THE SEARCH FOR MODERN CHINA

Edited by

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dynasty. To be rid of this violent evil will be greatly favorable to you. To rescue others from danger and support them is a great act of righteousness. To save the people from water and fire is a great act of benevolence. To raise what has perished and continue what has ended is to win great fame. To obtain authority and establish hegemony is to win a great success. Moreover, it is impossible to calculate how much wealth or the number of women the roving bandits have already accumulated; when your righteous army arrives all this will be yours and this shall be a great profit. As the world’s greatest hero, your majesty has this opportunity to rip down what is withered and rotten; certainly there will never be a second chance!

I beg you to consider the loyal and righteous words of this solitary official of a destroyed kingdom and immediately summon crack troops to enter the central and western zones. I, Sangui, will lead my command to arrive at the gates of the capital. We can then destroy the roving bandits who have taken the court and make manifest great righteousness in China. Then will our dynasty repay your northern dynasty merely with wealth? We will give land as a reward and absolutely shall never betray our word. I should have sent this letter to the Emperor of the northern dynasty, but since I do not understand the rites of the northern dynasty, I dare not lightly insult his sagely wisdom. I beg that your majesty will convey this memorial.

2.3 Dorgon’s Reply to Wu Sangui Sent from Xilatala, Guiyu Day, 4th Moon, 1644

We always wanted to cultivate a good relationship with the Ming and often sent you letters; however, the Emperor and officials of the Ming did not consider the chaos afflicting the state or the death of its troops and people and you never replied. Therefore, on three occasions our state launched campaigns to show your officials, troops, and common people that we wanted the Ming Emperor to make careful plans and befriend us. We shall do this no longer. We seek only to pacify the nation and give the people rest. When I heard that roving bandits attacked and captured the capital and that the Ming Emperor met a miserable end, I was unbearably angry! Hence, I am leading a righteous and compassionate army and, having "sunk my boats and broken my woks" [burned my bridges behind me], swear that I will not turn my battle standards until I have crushed the bandits and rescued the people from this disaster.

When your excellence dispatched an envoy with your letter, I was enormously happy and, therefore, am leading my army forward. Your excellence thought to repay your [Ming] lord’s graciousness toward you and refused to share the same sky with the roving bandits. This is certainly the righteousness of a loyal subject! Although your excellence has always garrisoned Liaodong and was our enemy, there is now no reason for former suspicions. In ancient times, Guan

Letter from Dorgon to Ming Loyalist

Zhong fired an arrow at Duke Huan that struck his buckler. Later, Duke Huan used Guan Zhong as a chief advisor to win hegemony. If your excellence is willing to lead your troops to us, we will enfeof you with a domain and ennable you as a prince. Your state will then be avenged and you and your family will be protected. Your posterity will enjoy wealth and nobility as eternal as the mountains and rivers.

2.4 A Letter from Dorgon to the Ming Loyalist Shi Kefa, 6th Moon, 1644

Shi Kefa (1602–1645) was a leading civil official during the Ming–Qing transition period and a martyr for the cause of Ming loyalism. In 1643, he was appointed the minister of war in Nanjing and was, thus, in a key position to coordinate future resistance to the Manchus south of the Yangzi.

In 1421, when the official capital was moved to Peking, Nanjing became China’s “supplementary capital” and retained in duplicate form all of the institutions of the central government. Normally, the boards and other Nanjing bureaucratic organizations had little or no real power. However, after the fall of Peking to Li Zicheng, as many imperial relatives and former Ming officials fled to Nanjing, the city became the first center of southern Ming resistance to the Manchus.

After an abortive attempt to help in the defense of Peking, Shi Kefa participated in the selection of a new emperor. His candidate for the throne was the prince of Lu (Zhu Yihai) but Ma Shiying, a powerful official of the Nanjing court, succeeded in shifting the choice to the ineffectual prince of Fu.

Subsequently, Shi Kefa was appointed commander of the Yangzhou garrison and participated in the defense of the city against Dorgon’s troops in 1645. As this letter shows, the Manchu leader was eager to use the example of Wu Sangui, now the “Pacifying King of the West,” and promises of position and rewards to win Shi Kefa to the side of the banners. These offers, however, were refused and the Ming garrison of Yangzhou gallantly resisted the Manchu invaders. Following the siege, Shi Kefa was taken prisoner by the Manchu forces and was executed for his unwavering loyalty to the Ming cause.

“When I was formerly in Shenyang, I was aware that your excellency was one of the most esteemed officials of Peking. Later, when I crossed the Great Wall to destroy the bandits and had contact with people in the capital, I came
to know your younger brother. I asked him to send you a letter of greeting and affection and am unsure whether the letter reached you. Presently it is rumored that someone has been enthroned in Nanjing. Hatred for the murderer of one monarch dictates that one must not share the same sky with the murderer. This is the meaning of the Spring and Autumn Annals in which it is written that before the murderer has been punished, the dead monarch cannot be described in history as having been formally buried nor can a new ruler rightfully take the throne. In order to guard against rebellious statesmen and unfaithful sons, this rule is very strict. The “Dashing Bandit,” Li Zicheng, led troops in an invasion of the capital; he harmed the Emperor and no Chinese subject came to his defense. Only the Pacifying King of the West, Wu Sangui, who was then stationed on the eastern border, emulated the ancient example of Shen Baoxu.¹ Our court was moved by his loyalty and righteousness. We remembered the generations of friendly relations between our two states and overlooked the minor quarrels of recent times. We sent our most ferocious troops to his aid to drive out these vicious animals.² When we entered the capital, we first paid our homage to your deceased Emperor; we gave him posthumous titles of honor; and buried him in the imperial tomb. All of this was done in proper ritual fashion. Imperial princes, generals, and others were permitted to retain their original titles. Meritorious relatives and all civil and military officials were allowed to stay in the court and continue to enjoy imperial grace. Tillers of the soil and merchants were unalarmed and not a single straw was disturbed. In the fall we plan to dispatch our troops on a western expedition; we will send a declaration of war to the Jiangnan region [south of the Yangzi river] and hope to form an alliance with you to fight in the west. We can then deploy our divisions together and single-mindedly exert all of our strength to take revenge for your Emperor and state and to manifest our dynasty’s virtue. I am exceedingly puzzled that you gentlemen in the southern provinces are shamefully clinging to the illusion of peace and to empty fame. You refuse to grasp the moment and forget about the actual perils.

