster defenses or even prevent the soldiers from looting commoners for food and supplies. So the tax was raised by another two-hundredths of a tael per *mu* in the hopes of raising another 5.2 million taels in revenue. Some places, such as Guizhou in the southwest, saw no increase.<sup>147</sup> Even as the increase was announced a censorial official from Jiangxi claimed that there were mountains of gold in the Forbidden City and the emperor need only release them.<sup>148</sup>

Xiong Tingbi ended up serving about one year with Wanli’s full backing. During his tenure, not only were the walls and defenses of Liaodong rebuilt, but many former refugees returned to their homes and the fighting potential of the Ming was restored to a respectable level. As a result commerce picked up and the people felt more secure. Xiong also recognized that, at least for the time being, the strengths of the Ming lay in superior firepower and positional defense. Unlike some of his counterparts Xiong realized that the Ming could win a defensive war and use advance positions to gradually recover lost territory. Significantly, the Jin attacks decreased. But over time Xiong came to believe that he might need to restrict his activities a bit and that perhaps he needed more than the people of Liao to hold the region. Indeed, his faith in the locals was shaken by events such as the mutiny of the previous year and someone remarked that “the people of Liao fear the Jurchens like sheep fear tigers.”<sup>149</sup> Plus, Ming troops were hampered by a lack of supplies and Jin efforts to burn grain stores. These issues were exacerbated by famine in Shandong that made it necessary for the government to reduce taxes.<sup>150</sup>

The Ming also benefitted from the fact that many of the Mongol khans were none too pleased about Nurhaci’s rise. Some, such as Ligdan Khan, killed the Jin ruler’s envoys. Others opened negotiations with the Ming, seeking favorable trade agreements in exchange for offering military assistance. Indeed it

is important to note that there were Mongol allies fighting alongside the Ming until the fall of the dynasty in 1644 and that the rise of the Jin/Qing state did not represent merely a step challenge to a sedentary empire. These were complex actors with complex interests that transcended ethnicity.

Wanli's death brought a new surge of hope to many but as things turned out, he would be the last competent military commander-in-chief of the Ming dynasty. He had wanted to be a strong ruler and had endeavored to exercise his authority to a level that no Ming ruler had in centuries. Therefore it is quite ironic that he ended up getting much of the blame for ushering in the demise of the Ming.<sup>151</sup> For while he could indeed be greedy, petty, and self-indulgent, he was also intelligent and had a solid grasp of the broader geo-strategic situation of the Ming than his successors. Moreover, he believed in entrusting competent officials with responsibilities and letting them do their jobs, particularly in the military realm, unlike, for example, his mercurial grandson, who we will encounter later. Furthermore, though Wanli is often decried as having ignored government and seldom holding court audiences, in fact he can better be described as selectively attentive and simply disenchanted with the dysfunctional system of government he inherited. This explains his reliance upon eunuchs for tax collection and other duties. Significantly enough, however, Wanli did not invest eunuchs with sweeping military supervisory authority, something his successor Chongzhen (r. 1628–44) became notorious for.

At the end of his life Wanli blamed the Liaodong debacle on the inability of his civil and military officials to cooperate, something he felt was true of the empire in general. He then took responsibility for the state of the empire and implored his officials to put state interests above their own. He then listed his own mistakes which included an over-reliance upon eunuchs, the practice of dispatching mining commissioners, raising taxes for building projects, allowing officials to form factions and prey on the people, and allowing supplies to fall in arrears, thereby weakening defenses in the east.<sup>152</sup> In fact not all of these problems can be laid squarely on the emperor's door, but it is true that a more forceful personality might have been better able to rein in the countervailing forces and right the Ming ship. In any event, there would be few moments of military glory for the Ming after Wanli's demise.

The new Taichang Emperor released 1 million taels for Liao expenses even before his enthronement. Yet even so, the official Li Ruhua estimated that the state needed 1.6 million to properly pay and outfit the troops.<sup>153</sup> The Ministry of Revenue in turn estimated that ongoing costs for the war in the northeast would be at least 3.2 million taels a year. But accounting for wastage and other variables a target of 4 million might just be enough.<sup>154</sup> Soon thereafter another million taels was sent from the inner treasury. But the state still needed to address the glaring troop shortage. For example, there were now only 120,000 soldiers in the capital garrisons, down from perhaps 200,000 a century before.

In another popular move, Taichang disbanded Wanli's hated eunuch tax collectors and mining supervisors.<sup>155</sup> Unfortunately for the Ming, Xiong was

impeached and replaced around the time of the death of the Wanli emperor, falling victim to the endless factional strife that undermined Ming defense efforts.<sup>156</sup> Xiong Tingbi was accused of losing territory and timorousness in battle. Xiong initially fought back in memorials and urged the emperor to listen to those with field experience rather than sycophants at court. But as the impeachments rolled in, Xiong tendered his resignation and it was finally accepted.<sup>157</sup> Incidentally the official who led the charge against Xiong was none other than Liu Guojin, who Xiong had impeached the previous year. Later, in the 10<sup>th</sup> month of 1620, after Taichang had already died, Yuan Yingtai was made Minister of War and Commissioner of Liao Affairs.<sup>158</sup> As for Yuan, he was a career bureaucrat who lacked practical military experience and was said to be more fond of ritual demonstrations than real action.

Taking advantage of the regime change, Yang Sichang submitted a memorial to Yuan Yingtai concerning the costs of Liao taxes and battle plans. Yang reminded Yuan that he needed to consider both soldiers and support staff like craftsmen and weapon-makers. In Yang's estimation a force of 177,000 troops and 100,000 mounts (not counting draft animals) would cost 289,500 taels a month or 3,724,500 taels a year. Yang suggested the expansion of local military farms to raise crops for both men and animals. This would offset the fact that horses alone consumed 6 catties of beans per day, which worked out to 780,000 piculs a year. Costs would rise if market prices increased. Plus there was the added cost of transporting supplies by land or sea. So the actual cost for such a force was at least 4–5 million taels a year. Yang then offered suggestions as to where funds might be located or raised.<sup>159</sup>

In still another memorial Yang raised an issue which is the bane of bureaucrats everywhere, that of waste. Yang noted that only 40 percent of funds raised were actually going to the troops. This problem was compounded by the existence of padded rolls and requests for phantom troops. Plus, because of previous arrearages officials were coming to rely on new revenue streams to make up for existing shortfalls rather than using them to facilitate expanded operations and activities. And then there was the issue of numbers and accountability. As an example Yang noted that the prescribed strength of the garrison of Changping was 60,000 troops. Subsequently 15,000 of these were deployed to Shanhaiguan. But now there were only 14,000 troops at each garrison, so where were the rest? Therefore Yang called for a comprehensive investigation into troop dispensation and fund allocation.<sup>160</sup> Yang also recommended implementing a new pay scale that divided recruits into grades and compensated them accordingly. Under his scheme first-class troops would receive around two taels a month, about two and a half times what the lowest grade (fifth-class) received. At the same time old troops would be reclassified so as to remove the worthless troops from the ranks and raise a more effective fighting force.<sup>161</sup>

Yang's memorials speak to a number of preexisting problems that would persist through the end of the Ming. There was rampant corruption and favoritism within the bureaucracy caused in part by the increased competition for official

posts. The population of the Ming had increased fourfold or more since the dynasty's inception yet the number of official positions had remained more or less static. And the number of qualified candidates for office increased at a rate greater than that of the general population increase. Therefore, despite the many checks in place to ensure fairness in competing for positions, selling offices or accepting bribes became commonplace. As demand increased, so did costs so that by the late Ming high positions in the bureaucracy might go for as much as 6,000 taels.<sup>162</sup> Following the trend of the times military officers often requested exorbitant amounts of supplies and pay for rations and skimmed a considerable amount off the top. And officials connected to the distribution of rations and supplies were expected as a matter of course to appropriate some for themselves. In fact, when one reads memorials concerning supply disbursement, one can often see the writer accounting for this practice in their calculations. One reason for this was that the founder of the Ming had expected officials to lead austere lives like he had in his youth so official salaries were set extremely low. In other words, corruption became institutionalized.

In the end of course the people who bore the brunt of these abuses were the common folk who typically lacked the means or connections to avoid additional exactions, costs, and fees. From 1604 to 1621 taxes increased sixfold at one collection site at the Chongwen Gate in Beijing. The kinds and numbers of taxes also increased. In Shandong province, for example, there were 26 kinds of taxes in the late Ming.<sup>163</sup> Seeking some level of relief, many commoners commuted their lands to wealthy landowners in exchange for lower rents. The landowners in turn employed bribery and other methods to hide these lands from the tax collectors. This in turn prompted the government to issue new taxes to meet skyrocketing military costs. So the cycle continued and, as will be seen below, many commoners were driven to desperate measures.

Yuan Yingtai assumed office amid a renewed Jurchen threat and the ascension of another emperor, Tianqi, after his father Taichang died under mysterious circumstances after barely a month on the throne.<sup>164</sup> The Ming continued to try and bolster troop strength in the northeast but was plagued by inefficiency and desertions, the bane of many early modern militaries.<sup>165</sup> Still, the Ming made some efforts to reinforce Shenyang, suspecting that was Nurhaci's next major target. They had driven back a Jin probing action there in the summer of 1620 and Yuan Yingtai was confident that he could assume a more aggressive posture than his predecessor had.<sup>166</sup> At the advice of the military commander He Shixian, who was one of the few Ming field commanders to have enjoyed some success against the Jin, Yuan wanted to bolster Ming strength with Mongol allies, whom he deemed more competent and reliable than the shifty people of Liaodong.<sup>167</sup> He said that one Mongol warrior was equal to five Han Chinese and that the Chinese "fear dying," unlike the Mongols. Yuan promised several Mongol chieftains that he would open several new markets and provide monetary rewards in exchange for their assistance.<sup>168</sup> Interestingly enough, Yuan also referenced ongoing famines in Manchuria that threatened the Mongols as much as the Jin and he presumed that the grateful Mongols would therefore readily submit to Ming rule

once the battle was won. But others feared that this was “like opening the chicken coop to welcome the wolf and the tiger.”<sup>169</sup>

Still others pointed to supply woes and the potential for the Mongols to turn on the Ming once the conflict with the Jin was over, if not before. But Yuan’s arguments carried the day in the charged political climate of the time because many sought to ground their own career advancement in tangible successes. In other words, such policy advice and support for more aggressive positions vis-à-vis the Jin was as much political as it was grounded in military exigencies. This was true for virtually all of Chinese history but this fact has often been glossed over by historians.<sup>170</sup> Yuan persuaded the new emperor to dole out some 3 million taels worth of supplies for the Mongols despite the wariness of many local officials about disbursing such sums. Contemporary sources tell us that virtually everyone thought Yuan’s plan was far-fetched but his contention that it was akin to getting “free crack cavalry” was persuasive enough for the hawks in the administration.<sup>171</sup>

It is worth pausing at this juncture to say a few words about Ming court culture and the decision-making process, particularly as it pertained to matters of war. As Lo Jung-pang observed decades ago, “In the Chinese tradition, authority has not been equated with power, nor position with rank.”<sup>172</sup> Throughout Chinese history power generally seesawed between so-called imperial and bureaucratic factions. This tendency reached its apex in the late Ming period, exacerbated by particularly self-righteous factions of officials, most notably the group known as the Donglin (Eastern Forest) faction, which emerged in response to Wanli’s perceived abuses of authority in the early seventeenth century and claimed to stand for a revival of Confucian morality in government.<sup>173</sup> Such groups found ample fodder for criticism in the less than stellar monarchs of the late Ming who in turn often turned to eunuchs to exercise their authority, thereby aggravating the situation further. This was because, in addition to their physical condition, abhorrent in the minds of family-oriented Chinese, the eunuchs were deemed to be nothing more than fawning sycophants who had taken the short cut to power and were fit only to be servants. Recent scholarship has attempted to ameliorate this contemporary view of eunuchs and present them as an important, even essential branch of the chronically understaffed Ming government.<sup>174</sup>

But the fact remains that contemporary accounts are full of denigrations of the eunuchs and their activities and hyper-critical of imperial initiatives regarding reliance upon eunuchs. On one level this is a manifestation of the never-ending struggle between court and bureaucratic authority. But it was also vitally important in the sense that whether or not they were actually useful for perpetuating the interests of the monarch, his use of eunuchs was often extremely damaging to morale and undermined literati faith in the government. Anyone reading contemporary Ming documents cannot help but become aware of this fact, particularly given that the vast majority of the surviving sources were compiled from the literati point of view.

In terms of the decision-making process itself, court conferences typically involved the emperor; the heads of the Six Ministries of Personnel, Revenue,

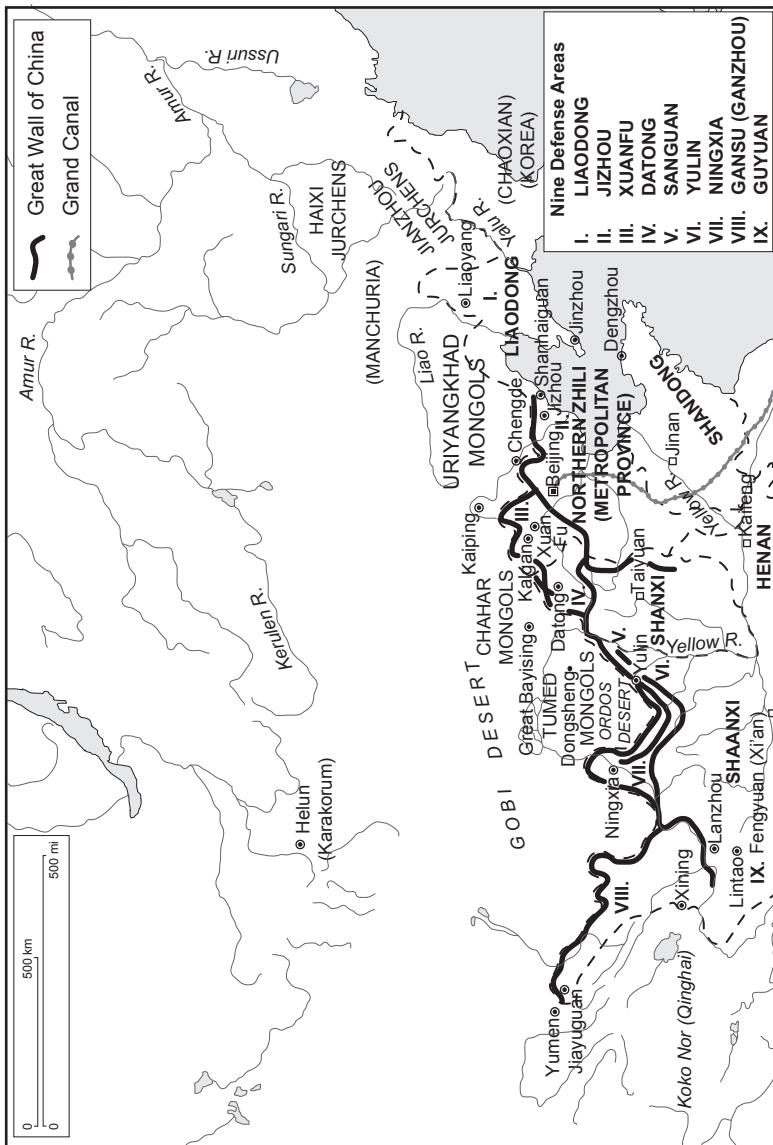
Rites, War, Justice, and Public Works; the head of the Censorate (a watch dog branch of government akin to an internal affairs board); the head of the Grand Court of Revision; the supervising secretaries and investigating censors.<sup>175</sup> Sometimes supreme military commanders, military affairs commissioners or others entrusted with specific sweeping responsibilities would be invited to such conferences. Officials typically presented their views before the emperor, who could offer input as was his wont. Many monarchs said little or nothing at these deliberations, but some, such as Chongzhen, were regular active participants. The amount of imperial input also varied by individual. Policies deriving from such meetings would be promulgated by the throne and disseminated by eunuch offices or the appropriate ministries and issued in any number of official commands or orders. Results were often published in a sort of official newspaper that circulated around the realm known as the *Capital Gazette* (*jingbao*). This was ostensibly for public consumption, but occasionally secret or otherwise scandalous materials found their way into its pages, offering a great glimpse into the pulse of late Ming political life. For example, in the last emperor's reign the monarch was embarrassed when a letter in his hand discussing secret peace talks with the Manchus was accidentally published in the gazette. The emperor pinned the talks solely on his Minister of War, Chen Xinjia, who publicly challenged Chongzhen's version of events. He was executed for his temerity.<sup>176</sup>

With respect to the decision-making process, it typically took place in multiple stages and at multiple levels. The first level was the gathering of intelligence from as many quarters as possible. The second stage involved appraisal by local officials. Then recommendations from officials at all levels of the administrative hierarchy were solicited. In theory any official at any level of government had the right to memorialize the emperor about anything and in practice a fair number did so, meaning that it was easy for the monarch to be buried in an avalanche of paperwork. Hence the need for a veritable army of assistants, including eunuchs. The next stage involved arriving at a judgment for action in a court conference or wider meeting of officials taking into account all available information, the context, and precedents. Finally a decision was rendered by the emperor or his designated agent. Officials often voted on courses of action, making the system a blend of consensus and autocracy.

Returning to the situation at hand, as the new monarch's first full year on the throne dawned, winds bringing red dust blew over the capital, once more suggesting impending doom.<sup>177</sup> In Liaoyang even amid heavy winter snows, the wells allegedly turned blood red.<sup>178</sup> Nonetheless the emperor issued a spate of new appointments and the court readied for a more activist position in the northeast. They would have the chance to implement Yuan's strategy sooner than they might have wished.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of 1621 the Jin took the Ming fortress of Fengibao, some 45 *li* east of Shenyang. It was under the command of the Ming general Li Bingchen. Nurhaci led eight columns against it and Li resisted with some two hundred troops, sallying forth from the city to meet the enemy on open ground. They were

dislodged by troops from the fourth banner, and fell back to the city with the Jin in hot pursuit. They managed to kill one Jin officer with cannon fire and Nurhaci pulled back out of range. That night his spies killed a pair of Ming scouts. When the Ming came out again the next day they were broken by the Jin and all 2,000 troops scattered in defeat. The Jin advanced to Huangshan next, putting another Ming commander to the run.<sup>179</sup> Their proposed capital of Shenyang was within reach.



Adapted from Mote, *Imperial China 900–1800*.

*Figure 2.1* Map of Ming dynasty's northern borders

## 2    **Changing tides: From defeat to stability in the northeast, 1622–6**

### **The battle of Liao-Shen**

It was somewhat ironic that the removal of Xiong Tingbi and the appointment of a more aggressive commander facilitated Nurhaci's attacks on Liaoyang and Shenyang. For as the reader will recall, Xiong was dubious about trying to hold Shenyang because he felt that it was undermanned. But his defensive strategy of the previous year had served to stabilize the situation and stymie Nurhaci's designs on these cities for the time being. However with the defeat of the Yehe and the acquisition of yet more troops and captives, the pressure was increasing on the Jin khan to find a more suitable capital for his swelling population. His threatening moves against the Bei Guan tribe to the north worried Ming officials further.<sup>1</sup> Their fears were realized in the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of 1621 as the Jin seized various forts and towns around Liaoyang and Shenyang as described in the previous chapter.

The Jin attacked Shenyang on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of 1621, choosing to hit the city before winter had broken. Nurhaci was personally in charge of the army, which possessed siege equipment and military and supply carts. The Jin erected defenses some seven *li* east of the city along the banks of the Hun River. Their campfires lit up the night sky and alerted the residents of the city to their peril. Shenyang was defended by He Shixian and You Shigong, two of the Ming commanders who had enjoyed limited success against the Jin. He directed the city's defenders in digging moats and erecting palisades. He also had small firearms and cannon and went about deploying them. Not wanting to challenge Ming firepower head on, the Jin strategy was to raid and loot the outskirts of the city in order to lure the Ming out to fight on ground that better suited them. The tactic eventually worked as the overly brave (and reportedly drunk) He Shixian led some 1,000 men in a sally to smash Nurhaci.<sup>2</sup> Subordinates urged caution to no avail.

He found himself surrounded by the Jin forces and he made a fighting withdrawal towards the west gate of the city. Some urged He Shixian to flee to Liaoyang, but he allegedly said, "How can I as the general not remain to defend the city?"<sup>3</sup> But he was pierced by four arrows and fell in battle. You Shigong tried to save him but his troops broke and he died in the fray. With his death the city's

defenses collapsed as the Jin scaled the walls with their siege ladders.<sup>4</sup> A Ming relief column was intercepted at the Hun River, with Nurhaci himself leading the Jin forces.<sup>5</sup> Ming commander Chen Ce tried to move forward with heavily armored pike-wielding infantry, but was flanked by the Jin cavalry, who drove them back into the river where many drowned.<sup>6</sup> More Ming troops regrouped, however, and 1,000 moved to engage 200 forward Jin troops, which pulled back. Fearing that his lines might collapse, Nurhaci rallied them. His son Daisan and others defeated another Ming column, killing 3,000 and chasing them for 40 *li*.<sup>7</sup> Returning to Shenyang, the Jin camped outside the city the first night, entering it the next day, where Nurhaci rewarded his followers.

Nurhaci then told his close Jurchen noble advisers (*beile*) that they had to keep the momentum going, as a relief force of some 50,000 was en route. The *beile* led the Jin force against the left wing of the Ming army, which fired its guns first. They managed to get inside before the Ming could reload and collapsed that wing, then swept in from the other side to create a pincer. They scattered the Ming army and chased them for some 60 *li* before encountering another force dispatched from Liaoyang that they also drove back.

This battle was significant in that it marked the first time that Nurhaci had captured a significant walled city. His other victories had been against small fortresses and market towns. This also paved the way for the capture of Liaoyang, which served as the springboard for Jin control of the whole region. Indeed, Liaoyang was viewed as the lynchpin of Ming defenses by both Xiong Tingbi and Yuan Yingtai. They had bolstered its defenses, deployed heavy firearms on its walls, and brought in new troops.<sup>8</sup>

The Jin attacked Liaoyang shortly thereafter, where Yuan Yingtai was in command. Again camping a couple miles outside the city, Nurhaci directed one column to cut off the water supply and another to begin sapping the east wall. Four Banners were detailed to intercept Ming relief units. He then personally directed units to build siege works, prompting some 30,000 Ming troops to come forth where they arrayed their own lines and fired guns and catapults. The Sichuanese troops put up the stoutest defense, forcing Li Yongfang to turn captured cannon on their positions. The Zhejiang troops also acquitted themselves well until they ran out of ammunition.<sup>9</sup> The Jin left wing then tried to take the bridge leading into the city. They advanced steadily behind shield carts towards the east gate, sustaining withering Ming fire, but they refused to retreat. Some 1,000 troops of the White Banner were the first to get in, driving the Ming cavalry back towards the city. Ming corpses eventually piled up so much that they filled the moat and the water turned crimson.<sup>10</sup> By this time the Jin left wing had taken the Wujing Gate and cut the bridge, thereby severing Ming troops outside the city from the defenders within. They began crossing the moat with floating bridges, demonstrating the sophistication of their siegeworks. A relief corps from Shandong arrived but they were turned back by the Jin.<sup>11</sup>

Nonetheless the defenders kept up a steady barrage, raining fire arrows and flaming earthenware pots on the assailants.<sup>12</sup> As two walls fell simultaneously, people panicked and fled. Many were caught between the armies and died in the

moats. Nurhaci pulled back briefly and the Ming rallied their defenses. Some Ming officials fled in the night but others continued the fight the next day. Yuan Yingtai died then, setting fire to the tower from which he was directing the battle when he saw the Banner troops breaching the walls. To his credit Yuan did personally lead the troops in battle the first day. And it was not his fault that a Jin cannon shot ignited Ming powder stores, adding to the confusion.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, his erstwhile Mongol allies who were present did not fight but rather looted some supplies and fled.<sup>14</sup> Following Yuan, several other Ming officers and their wives also committed suicide.<sup>15</sup> Others allegedly welcomed the victors and burned incense, shouting *wansui* (long life)!<sup>16</sup>

The Jin then moved to occupy all the forts east of the Liao River, taking altogether 70 fortified towns, garrisons, and advance bases and obtaining the surrender of many more people.<sup>17</sup> Supposedly some 70,000 Ming soldiers died in these two battles. Southern reinforcements came in too late to save the cities but allegedly killed two to three thousand Jin troops. The Ming fared better in a few other skirmishes but then had to cede defeat when they ran out of gunpowder.<sup>18</sup> With these victories came more Mongol defectors to the Jin cause. A confident Nurhaci then sent letters to the Korean king pressuring him to renounce his allegiance to the Ming and demanding that he turn over Liao refugees.<sup>19</sup> In a magnanimous gesture some Ming officials who had been jailed for resisting the Jin attack on Liaoyang were freed and restored to their former ranks in the service of the Jin. Nurhaci also ordered his troops to cease and desist from looting the homes of commoners. In the fourth month of 1621 the Jin capital was officially transferred to Liaoyang. Nurhaci announced to his nobles that once power was consolidated in Liao-Shen the Jin would renew their assault on the Ming.<sup>20</sup> He held a great victory feast three months later in his new capital.<sup>21</sup> Nurhaci bestowed rewards on his loyal followers and attacked the deceased Wanli emperor, saying that he had provoked the Jin into acting in self-defense.<sup>22</sup>

The Jin propaganda campaign was well under way already as the empire grew in the northeast. On a more practical level Nurhaci tried to attract settlers by opening markets and strictly prohibiting his men from abusing ordinary Han subjects.<sup>23</sup> He wanted people to think of themselves as subjects of the Jin, rather than of the Ming. To this end he initiated a variety of new laws, taxes, and administrative practices, stressing that the laws were designed to protect all, including Han Chinese.<sup>24</sup> He also found no shortage of Han officials and merchants willing to deal in weapons and supplies.<sup>25</sup> He also sought to gather artisans to his realm, following a practice that dated back to his tenure as ruler in Hetu Ala.<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile the Ming court was again left searching for answers. The modern scholars Sun Wenliang and Li Zhiting have identified five major reasons for the Ming defeat in the battles of Shenyang and Liaoyang. First, as noted above, Yuan Yingtai lacked practical military experience. Second, there was a general lack of coordination and resolve on the part of Ming officials. Third, Ming soldiers tended to abandon fortified positions too fast, fleeing as soon as it seemed a wall was to be breached or even before. Fourth and related to the previous point, a

lack of discipline in the ranks meant that many fled at the first sign of pressure. This was due in part to the general decline in rotational training practices. Earlier in the Ming it had been standard practice for troops to rotate through Beijing for standardized drilling exercises which included firearms training.<sup>27</sup> Finally, many surrendered to the Jin, bringing valuable skills and resources with them, gradually tipping the military balance in the favor of the Jin.<sup>28</sup>

At this juncture a Ming censor addressed the Ministry of War, saying the problem was that the empire had been too long at peace and it was imperative that the empire recruit heroes from the forests, mountains, fields, and marshes to uncover those of martial talent to match the enemy and deal with the mounting threats along the borders.<sup>29</sup> The court also moved to improve the training of the capital armies, bringing in drill instructors. In the summer Xue Guoyong was made Vice Minister of War and *jinglue* of Liaodong. Wang Huazhen was made Vice Censor-in-Chief of the Right and Touring Pacification Commissioner (*xunfu*) of Guangning.<sup>30</sup> This would initiate the unfortunate practice of the Ming court making appointments with nebulous overlapping responsibilities. Such a practice was due in part to the factionalism that prevailed at the Ming court as well as to the desire to have both civil and military officials in the field. But difficulties were compounded by the fact that high-ranking officials usually sought to put their own favorites into subordinate positions. These individuals would then in turn compete at all levels of the bureaucracy for precious resources and/or seek to implement frequently countervailing strategies in the field. In the absence of a strong imperial hand, gridlock was most often the result. Such was the case here. Xue appears to have advocated no particular policy, but seems to have favored a defensive strategy. Not unlike Yuan Yingtai, Wang favored a much more aggressive posture towards the Jin, in particular a combination of land and sea operations. Meanwhile, at the tactical level mercenaries were recruited from all across north and central China.<sup>31</sup>

The war in Liaodong was already having serious social ramifications. Tens of thousands of soldiers, commoners, merchants, and officials fled west seeking Ming protection, despite Nurhaci's promises of fair treatment. Another 34,000 or so fled to the islands and coastal districts of Shandong province, located across the Gulf of Bohai from the Liaodong peninsula. Local officials there complained about the unrest that followed in their wake. The Liaodong folk were regarded as shifty and untrustworthy and their influx taxed already thinly stretched resources and exacerbated existing social tensions. Others fled to offshore islands in the gulf or into Korea.<sup>32</sup> But even these often proved to be ill-chosen refuges as Ming troops sent to hold the islands sometimes committed acts of rape and plunder against the refugees.<sup>33</sup>

The Ming court tried to devise a new defense strategy, trying to ascertain where they should hold the line. Most officials thought that the west bank of the Liao River at the very least should be held. Thus the city of Guangning became the centerpiece of the new Ming defense strategy. And surprisingly enough, Xiong Tingbi was recalled to service.<sup>34</sup> Xiong reiterated his plan of emphasizing the defense of Liaoxi then gradually recovering the rest of Manchuria in three

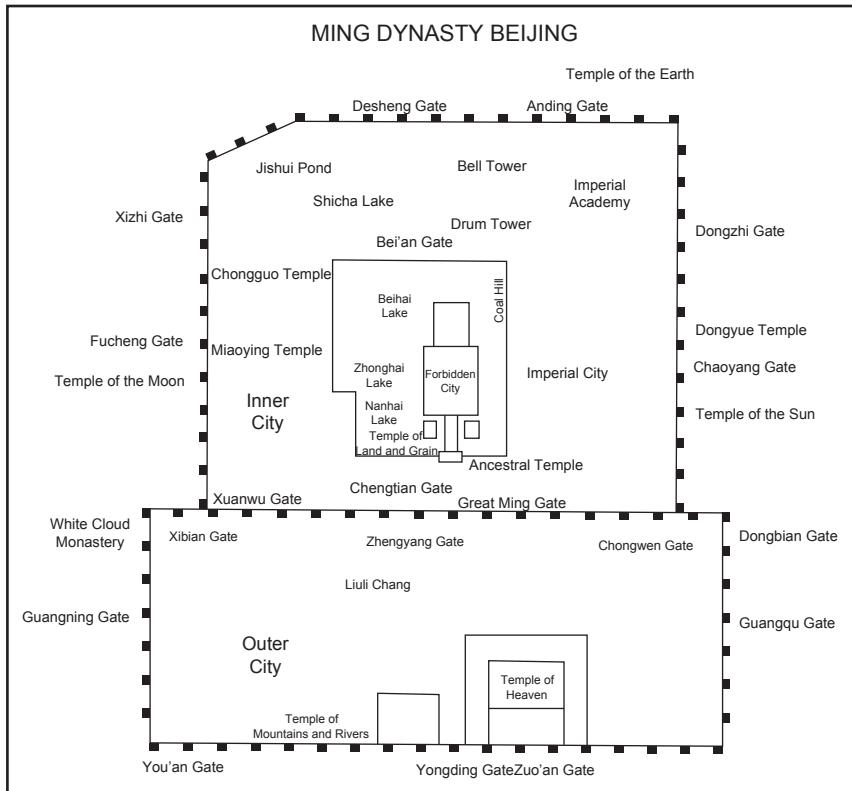
stages.<sup>35</sup> Guangning would be the center of the Ming defense line with fortifications bolstered along the Sancha River. Probing operations would be launched to test Jin strength. Boats would be readied at Denglai, Tianjin and other points in the northeast to launch both offensive and naval relief operations. Finally, a military affairs commissioner (*jinglue*) would be posted at Shanhaiguan to coordinate all activities.<sup>36</sup> Efforts would also be made to coordinate activities with the Koreans.

Xiong wanted some 300,000 troops to execute his plan. The court estimated that they could pull 260,000 together at this point, 120,000 of whom would be posted at Guangning. But supplies were short and money was sent instead. Xiong also received 214,060 catties of gunpowder, but as was the case in his previous tenure (and like military commanders everywhere) he always complained about his lack of supplies and funds.<sup>37</sup> Xiong's abrasive personality caused him additional problems as he had trouble working with Wang Zaijin, who had oversight of delivering weapons and supplies and was in charge of coordinating support efforts through the Ministries of Revenue, War, and Public Works. Wang Huazhen made matters worse by dispersing the troops sent forth to garrison multiple sites rather than concentrating the bulk at Guangning. This would have consequences the next year when the Jin took Fort Xiping as help was too far away to save it.

In the meantime Nurhaci's spies were working to find ways to breach Guangning's defenses and take it before the Ming reinforced it. But the Jin were hampered by their lack of boats. When Li Yongfang finally assembled enough to chance an attack, it was scrapped because of rumors that Wang Huazhen's Mongol allies were in the area. Again we see the importance of proper intelligence playing a major role, something officials on the Ming side often complained was lacking among their own commanders.<sup>38</sup> And of course there was the fact that the highest-ranking Ming commanders themselves presented countervailing opinions and interpretations, frustrating the ability of those at court to make informed decisions.<sup>39</sup> In this respect Nurhaci, being in the field with direct command of many of his troops, held a distinct advantage over the secluded, mentally deficient Tianqi emperor.

## The rise of Mao Wenlong

In the wake of the Ming defeats in the spring and summer of 1621, among the few bright spots for the Ming were the military exploits of Mao Wenlong, a swordsman and adventurer who established a base of operations on Pidao, an island near the mouth of the Yalu River, the Ming border with Korea. From this base Mao launched a series of daring raids into Latter Jin territory, some in conjunction with Korean units, prompting Jin incursions into Korea to extricate him. Mao's successes, however, amplified by his own dubious claims, prompted some Ming officials to advocate for a more aggressive forward policy with respect to meeting the Jin threat. Other officials favored a more defensive approach while still others called for a mixture of offensive and defensive strategies. Thus Mao became a lynchpin figure for the major strategic debates at the Ming court.



*Figure 2.2* Map of Ming dynasty Beijing

Leading a mere 197 men in four boats, Mao decided to strike at Fort Zhenjiang, which was located near the mouth of the Yalu River. Capturing this location had considerable strategic significance for it would allow the Ming to keep their lines of communication open with their Korean allies and provide a landward base from which a destabilizing strike deep into the heart of Jin territory could be launched.<sup>40</sup> It was also relatively easy to supply by sea, provided the Ming retained control of the sea lanes, which was not a problem as of this juncture, the Jin having no naval forces of their own. Mao therefore endeavored to attack and take this critical point in order to help effect a Ming restoration of authority in the region. Indeed, the Bohai region had proved a critical supply lane in the Sino-Korean war efforts against the Japanese in the 1590s, so it is no surprise that officials again recognized the importance of controlling this area for joint operations against the Jin.<sup>41</sup>

However, there was dissent at the Ming court over what the best plan of action might be. Part of the problem was that Xiong Tingbi and Wang Huazhen were like “fire and water” in their approach to defending Guangning and its environs.<sup>42</sup> As noted above, believing that the Ming were not in a position to launch a serious

offensive against the Jin at this time, Xiong still advocated a measured “three-pronged advance” stratagem that might make use of both land and naval forces, extending out from Guangning and eventually linking up with Korean units and those who had fled from the Jin into Korea or southern Liaodong.<sup>43</sup> Wang favored a more aggressive posture towards the Jin, one that included the use of significant numbers of Mongol mercenaries, in addition to Korean units and regular Ming forces, recalling the plans of Yuan Yingtai.<sup>44</sup> This immediately put Wang at loggerheads with Xiong Tingbi, who though admittedly much more cautious in his approach, also had far more practical military experience than Wang, who had only been serving as an official in the Ministry of Revenue for seven years.<sup>45</sup>

Wang, however, was saying what the court wanted to hear. Wang’s plans were given the go ahead and he was allowed to unleash Mao Wenlong, whom Xiong Tingbi distrusted as a reckless agitator.<sup>46</sup> Other court officials supported Wang’s aggressive strategy and called for 30,000 to 50,000 troops to be sent by sea from Shandong and its environs to sweep through Liaodong from the south. It was estimated that these units could be bolstered by Liao refugees and once Zhenjiang was secured, then additional forces from Korea could augment those of the Ming. Liaodong would be retaken in no time, as spies would be dispatched into Jurchen lands to determine their weaknesses and troop dispensations. Xiong urged caution, thinking it was too early for Mao to act, but Wang Huazhen argued that he already had 400,000 Mongol auxiliaries ready to go so now was the time to act.<sup>47</sup>

According to his own account, Mao first landed on Zhudao (Pig Island). The locals scattered and Mao was able to recover some twenty livestock for distribution among his followers. Once ensconced on the island, Mao issued a call for heroes (*haojie*) and offered to enroll them in regular Ming army ranks.<sup>48</sup> Mao then established contact with people inside the fortress at Zhenjiang, setting up a signaling system and planning an attack. Mao’s force crept ashore and stole through the wilderness in the middle of the night, attacking the city under cover of darkness by feigning an attack on one gate while concentrating on attacking another. With the assistance of fifth columnists within the fortress, it was taken and the Jin were forced to flee. Mao claimed to have obtained the surrender of myriad enemy troops, but Korean records suggest that most of those who surrendered to Mao were in fact impoverished commoners and that Mao only killed a few dozen enemy soldiers.<sup>49</sup> According to Mao, the hopelessly outnumbered Zhenjiang garrison then repulsed a Jin counterattack of some thousand troops. Though the mood was celebratory, Mao’s officers feared that more Jin troops would be coming soon and that they might be in danger of being surrounded. Subsequent skirmishes resulted in heavy casualties on the Jin side in particular, as the Ming brought their superior firepower to bear, but Mao’s forces were continually outnumbered, despite the fact that he had allegedly obtained the surrender of commoners and soldiers formerly in the service of the Jin.<sup>50</sup> More skirmishes continued through the end of 1621, but fearing a massive Jin counter-attack, Mao decided to pull back to Pidao. In the wake of Mao’s retreat, Nurhaci descended upon Zhenjiang and torched the place, dislodging more refugees into Korea.

While Mao's victory was not a major one, observers at the time and later scholars have noted its wide-ranging implications. Likening Mao's activities to building "an overseas Great Wall," Teng Shaozhen identifies three major repercussions of Mao's actions. First, the operation started the mobilization of locals by the Ming in defense against the Jin as well as the dislocation of people in Liaodong that was a key feature of the Jin–Ming struggle. Next, it signaled the rise of semi-independent military figures in the Bohai Gulf region. And finally it shook the confidence of the Latter Jin and prompted a shift in their approach to the northeast.<sup>51</sup> In the longer view these conflicts provided valuable experience for Mao's subordinates like Kong Youde, who would play larger roles later.

Given what had happened, Xiong Tingbi thought that Mao's victory was a curious triumph indeed, if it could even be called a victory at all.<sup>52</sup> But the Ming court was frantic for positive news from the front and Mao's daring attack gave them something they could latch onto. Many saw Mao's victory as a validation of Wang Huazhen's aggressive strategy and believed that the Ming were now poised to disperse Jin strength and launch a recovery operation for all of Liaodong. Accordingly Mao Wenlong was promoted to the post of Commander of Dongjiang (*zongbing guan*) and was ordered to coordinate attacks on the Jin rear with the Koreans so that the Jin could not direct all their attention towards fighting the Ming in the west.<sup>53</sup> It was hoped that some 8,000 naval units from Fujian and Zhejiang could be sent to Mao for diversionary actions, but Mao asked for 50,000 troops, arguing that in conjunction with Korean and Mongol units, a force of this size, could, in tandem with another Ming force from the west, catch the Jin in a deadly vise and crush them once and for all.<sup>54</sup>

From the start it appears that Mao did not view himself as a subordinate player in the war against the Jin. As soon as he established himself on Pidao, citing the large numbers of troops and refugees he had to feed, Mao endeavored to attract traders and merchants from all over the Bohai region to his redoubt, thereby establishing himself as somewhat of an independent "sea king" (*hai wang*) in the eyes of the Koreans in particular.<sup>55</sup> For his part, Mao maintained that any serious effort at recovering Liaodong needed to commence from the islands since they afforded the Ming units a measure of safety. Drawing upon lessons from the ancient military classics Mao said that relying on defending Guangning was an example of orthodox strategy, whereas launching a naval assault from Denglai and Tianjin via Pidao would be unorthodox. Using both strategies together (i.e. land and sea assaults) would be better still.<sup>56</sup> Mao boasted that he could probably recapture all of Liaodong with just 40,000 troops. These boasts aside, that he was recognized as a threat by the Jin is evidenced by the fact that as early as 1624, Mao was contacted by agents of Nurhaci, who was hoping to strike a deal with the Ming commander.<sup>57</sup>

## Trouble in the southwest

Even as the Ming were scrambling to stabilize the northeastern frontier, one of the largest and bloodiest domestic uprisings in the history of the dynasty broke

out in the southwest. This rebellion, known to history as the She-An Rebellion for the surnames of its two primary leaders, formally erupted in the 9<sup>th</sup> month of 1621 and was actually connected to central government requests for troops and supplies for the Liaodong frontier. A hereditary aboriginal official named She Chongming, who had recently been involved in a succession dispute that necessitated Ming intervention, originally agreed to send 30,000 piculs of grain and 20,000 troops to Liaodong. But when he showed up with a retinue of 80,000 at the provincial capital in Chongqing (hoping to be paid and supplied for such a number), the local governor ordered all but essential military personnel back to their home base and refused to provide food for them.<sup>58</sup> So they stormed the governor's home, killed him and other officials on the scene and started looting Chongqing. She proclaimed himself the King of Shu (an ancient designation for Sichuan) and his forces soon overran large swathes of the province. They then poured into neighboring Guizhou, capturing dozens of forts and towns and besieging the Sichuanese city of Chengdu unsuccessfully for 102 days.<sup>59</sup> Chongqing was recovered by government forces the next month.<sup>60</sup>

Following She's lead, another aboriginal official named An Bangyan tried to get out of payment pledges for Liaodong by sending troops instead. When the Ming rejected his request he rebelled "in order to reclaim his ancestors' glory" and made overtures to She Chongming.<sup>61</sup> The pair then rallied other indigenous elements and marched on the important city of Guiyang in Guizhou province with an army of 300,000. They would besiege the city for 296 days. But despite being outnumbered 300,000 to just 5,000 the defenders held out because the aboriginal troops attacked just one gate at a time. When they eventually tried to starve the defenders out the latter resorted to killing and eating people by lots, even consuming them atop the city gates to show the attackers their resolve!<sup>62</sup> The siege of Guiyang was finally lifted on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month of 1622, as An Bangyan retreated into the mountains and feigned surrender, only to assassinate a provincial governor at a proposed truce meeting.<sup>63</sup> Supposedly barely 200 defenders survived the siege of Guiyang.<sup>64</sup>

The She-An Rebellion picked up steam again in the spring of 1623 when a Ming relief column comprised largely of local allies was ambushed and nearly 40,000 were killed.<sup>65</sup> So now the commander on the scene asked for 200,000 more troops and three million taels in supplies to be rushed in from all over the empire.<sup>66</sup> Reports from later in the year indicated that government forces were killing lots of rebels in terms of numbers, but making little progress in actually stopping the uprising. Such reports were eerie harbingers of later government campaigns to crush the peasant rebels. For example, the rebels slipped through Ming hands in one clash despite official claims of 18,000 killed.<sup>67</sup> Government forces finally pulled back due to lack of supplies. As of 1625 government forces claimed about 27,500 killed, over 10,000 captured, over 300,000 freed POWs, and thousands of weapons and livestock recovered, yet the rebellion persisted.<sup>68</sup> Matters would see-saw back and forth in the southwest until the two leaders were killed on the battlefield in the 8<sup>th</sup> month of 1629. The Ming then burned their way into An Bangyan's realm until they obtained the surrender of his nephew.<sup>69</sup>

All told, to crush the rebellion the Ming mobilized around a million troops, spent 35 million taels of silver (12,000/day), and consumed a whopping two billion *shi* (piculs) of grain.<sup>70</sup> On the one hand the ability of the Ming government to finally crush the uprising is a testament to the empire's continued military prowess and the skill of its commanders, but on the other hand the fact that the rebellion festered for so long is an indication of the general level of resentment and dissatisfaction with Ming rule in the southwest. And looking at the bigger picture the Ming was forced to expend precious resources in the southwest that could have been allocated to the Liaodong theater of operations or to famine relief and public works in other corners of the realm. Certainly one thing that jumps out at the modern researcher when considering the military collapse of the Ming is the sheer scale and complexity of the threats the dynasty faced. When even regional events could morph into uprisings of the scale just discussed, it is truly remarkable that the Ming survived as long as it did and managed to quell so many of the challenges.

## **The fall of Guangning**

Returning to the northeast, other developments soon served to give Mao Wenlong the freedom of action he desired. In the interior Wang Huazhen had initially ordered one of his Mongol allies to attempt to lure the Jurchens into an ambush, though this plan was nixed by Ming secretaries at court. In the meantime Ming forces at Fort Xiping managed to repulse a Jin assault with cannon fire. Perhaps emboldened by this minor success Wang then appointed one of his favorites the leader of a strike force against the Jurchens over the originally designated commander, one Sun Degong.<sup>71</sup> With Sun predicting disaster, his replacement was routed in the field and Fort Xiping was lost to the turncoat commander Li Yongfang, thereby opening the approach to Guangning.<sup>72</sup>

Fort Xiping, west of the Liu River, was defended by the commander Luo Yiguan. Again, aggressiveness hurt the Ming. Luo wanted to hold the city but one of his subordinates insisted on going forth to engage the enemy. He was defeated and fell back to the fortress. Luo defended the city stoutly with artillery and inflicted heavy casualties, refusing offers to surrender from none other than Li Yongfang, whom Luo cursed as a traitor.<sup>73</sup> So many attackers died that their bodies reached the top of the walls. Luo himself supposedly could no longer wield his bow at one point because blood was streaming into his eyes.<sup>74</sup> But as he ran out of gunpowder and ammunition Luo bowed towards Beijing and said, "Your minister has exhausted himself," before slitting his throat.<sup>75</sup> The whole garrison of 3,000 was slaughtered though they supposedly took twice that number of Jin troops with them. Xiong Tingbi was irate at Wang Huazhen's inability to hold Xiping, asking, "Where has all your big talk of peacetime gone?"<sup>76</sup> In fact some 30,000 relief troops were dispatched late but they were intercepted and routed by Nurhaci, who killed perhaps a third of them.

For his part, Sun Degong had already cut a deal with Nurhaci to turn over Guangning but the Jin khan did not completely trust him.<sup>77</sup> When Sun returned

to Guangning after the fall of Xiping the people were frightened and he fanned their fears. Meanwhile, Wang's erstwhile Mongol allies also looted and plundered indiscriminately. This played right into Sun's hands and he was able to turn the nearly empty city of Guangning, where Wang Huazhen had previously been stationed, over to Nurhaci, including its precious stores of gunpowder. Outside of Guangning the common folk allegedly burned incense and welcomed their new masters.<sup>78</sup> Later that month Nurhaci held a banquet at Guangning where he bestowed more rewards on his followers, including potential Mongol allies.

Wang then fled to the outskirts of Dalinghe, where he encountered Xiong Tingbi, who chided him, "You said you could completely pacify Liao with 60,000 troops so what happened?"<sup>79</sup> Embarrassed, Wang admitted that Xiong's strategy had been better. But now Xiong realized that matters were so dire even his strategy had to be revised. They quickly fell back further, Xiong sending 5,000 of his troops with Wang and ordering a scorched earth policy to cover their retreat and deny the Jin supplies.<sup>80</sup> Wang Huazhen retreated through Shanhaiguan, his own forces taking those of Xiong Tingbi with them. Most other local commanders abandoned their posts and it seemed as if the Ming were willing to abandon everything outside the Great Wall. Supposedly some 100,000 refugees streamed through the pass creating still more difficulties for officials in the region.<sup>81</sup>

The Jin princes Daisan and Hung Taiji took Yizhou after a fierce eight-hour battle, killing its entire garrison of 3,000.<sup>82</sup> The Ming commander Zu Dashou then retreated to Juehua Island. Sun Degong was made a mobile corps commander and attached to the White Banner.<sup>83</sup> Sun then led other ex-Ming units to garrison Yizhou. Nurhaci returned to Liaoyang shortly thereafter, having acquired another stepping stone and earning his first major victory in Liaoxi. On the Ming side the loss of Guangning seriously undermined plans for a recovery of Liaodong due to its central location.<sup>84</sup> Though vigorous court debates ensued, both Wang and Xiong were impeached and both were eventually executed, though for a while Xiong retained his rank and Wang's supporters managed to keep him alive until 1632.<sup>85</sup> Many felt that Xiong in particular was a hapless victim of the machinations of the so-called "eunuch party" then ascendant at the Ming court, and while there may have been some truth to this, the fact remains that Xiong had made plenty of enemies over the years and in the end he lacked enough powerful friends to save him. On the other hand, the practice of killing prominent and often competent ministers would remain the case for the rest of the dynasty, contributing much to the state's downfall.<sup>86</sup>

Curiously, however, rather than utterly discrediting Wang's Liaodong recovery policy, the defeat at Guangning convinced many at court of the necessity of having a second front open to distract the Jin. Mao Wenlong's position was thereby strengthened and in the 6<sup>th</sup> month of 1622 he was appointed the Commander-in-charge of Pacifying Liao and instructed to cooperate with the new *jinglue*, Sun Chengzong.<sup>87</sup> Sun was an enthusiastic proponent of civilian control over the military but he also recognized the value of cooperation. He also had the ear of the young, impressionable monarch. Sun recommended the appointments of several men, including Sun Yuanhua and Yuan Chonghuan, who would play

major roles in the coming years and who happened to be enthusiastic proponents of Western military technology.

For his part Sun Chengzong created yet another detailed plan for strengthening and expanding the Ming defense perimeter.<sup>88</sup> Like Xiong Tingbi, he favored a generally defensive approach, but at least some of his subordinates were more aggressive and argued for maintaining advance bases to harass and distract the Jin. Sun cautioned that the court should not overemphasize minor defeats and victories but rather keep up a stout defense and calmly move forward towards victory.<sup>89</sup> The problem, according to Sun, was that officials with no knowledge of military matters had been allowed to dominate things. What was needed was an experienced general who could adopt a defensive posture and prevent the enemy from making further inroads. The first thing needed was additional training and the establishment of defensive preparations. To this end a vigorous official named Yuan Chonghuan was made Inspector of the Army at Shanhaiguan.<sup>90</sup>

Officials were regularly dispatched to inspect the state of defenses. Ningyuan, located southwest of Guangning, would be the new advance base and walls would be extended out from Shanhaiguan to reach that city. Moreover, officials were to take special steps to secure the locals and stabilize the region so as to provide support for the army and win back hearts and minds. And perhaps even more interestingly the Ming defeats initiated a renewed interest in developing and deploying superior military technologies to equalize the playing field with the Jurchens. Over the first four years of hostilities it had become obvious that the Ming were at a distinct disadvantage in the open field. To be honest they had not fared much better in positional defense, but in most cases that was because commanders had refused to trust the strength of their positions. A new coterie of officials was about to try something a bit different.

Contrary to many stereotypes about Chinese conservatism and backwardness in the use of firearms technology, Ming rulers had long recognized the importance of firearms in warfare as force multipliers and as a way to overawe their foes.<sup>91</sup> Superior firearms had proved crucial in the successful prosecution of the Three Great Campaigns of the Wanli Emperor in the 1590s. In addition to calling for the mustering of some 130,000 additional troops to meet the Jurchen threat, the Ming court directed the Ministry of Works to construct 300 “caitiff exterminating cannon,” one thousand 100 character cannon, and approximately 7,000 three-eyed guns and bird guns (*niao chong*, which also sometimes denotes arquebuses) in addition to other weapons, armor, shields, and military carts.<sup>92</sup> It was believed that these weapons were essential to restoring the fighting spirit of the Ming. But because the new touring pacification commissioner of the region, Wang Zaijin, feared the loss of all of Liaodong, he suggested that the Ming should emphasize defending fixed strong points with heavy use of firearms.<sup>93</sup> His suggestions would be echoed by other officials, including Censor Fang Zhenru in 1622, who held that firearms in stoutly defended cities could be the key to Ming success.<sup>94</sup>

The use of overwhelming firepower to overawe foes had been standard Ming practice, especially in the previous fifty years, when the Ming state had managed to reverse more than a century of military decline by not only quelling internal

challenges but also by projecting Ming power outside the empire's formal boundaries. In the capture of both Liaoyang and Shenyang the Jin relied upon superior mobility to negate Ming firepower advantages and managed to lure the defenders out to fight in terrain that better suited the attackers. But even though there were other Jin victories in these early engagements in the 1620s, it is worth noting that in several cases even isolated Ming fortresses held out if they were properly outfitted with cannon and had sufficient stores of gunpowder.<sup>95</sup> In fact, citing images from the *Manzhou shilu*, Nicola di Cosmo argues that the Ming might well have initially deployed their cannon *outside* city walls, rendering them more open to attack and making it more difficult for the defenders to continually reload and keep up a steady fire due to lack of protection. The Jurchen cavalry had time to close after initial volleys were fired. But once the Ming altered their tactics and brought their heavy guns inside their fortresses, they were much more successful. Furthermore, even though they were successful in most of these early clashes, the Latter Jin demonstrated their awareness of the importance of firearms by issuing directives to outfit Liaodong soldiers with guns as early as 1622.<sup>96</sup>

Meanwhile, for their part, the Ming were now turning to outside sources to aid their war effort. By the 1620s, as the result of the diligent efforts of such luminaries as Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), several prominent Ming officials had converted to Catholicism. Some of these men, most notably the famous Ming officials Xu Guangqi (1562–1633), Li Zhizao (1565–1630), and Sun Yuanhua (d. 1632), used their religious contacts to procure weapons and trainers in their use for the Ming state.<sup>97</sup> Xu Guangqi pioneered these efforts, initially arranging for four padres and four guns to be sent from the Portuguese colony of Macao to Beijing in 1621.<sup>98</sup> Xu was empowered to make this request because he had just been placed in charge of training troops for fighting the Jurchens. Xu stressed that the Ming needed to manufacture large numbers of guns and use them in defensive positions, and obtaining proper guidance and training in their use was critical.<sup>99</sup> Li Zhizao wanted cannon platforms placed around the walls of Beijing and pushed for an elaborate defense and early warning system akin to the Great Wall whereby some forty cannon platforms would be arrayed around the capital, though he was dismayed when by 1630 virtually no progress had been made in this area.<sup>100</sup>

Actually the Portuguese were more valued as instructors in the art of gunnery than as casters of cannon. But because some at the Ming court distrusted the motives of the Portuguese, the priests were detained in Guangzhou and only the guns went on to Beijing.

Experts in their use arrived in the capital two years later and their expertise was valued even after one of them was killed by a recoil during a demonstration. Sun Yuanhua claimed to have trained some 8,000 men in firearms use in just three months.<sup>101</sup> As one Jesuit observed at the time, "These guns were highly esteemed and carried to the frontiers against the Tartars; who were not knowing of this new invention, and coming on many together in a close body received such a slaughter from an iron piece that they were not only put to flight at that time, but went on ever after with more caution."<sup>102</sup> Indeed the Ming court put such high stock in

firearms training that Sun Yuanhua was given a de facto promotion to the exalted rank of *jinshi* without having to take to examination because of his demonstrated skills and achievements.<sup>103</sup> Sun called for adopting Western methods of casting and deployment and urged the erection of cannon platforms and more creative use of walls for defense, though it is unclear if Sun actually recommended (or even knew about) the adoption of the so-called artillery fortress.<sup>104</sup>

With respect to technical details, there are many surviving examples of these Ming weapons in museums and private collections so it is easy enough to determine their size. Range is a different matter owing to differences in contemporary sources and among the weapons themselves, as well as quality of manufacture, type of ammunition used, and the like. But for illustrative purposes let us consider the recent research of the Chinese scholars Liu Hongliang and Sun Lin. Sun Yuanhua claimed that the largest Western-derived cannon had a range approaching twenty *li*, or nearly seven miles.<sup>105</sup> But his estimates may be based on a different calculation of the *bu*, or Chinese step, and may also have been inflated by Sun in order to obtain greater support (and hence funding) for his plans. The modern researchers believe that 5–6 *li* (2.5–3 miles) seems like a much more reasonable estimate of range. So they suggest that a 7,000-pound gun, which was about 16 feet long with a caliber of 6.5 inches, fired 32-pound shot with an effective range of around 2,000 feet (3.66 *li*) and a maximum range of 7,000 feet (12.8 *li*).<sup>106</sup> Their calculations are based on Western sources from the era.



Figure 2.3 “Bamboo” cannon

In terms of numbers the Ministry of Works claimed to have manufactured some 25,134 cannon of various calibers, along with 6,425 muskets, 8,252 small guns and 4,090 culverins between 1618 and 1622 for a total of 43,901 firearms.<sup>107</sup> They also produced large amounts of bullets, gunpowder, and saltpeter. In addition to these items they produced 98,547 polearms and swords; 26,214 great “horse decapitator” swords; 42,800 bows; 1,000 great axes; 2,284,000 arrows; 180,000 fire arrows; 64,000 bow strings, and hundreds of transports carts and the like. The ability to produce so much attests to the wealth and productivity of the empire, as well as its great need. One official estimated that costs for the Liaodong campaign alone had run to 21,188,366 taels from 1618 to 1621.<sup>108</sup> By way of comparison in the early sixteenth century the Imperial Cannon Foundry in Istanbul produced 149 cannons in nine months. In the late seventeenth century the foundry in Seville, Spain produced around 36 cannons per year, though in 1684–5 the aforementioned Imperial Foundry of the Ottomans cast 785 cannon in just 326 days.<sup>109</sup>

The Ming received 26 more cannon from the Portuguese between 1623 and 1625. Eleven of these went to Shanhaiguan. The rest, with the exception of the one that blew up (noted above) were deployed in Beijing.<sup>110</sup> Ming successes, detailed below, would prompt further requests for aid from Macao.

## Loyalist or desperado?

Seeing his role as essential, Mao Wenlong continued to press the court for more supplies, particularly foodstuffs, gunpowder, and cash to pay his soldiers, estimating he needed approximately 20–30 cash per soldier. Mao also agitated for more assistance from the Koreans.<sup>111</sup> Mao argued that superior weaponry could compensate for any shortcomings in numbers. Plus, continued Jin activities in the region were displacing ever-larger numbers of refugees. They fled into the mountains and valleys of southern Liaodong and across the Yalu into Korea. Some were brought by boat to Mao’s islands and organized into military companies.<sup>112</sup> And though the Koreans continued to question the veracity of Mao’s reports to the Ming court and his abilities as a general, it does appear that he scored some successes against the Jin. Another daring night attack on Jinzhou resulted in the recovery of 1,014 guns and cannon, 560 catties of gunpowder, and another 1,302 small cannon suitable for use on ships.<sup>113</sup> From the Ming perspective, denying such supplies to the Jin was as important as having them for their own use. In his memorial to court, Mao noted that he wanted to garrison Jinzhou, but was short on boats and supplies. After consulting with his officers, Mao deemed it most prudent to pull back to the islands rather than disperse his limited forces. This also allowed him to guard Lushun and remain in a position to strike north when the opportunity arose.<sup>114</sup>

Over the next several years, a similar pattern emerged. Mao would lead small units of guerrillas against isolated Jin fortresses or settlements, inflicting minor casualties and sometimes capturing supplies. Sometimes he briefly occupied such sites, as when he took the Korean border town of Ūiju in 1625. Other times

his operations were mere pinpricks. For example, a report from the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of 1628 indicates that Mao's men killed four and captured seven in a skirmish with the enemy near Fort Zhenjiang.<sup>115</sup> But Mao continually complained that his troops were starving and that he lacked the resources to properly carry out his directives. A report from 1628 noted that his men were surviving on fish alone and begged for more aid from the court.<sup>116</sup> Meanwhile, the Koreans continued to complain that Mao's victories were all exaggerated, even sending their own independent reports to Ming officials.<sup>117</sup> The Koreans also charged that Mao had been holding talks with Nurhaci since the mid-1620s, observing that Mao had personal ties to some of Wang Huazhen's other subordinates who had already defected to Nurhaci.<sup>118</sup>

It should be noted that the Ming were not idle on the mainland during these years either. Even as refugees streamed into Shandong from Liaodong, the court dispatched the newly appointed Minister of War Sun Chengzong to the Longwu garrison at Shanhaiguan to oversee defenses and improve training and combat readiness.<sup>119</sup> Unlike some at court, Sun did not favor a withdrawal of Ming forces all the way to Shanhaiguan. Instead he advocated using Ningyuan as the lynchpin of Ming efforts for both defending Liaodong and reconquering lost territory.<sup>120</sup> In a court audience just after he was appointed Minister of War, Sun explained that one of the empire's main problems was that "Nowadays all over the empire we emphasize military officials over civil officials. This causes trouble for the civil officials."<sup>121</sup> He added:

The frontier situation is dire. Troops have been amassed, but not trained and military supplies have not arrived. You need generals to lead the troops but civil officials to coordinate training. Generals must oversee ranks, but a civil official must determine their use. You must use military officials to defend the frontiers but every day they should consult with civil officials in their tent. So the frontier should be entrusted to a *xunfu* and a *jinglue* and the decision to attack or defend should emanate from the court.<sup>122</sup>

Falling back on a standard Ming argument, Sun worried that the number of troops in the region "would not suffice to overawe the enemy."<sup>123</sup> He also stressed that simply raising troop numbers was not enough; the mercenaries needed to be properly trained and fed. Indeed, getting them food rations was paramount, for how could they be expected to train if they had no food?<sup>124</sup> He then made a few appointments and sent a letter to the Korean king with plans for joint operations. Sun requested 200,000 taels in cash immediately, but Wei Zhongxian initially balked, citing the lack of revenues from the provinces and the continued costs of suppressing a rebellion in Sichuan. The emperor eventually acceded to the request though, and also approved another 30,000 taels for the construction of military carts.<sup>125</sup>

Debates still raged at court as to how to best deal with the Jurchen menace. Wang Zaijin, who had been Xiong Tingbi's immediate replacement as Military Affairs Commissioner of Liaodong, requested 1.2 million taels to hire Mongols

to attack the enemy from the west, despite earlier failures to do so. Wang's argument was that cultivating better relations with the Mongols was a way to buy time and "turn weakness into strength." If the frontier markets and relations with the Mongols were totally shut off then the Mongols might be provoked into attacking the Ming or joining the enemy.<sup>126</sup>

There was also a plan to erect an extra cordon of defenses just eight *li* beyond Shanhaiguan and garrison them with 40,000 more troops. But Yuan Chonghuan and another official deemed this plan too passive. Plus there were cost issues, as a mere 4,000 *zhang* of walls were projected to cost one million taels to build in addition to the manpower (and subsequent provisioning) requirements.<sup>127</sup> The emperor, however, released 200,000 taels to get started. Sun went to Shanhaiguan himself and consulted with Yuan.<sup>128</sup> They decided in favor of the more forward strategy. When their opponents still pushed the defensive strategy, Sun countered by explaining the original logic of the defense array envisioned by the early Ming emperor Yongle (r. 1403–24). He added that his goal was not merely defensive; he also wanted to recover lost territory in Liaodong.<sup>129</sup> And though some at court disliked it, proponents of the forward strategy noted that holding Ningyuan and the islands of Bohai would force the Jurchens to divide their strength and aid the Ming in keeping both land and sea supply lines open.

The Pacification Commissioner of Liaodong, Zhang Fengyi, adopted a middle position of sorts, calling for the pulling of most troops back to the Great Wall but using Ningyuan as a front gate and Guangning as a strategic throat. The cities by the sea and the islands could be used as the wings and with just 20,000 troops here the Ming could effect a reversal. Mao Wenlong could serve as the vanguard spear and by combining land and sea operations the Ming could attack both old and new fortifications. Sun Chengzong actually liked this plan.<sup>130</sup> But others argued that the Ming lacked the troop strength and firearms capability to orchestrate a full recovery of Liaodong. This did not stop them from rushing firearms to Mao Wenlong on several occasions though.<sup>131</sup>

Still, some called for using Mongol auxiliaries and even when Sun questioned their reliability, those in favor of hiring Mongols countered by saying they were actually more cost-effective than paying, feeding, training, and supplying soldiers recruited from the interior.<sup>132</sup> Since cost seemed to be a major issue Sun then unveiled his plan to "use the people of Liao to defend Liao and the soil of Liao to support the troops of Liao." He argued that the soil was in fact quite fertile, making it ideal for the establishment of military farms. So the Ming could build stockades atop key mountains and establish 13 base stations. They would recruit 100,000 Liao people for positional defense in the mountain stockades. Regular, full-time soldiers would garrison the major fortresses and be available as support and strike units, ready to engage the enemy anywhere.<sup>133</sup>

Finally, Sun's plan won out and Wang Zaijin was reassigned to Nanjing as Minister of War in the auxiliary administration.<sup>134</sup> Sun was feted by the monarch before he left Beijing and granted the double-edged sword of authority. He reached Shanhaiguan early in the 9<sup>th</sup> month of 1622. He immediately reviewed the troops, started construction projects, and implemented training programs in the



*Figure 2.4* Sun Chengzong. Taken from Sun Quan, *Gaoyang taixzhuan Sun Wengong nianpu*.

use of firearms. He consulted with Yuan Chonghuan and sent rations and supplies to General Zu Dashou on the strategically important Juehua Island. Locals were enlisted in the building projects and military rolls were carefully examined and phantom commanders and soldiers were deleted.<sup>135</sup> Brigades were reorganized into numerically much smaller, but actually real units.<sup>136</sup> Sun also recommended greatly expanding the amount of land under cultivation, recommending a ratio of 5,000 *qing* per 100,000 people to offset mounting food costs.<sup>137</sup>

Sun suggested following the methods of the famed Ming general Qi Jiguang (1528–88) in designing and repairing towers and forts. He wanted to build five new walled cities and 13 forts for protecting the people. Camps would be set up first but draft animals would be brought in and settlement encouraged to re-establish a Ming presence in the region. Pay rates would be increased to keep laborers and others from absconding.<sup>138</sup> Sun would oversee everything, assisted by Yuan Chonghuan and Lu Shanji. This idea was in accordance with broader plans for a massive expansion of the Ming *tuntian*, or agricultural farm system, which had originally been designed to feed all the troops in the empire but had declined in the ensuing centuries.<sup>139</sup> Throughout the last decades of the Ming officials put forth similar proposals to revive the system and ensure steadier food supplies for the troops but they were only haphazardly implemented. Indeed it often seemed

to be no more than a fallback position when an official could not come up with something original to say!

For a short time Sun's plans found favor and his areas of responsibility were increasingly expanded. In mid-1623 he was given additional honorific titles and the emperor sent 100,000 taels in rewards for the men in recognition of Sun's achievements in restoring discipline and order in the region. The Ministry of War was instructed to provide Sun with an additional 80 *folangji* cannons, 250 additional guns, 152 suits of armor and helmets, 1,000 spears, 400 axes, 300 crossbows with bolts, 30 bows and 3,000 arrows.<sup>140</sup> His deputy Zhao Shuaijiao earned considerable success in training Liao refugees to be soldiers. Zhao eventually amassed some 50,000 refugees, turning the strongest into soldiers and having the rest engage in animal husbandry and farming.<sup>141</sup>

But Sun was increasingly isolated at court by supporters of the eunuch Wei Zhongxian (1568–1627), and as Jin raids south of the Great Wall persisted and they managed to capture the port city of Lushun in 1625, many came to believe that positional defense and ambushes were the only viable options. The emperor also increasingly trusted only his court eunuchs and started appointing them as army inspectors, a practice his successor would also employ to deleterious effect.<sup>142</sup> Nevertheless, despite being impeached by jealous rivals, Sun continued in bolstering the defenses of Ming bases such as Dalinghe. He also called for clarifying the jurisdictions of appointees to frontier posts so as to facilitate quicker unified action in the field.<sup>143</sup> Sun's actions and efforts paved the way for the subsequent successes of Yuan Chonghuan, as well as Yuan's clash with Mao Wenlong. In his four years in office Sun captured nine major cities and 45 fortresses, trained 110,000 crack troops, established twelve new divisions of cart troops, two divisions of firearms units, and five divisions of pikemen, set up eight vanguard divisions, and oversaw the production of copious amounts of supplies and weapons.<sup>144</sup> The capital armies had also improved under Sun's tenure, with troop strength rising from just under 80,000 in 1622 to over 117,000 by 1625 and the number of horses increasing fivefold.<sup>145</sup>

## The factional strife intensifies

But Sun's successes allegedly made his rivals jealous and people at court attacked both Sun's plans and his protégés. Sun himself eventually came under fire from Wei Zhongxian and his allies, in part because Wei himself had come under intense criticism as a result of an inflammatory memorial charging him with some 24 crimes that was submitted by an official named Yang Lian.<sup>146</sup> Sun had appealed for clemency for Yang Lian, Xiong Tingbi, and Wang Huazhen, earning him further distrust.<sup>147</sup> Furthermore some of Sun's subordinates, such as Ma Shilong, were implicated in embezzlement or bribery scandals.<sup>148</sup> Against this backdrop Yang's impeachment of Wei Zhongxian resulted in a purge of the Donglin elements at court and a concomitant change in frontier strategy. Officials deemed connected to the Donglin, however tenuously, were also impeached and in many cases removed. In extreme cases they were arrested, tortured, and

executed.<sup>149</sup> Among the first directives issued to Sun Chengzong in this new climate was to pull back to Shanhaiguan and refrain from aggressive action. Under pressure Sun retired and was replaced by Gao Di towards the end of 1625.<sup>150</sup> Xu Guangqi was also dismissed, his training policies having “achieved nothing” according to his critics.<sup>151</sup>

While it is beyond the scope of the present work to discuss the factional battles of the era at length, it is worth covering them briefly to shed light on how they impacted military developments.<sup>152</sup> Part of the problem confronting modern researchers in this regard is the fact that the contemporary sources are almost universally hostile to the eunuch Wei Zhongxian and those affiliated with him. They are heavily tinged with self-righteous morality, seeking to defend their own positions and actions and discredit those of their rivals. The result has been a tendency of scholars since the late Ming to decry Wei and his allies as “a ruthless and heterodox clique that had usurped imperial authority and disrupted the processes and principles of traditional Confucian politics.”<sup>153</sup> Such charges are both inaccurate and gloss over the rather dysfunctional nature of court politics throughout Chinese history regardless of the factions in power. As noted in Chapter 1, (some) more recent scholarship has offered a more balanced appraisal of Wei and his allies and moved away from vilifying him as the source of all evil in the late Ming. Moreover, as Ulrich Mamacitsch has noted, “The factionalism of the Ming bureaucracy made it virtually impossible for individual officials to maintain a neutral position.”<sup>154</sup> In other words, rather than accepting self-designations of different groups as “pure” or “righteous” and their foes as “poisonous,” it is more useful to just recognize them as interest groups and power blocks.

Indeed, while Charles Hucker argued that the Donglin “stood for integrity and justice in government” whereas their foes “opportunistically practiced a sort of government by crony,” in fact the latter statement best represents how all factions worked.<sup>155</sup> What might otherwise seem as innocuous, such as Wei Zhongxian’s encouragement of the Tianqi emperor’s interest in archery contests and military displays, could be portrayed by Wei’s rivals as leading the monarch into frivolous behavior.<sup>156</sup> Yet from the perspective of the empire’s military situation at the time would it not seem prudent to encourage the ruler’s interest in martial matters? After all, he was the nominal commander-in-chief of the Ming armies. And the Donglin had packed the government with its own men the previous three years so the swinging of the pendulum the other direction, however bloody, is not that surprising. Furthermore, as Harry Miller notes, Wei and his allies could point to concrete achievements in stabilizing the frontier and in improving the training and readiness of the capital armies, not to mention raising funds for the army, no matter their heavy-handed tactics.<sup>157</sup>

After the retirement of Sun Chengzong, Wei Zhongxian dispatched 45 trusted men to oversee the defenses at Shanhaiguan and to take charge of the situation. Wei was criticized from multiple quarters, as was the emperor’s practice of using eunuchs to handle affairs in general.<sup>158</sup> But these complaints went unheeded and attacks against Wei intensified. The emperor finally stepped in to quell the disputes and two key officials were docked three months’ salary. Meanwhile a

*coup d'état* in Korea in 1623, caused in part by factional disputes over supporting the Ming against the Jin, had complicated matters further, though the new monarch favored support for the Ming.<sup>159</sup> Because of this the Ming eventually recognized the new ruler, King Injo (r. 1623–49).<sup>160</sup>

Influenced by the aforementioned Korean reports and by other developments, the court urged Mao to relocate his base of operations to Sanshan Island near Lushun, but Mao refused. Mao told the court that relinquishing any more territory would certainly demoralize the people and that it was imperative that multiple fronts be maintained.<sup>161</sup> Officials at court agreed, with one noting, “Although weak, Korea is still on our border and can be useful in helping us resist the Jurchens. Therefore we cannot simply abandon Korea.”<sup>162</sup> And in discussing Mao’s efforts to gather refugees in the islands, another official reasoned, “every person who returns to being a [Ming] subject is one less potential Jurchen soldier.”<sup>163</sup> Likewise if Korea fell into the orbit of the enemy they would only get that much stronger. And if they controlled the sea lanes, then they would be stronger still and only despise China more.<sup>164</sup> Therefore, they argued, Mao Wenlong had to be supported.

Some of the Ming and Korean sources suggest that Mao was protected by Wei Zhongxian and his clique at court and that as soon as Wei was ousted, plans were made to liquidate Mao.<sup>165</sup> There were also reports, later confirmed, that Mao was encouraging soldiers in his ranks to adopt his surname and consider themselves his private retainers as opposed to regular Ming troops. It is also clear that Yuan Chonghuan, who was Sun Chengzong’s successor, was becoming increasingly frustrated with Mao’s antics and lack of concrete achievements.

There was also the matter of imperial leadership. The Tianqi emperor was mentally incompetent and relied almost entirely on those around him to make virtually all decisions of any consequence. This created an atmosphere at court that was even more factionalized than was already the norm for Ming politics.<sup>166</sup> The smallest triumphs were often amplified by officials looking to curry favor with whoever was ascendant at a given moment and the smallest reversals could lead to dismissal or even death. And some officials seeking to steer clear of the dangers of factional affiliation, buried themselves in bureaucratic minutiae, concocting plans that looked good on paper but were impracticable in the extreme. Meanwhile, even the Ming’s tributary allies were increasingly feeling the pressure exerted by the rising Jurchen threat.

## Emergence of Yuan Chonghuan

According to his *Mingshi* biography, Yuan was a native of Guangdong who earned his *jinshi* degree in 1619. He was valiant, courageous, and vigorous, and liked talking about war.<sup>167</sup> After the debacles of Sarhu and Guangning, Yuan was entrusted with defending Shanhaiguan in 1622. Before he went to the front Yuan met with the imprisoned Xiong Tingbi. Xiong asked Yuan about his strategy and Yuan replied, “First defend, then fight.” This response pleased Xiong greatly and the two men spent the rest of the day discussing strategy.<sup>168</sup> Though

he initially ran foul of factions at court, Yuan said that if properly paid and given the necessary support, he alone could defend the pass.<sup>169</sup> The officials at court were suitably impressed with his bearing and Yuan was made an acting military commissioner in charge of supervising Ming armies outside the pass and given 200,000 ounces of gold floral silver with which to recruit mercenaries.<sup>170</sup> In general, with the assistance of competent military commanders such as Zu Dashou and Man Gui, Yuan was able to maintain a more aggressive stance in Liaodong and Manchuria and stem the tide of the Jin advance. Early on he even advocated advancing to Jinzhou and using it as a forward base, but he was checked by Grand Secretary Sun Chengzong. But soon thereafter in 1624, the Ming had completed the first phase of new defenses for Ningyuan.<sup>171</sup> Yuan toured the area with a force of 12,000 and thus established for the locals and the Jin alike that the Ming were serious about controlling the area.

Over the next year Sun and Yuan built up a new Ming defense line, centering on locations such as Songshan, Jinzhou, Xingshan, and Dalinghe, creating a new zone of Ming control that extended back to the Great Wall. At this juncture some at court argued that the armies should pull back, but Yuan Chonghuan vigorously protested, saying:

In the art of war you advance, not retreat. Three cities have already been recovered; we can't lightly cast them away! If these places are disturbed, everything will fall apart and we won't be able to hold the passes. Now if we select a capable general to guard them, certainly we won't need to deliberate further.<sup>172</sup>

Nonetheless, Sun Chengzong's replacement, Gao Di, was opposed to Yuan's "forward policy" and ordered Yuan to abandon these cities.<sup>173</sup> Gao's position was strengthened when another of Sun's protégés, Ma Shilong, was ambushed by the Jin at the Liu River, losing 400 men, 690 horses, and lots of equipment.<sup>174</sup> This minor defeat served as the pretext for the full-scale assault on Sun and his policies. Moreover, the Jin had completed their palace at Shenyang that year (1625) and seemed poised to strike again. Yuan flatly refused orders to withdraw, saying, "I have been entrusted with the defense of the Ningqian region. Should I need to, I'll die for it, but I certainly won't abandon it!"<sup>175</sup> Yuan then went about amassing people and supplies at Ningyuan, preparing them for a renewed Jin assault. He established some 5,000 *qing* of military farms west of Ningyuan and started building military wagons and conducting integrated training exercises.<sup>176</sup>

## **The battle of Ningyuan**

Having firmly ensconced himself in Shenyang in 1625, Nurhaci was finally ready to flex his muscles again. He had also gained confidence by virtue of the brief capture of the port city of Lushun earlier in the year.<sup>177</sup> Plus he realized that the Ming were pulling back many of their troops and Ningyuan appeared to be no more than an isolated thorn in his side. Nurhaci was also experiencing some



Figure 2.5 Cloud ladder

difficulties in the area of public relations. Despite his promises and overtures to Han residents of Liaodong, there was widespread Chinese resistance to Jurchen rule. Among other things there were incidents of Chinese poisoning wells and acting as spies on behalf of the Ming.<sup>178</sup> Part of this was due to Jurchen soldiers looting Chinese homes and enslaving ordinary Chinese. There were also isolated massacres of Chinese civilians. Economic distress and Jurchen oppression of the Chinese had led to one Chinese uprising in Liaodong and Nurhaci's policy had shifted from integration to segregation. This led to another, larger, revolt in 1625. It was hoped that a victory might facilitate more cooperation among the cowed Chinese population.

In preparation for this battle Nurhaci resolved to unveil some new tactics. Although they had won all their earlier major engagements against the Ming, the Jin had suffered heavy casualties from Ming cannons. So Nurhaci resolved to stretch treated hide over military carts. The Jin would send these carts in first to draw fire then follow with pummeling infantry and cavalry strikes in the hopes of goading the defenders into the open field.<sup>179</sup> The Jin advanced to attack Ningyuan on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month of 1626. Nurhaci initially tried to convince the defenders simply to surrender. He sent a message to Yuan Chonghuan, threatening to overrun the city with a force of 200,000.<sup>180</sup> Yuan mocked Nurhaci, replying that he knew that the khan had "only" 130,000 troops and that he had already abandoned many lands to Yuan and the Ming. He added that he and his commanders were ready to die in defending Ningyuan. Yuan also quoted an

ancient maxim stating, “Those who seek life will die, but those who welcome death will live.”<sup>181</sup>

Prior to the battle and anticipating a Jin assault, Yuan had pulled back his leading generals to Ningyuan, including Man Gui, Zu Dashou, and He Kegang, adopting the classic *jianbi qingye* (strengthen the walls and clear the fields) strategy.<sup>182</sup> In addition to ringing the city walls with great Western cannon, Yuan had torched homes around the city and destroyed anything that might be of value to the attackers.<sup>183</sup> Fujianese gunners were put on cannon detail. He also sent word to Shanhaiguan calling for reinforcements. Unlike many of his predecessors in command in the northeast, Yuan used spies and counterspies and carefully delegated authority for defending certain parts of the city. For example, one official was put in charge of rations. Man Gui was tasked with wall defenses in general.<sup>184</sup> Zu Dashou was in charge of the south gate and walls, Zhu Mei the north, and Zuo Fufen the west. Yuan had a troop strength of around 20,000 and assumed overall command responsibilities.<sup>185</sup> The night before the battle Yuan conducted ceremonies to boost morale, bestowing rewards and sharing food with the men. He personally traversed the walls, inspecting defenses and giving battle speeches. They also concluded a blood pact to defend the city to the death.<sup>186</sup> All who fled in battle were to be executed and he sent word to Shanhaiguan that any deserters found there should also be killed.

As soon as the Jin set up camp northwest of the city, the Ming opened fire with their heavy cannon, driving them back.<sup>187</sup> Nurhaci then resolved to assail the southwest corner of the city, which appeared to be more weakly defended. He brandished his sword in the air and led the charge himself. After consulting with a Korean adviser, Yuan waited for the Jin to get within close range before the Ming defenders opened fire. Their huge cannon cut a swathe through the advancing cavalry. The Jin next tried to advance with their reinforced military carts, having apparently decided to revert to their original plan of attack. They used their archers to offer covering fire, but kept their elite “iron cavalry” back to exploit advantages. They hoped to use the flanking maneuver that had worked for them in the past once the Ming came out of the city. But the Ming had enough cannon (11) to cover the ground all around the city and Yuan would not be goaded into rash action. In addition to regular cannon fire, the Ming launched other incendiaries and poisonous projectiles at the enemy. And the Jin shield carts were splintered by the heavy shot of the Ming cannons, rendering them useless.<sup>188</sup> Still, the enemy advanced to the base of the walls, but Yuan rallied the defenders, shrugging off a flesh wound.<sup>189</sup> When the Jin tried to pull back, Yuan sent forth fifty “expendables” who torched the Jin siege carts.

The Jin then tried to attack another corner of the city, but were turned back again with burning oil and incendiary attacks that reduced their siege equipment to ashes. One strategist within the city coated bed sheets with gunpowder and oil and dropped them on the attackers.<sup>190</sup> Lines of saltpeter along the base of the wall were also ignited, stymying sapping efforts. The entire area around the city turned into a virtual sea of fire, engulfing the Jin’s tribal allies. One source related that everywhere the cannon struck smoke filled the sky for several *li* and sent Jin

corpses and siege equipment flying.<sup>191</sup> By evening the battle was still raging and parts of the wall were on fire, lighting the sky as if it were dawn. The Jin finally pulled back around ten at night.<sup>192</sup> Nurhaci allegedly sent an angry message to Li Yongfang, complaining, “You said this city would be easy to take. How can it be this difficult to attack?”<sup>193</sup> The next day Nurhaci launched another series of attacks with similar results and he set up camp some five *li* outside the city. The day after this he sent some Mongols to attack the offshore island of Juehua, which served as the main grain storehouse for the city. Although they killed some thousand defenders and wiped out significant grain stores, the island held for the time being.<sup>194</sup> A couple of days later, wounded and demoralized, Nurhaci withdrew to Shengyang. The joyous residents of Ningyuan thanked Yuan and Man Gui profusely.

This was the first time Nurhaci had tasted defeat in a major battle. Though later Qing records showed only around 500 were killed along with a few officers, the Ming claimed that thousands died. Yuan sent 269 heads to Beijing announcing his victory.<sup>195</sup> The court was overjoyed upon hearing this news, as they figured Ningyuan had been lost, and Yuan was the new golden boy of Beijing, being promoted to Censor-in-Chief of the Right.<sup>196</sup> One giddy official noted that this victory after eight years of defeats proved that “China still has men after all!”<sup>197</sup> The emperor felt the same way, exclaiming that ten years of defeat had been erased in a single day.<sup>198</sup> Sun Yuanhua was ordered to step up the production of Red Barbarian Cannon.<sup>199</sup> This was the biggest Ming triumph yet in the war and it initiated yet another change in overall strategy. Though he tried to claim credit for the victory, Gao Di was discredited and cashiered a little more than a month after the victory at Ningyuan.<sup>200</sup>

In part in response to their stinging defeat at Ningyuan, it was also at this time that the Jin began stepping up their pressure on the Ming forces in the Bohai Gulf and in Korea. Yuan was unable to send assistance as speedily as he would have liked and policy debates in Beijing continued to hamper the overall Ming war effort. Yuan, however, received further promotions and grew increasingly power hungry and overbearing according to his official biographers, often bickering with former close associates like Man Gui. Viewed in this light, it is easy to see how Yuan might have come to resent Mao Wenlong’s continued popularity at court and his freedom of action. Yuan believed that he was the best person for recovering Liaodong and Mao’s adventures were siphoning away precious funds with no real results. Yuan advocated a mixed strategy of offense and defense that involved the gradual incorporation of territory from Ningyuan and Lushun. Promoted yet again, Yuan still urged a cautious approach, telling the court that the Ming strength lay in defending fortified bastions with cannon rather than engaging the Jurchens in the wild. Meanwhile, Mao Wenlong’s reckless adventures provoked a Jin invasion of Korea and threatened to undermine Yuan’s whole strategy.

