Should We Die as Martyrs to the Ming Cause?

Scholar-officials' Views on Martyrdom During the Ming-Qing Transition

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Throughout Chinese history the collapse of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) was marked by the greatest number of scholar-officials dying as martyrs for their dynasty. During the Ming-Qing transition (1628–1722), the Ming martyrs themselves considered dying for the dynasty their moral obligation, and many yimin 遺民, surviving subjects endorsed this idea even though they failed to achieve martyrdom themselves. However, the percentage of the actual martyrs in the entire scholar-officialdom was rather low. As a result, the question “Should we die as martyrs to the Ming cause?” was a hot issue of discussion among scholar-officials during the Ming-Qing transition.

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1 See my article “Guanyu Mingji xunguo renshu de wenti 關於明季殉國人數的問題 ”, Gugong xueshu jikan 故宮學術季刊, 10.1 (Fall 1992), 13–22.

2 There are various definitions for the period of the Ming-Qing transition, see Jonathan D. Spence and John E. Wills, Jr. (eds.), From Ming to Ch’ing: Conquest, Region, and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century China (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. xi–xii; and Dorothy Ko, “The Complicity of Women in the Qing Good Woman Cult”, in The Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica (ed.), Family Process and Political Process in Modern Chinese History (Taipei: The Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1992), Part 2, pp. 456–457. In the present article “Ming-Qing transition” refers to the period of the reign of Chongzheng 崇禎 (1628–1644) of the Ming dynasty and the reigns of Shunzhi 順治 (1644–1661) and Kangxi 康熙 (1662–1722) of the Qing dynasty (1644–1912). During this period not only many Ming subjects sacrificed their lives, but also their martyrdoms were most widely discussed.

3 The term yimin has its meanings in a broad sense and a narrow sense. It could be broadly understood as survivors of a defunct dynasty who did not take office in the new dynasty. It also narrowly refers particularly to those people who retired from public life as an expression of loyalty to the former dynasty. For the origin of the term and its definitions, see my article “Lun Ming yimin zhi chuchu 論明遺民之出處”, in my book Mingmo Qingchu xueshu sixiang yanjiu 明末清初學術思想研究 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1991), pp. 102–103, 2n.

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1. The Prevalence of the Concept of Dying for One's Country During the Ming-Qing Transition

Ming martyrs were unanimous about their duty to die for their country, no matter whether they committed suicide or were killed by peasant rebels or the Manchus. Some remarkable figures committed suicide. Qi Biaojia 祁彪佳 (1602–1645), the retired Governor of Suzhou and Songjiang, drowned himself when the Manchu armies advanced to Hangzhou. In Qi’s opinion, he had no alternative but to die as a martyr since he had been appointed as an official.4 Zhang Guowei 張國維 (1594–1645), the commander of the troops of the Prince of Lu 魯王 (Zhu Yihai 朱以海, 1618–1662), drowned himself in the Qiantang River when he failed to put up a defence against the attack of the Manchus. Zhang claimed that it was a matter of the rites that a high official like himself should die for the affairs of state.5

Martyrs, who were killed by peasant rebels or the Manchus, held similar beliefs as their suicide counterpart. When Yingcheng was seized by the rebels, Prefect Rao Kejiu 饒可久 (d. 1636), believing that it was a duty for an official to die for loyalty to the emperor and a woman to die for chastity to her husband, refused to surrender and was killed as a consequence.6 Squad Leader Wu Zhifan 吳之蕃 (d. 1645) raised a revolt against the Manchus in Eastern Zhejiang. He was executed by the Manchus after he was captured. He did not yield to the Manchus because he regarded dying for the affairs of state as his duty.7

Martyrdom generally was evaluated positively by the yimin though they did not sacrifice their lives for the Ming dynasty. For instance, Sun Qifeng 孫奇逢 (1585–1675) called an official’s dying for the overthrow of his monarch “the cardinal principle of righteousness under the roof of heaven”.8 Chen Que 陳确 (1604–1677) reinforced the concept that it was the duty of an official to die for his monarch through his new interpretation of the relation between a monarch and his officials. Chen claimed that if a monarch treated his officials as “hands