Our state, in its pacification of Peking, seized it from the “Dashing Bandit” Li Zicheng and not from the Ming state. The bandits destroyed the ancestral temples of the Ming dynasty and humiliated the Ming ancestors; our state felt no qualms about the toil of dispatching expeditions or the expense of using tax revenues to wipe clean the shame that befell you. Any filial son or humane person should feel indebted and repay our generosity. But you are taking advantage of our liquidation of the treasonous bandits and the temporary halt of our imperial army’s advance. You seek to occupy Jiangnan and enjoy benefits obtained for you by others. If reason is applied to judge this behavior, can it be called fair? Do you think that the Yangtze cannot be crossed or that by throwing down our whips we could not halt the rivers?³ The “Dashing Bandit” was a peril only to your Ming dynasty and never offended our state. However, our sympathy for your plight and common hatred of the enemy has caused us to manifest great righteousness. But if you now claim you hold the exalted title, then there will be two suns in heaven and we will become enemies. China with its whole strength was unable to overcome the troubles caused by the rebels; you now control merely a corner of the south and yet seek, simultaneously, to face our great country and the remaining bandits. Neither straws nor turtle shells are needed to divine what the outcome will be. I have heard that a gentleman uses virtue to manifest his love for the people; a mean man is complacent. If you gentlemen truly understand the times and the will of heaven and sincerely consider your late Emperor and deeply love your capable king, it is appropriate that you advise him to relinquish his title and pledge his allegiance to us. Thus, he can maintain his eternal happiness and good fortune. Our court will treat your king as an honored guest and permit him to carry on the rituals of the Ming court and possess the rivers and mountains of his own domain. His rank will be superior to that of other princes and nobles. This will not defy the original intention of our court to manifest righteousness by pacifying the rebels and to restore what has been severed and ruined. As for you talented gentlemen in the southern provinces, should you present yourselves to us then you shall enjoy titles of nobility and will be rewarded with lands. There exists the model of the Pacifying King of the West and I can only hope that you who are in command will make plans for the benefit of all.

Recently, your scholars have been fond of establishing unreachable standards of virtue and have ignored the crisis of the state. In each moment of emergency they natter about how to set up the defenses of the house. In former times, while the people of the Song debated the course they might take, the invaders had already crossed the river. This should be a clear example for you. Your excellency is the leader of a famed circle and is charged with making state policy. You certainly understand all the implications of this moment; how could you bear to follow the vulgar trend and float listlessly at such a time? You should decide soon whether to follow us or to resist. Our army is ready; it can advance east or west. Peace or peril for your southern state depends on the course you select. I hope you gentlemen will be united in your intention to pay

1. Shen Baoxu was an official of the state of Chu who, after the invasion of his state by Wu, journeyed to the Qin court and tearfully implored its aid to restore his state.
2. The term used here in the original text is xiaoqing, or owls and cut-like monsters. These two creatures are deemed to be particularly evil because according to legend the owl ate its young and the mythical jing devoured its mother after birth.
3. This figure of speech, toubian duanlin (throwing down whips to stop the river’s flow), is an allusion to the Period of Disunity and the invasion of the north by Fu Jian of the former Qin state. He claimed to have so many troops that the mass of their whips tossed into the river together could halt the Yangzi. Since Fu Jian was, in fact, defeated, the use of this allusion in this context was less than ideal.
the bandits and will not be greedy for a transient glory that will surely prolong
the interminable calamity suffered by your state. I deeply hope that you will
not give rebellious statesmen and unfaithful sons reason to laugh at you. It is said
in the classics: "Only good men can appreciate straightforward advice." I
respectfully open my mind to you and, standing on tiptoe watch the horizon,
as I anxiously await words of enlightenment from you. This letter cannot fully
express my meaning.

2.5 Dorgon’s Edict: A Broadsheet
For the People of the
Southern Ming, 1645

Shi Kefa’s refusal to surrender his forces and the continued resistance of
other southern Ming commanders brought forceful words from the regent
Dorgon. Using highly suggestive language not unlike that of Nurhaci’s
Seven Grievances, Dorgon threatened his obdurate opponents south of the
Yangzi with punishment for their “three crimes.” Dorgon’s harsh message
continued to be tempered, however, by promises of rank and rewards for
ex-Ming officials who agreed to help the Qing cause.

The edict translated below was apparently circulated as a broadsheet
and was transcribed by an anonymous inhabitant of Jiangnan just after
Manchu troops took Nanjing.

Let it be known to all civil and military officials, soldiers and commoners of
Henan, Nanjing, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Huguang, and other areas: You southern
subjects did not dispatch a single soldier or a single arrow when the Chengzheng
Emperor of the Ming dynasty faced a calamity and when the palace gates and
the doors of the imperial tombs were burst open. You did not confront the
roving bandits but rather hid yourselves like tigers in a cave as the state was
about to be ruined. This was your first crime. When our army was sent to
exterminate the bandits who were fleecing west, you in the south enthroned
Prince Fu before you obtained firm information from the capital or knew the
deceased Emperor’s will. This was your second crime. The roving bandits were
your deadly foe but you never considered sending a punitive expedition. Your
generals sought simply to conserve their own armies and harmed the people.
They provoked quarrels and fought among themselves. This was your third
crime. These three crimes aroused anger throughout the realm and were too
great to be pardoned by Heaven. Therefore, I have respectfully received
Heaven’s mandate and have set in order the army to punish your crimes.

Any local civil or military official who surrenders his district or city, depend-
ing on the degree of his merit, will be promoted one rank. Those who resist
and refuse to obey will themselves be liquidated and their family members will
be taken captive. If Prince Fu regrets his past wrongs and is willing to surrender
to our army, his former crimes will be pardoned and he will be as well treated
as other Ming Princes. If Prince Fu’s trusted officials are willing to correct
themselves and give their loyalty to us, they, too, will be accorded merit fitting
their contribution. People residing in places where this announcement is made
should not be alarmed nor should they flee. Farmers and merchants should
calmly pursue their affairs; in the villages all will be as peaceful as before and
in the cities not a single straw shall be disturbed. However, all necessary fodder
and hay should be prepared for dispatch to the army. The Board of War shall
immediately send out orders and officials, soldiers, and the people should cir-
culate news of this [order] as early as possible so as not to delay military deploy-
ments. This is a special announcement; let all be apprised of it.