### **3 Pursuing a forward strategy: Yuan Chonghuan's rise and fall, 1626–30**

#### **The raid on Juehua Island**

Although the Ming were understandably elated over their victory at Ningyuan, Jin actions had still given them cause for concern. Nurhaci recognized that one of the Ming's great advantages lay in its ability to supply its armies by sea, as well as ferry in reinforcements. Control of the sea lanes also allowed the Ming to launch attacks deep in the Jin rear such as the activities of Mao Wenlong. So while the assault on Juehua Island was immediately designed to cut off supplies to Ningyuan, in the broader picture it also exemplified Nurhaci's realization of the need for the Jin to negate this advantage lest the Ming continually just keep drawing upon its much greater resources in their ongoing conflict. Of course it might also be noted that it was still not clear exactly how broad the Jin ruler's ambitions were. He may well have only wanted to consolidate his power in the northeast and not challenge the Ming for control over all of China. In either case, he needed more of a presence at sea.

Juehua Island had long served as a Ming supply depot. Located just 30 *li* from Ningyuan and 18 *li* from the coast, it was both close enough and far enough from land to suit Ming needs, especially when they enjoyed the monopoly on sea power. Sun Chengzong had emphasized the strategic import of Juehua during an inspection tour in 1623. It had enough cultivable acreage to support 20,000 troops and could supplant the Longwu garrison, located at Shanhaiguan, as an advance supply depot.<sup>1</sup> When the water froze in the winter as had happened frequently in the colder weather of the previous several decades as a result of the so-called Little Ice Age, supplies could be transported over the ice. In addition to its defensive value, it could also serve as a training ground for troops and offered easy ship access to the Ming ports of Lushun, Denglai, and Tianjin.<sup>2</sup> All of these ports served as shipping points for Ming supplies so that Juehua normally had 200,000 or more *shi* of grain at any given time. Its position had become even more important after the fall of Guangning. At this point Zu Dashou was posted to Juehua with three major tasks: (1) train troops; (2) amass supplies; and (3) harass the Jin by sea.<sup>3</sup> Just prior to the Battle of Ningyuan there were 7,000 troops and 7,000 commoners on the island.

In addition to his strategic reasoning, Nurhaci attacked Juehua to vent his frustration over the defeat at Ningyuan. But, keeping the military value in mind, the

Jin first went after Longgong Temple, knowing there were grain stores there. Gao Di had in fact received word of the impending Jin attack, but he did not deem it a threat because he assumed that the Jin could not cross the sea.<sup>4</sup> However, as noted above, the water was frozen all the way to the island because extended cold over the previous several decades had lowered the base water temperature and made it more prone to freezing. Nowadays the water around Juehua seldom ices over more than a mile off the coast. But temperatures had been well below zero for a long time prior to the attack. Upon seeing the Jin cavalry coming across the ice the Ming defenders tried to thwart them by throwing up defense works and cutting the ice, but they could not slow them down and a force of about 10,000 Jurchen and Mongol cavalry assailed the island.

This small battle was important for several reasons. For one, it showed Nurhaci's ability to adjust his tactics and his widening ambitions for expanding the scope of the war, even after suffering his first major defeat. It also exposed the inability of at least these Ming commanders to adjust their tactics to break a Jin cavalry charge. In their defense, their overall commander, Zu Dashou, had been recalled to Ningyuan and acquitted himself well there so the result may well have been different had Zu been present. But his subordinates should have been up to the task. Surprisingly, the defeat at Juehua also convinced some that a passive defense was still superior to engaging the Jin in the field perhaps because they had proved unable to break the Jin cavalry charge on the ice. Thus Yuan Chonghuan's supporters lost a bit of the momentum they had accumulated at Ningyuan.

As the defenders arrayed shields and carts Jin split their forces into twelve columns, with their commander leading the attack on the grain stores. Many Ming soldiers performed poorly in the cold weather and some of the mercenaries refused to stand up to the iron cavalry of the Jin. And as if the ice had not already helped the attackers enough, nature aided them further with a heavy snowfall on the day of the attack that helped fill the moats and offered purchase for their horses on the ice. Hitting the north gate of the grain store, the Jin quickly broke through. They set the stores on fire and smoke enveloped the island and the sky was alight.<sup>5</sup> They then split their forces again and attacked the east and west sides. The Ming commander Jin Guan tried to pull out with 300 men but was killed. Supposedly virtually none survived the slaughter. According to their own reports, the Ming lost 7,000 to 8,000 troops, an equal number of civilians and 82,000 *shi* of grain. Later Qing records also claim that some 2,000 boats and 1,000 buildings were destroyed and some 269 Ming officials were slain.<sup>6</sup> The Ming commander Yang Qi lost his rank as a result of his failure to defend Juehua.<sup>7</sup>

### **Yuan Chonghuan proposes a new strategy**

After Ningyuan, Yuan was convinced that he had found the secret to defeating the Jin. His strategy was in fact quite simple: don't fight their battle, meaning avoid pitched battles in the open field. The key, for Yuan, was to "clear the fields and strengthen the walls," and rely upon overwhelming firepower.<sup>8</sup> Echoing some



*Figure 3.1* Longwu garrison reconstruction

of his predecessors Yuan also revived the notion of using the people of Liao to defend Liao, which would obviate the problems caused by bringing mercenaries in. Yuan also lowered the number of troops he needed from 100,000 to 80,000, with 60,000 of these posted beyond the Great Wall. Ningyuan would be the lynchpin of Ming defenses and they would continue Yuan's practice of military farms to supply the troops and people. Yuan was also hopeful that Mao Wenlong could exert pressure from Pidao. His initial recommendations were received enthusiastically and he got pledges from many members of the royal family. Hundreds of cannon and thousands of other weapons were earmarked for manufacture, though Yuan had to twist a few arms to get the 450,000 taels he needed.<sup>9</sup> Yuan felt that he could hold the defensive corridor with the aforementioned troops, 30,000 horses and 100,000 merchants to help stabilize the economy. The latter point is interesting because it reifies the delicate economic situation indicated by Jin records. The Jin were desperate for resources for their troops and subjects. The Ming also realized the value of a stable population base.

Yuan also wanted to reinforce Jinzhou, Dalinghe, and Zhongzuosuo to extend Ming control another 170 *li* and then have settlers come to the region to farm and train. In Yuan's assessment this would create an active policy of advancing with no more retreating and would be a step-by-step plan not unlike that envisioned by Xiong Tingbi a few years earlier. Tianqi was reportedly delighted and authorized the dispatch of another 40,000 troops for construction efforts.<sup>10</sup> Yuan hoped to complete the building within a year. Yuan also proposed forging alliances with

some Mongol chieftains to thwart the Jurchens.<sup>11</sup> He was dismissive of mercenary troops from other parts of the empire, calling southern troops “weak,” and saying that western troops were “prone to flight.”<sup>12</sup> Impressed with their demonstrated success at the Battle of Ningyuan, the court also requested that another ten “red barbarian cannon” be sent from Guangzhou for the defense of Beijing.<sup>13</sup> The Ming also changed their methods of using the cannon, now bringing them within walls rather than arraying them outside and mounting them on elevated platforms.<sup>14</sup>

The Christian convert Sun Yuanhua, stationed in the critically important post of Denglai in Shandong adjacent to Manchuria, was one of the most enthusiastic Ming advocates of using firearms against the enemy. Sun repeatedly sent forth memorials stressing the need to manufacture more guns and train soldiers in their use. In a memorial from 1626 Sun argued (erroneously) that the Ming had to use Western firearms because Chinese models lacked the range of Jurchen bows. He finally obtained the backing of the influential adviser to the emperor, Sun Chengzong.<sup>15</sup> Sun believed in both using firearms and in conducting limited offensive operations against the Jurchens under the maverick commander Mao Wenlong and others.<sup>16</sup> A directive was issued calling for the training of 8,000 men in firearms use over a period of three months.<sup>17</sup> Sun Chengzong emphasized the utility of firearms in defensive positions as force multipliers.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, Sun Chengzong soon retired due to differences of opinion with certain elements at Tianqi’s court.



*Figure 3.2* Terminus of the Great Wall in Liaodong

## The first Jin invasion of Korea

In the wake of the death of Nurhaci on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> month of 1626, Hung Taiji became the new khan of the Jin empire.<sup>19</sup> Two months later Yuan Chonghuan sent 34 men to Shenyang to pay their respects to Nurhaci's spirit and congratulate Hung Taiji on his ascension. It was an interesting gesture on Yuan's part and was most likely investigative, as Yuan sought to determine the stability of the new khan's position and explore the feasibility of opening peace talks that might buy him time for his own repositioning and reconstruction efforts. Yuan also saw peace talks as being another tool in the box, so to speak, for the implementation of his comprehensive plan for the defense and recovery of Liaodong. In this Yuan was following many of the lessons embodied in the ancient military classics. Moreover, he had other problems to deal with, including a troop mutiny in the port city of Lushun in the 9<sup>th</sup> month of 1626.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, Hung Taiji faced many rivals among his relatives after succeeding his father. Hosting the Ming delegation was a way to underscore his new status and gain a measure of his enemy. Hung Taiji entertained the guests in style with wine and banquets. He endeavored to show them the power and ferocity of his banners and the sophistication of his state. They entertained the Ming envoys for nearly a month. For his part Hung Taiji sent presents (such as leopard skins) back to Yuan Chonghuan. He also sent Yuan a letter explaining that the Jin had launched the war against the Ming because of the repeated insults and contempt they had endured at Ming hands.<sup>21</sup> The two sides also engaged in preliminary peace talks. Among Hung Taiji's conditions for the Ming were fixing the border at Shanhaiguan and asking the Ming to give tributary gifts to the Latter Jin, including cash payments like the Song had given their neighbors centuries before.<sup>22</sup> In return the Jin would send the Ming gifts such as leopard skins and pearls.<sup>23</sup> The Jin khan would be below the Ming emperor but above Ming officials in seating arrangements at official functions. So it does appear that there was some genuine interest on the Jin ruler's part in coming to an agreement with the Ming, even if he had multiple agendas. And the fact that the Ming were listening afforded Hung Taiji a degree of credibility among the Jin elite. For his part the Tianqi emperor seemed inclined to listen, though he warned Yuan not to enter into peace talks lightly.<sup>24</sup>

Another way for Hung Taiji to consolidate his authority and prove his fitness was to gain some quick victories. He decided to go after the Koreans first in order to secure his flank for anticipated attacks on the forward Ming positions. Indeed, many scholars assume that Hung Taiji's only real reason for pursuing discussions with the Ming was to buy time to secure the Korean and Mongol flanks to his empire. The Jin ruler knew he was badly outclassed by the Ming in terms of resources and potential manpower. He also had to move to ameliorate some of the tensions with the Han Chinese under his rule created by the more exclusionary policies of Nurhaci's later years.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the Ming had developed new training and battle tactics that thwarted Jin efforts, improved Chinese morale and shattered the Jin reputation of invincibility. Finally, as the Ming knew, there was

the fact that many Jin subjects were starving.<sup>26</sup> Defeating Korea would allow the Jin to extract tribute, most significantly food supplies, but also weapons, from the Koreans. So Hung Taiji wanted to build up his own infrastructure and marshal his strength.

According to the *Qing shigao*, the reason the Jin invaded Korea was because the Koreans were aiding and abetting Mao Wenlong and shielding criminals from Jin justice.<sup>27</sup> While this was certainly true, as we have seen there were also broader geo-strategic reasons for the operation. The first probing mission was launched in the 1<sup>st</sup> month of 1627 as 30,000 Jin troops crossed the border. The Chinese defector Li Yongfang was among their number. They met sharp resistance but quickly overran the border towns.<sup>28</sup> In the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of 1627 the Jin prince Amin advanced to Ūiju and Mao Wenlong escaped into the Bohai Gulf.<sup>29</sup> Advancing quickly, the Jin then took Anju and Pyongyang and crossed the Taedong River. The fighting was also fierce at Anju but when the defenders realized they were beaten, the commanders blew themselves up with gunpowder.<sup>30</sup> In early 1627 the Ming got word that the Jin had invaded Korea and already taken Pyongyang without a fight.<sup>31</sup> They dispatched a relief contingent to aid the Koreans. The king then dispatched an envoy to negotiate. Amin enumerated Injo's ten crimes, but was willing to talk.<sup>32</sup> But the terrified king had already evacuated his family to Kanghwa Island off the coast.<sup>33</sup> He then offered to present gifts of 100 horses, 100 tiger and leopard skins, 400 bolts of cotton, and 15,000 pieces of cloth to the Jin khan, dispatching his younger brother to deliver them.<sup>34</sup> At this point the Jin were amenable to an accord and they left 1,000 Jurchen and 2,000 Mongol troops at Ūiju and 300 Jurchens and 1,000 Mongols at Fort Zhenjiang, to guard against further actions by Mao Wenlong. Henceforth the Koreans would have a tributary relationship with the Jin along the lines of an elder and younger brother.<sup>35</sup> This established Jin superiority, but was not as pronounced as the father–son relationship posited by the Chinese–Korean tributary understanding. They also returned the king's brother.<sup>36</sup> In the wake of this they sent letters of explanation to Yuan Chonghuan.

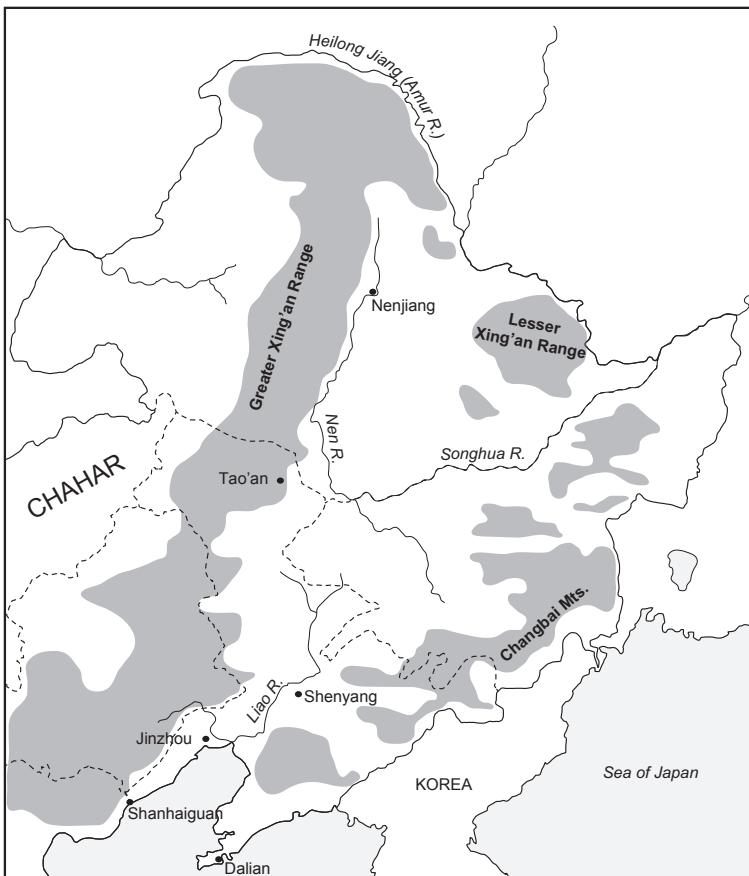
From the start, however, it seemed that the Koreans were less than enthusiastic participants in the treaty. Hung Taiji repeatedly sent letters to Injo complaining that the Koreans were not abiding by the terms of the agreement. He did not like that fact that the Koreans continued to trade with the Ming and warned the Koreans against feeding the people of other states (except the Jin) because the food of Korea should only be used for Koreans.<sup>37</sup> The Jin khan also related how he raided and plundered across China and how his men pulled back only in contravention of orders. Such statements were clearly designed to overawe the Koreans.<sup>38</sup> In another communication he complained that the Koreans were “behaving as if they were strong and the Jin were weak.”<sup>39</sup> The Ming were also accused of harming the economy of Liaodong by preventing people from returning there from the islands.

Yuan Chonghuan was impeached at once because many officials perceived him as having been duped by the Jin into entering peace talks so that they

could marshal strength for the assault on Korea. This was, of course, partially true. The talks would drag on for nearly three years with no real impact other than to aid the building of the Jin state apparatus. But what was perhaps most significant in the long run is that after this time, the Ming never openly engaged in peace talks with the Jin/Qing, even though there were numerous subsequent overtures by both sides. Politically no emperor or high minister could afford to be associated with a position of appeasement. The Ming stance was derived from the aforementioned Song–Jin situation. Ming officials could not countenance any such north–south state arrangement, nor would they accede to anything implying diplomatic or political equality. Such a stance speaks to the self-perception of the Ming as the rightful leaders of the East Asian tributary order. The Ming had forcefully rejected Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s gambit for overlordship several decades before, and now, even seriously militarily weakened, their position would remain the same. Interestingly enough, centuries later the Qing would assume basically the same stance, drawing upon the Ming experience, but also ultimately failing in their duties to their tributary vassals in resisting the imperialist encroachments of Western powers and the Japanese.<sup>40</sup>

Since the Koreans asked for help, the court told Mao Wenlong to dispatch troops. He sent about 9,000 relief troops by land, but hearing the Koreans had already reached an agreement with the Jin, they were recalled.<sup>41</sup> The upshot of the Jin invasion of Korea was that still more power was invested in Yuan Chonghuan. Yuan thought that he could still launch offensive operations, but he also dispatched negotiators to meet with Jin representatives, unbeknown to the court. Yuan wanted to restore old boundaries and buy some time for war preparations, but the Jin protested that Mao Wenlong and the Koreans were aggravating the situation. Yuan told the court he wished to establish a firm boundary at the Liao River so as to protect the locals and their livelihoods. Once they realized the stability offered by the Ming compared to the Jin, the people would naturally identify with the Ming.

In addition to the problems arising from his talks with the Jin, Yuan was experiencing difficulties with his fellow Ming officials. There was considerable personal animosity between Yuan and the military commander Man Gui, who felt that Yuan belittled his accomplishments, was lax in providing him resources and men, and favored Zhao Shuaijiao.<sup>42</sup> Man had many supporters at court and was eventually recalled to Beijing. The Grand Coordinator of Liaodong, Wang Zhichen, also clashed with Yuan with respect to how Shanhaiguan should be defended and who should hold it. Their dispute eventually provoked a meeting with the Minister of War and other ranking ministers and supervising secretaries. In the end, both Yuan and Wang were retained, but their jurisdictions were divided, with Yuan assuming responsibility for everything outside the pass and Wang having purview over the areas inside the Great Wall. Man Gui was then posted back to Shanhaiguan with the new title of “Caitiff Punishing General,” and bestowed with the authority of the double-edged sword.<sup>43</sup>



Used by permission of Harold Tanner

*Figure 3.3* Map of the topography of Liaodong

### The Ming victory of Ning-Jin

Eager to avenge the previous year's defeat and consolidate his authority with a victory, Hung Taiji decided to attack the fortified bastion of Jinzhou, not far from Juehua, which they had assaulted the previous year. He led 40,000 troops to attack the city. The siege began in the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> month of 1627. Unlike some of the nearby forts, however, Jinzhou had some 30,000 troops (under Zhao Shuaijiao) and was newly repaired, though not completed. Talks ensued as the Ming hoped to buy time for troops to arrive and the Jin hoped to avoid casualties. Among other things Hung Taiji charged Zhao Shuaijiao with building on Jin lands. Tianqi ordered some 30,000 Ming relief troops to rush in from various northern commands, along with supplies of weapons and gunpowder.<sup>44</sup> When the Ming refused to respond positively to his overtures, Hung Taiji hit the walls with scaling ladders and siege weapons, attacking the north and west towers. The

defenders rained stones, fire arrows and cannon balls upon the Jin, inflicting heavy losses. Still, the west tower started to crumble, forcing Zhao to rally the defenders to that point. He was successful and the battle raged for twelve hours. That night Hung Taiji pulled back and summoned reinforcements. They camped outside range of Ming cannons.<sup>45</sup>

The next day Hung Taiji tried to lure the defenders out, but Zhao shouted down, "You can keep attacking the city but we're not coming out!"<sup>46</sup> The enraged Jin khan gave the order to attack again but after several days the city still had not fallen. Another surrender letter was fired into the city but ignored. At this point he decided to pull back and probe nearby Ningyuan's defenses again, only to be defeated by an advance Ming column, this time in the open field as Man Gui, You Shilu, Zu Dashou, and Yuan Chonghuan blasted away from the walls and other units skirmished outside amid the recently expanded defense network.<sup>47</sup> Returning to Jinzhou, the Ming still would not bite the hook so Hung Taiji launched another frontal assault against the advice of Daisan and Jinggutai. The Ming opened fire with heavy cannon and mobile reinforcements hit the Jin from behind. The Jin suffered thousands of casualties.<sup>48</sup>

The frustrated Jin leader returned to menace Jinzhou yet again and tried to goad the Ming into attacking him. He concentrated on the south wall this time, while feigning attacks on the other three walls. He personally directed the battle from the southeast. The Ming blasted away with all manner of cannon but the Jin pushed on as corpses piled up, bringing cloud ladders to the walls, the corpses of their erstwhile compatriots serving as grisly shields for the attackers. But they still could not break the Ming defenses and Hung Taiji finally ordered a retreat. The Jin lost two to three thousand troops in this battle.<sup>49</sup> Man Gui even killed one of the Jin princes when his relief column helped lift the siege. He received 50,000 taels and a hereditary earldom for his exploits.<sup>50</sup> These battles came to be known as the Great Ming Victory of Ning-Jin. They reified Yuan's strategy and showed the continued superiority of the Ming in firepower and positional warfare. They were probably the high point of Tianqi's reign in terms of the military situation. But Hung Taiji had learned his lessons and would be in a position to apply this learning soon.<sup>51</sup> In the interim, however, he had to contend with famine and banditry in his new realm, forcing him to distribute famine relief.<sup>52</sup>

Before long, however, Yuan Chonghuan was attacked by Wei Zhongxian's clique at court and he asked to retire, eventually being replaced by Wang Zhichen.<sup>53</sup> Yuan was charged with failing to relieve Jinzhou in a timely fashion and for talking peace with the Jin, allowing them to attack Korea.<sup>54</sup> When a minister memorialized on Yuan's behalf, his request was ignored, though it was said that the emperor was none too pleased. As soon as Yuan was dismissed many questioned the wisdom of the extended defense line. But others, like Huo Weihua, came out forcefully in favor of Yuan's forward strategy.<sup>55</sup> Though not restored to his position, Yuan received modest rewards from the throne even as the power of the eunuch faction waxed, with the court expanding the practice of sending out eunuchs to inspect and supervise frontier defenses over the shrill protests of many outer court officials.<sup>56</sup>

## The Korean perspective

The situation with Chosôn Korea was intimately linked to recent historical events. The Ming had sent hundreds of thousands of troops to help repulse a Japanese invasion in the 1590s.<sup>57</sup> The war had devastated Korea's economy and infrastructure and although it had also precipitated a series of military reforms, the Chosôn state was in no condition to fight another major war. The former Korean king, known as Kwanghaegun (Lord Kwanghae), had been the crown prince during the war and had been entrusted with rallying popular resistance to the Japanese.<sup>58</sup> The Koreans were very leery of the Jin and Mao Wenlong, because Mao's aggressive adventures seemed to be provoking Jin incursions into Korea, since Mao often retreated into Korean territory. The Korean court was divided as to how to walk the tightrope between the Jin and the Ming. On the one hand, many officials felt that the very existence of Chosôn had been preserved by virtue of the Ming intervention and that they owed it to the Ming to offer whatever help they could, including any aid requested by Mao Wenlong as the court's designated military official. Others argued that the Ming had brought as much trouble as assistance to Chosôn and that the war with the Jin was a Ming affair that should not involve the Koreans if at all possible.

Kwanghaegun hoped to keep the channels of communication open with the Ming while also coming to some sort of accommodation with the Latter Jin. For their part, Jin envoys to Korea argued that they wanted to establish friendly, neighborly relations with Chosôn, but were prevented by the Ming.<sup>59</sup> But, as in China, factional politics intervened and Kwanghaegun was deposed and exiled, being replaced by King Injo (r. 1623–49) in 1623. Injo's supporters urged the new king to adopt a more pro-Ming policy and the king accordingly severed negotiations with the Jin.<sup>60</sup> This, of course, meant working more closely with Mao Wenlong. Actually many Korean officials still distrusted Mao, but they figured that if they made a concerted effort to help him, they could find out where he really stood. Furthermore, given the increasing pressure Mao was putting on Chosôn to supply his armies, they hoped they might at least see some tangible results for their efforts.

Before long, Korean reports to the throne again criticized Mao, charging that most of his reports to the Ming court were exaggerated and that while claiming to fight the Jin, in fact his men generally stayed on the islands and never even bothered to send spies into Jin territory. The Koreans said that Mao's army of 26,000 consumed at least 100,000 *liang* of rations per year, without really achieving anything.<sup>61</sup> But when they sent their own reports to the Ming court, Mao countered by sending in Jurchen heads and other evidence of his great deeds.<sup>62</sup> As a result, Mao continued to receive honors and commendations from the Ming court. Still, some in Beijing apparently believed the Korean reports and after the accession of Chongzhen in 1628, they sent their own representative to Pidao. This official concluded that Mao was indeed intent on rebelling, confirming Korean allegations that Mao was considering attacking Shandong, possibly with Jin assistance. Mao then executed two leaks in his organization and sent a messenger

to the Koreans, protesting his innocence.<sup>63</sup> The Koreans remained certain that Mao was no longer acting on behalf of the Ming, but they were also unsure as to whether he was acting in concert with the Jin or independently.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, the Koreans were cognizant of the fact that Mao had originally been stationed in Bohai to make sure the Koreans did not submit to the Jin so they were wary of antagonizing him, lest he report their actions to the Ming court.<sup>65</sup> Mao also told the king that his actions in quelling local unrest were instrumental in allowing Injo to take the throne, so he'd best continue to help Mao. The Koreans replied that the 20,000 troops Mao dispatched to put down bandits arrived late, and since the king had received his investiture seals from the Ming court itself, how could Mao claim credit?<sup>66</sup>

But now there were other problems, as tens of thousands were fleeing towards Mao and Korea from the Jin in the wake of Nurhaci's death in 1626. Mao demanded more supplies from the Koreans to feed these refugees and a special tax was established by the Korean court to help raise the needed grain.<sup>67</sup> As of 1626, the Koreans had sent Mao some 140,000 *dan* of provisions, but he still claimed he was short and needed more.<sup>68</sup> This in turn impelled Mao to invite merchants to set up markets on his islands to cover his shortfalls. Mao offered all merchants willing to trade his military protection. He also attempted to produce his own coinage with metals extracted from Korea, asking the Chosôn court to send fewer tributary missions to the Ming, while endeavoring to create a maritime trade monopoly of his own.<sup>69</sup> This illicit trading, at least in the eyes of the Ming court, would be considered one of Mao's major crimes.<sup>70</sup> Mao also tried to establish *tuntian* in the environs of Úiju and on his islands.<sup>71</sup>

## Enter a new monarch

Things became more complicated when the sickly Tianqi emperor died in the fall of 1627. He was succeeded by his younger brother, Zhu Youjian who, after considering several options, assumed the reign title of Chongzhen, meaning "expansive auspiciousness."<sup>72</sup> Chongzhen assumed the throne on October 2, 1627. When he took power Chongzhen felt that he had two major problems: cleansing the court of eunuch factions and pacifying the Liaodong region.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, one of his first acts as emperor was to recall the eunuch army inspectors from the frontiers.<sup>74</sup> Although he did not act directly against Wei Zhongxian, the eunuch was reassigned to a lesser post in Nanjing. As Wei and his retinue traveled south in the 11<sup>th</sup> month of 1627, however, he received word that he was going to be arrested. So Wei hung himself at a country inn.<sup>75</sup>

The new monarch also wanted facts and accountability from his officials, promising to be the kind of hands-on ruler that his brother had not been, but also demonstrating the penchant for micromanagement that would hamstring his whole reign.<sup>76</sup> To this end Chongzhen peppered his officials with questions about everything from troop numbers and dispensations to the service responsibilities of various posts down to the county level. But he also promised to rid the government of poisonous factions and try to help the people who were said to have

been grievously wounded by the so-called eunuch faction in the previous reign. Chongzhen directed the ministries to think of the people and hire men of talent for government posts rather than seeking to advance their own private interests.<sup>77</sup>

He was also eager to listen to all manner of suggestions concerning frontier policy. Wang Xiangqian, for example, suggested forging an alliance with the Chahar Mongols and using them to defend the northwest frontier. Wang estimated that the Ming could gain 300,000 allies in this fashion.<sup>78</sup> The emperor was dubious that such a plan would work and when Wang tried to allay his fears, Chongzhen retorted, “The way to contain the barbarians is to overawe them, not rely on loose reins!”<sup>79</sup> He also feared that the Mongols would come to despise China if the Ming opened talks. But Chongzhen later expressed his pleasure that Wang handled matters in the west as adeptly as Yuan Chonghuan did in the east. Wang also pushed for opening more markets to trade with the Mongols, the primary goal being to acquire more horses for the war with the Jurchens. The emperor also authorized the release of some 300,000 taels for military expenses in the frontier commands of Xuanfu, Datong, and Dongjiang, the latter being Mao Wenlong’s command.<sup>80</sup> And in another positive military development, the Ming obtained at least the nominal submission of the pirate-merchant Zheng Zhilong, who had been causing problems for several years in the southeast.<sup>81</sup>

At this time the Taicang Treasury, which was the main imperial reserve, still held around seven million taels although other reserves were tapped out or uncertain. But frontier officials were requesting money at an alarming rate and the emperor kept acceding, prompting the Vice Minister of Revenue to recommend a “return to ancestral practices [of frugality], better oversight, and the establishment of military farms” to subsidize the supply of the troops.<sup>82</sup> With respect to austerity measures the emperor once wondered, “If we aren’t a land that values money then how come my officials love it so much?”<sup>83</sup>

So from the start it was clear that Chongzhen was going to be the kind of activist ruler that so many officials had longed for, and many hoped that with his ascension to the throne, the “upright gentlemen” of the Donglin faction and their associates would be restored to their rightful places at the apex of the political scene. But instead, the new emperor’s paranoid fear of factions and his tendency to want to control everything only inflamed the political atmosphere more, making it even harder for any policy to be implemented for any extended period of time. And as soon as the slightest sign of failure was seen, political enemies pounced, discrediting their rival and seeking to advance their own plans and careers. One modern scholar has suggested that the Chongzhen court became swept up in a wave of “sensationalist politics” wherein personal and political matters became deeply entangled and sexual behavior and personal morality were linked to policy failings. The repetition of sensational stories about one’s political enemies became almost a cottage industry and helped paralyze the functioning of government in ways that might not be unfamiliar to contemporary observers of the American political scene.<sup>84</sup>

In terms of his leadership style, Chongzhen, though well-intentioned, was prone to bouts of pettiness and favoritism. He also tended to replace anyone who

threatened him or failed in any way and, like many mediocre rulers, surrounded himself with sycophants and lackeys. Their most notable talents were generally their ability to please the monarch and cover their own asses.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, there were some fifty grand secretaries during Chongzhen's reign, this total representing nearly a third of the total holders of that post for the entire history of the Ming dynasty.<sup>86</sup> And as if the sheer turnover was not bad enough for morale and the smooth functioning of government, Chongzhen displayed a disturbing propensity for executing competent officials for often spurious reasons or minor setbacks. As one modern scholar has noted, Chongzhen "sought only instant successes and simple solutions."<sup>87</sup> This being said, he was not a lazy or inattentive ruler and he often worked long into the night reading memorials and consulting with his officials, especially with regard to frontier policy and finances.<sup>88</sup> He also rose early and held regular court audiences, unlike his predecessors, and was an astute student of history and the Chinese classics.<sup>89</sup> However, his temperament and inability to evaluate and use talent severely undermined his good intentions.

A recent study offers a psychological profile of the last Ming emperor as isolated and lonely. Because, like most Ming emperors, he never really knew parental affection, he grew up guarded and mercurial. And because he was also used to having people always obey him, he was loath to ever assume responsibility for failure.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, allegedly like his grandfather before him, Chongzhen was miserly and always questioned expenses, while still encouraging officials to bring him presents of pearls and other rare items from around the empire. According to Nie Zuoping this frugality became like a slow acting poison that infected the blood and organs of the Ming state, day by day and year by year.<sup>91</sup> And as Jiang Yonghong observes, because of the rampant factionalism that pre-dated Chongzhen's reign, it was natural that he fell back on using eunuchs as they provided him with inside, secret information and, at least to his mind, had no other factional allegiances.<sup>92</sup>

With Chongzhen's accession to the throne, Yuan Chonghuan was reappointed as Censor-in-Chief of the Right with supervisory jurisdiction in the Ministry of War.<sup>93</sup> He was subsequently given supreme command of military affairs in the northeast.<sup>94</sup> In a meeting with the emperor in the 7<sup>th</sup> month of 1628, Yuan boldly proclaimed that he could recover all of Liaodong in just five years if he could just implement his old plan. Yuan noted that people there were starving and fleeing the Jin. Therefore he again proposed "using the people of Liaodong to defend Liaodong and the land of Liaodong to nourish the people."<sup>95</sup> He then stressed the importance of unified action between capital and border officials. Furthermore, Yuan appealed to the monarch's sense of thrift, by stressing that his plan would be cheaper than bringing in aboriginal troops from far flung corners of the empire.<sup>96</sup> Chongzhen was suitably impressed and gave Yuan many expensive gifts after investing him with command authority.<sup>97</sup> He also promised to make Yuan an earl if he delivered on his promise.<sup>98</sup> But Yuan's efforts were hampered from the start by underfunding, as the court could only amass about 40 percent of the funds Yuan initially requested.<sup>99</sup>



袁崇煥像

Figure 3.4 Yuan Chonghuan

Upon returning to the front, Yuan immediately executed some men for secretly negotiating with the enemy.<sup>100</sup> Yuan also had to deal with the fallout from a recent troop mutiny at Ningyuan. It seems that the troops had gone four months without pay so they captured the local Ming censor Bi Zisu. This was despite the fact that Bi had recognized the problem from the start of his appointment and had worked to improve relations between civil and military officials and to bring in more supplies for his troops.<sup>101</sup> He fully believed in trusting his military commanders to take care of the battles, observing, “Battle is the realm of the soldier and the general, not the civil official.”<sup>102</sup> He believed that if the right men were put into place and properly supplied, the Ming could easily overrun the enemy. But he pointed out that supplies had been short for three years so morale had plummeted. Therefore he kept pressing for the requisite supplies to be sent, reckoning that he was over 529,000 taels in arrears.<sup>103</sup>

Bi had stressed local food cultivation in addition to the steady flow of more supplies by land and sea.<sup>104</sup> He had even foreseen the mutiny that would bring about his demise, but could not goad the court into speedier action, perhaps owing to the recent transition of power in Beijing, though it is worth noting

that Chongzhen had approved the delivery of 200,000 taels to Bi.<sup>105</sup> He finally received 80,000 taels but the rest simply did not arrive in time and the troops mutinied, demanding their back pay. Bi finally wrung 20,000 taels from friends and another 50,000 from merchants and other locals and was able to quell the mutiny. Bi took full blame for the mutiny and committed suicide.<sup>106</sup> Yuan Chonghuan did not blame Bi, but executed 16 ringleaders himself upon arriving in Ningyuan.<sup>107</sup> Yuan brought some 300,000 taels with him to stabilize the situation, but he also had to quell yet another budding troop mutiny at Jinzhou over lack of supplies.<sup>108</sup> When one official questioned the dispatch of these funds, Chongzhen demanded that his ministers work harder, for how could the Ming resist Jurchen encroachments if they constantly had to be on guard against mutinies by their own troops?<sup>109</sup>



*Figure 3.5* Map of Northeast Asia

## The struggle for authority in Bohai

He then turned his attention towards Mao Wenlong, telling Mao he wanted to get a better sense of Mao's troop strength and supply needs so that they could better coordinate their actions. Mao staunchly resisted Yuan's directives, complaining that he had but 28,000 serviceable troops and that many of these were on the verge of starvation.<sup>110</sup> Meanwhile, a former Jin bannerman named Wang Zideng provided Yuan with information concerning Mao's secret negotiations with the Jin. Wang suggested to Yuan that he kill Mao to prevent him from rebelling.<sup>111</sup> Given Yuan's penchant for consolidating authority in his own hands, it can be surmised that Wang's suggestion was readily received, even if there was compelling evidence that Mao was in fact treating with the enemy. Yuan resolved to act fast, before Mao might suspect him.

Jung Byol-chul suggests that under Mao's direction, Pidao became a thriving international entrepot, though ginseng prices rose in both Korea and China.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, Mao even welcomed Jin traders to Pidao, a fact which enraged the Ming court. Products traded there included textiles, handicrafts, furs, ginseng, and even military supplies like saltpeter, sulfur, and weapons.<sup>113</sup> Yet Mao's troops still raided the Korean mainland for supplies and the "bones of the starving piled up like a mountain" on Pidao, despite Mao's efforts.<sup>114</sup> The *Ming shi* notes that Mao's men survived by dealing in cloth.<sup>115</sup> The situation would be exacerbated by Yuan Chonghuan's later decision to funnel supplies through his own base and curtail deliveries to Pidao, in large part because Yuan questioned what Mao was doing with all the supplies he had been receiving. For his part, Mao maintained that with proper supplies and medicine, he and his Korean allies could still effect a victory over the Jin.<sup>116</sup>

But when the Jin invaded Korea, Mao's men supposedly pulled back to their islands and then allegedly came back to the mainland after the Jin pulled out, raiding and looting the homes of commoners, even taking some three to four thousand captive and sending them to the Ming court as captured Jurchens.<sup>117</sup> These actions exposed Mao's duplicity and uselessness to the Koreans and ingrained in their minds the notion that it was Mao himself who had provoked the Jin invasion.<sup>118</sup> This in turn led some at the Korean court to more forcefully advocate cutting ties with Mao and with the Ming entirely, though the peace treaty concluded with the Jin in 1627 was never fully honored by the Koreans.

In fact, as noted above, Hung Taiji himself sent a letter to Yuan Chonghuan after the Jin subdual of Korea. In the letter he talked of his desire for an alliance and friendship with China, reiterating his request for annual payments of 50,000 taels in gold floral silver, 500,000 taels in silver, and 500,000 bolts of cloth as well as various and sundry other items. He told Yuan that the Jin actions were fated by Heaven so the Ming should just try to recognize that and reach an accord.<sup>119</sup>

In the wake of the Jin invasion of Korea and with all manner of rumors swirling around him, Mao decided to pay a visit to Dengzhou, where he might discuss military affairs and clear the air. Mao led forty boats to the port and

visited a local temple where he burned some incense. But the presence of so many soldiers along with Mao clearly suggested to many that this was a show of force. Yuan was not pleased with this response and he sent Mao away. Given that Wei Zhongxian was now dead and Yuan Chonghuan was in favor at court, it seems likely that Mao was testing the political waters. He continued to stress the precariousness of his situation and his value to the Ming.<sup>120</sup> It also appears that Mao may have overplayed his hand because he had already started his own discussions with the Jurchens.<sup>121</sup>

## Sparks and fires in the northwest

As dire as the situation in the northeast seemed, matters were about to get even worse for the beleaguered Ming empire. As was the case a decade before, natural catastrophes and strange weather phenomena seemed to herald new danger from another quarter. In 1627 widespread drought in Shaanxi baked the ground blood red for over a thousand *li*. And in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of 1628, the skies over Shaanxi turned a similar shade of crimson.<sup>122</sup> Food prices skyrocketed. Starving masses and deserting soldiers took to banditry. There were reports of cannibalism as stunted plants shriveled and died. It is worth noting that in the late Ming period natural disasters were not only frequent, but especially virulent, as indicated repeatedly in local gazeteers and official reports from the era. For the last sixty years of the Ming there was not a single year without a natural disaster in Shaanxi province. Nearby Shanxi was similarly afflicted, with everything from great windstorms to earthquakes, to frosts, to famines. In Henan to the south, “grains of rice became as precious as pearls.”<sup>123</sup> Epitaphs on grave steles from the Chongzhen era paint a similarly gloomy picture, with widespread references to famine and streets strewn with corpses.<sup>124</sup> In some areas people feared traveling alone lest they be ambushed and eaten.<sup>125</sup> These phenomena were not unique to Ming China, as noted by historians such as Timothy Brook, but their virulence amid the world’s most populous state is important to recognize when considering the backdrop to the fall of the Ming dynasty.<sup>126</sup> Contemporary sources also often blame either the central government or rapacious local officials for exacerbating the situation by refusing to remit taxes.<sup>127</sup>

As the young shoots died in the fields after months without rain we are told that the weak simply starved to death while the strong took to banditry.<sup>128</sup> Others sought refuge in sectarian teachings such as those of the heterodox White Lotus Society, which had persisted underground despite the suppression of a major rebellion of its adherents in Shandong in 1622.<sup>129</sup> In addition to the widespread famine, flooding, and desperation over an inability to pay taxes, cutbacks in the Ming postal service which employed large numbers of young men in the northwest and anger over the state’s laxity in delivering military salaries and rations eventually coalesced into the movements that became the peasant rebellions that eventually destroyed the Ming dynasty.<sup>130</sup> An apocryphal tale about the closure of the postal service relates that it was prompted by the angry wife of one high censorial official who was upset that it took so long to travel between

her hometown (officials often stayed in post houses) and the capital so she had her spouse protest to the emperor about the inefficiency of the postal system. Chongzhen then supposedly cut much of the funding for the whole service!<sup>131</sup>

In any case, a contemporary source notes that those who became known as the *liukou* (wandering bandits) came from six sources: (1) rebellious soldiers; (2) deserters; (3) ex-postal workers; (4) starving commoners; (5) impoverished commoners; and (6) mounted highwaymen.<sup>132</sup> Shaanxi province possessed all of these types in abundance so it is no surprise that the conflagration began in this part of the empire.<sup>133</sup> The frontier nature of Shaanxi also meant that the rebels could sometimes link up with Mongol groups. Finally, its isolation and rugged terrain offered plenty of opportunity for rebels to escape and hide from government forces.

The first notable peasant rebel leader was Wang Jiayin, who assembled a band of starving peasants to raid in the environs of the Great Wall in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of 1628.<sup>134</sup> Local officials initially did not report the uprising for fear of being reprimanded. Army deserters joined the ranks of another disaffected peasant leader who linked up with Wang and before long all of Shaanxi was in an uproar. Wang had some five to six thousand followers, one of whom was none other than Zhang Xianzhong (1605–47), at this time styling himself *Ba da wang* (Eighth Great King).<sup>135</sup> Even though the Ming military was able to defeat these bands, they simply melted into the mountains and by early the next year, they were raiding again. Beleaguered local officials begged Beijing for more troops and rations as the uprisings spread. In late 1628 the Ming assembled a force of 17,000 troops to crush the rebels, but they only incited them to further activities.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, because the court prioritized the conflict with the Jurchens at this time, the north-west theater of operations received a much lower share of available resources.

Because the local pacification commissioner, Hu Yan'an was ineffectual, the rebels called him their “host at the capital” and their activities increased, aided by the rugged mountain terrain of the province with its many hideouts. Shortly thereafter the mounted bandit Gao Yingxiang, who would become the most important early leader of the rebellions, joined forces with Wang Jiayin, styling himself “the dashing prince” (*chuang wang*). Over the next couple years several more noted leaders emerged, eventually prompting the government’s appointment of Yang He, a veteran official who had enjoyed a measure of success in quelling unrest in southwest China.<sup>137</sup> Among the more interesting of these early figures was one Zhao Si’er, who went by the sobriquet “Lighted Lamp,” because he was supposedly a scholar who stayed up late into the night reading books when not raiding.<sup>138</sup> Yang was made Supreme Commander of the Three Border Regions in the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of 1629.

Upon assuming his post, Yang He identified a number of key problems in the region, including supply issues, the constant threat of border raids by the Mongols, and dereliction of duty by local officials. He saw restoring the vitality of the local populace by improving administration as crucial to stabilizing the military situation and believed that a conscientious official could effect these changes from within.<sup>139</sup> Yang believed that government relief and transfer of peasants to areas that had presumably been less affected by natural disasters would be sufficient. Impressed with Yang’s sincerity and commitment, Chongzhen made Yang

Supreme Commander of the three border regions of Shaanxi, investing him with the kind of power that had seldom been delegated to frontier officials since the heyday of the Wanli era.<sup>140</sup> But Yang was faced with many challenges, some of them institutional in nature. In many cases salaries for the troops were seriously in arrears. In 1629 the Vice Minister of Revenue noted that the salaries of Yansui, Guyuan, and Ningxia were 36 months in arrears.<sup>141</sup> This prompted many of their erstwhile soldiers to become bandits.<sup>142</sup> Plus, Yang had little control over prices and the cost of a peck of rice was now four taels, almost the equivalent of a quarter of a soldier's annual salary.<sup>143</sup>

Thus, despite his lofty rhetoric, because he recognized some of the challenges he faced, Yang expressed misgivings about the power with which he had been invested. Because he was a staunch advocate of traditional Confucian statecraft who disdained the use of troops and had little practical military experience, Yang embarked upon a plan of soothing and pacifying the rebels, encouraging them to surrender to the state in exchange for food and the opportunity to return to agricultural pursuits.<sup>144</sup> Yang strictly forbade executing surrendered rebels and seems to have been very gullible in assuming that all who accepted pardons simply returned to peaceful pursuits. He even argued for leniency in cases where rebels killed officials.<sup>145</sup> The fluid nature of rebel leadership compounded matters further, as in the case of the bandit leader Shen Yiyuan, who was killed by Ming troops after months of raiding, only to be replaced by his younger brother, Shen Yikui.<sup>146</sup> Yikui later submitted to the Ming, but before long his followers were raiding again. Thus the very qualities that had made Yang a good censorial official made him a terrible military commander. His ineffectiveness is evidenced by the fact that by late 1630 Wang Jiayin was powerful enough to take several isolated fortresses and kill a local mobile corps commander, though he in turn suffered a defeat at the hands of Cao Wenzhao, who would emerge as one of the most competent late Ming field commanders.<sup>147</sup>

Additionally, however, Ming policy was not consistent. Even while Yang was pushing for pacification and suasion, other commanders were pursuing more aggressive options, sometimes even employing Mongol allies to help smash rebel forces, though in most cases they scattered rather than defeated the rebels.<sup>148</sup> In one famous incident the Ming commander He Renlong killed 320 bandits at a "surrender banquet."<sup>149</sup> And Yang himself presided over the slaughter of some three thousand rebels after lifting the siege of Hancheng in Shaanxi.<sup>150</sup> Actions such as this called into question the sincerity of the Ming state in negotiating with the rebels even if they were rather effective in their own grisly way.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> month of 1631 the emperor convened a palace audience to discuss the wandering bandit problem. When a local surveillance commissioner complained that a lack of military supplies was hampering efforts to contain them, the emperor replied, "Previously you reported that the bandits were pacified. How is it that they now have multiplied?"<sup>151</sup> The official responded that "The riverine area between Shanxi and Shaanxi cannot be pacified, therefore Hequ alone has been encircled." He added that the bandits were not skilled in battle but they had the help of starving peasants, so, because the earlier plan to suppress them

was not implemented, the Ming had come to this national disaster. Furthermore, the Ming units that had been successful in the battlefield had already been demobilized.<sup>152</sup>

Identifying with the position taken by Yang He, Chongzhen said, “The bandits are my children. They should be soothed and pacified. I cannot punish them. If [the former bandit] Wang Zuogua has already surrendered, how could we have killed him?” His official replied, “Because he surrendered and then started looting again. We had to kill him to set an example.”<sup>153</sup> A few days later the emperor ordered famine relief for Shaanxi, expressing his sympathy at the plight of the people and noting that he knew that they were all really good at heart, driven into their actions by desperation. Thus it appeared that the emperor, at least, was still in Yang He’s camp. His resolve was strengthened by reports that suggested sending relief funds to the countryside could “turn bandits into peasants” again. Yang expressed hope that plentiful snow and rain would bring good harvests the following year. A few days later Chongzhen released 100,000 taels from the treasury to pacify the “wandering bandits,” as they were already being called.<sup>154</sup>

The emperor’s support did not silence Yang’s critics, however. Many distrusted the sincerity of rebel leaders who surrendered under duress, not believing that their chants of “*wansui*” (meaning long life) before Yang outside his *yamen* walls constituted sufficient evidence to assume they were once again loyal subjects. In fact, adopting a strategy that rebel leaders would use throughout the last days of the Ming, many disguised themselves as Ming troops in order to gain access to towns and their resources.<sup>155</sup> Even after some military campaigns proved effective in stamping out local uprisings, Yang stopped his subordinates from pursuing rebel remnants, giving those who surrendered certificates of pardon and letting the ringleaders return to the countryside, where many simply joined other bands.<sup>156</sup> As a result, Yang’s critics became increasingly vocal, perhaps best exemplified by Censor Wu Sheng, who argued that even if pacification was a policy found in the historical record, it was exceedingly difficult to be soft first and then adopt a harsher policy. The rebellion of Shen Yikui, who had previously submitted to Yang, was the last straw.<sup>157</sup> In the wake of Shen’s submission, the Ming scored a series of victories, killing hundreds of rebels and obtaining the surrender of many others. Wang Jiayin himself was also killed, but then Shen Yikui rebelled again. When more surrendered rebels again unfurled the flag of insurrection, Yang He was impeached.<sup>158</sup> As more impeachments attacking the pacification policy rolled into Beijing, Chongzhen eventually agreed and ordered Yang’s arrest and interrogation by the Ministry of Justice.<sup>159</sup> Yang was replaced by Hong Chengchou (1593–1665), who would later become notorious as a defector to the Manchu side.<sup>160</sup> The emperor also approved Wu Sheng’s request to retain local funds in lieu of sending them to Beijing for the purpose of stimulating agriculture and the local economy.<sup>161</sup>

### Mao Wenlong’s negotiations with the Latter Jin

As noted above, Manchu and Korean sources suggest that Mao Wenlong had been negotiating with the Latter Jin as early as 1622. But Nurhaci died before any

concrete agreements could be completed. Hung Taiji did not trust Mao, so he broke off talks and launched an invasion of Korea with the aim of securing his flank and cutting Mao off from valuable supplies. But after he was turned back at Ningyuan in the summer of 1627, Hung Taiji realized that he still lacked the strength he needed to fully engage the Ming. Plus the Jin were still short on supplies and hampered by refugees fleeing their rule into the arms of Mao Wenlong. So they decided to open talks with Mao again. Apparently an envoy dispatched by Mao himself was executed, but the Jin then sent an envoy of their own to explain the situation.<sup>162</sup> By late 1628 Mao realized that his tenure as absolute ruler of Pidao was in jeopardy. His support at court seemed to be dwindling and the Koreans were becoming increasingly resistant to his bullying tactics. So in the eleventh month of 1628 Mao sent more representatives to the Jin khan, talking of the mutual profits they could enjoy by allying. Rumors of these talks reached Beijing, but Mao continued to vociferously deny the charges.<sup>163</sup> For his part, Hung Taiji still distrusted Mao and was reluctant to commit to a full-scale alliance. One entry from the *Injo sillok* even suggests that Mao proposed entering into marriage relations (*heqin*) with the Jin ruler.<sup>164</sup> But even though they had regular communications between 1627 and 1628, no formal treaties were ever proposed or concluded.

The Jin were also suffering economically at this time. Ming records report that groups of forty to sixty Jurchens were raiding isolated towns and garrisons, stealing food and livestock.<sup>165</sup> The Ming tried to counter these raids by repositioning units, but local commanders complained that they lacked sufficient numbers of mounts, food and weapons. The court eventually released some funds for purchasing horses. Court discussions focused on the potential for these raids to turn into something larger.<sup>166</sup> Yuan Chonghuan warned about such possibilities too and emphasized the importance of opening local markets and improving the livelihood of the people so as to ensure their loyalty.<sup>167</sup> And at least as late as 1628 Yuan was still talking about coordinating actions with Mao Wenlong, though he was dubious about Mao's claims in terms of both his supposed achievements and the services he was rendering for the refugees.<sup>168</sup> In a report to the throne Mao argued that he faced 100,000 Jin troops with just 28,000 of his own men yet still he had held out for nine years. Mao also stressed the critical nature of the sea lanes and warned the Ming court not to be misled by "ignorant civil officials," quipping, "It's said that those who aspire to great things should not be misled by the words of the petty."<sup>169</sup> Mao also provided figures for the amount of funds he had received from Tianqi, ostensibly to point out that the former ruler had adequately supported Mao's efforts. Chongzhen acknowledged receipt of Mao's report, but did not respond.

### **The execution of Mao Wenlong**

Yuan finally resolved to pay Mao Wenlong a visit in the 5<sup>th</sup> month of 1629. Bringing along a significant contingent of his personal troops, Yuan was greeted by an impressive retinue in 28 boats and treated to wine by Mao Wenlong.<sup>170</sup>

Yuan tried once again to talk Mao into relocating closer to the Ming base of operations and come back into the fold. Mao protested, saying, “Only I know what is happening in the east. Although Korea appears outwardly weak, secretly they can help us.”<sup>171</sup> Yuan was displeased by this answer and he sent Mao away. The next day Yuan started distributing supplies and cash rewards to Mao’s troops for their “loyal” service. He then witnessed an impressive demonstration of Ming cannon. Climbing to the top of the island’s cliffs, Yuan remarked that the place looked like a painting and said that he wished to set his camp up atop the hills. There were heavy storms that night and the island was shrouded in fog the next morning. The waves pounded the rocky island for the duration of the next day and winds whipped across its peaks, giving the place an eerie semblance of a bone yard according to one account.<sup>172</sup>

Yuan then took tours of all the islets in the vicinity of Pidao, pointing out local landmarks. At the Temple of the Dragon King, Yuan addressed the troops about the region’s significance in the founding of the Ming dynasty and stressed how the territory lost to the Jin had to be recovered by land and sea. He then gave the assembled commanders food and drink again.<sup>173</sup> Yuan met with Mao again the next morning. Mao was very deferential in this meeting and the two enjoyed tea and snacks as they talked over defense matters. In this meeting Yuan again emphasized the need for Mao to work with his fellow commanders and stressed the importance of maximizing limited supplies. He was very concerned that Mao refused to recognize these facts. Mao replied, “Wenlong has been overseas for eight years and accumulated many achievements. Just because some petty person starts spreading rumors, don’t forget that the food and the money that have reached me have been insufficient and that I’m also short on weapons and mounts. I haven’t been able to accomplish all that I’ve desired. If I’d gotten what I requested once or twice, then I certainly could have helped achieve these goals; it wouldn’t be hard at all.”<sup>174</sup> At this, Yuan bowed and left Mao’s tent.

The next day Yuan doled out more gifts and watched Mao’s men perform a halberd display.<sup>175</sup> The two had more secret talks that night. The following day Mao invited Yuan for tea again, but was clearly uneasy, perhaps because Yuan was once more handing out cash to Mao’s soldiers.<sup>176</sup> After announcing that he would continue to oversee western defenses while Mao handled things in the east, Yuan invited Mao to watch an archery display on top of the hill. Mao assented and followed Yuan up to the top of the hill. Once there, Yuan started asking the officers their surnames. As they kept answering “Mao,” Yuan found this quite curious. He then asked them how they could complain about rations when they had been sent ample supplies from Ningyuan. He commiserated with their bitterness and suffering on the distant isle, noting how they had given their strength for the state and yet somehow had not received their rations. This was truly lamentable, sympathized Yuan. At this point the men all started weeping and bowed before Yuan. Yuan then turned to Mao Wenlong and berated him about squandering funds without really overseeing all he had been entrusted with, concluding, “Where has all the money we sent you from Ningyuan gone?”<sup>177</sup>

Mao protested that he had been absolutely sincere and loyal, but Yuan said that Mao had shown the fierce heart of a wolf and that everything he said was basically a lie. Yuan added, “You can still look me in the eye, but how can you resist the imposition of national law as imposed by the sagacious Son of Heaven as derived from Heaven with brave martiality?”<sup>178</sup> As Yuan finished talking, he bowed to the west in acknowledgment of the kingly mandate as several guards grabbed Mao and forced him to the ground, taking his cap off. Mao resisted and Yuan addressed him again, saying, “You were given the authority of a general. But now you, Mao Wenlong, have treacherously raised yourself to the level of a lord, amassed soldiers, siphoned off rations, slaughtered the refugees of Liaodong, despoiled Korea, harassed Denglai, carried out illicit commerce, looted and plundered commoners’ boats, changed people’s names, and violated the people’s sons and daughters. These are the crimes for which you will be put to death.”<sup>179</sup>

Mao was rendered speechless at first, but then kowtowed and pleaded for his life. Yuan then turned to the assembled commanders and asked if any disagreed with the charges and whether or not Mao should be put to death. Yuan added, “If you don’t think I should kill him, then you may come forward and kill me.”<sup>180</sup> The assembled officers lost color and kowtowed to Yuan as well, but did not respond. So Yuan yelled at them again, saying, “Wenlong wears the robes of an official of the third grade and enjoys hereditary privileges, and yet these rewards are so insufficient that he has treated with the enemy?”<sup>181</sup> Mao remained silent, but someone else said, “Wenlong has committed crimes so he should die, but we ask the honorable supreme commander for lenience.”<sup>182</sup> Yuan replied, “You don’t understand dynastic law. If I don’t kill you [Wenlong] then this land doesn’t belong to the emperor!”<sup>183</sup> Yuan then bowed to the west and asked for a double-edged sword. He decapitated Mao in front of his tent and turned to the other officers and said, “The punishment was only for Wenlong. The rest of you have committed no crimes.”<sup>184</sup>

The soldiers were understandably agitated, but Yuan summoned their officers to his quarters and explained that he was only charged with executing Mao so as to stabilize the troops and succor the people overseas, because sometimes it was necessary to kill people in order to bring peace. Yuan assured the commanders that they would be restored to their old ranks and surnames and he would report to the court that they had done nothing wrong.<sup>185</sup> Yuan then divided the 28,000 troops of Mao Wenlong into four wings, the central wing being under the command of Mao’s son, Mao Chenglu. He then disbursed another 100,000 *liang* of silver, giving each soldier about three *liang*.<sup>186</sup> Yuan also bowed before Mao’s coffin and offered felicitations, saying, “Yesterday I killed you by the order of the emperor; this was in accordance with the Court’s law, but today I offer you oblations and this is in accordance with my own personal feelings.”<sup>187</sup> Both Yuan and the assembled commanders then wept mournfully. Yuan spent two more days on the island and then departed for Ningyuan.

In his report to the Korean court, Yuan echoed similar sentiments, saying he needed to “properly establish the emperor’s awesomeness,” adding, “If we can’t

pacify internal bandits, how can we hope to quell the barbarians?”<sup>188</sup> Yuan admitted that while there was no doubt that Mao had been a talented commander, he had come to see himself as an island king and regarded only himself as great. This was on top of his engaging in illicit trade and expropriation of military funds. Yuan continued by noting that in the ten years since he had taken Zhenjiang, Mao had done nothing to aid in the recapture of Liaodong, but instead had everyone call him lord, and even made his officers adopt his surname. On top of this, he had kidnapped people, stolen food and cash crops, and killed refugees, not to mention trafficked in goods with the Jurchens.<sup>189</sup> It was only because of the penetrating gaze of the Son of Heaven that Yuan was able to unmask Mao and put an end to his nefarious plots. But while they shed no tears for Mao, the Koreans were concerned that Mao’s death might actually bring more instability to the region, which is exactly what happened.<sup>190</sup>

Mao’s exploits and dramatic end have captivated historians since the events themselves. Within a year of Mao’s execution, Wu Guohua, a supporter of Mao from his home region, wrote a vociferous defense of Mao’s actions, known as *Dongjiang kewen*, written in the form of responses to an anonymous guest’s questions.<sup>191</sup> Wu’s work was in fact a response to a pair of works written in defense of Yuan Chonghuan, Mao’s executioner, by one Cheng Benzhi, who protested Yuan’s subsequent execution by Emperor Chongzhen on charges of treason and incompetence.<sup>192</sup> Wu points out that Cheng, having been on Yuan’s payroll, was obviously biased and wrote his spurious account of Mao’s misdeeds to cover up his own master’s many crimes. As Wu puts it, how could Mao have been executed after all his achievements in the 1620s, which included the recovery of Fort Zhenjiang, harassing the Jurchens, defending Tieshan, offering shelter to refugees from Liaodong, strengthening and reinforcing the islands in Bohai for attacking the Jin rear, and protecting Korea when no one else could? Though the Jin continued to raid and retreat, Wu contends, “after Mao ensconced himself in the region, they did not dare set one foot inside the pass.”<sup>193</sup> According to Wu Guohua, Mao’s successes aroused the jealousy of Yuan Chonghuan, whose own policies were less than completely effective, despite Yuan’s boasts to the emperor that he could recover all of Liaodong in five years (from 1628).<sup>194</sup>

Mao’s defenders understandably downplayed or contradicted any evidence of his disloyalty, stressing instead his victories and role as a thorn in the side of the Jin. Wu Guohua argued that Yuan Chonghuan simply came to resent Mao’s independent authority and the great responsibility Mao was entrusted with on the frontier. The fact that Yuan divided Mao’s military forces into four separate units after killing him demonstrates how jealous Yuan was of centralized authority other than his own, according to Wu.<sup>195</sup> Wu further dismissed rumors that Mao wanted to seize Nanjing and administer it as a vassal of the Jin as utterly groundless. Wu added that Yuan Chonghuan benefited from powerful friends at court and that the real reason Mao was executed was because the efficacy of his operations was undermining the efforts of Yuan’s own secret peace negotiations with the Jin.<sup>196</sup> Admitting that there were many questions concerning talks with the Jin from all quarters, Wu lamented that Mao’s premature death had made it

impossible for everyone involved to present their sides of the story. Wu further lambasted Yuan for not only failing in his pledge to recover Liaodong in five years, but also for groveling in addressing Hung Taiji as khan, when in fact he should have been regarded as no more than a rebellious chieftain.<sup>197</sup>

Wu then countered Yuan's enumeration of Mao's crimes with his own list of ten crimes committed by Yuan himself. For example, despite the fact that he had charged Mao with illicit trading from Pidao, Yuan himself had allegedly marketed grain to the caitiffs. He was also repeatedly tardy in answering Jin raids and in distributing famine relief. Even when the Jin chiefs "planted their felt tents just outside his city," Yuan never assembled an army, but just cowered behind his fortress walls.<sup>198</sup> In some instances Yuan maintained that he lacked sufficient manpower, yet in others he abandoned entire cities without firing a single arrow. So, concluded Wu Guohua, it was only fitting that Yuan was publicly dismembered.<sup>199</sup>

The Qing writer Chen Yushu also defended Mao Wenlong in his *Houle tangji*, comparing Mao to the late Ming general and adventurer Zuo Liangyu (1598–1645), who was regarded as a Ming loyalist despite the fact that he despoiled the southern capital of Nanjing for a year in the dynasty's waning days.<sup>200</sup> While acknowledging that Mao was guilty of insubordinate behavior and illegally opening markets, Chen maintained that there was no evidence Mao had dealings with the Jin, an assertion that is countered by Jin and Korean records, as noted above. Echoing the sentiments of Wu Guohua, Chen Yushu suggested that Yuan had wanted to kill Mao for some time due to his desire for unfettered control of frontier defenses.<sup>201</sup> Mao hated the oversight of civil officials, whom he considered to be incompetent. Therefore he acted as he saw fit. According to Chen, this behavior prompted Grand Secretary Qian Longxi and Yuan Chonghuan to concoct the plot to assassinate Mao. Chen also noted that, rightly or wrongly, Mao was associated with the Wei Zhongxian faction so his assassination may have been part of the general reckoning that took place in the early years of Chongzhen's reign.<sup>202</sup>

For centuries after Mao's death, this general version of events was accepted. Most likely because there were few concrete Ming victories in the 1620s, as well as the fact that Mao cut a dashing figure as a maverick Ming frontier commander, later historians were inclined to view Yuan's execution of Mao as a grave mistake, one which sorely damaged, if not altogether ruined, the Ming cause in the northeast. For if Mao had not been executed, his supporters argued, then Kong Youde, Shang Kexi, Geng Jimao and their troops would not have submitted to Hung Taiji, and he would not have benefited from their numbers and experience.<sup>203</sup> Mao's execution also supposedly cut Korea off from vital Ming support and rendered it ripe for invasion by the Latter Jin. Because the Ming lacked a naval presence in Bohai, they could no longer offer a serious threat to the Jin heartland and all of the khan's attention could now be focused on threatening the environs of the Great Wall and in occupying Liaodong. Even the Jin themselves supposedly later remarked upon how significant the liquidation of Mao had been for their plans.

Of course the emperor had not authorized Mao's execution, and when Yuan returned from the front, he was brought before Chongzhen to answer for his actions. Yuan told the emperor that Mao was engaged in unlawful activities and overseas trading, causing chaos in the region. Moreover, he had a large following that could have become dangerous. When pressed Yuan simply said, "Those who can be used should be used. Those who cannot be of use should be killed."<sup>204</sup> Chongzhen seemed mollified and asked how they would feed the extra troops. Yuan responded that they could be supported in Liaodong. The emperor doubted him, citing rising military costs, but reminded Yuan that the matter was in his hands. But Yuan had earned only a temporary reprieve. Shortly thereafter, the Jin managed to break through Longjinguan and Da'ankou and reached the outskirts of the capital region before they were intercepted by Yuan's forces.

### **The Jin raid of 1629 and its aftermath**

The Jin invaded through Da'ankou and Zunhua in the 10<sup>th</sup> month of 1629, bolstered by Mongol allies. The Jin troops were warned not to rape, loot, or harm the Chinese people, though the taking of captives was not prohibited.<sup>205</sup> They first encircled Jizhou then pushed on to Zunhua, which they took with the help of fifth columnists.<sup>206</sup> The Ming official Liu Zhilun tried to hold out with his two divisions of gunners, but the men turned on him and tried to get him to surrender. He refused as his men were routed, and as Liu died in a hail of arrows he gave his seals of office to a servant to turn over to the Ming authorities.<sup>207</sup> Zhao Shuaijiao, longtime favorite of Yuan Chonghuan, also died in the fighting at Zunhua.<sup>208</sup> The Jin killed two more Ming commanders as they continued their advance towards the capital. Along the way Hung Taiji promised that "the submissive shall be soothed and the criminals shall be punished."<sup>209</sup> He also told the people that Heaven's favor was already leaning towards the Jin.

The Ming Ministry of War issued a directive to all commands to assemble troops, improve defenses, step up drilling, lay ambushes, and stockpile firewood and supplies. They also stressed the use of firearms and erection of cannon placements.<sup>210</sup> Man Gui rushed to the rescue and Sun Chengzong was made Minister of War and given oversight of the armies of Tongzhou. Man's 5,000 troops camped at Shunyi and then engaged the enemy. But they were driven back towards the capital city where they camped outside Deshengmen. Hou Shilu's troops, which were also present, were routed, leaving Man Gui on his own. Though he had artillery support from the walls, Man was hit by friendly fire and had to pull back within the city, having lost about 40 percent of his force.<sup>211</sup> The desperate emperor even resorted to asking high officials in the capital to provide their personal horses and donkeys for military use, and deployed a small private army led by a former Buddhist monk.<sup>212</sup>

Meanwhile, as the Jin troops threatened Deshengmen, Yuan Chonghuan returned from the northeast, and with troops from other garrisons they eventually drove the Jin back and saved Beijing. Yuan directed the city defense efforts as Sun Chengzong met with the emperor. Xu Guangqi was promoted and put in

charge of artillery defenses. Chongzhen responded by tossing the Minister of War, Wang Qia, into jail. Yuan Chonghuan was initially rewarded with ceremonial clothing and other presents, as was Zu Dashou. Man Gui was given wine by the emperor himself. He then camped his units outside Andingmen. Yuan Chonghuan led the defense from the Guangqu Gate. Given the double-edged sword of authority, Man then assembled his commanders and erected palisades two *li* outside the city. The Jin armies mounted a fierce cavalry charge against these defenses and the Ming armies crumbled, Man Gui dying. In subsequent operations, Zu Dashou's army broke and fled east. Ma Shilong was then put in command of the relief army and Sun Chengzong was tasked with restoring Zu Dashou's units.<sup>213</sup>

Nevertheless, the reconstituted Ming forces were routed by the enemy near Marco Polo Bridge and several commanders were captured by the enemy. As more relief troops came in from the west there was widespread alarm in the capital. Many officials were flogged or executed and some of the so-called relief armies looted en route to Beijing.<sup>214</sup> Yongping fell to the Jin in the 1<sup>st</sup> month of 1630, with the attackers capturing some 22,000 taels and much food in the process.<sup>215</sup> Even after the Jin moved on, rioting Ming troops inflicted more depredations on the hapless populace.<sup>216</sup> They then attacked other sites, but were thwarted in several cases as Yuan's Liao troops managed to recover and acquit themselves creditably in positional defense. Hung Taiji tried to contact Chongzhen via letter to come to terms, but received no reply.<sup>217</sup> He eventually returned to Shenyang in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of 1630, though he left some of his commanders behind to occupy Ming cities. Inspired by Sun Yuanhua's killing of some six hundred Jurchens outside the pass, the Ming hoped to use six smaller forts near Luanzhou and Yongping to launch a counterstrike, even hoping to use Mao Wenlong's former troops.<sup>218</sup> In the wake of these raids Chongzhen made the eunuch Li Fengyu commander of the capital garrisons thereby reversing the policy from the start of his reign when he did not use eunuchs to supervise military operations.<sup>219</sup>

Despite the fact that he initially appeared as the hero, former partisans of Wei Zhongxian and Mao Wenlong now took the opportunity to impeach Yuan, accusing him of collaborating with the enemy and failing to act speedily in battle. Allegedly because he felt that he could not defeat Yuan in battle, Hung Taiji leaked false news of a conspiracy between himself and Yuan to a pair of captive eunuchs. As the emperor trusted the eunuchs implicitly, Yuan was arrested and tossed into jail.<sup>220</sup> More charges of treason and collaboration followed, some spread by eunuchs who actually were collaborating with the Jurchens.<sup>221</sup> The men in Liaodong were distraught upon hearing the news but in a letter to Zu Dashou, Yuan told his subordinates to stay the course in Liaodong.<sup>222</sup> The emperor, while admitting that Yuan was within his rights in executing Mao, was still concerned about these other allegations, not to mention the disputed charges that Yuan had strafed his old rival Man Gui with "friendly fire."<sup>223</sup> But when Yuan's Liao troops proved doughty in subsequent operations to drive the Jin back outside the Great Wall, Chongzhen considered reinstating Yuan, only to be opposed by Yuan's

rivals at court, like Wen Tiren, one of the most notorious late Ming officials.<sup>224</sup> Wen and others criticized the emperor's use of "talentless Donglin men" and the factional scrum was on again. Yuan was then accused of bribery.<sup>225</sup>

The Ming finally closed in on the last occupied stronghold of Luanzhou in the 5<sup>th</sup> month of 1630. The Jin tried to slow them down with negotiations, but the Ming were eager to retake the bastion. They brought many heavy artillery pieces to the engagement. The Jin had reinforced their defenses in the preceding months and Zu Dashou had to engage in probing actions to find Luanzhou's weak points. As the Ming closed in with siege ladders, the Jin, now versed in such tactics, countered with pots of burning oil. The Ming just kept blasting away with their heavy guns, forcing the Jin to try and sally forth out of the east gate. Once outside they were subjected to withering crossbow fire from an ambush set up by Zu Dashou. So the Jin pulled back into the city, scavenging for food and supplies as they retreated. The defenders were running short on ammunition and were using severed heads as projectiles. As they scrambled to repair the city's defenses, Cao Wenzhao's unit fired incendiary arrows to set the towers alight. They ignited and winds fanned the flames, causing havoc within the city. Then it started raining so the Ming pulled back and laid another ambush. The Jin then fled the city. The Ming claimed thousands of Jin soldiers were killed and captured, along with lots of weapons, supplies and equipment.<sup>226</sup> All told the Ming recovered four walled cities and twelve fortresses in the spring of 1630 and killed over 3,300 Jin troops along with several conspirators.<sup>227</sup>

Still, the Jin made off with considerable amounts of booty and slaves themselves. The raids exposed serious weaknesses in Ming governmental readiness, coordination, and preparations. It also showed how the Ming foolishly appointed the disloyal and incompetent while killing the loyal and competent. The raids also gave the Jin insights into, experience of, and confidence in fighting in China proper. As significantly, Hung Taiji's cousin, Amin, a contender for power, was arrested for perpetrating atrocities against the Chinese and his property and troops were redistributed among the other Jin nobles.<sup>228</sup> This allowed Hung Taiji to consolidate his authority among the Jin nobility and demonstrate his concern for potential subjects.

In the wake of the raids of 1629–30 the debate over how best to defend the capital was renewed.<sup>229</sup> Xu Guangqi continued to push for the deployment of more foreign cannon and the hiring of foreign experts to help cast them and train Ming soldiers in their use.<sup>230</sup> Efforts were made to place more firearms in key locales and actually deploy sufficient manpower to garrison these forts.<sup>231</sup> Finally in 1630 the Portuguese Goncalvo Teixeira Correa led a contingent bringing thirty cannon to the Ming court.<sup>232</sup> But some opposed the employment of "Western barbarians" and Xu was criticized. Others feared the possibility that the Europeans were Jin spies or that using them would be seen as a sign of weakness by the Ming's enemies, arguing that "they are not our kind" and refusing to separate the technology from the teachers.<sup>233</sup> Xu countered by saying that the Portuguese, unlike the Dutch who were then ensconced in Taiwan, were in fact friendly, and he pushed for their continued employment. Funds were allocated

and space was allocated in front of the Xuanwu Gate for drilling.<sup>234</sup> But his detractors found fuel for their position when someone was killed by an accidental explosion during a training drill in the capital.<sup>235</sup>

While the debate at court continued, at least a few of the Portuguese followed Sun Yuanhua to his new post as Pacification Commissioner at Denglai in Shandong. Some of these men were trainers; others were actually weapon makers.<sup>236</sup> Xu Guangqi then proposed new-style brigades with two-wheeled wagons, cannon wagons, provision wagons, 16 large Western cannon, 80 mid-sized cannon, 100 eagle guns, 1,200 bird guns (muskets), 2,000 infantry, and 2,000 miscellaneous soldiers (including gunners) per unit.<sup>237</sup> Xu went so far as to suggest that all of Liaodong could be recovered in two years with sufficient firepower.<sup>238</sup> The next year would see considerable repositioning of Ming forces and extensive efforts to rebuild and reinforce the defenses that had been so easily breached by the Jin.<sup>239</sup> The Ming also made efforts to stabilize defenses in the islands of Bohai.

Nonetheless, low-scale military activity continued. Ming records refer to frequent Jin raids that, while not significant in a larger military sense, were important in terms of keeping the Ming on the defensive and in undermining the morale of Ming subjects. In most cases the Ming reacted to these raids but even if they drove the enemy off, they had little to show for the efforts.<sup>240</sup> Simultaneously the Ming tried to keep up the pressure by sea.<sup>241</sup> The main problem they had was to find islands that were close to shore, defensible, and had water supplies. They also still sought to link up with Korean soldiers but Ming officials had little confidence in Korea's "soft, weak soldiers."<sup>242</sup> The Ming armed their boats and encouraged efforts to promote commerce in the Bohai Gulf in order to help build support for themselves. Another measure taken was the reconsideration of plans for coastal defense implemented during the Japanese scare of the 1590s. The emperor apparently liked the idea of mustering troops at Lushun and reinforcing the islands as a way to maintain a second front.<sup>243</sup> Indeed, such a plan might well have worked had Yuan Chonghuan and Mao Wenlong both remained alive and actually cooperating.

Meanwhile, Yuan Chonghuan was sentenced to death. He was dismembered in the marketplace in the 8<sup>th</sup> month of 1630.<sup>244</sup> It is now generally assumed that Yuan was the "fall guy" for the Jin raids and that his death, even if it was primarily due to factional intrigue, served the purpose of showing that Chongzhen had done something to respond to the raid on Beijing.<sup>245</sup> But the emperor waited eight months to have Yuan killed just in case the military situation worsened and he needed to be recalled!<sup>246</sup> According to contemporary accounts the enraged people of Beijing fought over scraps of Yuan's flesh after it was hacked to pieces.<sup>247</sup> Some even allege that pieces of his flesh sold for one cash in the capital.<sup>248</sup> His family was sent into exile and, as he had no sons, Yuan's legacy was effectively over. Allegedly one of Yuan's followers recovered parts of his corpse for internment. He was later rehabilitated and recognized as a great patriot and shrines to Yuan exist today in both his hometown in Guangdong and in Longtan Park in Beijing.<sup>249</sup>

The saga of Mao Wenlong reveals a number of important things about the Bohai region in the early seventeenth century. First of all, it was truly an international melting pot, where Chinese, Koreans, Mongols, Jurchens, and others co-mingled. Though its earlier significance had perhaps been more connected to military and tributary matters, the region was now becoming increasingly enmeshed in regional trade networks. As seen by the example of Mao Wenlong, a rogue general on a barren island could amass enough wealth to set himself up as a “sea king,” even if for only a short while. The area also continued to serve as the focal point for Sino-Korean exchanges and joint military operations. Recognizing this, the Latter Jin realized that the best way to prevent the two states from cooperating was to sever their communication and transportation networks and then forcibly conquer the weaker of the two, which the Jurchens would do in 1637. The continued significance of the Sino-Korean tributary relationship is also highlighted in this discussion. Even when Mao was becoming increasingly arrogant and demanding the Koreans were reluctant to anger him for fear of antagonizing the Chinese, who had so recently sent men, money, and materials to the rescue of their tributary neighbor. For their part, the Jin quickly realized that one step towards legitimization in the East Asian world order was by establishing tributary relationships with other states. Defeating Korea and creating such a relationship was therefore doubly rewarding for the expanding Jin empire.

Mao’s exploits are also a testament to the fluidity of borders and boundaries in northeast Asia in the early seventeenth century. Mao was able to take advantage of disorder to carve out a sphere of influence for himself, even aspiring to a position of regional maritime hegemony. In the process he ran up against the interests of three competing states: Ming China, Chosôn Korea, and the Latter Jin in Manchuria. In addition to their active and passive resistance, Mao was constrained by the region’s relative poverty, not to mention the devastation wreaked by the actions of both his enemies and his own troops. Finally, the crimes with which Mao was charged reflect the continuing Ming concern over retaining primacy in the East Asian world order. Whether actually sanctioned by Chongzhen or not, Yuan Chonghuan’s assertion to the Korean king that he killed Mao in order to impress upon the troops the reach of the emperor’s awesomeness is a telling statement indeed. Yuan was effectively demonstrating the reach of the emperor’s information networks to his own forces and showing the Jin that the Ming had the ability to conduct far-flung military operations, even though, as it turned out, Yuan was never able to implement his plans for retaking Liaodong.

As for the larger international repercussions of the execution of Mao, they were far-flung indeed, though perhaps not as cut and dry as suggested by the editors of the *Mingshi*, who observe, “First Chonghuan ignorantly killed Wenlong, then the emperor foolishly killed Chonghuan. From the time of Chonghuan’s death there was no one who could deal with border affairs and the fate of the Ming was decided.”<sup>250</sup> It now seems clear that Mao Wenlong was guilty of treason, though it also seems that Yuan Chonghuan had his own agendas which exacerbated matters. But even had both not been summarily executed, the Ming would have been hard pressed to solve their military problems as will be seen below.

However, in the wake of Mao's death, there were other pressing problems in the Bohai Gulf, caused in part by Mao's liquidation. The remnants of Mao's forces were restive and clamored for supplies. So in 1630 Mao Yuanyi and Zhou Wenyu were sent to the Longwu garrison at Shanhaiguan to bring some of these units under control.<sup>251</sup> They temporarily restored order there, but by the time they reached Juehua, Liu Xingzhi revolted on Pidao and killed another local commander named Chen Jisheng, allegedly because he had embezzled supplies earmarked for the soldiers. The Ming were concerned that the mutineers might try to link up with the Jin. They sent out negotiators and met with Liu some fifty *li* from Lushun. They gave him food, wine, and gifts for him and his men but contended that the Jin raids of the previous months had prevented them from delivering supplies to Pidao.<sup>252</sup> In questioning Liu's followers they learned that many were Liao refugees who claimed to be loyal Ming subjects. The Ming finally provided some additional funds and supplies. Liu later got back into good graces with the Ming by killing Jurchens in several skirmishes.<sup>253</sup> But even though this uprising was nipped in the bud and things settled down for the time being, matters would soon take a much more dire turn.<sup>254</sup>

## **4 Dashing defiers and dastardly defenders: The peasant rebels gain strength and the northeastern front weakens, 1630–6**

### **The siege of Dalinghe**

With Yuan Chonghuan out of the way, his Korean flank secured, and one of his greatest potential challengers neutralized in Amin, Hung Taiji could now direct his attention towards the capture of another important Ming bastion: the fortress of Dalinghe.<sup>1</sup> This was the most forward of the Ming bases in Liaodong and posed the greatest threat to the Jin capital of Shenyang. It had also been the site of much construction activity in the past several years as the Ming sought to expand and fortify its defense works.<sup>2</sup> Zu Dashou and He Kegang had recently reinforced it with 4,000 troops, in addition to their construction efforts.<sup>3</sup> On the eve of the Jin assault, Zu Dashou estimated that there were about 13,800 troops in the city, along with perhaps 10,000 merchants and another 6,000 civilians for a total population of around 30,000.<sup>4</sup> Hung Taiji was eager to attack it before its defenses were completed.<sup>5</sup> He also worried that should they succeed, the Ming and their Korean allies (despite their recently concluded treaty with the Jin) would move to control all trade and resources of the region, choking off the Jin.<sup>6</sup> In preparation for his assault Hung Taiji created his first divisions of entirely Han Chinese troops, which would be the forerunners of the Han banners. Most of these troops were Ming soldiers who had surrendered at Yongping. They were placed under the command of the longtime Han collaborator Tong Yangxing, who was also tasked with supervising crews of Chinese artillery experts, also captured at Yongping.<sup>7</sup> By early 1631, under the direction of a Chinese foundry foreman, these men had already cast forty European style cannon and Tong was given total command of all Han people serving under the Jin.<sup>8</sup>

Hung Taiji led his army west from Shenyang on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month, reaching Dalinghe on the 6<sup>th</sup> of the next month. His forces advanced in two columns, one led by the khan, the other by his brother Ajige.<sup>9</sup> Before they set out the Jin ruler prohibited rape, bloodshed, and looting by his troops. As he prepared for his next major assault on Dalinghe, Hung Taiji built a formidable network of siegeworks and refused to mount the kind of suicidal frontal assaults that had doomed the Jin at Ningyuan and Jinzhou. These structures and moats were erected on both sides to deter the defenders and to stymie potential rescuers. All told the Jurchens had some 45 outer camps, 12 inner camps and

11 communication posts. The Jin also used their own siege guns to take out outlying Ming defensive towers, which the Jin leader had recognized as being more vulnerable than the main fortress. As noted above, Hung Taiji allegedly had some 40 “generalissimo” and red barbarian cannon with him. Tong Yangxing was given oversight of the red barbarian cannon while Hung Taiji himself took the generalissimo models to Jinzhou to guard against Ming flanking actions. Some were used defensively while others were apparently used as mobile field pieces. Mobile Mongol units were deployed to intercept possible relief forces. Although precise figures are difficult to ascertain, it seems that the size of the Jin force, including auxiliaries, was around 80,000.<sup>10</sup>

The first phase of the siege consisted of a series of artillery barrages and responses by the two sides. The Jin were quite effective and enjoyed their greatest success to date in reducing city walls, capturing several of the outlying towers in just over a week.<sup>11</sup> Zu Dashou attempted to lead a couple sallies out of the city, but could not break through, though he did inflict considerable casualties upon the enemy.<sup>12</sup> His younger brother, Zu Dabi, also led a failed breakout attempt.<sup>13</sup> In one skirmish the Ming troops allegedly babbled false Mongolian gibberish to confuse the enemy.<sup>14</sup> Hung Taiji was angered when White Banner forces suffered heavy casualties trying a probing mission towards the city and he ordered the Jin forces to concentrate on defensive activities only.<sup>15</sup> Tong Yangxing drove off multiple Ming relief columns with his cannon, defeating both a force of 2,000 sent from Songshan and one of 6,000 dispatched from Jinzhou.<sup>16</sup> Hung Taiji himself checked another relief column of 7,000 troops in the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> month, driving it back to Jinzhou.<sup>17</sup> The Jin tried to draw Zu out again by circulating false reports of additional relief forces. Zu fell for one of these ploys and lost several hundred men as he fought his way back into the city after being ambushed. Yet another relief column some 40,000 strong was turned back towards the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> month by Hung Taiji and Daisan near Changshan.<sup>18</sup> The Ming first erected palisades and waited for the Jin assault. A fierce see-saw battle ensued but Wu Xiang and one of his allied Mongol commanders were driven back after multiple charges. The censor Zhang Chun rallied and reorganized the Ming units but then a fire set by the Ming in the autumn grass designed to thwart Tong Yangxing’s artillery was reversed by a sudden change in the wind and blew back into the faces of the Ming troops.<sup>19</sup> This was followed by a blinding rain and the Jin smashed into the Ming ranks. Wu Xiang’s units were the first to break. Song Wei fought through the night but his troops eventually scattered as well.<sup>20</sup> Zhang Chun was captured here and after several days of resisting the khan’s overtures, he decided to join the Jin side, angry at the poor treatment he had received from elements at the Ming court.