4 Qi Biaojia, “Yiyan 遺言”, in his Qi Biaojia ji 祁彪佳集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), juan 9, p. 222.
5 Shao Tingcai 邵廷采 (1648–1711), Dongnan jishi 東南紀事 (Zhongguo lishi yanjiu ziliao congshu 中國歷史研究資料叢書 edition, Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1982), juan 5, p. 219. For the rites to which Zhang referred, see Section Two below.
8 Sun Qifeng, “Guanglusi shaoqing Eryou Sungong ji yuanpei Zhao yiren hezang muziming 光祿寺少卿二酉孫公暨元配趙宜人合葬墓誌銘”, in his Xiafeng xiansheng ji 夏峰先生集 (contained in his Sun Xiafeng daquanji 孫夏峰大全集, 1845 edition), juan 9, p. 53a.
and feet”, they should treat him as their “belly and heart” in return as an expression of their gratitude. Even if he treated them as his “horses and hounds”, or as “mud and weeds”, they still had no alternative but to die for him. Under no circumstances would they treat him as an enemy.  

Some scholar-officials stressed that it was a decree of heaven that all officials were bound to die as martyrs to the Ming cause as all of them received a salary from the dynasty. Before the fall of Beijing in 1644, Gong Yuanxiang 龔元祥 (d. 1634), Instructor of Houshan, had already indicated that one who received a salary and sought refuge from the national calamity was disloyal, whereas one who abandoned the city at the point of seizure was unrighteous. In addition, Gong taught his students that regardless of their ranks the duties of officials were identical insofar as loyalty was concerned. 

After the fall of Beijing, this idea of loyalty was more prevalent. Representing the attitude of the high officials was Li Banghua 李邦華 (d. 1644), Censor-in-chief of the Left. Before his suicide, Li reassured the old saying that “when the ruler suffers humiliation, his officials should die for that” (zhuru chensi 主辱臣死). The same attitude could be seen among many minor officials. Chen Yujie 陳于階 (d. 1645), Supervisor of Water Clocks of the Five Offices, cited the same saying before his suicide and emphasised that the truth was not only applicable to senior officials, but also to minor ones like himself. 

Qu Dajun, a Ming yimin, held a similar attitude which was reflected in the biographies he wrote about late Ming martyrs. He maintained that no matter how ignorant or humble an official was, the official had no escape from the duty of dying for his dynasty. 

The idea of loyal martyrdom was extended to common people. Su Guansheng 蘇觀生 (d. 1647), who headed the Ministry of War of the Shaowu 紹武

9 Chen Que, “Yu Zhang Kaofu shu 與張考夫書”, in his Wenji 文集, contained in his Chen Que ji 陳確集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), juan 3, p. 124. Chen's idea was adapted from The Mencius in which Mencius (c. 372 B.C.–289 B.C.) said to Prince Xuan of the State of Qi 齊宣王: “If a prince treats his subjects as his hands and feet, they will treat him as their belly and heart. If he treats them as his horses and hounds, they will treat him as a mere fellow-countryman. If he treats them as mud and weeds, they will treat him as an enemy.” (The Mencius [translated by D.C. Lau, Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1984], 4B.3, p. 159. For “mere fellow-countryman”, the Penguin Books edition reads “stranger” [p. 128].)


11 Ibid., juan 21a, p. 510. For the origin of the saying, see Sima Qian 司馬遷, Shiji 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), juan 41, p. 1752.

12 Qu Dajun 屈大均 (1630–1696), Huangming sichao chengren lu 皇明四朝成仁錄 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1948), juan 6, p. 216a.