2.6 Edict from Dodo (Prince Yu)
Following the Yangzhou
Massacre, 1645

This edict uses the example of the Yangzhou massacre to attempt to cow
southern Ming commanders into surrender. Like Dorgon’s edict announc-
ing the Manchu army’s intention to move south, Dodo’s message was cir-
culated as a broadsheet and was transcribed by an inhabitant of Jiangnan.
Later it was printed in a collection of historical documents entitled the
Jiangnan wenjuanlu. By now terror, along with the obligatory promises of
rewards and position, had become a key Manchu tactic in suppressing
southern Ming resistance.

Let it be known to all civil and military officials, soldiers and commoners of
Nanjing and other places: I have received an imperial edict ordering me to lead
our great army to surpass the calm disorder. Those who follow us will be offered
amnesty and enlisted on our side; those who resist will be exterminated. In
many places where our great army has hitherto arrived, the blades of its swords
were not stained with blood. Surrendering officials presented their seals of
appointment to us and many were specially promoted and invited to remain at
their posts. Among the people, not a straw was disturbed and property was
untouched. Recently when our great army arrived in Yangzhou and its popu-
lation tried tenaciously to defend it, I felt deep compassion for the lives of the
people and could not bear to launch an offensive. I feelingly made known to
them the consequences of resistance but, after several days delay, the officials
[of Yangzhou] continued to resist. Orders were given to attack the city and slay
its inhabitants; only women and children were taken prisoner. This was not my
original intention but happened because there was no other course. In the future, Yangzhou will serve as an example for officials who do not surrender when our great army arrives. Heaven and earth give men life; it is appropriate that those who seek to resist destiny should end their own lives but they should not involve others. Our dynasty has inherited the affection of Heaven; if it fights a battle it shall win, if it attacks a city it will overcome it. I am sure you are aware of this. Although virtue must be made manifest through the action of the army, compassion and righteousness are shown by amnesty. This is as clear as a mirror. Presently Prince Fu has usurped the exalted title and arrogated to himself wine and sex; he trusts his entourage while the people suffer more each day. Civil officials toy with power; they know only how to do evil and take bribes. Military officials threaten the monarch and contemptuously overawe him to usurp his powers. The government and subjects are not of one heart and the people’s plight is truly terrible! When I think of this I cannot help but to sigh. Therefore, I have respectfully taken Heaven’s mandate to punish these crimes and save the people from their disaster. Let all be clearly informed of this.

2.7 Regent Dorgon’s Edict to the Board of War

"Now that our dynasty has established its authority in Peking, the soldiers and common people who endured recent calamities are all our children. We will save them from disasters and give them security. Send messengers to cities and forts of all regions requesting their surrender. If, on the day this message arrives, their inhabitants shave their heads and submit, all local officials shall be promoted one rank. Soldiers and common people will be exempt from deportation. Leading civil and military officials should personally collect tax registers and army rosters and immediately bring them to the capital for imperial audience. Those who claim to submit but do not shave their heads are resistant and watchful. They should be given a deadline for compliance based on their distance from the capital and rewarded accordingly when they arrive in Peking. If they do not meet the deadline, it is clear that they are resisting and definitely should be punished; troops are to be sent to suppress them. Princes with the surname Zhu [members of the Ming imperial family] who conform to this order shall not be deprived of their titles and will continue to enjoy imperial grace."

2.8 Imperial Edict to the Board of Rites

"In the past the system of dressing the hair in a queue was not uniformly enforced. People were allowed to do as they pleased because we wanted to wait until the whole country was pacified before putting into force this system. Now, within and without, we are one family. The Emperor is like the father and the people are like his sons. The father and sons are of the same body; how can they be different from one another? If they are not as one then it will be as if they had two hearts and would they then not be like the people of different countries? We do not need to mention this because we believe all subjects under Heaven must be aware of it themselves. All residents of the capital and its vicinity will fulfill the order to shave their heads within ten days of this proclamation. For Zhili and other provinces compliance must take place within ten days of receipt of the order from the Board of Rites. Those who follow this order belong to our country; those who hesitate will be considered treasonous bandits and will be heavily penalized. Anyone who attempts to evade this order to protect his hair or who uses cunning language to argue against it will not be lightly dealt with. All officials in regions that we have already pacified who insultingly advance a memorial related to this matter arguing for the continuation of the Ming system and not following the system of our dynasty will be executed without possibility of pardon. As for other apparel, unhurried change is permitted, but it cannot differ from the system of our dynasty. The aforementioned Board will immediately dispatch this message to the capital and its
vicinity and to the provincial, prefectural, sub-prefectural, and county yamen and garrisons of Zhili and other provinces. Civil and military yamen officials, clerks, scholars, students, and all members of military and civilian households shall carry this out without exception."

2.9 THE SIEGE OF JIANGYIN, 1645

The hair-cutting decrees were a dramatic sign of the changing political order in China and prompted strong resistance in many parts of the south. In the city of Jiangyin, just south of the Yangzi River in Jiangsu, local scholars used this issue to muster resistance to advancing Qing armies and in August 1645 a fierce battle with Manchu forces ensued.

This account of the eighty-day siege of Jiangyin was written by Xu Chongxi, a controversial private scholar and historian of the late Ming period from Changshu. Xu was praised by some of his contemporaries for his scholarly diligence and criticized by others for his frank and outspoken commentary on the events of his time. (During the Qianlong era, Wu's history of the final years of the Ming period was a proscribed book.)

This translation is drawn from Xu's *Postscript on the Defense of Jiangyin City* (Jiangyin chenghouhou) which describes in colorful terms the struggle by Jiangyin's defenders to hold the Manchu invaders outside the walls. The document provides a vivid sense of the violence of warfare during the conquest period and suggests, as well, how the local elite in the Jiangnan region struggled to build forces of resistance to the Qing invaders. After the defeat of Jiangyin, the Manchu army, as at Yangzhou several months before, burned the city and massacred many of its inhabitants.