The siege then entered its next phase, with Hung Taiji sending letters and Ming defectors to induce Zu to surrender and consider some kind of cooperation with the Jin.<sup>21</sup> In one letter he said, “Who does not desire peace but rather wishes for war? Now that our peace talks have been severed, I want to strengthen my state . . . to extend happiness and prosperity; this is my wish. If the general believes I am sincere, please send a reply.”<sup>22</sup> Zu said that he had resolved to die in defense of



*Figure 4.1* Ming stone cannonballs

the city but he feared for the safety of his family should the city fall. So Zu's son delivered a message to the besiegers. Hung Taiji pledged not to kill anyone, but Zu remained suspicious. Hung Taiji tried to reassure him, saying, "The slaughter of people in Liaodong happened during Taizu's reign but we are different."<sup>23</sup> He added, "In my state we make use of soldiers. Those who should be punished are punished. Those who can be of use are employed. As some can tell you, my kindness is great. For those who submit you can rest assured that my kindness will be extended."<sup>24</sup> One of Zu's underlings offered to surrender but the men refused, assuming they would be slaughtered. By this time rations in the city were running low and people would soon be reduced to eating horses or even one another. Memorialists back in Beijing wondered what was happening, some charging Zu with laxity in not breaking out and others questioning the resolve of Ming relief units.<sup>25</sup> Unverified accounts of cannibalism were already circulating.<sup>26</sup> Zu finally sent a subordinate to negotiate surrender terms.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, Tong Yangxing then used six *hong yi pao* and 14 generalissimos against the fortified redoubt of Zizhangtui on November 2, 1631, taking the fort in four days and killing 57 defenders.<sup>28</sup> The next month, plagued by supply problems, Zu Dashou surrendered, having endured 80 days of increasing desperation and starvation.<sup>29</sup> Jin records said that only 11,632 people were alive in Dalinghe when they took it, along with a mere 32 horses and 233 *dan* of rice.<sup>30</sup> In exchange for his own life and those of his family, Zu pledged to help the Jin take Jinzhou and Songshan.<sup>31</sup> Only He Kegang refused to submit and he was arrested by Zu

and decapitated in front of the Jin as he laughed in defiance.<sup>32</sup> The other 29 Ming officers pledged allegiance to the Jin and signed a compact. Zu Dashou met with Hung Taiji outside the city and was showered with gifts including pearls and leopard pelts. He was also personally served cups of wine by the Jin khan. They then devised their plan to take Jinzhou. Hung Taiji released Zu and some 350 men to go ahead, pretending to be refugees from Dalinghe. But as soon as he was safe in the city Zu Dashou reneged on his promise and rejoined the Ming, requesting to be dismissed from his post for failing to hold Dalinghe.<sup>33</sup> While some remained suspicious of Zu, a censorial investigation concluded that Zu had surrendered to save his men and his family.<sup>34</sup> He would serve the Ming more or less competently for another decade. Dalinghe was torched by the retreating Jin forces.

Nonetheless, with their victory at Dalinghe in 1631, the Jin acquired some 3,500 guns of various sizes, accelerating their weapons program.<sup>35</sup> The weapons were moved to Guangning. Moreover, the victory at Dalinghe reified Hung Taiji's new approach to empire building. Soon thereafter the Latter Jin would create their first firearms division under the leadership of the aforementioned Tong Yangxing.<sup>36</sup> In a memorial to Tong, he was told that he should manufacture as many cannon as possible as "even one hundred cannon were not too many and even 100,000 catties of gunpowder was still too little."<sup>37</sup> The Jin also realized they needed to build more carts to transport the cannon so urgent orders were issued to procure the necessary firewood to start building them. They were initially hampered, however, by the harsh climate of Manchuria so they eagerly attempted to attract skilled settlers to the region so as to aid their efforts to build up a support structure for such an ambitious operation. The Jin also hoped to attract more potential soldiers and were eager to keep their operations relatively secret so that they might enjoy the advantage of surprise when they unveiled their weapons against the Ming. Tong would oversee these efforts until his death in 1632. He was succeeded by Shi Tingzhu, another Ming defector who had submitted to Nurhaci after the fall of Guangning.<sup>38</sup>

With an emphasis upon training soldiers, this allowed the Jin to create their first integrated divisions. Hung Taiji envisioned these units as flanking wings to be deployed outside the banners and aid the cavalry in concentrated assaults.<sup>39</sup> Originally the unit was comprised solely of Han Chinese soldiers outside the regular banners. As the Han banners evolved they became more closely integrated into the Jin military structure, initially in units of 1,580 men.<sup>40</sup> In 1637 they were organized into left and right wings under the Chinese defector commanders Kong Youde and Geng Zhongming (d. 1649).<sup>41</sup> Interestingly enough, in defecting to the Latter Jin after his mutiny failed against the Ming, Kong stressed that his knowledge of firearms could be very useful to his new masters.<sup>42</sup> These defectors helped convince Hung Taiji of the utility of creating Han banners to augment his existing formations.<sup>43</sup> These Chinese artillery wings were later expanded into four units and eventually became part of the eight Han banners in 1644.

The Ming court was deeply disturbed by the news of the fall of Dalinghe and Zu Dashou remained under a cloud of suspicion. Chongzhen summoned his officials to the Hall of Literary Transformation in the Forbidden City and gave them

a tongue lashing, saying it was their duty to assume responsibility for military affairs and not to turn their backs on imperial orders. He also put more eunuchs in charge of military supplies and naval defenses, over the vociferous protests of the outer court officials.<sup>44</sup> Chongzhen was eager to restructure and reinforce defenses in the northeast to prevent further Jin expansion over the Ming defense lines. Ming fortresses in the northeast remained understaffed and undersupplied, severely taxing their ability to maintain the kind of forward strategy that the emperor favored.<sup>45</sup> He had also received disturbing news about the exploits of another rising rebel leader in the northwest, a man named Luo Rucai, who would style himself Cao Cao, after the great anti-hero of China's Three Kingdoms (220–265) era. But the court faced an even more immediate threat in the form of yet another troop mutiny, this one led by one Kong Youde, a former retainer of Mao Wenlong.

### **The Wuqiao Mutiny**

The Wuqiao Mutiny was connected to both the aforementioned events on Pidao surrounding the revolt of Liu Xingzhi and the siege of Dalinghe. With the deaths of Yuan Chonghuan and Mao Wenlong the Ming had been deprived of its top military commanders on the eastern and western fronts of the war against the Jin and things deteriorated quickly. It will be recalled that after his execution of Mao Wenlong, Yuan Chonghuan sought to reorganize Mao's units for better central control. The four original commanders were Mao Chenglu (Wenlong's adopted son), Liu Xingzuo, Xu Fu, and Chen Jisheng. All were regional vice commanders (*fu zongbing*) with equal status. Yuan had originally proposed putting Liu in charge but he refused so Yuan installed Chen Jisheng in nominal charge of military matters with Liu as his assistant.<sup>46</sup> Yuan also tried to convert some of these naval units into land units to further his plans for recovering Liaodong and ordered subordinates such as Mao Yuanyi to go about furthering central control.

However, there were two major weak points to this strategy. First, there were lots of dispersed troops with no overarching central commander like Mao had been. So they were not subjected to central directives and their independence actually increased after splitting the units up,<sup>47</sup> for all the subordinate commanders lacked Mao's leadership ability and personal charisma. Meanwhile, Yuan Chonghuan was prevented from exerting his own control by the continual intrigues of rivals such as Wen Tiren at court. Furthermore, Yuan miscalculated badly in assuming he could count upon the loyalty of Mao's former troops. After all, some of them had served with Mao for over a decade and they had undergone many trials and tribulations together. Such bonds were not easily dissolved. For example, when Mao was executed by Yuan it was said that "all 3,000 men in the field wept."<sup>48</sup> When the division originally took place, Kong Youde and Geng Zhongming were under the banner of Chen Jisheng. Kong was supposedly angry because he felt that Mao Wenlong had done nothing wrong and many of his trusted commanders had been denied posts whereas Chen Jisheng was incompetent and his appointment was political.

Soon after the original four divisions were reorganized into eastern and western wings with Chen Jisheng in charge of the east and Liu Xingzhi (Xingzuo's younger brother) in charge of the west. Liu Xingzuo in the meantime had been transferred to Ningyuan where he served under Sun Chengzong in battling the Jin during the raids of 1629–30. He fought the Jin at Taipingshan in 1629 and resisted them again at Yongping in 1630. In the latter battle he fought the enemy fiercely from horseback without armor for more than an hour, cutting down many of the enemy before falling from his mount, pierced by multiple arrows, blood cascading down his body.<sup>49</sup> Though badly outnumbered, the Ming killed some 600 of the enemy in this battle. Angry that Liu had rejoined the Ming side after nominally pledging his loyalty to them before, the Jin recovered his corpse from the field and dismembered it.<sup>50</sup> It was after this that Liu Xingzhi's troops revolted, as discussed above, also provoked by Liu Xingzhi's anger that his brother had not been properly honored by the Ming for dying in battle. Indeed, rumors circulated that Xingzuo lived and had defected back to the Jin.<sup>51</sup> Still, the members of the Liu clan assembled and assassinated Chen Jisheng, just as mobilization orders from Sun Chengzong arrived.<sup>52</sup> But after they were pacified by another Ming officer, Liu Xingzhi led his men against the Jin at Qingshan and Fenghuang in the autumn of 1630.

Yet another mutiny of Liu's men erupted in 1631, which Liu quelled. But he was then killed in further violence among his men.<sup>53</sup> There was considerable tension between the Liu and their followers and Mao Wenlong's old retainers. So now one Huang Long was made commander of the area and sent east to oversee operations from Pidao. But Huang had major problems with lack of supplies and increasing military pressure from the Jin. Meanwhile two of the earlier Ming mutineers had defected to Hung Taiji, who now sent them forth with 12,000 banner troops to fight Huang Long. Though the fighting was fierce and the casualties were about even, the banner troops, inexperienced in naval warfare, eventually pulled back.<sup>54</sup> But food supplies were scarce on the islands and the Ming were still trying to trade with Korea. In the absence of regular supplies and steady trade, some men resorted to raiding Korea or even secretly trading with the Jin, as Geng Zhongming supposedly did.<sup>55</sup> Additionally it was rumored that Huang Long was siphoning off supplies for his own benefit. When Huang learned of Geng's dealings, he jailed him, provoking an officer named Geng Zhongyu (Zhongming's brother) to revolt against Huang Long, cutting off his nose and an ear.<sup>56</sup> Huang was eventually released at the intercession of Shang Kexi but Sun Yuanhua protected Geng, and impeached Huang Long for embezzling army funds. More charges passed back and forth and several officers were transferred, most significantly Kong Youde and Geng Zhongming, to Dengzhou on the Shandong peninsula.

Then the Ming issued a call for reinforcements to lift the siege of Dalinghe. Among these units was one led by Kong Youde. Kong led 4,772 troops with 1,061 horses, 551 mules, 154 oxen, 1,958 sets of iron armor, 1,034 firearms of various types, 1,200 powder horns, 36,897 fire arrows and other incendiary projectiles, and 5,990 *jin* of gunpowder among other supplies.<sup>57</sup> His troops were

undersupplied and none too pleased about being sent to fight the Jurchens. As they passed by the town of Wuqiao in Shandong on the 28<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> intercalary month of 1631, some of his men stole and killed chickens and dogs that belonged to commoners.<sup>58</sup> The soldiers were flogged by a local official, prompting them to retaliate.<sup>59</sup> When Kong Youde initially refused to defend them against the local official, they apprehended him and forced him to join their mutiny. The instigator of the revolt was a soldier named Li Jiucheng. After raiding Jinan and its environs, the mutineers fanned out and headed for the strategically important ports of Dengzhou and Laizhou.

The rebels took Dengzhou on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> lunar month of 1632 and besieged Laizhou on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The initial Ming response was to negotiate with Kong. Kong, knowing that his own force was relatively weak, tried to buy time by feigning interest, fooling the Ming pacification commissioner, Yu Dacheng, in the process, though it was obvious that Yu had little stomach for a fight. Making good use of firearms, Kong's men enjoyed much success in random plundering around Shandong before the Ming could employ a concentrated response. The military official Zhang Keda advocated a forceful response but Sun Yuanhua supported persuasion for the time being, arguing that if force failed the first time, they would be in no position to try negotiating at all.<sup>60</sup> He was actually in Dengzhou when the rebels attacked and was fooled by a false promise to surrender from Kong. Zhang took to the field and initially drove back the attackers several times with his own guns. But Zhang's efforts were undone by fifth columnists inside the city as one Zhang Tao and an old friend of Geng Zhongming aided the mutineers by opening the city's main gate as Kong assailed the east gate.<sup>61</sup> This happened after twelve days of fighting.

Seeing this, Sun Yuanhua unsuccessfully tried to slit his own throat. He was then allowed to flee by the rebels. Sun Yuanhua was eventually impeached, branded as incompetent, and charged with bribery and embezzlement.<sup>62</sup> The Minister of War was replaced by Zhang Fengyi, a favorite of the emperor who would serve the court for far too long. At this point Xu Congzhi was made the new Pacification Commissioner of Shandong.<sup>63</sup> Xu entered Laizhou on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month and immediately began working with local gentry to coordinate defense efforts.<sup>64</sup> Sun, his patrons, and supporters were blamed for the mutiny in subsequent memorials. He would be executed in 1633, as was Yu Dacheng.<sup>65</sup>

After the capture of Dengzhou, Kong Youde superseded Li Jiucheng as the ringleader of the mutiny, perhaps because of his reputation and experience. He also had many connections and recruited assistance from Mao Chenglu and others in the islands of Bohai. The rebels initially appeared to have no clear-cut goals but they later tried to wring recognition of a quasi-independent status for themselves within the Bohai Gulf, which would be akin to what Mao had carved out for himself in the preceding decade.<sup>66</sup> And while the Ming state understandably balked at such requests, in fact they would have amounted to a tacit recognition of an existing reality as "the growing needs of the northern garrisons together with the relaxation of coastal trading bands in the early seventeenth century [had]

facilitated the expansion of non-state commerce with and without the authorization of Ming officials.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, “the commercial dynamics of the late Ming produced a need for the construction of a new maritime space that transcended existing political-administrative boundaries.”<sup>68</sup> In essence, military needs spurred the creation of a new economic infrastructure in the region. But even if they realized this to an extent, Ming officials had neither the resources nor the political capital to authorize such radical institutional changes at the time. There were spies and refugees everywhere and the political climate would not allow for the establishment of still more maverick forces. Moreover, recognizing Kong and his allies in such a fashion would highlight that the court had made a grave mistake in assassinating Mao Wenlong, even if it had not actually sanctioned that act.

Meanwhile the Ming court appointed a new Minister of War and dispatched various commanders to stamp out the rebellion. Kong’s positions had been greatly improved by the capture of Dengzhou, however. For not only had he acquired a fortified bastion with access to the sea, he came into the possession of 3,000 war horses, 20 *hongyi dapao*, 300 *xiyang pao* (Western Ocean cannon), armor, weapons, and some 100,000 taels of silver.<sup>69</sup> The rebels then fanned out across Shandong and by early in the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of 1632 their movement had 15,000 followers closing in on Laizhou, which became the center of Ming defense efforts as it was the base for Xu Congzhi. Even so, some Ming officials, most notably Zhou Yanru, one of Chongzhen’s favorites, still pushed for negotiations.<sup>70</sup> Others, such as Bi Ziyan, recommended joint land-sea operations. Censor Wan Wanxiang from Sichuan favored “showing the empire’s awesomeness” not only to quell the rebellion at hand, but also to send a message to the Jurchens in Liaodong.<sup>71</sup>

In the initial stages of the siege of Laizhou the government forces mounted sallies to try and break out with no success. Conversely, the rebels hit the north-west corner of the city with cloud ladders but could not breach it.<sup>72</sup> Both sides made use of gunpowder weapons and the mutineers pulled back when they took heavy casualties. The defenders also sent men outside to steal rebel weapons. They were successful enough in these efforts to thwart subsequent rebel assaults by procuring guns and arrows.<sup>73</sup> In the evenings the attackers would sing, drink, and carouse outside the city to unnerve the besieged, who were already starving.<sup>74</sup> But repeated assaults were turned back by the defenders’ heavy artillery.<sup>75</sup> These actions forced the attackers to realize that the defenders were competent so they resorted to a siege of attrition, seizing nearby cities such as Pingdu, hoping to cut off lines of relief. Even so, Xu Congzhi managed to get messages out to Beijing and he urged the emperor to ignore ploys for negotiations on the rebel side. But the rebels kept up their artillery barrages and spooked the defenders further when ships were sighted off the coast.

Hearing that Dengzhou had fallen, the residents of Laizhou were worried, especially when they saw siege towers being erected. The Ming then sent out “daredevils” to burn the towers down.<sup>76</sup> There were a series of skirmishes over the next several days outside the south gate (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> month) with both sides burning each other’s defenses. The Ming held out, however, and volleys of fire arrows

failed to ignite structures within the city. But at the same time, rebel ambushes thwarted efforts to break out. This led the attackers to build more moats and siege towers. The Ming defenders countered by putting their “red barbarian cannon” opposite the siegeworks and firing away.<sup>77</sup> As the defenders continued to pick off mutineers who got too close to the city, they provided covering fire for relief troops from Sichuan to enter the city by land and repulsed a rebel assault on the water gate.<sup>78</sup> When they got word that relief troops had already reached Changyi their hopes were further lifted. Over the next few weeks the defenders managed to sneak out and capture more weapons from the mutineers and repulsed several more rebel assaults.<sup>79</sup> With several of their watchtowers badly damaged, sallying forth to seize rebel artillery became vital for the defenders.

The defenders of Laizhou also kept up negotiations, hoping to buy time until relief troops arrived. The gentry continued to organize militia defense units and some men were dispatched by sea to seek news because relief units had apparently been stalled.<sup>80</sup> The gentry contributed funds to reward the defenders when they heard that the Ming relief column was advancing. They also helped with counter-siege measures, burning cloud ladders and frustrating efforts to sap the walls.<sup>81</sup> But sallies were difficult owing to the extent of the siegeworks around the city. Hearing that relief troops were advancing in the summer, the besiegers stepped up their efforts. Their fears were realized when a contingent from Sichuan arrived.<sup>82</sup> The defenders, on the other hand, were running low on ammunition for their weapons.<sup>83</sup> So they continued to sally forth and captured guns and supplies.<sup>84</sup> Through the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of 1632 they achieved limited victories and captured more heavy artillery. Still, the attackers made limited progress with their artillery and the Ming were hard pressed to put out the fires caused by the continual barrages.

Late in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of 1632 the mutineers stepped up their attacks, bolstering defenses in the west and south to concentrate their offensive operations in the north and east. The defenders received a reprieve when Ming naval units brought men and supplies into the city early in the 4<sup>th</sup> month of 1632.<sup>85</sup> Morale was boosted by news of Ming victories to the west. The Ming army was advancing fast, making adroit use of firepower and moving too quickly for the rebels to get their own heavy artillery into position, though one inexperienced Ming commander was beaten near Shahe, slowing the relief armies’ advance.<sup>86</sup> Back in Laizhou the rebels opened fire with heavy artillery and Xu Congzhi was clipped in one of the engagements at the southwest corner of the city.<sup>87</sup> He would die that day.<sup>88</sup> Kong Youde kept up the facade that he wished to negotiate as well, bowing before the gates of Laizhou and inviting Ming officials to his camp for talks, only to kill them.<sup>89</sup>

After the death of Xu Congzhi, Chongzhen finally decided upon a policy of extermination and he sent the eunuch Gao Qiqian, Wu Xiang, Xiang’s young son, Wu Sangui, and others to stamp out the rebellion.<sup>90</sup> The members of the Wu clan had been demoted for their failure to rescue Dalinghe the previous year and were eager to restore their names. Zhu Dadian was appointed to replace the deceased Xu Congzhi. The relief armies amassed at Changyi on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the

8<sup>th</sup> month of 1632 and advanced towards Dengzhou in three columns with 12,000 men. The southern route led by Chen Hongfan and Liu Zeqing had 6,000 men and advanced from Pingdu.<sup>91</sup> The northern route under Wang Zhifu advanced from Haimiao and included 3,000 troops.<sup>92</sup> Wu Xiang led the third route from the vicinity of Laizhou, which was still under siege by rebel forces. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of the 8<sup>th</sup> month the Ming army smashed the enemy at Shahe, spearheaded by the efforts of Wu Xiang.<sup>93</sup> They advanced towards Laizhou and captured a rebel officer who gave them information on rebel defenses. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of the 8<sup>th</sup> month Kong Youde led 3,000 men forth from Dengzhou to engage the Ming units but they were broken by Zu Kuan's vanguard of 500 men and the siege of Laizhou was lifted as the rebel units were caught between those of the defenders and the Ming relief troops.<sup>94</sup> Wu Xiang was recognized for his tactical advice and the name of the Wu clan was restored. The rebels left a virtual mountain of weapons and supplies in their wake, along with hundreds of POWs and camp followers. Over the next several months the Ming forces steadily recaptured outlying towns. After they fell into one ambush, they were rescued by the efforts of Chen Hongfan and Gao Qiqian and a timely cavalry charge by Liu Zeqing.

Now the main task was to recover Dengzhou. The mutineers tried to set an ambush with allegedly 100,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry troops. The Ming vanguard stumbled into it but Wu Xiang, Guo Qiqian, Liu Zeqing, and Chen Hongfan rallied and carried the day. In the decisive battle of Baima, some 13,000 rebels were killed and 800 captured.<sup>95</sup> The next order of business was to marshal supplies for an extended siege, which they did.

Ming forces were now surrounding Dengzhou and they tightened their siege in the first week of the 9<sup>th</sup> month of 1632, erecting siegeworks around the city to a distance of thirty *li*. Chen Hongfan and Liu Zeqing attacked the west, supported by Wu Xiang. Liu Liangzuo and Zu Dabi (Dashou's brother) attacked the south gate and Wang Fuwei attacked the east.<sup>96</sup> As for the defenders, Geng Zhongming commanded defenses in the west, Kong Youde in the south, Li Jiucheng held the east gate, and Mao Chenglu protected the water gate. Chongzhen was particularly concerned about the water approach and ordered his commanders to cut that off. So there was extensive fighting over the next few months as the mutineers sought to maintain their escape route.<sup>97</sup> The Ming met with only limited success in this area.<sup>98</sup> For one, they were dubious about mobilizing other former associates of Mao Wenlong to aid in their suppression efforts, though they eventually brought in some Bohai units.<sup>99</sup>

The defenders held out for four months until they were reduced to cannibalism. They planned a breakout in the 12<sup>th</sup> month but were betrayed by spies within the city, who told the Ming troops. They then caught Kong's troops in an ambush. Li Jiucheng fell in the field, though Kong escaped back into the city.<sup>100</sup> A failed Ming effort on New Year's Day of 1633 provoked a purge in the city where three to four thousand "southerners" suspected of aiding the Ming were killed.<sup>101</sup> The defenders then instituted curfews and set up an elaborate signaling system to warn them of impeding attacks. When he got word that the Ming were readying for a full-scale assault on the water gate, Kong made plans to flee by sea, evacuating

on the 13<sup>th</sup> of the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of 1633. Even though the Ming had captured some of the outlying islands, they did not control all of them and Kong slipped away in the night. Geng Zhongming and Mao Chenglu escaped soon thereafter.<sup>102</sup> The Ming recaptured Dengzhou three days later.<sup>103</sup>

In fact the Ming had tried to blockade Dengzhou the previous winter but owing to frozen waters farther north, another symptom of the Little Ice Age, moving troops into position had been difficult. This allowed the rebels to keep their own sea lanes open and send people and supplies in and out to a limited extent. As the Ming officers complained, “Our ships are few and the rebels have many” so it was hard to patrol the coast and deny the rebels landing points.<sup>104</sup> Although they had sustained heavy casualties and the main leaders got away, the Ming still freed thousands of captives and captured 75 rebel officers when they took Dengzhou. They estimated four to five thousand died in the sea as they tried to flee.<sup>105</sup> After they pulled out, the rebels captured Huang Long’s mother-in-law and tried to use her as leverage, but the maimed Huang still defended Lushun against them. Turned away from Lushun, the rebels fled east, landing at Shuangdao, where Mao Chenglu was apprehended by Ming forces.<sup>106</sup> Another rebel leader was captured and executed at Huanggudao. With morale dissipating fast, the remaining mutineers headed for the Korean border. Mop-up operations continued through the summer for the Ming, some of them in tandem with Korean forces.<sup>107</sup>

Unfortunately for the Ming, however, Kong Youde and Geng Zhongming escaped justice and surrendered to the Jin on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> month of 1633.<sup>108</sup> They were met by Ajige, Dodo, and Jirgalang at Fort Zhenjiang, ironically the same place where Kong had accompanied Mao Wenlong in defeating the Jin some twelve years earlier. They were treated like the other prominent Ming defectors and helped in reorganizing Jin military units and with firearms training. Kong was made Marshal and Geng was made a Commander. Their defection and that of their troops was used by Hung Taiji as a rationale for extracting more food from the Koreans.<sup>109</sup> The Jin then launched another unsuccessful assault on Lushun. They considered attacking Shandong and Shanhaiguan too, but it was deemed too risky. Their former compatriot Shang Kexi would join the Jin a few months later.

Chongzhen was ecstatic over the victory, liberally distributing rewards to his commanders even though the major ringleaders had escaped.<sup>110</sup> Mao Chenglu’s corpse was cut up and scattered along the frontier.<sup>111</sup> The campaign demonstrated that the Ming could still win battles against skilled foes with proper leadership and coordination. It also signaled the rise to prominence of Gao Qiqian and the Wu clan and reified the emperor’s policy of appointing eunuchs to high military positions.<sup>112</sup> In the larger picture, of course, the escape of Kong and Geng was important in aiding the expansion of the Jin and the further intensification of their arms production and deployment efforts.<sup>113</sup> As Christopher Agnew has demonstrated, the mutiny also highlighted the social tensions between migrants and local populations.<sup>114</sup> Sun Yuanhua, for example, called the Liao migrants “weak, deceitful, and completely unreliable.”<sup>115</sup> He had also worried about mutinies and the social tensions caused by the flood of Liao refugees in the months prior to the

mutiny.<sup>116</sup> At the local level, it destroyed the city of Dengzhou. A local magistrate in 1636 observed that when looking at the city he saw, “only a bleak wasteland, overgrowth, collapsed walls, and broken roof tiles.”<sup>117</sup>

Capitalizing on the knowledge and skills of their new allies the Jin resolved to take the port city of Lushun later in the summer of 1634. Kong and Geng recommended joint land-sea operations, which would be a first for the Jin. They sent cavalry in from the north where Huang Long personally directed the defenses as he had done several months before. The Ming defenders repulsed the initial Jin attacks with cannon, spears, arrows, and catapult fire. The Jin lost some four thousand men in six days of assault, but the Ming lacked the manpower to pursue the enemy into the field.<sup>118</sup> They were also running short on ammunition. Knowing the city was doomed to fall, Huang Long dispatched an aide with the seals of office to flee the city. The Ming managed to fend off another sea attack but were overwhelmed by a simultaneous land assault and it turned into a street fight. Huang and his men were surrounded so he committed suicide and all his troops died. The Ming lost over five thousand men in addition to more mounts, supplies, cash, and other items.<sup>119</sup> The Jin detailed 2,500 men to hold the strategically important port in anticipation of using it as a base to root out Ming remnants in the Bohai Gulf.<sup>120</sup>

For his part Chongzhen ordered Shen Shikui to defend Pidao and use it as a base to attack the Jin and defend other islands.<sup>121</sup> Some wanted to flee but Shen quelled them for the time being and resolved to hold the island. On the Jin side there was considerable debate over whether or not to attempt an assault on the islands. Some thought they were of scant military value, being filled with starving commoners. Others recommended co-opting them. This was the strategy Hung Taiji elected to take, sending a letter to Shen Shikui urging him to surrender and another to King Injo explaining his non-aggressive stance towards Pidao.<sup>122</sup> Seizing their opportunity, many lesser officers fled to the Jin side, seeking rewards and position.

Nonetheless, the Ming did not deem the recovery of Liaodong a lost cause. They still hoped to use Jinzhou to spearhead an advance and thought that if the sea lanes were kept open, it would only take a couple of victories to reverse the tide. One official even referenced the successful conquest of the region by the Ming founder as a source of inspiration.<sup>123</sup> Others noted that repairing the walls of Dalinghe was not that much of a problem, but the loss of cannon after the recent defeats was cause for concern. Requests were submitted to the Ministry of Works for more cannon for strategic points such as the Juyong Pass, the approach to Beijing from the west.<sup>124</sup> But more troops needed to be dispatched since some nine fortresses outside the Great Wall had just 50,000 troops so it was difficult to patrol or launch offensive operations.<sup>125</sup> They also realized the need for expanded construction gangs outside the Wall. Counter-espionage was another priority.<sup>126</sup> There were numerous minor skirmishes around Liaodong and along the Great Wall over the next couple years, most involving just a few dozen casualties at most. Ming records also show how they tracked the movements of raiding parties (or potential parties), though it is not always clear



Adapted from Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions of the Late Ming Dynasty*.

*Figure 4.2* Map of Late Ming peasant rebellions, 1628–36

if they are talking about Jurchens or Mongols.<sup>127</sup> In the face of these threats localities were told to adopt the strategy of “strengthening the walls and clearing the fields.”

### Stepping up activity against the wandering bandits

Returning to the northwest, Hong Chengchou proved to be a much more aggressive supreme commander than Yang He and through 1631 he stepped up his operations even as Yang He tried to preserve his own policy of suasion.<sup>128</sup> His overarching strategy was threefold: (1) sever rebel communications; (2) pardon those compelled to follow; and (3) cause dissent between the rebel leaders.<sup>129</sup> Hong’s subordinates were noted for their recklessness and daring, particularly the father and son duo of Cao Wenzhao and Cao Bianjiao, who scored repeated victories over the bandits in these early years.<sup>130</sup> The problem was that success was difficult to quantify, or more accurately it was quantified perhaps too simply in the form of head counts. They would then submit victory reports tallying their exploits, which regularly ran into the hundreds or even thousands.<sup>131</sup> Because soldiers received combat bonuses based on the number of enemies killed, there was a tendency for commanders to slaughter rebels, or even commoners, in order

to gain rewards. For example, one official submitted a bunch of female heads, claiming they were slain bandits. He was deprived of his rank.<sup>132</sup>

The problem was that it was difficult to ascertain the accuracy of such figures and the motive for committing atrocities was rather strong given the potential rewards. Random acts of violence perpetrated by Ming soldiers only served to drive more people into hiding or into the arms of the bandits. Some commanders, most notably Zuo Liangyu and Du Wenhuan, became infamous for the rapacity of their troops.<sup>133</sup> But head counts served as an indication that at least something was being done and were taken as signs of progress by a court eager for positive news.<sup>134</sup> Yet against the backdrop of these reports, the bandits allegedly numbered nearly 200,000 by late 1631, loosely organized into some 36 brigades.<sup>135</sup> The following year this figure would climb to 300,000 in Shanxi alone.<sup>136</sup> This period also witnessed the emergence of three more figures who would play major roles in the rebellions over the next 15 years: Lao Huihui (Old Muslim), Zhang Xianzhong, and Li Zicheng.

Zhang Xianzhong was perhaps the most violent and bloodthirsty of all the late Ming peasant rebel leaders. He was a native of Yan'an, Shaanxi. It is said that he was strong and valiant as a youth, but also very hairy and he had an inordinate lust for killing. His official biography notes that “if a single day went by and he did not kill someone, then he was really unhappy.”<sup>137</sup> His subsequent career and behavior suggest that at the least Zhang was mentally unstable and he may well have been a psychopath. He got into repeated scrapes with his associates as a youth so his family disowned him. He then joined the army but was sentenced to death for breaking military law.<sup>138</sup> Another officer named Chen Hongfan spared Zhang because he was impressed with his valiance. But when the peasant rebellions erupted in the region a couple of years later Zhang formed his own band and started plundering. He later followed Ma Shouying, who recognized Zhang’s talent and made him a petty officer, dubbing him the “Yellow Tiger” because of the pallor of his skin, probably caused by a childhood ailment.<sup>139</sup> Zhang soon rose to the command of 500 men and later to the command of 2,000. But hardship struck in the winter of 1631 and he joined Luo Rucai in accepting Hong Chengchou’s offer to surrender. It would be the first of several such expedient surrenders on Zhang’s part.

According to some accounts Li Zicheng was Gao Yingxiang’s nephew. Li was a native of Mizhi, Shaanxi. His hometown was a dry and dusty country, prone to heavy winds and populated by sturdy people with short lifespans. Li’s childhood name was Li Hongji and he was the second son of Li Shouzhong. But his brother was twenty years older than him and they were born of different mothers. Li’s father was much older than his mother and he died when Hongji was just a few months old. His stepfather, however, stressed education and Li started learning characters at the age of six *sui*.<sup>140</sup> Li apparently never fit in his dull village. He was bright and inquisitive and was always asking questions. But he was also known as a rowdy and a troublemaker, and often skipped school, earning frequent beatings. One of his favorite pastimes was mounted archery, which he excelled at. Because his family was impoverished by repeated droughts, Li became a

shepherd at the age of ten. It is said that even though his boss often beat him, Li did not complain. His mother died three years later, but despite his harsh life, Li grew up tall and strong, “with eyes that sparkled like lightning and the spirit of a tiger.”<sup>141</sup>

His closest companions were his nephew Li Guo, who was just one month younger than him, and his cousin Liu Guolong. While his companions dreamed of rising to military glory, Li Hongji also realized the value of literary achievement. He took the name Zicheng, which means “achieving on one’s own,” after he moved a huge incense burner at a temple to Guandi, the Chinese god of war.<sup>142</sup> Li first tried to join the army at the age of 16 but was turned down due to his youth. He was, however, allowed to join a few months later. At the age of eighteen he married a celebrated local beauty named Han Jin’er, supposedly to help take care of his aging stepfather.<sup>143</sup> He then seems to have left the army, working in a variety of odd jobs and in a family wine shop until getting a job with the postal service in 1626. The pay was low and it was difficult to support his family. Matters were made worse by the fact that his superior beat him and denied him food and water for extended periods on account of loafing. While Li supposedly swallowed his bitterness at these indignities, he first became an outlaw when he killed a man whom he found in bed with his wife after returning from an extended business trip.<sup>144</sup> Li protested that killing a cheating wife was perfectly within the limits of propriety, but his protests were ignored and he was imprisoned, awaiting trial. Li was freed through the efforts of his nephew Li Guo, who had apparently bribed the jailer, but the two then killed the official who had sentenced Li in the first place so they had to flee the area.<sup>145</sup>

The two went to Suiye, where they again ran afoul of the law so they moved on, traveling to Ningxia and then to Gansu. In Gansu Li joined the army (again) and by virtue of his military talents, soon became a squad commander of 50 men. Li’s squad was among those sent to suppress the uprising of the “Dashing Prince,” Gao Yingxiang. One version of events holds that Li found that he sympathized with the rebels (recall that Gao may have been related to Li) and joined their cause. Another suggests that he was charged with stealing rations so he decided to cast his lot with the rebels.<sup>146</sup> Still another references a challenge of combat wherein neither Li nor his foe (Gao Ruyue) could gain the upper hand, so they stopped, had drinks, and joined forces.<sup>147</sup> No matter the exact circumstances Li would soon emerge as one of the smartest and most talented peasant rebel leaders, his own rise somewhat echoing that of the august founder of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang.

In early 1632 the Ming dispatched veteran censor Wu Sheng to investigate the situation in Shaanxi. Wu was one of the officials who had impeached Yang He, accusing him of “errors of state.”<sup>148</sup> Wu reported that the biggest problems were long-term privation and starvation. Many people were reduced to eating grass and tree bark as a matter of course.<sup>149</sup> Bandits who submitted to the state were allowed to keep official Ming seals of authority (sometimes being enrolled in the military) and still looted as before. So the people called them “official bandits” and the pacification policy advocated by Yang He was exposed as a total failure.<sup>150</sup> Wu

favored a forceful extermination campaign and clear application of rewards to wipe out the rebels. The emperor thereby ordered the capture and punishment of all former surrendered rebels who were now rebelling again and told Wu that henceforth extermination would take precedence over pacification.<sup>151</sup> He also followed Wu's advice in authorizing the retention of 200,000 taels in local funds for stimulating agriculture and soothing the people.<sup>152</sup>

Wu also noted the vicious cycle of local immiseration whereby famine, bad weather and constant military campaigns and exactions drove people to banditry. Heavy winter snows had hampered deliveries of food and when it came to supplies, combat units were prioritized, making those stationed in garrisons surly and restive. He stressed the need to keep transportation routes open, including the rivers, which were needed not only for military purposes, but also to deliver famine relief. Wu explained, "If a river is not open for a single day, then there's no business for that day and no rice comes for that day and then both the soldiers and the commoners don't eat for that day."<sup>153</sup> Wu also noted the connection between force and suasion, saying that a policy of pacification could never work if the state did not also establish its awesomeness (*wei*).<sup>154</sup> He admitted that both strategies had their shortcomings, but they could work in tandem if only the livelihood of the people was secured first. If the bandits realized that the people were content and capable of defending themselves, they would scatter and disperse.<sup>155</sup> Additionally, Wu pointed to the deleterious effects of closing many of the postal stations for local economies.<sup>156</sup>

An official from the Ministry of War likewise lamented the declining production of the military farm system, drawing attention to declining figures across the board from the dynasty's early years, though it is worth pointing out that the late Ming military was comprised of far more mercenaries than theoretically self-sufficient hereditary soldiers as had been the case in the dynasty's early years.<sup>157</sup> Notwithstanding these problems for the rest of 1632 at least, it seemed as if the newly appointed officials were making headway with their more aggressive policies. Cao Wenzhao relieved a siege of Heshui in the 7<sup>th</sup> month and continued to press the attack over the ensuing months. Hong Chengchou and Cao Wenzhao killed the bandit leader Ke Tianfei (Can Fly to Heaven) and some 30,000 followers. Lighted Lamp was also captured and killed, as was the "Heaven Disturbing Money."<sup>158</sup> They then scored several more triumphs and pacified a large swathe of Shaanxi.<sup>159</sup> By virtue of these victories Cao Wenzhao emerged as the most feared Ming field commander and he received many honors from the throne.<sup>160</sup>

But their successes had little effect on the overall spread of the rebellions, other than to drive the rebels into neighboring provinces. Feeling that Shaanxi was too dangerous, Gao Yingxiang led his followers to plunder in neighboring Shanxi and down into Jiangxi. The Ming commanders Cao Wenzhao and Zuo Liangyu scored further victories only to see the rebels flee to another area and start raiding again. Minor rebel leaders rampaged through Shanxi and Shaanxi taking small towns and sometimes slaughtering the locals, but also keeping on the move. Luo Rucai and Zhang Xianzhong had also returned to their rebellious

ways, plundering in Shanxi, when Hong Chengchou moved west. Meanwhile, Chongzhen continued his policy of appointing eunuchs for key posts, including overseeing supplies for bandit suppression. This brought a flurry of memorials from outer court officials who argued that eunuchs “were easy to appoint but difficult to remove.”<sup>161</sup> The headstrong emperor ignored their complaints and even asked them to rectify their own behavior so as to set a better example for the people of the realm.<sup>162</sup> He also expressed his irritation at “braggarts who throw around big words, but don’t understand national affairs.”<sup>163</sup>

Cao Wenzhao’s successes continued in the autumn of 1632 but the rebellions kept spreading.<sup>164</sup> One problem was that surrendered bandits were often simply enlisted as troops. As soon as they ran short on supplies or encountered what they perceived to be easy pickings, they would return to banditry. Bandits also learned to take advantage of troop transfers, particularly when units were deployed to the Liaodong frontier.<sup>165</sup> And the fact that so many of the bandits were the friends, relatives, and neighbors of those they raided, they could often receive support and intelligence from locals. So Wu Sheng pushed for “causing chaos to the ears and eyes” of the rebels to crush their movement.<sup>166</sup> Unfortunately for the government though, such efforts required lots of manpower and additional resources to keep people in the countryside. Simply killing lots of bandits was a quicker, cheaper solution, at least in the short term. And, as Wu lamented, most generals were not the equal of Cao Wenzhao.

Still, the Ming continued their pacification efforts through 1633, submitting lists of heads taken but seldom coordinating their efforts systematically. The emperor’s meddling did not help matters. In late 1632 he had ordered all his officials to contribute horses to the Ming cause, the number of mounts submitted commensurate with one’s rank.<sup>167</sup> The eunuchs tasked with accepting the mounts accepted only horses procured through them and set up a ring whereby they sold horses at exorbitant prices! In the spring of 1633 Chongzhen castigated his officials for loafing and ordered that all the rebellions be suppressed within three months.<sup>168</sup> To facilitate matters he released another 100,000 taels for famine relief in Shanxi.<sup>169</sup> In the 4<sup>th</sup> month bandits sacked Pingshun in Shanxi and killed the prefect. But Cao Wenzhao came to the rescue and killed 1,500 while Zhang Yingchang captured and killed a number of other rebels. Hong Chengchou moved to Tong Pass to coordinate operations in the west. Bandit incursions into Shandong were turned back by Zuo Liangyu and Deng Qi, who worked effectively together through the spring of 1633. Linking up with Cao Wenzhao these two commanders plowed through rebel groups into the fall of 1633, piling up impressive head counts, especially when more troops were brought in from other parts of the empire.<sup>170</sup> But in the midst of this Cao was impeached by a friend of a jealous rival and was transferred west. His reassignment allowed the bandits to retake some areas they had lost to him.<sup>171</sup> The best news Chongzhen received was from Grand Coordinator Xu Dingchen, who told the emperor that 50 percent of the rebels had been annihilated, 30 percent dispersed, while the remaining 20 percent, who numbered not more than 40,000, would be handled any day.<sup>172</sup> The gullible monarch believed the report.

Part of the problem lay in the tactics of the government forces. Taking cities allowed the rebels to flee into the countryside. Pursuing them then left the cities vulnerable. And commanders often squabbled over tactics and strategy, a problem exacerbated by jurisdictional overlap and confusion. The roles of the various high Ming grand coordinators, pacification commissioners, and supreme commanders were nebulous and conditional. There were also often inter-province disputes over the allocation of manpower and supplies. In many cases officials would not send their resources to their neighbors. And once bandits crossed into another province, it was someone else's problem. The emperor was particularly frustrated by the general unwillingness of his officials to cooperate. It seemed as if every time they got close to wiping out a group, they would simply slip out of their grasp. For example, in late 1633 the major rebel groups were amassed on the north bank of the Yellow River with Ming units arrayed on the south bank. But Ming armies were slow to react when the rebels mobilized and they panicked, allowing them to escape south when the river froze.<sup>173</sup>

In another instance in 1633 the emperor ordered the Ministry of War to assemble forces to crush the rebels before they enveloped Henan, which was a strategic gateway to Beijing. But three regional commanders complained that snow and lack of supplies hindered their efforts.<sup>174</sup> Thus the rebels were ranging freely through the mountains of Henan, striking local cities and killing mid-ranking Ming officials with impunity. So the officials of Henan asked Chongzhen to give Hong Chengchou jurisdiction over the military affairs of the province to create some overarching authority. The Ministry of War agreed and Hong was transferred to Tong Pass to oversee military affairs as Touring Pacification Commissioner while appointing Cao Wenzhao and Zhang Yingchang as his field commanders.<sup>175</sup> But Chongzhen was wary of imparting such power to one official so he scotched the plan, instead stressing that if the military men "applied the art of war" the bandits would be eliminated within his prescribed three-month timetable.<sup>176</sup>

Then there was the emperor's own personality and poor judgment when it came to appointing advisors and, to a lesser extent, field commanders. The practice of dispatching eunuchs to assist and oversee military operations, especially the delivery of supplies, was damaging to morale and diminished the prestige of the court in the eyes of its outer court officials. Likewise sending out special rewards with these eunuchs took authority out of the hands of the field commanders and put it in the hands of the eunuchs, who needed to be impressed (or bribed) to bestow the imperial gifts. Furthermore, many of the eunuchs lacked practical military knowledge or field experience, though the same charge can be leveled at many of the civil commanders. And in some cases the emperor's choice of incompetent civil officials to lead suppression efforts made things worse. One such blunder occurred when the emperor sent out a pair of inexperienced commanders along with eunuch inspectors at the head of capital troops that allowed the rebellions to spread through Huguang and Sichuan in 1633 – appointing more skilled leaders such as Zuo Liangyu might have contained them.<sup>177</sup> In fact, the emperor had assented to a request to appoint Zuo to the command, but it arrived too late to avert disaster.

### Pacifying the pirates in the southeast

The year 1633 also witnessed the final eradication of pirate bands off the Fujianese coast that had been plaguing the Ming for over a decade. As will be recalled, in 1628 an official named Xiong Wencan had accepted the nominal surrender of another pirate named Zheng Zhilong and invested him with a Ming official rank, hoping to use him against his fellow pirates and counter the growing influence of the Dutch, whom Zheng had once served as a translator.<sup>178</sup> In fact the Ming had once tried to get the Dutch to help them fight Zheng Zhilong and when they backed out, hoping to extract trade concessions from the Chinese, the Ming themselves purchased Zheng's loyalty.<sup>179</sup> With provincial backing Zheng then started a war junk building program. His ships incorporated cannons and Western shipbuilding techniques, making them cutting edge. This allowed Zheng and his Ming overlords to both suppress other Chinese pirates (most notably Liu Xiang) and definitively force the Dutch to relocate to Taiwan (from the offshore islands of Jinmen and Xiamen) in the autumn of 1633.<sup>180</sup> The Dutch had originally occupied these islands in 1622 and were driven to Taiwan in 1624, only to continue their efforts to trade along the coast. Forcing the Dutch all the way back to Taiwan freed up some of the pressure being exerted on the southeast coast by the constant raids and allowed the Ming government to focus its energies more fully on the fluid situation in the Bohai Gulf. More significantly for the present



*Figure 4.3* Remnants of Ming city wall in Beijing

story, the successful cooption of Zheng Zhilong gave Xiong Wencan a certain amount of cachet within the Ming court.<sup>181</sup>

### **The Jin renew peace talks**

In the wake of the suppression of the Wuqiao Mutiny, the Ming moved once again to bolster their defenses in Liaodong. Their plans were mostly defensive, but the idea was to create a defense in depth wherein interlinked systems of watchtowers could provide advance warning of raids and the enemy could be channeled into a killing ground. Positional defense with firearms was emphasized.<sup>182</sup> Reports indicate that the Ming enjoyed minor success with these efforts, driving Jin raiders off on multiple occasions.<sup>183</sup> But they continued to be plagued by a lack of manpower and poor discipline among their troops. They could not prevent their subjects from being kidnapped by Jin raiders. There were also widespread rumors about Jin spies.<sup>184</sup> And, echoing the scenario we saw in the northwest, Ming patrols often returned with “enemy” heads from patrols that were clearly women, children, or the elderly and not Jin soldiers at all.<sup>185</sup> Armies often deserted or fled before the enemy. Yang Sichang, Yang He’s son, who had recently been appointed to a post in the northeast, argued that the problem was that people did not realize the very fate of the empire hung in the balance. Armies needed better training and coherent plans of action before they were sent out into the field. Yang suggested implementing a concrete empire-wide mobilization and supply plan. Troops needed to be adequately trained and supplied. He recommended starting with a crack force of 60,000 and expanding from there. Another 20,000 should be raised and deployed for mobile operations.<sup>186</sup>

As he had recommended earlier in his career, Yang wanted accountability from officials at every level of the administrative hierarchy. Commanders who deserted should be arrested. Rations should be tracked. Men should be rewarded or penalized according to actual achievements. Troop numbers needed to accord with paper strength. Yang also called for the Ming to draw upon its defensive traditions and not strive to launch aggressive operations against the Jurchens because they lacked manpower and horses.<sup>187</sup> Though Yang’s recommendations were in fact not that remarkable and had been articulated by many before him, his ability to write clearly and forcefully and create plans that looked good on paper impressed the emperor and by the 9<sup>th</sup> month of 1634 Yang was Vice Minister of War of the Right, Censor-in-Chief of the Right and Supreme Commander of Xuanfu, Datong, and Shanxi. He would remain high in Chongzhen’s esteem for the next seven years, despite the disgrace in which his father had retired.

Through the summer of 1632 the Jin raided Ming lands for people and resources. As he continued to centralize his authority amongst the steppe leaders Hung Taiji issued a statement stating that when they had first raised troops the Jin had no intention of replacing the Ming as the rulers of all under heaven. And still all he professed to want was open trade and commerce and a free hand in Liaodong.<sup>188</sup> He also complained that repeated attempts to open talks with the Ming had simply been ignored. Yet, at the same time, the Jin ruler started making

demands for gifts from the Ming court. The Ming finally sent some envoys that were feasted with gifts of beef and lamb, but no accord was reached.<sup>189</sup> In another political gesture Hung Taiji had people beaten who were found sneaking across the Ming border to steal livestock. He reiterated his request for open border markets with the Ming at places such as Zhangjiakou.

In the middle of 1634 the Jin invaded China again via Longmen and overran Xuanfu and other areas. They went through Mongolia with Mongol allies to circumvent Ming defenses in the northeast. The Ming Minister of War, Zhang Fengyi, chastised his regional commanders and urged swift action to check the Jin advance.<sup>190</sup> They advanced in four wings towards Shuozhou, the Yellow River, Xuanfu, and Datong. Hung Taiji personally led one column and the recent Chinese defector commanders accompanied him.<sup>191</sup> Hung Taiji was turned back by heavy cannon fire at Xuanfu so he attacked Yingzhou, where he joined Ajige and others who were advancing along the middle route. Daisan and his men took Deshengbao, but found Datong tough going so they moved on.<sup>192</sup> One Chahar chieftain with 1,200 followers and some Ming officers joined the Jin as they advanced. After a series of clashes at Bao'anzhou, Hung Taiji tried to get Cao Wenzhao to negotiate but he refused.<sup>193</sup> The initial Jin assaults were repulsed by artillery, but the next day the attackers returned and hit the east wall and overwhelmed the defenders.<sup>194</sup> Bao'an fell late in the 7<sup>th</sup> month and was a scene of carnage and destruction with corpses of the old, young, and weak filling the streets.<sup>195</sup> It was reported that only one out of every ten homes avoided being torched, despite the earlier orders of Hung Taiji to avoid massacres.<sup>196</sup> Some of the officials and their wives present killed themselves before the Jin beached the walls, fearing they would be tortured by the Jin.<sup>197</sup> Another attack on Datong was stymied as Chongzhen sent a relief column of 20,000.<sup>198</sup> Other Ming units were hastily ordered into the field. The Jin then pulled back and assailed Xi'anbao without success, as Zhou Quanchang drove them back.<sup>199</sup> In a follow-up engagement the Ming killed 120 and captured a Jin officer in gaudy red armor, along with significant numbers of weapons and armor. This battle was noteworthy in that it was one of the few where the Ming inflicted significant casualties in the open field without the aid of heavy artillery. The raiders hit other smaller towns with varying degrees of success and they used this pressure to reopen peace talks with the Ming.<sup>200</sup>

Ming countermeasures included publicly executing captured spies and sending their own operatives into Jin camps to learn plans and sabotage weapons and supplies. Chen Hongfan was dispatched to hold Juyong Pass and protect the northwest route to Beijing. But many local commanders claimed they lacked the supplies to engage in offensive operations against the raiders. In total this incursion lasted some fifty days and saw dozens of Ming forts and towns attacked. Countless people and livestock were carried back to Manchuria.<sup>201</sup> The primary purpose of the raid was to test Ming readiness and continue to chip away at the morale of the populace by exposing the inability of the Ming government to defend its subjects.<sup>202</sup> Bao'an in particular, given its resources and location with a river to the front and a mountain behind, should have been able to hold out longer.

The Jin reiterated that they simply wanted recognition as an equal neighboring state, but Chongzhen did not deign to respond, officially.<sup>203</sup> In fact the Ming had dispatched an emissary to talk with the Jin, but the court later disavowed responsibility for the action and dismissed the official.<sup>204</sup> But after Cao Wenzhao sent an embellished victory report to the Ming court, Hung Taiji sent a letter to the Ming ruler pointing out that traitorous officials like Cao were the Ming's main problem.<sup>205</sup> More imperial communications exposed the duplicity of other Ming officials such as the eunuch defender of Xuanfu. Likewise, Ming officials charged their compatriots with dereliction of duty and called for investigations into battlefield conduct.<sup>206</sup> Once again after-action reports wondered how the Ming had been caught so unawares and why the Chinese fortifications were so undermanned.<sup>207</sup> Wu Xiang was taken to task for his laxity in responding to calls for relief troops and was demoted.<sup>208</sup> It seemed that earlier recommendations for improving training, setting up better logistical lines and raising the pay of officers had simply been ignored.<sup>209</sup> In some cases it seemed that simply having cannon mounted atop city walls was sufficient to deter attack and yet many places had not adopted such measures.<sup>210</sup> So new directives were issued for troop and ration increases across the board and investigations were conducted into troop dispensations.<sup>211</sup> The emperor came away from the affair convinced that the Ming were full of traitors, stoking his existing paranoia.<sup>212</sup> In the wake of the raids, at the end of 1634 the notorious Wen Tiren was impeached for errors of state and sentenced to exile, though he managed to save himself temporarily.<sup>213</sup>

Significantly, the Ming never appeared to seriously consider mollifying the Jin in their discussions. Indeed, when reviewing frontier policy over the entire course of the Ming, Chongzhen and his advisers came to the conclusion that appeasement was never an effective policy.<sup>214</sup> Such a realization is interesting in light of studies that are tempted to portray the Ming as a defensive, pacifist state and consolidates Iain Johnston's conclusions about the generally aggressive character of Ming foreign policy and strategic culture.<sup>215</sup> This is manifested even in times of military weakness, at least in the period under consideration here. Appeasement was a political football that no one wanted to carry.

Additionally, as bad as things had seemingly gone for the Ming, they managed a few victories and there was still the sense that if properly outfitted and led, Ming troops could stand up to the enemy and win battles, especially if they dictated the circumstances of combat. The key was controlling the strategic initiative and playing to their strengths. One official called for the use of firearms and infantry to negate Jin superiority in archery. He also discussed using pole-arms like a forest to break cavalry charges.<sup>216</sup> Shields were to be used to protect the gunners. He added that these should be augmented by fire arrows and poisonous and incendiary projectiles in every engagement. Once the enemy was decimated by firepower, cavalry could be sent in pursuit. The memorialist recommended an infantry–cavalry ratio of seven to three to best utilize Ming strengths.<sup>217</sup>

But the Ming remained hampered by deficiencies in troop numbers. In the 74 forts in the Xuanda defense command there was a total of just 13,700 troops according to one report. The larger forts had just a few hundred men, the smaller

ones just a few dozen. And many of these were ill-trained if they were even trained at all since so many deserted.<sup>218</sup> The emperor approved requests to send more troops and enhance training efforts.<sup>219</sup> He also ordered that counties should adopt quotas for the production of military officers and each should provide suitable candidates.<sup>220</sup> Yang Sichang, as might be expected, came up with some of the most detailed plans, calling for categorizing fortifications and allocating resources by category. He also recommended clearly delineating pay rates by rank and improving efforts to ensure that all officials were adequately paid.<sup>221</sup> Further plans were also drawn up for creating a defense in depth inside the Great Wall, but local officials complained of shortages in materials, funds, and manpower.

### **The creation of the Qing and the second invasion of Korea**

As part of his efforts to create a new identity for his people Hung Taiji began the practice of designating the Jurchens the Manchus in 1635 and forbidding the use of the term Jurchen. The origin of the term “Manchu” itself is a matter of debate. Some scholars believe that the term arose from a local word for “river,” whereas others contend that it was linked to Hung Taiji’s efforts to venerate his father, who claimed to be a reincarnation of the bodhisattva Manjusri as part of his efforts to establish himself as a true multi-ethnic ruler.<sup>222</sup> Pei Huang argues that the term probably originated in the Old Manchu Archives and was first used in 1613, not invented by Hung Taiji.<sup>223</sup> Hung Taiji himself claimed it was an ancient tribal designation for his people. The designation also served to paper over the fact that what the Jin rulers had done was to defeat or co-opt diverse Jurchen groups. Calling them all Manchus imbued them with a sense of unity that clearly signified a departure from the past.<sup>224</sup> It also provided a suitably mythic ancient identity befitting a new empire with lofty aspirations. In late 1635 Hung Taiji promulgated the crimes of Daisan, removing another potential threat to his preeminent status amongst the Jurchen nobility. He also scored a symbolically important victory by capturing the seal of the Great Khan in a clash with the Chahar Mongol leader Ligdan khan in 1634, making himself the theoretical heir to the Chinggisid line.<sup>225</sup> Though far from a loyal ally of the Ming, Ligdan had figured in the Ming strategy of keeping the Mongols and the Manchus divided and his death simplified things somewhat for Hung Taiji.<sup>226</sup> Shortly thereafter, because his peace talks had not come to fruition, he resolved to invade the Ming again.

By this point the khan was also ready to take his challenge to the Ming to the next level by adopting a new dynastic name, Qing (meaning pure) and sending a message to King Injo in Korea in early 1636, requesting his recognition of the reconfigured state.<sup>227</sup> However, it was still unclear whether or not he had designs on all of China. Later Qing sources tend to suggest that it was in fact the Chinese defectors who really pushed for the conquest of China. Ma Guangyuan, for example, helped the Jin establish the Six Ministries and Grand Secretariat along Ming lines just prior to the founding of the Qing dynasty.<sup>228</sup> Such portrayals serve to

reinforce the perception that the Jurchens were loyal vassals pushed into action by popular anger at the exploitation of the Ming and that their original aims were primarily defensive.

In any case, in the third month envoys returned from Chosôn saying that the king refused to meet with them or even send a letter of acknowledgment. On top of this, the Koreans had been supplying the Ming with rice for military operations, violating the Jin ruler's directives and their earlier agreement.<sup>229</sup> The *beile* were all furious and wanted to mobilize an invasion force immediately. The new emperor chose to first investigate the situation and try to reason with the Koreans, figuring that even if the Koreans did not accede to his request they could always send troops later.<sup>230</sup> In the meantime some 49 Mongol chieftains and the Chinese elite, including Kong Youde, Shang Kexi, and Geng Zhongming, were summoned to Shenyang to recognize the new monarch. Hung Taiji was now forced to reassess his role as a player in a regional contest for power and his thinking and planning was correspondingly much broader.

In the 7<sup>th</sup> month of 1636 the Qing launched yet another raid into China. The Ming had in fact worried about the possibility of such a raid for months in advance, but still had not adequately shored up their defenses.<sup>231</sup> This raid was led by Ajige, the new Qing emperor's brother. Again Chongzhen responded by deploying eunuchs to key defense nodes, defending his policy by pointing out that he had gone days without hearing from his other officials. So who else besides eunuchs could he rely on?<sup>232</sup> The people of Beijing were scared again and pecks of rice were retailing for 300 cash in the markets. The emperor convened a conference to whip his officials into shape and Lu Xiangsheng and others were ordered to defend the capital. His officials offered the usual bland recommendations to step up training and raise local militia, eliciting disgust from the emperor. Minister of War Zhang Fengyi was put in charge of capital defenses and Gao Qiqian was appointed army inspector. The invasion in turn relieved pressure on the wandering bandits.<sup>233</sup> This time the Qing also raided into Shanxi, torching towns west of the capital.<sup>234</sup> After a see-saw series of battles, the Manchus were finally driven east in the 9<sup>th</sup> month and Lu Xiangsheng was promoted to Supreme Commander of Xuanda and Shaanxi in recognition of his efforts.<sup>235</sup> Lu recovered several lost towns and returned some seven thousand POWs to their homes.<sup>236</sup> Still, at one point the Qing got as close as Marco Polo Bridge, northwest of the capital. A probing attack on Shanhaiguan was repulsed. Lu immediately requested 200,000 taels for rations and his request was approved.<sup>237</sup> He also made a series of recommendations for improving defenses, expanding *tuntian*, and appointing new officials to important commands. He then set up some fifty watchtowers atop mountains to serve as a warning system for future raids.<sup>238</sup> New inquiries were made into defensive lapses that allowed the Qing to get so close to Beijing.<sup>239</sup> A new plan called for relying on natural defenses in conjunction with fortifications and trying to funnel future raiding parties towards Taiyuan, away from the capital.<sup>240</sup> The following month Yang Sichang would be appointed Minister of War. Zhang Fengyi had committed suicide in his barracks after disgracing himself in battle.<sup>241</sup>

From a strategic standpoint the Qing ruler had acquired lots of booty for distribution and further weakened his rival. He could now turn to chastising the recalcitrant Koreans. The second invasion of Korea was bloodier than the first and was clearly designed to send the proper message, reflecting Hung Taiji's new status, security, and greater confidence. To prevent the Ming from sending help, Abatai, Jirgalang, and Ajige were sent ahead a month before the invasion to secure the coastal approaches to Korea.<sup>242</sup> It commenced in the 12<sup>th</sup> month of 1636. Hung Taiji went personally to Zhenjiang to direct operations. Dorgon and Haoge led Mongol wings in a sweep towards Seoul. They advanced quickly and overwhelmed the elite guards of the capital.<sup>243</sup> Dorgon then defeated more than 15,000 additional troops mobilized from the south and the Korean armies retreated.<sup>244</sup>

Chinese commanders played a much larger role this time, leading firearms units and smashing Korean defenses on and offshore. Kong Youde, for example, had been ennobled as the Prince Gongshun upon the creation of the Qing and he accompanied Dodo to Korea where he joined in the capture of Kanghwa Island and Pidao.<sup>245</sup> Pidao held out for over a month as Shen Shikui blasted away at the attackers with his heavy cannons.<sup>246</sup> So the Qing finally launched a multi-pronged strike on the island with 70 boats commanded by Ming defectors and Korean allies landing on the east side of the island. The Ming defenders rushed their strength there and the Qing landed on the northwest side in the dead of night. The Ming were shocked when they saw the new troops "that seem to have flown" there and they were overrun.<sup>247</sup> Shen Shikui was beheaded by Ajige after refusing to surrender. In the end the Ming lost at least 10,000 men defending Pidao and Korean records suggest barely a handful survived.<sup>248</sup> They also lost large numbers of guns and significant quantities of gunpowder.<sup>249</sup> Yang Sichang subsequently ordered all remaining Ming units back to Denglai.<sup>250</sup> Geng Zhongming and Shang Kexi were also ennobled by the Qing and played similarly prominent roles in the second invasion of Korea.

On land Dodo led the Qing troops in their drive towards Seoul. The king evacuated to the mountain fortress of Namhan and ordered his armies into battle. Successive columns were defeated by Dodo as Hung Taiji advanced his units to the Imjin River and waited for it to freeze so he could cross.<sup>251</sup> The Qing then ransacked Seoul and waited for the arrival of allied Mongol units to besiege Namhan. After they repelled more Korean relief units the king opened peace talks. In the meantime Hung Taiji's brother Dorgon had captured Injo's concubines and children from Kanghwa Island and displayed them before the army.<sup>252</sup> The king was warned that he needed to capitulate if he wished to save his family and protect the ancestral altars. Upon hearing this, coupled with the fact that his own castle was about to fall, Injo relented and he and his high ministers surrendered at the Han River. He turned over his Ming seals of investiture and sent his son with the Qing as a guarantor of good behavior.<sup>253</sup>

Among other things, in highlighting his new status as the tributary overlord of Korea, Hung Taiji referenced the fact that Korea had formerly enjoyed tributary relations with the Liao, Jin, and Yuan dynasties. He stressed that their relations

would henceforth be as elder and younger brothers.<sup>254</sup> The Koreans would be required to abandon the Ming calendar and would have to submit tribute as they had done to the Ming, including gold, silver, water buffalo horns, leopard pelts, deer skins, tea, otter pelts, assorted knives, swords, wood, paper, dragon robes, silk, cotton, rice, and miscellaneous items of clothing.<sup>255</sup> The Koreans were also expected to provide boats and military supplies for the Qing war effort.<sup>256</sup> Indeed, these were deemed particularly important to long-range Qing plans to take out the Ming forward bases at Jinzhou and Songshan.<sup>257</sup> The two sides also agreed to exchange envoys.<sup>258</sup>

In turn the Qing troops were forbidden from looting or harming the people of Korea. The hostages were taken back to Shenyang. In the 5<sup>th</sup> month the king sent Hung Taiji a letter thanking him for his kindness. The Qing armies returned home after concluding mop-up operations in Hamgyōng province.<sup>259</sup> Injo was formally enfeoffed as a Qing vassal in the 10<sup>th</sup> month but the Qing emperor refused to return his sons for the time being. Further pledges of fealty would follow from the Korean monarch to the Qing emperor over the next several years.<sup>260</sup> The Ming had lost a vassal and the Qing had secured their flank and acquired a new source of vital war supplies. Their war was entering a new phase. The Ming recognized



图 2 皇太极像

*Figure 4.4* Hung Taiji. Adapted from *San fan shilue*.

it too, Yang Sichang for example recognizing the loss of Korea as akin to China losing the lips to its teeth.<sup>261</sup> Various plans were submitted as to how China might retain some influence in the Bohai Gulf and keep its supply lanes to Songshan, Jinzhou, and Ningyuan open.<sup>262</sup>

### **From Chexiang Gorge to the capture of Gao Yingxiang**

In early 1634 Chen Qiyu was made the Supreme Commander of Shaanxi, Shanxi, Henan, Huguang, and Sichuan. This was the first time that an official had been invested with such sweeping command authority over multiple provinces and reflected the government's realization that those fighting the wandering bandits required greater authority to coordinate their activities. It was also prompted by a stream of complaints emanating from officials in Nanjing, the auxiliary Ming capital, who were worried about the advancing bandit tide. A censor there identified four types of bandits: (1) local troublemakers; (2) postal workers; (3); starving masses; and (4) refugees.<sup>263</sup> So someone needed to step in and take overall control. Nearly a year before there had been suggestions that such a position was needed, but Chongzhen had rejected it at that time. Some wanted Hong Chengchou to be the Supreme Commander but it was deemed that he was needed more in the field in Shaanxi. Chen had earned his reputation for bold secret strikes and surprising victories against the rebels earlier in his career so he was deemed a suitable choice.<sup>264</sup>

In any case, Chen enjoyed great success at first, leading troops alongside Lu Xiangsheng, who had been put in charge of military operations around Yunyang, to attack the bandits in the mountains along the Sichuan–Henan border.<sup>265</sup> Adopting their old duplicitous strategy the Ming killed nearly five hundred rebels at a “surrender banquet.”<sup>266</sup> As drought, famine, and cannibalism persisted, the court released another 50,000 taels for famine relief for Shaanxi. This came after a report that someone had killed and roasted his own parents.<sup>267</sup> Such hardships continued to drive peasants to swell rebel ranks. Ming officials complained that they lacked the resources to either feed their troops or distribute relief. And when officials failed, they were dismissed, leading to a shortage of men to manage the situation. “How can we both mollify the people and prevent them from turning into bandits?” asked Lian Guoshi.<sup>268</sup> Bandit attacks on Yunyang and Fang County confirmed Lian’s fears. Chongzhen pushed for more aggressive action as reports came in that some officials were vacillating.<sup>269</sup>

Still, the Ming made headway. Zhang Xianzhong and Luo Rucai were driven out of Sichuan with the help of the heroine Qin Liangyu.<sup>270</sup> In the initial Ming push some 1,750 rebels were killed. Thousands more were slain in follow-up battles.<sup>271</sup> Chen deployed his commanders to cut off escape routes and herded the rebels towards a central point. By the 7<sup>th</sup> month Huguang was bandit-free. In the summer Chen Qiyu sent Deng Qi, Cao Bianjiao, and Zhang Yingchang forth from his base at Nanyang, in southern Henan, to drive the rebels west.<sup>272</sup> Hong Chengchou, Cao Wenzhao, and He Renlong pushed forward from Shaanxi and by the end of summer most of the rebel groups had been bottled up in Chexiang Gorge in western Henan, just across the border from Shaanxi.

Heavy rains pummeled the rebel forces for forty days and they were reduced to starvation. Their bows warped and broke.<sup>273</sup> After weeks of deprivation, they offered to surrender, with Li Zicheng making the grand gesture of binding himself in ropes before Chen Qiyu. Chen decided to accept the surrender of some 13,000 rebels who pledged to return to agricultural pursuits.<sup>274</sup> This was reportedly against the advice of some of his subordinates.<sup>275</sup> Historians and commentators have been very critical of Chen's decision to accept surrender when he appeared to have the rebels on the ropes. It was not clear why he accepted the surrender, though sources suggest that Chen's advisers had been bribed.<sup>276</sup> The early Qing historian Peng Sunyi commented, "If [Chen] had only killed him [Li] at this time when he had him tied up, this would have dissipated all their strength. Subsequently he destroyed all under Heaven. Alas, could Chen's mistake have been greater?"<sup>277</sup> Wu Weiye colorfully remarked, "Qiyu did not understand warfare. When you've just inflicted a great wound on a tiger and got him hopelessly outnumbered, one does not extend one's hands and bow before him in supplication."<sup>278</sup> James Parsons opines that Chen, in true Confucian fashion, may have hoped to avoid a massacre or that perhaps the governmental position was not as strong as it appears.<sup>279</sup> It is true that even during the aforementioned campaigns Ming troops complained of shortages in weaponry and supplies. Plus they had also endured the terrible weather. One modern scholar even argues that some military officers realized that it was to their advantage to keep some rebels alive so they could keep their positions and put the squeeze on desperate local officials.<sup>280</sup>

As part of the terms of the agreement the rebels were accompanied by fifty officials detailed to escort them to their homes in northern Shaanxi. They were to be provided with food and places to camp along the way home. Their weapons and supplies were even returned! Things went smoothly until an incident outside Baoji in Shaanxi where some 36 rebels were killed by a local official in response to their threatening behavior. He then hung their severed heads from the city walls. This provoked a full-scale revolt on the part of the surrendered rebels. Chen Qiyu responded by impeaching Lian Guoshi for letting things get out of hand but Chen himself was soon dismissed and exiled, charged with "playing with the bandits and destroying the state's awesomeness."<sup>281</sup> Thus would end the first great opportunity for the Ming to wipe out the peasant rebellions, though it is possible that the sources exaggerate the significance of the event given that there were far more rebels in the field than those caught at Chexiang Gorge. However, it is worth noting that many of the men who became the prominent leaders of the rebellions later on, including Li Zicheng and Zhang Xianzhong, had been among those spared that day. Within a few months, the rebel movement had mushroomed into 72 camps comprising an alleged 200,000 rebels.<sup>282</sup> They ranged across Shaanxi and Henan, taking smaller towns and killing officials. Chongzhen wanted Cao Wenzhao transferred back to Henan from the northeast, but he was frustrated by the efforts of Wu Sheng, who wanted Cao's talents under his purview in Shanxi, so he had him posted to Taiyuan.<sup>283</sup>

Li Zicheng then besieged He Renlong at Longzhou and tried to entice him to join the rebels, drawing upon the fact that they hailed from the same hometown.

Li dispatched his lieutenant Gao Jie (d. 1645), also a native of Mizhi, to negotiate, but He refused Gao's overtures.<sup>284</sup> After a two-month siege, Hong Chengchou sent Zuo Guangxian to drive the rebels away. But the power of the bandits continued to wax as they routinely traveled in groups of over 10,000 and their camps extended hundreds of *li* in some cases. They also continued their roving ways, attacking isolated towns and committing atrocities against officials who resisted them, but avoiding pitched battles with Hong Chengchou's forces.<sup>285</sup> Ming army commanders complained that their inferior mobility (being mostly infantry) and need for extended supply lines hampered their ability to pursue the bandits. Matters were made worse by the continued petty rivalries between the Ming commanders. Furthermore, they claimed to be badly outnumbered. Hong Chengchou said he had barely 20,000 troops to fight 140,000 to 150,000 bandits. So he asked for another 300,000 taels of salt revenues to raise more troops and for a promotion for Cao Bianjiao. His requests were granted.<sup>286</sup>

In the wake of the debacle at Chexiang Gorge, Lu Xiangsheng concocted a new strategy for battling the peasant rebels. Lu had earned the admiration of the bandit leader known as the Scorpion several years before after taking an arrow through the eyebrow, prompting him to quip, "Master Lu has three eyes."<sup>287</sup> In the meantime Lu had also earned the respect of his Ming peers. Lu's plan consisted of the establishment of what might be best termed "blockhouses," augmented by mountain fortresses, signal towers, and local militia units.<sup>288</sup> Not unlike some of his compatriots, Lu was a firm believer in winning hearts and minds by making locals self-reliant and investing them in their own defense, while providing some support and resources from the government.<sup>289</sup> He reasoned that the best strategy was to keep commoners from becoming bandits in the first place. He said, "If commoners remain commoners, soldiers remain soldiers, and outlaws remain outlaws, it is easier to exterminate the latter."<sup>290</sup> Smaller hamlets would not build their own stockades but would be expected to go to larger towns in times of danger. He believed that if properly implemented, "not a single commoner would defect to the rebels."<sup>291</sup> Moreover, they would establish ambush points and use firearms to catch the bandits unawares, taking advantage of terrain features, making the enemy afraid to lightly come forth and harm the people.<sup>292</sup> His initial plan called to start this with 3,000 troops.<sup>293</sup> While it might seem counter-intuitive, the emphasis upon positional defense made sense because the rebels were often mounted and could travel hundreds of *li* in a single day and night. But they had shown time and again that capturing well-defended cities and towns, even small ones, was not their forte. So if they could be denied these sources of food and supplies, their movement might peter out.

Meanwhile their enemies were also working together. In the early spring of 1635 13 major rebel leaders and their followers convened at the county of Rongyang in central Henan, south of the Yellow River. It is not clear what prompted the meeting, but over the next two weeks the rebels hashed out a cooperative strategy. All of the prominent rebel leaders, including Gao Yingxiang, Li Zicheng (as Gao's lieutenant), Luo Rucai, Zhang Xianzhong, Ma Shouying, and Zuo Jinwang were present. The meeting marked a turning point in Li Zicheng's

career as he emerged as perhaps the leading strategist among the rebel leaders despite his relatively junior status. In the ensuing talks the rebels decided to divide their forces and strike out simultaneously in all directions. The most important assignment was an eastward thrust into Nan Zhili by Zhang Xianzhong and Gao Yingxiang. Luo Rucai was entrusted with defense of the Yellow River and central Henan and Ma Shouying was to lead one of the mobile reserve wings. Others were given more defensive roles.<sup>294</sup>

The strike force of Gao and Zhang was the most successful of the groups. En route to their target the troops carried banners declaring themselves followers of the True Primal Dragon Emperor, thereby identifying themselves as something more than mere bandits, nebulous as their goals might have been. They moved swiftly across Henan and into Nan Zhili, where they sacked the town of Fengyang, ancestral home of the Ming founder and location of his tomb.<sup>295</sup> It was also the location of a prison for disgraced members of the imperial clan, known as High Walls.<sup>296</sup> Fengyang was not particularly well defended and the local eunuch commander was considered greedy and incompetent. The rebels also sent ahead spies disguised as workers, merchants, and wandering Daoists, who aided them from within the city.<sup>297</sup> There were also many ancient temples there. The rebels looted the place for days, burning the tombs, releasing some of the imperial prisoners, and torching thousands of ancient pine trees.<sup>298</sup> Over four thousand Ming officials and civilians were killed and over 2,600 structures were burned down. Among the atrocities committed was the ripping of fetuses from the wombs of pregnant women.<sup>299</sup> It was said that only one defender, Zhu Guo, managed to put up any resistance, killing some 27 rebels in street fighting.<sup>300</sup> The burning of the city could be seen for a hundred *li* at night. But despite the success of the operation, a dispute arose between Zhang Xianzhong and Li Zicheng over the capture of some eunuch musicians, whom both wanted for themselves. Li ended up killing the hapless eunuchs and the coalition was dissolved even as Ming relief troops rushed to the scene.<sup>301</sup> Li Zicheng and Gao Yingxiang headed west. Zhang Xianzhong went on to attack the town of Luzhou to the east.

Luzhou was defended by one Wu Dapo. Wu deployed commoners and troops to defend the town, setting up cannon atop the walls and trying to lay ambushes outside. He also drilled and trained these folk and stockpiled logs, cannon shot, and grenades. When the bandits got close, they opened fire, killing some 1,100, so the enemy stepped up the attack. Wu ascended the walls to lead the defense and ordered cannon volleys and the dropping of logs on the bandits, killing many more. Repeated assaults were turned back with heavy casualties.<sup>302</sup> Once again the importance of competent local defense was highlighted.

The court was rocked by the news and Chongzhen donned mourning garb, abstained from sex, announced the debacle to the ancestral spirits, and ordered his officials to rectify themselves.<sup>303</sup> He also demoted, executed, or transferred officials deemed culpable. He even temporarily recalled his eunuch inspectors, though within a few months the policy was reversed. The emperor explained that the main reason he used the eunuchs was efficiency. He could dispatch a eunuch immediately whereas it could take days or weeks for a regular official to mobilize. And the

latter sometimes dragged their feet or refused orders.<sup>304</sup> The eunuch defender of the tombs simply killed himself. In fact the Ming had been busily amassing troops and supplies for another massive extermination campaign but news of the burning of Fengyang derailed the plans. Officials to the south scrambled to ready their localities for an impending rebel assault though one official hopefully presumed that the rebels could not go too far south because their northern horses could not stomach the grass.<sup>305</sup> The Ministry of War responded by rushing 43,000 troops from other theaters, including two thousand iron cavalry from the northeast, to Henan.<sup>306</sup> Hong Chengchou swung into action immediately, detailing troops to hold Xi'an and other key points while he remained at Luoyang, in the northwest part of Henan. Zuo Liangyu defeated one group outside the walls of Nanyang and subsequently Zuo and Zu Kuan held Lingbao against repeated bandit assaults.<sup>307</sup> But Hong was frustrated that the “crack” troops could not crush the rebels. And he suffered a loss when his subordinate Deng Qi was killed by his own men as they looted.<sup>308</sup>

In the wake of the disaster at Fengyang, Hong Chengchou was bestowed with the double-edged sword and given an ultimatum by Chongzhen to crush the rebels within six months, reflecting the emperor’s penchant for drastic action and desire for speedy results.<sup>309</sup> The monarch pledged 936,000 taels worth of supplies to aid



*Figure 4.5* Emperor Chongzhen. Adapted from Zhang Dexin and Tan Tianxing, *Chongzhen huangdi qi jiang*.

him, though only 200,000 were immediately available.<sup>310</sup> But Hong had far too few troops, too much ground to cover, and too little time. On the more positive side, within a few months Lu Xiangsheng was appointed as Grand Coordinator and Pacification Commissioner of Huguang and ordered to coordinate activities with Hong. Lu submitted a ten-point plan to the emperor for suppressing the bandits that included the usual recommendations of establishing better supply lines, improving training practices, clarifying official responsibilities and jurisdictions, and so forth.<sup>311</sup> So now the Ming at least had two reasonably competent men in charge of anti-rebel efforts. Moreover, these two did make significant efforts to work together and enjoyed some quick victories. Lu pressed for more funds, but the emperor denied his request, saying he should already have what he needed. The court expected the rebels to be surrounded and crushed in Henan.

But they still roamed freely, prompting one official in Henan to lament, "The villages are bereft of people, white bones fill the wilderness and at night the crying of ghosts can be heard everywhere."<sup>312</sup> A single *shi* of rice was selling for 16,000 cash in some places and a picul of grain went for 900. People were reportedly buying the flesh of the deceased in markets.<sup>313</sup> In response to the expanded bandit activity to the north the officials of Huguang deployed boats along the Yangzi River and stationed troops at chokepoints.<sup>314</sup> They also implemented *baojia* (local militia units for village defense), particularly around Yangzhou.<sup>315</sup> The emperor stressed that the main point was to keep the wandering bandits north of the river. Preparations were also underway to launch yet another major extermination campaign.

Li Zicheng continued his activities through 1635 and 1636, enjoying modest success in northern Shaanxi, but not really enhancing his strategic position.<sup>316</sup> And he suffered a setback in his leadership coterie when one of his ablest lieutenants, Gao Jie, defected to the Ming side. Gao had developed a romantic attachment to Li's girlfriend, who defected with him. She had been in charge of supplies for the band so Li was deprived of two key aides in one stroke.<sup>317</sup>

But the government side suffered a much more significant loss when the dashing Cao Wenzhao was surrounded by rebel forces and forced to commit suicide near Qiutouzhen.<sup>318</sup> After killing some five hundred rebels in the initial clash, the government forces pursued for another thirty *li* but Cao and his men ran into a cavalry ambush when they pushed ahead on foot. At first the rebels did not know he was there but Wenzhao's presence was revealed by a subordinate calling for help. Nonetheless, he fought on, tossing enemy heads aside as he pressed forward.<sup>319</sup> Though he fought fiercely, when he saw the situation was hopeless, he killed himself.<sup>320</sup> It was probably the most important rebel triumph to this point and had a debilitating effect on Ming morale. The remnants of his troops were put under his son's command.

The rebel groups also started demonstrating greater tactical awareness as evidenced by their burning of crops in one area for the express purpose of denying food supplies to pursuing Ming forces.<sup>321</sup> And at Guangzhou, Gao Yingxiang made use of heavy cannon to attack the city. Gao was now at the height of his power, with perhaps 70,000 men, 10,000 to 20,000 camp followers, and 30,000

to 40,000 horses under his banner.<sup>322</sup> Gao's forces moved towards Taozhou and threatened Nanjing. They crushed a Ming army in Song County, Henan, and reentered Shaanxi in early 1636.

Hong Chengchou was now overseeing actions in the north and west and Lu Xiangsheng in the south and east. They managed to retake Xianyang from Li Zicheng right around the time they secured the defection of Gao Jie, which was in the 8<sup>th</sup> month of 1635. Over the next two months there was heavy fighting across Shaanxi, Henan, and Huguang and more troops were brought in from Liaodong. Zhang Xianzhong was driven back from Lingbao by Zuo Liangyu. Near Ruxi Zhang lost over a thousand troops to the aforementioned Liao units.<sup>323</sup> Rebel probes into Nan Zhili were turned back by Lu Xiangsheng.