13 Ibid., juan 7, p. 274b.
court of the Southern Ming Regimes, advocated before his suicide that all “loyal officials and righteous men” should die.\textsuperscript{14} Undoubtedly, he meant to impose the same duty of dying for one's country on people who occupied no office. Zhang Bingchun 張秉純 (d. 1645), Government Student of Hanshan, went to the extreme when he said: “At the present moment, all men, the noble or the humble, the old or the young, ought to die indiscriminately for the monarch.” Zhang ended his life by starving himself to death.\textsuperscript{15}

2. Did All Officials Have the Duty to Die?

Not all scholar-officials thought that all officials had the duty to die. The concept “keepers of frontiers should die on the frontiers” (fengjiang zhi chen ying si fengjiang 封疆之臣應死封疆) was popular at the end of the Ming dynasty. Grand Secretary Qu Shishi 瞿式耜 (1590–1651) upheld this concept when he was placed in charge of the defence of the Manchu invasion in Guilin. Although he determined to defend the place to his death, he did not allow his student Zhang Tongchang 張同敞 (d. 1651), Minister of War, who was visiting him, to stay behind with him. In Qu's opinion, since Zhang had not been appointed for the garrison of Guilin, he had no duty to die there.\textsuperscript{16}

The case of Liu Zongzhou 劉宗周 (1578–1645), Censor-in-chief of the Left, was more complicated. Liu had not died at either the fall of Beijing in 1644 or the fall of Nanjing in 1645, but starved himself to death when he heard the news of the seizure of Hangzhou and the surrender of the Administrator of the Realm (jianguo 監國), Zhu Changfang 朱常滂, to the Manchus. Qin Zushi 秦祖軒, Liu's son-in-law, wrote Liu a letter in order to straighten him out: “As you do not hold any office related to [the defence of] the city, you do not have to die when it is seized.” Liu was not convinced by Qin and replied as follows:

At the fall of Beijing, to die or not to die is a matter of my choice because my office was suspended and there was hope for the revival of our dynasty. At the fall of Nanjing, our monarch (the Prince of Fu 福王, Zhu Yousong 朱由崧, d. 1646, reigned 1644–1645), deserted his court and fled. At that time, as I had not resumed my duty yet, it was a matter of

\textsuperscript{14} Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610–1695), Xingchao lu 行朝錄 (contained in Volume Two of his Huang Zongxi quanji 黃宗羲全集, Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1986), juan 2, p. 124.

\textsuperscript{15} Huangming sichao chengren lu, juan 12, p. 443a.

\textsuperscript{16} Qu Yuanxi 瞿元錫, Gengyin shi'an shilue 庚寅始安事略 (Zhongguo lishi yanjiu ziliao congshu edition), p. 198. Zhang, however, did not take his teacher's advice and eventually sacrificed his life with his teacher. For other examples of the concept see my article, “Mingji shidafu xunguo yuanjin pouxi 明季士大夫殉國原因剖析”, Chinese Studies (Hanzue yanjiu 漢學研究), 12.1 (June, 1993), 287–317.
choice for me to die or to wait for the emergence of a new monarch. After the fall of Hangzhou, our Administrator of Realm has surrendered; and now our Zhejiang has fallen too. Where can this trifling old official go? If you say I am not in office and thus do not have to die after our city has been taken, should I not die when our domain has been taken? This was the reason why Jiang Wanli 江萬里 (1198–1275), the former Prime Minister [of the Song dynasty] died. Since there was no Prime Minister flying for his life, neither should there be any Censor-in-chief doing so. 17

From Liu's reply it is obvious that reasons such as not holding relevant office could be used to justify the preserving of an official's life. Even though Liu finally died as a martyr, he had used such reasons to keep his life on the two previous occasions.

According to the Book of Rites, "the commanders of the troops have to die when they are defeated; the administrators of the state have also to die when the state is in peril". 18 Some scholar-officials tried to distinguish which types of officials should or should not die in this context.