"In the sixth moon of 1645, Magistrate Fang of Jiangyin arrived in the city and conveyed the [Qing] edict to dress the hair in the queue. On the first day of the intercalary sixth moon, four local scholars, Xu Yongde, hung a portrait of the Ming founder in the Minglun Lecture Hall [the official local academy for instruction in the classics] and led a crowd who prostrated themselves before it and cried out: "Cut off our heads, we refuse to shave our hair!" That afternoon, the local militia in the North Gate area were the first to rise up; they arrested the magistrate and jailed him in the local guest house. Tens of thousands of people within and outside the city supported them. Those in revolt requested the release of stores of weapons and ammunition and the local judge Chen Mingxuan agreed. The chief of the local reserve unit was then arrested and a search began for spies within the city. The Huizhou merchant Shao Kanggong..."

who was a master of the martial arts was appointed as commander and enlisted soldiers for the defense of the city. Former Duke Zhou Ruiyong stationed ships at the mouth of the river and asked Shao Kanggong to bring his troops out through the east gate so that they could combine forces at the north gate to fight the [Qing] invaders. When the battle was joined, they were successful. The enemy's force grew larger day by day and the militia men did their best to attack it and kill Manchu soldiers. Whenever they presented one head, the city rewarded them with four taels of silver. At this time, slaves and servants were in revolt against their masters and the great local families were occupied in saving themselves from death.

The Qing army first attacked the western quarter of the city and then moved to the south gate. Shao Kanggong went forward to command the defense but could not prevail. The enemy burned the eastern quarter and looted the homes of rich families living outside the city wall. The militia fought ferociously and a certain pair of brothers killed a cavalry general. ... Zhou Ruiyong boarded his boat and fled.

The former judge, Yan Yingyuan, had been promoted to Deputy Magistrate of Yingde county in Guangdong but had not yet left to fill the position because his mother was ill. When the national calamity occurred, he and his family moved to Shashan, located east of the city. Chen Mingxuan said: "My wisdom and courage are no match for Mister Yan’s; he should come to take charge of this great matter." That night riders were sent to meet with Yan Yingyuan. Yingyuan accepted and led more than forty of this family’s retainers to rush to defend the city. Scattered groups of enemy soldiers were burning and looting outside the city walls. The militia had fled and no reinforcements were coming.

Now the enemy concentrated on attacking the walled city. Within the city walls there were less than a thousand soldiers and about ten thousand households. No source of pay or rations existed for the troops. Yan Yingyuan gathered up household registers and set in order defense towers. He ordered each household to present X [character missing] men to mount the city wall and commanded all others remaining to assist in preparing meals. He then released munitions and firearms made by Zeng Hualong, the former military circuit minister, and stored them in battle towers. He sent an order to the great families of the city encouraging contributions: "Contributions will not necessarily consist of money. Clothing, grain, and other materials are all acceptable." The national academy scholar Cheng Bi came forward first with a donation of twenty-five thousand silver taels and then many other donors came forward. Within the besieged city there were three hundred charges of gunpowder, one thousand dan [1 dan = 133.1 lbs.] of lead and iron blunderbuss ammunition, one hundred cannons, one thousand fowling pieces, ten million copper cash and ten thousand dian of millet, wheat and beans. Wine, salt, iron, and hay was also...

4. Intercalary months were added to the lunar calendar to keep it in harmony with the solar year.

5. Ming military rank equivalent to commander or captain.
days; the third paid five times more and was able to walk as usual that very
night. Someone asked a beating, "Since some of the prisoners are rich and others
poor but all give something, why draw a distinction in punishing them simply
because of their payments?" The answer was, "If there was no difference, who
would pay more?"

3.5 Kangxi's Valedictory Edict,
1717

The imperial edict below was issued by the Kangxi emperor (1654–1722)
on December 23, 1717. By this time, Kangxi had ruled China for over fifty
years and placed the stamp of his thoughtful and inquiring mind on the
workings of the imperial state. The ambitious rivals who threatened the
throne at the outset of Kangxi's reign were long since under control. Oboi,
Galdan, Wu Sangui, and Koxinga were all dead and the forces they com-
manded in vain efforts to achieve their aims followed them into oblivion.
In the final years of the emperor's life, Kangxi was the master of a power-
ful and unified state.

While one glimpses through this edict the emperor's sense of his own
accomplishments, there are also ruminations on mortality and the concerns
of ruling a state so vast and complex as seventeenth- and eighteenth-
century China. One of the agonizing difficulties of the final years of
Kangxi's reign was the problem of finding an appropriate successor. Until
1712, Kangxi favored his second son, Yinzhen, but the erratic and conspira-
torial behavior of the heir apparent made him an unpopular choice. By
the time of the 1717 edict, Kangxi appeared to favor Yinti, his fourteenth
son, for the throne, but the document merely suggests how burdensome
this problem had become and makes no explicit reference to how Kangxi
intended to resolve it.2

When I was young, Heaven gave me great strength, and I didn't know what
sickness was. This spring I started to get serious attacks of dizziness and grew
increasingly emaciated. Then I went hunting in the autumn beyond the borders,
and the fine climate of the Mongolian regions made my spirits stronger day
by day, and my face filled up again. Although I was riding and shooting every
day, I didn't feel fatigued. After I returned to Peking the Empress Dowager
fell ill, and I was dejected in mind; the dizziness grew almost incessant. Since

2. "Unofficial histories" (yeshi) of the Qing era have suggested that Yinzhen (later Emperor
Yongzheng), son number four (si), simply erased the character for ten (shi) in Kangxi's decree
appointing the fourteenth son (shi) as his heir.

there are some things that I have wanted to say to you on a normal day, I have
specially summoned you today to hear my edict, face to face with me.

The rulers of the past all took reverence for Heaven and observance of ances-
tral precepts as the fundamental way in ruling the country. To be sincere in
reverence for Heaven and ancestors entails the following: Be kind to men from
afar and keep the able ones near, nourish the people, think of the profit of all
as being the real profit and the mind of the whole country as being the real
mind, be considerate to officials and act as a father to the people, protect the
state before danger comes and govern well before there is any disturbance, be
always diligent and always careful, and maintain the balance between leniency
and strictness, between principle and expediency, so that long-range plans can
be made for the country. That's all there is to it.