But Lu Xiangsheng and Hong Chengchou finally started making some headway and defeated Gao Yingxiang in a series of battles in early 1636. In the 1<sup>st</sup> month of 1636 Lu had convened a council of his generals at Fengyang to discuss strategy. But his subordinates did not follow his directives and let Gao escape across the Han River to Yunyang through an enveloping operation.<sup>324</sup> At this point Chongzhen approved a troop transfer plan to pursue the rebels into the mountains. But the plan ignored the fact that many of the cavalry units under Lu had scant experience fighting in such terrain. So some refused to mobilize and simply returned north. Lu told the emperor that such operations were futile and that they would consume all their supplies in mere days with their slow progress.<sup>325</sup> His blockhouse strategy was better.<sup>326</sup> In the meantime Chongzhen issued a declaration of amnesty for rebels who surrendered or joined the army, reversing his hardline stance.<sup>327</sup> They eventually decided to post cavalry in the more central cities and send infantry deeper into the mountains in pursuit of the rebels. But when a pair of sub-commanders allowed the enemy to escape again, they were transferred. Lu camped at Xianyang and initiated efforts to root the rebels out.<sup>328</sup> But the aforementioned incursion by the Qing in the summer resulted in the recall of Lu and others to the capital region.

Sun Chuanting was made the new Grand Coordinator of Shaanxi. Sun was a native of Shaanxi who had started his career in the Wanli era. He was tall and excelled at strategy. He had first earned a reputation battling White Lotus elements in the 1620s. After retiring due to the factional strife of the era, he returned to office in 1634 and presented several plans for defending the northwest against bandit activities. They impressed the emperor and he approved Sun's ideas, providing some 60,000 taels for their implementation. In fact it was Sun's plan that Hong Chengchou had used to good effect.<sup>329</sup> In the wake of these developments Sun threw himself into training troops day and night, gradually ousting many of the bandits from Shaanxi. When Li Zicheng and Gao Yingxiang moved into southeastern Shaanxi, they were badly beaten near Zhouzi and Gao was captured on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month. Sun ambushed Gao at Black River Gorge, west of Xi'an, catching his men in a torrential downpour as they could not maneuver.<sup>330</sup> He was sent on to Beijing and dismembered in the marketplace.<sup>331</sup> Gao was the most prominent rebel leader yet captured and this seemed to signal that the Ming were finally making real progress.

In fact, however, despite his exalted status and longevity as a leader, Gao had already been surpassed in reputation by his subordinate Li Zicheng, who quickly assumed Gao's nickname upon the latter's death, while Lao Huihui and the other rebel leaders had their own organizations that also needed to be eradicated. Indeed, their power seemed to wax further after Gao's death as Lao Huihui surrounded and nearly killed Zuo Liangyu in one engagement.<sup>332</sup> Hong Chengchou complained that he had less than 20,000 troops to resist the rebels.<sup>333</sup> Zhang Xianzhong also enjoyed some victories though the "Heaven Disturbing Monkey" became the second prominent rebel leader to be killed by the Ming that summer.<sup>334</sup>

Perhaps buoyed by these successes, Minister of War Yang Sichang decided that quelling the wandering bandits should be the first priority. Presaging Chiang Kaishek's reasoning for wiping out the communists centuries later, Yang argued that the bandits were a "disease of the heart" and that the capital region, as the head of the state, must be protected from the spreading poison of the bandits. The frontier was like the arms – important, but not necessary for ultimate survival.<sup>335</sup> As of the beginning of 1637 Yang saw the greatest danger in Shaanxi, Henan, Huguang, and Jiangbei. Thus the empire needed a bold new plan for containing the rebellions and restoring state control of the central plain. Then they could turn their attentions towards the Manchu threat. Yang's plan was known as the Ten-Sided Net (*shi mian zhi wang*).<sup>336</sup> Like most of his proposals, it looked impressive on paper. But it would go down as one of the biggest failures in strategy of the entire late Ming. That tale will be related in the next chapter.

## 5 Mischief a ten-sided net: Yang Sichang descendant, 1636–41

### Yang Sichang descendant

We have already encountered Yang Sichang and touched upon his rise to prominence, but it is worth briefly recounting his earlier career to give a sense of how the emperor came to trust him so much. Yang Sichang's rise was intimately tied to the disgrace of his father and to his own sense of filial piety. As soon as Yang He was summoned to Beijing, his son, Sichang, petitioned the court to replace his father so as to atone for his mistakes, but Chongzhen refused for the time being.<sup>1</sup> Following in the footsteps of his father, Yang Sichang was a *jinshi* of 1610.<sup>2</sup> After earning his degree, he was first made an instructor in the prefectural school at Hangzhou and then transferred to a lecturer post in Nanjing before receiving an appointment in the Ministry of Revenue. As we saw earlier, he was quite vocal in making recommendations for improving Ming defenses in the northeast and his proposals tended to be detailed and well-written, even if at times they were overly idealistic. Perhaps desiring to stay out of the factional strife that was then wracking the court, Yang retired on account of illness in 1621 and did not return to office until Chongzhen ascended the throne. After serving in mid-level positions for several years he was transferred to Shanhaiguan in 1631 to oversee military supplies.<sup>3</sup>

Although his plea to replace his father had been rejected (as was his offer to serve his father's sentence of exile), Yang was promoted to Censor-in-Chief of the Right and Touring Pacification Commissioner of Shanhaiguan, Yongping, and the surrounding areas in 1633, later being elevated still further to Vice Minister of War of the Right and concurrently Vice Censor-in-Chief of the Right, as well as Supreme Commander of Military Affairs of Xuanfu, Datong, and Shanxi. Because banditry was still spreading across the central plains, Yang recommended opening up mines to raise additional revenues.<sup>4</sup> He then sent a series of memorials discussing border affairs to the throne, impressing Chongzhen with his talents, though later critics have charged that Yang was more of a clever word-smith and excellent calligrapher than a solid policy-maker or sound tactician.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, because of these very skills, which traditionally marked an able and upright official and human being, the emperor trusted Yang implicitly and Yang was to become perhaps the most influential official in the empire over the next

several years.<sup>6</sup> It is said that Chongzhen thought no one else had Yang Sichang's grasp of the big picture with respect to military affairs. However, just as Yang was to assume his posts, his father died in exile and Yang was forced to retire to observe the customary mourning period. Before the mourning period was up, however, Yang was recalled to service by the emperor owing to the suicide of Zhang Fengyi in the wake of the recent Qing raids.

As noted in the previous chapter, upon resuming office in 1637, Yang stressed that suppressing internal dissent should be paramount over taking the fight to the Manchus in the northeast. By this time the scope of the peasant rebellions had expanded greatly, and the center of rebel activity was shifting south and east, closer to the capital and the agricultural heartland of the empire. Yang therefore favored additional wall construction and defensive measures along the frontier, hoping that extra firepower and moats would make up for shortcomings in troop numbers.<sup>7</sup> He believed that keeping around 50,000 troops outside the Wall would constitute a sufficient deterrent and could hold up the Qing long enough to bring in reinforcements. In a recommendation that would later cause him no small amount of trouble, Yang even suggested opening negotiations with the Manchus to buy time for quelling the peasant rebels, evoking Han, Tang, and Song dynasty precedents in arguing that the ways of barbarians were unfathomable.<sup>8</sup> This of course created an uproar in court as few wanted to be likened to the Song in particular and the notion of appeasement in any way continued to be unpopular. Chongzhen gave his tacit approval, but took care to cover up his own role in authorizing talks.<sup>9</sup>

Other officials suggested opening more trading markets and using Mongol intermediaries to procure horses. They also hoped that trading with the Mongols would drive a wedge between them and the Manchus.<sup>10</sup> Ming reports from the time show just how scared they were of the possible ties between Mongol groups and the Manchus. One border official called the frontier situation "as fiery as a hotspot."<sup>11</sup> Another worried that opening horse fairs would only makes things easier for spies and traitors to infiltrate the Ming. After all, wasn't this how things had started way back in 1618 at Fushun?<sup>12</sup> But others argued for the efficacy of horse markets in both providing the Ming with battle-worthy horses and in improving the economic lot of the Mongols to make them more favorably disposed towards the Ming. Plus, cutting off horse sales to the Manchus was a way of "using barbarians to control barbarians." Another suggestion was to offer the Mongols huge bounties for submitting Manchu heads.<sup>13</sup> It is unclear whether the timing of this scheme reflects desperation on the part of Ming officials or a savvy awareness of the still fragile nature of the Qing polity and its alliance structure.

With respect to the peasant rebels, Yang's basic suggestions were that if adequate supplies were provided, then the soldiers could be fed and would fight, and this in turn would facilitate the adequate protection of the local populace. Once the people felt safe, they would once again direct their allegiance to the Ming government and be less inclined to join the rebels.<sup>14</sup> Local militia had proved successful in many cases and in rugged areas Yang assumed that the government forces could cut off, isolate, and starve out the bandits.<sup>15</sup> Yang also

targeted his fellow officials, calling for the punishment and even the execution of officials who were derelict in their duties.<sup>16</sup> It was at this juncture that Yang unveiled his “ten-sided net” strategy.

Yang said that Shaanxi, Henan, Huguang, and Jiangbei (the area north of the Yangzi River) would be the four main lines of defense (*zheng*). Four touring pacification commissioners would be assigned to defend each line respectively. Then Yansui, Shaanxi, Shandong, Jiangnan, Jiangxi, and Sichuan would be established as the six auxiliary lines of defense. The six pacification commissioners in command of these posts would be tasked with both defensive and offensive operations, the idea being that the net would gradually close around peasant rebels’ positions until all were trapped and either killed or submitted.<sup>17</sup> But defense was to be their primary function. The idea was that as the net closed, the Ming would employ the classic strategy of “clearing the fields and strengthening the walls.” With stoutly defended cities and no supplies available, the rebels would eventually have no recourse but to surrender.<sup>18</sup> Two supreme commanders (*zongli/zongdu*) were to smash the enemy wherever they encountered them and the other officials were to act locally, presumably in more defensive capacities.<sup>19</sup> The troops under the supreme commanders were to be the elite troops and would be assisted by troops dispatched from Beijing and from neighboring regions.

Yang argued that despite their huge overall numbers and the vast despoliation they had caused, the number of truly militarily dangerous rebels was rather small. So he thought that the problem could still be managed. He believed that putting 10,000 troops in key defensive posts and detailing 30,000 each to the supreme commanders for offense and pursuit would do the trick. In total Yang estimated that he would need 120,000 men, only 36,000 of whom would be mounted.<sup>20</sup> But Yang figured that rebel mobility would be curtailed in the winter, thereby allowing government forces to “close the net.” Playing to Chongzhen’s love of accelerated timetables, Yang boldly predicted that he could wipe out the peasant rebels in a mere six months.

To outfit and supply these extra troops, Yang estimated he would need a colossal 2.8 million extra taels of revenue.<sup>21</sup> While many other court officials balked at further exacerbating an already angry tax base, Yang argued that the land tax was vastly underreported anyhow.<sup>22</sup> He also contended that extra special taxes levied in Liaodong had already raised 5–6 million taels for the defense of that region so there was no reason the presumably more productive areas of central China could not assume this lesser burden.<sup>23</sup> Simply increasing the land tax by twelve ounces of grain per *mu* would bring in 1,929,000 taels. Another 406,000 could come from special taxes on surplus land. They could expect 200,000 from postal revenues and the rest could perhaps be raised by selling *jiansheng* degrees.<sup>24</sup> Despite the heated opposition of many of his officials to this plan, Chongzhen reasoned that the long-term benefits outweighed one more year of hardship for the peasants, so he approved Yang’s proposal. He then told local officials to both look for ways to raise the funds and to proceed with further famine relief measures.<sup>25</sup> Later scholars criticized Yang heavily for this policy, some even going so far as to charge that Yang “killed the country with a single word” by virtue of this

plan.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, it is said that Chongzhen appreciated the fact that at least Yang appeared to have a concrete plan for dealing with the empire's military problems. Whereas most of his other officials vacillated, Yang was confident, forceful, and visionary.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, Xiong Wencan, who had gained a reputation for dealing with rebels by virtue of having persuaded Zheng Zhilong to surrender, boasted that he could wipe out the rebels in no time, so he was appointed as one of the supreme commanders, along with Hong Chengchou.<sup>28</sup> In fact Chongzhen was initially suspicious of Xiong because he had been accused of bribery so he first sent a eunuch to interview him. Then while drinking one night Xiong boasted that had he been employed in the north, the rebel situation never would have gotten so out of hand.<sup>29</sup> Still, despite these red flags, Chongzhen assented to the appointment, making Xiong Vice Minister of War, Assistant Censor-in-Chief of the Right and Supreme Commander of Five Provinces. Xiong immediately rubbed people up the wrong way, asking to remove Zuo Liangyu from his post in favor of men Xiong brought along from Guangdong, who were supposedly more adept in the use of firearms than Zuo's troops.<sup>30</sup> Xiong also complained of a lack of cavalry so the emperor ordered that another 3,000 war horses be sent to him immediately.<sup>31</sup>

Among Yang's more notable critics was Sun Chuanting (d. 1643), the recently appointed Grand Coordinator of Shaanxi and man responsible for the capture of Gao Yingxiang. Sun submitted a memorial on border affairs in which he highlighted ten problems with Yang's ten-sided net. First of all, Sun believed that Yang's requests for funds and manpower were highly unrealistic. "How can the state raise an extra 2.8 million taels when they've already spent more than 1 million taels in extra revenues?" asked Sun.<sup>32</sup> Deeming Yang totally impractical and unversed in military affairs, Sun further questioned where the troops would come from. He also questioned Yang's timetable, supposedly a mere six months, and the issue of when troops would be mobilized in respect to the upsurge of bandit activity. Sun noted that campaign seasons for the troops did not correspond to the seasons when the bandits were active. On top of this, there was the problem of geography. The terrain greatly favored the highly mobile peasant rebels who lived off the land and escaped into the mountains, gorges, and forests. Large Ming armies, on the other hand, had to rely on fixed positions and needed to maintain long supply lines. Jurisdictional problems exacerbated matters still further as the rebels could easily move from province to province while the Ming defenders belatedly exchanged information or wrangled over whose responsibility it was to apprehend given rebels. In essence, Sun argued that Yang's plan was too static in addition to its high costs.<sup>33</sup> This, in effect, made it no more than an "empty net" strategy in Sun's words.<sup>34</sup>

Sun added that the Ming needed far more troop strength if a coherent policy of extermination were even to be considered. Moreover, Sun was highly critical of the government's general lack of consistency in pursuing either pacification or extermination, noting that such vacillation only served to create further confusion and distrust among the populace.<sup>35</sup> Finally, Sun stressed the importance of

appointing experienced and competent commanders at all levels. The men in charge needed to be familiar with local people and conditions and a more graduated, cautious, and localized approach was needed to quell the uprisings. Given his track record in the field, Sun's concerns deserved serious consideration. But in the end such was Yang's favor with the emperor that Sun's recommendations were ignored and he was later even jailed for his opposition to Yang's policies.<sup>36</sup>

While Sun's counterpoints are well taken, it remains to be seen if any better alternatives to Yang's plan could have been presented or implemented. As the modern scholar Fan Shuzhi notes, if properly administered, the plan had a reasonable chance of success and in several previous meetings no official had offered anything better.<sup>37</sup> But there was also the problem of taxing the peasantry more. As the emperor himself observed, "Leadership and money needs to come from the gentry, not the masses. Suppressing the bandits requires a big campaign which requires lots of troops. The money can't come from the people, but should come from the treasury, but the treasury is empty." So the emperor ordered the ministries to investigate all possible sources of revenue and report to him within two months.<sup>38</sup> So in effect, Chongzhen called his gentry to the mat. When they refused to help out, he replied in disgust that he had no recourse but to raise taxes, so in the fourth month of 1637, taxes were raised across the empire.<sup>39</sup>

Meanwhile, back in the field, Xiong Wencan continued to cause friction with local commanders, drawing the ire of the emperor after troops dispatched from the capital still made little headway. Hong Chengzhou and Zuo Liangyu virtually ignored Xiong's orders, though they achieved some successes. Hong defeated Li Zicheng in the 10<sup>th</sup> month of 1637 in Sichuan. But government victories often did not mean peace for the locals. For example, Zuo's troops looted and raped after they drove the bandits into the mountains near Shucheng.<sup>40</sup> Xiong's hand-picked outsiders continued to clash with local troops. Additionally, Xiong also tended to favor surrenders and less coercive policies, despite his bold pronouncements the previous year. This drew no small measure of criticism from his fellow officials, who argued that the wandering bandits were nothing like the pirates that Xiong had dealt with in the past.<sup>41</sup>

Sun Chuanting was wary of venturing deep into the mountains without adequate supply lines and being subjected to bandit ambushes. Ming commanders were also loathe to divide their forces in pursuit of the enemy because of their numerical inferiority.<sup>42</sup> Sun also told the emperor that many of the troops allocated to his command had not yet arrived. Yang Sichang expressed anger that his subordinates continued to resist or ignore his directives to advance as it was clear that they were not going to meet his timetable for suppressing the rebellions.<sup>43</sup> Government forces won numerous battles and claimed to kill thousands but never quite had the strength to eliminate the enemy entirely so reinforcements were ordered from Yansui. Among those slain in the summer of 1637 was the rebel leader Ma Shouying, one of several who adopted the nickname of "Old Muslim."<sup>44</sup> Chongzhen also sent out more capital troops under the command of a pair of trusted eunuchs, prompting the usual outcry from the outer court officials, which was duly ignored by the emperor.<sup>45</sup>

Nonetheless, Zuo Liangyu was kept in his position for the time being. In fact Zuo scored impressive victories over Zhang Xianzhong in addition to the defeat of Ma Shouying in the summer of 1637. In a battle near Nanyang Zhang had been hit in the eye by an arrow and slashed with a sword in a fight with Zuo Liangyu's men.<sup>46</sup> He was saved by the intercession of his lieutenant Sun Kewang and holed up near Macheng, Huguang, while opening surrender talks. Zuo argued for rejecting Zhang's overtures as false, but he was ordered to accept Zhang's surrender.<sup>47</sup> Zuo was furious and wanted to kill Zhang on the spot, but deferred to Xiong's orders.<sup>48</sup> A eunuch on the scene suggested using Zhang Xianzhong to kill Li Zicheng. This plan was deemed risky so instead Chongzhen sent down a directive to "overtly accept surrender but covertly prepare to annihilate them."<sup>49</sup> In the 12<sup>th</sup> month of 1637 Xiong ordered Zhang Daying and Zuo Liangyu to accept Zhang Xianzhong's surrender. It would take a few months to work out the details, which were allegedly facilitated by bribes and expensive gifts sent by Zhang to Xiong Wencan and Chen Hongfan through Zhang's lieutenant, Sun Kewang.<sup>50</sup> Insult would be added to injury when Xiong provided Zhang with supplies for 20,000 men for the maintenance of local order! Zhang had actually asked for supplies for 100,000 and when Xiong did not give him this much, he sent his men out on looting expeditions.<sup>51</sup> The local prefect protested vociferously to Xiong but his concerns were brushed aside. This prompted Yang Sichang to become more personally involved in the campaign and he vowed to the emperor that he would close the net in the winter of 1637–8 and crush the rebels within three months.<sup>52</sup> Among other things, Yang noted the importance of commanders in the field to obey the authority conferred upon officials such as himself, noting that "if everyone exerts their strength to the utmost, how can the rebels not be pacified?"<sup>53</sup>

Yang also defended Xiong Wencan, pointing out that Hong Chengchou, despite his many ardent supporters, had been battling the rebels for seven years with no real results while Xiong had only been at it for three months and had already accomplished more.<sup>54</sup> But memorials poured in criticizing Xiong's policy of appeasement. Even the emperor said that Xiong "was all talk with no results."<sup>55</sup> Hong Chengchou incidentally, also came under attack, but Hong argued that the reason he had not engaged the rebels more forcefully was because his troops had such a fearsome reputation, the rebels always fled before he could engage them, so he could not be blamed.<sup>56</sup> At this point Chongzhen chastised Yang for divisive talk and he dropped his attacks on Hong. But after another three months passed with no results, Yang asked to be replaced and the emperor refused, telling Yang, in effect, to find a way. For his part, Yang sent up another memorial, criticizing Hong Chengchou's handling of matters while praising Xiong Wencan's adroit mixture of aggressive and conciliatory measures in Jiangbei and Jiangnan. Yang added that many of the so-called rebel strengths, such as their mobility, were not so striking. After all, cavalry were most useful on flat ground. And while the bandits were adept archers and used short swords, the Ming held superiority in firearms and long spears. So if properly led and supplied even a smaller government force should prevail against the rebels.<sup>57</sup> Yang then provided a list of officials who deserved merit or punishment for their actions, most notably calling

for the arrest of Hong Chengchou, who he may have resented because Hong had replaced his late father.<sup>58</sup> The emperor followed Yang's recommendations, except for the one calling for Hong's arrest.

In a report from the end of 1637 Lu Xiangsheng referenced the continued superiority of the bandits with respect to mobility. He sent Meng Ruhu and He Yingzhao to secure the Henan-Shaanxi border and requested assistance from other quarters. Lu worried about holding strong points through the winter and was unsure if he had sufficient rations to last. He warned that the men would not train if they were not fed. His garrisons were also short on livestock for work, food, and transportation duties.<sup>59</sup> Earlier that year in fact the emperor had approved a request from an official in Shanxi who recommended an empire-wide search for hidden cash, foodstuffs, and military supplies. But he rejected a plan for extracting revenues from Buddhist and Daoist lands.<sup>60</sup> So the court apparently realized that there were vast untapped sources of wealth in the countryside, but needed better ways of identifying and extracting it. Unfortunately for them, local officials were adept in hiding the said resources and in bribing those sent out to acquire them. In one case local landlords were decapitated for torching dwellings on their property to avoid paying taxes on them.<sup>61</sup>

Natural disasters continued to plague the realm as well. Locust plagues and famines ravaged Henan and Shandong and desperate peasants were forced to scrounge for food in the wilderness. Tigers and wolves allegedly prowled the roads looking for victims.<sup>62</sup> Earthquakes rattled Sichuan. In the Suzhou region



*Figure 5.1* Lu Xiangsheng. Taken from Lu Anjie (comp.), *Ming da sima Lu gong nianpu*.

in 1638 locusts “blanketed the sky like snow.”<sup>63</sup> Great winds lashed Suzhou in the summer of 1639, “making it seem as if it were autumn.”<sup>64</sup> Local officials were often at a loss to cope with these problems and the strong continued to join the bandits to improve their chances of survival.

## Gridlock

It is worth noting at this juncture that despite his support of Xiong Wencan, or perhaps because of it, Yang no longer seriously discussed the implementation of the ten-sided net. In the initial glow after the presumed surrender of Zhang Xianzhong, Xiong’s policy of pacification was verified in Yang’s eyes. In a meeting with Chongzhen, Yang talked about the primacy of military action, and how these successes demonstrated the shining virtue of imperial justice. Even the emperor balked at such hyperbole, chiding Yang that the Ming was not the Warring States era!<sup>65</sup> He wanted to know why Yang was changing his plans. Yang said that he had not realized how tough it would be for officials to coordinate their actions. And certain areas were too important to leave unattended so he had been forced to reposition what were envisioned to be mobile units. Plus he said that the rations he had were insufficient for extermination campaigns.<sup>66</sup> He lacked the manpower to properly garrison all cities and strong points. Yang also complained that officials such as Hong Chengchou and Lu Xiangsheng were not properly using their delegated authority. Yang said, “If subordinate commanders don’t heed the orders of their superiors, what is the use of the double-edged sword? It’s no wonder the bandits haven’t been pacified!”<sup>67</sup> Others were accused of being too lenient in accepting surrender.<sup>68</sup>

This was despite the fact that Zhang had obtained quite a deal for himself, including control of a town, supplies for his men, and other privileges.<sup>69</sup> There was even rapturous talk of how the surrendered bandit chieftains (some had followed Zhang in submitting) were now willingly turning swords into ploughshares. Yet even as this was taking place, Sun Chuanting and Hong Chengchou were pursuing a policy of annihilation against the peasant rebels in their midst with a fair degree of success.<sup>70</sup> Huang Degong killed over 2,900 bandits in three battles over four days in the 1<sup>st</sup> month of 1638. Hong Chengchou killed thousands of Li Zicheng’s troops in an ambush along the Shaanxi–Sichuan border.<sup>71</sup> In the third month Cao Bianjiao captured some 20 minor leaders, just missing the chance to capture Li Zicheng.<sup>72</sup> Cao kept chasing Li deeper into the wilderness, detailing subordinates to hold strategic escape routes. Li fled south with a mere 100 cavalry to Guangyuan. Cao pursued him, but Li was tipped off by locals, allowing him to escape again. Ming infantry complained about dragging their heavy weapons up steep mountain peaks, but they kept up the chase. Eventually Li and his last 17 followers escaped by shredding their clothes and using them like ropes to rappel down a mountain!<sup>73</sup> But it seemed that Li’s power was waning rapidly, as he had lost over six thousand men in the battle.<sup>74</sup> Zuo Liangyu also scored some victories in Sichuan. Still, however, the rebellions flared up here and there and Ming forces scrambled to upgrade riverine defenses and prevent

the movements from spilling into one another.<sup>75</sup> Those fighting the bandits were upset that the best troops remained posted along the frontiers.<sup>76</sup> While Ming records suggest the level of uncertainty still in the air, Xiong Wencan reported to the throne that ultimate victory appeared imminent, claiming that “there was not a single bandit north of the Yellow River.”<sup>77</sup>

Yang also continued to push for border markets for trading with the Mongols, calling those who argued for closed borders traitors.<sup>78</sup> When pressed by Chongzhen to clarify who he meant by such accusations, Yang refused to elaborate. But he stuck to his position that trading with the Mongols combined with defending against the Manchus would suffice to secure the borders. The emperor pointed to the need for more cannons in the border fortresses and Yang agreed, telling Chongzhen that expanding weapons production, military farms, and militia were all part of his master plan.<sup>79</sup> He felt so confident that his plans were already working that he proposed using 900,000 taels previously earmarked for troop payments and distributing them for famine relief.<sup>80</sup>

### The Qing strike again

But as had happened to his father a few years earlier, Yang’s ambitions were undone by another Manchu incursion in late 1638. The invasion was not exactly a surprise since Gao Qiqian and Wu Sangui had reported heavy activity around Shenyang earlier in the year and Lu Xiangsheng had warned of a threat to Zhangjiakou.<sup>81</sup> In fact, Yang had already incurred the enmity of several high officials by virtue of interpreting certain astronomical phenomena in such a way that they justified his pursuit of negotiations with the Manchus.<sup>82</sup> So he sent out some feelers, but with their recent military successes, the Manchus were not particularly interested in talking, though Hung Taiji publicly claimed that his raid was prompted by the unwillingness of the Ming side to talk.<sup>83</sup> Actually, Fang Yicao had favored talks, arguing that the enemy was strong and the Ming were weak. He suggested coming to an agreement similar to what the Ming had negotiated with Altan Khan in 1571, recognizing him as a tributary prince. Accordingly Yang Sichang secretly pushed for this, but was opposed by Lu Xiangsheng.<sup>84</sup>

On the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month of 1638 Chongzhen held a meeting of high officials to debate the issue. Chongzhen expressed his concern over of the state of Ming defenses, particularly the lack of guns in Ming forts.<sup>85</sup> In the end the emperor ruled in favor of Yang but his own position towards peace talks remained murky.<sup>86</sup> Yang then proceeded to demote several of his key foes just as the invaders came through the Great Wall defenses, prompting another round of infighting. The Ming lost several prominent commanders in these raids, including Sun Chengzong, who died at Gaoyang, and Lu Xiangsheng, whose tragic demise will be recounted below. Ironically Gao Qiqian survived despite the routing of his army.

These raids were led by younger Manchu nobles, most notably Dorgon, whose star had continued to rise after his impressive handling of the campaign in Korea. The Ming defectors Kong, Shang, and Geng were also part of the operation, detailed to menace Ming bastions outside the Great Wall.<sup>87</sup> Again the Qing troops

were strictly forbidden from indiscriminate looting, rape, and plunder. They initially reached the outskirts of the Great Wall late in the 9<sup>th</sup> month and burned some defenses. When they reached a larger redoubt the Ming troops were drunkenly celebrating the birthday of their commander and they were easily defeated, falling back to Miyun because Wu Aheng deployed his troops too late.<sup>88</sup> Dorgon led the troops across the border in eight columns and the Qing moved due west, six of the columns heading for the Yellow River. The capital armies were put on alert with Zu Dashou summoned for relief while others were deployed to defensive positions.

While some officials at court, including Yang Sichang, advocated negotiations, Lu Xiangsheng urged battle. Lu told Yang, “If you discard war but talk of negotiations, you nourish disaster and bring disgrace to the country. Who doesn’t know this?”<sup>89</sup> He added, “What’s the point of my receiving the double-edged sword from the emperor if I don’t exert myself in battle?”<sup>90</sup> In response Yang Sichang transferred many troops to the control of Gao Qiqian, leaving Lu in direct command of a mere 20,000 men.<sup>91</sup> Other units, including those commanded by Sun Chuanting and Hong Chengchou, were recalled to rescue the capital, even though they had just smashed Li Zicheng’s armies near Tong Pass.<sup>92</sup>

The emperor was livid that the Qing were threatening his capital yet again and he grilled Yang in a court audience. He then asked where people had heard rumors that he favored negotiating with the Manchus. The response was “from all over.”<sup>93</sup> They finally decided to send Lu Xiangsheng in pursuit of the enemy and station Gao Qiqian at Shanhuaiguan, though Chongzhen was not sure Lu was the right man for the job.<sup>94</sup> Yang said it was best to use who was already in the field rather than getting caught up in more red tape by making new appointments. Lu camped at Changping and the emperor sent him 40,000 taels for special rewards. The next day he received some horses and 500 “iron whips.”<sup>95</sup> The emperor told Lu, “Peace talks were the idea of the outer court officials. The Emperor personally favors war.”<sup>96</sup> Chongzhen then tore into the assembled officials again for wasting lots of money yet coming up with no workable plans.<sup>97</sup> Yang Sichang then recommended one large frontal assault augmented by firearm-based ambushes. The Ming forces decided to advance and attack at night to gain surprise, but their first division was defeated. Lu and Gao Qiqian continued to squabble over strategy even as plans for buying the Qing off were bandied about the court.<sup>98</sup>

In the 11<sup>th</sup> month the Qing attacked Gaoyang, where 76-year-old Sun Chengzong was living in retirement. He and his whole family participated in the city’s defense. They fought for three days but the city fell and Chengzong and 19 of his children and grandchildren all died.<sup>99</sup> Lu Xiangsheng pushed for a Ming counter-attack, but Gao Qiqian maintained that Ming strength was not in open field warfare, so they should focus on positional defense. Gao’s troops were subsequently defeated near Marco Polo Bridge.

Meanwhile, Lu Xiangsheng managed to kill a hundred of the enemy at Baoding despite the fact that his starving troops had only water for rations.<sup>100</sup> In tears Lu then implored the troops to join him in resisting the invaders. Addressing the men, Lu said, “You and I have all received the blessings of the state. In this



*Figure 5.2* Manchu armor

calamity we may not avoid death, but there is no calamity in which we might not attain life!”<sup>101</sup> They therefore resolved to fight in hopes of delaying the enemy long enough for relief troops to arrive. Supposedly Lu’s plea even inspired local elders to contribute funds for feeding the troops. At this time Gao Qiqian was just fifty *li* away and Lu sent him an urgent dispatch for help, noting that he had just one life to sacrifice for the Ming but perhaps they could at least make the area a killing ground for the Qing.<sup>102</sup> Gao did not reply. Lu had only Yang Guogui and Hu Dawei under him. Hu led the left wing and Yang the right. The next day they found themselves surrounded. Lu then engaged the Qing at near Gaoshui Bridge outside Jiazhuang and fought for six hours, with cannons and catapults firing and arrows flying all around. Discipline broke down in the Ming ranks and Lu could not get his military carts in proper position to form a wall.<sup>103</sup>

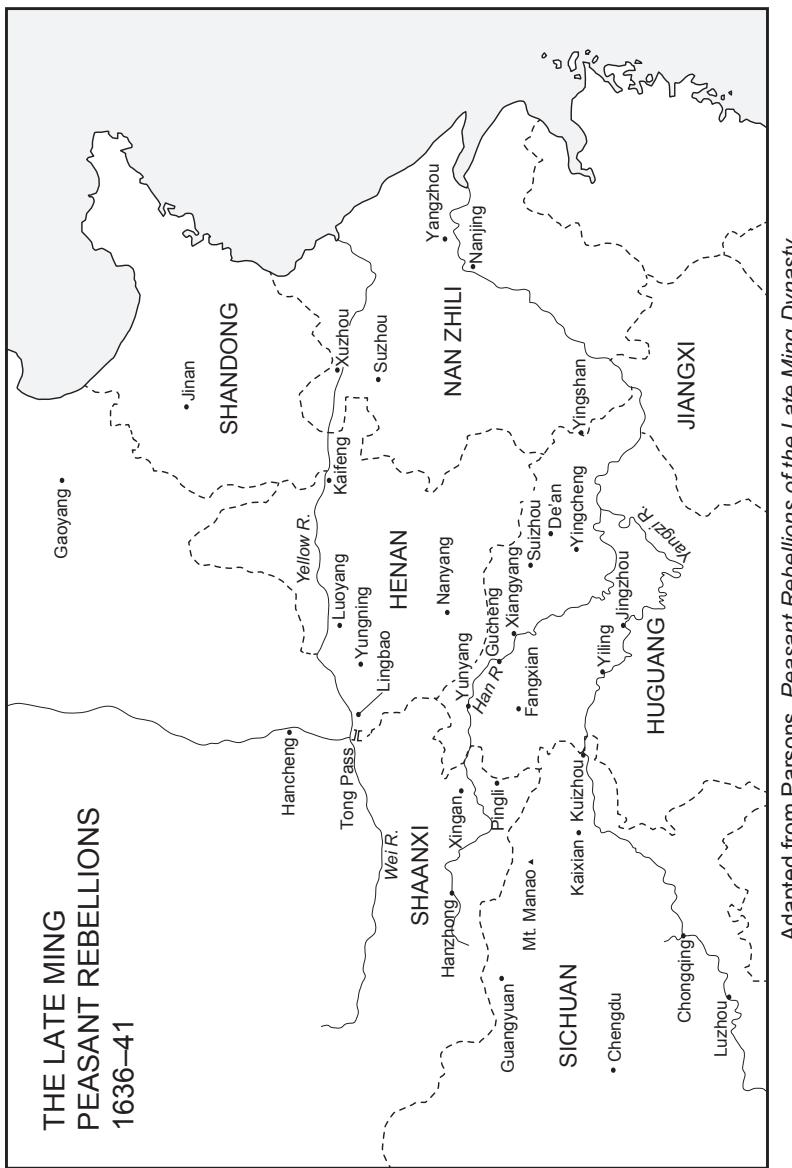
Hu Dawei asked to try to break out of their encirclement, but Lu told him to stand his ground. As Hu escaped Lu galloped into battle, shouting, “A general dies in front of his troops, not behind them!”<sup>104</sup> Lu fell after taking four arrows and sustaining three sword cuts. He allegedly took ten men with him before falling from his mount and dying heroically on the field of battle. A subordinate covered his body and took another two dozen arrows before expiring himself.<sup>105</sup> Lu’s force would be routed though Hu Dawei escaped.<sup>106</sup> Lu’s corpse was retrieved from the battlefield and draped in ceremonial cloth. Everyone present

wept at the memory of Lu's valiance.<sup>107</sup> Yang Sichang would subsequently try to deny Lu posthumous honors because of petty anger over Lu's disagreements with Yang over strategy. As a result Lu would not be properly recognized for his sacrifice until after Yang's own death.<sup>108</sup> Gao Qiqian, who was finally en route to join Lu, fled after hearing news of the defeat, only to fall into an ambush himself.<sup>109</sup>

The Qing then captured Changping, Pinggu, Jizhou, and other cities, reaching the outskirts of Jinan, Shandong in the 1<sup>st</sup> month of 1639.<sup>110</sup> The city fell as its defenders fled and the Qing captured the Ming Prince of De. Zhang Bingwen fought fiercely but fell in battle after taking multiple arrows in a bloody street fight.<sup>111</sup> A Ming relief column of 300 was defeated so the Ming dispatched Sun Chuanting at the head of 180,000 troops from the northeast, as well as Zu Dashou, but Jinan was burned before they arrived.<sup>112</sup> In one town Ming relief forces were denied entry by the locals. When they fired an arrow into the city with a message explaining who they were, those inside responded by reminding them that they had been commissioned to fight the Qing so why were they not out doing that?<sup>113</sup>

Dorgon then raided the environs of Tianjin before heading back east. The Qing withdrawal was abetted by heavy rain and snows, but some officials criticized Ming relief columns for laxity in pursuit. In sum total these Qing raids lasted five months, covered 2,000 *li*, included 57 battles involving 53 cities (eight of which were captured by the Qing), and saw the invaders defeat 33 Ming divisions, capture an astounding 473,000 people, 4,039 taels of gold, and 976,460 taels of silver, and kill some 100 Ming officers and over 150,000 civilians.<sup>114</sup> Yang Sichang opined in a memorial that booty, in the form of both goods and people, were really what the Manchus were after and that if the Ming could turn the tables and raid Qing lands, they could still turn defeat into victory.<sup>115</sup> His rosy projections were countered by Ming reports suggesting that nine out of every ten people in Jinan had been killed.<sup>116</sup> The Ming government responded by executing some 32 officials deemed culpable en masse and demoting many others.<sup>117</sup> They also took measures to rebuild defenses in Jinan and the northeast, allocating significant funds towards reconstruction and weapons procurement over the following couple of years.<sup>118</sup>

Yang Sichang found himself impeached for errors of state, but managed to survive owing to his continued support from the emperor, though he was demoted three grades for his failures.<sup>119</sup> Other officials were cashiered and prominent officials, including Sun Chuanting and Hong Chengchou, were transferred to the northeast, thereby allowing the rebellions in the northwest to fester once more. In fact Sun Chuanting opposed such transfers on multiple grounds. First he argued that the rebellions in Shaanxi were not completely quelled yet. Leaving too many troops in the northeast would allow the rebellions to fester in Shaanxi. Plus the troops would worry about their homes and families and might desert. Then, upon returning home, there was the chance that they would resort to banditry. Thus such a plan hurt defenses in both regions.<sup>120</sup> Sun also submitted a report criticizing Yang's actions and the emperor's handling of matters.<sup>121</sup> Sun would be arrested not long thereafter.<sup>122</sup>



Adapted from Parsons, *Peasant Revolutions of the Late Ming Dynasty*.

Figure 5.3 Map of the Late Ming peasant rebellions, 1636–41

Wu Sangui complained of a shortage of trained officers for activities outside the Wall and asked to step up training programs.<sup>123</sup> So now Yang was forced to direct his interests towards securing the northeast before turning back to deal with the peasant rebels.<sup>124</sup> Yang's plans for bolstering the defenses of the northeast bore his hallmark of being expensive and impressive on paper, but difficult to implement and somewhat out of touch with reality as he expressed hopes he could raise 7.3 million additional taels through new taxes.<sup>125</sup> But in the end, as some critics noted, training taxes were pointless if soldiers did not actually train and the extra taxes probably drove more people into banditry.<sup>126</sup>

### **The Yellow Tiger leaves his cage**

For a few months after his surrender Zhang Xianzhong stayed put in Gucheng. During this time he trained his troops, made promises to the Ming that he would help them pacify all of Huguang and sent hefty bribes to officials at all levels of the Ming administration.<sup>127</sup> He also erected a customs house on the Han River and collected transit taxes, ostensibly to help maintain his surrendered garrison. Defenses around Gucheng were bolstered. Local administration was effectively in Zhang's hands. Zuo Liangyu agitated for the chance to strike at his old rival and eliminate him for good, but Xiong Wencan refused, seeing Zhang's surrender as a consolidation of his appeasement strategy.<sup>128</sup> One official who dared to relate the truth was impeached by Yang Sichang and eventually arrested. It turned out that this same official had formerly impeached Sichang's father.<sup>129</sup>

Nonetheless, Xiong approved additional offensive operations after he continued to come under criticism for not containing the rebellions. These pressures induced other rebel leaders to reconsider their options and, in some cases, surrender. Most notably, at the end of 1638, the prominent rebel commander Luo Rucai, who styled himself Cao Cao after the famous anti-hero of the third century, surrendered to Xiong and ostentatiously refused Xiong's offer of official rank as a mobile corps commander, claiming that he desired to be nothing more than a simple peasant.<sup>130</sup> Yang Sichang, however, was dubious, having seen what Zhang had done since his surrender.

Thus, as of late 1638, the court erroneously considered the peasant rebellions largely quelled, but within a few months, Zhang Xianzhong, after first unsuccessfully trying to recruit Li Zicheng to his cause much to the embarrassment of Xiong Wencan, rebelled outright.<sup>131</sup> In fact, Zhang had been making preparations for such a move for quite some time, extorting money from local officials as part of a transit tax, reinforcing the walls of the town where he was settled, and drilling his troops.<sup>132</sup> He also systematically bribed Ming officials to ignore his activities. Finally, on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month of 1639, Zhang opened the prisons of Gucheng where he was posted, killed a local official and made clear his intention to rebel once more.<sup>133</sup> At the same time he gleefully released his records of all the Ming officials who had accepted bribes from him in the previous several months.<sup>134</sup> Zhang then moved to join forces with Luo Rucai. They quickly attacked the nearby town of Fangxian, which put up a spirited resistance

for a week until one of the defenders (a former associate of Luo Rucai), opened the gates.<sup>135</sup> They then moved towards the heavily forested mountains near the Shaanxi border.

Unsurprisingly Xiong Wencan was lambasted by his fellow officials for letting Zhang get away.<sup>136</sup> Xiong then ordered Zuo Liangyu to pursue the rebels. Zuo was furious, pointing out that he had recommended killing Zhang the previous year and that Xiong was akin to someone who deliberately released an angry tiger and then ordered underlings to catch it.<sup>137</sup> Nonetheless, Zuo complied with the order. Luo Dai was put in command of Zuo's vanguard but he was ambushed near Mount Luoying.<sup>138</sup> Luo got off his horse and cut his way through the vines of the mountain with a sword, but he was surrounded and captured when he ran out of arrows. Zuo Liangyu's army retreated in defeat, with over 10,000 reportedly killed. This was perhaps the single greatest rebel victory yet. Zuo also lost a great quantity of supplies and his official seals of authority. He was demoted three grades and ordered to redeem himself through meritorious service.<sup>139</sup>

Enraged, Yang Sichang decided to take to the field himself to deal with the problem. So in the eighth month of 1639, Yang Sichang was reappointed Minister of War, Grand Secretary, and Supreme Commander of Bandit Pacification, and bestowed with the double-edged sword of authority. The emperor approved Yang's request to raise an additional five million taels to wipe out the rebels and gave Yang the authority to select his own army inspectors, following Yang's earlier suggestion that he needed more unified field authority.<sup>140</sup> Yang was then given 40,000 taels and ceremonial clothes and medals to confer upon the troops. He was given 20,000 more taels to allocate among a projected force of 100,000 troops. The emperor personally served Yang wine at a banquet and gave him a poem in his own handwriting. As Yang set forth for his assignment, Chongzhen gushed, "With officials such as this, what can we have to worry about? With you in charge it is as if I am going myself."<sup>141</sup> Yang replied that he would do his best to extend the awe of the army and sweep away the bandits to console the people.

Xiong Wencan was impeached for incompetence and for allegedly accepting a bribe from Zhang Xianzhong.<sup>142</sup> He then awaited word of his fate from Yang Sichang. Yang went to Kaifeng first and extended the emperor's words of consolation to the people, promising that he would eradicate the bandit menace. Yang reached Xiangyang on the Han River on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of the 9<sup>th</sup> month of 1639. He entered Xiong's headquarters and immediately took control of the army, sending Xiong forward to Beijing and refusing to defend him anymore, ignoring his pleas to restore his name by virtue of a minor victory just prior to Yang's arrival.<sup>143</sup> He then met with his commanders, Zuo Liangyu, Fang Kongzhao, and Chen Hongfan, and devised another strategy of containment. Over the previous several months, engagements between the rebels and the Ming had see-sawed so Yang initially dispatched his officers to the field to conduct containment operations while he evaluated the overall picture.

Yang envisioned a six-step plan for stopping the spread of the peasant rebellions. First, taxes would be used to raise local stalwarts to replace old and weak government troops and military farms would help feed them. Second, town walls

and defenses would be improved using revenues pulled from the courier service. Third, mercenaries would be brought in to help train local militia and all localities would be asked to select numbers of men for militia service commensurate with their populations. Fourth, all cities needed firearms mounted on their walls.<sup>144</sup> Every tower should have one to two guns and locals should be trained in their use. Fifth, the government needed to do a better job of distributing famine relief to succor the people and keep traitors from helping the bandits. Finally, Yang pushed for the appointment of more riverine units and stepped up efforts to destroy rebel boats.<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, Yang again advocated bringing in troops from neighboring regions and encircling the rebels.<sup>146</sup> In addition to their combat experience, such troops were desirable because they spoke different dialects, making it harder for local rebels to co-opt them. Funds would again come from new taxes and revenues left in the provinces (not forwarded to capital).<sup>147</sup> He estimated requiring 150,000 taels per month for supplies.<sup>148</sup> Zuo Liangyu was invested with the title of “Bandit-Pacifying General” and early Ming successes resulted in the liberal bestowal of rewards by Yang.<sup>149</sup>

But within a short while it seemed to Zuo that Yang wanted to keep him inactive and in defensive positions, thereby denying him the chance to earn merit or to exact revenge upon his old rival Zhang Xianzhong. They also clashed over military policy, Yang wanting to divide troops into smaller strike forces while Zuo favored larger commands where numerical superiority could help the Ming carry the day.<sup>150</sup> Yang’s public whippings and decapitations of military officials who failed to hold towns or capture rebels did little to improve morale even though he was actually following the emperor’s directive in such actions.<sup>151</sup> He even arrested Fang Kongzhao, Provincial Governor of Huguang, for disobeying orders. Fang was brought to Beijing for interrogation by the Embroidered Uniform Guard.<sup>152</sup> But rebel strength remained on the rise, as Luo Rucai commanded some 100,000 followers by the fall of 1639 and was still working with Zhang Xianzhong.<sup>153</sup>

Yang repositioned his troops again and came up with a new encirclement plan, stationing his forces at Gucheng. But he was wary of pursuing the rebels too deeply into the mountains without guns and supplies. Chongzhen demanded a timetable for suppression as troops seemed laggard in getting into the field.<sup>154</sup> Yang blamed local officials who “had not taken a single step outside their yamen walls in pursuit of the rebels.”<sup>155</sup> Chongzhen responded that Yang should exert his command authority to get the men and supplies he needed. A few victories in 1639–40 mollified the emperor and brought Yang more rewards, as well as a promotion to Junior Guardian of the Heir Apparent.<sup>156</sup>

Subsequent victories piled up and it looked as if the Ming were finally turning the tide even as Zhang Xianzhong fled into Sichuan, hotly pursued by Zuo Liangyu in the early months of 1640. Ignoring Yang’s orders to cease pursuit, Zuo eventually surrounded Zhang near Mount Manao and inflicted a major defeat upon him, killing 3,500 and capturing several commanders.<sup>157</sup> They also captured Zhang’s wives and concubines, over a thousand horses and mules, flags and pennons, more than one hundred cannons and smaller guns, some of his weapons, his famous golden whip, and several valuable swords.<sup>158</sup> The Ming also

captured thousands of head of livestock, critical for their armies.<sup>159</sup> Chongzhen was delighted and rewarded the commanders responsible for the victory with cash and bolts of cloth. He also said that Yang and Zuo had thereby exonerated themselves for previous mistakes. Subsequent operations claimed 900 more rebel lives but the Ming eventually found themselves overextended. Hampered by terrain, weather, and inferior numbers they pulled back and Zhang made his escape into western Sichuan.<sup>160</sup>

Nonetheless, the victory at Mount Manao was problematic because Zuo Liangyu had subverted Yang's authority to gain it. Seeking to counter Zuo's growing reputation and authority, Yang made the serious mistake of recommending that another general, He Renlong, be invested with Zuo's title of "Bandit Suppressing General." Yang based his thinking on the fact that He had won a significant victory in the summer of 1639 and on the grounds of his long and distinguished record.<sup>161</sup> When this plan failed, Yang succeeded only in alienating both men.<sup>162</sup> This in turn caused Zuo to vacillate in pursuing Zhang Xianzhong and allowed the rebel leader to recover his strength through the summer months as he drove into Sichuan alongside Luo Rucai.<sup>163</sup> It has also been suggested that Zuo deliberately allowed Zhang to survive because totally eradicating him would remove the justification for Zuo's own lofty position and give him a pretext for squeezing local officials for supplies and funds.<sup>164</sup> Whether or not this was actually the case, the various Ming armies continued to be hamstrung by lack of supplies.<sup>165</sup>

Fearing rebel strength in the west was waxing, Yang moved his headquarters south to Yiling on the Yangzi and suggested a new policy of holding strong points. Nonetheless, a couple of timely Ming victories and key defections seemed to turn the tide again and Yang prepared to close his net around Sichuan, where most of the remnants had gathered.<sup>166</sup> He invoked the authority of the double-edged sword to execute one official at Wushan and then moved to Chongqing in the 11<sup>th</sup> month of 1640 as Zhang Xianzhong rampaged throughout Sichuan. Yang also requested more officials and financial aid from the court, which was granted.<sup>167</sup> He now maintained that he lacked the numbers for encirclement so defense and ambush were his preferred tactics. Part of the problem was apparently caused by desertion, as Ming units evaporated into the countryside on a nightly basis. This prompted Yang to seek other sources of recruits, including the monks of the famed Shaolin Temple in Henan.<sup>168</sup> Nonetheless, soon all of Sichuan was in tumult as cities were taken or abandoned to rebel depredations, though He Renlong did manage to inflict a defeat upon Luo Rucai, killing over a thousand insurgents and driving Luo back east, towards Yang Sichang.<sup>169</sup>

But the ill-disciplined and undersupplied Ming troops were prone to desertion when they camped too long. Because of their unsavory reputation, local towns often refused them entry or supplies.<sup>170</sup> And with famine forcing peasants into cannibalism, there was no shortage of recruits for the bandits. Increasingly frustrated, Yang requested to be relieved of his post, but the emperor responded by sending him 50,000 taels for medicine and another 200,000 for famine relief.<sup>171</sup> Chongzhen refused other requests to retire and reports came in stating that the

rebels were taking sites in Shaanxi, Sichuan, and Huguang. Still, things were not entirely one-sided, as the Ming gained the surrender of several notable rebel commanders in the late summer of 1640, though Luo Rucai resisted Yang's overtures.<sup>172</sup> In addition to giving him hope that the situation might yet be controlled, this prompted Yang Sichang to send troops west into Sichuan on the advice of one of his subordinates, though some felt that it was done in part to protect Yang's native province of Huguang from further depredations.<sup>173</sup> The emperor was initially pleased until counter-reports of renewed rebel activity started rolling in.

### An example of local defense

Despite, or perhaps because of, Yang Sichang's efforts to coordinate regional defense, many local communities were left largely to fend for themselves against the depredations of the roving bandits. Historians are fortunate in that some of those who were successful in such endeavors left behind detailed records of how they did it. Such accounts were designed at the time to serve as models for village defense but also shed valuable light on the functioning of local society and the roles that different social elements were expected to play. One particularly interesting example of these kinds of accounts comes from Neijiang county, Sichuan, and concerns the defense of the county seat against a probing attack by Zhang Xianzhong's forces.

The siege of Neijiang, a small town not far from Chengdu, provides an especially useful example of small-city defense in late Ming China and provides a rare detailed local view of the impact of the late Ming peasant rebellions upon local society. This is because the defenders of the town left a remarkable record of their successful response to this raid, a military manual called the *Dengpi jilue*, or "Record from Atop the Battlements." Written by a local official named Miao Yuan, this work offers a fascinating glimpse into how local defenses could be coordinated and organized independently of the central government, whose problems in coordinating such efforts have already been amply chronicled.<sup>174</sup> Indeed, Harry Miller argues that the work demonstrates that local gentry leadership is "the only essential to military defense, and it is not even considered for a moment that the central government had any competent authority over such matters."<sup>175</sup> Organized into topical chapters, the work is in fact a "how to" guide for organizing the defense of a small city. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that while the defense of the city was successful, it depended upon active local gentry leadership of such efforts, which was not always the case. In essence the imperial system was ideally supposed to operate just this way, with local officials and gentry taking the initiative for maintaining local security and thereby perpetuating imperial rule in an informal fashion.

Neijiang was located approximately 155 kilometers southeast of the Sichuanese provincial capital of Chengdu. Like most Chinese towns, it was situated along a river, in this case the Luo River, which emptied into the mighty Yangzi some 75 kilometers to the southeast at the prefectural capital city of Luzhou. Its location was strategically important in that it was situated along the routes that

connected Sichuan's two most important urban centers: Chengdu and Chongqing. Thus control of this region could prove critical in maintaining authority and influence in the province as a whole, whether from a governmental or a rebel perspective. The town was surrounded by hills and mountains, which were dotted with temples, shrines, schools, and Confucian academies. Neijiang was therefore well positioned between major centers and served as a county center of trade and learning even though it was not a county seat. This is significant because local gentry and minor officials oversaw the town's defense. Had so many such individuals not been present in Neijiang when the bandit army passed by, the outcome might well have been less favorable for the town. The town had four major gates situated along each of the major compass directions, and five minor gates. It also had a moat that could only be crossed via a bridge providing access to the great west gate. There were also a few towers and minor defensive structures located outside the town's main walls.<sup>176</sup>

The aforementioned Ming pressure exerted by Zuo Liangyu and He Renlong had forced Zhang Xianzhong and his diminished following to hole up in the mountains and they decided to enter Sichuan to bide their time and build up their strength again.<sup>177</sup> Sichuan was ideally suited for such activities because it was mountainous and located on the empire's peripheries, meaning there was less of an official presence. But it also had enough resources to make it attractive as a base of operations and source of plunder.

The first point worth noting is that the plans for defending Neijiang were not hatched overnight. In fact the successful defense of the town was largely the result of some three years of effort. Repairs to the town walls commenced in 1638, as rock was harvested from the surrounding hills, most notably Yankaishan. Altogether some 39,490 stones were excavated and transported by some 130 people using 30 boats. These rocks were then broken up and mixed with lime to augment the existing walls.<sup>178</sup> The townsfolk were able to extend the height of the town walls by some two *zhang* (approximately six feet), and the thickness of the walls by about three feet. The radius of the walls was also extended. Modifications were also made to the towers that surmounted the town's nine gates, including the construction and placement of wooden catapults atop these gates.<sup>179</sup> The moat was widened too so that would-be attackers would be forced further back from the town's walls and not be able to look into the city and attack from siege towers. Expenses for these repairs were covered by contributions from the likes of a local censor, the town magistrate, a former capital official, an ex-prefect, local civil and military officials, and government students.<sup>180</sup>

In addition to repairing the town's physical defenses, the people were organized into militia units, which were based on societal affiliations or origins. Hence there were "street militia," "monk soldiers," and the like. In establishing the principles of militia organization, Miao Yuan references the Ming *baojia* system. All were placed under the leadership of local gentry leaders (*xiangshen*), many of whom were students or petty officials from both the civil and military ranks. According to estimates given in the text, the town had just over 3,000 defenders.<sup>181</sup> Miao Yuan emphasizes that training was deemed of the utmost importance in preparing

such units for defending the town, noting that even with innate courage, those who do not train properly will not be able to win one battle out of a hundred.<sup>182</sup> Skills emphasized in training activities included archery and horsemanship. Miao stressed that the young and vigorous were to constitute the militia, not old and weak men who could not fight. Interestingly enough, Miao also notes the strategic importance of Neijiang and other secondary cities in Sichuan, calling these cities “the throat of the province,” thereby underscoring their importance within the broader administrative hierarchy, a point which is downplayed by Harry Miller in his treatment of the town’s defense.

For training purposes the militia were organized into five divisions. In the event of an attack, they would be posted to all the town’s gates. If one gate came under heavy attack or was breached, units from other gates would be rushed to its defense. Some would fight and others would act in supporting roles. Once the bandits were driven off, all would return to their original posts. No one was to leave their post (in an attempt to gain glory) without directives from their commander. Each gate was to be guarded by one local gentry figure. Different cannon signals were prescribed for assembling and deploying units, following the training practices introduced by the Ming general Qi Jiguang in the 1560s. Catapults were to be used first if an enemy approached the town in the hopes that threats could be easily deterred. The coordination of different units was essential to ensuring the defense of the whole town. Stressing both active and passive defense measures, the manual emphasizes the need for keeping torches lit atop the walls all night and for sending out regular patrols to prevent bandits from spying on the town’s defenses and gaining valuable information. Miao’s estimates called for having 110 catties of lamp oil on hand per night.<sup>183</sup> Standard military regulations were to be followed with respect to punishments and rewards for soldiers.

The militia units were to provide some of their own food by setting up military farms just outside the town walls.<sup>184</sup> This recalls the defense procedures initiated for the empire as a whole at the start of the Ming period and attests to the perceived universal applicability of such measures. The local gentry were also expected to take the lead in setting aside supplies or funds for army provisions. According to Miao’s account, local notables provided some 542 piculs of grain. Considering the general hardship of the area, this was a fair sum. In soliciting aid from the locals, officials said, “even though our walls might be strong and our moats deep, without sufficient food our troops cannot defend the town.”<sup>185</sup>

With respect to the procurement of weapons, local materials were used and the county was even responsible for supplying its own saltpeter and gunpowder.<sup>186</sup> Thunder carts and gunpowder and fire weapons were deemed essential because bandits feared them. Local woods were used for carts and weapon construction. Many weapons were also forged locally.<sup>187</sup> Some two hundred taels of cash were allocated equally among the nine gates/units for the purchase of weapons, but it is unclear from whence these funds came or how they were used by the town’s defenders. Miao Yuan provides a list of recently manufactured weapons, which included muskets, three-eyed (triple barreled)

guns, fire lances, great swords, pikes, bows, crossbows, ammunition and some 2,500 catties of gunpowder.<sup>188</sup> Such figures are a testament to both the wealth of local society and the bureaucratic efficiency of local officials, and provide insight into how local order could in fact be maintained throughout the Ming period without an overwhelming official military presence in the countryside. Such a state of affairs has prompted Harry Miller to go so far as to say that during the Ming period, “counties waged wars, not countries.”<sup>189</sup> While such an assertion has a certain degree of validity with respect to local banditry and everyday defense, the imperial state did take an interest in local defense when national interests were at stake. Additionally, major problems in the system could be exposed during longer, more protracted conflicts, as local resources would not be sufficient to handle serious challenges.

Of special interest in this account of the defense of Neijiang are the chapters on espionage and the ferreting out of traitors. Noting that the people are the “eyes and ears of defense,” Miao Yuan devotes a significant portion of his account to discussing how the town’s residents gathered intelligence concerning the movements of the bandit armies through western Sichuan, providing brief battle narratives and information about the bandits’ tactics. One point that emerges from these battle accounts is that the bandits preferred to attack places that were not well defended and were therefore easy to take. Constantly harried by government pursuit, the bandits were seldom willing to engage in protracted sieges. Thus they often sent out scouts and pumped locals for information concerning town defenses. In the case of Neijiang, the town benefited from the spread of false counter-intelligence. When the bandits first entered Neijiang county they apparently captured a local resident and plied him for information about the town’s defenses. He cleverly told them that the town was defended by some 20,000 soldiers including local militia units, Han Chinese soldiers, aborigines, and even monks. He then told them of the town’s great catapults (cannon?), which had shot so powerful that a single stone could kill several people at once.<sup>190</sup> The bandits were reportedly shaken up by these tales and decided to avoid Neijiang for the time being. With respect to internal intelligence gathering, the *Dengpi jilue* also contains a chapter on the discovery of spies and traitors, detailing the backgrounds and aliases of several such individuals captured in the town.<sup>191</sup>

The work then turns to what might be termed “psychological defenses.” The resolve of the populace to defend the town was steeled by gathering them together in the center of Neijiang to swear a solemn oath to hold out until the end. Incense was burned and officials and commoners alike took their oath together, reinforcing their sense of mutual dependence.<sup>192</sup> The people of Neijiang also sent letters to nearby towns, keeping them apprised of their defense efforts. A public proclamation was issued listing all the measures the town had implemented and boasting of their successes. The importance of local gentry leadership is stressed, the author observing that confidence stems from the skillful leadership of local gentry and the people’s faith in that leadership.<sup>193</sup> A circular call to arms issued to the literati of Neijiang county stressed the duty of these local elites to protect

the common folk. A subsequent chapter on raising troops again highlights the strategic importance of Neijiang for the defense of Chengdu, and indeed all of western Sichuan. Only by acting in concert could the people attain victory, according to Miao Yuan.

In any event, in late 1640 the forces of Zhang Xianzhong once again began to raid widely in southern and western Sichuan province. Though frequently bested by government forces and sometimes suffering hundreds or even thousands of casualties, the bandit forces would coalesce once more and recommence raiding and plundering.<sup>194</sup> They initially approached Neijiang from the southeast, sending out spies in advance of their main columns. The town's defenders caught one of these scouts and learned of the threat. Worried that a requested Ming relief column would not arrive in time, the defenders of Neijiang circulated a false story that 30,000 Ming troops were en route.<sup>195</sup> As the bandit army approached, they sent out scouts again. Seeing the fields cleared and the walls stoutly guarded, they were wary of coming too close.

The great east and small south gates of Neijiang had recently been augmented with stockades and the troops were positioned in their units all around the town. The local military censor was strict in his enforcement of discipline and commoners were used as informants, shouting out information about bandit troop movements outside the town. Food and wine were distributed freely among the defenders to boost morale.<sup>196</sup> Mushrooms were also distributed to alleviate hunger. Commanders took their place atop the walls alongside common defenders. The gentry went to the north tower and addressed the people of Neijiang, shouting, "The bandits will never be able to determine our strengths and weaknesses. Before we set up these [defense] measures. And now we can take solace in our security and hold out!" They continued by pointing out that the bandit cavalry were disadvantaged in this terrain. Even if they dismounted and tried to cross the moat with boats, their boats could be torched. Censor Wei again exhorted the people to place their trust in the gentry leaders. He noted how the bandits could only take isolated, undefended towns, not one that was prepared and protected. In fact, some had already fled east after seeing the town's defenses. Wei then suggested laying an ambush at a bridge ten *li* outside the town and trapping the bandits against the river.<sup>197</sup>

Returning to the engagement itself, the bandits entered the county on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month of 1640. Zhang Xianzhong's primary target was actually Luzhou to the south, but he sent a wing of his army to secure Neijiang so that his rear would be protected.<sup>198</sup> Upon hearing the news, the local leaders stationed all the militia at their respective posts and waited. Some thought the mountains would protect the town, but the bandits advanced and seized other towns. The gentry were assembled and instructed to create a left-wing vanguard of 500 troops under Mao Wen, a military official, and hold the approach along the small road leading into town. Another 500 made up the right wing under one Li Yingrong, and 600 aboriginal troops made up the center army.<sup>199</sup> Others were sent to hold the bridge and 500 were detailed as a rear guard. Three hundred more troops were put into defensive positions on the walls with orders to help the left and right wings if

necessary. Another 500 were placed on standby to assist in enveloping attacks and 300 were assigned to boats in charge of defending the moat.<sup>200</sup> Local centurions led another mobile corps of 300 men.

Rather than wait for a full-scale assault, the town's defenders sallied forth and skirmished with bandit scouts. The bandits pulled back and tried to lure the Neijiang units into an ambush, but they did not take the bait. Seeing the bandits' rather meager defenses, the Neijiang units asked the town's defenders to send another 500 troops out to take the offensive against the attackers. They first engaged the bandits with cannons and then lured them into an ambush of their own. They recovered weapons, supplies and horses and quickly crushed the morale of the bandit forces. As they withdrew, the bandits fell into another ambush, where they lost 300 men and a large number of weapons and military supplies.<sup>201</sup> They eventually pulled back some 20 *li*. Fearful they would be caught with their backs against the river, they withdrew even further.

Meanwhile, the defenders were poised for another assault on the town. The bandits approached, but cannon were fired from atop the walls and the bandits scattered again as the defenders mounted a sortie to engage them. Some bandits then climbed the nearby mountains to inspect the town's defenses. They were impressed by what they saw and decided not to press the attack. The bandits decided to strike camp that night and pull back, but as they did so, the defenders of Neijiang came forth again, pursuing the bandits for some forty *li* before heading back to the town rather than falling into an ambush. Though they were beaten badly at Neijiang, Zhang's forces did manage to capture Luzhou, albeit only holding the town for brief time before a larger Ming relief army put them to the run.<sup>202</sup> The residents of Neijiang were jubilant, crowing that the bandits had taken them lightly and had paid the price.<sup>203</sup>

In summing up the defense of the town, Miao Yuan talked about how the measures implemented in Neijiang might be adopted by other towns in Sichuan. He also laid out a plan of sorts for the defense of southern Sichuan as a whole.<sup>204</sup> Unfortunately for the residents of the region, the success of Neijiang would be an isolated one. In the coming years Zhang would devastate the region and retard its economic development for decades. Secondary cities like Neijiang simply lacked the resources to resist his depredations and with the final collapse of the central government and the creation of several Ming courts-in-exile, mere survival became the paramount interest of the central authorities. Nonetheless, the defense of Neijiang should be considered an archetypal example of the creative application of the *qing ye jian bi* policy of defense. Taking the staunch defense of the city as their root, the people of Neijiang were also able to devise and implement active defensive measures that clearly caught their bandit attackers by surprise. Granted, in many cases the defense of such cities was more passive, but this example is by no means unique.

The defense of Neijiang also illustrates the importance of local officials as mediators between the state and society in late imperial China. While it is true that there were often tensions between state and local interests, the local officials in this case clearly recognized the congruence between their own and broader

regional, if not necessarily national, interests. They also had a clear sense of how Neijiang fitted into the commercial and defense hierarchy of Sichuan province. This is illustrated by the book's final chapter, which articulates a program for the mutual defense of the whole region. Indeed, the author is explicit in discussing the importance of secondary cities in the defense hierarchy and in recognizing that if these smaller towns are not held, then the communication arteries of the province will be severed and the entire area will be lost.

Finally, the importance of the relationship between the officials and the common people is an important theme of this work. Time and again the responsibility of local gentry for maintaining order and promoting the public good is emphasized. Part of the reason for this might have been that so many officials were in fact shirking their responsibilities by this time, as seen above. But it also reflects a continued appreciation of the people as the bulwark or root of the state. Given that so many had already joined the roving bandits, officials had to realize that they needed to take measures to ensure the others remained loyal, lest the state itself crumble, which is of course what ultimately happened. In other words they were acutely cognizant of the need to win hearts and minds, to draw upon contemporary military language.

### **The tragic end of Yang Sichang**

Meanwhile, Yang Sichang's subordinates continued to defy his orders. In the 10<sup>th</sup> month of 1640 Zhang Xianzhong's forces took the town of Dachang because the local commander, Shao Jiechun, had split his forces up to defend multiple sites. Zhang's spies found the weak point and attacked there. Relief corps were called in but Zhang was too fast and camped at Kaixian. Hearing of the Ming collapse there, Yang Sichang dispatched his troops to garrison another point and executed the aforementioned commander for his mistake.<sup>205</sup> Zhang Xianzhong and Luo Rucai then joined forces and struck several sites before being turned back west by He Renlong. Though the Ming units won several skirmishes, they were subsequently routed and the rebels moved east again.

This prompted Yang to relocate his headquarters to Chongqing, Sichuan, where he would be closer to the thick of the fighting. He repositioned his commanders and offered Luo Rucai another chance to surrender. At this point, Yang also put a 10,000 tael price on the head of Zhang Xianzhong, along with a hereditary marquis post. He also announced clemency for other rebels if they brought him Zhang's head.<sup>206</sup> The next day a note appeared on the wall of Yang's office headquarters in Chongqing, reputedly from Zhang Xianzhong, wherein the rebel leader put a bounty of a mere three taels on Yang's head!<sup>207</sup> Yang now feared, probably correctly, that Zhang had spies in his own entourage and he sent several communications complaining of matters to the emperor. But other reports trickled into Beijing charging that Yang spent most of his time drinking wine and composing poems in his tent and that he knew nothing of Sichuan or its customs. He was even accused of reciting Buddhist incantations to ward off locusts, a serious charge to level against a proper official since it implied superstition.<sup>208</sup> Such

stories of course build upon earlier accusations against Yang, such as his belief in astronomical portents, so they should be taken with a pinch of salt.

The court became increasingly frustrated with Yang's inability to achieve results and with his disputes with his subordinates, whom Yang railed against incessantly for their supposed incompetence. Yang also blamed rugged terrain, bad spring weather, and poor supply lines.<sup>209</sup> In questioning their inability to apprehend Zhang Xianzhong Yang said, "A shrimp cannot survive in a poisoned sea, how can he still elude capture when you've supposedly defeated his forces and broken his morale?"<sup>210</sup> But the fact of the matter was that many of the new troops rotated in were green and unfamiliar with the terrain of Sichuan. Therefore they were prone to falling into the traps and ambushes of the wily and experienced Zhang Xianzhong.<sup>211</sup> Yang's inactivity even elicited a mocking poem from Zhang Xianzhong:

Before we had coordinator Shao  
Who often came forth and danced with me  
Then came the armies who would not fight  
But followed me around  
But now we have good commander Yang  
Who graciously leaves me a three day road!<sup>212</sup>

Despite their failure to capture Neijing, the rebels took the key town of Luzhou in the 12<sup>th</sup> month of 1640, but fled before the Ming troops could trap them there.<sup>213</sup> Meanwhile Yang feared that the rebels would be able to strike east again, perhaps threatening the Ming prince at Luoyang. Yang ordered Zuo Liangyu to head east, but Zuo refused, not wanting to open an escape route for them into Shaanxi. To one command Zuo replied, "Was it not by disobeying you that I gained the victory at Mount Manao?"<sup>214</sup> More memorials detailing Yang's failures as a commander flooded the capital. He knew that his time as commander might soon be over.

So Yang ordered all his commanders to assemble at Yunyang to mount one more campaign to crush the rebels. But by this time, He Renlong had already moved west and others simply ignored Yang's orders. The only officer who came to Yang's aid was the doughty Meng Ruhu who fought the rebels at Kaixian and Huangling in eastern Sichuan but was badly beaten. In fact when his forces first reached Huangling, it was raining hard and some of the officers wanted to wait to advance. But one of Meng's subordinates said, "We've been chasing the bandits for four months. If we stop now they could get away and then what could we do?"<sup>215</sup> This was enough to goad Meng into action. As they advanced, Zhang Xianzhong espied them from afar, but noticed no Shaanxi banners nor any evidence of his feared rival, Zuo Liangyu. The rebels then sent their cavalry to intercept the Ming advance units in a tight valley. Meng escaped his first encirclement but his son was captured and executed.<sup>216</sup> He supposedly killed dozens himself, but the Ming lost 172 men and all their mounts. Some sources indicate that he died here too, but others have him dying at Nanyang later

in the year.<sup>217</sup> Still Yang desperately pressed for an offensive campaign against the recommendations of his military advisers, who suggested taking defensive positions.<sup>218</sup> Yang argued that there was too much terrain to cover so offense was better. But as the rebels turned back east and flanked the Ming forces, Yang regretted his directive. He then returned to Yiling and sent an urgent dispatch to Zuo Liangyu. But the rebels severed their lines of communication, even capturing a lone messenger dispatched to spread the word of the rebels' movements.<sup>219</sup> The border region was in tumult as the people trembled in fear and officials were ordered to defend empty cities. In some places the only men who could be mustered for defense were monks. The rebels were moving fast, sometimes 300 *li* in a single day, and Ming forces simply could not respond fast enough to deter them.

Yang's fears were realized when Zhang Xianzhong captured the Ming Prince of Xiang at Xiangyang. On the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of 1641, using the seals of office they had recovered from the Ming messengers, Zhang's men entered the town with the help of fifth columnists. Upon taking the town, Zhang occupied the prince's seat in his palace and had the prince brought before him. He offered the prince a cup of wine and then addressed him, saying, "I wish to have the head of Yang Sichang, but he is far away in Laikou, so now I'll have to borrow the prince's head in his stead. This will cause Sichang to suffer the full penalty of the law for having lost this princely fief. Now the prince should use all his strength to finish his wine."<sup>220</sup> The prince was tied to the top of the palace walls and the whole structure was set alight. The prince's corpse was lost in the flames and all his concubines were killed. Zuo Liangyu had rushed to the aid of the town, but he arrived too late. Zhang then distributed some 150,000 taels from the prince's coffers to the people, though such acts of largesse were countered by the propensity of Zhang's men to commit atrocities like severing the hands, feet, ears, and noses of random civilians when they captured towns.<sup>221</sup> The rebels also captured a large number of supplies. The rebels then moved east, taking several more towns, including Guangzhou. Yang Sichang grilled his subordinates about why they had not moved to intercept the rebels and they complained that they had to guard against strikes from Li Zicheng to the north.

But their efforts to intercept Li were an equally spectacular failure and led to an equally grisly result. Luoyang was defended by one Wang Shaoyu, who was terrified of the peasant rebels but feared Ming relief troops almost as much. Therefore, when Li's armies approached the city, Wang asked the Prince of Fu, whose fief was located therein, if they should admit Ming relief troops to defend the city. The prince also feared a mutiny by Ming troops so he simply refused to answer repeated requests. So finally two Ming commanders forced their way into the city, only to surrender when Li approached, even bringing him cannons that he later used to batter down the walls of Luoyang.<sup>222</sup> The peasant army attacked on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month but pulled back after the first day of fighting and nobody knew why. Then, in the middle of the night, the troops defending the walls shouted, "the walls are breached," creating havoc within the city. Signal fires were lighted and conspirators opened the gates, with the

rebels entering first through a water gate.<sup>223</sup> Others clambered across the moat or through the land gates and the city was taken. Wang Shaoyu bolted in the ensuing chaos.

The Prince of Fu and his grandson initially escaped but the next morning peasants informed the rebels of their location and they were apprehended. The prince was an enormous man, weighing nearly four hundred pounds according to contemporary accounts, and was much reviled by the local populace for his avarice. In fact he had been a controversial figure for his entire life, having been the favored son of the Wanli emperor whose planned investiture had provoked the so-called Trunk of State controversy back in the 1590s. His cowardice in the face of the rebel attack only inflamed the locals against him more. After he was captured the rebels brought him to the Duke of Zhou Temple. The prince kowtowed before Li and begged for his life. Li announced the prince's crimes to the room and then killed him. He then opened up the prince's residence and distributed some of its vast wealth among the commoners of the city. Li told them, "The prince and the wealthy stripped away the flesh of the people and had no regard for the life or death of the common folk. I've killed him on your behalf."<sup>224</sup> Li and his lieutenants then stripped away the flesh from the prince's corpse and consumed it, mixing his blood with wine to create "prosperity wine," in a cruel pun on the prince's title.<sup>225</sup>

They then set the prince's compound alight and it burned for three days. Li left behind a follower to hold the city, but it was soon recaptured by the Ming. Nonetheless, in the wake of the capture of Luoyang, Li was recognized as the foremost rebel leader, and the term the "Dashing Prince" appeared on his banners. Luo Rucai assumed the title of "Generalissimo Chosen by Heaven to Pacify the People."<sup>226</sup> The peasant rebel leaders were clearly becoming more politically conscious and emboldened by their successes. Li would shortly signal his rising ambitions by attacking Kaifeng, another of China's ancient capitals. The tales of the sieges of Kaifeng will be related in the next chapter.

By the time he got word of all these developments Yang was in despair and believed that he had no chance of success. Yang sent a letter to the emperor asking to be executed for his failures, saying he deserved 10,000 deaths for his transgressions.<sup>227</sup> He also blamed his subordinates for ignoring his directives. One of his last acts was to detail troops to guard the ancestral tombs at Fengyang. He feared that the fall of Nanyang was imminent, but said he was too ill to do anything about it.<sup>228</sup> In his final letter to Zuo Liangyu he questioned the whereabouts of 50,000 relief troops expected from Sichuan.<sup>229</sup>

Upon hearing that Luoyang had fallen to Li Zicheng and the Prince of Fu had been killed, Yang stopped eating and died sometime early in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of 1641, though some versions of the story maintain that he committed suicide by taking poison.<sup>230</sup> Ding Qirui was appointed to replace him. Though many officials recommended posthumous punishment for Yang, the emperor pointed to his achievements and instead raised him to the ceremonial rank of Grand Guardian of the Heir Apparent. He was buried at his ancestral home of Wuling though later, when Zhang Xianzhong took the town, he dug up the family graves, burned

Yang's wife's coffin, and desecrated Yang's corpse. Yang's sons and grandsons later recovered the body parts and re-interred them.<sup>231</sup>

Yang's tragic saga is unfortunately representative of late Ming politics and illustrates the many problems confronting the late Ming military and its commanders. The empire had no dearth of men of martial ability and real experience. But too often significant and sweeping authority was invested in purely civil officials who lacked real military experience. In this sense the reign of Chongzhen offers an interesting contrast with that of Wanli, who, for most of his reign, actively patronized and protected key military officials and supreme commanders from baseless or petty accusations so that they could do their jobs. It is worth mentioning, as noted by one seventeenth-century source, that after Yang's death, the court no longer appointed civil officials as supreme commanders of the army.<sup>232</sup> Of course the dynasty lasted just three more years, but even this late realization is a telling indictment of the practice.

With respect to Yang's ten-sided net strategy itself, it is very difficult to believe it could have succeeded except under the best of conditions. The main problem was that of resource allocation. Had the state been able to effectively contain the Manchu threat in Liaodong, perhaps they could have mustered the manpower needed. Indeed, we see time and again how manpower or other resources had to be shifted just as government forces seemed on the verge of triumph. This also speaks to the issue of prioritization. High officials were always divided as to whether the peasant rebels or the Manchus constituted the more serious threat to the dynasty's survival. For what it is worth, it seems that by this juncture the majority of officials deemed the peasant rebels a more serious threat to the state's short-term survival, a disease of the heart, to borrow Chiang Kaishek's famous phrase. While they were undoubtedly the more formidable foe militarily, the Manchus seemed more likely to be contained or accommodated in some fashion, despite the fact that they had raided widely in north China since the 1620s. They also had one clear leader with whom the Ming could negotiate, distasteful as the idea seemed to many.

Irrespective of which threat was deemed greater, the main difficulty confronted by all late Ming military officials was obtaining sufficient provisions and military supplies. Yang Sichang's rosy projections notwithstanding, the devastation wreaked by drought, floods, and the peasant rebellions themselves made it unlikely that sufficient provisions could have been extracted from the affected areas. Yang's forces were consistently under-supplied, generally having only about half the supplies they needed by their own accounts. These logistical problems were made worse by Yang's lack of military experience and poor evaluation of military talent. Nonetheless, one can point to the many local Ming victories against the peasant rebels right up until the end of 1643. When properly led and outfitted, Ming troops almost always bested peasant rebel units. They also proved quite adept at holding cities and towns. However, therein lay the strength of the rebel movements themselves: their mobility, as noted by Sun Chuanting among others. It really would have required a multi-layered suppression strategy that combined offense, defense, and reclamation of lost agricultural lands to resettle

former bandits. Thus maybe someone less dogmatic and heavy-handed than Yang might well have been able to close the net after all.

For the remainder of 1641 the Ming tried to stem the rising rebel tide across central China. The disgraced Fu Zonglong was released from prison and made Vice Minister of War and Supreme Commander of Shaanxi in the 5<sup>th</sup> month. Around the same time the Ming dealt a major defeat to the “local” bandit Yuan Shizhong, whose forces had ranged east towards Shandong, driving him back to Henan.<sup>233</sup> Yuan was one of the many such figures who took advantage of local disorder to raise their own mini bandit armies. These opportunists also sometimes cultivated relationships with more powerful rebel leaders by virtue of their greater knowledge of local terrain and conditions. In the 7<sup>th</sup> month of 1641 Zhang Xianzhong was driven back from Yunyang with heavy losses. A subsequent attack on Macheng was beaten by Zuo Liangyu and Ma Jinzhong, who killed over 2,000 and drove Zhang back towards Nanyang.<sup>234</sup> But their power would wax again when local bandits joined their ranks. Heavy rains hindered the ability of Ming forces to supply their troops through the summer. However, the growing prominence of the major rebel leaders was also inflating their respective egos and leading to more friction between them even as they continued to cooperate at times. It was now obvious that Li Zicheng was the foremost rebel commander, with Zhang Xianzhong and Luo Rucai just beneath him in status and reputation.

Additionally, their repeated victories over Ming forces over the previous several years had given the rebels significant battle experience, not to mention lots of weapons. The Ming state was rapidly losing its technological and experiential edge in the war with the rebels, and its popular image continued to suffer as well. Luo Rucai was not the only rebel leader to adopt a nickname drawn from popular folklore. The bandits were increasingly becoming Robin Hood-type figures.<sup>235</sup> Derogatory terms for Ming officials arose such as the “Five Insects,” which included yamen insects, government insects, local bully insects, eunuch insects, and scholar insects, all of whom did nothing but plague the people.<sup>236</sup> And as the rebels became more organized, they increasingly started taking titles and ranks modeled after Ming or earlier precedents, signaling their rising prestige and ambitions.

## **Preparing for the final assault on Songshan and Jinzhou**

In the wake of their raid on Shandong, the Qing launched another probing attack on Songshan in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of 1639. A force of 30,000 approached the multi-layered defenses of Songshan and opened fire with cannon. The Ming forces had 37 of their own heavy cannon though and drove the Qing off after a pitched artillery battle. When the Qing retreated after one assault, the defenders hung half a dozen severed heads from the city walls. The Ming recovered many weapons and supplies when the attackers withdrew. An assault the following day was also repulsed.<sup>237</sup> It was clear to Hung Taiji that these last bastions of Ming resistance in the northeast needed to be eradicated, but equally clear that the Ming were not

yet willing to abandon everything outside the Great Wall to their rivals.<sup>238</sup> As one Ming official claimed, “For twenty years Songshan has towered alone like a mountain peak as a refuge for the people of Liaodong.”<sup>239</sup> Jirgalang led another round of attacks on the Song-Jin region in the summer of 1639 and skirmishing between the sides continued with neither gaining the upper hand.<sup>240</sup> More attacks followed in the fall, along with inconclusive negotiations.

Plans for the defense of Liaodong continued to be submitted to the throne, but most echoed the strategies advocated by officials such as Xiong Tingbi and Yuan Chonghuan in the past.<sup>241</sup> As one official observed, none of the civil or military officials dared advance a plan for the war for fear of it failing. Knowing the emperor’s temper, few wanted to risk incurring blame for such a failure.<sup>242</sup> This speaks to one of the underlying problems of his whole reign and to his shortcomings as a leader.

Still, Chongzhen was supportive of these efforts and approved a request for 100 officers and 1,800 more troops to be sent to Songshan to improve training and battle-readiness. Officials were dispatched from Beijing to inspect frontier defenses and ensure that forward garrisons had adequate supplies of guns and ammunition. Chongzhen also approved a plan for sending more crack troops, horses, and firearms to the various coastal garrisons.<sup>243</sup> Additional troops were dispatched to the closer seaside garrisons such as Longwu, near Shanhaiguan.<sup>244</sup>

As the battles against the peasant rebels were intensifying in west and central China, the Qing were also ratcheting up the pressure in Liaodong. Ningyuan remained a meddlesome thorn in Hung Taiji’s side and Songshan and Jinzhou had stubbornly resisted Qing efforts to capture them over the preceding decade. In early 1640 the Qing reinforced their defenses around Yizhou and set up military farms to grow food for a planned attack on Ming positions.<sup>245</sup> Koreans were ordered to transport supplies by ship to Xiaolinghe and Dalinghe in support of Qing efforts. Hung Taiji then went forth to Yizhou to discuss strategy with Jirgalang. They decided to renew their attacks on all the forward Ming positions in hopes of dividing Ming strength. In particular it seems that they hoped their new policy of using sea lanes to supply their troops would bring dividends.