In Liang Fen’s 梁份 (1641–1729) opinion, there were three categories of officials who did not have to die:

- The state in turbulence is the time for its officials to sacrifice their lives. However, it is permissible for officials to spare their lives: those whose [current] office was not authorized by the state; those in charge of territories not on the frontiers, and those whose office is not to resist foreign aggression. 19

Retired officials were also believed to have no obligation to die for the dynasty at its demise. For example, He Zhongshi 賀仲軾 (1580–1644), former Circuit Intendant of Wude, committed suicide as a martyr in proper rituals with his wife and concubines after the fall of Beijing. Sun Qifeng pointed out that it was not He's duty to die as he had already retired from office. 20

Scholar-officials during the Ming-Qing transition had no unanimous opinion on the martyrdom of the Ming officials who were considered not obliging to sacrifice their lives. For example, Ru Keqi's 汝可起 (d. 1643) case was controversial. Ru was appointed Assistant Instructor of Changzhou in 1642. While on


19 Liang Fen, "Shu Guo Zhonglie zhuan hou 書郭忠烈傳後", in his Huaigetang wenji 懷嶠堂文集 (preface dated 1707), p. 1a of the article. The edition of the above collected works which I used is housed in the Library of Congress. It was actually divided into several juan but the identification numbers are absent.

his way to assume his post, the Manchus attacked Beijing and its environs. The gates of Changzhou therefore were closed. Instead of fleeing, Ru tried very hard to slip into the city, and was killed by the Manchus when the city fell. Some people argued that the office of an Assistant Instructor was not in charge of garrison of the place, not to mention that Ru had not assumed duty. Although Wei Xi 魏禧 (1624–1681) agreed that it was entirely all right for Ru to flee for his life, Wei did not think Ru's martyrdom meaningless. According to Wei, Ru was a righteous man. When Ru met the Manchu soldiers who ordered him to surrender, he had no alternative but to die even he was merely a man in the street. From the perspective of righteousness, the obligations of a high official, a local official who was placed in defence of a city, an official who held other offices, and even that of an everyman, were the same. Therefore, Wei did not find fault with Ru for his martyrdom but treated him as a patriot.21

Similarly, Ji Luqi did not consider Shen Jiayin's 申佳胤 (1602–1644) martyrdom a meaningless sacrifice though Shen gave up his opportunity to run for his life. Shen, Chief Minister of the Court of the Imperial Stud, was on an inspection tour of the capital's environs in 1644. When the rebels were approaching the capital, Shen's subordinates urged Shen to take refuge as he was lucky enough not to be there and did not have to confront the disaster. Shen replied that he knew quite well that the capital was likely to fall; however, his monarch (Emperor Chongzhen, Zhu Youjian 朱由檢, 1611–1644, reigned 1627–1644) was there. He would live with his monarch regardless of safety or danger. Then Shen entered Beijing and drowned himself in a well when the capital fell to the rebels.22 In Ji's opinion, as there were so many officials surrendered to and joined the peasant rebels when Beijing fell, those who did not surrender but escaped from the capital were already admirable. Shen, however, returned to the capital and determined to live and die with his monarch. This showed a firm and lofty mind at work. Shen also surpassed those people who did not know how to handle the existing situation so that they simply took their lives as a means of escape from reality.23


23 Mingji beiue, juan 21a, p. 542.
3. Did Scholars Have the Duty to Die?

While some scholar-officials believed that it was a universal duty for all subjects to die as a martyr to the Ming cause, the majority thought otherwise. For example, although Chen Que stated that a subject should not shirk his responsibility to his ruler, he also stressed that the responsibility only came after the subject had received a salary. In the latter case, the subject should die in order to demonstrate his gratitude to his ruler. In other words, those who had not received any salary from the state had no duty to sacrifice their lives for it. Indeed, when late Ming scholar-officials considered whether they were obliged to die or not, they often took this factor into consideration.

Hou Fangyu 侯方域 (1618–1655) was in Shi Kefa's 史可法 (1605–1645) camp in Yangzhou when the Qing armies were approaching Yangzhou. When Yangzhou was in peril, Shi prepared to defend Yangzhou to his death but urged Hou to leave. Shi thought that he himself should die because he was a general and a minister of the state; Hou, however, should leave as he was merely a scholar.