No dynasty in history has been as just as ours in gaining the right to rule.
The Emperors T'ai-tsung and T'ai-tsung initially had no intention of taking over
the country; and when T'ai-tsung's armies were near Peking and his ministers
advised him to take it, he replied: "The Ming have not been on good terms
with our people, and it would be very easy to conquer them now. But I am
aware of what an unbearable act it is to overthrow the ruler of China." Later
the roving bandit Li Tsucheng stormed the city of Peking, the Ming Emperor
Ch'ung-chen hanged himself, and the officials and people all came out to wel-
come us. Then we exterminated the violent bandits and inherited the empire.
In olden times, it was Hsiao Yu who raised an army and defeated the Ch'in,
yet the country then passed to the Han, even though initially Emperor Han
Kao-tsu was only a local constable on the Su River. At the end of the Yuan,
it was Ch'en Yu-liang and others who rebelled, yet the country then passed to
the Ming, even though initially Emperor Ming T'ai-tsu was only a monk in
the Huang-chueh Temple. The forebears of our dynasty were men who obeyed
Heaven and lived in harmony with other men; and the empire was pacified.
From this we can tell that all the rebellious officials and bandits are finally
pushed aside by truly legitimate rulers.

I am now close to seventy, and have been over fifty years on the throne—
this is all due to the quiet protection of Heaven and earth and the ancestral
spirits; it was not my meager virtue that did it. Since I began reading in my
childhood, I have managed to get a rough understanding of the constant his-
torical principles. Every Emperor and ruler has been subject to the Mandate of
Heaven. Those fated to enjoy old age cannot prevent themselves from enjoying
that old age; those fated to enjoy a time of Great Peace cannot prevent them-
selves from enjoying that Great Peace.

Over 4,350 years have passed from the first year of the Yellow Emperor to
the present, and over 300 emperors are listed as having reigned, though the data
from the Three Dynasties—that is, for the period before the Ch'in burning of
the books—are not wholly credible. In the 1,960 years from the first year of
Ch'in Shih-huang to the present, there have been 211 people who have been
named emperor and have taken era names. What man am I, that among all those who have reigned long since the Ch'in and Han Dynasties, it should be I who have reigned the longest?

Among the Ancients, only those who were not boastful and knew not to go too far could attain a good end. Since the Three Dynasties, those who ruled long did not leave a good name to posterity, while those who did not live long did not know the world's grief. I am already old, and have reigned long, and I cannot foresee what posterity will think of me. Besides which, because of what is going on now, I cannot hold back my tears of bitterness; and so I have prepared these notes to make my own record, for I still fear that the country may not know the depth of my sorrow.

Many emperors and rulers in the past made a taboo of the subject of death, and as we look at their valedictory decrees we find that they are not at all written in imperial tones, and do not record what the emperor really wanted to say. It was always when the emperors were weak and dying that they found some scholar-official to write out something as he chose.

With me it is different. I am letting you know what my sincerest feelings are in advance.

When I had been twenty years on the throne I didn't dare conjecture that I might reign thirty. After thirty years I didn't dare conjecture that I might reign forty. Now I have reigned fifty-seven years. The “Great Plan” section of the Book of History says of the five joys:

The first is long life;
The second is riches;
The third is soundness of body and serenity of mind;
The fourth is the love of virtue;
The fifth is an end crowning the life.

The “end crowning the life” is placed last because it is so hard to attain. I am now approaching seventy, and my sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons number over 150. The country is more or less at peace and the world is at peace. Even if we haven't improved all manners and customs, and made all the people prosperous and contented, yet I have worked with unceasing diligence and intense watchfulness, never resting, never idle. So for decades I have exhausted all my strength, day after day. How can all this just be summed up in a two-word phrase like “hard work”?

Those among the rulers of earlier dynasties who did not live long have all been judged in the Histories as having caused this themselves through their own wild excesses, by overindulgence to drink and sex. Such remarks are just the sneers of pedants who have to find some blemishes in even the purest and most perfect of rulers. I exonerate these earlier rulers, because the affairs of the country are so troublesome that one can't help getting exhausted. Chu-ko Liang said: “I shall bow down in service and wear myself out until death comes,” but among all the officials only Chu-ko Liang acted in this way. Whereas the emperor's responsibilities are terribly heavy, there is no way he can evade them. How can this be compared with being an official? If an official wants to serve, then he serves; if he wants to stop, then he stops. When he grows old he resigns and returns home, to look after his sons and play with his grandsons; he still has the chance to relax and enjoy himself. Whereas the ruler in all his hard-working life finds no place to rest. Thus, though the Emperor Shun said, “Through non-action one governs,” he died in Ts'ang-wu [while on tour of inspection]; and after four years on the throne Emperor Yu had blistered hands and feet and found death in K'uai-ch'i. To work as hard at government as these men, to travel on inspection, to have never a leisure moment—how can this be called the valuing of “non-action” or tranquilly looking after oneself? In the I Ching hexagram “Retreat” not one of the six lines deals with a ruler’s concerns—from this we can see that there is no place for rulers to rest, and no resting place to which they can retreat. “Bowing down in service and wearing oneself out” indeed applied to this situation.

All the Ancients used to say that the Emperor should concern himself with general principles, but need not deal with the smaller details. I find that I cannot agree with this. Careless handling of one item might bring harm to the whole world; a moment’s carelessness could damage all future generations. Failure to attend to details will end up endangering your greater virtues. So I always attend carefully to the details. For example: if I neglect a couple of matters today and leave them unsettled, there will be a couple more matters for tomorrow. And if tomorrow I again don’t want to be bothered, that will pile up even more obstructions for the future. The emperor’s work is of great importance, and there should not be delays, so I attend to all matters, whether they are great or small. Even if it is just one character wrong in a memorial, I always correct it before forwarding it. Not to neglect anything, that is my nature. For over fifty years I have usually prepared in advance for things—and the world’s millions all honor my virtuous intentions. How can one still hold to “there being no need to deal with the smaller details”?

I was strong from my childhood onward, with fine muscles; I could bend a bow with a pull of 15 li, and fire a fifty-two inch arrow. I was good at using troops and confronting the enemy, but I have never recklessly killed a single person. In pacifying the Three Feudatories and clearing out the northern deserts, I made all the plans myself. Unless it was for military matters or famine relief, I didn’t take funds from the Board of Revenue treasury, and spent nothing recklessly, for the reason that this was the people’s wealth. On my inspection tours, I didn’t set out colored embroideries, and the expenses at each place were only 10,000 or 20,000 taels. In comparison, the annual expense on the river conservancy system is over 3,000,000—so the cost was not even one percent of that.
When I studied as a child, I already knew that one should be careful with drink and sex, and guard against mean people. So I grew old without illness. But after my serious illness in the forty-seventh year of my reign, my spirits had been too much wounded, and gradually I failed to regain my former state. Moreover, every day there was my work, all requiring decisions; frequently I felt that my vitality was slipping away and my internal energy diminishing. I fear that in the future if some accident happened to me I would not be able to say a word, and so my real feelings would not be disclosed. Wouldn’t that be regretful? Therefore I am using this occasion when I feel clear-headed and lively to complete my life by telling you all that can be revealed, item by item. Isn’t that wonderful?