In fact Hung Taiji had been presented with four plans pertaining to defeating the Ming in the spring of 1640. The first was an assault upon Beijing. The next was to take Shanhaiguan first and see how the Ming responded. The third plan involved crossing the sea and landing at Denglai and advancing overland from there. Another called for a multi-pronged strike at the capital from Xuanfu and Datong. But the Qing emperor preferred to wait and marshal his strength. Finally a couple of subordinates submitted plans for taking Songshan and Jinzhou, arguing that they were the keys to taking Shanhaiguan. They said that all earlier raids had been compromised by the fact that the Ming still held the Shanghai–Song–Jin corridor and that if this was cut off, the Jin could consolidate Liaodong and proceed towards China proper.<sup>246</sup> Hung Taiji liked the plan and decided to go for Jinzhou first.

Throughout the first half of 1640 the Ming fought skirmishes with Qing forces, with even relatively minor victories being greeted with great pleasure in Beijing.<sup>247</sup> In a clash near Ningyuan the Qing were subjected to withering cannon

and arrow fire, losing many.<sup>248</sup> Hong Chengchou was now entrusted with defense of the northeast, Yang Sichang grimly warning him that “exterminating bandits is not the same as defending the frontier.”<sup>249</sup> Cao Bianjiao was also transferred to that theater, thereby depriving the anti-peasant rebel campaign of perhaps its best field commander. Though he had perhaps 150,000 men under his command, Hong was reluctant to engage in offensive operations until he had at least a full year’s worth of supplies, but he did like the idea of dispatching relief columns to test defenses.<sup>250</sup>

All the Ming garrisons in the northeast readied for the impending assault.<sup>251</sup> They laid ambushes for Qing raiding parties and submitted frequent requests to Beijing for the timely delivery of cannons, ammunition, gunpowder, fuses, and other materials. The importance of such measures was underscored by a report from the Supreme Commander of Xuanda that the Qing had manufactured 60 *hongyi dapao* the previous year and enlisted the services of 100 master craftsmen. It was presumed that the Qing were readying for a massive assault on Songshan and Jinzhou.<sup>252</sup> They also put pulleys on the walls of their fortresses to facilitate the quick delivery of supplies during battle.<sup>253</sup>

The next major Qing attack came against Jinzhou in the 5<sup>th</sup> month of 1640. Hung Taiji commenced the attack by digging trenches around the city.<sup>254</sup> In response the Ming defenders discussed mobilizing locals into militia units and construction brigades. They also made plans to set up relay stations around Liaodong and to get messages to the coast and communicate with one another. Well armored archers were to serve as escorts for the messengers. The Ming realized that Hung Taiji was seeking to cut Songshan and Jinzhou off from the rest of the Ming bastions and they remained committed to preserving these forward bulwarks and waiting for relief forces from China proper. Instructions were conveyed to step up training programs within these cities and requests sent for the speedy dispatch of more firearms.<sup>255</sup> Firearms and ballistae were arrayed atop the walls. Foot soldiers were detailed to patrol the mountains around Songshan and Xingshan. To counter the Qing measures, the Ming defenders also went about deepening their trenches and reinforcing their walls and firing platforms. Approximately 6,000 support troops were sent to Jinzhou from Xingshan and other places in Liaodong. The Ming also worried about being hit by sea, as the Manchus had occupied port cities along the Korean coast for years.

Ministry of War communications indicate that each city had perhaps two to three months of rations at this time, but they hoped to deliver more in case the sieges dragged on.<sup>256</sup> But they were hindered by a lack of horses and mules, having less than 5,000 of these animals for the three cities of Songshan, Jinzhou, and Xingshan combined. They estimated that a thousand mules could lug three to four hundred carts with 2,000 *shi* of supplies. The goal was to outfit all the cities in Liaodong with around 10,000 *shi* of grain reserves. As soon as one city was supplied they could turn their efforts to the others. This would also force the enemy to divide their strength.<sup>257</sup>

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of 1641 Zu Dashou sent one of his Mongol retainers to the walls of Jinzhou to address the Qing, saying, “We’ve got enough food to last two

to three years. It will be a long siege; will you be able to hold out that long to outlast us?" The Manchus replied, "We aren't lifting the siege, whether it lasts two to three or even four to five years. How are you going to keep getting food?"<sup>258</sup> But some of his Mongol retainers got nervous and went out to negotiate. Hearing of this, Zu went out and fought a fierce battle, but pulled back. The Qing hacked their way through the outer defenses and took 5,367 captives. When the Ming tried to send relief from Xingshan, Jirgalang laid an ambush and killed 170 more, capturing 4,374, along with 116 horses and 76 suits of armor.<sup>259</sup> In fact it appears that the siege was not initially that tight. Qing lines were some thirty *li* from Jinzhou, allowing people to come out and work the fields and some supplies to get in. Dodo and the other Qing field commanders, following Hung Taiji's orders, allowed troops to regularly rotate home to keep them fresh. But when he heard how lax things were Hung Taiji was furious and ordered things tightened up.

The Qing attacked the outpost of Chayeshan on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> month. They plied both large cannon and arquebuses in the attack. But they were resisted by soldiers and a contingent of monks from a local temple who fought back with spears, stones, and jugs of incendiaries. But the attackers overwhelmed them with firepower and torched the temple as the monks retreated. Chongzhen was not pleased upon hearing of the fall of the outpost and issued demotions for Zu Dashou and Zu Dale. Dashou reported that hundreds of Qing cavalry were patrolling the vicinity and he requested more relief troops. Hong Chengchou made plans to send help overland from Ningyuan and by sea from Tianjin.<sup>260</sup> Hong envisioned a multi-pronged column of relief corps brought in from all over China. These units would augment those at Ningyuan and those already in the fortresses to divide and pick off the besiegers.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of the 5<sup>th</sup> month Wu Sangui engaged the Qing outside of Xingshan. He sent Liu Qiji forth with 3,000 cavalry to meet the Manchu-Mongol force, keeping 3,000 men in reserve at Songshan, while Zu Dashou sent 700 men from Jinzhou. The Ming were outmaneuvered and encircled by Dodo and Jirgalang in the open field and Liu had to save Wu Sangui. The Ming lost some thousand troops in this battle and several commanders.<sup>261</sup> The two sides fought another skirmish at Liangmashan, about ten *li* from Jinzhou. There the Ming dug in and awaited the arrival of about 3,000 Qing troops in six columns. The Ming sent out probing forces to entice the Qing into fighting, but they did not take the bait and withdrew north after four hours. In fighting outside another outlying tower the Ming drove the Qing assailants back with guns, arrows, and flaming pots. This forced the Qing to pull back and pitch their tents. Soon thereafter they dragged their own heavy artillery into position for firing.<sup>262</sup> They attacked fiercely, but the Ming put out the fires with water and managed to ignite the uniforms of some of the attackers. The Qing withdrew temporarily but renewed their assault that night. They hit the walls with siege ladders and there was intense swordplay atop the battlements. The walls were drenched in blood, but the Ming ultimately turned back the attack, albeit after heavy losses.<sup>263</sup> Another Manchu force outside Ningyuan was ambushed around the same time.<sup>264</sup> The Ming captured a few dozen horses and lots of weapons and supplies by virtue of these victories.

Songshan resisted a 37-day siege by doling out punishment from its formidable array of cannon until a Ming relief column arrived.<sup>265</sup> They positioned their cannon so as to overawe the enemy, but the Qing fired into the city anyhow until withering fire forced them back.<sup>266</sup> They camped 20–30 *li* east of Songshan and were forced to fend off Ming strikes that were spurred on by colossal rewards of 50 taels per Manchu head taken.<sup>267</sup> Ming spies on ships off the coast determined that there were around 3,000 Qing soldiers with 70–80 cannon in the vicinity. These weapons were subsequently used in the reduction of some of the outlying Ming towers around Xingshan.<sup>268</sup> Ming records indicate a number of battles were fought simultaneously, all of them involving heavy use of artillery, and time and again the Ming cleared the field with their red barbarians and caitiff exterminators.<sup>269</sup>

Jinzhou was also partially encircled in the 7<sup>th</sup> month of 1640, but heavy cannon fire kept the Qing from closing the siege, as they fired away at Qing troops from the Yellow, White, Red, and Blue Banners.<sup>270</sup> Every time the Qing got close, they drew fire and feigned retreats did not produce the desired effect. Wu Sangui and others marched into the teeth of the Qing assault, driving back a force estimated at 30,000 with heavy artillery fire.<sup>271</sup> Qing cavalry charges failed to break the Ming lines this time. It was also clear that the Ming still enjoyed an edge, however slight, in overall firepower. But an escaped Qing captive raised fears among the Ming commanders when he related tales of how the Qing were busily building weapons carts and ships in Shenyang for additional attacks.<sup>272</sup>

As the Qing noose tightened around Songshan and Jinzhou in 1640, the defenders discussed the efficacy of using sallies combined with feigned retreat to lure the Qing into an ambush where they could catch them in crossfire from fortress walls.<sup>273</sup> Commanders in the field were also encouraged to adopt a scorched earth policy to deny pasturage for Qing horses.<sup>274</sup> Ming strategists also discussed the importance of trying to force a decisive battle, suggesting that even at this late stage and with their precarious position in Liaodong, they held out hope that the Qing could be defeated and the region recovered. Once again Ming commanders believed that could prevail if they could dictate the place and style of combat. It was clear that a purely defensive war would not be enough.<sup>275</sup> Ming hopes were raised when they ambushed a much larger Qing force outside Song-Jin and inflicted heavy casualties.<sup>276</sup> They also captured several dozen horses and lots of weapons and equipment in this battle. Meanwhile, commanders such as Hong Chengchou and Wu Sangui continued to submit comprehensive defense plans.<sup>277</sup>

The fighting continued unabated, with the Qing constantly probing Ming defenses. Some border forts were subjected to as much as 200 rounds of cannon fire by the Qing yet they still managed to hold out, attesting to the strength of the repaired Ming defenses.<sup>278</sup> The problem, according to Hong Chengchou, was making sure that Ming fortresses had sufficient ammunition. He also requested four months of additional rations to get the Ming forces through the winter of 1640–1, along with 30,000 more troops.<sup>279</sup> Tensions were heightened by reports of Korean ships in the Bohai Gulf transporting Manchu soldiers.<sup>280</sup> One report counted upwards of 100 enemy ships. A few skirmishes were fought against Qing

forces at sea and along the coast, though details are sketchy. There were concerns that Ming supply lines by sea were about to be severed. This prompted the Ming to detail 2,700 troops of their own to patrol the Gulf. They also outfitted watchtowers along the coast with additional firearms.<sup>281</sup>

Documents from the time period reflect the growing realization that the campaign for Song-Jin was to be critical for both sides. The Ming kept sending more troops and supplies to the region as the Qing attempted to intercept supply trains and ships and kept launching probing attacks on Ming defenses. Ming officials on the scene fired off urgent requests for supplies and punishments abounded for officials who failed in their duties to deliver or protect said supplies. Frontier commanders submitted reports of Qing movements, carefully tracking locations.<sup>282</sup> In the 4<sup>th</sup> month of 1641 the Ming commanders held a conference at Ningyuan and formulated a plan for breaking the Qing encirclement of Songshan and Jinzhou. Wu Sangui led the initial attack and was joined by Zu Dashou from Jinzhou. The Qing sent 7,000 to 8,000 cavalry into the fray, but Ming cannons again carried the day and the Qing were driven back north for the time being.<sup>283</sup> Wu Sangui gained a good deal of notoriety for his victory here though in fact it was not even a full-scale battle but more of a skirmish. On the Qing side Jirgalang was deprived of his command and replaced by Dorgon.

In the wake of the battle Hong Chengchou pressed the court for more supplies. But now, in the wake of the deaths of the two Ming princes and the suicide of Yang Sichang, the court decided to prioritize the peasant rebellions and Hong was told to make do with the supplies he had on hand. The court even dispatched some army inspectors to see if Hong was in fact squandering what they had already sent him.

In the summer of 1641 the Qing readied for what they hoped would be their final assault on Jinzhou and Songshan. As they neared Jinzhou, Zu Dashou hunkered down and sent missives asking for help.<sup>284</sup> Reviving the strategy he had used against Dalinghe, Hung Taiji had his men erect a linked series of siege and counter-relief works, digging moats and building palisades around both Jinzhou and Songshan. But Hong Chengchou remained somewhat reluctant to launch a full-scale relief assault, feeling that with the coming of autumn, the poverty stricken Manchus would not be able to press home the siege.<sup>285</sup> This did not satisfy Chongzhen, however, and he dispatched an official to talk strategy with Hong. The court pushed for a rapid advance from all four directions.<sup>286</sup> Hong disagreed and the emperor followed his judgment at first, but subsequently sent Minister of War Chen Xinjia and Zhang Ruoqi to goad Hong into action. Chen attacked Hong for not being aggressive enough over the previous year and wasting government funds. He charged Hong with lacking faith in Ming troops and disobeying the “wishes and aspirations of the court and its assembled civil and military officials.”<sup>287</sup> Thus, amid the same kind of sniping and factionalism that had plagued the Ming over the previous two decades of the conflict, what many believe to be the climactic battle of the Ming–Qing war was about to begin.

## 6 Hanging by a silken thread: The Ming armies collapse, 1641–3

### Li Zicheng's ambitions grow

With the capture of Luoyang and the subsequent death of Yang Sichang, Li Zicheng's ambitions, as well as his perceived potential, began to grow. He had long been recognized as a charismatic leader and cunning military strategist. And with his acts after the looting of the Prince of Fu's coffers he acquired a reputation for giving food and money to the peasants.<sup>1</sup> But now he was beginning to attract a new kind of follower: local gentry. The first such figure to attach himself to Li Zicheng was a possibly fictitious *juren* named Li Yan, who was a native of Jixian, Henan. His family was fairly well off and, unlike many of his gentry peers, they contributed significant amounts of grain for local famine relief. Li was subsequently kidnapped by a local rebel group, allegedly because its female leader was romantically attracted to him!<sup>2</sup> He managed to escape, only to be imprisoned by his fellow gentry upon his return home, ostensibly because he was suspected of being a rebel sympathizer, but more likely because they considered him a potential rabble rouser for aiding the peasants. This incited a mob who broke into the jail and killed the magistrate in the process of freeing Li Yan. According to popular lore he then persuaded the group that their best course of action was now to join Li Zicheng, whom Li Yan decided to follow, allegedly with the hopes that he could temper some of Li's more unsavory tendencies.<sup>3</sup>

Li Yan supposedly said to Li Zicheng, “You must take capturing the hearts of all the people under heaven as the root. If you don't kill people, then you'll win their hearts.”<sup>4</sup> Zicheng allegedly adopted his ideas immediately, prompting people to exclaim, “The Masters Li have given us life!”<sup>5</sup> Regardless of the veracity of the accounts of Li Yan's joining Zicheng, he reputedly exerted an important influence on the rebel leader over the next several years and is credited with devising many of Li Zicheng's popular programs and slogans, including the promise to remit taxes. He also sometimes engaged in spin control when Li's activities were contrary to his stated goals of helping the people.<sup>6</sup> One of Li's ditties went as follows:

Kill your oxen and sheep  
And prepare your wine and spirits

Open your gates and welcome the Dashing Prince  
 When the Dashing Prince comes  
 You won't be paying taxes<sup>7</sup>

Shortly thereafter a pair of equally important, but perhaps less savory, individuals would join the service of Li Zicheng. These were the local official Niu Jinxing and the dwarf sorcerer Song Xiance.<sup>8</sup> Niu was also a native of Henan, though the exact town remains a matter of debate. He joined Li after a dispute with his in-laws saw him fall out of favor with the local magistrate and got him jailed.<sup>9</sup> Sources vary on Niu's exact status and rank. Some say that he was a *juren*, others assert that he was a mere tributary student (*gongsheng*).<sup>10</sup> But Niu had a rather tarnished local reputation, being regarded as someone prone to getting drunk and shooting off his mouth. His gentry credentials were shaky at best and he developed quite a rivalry with Li Yan in the ensuing years, but his joining Li Zicheng's entourage was a source of prestige in these early years. Niu joined Li when he camped at Lushi, and offered his daughter to Li as a consort. Such men were essential in broadening the appeal of the rebel movement and in co-opting their fellow gentry, not to mention offering the rebels their knowledge of administrative practices and techniques. They also recalled the experience of the Ming founder, who had traveled a similar path to power.

Song Xiance was a native of Guide, Henan. In addition to being a dwarf, Song walked with a limp, owing to a bad right foot. Locals called him Song the Dwarf or Song the Child and like many in his condition, he scraped by telling fortunes and casting divinations.<sup>11</sup> In China, as elsewhere, such individuals were often perceived as having been touched by the gods and therefore possessing unique insights into the supernatural realm. One of these prognostications proved particularly appealing to Li Zicheng. Upon meeting Li, Song allegedly said that he predicted that an eighteenth grandson would assume the imperial throne and that this man would be surnamed Li.<sup>12</sup> As it turned out, Song was also a capable strategist and he would serve Li well in this capacity in the ensuing years.

### **The wandering bandits expand their activities**

Even as Li Zicheng was attracting popular support and expanding his vision, the other bandit leaders continued to rampage through central and western China. Ding Qirui moved to engage the combined forces of Zhang Xianzhong and Luo Rucai at Macheng in Nan Zhili. He detailed Shaanxi troops to defend the north bank of the nearby river but they did not cross to engage the rebels and he returned to Fancheng in north-central Huguang. But he had difficulty in maintaining discipline among his troops as starving soldiers took food from isolated towns or simply deserted, fleeing into the mountains to scrounge for food. Some joined the bandits. Ding's inability to control his men got him impeached and eventually replaced by Fu Zonglong.<sup>13</sup> Ding and Zuo Liangyu would lift the siege of Macheng later, killing 1,200 in the process.<sup>14</sup> Zhang Xianzhong took advantage

of the situation to attack Xinyang, with a force that had swelled to over 100,000. But they were defeated again by Zuo Liangyu, and Zhang lost many mounts. Now Zuo Liangyu's reputation was rising and many former rebels flocked to his banner. He had established himself as Zhang's arch nemesis.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> month of 1641 He Renlong briefly bottled Li Zicheng up in the mountains of Shaanxi. Zhang and Luo headed north, hoping to relieve the pressure on Li. They were deterred and then clashed with Zuo Liangyu, who defeated them at Xishan. They then struck at Nanyang, only to be defeated again. A subsequent attack by the pair upon the city of Yingshan was also turned back, this time by withering crossbow fire. The people of this town were local aborigines skilled in hunting tigers and leopards and who used poison-tipped crossbow bolts.<sup>15</sup> Zhang and Luo Rucai then took Suizhou and killed the local prefect. The prefect sent his son to flee with the seals of authority but he was captured and killed. The residents of the town resisted fiercely but they were slaughtered and the streets ran red with blood.<sup>16</sup> In the 7<sup>th</sup> month of 1641 Zhang Xianzhong was turned back at Yunyang. So, as was seen in the case of Neijiang, ably led locals could still turn back the peasant rebels, particularly if they were well supplied. But wiping out roving bands was much harder than merely defending cities.

Local bandits also flourished as the overstretched Ming forces desperately tried to counter the movements of all the groups, though some were bested by troops dispatched from the capital with greater firepower. But even after major defeats, rebel groups rebounded and saw their numbers grow within weeks or months, usually as a result of the ongoing demographic crises. There were widespread reports of famine and of people cannibalizing the dead. In some places corpses blocked up rivers. In other places a *shi* of rice cost 150 taels.<sup>17</sup> Debates at court about the viability of appointing supreme commanders and grand coordinators continued. Some enterprising local commanders devised new solutions to their problems such as combining musketeer units with ranks of pikemen to beat the bushes and scatter rebel groups into the mountains.<sup>18</sup>

The rebel situation changed again in the 8<sup>th</sup> month of 1641 when Luo Rucai broke with Zhang Xianzhong and joined up with Li Zicheng in Henan. Other second tier rebel leaders also attached themselves to Li around this time. Li took advantage of the improvement in his strategic position to attack the Ming near Xincai along the Henan–Nan Zhili border. The newly appointed supreme commander Fu Zonglong was present and retreated to a defensive position at Shaodian. The first rebel assault was beaten back with cannons. Fu Zonglong was especially doughty in defending the town, feeling he had gained a second lease on life by virtue of his release from prison and reappointment. But his efforts were damaged by the flight of commander Yang Wenyue. Fu sent a missive to He Renlong and Li Guoqi asking for help, but the two commanders complained that they could not cut their way through the rebel cordon. Li stepped up the pressure on the Ming forces and tried to flood the defenders out. Pretty soon food was running low and they had to kill their horses to survive. When these were gone they allegedly ate the corpses of slain bandits.<sup>19</sup> Then they ran out of gunpowder

so Fu led 6,000 troops out in the middle of the night and attacked the rebels. They killed a thousand and broke the encirclement. They got eight *li* outside the city but were spotted and chased by the rebels as day broke.

Fu was captured and returned to the city, where the rebels hoped to use him to entice the remaining defenders to open the gates for them. Fu shouted angrily, “I am the commander of Shaanxi and though I have fallen into rebel hands and there are rebels on all sides of me, I will never serve you.” The rebels cursed him and he continued, “I am a high official. If you wish to kill me, then kill me. How can I not sacrifice my life rather than help you bandits deceive those in the city?” He then shouted a warning to those inside. The rebels then slashed him with swords and forced him to the ground with a blow to the head. When he still cursed them, they cut off his nose. Fu died and the town was taken anyhow. The Ming had lost yet another loyal official.<sup>20</sup>

Zuo Liangyu was attacked by Li and Luo in the 10<sup>th</sup> month and forced to retreat to Yancheng, Henan. Li would next turn towards Nanyang in southern Henan, attacking it in the 11<sup>th</sup> month of 1641. Nanyang was defended by Meng Ruhu, who had narrowly escaped death earlier in the year against Zhang Xianzhong. Meng fought with a short sword, hacking away as blood drenched his clothes. Though he defended the city stoutly, he was overwhelmed and Meng died, bowing in the direction of the emperor before he fell.<sup>21</sup> In Nanyang Li continued his personal grudge match against the Ming royal family, burning the residence of the Ming Prince of Tang. Li Zicheng then moved to occupy many of the towns of southwestern Henan, though Kaifeng, the most important prize, eluded his grasp for the time being. Ding Qirui was once again coming under heavy fire from officials in the capital because so much of Henan had been lost on his watch. So Sun Chuanting was brought out of jail and made Supreme Commander of the Three Frontiers after he wrote a letter to the emperor from prison asking for a chance to redeem himself.<sup>22</sup>

Around this time Wang Qiaonian decided to attack Xiangcheng in central Henan, which had fallen to the rebels. He detailed some infantry with firearms to defend Luoyang and led 10,000 crack troops to Xiangcheng. Though it was nominally under rebel control, a sympathetic prefect admitted the Ming troops. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of 1642 the rebels came back and Wang’s forces were routed outside the city. Wang sighed, “This will be the death of me,” and made a fighting retreat with a thousand men. The rebels attacked the city with incendiaries and smoke bombs. Wang fought desperately with a long spear, taking many rebels down but by evening the defenders were exhausted and waiting in vain for the arrival of Zuo Liangyu with relief troops. As morale flagged around him, Wang shouted, “You all fear death. I do not fear death!”<sup>23</sup> When the city walls crumbled a street fight ensued. Wang killed three more men then tried to slit his own throat, but was stopped and captured. He cursed the rebels repeatedly so they cut out his tongue and killed him. Li Zicheng then killed the man who had let Wang into the city and nearly 200 other conspirators. Li’s ire was especially fierce because Wang had previously desecrated the graves of the Li clan.<sup>24</sup>

Zhang Xianzhong then attacked Shucheng in southwestern Nan Zhili in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of 1642. Shucheng was lightly defended but a local official refused

to listen to surrender demands issued by the rebels. But his hopes for a fierce resistance were undone by the local military commander, who defected to Zhang with his troops. The city fell after a three-day siege and Zhang ordered its name changed to Desheng, “Attained Victory,” and raised the status of the city from that of a county to a sub-prefecture. Although he did nothing to actually effect this change, it signaled that Zhang too was thinking in broader terms than he had earlier in his career.<sup>25</sup> But his savagery showed no signs of abating. For example, when he captured the town of Liu'an he cut the left arms off all the men and the right arms off all the women.<sup>26</sup>

Over the next several months Li Zicheng and Luo Rucai continued to roam across Henan, taking and abandoning towns as they alternated this with more serious efforts against Kaifeng, described below. Zhang Xianzhong continued his efforts as well, taking Luzhou. Sun Chuanting reached Tong Pass in the 5<sup>th</sup> month and immediately killed He Renlong because he was suspected of aiding the rebels and because he had left Meng Ruhu alone in Nanyang the previous year.<sup>27</sup> Sun invited He to a banquet and served him wine. Then he took out the axe of command authority and bound He before the assembled men. Sun said:

You were commanded to enter Sichuan but instead you returned to Kaixian. As a result the isolated army of Meng [Ruhu] was defeated and Zhang and Cao [Cao Cao, aka Luo Rucai] were able to escape the trap we had set. The responsibility for this lies with you. Then, by the beneficence of heaven you were given the chance to kill bandits to redeem yourself yet when you encountered them you were the first to flee and you allowed the supreme commander of Qin [Shaanxi] to fall into the bandits’ hands. How can this mean anything but death for you?<sup>28</sup>

He then gave the command to behead He Renlong. Sun would ironically appoint Li’s former lieutenant Gao Jie as commander of He’s former troops. His wife and daughter were given He’s corpse for burial. Far from his possible collusion, He’s execution was greeted with joy by the rebels, who feared him in battle. They allegedly exclaimed, “With the death of Madman He, the lands within the pass are now ours for the taking!”<sup>29</sup> Still, Ming troops continued to have limited success in anti-rebel campaigns through the summer, particularly the commanders Huang Degong and Liu Liangzuo. Huang was known as “Dashing Huang” and Liu as “Dappled Horse Liu,” and they killed thousands in the mountains of central China that summer.<sup>30</sup> Huang would be enfeoffed as the Earl of Jingnan by the emperor on account of his exploits.<sup>31</sup>

### **The final battle of Song-Jin**

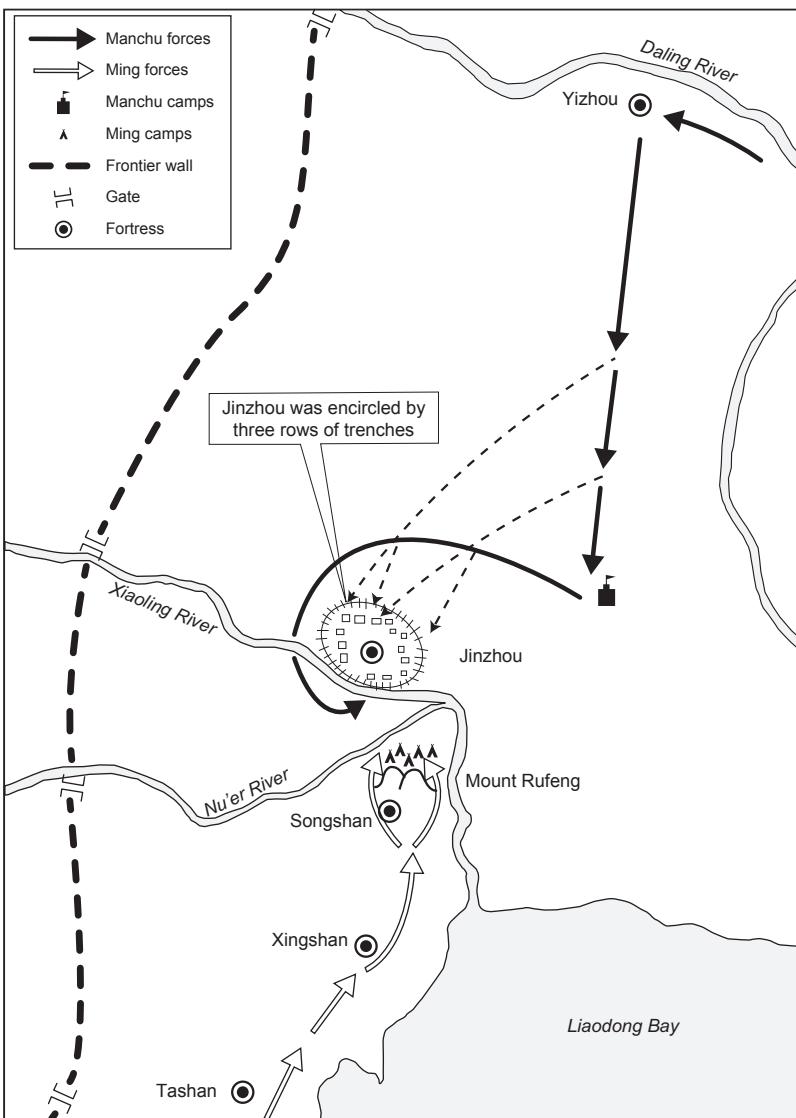
Returning to the northeast theater of war, Hung Taiji’s efforts would bear fruit in what one scholar calls “the single most decisive engagement fought between Ming and Manchu armies either before or after the capture of Beijing.”<sup>32</sup> This was the battle of Song-Jin in 1641–2.<sup>33</sup> Given their ability to withstand the determined



*Figure 6.1* Chongzhen-era cannon

attacks of the previous several years, Ming officials remained cautiously optimistic that they could hold out with sufficient reserves of food, water, and gunpowder. So in the 8<sup>th</sup> month of 1641 they sent 13,000 *shi* of supplies by sea from Shandong and the emperor authorized the dispatch of 80,000 more.<sup>34</sup> They were probably correct in this assessment. The final series of conflicts began with the same kinds of thrusts and feints that had characterized the fighting up to that point. The Qing attacked a Ming camp at Mount Rufeng but were driven back. Hong Chengchou continued to brush aside plans for more aggressive Ming counterstrikes, telling one person, “I’ve been a commander in the army for twelve long years. What does a scholar of books know about warfare?”<sup>35</sup> But Qing efforts were proceeding rapidly and their trenches were already some eight feet deep and six feet wide. They dug three rows of such trenches and repulsed multiple Ming efforts to halt their activities. The siege also reflected the growing multi-ethnic character of Hung Taiji’s empire. Koreans manned many of the firearms present and Mongols were used in mobile operations.

The first Ming relief units advanced firing arrows and guns but doing little damage. Hearing the sounds of combat the defenders of Jinzhou burst out of the south gates. The Ming initially collapsed a couple of the Qing lines, but then some 7,000 cavalry swept in from the west. A fierce battle ensued but once the Qing got their cannon into play they started shredding the Ming ranks. But the Ming fought on and the Qing turned back as night fell. According to Hong Chengchou the Ming suffered 738 dead and 793 wounded in this battle,



The Battle of Song-Jin (1).  
Adapted from Ch'en-main Wang, *Life and Career of Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou*.

*Figure 6.2* Map of the siege of Song-Jin, part one

along with losing 657 mounts. Jirgalang reported that the Qing had killed around two thousand.<sup>36</sup>

In fact Zu Dashou had sent a letter informing the Ming commanders that he still had about six months of supplies so they should not lightly enter battle.<sup>37</sup> But the court wanted more aggressive action so Hong went forth with an army

of 60,000 on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month of 1641. Spotting the Qing forces around Mount Rufeng, which was about five *li* south of Jinzhou, he arrayed his troops to the east and west. Dorgon was frantic and sent an urgent message to Hung Taiji who directed him to stand firm and sent 3,000 cavalry to help.<sup>38</sup> Two initial thrusts by the Qing were beaten back, but the Ming were in turn stymied by the Qing from getting much closer. Some Qing records suggest that Hung Taiji personally led this small force to scatter the Ming relief column, but in fact the fighting was fierce and it seems that the Qing had around 100,000 troops in elevated positions, though some estimates of their troop strength are even higher.<sup>39</sup> Moreover their siege works were now more or less complete. At this point Zu Dashou tried to sally forth from Jinzhou and killed more than 100 Qing soldiers, but could not break the siege.<sup>40</sup>

When he arrived on the scene Hung Taiji was impressed, saying, “They say Hong Chengchou knows how to use troops. I can see that those aren’t empty claims. My generals should be concerned.”<sup>41</sup> But after surveying the Ming ranks for a time he detected a weakness in the rear and decided to exploit it. As the Ming joined battle, the Qing raided one of the outlying forts and seized its grain stores. The Ming then pulled back towards Songshan.

Some of Hong’s subordinates, including Zhang Ruoqi, wanted to retreat on account of supply shortages, but Hong was finally of a mind to fight. Addressing the men he said, “Now today we have this opportunity and although our food supplies are growing short, you should listen to the orders of your officers. If you defend, you may die, but if you don’t fight, then you’ll still die, but only in battle do you have any hope of a favorable outcome.”<sup>42</sup> So he led the attack himself against Hung Taiji, who brandished a great lance in the battle. Hong put Wang Pu and Bai Guang’en on the left flank and Wu Sangui on the right. But they advanced haphazardly and were soon routed by the Qing forces. The next day Wang Pu led the panicked flight of the Ming armies who trampled one another and abandoned many weapons and supplies while running into a series of Qing ambushes.<sup>43</sup> The Ming lost over 50,000 men and 700 horses and saw their supply carts captured or destroyed.<sup>44</sup> Wu Sangui also fled the field, being driven literally into the sea.<sup>45</sup> It was said that barely 200 of his men survived after they were ambushed returning back to Ningyuan.<sup>46</sup> Wang Pu would be executed but Wu Sangui was allowed to redeem himself through service.<sup>47</sup>

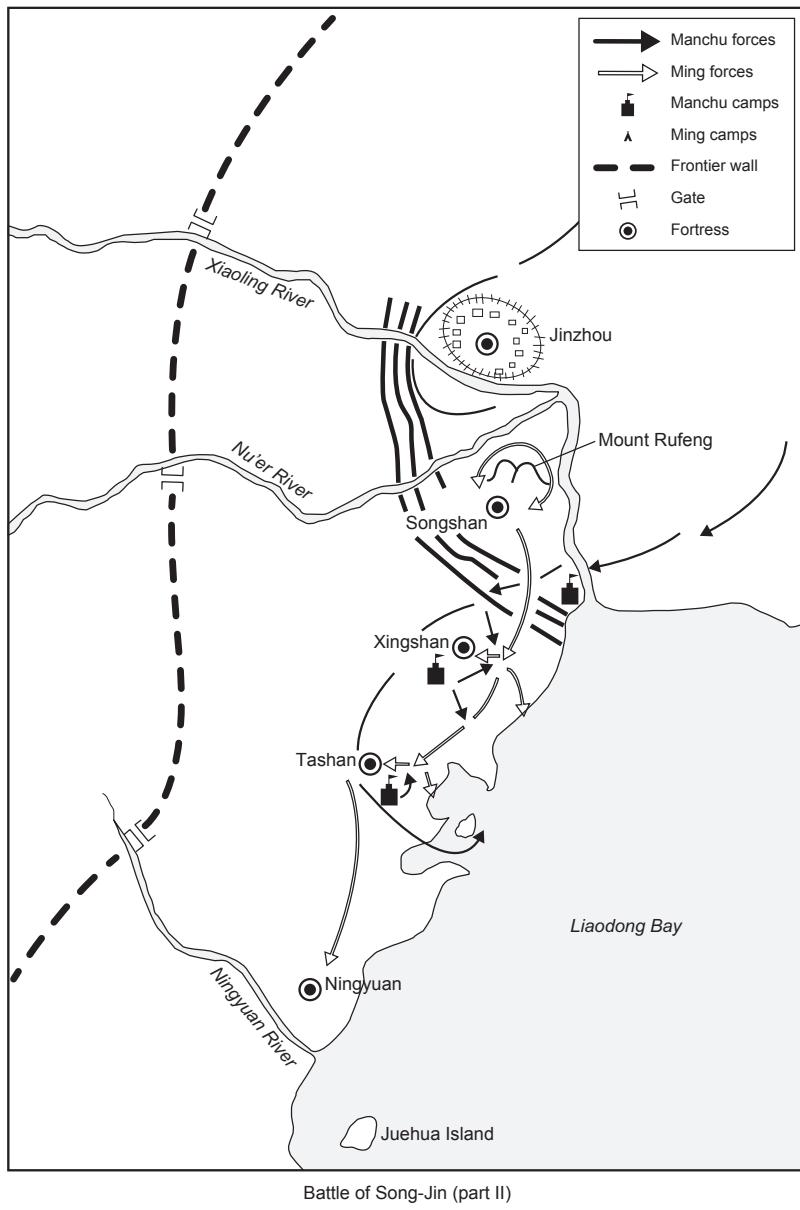
Hong Chengchou, Cao Bianjiao, and Wang Tingchen managed to beat a fighting retreat into Songshan with just 10,000 troops, which Hong now vowed to hold to the death. Jinzhou was also still imperiled. As the Ming dug in further, Hung Taiji told his men that they merely needed to cut supply lines and defend the coast because the Ming were short on food and resolve and would certainly falter.<sup>48</sup> He returned to Shenyang in the 9<sup>th</sup> month, leaving the siege in the hands of Dodo, Jirgalang, and Abatai. Cao Bianjiao was wounded in one breakout attempt. Chongzhen ordered Hong to die defending Songshan, but as usual officials at court were less than effective in devising plans for relieving the siege. Chongzhen ordered Ma Ke to defend Shanhaiguan, Tang Tong to defend Xuanfu

and Datong, and Wu Sangui, Bai Guang'en, and Li Funing, to train new troops and try to break the siege.<sup>49</sup>

As the siege dragged on, the defenders continued to press the court for reinforcements and supplies, especially weapons. One request asked for 200 cannon, 2,000 three-eyed guns, 8,000 bows, and 190,000 arrows.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile the men were reduced to surviving on a single bowl of rice per day. Through the winter there was little real fighting as the Qing just tried to wait things out and bumbling Ming officials submitted simplistic or unworkable plans.<sup>51</sup> One plan that Chongzhen did approve was an idea submitted by Chen Xinjia to use Mongol allies to try and break the siege, but it was never implemented.<sup>52</sup> Some officials feared sending another relief column from Ningyuan lest that city also fall.<sup>53</sup> One half-hearted effort in the tenth month of 1641 was repulsed and the troops went back to Ningyuan.<sup>54</sup> Though they had trained for months, these troops remained poorly supplied and they had barely 10,000 horses for 40,000 men. Heavy snows fell that winter, putting the besiegers in dire straits as well. Wu Sangui continued to train his troops at Ningyuan, telling the court at the start of 1642 that he would be ready to advance in another three months!<sup>55</sup>

Xia Chengde finally turned Songshan over to the Qing in the third month of 1642. Jinzhou still held out, but its defenders were reduced to cannibalism. Shortly thereafter Zu Dashou surrendered at Jinzhou.<sup>56</sup> In fact Zu Dale had surrendered before his elder brother and Dashou told the Qing he would only surrender if he could verify that his brother lived. Jirgalang was angry and wanted just to seize the city by force, but Hung Taiji restrained him. Jinzhou finally capitulated on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of 1642. Tashan and Xingshan fell next. There was heavy fighting at Tashan and the Qing massacred its 7,000 defenders, but Xingshan submitted peacefully.<sup>57</sup> The captured Ming officers were brought to Shenyang. Cao Bianjiao was killed, but the members of the Zu clan, perhaps because of their family relationship with Wu Sangui, were spared.<sup>58</sup> Zu Dashou had even asked to be killed but his request was denied.<sup>59</sup> After refusing food for several days, Hong Chengchou finally consented to join the Qing, becoming the newest prominent Ming defector.<sup>60</sup> But Hong was not granted an official title nor given banner duties though he was formally assigned to the Bordered Yellow Banner. He would also later assist Dorgon in devising strategies for assuaging the people and stamping out the peasant rebels in China.<sup>61</sup>

This victory also proved a great windfall for the Qing with respect to the amount of firepower they gained. As a result of the epic battle of Song-Jin the Qing acquired 2,363 cannon at Songshan, 488 from Jinzhou, 452 from Tashan, and 80 at Xingshan. In addition to these 3,683 cannon, they acquired 1,515 smaller guns of various sizes.<sup>62</sup> So now over a period of a mere 13 years, Hung Taiji had turned weakness into strength and the Manchus had a fully operational military system capable of toppling the preeminent power in Asia. The Ming court was distraught over the news and some called for Zhang Ruoqi's execution.<sup>63</sup> Again the factionalism and vacillation that crippled so many Ming campaigns had hampered relief efforts. In fact, the Ming court initially heard that Hong Chengchou had died defending Songshan and he was honored accordingly.<sup>64</sup>



*Figure 6.3* Map of the siege of Song-Jin, part two

In fact, just prior to the fall of Songshan and Jinzhou, in the first month of 1642, Chongzhen had convened a meeting of his officials to discuss reopening peace talks with the Manchus. Chen Xinjia had strongly favored them, but Chongzhen was skeptical and thought it would be difficult to reach an accord.<sup>65</sup>

Knowing the emperor's temper few dared speak out until Xie Sheng advocated peace talks. Chongzhen finally decided to secretly dispatch two envoys with gifts to meet with Qing representatives at Ningyuan. But by the time they got there, word came that Songshan and Jinzhou had fallen. So the Qing were in an even better position. Plus, given what had transpired over previous years, the Qing were dubious of the sincerity of the Ming offers. Nonetheless, during these talks Hung Taiji pulled his troops back from Ningyuan as a gesture of good faith. But then he demanded territorial concessions and expressed his disdain for the Ming, noting how his troops had repeatedly crushed the Ming armies. So he asked for open frontier markets and cash subsidies of 10,000 taels of gold and one million taels of silver per year.<sup>66</sup> The Ming would be allowed to retain Ningyuan, but the Qing frontier would extend to Tashan, encompassing the recently captured towns.<sup>67</sup> Another proposal by Hung Taiji's advisers apparently involved extending Qing control as far as the Yellow River, but the Qing ruler rejected this, apparently realizing it had no chance of success.<sup>68</sup> The two states would be equals and exchange ministers to conclude all agreements.

These demands were relayed to Chongzhen, who again assembled his court. Once more the officials were divided. On the one hand they could possibly stabilize the northern frontier, which would allow them to divert resources to quell the peasant rebels. But it was also deemed dangerous to publicly announce that they were treating with the Manchus. And while some officials considered making a counter-offer to the Qing with respect to subsidies, lower ranking hawks harshly criticized any accommodation, saying that they would hurt the state's credibility in the eyes of the people. Chen Xinjia in particular was singled out for favoring peace talks and was raked over the coals. Grand Secretary Zhou Yanru's unwillingness to speak out on Chen's behalf despite the fact that he had also favored talks made matters worse as Chen was left hung out to dry.<sup>69</sup> Chongzhen was furious when word leaked that the Ming were considering peace talks and would, as usual, admit no personal responsibility. Instead he threw Chen to the wolves and had him arrested, eventually killing him to shut him up and satisfy the hawks at court.<sup>70</sup> Other officials tried to bribe the Minister of Justice to save Chen but failed. Chongzhen even noted Ming precedents for killing Ministers of War for policy failures! Officially, Chen was blamed for the loss of 72 towns in the northeast, though in fact it was his open support for peace talks that led to his execution.<sup>71</sup> The Ming envoys left Shenyang in the 6<sup>th</sup> month of 1642. From this point onwards, no one seriously considered peace talks with the Manchus.

The battle of Song-Jin again highlighted the shortcomings inherent in the Ming administration as well as the tactical mistakes of its individual commanders. First off, there was never a single policy for relieving the siege on the part of the Ming officials. Too much power was invested in civil officials and they were given too much oversight of combat operations. Hong Chengchou, for example, despite his record of military experience, was actually a civil official, and his arrangement of troops proved easy to cut off and encircle, despite Hung Taiji's kind words concerning Hong's military acumen. They proved unable to establish and maintain supply lines and stable defense lines. The Ming also lacked the real

support of the people and troops of Liaodong because they had not done enough to alleviate their suffering.<sup>72</sup> In short, the Qing were now winning the battle for hearts and minds in the region.

For their part, the Manchus now realized how strong their position was. The conquest of China was not necessarily within easy reach, but it certainly loomed as a possibility should they desire it. In conferences with his advisers Hung Taiji realized that they could now let the peasant rebels do much of the heavy lifting. But he would also continue to launch raids for supplies, slaves, and booty. An incursion in the 10<sup>th</sup> month of 1642 involved some 50,000 troops. Again orders were issued not to rape or plunder indiscriminately.<sup>73</sup> The Qing quickly circumvented Ming defenses along the Great Wall, winning a series of minor battles. They then took Jizhou from Bai Guang'en, killing several commanders and capturing over 600 horses. Chongzhen rushed troops there, but by then the Qing had moved on, taking several more towns en route to Shandong.<sup>74</sup> An attack on Dongchang was repulsed by Liu Zeqing, but most of the Ming resistance was ineffectual. Dongchang itself fell later and was occupied for three months. Part of the problem was that Ming defenses in Shandong were oriented towards the sea and localities had training and equipment to counter attackers from that direction, not mounted cavalry. At Jining the Ming Prince of Lu courageously led the defense and committed suicide when the city fell after hard fighting.<sup>75</sup> At Linqiang stores were looted, prisons were opened, and houses were torched by the Manchus, despite the Qing ruler's warnings against such actions.

Grand Secretary Zhou Yanru offered to lead relief troops to the delight of the emperor, but his troops were routed and he falsely claimed victory.<sup>76</sup> In fact Zhou allegedly disported himself by banqueting with his friends instead of fighting, while sending a stream of victory reports to court.<sup>77</sup> He was not the only Ming official to do so.<sup>78</sup> Minor victories were reported as great triumphs even as accounts of looting by Ming forces rolled in.<sup>79</sup> Though Zhou was initially showered with gifts upon his return to the capital, when the truth of his activities was revealed, he was dismissed but not severely punished because as Chongzhen said of his long-time favorite, "His achievements outweighed his mistakes."<sup>80</sup> Once again Chongzhen's inability to assess character proved a detriment to Ming military operations.

During the raids in Nan Zhili, Henan, and Shandong in 1642–3, the Qing attacked 3 superior prefectures, 18 prefectures, 67 counties, and 88 towns, and captured 369,000 people, 321,000 livestock, 12,254 taels of gold, 2,205,270 taels of silver, and 4,440 *liang* of pearls.<sup>81</sup> In some places they also acquired more firearms and gunpowder as well as grain supplies. And while some fled before the Qing, others welcomed them with gifts.<sup>82</sup> Matters were exacerbated by the fact that refugees were still streaming into Shandong from Liaodong and the local officials could not accommodate them.<sup>83</sup> The Ming tried to devise new defense strategies in the wake of the attacks but their plans were never really implemented.<sup>84</sup> The emperor ordered more frequent troop reviews and a rectification of the rosters.<sup>85</sup> The only thing that derailed these raids was the sudden death of Hung Taiji in the 8<sup>th</sup> month of 1643, possibly due to a stroke.<sup>86</sup>

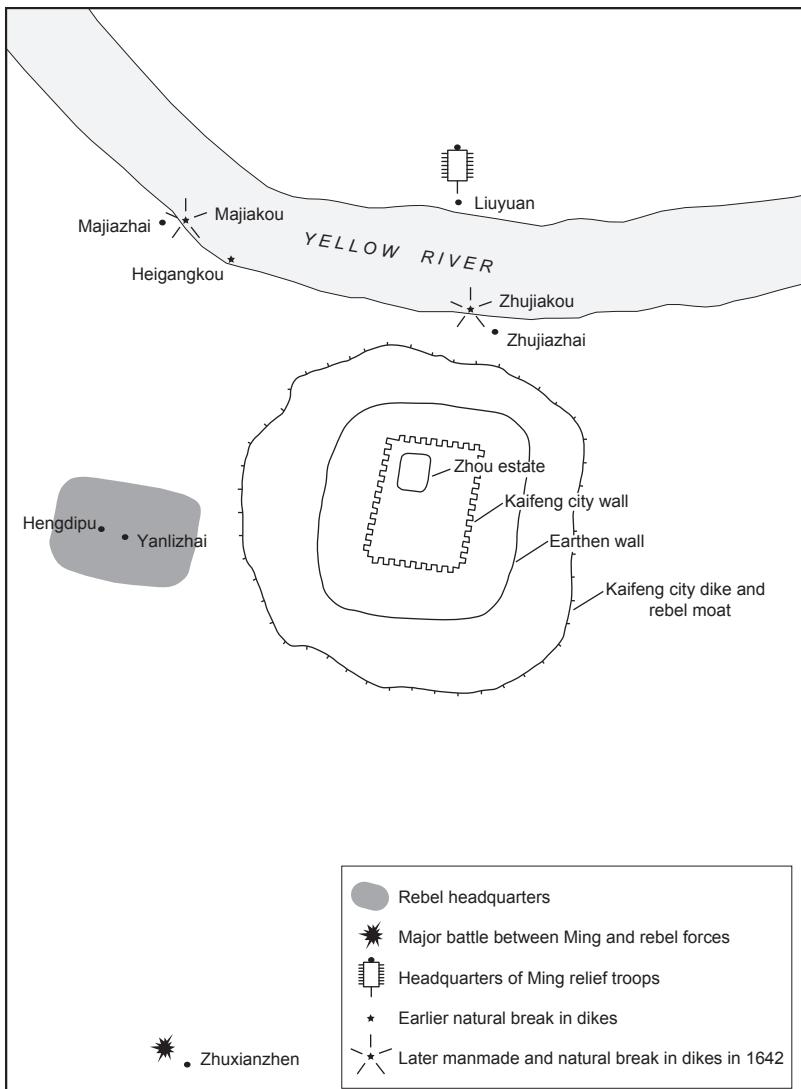
## **Li Zicheng's sieges of Kaifeng**

In October of 1642 the great city of Kaifeng in Henan province, formerly the capital of all of China, was destroyed in a devastating manmade flood. The flood submerged the entire city and casualty estimates ran as high as 80 percent of the entire population of over 370,000. This marked the catastrophic end of a series of sieges of the city by Li Zicheng, who had hoped to use its capture as a springboard for his thrust towards Beijing.<sup>87</sup> Though Li eventually (however briefly) realized his ultimate goal, the destruction of Kaifeng was a setback both for him and for his Ming adversaries, who lost a valuable base from which to launch anti-rebel suppression campaigns. Moreover, the debacle resulted in homelessness and famine for its relatively few survivors and further contributed to the general breakdown of order in central China that we have been following in the present work.

After the capture of Luoyang and the growing awareness of his potential Li realized that he needed a more stable base of operations to serve as a springboard towards an assault on the capital. For Li Zicheng, this is where Kaifeng came into the picture. It was a target of both symbolic and strategic value. Having been the imperial capital under the Northern Song (960–1127) dynasty, Kaifeng boasted a rich tradition, as did its surrounding province of Henan.<sup>88</sup> Being located in east-central Henan, Kaifeng was much closer to Beijing than Xi'an, another former imperial capital located in Li's native Shaanxi province that Li had also attacked. Moreover, because of the recent failure of Yang Sichang's efforts, the strategic "throat" to Beijing was now open, so the time seemed ripe to seize Kaifeng.<sup>89</sup>

Li and his men had attacked Luoyang, as part of his plan to make Henanfu in the western part of the province a base of operations for further activities on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month of 1641. Li and his retinue then moved south-east towards the town of Ruzhou, leaving a couple of minor officials behind to administer the town. Luoyang was quickly recaptured by loyalist forces, but the peasant rebels had scored another strategic victory.<sup>90</sup> Arriving at Ruzhou, the peasant rebels were faced with a local magistrate who had vowed to resist and for five days there was heavy fighting as the defenders rained cannonfire and arrows down upon the attackers. But when a heavy wind spread fires across the wall and into the city, the defenders panicked and fled.<sup>91</sup>

Emboldened by his successes and apparently aware that Ming forces from Kaifeng had been dispatched to retake Luoyang, Li decided to strike at the provincial capital on March 22, 1641 with some 33,000 troops.<sup>92</sup> The bandits initially dispatched three hundred cavalry disguised as government troops to the city. Because of the departure of the Ming troops under *xunfu* Li Xianfeng, the people were initially terrified at the rebel approach because "they had not a single soldier" to defend the city.<sup>93</sup> At this point, the local prefect, Wang Bian, mobilized the gentry for the city's defense, creating 84 wards for the defense, each of which was supposedly responsible for recruiting defenders, with the target initially set at an unreasonable 50,000. Each ward was to have one leader responsible for training and defense. The prominent clans of the city were to



Adapted from Des Forges, *Cultural Centrality and Political Change in Chinese History*.

*Figure 6.4* Map of the sieges of Kaifeng

provide funds for equipment, uniforms, and flags. All told they raised a force of perhaps 4,200, according to one account.<sup>94</sup>

Some 800 local stalwarts were mustered to defend the city's west gate, and seeing this force the rebels directed more of their attention upon the east gate, mustering their forces there on March 22, 1641. The people were promised rewards of 50 taels per bandit head taken, 30 if they killed a bandit with an arrow, and 10 for wounding or killing them with artillery fire. Inspired by these

rewards, the commoners mounted the city walls and plied crossbows and other weapons.<sup>95</sup> As the initial fighting continued for several days, the defenders resorted to throwing shovelfuls of feces on the attackers in addition to more deadly projectiles.<sup>96</sup> As the rebels tried to tunnel their way into the city, the defenders dropped gunpowder and other incendiary materials on them. When the rebels dug in, the defenders, under the direction of one Zhang Jianxian, built platforms that extended out from the city's towers made of cypress that allowed them to continue to rain death on the assailants. The townsfolk supposedly built fifty of these platforms in a single night and inflicted heavy casualties upon the peasant rebels in this fashion.<sup>97</sup>

Nevertheless, heavy winds made it hard to see and the officials were forced to beat drums and constantly traverse the walls, offering rewards and personally rallying the defenders.<sup>98</sup> They also announced that they intended to sally forth to take the offensive, even as prefect Wang Bian moved to amass resources for a long siege, adopting the classic *jianbi qingye* ("strengthen the walls and clear the fields") strategy.<sup>99</sup> Four days into the fighting, the Ming commander Cheng Yongfu returned from Luoyang and cut his way through the rebel camp to the city, gaining admittance through the water gate. The next morning there was still heavy fighting outside the small west gate. The rebels eventually pulled back when the Ming rolled heavy boulders and threw tiles upon them from atop the walls. On the following day, March 27, Chen De, Chen Yongfu's son, shot Li Zicheng in the left eye with an arrow.<sup>100</sup> The arrow penetrated two inches into Li's face and rendered that eye useless for the remainder of Li's life. Although it was a boon to Ming morale at the time, Li's injury would later add to his mystique and reputation as "the dashing prince."<sup>101</sup> At this juncture Li decided to lift the siege. As the rebels pulled back, they tried to lure the Ming troops out, to no avail because Chen Yongfu realized that he was badly outnumbered. So the rebels fell back north on March 28, 1641, defeating a Ming force sent to intercept them near Zhengzhou. Another force under Chen Yongfu briefly pursued them, but retreated back to Kaifeng owing to a lack of supplies.<sup>102</sup>

In the wake of this triumph, the defenders were understandably enthusiastic. The Prince of Zhou, learning from the mistake made by his greedy cousin the Prince of Fu, rewarded the defenders with cash from his own coffers. Chen Yongfu and other defenders were promoted. The prince also contributed to funding the restoration of the city walls.<sup>103</sup> But this had really only been a probing mission. Li's sometime ally, Luo Rucai, was not with him and veteran troops constituted only a small part of his force. Given the ease with which he had taken Luoyang and Ruzhou, he thought that Kaifeng was possibly worth the gamble. Having failed, he would be more prepared the next time. As for the defenders, once more it was proven that inspired leadership, solid tactics, and concrete rewards were sufficient to ward off even fairly sizeable rebel contingents. Working with the townspeople, the local gentry and the imperial Prince demonstrated the kind of government leadership that was too often lacking in late Ming society. The problem for the Ming was in obtaining the same kind of direction throughout the empire. Because such efforts were dependent upon the quality and

leadership of local officialdom and individual personalities, it was exceedingly difficult to replicate such successes.

After taking numerous small cities throughout the province, Li Zicheng and his men returned for another crack at Kaifeng on January 20, 1642.<sup>104</sup> The defenders had not been idle in the meantime and the officials had continued repairing defenses, stockpiling weapons and supplies and drilling their ward-based militias. The rebels initially dispatched a contingent to test the defenses of the Cao gate. That night Li and his men arrived and camped some ten *li* outside the city. This time his ally, Luo Rucai, was also present, and camped at the Fanta Temple, south of town. The Ming official Wang Xie was certain that the rebels would attack the east gate so he bolstered defenses there first, while also detailing other officials to oversee the defenses of the city's other gates, posting Chen Yongfu and Gao Mingheng, the city's most accomplished military officers, at the south gate. On January 24 the rebels attacked northeast from the Cao gate to the north gate and the defenders collapsed and surrendered, losing the Moon Tower of the north gate. At this time a relief column led by the Ming supreme commander Ding Qirui was beaten badly and many of his men surrendered to the rebels, though some escaped into the city.<sup>105</sup> This enabled the attackers to seize an outer courtyard, but they were turned back by the defenders, who hurled flaming brands at them, allegedly killing thousands, though this figure is probably inflated.<sup>106</sup> The next day, a rebel effort to sap the walls was stymied by dropping bricks on them. On the 26<sup>th</sup> the rebels hit the northeast corner of the city again, only to be thwarted by heavy cannon fire.<sup>107</sup>

Nonetheless, the rebels managed to open a two *zhang* breach in the wall through the use of their own artillery and hoped to use infantry to exploit it. But they were repulsed once more by cannon fire from the defenders. The besiegers made dozens of attacks nightly but were continually turned back, the lights from the guns illuminating the night sky. The rebels countered with the erection of their own defensive stockades. According to contemporary sources, the defenders possessed both light guns and heavy cannon and Ming officials beat the drums through the night to signal attacks and bolster morale within the city. On the night of the 28<sup>th</sup>, fires broke out in the city and the arsonist was decapitated so as to set an example for the townspeople, even though it was determined that he had set the fire accidentally while drunk.<sup>108</sup> On January 30, the rebels attacked the walls with carts. In order to bolster morale the government student (and author of one of the diaries used in this study) Li Guangtian offered cash and steamed buns to the defenders. Wang Xie managed to get several thousand in cash contributions from the Prince of Zhou in addition to funds from government officials. In the end the officials provided more than 100,000 buns to the city's defenders.<sup>109</sup> Even so, freezing temperatures led to the deaths of perhaps a thousand of the city's soldiers.<sup>110</sup>

At this point one of the more curious confrontations between the two sides also took place. The rebels sent naked women, most likely captives, to the base of the wall to hurl insults at the defenders and goad them into coming out to fight. These women were unceremoniously killed and the defenders countered by rounding up

monks and having them shout their own curses at the rebels! The hapless monks were also killed and this became known as “the clash between the yin and yang phalanxes.”<sup>111</sup>

By this point Li Zicheng was becoming increasingly frustrated and he took it out on the troops that had surrendered from Ding Qirui’s ranks, killing perhaps 3,000 of them. He also had his officer Li Goupi lashed forty times for failing to take the north gate.<sup>112</sup> More proactively, the rebels constructed high towers from the nearby forests so that they could fire down into the city. Once this was done Li mounted another all-out night assault, putting captured victims and commoners in the front as cannon fodder and following up with his crack troops while covering them with artillery fire. Gao Mingheng and Chen Yongfu coordinated defensive efforts using gunpowder and bricks to hem the defenders in, then setting the attackers alight with incendiaries. They also recruited commoners to shovel snow atop the attackers as they tried to sap the walls, which were allegedly as thick as one hundred and twenty feet at the base.<sup>113</sup> Though the defenders lost perhaps a hundred men, this was both a tactical and strategic victory for them. The city officials celebrated the triumph by distributing wine and cash rewards to the freezing defenders.<sup>114</sup> The money was used to buy clothes.<sup>115</sup>

The officials then announced a 2,000 tael reward for anyone who could stop the rebels from tunneling under the Cao gate, as the rebels had already created what amounted to a veritable cavern with some 36 holes punched into the wall. This prompted significant Ming counter-siege efforts as some one hundred people showed up under one leader and filled the holes with torches and gunpowder to stop the incursion. Meanwhile, additional soldiers were posted at access points to cut down stragglers.<sup>116</sup> The Ming defenders also resorted to psychological warfare. Gao Mingheng had two cannon buried outside the walls. They were “discovered” and had inscriptions on them stating that they were built during the Hongwu (1368–98) reign period. This connection with the dynasty’s glorified military founding was said to have greatly boosted the spirits of the city’s defenders. Perhaps more significantly, the defenders fired arrows with false reports of the impending arrival of government relief columns into the rebel camp.<sup>117</sup>

On February 6, some five hundred Ming troops sallied forth, augmented by fire from heavy cannon. Some of these troops popped out of foxholes dug by the defenders to ambush the rebels as they pulled back. The Ming claimed to have taken 783 heads in this assault. The next day the Zhou prince and others contributed more wood to the cause in part because the defenders were running low on arrows.<sup>118</sup> The defenders also continued to extend the height of the city walls to counter the towers built by the rebels. Commoners were paid for their construction efforts and bricks were donated by the monks from Guan Yin temples within the city.<sup>119</sup>

On February 10, Li Zicheng mounted yet another assault in force and supposedly lost some 10,000 men to Chen Yongfu’s withering cannon blasts and crossbow fire. Chen allegedly led his men with the battle cry, “Loyal officials do not fear death!”<sup>120</sup> The next day the attackers again tried to blow up the city

walls with gunpowder but the explosion backfired and killed thousands of their own number while not killing a single person inside the city, according to Li Guangtian.<sup>121</sup> Li claimed that this was according to the judgment of Heaven rather than the strength of men and that it convinced the rebels to pull back, although they mounted one final assault the next day, losing another 748 men in the process.<sup>122</sup> The rebels abandoned many supplies as they lifted the siege and headed south and the ground all around the city was littered with their corpses. Some 2,300 captive womenfolk were returned, along with an estimated 30,000 cattle, which were given to the starving populace.<sup>123</sup>

In the wake of the siege the Ming officials went about cleaning up the mess and rebuilding the city's defenses, including the moats, walls, and ditches, at a cost of 38,000 taels.<sup>124</sup> Ding Qirui took his remaining troops and garrisoned Runan. Knowing that the rebels would certainly return, Gao Mingheng started stockpiling grain in the city. The city's inhabitants also raised the height of the city's towers, amassed gunpowder, erected cannon platforms, gathered stones for catapults, and disseminated defense plans among the ward captains.<sup>125</sup> Seeing the problems of the two previous sieges where repeated vigorous assaults had failed, they presumed that the next siege would be a drawn out affair so they endeavored to strip the area around the city of all its resources. Their predictions would prove to be accurate and they unfortunately did not have as much time to prepare their defenses as they would have liked.

On May 6 the rebels attacked Guide prefecture and the town of Yiqi, south-east of Kaifeng.<sup>126</sup> Li joined forces with a regional bandit leader named Yuan Shizhong and on May 29, 1642, they returned to encircle Kaifeng once again. Gao Mingheng was posted on the west gate, Chen Yongfu held the south gate with one Wu Shijing. Huang Shu, a local prefect, oversaw the Cao gate. The rebels arrived in full force on June 9 and camped at Yanlizhai about 10–20 *li* west of the city, sending out cavalry units to probe Kaifeng's defenses.<sup>127</sup> Luo Rucai was again present and camped at Hengdipu, a little further west from Li Zicheng. One of their early missions was successful in enticing the defenders to come out of the city and the rebels defeated them handily, as barely a thousand Ming troops returned to the city. This initially led to a more passive defense strategy as "not one person dared to come out of the city."<sup>128</sup>

As importantly for the besieging forces, it also gave them the opportunity to harvest wheat from the fields around the city since the defenders had apparently not completed their own plans to denude the surrounding fields. Although the Ming sent out their own detachments to deter the rebels, the latter were able to both acquire their own grain and burn the fields, denying crops to the city and thereby turning their own strategy against them. On June 20 Zuo Liangyu and Yang Wenyue advanced to Zhuxianzhen, south of Kaifeng. Li initially sent a force of 3,000 men to intercept the relief column, personally leading a larger force a couple of days later. Meanwhile, Chen Yongfu sent out spies to check on rebel dispositions and managed to steal a cache of supplies from the besiegers when Li moved south.<sup>129</sup> The Ming also managed to mount another sally, killing 300 rebels and capturing 50. For their part, the rebels sought to overawe their

captives with cruelty, cutting off the hands, feet, ears, and noses of those who fell into their clutches.<sup>130</sup>

As they moved towards Zhuxianzhen, the rebels arrayed their forces in an advantageous position, taking the high ground. They then sent out divisions to cut the water supply of the Ming units and severed their logistical lines. Zuo and Hu Dawei were to the west of the rebel lines and Ding Qirui and Yang Wenyue to the east. Leading a force of 10,000 well equipped with firearms, Yang Wenyue fought fiercely for two days and gained a minor victory over Li's forces. However, because he ran short of ammunition, his army collapsed.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, because the Ming had advanced in four columns, the faster rebel units were able to weaken them by launching a series of probing attacks and preventing them from coordinating their relief efforts. The Ming units also waited in vain for help from Kaifeng as their troops were reduced to eating wild plants and butchering their horses, even drinking their blood. The rebels finally attacked after eleven days and inflicted heavy casualties. The Ming armies broke on June 19, Zuo Liangyu's retreating first. Ding Qirui barely made it out alive, withdrawing to Runan as his force was decimated.<sup>132</sup> The rebels were thus able to gain the victory. Before returning to Kaifeng, however, the rebels sent forward false reports telling the defenders to stay put because Zuo Liangyu was en route. This served to protect their rear as they were completing their mop-up operations.

Once the people of Kaifeng got word of the defeat of Zuo Liangyu and the impending return of the rebel forces they worked furiously to harvest as many crops from the unburned fields as possible.<sup>133</sup> But there was not much to be had and wild herbs were selling for as much as 500 cash per catty.<sup>134</sup> Additionally, those allowed to go outside the city to forage for food started colluding with the rebels, so city officials were forced to prohibit this practice. They also killed grain speculators in the marketplace so as to set an example.<sup>135</sup>

By the middle of July, famine was spreading within the city and the rebels embarked upon a program of expanding defensive moats around the city to wait out the siege. They also thought they might be able to harness the power of the nearby Yellow River and use it to flood out the defenders, incidentally replicating a tactic that had worked some fifty years earlier in a siege of the city of Ningxia.<sup>136</sup> The officials within the city tried to rally the populace through renewed oaths of loyalty and service, taking blood oaths. Some 10,000 militia troops were thus mustered and the government resold grain to the needy masses. Local officials also continued to train defense brigades. Regiments were given names taken from the *Zuozhuan*, demonstrating yet another appeal to history and a sense of historical consciousness among the people.<sup>137</sup>

On July 29, an impatient Li Zicheng killed the subordinate who had proposed the river diversion plan because it had not yet worked, the moat being filled with just five inches of water. A few days later the defenders burst out of the city, killing 41 rebels and capturing a dozen, along with nine horses and some military tents and equipment. They also allegedly killed perhaps 500 more rebels with arrow fire.<sup>138</sup> Emboldened by this triumph, the defenders continued such actions for the following few days. Chen Yongfu held a victory feast one day

and then struck out in the night, taking two rebel heads in the ensuing battle. The defenders were further heartened by news of a possible relief column about to cross the Yellow River and made plans to greet them. This contingent, led by Liu Zeqing,<sup>139</sup> won a series of minor skirmishes, prompting the defenders to concoct a plan to create and use armored carts to open a supply line to the Yellow River, creating a defense corridor.<sup>140</sup> The plan was eventually deemed impractical and the defenders kept rebuilding their defenses as the rebels stepped up the pressure.

Finally, on August 10, the Ming armies burst out of the west gate to fight what they hoped was a decisive battle. The fighting was ferocious and Li Zicheng waded into the thick of it with his relief troops. The Ming took a hundred more heads in this clash and captured more animals and supplies, increasing morale a hundredfold according to Bai Yu.<sup>141</sup> Another raid a couple of days later netted more supplies, but it was becoming increasingly apparent that time was running short for the defenders. Their walls were literally crumbling. Even though an attempt to smoke them out was unsuccessful, the defenders started arguing over whether or not to try and escape or wait for a relief force. For his part Li Guangtian was a proponent of the aforementioned cart plan, feeling that it was merely a matter of how to best allocate resources to make it happen.<sup>142</sup>

An indication of just how grisly things were becoming is the report that severed rebel heads were selling for 3–4 taels each for food.<sup>143</sup> This was apparently in response to the Prince of Zhou's offer to provide additional rewards to motivate the defenders for killing rebels! The prince's offer also led to unscrupulous people killing commoners to get the reward money. There also were rising class tensions within the city as people starved and prices rose drastically. Reports of cannibalism, including wives eating their husbands and fathers eating their children, spread widely. People feared to go out alone for fear of being waylaid, killed, and eaten.<sup>144</sup> Still, the local officials tried to rally the people with money, communal singing, and gifts of wine. The city's final living animals were butchered for food in mid-September.<sup>145</sup> Government officials also gave the nod for women to leave the city to save their own lives.

At this point, with people reduced to eating leather, clothing, and insects, the defenders began thinking about using the river to effect their own escape from the besiegers. The city was supposedly filled with mountains of bones and people reported hearing the wails of the dead ringing through the night. Water levels were now three to four feet deep and heavy rains were making the situation more dire by the day. The defenders also hoped that diverting the river could provide them with food in the form of fish and other aquatic denizens.<sup>146</sup> In fact, the latter happened when the rebels cut the dike at Zhujiazhai. Another Ming relief column was driven back into the Yellow River, with many troops drowning.<sup>147</sup> Hearing a false rumor of a rift between Luo Rucai and Li Zicheng, Gao Mingheng tried to rally the defenders for one last sally and failed. Thus he decided to send out some 3,000 crack troops in the middle of the night to cut the dikes but these men were intercepted and turned back.<sup>148</sup>

Then, in the middle of the night on October 7, the people of the city were awakened by a great roar and the river came crashing into the city. The rebels

pulled back and let the power of the river do their work for them. It is still not clear whether the rebels actually cut the dikes themselves or whether the heavy rains finally created the conditions needed for them to collapse. In any case, the sound was like thunder and smashed through the Cao gate in the north, sweeping everything before it and rushing out the south gate.<sup>149</sup> People climbed the tallest towers to avoid the flood. Some escaped on rafts. The aforementioned local official Huang Shu quickly took charge of evacuation efforts, as people gathered atop the Cao gate to await rescue. Huang and Wang Xie, assisted by Gao Mingheng, built some 20 boats for these operations, rescuing the prince and perhaps five to six hundred followers, despite coming under cannon fire from Li Zicheng.<sup>150</sup> Most commoners were forced to cling to tree branches and debris and rescue efforts lasted for days. Many were killed by the peasant rebels as they tried to get away. By dawn of October 10, the entire city was submerged.<sup>151</sup>

Though figures suggesting that barely 10 percent of the population survived the siege are probably not accurate, estimates of less than 100,000 survivors out of a previously estimated population of perhaps 370,000 are not unreasonable.<sup>152</sup> The survivors were assembled at relief centers north of the river, where 100,000 taels of relief was distributed. Some Ming officials killed rebellious troops to protect commoners and others plied cannon to fend off the rebels while commoners escaped. A few rebels were captured and decapitated by Ming officials north of the river.<sup>153</sup> The rebels looted what was left of the city but it was in such a state that there was no point in occupying it or using it as a base for further operations. Li Zicheng decided to pull back to the south and continue his efforts there.

In terms of its overall impact on the strategic situation of the Ming dynasty, the destruction of Kaifeng truly stands out as a cause lost. As noted above, it was a site of tremendous strategic and symbolic value for both sides. Had the Ming been able save the city, they would have at least had an additional base from which to coordinate the defenses of Henan and protect the southern approach to Beijing. They might also have been able to use the resources of its environs to supply troops in the region. On the other hand, had Li Zicheng captured the city intact, he might have gained a valuable springboard for his drive to Beijing, not to mention additional gentry and commoner support for his nascent regime. He also might have acquired the resources destroyed in the siege by virtue of the flood. In the end, while the destruction of the city did manage to turn more locals against the Ming state and perhaps to banditry in desperation, it did little to win Li the hearts or admiration of the commoners because his men had treated them so cruelly during and after the siege.

With respect to the tactics of the sieges themselves, the sieges are interesting for what they reveal about late Ming warfare and social and military organization.<sup>154</sup> In the first two successful defenses of Kaifeng, and even for much of the third siege, one realizes how adept leadership and cooperation among different levels of officialdom could lead to positive results. Civil and military officials worked well together and performed the functions society expected of them. They made adept use of their limited resources and used a combination of rewards and punishments to get the most out of the city's defenders. This demonstrates in fact

that the late Ming state was still not entirely bereft of administrative talent and moral leadership. But in the end, the general breakdown of order and the state's funding and logistical problems conspired to prevent relief operations from succeeding and resulted in disaster for the people of Kaifeng and the surrounding areas. This was indeed immersive learning at its worst.

### **The bandits spread across central China**

While Li Zicheng's destruction of Kaifeng was perhaps the most spectacular and strategically important development in the ongoing war against the wandering bandits in late 1642, there were plenty of other significant events occupying Ming attention in central China. In the 8<sup>th</sup> month of 1642 Zhang Xianzhong camped in the area of Lake Chao not far from Luzhou, and embarked upon a program of recruiting and training a naval force for an attack south of the Yangzi, perhaps against Nanjing. He also appeared to start envisioning grander things for himself as he ordered the fashioning of an imperial seal and attracted some eunuchs into his service, the latter apparently hoping to obtain positions within Zhang's administration once his dreams were realized. It is also said that around this time Zhang began disporting himself in style, resting on piles of furs in his tent and surrounding himself with beautiful women.<sup>155</sup> He created a personal bodyguard and indulged himself in fine food and wine. Dancing girls were in abundance at a birthday party he threw for himself. As he traveled through the countryside he had his men select youths to be raised as his elite cavalry and personal killers. He rewarded those who went out looting and brought him back treasure while lashing those who did not with the bastinado.<sup>156</sup> That he still retained a large following despite his erratic behavior is a testament to his unnerving personal charisma and the fear he engendered.

Meanwhile, after abandoning Kaifeng and skirmishing with Ming units elsewhere in Henan, Li Zicheng turned his attentions towards Nanyang, where Sun Chuanting was leading the Ming forces. Sun had recently arrived in the area after his execution of He Renlong, who had been suspecting of sympathizing with the rebels because he hailed from Li Zicheng's hometown.<sup>157</sup> The two skirmished outside Nanyang in the fall with inconclusive results, though Sun's forces had been unable to press the attack due to supply difficulties as they were reduced to scavenging for persimmons in the wilds.<sup>158</sup> Sun had tried to set an ambush for Li, but it was discovered and sprung early. Li feigned a retreat and enticed Sun's troops into an ambush of his own.<sup>159</sup> A follow-up battle resulted in Sun's defeat and retreat towards Shaanxi and Tong Pass. Sun had lost 78 officers and nearly a thousand troops. Li Zicheng then moved towards Runing, the last position of Ming strength in Henan.

Runing was defended by Yang Wenyue with about 3,000 troops. Yang was an old rival of Li, having fought him outside Kaifeng and alongside Fu Zonglong the previous year. As soon as the rebel forces attacked, the defenders broke and started fleeing. The rebels erected cannon on platforms and started firing inside the city. The defenders put palisades outside the south walls and threw dead

bodies beyond count into the moat. The vice commander, Wu Dawei, slit his throat so Yang ascended the walls to direct battle himself. But the commanders of the north and west gates, seeing the situation worsen, torched the palisades and led the troops out. More than a hundred died, many by their own hands. The next day the Ming prince there decided to surrender to the rebels. Yang protested this action and that afternoon the rebels entered the city and captured Yang. Li Zicheng said to him, “Master is an important official of the dynasty who will not submit to us. But now that we’ve caught you, what is your wish?” Yang replied, “I myself, without any soldiers only want to kill you. So today I’ll die at your hands. What else can I say?”<sup>160</sup> Yang was executed in front of Sanyi Temple. When the city fell, many other Ming officials immolated themselves.

The rebels next seized Xiangyang, then De'an and captured Chengtian on the second day of the first month of 1643, though subsequent assaults by Li Zicheng on Yunyang were repulsed. At Xiangyang Li took new steps towards establishing an administrative structure and legitimizing his enterprise. Li occupied the residence of the local Ming Prince of Xiang and enfeoffed the prince and his siblings as earls. Xiangyang was renamed Xiangjing and Li assumed the title of “Long Accumulated Worshipping Heaven Leading-in-Righteousness Generalissimo,” later shortening it to Commander-in-Chief. Luo Rucai was styled the “Generalissimo Whose Virtue and Awe Pacifies the People on Behalf of Heaven.”<sup>161</sup> Li reorganized his troops too and now had some 230 companies with perhaps 600,000 troops under his nominal control.<sup>162</sup> Zuo Liangyu was supposed to defend Xiangyang but he was outnumbered and withdrew south to Wuchang, where he tried to extract 200,000 taels from the local Ming prince for troop upkeep. When the prince refused, Zuo let his men loot and plunder.<sup>163</sup> His men raped and pillaged to such an extent that the people came to fear them more than the bandits.<sup>164</sup>

Li Zicheng would adopt the title of Prince of Xinshun a few months later. Zhang Guoshen and Niu Jinxing were made the equivalent of chief ministers and skeleton staffs were created for the traditional Six Ministries of government.<sup>165</sup> All men who fell into rebel hands between the ages of 15 and 40 were enrolled in the army. They also implemented procedures governing the taking of cities. If the populace did not resist, no one would be killed. If they resisted for one day, 30 percent would be killed. If resistance lasted two days, 70 percent would be executed and if they held out for three days, all would be massacred.<sup>166</sup>

Chongzhen was disgusted upon hearing the news and sent out eunuch inspectors and the veteran official Wu Sheng to control this rabble.<sup>167</sup> Wu argued that the problem with earlier efforts had been lack of joint action by Ming commanders. If troops were properly positioned and heeded orders, the bandits could be bottled up. Wu was initially promised some 30,000 crack troops, but he ended up getting only a third of that number because the rest were needed to guard against the Qing. Wu was upset and submitted another plan to the emperor for coordinating actions, feeding the troops, and crushing the rebels that met with Chongzhen’s approval. But officials in the Ministry of War dismissed it as literary rhetoric that revealed no understanding of the real situation. Chongzhen

responded by accusing Wu Sheng of dereliction of duty.<sup>168</sup> Another round of administrative shuffling at the upper echelons followed.

Zhang Xianzhong was also flexing his muscles and making his ambitions known by renaming and reclassifying captured towns and prefectures in central China even when he did not hold them. The atmosphere around Nanjing became even more tense when one of Zuo Liangyu's subordinates instigated a mutiny and threatened to take the city. Officials prepared for the worst but Zuo was eventually able to quell the mutiny when he received 150,000 taels from the merchants of the city.<sup>169</sup> But their activities distracted them from their ostensible duties and freed up the region for Zhang Xianzhong.

As of the beginning of 1643 Zhang was the only rebel leader not subordinated to Li Zicheng. But he realized the threat posed by Li and started thinking more seriously about consolidating and legitimizing his power lest he be swallowed up by his rival. So Zhang considered attacking Nanjing himself and started building up a degree of naval power. This was useful for fighting in east central China and was in fact the tactic used by the Ming founder some three centuries previously to build up his power. So in early 1643 Zhang moved back into eastern Huguang and captured several towns in succession. In early May he declared himself Prince of the West at Huangzhou. This was about two weeks after Li Zicheng had declared himself the Prince of Xin Shun. He moved to Macheng and managed to gain the support of local notables who had over 25,000 troops at their disposal. Zhang was now ready to strike at Wuchang, the provincial capital of Huguang.

The defenders of Wuchang were aware of Zhang's approach and had argued over defense strategy. Some wanted to cut Zhang off at the Yangzi River rather than let his forces come all the way to the city walls. But they were overruled. Though the city was short on personnel and funds, the local Ming Prince of Chu contributed some of his considerable fortune to defense efforts. However, many of the troops in the city were remnants of Zuo Liangyu's mutineers and were ill-disciplined and unreliable. In fact their unreliability was the major reason for the decision to defend only the city walls rather than the riverbank. So Zhang crossed the river against only token resistance and laid siege to the city. With the exception of Assistant Commander Cui Wenrong, the city's defenders did not acquit themselves well and the city fell to Zhang on July 15, 1643.<sup>170</sup> In the wake of its capture thousands were massacred by Zhang's forces and thousands more died by jumping into the river. The Prince of Chu was drowned in a bamboo cage after being chided by Zhang for his stupidity. Most of the prince's retinue were killed, though his younger brother was spared. All men between the ages of 15 and 20 were enrolled as soldiers but the rest were killed. The river was allegedly so befouled by corpses that the fish were unfit for consumption for months afterwards.<sup>171</sup>

Despite his grisly depredations, Zhang celebrated (and evinced his aspirations) by renaming the city Tianshoufu, or "Received from Heaven," and making it the capital of his Western Kingdom. Banners were hung on the city's gates reading "Peace and tranquility for all under heaven. My awesomeness extends in the eight directions."<sup>172</sup> Zhang elevated the Prince of Chu's younger brother to a

position of nobility within his own administration. He announced that he would soon establish government offices such as the Six Ministries and that various appointments would be made to fill prefectural, sub-prefectural, and county-level offices under his purview in eastern Huguang. He then made the grand gesture of distributing famine relief to the few hapless people who survived his slaughter.<sup>173</sup> He even held rudimentary examinations, awarding *jinshi* titles to some twenty eager candidates.<sup>174</sup> But Zhang would occupy the city for barely a month and make virtually no appointments before he was chased away by Zuo Liangyu. He torched the city as he withdrew.<sup>175</sup> Nonetheless, Zhang's success, coupled with his capture of Hanyang, which had eluded Li Zicheng's grasp, prompted Li to put a price of 1,000 taels on Zhang's head, demonstrating how seriously Li now regarded Zhang's threat to his primacy.<sup>176</sup>

Zhang then moved south to occupy Yezhou, where he established another garrison and skeletal administration. He then tried to attack Jingzhou by crossing Dongting Lake but was thwarted by a storm that sunk several of his boats. So he returned to shore, burned the boats and struck off for Changsha, south of the lake, which would become his base for the next several months. The flames from the burning boats at Yezhou illuminated the night sky for miles.<sup>177</sup> Like the fools at Wuchang, the defender of Changsha ignored sage advice to defend strong points 60 *li* north of the city and allowed Zhang's forces to approach. The rebels asked the city to surrender but were rebuffed. However, a brief effort to drive the rebels back was defeated and the gates were forced. The city's commander asked Zhang to kill him but spare the people. They obliged him, though others were allowed to commit suicide.<sup>178</sup> It is said that the commander's eyes remained clear and bright as he was cut to pieces and that he did not utter a single cry.<sup>179</sup>

The government's ability to control the situation was declining rapidly. In a meeting with Chongzhen one official argued that defeating Zhang Xianzhong was easy, but defeating Li Zicheng was hard. This was because the people feared Zhang and liked Li. So if proper forces could be mobilized and relief distributed then the hearts of the masses would still return their allegiance. After all, the bandits often did not really capture places, they were simply handed over by the people. But if the people were treated better and not abused by the soldiers sent to protect them, they would not nourish bitterness in the hearts towards the government. So discipline needed to be maintained, especially among the troops of Zuo Liangyu.<sup>180</sup> In another meeting with a censorial official Chongzhen was informed that in the northeast tall grass covered the roads, the cries of chickens and dogs were non-existent and all the people had disappeared. Now both the frontiers and the interior were not secured and chaos reigned.<sup>181</sup> Impeachments of officials continued to pour into the palace as the emperor desperately sought solutions.