Strictly speaking, there were three types of scholars. The first type was degree-holders of metropolitan examinations who had not yet received appointments of office. Meng Zhangming 孟章明 (d. 1644), jinshi of 1643, belonged to this type. When he heard of the fall of Beijing, he went to visit his father Meng Zhaoxiang 孟兆祥 (d. 1644), Vice Minister of Justice of the Right. The old Meng believed that it was his duty to die since he was a senior official of the country. But he urged his son to flee as the latter had not taken any office yet. Zhangming, however, swore to die with his father. He explained to his father that the principal morality of human life was to demonstrate loyalty to the monarch and filial piety to one's father. As Emperor Chongzhen had died already and his father was going to die too, he could not as a subject and a son continue to live.

The second type of scholars was the degree-holders of prefectual and provincial examinations. When Zhang Luoshan 張羅善 (1605–1644), Government Student of Hejian, helped his elder brother Zhang Luoyan 張羅彦 (1597–1644), Director of the Bureau of Appointments and Vice Minister of the Court of Imperial Entertainment, to defend Hejian, his brother urged Luoshan to escape when the peasant rebels captured the city. Luoshan replied to his brother that

24 Chen Que, “Ji Wu Pouzhong shu 寄吳裒仲書”, Wenji of Chen Que ji, juan 2, p. 102.
26 Qian Xing 錢駒, Jiashen zhuanxin lu 甲申傳信錄 (Zhongguo lishi yanjiu ziliao congshu edition), juan 3, p. 44.
since there were officials who would sacrifice their lives, there should also be scholars who would do so. Moreover, he did not wish to see his brother die while he continued to live. Nevertheless, Luoyan pointed out that their situations were different: he should die because he held an office, whereas Luoshan should not die because he had not taken any office. Luoshan did not change his mind, however, and drowned himself in a well.27

The third type of scholars was those ordinary literati who did not hold any degrees. He Qiyu 郝奇遇 (d. 1644), a native of Boxiang, was not interested in an official career and lived the life of a hermit. When the news of the fall of Beijing arrived, he determined to die in a righteous way for the dynasty. When he summoned his relatives and friends together to bid them farewell, they reprimanded him, asserting that he was only a scholar among the rustics and should not love fame like that. He said that he had no intention to use his death to gain a reputation. Rather, he considered the sacrifice of his life as his obligation. Then he drank poison and died.28

Thus it is evident that scholars were generally not expected to sacrifice their lives for the Ming dynasty though a number of them still insisted on doing so.

There were positive and negative comments on scholars' martyrdom during the Ming-Qing transition. Government Student Liu Changgeng 劉長庚 (d. 1643) swore to defend his native place to his death when Li Zicheng 李自成 (1606–1645) captured Tongguan. He was also willing to take up the duty of the fleeing prefect (i.e., to die when the prefecture was taken. See Section Two above) when Li was approaching. Some people pointed out that there were no rules for a scholar to die and that dwelling in seclusion was already a virtuous way to fulfil his duty of loyalty. Liu did not heed their advice and committed suicide. Although Liu's martyrdom was not accepted by some of his contemporaries, Wang Hongzhuan 王弘撰 (1622–1702) showed his great respect for Liu as he observed that Liu's case demonstrated that the relationship of righteousness that existed between the monarch and his subjects could be magnificent. Wang said during peaceful times, some officials who had been granted noble titles and big salary usually boasted of their reputation and integrity. Once they confronted a national calamity, they lost their integrity and were even willing to serve the enemy. Only those humble scholars in rustics were able to sacrifice their lives for the purpose of righteousness. In Wang's opinion, these scholars could be compared with the strong pines which were under attack by severe frost. Therefore, he respected these scholars even though he also grieved for them. As he himself felt ashamed because he could not sacrifice his life as what

27 Ibid., juan 7, p. 135.
28 Huangming sichao chengren lu, juan 1, p. 13a–b.
they had done, he dared not cite Mencius's saying, "When it is permissible both to die and not to die, it is an abuse of valour to die", in reference to them.29