All men who live must die. As Chu Hsi said, “The principle of the cyclical cosmic forces is like dawn and night.” And Confucius said, “Live contentedly and await Heaven’s will.” These sayings express the great Way of the Sages, so why should we be afraid? I have been seriously ill recently; my mind was blurred and my body exhausted. As I moved around, if no one held me up by the arms it was hard for me to walk. In the past I fixed my mind on my responsibilities to the country; to work “until death comes” was my goal. Now that I am ill I am querulous and forgetful, and terrified of muddling right with wrong, and leaving my work in chaos. I exhaust my mind for the country’s sake, and fragment my spirits for the world. When you wits aren’t guarding your body, your heart has no nourishment, your eyes can’t tell far from near nor cars distinguish true from false, and you eat little and have a lot to do—how can you last long? Moreover, since the country has long been at peace and people have grown lazy, joy goes and sorrows mount, “peace” departs and “stagnation” comes. When the head is crammed with trifles, the limbs are indolent—until everything is in ruins and you inevitably bring down at random and together calamities from Heaven and destruction for men. Even if you want to do something, your vitality is insufficient, and by then it’s too late to admit your mistakes. No more can you be roused up, and meaning in your bed you’ll die with eyes open—won’t you feel anguish just before you die?

Emperor Wu-ti of the Liang was a martial dynastic founder, but when he reached old age he was forced by Hou-ching into the tragedy at T’ai-ch’eng. Emperor Wen-ti of the Sui also was a founding emperor, but he could not anticipate the evil ways of his son Yang-ti and was finally unable to die in peace. There are other examples, like killing oneself by taking cinnamon, or being poisoned and eating the cakes, or the case of Sung T’ai-tsu, when people saw the candlelight from afar. There are records of all kinds of suspicious cases—are these not tracks of the past that we can see? All these happened because [the emperors] didn’t understand in time. And all brought harm to country and people. Han Kao-tsu told Empress Lu about the mandate; T’ang T’ai-tsun decided on the heir apparent with Chang-sun Wu-chi. When I read such things I feel deeply ashamed. Perhaps there are mean persons who hope to use the confusion, and will act on their own authority to alter the succession, pushing someone forward in expectation of future rewards. As long as I still have one breath left, how could I tolerate that sort of thing?

My birth was nothing miraculous—not did anything extraordinary happen when I grew up. I came to the throne at eight, fifty-seven years ago. I’ve never let people talk on about supernatural influences of the kind that have been recorded in the Histories: lucky stars, auspicious clouds, unicorns and phoenixes, chil grass and such like blessings, or burning pearls and jade in the front of the palace, or heavenly books sent down to manifest Heaven’s will. Those are all empty words, and I don’t presume so far. I just go on each day in an ordinary way, and concentrate on ruling properly.

Now, officials have memorialized, requesting that I set up an heir apparent to share duties with me—that’s because they feared my life might end abruptly. Death and life are ordinary phenomena—I’ve never avoided talking about them. It’s just that all the power of the country has to be united in one person. For the last ten years, I’ve been writing out (and keeping scaled) what I intend to do and what my feelings are, though I haven’t finished yet. Appointing the heir-apparent is a great matter; how could I neglect it? The throne of this country is one of the utmost importance. If I were to relieve myself of this burden and relax in comfort, disentangling my mind from every problem, then I could certainly expect to live longer. You officials have all received great mercies from me—how can I attain the day when I will have no more burdens?

My energies have shrunk, I have to force myself to endure, and if everything finally goes awry, won’t the hard work of the last fifty-seven years indeed be wasted? It is my intense sincerity that leads me to say this. Whenever I read an old official’s memorial requesting retirement, I can’t stop the tears from flowing. You all have a time for retiring, but where can I find rest? But if I could have a few weeks to restore myself and a chance to conclude my life with a natural death, then my happiness would be indescribable. There is time ahead of me; maybe I will live as long as Sung Kao-tsun. We cannot tell.

Not until I was fifty-seven did I begin to have a few white hairs in my beard, and I was offered some lotion to make it black again. But I laughed and refused, saying: “How many white-haired emperors have there been in the past? If my hair and whiskers whiten, won’t that be a splendid tale for later generations?” Not one man is now left from those who worked with me in my early years. Those who came later to their new appointments are harmonious and respectful with their colleagues, they are just and law-abiding, and their white heads fill the Court. This has been the case for a long time, and for this I am grateful.

I have enjoyed the veneration of my country and the riches of the world; there is no object I do not have, nothing I have not experienced. But now that I have reached old age I cannot rest easy for a moment. Therefore, I regard the whole country as a worn-out sandal, and all riches as mud and sand. If I can die without there being an outbreak of trouble, my desires will be fulfilled. I
wish all of you officials to remember that I have been the peace-bearing Son of Heaven for over fifty years, and that what I have said to you over and over again is really sincere. Then that will complete this fitting end to my life.

I've been preparing this edict for ten years. If a "valedictory edict" is issued, let it contain nothing but these same words.

I've revealed my entrails and shown my guts, there's nothing left within me to reveal.

I will say no more.

CHAPTER 4 | Yongzheng's Authority

4.1 AND 4.2 Kangxi's Sacred Edict and Wang Yupu and Yongzheng's Amplification

The purpose of Kangxi's sixteen hortatory maxims, each expressed in seven characters, was to lay down an ethical and moral framework for subjects of the Qing state. In 1724, the Yongzheng emperor issued an amplified version of his father's maxims (the Shengyu guangyu) in literary Chinese. An expanded third version (the Shengyu guangyu zhijie) was written in a homely colloquial style by Wang Yupu, a Shaanxi salt commissioner, soon thereafter. This latter version was read aloud at yamen throughout China on the first and fifteenth of each month.