### **Li Zicheng eliminates his rivals and consolidates his authority**

In the spring of 1643 on the heels of the aforementioned failed effort to take the city of Yunyang, Li Zicheng moved to pick off his most dangerous subordinates

within his hierarchy. The first man to be eliminated was Ge Guoyan, who had recently added many of Zuo Liangyu's former troops to his retinue. Upon returning from his campaign Ge met with Luo Rucai for a conference, raising suspicions in Li's mind that the two might be plotting against him. Li invited Ge to a banquet, got him drunk, and killed him. He then added Ge's troops to his own ranks. Zuo Jinwang was apparently killed at the same banquet.<sup>182</sup> He Yilong was killed around the same time.<sup>183</sup>

The most prominent of these men was Luo Rucai. Luo had been a prominent rebel leader since the early 1630s and his fame was only eclipsed by that of Li Zicheng and Zhang Xianzhong. Luo had in fact worked with both men in the past and was regarded as a charismatic field commander and solid tactician. In Henan the two worked like left and right hands with Luo's mobility complementing Li's skill in siegework. But unlike Zhang and Li, he never expanded his horizons to think about serious political goals, preferring the romantic life of a wandering rogue. He delighted in eating fine foods and surrounding himself with beautiful women, much to the dismay of Li in particular, who seems to have led a fairly austere lifestyle.<sup>184</sup>

It is unclear why Li finally decided to assassinate Luo but it appears to be connected to both the intrigues of subordinates and government overtures to get Luo to defect to the Ming side.<sup>185</sup> One of Luo's subordinates apparently pushed for the latter and the price on Li's head was sufficiently high that Luo seems to have been seriously considering the offer. Meanwhile an officer named Chen Sheng had suggested that Luo Rucai reorganize his cavalry into four groups (left, right, front, and rear) and mark the horses accordingly. He then spread the rumor that Luo was going to return to the Ming side and pointed out to Li Zicheng that some of Luo's horses bore the mark "zuo," which was the same character as the surname of Zuo Liangyu. This allegedly sealed Li's suspicions though in fact the whole story may well have been fabricated by Li Zicheng himself.<sup>186</sup> In any case, Luo had skipped the banquet where his compatriots had been killed, probably because he suspected treachery on Li's part. So Li dispatched a small death squad to Luo's camp where they caught him as he was just waking up in the morning, seized him, and executed him. His units were quickly enrolled under Li's banners.

Shortly after this Li moved to eliminate the regional bandit Yuan Shizhong, who had cooperated sporadically with Li over the previous three years. Yuan had participated in the attacks on Kaifeng but deserted Li and concentrated his activities in the east, raiding across Nan Zhili, Henan, and into Shandong. But as pressures mounted on Yuan from both Li and the Ming, in 1643 he decided to try and offer his services to the Ming. But Li got word of the arrangement and killed Yuan before he could follow through.<sup>187</sup> Li's actions in turn prompted Zhang Xianzhong to send Li gifts of cash, horses, and baubles as felicitations. Li accepted these gifts but sent nothing in return, earning the enmity of Zhang.<sup>188</sup>

In the middle of 1643 Sun Chuanting remained in the vicinity of Tong Pass, mustering forces and supplies and launching occasional probing attacks to drive Li east. Chongzhen tried to alleviate hardship by remitting taxes for Henan and by promising that any disgraced official who captured or killed "false officials"

who had joined the rebel side would have their old ranks restored.<sup>189</sup> This order stimulated more anti-rebel activity for a while and Sun Chuanting continued to check Li's efforts to take Yunyang, entrusting its defense to Gao Jie. But Ming officials in the field continued to complain of insufficient troop numbers and rations. The price on Li's head was increased again, to 10,000 taels, and the government promised to throw in a hereditary earldom as well. Bringing Zhang Xianzhong's head in would earn someone 5,000 cash and an official post of the highest rank.<sup>190</sup> Sun Chuanting was given more funds, clothing, and other gifts to spur him into action.

### **The government's last offensive**

The ill-fated final Ming offensive was launched against Li Zicheng in the autumn of 1643. Under pressure from multiple quarters, the emperor ordered Sun Chuanting to conduct operations in Henan province to the east with the aim of crushing Li Zicheng once and for all. Sun had been carefully marshaling resources at Tong Pass for the previous several months after his defeat outside of Nanyang. Those in favor of aggressive operations were impelled in part by the increasing pressure being generated on Beijing from the northeast. They hoped that if Li Zicheng's forces were destroyed in Henan, Ming troops could then be transferred to the northeast to counter the Manchu threat. As was often the case in late Ming politics, the prospect of forceful action was appealing to the emperor because he could be perceived as doing something, rather than just resigning himself to his fate. Equally important within the political context and germane to any consideration of the backdrop to the campaign, Sun Chuanting was widely disliked among the local gentry in Shaanxi province because he had raised their taxes to pay for (what was in fact successful) local defense. So, taking the short-sighted position that too often characterized late Ming officialdom, they reasoned that if Sun led Ming armies away from his defensive position at Tong Pass, he would no longer bother them with demands for taxes and orders for building and manning defense works.<sup>191</sup>

Sun himself staunchly opposed this operation on multiple grounds. First of all, his defensive plan seemed to be bearing fruit in Shaanxi. And even as Li's army ranks swelled, their supply problems were becoming more acute. With winter coming on, Sun figured that the morale of Li's troops would begin to erode and if they tried to drive west, his own entrenched units would be able to break them. Moreover, Sun was very concerned about supplying his own units in the event of an offensive operation. Sun pointed to the fact that the previous year's series of defeats at Li's hands in the vicinity of Nanyang had been largely because of supply difficulties.<sup>192</sup> He was wary of being overextended again and also concerned about his comparative shortage of cavalry units in comparison with the rebel forces. So he suggested waiting at least until the following spring.<sup>193</sup> He also asked for 20,000 more troops but Chongzhen responded, "Before you got 5,000 and you were able to crush the bandits. Now how can you ask for 20,000 more?"<sup>194</sup> In any event equipping and supplying the extra troops would have been difficult.

Given his field experience and track record, Sun's viewpoint should have carried the day. After all, by late 1643 he was one of the few successful Ming commanders still alive and fighting despite the setbacks he suffered in 1642. His assessments of the capabilities of both his own forces and those of his adversaries were realistic. Local support and coordination, particularly with respect to obtaining supplies, was vital. But the simple fact was that by this point in time many ordinary peasants had lost faith in the Ming government and increasingly came to identify with the peasant rebels, especially as Li Zicheng's propaganda stressing his goal of eliminating taxes for the masses spread.<sup>195</sup> In the highly charged and increasingly desperate atmosphere of the Chongzhen court, the only prominent official who openly supported Sun's defensive stance was Vice Minister of War Zhang Fengyi.<sup>196</sup>

Sun finally bowed to local pressures and imperial orders and led an offensive campaign against Li. But he allegedly remarked, "This is the path to ruin," as he set forth.<sup>197</sup> Sun held a departure ceremony in Xi'an on September 13, 1643 and headed for Tong Pass. Saying he was heading into "certain defeat" Sun held out the small hope that he might win by a fluke.<sup>198</sup> Moving down the Yellow River valley, Sun gathered Ming remnant forces in Luoyang (still another ancient Ming capital that had been despoiled by the rebels) and pressed forward. As he readied to strike at Li, Sun ordered Zuo Liangyu to advance from Jiangxi in the south and meet his forces at Runing, where they could catch Li in a pincer movement. Zuo, however, had not yet reconstituted his army from a defeat earlier in the year and he refused Sun's order, as he too often did. This meant that Sun had to push forward alone.

Nevertheless, Sun's rapid advance resulted in a Ming victory at Ruzhou as well as the surrender of some commanders and units who had joined the rebels.<sup>199</sup> News of this victory delighted the court in Beijing and encouraged them to push for further offensive operations despite Sun's own continued misgivings, as well as those of Zhang Fengyi who warned that the rebels were crafty and might simply be presenting the illusion of weakness, which would be in accordance with many of the teachings of classical Chinese military strategy.<sup>200</sup> It also temporarily deflated the morale of Li's forces, who seemed on the verge of collapsing, forcing Li to pull in reinforcements for what he hoped to be a decisive engagement. Sun capitalized on his initial success by seizing Baofeng and Jia counties and capturing the rebel camp at Tangxian, where many of the families of the rebel leaders were living.<sup>201</sup> The rebels then pulled back to their heavily fortified redoubt of Xiangcheng in late October.

But just as things appeared to be going the government's way, the very difficulties Sun Chuanting had foreseen began to arise. For one, his troops were rapidly running short on food supplies. Years of warfare and a scorched earth policy had devastated the agricultural productivity of Henan. So the Ming troops were forced to bring in supplies from neighboring provinces. But the officials and people of these regions were often unwilling or unable to supply the needed provisions. Moreover, heavy autumn rains drenched the roads and made it very difficult for the supply carts to even move.<sup>202</sup> Complaining that he had only five days of supplies left, Sun requested more to be urgently sent. His request was

answered with the dispatch of some 200 mules and sheep but even these animals got mired in the roads.<sup>203</sup> These problems were exacerbated by a rift between Sun's field commanders. One of Sun's commanders, Bai Guang'en now favored a more defensive strategy, owing to the aforementioned difficulties. Another subordinate, Gao Jie, favored continued offensive operations.<sup>204</sup> By this point, feeling that he might finally have Li on the ropes, Sun Chuanting also favored continuing the offensive. He said, "Certainly a general doesn't retreat. How can we leave Gao Jie's army alone?"<sup>205</sup> Furthermore, Sun's hopes were bolstered by the fact that he had an agent within Li's camp who was feeding him information.

As things panned out, matters deteriorated rapidly for the government forces in early November of 1643. First the government's supply woes worsened, causing the troops to raid local towns and start eating their own horses. Then the rear portion of the army got cut off by Li's forces and circulated rumors that the relief troops (the rest of the army) would not be arriving. As the units panicked, the local commander executed one officer so as to instill discipline in his units, but it failed and the army routed.<sup>206</sup> The Ming spy in Li's camp was discovered and dismembered and a number of former peasant rebels who had joined the Ming side decided to resume their old allegiances. All these developments prompted Sun to order a retreat. Sun ordered Gao Jie to protect the rear and Bai Guang'en to lay an ambush to cover the retreat. Bai instead bolted for Tong Pass, fleeing as the rebel cavalry smashed into his largely infantry force.<sup>207</sup> Sun's units were routed and allegedly fled 400 *li* in a single day, losing some 40,000 men and abandoning over 100,000 weapons and pieces of equipment in the retreat.<sup>208</sup> As soon as word of the defeat reached Beijing, Sun came under attack for his faulty strategy!

Sun assembled what remnants he could and resolved to make a last desperate stand at Tong Pass. Pursued hotly by Li, Sun was unable to make the best use of the pass's defenses and it fell to the peasant rebel armies on November 16, 1643.

Again Bai Guang'en failed to perform effectively in the field and he eventually surrendered to Li, becoming one of the rebels' leading commanders over the next several months. Sun Chuanting retreated up the Wei River valley and fought a final battle at Weinan, where he was killed, though his corpse was never recovered, prompting rumors that he had survived.<sup>209</sup> With the exception of one young son, Sun's family members all committed suicide.<sup>210</sup> Soon thereafter Gao Jie fled, and the gateway to the north, from whence the rebels could strike at the capital from the northwest, was open.<sup>211</sup> As Sun had predicted the offensive operation against Li had turned into a debacle and the capital was now for all intents and purposes undefended. In a strategic sense the loss of Tong Pass in the west was equivalent to the Ming loss of Songshan and Jinzhou in Liaodong. Furthermore, Li's success in this campaign convinced him that the time was right to formally declare his intention to overthrow the Ming by formally establishing his own regime at Xi'an.

## Scrambling to respond

Farther south Zuo Liangyu continued to skirmish with Zhang Xianzhong. But his troops remained as unruly as ever and perpetrated multiple acts of rape and

pillage.<sup>212</sup> Commoners simply fled into the mountains and officials often abandoned their posts and seals of office to rebel groups. Although Zuo managed to recapture Xiangyang and Nanyang, Zhang remained entrenched at Changsha. He turned back one joint land/water operation in the 11<sup>th</sup> month and sent units out to threaten Yuezhou. Chongzhen then dispatched a eunuch to oversee Zuo's troops. Yuezhou was subsequently retaken by Ming forces at a cost of 4,000 casualties for the rebels.<sup>213</sup> But for a brief time Zhang's influence extended into northern Guangdong, becoming the southernmost point reached by the rebellions prior to the fall of the Ming. Many towns changed hands in the fighting between Zhang and Zuo over the next few months. Before long Zhang would set out for a more isolated position in Sichuan where he would establish his bloody Great Kingdom of the West, discussed in Chapter 8.<sup>214</sup> En route he would stop at Changde, Huguang, the ancestral home of Yang Sichang's clan. Zhang desecrated the Yang family tombs and Yang's own corpse while there.<sup>215</sup>

In the northwest the government also struggled to restore order. Against the advice of many of his officials Chongzhen made Yu Yingui Supreme Commander of Shaanxi, replacing Bai Guang'en. But Yu remained skeptical that the Ming could turn the tide. In the northeast Wu Sangui was shocked by a sudden attack on Ningyuan that claimed 4,000 Ming lives and resulted in the loss of the last remaining bastions outside the city. He had presumed that there would be a lull in Qing aggression because of the recent death of Hung Taiji.<sup>216</sup>

### **Li Zicheng prepares to strike**

After the defeat of Sun Chuanting, Li Zicheng was in a position to realize his grand ambitions. Several courses of action were presented to him. Niu Jinxing suggested taking Hebei then striking for the capital. Others suggested looping around via Jinling to acquire supplies and strike at Beijing from the south-southeast. Still others recommended taking the area within the pass (i.e. Henan) as a base, then capturing the three northwestern border areas, mustering troop strength, cutting across Shanxi and sweeping into the capital.<sup>217</sup> They could then alternately attack and consolidate power in stages. Li decided to follow this plan, which was attributed to Gu Junen.<sup>218</sup> But first he would create his own administration in Xi'an. Then he would launch the final attack on Beijing. After much debate, Li decided to attack Beijing from two directions. Li himself and his leading military subordinate, Liu Zongmin, would advance on Beijing from the northwest, first heading northeast from Xi'an, seizing strategic Ming garrisons throughout western Shaanxi, eventually proceeding through the inner defenses of the Great Wall at Juyong Pass. Meanwhile, another subordinate, Liu Fangliang, would approach from the south, crossing the Yellow River and securing eastern Henan en route to the capital.<sup>219</sup> It was estimated that Li now commanded fully half a million troops and its ranks only swelled as they marched on Beijing in the early spring of 1644.<sup>220</sup>

The great city of Xi'an, protected by some of the mightiest walls in all of China, fell without a fight as one of its leading officials was in league with the

peasant rebels. Li invested the local Ming Prince of Qin with a new title in his administration and renamed the city Chang'an, recalling its Tang dynasty glory. Significantly Li also adopted Tang-era names for government offices and administrative positions, both to signal the break from the Ming and to draw attention to the fact that he bore the same surname as his illustrious Tang forebears. Li walked about in dragon robes as people chanted *wansui* to their new ruler.<sup>221</sup> Li prohibited looting and distributed wealth to the people. His envoys went out to the localities to gain support for Li's new government. Those who refused were killed, sometimes in grisly fashion as in the case of a prefect who was blown apart by a cannon shot or another who had his tongue cut out.<sup>222</sup>

In the meantime Li's armies fanned out and started conquering and re-naming places. His hometown of Mizhi was named Tianbao ("Protected by Heaven") and he began construction of a palace there that remains a tourist attraction to the present day. Li entered the city accompanied by some 10,000 cavalry. He showered gifts upon his clansmen and restored the ancestral tombs that had been desecrated by the Ming a couple years earlier. He also bestowed imperial titles upon his ancestors and his primary wife and concubine. This was the next step in formalizing his challenge to the dynastic legitimacy of the Ming. The final step was about to be taken.

# **7 Chongzhen's lament: My ministers have abandoned me! Winter–Spring 1644**

## **Omens and celebrations**

The lunar new year of 1644, like all such years in traditional China, was marked by celebrations all over the empire. The nature and tone of these celebrations differed quite a bit, however. Ominously there was an earthquake in Fengyang, recalling the depredations of the roving bandits there some nine years before. Moreover, the earthquake of early 1644 coincided with many other harbingers of Ming doom including strange colored pears appearing on trees around the capital and an ominous wind that suddenly arose before the start of the annual sacrifice to Confucius.<sup>1</sup> And when Chongzhen went to review his civil and military officials for the annual New Year's procession, many of them were tardy and the review in general was sloppy.<sup>2</sup> There is also an apocryphal tale wherein the emperor himself encountered a fortune-teller while walking in the streets of Beijing just outside the imperial palace. The fortune-teller offered to predict the monarch's future and foretold dire things from the monarch's eight characters associated with his birth date and time and Chinese zodiac sign. This fortune-teller was allegedly none other than Song Xianc.<sup>3</sup>

Residents of Beijing later related their own sinister omens as seen in the following account from the official Liu Shangyou:

During the night of the second or third day of the year, sounds of crying and combat were heard outside the Great Ming Gate, as though several tens of thousands of horsemen had gathered at Chessbord Street [near the Zhengyang Gate], and this continued for several nights in succession. Also, during the previous half-year, no babies were born in the whole city. And in the summer and fall there was a great pestilence: people, seemingly without reason, got virulent cysts and died within hours. It was called the pustule plague, and 40 percent to 50 percent of the capital residents suffered from it. Then, in mid-spring there was a blood-spitting sickness, which also killed people in half a day, sometimes taking several together from the same family. At court such anomalies as a freakishly tall man or horse entering the imperial palace gate were seen, but they were kept secret and news of such sightings was not passed on. Inside the palace grounds an ancient cypress tree strangely

sprouted four twigs, which the caretaker didn't dare report. Often there were scourges and abnormalities like these.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, on New Year's Day of 1644, Li Zicheng had declared the formation of his rival Shun dynasty in the ancient city of Xi'an, now called Chang'an by the rebels.<sup>5</sup> Li adopted the reign title, Yongchang, which means "eternal prosperity." Niu Jinxing was made Li's prime minister and Song Xiance was made grand marshal. Consolidating the process they had started the previous year in Xiangyang, Li and his advisers also took the symbolically important step of establishing the traditional six ministries of government, each with one minister and two vice ministers.<sup>6</sup> Li even dispatched emissaries to Zhang Xianzhong (as he had also done the previous year) and was delighted to receive a congratulatory reply.<sup>7</sup> All of Li's top appointees were in fact former Ming officials, though most had held only lowly posts in the bureaucracy. But even the mere fact that they had chosen to cast their lot with the rough, one-eyed former postal worker and brigand demonstrates the degree to which the Ming state was believed to have forfeited the so-called Mandate of Heaven and the rising potential of Li to become the ruler of all under Heaven.

Shortly after his ascension as ruler, Li led an attack against Yulin, one of the last remaining Ming strongholds in Shaanxi. The Yulin troops had a reputation for toughness and Li was concerned that his aspirations might yet be checked if he could not take the city. But although the fighting was fierce, Li's forces brought down the city walls with cannon fire. You Shiwei led the resistance in the streets and even women fell in battle. Many more people committed suicide after the city was taken and the wells of the town were filled with corpses. Li then had the surviving generals tied up and brought before him as he sat on his princely throne in Xi'an. He addressed them, saying, "You are all famous generals. If you help me pacify all under heaven, I'll make you dukes. What do you say?" They cursed him, saying, "You are a postal worker, how dare you address us so?" Li laughed and untied them, but one of them said, "A postal worker, but now in the garb of a general." This enraged Li and he killed all of them.<sup>8</sup>

Li also went after Ningxia, which was defended by formidable walls and was expected to be something of a challenge. But its defenders were rather dispirited and they surrendered once they heard that Yulin had fallen. Resistance was stouter at Qingyang and Liu Zongmin suffered 30,000 casualties until the city fell after several days.<sup>9</sup> Guyuan was simply handed over by Bai Guang'en. Chen Yongfu, the soldier credited with taking out Li's eye at Kaifeng, was one of the commanders who surrendered here. He feared Li's wrath but at a banquet for the surrendered generals, Li laughed it off, saying, "The loss of my eye was entirely my fault."<sup>10</sup> Having secured the border regions Li now turned towards securing his regime as his armies fanned out towards Gansu.

## Desperate measures

As might be expected, Chongzhen was beside himself and sought help from all quarters. In desperation he considered nearly any plan, no matter how far-fetched,

while simultaneously rejecting various suggestions for negotiations or the aforementioned strategic retreat to Nanjing, located in the southern breadbasket of the empire. In many respects the situation at the start of 1644 and the responses of Chongzhen and his officials to the myriad problems facing them were a microcosm of his entire troubled reign. Despite his frequent court conferences and constant communications between his officials in the capital and in the field, Chongzhen remained unable to devise realistic strategies to solve the empire's problems. Moreover, no one, including the emperor himself, was really willing to assume responsibility or blame for failures and all were too quick to assign blame to others, often on the flimsiest pretexts.

In response to Li's moves, the court hastily dispatched commanders to cut off various routes to the capital. Chongzhen then summoned the Hanlin Academy lecturer Li Mingrui and other court officials for an audience to discuss the problem. But again, the court officials and the emperor found themselves at an impasse and no one offered promising solutions. Chongzhen lamented, "We've been in this state for a long time because I've got no one with any plans! Thus, we've now arrived at this [state of affairs]. Now if you can come to an accord with my sentiments, then why can't you officials follow my directives when I make a decision? Moreover, you still just plot secretly!"<sup>11</sup> In response the assembled officials discussed various land and water routes by which the Ming armies could mobilize to cut off the rebels. Li Mingrui also revisited the possibility of the emperor embarking upon a "Southern Tour" to Nanjing wherein by virtue of the monarch leaving the capital "like a dragon rising or a tiger leaping" the masses would spontaneously rise to quell the rebels in their righteous indignation.<sup>12</sup> Li thought this was the only real chance for the survival of both the dynasty and the imperial person.<sup>13</sup>

In fact Chongzhen himself felt somewhat the same and expressed his feelings to Li Mingrui when no one else could hear. But the emperor feared that no other officials would support such a course of action and that his own image would suffer should he abandon the capital. He warned Li that should word of his choice get out, he would not take personal responsibility, but would blame his adviser. Later that night the emperor met privately with Li and peppered him with logistical questions about the feasibility of a move to the south. Most important was the need for an adequate military force to defend the monarch as he travelled south and there was the not so small matter of raising and funding such troops without alerting any of the empire's enemies to their plans. Li Mingrui suggested raising troops from the eight prefectures around the capital rather than pulling units from the northeast frontier, which would have the effect of abandoning territory to the Manchus.<sup>14</sup> Another version of the plan had the emperor remaining in Beijing, but the crown prince heading south to Nanjing, where he could then establish a resistance government should the main capital fall. Some thought to cloak this in the idea of the emperor personally leading a military campaign, an option which had briefly surfaced earlier in relation to the idea of the southern tour. Raising the point that his illustrious ancestors had personally led the army in battle, some officials optimistically predicted an army of 100,000 or more would arise in no

time and as they advanced south, they could overawe the bandits and easily effect the restoration of the entire empire from Nanjing.<sup>15</sup> As Chongzhen vacillated over using his personal privy purse or public funds to pay for such an endeavor, a supervising secretary named Guo Shiheng spoke out against a southern tour, causing the emperor to angrily change his plans to head south.<sup>16</sup>

As these debates were still taking place, the emperor was presented with another hare-brained scheme that he seized upon in desperation. Grand Secretary Li Jiantai, who was known to be quite wealthy, offered to raise a colossal one million taels of silver to recruit and fund an army to relieve his home province of Shanxi. Chongzhen said that such an offer should not be made lightly causing Li to reply dramatically, “If not me, then who?”<sup>17</sup> Li said he would be assisted by another scholar, Shi Long, who would raise volunteers from Gansu, Ningxia, and other areas in the northwest. While some officials pointed out the unfeasibility of the plan, others argued that Shanxi was still somewhat intact so the plan had some chance of success.<sup>18</sup> This was what Chongzhen wanted to hear and he approved the plan immediately while disregarding the important fact that Li Jiantai had no practical military experience.<sup>19</sup> Li suggested commanders for the anticipated units and set about recruiting them in the capital region. Chongzhen hosted a celebratory banquet on March 4 (26<sup>th</sup> of 1<sup>st</sup> lunar month) in Li’s honor as he prepared to depart the capital, personally serving him wine and giving him scrolls bearing the emperor’s own prized calligraphy.<sup>20</sup> Civil and military officials were arrayed in 19 rows in front of the emperor and all drank from gilded chalices.<sup>21</sup> He gushed to Li at the banquet, “As you depart, it is as if I were going myself!”<sup>22</sup> He also gave Li the double-edged sword of authority.

Chongzhen would also personally see the expeditionary force off as they departed the capital through the Zhengyang Gate south of the Forbidden City.<sup>23</sup> Drums beat and banners waved as the emperor looked on. Onlookers claimed that the departing force was 100,000 strong.<sup>24</sup> It seemed as if help had arrived at the eleventh hour. But not all were convinced of the army’s impending success. The night of its departure Beijing was buffeted by great winds and someone said, “This is not auspicious for mobilizing an army.”<sup>25</sup> There were other ill portents. News came of an earthquake in Nanjing and the harness of Li Jiantai’s carriage broke soon after he departed, though he remained in high spirits.

More significantly, Li’s so-called army was no more than a collection of the capital’s ne’er-do-wells and riffraff, full of “dandies, spoiled rich kids, space fillers, and incompetents” in the words of a modern scholar.<sup>26</sup> More than half this mob deserted before they were even 100 *li* from Beijing. They moved a mere 30 *li* per day and as soon as they reached Zhuozhou, some 3,000 capital garrison units deserted, returning to Beijing. The rest scattered well before they had participated in any serious fighting and for some time the court had no news of Li Jiantai’s fate, as various rumors circulated in Beijing.<sup>27</sup> Many local officials refused to open their gates to supply or host this rabble army. Ironically Li Jiantai’s own hometown was looted!<sup>28</sup> Even as soon as three days after the army’s departure when the emperor asked his Minister of War Li’s whereabouts, the official had



*Figure 7.1* Image of Li Jiantai departing Beijing

no idea. This infuriated Chongzhen, who exclaimed, “How can my Minister of War not know this?”<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, the emperor continued to issue a veritable stream of directives and proclamations and continually invited the ranking ministers and supervising secretaries to submit plans for the national defense, especially against the rising tide of the peasant rebels. One prefect suggested replacing all the civil official supreme coordinators with military officers.<sup>30</sup> Chongzhen observed that the constant flight of officials sapped public morale and that anyone who deserted their posts would be severely punished, while calling for the continued stout defense of all prefectures and counties.<sup>31</sup> But by this point, the Ming state was clearly losing the propaganda war as well as the military battles. As one official noted to the emperor, the peasants were flocking to the rebel side because they were oppressed by the officials, who continually exploited them and clothed themselves and their families with the taxes squeezed from the masses.<sup>32</sup> So the emperor needed to get in and take from the wealthy and give to the poor, which was Li Zicheng’s strategy. For their part, as they advanced north, Li Zicheng’s forces sought to maintain strict discipline. In advance of the army placards were posted indicating that the troops were forbidden from looting, raping, and plundering and that once Li was ensconced as ruler, taxes would be remitted.<sup>33</sup> Towns that resisted, however, were utterly destroyed “with not a blade of grass left standing.”<sup>34</sup>

Taking some personal responsibility while simultaneously urging his officials to rectify their behavior, Chongzhen tried to stimulate his underlings to action

by reiterating the bestowal of huge rewards and hereditary titles of nobility for anyone who brought him the head of Li Zicheng or Zhang Xianzhong.<sup>35</sup> In one meeting Chongzhen lamented:

We've been in this state for a long time because I've got no one with any plans. So now we've arrived at this! Now if you can come to an accord with my sentiments then when I make a decision how can you not follow my directives? Moreover, you plot secretly.<sup>36</sup>

He also continued to dispatch his trusted eunuch officials to the frontier to serve as army inspectors or even commanders.<sup>37</sup> As always, this elicited considerable opposition from the officials in the “outer” bureaucracy, but the emperor remained fiercely defensive of this policy, telling one critic, “If you officials all exhausted yourselves in service to the state then maybe I would not have to rely on the Inner Court ministers, would I?”<sup>38</sup>

On the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of 1644 Chongzhen held a personal audience with Wu Xiang, Sangui’s father, to discuss the state of the capital armies. The emperor noted that popular reports maintained that the rebel armies were one million strong and wanted to know what the Ming could counter this force with. After reassuring the monarch that the real strength of the peasant armies was more likely around 100,000, Wu gave the emperor a sobering but telling assessment. He told Chongzhen that while the paper strength of his armies around the capital was 80,000, in fact he had only about 30,000 and only about 3,000 of those – all of whom were his personal housemen – could truly be considered reliable. After expressing his apprehension that a mere 3,000 could resist an army of one million or even a hundred thousand, Chongzhen wondered how much it would cost to ready this force. He was taken aback again when Wu suggested that he needed a million taels, but the general reminded him that supplies and pay were 14 months in arrears and that such a sum could help supply those still outside the pass who would be summoned to help defend the capital. Chongzhen protested that he had only 70,000 taels in the capital vaults, but that he could possibly raise 200,000 to 300,000 more from around the capital. But he was hamstrung by Minister of War Ni Yuanlu’s report that basic border defense costs were running at 400,000 taels a month.<sup>39</sup>

At this juncture some officials revisited the notion of the “Southern Tour,” or at least sending the Heir Apparent south, but the proposal was once again rejected.<sup>40</sup> Chongzhen glared at them and retorted:

So this is what all you ministers are saying? Now the country has come to this and there is not a single loyal or righteous minister who wishes to share the plight of the court. But you continue to plot like this? That a country’s ruler should die for the ancestral altars has been the right way for all times. So my will is resolved and I’ll hear no more talk of this!<sup>41</sup>

In fact, as later conversations demonstrated, the emperor was not as steely in this position as suggested.

Publicly at least, the emperor had resigned himself to going down with the ship of state and apparently taking his family with him. Officials continued to press the monarch for funds for the army, though he claimed the coffers were empty. He instead offered various hereditary emoluments for military commanders and pressed his officials to ferret out Li Zicheng's spies, who had infiltrated not only the localities but also the capital itself.<sup>42</sup> Attempting to gird the capital for a possible siege by the rebels, Chongzhen asked for an assessment of food stores. When he was told that they were not good, the desperate monarch told his officials to donate supplies and horses. Some, including several court eunuchs, gave tens of thousands of taels and many received titles of nobility in exchange for their contributions.<sup>43</sup> However, despite the emperor's protestations of poverty, when Li's men seized the capital shortly thereafter they allegedly recovered some 3.7 million taels, enough to support the armies of the capital for two years!<sup>44</sup>

The die to stay put being cast, Chongzhen conferred with the officials of the Hanlin Academy concerning the defense of the city walls. The eunuch Wang Cheng'en was put in charge of defending Beijing.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, the news from the front was increasingly grim. Li Zicheng's forces captured the important city of Taiyuan, provincial capital of Shanxi, and advanced to the fortress town of Datong on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> lunar month (March 23), where the local commander surrendered after a brief struggle led by the local Ming prince.<sup>46</sup> At this point the court recalled the military commander Wu Sangui and Wang Yongji from the northeast, Tang Tong from Changping (just northwest of Beijing), and Liu Zeqing from Shandong, which was southeast of the capital.<sup>47</sup> All were given further hereditary titles of nobility. Tang took charge of defending the capital garrisons and dispatched eunuchs to hold Juyong Pass, joining them soon thereafter with about 8,000 troops.<sup>48</sup>

The recall of Wu was especially notable because he had been posted at Ningyuan, which was the last forward Ming base in Liaodong.<sup>49</sup> Bringing him to Beijing effectively meant abandoning all defenses against the Manchus in the northeast. Moreover, Wu himself was rather ambivalent concerning his orders and he seemed reluctant to heed the emperor's call. He complained that he was responsible for a large number of Ming refugees at Ningyuan and that he would have to cover their retreat to Shanhaiguan. Then he still wanted to secure that pass against possible Manchu incursions. Plus, the Manchus had long been courting Wu, using former Ming commanders who had defected to their side to gain his allegiance to their cause. Some of these men, in addition to being his old battle comrades, were connected to Wu by blood or marriage. So even when Wu finally assented to the imperial order to abandon Ningyuan, he made his way in a rather leisurely fashion to Shanhaiguan, where he took a wait and see approach.<sup>50</sup>

### **The rebel armies advance**

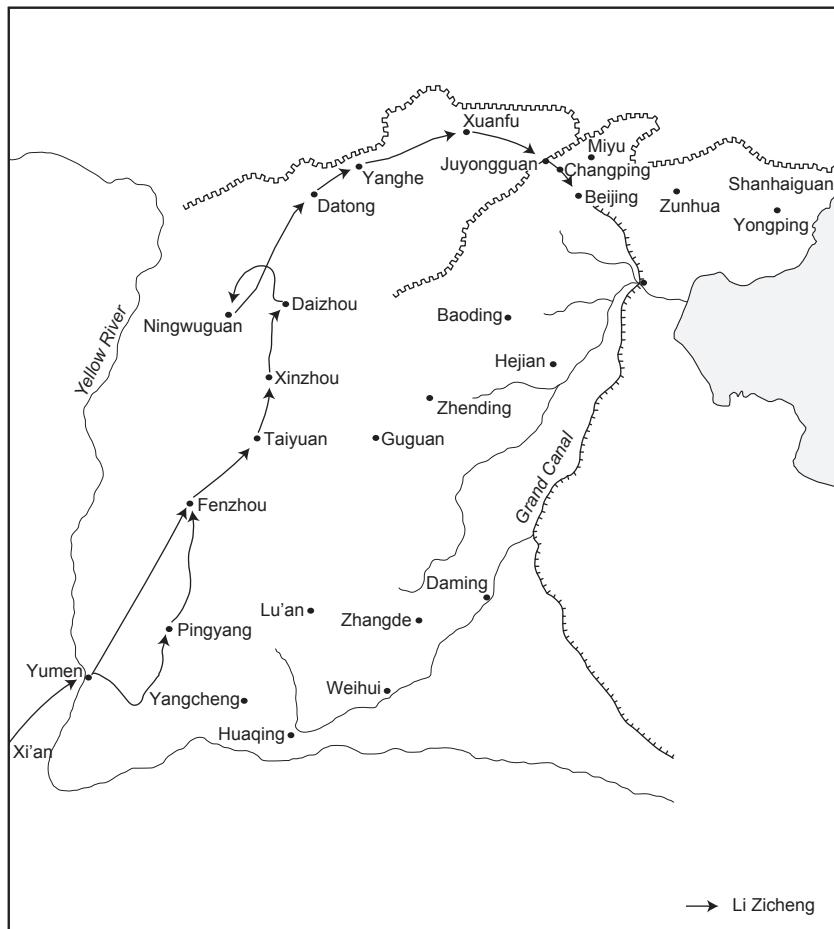
One of the few places where Ming forces made a decent account of themselves was Ningwu Pass, southwest of Datong. Its defender, Zhou Youji, held out for three days, killing some 10,000 rebel troops before running out of gunpowder.

Resolving to martyr himself for the Ming cause, Zhou led a desperate sally forth from the gates of the pass. Its ferocity surprised the rebels, who lost several thousand more men and were forced to temporarily pull back. They returned in greater numbers and forced the defenders back into the pass. Zhou fought to the bitter end, cutting down rebels with his short sword until he was overwhelmed and captured. Li lost four experienced commanders in the engagement. Given the option of joining Li's forces, Zhou cursed the rebels, whereupon they cut his corpse to pieces before the masses in Ningwu. Even Zhou's wife was said to have plied a bow from the ramparts until she too was killed.<sup>51</sup> Zhou's body was so filled with arrows that he looked like a hedgehog.<sup>52</sup> Li Zicheng was greatly impressed remarking, "If all the defending commanders were like General Zhou then how could I have gotten this far?"<sup>53</sup>

The rebels crossed the Yellow River at Yumen and were welcomed by locals in many places. They neared Taiyuan in the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of 1644, laying siege to it on the 26<sup>th</sup>. The people were fearful but hoped to hold out until Li Jiantai's troops arrived. Li Zicheng sent an emissary forth to urge surrender, but he was executed. The Ming then sent a pair of commanders out to do battle, but both were killed, along with many men. So the local Prince of Jin contributed 3,000 taels of his own funds to the defense of the city, joining the people atop the walls.<sup>54</sup> The fighting raged and on the night of the 7<sup>th</sup> a great wind fanned flames in a thunderstorm. Amid this fracas the rebel forces breached the south gate. Some surrendered at once and resistance was made futile by the igniting of the gunpowder stores. By dawn the city was engulfed in flames, towers were crumbling and people were scrambling away. The Shun forces entered on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> month.<sup>55</sup> While in Taiyuan, Li made a big show of disciplining the troops and preventing them from harming the masses. As Li's armies occupied Taiyuan, far to the south Zhang Xianzhong was entering Sichuan.

Datong fell on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> month. The Ming prince at Datong did not want to surrender so the soldiers killed him and opened the gates for Li. Li then met with the local pacification commissioner and offered him a position in Li's regime, giving him three days to decide. When he refused to join the rebels, Li said, "You are a loyal minister. I'll arrange for your corpse to be transported to your ancestral home." The man asked to be killed quickly, but Li refused to kill him so he hung himself in a temple.<sup>56</sup> Li later sent his family 50 taels to pay for transporting the coffin. Li then killed the prince and his retainers. After staying at Datong for six days Li moved on to Xuanfu. The local official readied to defend the city but the Xuanfu guard was commanded by the younger brother of the Ming officer who had submitted to Li at Yulin. So they simply turned the city over to Li, prompting the pacification commissioner to take his own life. The people welcomed Li into the city by burning incense.<sup>57</sup>

Changping fell on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> month, the local commander slitting his throat after felling several rebels with a spear.<sup>58</sup> Li's forces occupied Juyong Pass some three days later, Tang Tong capitulating without a fight.<sup>59</sup> The emperor continued to try and rally the capital's defenses by distributing cash rewards, ordering the creation of additional city watches and militia units, and by setting



Adapted from Des Forges, *Cultural Centrality and Political Change in Chinese History*.

*Figure 7.2* Map of Li Zicheng's advance on Beijing

heavy cannon atop the walls. He tried to extract contributions from eunuchs and capital officials, offering more noble titles in exchange for their funds.<sup>60</sup> Officials were appointed to oversee the defenses of each city gate.<sup>61</sup> Chongzhen convened a meeting to discuss supplies but got word that Changping had fallen. He lost color, got up, and left, pacing through the palace.<sup>62</sup> On the 16<sup>th</sup> the people of Beijing got word that the rebels had burned the Ming tombs northwest of the city.<sup>63</sup> That night Chongzhen allegedly wandered the halls of the Forbidden City screaming, “My ministers have failed me! Failed me!”<sup>64</sup>

Sending envoys ahead, Li tried to negotiate with the officials in Beijing to turn over the city without a fight and even offered to cut a deal with the emperor whereby Li would be recognized as a prince and would fight the Manchus on behalf of the Ming.<sup>65</sup> Sending the turncoat eunuch Du Xun into the Forbidden

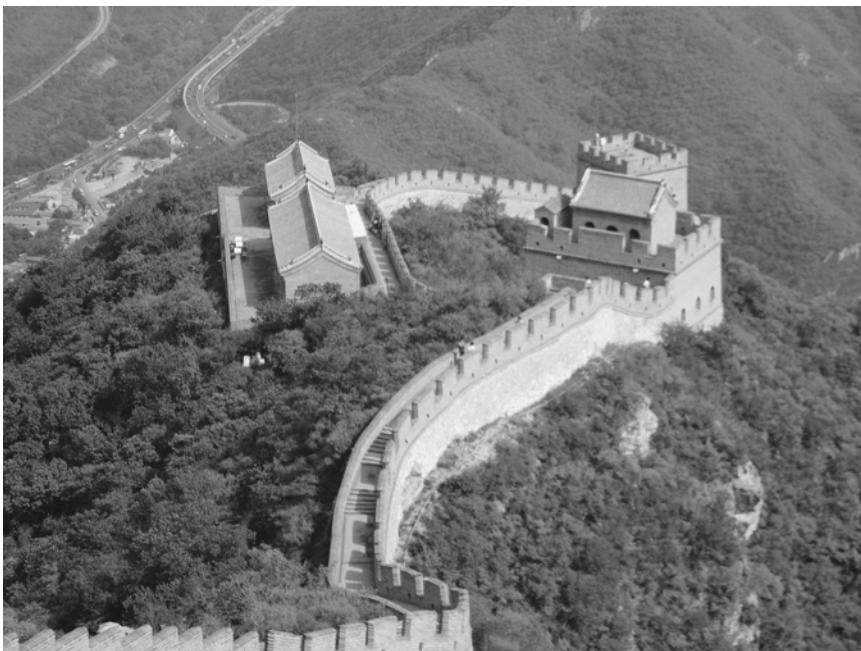


Figure 7.3 Juyong Pass

City as his envoy, Li's offer consisted of three major stipulations. First, Li was be formally enfeoffed as the Prince of Shun and all territory in the northwest, which Li currently controlled in any case, would be put under the jurisdiction of the Shun government. Second, the Shun would be given one million taels in cash, after which they would withdraw south of the Yellow River and defend Henan. Finally, while Li would not take orders from Chongzhen, he would offer the Ming military assistance in both quelling internal rebellions and in fighting the Manchus.<sup>66</sup>

### The fall of Beijing

According to some sources Chongzhen ignored Li's offer and conferred with his advisers once again. But others suggest that he considered Li's proposal fairly seriously, discussing it with the official Wei Caode. But when Wei refused to answer repeated queries from the emperor about the merits of such an agreement (presumably because he did not want assume responsibility for the decision), the emperor at last realized that death was the only option he had left.<sup>67</sup> He issued an order for his sons to go into hiding and then flee to the south.<sup>68</sup> He was told that no one was heeding his orders to defend the city walls and while officers took the time to whip one deserter, others just ran away.<sup>69</sup> The distraught emperor ordered the drafting of an edict repealing many of the taxes raised over a decade before to combat the Manchus and reiterating the offer of a hereditary marquis post for

anyone bringing him the head of Li Zicheng. He also issued a directive for all civil officials to kill themselves since they had done nothing to save the dynasty!<sup>70</sup> As the rebels started attacking the city gates many defenders simply fired powder shots, having already reached an accord with rebel agents.<sup>71</sup> Li's men had calculated well and knew that they would face little resistance once they got to Beijing. Their intelligence network was far reaching and they were well informed about conditions in the city, though Li was taking nothing for granted and felt that negotiating would not hurt his position.<sup>72</sup>

On the afternoon of the 18<sup>th</sup> of the 3<sup>rd</sup> month (April 24) one of Chongzhen's eunuchs gave the order for the city gates to be opened to the rebels. The rebels attacked the Xizhi Gate, but it held.<sup>73</sup> The people huddled in their homes as talks continued. Li promised amnesty to all who surrendered. When the rebels realized the cannons atop the walls were firing only powder they returned. The defenders at the gates panicked and ran.<sup>74</sup> Later that afternoon the rebels attacked the Zhangyi Gate and finally entered the city after a brief struggle.<sup>75</sup> The Desheng and Pingyi Gates fell next. Song Xianc predicted that if it rained the next day, the fates were favorable for Li's entry into the city.<sup>76</sup>

Around the same time the emperor issued an urgent directive for all military units to rush to the capital. But no one could get out and the message never reached the field commanders.<sup>77</sup> He then asked his inner court officials if the city gates had been breached and no one knew.<sup>78</sup> The emperor replied, "So now it's come to this? The officials all fight in the alleys [to escape] and no one takes responsibility for the country."<sup>79</sup> Chongzhen then put an official named Liu Wenbing in charge of rallying the populace to defend the city to which Liu replied, "If your majesty cannot do it, then how can I?"<sup>80</sup> That night Li Zicheng entered the city as rain fell and the common folk huddled fearfully in their homes.<sup>81</sup>

Bereft of reliable intelligence about the state of the city, Chongzhen climbed Coal Hill behind the Forbidden City and, seeing fires all around, knew that the city had already fallen to the enemy. After writing a directive putting the Duke of Chengguo in charge of military affairs, he went back into the Qianqing Palace in the Forbidden City and addressed the empress saying, "All is lost. As you are the Mother of All Under Heaven, you should die." She replied, "I have followed Your Highness for 18 years and I will die without a word; today we die together with the altars of state and we will have no more regrets."<sup>82</sup> After downing several cups of wine the emperor ordered the rest of the royal family to commit suicide, telling the younger ones to disguise themselves as commoners and flee for their lives. He apologized to them for bringing them into his unlucky family.<sup>83</sup> But while his wife and many other members of the royal entourage were able to do the deed, his young daughters could not bring themselves to commit suicide so the emperor killed the youngest, the Zhaowang Princess, with a sword.<sup>84</sup> But by this time he was quite drunk and only managed to sever the arm of his favorite daughter, the Changping Princess.<sup>85</sup> Lamenting her fate, he left her in a pool of her own blood, where she would be found, still alive, the next day by the peasant rebels. His sons had already been committed to the care of an official and were hiding in Beijing.<sup>86</sup>

That night a frigid wind blew over Beijing and in the early dawn hours Chongzhen and his last faithful eunuch servant, Wang Cheng'en, trudged to the base of Coal Hill, where they hung themselves from a tree.<sup>87</sup> The emperor reportedly left a suicide note that read in part:

My inadequate virtues and weak flesh have invited punishment from Heaven. Now the treacherous rebels are invading the capital. My officials have caused all this! I must die but I am ashamed to face my ancestors. Therefore I take off my crown and cover my face with my hair. Rebels! You can dismember my body, but do not harm the common people!<sup>88</sup>

Some later claimed to have seen strange lights in the sky or even a dragon, indicating that the emperor's soul had ascended to heaven.<sup>89</sup> His body would not be found for three days and rumors swirled that he had escaped to the south.

The day Chongzhen killed himself several court eunuchs and the Minister of War, Zhang Jinyan, welcomed Li Zicheng into the city at the same Zhengyang Gate where Chongzhen had feasted Li Jiantai just a few weeks earlier. Commoners around the city painted the words "Shun min" (Subjects of Shun) on their doors and burned incense in honor of the Dashing Prince. Others wrote posters proclaiming, "Long live the Great Prince of Shun!"<sup>90</sup> Some 300 literati welcomed Li at the gates, seeking to curry favor with the new lord of Beijing.<sup>91</sup> Li entered the city via the Desheng (Attaining Victory) Gate on a black horse, accompanied by 100 elite cavalry and his aides Song Xian and Niu Jinxing. As they entered the palace area, Niu predicted that if Li fired an arrow that hit the characters for Eternal Peace (*tian xia tai ping*) inscribed atop the gates, he would indeed bring peace to the realm. Li's shot went wide and landed in a moat. But Song claimed that it had split the characters so the omen was favorable.<sup>92</sup>

Eunuchs then gave Li and Liu Zongmin a tour of the palace. The first order of business for Li was determining the fate of the emperor. One widely circulating rumor was that Wu Sangui's troops had arrived in the middle of the night and spirited away the emperor, empress, and crown prince.<sup>93</sup> But Li was suspicious of the story in part because they had found the corpses of some members of the imperial retinue already, including the empress. He could not find Chongzhen's corpse in the palace so Li offered a 10,000 tael reward and a hereditary earldom for whoever found the body.<sup>94</sup> Li was disturbed upon seeing all those who committed suicide and ordered proper burials for them.<sup>95</sup> The rebels found the princess lying on the floor in a pool of blood next to her arm. She said, "My imperial father tried to reward me with death. How can I bear to live?"<sup>96</sup> She was saved and reportedly lived out her days as a Buddhist nun.

The emperor's body was found a couple days later, as were the imperial princes, who were hiding with an uncle. Li had the princes brought before him. According to one version of the story, Li asked the crown prince, "How could your family have lost All under Heaven?" The boy replied that it was because of the bad advice of ministers like Zhou Yanru. Li laughed and agreed.<sup>97</sup> The prince then asked, "Why haven't you killed me already?" Li replied, "Because you have



*Figure 7.4* Chongzhen's memorial on Coal Hill

committed no crime. I do not kill needlessly.” The prince responded, “I heard you were like this. But can you listen to my one request? Please don’t disturb our ancestral graves. And can you provide for a proper burial for my imperial mother and father? And third, don’t kill the common people.”<sup>98</sup> Li readily assented to the requests and made the crown prince the Prince of Song and his brother the Duke of Ta’an.<sup>99</sup> He also held a mourning ceremony for Chongzhen.

After these formal ceremonies were concluded eunuchs and officials started applying for positions with the Shun government, though Li personally expressed his distaste for those who sought to curry favor with the new regime so soon after their ruler had passed.<sup>100</sup> The bandit leaders divided up the palace ladies, taking 30 apiece.<sup>101</sup> But despite such an initial outpouring of goodwill, Li’s tenure in Beijing would be short indeed. Although he had issued orders prohibiting looting, discipline among his troops soon broke down and the commoners of Beijing were subjected to raping and looting, much of it conducted by Li’s own top lieutenants in what was euphemistically dubbed “scouring things.”<sup>102</sup> Officials were shaken down for “contributions” and charged fees for offices under the new government. Eunuchs were expected to contribute 100,000 taels each, ranking ministers 70,000, supervising secretaries 50,000, Hanlin officers 20,000, and lower ranks 1,000 taels apiece.<sup>103</sup> Many Ming officials killed themselves rather than face the

prospect of torture or sullyng their names by collaborating with the rebels.<sup>104</sup> The most money was extracted from the Earl of Jiading, Chongzhen's uncle, from whom they got 530,000 taels. Some sources claim the rebels got millions of taels from these schemes.<sup>105</sup> Yet, just weeks before, the earl had contributed only a few thousand taels when pressed by the emperor for funds.<sup>106</sup> Others, however, still sought positions with the new government and went before Li and Niu Jinxing for interviews.<sup>107</sup> Some were accepted, but others were slapped around or berated as disloyal sycophants, as in the case of Li Guozhen who was accused of destroying the state.<sup>108</sup>

There was some confusion as to what status Li actually claimed because he had not formally ascended the throne yet, although they did announce new names for some government offices. Part of this seems to have been due to Li's somewhat ambivalent feelings about having committed regicide. But there was also the military problem in the northeast. Li knew he had to act quickly on that front. On the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> month officials appealed to the new Ministry of Rites to establish the Shun Dynasty. There was no reply. Another request a few days later was also ignored. Finally Niu Jinxing announced that the enthronement would happen on the 17<sup>th</sup>. But no sooner had these plans been made than they got word that Wu Sangui was coming with troops. At the same time someone foretold defeat on the battlefield in the east. It was not clear if he sought battle or not, but it was deemed an inauspicious time for enthronement.<sup>109</sup>

## The battle of Shanhaiguan

On the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> month Li set forth to meet the enemy, leaving Niu Jinxing in command of Beijing. That night Niu beheaded some 60 former Ming officials outside the Donghua Gate.<sup>110</sup> Li's other lieutenants were similarly unrestrained. Even though rebel strength in Beijing was but 10–20 percent of what it had been, rape and looting was common and many hid or fled for their lives. People were “treated like chickens to be tossed in a pot of soup,” according to one observer.<sup>111</sup> In one *hutong* some 370 women were raped in a single night. It was obvious that simply getting to Beijing and plundering its beauties and riches was the end goal for many of Li's followers. The goodwill they enjoyed just weeks earlier evaporated. Gathering their loot on mules and camels many of Li's followers simply went home to Shaanxi in his absence. Liu Zongmin, Li's long-time military aid, was the worst of the offenders and his thugs regularly swept through the city.<sup>112</sup>

While Li took Beijing, Wu Sangui had remained ensconced at Shanhaiguan, weighing his options. Li Zicheng captured Wu's father, General Wu Xiang, as well as his girlfriend, the fabled beauty Chen Yuanyuan, in Beijing and tried to use them as bargaining chips to gain Wu's allegiance against the Manchus. Wu Xiang rejected the notion that his son might defect, calling him loyal and filial.<sup>113</sup> Tang Tong was sent with a letter attributed to Wu Xiang asking his son to submit to Li. It was most likely penned by Niu Jinxing. At the same time Li sent letters to Zuo Liangyu and other Ming generals telling them that Wu had already submitted to him.<sup>114</sup> But when Wu learned through family contacts that

other members of his clan had been subjected to abuses by the peasant rebels, he chose to cast his lot with the Manchus. Or so goes one version of events.<sup>115</sup> Li's armies first clashed with Wu's advance forces on the 19<sup>th</sup> at Shahe post station near Yongping. But Li miscalculated in putting these troops under the command of the turncoats Bai Guang'en and Tang Tong. Wu got the better of it that day and badly mauled Li's troops the next day as well. He had also rejected Li's overtures, though he had asked Li to send him the crown prince and then they could talk.<sup>116</sup> When Wu sent Li a letter rejecting his offers, Li was enraged and threatened to kill Wu Xiang who was still his captive.<sup>117</sup> Wu decided to pull back to Shanhaiguan, which was easier to defend.<sup>118</sup>

A few horsemen returned to Beijing with news of the rebel defeat and there was widespread speculation that Wu Sangui would soon arrive with the Heir Apparent to restore the Ming. A placard was posted on Chang'an Avenue that read, "The spirit of the Ming Dynasty has not been extinguished. Its people are still loyal. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of this month an emperor will be enthroned in the eastern palace with the reign title Yixing (Righteousness Restored)."<sup>119</sup> Liu Zongmin investigated and arrested some commoners suspected of writing the treasonous words. He then issued his own proclamation explaining how the Mandate of Heaven clearly lay with the Dashing Prince.<sup>120</sup> But Liu then had a dream foretelling his defeat in battle. It was decided that the Shun would take the attack to Wu again, this time in more force. Li and Liu went forth with an army of around 80,000.

Wu realized that militarily the Manchus represented more of a sure thing and his own interests would be better served by joining their side. So after lengthy negotiations with Prince Dorgon, Wu arranged to allow the Manchu armies to enter China proper through Shanhaiguan in exchange for their help in battling Li Zicheng. In fact Zu Dashou, Wu's uncle, had been negotiating with him since the capture of Jinzhou the previous year.<sup>121</sup> While Wu initially hoped to be recognized as perhaps even the next ruler of a restored Ming state, he settled for recognition as a semi-independent prince under the Manchus, a rank consistent with than given to some other prominent Ming defectors.<sup>122</sup> Even as talks were progressing, Dorgon remained suspicious of Wu's motives.

But avenging the Ming by helping wipe out the peasant rebels lent a bit of luster to the otherwise suspect reputations of men such as Wu and Hong Chengchou. Such an arrangement suited the Manchus as well, for it allowed them to appear as the avengers of the Ming against the peasant rebels and conveniently obscured the fact that they too had been fighting the Ming for decades.<sup>123</sup> Indeed, this was part of Dorgon's strategy since taking charge of affairs after the death of Hung Taiji.<sup>124</sup> He had also been told by Hong Chengchou that a strong, fast strike could cripple the peasant rebel forces because they had been fighting for over a decade and were not used to disciplined resistance.<sup>125</sup> Given his experience fighting the rebels, Hong's words carried a great degree of credibility. Incidentally, Dorgon had also contemplated striking at Beijing via Inner Mongolia, but Wu's offer of an alliance solved that problem for him.

After the talks had finally been concluded Wu welcomed the advance force of 140,000 Qing troops at Shanhaiguan and concluded a blood oath with them.<sup>126</sup>

The day he got the letter Dorgon resolved to race to the pass fearing that it would be tough to breach if Li was victorious and able to secure it. The Qing army supposedly covered 100 *li* in a single day and night.<sup>127</sup> Dorgon was welcomed with honor. It was agreed that Wu's army would serve as the vanguard. From the Qing perspective having Wu take the brunt of the hard fighting would ensure that he was not strong enough to stand up to them should he have a change of heart. Wu's troops were given white handkerchiefs to tie to their weapons and mounts to distinguish them from Li's forces.

In fact Li had made several mistakes prior to the battle and his chances of success were actually quite slim. For one, the number of troops he had was less than he had originally projected. Li wanted to go forth with around 100,000 men, but he had no more than 80,000, and maybe less. Second, many of his commanders and troops were recent turncoats like Tang Tong and Bai Guang'en. These men had hardly distinguished themselves as commanders. Furthermore, morale was not high among Li's men. As noted above, many had seen Beijing as the ultimate goal and they were eager to get back to the capital to enjoy what they viewed as their rightful spoils. Additionally, although there were some experienced units, most of the peasant rebels had not fought troops the caliber of the Manchus or even those under Wu Sangui. In terms of intelligence, Li failed to seriously consider the possibility that Wu might join the Qing. So he was very surprised when he saw how things developed on the battlefield. Finally, the Shun armies advanced very deliberately, perhaps because Li hoped that a negotiated solution might be reached.

On May 27–28 the two sides met on the field of battle outside Shanhaiguan. Shanhaiguan included multiple bastions. Three outlying castles guarded the approach to the pass. Wu arrayed his main defense line at the west bank of Shihe. Li detailed 40,000 of his troops to crash right into Wu's main line. Wu fell back towards the main castle and sent 20,000 men from the north and west to cut off Shun escape routes. In the initial fighting there were equal losses on both sides and Wu was concerned that he might be defeated so he sent a missive to Dorgon, requesting his aid. The forces battled through the night and Dorgon still resisted Wu's requests for assistance. But as the tide began to turn, Dorgon sent two waves of 20,000 cavalry in to prepare to envelop Li's army.

The full-scale battle started the next day with a cannonade. Wu led the charge but the Shun forces resisted stoutly. They gradually drove Wu's men back towards the pass. The bastion of Beiyicheng had already fallen to Li when the Manchu cavalry struck. Ajige and Dodo led 20,000 cavalry of the White Banner from Wu's right. Wu's men then rallied as Shun morale crumbled and they reaped a grim harvest, the cries of the dying piercing the air as Li's troops stampeded over their own as they tried to flee. Li was directing the battle from a high position, the Ming crown prince in tow, when he saw the change on the field, but he presumed the new forces were Wu's cavalry. Around the same time the Qing swept in a great dust storm arose, causing even more confusion. Out of the dust Qing arrows rained down "like a swarm of locusts."<sup>128</sup> Li, seeing the Qing army in front and Wu's army coming from the right, sent in his reinforcements to try

and rally. An aide told Li that the new units in the field were Manchus. He moved closer to see for himself and heard someone shout, “The Tartars have come!”<sup>129</sup> The Shun forces were driven towards the sea and many drowned.

The Shun army collapsed rapidly. Liu Zongmin’s horse was killed and the Shun lost 15 commanders. They retreated 40 *li* to Yongping and finally killed Wu Xiang. The fate of the crown prince and his brother is unknown. Li’s army returned to Beijing on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> month and celebrated their return by raping their way through the capital.<sup>130</sup> Li’s bedraggled forces then looted the city and fled before the invaders after a hastily staged enthronement ceremony for Li. Li finally declared himself emperor on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> month. It is unclear and probably unlikely that an earlier such declaration would have garnered him more popular support given the behavior of his associates, but it was clear to all in the capital that this was a farce. The rebels left the city the very next day, laden with loot amid the derisive calls of the ravaged populace.<sup>131</sup>

The Manchu Prince Dorgon, still serving as regent for the child Emperor Shunzhi, entered Beijing in the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> month of 1644 and announced to the people that they were now under Qing rule.<sup>132</sup> Li fled west to Shaanxi, seeing his armies crumble as he retreated to Xi'an. Over the next six months his authority would disintegrate throughout the areas he had formerly captured, as Ming loyalists, semi-independent warlords, and Qing forces captured districts and towns from Li’s appointees. Li’s close advisers also turned against one another as Niu Jinxing intrigued to have Li Yan executed in the summer of 1644. Taiyuan fell to the Qing in the fall of 1644 and Tong Pass was breached after heavy fighting at the start of 1645. Li’s remaining commanders and forces regrouped at Xi'an, before retreating southeast into Henan before the Qing advance. Li’s armies dispersed further at this point and Li finally ended up in the vicinity of Mount Jiugong with a mere twenty followers in mid-summer of 1645, hotly pursued by the Manchu prince Ajige.

The exact circumstances of Li’s death remain a matter of some dispute. One account maintains that Li hung himself after being surrounded by a band of angry peasants from whom he stole food. But by the time his corpse was recovered it had decayed beyond recognition. Another version of events relates that Li was beaten to death by angry peasants who did not even know who he was (presumably also after he stole food), but identified him later by his seals, fine clothes and missing left eye. His body was then turned over to the Southern Ming authorities who decapitated it. Still another account relates that Li’s men scattered and no one knows what became of him. The only one among Li’s followers who survived was his nephew Li Guo, who, ironically, like Zhang Xianzhong’s former subordinates, eventually defected to the Southern Ming and served them as a military commander.<sup>133</sup> Song Xiance would lament that his “Lord was no more than a horseback king, not the Son of Heaven.”<sup>134</sup>

Zhang Xianzhong, being based in distant and rugged Sichuan, would hold out until 1647, ravaging the province to a degree that is almost unfathomable, as will be discussed in the next chapter. Ming loyalist forces, many of them ironically commanded by former lieutenants of Zhang Xianzhong, would hold

out on the mainland until 1662.<sup>135</sup> Other remnants would resist the Qing on Taiwan until 1683. But history marks the fall of the Ming in 1644 with the death of Chongzhen. And while he himself chose to blame his ministers to the bitter end, ultimate responsibility for the collapse of the empire lay at his feet. As one recent historian has observed, the fall of the Ming was due to an administration that “could no longer manage its resources, utilize its strengths, and maintain its focus.”<sup>136</sup> Eventually the accumulation of political, strategic, and tactical errors grew too great to overcome but all of these were the product of conscious, albeit not always rational, choices. But with the proper leader at the helm and the proper delegation of authority and allocation of resources, the ship could be righted. This was proven by the amazing success of the Qing dynasty which retained many of the administrative and legal practices of the Ming, as well as the basic structures of government, but endeavored to root out corruption at all levels. In the final assessment, human choices and individual agency still matter.

## 8 The fall of the Ming from a global perspective

The fall of the Ming dynasty has captivated people for centuries. After all, how could the wealthiest, most powerful empire in the world succumb to ragtag bands of peasant rebels and recently unified tribal peoples from a backward frontier? Traditionally the fall of the Ming was couched in the standard terms of the dynastic cycle, whereby a corrupt, ossified regime collapsed in upon itself and a more vigorous government that served the interests of the people came in to take its place and restore order. Of course, as the present work has hopefully demonstrated, matters were far more complicated than this. As the authors of *The Cambridge History of China* volume on the Ming observed more than two decades ago, “any attempts to pass over late Ming history with facile references to the inexorable workings of the dynastic cycle should be quickly and firmly rejected.”<sup>1</sup> There were a multitude of reasons for the fall of the Ming dynasty, some of which had something in common with earlier dynastic collapses, but many of which were specific to the era in question. Most importantly, recent scholarship has identified the great degree to which the Ming were integrated into wider world developments, both economically and ecologically. Many of these developments were far beyond the capacity of the Ming, or indeed any government, to anticipate or direct. The present study has endeavored only to illuminate the military dimensions of the collapse because previous works, most notably Frederic Wakeman’s magisterial *The Great Enterprise*, have amply chronicled political and social developments, in particular the rise and consolidation of Manchu power.

Yet lest this work appear to cast the Ming in too negative a light, it must be remembered that “Despite enormous differences in climate, topography, agriculture, population density, language, and local customs, not to mention differences in transportation and communication, Ming officials did an admirable job in maintaining peace and stability in this huge expanse of territory for much of the dynasty’s 276-year history.”<sup>2</sup> And even at the dynasty’s end, the Ming retained the loyalty of a great number of its officials. Official chronicles and local records alike are replete with accounts of martyrs. While some of these accounts seem to conform to expected tropes, there are far too many to dismiss them as mere literary inventions. Though numbers are difficult to quantify, it seems that the Ming had more loyalist martyrs than any preceding dynasty.<sup>3</sup> So the Ming must

have been doing something right to inspire such devotion, particularly given the fact that with a few aberrations, the Manchus were generally receptive to the employment of former Ming officials and did not engage in massive bloodlettings on ethnic grounds. For the remainder of this chapter we will recap some of the most important specific causes for the military collapse of the Ming, as well as examine how the Ming were plugged into broader world developments. Finally we will briefly consider some of the areas that might invite further comparative study by military historians.

## Factors specific to the Ming

What is initially most striking about the military collapse of the Ming is the importance of individual agency. While I am not going to argue for Great Man Theory, it is still obvious that many of the mistakes made at the end of the Ming could have been avoided if particular actors, most notably the emperors, had made different decisions. The Ming political system invested a tremendous amount of power in its emperors and they had the ability to affect policies in ways that are perhaps unfathomable to modern readers. Yet they were also constrained by a political order that encouraged factionalism and sought to balance power between both blocs of civil officials and the civilian and military arms of the government in order to counter potential challenges to the throne. And, as F. W. Mote observed, “The range of political choices open to statesmen and rulers in the early seventeenth century did not include the choice to analyze and correct structural faults in the political order.”<sup>4</sup> In short, it was not the system that was the problem in their eyes, it was the people running it. If only the right people with the proper morals could be put into place, the other problems would rectify themselves. So whatever his personal failings, and as we have seen there were many indeed, Chongzhen cannot really be blamed for failing to revise the political structure he inherited. But he can be faulted for “failing to make sound choices from among the administrative and policy options that were within his grasp, options which could well have made things work again.”<sup>5</sup> In the end the fatal circumstances of the Ming were brought about by “an administration that simply could no longer manage its resources, utilize its strengths, and maintain its focus. The fall of the Ming was, in short, caused by an accumulation of political errors, not by the underlying element of the system’s inadequacies.”<sup>6</sup>

One huge problem faced by the late Ming emperors was the factionalism of the bureaucracy, which in turn politicized virtually every aspect of Ming governance. Certainly by the late Ming “political rather than military concerns drove the defense system.”<sup>7</sup> Within this environment of fluid political competition anyone might be sacrificed for his rivals’ advantage. Such problems were exacerbated by weak or vacillating rulers. In other words, a despotic political system does not function at its best in the absence of a good despot. There needed to be someone to provide a sense of purpose and direction. For all his faults as a ruler, at least in the military realm, Wanli had been such a figure for the better part of his reign. His successors could make no such claims. Taichang did not rule long

enough to do anything of note. Tianqi was too mentally limited and personally sheltered regardless of the degree to which one believes eunuchs ran the show. And Chongzhen was such a mercurial, paranoid micro-manager that he probably accelerated rather than slowed the Ming collapse, despite his best intentions. Had he left his best commanders to their own devices and truly entrusted them with their command responsibilities for extended periods, then many of the military disasters experienced by the Ming could well have been avoided. Frederick Mote opines that Hong Chengchou, for example, could well have destroyed the peasant rebellions had he been left in the northwest and then perhaps even handled the Manchu threat.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, the decision to execute Yuan Chonghuan was disastrous, even if it is unclear that Yuan could have prevented the butterfly effect that resulted from the execution of Mao Wenlong. Certainly no one else had the potential to do so. The final decision to force Sun Chuanting into the field against Li Zicheng is another striking example of Chongzhen's mismanagement.

Then there was the problem of civil-military relations and the increasing militarization of Ming society.<sup>9</sup> Confucian trained officials were often ill-equipped to handle military problems or manage military campaigns. The result was that they often devised plans that looked great on paper but were hard to implement. Others simply quoted lines from the military classics or parroted one another with facile remarks on the importance of training and morale. While such things are of course important, more concrete suggestions, as well as real implementation of such plans, were needed. As Yimin Zhang observes, "with the increasing militarization of the period, they neither knew how to effectively control the Ming military officials and regular soldiers with whom they were supposed to cooperate nor how to deal with local military forces."<sup>10</sup> Civil officials often lacked the social connections and skill sets to effectively mobilize local military groups. This is not to say that local officials were never successful in coordinating such defensive activities for we have seen several such examples herein. But such cases were the exception rather than the rule. This state of affairs was aggravated by the fact that civil officials also often disdained their military counterparts, though this writer disagrees with the conclusion of PLA veteran Jiang Yonghong who contends that the Ming fell because of a general inability or unwillingness to sustain military traditions.<sup>11</sup>

In fact there was a growing awareness of the need for officials to combine both civil and military talents and an increasing number of civil officials cultivated ties with their military counterparts in the late Ming, as discussed by Kathleen Ryor.<sup>12</sup> But in general there were not enough local officials with the talent or civic spirit to organize such measures. What is perhaps most striking about this is that the records suggest that the peasant rebel armies typically avoided centers of tough resistance, especially prior to 1641 when their numbers greatly expanded. So perhaps had something akin to Lu Xiangsheng's blockhouse strategy been widely implemented, then the countryside could have been pacified. In some ways the solution was as simple as locking one's car to deter theft. But it would have required clear central direction and sustained implementation, neither of which were Chongzhen's forte. Yet, as many realized, local stability and security

were vital to preventing people from joining the ranks of the rebels. But with so many problems multiplying the emperor's attention never lingered in one place for too long.

Another huge problem for the Ming and one that was endemic to all Chinese dynasties was corruption. Contemporary sources often ascribed much of this to the eunuchs, but in fact as we have seen throughout the present work, it permeated all of Ming officialdom. When requesting supplies or projecting their delivery officials routinely factored in amounts that would be skimmed off along the way. In many cases it was estimated that barely 10–20 percent of requested funds or supplies reached their destinations. The Ming emperors tried to correct this by appointing army inspectors, eunuch and otherwise, but these appointments themselves were often viewed as an opportunity for graft on the part of the appointees. This corruption was extended to the tax system as well where local magnates bribed officials to hide the amount of land or property they owned in order to keep their taxes low. In fact from the middle to the end of the Ming the amount of taxable land dropped by more than half while the population nearly doubled.<sup>13</sup> Then, when the state was forced to increase taxes for military expenses, the costs were simply passed along to the peasants. In desperation many commuted their lands to more powerful individuals in exchange for lower rents or simply fled, often becoming bandits. In fact, while Ming records are in concurrence about the massive tax increases of the dynasty's last several decades, in theory based on population and land records, the state should have been able to collect far more than it needed for both defense and regular administration had the available tax records been accurate and properly assessed and collected.<sup>14</sup> This is despite the fact that by the last decade of the Ming, military costs were twenty times non-military expenses and five times the total spending of the government in 1590.<sup>15</sup> The empire was potentially that wealthy but its tax base, grounded in the land tax and based on faulty records, was fossilized.

Excessive eunuch power is yet another perceived cause of the fall of the Ming dynasty.<sup>16</sup> It is true that the number and influence of eunuchs in the late Ming period was greater than it had been in some earlier eras. But as Henry Tsai has demonstrated, because of the general shortage of regular official posts in the bureaucracy and the huge burden placed on Ming rulers to handle paperwork and the daily business of governance, eunuchs were indispensable to the system.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, they should be regarded as virtually an extra branch of government, pardon the phrase. The charges most often leveled at eunuchs were that they were greedy, corrupt, and militarily incompetent. While all of these were true to varying extents, the same charges could be leveled at regular outer court Ming officials. And from the perspective of the throne, Chongzhen's logic actually made sense. He trusted no one in the regular bureaucracy so he saw the eunuchs as the best way to exercise the imperial will and provide him with unbiased sources of information. Using eunuchs also helped to circumvent the cumbersome Ming bureaucracy wherein it could take weeks or months to appoint and deploy an official or issue an order. The main problem was that outer court officials were jealous of the eunuchs' access to the monarch and their ability to influence

policy, not to mention challenge their own privileged place in Ming society. Their virulent opposition to successive emperors sending out eunuch tax collectors provides ample evidence of this fact.<sup>18</sup> However, it must be admitted that the continued employment of eunuchs in supervisory positions had an extremely deleterious effect on the morale of the bureaucracy as a whole. In that sense it was an important factor in the fall of the Ming from a military standpoint. Wanli had generally refrained from employing eunuchs in important military positions. His successors did not and it had fatal consequences for them.

### **Connections to global trends**

The Ming dynasty was connected to global developments to a degree unprecedented in Chinese history, at least in terms of its integration into what was becoming a global economy. Some scholars basically credit the Ming for creating world trade. As Dennis Flynn and Arturo Giraldez have argued, “the single product most responsible for world trade was silver.”<sup>19</sup> And the Ming Empire was the engine that drove that trade. China “drew as much as twenty percent of all silver mined in Spanish America directly,” and “as much as half of the precious metals mined in the New World may have thus ended up in China” as a result of additional trade via China’s tributary states.<sup>20</sup> This was largely because silver was overvalued in China compared to the rest of the world and of course because of the huge population of the Ming Empire. China’s desire for silver was impelled by changes in the tax system in the sixteenth century whereby taxes formerly collected in kind were collected in silver.<sup>21</sup> Along with the lifting of a ban on overseas trade, the Ming state became increasingly monetized and commercialized, though at least one scholar contends that the commercialization of the Ming economy is actually what stimulated foreign trade and encouraged silver imports rather than the other way around.<sup>22</sup> Among other things, this facilitated the transition to a largely mercenary army, one whose pay rose rapidly in the last decades of the Ming, from the original hereditary system created by the Ming founder, though vestiges of that system remained.

But as positive as the influx of silver was in some areas, it created problems in others. For one, inflation spiraled in the late Ming. As might be expected this struck hardest among the poorer classes. And the poor generally paid taxes in copper and had to commute them into lump silver, suffering from both transaction fees and the higher price of silver relative to copper. Official salaries were fixed at artificially low levels, which encouraged the kind of embezzlement we have chronicled throughout the present work.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, the palace continued to spend huge sums of money on daily maintenance and for financing their eunuch offices. In addition to the emperor’s annual “allowance” of 400,000 taels per year, the court supported around 10,000 eunuchs and 9,000 palace ladies. This huge retinue consumed some 72,000 *shi* of rice every month, which was theoretically enough to feed 72,000 people for an entire year.<sup>24</sup> On top of this the court had delicacies and valuables brought in from all over the empire. Imperial extravagance was in turn emulated by the elites “with the result that ostentatious

display and conspicuous consumption became hallmarks of late Ming economic life.”<sup>25</sup> As contemporary Americans can empathize, such conspicuous consumption amid widespread dearth did not play well in Shaanxi.

There is also evidence that suggests a sudden downturn in silver supplies contributed to economic hardship and hastened the fall of the Ming, but scholars remain divided on both the statistics themselves and their potential impact. William Atwell highlights a great expansion of silver imports from Japan and the Americas in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that propelled the Ming economy in those decades. But when said imports declined in the 1630s as a result of changing policies in Acapulco and Japan, the Ming economy supposedly felt the pinch.<sup>26</sup> Such views are generally disputed by Asian scholars, who find that there was not a significant reduction in silver imports in the late Ming.<sup>27</sup> When silver sources from the Americas declined the Chinese simply went to Nagasaki. While acknowledging the important role played by international commerce in late Ming society, such scholars still tend to correctly highlight personal and institutional factors. For example, Brian Moloughney and Xia Weizhong conclude that, “the suicide of the Chongzhen emperor that marked the collapse of the Ming in 1644 was due more to factionalism and nepotistic squabbling that infected the late Ming bureaucracy than to the vicissitudes of international movements of bullion.”<sup>28</sup>

More striking than the descriptions of ostentation in the Ming sources are the poignant images of suffering and famine, most of them due to natural calamities. This is another area of analysis that is becoming increasingly popular as scholars of different regions find common experiences. The mid-seventeenth century was an era of tremendous strife, epidemics and mortality across the globe. Not only were conflicts more frequent, they were longer in duration.<sup>29</sup> This was “adversity unparalleled in modern times.”<sup>30</sup> In China, for example, as mentioned above, the amount of cultivated land fell from 191 million acres to 67 million acres from 1602 to 1645.<sup>31</sup> Stuart England and Ottoman Turkey experienced similar political upheavals engendered by wide-ranging ecological crises as “the same broad array of urban, elite, cultivator, and heterodox [actors] struggled against a fiscally weakened state.”<sup>32</sup> One reason such states were toppled was their nature. They did not have the same communication or support networks possessed by modern states, which as recent events in the United States and elsewhere have demonstrated, are still often hard pressed to respond to natural disasters. Governments were forced to maintain a careful balancing act and needed the cooperation of elites to implement relief programs and the like. Therefore, “any train of events that simultaneously led to fiscal deterioration, elite factionalism and disloyalty, and a major decline in popular living standards or the overturning of traditional popular rights threatened the ability of states to maintain their authority.”<sup>33</sup> Viewed in this light it is remarkable that the Ming lasted as long as they did.

With respect to the issue of legitimization it is fascinating to see the plethora of references to omens in the Ming literature. What might be surprising to some is that the writers rarely comment on the significance or interpretation of such phenomena. They are simply recorded in terse fashion. It is left to the reader to

decide their importance. Interestingly, Timothy Brook has recently highlighted the number of strange weather anomalies in China during the Ming period by tracking dragon sightings since these mythical beasts were traditionally associated with such things.<sup>34</sup> He takes the large number of dragon sightings to be a manifestation of concerns about such phenomena and an indicator of their frequency. The Ming people were of course not alone in ascribing supernatural causes to its problems.<sup>35</sup> The challenge for historians is to use such accounts to get a better sense of what was happening and then triangulate these with harder data, tree rings and other such materials. Together such materials present a picture of hardship that no state could have been expected to handle without serious trouble.

For example, historians have long realized that the seventeenth century witnessed the last of the so-called Little Ice Ages. The era was marked by less solar activity and a spate of volcanic eruptions that shot dust into the atmosphere and darkened the skies. Reduced solar energy meant that the polar ice caps were bigger and reflected more sunlight back into space, thereby resulting in cooler global temperatures, which were on average 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius colder.<sup>36</sup> This peaked around 1640, not coincidentally in the midst of the most violent political upheavals under consideration here.<sup>37</sup> Sometimes such conditions allowed for unexpected military outcomes as we saw with the Jin burning of the grain stores on Juehua Island after their defeat in the Battle of Ningyuan.<sup>38</sup> The sea would normally not have been frozen all the way out to the island but forty years of cooler temperatures allowed that to happen. And while that raid did not change the whole course of the war, it is quite possible that had the Ming retained those grain stores they would have been better able to follow up on the momentum generated by the victory at Ningyuan and implement Yuan Chonghuan's forward strategy.

And while there is no doubt that the Ming were negatively affected by the seventeenth-century crisis, a recent Chinese study finds that the late Ming period witnessed the *fewest* natural disasters of an era in the Ming as both a total percentage of incidents and in terms of the number of incidents per year.<sup>39</sup> However, it should be noted that the work in question breaks its periods by reigns rather than strict chronology, so the era defined as the "late Ming" dates from the Wanli reign. Furthermore, the Chongzhen era was especially afflicted, most significantly with extended drought. There were only two years during the entire Chongzhen reign (1631 and 1637) when drought was not reported. From 1637–43, for example, rainfall was down 12–51 percent per year.<sup>40</sup> Drought was so severe in Shandong that part of the Grand Canal dried up for the only time on record.<sup>41</sup> The drought was unsurprisingly most concentrated in the regions where the peasant rebellions flourished. It should be added that such conditions were exacerbated by human factors such as deforestation caused by population growth and migration and ever increasing demands for building materials. In fact there is evidence to suggest that some of the massive aboriginal uprisings in southwest China were triggered by repeated exactions of lumber for imperial building projects as part of their tributary obligations.

Late Ming insect-related disasters constituted 27.56 percent of the total for the dynasty, but most of these were also in the north.<sup>42</sup> The late Ming also experienced 30.05 percent of the ice-related disasters for the dynasty as a whole. As for earthquakes, from the Wanli reign on, the Ming had an average of 5.93 major earthquakes per year, 28.64 percent of the Ming total. Again, because of tectonics, the vast majority of these were in north China. The late Ming era was particularly prone to epidemics, with 34.12 percent of the dynasty's total happening in that period. Moreover, the most virulent epidemics in terms of transmission and mortality occurred during the Chongzhen reign between 1640 and 1644.<sup>43</sup> Incidents of frost were down slightly in the last decades of the Ming, but dust storms peaked. All told out of 5,614 natural disasters reported in Ming records, 1,371 (24.42 percent) took place in the last 72 years of Ming rule.<sup>44</sup> By region the northern provinces of Bei Zhili, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Shandong, and Henan experienced nearly 54 percent of the total number of disasters.

Even a casual perusal of annalistic histories from the era attests to the litany of disasters that plagued the Ming. Ming officials were well aware of these problems as well as the dangers they represented for state legitimacy. And there were both public and private attempts to ameliorate the suffering. Among other things the late Ming witnessed the establishment and expansion of benevolent societies and charitable organizations.<sup>45</sup> But the state was eventually overwhelmed by the number and scale of the disasters, especially when concurrently confronted with the threats posed by the Jurchens and the peasant rebels. So it is essential that historians put these developments in perspective when analyzing the capacity of the Ming state and the reasons for its demise.

### Suggestions for further research

The military collapse of the Ming dynasty offers fertile ground for future generations of comparative military historians. For one it is hoped that this work has put to rest notions that the Ming were technologically backward and uninterested in deploying the best weaponry available to them. Far from being ostriches with their heads in the sand when it came to firearms, many, if not most, officials in military command positions enthusiastically recommended the production and use of firearms. In fact even contemporary European observers realized this. As one person stated, "They profit themselves of policies, devises and instruments of fire and of fireworks. Thus do they use as well by land in their wars as by sea, many bomes of fire full of old iron and arrows made powder and fireworks, with which they do much harm and destroy their enemies."<sup>46</sup>

Nor did the Ming state seek to jealously guard their monopoly on the production or distribution of weapons. As we have seen, many officials saw putting guns in the hands of peasants as being the most effective way to defend the localities. Guns were force multipliers and as long as people were properly trained in their use, they were viewed as useful extensions of state power. The cases where particular officials opposed the use of cannon or the employment of foreign mercenary trainers and casters were generally political disputes or related to

business interests (as in the case of the Guangdong merchants) rather than being due to some kind of innate Chinese xenophobia. Rather, as was also true for the Ottoman Empire, the adoption or rejection of firearms technology “was influenced by the social fabrics, economic capabilities, geopolitical realities and constraints, as well as by military and political objectives.”<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, one is forced to disagree with Keith Krause’s characterization of Ming China as a “third tier” producer of firearms that relied upon imports only to produce such weapons.<sup>48</sup> Ming China would appear to belong to the second tier of suppliers and producers that produced or even advanced weapons but did not put a premium on innovation in part because of the nature of the military challenges they faced.<sup>49</sup>

That Jurchens of course also recognized the importance of firearms in giving the Ming an advantage over them, particularly in positional warfare. Therefore they took extensive steps to acquire both the weapons themselves and experts in their use and manufacture. The Siege of Dalinghe was critical in this regard as were the defections of Kong Youde and his associates. The Koreans, who had eagerly adopted firearms after Ming prodding during the Japanese invasions of the 1590s, also proved to be helpful in establishing centers of production and creating ranks of gunners. It is quite likely that the Siege of Song-Jin would not have succeeded had it not been for the extensive use of firearms by the Qing that allowed them to counter Ming relief expeditions while keeping up a barrage on the citadels. Studying the ways in which the Qing, formerly a steppe cavalry-oriented military, incorporated these new weapons into their military could be a useful case study for comparison, perhaps, with the Ottomans.

Arms production and distribution is another area that invites comparative examination. While the Ming had problems with standardization of production, that was common to all early modern militaries.<sup>50</sup> They nevertheless produced an amazing variety of weapons in staggering quantities, though records are scattered. In an average year the military placed orders for one million arrows, 300,000 uniforms, 160,000 shields, tens of thousands of spears, swords, and polearms, and thousands of suits of armor and helmets.<sup>51</sup> They also increasingly manufactured large numbers of cannon and smaller firearms in a variety of sizes and for a variety of uses. While many of the requests and production orders went through the Bureau of Procurement of the Ministry of Works in Beijing, it would be interesting to see to what degree the Ming produced weapons locally, as was often the case in Europe. We know that certain regions of China provided specific materials, such as certain types of wood or saltpeter, but the level of military production decentralization is unclear.

Military specialization in Ming China also remains a murky subject at the present time. It is clear that soldiers from different parts of the empire were generally regarded as proficient in specific types of weapons or skills. And there were definitely trainers who specialized in firearms training. But there appear to have been far fewer specifically designated siege engineers or ballistics experts (beyond the aforementioned Jesuits and their students) such as one might find in contemporary Europe or the Ottoman Empire where they were accorded great prestige.<sup>52</sup> It is possible that the Chinese simply did not deem such individuals

worthy of much discussion because they were so integrated into the military structure already due to China's extensive history of siege warfare. The Ming do appear to have invented spotting telescopes sometime in the Chongzhen era and to have used them for military applications.<sup>53</sup>

Supply and logistics are of course vital to all military operations and the amount of detail one finds in Ming documents with respect to these aspects of warfare is impressive indeed. That should come as no surprise given that the writers of these reports were career bureaucrats. They understood the importance of creating paper trails and were masters at crafting language designed to impress superiors. So one problem one encounters is that there are tons of requests for supplies and materials, but fewer records of what actually got produced or delivered. Still, a comparative study of military logistics in a centralized bureaucratic empire like the Ming with contemporary states having different political and institutional systems would be fascinating.<sup>54</sup>

A final area worthy of study is the realm of training and discipline, particularly as it related to mercenary armies. In Europe professional mercenary armies were highly prized in the early modern era because of their comparative skill and reliability. They also served as avenues of social mobility for those not born into elite families.<sup>55</sup> They also facilitated the creation of task forces with different component forces being allocated specific tasks. Mercenary life offered the same kind of social mobility in Ming China but it is less clear if there was any greater degree of occupational specialization. In fact the opposite may have been the case depending upon the degree of training recruits underwent, if any. In the early Ming the state established central training divisions and procedures. But by the period under consideration here these were in steep decline as evidenced by the continuous calls to revive them. Likewise the widespread looting and pillage practiced by Ming armies speaks to the general lack of discipline, particularly among large forces. Following up on this, a general study of military culture in the Ming period would be most welcome.

### **Epilogue: the bloody reign of Zhang Xianzhong in Sichuan**

It is perhaps fitting to end our story of the military collapse of the Ming with a brief discussion of the last days of Zhang Xianzhong because it relates to contemporary developments in China and broader issues discussed in this chapter. In 2002 when representatives of the Chinese government were excavating around the south gate of Chengdu as part of their Three Gorges project, they came upon a grisly discovery. Workers uncovered piles of bones that were very old. They were jumbled about and not in proper graves, as if the people in question had been massacred.<sup>56</sup> It was eventually determined that the bones dated from the Ming–Qing transition and were from one of Zhang Xianzhong's great massacres while he ruled as Prince of the West. Zhang had occupied Chengdu in the 8<sup>th</sup> month of 1644, some three months after the fall of Beijing to the Qing, and declared it his Western Capital (*Xi Jing*). By this time his reputation for cruelty was well established and he did not abate. In fact it preceded him as he had

severed the arms of Ming captives in Chongqing barely six weeks before his occupation of Chengdu because he did not want them to be able to swing their swords. Supposedly 37,000 people were so maimed while others lost “only” ears or noses and were still used by Zhang.<sup>57</sup>

Despite these atrocities Zhang managed to attract potential scholars by announcing he was going to hold examinations for service in his government. In fact Zhang’s paranoia and inability to keep track of subversives in his government had probably led him to concoct a plan to remove potential threats. In any case some 17,000 scholars were allegedly massacred at Zhang’s Qingyang Palace when they showed up for Zhang’s bogus exams.<sup>58</sup> Zhang also killed officials who showed the slightest signs of disrespect or committed errors of propriety, sometimes killing hundreds at a time. By the time Zhang was killed by Qing forces in 1647 it is said that only 25 of his original 900 officials were left. The rest had died or fled.<sup>59</sup> Monks and peasants were also massacred. Zhang was particularly suspicious of Buddhists, though he briefly entertained some Jesuit priests at his capital. As resistance to his tyranny increased, Zhang allegedly resolved to massacre all of Sichuan, sending his four top commanders in every direction to “cleanse” the province of potential rivals. His generals were rewarded in accordance with how many people they killed in these campaigns.<sup>60</sup> They were instructed to bring severed hands back to Zhang, receiving a promotion after 1,700 were submitted.

Zhang’s madness apparently increased as the Qing approached. He believed that there were traitors everywhere. Even dogs and chickens were to be killed so that they would be denied to the Qing. By the time Zhang abandoned Chengdu in the summer of 1646 it was a smoldering abandoned wreck. In the wake of Zhang’s depredations the masses died from disease and tigers roamed free, killing indiscriminately. By the time the Qing restored a provincial government in 1654 the population of the entire province was estimated at barely 80,000, less than that of either Chengdu or Chongqing prior to Zhang’s entry.<sup>61</sup> The *Mingshi* offers the outrageous claim that Zhang killed 600 million in Sichuan, but even if that is estimated down to 6 million, it would constitute more than the recorded population of the province at the time. If we drop the figure to 600,000 and if a more plausible estimate is used for Sichuan’s population at, say, four million, Zhang still killed about a sixth of the population of the entire province in just two years!<sup>62</sup> Qing records indicate that just 1–3 percent of the people of Sichuan survived. Added to the calamities already experienced by the people of the province, it would take decades for Sichuan to recover. A gazetteer from the Kangxi reign in the Qing relates that for 100 *li* one could not see chimney smoke and that bones arose in mountains around Chengdu.<sup>63</sup> But unlike the disasters of the late Ming, this one was largely man-made.

Lest we end this book on such a down note, it is worth drawing attention to a curious commemoration of the Chongzhen emperor in southeast China. Apparently the 19<sup>th</sup> day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> lunar month (the date of Chongzhen’s suicide) became associated with the birthday of the sun in Shaoxing, near Hangzhou, a city that was heavily populated by Ming loyalist officials.<sup>64</sup> So while the emperor’s death was grim and shadowed, his memory, at least, as well as that of the Ming, continued to be bright.

# Rogues' gallery

- Abatai:** Son of Nurhaci and military commander who led Qing raids of 1643
- Ajige:** Jurchen military commander and brother of Hung Taiji
- Amin:** Jurchen prince imprisoned for massacre of Chinese in 1630
- An Bangyan:** Aboriginal rebel leader in southwest
- Bai Guang'en:** Ming military commander who later joined peasant rebels
- Bi Sancai:** Ming Minister of War in the 1620s
- Bi Zisu:** Ming censor involved in troop mutiny at Ningyuan
- Cao Bianjiao:** Ming military official, son of Cao Wenzhao
- Cao Wenzhao:** One of the leading military officials in the northwest
- Chen Hongfan:** Ming military commander
- Chen Jisheng:** Ming commander on Pidao killed by his subordinates for embezzlement
- Chen Qiyu:** Ming supreme commander who accepted the rebel surrender at Chexiang Gorge
- Chen Xinjia:** Ming official who favored peace talks with the Qing, executed by Chongzhen
- Chen Yongfu:** Ming military officer credited with shooting Li Zicheng's eye out
- Chen Yuanyuan:** Famed beauty and girlfriend of Wu Sangui
- Chongzhen:** Last Ming emperor (r. 1628–44) who committed suicide in 1644
- Daisan:** Son of Nurhaci and Jurchen military commander
- Deng Qi:** Ming military commander who fought peasant rebels
- Ding Qirui:** Ming supreme commander in central China
- Dodo:** Jurchen noble and military commander
- Dorgon:** Brother of Hung Taiji and regent for Qing emperor Shunzhi
- Du Song:** Ming commander; defeated in Liaodong campaign
- Du Xun:** Eunuch official who defected to Li Zicheng
- Fu Zonglong:** Ming supreme commander of Shaanxi defeated by peasant rebels
- Gao Di:** Ming Minister of War who favored defensive posture in northeast
- Gao Jie:** Military official who defected from Li Zicheng to Ming side
- Gao Mingheng:** Ming official who led defense of Kaifeng against Li Zicheng
- Gao Qiqian:** Eunuch military commander
- Gao Yingxiang:** Peasant rebel leader captured by Sun Chuanting in 1636
- Geng Zhongming:** Follower of Mao Wenlong, defected to Latter Jin
- Giocangga:** Father of Nurhaci
- Haoge:** Jin prince involved in invasion of Korea
- He Kegang:** Ming military officer who participated in defense of Ningyuan
- He Renlong:** Ming military officer executed by Sun Chuanting for possible treason

- He Shixian:** Ming military officer who won victories over Jin in 1618–19 but died defending Shenyang
- Hong Chengchou:** Ming official who joined Qing after defeat in the battle of Song-Jin
- Hu Dawei:** Ming military commander who fled before Qing outside Beijing
- Huang Degong:** Ming military official ennobled by Chongzhen
- Huang Long:** Ming military official in Bohai, mutilated by mutineers
- Hung Taiji:** Son of Nurhaci and founder of Qing dynasty
- Injo:** King of Korea, 1623–49
- Kong Youde:** Leader of the Wuqiao Mutiny who later joined the Jin
- Kwanghaegun:** King of Korea, 1609–23, overthrown for not supporting Ming
- Lao Huihui:** “Old Muslim,” Ming peasant rebel leader
- Li Chengliang:** Ming general in Liaodong and adoptive father of Nurhaci
- Li Guo:** Nephew and companion of Li Zicheng
- Li Jiantai:** Ming civil official who tried to raise army to defeat Li Zicheng
- Li Jucheng:** Instigator of Wuqiao Mutiny
- Li Mingrui:** Hanlin Academy official who favored “Southern Tour” by Chongzhen
- Li Rubo:** Ming general, committed suicide after defeat in Liaodong campaign
- Li Ruzhen:** Ming general, brother of Rubo who abandoned Tieling before Jin attack
- Li Yan:** Civil official and adviser to Li Zicheng, possibly fictitious
- Li Yongfang:** Ming military commander who turned Fushun over to Nurhaci
- Li Zhizao:** Ming Catholic convert and proponent of military reforms
- Li Zicheng:** Ming peasant rebel leader and founder of Shun dynasty, aka “The Dashing Prince”
- Ligdan Khan:** Chahar Mongol leader defeated by Hung Taiji in 1634
- Lighted Lamp:** Ming peasant rebel leader
- Liu Guojin:** Ming official involved in factional strife with Xiong Tingbi
- Liu Liangzuo:** Ming military official in Shandong, helped suppress Wuqiao Mutiny
- Liu Ting:** Ming general defeated in Liaodong campaign, aka “Big Sword Liu”
- Liu Xingzhi:** Military official who revolted on Pidao
- Liu Xingzuo:** Ming military official and brother of Xingzhi, killed in battle against Jin
- Liu Zeqing:** Ming military official most active in Shandong
- Liu Zongmin:** Strategist for Li Zicheng
- Lu Xiangsheng:** Ming official and military commander, killed defending Beijing
- Luo Rucai:** Peasant rebel leader assassinated by Li Zicheng, aka Cao Cao
- Ma Lin:** Ming commander defeated in Liaodong campaign
- Ma Shouying:** Peasant rebel leader, sometimes identified as Lao Huihui
- Madame Ke:** Nursemaid to Tianqi accused of dominating court politics
- Man Gui:** Ming field commander killed defending Beijing in 1629
- Mao Chenglu:** Son of Mao Wenlong, inherited command of some of his troops
- Mao Wenlong:** Ming field commander in northeast, executed by Yuan Chonghuan
- Mao Yuanyi:** Ming official and writer
- Meng Ruhu:** Ming military official killed in defense of Nanyang
- Miao Yuan:** Local official who wrote an account of the defense of Neijiang against Zhang Xianzhong
- Ni Yuanlu:** Ming Minister of War
- Nikan Wailan:** Jurchen leader defeated by Nurhaci in 1586
- Niu Jinxing:** Civil official adviser to Li Zicheng
- Nurhaci:** Jurchen leader and founder of Latter Jin dynasty
- Pan Zongyan:** Ming censor killed in Sarhu campaign

- Qin Liangyu:** Female aboriginal warrior from Sichuan
- Ruan Dacheng:** Ming official and foe of the Donglin and Fushe
- Shang Kexi:** Ming commander who defected to Jin after failure of the Wuqiao Mutiny
- Shao Jiechun:** Ming official executed by Yang Sichang
- She Chongming:** Aboriginal rebel leader in southwest
- Shen Yikui:** Ming peasant rebel leader, brother of Shen Yiyuan
- Shen Yiyuan:** Ming peasant rebel leader
- Song Xianc:** Dwarf sorcerer and adviser to Li Zicheng
- Sun Chengzong:** Ming military commander who favored forward strategy in northeast
- Sun Chuanting:** Ming official and military commander defeated by Li Zicheng in 1643
- Sun Degong:** Ming official who surrendered Guangning to Nurhaci
- Sun Yuanhua:** Ming official and Catholic convert blamed for not suppressing the Wuqiao Mutiny
- Taichang:** Ming emperor who reigned for one month in 1620
- Tang Tong:** Ming military official who defected to Li Zicheng, defeated at Shanhuaiguan
- Tianqi:** Ming emperor who reigned from 1621 to 1627
- Tong Yangxing:** Ming official who defected to Jin and aided in military operations, created first Jin firearms divisions
- Wan Yuanji:** Ming official who succeeded Yang Sichang as supreme commander
- Wang Cheng'en:** Eunuch in charge of Beijing defenses in 1644, committed suicide alongside Chongzhen
- Wang Gao:** Jurchen leader and son of Wang Tai
- Wang Huazhen:** Ming pacification commissioner in Liaodong who clashed with Xiong Tingbi
- Wang Jiayin:** Ming peasant rebel leader
- Wang Qiaonian:** Ming official who desecrated graves of Li Zicheng's family, later killed by Li
- Wang Tai:** Jurchen leader in 1540s to 1550s
- Wang Xiangqian:** Ming adviser to Chongzhen who favored allying with Mongols to fight the Latter Jin
- Wang Zaijin:** Ming official who favored using Mongol allies against Jin
- Wanli:** Ming emperor who reigned from 1573 to 1619
- Wei Zhongxian:** Eunuch official accused of usurping authority under Tianqi
- Wen Tiren:** Notorious Ming grand secretary and favorite of Chongzhen
- Wu Sangui:** Ming field commander who joined Manchus in 1644
- Wu Sheng:** Ming civil official and strategist, created blockhouse plan for local defense
- Wu Xiang:** Father of Wu Sangui and Ming military official, helped crush Wuqiao Mutiny
- Xiong Tingbi:** Ming official and field commander in northeast, executed in 1625
- Xiong Wencan:** Ming official associated with appeasement policy towards peasant rebels
- Xu Congzhi:** Ming official killed in defense of Laizhou
- Xu Guangqi:** Ming official and advocate of cannon technology, Catholic convert
- Xu Hongru:** Instigator of White Lotus Revolt in 1622
- Yang Hao:** Supreme commander of Liaodong campaign for Ming
- Yang He:** Ming civil official who failed to quell peasant rebels
- Yang Lian:** Civil official who impeached Wei Zhongxian for 24 crimes
- Yang Sichang:** Son of Yang He and architect of the Ten-Sided Net strategy
- Yang Wenyue:** Ming military commander killed by Li Zicheng at Runing
- You Shigong:** Ming military commander killed defending Shenyang
- Yu Dacheng:** Ming pacification commissioner in Shandong during Wuqiao Mutiny

**Yuan Chonghuan:** Ming official and defender of Ningyuan

**Yuan Shizhong:** Local bandit leader assassinated by Li Zicheng in 1643

**Yuan Yingtai:** Ming official in northeast killed during fighting with Jurchens

**Zhang Fengyi:** Ming Minister of War and favorite of Chongzhen, favored defensive approach in northeast

**Zhang Xianzhong:** Ming peasant rebel leader and founder of Great Western Kingdom, aka "The Yellow Tiger"

**Zhao Shuajiao:** Ming military commander and favorite of Yuan Chonghuan

**Zheng Zhilong:** Ming pirate who later became military official

**Zhou Yanru:** Ming grand secretary and sycophant of Chongzhen

**Zhou Youji:** Ming commander who died defending Ningwu Pass in 1644

**Zu Dabi:** Military commander and brother of Zu Dashou

**Zu Dale:** Brother of Dabi and Dashou, surrendered to Qing after the battle of Song-Jin

**Zu Dashou:** Ming military official and uncle of Wu Sangui who submitted to Qing

**Zu Kuan:** Ming military commander

**Zuo Liangyu:** Ming military commander, notorious for the ill-discipline of his men

# Chronology

- 1616** Nurhaci declares creation of Latter Jin
- 1618** Nurhaci issues 7 Grievances against Ming; Latter Jin seize Ming city of Fushun in Liaodong
- 1619** Battle of Sarhu; Latter Jin seize Kaiyuan and Tieling
- 1620** Ming emperor Wanli dies; Taichang dies after reigning one month; succeeded by Tianqi
- 1621** Latter Jin seize territory in Liaodong making Liaoyang their new capital; Xiong Tingbi made Military Commissioner of Liaodong; Mao Wenlong wins Battle of Fort Zhenjiang
- 1622** Latter Jin seize Guangning and attack Lushun; Ming suppress Xu Hongru Rebellion in Shandong
- 1625** Latter Jin move capital to Shenyang
- 1626** Battle of Ningyuan; Latter Jin destroy grain stores at Juehua Island; Nurhaci dies
- 1627** Emperor Tianqi dies; Hung Taiji succeeds Nurhaci and launches incursion into Korea
- 1628** Emperor Chongzhen's reign begins; start of peasant rebellions in Shaanxi
- 1629** Yuan Chonghuan kills Mao Wenlong; Latter Jin raid inside the Great Wall reaching all the way to Beijing; She-An Rebellion finally crushed in southwest China
- 1631** Siege of Dalinghe
- 1632** Start of the Mutiny of Wuqiao under Kong Youde
- 1633** Latter Jin seize Lushun; Kong Youde and allies submit to Latter Jin after Wuqiao Mutiny is suppressed by the Ming
- 1634** Chexiang Gorge campaign against peasant rebellions; Latter Jin raid inside the Great Wall; Latter Jin defeat Ligdan Khan
- 1635** Peasant rebel leaders convene Rongyang Conclave
- 1636** Hung Taiji declares Qing dynasty; Qing invade Korea; Ming capture and kill rebel leader Gao Yingxiang; Qing raid inside the Great Wall
- 1637** Yang Sichang devises Ten-Sided Net Strategy; Qing take Pidao
- 1638** Zhang Xianzhong “surrenders” to Ming and occupies Gucheng; Qing raid into northeast China
- 1639** Zhang Xianzhong rebels again and defeats Ming at Mount Luoying; Qing raids into northeast continue
- 1640** Qing besiege Jinzhou but withdraw; Zuo Liangyu defeats Zhang Xianzhong at Mount Manao
- 1641** Zhang Xianzhong kills Ming Prince of Xiang; Li Zicheng kills Prince of Fu; Yang Sichang commits suicide
- 1641–2** Battle of Song-Jin; first two sieges of Kaifeng by Li Zicheng

- 1642** Kaifeng flooded and falls to Li Zicheng in third siege
- 1642–3** Qing raid throughout Shandong
- 1643** Li Zicheng declares himself Prince of Xinshun at Xiangyang; Luo Rucai assassinated by Li Zicheng; Zhang Xianzhong declares himself Prince of the West and occupies Wuchang; Hong Taiji dies and is succeeded by Qing emperor Shunzhi; Li Zicheng defeats Sun Chuanting at Tong Pass
- 1644** Li Zicheng declares Shun Dynasty at Xi'an; Li captures Beijing in April; Battle of Shanhaiguan; Qing occupy Beijing; Zhang Xianzhong declares himself Emperor of the West at Chengdu in September

# Abbreviations used in the notes

<i>BSXJ</i>	<i>Bian shi xiaoji</i>
<i>CASJ</i>	<i>Chai'an shuji</i>
<i>CHC</i>	<i>Cambridge History of China</i>
<i>CXLH</i>	<i>Mingji Chaoxian zhi dingmao luhuo yu bingzi luhuo</i>
<i>CZCB</i>	<i>Chongzhen changbian</i>
<i>CZJW</i>	<i>Chongzhen jiwen lu</i>
<i>CZSL</i>	<i>Chongzhen shilu</i>
<i>CZYJ</i>	<i>Chongzhen yeji</i>
<i>DMB</i>	<i>Dictionary of Ming Biography</i>
<i>DYKL</i>	<i>Dongyi kaolue</i>
<i>ECCP</i>	<i>Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period</i>
<i>GQ</i>	<i>Guoque</i>
<i>JSZB</i>	<i>Jiashen zhi bian</i>
<i>KGFL</i>	<i>Qing Kaiguo fanglue</i>
<i>LDSG</i>	<i>Liaodong shugao</i>
<i>LHXS</i>	<i>Liehuang xiaoshi</i>
<i>LKCB</i>	<i>Liukou changbian</i>
<i>LKSM</i>	<i>Mingji liukou shimo</i>
<i>LKZ</i>	<i>Liukou zhi</i>
<i>LSTJ</i>	<i>Loushangtang ji</i>
<i>MCDA</i>	<i>Zhongguo Mingchao dang'an zonghui</i>
<i>MJBL</i>	<i>Mingji beilue</i>
<i>MQSC</i>	<i>Ming-Qing shiliao congshu</i>
<i>MQSL</i>	<i>Ming-Qing shiliao</i>
<i>MQZS</i>	<i>Ming-Qing Zhanzheng shilue</i>
<i>MS</i>	<i>Mingshi</i>
<i>MSJSBM</i>	<i>Mingshi jishi benmo</i>
<i>MTJ</i>	<i>Ming tongjian</i>
<i>NMQYSL</i>	<i>Mingmo nongmin qiyi shiliao</i>
<i>PPJ</i>	<i>Pingpan ji</i>
<i>QBLJ</i>	<i>Quan bian lueji</i>
<i>QRGQSL</i>	<i>Qing ruguan qian shiliao xuanji</i>
<i>QSG</i>	<i>Qing shigao</i>
<i>QSLZ</i>	<i>Qingshi liezhuan</i>
<i>QTZ</i>	<i>Qing Taizong quanzhuan</i>
<i>SBRZ</i>	<i>Shoubian rizhi</i>

<i>SFSL</i>	<i>San fan shilue</i>
<i>SKJL</i>	<i>Suikou jilue</i>
<i>WCRL</i>	<i>Weicheng rilu</i>
<i>WMS</i>	<i>Wan Ming shi</i>
<i>YDZB</i>	<i>Yandu zhi bian</i>
<i>YSJ</i>	<i>Yang Sichang ji</i>
<i>ZLZZ</i>	<i>Zaolin zazu</i>
<i>ZWL</i>	<i>Zuiwei lu</i>

# Notes

## Introduction

- 1 Kenneth M. Swope, *A Dragon's Head and a Serpent's Tail: Ming China and the First Great East Asian War, 1592–1598* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009).
- 2 For a brief overview of the ongoing tensions between civil and military officials in the Ming with respect to managing military affairs, see Kai Filipiak, “The Effects of Civil Officials Handling Military Affairs in Ming Times,” *Ming Studies*, 66 (2012), pp. 1–15.
- 3 See Filipiak, pp. 10–12.
- 4 See Kathleen Ryor, “*Wen* and *Wu* in Elite Cultural Practice During the Late Ming,” in Nicola Di Cosmo (ed.), *Military Culture in Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 219–42.
- 5 Lynn A. Struve, *The Ming–Qing Conflict: A Historiography and Source Guide* (Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 1998), p. 1.
- 6 See the discussions in Geoffrey Parker, “Crisis and Catastrophe: The Global Crisis of the Seventeenth Century Reconsidered,” *American Historical Review*, 113.4 (October 2008), pp. 1053–79, and Jack Goldstone, “East and West in the Seventeenth Century: Political Crises in Stuart England, Ottoman Turkey and Ming China,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 30.1 (January 1988), pp. 103–17.
- 7 See Peter Lorge, *The Asian Military Revolution: From Gunpowder to the Bomb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Kenneth Chase, *Firearms: A Global History to 1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Tonio Andrade, *Lost Colony: The Untold Story of China's First Great Victory Over the West* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).
- 8 See Frederic Wakeman Jr, *The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of Order in Seventeenth-Century China* 2 vols (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985). For a recent biography of a key figure, see Chen-main Wang, *The Life and Career of Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou: Public Service in a Time of Dynastic Change* (Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 1999). For a study of the impact of the fall of the Ming on a specific province, see Roger V. Des Forges, *Cultural Centrality and Political Change in Chinese History: Northeast Henan in the Fall of the Ming* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).
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- 10 Li Guangtao, *Mingji liukou shimo* (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1965).
- 11 Lynn A. Struve, *The Southern Ming, 1644–1662* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984).

## 1 A gauntlet is cast down: The rise of the Latter Jin, 1618–21

<sup>1</sup> *MSJSBM*, p. 1409.

<sup>2</sup> *DYKL*, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> On Wanli's military triumphs, see Kenneth M. Swope, "Bestowing the Double-edged Sword: Wanli as Supreme Military Commander," in David M. Robinson (ed.), *Culture, Courtiers, and Competition: The Ming Court (1368–1644)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 61–115.

<sup>4</sup> For information on the factional struggles of the late Ming in general, see Harry Miller, *State Versus Gentry in Late Ming Dynasty China, 1572–1644* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). On Wanli's disputes with his officials and the associated controversies, see Jiang Fen, *Mingshi jishi* (Hangzhou: Jiangsu guangling guji shuyin, 1990), pp. 285–304.

<sup>5</sup> For information on this, the first of the infamous "Three Cases" of the late Ming, see John W. Dardess, *Blood and History in China: The Donglin Faction and Its Repression, 1620–1627* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), pp. 9–16. Also see *MSJSBM*, pp. 1077–107 on the Three Cases.

<sup>6</sup> See Luo Bin, *Mingchao de naxie zhanzheng* (Beijing: Jinghua chubanshe, 2010), p. 213.

<sup>7</sup> For a brief biography of Nurhaci in English, see *ECCP*, pp. 594–9. For a full-length recent biography in Chinese, see Zhou Yuanlian, *Qing Taizu zhuan* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Luo Bin, p. 214.

<sup>9</sup> Luo Bin, p. 214.

<sup>10</sup> Luo Bin, p. 215.

<sup>11</sup> Nurhaci's Seven Grievances included the anger at the accidental deaths of his father and grandfather at Ming hands; rage over the Ming's apparent partisanship with respect to territorial and marriage disputes with other Jurchen tribes, and repeated border violations by Han Chinese settlers and ginseng gatherers. See Wu Bosen, *Ming shilu leizuan: junshi shiliao juan* (Wuhan: Wuhan chubanshe, 1993), p. 788. This source is a compilation of an account from the *Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty* pertaining to military matters. For the full text of the Seven Grievances, see *QRGQSL*, 1, pp. 289–96. For an English translation of one version of them, see Pei-kai Cheng and Michael Lestz with Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), pp. 21–3.

<sup>12</sup> Luo Bin, p. 216.

<sup>13</sup> *QSG*, p. 9326.

<sup>14</sup> *QSG*, p. 9327.

<sup>15</sup> Luo Bin, p. 216, and *QSLZ*, 78.11a.

<sup>16</sup> Luo Bin, p. 216, and *QSLZ*, 78.10b–11a.

<sup>17</sup> For the text of Nurhaci's offer of surrender to Li Yongfang, see Franz Michael, *The Origin of Manchu Rule in China: Frontier and Bureaucracy as Interacting Forces in the Chinese Empire* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1942), pp. 121–2.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Pei Huang, *Reorienting the Manchus: A Study of Sinicization, 1583–1795* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 112. In fact an officer named Tong Yangxing had defected to Nurhaci in 1616 and been jailed for it. He escaped and rejoined Nurhaci, where he received a position and one of the khan's daughters as a wife. See *QSG*, p. 9323.

<sup>19</sup> Michael, p. 75.

<sup>20</sup> Luo Bin, p. 216, and Wu Bosen, p. 789. For a brief biography of Hung Taiji, see *ECCP*, pp. 1–3. Also known as Abahai, he would later serve as the second Jin (and first Qing) emperor. For a complete biography of him in Chinese, see *QTZ*. On Daisan, see *ECCP*, p. 214.

- <sup>21</sup> Luo Bin, p. 216, and Wu Bosen, p. 1038. For a biography of Yang Hao, see *ECCP*, pp. 885–6. On Li Rubo and the rest of his family, see Kenneth M. Swope, “A Few Good Men: The Li Family and China’s Northern Frontier During the Late Ming,” *Ming Studies*, 49 (2004), pp. 34–81.
- <sup>22</sup> On this event, see Kenneth M. Swope, “War and Remembrance: Yang Hao and the Siege of Ulsan of 1598,” *Journal of Asian History*, 42.2 (December 2008), pp. 165–95. On the war in Korea, see Kenneth M. Swope, *A Dragon’s Head and a Serpent’s Tail* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009).
- <sup>23</sup> For Li Chengliang’s biography, see *ECCP*, pp. 450–2.
- <sup>24</sup> Wang Zaijin, *Sanchao Liaoashi shilu*, 12 vols (Yangzhou: Guangling guji kaiyinshe, 1988), pp. 1.1a–1.2a. Liu Ting, better known to his contemporaries by his nickname “Big Sword Liu,” was also a veteran of the war in Korea. For a biography of him, see *DMB*, pp. 964–8.
- <sup>25</sup> Wang Zaijin, p. 1.2a.
- <sup>26</sup> Wu Bosen, p. 1212.
- <sup>27</sup> *WMS*, p. 764.
- <sup>28</sup> On Wanli’s refusal to contribute personal funds for the campaign, see Miller, *State Versus Gentry*, pp. 116–17.
- <sup>29</sup> *MSJSBM*, p. 1410.
- <sup>30</sup> Luo Bin, p. 217, and *MSJSBM*, pp. 1410–11.
- <sup>31</sup> Wang Zaijin, pp. 1.2b–1.5a, and *DYKL*, p. 51.
- <sup>32</sup> *MTJ*, p. 2939.
- <sup>33</sup> Wang Zaijin, p. 1.5b.
- <sup>34</sup> *MQZS*, p. 38.
- <sup>35</sup> For details on the Ming tributary system and its manipulation in the northeast, see Philip H. Woodruff Jr, “Foreign Policy and Frontier Affairs Along the Northeastern Frontier of the Ming Dynasty, 1350–1618,” PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1995. On Ming–Jurchen relations in general and the economic dimension in particular, see Yang Shaoxian and Mo Junqing, *Mingdai minzu shi* (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1996), pp. 123–38.
- <sup>36</sup> See *CHC* 9, pp. 22–3.
- <sup>37</sup> T. C. Lin, “Manchuria Trade and Tribute in the Ming Dynasty: A Study of Chinese Theories and Methods of Control Over Border Peoples,” *Nankai Social and Economic Quarterly*, IX.4 (January 1937), p. 856. Reflecting a somewhat dated sense of Sinocentrism, Lin also maintained that tribute trade was a manifestation of the benevolence of the Chinese emperor towards the frontier peoples. See p. 857.
- <sup>38</sup> T. C. Lin, p. 857.
- <sup>39</sup> *CHC* 9, pp. 10–11.
- <sup>40</sup> See *CHC* 9, pp. 11–16.
- <sup>41</sup> See Michael, pp. 27–8 and 32–3.
- <sup>42</sup> On the development of these figures, see Frederic Wakeman, Jr, *The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China*, 2 vols (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 37–49. Also see Woodruff, pp. 201–4.
- <sup>43</sup> *CHC* 9, pp. 24–7, and Mark Elliott, *The Manchu Way* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 48–51.
- <sup>44</sup> *CHC* 9, p. 25, and T. C. Lin, p. 878.
- <sup>45</sup> T. C. Lin, p. 869, and *CHC* 9, p. 26.
- <sup>46</sup> On Li Chengliang’s activities versus the Jurchens, see *DYKL*, pp. 49–50.
- <sup>47</sup> For more details on these events, see *MQZS*, pp. 3–6.
- <sup>48</sup> *MQZS*, p. 6.
- <sup>49</sup> *MQZS*, p. 6.
- <sup>50</sup> See Yan Chongnian, *Nuerhachi zhuan* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), pp. 19–22.
- <sup>51</sup> *MQZS*, pp. 6–7.

- 52 See Pei Huang, pp. 68–9.
- 53 See *MQZS*, pp. 8–15.
- 54 *DYKL*, p. 65.
- 55 Yang and Mo, pp. 142–3.
- 56 *MJBL*, p. 2.
- 57 *QSG*, p. 6.
- 58 *QSG*, p. 7.
- 59 For details on Nurhaci's campaigns of conquest in Manchuria, see Yan, *Nuerhachi zhuan*, pp. 43–72.
- 60 *MJBL*, p. 3. The Koreans asked the Ming to order Nurhaci to desist from attacking their border and to stop seeking tributary relations with them. See Woodruff, pp. 204–5. For more on Korean fears, see *QRGQSL*, 1, pp. 415–16.
- 61 *MQZS*, pp. 17–18.
- 62 Woodruff, pp. 215–17. For a brief biography of Xiong, see *ECCP*, p. 308.
- 63 *WMS*, pp. 762–3.
- 64 See *ZWL*, p. 1770.
- 65 There is some dispute over when Nurhaci last submitted tribute. Some sources indicate it was in 1613 or even 1615, though the date given here reflects a personal trip. Also see Pei Huang, p. 115, and *GQ*, p. 5080.
- 66 Wu Bosen, pp. 1208–9.
- 67 *QSG*, p. 8.
- 68 *MJBL*, p. 6.
- 69 *MQZS*, pp. 20–1.
- 70 Elliott, p. 58.
- 71 See Pei Huang, p. 70.
- 72 On the origin of the Eight Banners, see Elliott, pp. 56–65.
- 73 See Michael, pp. 60–8.
- 74 Yang and Mo, pp. 144–5.
- 75 On the letter requesting aid from Korea, see *MQZS*, pp. 41–2.
- 76 *WMS*, p. 766. The number of 470,000 is the figure that Yang himself gave in threatening the Jin ruler prior to the campaign. See *KGFL*, p. 130.
- 77 Luo Bin, p. 218. Wanli had also heard that Nurhaci regularly feasted on bear hearts.
- 78 See *MQZS*, pp. 45–6.
- 79 *DYKL*, p. 72, and *L GSL*, p. 140.
- 80 *MJBL*, p. 10.
- 81 *DYKL*, p. 72.
- 82 One source indicates that this plan was actually Li Yongfang's. See *L GSL*, p. 140.
- 83 *MQZS*, p. 47.
- 84 Luo Bin, p. 219.
- 85 *MQZS*, p. 48.
- 86 *L GSL*, p. 140.
- 87 *CHC* 7, p. 581.
- 88 *KGFL*, pp. 130–2.
- 89 *KGFL*, pp. 132–3.
- 90 *KGFL*, p. 133.
- 91 *KGFL*, p. 134.
- 92 *KGFL*, p. 135, and Luo Bin, p. 219.
- 93 *KGFL*, p. 135, and *CHC* 7, p. 582.
- 94 Jiang Yongfang, *Shei huile da Ming wangchao* (Beijing: Jiefangjun wenyi chubanshe, 2008), p. 336.
- 95 *MTJ*, pp. 2940–1.
- 96 *KGFL*, p. 136, and *MTJ*, p. 2941.
- 97 *QRGQSL* 1, pp. 419–23 provides a Korean account of the battle.

- 98 *KGFL*, p. 137.
- 99 *MTJ*, pp. 2941–2.
- 100 *MQZS*, p. 54, and *KGFL*, p. 137.
- 101 *KGFL*, p. 138.
- 102 Luo Bin, p. 220. The details of Liu's death differ. The Jin claimed they executed him. The Chinese said he died in combat. The Koreans say that he committed suicide by igniting gunpowder under himself.
- 103 *KGFL*, p. 139.
- 104 Luo Bin, p. 220, and *WMS*, p. 767. For a list of the Ming officers killed, see Wang Zaijin, pp. 1.9b–1.13b.
- 105 *KGFL*, p. 139, and *MQZS*, p. 68.
- 106 *MJBL*, pp. 13–15.
- 107 *KGFL*, p. 140.
- 108 *QSG*, p. 12.
- 109 Jiang Yongfang, pp. 333–4.
- 110 See Nie Zuoping, 1644: *Diguo de tengtong* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), pp. 100–1, and Jiang Yongfang, pp. 333–5.
- 111 On blaming Wanli, see *MQZS*, p. 63, and Nie, pp. 96–7.
- 112 *MQZS*, pp. 57–8.
- 113 *KGFL*, pp. 141–2.
- 114 *MTJ*, p. 2944.
- 115 *KGFL*, pp. 142–3.
- 116 *QSG*, p. 12.
- 117 Jiang Yongfang, p. 343.
- 118 *KGFL*, pp. 146–7.
- 119 *KGFL*, p. 151.
- 120 *KGFL*, pp. 143–4.
- 121 *KGFL*, pp. 151–2.
- 122 *KGFL*, p. 155.
- 123 *MTJ*, p. 2945.
- 124 *MTJ*, pp. 2945–6.
- 125 *DYKL*, p. 75.
- 126 Wang Zaijin, p. 1.25a.
- 127 Wang Zaijin, p. 1.14b, and Wu Bosen, p. 1041.
- 128 *LGSL*, pp. 146–7.
- 129 *MTJ*, pp. 2942–3.
- 130 *DYKL*, p. 76.
- 131 *MTJ*, p. 2947.
- 132 Wang Zaijin, pp. 1.43b–44b.
- 133 *MTJ*, p. 2949, and Wang Zaijin, p. 2.1a.
- 134 Wang Zaijin, pp. 1.22a–22b.
- 135 Wang Zaijin, pp. 1.25a–26a.
- 136 Wang Zaijin, pp. 1.23a–23b.
- 137 Wang Zaijin, p. 1.23b.
- 138 For a request for aboriginal troops from Guizhou, see *MCDA* 1, pp. 278–9.
- 139 *MSJSBM*, pp. 1417–20.
- 140 Wu Bosen, p. 1213.
- 141 See *YSJ*, pp. 8–16.
- 142 *YSJ*, p. 24.
- 143 *YSJ*, p. 25.
- 144 *YSJ*, p. 25.
- 145 *YSJ*, p. 25.
- 146 *YSJ*, p. 25. The memorial was marked received and retained by the throne but no response was given.

- 147 *MTJ*, p. 2952.
- 148 *MTJ*, pp. 2953–4. In fact the emperor had released 360,000 taels of personal funds the previous year.
- 149 Wang Zaijin, p. 2.4a.
- 150 Wang Zaijin, pp. 1.39a–42a. Wang also complained about troop shortages comparing the present day unfavorably with the era of the Japanese war against the Ming in Korea.
- 151 *WMS*, p. 629.
- 152 *WMS*, p. 639.
- 153 Wu Bosen, p. 1214.
- 154 Wu Bosen, pp. 1241–15.
- 155 *MTJ*, p. 2935.
- 156 *WMS*, p. 769.
- 157 *MTJ*, pp. 2968–9. Some sources suggest that Xiong’s dismissal was tied primarily to his constant harping about funding shortages. Others cite his lack of people skills. See *LGSL*, p. 148.
- 158 *MS*, p. 297.
- 159 *YSJ*, pp. 39–43.
- 160 See *YSJ*, pp. 55–56.
- 161 *YSJ*, pp. 60–1.
- 162 *JSZB*, pp. 6–7.
- 163 *JSZB*, p. 12.
- 164 For details on the brief Taichang reign and the emperor’s mysterious death, see Dardess, *Blood and History*, pp. 16–20.
- 165 *GQ*, p. 5166.
- 166 *GQ*, p. 5170. This was actually under Xiong Tingbi before his dismissal.
- 167 *GQ*, p. 5181. Also see *MS*, p. 6952 regarding the exploits of He Shixian.
- 168 *LGSL*, pp. 150–3.
- 169 *LGSL*, p. 154.
- 170 For important exceptions to this trend see the discussions in Peter Lorge, *War, Politics, and Society in Early Modern China, 900–1795* (London: Routledge, 2005); Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); and Arthur Waldron, *The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
- 171 *LGSL*, pp. 155–6.
- 172 Lo Jung-pang, “Policy Formulation and Decision-making on Issues Respecting Peace and War,” in Charles O. Hucker (ed.), *The Chinese Government in Ming Times* (Taibei: Rainbow Bridge, 1969), p. 42.
- 173 There are myriad studies of the Donglin in English and Chinese. In addition to the works by Hucker, Miller, and Dardess cited herein, see Wu Yingji, *Donglin benmo* (Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 2002) for a collection of Ming sources pertaining to their activities.
- 174 See, for example, Shih-shan Henry Tsai, *The Eunuchs in the Ming Dynasty* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996), and Ulrich Mammitzsch, “Wei Chung-hsien (1568–1628): A Reappraisal of the Eunuch and the Factional Strife at the Late Ming Court,” PhD dissertation, University of Hawaii, 1968.
- 175 For details on the organization of Ming government and the duties and ranks of all these officials, see Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985).
- 176 See Lo, “Policy Formulation,” p. 69.
- 177 *GQ*, p. 5181.
- 178 *LGSL*, p. 151.
- 179 *KGFL*, p. 164.

## 2 Changing tides: From defeat to stability in the northeast, 1622–6

- <sup>1</sup> *MQZS*, p. 90.
- <sup>2</sup> *MQZS*, p. 96, and Wu Bosen, p. 798.
- <sup>3</sup> Wu Bosen, p. 798.
- <sup>4</sup> *KGFL*, pp. 165–6. Some said that He fled to Liaoyang. See *MQZS*, p. 96. Still other accounts suggest that he was killed by a mob or joined Li Yongfang as a defector. See *MSJSBM*, p. 1424, and *MJBL*, p. 27.
- <sup>5</sup> *MS*, p. 298.
- <sup>6</sup> *KGFL*, p. 166.
- <sup>7</sup> *KGFL*, p. 167.
- <sup>8</sup> See *MQZS*, pp. 96–9.
- <sup>9</sup> *MSJSBM*, p. 1425.
- <sup>10</sup> *KGFL*, pp. 168–9.
- <sup>11</sup> *QBLJ*, p. 245.
- <sup>12</sup> *KGFL*, p. 169.
- <sup>13</sup> Wu Bosen, pp. 798–9.
- <sup>14</sup> *GQ*, p. 5188.
- <sup>15</sup> *KGFL*, p. 170. For a list of the high Ming officials who died, see *QBLJ*, p. 247.
- <sup>16</sup> *QSG*, p. 13.
- <sup>17</sup> *LGSL*, p. 163.
- <sup>18</sup> *MQZS*, p. 97.
- <sup>19</sup> *KGFL*, pp. 171–2.
- <sup>20</sup> *NMSL*, p. 32.
- <sup>21</sup> *KGFL*, pp. 172–3.
- <sup>22</sup> *KGFL*, p. 174.
- <sup>23</sup> *MQZS*, p. 108.
- <sup>24</sup> For details on these initiatives, see *MQZS*, pp. 112–13.
- <sup>25</sup> *NMSL*, p. 33.
- <sup>26</sup> See Yang and Mo, pp. 153–6.
- <sup>27</sup> On the rotational troop system of the Ming, see Peng Yong, *Mingdai banjun zhidu yanjiu* (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu daxue chubanshe, 2005). On the decline of the system and efforts to reverse it, see pp. 396–448.
- <sup>28</sup> *MQZS*, pp. 103–5.
- <sup>29</sup> *MS*, p. 298.
- <sup>30</sup> For a biography of Wang, see *ECCP*, p. 823.
- <sup>31</sup> *MS*, pp. 298–9.
- <sup>32</sup> *MQZS*, p. 115, and *MTJ*, p. 2982.
- <sup>33</sup> Wu Bosen, p. 800.
- <sup>34</sup> *LGSL*, p. 165.
- <sup>35</sup> *MQZS*, p. 119.
- <sup>36</sup> *MQZS*, pp. 119–20.
- <sup>37</sup> *MQZS*, p. 121.
- <sup>38</sup> See *DYKL*, p. 86, where the author stresses the need to study the Chinese military classics to rectify the problem.
- <sup>39</sup> See *QBLJ*, p. 248 regarding this problem. Also consider the comment of the official Wu Sheng who, citing the ancient text the *Great Learning*, noted that “when officials are numerous, regulations are in chaos.” See *CASJ*, p. 31.
- <sup>40</sup> See Li Guangtao, “Mao Wenlong niangluan Dongjiang shimo,” in *Ming-Qing Dang'an lunwenji* (Taibei: Lianjing chubanshiye gongsi, 1986), p. 165.
- <sup>41</sup> On the importance of the sea lanes of Bohai in military terms, see Jung Byol-chul, “Late Ming Island Bases, Military Posts, and Sea Routes in the Offshore Area of Liaodong,” in Angela Schottenhammer and Roderich Ptak (eds), *The Perception of Maritime Space in Traditional Chinese Sources* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), pp. 41–3.

- <sup>42</sup> *MJBL*, p. 32.
- <sup>43</sup> See Li Guangtao, “Mao Wenlong niangluan,” pp. 165–6.
- <sup>44</sup> See *MJBL*, pp. 32–3.
- <sup>45</sup> On the rivalry between Wang and Xiong, see Li Guangtao, *Mao Wenlong niangluan*,” pp. 166–70, and *MJBL*, pp. 35–6.
- <sup>46</sup> Li Guangtao, “Mao Wenlong niangluan,” p. 163.
- <sup>47</sup> *MTJ*, p. 2991.
- <sup>48</sup> Mao Chengdou, pp. 5–6.
- <sup>49</sup> See Li Guangtao, “Mao Wenlong niangluan,” p. 167.
- <sup>50</sup> See the memorials in Mao Chengdou, pp. 7–9. Mao claimed he liberated some 40,000 refugees when he took Zhenjiang.
- <sup>51</sup> See *SFSL*, pp. 39–41.
- <sup>52</sup> See *ZWL*, p. 1774.
- <sup>53</sup> See Chen Shengxi, p. 121, and Li Shanhong, “Shilun Mao Wenlong yu Chaoxian de guanxi,” p. 34.
- <sup>54</sup> Li Guangtao, “Mao Wenlong niangluan,” p. 174.
- <sup>55</sup> Chen Shengxi, p. 121.
- <sup>56</sup> See Li Guangtao, “Mao Wenlong niangluan,” p. 175. On Ming plans for operations in the Bohai Gulf in this period, see *MQSC* 4, pp. 20–84, which contains a variety of reports, plans, and memorials from the official Tao Langxian.
- <sup>57</sup> Chen Shengxi, p. 121.
- <sup>58</sup> *MS*, p. 299, and John E. Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist: China's Colonization of Guizhou, 1200–1700* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 176–7.
- <sup>59</sup> *MS*, p. 299. The female aboriginal official Qin Liangyu was among those who fought on the Ming side. See *GQ*, p. 5196, and *ZWL*, p. 338.
- <sup>60</sup> Wu Bosen, p. 694. This was the 5<sup>th</sup> month of 1622. Incidentally even as this was taking place, the Ming were battling an uprising of White Lotus sectarians in Shandong province in the northeast. See Wu Bosen, pp. 694–6. For full details on the Xu Hongru White Lotus revolt of 1622 see *MSJSBM*, pp. 1127–31. Xu’s rebellion lasted seven months and claimed some two million followers. He was captured and dismembered in the marketplace in Beijing. See *MTJ*, p. 3022.
- <sup>61</sup> Herman, p. 178, and *MS*, p. 302. The region had been the site of steady Han Chinese encroachment for the entire Ming period and had witnessed a massive tribal revolt as recently as the 1590s. For more on Han Chinese expansion, see Leo K. Shin, *The Making of the Chinese State: Ethnicity and Expansion on the Ming Borderlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). On the Yang Yinglong rebellion of the 1590s, see Kenneth M. Swope, “To Catch a Tiger: The Suppression of the Yang Yinglong Miao Uprising (1587–1600) as a Case Study in Ming Military and Borderlands History,” in Kenneth R. Hall and Michael Aung Thwin (eds), *New Perspectives on the History and Historiography of Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 112–40.
- <sup>62</sup> Herman, pp. 181–3, and *MTJ*, p. 3023.
- <sup>63</sup> Herman, p. 185.
- <sup>64</sup> Wu Bosen, p. 697.
- <sup>65</sup> Wu Bosen, p. 698.
- <sup>66</sup> Wu Bosen, p. 698.
- <sup>67</sup> Wu Bosen, p. 700.
- <sup>68</sup> Wu Bosen, p. 703.
- <sup>69</sup> Herman, p. 186.
- <sup>70</sup> As a point of comparison the annual revenue of the empire in the late Ming was around 40 million taels. Herman, pp. 186–7. For a longer account of the She-An Rebellion see *MSJSBM*, pp. 1109–26.
- <sup>71</sup> *MJBL*, p. 32.
- <sup>72</sup> *MJBL*, pp. 32–3.

- <sup>73</sup> *MQZS*, pp. 132–3.
- <sup>74</sup> *MS*, p. 6956.
- <sup>75</sup> *MS*, p. 6956.
- <sup>76</sup> *MQZS*, pp. 134–5.
- <sup>77</sup> *MQZS*, p. 135.
- <sup>78</sup> *KGFL*, p. 178.
- <sup>79</sup> *MJBL*, p. 33, and Mei Qizhao, *Gaoben Ming shijue* (Beijing: Xinhua shudian, 2002), pp. 660–2.
- <sup>80</sup> *MQZS*, p. 136.
- <sup>81</sup> *GQ*, p. 5200.
- <sup>82</sup> *MQZS*, pp. 139–40.
- <sup>83</sup> *KGFL*, p. 179.
- <sup>84</sup> See *QTZ*, pp. 111–12 for a discussion of the strategic significance of the capture of Guangning.
- <sup>85</sup> See the discussion in Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, pp. 66–9. Also see *MQZS*, pp. 141–51. Before his death Xiong likened his tormentors to the infamous Qin dynasty eunuch Zhao Gao, who helped kill the second emperor. This was of course a reference of the so-called Ming eunuch dictator Wei Zhongxian (1568–1628) and his allies, who were prominent at court at the time. While all manner of charges were leveled at Xiong before his death, he would be partially rehabilitated, albeit posthumously, by the last Ming emperor.
- <sup>86</sup> Jiang Yonghong suggests that this was the major reason for the fall of the Ming, along with overreliance upon eunuchs. See Jiang Yonghong, p. 347.
- <sup>87</sup> Mei Qizhao, p. 665. On Sun's position with respect to other officials, see Chen Zuorong, "Tianqi jian Sun Chengzong du Liao yeji shulue," *Dongbei shida xuebao*, 1988.3 (1988), pp. 30–5.
- <sup>88</sup> For Sun Chengzong's overarching defense plans, see *QBLJ*, pp. 253–5, and *GQ*, p. 5257, and p. 5284.
- <sup>89</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3005.
- <sup>90</sup> *ZWL*, p. 335. Also see Yan Chongnian, *Yuan Chonghuan zhuan*, pp. 47–9.
- <sup>91</sup> For a general overview of the Ming adoption and deployment of firearms, see Chen Dong, "Mingdai houqi youming huopao gaishi," *Wenwu*, 1993.4 (1993), pp. 79–86; and Kenneth M. Swope, "Bringing in the Big Guns: On the Use of Firearms in the Ming-Manchu War," forthcoming in Peter A. Lorge and Kaushik Roy (eds), *Chinese and Indian Warfare from Antiquity to 1870* (London: Routledge, 2012).
- <sup>92</sup> *MJBL*, p. 25.
- <sup>93</sup> Xie Lihong, p. 103. On Wang Zaijin, see *ECCP*, p. 839.
- <sup>94</sup> See Shen Guoyuan, in *QRGQSL*, p. 237.
- <sup>95</sup> An example would be Luo Yigui's defense of Xipingbao. See *MJBL*, p. 32.
- <sup>96</sup> See Di Cosmo, "Did Guns Matter," pp. 136–9.
- <sup>97</sup> On Xu and Li, see Chun-shu Chang and Shelley Hsueh-lun Chang, *Crisis and Transformation in Seventeenth-Century China: Society, Culture, and Modernity in Li Yu's World* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 287–90. On Sun Yuanhua, see Huang Yi-long, "Sun Yuanhua yu Mingmo chuanhua de xiyang huopao," *Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan*, 67.4 (1996), pp. 911–66. For a brief biography of Sun, see *ECCP*, p. 686; for a biography of Xu Guangqi, see *ECCP*, pp. 316–19.
- <sup>98</sup> Boxer, "Portuguese Military Expeditions," p. 24. Yimin Zhang credits Xu Guangqi with being one of the pioneers of the so-called *quancai* ideal where officials sought to master civil and military affairs. See Yimin Zhang, "The Role of Literati in Military Action During the Ming–Qing Transition Period," PhD dissertation, McGill University, 2006, p. 17.
- <sup>99</sup> Huang Yi-long 1996, pp. 913–16.
- <sup>100</sup> See Liu Hongliang and Song Lin, "Ming-Qing liangchao hongyi dapao de shecheng wenti zaixi," *Lishi dang'an*, 2007.4 (2007), pp. 41–2. Interestingly enough, however,

- a Chongzhen era cannon can still be found atop the wall at the Ming Wall Ruins City Park in Beijing.
- 101 Huang Yi-long, “Sun Yuanhua,” p. 231.
- 102 Boxer, p. 26.
- 103 Huang Yi-long, “Sun Yuanhua,” pp. 233–4.
- 104 For a recent discussion of the significance of the artillery fortress in early modern warfare, see Tonio Andrade, *Lost Colony: The Untold Story of China’s First Great Victory Over the West* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), esp., pp. 152–6 and pp. 316–20.
- 105 Liu and Song, p. 43.
- 106 See Liu and Song, pp. 43–5, which includes a table of sizes and ranges.
- 107 Wu Bosen, p. 1219.
- 108 See Wu Bosen, pp. 1216–20 for these figures, all of which were extrapolated from the *Veritable Records of the Ming*.
- 109 See Agoston, pp. 180–3.
- 110 Xie Lihong, pp. 103–4.
- 111 Mao Chengdou, pp. 12–13.
- 112 Mao Chengdou, p. 15.
- 113 Mao Chengdou, p. 15.
- 114 Mao Chengdou, p. 16.
- 115 Mao Chengdou, p. 110.
- 116 See Mao Chengdou, p. 16, and p. 109.
- 117 See Li Guangtao, pp. 177–8.
- 118 Chen Shengxi, p. 122.
- 119 MS, p. 300, and Cai Ding, *Sun Gaoyang xiansheng qianhou dushi hueba*, in Yu Hao (comp.), *Ming-Qing shiliao congshu*, 18 vols (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2009), vol. 6, p. 576. For a brief biography of Sun, see ECC P, pp. 670–1. For a traditional chronological biography (*nianpu*), see Sun Quan (comp.), *Gaoyang taizhuan Sun Wenzheng gong nianpu*, in Yu Hao (comp.), *Mingdai mingren nianpu*, 12 vols (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2006), vol. 10, pp. 1–392.
- 120 Cai Ding, p. 577.
- 121 See Sun Quan, p. 120.
- 122 ZWL, p. 1492.
- 123 GQ, p. 5259.
- 124 Sun Quan, pp. 121–2.
- 125 Sun Quan, p. 128.
- 126 GQ, p. 5202. For a longer discussion of Ming concerns about the potential Mongol threat, see MQSC 6, pp. 104–9.
- 127 BSXJ, p. 66.
- 128 BSXJ, pp. 66–9.
- 129 See Sun Quan, pp. 1338.
- 130 ZWL, pp. 338–9. Also see GQ, p. 5203, concerning plans for joint land/sea operations.
- 131 For one example, see Wu Bosen, p. 1226.
- 132 Sun Quan, pp. 144–6.
- 133 Sun Quan, pp. 146–7.
- 134 BSXJ, p. 69.
- 135 Sun Quan, p. 147.
- 136 Sun Quan, pp. 161–2.
- 137 GQ, p. 5236. The Ming were looking at costs in excess of 5.2 million taels a year for activities in Liaodong.
- 138 Sun Quan, pp. 163–4.
- 139 GQ, pp. 5247–8.
- 140 GQ, p. 5215.

- <sup>141</sup> *MS*, p. 6962.
- <sup>142</sup> Sun Quan, pp. 189–93, and *BSXJ*, pp. 82–3.
- <sup>143</sup> See Cai Ding, pp. 583–6.
- <sup>144</sup> *ZWL*, p. 1493.
- <sup>145</sup> *MQZS*, p. 156.
- <sup>146</sup> *MTJ*, pp. 3043–8. For additional details on Yang’s memorial and its fallout, see Dardess, *Blood and History*, pp. 79–100.
- <sup>147</sup> *GQ*, p. 5293.
- <sup>148</sup> See Liu Jinshu and Gao Shouxian, *Tianqi huangdi da zhuan* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui chubanshe, 2007), pp. 270–1.
- <sup>149</sup> On the purges and their connection to the dismissal of Sun Chengzong, see *MTJ*, pp. 3051–8.
- <sup>150</sup> *MS*, p. 303.
- <sup>151</sup> *GQ*, p. 5304.
- <sup>152</sup> For a lengthy account of the Donglin, see Heinrich Busch, “The Tung-lin Shu-yuan and Its Political and Philosophical Significance,” *Monumenta Serica*, 14 (1949–55), pp. 1–163.
- <sup>153</sup> Charles O. Hucker, “Su-chou and the Agents of Wei Chung-hsien,” in *Silver Jubilee Volume of the Zinbun kogaku kenkyuso*, Kyoto University (Kyoto: Kyoto daigaku, 1954), p. 224.
- <sup>154</sup> Mammitszsch, p. 75.
- <sup>155</sup> See Hucker, “Agents of Wei Chung-hsien,” pp. 225–6.
- <sup>156</sup> Mammitszsch, p. 123. On Wei’s supposed nefarious plotting to gain the reins of authority, see Wang Xingguo and Xia Peizhuo, *Huaxia wuqian nian mingren shengji-Mingchao houqi juan* (Beijing: Zhongguo huabao chubanshe, 2006), pp. 139–42.
- <sup>157</sup> See Miller, *State Versus Gentry*, pp. 134–6.
- <sup>158</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3028.
- <sup>159</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3029. The Korean situation is covered in the next chapter.
- <sup>160</sup> *MTJ*, pp. 3036–7. See p. 3043 for the Ming investiture of the new king. Also see *DMB*, p. 1593.
- <sup>161</sup> Chen Shengxi, p. 122.
- <sup>162</sup> *BSXJ*, p. 329.
- <sup>163</sup> *BSXJ*, pp. 330–1.
- <sup>164</sup> *BSXJ*, pp. 337–8.
- <sup>165</sup> Wu Guohua, p. 140. On Mao’s relationship with Wei, see Li Guangtao, “Mao Wenlong niangluan,” pp. 182–7.
- <sup>166</sup> For a more sympathetic recent biography of Emperor Tianqi that gives him a greater degree of agency than most traditional sources, see Lin and Gao, *Tianqi huangdi dazhuan* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui chubanshe, 2008). For brief account of factionalism and the so-called “eunuch party” at the Tianqi court, see Yan Chongnian, *Ming wang Qing xing liushi nian*, 2 vols (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), vol. 1, pp. 229–38.
- <sup>167</sup> *MS*, p. 6707.
- <sup>168</sup> *MQZS*, p. 165.
- <sup>169</sup> On Yuan’s supposed connections to the Donglin, see Liu Bohan, “Lun Yuan Chonghuan yu Donglin dang de guanxi,” *Lishi yanjiu*, 1958.4 (1958), pp. 11–27.
- <sup>170</sup> *MS*, pp. 6707–8.
- <sup>171</sup> *MQZS*, p. 167.
- <sup>172</sup> *MS*, pp. 6708–9.
- <sup>173</sup> *BSXJ*, pp. 101–2.
- <sup>174</sup> *MQZS*, pp. 170–1.
- <sup>175</sup> *MS*, p. 6709.
- <sup>176</sup> *BSXJ*, p. 90.
- <sup>177</sup> *MS*, p. 303.

- <sup>178</sup> See Gertraude Roth Li, “The Manchu–Chinese Relationship, 1618–1636,” in Spence and Wills, pp. 13–14.
- <sup>179</sup> Lin and Gao, p. 278.
- <sup>180</sup> Jiang Yonghang, p. 349.
- <sup>181</sup> *MQZS*, p. 175, and Jiang Yonghong, p. 349. In actuality Nurhaci most likely had around 60,000 troops.
- <sup>182</sup> *MQZS*, p. 176. For an overview of this strategy, see Kenneth M. Swope, “Clearing the Fields and Strengthening the Walls: Defending Small Cities in Late Ming China,” in Kenneth R. Hall (ed.), *Secondary Cities and Urban Networking in the Indian Ocean Realm* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), pp. 123–54. On troop transfers to Ningyuan, see Sun Quan, p. 196.
- <sup>183</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3080.
- <sup>184</sup> *MQZS*, p. 177. Man was a Mongol who had served the Ming capably for several years under Sun Chengzong.
- <sup>185</sup> For a complete account of Yuan’s preparations, see Yan Chongnian, *Yuan Chong-huan zhuan*, pp. 56–60.
- <sup>186</sup> *MQZS*, p. 177, and Lin and Gao, p. 278.
- <sup>187</sup> *MQZS*, p. 178.
- <sup>188</sup> *MQZS*, p. 179, and Lin and Gao, p. 279.
- <sup>189</sup> Wang and Xia, p. 172.
- <sup>190</sup> *MJBL*, p. 41.
- <sup>191</sup> *MJBL*, p. 42.
- <sup>192</sup> *MQZS*, pp. 180–1.
- <sup>193</sup> *MJBL*, p. 41.
- <sup>194</sup> *QSG*, p. 16. See Yan Chongnian, *Yuan Chonghua zhuan*, pp. 68–71. This battle will be discussed in the next chapter.
- <sup>195</sup> On the death toll, see *MQZS*, pp. 182–3.
- <sup>196</sup> *MS*, p. 6710.
- <sup>197</sup> *MQZS*, p. 184.
- <sup>198</sup> *WMS*, p. 774.
- <sup>199</sup> *ZWL*, p. 346.
- <sup>200</sup> Lin and Gao, p. 284.

### 3 Pursuing a forward strategy: Yuan Chonghuan’s rise and fall, 1626–30

- <sup>1</sup> *MWQX* 1, p. 186.
- <sup>2</sup> *MWQX* 1, pp. 186–7.
- <sup>3</sup> *MWQX* 1, p. 188.
- <sup>4</sup> *MWQX* 1, pp. 188–9.
- <sup>5</sup> *MWQX* 1, pp. 189–90.
- <sup>6</sup> *MWQX* 1, p. 190.
- <sup>7</sup> *GQ*, p. 5322.
- <sup>8</sup> Lin and Gao, p. 285.
- <sup>9</sup> Lin and Gao, pp. 286–7.
- <sup>10</sup> Lin and Gao, p. 290. Troops and horses were also sent from Tianjin to Shanhaiguan. See Wu Bosen, p. 1051.
- <sup>11</sup> Wu Bosen, p. 816.
- <sup>12</sup> *MQZS*, p. 212.
- <sup>13</sup> Wu Bosen, p. 1227.
- <sup>14</sup> *MQZS*, pp. 192–3.
- <sup>15</sup> Excerpts from Sun Yuanhua’s memorials can be found in Huang Yi-long, “Sun Yuanhua,” pp. 919–20. On Sun Chengzong, see *ECCP*, pp. 670–1, and *MS*, pp. 6465–77.

- <sup>16</sup> WMS, p. 771.
- <sup>17</sup> Huang Yi-long, "Sun Yuanhua," p. 920.
- <sup>18</sup> WMS, p. 773. On Sun Chengzong's plans for defending Liaodong incorporating firearms in defensive positions, see *GQ*, pp. 5235–6.
- <sup>19</sup> *MQZS*, p. 197.
- <sup>20</sup> *ZWL*, p. 349.
- <sup>21</sup> See the translated excerpt in Crossley, *The Manchus*, p. 75.
- <sup>22</sup> For an excellent overview of Song-Liao diplomacy, see Jing-shen Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven: Studies in Sung-Liao Relations* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1985.) Also see David C. Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity in Eleventh-Century China: Sung's Foreign Relations with Kitan Liao* (Leiden: Brill, 2005). For a collection of essays on diplomacy and foreign relations in the Song era, see Morris Rossabi (ed.), *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983).
- <sup>23</sup> See *MQZS*, p. 203 for details.
- <sup>24</sup> *MQZS*, p. 205.
- <sup>25</sup> *MQZS*, pp. 200–1.
- <sup>26</sup> *GQ*, p. 5431.
- <sup>27</sup> *QSG*, p. 21.
- <sup>28</sup> *CXLH*, p. 2.
- <sup>29</sup> Mao later claimed to have killed several Jin commanders and reported a victory to the Ming throne. See *MJBL*, pp. 42–3.
- <sup>30</sup> *CXLH*, p. 3.
- <sup>31</sup> Wu Bosen, p. 1228.
- <sup>32</sup> For letters from Hung Taiji to King Injo, see *MQSC* 2, pp. 183–8.
- <sup>33</sup> *GQ*, p. 5348.
- <sup>34</sup> *QSG*, p. 22.
- <sup>35</sup> On Hung Taiji's articulation of the brotherly relationship, see *MQSC* 2, pp. 212–15.
- <sup>36</sup> *QSG*, p. 22.
- <sup>37</sup> *MQSC* 2 p. 194.
- <sup>38</sup> *MQSC* 2, pp. 198–9.
- <sup>39</sup> *MQSC* 2, p. 203.
- <sup>40</sup> For a stimulating recent overview of the Chinese tributary system and its role in early modern East Asian diplomacy and international relations, see David C. Kang, *East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).
- <sup>41</sup> *MS*, p. 6711.
- <sup>42</sup> *MS*, p. 6959.
- <sup>43</sup> See *MQZS*, pp. 214–15.
- <sup>44</sup> Lin and Gao, p. 291.
- <sup>45</sup> *QTZ*, p. 186.
- <sup>46</sup> *QTZ*, p. 186.
- <sup>47</sup> Lin and Gao, p. 292.
- <sup>48</sup> Lin and Gao, p. 293.
- <sup>49</sup> Lin and Gao, p. 293.
- <sup>50</sup> *QBLJ*, p. 258.
- <sup>51</sup> For a lengthier account of this campaign see Yan Chongnian, *Yuan Chonghuan zhuan*, pp. 75–98.
- <sup>52</sup> *QSG*, p. 24.
- <sup>53</sup> Wu Bosen, p. 1228.
- <sup>54</sup> Lin and Gao, p. 294.
- <sup>55</sup> Lin and Gao, p. 295.
- <sup>56</sup> *GQ*, pp. 5322–3.

- <sup>57</sup> For a full treatment of this war, see Kenneth M. Swope, *A Dragon's Head and a Serpent's Tail* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009).
- <sup>58</sup> For a biography of Kwanghae, see *DMB*, pp. 1591–4.
- <sup>59</sup> Li Shanhong, p. 35.
- <sup>60</sup> On the relationship between factional politics, the coup, and the Jin invasion of Korea, see James Palais, *Confucian Statecraft and Korean Institutions: Yu Hyongwon and the Late Chosón Dynasty* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1996), pp. 92–101.
- <sup>61</sup> See Yan Chongnian and Yu Sanle (comps), *Yuan Chonghuan ziliaojilu*, 2 vols (Nanning: Guangxi minzu chubanshe, 1984), vol. I, p. 164, which is taken from the *Injo sillok*.
- <sup>62</sup> Li Shanhong, p. 36.
- <sup>63</sup> Chen Shengxi, p. 122.
- <sup>64</sup> *Yuan Chonghuan ziliaojilu* I, p. 161.
- <sup>65</sup> Chen Shengxi, p. 123.
- <sup>66</sup> Li Shanhong, p. 38.
- <sup>67</sup> See Palais, p. 789.
- <sup>68</sup> Li Shanhong, p. 36. Some sources say he received as much as 260,000 *dan* of supplies from the Koreans in total. See Jung, p. 47.
- <sup>69</sup> See Mao Chengdou, pp. 78–80, and Jung, p. 47.
- <sup>70</sup> See *GQ*, p. 5486.
- <sup>71</sup> Jung, p. 46.
- <sup>72</sup> *LHXS*, p. 5.
- <sup>73</sup> *WMS*, p. 776.
- <sup>74</sup> See *CZYJ*, p. 7, and *LHXS*, pp. 6–7.
- <sup>75</sup> *MS*, p. 309.
- <sup>76</sup> *CZYJ*, p. 26.
- <sup>77</sup> *CZSL*, p. 45.
- <sup>78</sup> *ZWL*, p. 5456.
- <sup>79</sup> *LHXS*, p. 24. Also see *CZSL*, pp. 46–7, for discussions of the ongoing Chahar problem.
- <sup>80</sup> *CZSL*, p. 37. He also approved a plan for renewed countermeasures against the She-An rebels in Sichuan. Early the following year another 500,000 taels were allocated to Shaanxi.
- <sup>81</sup> *GQ*, p. 5456.
- <sup>82</sup> *CZSL*, p. 49.
- <sup>83</sup> *CZSL*, p. 50.
- <sup>84</sup> Ying Zhang, pp. 160–4.
- <sup>85</sup> See Jiang Yonghong, p. 355. On Chongzhen's poor judgment of character and use of sycophants, see Meng, *Mingshi jiangyi*, pp. 277–78. For an examination of Wen Tiren, one of Chongzhen's most reviled favorites, see Fan Shuzhi, *Quan yu xue: Ming diguo guanchang zhengzhi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005), pp. 149–58. Also see Yu Tongyuan, *Chongzhen shiqi nian: shehui dongdang yu wenhua bianzou* (Taibei: Laogu chubanshe, 2002), pp. 69–76.
- <sup>86</sup> Jiang Yonghong, p. 356.
- <sup>87</sup> Ying Zhang, p. 230.
- <sup>88</sup> *MCSD*, p. 383.
- <sup>89</sup> *MCSD*, p. 404.
- <sup>90</sup> Nie, p. 22.
- <sup>91</sup> Nie, p. 23. Of course some of these charges are ascribed to nearly every dynasty's final emperors so they must be taken with a grain of salt.
- <sup>92</sup> Jiang Yonghong, pp. 354–5.
- <sup>93</sup> *CZYJ*, pp. 22–3, and *CZSL*, p. 40. This was in the 11<sup>th</sup> month.
- <sup>94</sup> *MS*, pp. 6712–13.

- <sup>95</sup> *MS*, p. 6713.
- <sup>96</sup> *WMS*, p. 781.
- <sup>97</sup> For a full discussion of Yuan's audience with Chongzhen, see Yan, *Yuan Chonghuan zhuān*, pp. 116–28.
- <sup>98</sup> *MJBL*, p. 92.
- <sup>99</sup> *WMS*, p. 783. The Ministry of Revenue reported deficit spending in excess of one million taels for the previous year and it was getting worse with Liaodong consuming ever greater shares of revenue.
- <sup>100</sup> Concerning espionage between the Ming and Jin, see *MQSL* 1, pp. 49b–51a.
- <sup>101</sup> See *LDSG*, pp. 22–45, for Bi's own writings and recommendations on these subjects. Bi also indicted his fellow civil officials, quoting an old Song dynasty proverb that said, "when civil officials don't love money, military officials don't fear death." See p. 44.
- <sup>102</sup> *LDSG*, p. 96.
- <sup>103</sup> See his urgent request on the eve of the mutiny in *LDSG*, pp. 137–45.
- <sup>104</sup> *LDSG*, pp. 57–61.
- <sup>105</sup> *LDSG*, p. 62.
- <sup>106</sup> See *LDSG*, pp. 245–7.
- <sup>107</sup> *CZSL*, p. 52.
- <sup>108</sup> *CZYJ*, pp. 24–5. On Yuan's requests for supplies, also see *MQSL* 3, pp. 717a–717b.
- <sup>109</sup> *LHXS*, pp. 26–7.
- <sup>110</sup> Li Guangtao, "Mao Wenlong niangluan," pp. 191–2.
- <sup>111</sup> Chen Shengxi, p. 126. Interestingly enough, this same Wang Zideng apparently followed Mao's former subordinates in submitting to the Jin a few years later!
- <sup>112</sup> Jung, p. 48.
- <sup>113</sup> *MS*, p. 6715.
- <sup>114</sup> Li Shanhong, p. 37.
- <sup>115</sup> *MS*, p. 6716.
- <sup>116</sup> *MQSL* 3 , pp. 710a–710b.
- <sup>117</sup> Li Shanhong, p. 36.
- <sup>118</sup> *Yuan Chonghuan ziliao* I, p. 161.
- <sup>119</sup> *MQSL* 1, pp. 41a–41b.
- <sup>120</sup> See *MQSL* 3, pp. 703a–703b.
- <sup>121</sup> On Mao's letters to Hung Taiji, see *MQSL* 1, pp. 42a–43b. Also see *ZLZZ*, pp. 597–8.
- <sup>122</sup> *LKCB*, pp. 29–30.
- <sup>123</sup> *CASJ*, p. 101.
- <sup>124</sup> See, for example, the discussions in Ju Mingku, pp. 349–51, and Xie Chengren, *Li Zicheng xinzhuān* (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2007), pp. 8–9.
- <sup>125</sup> Nie, p. 56.
- <sup>126</sup> On the role of climate and natural disasters (which he identifies as sloughs) in the demise of the Ming dynasty, see Timothy Brook, *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2010), esp. pp. 50–78 and pp. 238–59. On the global crisis of the seventeenth century and its connection to state breakdown, see Geoffrey Parker, "Crisis and Catastrophe: The Global Crisis of the Seventeenth Century Reconsidered," *American Historical Review*, 113.4 (2008), pp. 1053–79; and Parker, *The Global Crisis of the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).
- <sup>127</sup> See, for example, Ju Mingku, pp. 351–3.
- <sup>128</sup> Ju Mingku, pp. 353–4.
- <sup>129</sup> *CASJ*, p. 101. The official Wu Sheng reports that he devoted considerable effort to apprehending White Lotus bandits who had strayed into his jurisdiction in Henan from Shandong. See *CASJ*, pp. 114–15.
- <sup>130</sup> On the origins of the late Ming rebellions in the northwest, see *MSJSBM*, p. 2448; *LKZ*, pp. 1–4; *SKJL*, pp. 1.2a–2b; and *LKCB*, pp. 29–42. For modern discussions

of the outbreak of the uprisings, see James Bunyan Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions of the Late Ming Dynasty*, repr. (Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 1993), pp. 1–21; and *LKSM*, pp. 1–32. The Chinese historian Li Guangtao also notes that religious sectarians and unemployed miners swelled the ranks of the peasant rebels. For a theoretical study of collective violence in the Ming, see James W. Tong, *Disorder Under Heaven: Collective Violence in the Ming Dynasty* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991). Some sources blame rapacious eunuchs for driving people into banditry. See *MTJ*, pp. 3088–9. For Marxist interpretations, see Taniguchi Kikuo, “Peasant Rebellions in the Late Ming,” *Acta Asiatica*, 38 (n.d.), pp. 54–68; and Fu Yiling, *Ming-Qing fengjian tudi suoyou zhi lungang* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), pp. 129–34. For an overview of early Chinese communist historiography on the rebellions, see James Parsons, “Attitudes Towards the Late Ming Rebellions,” *Oriens Extremus*, 6 (1959), pp. 177–204.

<sup>131</sup> Nie, p. 57.

<sup>132</sup> *MJBL*, p. 95.

<sup>133</sup> Li Guangtao notes that many of the deserters were men who had been defeated in battle in Liaodong and feared going back to the front. See *LKSM*, p. 12. Li argues that the events in Liaodong were perhaps the single greatest cause of the unrest in the northwest because of the local tensions they generated. See p. 32.

<sup>134</sup> *MJBL*, p. 96, and *ZWL*, p. 355. Sources differ on exactly when the first revolt commenced, but it was in the summer of 1628.

<sup>135</sup> See *WMS*, pp. 896–8; and *MSJSBM*, p. 2448. On Zhang’s unsavory background, see *MTJ*, pp. 3153–4. For a brief biography of Zhang in English, see *ECCP*, pp. 37–8.

<sup>136</sup> *LKCB*, p. 41.

<sup>137</sup> On the early rebel leaders, see *WMS*, pp. 897–903, and *SKJL*, 1.5a–5b.

<sup>138</sup> *WMS*, p. 898.

<sup>139</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3128.

<sup>140</sup> *WMS*, p. 903.

<sup>141</sup> *LKSM*, pp. 19–20.

<sup>142</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3124. Some also took to kidnapping their former commanders or other Ming military officers. See *LKZ*, p. 2.

<sup>143</sup> *MJBL*, p. 104.

<sup>144</sup> On Yang He’s general policies see Chen-main Wang, *The Life and Career of Hung Ch’eng-ch’ou (1593–1665): Public Service in a Time of Dynastic Change* (Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 1999), pp. 39–48; and Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, pp. 8–16.

<sup>145</sup> *SKJL*, 1.5b, and *MJBL*, pp. 125–6.

<sup>146</sup> *ZWL*, p. 359.

<sup>147</sup> *SKJL*, 1.7a, and *LKCB*, p. 52.

<sup>148</sup> *LKZ*, p. 2. For details on bandits activities through the summer of 1630, see *LKZ*, pp. 3–5.

<sup>149</sup> *GQ*, p. 5561.

<sup>150</sup> *GQ*, p. 5514.

<sup>151</sup> *LKZ*, p. 5.

<sup>152</sup> *LKZ*, p. 5.

<sup>153</sup> *LKZ*, p. 5. Wang, by the way, was the leader under whom Li Zicheng (1606–45) got his start, at least according to several accounts. For a brief biography of Li in English, see *ECCP*, pp. 491–3. His background and rise to prominence will be covered in the next chapter.

<sup>154</sup> See *WMS*, pp. 905–7.

<sup>155</sup> *LKZ*, p. 6, and *MJBL*, p. 131.

<sup>156</sup> *LKZ*, p. 6.

<sup>157</sup> For Yang’s belief in the sincerity of surrendered rebels, see *NMQYSL*, pp. 9–13.

<sup>158</sup> *SKJL*, 1.8b–9a.

- <sup>159</sup> *LKZ*, p. 8, and *MS*, p. 6728. Yang had actually asked to resign earlier, but his request was rejected by the emperor. See *WMS*, pp. 910–11.
- <sup>160</sup> For a detailed biography of Hong, see Chen-main Wang. Also see his entry in *ECCP*, pp. 358–60.
- <sup>161</sup> *SKJL*, 1.10b.
- <sup>162</sup> Chen Shengxi, p. 123.
- <sup>163</sup> Chen Shengxi, pp. 123–4.
- <sup>164</sup> See Chen Shengxi, p. 125.
- <sup>165</sup> *MCDA* 6, pp. 149–62.
- <sup>166</sup> *MCDA* 6, pp. 191–7.
- <sup>167</sup> *MCDA* 6, pp. 198–202.
- <sup>168</sup> See *MCDA* 6, pp. 203–7.
- <sup>169</sup> *MCDA* 6, pp. 205–6.
- <sup>170</sup> Li Qing (attr.), *Yuan dushi zhan Mao Wenlong shimo* in Longdaoren (pseudo.), *Youbian jilue* (Taibei: Taiwan wenxian congkan, 1968), p. 41. Struve believes this source to be a truncation of Bo Qizong's *Dongjiang shimo*. See Struve, *Historiography and Source Guide*, p. 202.
- <sup>171</sup> *MS*, p. 6716.
- <sup>172</sup> Li Qing, p. 41.
- <sup>173</sup> Li Qing, pp. 41–2.
- <sup>174</sup> Li Qing, p. 42.
- <sup>175</sup> The halberd dance was one of a number of military dances performed at Chinese courts and for visiting dignitaries since ancient times. On the significance of martial dances in Chinese history, see Peter A. Lorge, *Chinese Martial Arts: From Antiquity to the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), esp. pp. 25–9 and 79–80.
- <sup>176</sup> Li Qing, p. 42. The average amount Yuan gave seemed to be 3–5 *liang* per soldier.
- <sup>177</sup> Li Qing, p. 43.
- <sup>178</sup> Li Qing, p. 43.
- <sup>179</sup> Li Qing, pp. 43–4. The *Mingshi* lists twelve more specific crimes enumerated by Yuan, including stealing rations, raiding supply ships, wasting supplies, and having secret dealings with other military officials and with the Jin. See *MS*, pp. 6716–17. Also see Yuan's official reports and subsequent communications in *MQSL* 3, pp. 719a–724b.
- <sup>180</sup> Li Qing, p. 44, and Cai Ding, p. 598.
- <sup>181</sup> *MS*, p. 6717.
- <sup>182</sup> Li Qing, p. 44.
- <sup>183</sup> Li Qing, p. 44.
- <sup>184</sup> *MS*, p. 6717.
- <sup>185</sup> Li Qing, p. 44.
- <sup>186</sup> Li Qing, p. 44, and *MS*, p. 6717.
- <sup>187</sup> Li Qing, p. 45, and Cai Ding, p. 601.
- <sup>188</sup> *Yuan Chonghuan ziliao* I, p. 165.
- <sup>189</sup> *Yuan Chonghuan ziliao* I, p. 166.
- <sup>190</sup> *Yuan Chonghuan ziliao* I, p. 167.
- <sup>191</sup> This work was later appended to a collection of Mao Wenlong's memorials compiled by his son, Mao Chengdou. See Wu Guohua, pp. 139–45. This modern edition also includes Wu Qian's *Dongjiang yishi*, a late Qing collection of materials about Mao. For historiographic details on these sources, see Lynn A. Struve, *A Historiography and Source Guide* (Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 1998), pp. 182–3.
- <sup>192</sup> See Wu Guohua, p. 139.
- <sup>193</sup> Wu Guohua, p. 140.
- <sup>194</sup> *MS*, p. 6713.
- <sup>195</sup> Wu Guohua, p. 141.

- 196 Wu Guohua, pp. 142–3.
- 197 Wu Guohua, p. 143.
- 198 Wu Guohua, p. 144.
- 199 Wu Guohua, p. 144.
- 200 See *Yuan Chonghuan ziliao* II, p. 71. For a biography of Zuo Liangyu, see *ECCP*, pp. 761–2.
- 201 *Yuan Chonghuan ziliao* II, p. 72.
- 202 *Yuan Chonghuan ziliao* II, p. 73.
- 203 See the discussion in Li Guangtao, “Mao Wenlong niangluan,” p. 163.
- 204 *CZYJ*, p. 42.
- 205 *QSG*, p. 28. Qing records indicate that Mongols in the ranks were guilty of such transgressions and were punished accordingly, even being executed for stealing clothes. See *QSG*, p. 29.
- 206 *CZSL*, pp. 66–7, and *GQ*, p. 5500.
- 207 *MQZS*, p. 257.
- 208 *MS*, p. 6963.
- 209 *QSG*, p. 29.
- 210 *GQ*, p. 5498.
- 211 *MS*, p. 6960, and *LHXS*, p. 44.
- 212 *MTJ*, p. 3141.
- 213 *MS*, p. 355.
- 214 *CZYJ*, p. 47.
- 215 *GQ*, p. 5122.
- 216 Wu Bosen, p. 820.
- 217 A captured Ming general allegedly told the Jin ruler that the emperor was young and his court was riven by factions so he should expect no reply. See *QSG*, p. 32.
- 218 See *BSXJ*, pp. 121–33, for details on these operations.
- 219 *LHXS*, p. 47.
- 220 Liu Bohan, p. 21.
- 221 Concerning the push to execute Yuan by Liang Tingdong and others, see Meng Sen, *Ming-Qing shi lunzhu jikan* (Taibei: Shijie shuju, 1961), pp. 17–27.
- 222 Liu Bohan, p. 22.
- 223 Liu Bohan, p. 24. The Ming historian Tan Qian refutes these claims, stating that Man was injured when he was fighting north of the city walls whereas Yuan was stationed atop the south walls. See *GQ*, pp. 5505–6.
- 224 Liu Bohan, p. 25.
- 225 *LHXS*, p. 50, and *WMS*, pp. 808–9. For more on Yuan’s alleged Donglin associations, see Li Shaoqing, “Yuan Chonghuan zhi si yu Mingmo de dangzheng,” *Qilu xuekan*, 1983.1 (1983), pp. 57–62.
- 226 See *BSXJ*, pp. 145–59, and Wu Bosen, pp. 820–7. On other mop-up operations, see pp. 160–6. For details on imperial rewards for the victorious troops, see *MCDA* 6, pp. 411–14.
- 227 *GQ*, p. 5533, and Sun Quan, pp. 299–306.
- 228 *MQZS*, pp. 258–9.
- 229 On new directives for defending Beijing, see *MCDA* 6, pp. 429–31.
- 230 See Dong Shaixin and Huang Yi-long, “Chongzhen nianjian zhaomu Pu bing xinkao,” *Lishi yanjiu*, 5 (2009), pp. 65–86.
- 231 See *MCDA* 8, pp. 37–8, and Sun Quan, pp. 259–62.
- 232 See *MCDA* 6, pp. 361–2; *MCDA* 8, pp. 58–9; and Huang Yi-long, “Sun Yuanhua,” pp. 239–40.
- 233 Dong and Huang, p. 83.
- 234 Dong and Huang, p. 76.
- 235 *CZJW*, p. 5.
- 236 Dong and Huang, p. 78.