A full translation is provided below of the original Kangxi maxims. There follow portions of Wang Yupu’s vernacular exposition of the Yongzheng text for those maxims marked with an asterisk. For the Confucian ruler, well-ordered families and clans were the paradigms of an orderly state and both the Kangxi and Yongzheng versions of the Edict stress this basic principle of Chinese statecraft. It is also worth noting the scorn heaped by Wang Yupu on Buddhist and Daoist practices and folk religion in general. The central government saw its subjects as ignorant and easily misled. It distrusted and feared orthodoxies other than those it imposed and "heterodox" authorities who might extract funds or loyalty from the state's own constituencies.
4.1 The Sacred Edict of the Kangxi Emperor, 1670

**THE SIXTEEN MAXIMS (SHENGYU)**

1. Strengthen filial piety and brotherly affection to emphasize human relations.  
2. Strengthen clan relations to illustrate harmony.*  
3. Pacify relations between local groups to put an end to quarrels and litigation.  
4. Stress agriculture and sericulture so that there may be sufficient food and clothing.  
5. Prize frugality so as to make careful use of wealth.  
6. Promote education to improve the habits of scholars.  
7. Extirpate heresy to exalt orthodoxy.*  
8. Speak of the law to give warning to the stupid and stubborn.*  
9. Clarify rites and manners to improve customs.  
10. Let each work at his own occupation so that the people’s minds will be settled.  
11. Instruct young people to prevent them from doing wrong.  
12. Prevent false accusations to shield the law-abiding.  
13. Prohibit sheltering of runaways to avoid being implicated in their crime.  
14. Pay taxes to avoid being pressed for payment.  
15. Unite the baqia system to eliminate theft and armed robbery.  
16. Resolve hatred and quarrels to respect life.

4.2 Wang Yupu and Yongzheng’s Amplification of Kangxi’s Sacred Edict, 1724

**1. AMPLIFICATION OF MAXIM TWO: STRENGTHEN CLAN RELATIONS TO ILLUSTRATE HARMONY.**

... The clan is like the water of a spring which branches into several streams and then dozens of streams as it emerges. But all of these branches originated from the same spring. It is also like a tree which grows a thousand branches and ten thousand leaves that all emerge from the same root. A clan whether it is divided into a branch of several dozens of able bodied men or hundreds of men comes from the same body of the same ancestor. The clan members are like the hands, feet, ears, eyes, mouth, nose, and other parts of the ancestor’s body; when you put them together they are one body. Just think, if there is a sore on my body or if I sprain my ankle or break my leg, doesn’t my whole body feel uncomfortable? If you try to entrap or harm a clan member or insult or cheat him and make him feel uncomfortable, can you imagine that you will feel happy? You should treat them as you would yourself. You should look at clan members as part of one body; if one place hurts then all other places will hurt. If one spot itches, all spots will itch. Only when the blood flows throughout the body will things be as they should be. Therefore, the ancients said: ‘To educate the people, filial piety, brotherly affection, harmony, love, willingness to endure for others, and charity are necessary.’ When it [the section of the ancient classic the Zhouli quoted by Yongzheng] says filial piety, next it says brotherly affection and then it says harmony and that’s because clan members are descended from the same ancestor. If someone does not want harmony in his own clan he is unfilial and goes against brotherly affection...

2. AMPLIFICATION OF MAXIM SEVEN: EXTINGUISH HERESY TO EXALT ORTHODOXY.

... What is heterodoxy? From ancient times there have been three religions. Besides Confucian scholars there are Buddhist monks and Taoist priests. These latter sects are heretical. All the Buddhist priests talk about is meditation, enlightenment, and becoming a Buddha. They also say: “If one son becomes a monk, the whole clan will ascend to heaven.” Just think about it, who has ever seen a Buddha? What is a Buddha? Buddha is in the heart. What is the meaning of chanting the name of the Buddha? It is for the mind to be constantly concerned about the heart. If the heart is good this is Buddha. Just look at their sutras. The first sutra is the Heart Sutra. All the Heart Sutra says is that the heart should be straight; it should not be twisted or devious. It should be honest and not false and lying. It should be frank and not unclean. If one can cut oneself off from greed, anger, and stupid attachments and be, in all things, like a flower in a looking glass or the moon in water, then all doubts and fears will cease and the heart will be perfect. Therefore, Master Zhu Xi of the Song dynasty said: ‘Buddhism does not concern itself with anything in the four corners of the universe but is concerned simply with the heart.’ This sentence goes to the bottom of Buddhism and expresses it entirely.

... All this talk about fasts, processions, building temples, and making idols is invented by idle and lazy Buddhists monks and Taoist priests as a plan for swindling you. But you want to believe them and not only go yourselves to burn incense and worship in their temples but also ask your wives and daughters to go to the temples to burn incense. With oiled hair and powdered faces, dressed in bright colors, they crowd and jostle shoulder to shoulder with these Taoist and Buddhists priests and riffraff. Where the ‘practicing goodness’ comes in nobody knows, but many vile things are done that provoke anger, vexation, and ridicule....

... As for reciting prayers to Buddha: You say it does good and that by burning paper, offering presents, and performing services for the release of
souls, calamity may be averted, sin destroyed, happiness increased, and life prolonged. Now just consider, it has always been said: 'The wise and upright are divine.' If someone is a divine Buddha, how can he be greedy for your contributions of silver in order to protect you. And if you don’t burn paper money and make sacrifices, and the ‘divine Buddha’ then gets angry and sends a calamity down upon you, is he not a mean person? Take the example of your local official. If you attend to your own business and are a good person, even if you don’t go to flatter him, he will still naturally regard you with respect. If you do evil and behave in a bullying and presumptuous way, even if you think of a hundred ways to flatter him, he will still be angry with you and get rid of you to spare the people harm. You say: ‘If we repeat the Buddha’s name we can be rid of our sins.’ If you do something evil and break the law and then cry out, ‘Your honor,’ a thousand times in a loud voice when you reach the yamen, will he pardon you? Every time you do something, you ask several monks and Taoists to chant the sutras and carry out rituals. It is said that chanting the sutras secures peace, averts disaster, and prolongs happiness and life. Suppose you don’t follow the teachings in the Sacred Edict, but instead merely recite it several thousand times or tens of thousands of times, it is unlikely that the Emperor will be so pleased with you that you will be given an official post or rewarded with silver.

...To be perfectly loyal to the Ruler and to fulfill filial duty to the utmost is the whole duty of man and the means of obtaining the blessing of heaven. If you do not seek happiness which is not your lot in life and do not meddle in matters that do not concern you but simply mind your own business, you will enjoy the protection of the gods. Farmers should look after farming. Soldiers should go about their patrols and garrison duties. Each should attend to his own occupation and duties and then the realm will naturally be at peace and the people will be naturally happy. If none of you believe in heretical sects, they will not have to wait to be driven out but will become extinct naturally.