- <sup>237</sup> Huang Yi-long, “Sun Yuanhua,” pp. 244–5.
- <sup>238</sup> Dong and Huang, p. 80.
- <sup>239</sup> On these efforts, see *MCDA* 7, pp. 59–79, and *MCDA* 8, pp. 95–102.
- <sup>240</sup> On more successful Ming efforts, see *GQ*, p. 5521, and p. 5526.
- <sup>241</sup> *MCDA* 7, pp. 198–201, 220–33, and 263–84.
- <sup>242</sup> *MCDA* 7, p. 270.
- <sup>243</sup> *MCDA* 7, p. 276.
- <sup>244</sup> See *GQ*, pp. 5544–5, and *MS*, p. 6718.
- <sup>245</sup> See Wang and Xia, pp. 176–7, which also discusses the rumors flying around Beijing at the time.
- <sup>246</sup> See Wang and Xia, p. 181. Also see Fan Shuzhi, *Quan yu xue*, pp. 175–98, which treats the death of Yuan Chonghuan within the broader context of Ming factional strife.
- <sup>247</sup> Jiang Yonghong, p. 352.
- <sup>248</sup> *MJBL*, p. 119.
- <sup>249</sup> See Yan, *Yuan Chonghuan zhuan*, pp. 207–24 concerning posthumous honors, memorials, and other forms of recognition for Yuan over the ensuing centuries.
- <sup>250</sup> *MS*, p. 6719.
- <sup>251</sup> *MSJSBM*, p. 1463.
- <sup>252</sup> See *BSXJ*, pp. 182–93.
- <sup>253</sup> *BSXJ*, pp. 201–12.
- <sup>254</sup> *MSJSBM*, p. 1464.

#### 4 Dashing defiers and dastardly defenders: The peasant rebels gain strength and the northeastern front weakens, 1630–6

- For more on the significance of the purge of Amin, see Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, pp. 165–8.
- For a communication from the Ministry of War concerning expanding defense works through 1631, see *MCDA* 9, pp. 145–73. On improving defenses within the Great Wall around Beijing, see *MCDA* 10, pp. 1–6, and *MCDA* 11, pp. 98–104.
- For a description of Dalinghe’s defense works, see *MQZS*, p. 230.
- MQZS*, p. 230.
- QTZ*, p. 195.
- Luo Bin, p. 235.
- QSG*, pp. 9923–4.
- Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, p. 169.
- For Ajige’s biography, see *ECCP*, pp. 4–5.
- MQZS*, p. 232.
- MQZS*, pp. 234–5.
- For Zu’s reports to the court, see *MCDA* 11, pp. 377–82.
- Sun Quan, pp. 331–2.
- LHXS*, p. 67.
- Luo Bin, p. 236.
- Li Hongbin, pp. 88–9, and *MQZS*, pp. 235–6. On Ming reports and efforts to relieve the siege, see *MCDA* 12, pp. 2–5.
- MCDA* 11, p. 381.
- MS*, p. 313.
- See Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, pp. 178–9 for details on this battle. Also see *QSG*, p. 9422.
- LHXS*, p. 66. For a censorial report on the Ming defeat, see *MCDA* 12, pp. 25–8.
- See *MQZS*, pp. 236–8. For a translation of one of the letters, see Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, p. 176.
- Luo Bin, p. 238.

- <sup>23</sup> *QTZ*, p. 199.
- <sup>24</sup> Luo Bin, p. 239.
- <sup>25</sup> *MCDA* 12, pp. 7–8. Sun Yuanhua, for example, thought relief should have come from the islands. See *MCDA* 12, p. 87. In the wake of the defeat Sun reiterated his call for more Western cannon to be deployed in the forts and for interlocking defenses across Bohai and up into Liaodong.
- <sup>26</sup> *MQZS*, p. 239.
- <sup>27</sup> *MCDA* 12, p. 26.
- <sup>28</sup> Li Hongbin, p. 89.
- <sup>29</sup> For a biography of Zu, see *ECCP*, pp. 769–70.
- <sup>30</sup> *MQZS*, p. 241. For a list of high officials who died at Dalinghe, see *YSJ*, p. 93.
- <sup>31</sup> On Zu's deal with the Jin, see *QSG*, pp. 9422–3.
- <sup>32</sup> *MQZS*, p. 240.
- <sup>33</sup> *MCDA* 12, pp. 45–6.
- <sup>34</sup> *MCDA* 12, pp. 138–40.
- <sup>35</sup> Xie Lihong, p. 105, *MCDA* 12, pp. 144–6, and *MQZS*, p. 242.
- <sup>36</sup> *QSG*, p. 9324.
- <sup>37</sup> Li Hongbin, p. 89.
- <sup>38</sup> *QSG*, p. 9329.
- <sup>39</sup> Xie Lihong, p. 106. On the evolution of the Han banners, also see Tong Yonggong, “Huang Taiji yu Hanjun baqi de sheli,” *Lishi dang'an*, 2009.4 (2009), pp. 32–8.
- <sup>40</sup> Xie Lihong, pp. 106–7.
- <sup>41</sup> On Geng, see *ECCP*, pp. 416–17.
- <sup>42</sup> Huang Yi-long, “Sun Yuanhua,” p. 945.
- <sup>43</sup> Tong Yonggong, p. 33.
- <sup>44</sup> *MS*, p. 314.
- <sup>45</sup> See the documents in *MCDA* 8, pp. 420–7.
- <sup>46</sup> *SFSL*, p. 98.
- <sup>47</sup> *SFSL*, pp. 98–9.
- <sup>48</sup> *SFSL*, p. 100.
- <sup>49</sup> *SFSL*, p. 102.
- <sup>50</sup> *SFSL*, pp. 102–3.
- <sup>51</sup> *SFSL*, p. 103.
- <sup>52</sup> *MS*, pp. 6966–7.
- <sup>53</sup> *MS*, p. 6967.
- <sup>54</sup> *SFSL*, p. 105.
- <sup>55</sup> *SFSL*, p. 106.
- <sup>56</sup> *SFSL*, p. 106, and *MS*, p. 6967.
- <sup>57</sup> *MCDA* 12, p. 148.
- <sup>58</sup> *CZYJ*, p. 68.
- <sup>59</sup> *MTJ*, pp. 3170–1.
- <sup>60</sup> *SFSL*, p. 113, and *BSXJ*, p. 254.
- <sup>61</sup> *SFSL*, p. 114. Zhang Tao was one of the men who killed Liu Xingzhi earlier in the year. Also see *PPJ*, p. 7, and *MTJ*, p. 3174.
- <sup>62</sup> Huang Yi-long, “Sun Yuanhua,” pp. 248–53. Also see *PPJ*, p. 192.
- <sup>63</sup> *PPJ*, p. 13.
- <sup>64</sup> *WCRL*, p. 365. Other sources put his arrival four days earlier.
- <sup>65</sup> *SFSL*, p. 114. Another source says that Yu was merely exiled. See *CZYJ*, p. 68.
- <sup>66</sup> *SFSL*, p. 115.
- <sup>67</sup> Agnew, “Dengzhou,” p. 176.
- <sup>68</sup> Agnew, “Dengzhou,” p. 171.
- <sup>69</sup> *SFSL*, p. 115.
- <sup>70</sup> See, for example, *PPJ*, pp. 47–8.
- <sup>71</sup> *PPJ*, pp. 58–9.

- 72 *WCRL*, p. 369.
- 73 *WCRL*, p. 371.
- 74 *PPJ*, p. 84.
- 75 *WCRL*, pp. 372–3.
- 76 *WCRL*, p. 379.
- 77 *WCRL*, p. 381.
- 78 *WCRL*, pp. 386–7.
- 79 *WCRL*, pp. 390–3.
- 80 *WCRL*, p. 401.
- 81 *WCRL*, pp. 404–5.
- 82 Chongzhen issued a prohibition on looting to the relief troops. See *WCRL*, p. 418.
- 83 *WCRL*, p. 426. Plus their defenses were aging, dating from the 1590s.
- 84 *WCRL*, pp. 427–9.
- 85 *WCRL*, pp. 455–6.
- 86 *MS*, p. 314, and Wu Bosen, p. 732.
- 87 *GQ*, pp. 5595–6.
- 88 *CZYJ*, p. 69.
- 89 See *PPJ*, pp. 140–1, and pp. 150–7.
- 90 *PPJ*, pp. 106–8.
- 91 On the fighting at Pingdu, see *PPJ*, pp. 180–3.
- 92 *PPJ*, pp. 205–6.
- 93 *PPJ*, pp. 210–11.
- 94 *PPJ*, pp. 217–18.
- 95 *SFSL*, p. 119.
- 96 See *PPJ*, pp. 240–1 for the full Ming battle array.
- 97 On these clashes, see *MQSL* 3, pp. 750b–751a, and *MCDA* 13, p. 388.
- 98 See *PPJ*, pp. 247–9.
- 99 See *BSXJ*, pp. 255–7.
- 100 *SFSL*, p. 121, Wu Bosen, p. 740, and *PPJ*, p. 258.
- 101 Christopher Agnew, “Migrants and Mutineers: The Rebellion of Kong Youde and Seventeenth-Century Northeast Asia,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 53.3 (2009), pp. 534–5. On the shiftiness of Liaodong migrants, also see *WCRL*, pp. 349–50.
- 102 *PPJ*, pp. 271–2.
- 103 For details on the capture of the city, see *PPJ*, pp. 275–9.
- 104 *MQSL* 3, p. 751a.
- 105 *PPJ*, p. 279.
- 106 *PPJ*, p. 283.
- 107 *PPJ*, p. 287, and *YSJ*, p. 1073. See *BSXJ*, pp. 289–306 for communications between Chongzhen and Injo.
- 108 *PPJ*, p. 288, and *QSG*, p. 42.
- 109 *QSG*, p. 42, and *BSXJ*, pp. 301–3.
- 110 *PPJ*, pp. 259–61, and *MCDA* 14, pp. 70–100 for victory reports. For Gao Qiqian’s report, see *MQSL* 1, pp. 9a–9b.
- 111 *MS*, p. 6968.
- 112 On the significance of the suppression of the mutiny for the Wu clan, see Liu Fengyun, *Wu Sangui zhuan* (Lanzhou: Lanzhou daxue chubanshe, 2000), pp. 4–5.
- 113 For information on the importance of the equipment and training the defectors brought to the Jin, see *SFSL*, pp. 146–56.
- 114 See Agnew, “Migrants and Mutineers,” pp. 505–41.
- 115 Agnew, “Migrants and Mutineers,” p. 515.
- 116 See *MCDA* 11, pp. 398–403.
- 117 Agnew, “Migrants and Mutineers,” p. 506.
- 118 *MQZS*, p. 297.

- <sup>119</sup> *MQZS*, p. 299.
- <sup>120</sup> On the efforts of Ming defectors on behalf of the Jin in the Bohai Gulf, see Hosoya Yoshio, "Han Chinese Generals Who Collaborated with Hou Chin kuo," *Acta Asiatica*, 53 (1988), pp. 43–51.
- <sup>121</sup> On Ming efforts to supply the islands, see *MCDA* 14, pp. 47–52. On the decision to hold them, see *MCDA* 14, pp. 318–320.
- <sup>122</sup> *MQZS*, p. 304.
- <sup>123</sup> See *MCDA* 12, pp. 202–11.
- <sup>124</sup> *MCDA* 13, pp. 63–6.
- <sup>125</sup> *MCDA* 12, pp. 218–19.
- <sup>126</sup> See *MCDA* 12, pp. 375–83 and 486–92 for counter-espionage efforts in the wake of the Siege of Dalinghe.
- <sup>127</sup> *MCDA* 13, pp. 27–47. In fact, most of these raids appear to have been conducted for procuring livestock.
- <sup>128</sup> On Hong's rise to prominence, see Chen-main Wang, pp. 40–3.
- <sup>129</sup> Chen-main Wang, pp. 50–3.
- <sup>130</sup> See *MTJ*, p. 3163, and *GQ*, pp. 5590–5 for information on Cao's exploits.
- <sup>131</sup> For example, a report from mid-1633 claimed government forces had killed 36,600 bandits so far that year. See *SKJL*, 1.11b.
- <sup>132</sup> *MJBL*, p. 134.
- <sup>133</sup> On Du's penchant for trumping up victories and allowing his men to pillage, see *SKJL*, 1.10b. Also see *CASJ*, pp. 153–6 for an official investigation by Wu Sheng into Du's misconduct. Zuo Liangyu was a native of Shandong. Though illiterate, Zuo had followed his father in the army from an early age and was regarded as a skilled commander and tactician who enjoyed the support of his men. He had been demoted after the Ningyuan mutiny of 1628, but later gained merit in operations to recover Ming cities in 1630. He also led relief troops to Dalinghe before being transferred to the northwest, where he gained fame collaborating with Cao Wenzhao. See *MS*, pp. 6987–8 for Zuo's early career. On the ill-discipline of Zuo's troops, see *ZLZZ*, pp. 88–9.
- <sup>134</sup> See, for example, *LKCB*, p. 91.
- <sup>135</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3164.
- <sup>136</sup> Xie Chengren, *Li Zicheng xin zhuan* (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2007), p. 14.
- <sup>137</sup> *MS*, p. 7976.
- <sup>138</sup> *MS*, p. 7969.
- <sup>139</sup> *MJBL*, p. 135, and *MS*, p. 7969.
- <sup>140</sup> See Xie Chengren, pp. 22–3.
- <sup>141</sup> Xie Chengren, p. 24. For a contemporary account of Li's youth, see *MJBL*, pp. 110–14. Also see Liu Yinan, *Li Zicheng jinian fukao* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), pp. 1–25, which chronicles the events in Li's life and environment from his birth until 1630 by citing all available primary source materials.
- <sup>142</sup> Xie Chengren, p. 24. Another version of the story says he took the nickname after receiving a good fortune from a Daoist priest. See *MJBL*, p. 111.
- <sup>143</sup> Xie Chengren, pp. 24–5, and *MJBL*, pp. 111–12.
- <sup>144</sup> Xie Chengren, p. 26.
- <sup>145</sup> See Xie Chengren, p. 26. Other sources say that Li joined the army to avoid the death sentence. See *MTJ*, p. 3164.
- <sup>146</sup> See *MTJ*, p. 3164, and Xie Chengren, p. 31.
- <sup>147</sup> *MJBL*, p. 112. Also see pp. 113–14 for more variants on the story.
- <sup>148</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3166. For the memorial itself, see *NMQYSL*, pp. 24–5.
- <sup>149</sup> *CASJ*, pp. 140–2.
- <sup>150</sup> *MJBL*, pp. 133–4.
- <sup>151</sup> *MSJSBM*, p. 1255.

- <sup>152</sup> SKJL, 1.10b. These funds had been earmarked for the northeast as part of the ongoing Liao surtax. See CASJ, p. 180, and LKZ, p. 10, which attributes the request to Hong Chengchou. Also see MSJSBM, p. 1259.
- <sup>153</sup> CASJ, pp. 144–5.
- <sup>154</sup> LKCB, p. 63. Wu had made this observation the previous year.
- <sup>155</sup> See CASJ, pp. 159–66.
- <sup>156</sup> CASJ, pp. 170–2.
- <sup>157</sup> LKCB, pp. 65–6.
- <sup>158</sup> MTJ, pp. 3168 and 3183.
- <sup>159</sup> MJBL, p. 139.
- <sup>160</sup> It was said that many bandit leaders simply fled when they heard Cao was in the vicinity. See LKCB, p. 107. He was credited with some 30,000 kills in his first several months of service. See LKZ, p. 10, and MSJSBM, p. 1260. For a list of the rebel leaders killed by Hong and his sub-commanders as of the end of 1632, see WMS, p. 918.
- <sup>161</sup> MJBL, p. 141.
- <sup>162</sup> MJBL, pp. 145–6.
- <sup>163</sup> LKCB, p. 113.
- <sup>164</sup> GQ, p. 5598.
- <sup>165</sup> See CASJ, pp. 190–1.
- <sup>166</sup> CASJ, p. 204.
- <sup>167</sup> The emperor had complained about the high cost of horses and instructed that officials make sure they bought only high-quality mounts. Of course most officials were ill-equipped to judge the battle-worthiness of horses. See MCDA 15, p. 55.
- <sup>168</sup> Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, p. 28, and MTJ, p. 3193.
- <sup>169</sup> CZSL, p. 122.
- <sup>170</sup> LKCB, pp. 181–3. Some of the reports were discovered to have been inflated by the massacre of commoners.
- <sup>171</sup> MTJ, p. 3199.
- <sup>172</sup> WMS, p. 923. For a recap of the events of 1633, see LKCB, pp. 193–200.
- <sup>173</sup> Xie Chengren, p. 37.
- <sup>174</sup> WMS, p. 928.
- <sup>175</sup> WMS, p. 929.
- <sup>176</sup> WMS, p. 929.
- <sup>177</sup> LKZ, p. 17.
- <sup>178</sup> On Zheng's early career and exploits, see Andrade, *Lost Colony*, pp. 22–30, and Leonard Blusse, "Minnan-jen or Cosmopolitan? The Rise of Cheng Chih-lung, alias Nicholas Iquan," in E. B. Vermeer (ed.), *Development and Decline of Fujian Province in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), pp. 253–7.
- <sup>179</sup> C. R. Boxer, "The Rise and Fall of Nicholas Iquan," *T'ien-hsia Monthly*, 11 (1941), p. 418. The Dutch even tried to create a coalition of Chinese pirates to improve their trade position. See Andrade, "The Company's Dutch Pirates," pp. 415–16.
- <sup>180</sup> These campaigns are described in Andrade, *Lost Colony*, pp. 32–52. On Zheng's clash with Liu Xiang, see MTJ, p. 3188.
- <sup>181</sup> MCDA 47, pp. 78–80.
- <sup>182</sup> MQSL 3, pp. 737a–738b.
- <sup>183</sup> See MQSL 3, pp. 741a–741b for examples.
- <sup>184</sup> LSTJ 10, p.9a.
- <sup>185</sup> See the memorial in YSJ, pp. 105–7.
- <sup>186</sup> YSJ, p. 117.
- <sup>187</sup> YSJ, p. 1044.
- <sup>188</sup> QSG, pp. 38–9. Note that this source is from the Qing perspective and was composed after the fact.
- <sup>189</sup> QSG, p. 40.

- 190 Fang Yujin (comp.), “Chongzhen qinian Hou Jin dui guannei de rurao, yi,” *Lishi dang'an*, 1982.2 (1982), pp. 3–4.
- 191 *MQZS*, pp. 264–5.
- 192 See *MCDA* 17, pp. 36–42.
- 193 Fang, “Guannei de rurao, yi,” pp. 3–5.
- 194 *MCDA* 16, pp. 454–60.
- 195 See Fang Yujin (comp.), “Chongzhen qinian Hou Jin guannei de rurao, er,” *Lishi dang'an*, 1982.3 (1982), pp. 12–13.
- 196 *MCDA* 17, p. 189.
- 197 *MTJ*, pp. 3211–12.
- 198 *MCDA* 17, pp. 210–16.
- 199 Fang Yujin (comp.), “Chongzhen qinian Hou Jin dui guannei de rurao, san,” *Lishi dang'an*, 1982.4 (1982), pp. 8–9.
- 200 Fang, “Guannei de rurao, yi,” pp. 7–9.
- 201 *MQZS*, p. 268, and *MCDA* 17, p. 57.
- 202 Fang, “Guannei de rurao, yi,” p. 3.
- 203 *QSG*, p. 47.
- 204 *MTJ*, p. 3211.
- 205 *QSG*, p. 48.
- 206 See Minister of War Zhang Fengyi’s investigations in Fang, “Guannei de rurao, er,” pp. 3–13.
- 207 Fang, “Guannei de rurao, yi,” pp. 16–18.
- 208 Fang, “Guannei de rurao, san,” pp. 6–8, and *MCDA* 17, pp. 43–53.
- 209 On these earlier proposals, see *MCDA* 15, pp. 56–65. Nonetheless, desertion remained a problem. One official estimated that perhaps two to three out of dozens of recruits actually completed the requisite training. See *MCDA* 19, pp. 85–90.
- 210 On the efficacy of cannon as a deterrent, see *MCDA* 17, pp. 457–63.
- 211 See *MCDA* 17, pp. 490–8.
- 212 See Fang, “Guannei de rurao, er,” p. 5, and *MCDA* 17, pp. 103–9 and 120–33 on the interrogation of captured Jin spies.
- 213 See *MJBL*, pp. 166–7.
- 214 *MCDA* 18, pp. 155–6.
- 215 See Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, on Ming strategic culture. For the more traditional pacifist interpretation of the Ming, see Waldron, *The Great Wall*, and Yuan-kang Wang, *Harmony and War*, pp. 101–45.
- 216 *MCDA* 19, pp. 298–9.
- 217 *MCDA* 19, p. 300.
- 218 See *YSJ*, pp. 127–8.
- 219 *MCDA* 20, pp. 70–78.
- 220 *MCDA* 20, p. 281.
- 221 See *YSJ*, pp. 127–31.
- 222 See *CHC* 9, pp. 65–8, on the efforts to create a multi-ethnic polity. On the origins of the term Manchu, also see Elliott, *Manchu Way*, p. 71.
- 223 Pei Huang, p. 52.
- 224 *CHC* 9, pp. 316–17.
- 225 Wakeman, *Great Enterprise*, p. 203, and Crossley, *The Manchus*, p. 77.
- 226 On these Ming efforts, see *MCDA* 19, pp. 434–53, and pp. 479–89.
- 227 *QSG*, p. 52.
- 228 *QSG*, pp. 9333–4. On the establishment of the Six Ministries, see *CHC* 9, pp. 61–2, and Pei Huang, pp. 80 and 173–86. On the key roles played by Chinese advisers in determining strategy, see *QTZ*, pp. 155–8.
- 229 *CZSL*, p. 129.
- 230 *QSG*, p. 52.
- 231 See *MCDA* 24, pp. 109–14.

- <sup>232</sup> *ZWL*, p. 367.
- <sup>233</sup> See *CASJ*, pp. 297–8.
- <sup>234</sup> *MJBL*, p. 199.
- <sup>235</sup> *GQ*, pp. 5753–5, and *MQZS*, pp. 316–18.
- <sup>236</sup> Lu Anjie, pp. 38–9. The Qing claimed they captured 179,800 people and animals. See *MQZS*, p. 318.
- <sup>237</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3258.
- <sup>238</sup> Lu Anjie, pp. 38–9.
- <sup>239</sup> *MCDA* 22, pp. 393–5.
- <sup>240</sup> *MCDA* 24, pp. 168–75.
- <sup>241</sup> *GQ*, p. 5757.
- <sup>242</sup> *CXLH*, p. 18.
- <sup>243</sup> *CXLH*, p. 18.
- <sup>244</sup> *CXLH*, p. 18.
- <sup>245</sup> *QSG*, p. 9398.
- <sup>246</sup> *QSG*, p. 308.
- <sup>247</sup> *MQZS*, pp. 309–10.
- <sup>248</sup> *MQZS*, p. 311.
- <sup>249</sup> One island alone held 32,000 *jin* of gunpowder. See *MCDA* 23, p. 485.
- <sup>250</sup> *LKCB*, p. 435. For Ming reports of the loss of Pidao, see *MCDA* 23, pp. 476–9 and 483–7.
- <sup>251</sup> *QSG*, p. 59.
- <sup>252</sup> They captured 76 palace ladies and 166 officials.
- <sup>253</sup> *QSG*, pp. 59–60.
- <sup>254</sup> See *MQSL* 3, pp. 607a–621b, for letters from Hung Taiji to Injo.
- <sup>255</sup> *CXLH*, p. 19–22 for the full list.
- <sup>256</sup> *MQSL* 3, pp. 626a–628a.
- <sup>257</sup> *MQSL* 3, pp. 628a–631b notes the importance of Korean grain supplies for the Qing.
- <sup>258</sup> For a longer discussion of the Qing invasion of Korea and the ensuing peace agreement, see *QTZ*, pp. 166–82.
- <sup>259</sup> *QSG*, p. 61.
- <sup>260</sup> *MQSL* 3, pp. 639a–640a.
- <sup>261</sup> *YSJ*, pp. 213–15.
- <sup>262</sup> *YSJ*, pp. 223–5 and 320–3.
- <sup>263</sup> *MSJSBM*, p. 1267.
- <sup>264</sup> See *MTJ*, pp. 3204–5, and *WMS*, pp. 936–7.
- <sup>265</sup> Lu Anjie, p. 26.
- <sup>266</sup> *LKZ*, p. 20.
- <sup>267</sup> *LKZ*, p. 21.
- <sup>268</sup> *LKZ*, p. 22. Also see Lian's report on the difficulties faced by the Ming in *CZSL*, p. 138.
- <sup>269</sup> *WMS*, pp. 940–1.
- <sup>270</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3206, and *SKJL*, 2.3a–3b.
- <sup>271</sup> *LKCB*, p. 216.
- <sup>272</sup> *LKCB*, pp. 216–17.
- <sup>273</sup> *SKJL*, pp. 2.5b–6b, and *LKZ*, p. 23. Some sources put the number of rebels at 36,000, but this might indicate their original numbers.
- <sup>274</sup> *SKJL*, p. 2.6b.
- <sup>275</sup> *WMS*, p. 943.
- <sup>276</sup> *SKJL*, p. 2.6b, Mei Qizhao, p. 690, and *LKSM*, p. 40.
- <sup>277</sup> *LKZ*, p. 23.
- <sup>278</sup> Cited in *WMS*, p. 947.
- <sup>279</sup> Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, p. 34.
- <sup>280</sup> *LKSM*, pp. 54–5.

- 281 *SKJL*, p. 2.7b, and *LKZ*, p. 26.
- 282 *SKJL*, p. 2.8a–8b.
- 283 *MTJ*, p. 3215.
- 284 See *MTJ*, pp. 3215–16. For a biography of Gao Jie, see *ECCP*, pp. 410–11.
- 285 *MTJ*, p. 3217.
- 286 *LKZ*, p. 23.
- 287 *ZWL*, p. 1497, and *LKZ*, pp. 15–16.
- 288 See Lu Xiangsheng, *Lu Xiangsheng shudu* (Hangzhou: Zhejiangguji chubanshe, 1984), pp. 26–8.
- 289 See, for example, the recommendations of Wu Yingji concerning anti-bandit defense in *LSTJ* 10, pp. 16a–22a. Wu also recommended river patrols, night watches and equipping even small towns with guns on the walls.
- 290 *ZWL*, p. 1497.
- 291 *ZWL*, p. 1497.
- 292 Lu Xiangsheng, pp. 36–7.
- 293 Lu Anjie, p. 28.
- 294 For details, see *SKJL*, pp. 2.10b–2.11a, and Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, pp. 37–9.
- 295 *CZYJ*, pp. 83–4.
- 296 On High Walls, see David M. Robinson, “Princes in the Polity: The Anhua Prince’s Uprising of 1510,” *Ming Studies*, 65 (May 2012), p. 42.
- 297 *WMS*, p. 951.
- 298 *SKJL*, pp. 3.2b–3a.
- 299 *MSJSBM*, p. 1275. It should be noted that variations on this particular type of atrocity are found several times in the sources, associated with different places. So it is possible that such details are included for shock effect. See, for example, the account of a similar episode at Huoshan in *LKZ*, p. 35.
- 300 *MJBL*, p. 173. For accounts of others who martyred themselves see pp. 174–5.
- 301 *SKJL*, pp. 3.3b–4a.
- 302 *MJBL*, p. 179.
- 303 *SKJL*, p. 3.4b, and *CZYJ*, p. 84–5.
- 304 *CZYJ*, p. 99. On Chongzhen’s trust of eunuchs, also see *GQ*, pp. 5603–4.
- 305 *SKJL*, p. 3.6b.
- 306 *LKCB*, p. 274.
- 307 *MS*, p. 6990, and *GQ*, p. 5693.
- 308 *SKJL*, pp. 3.12a–12b.
- 309 Chen-main Wang, p. 63, and *MJBL*, p. 170.
- 310 *WMS*, p. 948, and *LKZ*, p. 28. Soldiers received 3 *fen* of silver and approximately a pint and a half of rice per day. With costs for fodder for horses factored in, the court estimated it would cost 110,000 taels to feed and supply 70,000 troops and 15,000 horses for five months. See *LKZ*, p. 29.
- 311 Lu Anjie, pp. 30–2.
- 312 Ju Mingku, p. 359.
- 313 Ju Mingku, p. 362.
- 314 Wu Sheng recommended the use of mounted patrols along the river. See *CASJ*, pp. 238–41.
- 315 *MCDA* 15, pp. 468–87.
- 316 For an overview of rebel activities (not just Li’s) in the remainder of 1635, see *MTJ*, pp. 3226–44.
- 317 *ZLZZ*, p. 133, and *MJBL*, pp. 157–8. Some sources place the defection earlier.
- 318 *MJBL*, p. 169.
- 319 Xu Bingyi, p. 31.
- 320 *SKJL*, p. 3.17a.
- 321 *LKZ*, p. 34.
- 322 Luo Bin, p. 258.

- 323 *SKJL*, p. 4.9a.
- 324 *NMQYSL*, pp. 27–8.
- 325 *SKJL*, pp. 4.15b–16a.
- 326 *WMS*, p. 962.
- 327 *MS*, p. 319.
- 328 *MTJ*, pp. 3253–5.
- 329 Xu Bingyi, pp. 23–4.
- 330 *WMS*, pp. 967–8.
- 331 *MTJ*, p. 3255.
- 332 *MJBL*, p. 205.
- 333 *LKCB*, pp. 388–9.
- 334 *MJBL*, p. 209.
- 335 *YSJ*, pp. 181–2.
- 336 See *YSJ*, pp. 182–3.

## 5 Miscasting a ten-sided net: Yang Sichang descendant, 1636–41

- 1 *MS*, p. 6728.
- 2 Yang Sichang's official biography can be found in *MS*, pp. 6509–21. Also see *DMB*, pp. 1538–42.
- 3 *MS*, p. 6509.
- 4 *MS*, p. 6509.
- 5 See Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, p. 54, and *WMS*, p. 970.
- 6 For a contemporary assessment of why the emperor trusted Yang, see *SKJL*, pp. 5.10b–11a.
- 7 See *MCDA* 24, pp. 209–24 on the progress of construction efforts in Xuanfu in 1637. For a detailed inquiry by Yang into the expenses associated with the frontier garrisons, see *MCDA* 24, pp. 257–330.
- 8 *WMS*, p. 990.
- 9 On the debates at court, also see *CZYJ*, pp. 114–22.
- 10 *MCDA* 25, pp. 19–20.
- 11 *MCDA* 25, p. 41.
- 12 *MCDA* 25, pp. 92–101.
- 13 *MCDA* 25, pp. 226–43.
- 14 *WMS*, p. 971.
- 15 See *NMQYSL*, pp. 170–3, and *YSJ*, p. 998.
- 16 *SKJL*, p. 5.11a.
- 17 *SKJL*, pp. 6.3a–3b, and *YSJ*, pp. 182–3.
- 18 *SKJL*, p. 6.3b.
- 19 *MS*, p. 6510.
- 20 *YSJ*, p. 184.
- 21 *SKJL*, pp. 5.15a–15b.
- 22 *LKZ*, p. 47. On the problems caused by increasing taxes in the late Ming, see *LKSM*, pp. 48–9.
- 23 *WMS*, p. 974.
- 24 See *MS*, p. 6510. For slightly different figures, see Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, p. 56.
- 25 *MS*, p. 6510.
- 26 See *WMS*, p. 974, and *LKZ*, pp. 47–8.
- 27 *SKJL*, pp. 5.20a–21a.
- 28 *MS*, p. 6510, *MSJSBM*, p. 2459, and *LKZ*, p. 47. For biographies of Xiong Wencan, see *DMB*, pp. 562–6, and *MS*, pp. 6733–8. Also see *SKJL*, pp. 6.1a–1b.
- 29 *WMS*, p. 977.

- <sup>30</sup> On Zuo, see *ECCP*, pp. 761–2. Yang had actually favored keeping Zuo in power, at least initially, on account of his reputation and prior achievements. On Xiong's appointment, see *WMS*, p. 978.
- <sup>31</sup> *SKJL*, p. 5.17a.
- <sup>32</sup> Sun Chuanting, *Sun Chuanting shudu* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1983), p. 1. Ironically Sun had been recalled to the west in part because Yang had not gotten along with Hong Chengchou. See *SKJL*, p. 6.4b.
- <sup>33</sup> Sun Chuanting, pp. 1–2.
- <sup>34</sup> Sun Chuanting, p. 2.
- <sup>35</sup> Sun Chuanting, p. 3.
- <sup>36</sup> Sun, Chuanting, pp. 3–4, and Chen-main Wang, pp. 68–9.
- <sup>37</sup> *WMS*, pp. 974–5.
- <sup>38</sup> *WMS*, p. 975.
- <sup>39</sup> *WMS*, p. 976.
- <sup>40</sup> *ZWL*, p. 368.
- <sup>41</sup> *SKJL*, p. 6.2b.
- <sup>42</sup> *LKCB*, pp. 455–6.
- <sup>43</sup> *LKCB*, pp. 460–2 and 474–5.
- <sup>44</sup> *SKJL*, p. 5.12a. Also see Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, p. 58, who says Ma died of natural causes.
- <sup>45</sup> *LKCB*, pp. 485–6.
- <sup>46</sup> On Zuo's successes in 1637, see *MSJSBM*, pp. 1287–8.
- <sup>47</sup> *WMS*, p. 980.
- <sup>48</sup> *SKJL*, p. 6.6b.
- <sup>49</sup> *WMS*, p. 980.
- <sup>50</sup> Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, p. 62, and *MTJ*, p. 3287. Chen had earlier saved Zhang's life when he was accused of rape while in the army.
- <sup>51</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3288.
- <sup>52</sup> See Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, pp. 57–8; *WMS*, pp. 978–979; *LKZ*, p. 53; and *MS*, p. 6511.
- <sup>53</sup> *MS*, p., 6511.
- <sup>54</sup> *SKJL*, p. 6.5a.
- <sup>55</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3297.
- <sup>56</sup> *SKJL*, pp. 6.7b–8a.
- <sup>57</sup> *YSJ*, pp. 407–9.
- <sup>58</sup> *MS*, p. 6512.
- <sup>59</sup> See *MCDA* 28, pp. 265–78.
- <sup>60</sup> *ZWL*, p. 372.
- <sup>61</sup> *CZJW*, p. 11.
- <sup>62</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3277.
- <sup>63</sup> *CZJW*, p. 10.
- <sup>64</sup> *CZJW*, p. 11.
- <sup>65</sup> *MS*, p. 6512.
- <sup>66</sup> *LKCB*, p. 496.
- <sup>67</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3281.
- <sup>68</sup> *YSJ*, p. 999.
- <sup>69</sup> See *WMS*, pp. 980–3.
- <sup>70</sup> See *WMS*, pp. 983–8 for details on these campaigns.
- <sup>71</sup> *LKCB*, p. 532.
- <sup>72</sup> *GQ*, pp. 5798–9.
- <sup>73</sup> *GQ*, p. 5799.
- <sup>74</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3286.
- <sup>75</sup> *MCDA* 27, pp. 296–314.
- <sup>76</sup> *MCDA* 28, p. 111.

- <sup>77</sup> *SKJL*, pp. 6.20a–20b, and *YSJ*, pp. 474–5.
- <sup>78</sup> *YSJ*, pp. 1002–4.
- <sup>79</sup> *YSJ*, pp. 1010–14.
- <sup>80</sup> *YSJ*, p. 1006.
- <sup>81</sup> See *MCDA* 29, pp. 69–70, and pp. 245–8.
- <sup>82</sup> *YSJ*, pp. 1007–9, and *MJBL*, pp. 237–8.
- <sup>83</sup> *WMS*, pp. 991–3, and *MQZS*, p. 322.
- <sup>84</sup> *GQ*, p. 5813.
- <sup>85</sup> *YSJ*, pp. 570–2.
- <sup>86</sup> See the discussion of the debate in *WMS*, pp. 995–6.
- <sup>87</sup> *QSG*, p. 65.
- <sup>88</sup> *MQZS*, p. 324.
- <sup>89</sup> *CZYJ*, p. 122.
- <sup>90</sup> Lu Anjie, pp. 53–4.
- <sup>91</sup> *MQZS*, p. 325.
- <sup>92</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3303, and *YSJ*, pp. 600 and 623–4.
- <sup>93</sup> *YSJ*, p. 1016. On Chongzhen's desire to keep his name out of any peace talks, see *LHXS*, p. 163.
- <sup>94</sup> On Ming troop dispensations, see *YSJ*, pp. 629–32 and 645–52.
- <sup>95</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3300. Based on a specimen in the Military Museum in Beijing, iron whips were actually more like spiked clubs.
- <sup>96</sup> See *WMS*, pp. 998–9, and *CZYJ*, pp. 122–4.
- <sup>97</sup> *YSJ*, pp. 1017–18.
- <sup>98</sup> *WMS*, pp. 999–1001.
- <sup>99</sup> *MQZS*, p. 326.
- <sup>100</sup> For an urgent request for supplies, see *YSJ*, pp. 704–5.
- <sup>101</sup> *MTJ*, pp. 3303–4.
- <sup>102</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3304.
- <sup>103</sup> *YSJ*, pp. 709–10.
- <sup>104</sup> Lu Anjie, p. 61.
- <sup>105</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3305.
- <sup>106</sup> *MS*, p. 6764.
- <sup>107</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3305.
- <sup>108</sup> See *CZYJ*, p. 126, for an epitaph for Lu. For an appraisal of Lu's career and mistakes, see *MJBL*, p. 247.
- <sup>109</sup> *MQZS*, p. 327.
- <sup>110</sup> *JSZB*, p. 56.
- <sup>111</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3308.
- <sup>112</sup> *GQ*, p. 5829.
- <sup>113</sup> *LHXS*, pp. 167–8.
- <sup>114</sup> *JSZB*, p. 56. For a list of Ming martyrs, see *MTJ*, pp. 3306–9.
- <sup>115</sup> *YSJ*, p. 719.
- <sup>116</sup> *MQZS*, pp. 328–9.
- <sup>117</sup> See *YSJ*, pp. 716–17.
- <sup>118</sup> On these measures, see Fan Yujin (comp.), “Chongzhen shisan nian Jinan beifang dang,” *Lishi dang'an*, 1986.1 (1986), pp. 19–29.
- <sup>119</sup> *MS*, p. 6513. Also see *WMS*, pp. 992–5.
- <sup>120</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3209.
- <sup>121</sup> *MCDA* 32, pp. 64–79.
- <sup>122</sup> *MSJSBM*, p. 1292, and *MTJ*, pp. 3317–18.
- <sup>123</sup> *MCDA* 32, pp. 311–19.
- <sup>124</sup> See *WMS*, pp. 989–91. For actual reports on plans to stabilize defenses in the north-east, see *MCDA* 33, pp. 23–42.
- <sup>125</sup> See *MS*, pp. 6514–15, and *YSJ*, pp. 685–91.

- 126 See the discussion in *MTJ*, pp. 3319–20.
- 127 *LKCB*, pp. 539 and 553.
- 128 *LKZ*, p. 52.
- 129 *MTJ*, p. 3315.
- 130 *SKJL*, pp. 6.15a–15b, and *LKCB*, p. 580.
- 131 Zhang had been ordered by Xiong to capture Li. See *WMS*, p. 1007.
- 132 *LKZ*, p. 55.
- 133 *SKJL*, pp. 6.20b–22a.
- 134 Xiong Wencan himself allegedly received some of these bribes. Other sources indicate that the local prefect committed suicide. See *WMS*, p. 1009.
- 135 *LKZ*, pp. 55–6.
- 136 See *YSJ*, pp. 826–8.
- 137 *WMS*, p. 1010.
- 138 *MS*, p. 6992.
- 139 *MS*, p. 6992.
- 140 *SKJL*, p. 7.9b.
- 141 *MS*, p. 6515, and *SKJL*, p. 7.10b.
- 142 *LKZ*, p. 56, and *LKCB*, pp. 722–3. Also see *WMS*, pp. 1007–9.
- 143 *MSJSBM*, p. 2459, and *SKJL*, pp. 6.27b–6.29a. Xiong was executed in the market-place as soon as he reached the capital. See *MS*, p. 6738.
- 144 Yang had long advocated this. See *YSJ*, pp. 509–10 for another directive to this effect.
- 145 *YSJ*, pp. 428–30.
- 146 *YSJ*, pp. 449–51.
- 147 *WMS*, p. 1012.
- 148 *YSJ*, pp. 884–5.
- 149 *MS*, p. 6516, and *LKZ*, p. 57.
- 150 See *WMS*, pp. 1014–15, and *LKCB*, pp. 728–34.
- 151 *YSJ*, p. 902.
- 152 *LKZ*, pp. 56–7.
- 153 *YSJ*, pp. 867–9.
- 154 *YSJ*, pp. 857–9.
- 155 *YSJ*, p. 870.
- 156 *MS*, p. 6517.
- 157 *WMS*, p. 1015, *YSJ*, pp. 908–9, and *SKJL*, pp. 7.14b–16b.
- 158 For a full list, see *YSJ*, p. 908.
- 159 They also recovered documentation of Xiong Wencan's receipt of bribes from Zhang Xianzhong. See *SKJL*, p. 7.16b.
- 160 *SKJL*, pp. 7.17a–17b, and *MTJ*, pp. 3330–1.
- 161 On He's victories, including against Luo Rucai, see *LKZ*, pp. 60–1. For Yang's communication to Zuo that he was to be replaced, see *YSJ*, pp. 1193–4.
- 162 *LKZ*, pp. 58 and 63–4. Also see *GQ*, p. 5864.
- 163 See *LKZ*, pp. 62–4, and *LKCB*, pp. 705–6. In his defense, Zuo did defeat the bandit leader Guo Tianxing that summer, enrolling Guo's troops in his ranks.
- 164 See *LKSM*, pp. 54–5.
- 165 *WMS*, pp. 1017–18, and Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, p. 75.
- 166 *MSJSBM*, pp. 1297–8.
- 167 *LKZ*, p. 66, and *MS*, p. 6517.
- 168 On Yang's recruitment of monks from Shaolin, see Meir Shahar, *The Shaolin Monastery: History, Religion, and the Chinese Martial Arts* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), pp. 188–9.
- 169 *SKJL*, p. 7.20a, *YSJ*, pp. 1204–5, and *GQ*, pp. 5866–7.
- 170 *YSJ*, p. 829.
- 171 *SKJL*, p. 7.20b.
- 172 See *YSJ*, pp. 1155–63.

- <sup>173</sup> See *MJBL*, p. 300, and *SKJL*, p. 7.21a.
- <sup>174</sup> Miao Yuan, *Dengpi jilue* (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1986).
- <sup>175</sup> Miller, “State Versus Society,” p. 507.
- <sup>176</sup> See the image in Miao Yuan, pp. 601–2.
- <sup>177</sup> For an overview of peasant rebel activities in Sichuan in 1640, see *LKCB*, pp. 673–720.
- <sup>178</sup> Miao Yuan, p. 604.
- <sup>179</sup> Miao Yuan, pp. 604–5.
- <sup>180</sup> Miao Yuan, pp. 605–7 includes a list of amounts contributed by each notable.
- <sup>181</sup> Miao Yuan, pp. 610–11.
- <sup>182</sup> Miao Yuan, p. 609.
- <sup>183</sup> Miao Yuan, p. 620.
- <sup>184</sup> Miao Yuan, pp. 615–17.
- <sup>185</sup> Miao Yuan, p. 629.
- <sup>186</sup> Miao Yuan, pp. 617 and 631.
- <sup>187</sup> Miao Yuan, p. 631.
- <sup>188</sup> Miao Yuan, pp. 632–3.
- <sup>189</sup> Miller, “State Versus Society,” p. 510.
- <sup>190</sup> Miao Yuan, pp. 642–3.
- <sup>191</sup> See Miao Yuan, pp. 651–61.
- <sup>192</sup> See Miao Yuan, pp. 664–5 for the oath itself.
- <sup>193</sup> Miao Yuan, pp. 671–2.
- <sup>194</sup> See *LKCB*, pp. 714–19.
- <sup>195</sup> Miao Yuan, p. 687.
- <sup>196</sup> Miao Yuan, pp. 687–8.
- <sup>197</sup> Miao Yuan, pp. 688–90.
- <sup>198</sup> *LKCB*, pp. 720–21.
- <sup>199</sup> Miao Yuan, p. 694. Aboriginals often made up the bulk of local military forces in southwestern provinces. See Leo K. Shin, pp. 91–5.
- <sup>200</sup> Miao Yuan, p. 695.
- <sup>201</sup> Miao Yuan, p. 696.
- <sup>202</sup> Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, p. 78.
- <sup>203</sup> Miao Yuan, p. 704.
- <sup>204</sup> See Miao Yuan, pp. 707–16.
- <sup>205</sup> *SKJL* 7.24b.
- <sup>206</sup> *YSJ*, pp. 1137–8.
- <sup>207</sup> *MS*, p. 6718, and *SKJL*, p. 7.26a.
- <sup>208</sup> *WMS*, pp. 1020–1, and *SKJL*, p. 7.20a.
- <sup>209</sup> *YSJ*, pp. 1145–6.
- <sup>210</sup> *YSJ*, p. 917.
- <sup>211</sup> *SKJL*, p. 7.21b.
- <sup>212</sup> Cited in *WMS*, p. 1021.
- <sup>213</sup> *MS*, p. 6718.
- <sup>214</sup> *LKZ*, p. 72.
- <sup>215</sup> Xu Bingyi, p. 12.
- <sup>216</sup> See *MTJ*, p. 3349.
- <sup>217</sup> *YSJ*, p. 971, and Xu Bingyi, p. 12.
- <sup>218</sup> *SKJL*, p. 7.28b.
- <sup>219</sup> *MS*, p. 6520. They also obtained Ming military seals of authority by intercepting this messenger.
- <sup>220</sup> *LKZ*, p. 74; *MJBL*, p. 301, and *SKJL*, p. 7.29a.
- <sup>221</sup> *LKCB*, pp. 759–60.
- <sup>222</sup> Xie Chengren, p. 153.
- <sup>223</sup> Xie Chengren, p. 153.

- 224 Xie Chengren, p. 154.
- 225 *CZSL*, p. 245. The prince's title means prosperity or good fortune.
- 226 *GQ*, p. 5586. On the fallout from the death of the Prince of Fu, see *CZYJ*, pp. 134–6.
- 227 *YSJ*, p. 983.
- 228 *YSJ*, pp. 1275–6.
- 229 *YSJ*, pp. 1279–80.
- 230 See *SKJL*, p. 7.29a.
- 231 *MS*, p. 6521.
- 232 *SKJL*, 7.30a.
- 233 *LKCB*, pp. 777–8.
- 234 *LKCB*, p. 781.
- 235 On the tradition of similar popular heroes in popular Chinese folklore, see Shelley Hsueh-lun Chang, *History and Legend* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1990). Also see Xie Chengren, pp. 145–7.
- 236 Xie Chengren, p. 145.
- 237 *MCDA* 31, pp. 328–31.
- 238 On Ming recognition of the strategic import of Songshan, see *MQSL* 1, pp. 21a–23b.
- 239 Fan Yujin (comp.), “Mingjun shouwei Songshan deng chengbao de liujian zhanbao,” *Lishi dang'an*, 1981.2 (1981), p. 4.
- 240 *QSG*, p. 68.
- 241 See, for example, *MCDA* 34, pp. 328–40.
- 242 *MCDA* 34, p. 354.
- 243 *MCDA* 34, p. 356.
- 244 *MCDA* 34, pp. 341–9.
- 245 *QSG*, p. 70.
- 246 *MQZS*, pp. 338–43.
- 247 See *MCDA* 35, pp. 127–44 for examples of such victory reports.
- 248 *MCDA* 34, p. 438.
- 249 *YSJ*, pp. 1027–8.
- 250 *MS*, p. 6978.
- 251 On the situation at Jinzhou, see *MCDA* 34, pp. 482–9.
- 252 *GQ*, p. 5863.
- 253 *MCDA* 35, pp. 156–8, and *MQSL* 1, pp. 24a–24b.
- 254 See Fan Yujin (comp.), “Chongzhen shisan nian Liaodong zhanshou Mingdang xuan, shang,” *Lishi dang'an*, 1985.1 (1985), p. 3.
- 255 Fan Yujin, “Liaodong zhanshou, shang,” p. 5.
- 256 Fan Yujin, “Liaodong zhanshou, shang,” pp. 7–8.
- 257 Fan Yujin, “Liaodong zhanshou, shang,” pp. 8–9.
- 258 *QSG*, p. 9426.
- 259 *QSG*, p. 9426.
- 260 Fan Yujin, “Liaodong zhanshou, shang,” pp. 11–13.
- 261 Liu Fengyun, p. 19.
- 262 Fan Yujin (comp.), “Chongzhen shisan nian Liaodong zhanshou Mingdang xuan, xia,” 1985.2 (1985), pp. 3–4.
- 263 Fan Yujin, “Liaodong zhanshou, xia,” p. 4.
- 264 Fan Yujin, “Liaodong zhanshou, xia,” pp. 11–13.
- 265 *YSJ*, p. 763, and *CZSL*, p. 239.
- 266 Fan Yujin (comp.), “Chongzhen shisan nian Liaodong zhanshou suppl. 2,” p. 4.
- 267 Fan Yujin (comp.), “Chongzhen shisan nian Liaodong zhanshou suppl. 2,” p. 5.
- 268 Fan Yujin, comp., “Chongzhen shisan nian Liaodong zhanshou suppl. 2,” p. 7.
- 269 Fan Yujin, comp., “Chongzhen shisan nian Liaodong zhanshou suppl. 2,” p. 10–11.
- 270 *MCDA* 36, pp. 12–22 and 140–5. Also see Fan Yujin, “Liaodong zhanshou,” suppl. 1, pp. 7–9.

- <sup>271</sup> See *MCDA* 37, pp. 426–78 for extensive reports on these battles. Also see *MQSL* 1, pp. 27a–27b.
- <sup>272</sup> Fan Yujin, “Liaodong zhanshou,” suppl. 1, p. 10.
- <sup>273</sup> *MCDA* 35, p. 161.
- <sup>274</sup> Fan Yujin (comp.), “Chongzhen shisan nian Liaodong zhanshou Mingdang xuan,” suppl. 3, *Lishi dang'an*, 1987.3 (1987), p. 4.
- <sup>275</sup> *MCDA* 35, p. 163.
- <sup>276</sup> *MCDA* 35, pp. 77–9 and 179–84. This was at Zaoshan. Also see Fan Yujin, “Liaodong zhanshou, shang,” pp. 13–14.
- <sup>277</sup> See *MCDA* 35, pp. 205–66, and pp. 295–302.
- <sup>278</sup> See Hong Chengchou’s report on the situation in Liaodong in *MCDA* 36, pp. 348–56. Also see Fan Yujin (comp.), “Chongzhen shisan nian Liaodong zhanshou Ming dang xuan,” suppl. 2, *Lishi dang'an*, 1986.3 (1986), pp. 3–12.
- <sup>279</sup> Fan Yujin, “Liaodong zhanshou,” suppl. 3, p. 8.
- <sup>280</sup> *MCDA* 37, pp. 99–107.
- <sup>281</sup> On these measures, see Fan Yujin (comp.), “Chongzhen shisan nian Ming-Qing zhan-fang shiliao,” *Lishi dang'an*, 1986.2 (1986), pp. 3–7. Also see *MCDA* 38, pp. 40–56.
- <sup>282</sup> See, for example, *MCDA* 38, pp. 340–3, for such a report from Zu Dashou.
- <sup>283</sup> Liu Fengyun, p. 21.
- <sup>284</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3357.
- <sup>285</sup> *WMS*, p. 1031.
- <sup>286</sup> *WMS*, p. 1032.
- <sup>287</sup> *WMS*, pp. 1032–3. For a variant translation of part of this letter, see Chen-main Wang, p. 103.

## 6 Hanging by a silken thread: The Ming armies collapse, 1641–3

- <sup>1</sup> *JSZB*, p. 22.
- <sup>2</sup> Luan Xing, *Jiashen shi shang* (Zhengzhou: Zhengzhou guji chubanshe, 1987), p. 58.
- <sup>3</sup> See *MJBL*, pp. 225–6, and Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, pp. 91–3. There is in fact a plausible theory that Li Yan was not a real person, but that he was created to provide the illusion that Li Zicheng had a gentry adviser who helped him govern, thereby enhancing his legitimacy as a contender for the throne. See Luan Xing, pp. 174–200, and Roger V. Des Forges, *Cultural Centrality and Political Change in Chinese History: Northeast Henan in the fall of the Ming* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 284–5.
- <sup>4</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3347.
- <sup>5</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3347.
- <sup>6</sup> See *MJBL*, p. 356, for an example.
- <sup>7</sup> Xie Chengren, p. 157.
- <sup>8</sup> Mei Qizhao, pp. 701–2.
- <sup>9</sup> See Luan Xing, pp. 9–17 for accounts of his misdeeds.
- <sup>10</sup> See Luan Xing, pp. 1–2.
- <sup>11</sup> Xie Chengren, p. 155.
- <sup>12</sup> *LKZ*, p. 80, and *SKJL*, pp. 9.5a–8a.
- <sup>13</sup> *LKZ*, p. 80, and *MTJ*, p. 3358.
- <sup>14</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3358.
- <sup>15</sup> *LKZ*, p. 82.
- <sup>16</sup> *LKZ*, pp. 80–1.
- <sup>17</sup> *MTJ*, pp. 3359–60.
- <sup>18</sup> *LKZ*, p. 82.
- <sup>19</sup> *LKZ*, pp. 84–5.
- <sup>20</sup> *LKZ*, p. 85.

- 21 *LKZ*, p. 86.
- 22 *ZWL*, p. 1875.
- 23 *MTJ*, p. 3375.
- 24 *MTJ*, p. 3375–6.
- 25 *MJBL*, pp. 326–8, *ZWL*, p. 377, and Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, pp. 145–6.
- 26 *MJBL*, p. 329.
- 27 *MTJ*, p. 3380.
- 28 *LKZ*, p. 90.
- 29 *LKZ*, p. 90.
- 30 *LKZ*, p. 95.
- 31 *ZWL*, p. 377.
- 32 Chen-main Wang, p. 94.
- 33 For a full account of this battle, see *MQZS*, pp. 337–92. Also see Chen-main Wang, pp. 94–110.
- 34 *GQ*, p. 5901.
- 35 *GQ*, p. 5903.
- 36 *MQZS*, p. 358.
- 37 *MQZS*, p. 362.
- 38 *WMS*, p. 1033.
- 39 Some estimates put as many as 240,000 Qing troops on the scene. *MQZS*, pp. 365–6.
- 40 *MQZS*, p. 364.
- 41 *MQZS*, p. 366.
- 42 *WMS*, p. 1034.
- 43 *JSZB*, p. 58, and *MS*, p. 6979.
- 44 *MQZS*, p. 370.
- 45 See *MQSL* 5, pp. 327a–328b. Also see Wakeman, *Great Enterprise*, pp. 211–14.
- 46 *MTJ*, p. 3362, and *QSG*, pp. 74–5. Also see *MQZS*, p. 368.
- 47 *MS*, p. 6981.
- 48 *QSG*, p. 74.
- 49 Liu Fengyun, pp. 27–8.
- 50 *MQSL* 1, pp. 32a–32b.
- 51 See the plans in *MCDA* 40, pp. 15–30, and *MCDA* 48, pp. 113–17.
- 52 *GQ*, p. 5910.
- 53 *GQ*, p. 5908.
- 54 *MCDA* 39, p. 461.
- 55 Liu Fengyun, p. 30.
- 56 On Zu's decision to surrender, see Wakeman, *Great Enterprise*, pp. 222–3.
- 57 *QTZ*, p. 311.
- 58 They would send many letters on the Qing's behalf to Wu over the next couple years. See Liu Fengyun, pp. 38–41.
- 59 *QSG*, pp. 9427–8.
- 60 See *QSG*, pp. 76–7. On theories of Hong's defection and its implications for both sides, see Chen-main Wang, pp. 112–18.
- 61 Chen-main Wang, pp. 131–2.
- 62 Li Hongbin, p. 90, and Chen-main Wang, p. 110.
- 63 *WMS*, p. 1035.
- 64 *WMS*, p. 1036.
- 65 *MS*, pp. 6638–9.
- 66 See He Yu, "Shilun Huang Taiji shiqi de Ming-Qing yihe," *Ming-Qing shiluncang*, vol. 5 (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 2004), pp. 426–7.
- 67 *WMS*, p. 1040.
- 68 *QSG*, p. 77.
- 69 On Zhou's later disgrace and death, see *WMS*, pp. 1067–76.
- 70 *WMS*, p. 1043, and *LHXS*, pp. 201–2.

- <sup>71</sup> WMS, p. 1044. Also see Wakeman, *Great Enterprise*, p. 152.
- <sup>72</sup> Luo Bin, pp. 316–17.
- <sup>73</sup> MQZS, pp. 330–1.
- <sup>74</sup> See MCDA 42, pp. 193–229 for reports on these raids.
- <sup>75</sup> MQZS, p. 334.
- <sup>76</sup> MQZS, p. 334.
- <sup>77</sup> MTJ, pp. 3413–16.
- <sup>78</sup> See LHXS, pp. 213–14.
- <sup>79</sup> MCDA 43, pp. 279–80 and 341–6.
- <sup>80</sup> See MTJ, pp. 3417–18.
- <sup>81</sup> JSZB, p. 61. For a report on the destruction to Linqing alone, see MCDA 43, pp. 105–12.
- <sup>82</sup> MTJ, p. 3399.
- <sup>83</sup> MCDA 41, p. 216.
- <sup>84</sup> MCDA 42, pp. 253–75.
- <sup>85</sup> MCDA 43, pp. 85–95.
- <sup>86</sup> See QSG, pp. 80–1.
- <sup>87</sup> See Liu Yinan, *Li Zicheng jinian fukao* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983).
- <sup>88</sup> On the centrality of Henan in Chinese history, see Des Forges, pp. 1–14.
- <sup>89</sup> For a look at the overall strategic situation for the region in 1641, see Liu Yinan, pp. 167–74.
- <sup>90</sup> Xie Chengren, p. 173.
- <sup>91</sup> Xie Chengren, p. 173, and Des Forges, p. 213.
- <sup>92</sup> Xie Chengren, p. 173, and Des Forges, p. 213.
- <sup>93</sup> Bai Yu, p. 2.
- <sup>94</sup> See Bai Yu, pp. 2–3.
- <sup>95</sup> SBRZ, pp. 1–2.
- <sup>96</sup> Bai Yu, p. 5.
- <sup>97</sup> SBRZ, p. 2.
- <sup>98</sup> Bai Yu, pp. 5–6.
- <sup>99</sup> Bai Yu, p. 7.
- <sup>100</sup> Some sources credit Chen Yongfu with shooting the eye. See ZWL, p. 376.
- <sup>101</sup> SBRZ, p. 3.
- <sup>102</sup> Bai Yu, p. 10.
- <sup>103</sup> Bai Yu, p. 11, and SBRZ, pp. 3–4.
- <sup>104</sup> SBRZ, p. 4. For details on Li's activities through the remainder of 1641, see Des Forges, pp. 214–22. Also see SKJL, *juan* 8, which encompasses all three sieges of Kaifeng by Li Zicheng.
- <sup>105</sup> SBRZ, p. 5, and Bai Yu, p. 13.
- <sup>106</sup> Bai Yu, pp. 13–14.
- <sup>107</sup> SBRZ, pp. 5–6.
- <sup>108</sup> SBRZ, p. 6.
- <sup>109</sup> SBRZ, p. 7, and Bai Yu, pp. 16–17.
- <sup>110</sup> Bai Yu, p. 16.
- <sup>111</sup> SBRZ, p. 7.
- <sup>112</sup> SBRZ, p. 8.
- <sup>113</sup> SBRZ, p. 8.
- <sup>114</sup> Bai Yu, pp. 19–21.
- <sup>115</sup> SBRZ, p. 8.
- <sup>116</sup> SBRZ, pp. 8–9.
- <sup>117</sup> Bai Yu, p. 22.
- <sup>118</sup> SBRZ, p. 9.
- <sup>119</sup> SBRZ, pp. 9–10. Guan Yin is the Buddhist bodhisattva of mercy.
- <sup>120</sup> SBRZ, p. 10.

- 121 *SBRZ*, p. 11. Also see Bai Yu, p. 28.
- 122 *SBRZ*, p. 11. There were also more substantiated reports that Zuo Liangyu was nearby. See Bai Yu, pp. 27–9.
- 123 *SBRZ*, p. 12.
- 124 *SBRZ*, pp. 12–13.
- 125 Bai Yu, pp. 34–5.
- 126 For details on these actions, see Des Forges, pp. 237–54. Also see Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, pp. 99–100.
- 127 Bai Yu, pp. 35–6, and *SBRZ*, pp. 14–15.
- 128 Bai Yu, p. 36.
- 129 *SBRZ*, p. 16.
- 130 Bai Yu, p. 37.
- 131 Bai Yu, p. 40.
- 132 Bai Yu, p. 40.
- 133 Bai Yu, pp. 37–9, and *SBRZ*, pp. 16–17.
- 134 *SBRZ*, p. 17.
- 135 *SBRZ*, p. 18.
- 136 The siege of Ningxia is described at length in Kenneth M. Swope, “All Men are Not Brothers: Ethnic Identity and Dynastic Loyalty in the Ningxia Mutiny of 1592,” *Late Imperial China*, 24.1 (June 2003), pp. 79–129.
- 137 *SBRZ*, p. 20.
- 138 *SBRZ*, p. 21.
- 139 See his biography in *ECCP*, pp. 531–2.
- 140 For details on this plan, see *SBRZ*, pp. 22–3, and Des Forges, pp. 262–3.
- 141 Bai Yu, p. 44.
- 142 See *SBRZ*, pp. 25–7.
- 143 *SBRZ*, p. 27.
- 144 Bai Yu, p. 53.
- 145 *SBRZ*, pp. 28–9.
- 146 *SBRZ*, p. 31, and Bai Yu, p. 46.
- 147 Bai Yu, pp. 49–50.
- 148 Bai Yu, p. 52.
- 149 *SBRZ*, p. 32.
- 150 Bai Yu, pp. 57–8.
- 151 *SBRZ*, pp. 32–3.
- 152 See Bai Yu, pp. 60–1, and Des Forges, p. 266. Some estimates contend that the city had 900,000 inhabitants prior to the third siege, but that figure seems far too high. See Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, pp. 103–4, and Liu Yinan, pp. 175–7, who gives the figures listed in various contemporary sources.
- 153 Bai Yu, p. 63.
- 154 For a comparative perspective on siegework in medieval Europe, see Jim Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1992). Of particular interest are the discussions of rates of fire for batteries of trebuchets and guns and the discussion of mining and sapping on pp. 270–4.
- 155 *MJBL*, p. 282.
- 156 *MJBL*, p. 282.
- 157 Xu Bingyi, p. 25.
- 158 *SKJL*, p. 9.19a.
- 159 *WMS*, p. 1085.
- 160 Xu Bingyi, p. 5.
- 161 *SKJL*, pp. 9.21a–22a.
- 162 *MJBL*, pp. 360–1.
- 163 *LKZ*, p. 102.

- 164 *MTJ*, p. 3397.
- 165 *LKZ*, p. 104.
- 166 *SKJL*, p. 9.22b.
- 167 *WMS*, p. 1087.
- 168 *WMS*, p. 1090.
- 169 *MTJ*, p. 3412.
- 170 *MTJ*, pp. 3418–19, and Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, pp. 150–1.
- 171 *MTJ*, p. 3420.
- 172 Luo Bin, p. 271.
- 173 *MTJ*, p. 3420.
- 174 Luo Bin, p. 272.
- 175 *MTJ*, p. 3424.
- 176 *LKZ*, p. 113.
- 177 *MTJ*, p. 3424.
- 178 *MTJ*, p. 3425.
- 179 *MJBL*, p. 385.
- 180 *MJBL*, p. 357.
- 181 *MJBL*, p. 357.
- 182 *MJBL*, pp. 358–9, and *LKZ*, p. 107.
- 183 *GQ*, p. 5966.
- 184 See *SKJL*, pp. 9.22b–23a.
- 185 *MJBL*, p. 359.
- 186 See Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, pp. 109–10, and *LKZ*, p. 108.
- 187 *LKZ*, pp. 110–11.
- 188 *LKZ*, p. 113.
- 189 *LKZ*, p. 109.
- 190 *KZ*, p. 113.
- 191 See Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, pp. 117–18.
- 192 *MS*, pp. 6790–1.
- 193 *ZWL*, p. 1875.
- 194 *CZSL*, p. 266.
- 195 On the identification of the peasants with Li Zicheng, see *LKSM*, pp. 71–3, and Xie Chengren, pp. 222–38.
- 196 *WMS*, p. 1095.
- 197 *ZWL*, p. 1875.
- 198 *WMS*, p. 1095.
- 199 *LKZ*, p. 122.
- 200 *WMS*, p. 1096.
- 201 *MS*, p. 6791.
- 202 *MS*, p. 6791.
- 203 *WMS*, p. 1097.
- 204 On Gao Jie, see *ECCP*, pp. 410–11.
- 205 *LKZ*, p. 124.
- 206 *MS*, pp. 6791–2.
- 207 See Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, pp. 119–20, and *MS*, p. 6792.
- 208 *MS*, p. 6792.
- 209 *MTJ*, p. 3430.
- 210 *WMS*, p. 1098.
- 211 Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, p. 120, Xie Chengren, pp. 266–7, and *MS*, pp. 333 and 6792. Gao was the only one of Li's former subordinates who did not join him.
- 212 *LKZ*, p. 129.
- 213 *LKZ*, p. 132.
- 214 See Luo Bin, pp. 299–301 on the establishment of this regime.

- 215 *LKCB*, pp. 898–902, and *MS*, p. 333.
- 216 Liu Fengyun, pp. 43–4.
- 217 See *MTJ*, pp. 3425–6.
- 218 *LKCB*, p. 886.
- 219 See *JSZB*, pp. 64–6, and Des Forges, pp. 296–8.
- 220 *MJBL*, p. 416.
- 221 *MTJ*, p. 3434.
- 222 *LKZ*, p. 128.

## 7 Chongzhen's lament: My ministers have abandoned me! Winter–Spring 1644

- 1 On these and other omens, see Nie, pp. 2–3.
- 2 *MJBL*, pp. 414–15.
- 3 Nie, pp. 3–4.
- 4 Cited and translated in Lynn A. Struve, *Voices from the Ming–Qing Cataclysm: China in Tiger's Jaws* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 8.
- 5 *LKZ*, p. 136, and Nie, pp. 3–4.
- 6 *LKZ*, p. 136.
- 7 *LKZ*, p. 136.
- 8 *MTJ*, p. 3440.
- 9 *JSZB*, p. 37.
- 10 *JSZB*, p. 38.
- 11 *LKZ*, pp. 136–7.
- 12 *LKZ*, p. 137, and *MJBL*, pp. 416–17.
- 13 For more on the “Southern Tour” debate, see Yu Tongyuan, pp. 43–50.
- 14 *LKZ*, p. 137.
- 15 *LKZ*, p. 140.
- 16 For a lengthier treatment of the discussions concerning a possible move south, see Wakeman, *Great Enterprise*, pp. 240–4, and *WMS*, pp. 1109–18. Also see *MJBL*, pp. 416–17, and Feng Menglong, *Yandu riji*, in Yu Hao (comp.), *Ming–Qing shiliao congshu*, 8 vols (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2005), vol. 8, pp. 376–9. This source is a fascinating diary account of the fall of Beijing to the peasant rebels. Also see *YDZB*, pp. 605–6, another diary by Xu Yingfen.
- 17 *WMS*, p. 1105.
- 18 *WMS*, p. 1105.
- 19 See *MS*, p. 334, and *LKZ*, p. 139. Li was allegedly a student of ancient *bingfa*, or military methods from the classics as were many Ming literati. See *WMS*, p. 1106.
- 20 Nie, p. 5.
- 21 *MJBL*, p. 421.
- 22 *LKSM*, p. 73.
- 23 In the small museum housed in the Zhengyang Gate today one can see an image of the emperor bidding farewell to the troops.
- 24 *MJBL*, p. 421.
- 25 *MJBL*, p. 421.
- 26 Nie, p. 6.
- 27 See Feng Menglong, pp. 380–2.
- 28 *MJBL*, p. 422. It is not entirely clear from the sources if these looters were actually members of the force, but that is the implication.
- 29 Nie, p. 7. Li Jiantai was eventually captured by the rebels at Baoding, south of the capital. See *WMS*, p. 1109.
- 30 *CZCB*, pp. 27–8.
- 31 *LKZ*, p. 139.

- <sup>32</sup> See *MJBL*, p. 417, and *GQ*, p. 6013.
- <sup>33</sup> *JSZB*, p. 66.
- <sup>34</sup> *JSZB*, p. 66.
- <sup>35</sup> *LKSM*, pp. 77–8.
- <sup>36</sup> *LKZ*, pp. 136–7.
- <sup>37</sup> *MS*, p. 334.
- <sup>38</sup> Nie, p. 39.
- <sup>39</sup> See Yu Tongyuan, pp. 40–2.
- <sup>40</sup> *MS*, p. 334.
- <sup>41</sup> *LKZ*, p. 149.
- <sup>42</sup> *LKZ*, p. 142. On the rumors flying around Beijing at this time concerning the rebels and their activities, see Feng Menglong, pp. 388–92. Wu Sangui, for example, was enfeoffed as the Earl of Ningyuan.
- <sup>43</sup> Feng Menglong, pp. 394–6.
- <sup>44</sup> *WMS*, p. 1102.
- <sup>45</sup> Feng Menglong, pp. 399–400.
- <sup>46</sup> *MS*, p. 334, and *JSZB*, pp. 74–6.
- <sup>47</sup> *WMS*, p. 1123, and *MCDA* 46, pp. 109–11.
- <sup>48</sup> *MJBL*, p. 438.
- <sup>49</sup> For a brief biography of Wu, see *ECCP*, pp. 827–30.
- <sup>50</sup> On Wu's attitude towards the Ming court and the Manchus, see *SFSL*, pp. 248–89. Also see Angela Hsi, "Wu San-kuei in 1644: A Reappraisal," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 34.2 (February 1975), pp. 443–53.
- <sup>51</sup> *JSZB*, p. 82.
- <sup>52</sup> *MTJ*, p. 3456.
- <sup>53</sup> *MJBL*, p. 439.
- <sup>54</sup> *JSZB*, p. 75.
- <sup>55</sup> *JSZB*, p. 75.
- <sup>56</sup> *JSZB*, p. 84.
- <sup>57</sup> *JSZB*, p. 87.
- <sup>58</sup> Feng Menglong, p. 400.
- <sup>59</sup> *YDZB*, p. 608.
- <sup>60</sup> Feng Menglong, pp. 394–6.
- <sup>61</sup> *MJBL*, p. 437.
- <sup>62</sup> *LKZ*, p. 155.
- <sup>63</sup> Feng Menglong, p. 403.
- <sup>64</sup> Nie, p. 43.
- <sup>65</sup> *JSZB*, p. 153.
- <sup>66</sup> Yu Tongyuan, p. 6.
- <sup>67</sup> See Yu Tongyuan, pp. 7–8, and *JSZB*, p. 154.
- <sup>68</sup> *LKZ*, p. 158.
- <sup>69</sup> Nie, p. 43.
- <sup>70</sup> See *WMS*, p. 1127, and Nie, p. 43. For more on the reasons for this directive, see Yu Tongyuan, pp. 51–7.
- <sup>71</sup> Feng Menglong, pp. 404–5, and *WMS*, p. 1128.
- <sup>72</sup> *JSZB*, p. 151.
- <sup>73</sup> Feng Menglong, p. 405.
- <sup>74</sup> Feng Menglong, p. 406.
- <sup>75</sup> *JSZB*, p. 164.
- <sup>76</sup> *LHXS*, p. 232.
- <sup>77</sup> Nie, p. 44.
- <sup>78</sup> *WMS*, p. 1129.
- <sup>79</sup> Feng Menglong, p. 409.
- <sup>80</sup> Nie, p. 44.

- 81 Feng Menglong, p. 406.
- 82 *WMS*, p. 1129, and *ZWL*, pp. 384–5.
- 83 *WMS*, p. 1130.
- 84 Feng Menglong, pp. 410–11.
- 85 Nie, pp. 44–5.
- 86 For more details on Chongzhen's farewell to his family and palace servants, see Yu Tongyuan, pp. 9–18.
- 87 See *WMS*, pp. 1131–2 for various versions of the emperor's suicide. Also see Nie, p. 45.
- 88 See *MS*, p. 335, and Ying Zhang, p. 1.
- 89 Feng Menglong, p. 414.
- 90 Feng Menglong, p. 416, and *YDZB*, pp. 613–14.
- 91 See Wakeman, "Shun Interregnum," pp. 74–6.
- 92 Feng Menglong, pp. 416–17. Also see *MJBL*, pp. 456–7.
- 93 See Struve, *Voices from the Ming–Qing Cataclysm*, p. 13.
- 94 Qian Banqi, *Chongzhen jiashen Yandu jibian shilu*, in *MQSC* 8, p. 355.
- 95 *GQ*, p. 6048.
- 96 *MSJSBM*, p. 1384.
- 97 Qian Banqi, p. 355.
- 98 Qian Banqi, pp. 355–6.
- 99 Feng Menglong, pp. 418–19.
- 100 On Li's disdain for turncoats, see Yu Tongyuan, pp. 56–7.
- 101 Qian Banqi, p. 357.
- 102 Wakeman, "Shun Interregnum," pp. 86–7.
- 103 *MTJ*, p. 3483.
- 104 For a list of martyred officials, see *MTJ*, pp. 3472–5.
- 105 *JSZB*, p. 190 gives the improbable figure of 70 million.
- 106 Nie, p. 80.
- 107 *YDZB*, p. 615. For a list of officials who joined the new government, see Feng Menglong, pp. 427–8.
- 108 *GQ*, p. 6054.
- 109 *YDZB*, p. 625.
- 110 *YDZB*, p. 626.
- 111 Feng Menglong, pp. 433–4.
- 112 *GQ*, pp. 6061–2.
- 113 *GQ*, p. 6065.
- 114 *JSZB*, p. 196.
- 115 See Liu Fengyun, pp. 55–6, and *JSZB*, pp. 197–8.
- 116 *MJBL*, p. 495.
- 117 *YDZB*, p. 627, and Feng Menglong, p. 443.
- 118 On Wu's strategic dilemma, see Shang Hongkui, "Ming-Qing zhiji Shanaiguan zhanyi de zhenxiang kaocha," *Lishi yanjiu*, 5 (1978), pp. 76–8.
- 119 *JSZB*, p. 202.
- 120 *JSZB*, p. 202.
- 121 See *JSZB*, pp. 99–100.
- 122 *JSZB*, p. 208.
- 123 On the negotiations between Wu Sangui and Dorgon, see Li Hongbin, "Duoergun yu Shanaiguan dazhan," *Qingshi yanjiu*, 5 (1986), pp. 66–86. Also see Wakeman, *Great Enterprise*, pp. 304–13.
- 124 Li Hongbin, "Duoergun," p. 67.
- 125 Li Hongbin, "Duoergun," p. 68.
- 126 *MJBL*, p. 495.
- 127 *JSZB*, p. 210.

- <sup>128</sup> JSZB, p. 212.
- <sup>129</sup> JSZB, p. 212.
- <sup>130</sup> Feng Menglong, pp. 447–8.
- <sup>131</sup> Wang and Xia, p. 256.
- <sup>132</sup> MJBL, p. 498.
- <sup>133</sup> See Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, pp. 165–6, on Li’s final days. Also see Xie Chengren, pp. 330–52.
- <sup>134</sup> MJBL, p. 491.
- <sup>135</sup> The standard narrative of these events in English is Struve, *The Southern Ming* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984).
- <sup>136</sup> F. W. Mote, *Imperial China, 900–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 802.

## 8 The fall of the Ming from a global perspective

- <sup>1</sup> CHC 7, p. 585.
- <sup>2</sup> CHC 7, pp. 585–6.
- <sup>3</sup> See Ho Koon-piu, “Should We Die as Martyrs to the Ming Cause? Scholar-officials’ Views on Martyrdom During the Ming–Qing Transition,” *Oriens Extremus*, 37.2 (1994), p. 123.
- <sup>4</sup> Mote, *Imperial China*, p. 801.
- <sup>5</sup> Mote, *Imperial China*, p. 801.
- <sup>6</sup> Mote, *Imperial China*, p. 802.
- <sup>7</sup> Mote, *Imperial China*, p. 794.
- <sup>8</sup> Mote, *Imperial China*, p. 805.
- <sup>9</sup> On the militarization of Ming society, see Struve, *Southern Ming*, pp. 6–7.
- <sup>10</sup> Yimin Zhang, p. 272.
- <sup>11</sup> Jiang Yonghong, p. 365.
- <sup>12</sup> See Kathleen Ryor, “*Wen* and *Wu* in Elite Cultural Practices during the Late Ming,” in Nicola Di Cosmo (ed.), *Military Culture in Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 219–42.
- <sup>13</sup> Xie Guozhen, *Nan Ming shilue* (Changchun: Jilin chuban jituan youxian ziren gongsi, 2009), pp. 9–14.
- <sup>14</sup> On this point, see Ray Huang, *Taxation and Government Finance in Sixteenth-Century Ming China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).
- <sup>15</sup> See James Tong, p. 122. Surtaxes alone were bringing in an extra 16.7 million taels annually by the late 1630s. See Xie Guozhen, p. 14.
- <sup>16</sup> See, for example, the discussion in Jiang Yonghong, pp. 123–40.
- <sup>17</sup> Tsai, *Eunuchs in the Ming Dynasty*.
- <sup>18</sup> See Miller, *State Versus Gentry*, for an extended discussion of this point.
- <sup>19</sup> Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giraldez, “Born with a Silver Spoon: The Origin of World Trade in 1571,” *Journal of World History*, 6.2 (Fall 1995), p. 201.
- <sup>20</sup> See Frederic Wakeman Jr., “China and the Seventeenth Century Crisis,” *Late Imperial China*, 7.1 (June 1986), p. 3. Also see S. A. M. Adshead, “The Seventeenth Century General Crisis in China,” *Asian Profile*, 1.2 (October 1973), pp. 271–80.
- <sup>21</sup> Flynn and Giraldez, p. 215.
- <sup>22</sup> See Richard Von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune: Money and Monetary Policy in China, 1000–1700* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), p. 142.
- <sup>23</sup> Wakeman, “China and the Seventeenth Century Crisis,” p. 9.
- <sup>24</sup> Xie Guozhen, p. 15. Also see Wakeman, “China and the Seventeenth Century Crisis,” pp. 10–11.
- <sup>25</sup> William Atwell, “Some Observations on the Seventeenth Century Crisis in China and Japan,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, 45.2 (February 1986), p. 227.

- <sup>26</sup> William Atwell, "Notes on Silver, Foreign Trade, and the Late Ming Economy," *Ch'ing-shih wen-t'i*, 3.8 (December 1977), pp. 1–33.
- <sup>27</sup> See the discussion in Brian Moloughney and Xia Weizhong, "Silver and the Fall of the Ming: A Reassessment," *Papers on Far Eastern History*, 40 (1989), pp. 53–60. Also see Von Glahn, pp. 231–45.
- <sup>28</sup> Moloughney and Xia, p. 68.
- <sup>29</sup> Geoffrey Parker, "Crisis and Catastrophe" *American Historical Review*, 113.4 (October 2008), p. 1057.
- <sup>30</sup> Parker, "Crisis and Catastrophe," p. 1058.
- <sup>31</sup> Parker, "Crisis and Catastrophe," p. 1059.
- <sup>32</sup> Jack A. Goldstone, "East and West in the Seventeenth Century: Political Crises in Stuart England, Ottoman Turkey and Ming China," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 30.1 (January 1988), pp. 103–4.
- <sup>33</sup> Goldstone, "East and West," p. 105.
- <sup>34</sup> Brook, *The Troubled Empire*, chapter one.
- <sup>35</sup> See Parker, "Crisis and Catastrophe," pp. 1060–2.
- <sup>36</sup> Ju Mingku, p. 71.
- <sup>37</sup> Parker, "Crisis and Catastrophe," p. 1071.
- <sup>38</sup> KGFL, pp. 200–1.
- <sup>39</sup> Ju Mingku, pp. 31–2.
- <sup>40</sup> See Ju Mingku, pp. 36–40 for tables and maps.
- <sup>41</sup> Parker, "Crisis and Catastrophe," p. 1069.
- <sup>42</sup> Ju Mingku, pp. 42–7.
- <sup>43</sup> Ju Mingku, pp. 55–9. On epidemics in the Ming also see Helen Dunstan, "The Late Ming Epidemics: A Preliminary Survey," *Ch'ing shih wen-t'i*, 3 (1975), pp. 1–59. On government relief efforts, see Des Forges, pp. 34–55.
- <sup>44</sup> Ju Mingku, p. 65.
- <sup>45</sup> See Joanna Handlin Smith, *The Art of Doing Good: Charity in Late Ming China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009).
- <sup>46</sup> Cited in Needham 5.7, p. 189.
- <sup>47</sup> Agostan, p. 8.
- <sup>48</sup> Keith Krause, *Arms and the State: Patterns of Military Production and Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 48.
- <sup>49</sup> See Krause, p. 29. On military challenges and the impetus for innovation in China, see Kenneth Chase, *Firearms: A Global History to 1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 197–210.
- <sup>50</sup> DeVries, p. 48.
- <sup>51</sup> James Tong, p. 141.
- <sup>52</sup> See Agostan, pp. 40–7.
- <sup>53</sup> See Needham 5.7, pp. 412–13.
- <sup>54</sup> Dai Yingcong has done some work on this for the Qing period. See Yingcong Dai, "Military Finance of the High Qing Period: An Overview," in Di Cosmo, (ed.), *Military Culture in Imperial China*, pp. 296–316.
- <sup>55</sup> Dennis Showalter, "Caste, Skill, and Training: The Evolution of Cohesion in European Armies from the Middle Ages to the Sixteenth Century," *Journal of Military History*, 57.3 (July 1993), pp. 415–19.
- <sup>56</sup> Yu Lizi, *Ming-Qing shi jianggao* (Jinan: Jilu shushe, 2008), pp. 51–2.
- <sup>57</sup> Yu Lizi, p. 62.
- <sup>58</sup> Yu Lizi, pp. 6–64. On Zhang's possible motives, see Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, pp. 176–8.
- <sup>59</sup> Yu Lizi, p. 66.
- <sup>60</sup> Yu Lizi, p. 68.
- <sup>61</sup> Yu Lizi, p. 73.

62 See Yu Lizi, pp. 81–3, and Parsons, *Peasant Rebellions*, p. 180.

63 Yu Lizi, p. 84.

64 Zhao Shiyu and Du Zhengzhen, “Birthday of the Sun: Historical Memory in South-eastern Coastal China of the Chongzhen Emperor’s Death,” in Lynn A. Struve (ed.), *Time, Temporality and Imperial Transition: East Asia From Ming to Qing* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), pp. 244–76.

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