3. **AMPLIFICATION OF MAXIM EIGHT: SPEAK OF LAW TO GIVE WARNING TO THE STUPID AND STUBBORN.**

...Is it possible that the State could enjoy beating and decapitating people? It is only because the people do not learn to be good and do not obey instructions that there is no other alternative than to use the penal law to control them. Since in many cases, the people break the law because they do not know it, this book has been compiled to instruct them to be good people and not bad people. For those who do bad, punishment is proportional to the offense, but even should you merely curse someone or take a blade of grass or stick of wood you will not escape the law.

...The law contains a profound meaning and was originally drawn up in accordance with human nature. If everyone knew the meaning of the law, they would not break it. There would be nobody in the prisons and few litigations. It follows that it is best to warn people before they break the law and to frequently warn them rather than waiting for them to break the law and then punishing them.

But you are also aware that breaking the law is not good and yet you incessantly disobey it. What is the reason for this? It is entirely because you do not understand the law and therefore break it unconsciously. There are even cases of people who to their dying day are unaware of it. Presently the court has called upon its great officials to set in place that great Qing’s laws and to organize statutes and precedents that will be set forth in detail. This is done so that you soldiers and people will understand and obey and so that you will not find yourselves in the situation of having broken the law. It is truly tender care for you that has prompted this.

But people who have grown up in country villages are unavoidably dull and stupid and soldiers who are occupied with military affairs are mostly rough and rude. Both of these groups often break the laws of the land unknowingly. Presently we especially and repeatedly instruct you: if you all understand, you will naturally be afraid of breaking the law....

...Make it your constant practice, by means of the law of the land, to curb and control yourselves, and to admonish others. Those who fear the law, will, come what may, avoid breaking it. Those who dread punishment will surely work to not incur it. If depravity is eliminated, then wrangling will cease. The muddled will be enlightened and the stubbornly evil will be made good. The people will be happy in the fields and the soldiers will be happy in their ranks. If the penal law is not used for several hundred years, will not everyone enjoy peace together?

4.3 **YONGZHENG’S EDICT ON CHANGING THE STATUS OF THE MEAN PEOPLE.**

From 1723 onward, Emperor Yongzheng issued edicts that successively reclassified “mean” (jiān) households as “common” (liàng) households. “Mean” groups had been discriminated against for centuries and were confined to narrow occupational niches. One such group were the yuehù or musician households. Members of this group were descended from loyal followers of the Jianwen emperor who were exiled to Shaanxi and Shanxi after Ming emperor Yongle successfully usurped the throne in 1403. The women were subsequently obliged to work as government courtesans and the men were allowed to work only as musicians. The duomin or "lazy
 households” of Zhejiang, who may have been descended from criminals or war captives of the Song dynasty, were not permitted to wear the same clothing as ordinary people and were consigned to jobs such as catching frogs and turtles; exorcising evil spirits; working as go-betweens or as midwives; and carrying sedan chairs. People who belonged to all of these and other like groups were not permitted to take the bureaucratic examinations or enter government service, were barred from marrying commoners, and were obliged to follow strict sumptuary laws.

Although the Kangxi emperor had abolished the “musical households” of Yangzhou during his reign, Yongzheng’s reforms were on a far greater scale and completely eradicated the legal basis for discrimination. Some members of these households continued to follow the same professions subsequent to the reforms and continued to be looked down upon, but nevertheless the reforms led to the gradual disappearance of the cruel social distinctions of earlier eras.

The document translated below is one example of the series of edicts through which Yongzheng abolished the discrimination suffered by the 
jiaomin. It refers to the abolition of the hereditary status of household slaves and retainers in Ningguo and Huizhou prefectures in Anhui in 1727.

Yongzheng believed that the social categories were evil remnants of earlier eras and regimes and sought to manifest the humanity of the Qing throne by wiping them out.

Recently I heard that in the Jiangnan area there are hereditary retainers in the Huizhou prefecture and hereditary bond servants in the Ningguo prefecture. Members of these two groups are referred to in this locality as “mean people.” Their household registrations and professions are base and they are regarded almost like the “musical households” and “lazy households.” Worse still is that if there are two families whose villages and lives are almost identical but one family is the hereditary bond servant or retainer of the other family, then whenever the [superior] family holds a wedding or funeral the other [mean] family must go out and serve them like slaves. If the compartment [of the mean family] is not perfect, everyone can abuse and beat them. Should one ask how or when this system originated, no one has any reliable idea. In actuality, there is no distinction between high and low; these people are merely following an evil custom. This is what we have heard. If people of this sort truly exist, the [mean] status should be abolished and they should become commoners so that they can strive and improve themselves and not be burdened with a base status to the end of their lives or have it placed upon their descendants.

CHAPTER 5

Chinese Society and the Reign of Qianlong

5.1 Wu Jingzi: From the Scholars (Rulin waishi) (Fan Jin Passes the Juren Examination)

Rulin waishi (An unofficial history of the literati) was probably composed between 1740 and 1750. It is the greatest exemplar of the mode of satirical realism in Chinese literature and captures more clearly than any other existing novel the quality of everyday life in Qing China. Like the contemporaneous novels of Henry Fielding, The Scholars provides a mordantly witty portrait of the pretensions and hypocrisies of society. Its realism has drawn the attention of historians eager to understand the nature of society and culture in the Qianlong era.

The novel’s author Wu Jingzi (1701–1754) was the son of a noted official family from Anhui. His greatest accomplishment as an examination scholar, despite repeated competition for higher titles, was obtaining the xincai title (the lowest examination title) in 1720. Wu was apparently looked upon as a ne’er-do-well in his own village and in 1733 left it for Nanjing where, in his middle and later years, he lived a miserably impoverished existence in the company of other failed scholars.

Frustrated and disillusioned as an examination candidate, Wu Jingzi drew upon his own experiences and those of his friends to attack the suffocating formalism and the false social hierarchies produced by the examination system. In “Fan Jin Passes the Juren Examination,” he shows how a scorned middle-aged scholar who has worked for decades to pass the exams is drastically elevated in the esteem of his fellow Cantonese by passing the middle or juren examination. This chapter of The Scholars is one