The martyrdoms of scholars were highly regarded by the Southern Ming Regimes. For example, Tang Wenqiong 湯文瓊 (d. 1644), a native of Shidai who taught as a private tutor at Beijing, hanged himself at the fall of Beijing. When his friends asked Tang to explain his proposed suicide, Tang said: "Although I am a scholar, am I not a subject of the Great Ming? How can I bear to see the rebels kill the monarch and usurp the state?" Before his suicide, Tang wrote down the following words on the front of his jacket: "Despite the fact that I have not occupied Prime Minister Wen's (Wen Tianxiang 文天祥, 1236–1282) office, I have maintained Prime Minister Wen's mind." When Xiong Rulin 熊汝霖 (d. 1648), Supervising Secretary of the Court of Hongguang 弘光, heard of Tang's martyrdom, he sent a memorial to the Prince of Fu. Xiong wrote that at the fall of Beijing, there were a great number of officials who either surrendered to the rebels or even served them. Tang was just an ordinary man but he sacrificed his life in such a way as if striving for brightness equal to the sun and the moon. When the rebels learned of Tang's words on the front of his jacket, they reprimanded Chen Yan 陳演 (d. 1644), the surrendered Prime Minister of the Chongzhen reign, and executed Chen at the market. Since Tang's martyrdom was even honoured by the rebels, if the Hongguang court did not honour Tang, the Hongguang court could not console the souls of the Ming loyalists and rouse the Ming subjects to maintain their loyal duty to the court. The court accepted the recommendation from Xiong, and posthumously granted Tang the title of Drafter and placed his name on the altar of the Temple for Loyalties.30

As already shown, there were also some negative opinions on the martyrdom of scholars. Some of the most severe criticism came from the Qing official Mao Qiling 毛奇齡 (1623–1716). According to Mao, the concept that loyal officials should die for their monarch, which first appeared in the Song dynasty, had no root in history. Dying for the monarch had not been a criterion for judging an official; no officials had been honoured as loyal just because they chose to die for the monarch. Mao made a distinction between "dying as a result of a national calamity" (xunnan 殘難) and "dying for the sake of dying" (xunsi 殘死). The officials who died without a good cause were only dying for the sake of dying and their death was meaningless. Mao lamented that since the Song dynasty, Confucian ethics had become obscure, and society had begun to degenerate. As a result, officials had become inclined to die after their monarch or at

the change of dynasties, regardless of which offices they were occupying. These officials treated death as a means to evade their responsibilities, and had not considered whether their death would benefit the monarch or the state. The more ridiculous phenomenon was that even the ordinary people imitated the officials, deserting their parents and wives. Mao found the martyrdom of the ordinary people absurd on the grounds that these ordinary people neither hold any offices or degree titles, nor did they have the opportunity to see the monarch or enter into the court during their lives. In Mao's opinion, only the officials were given the monopoly to handle state affairs. Those ordinary people who had sacrificed their lives had impinged upon the monopoly of the officials. Mao, therefore, called them the "perplexed" (huozhe 惑者). Mao said that the "perplexed" were crazy and foolish and acted in a disorderly manner. They perplexed and scared other people because they got themselves involved in everything, so much so that they intruded into the business of the officials and died publicly as if they also had the right to handle state affairs.\footnote{31}

Mao's argument that a loyal official should not die without a cause, however, was severely condemned later by Quan Zuwang 全祖望 (1705–1755) even though Quan shared Mao's view on the martyrdom of common people. For example, Xu Qirui 徐啓睿 (d. 1645) was a commoner when he joined Prince Lu's troop to resist the Manchu invasion. The Manchus killed Xu as he refused to convert to the Manchu cause after he was captured. Although Quan was impressed by Xu's boldness and admitted that loyalty and filial piety could not be taken care of at the same time, he did not countenance Xu's choice of deserting his aged parents and sacrificing his life as Xu was a poor commoner.\footnote{32}

\section*{4. Should Scholar-officials Die if They Had Parents Alive?}

After the collapse of the Ming Dynasty, scholar-officials often faced a dilemma between sacrificing their lives for the sake of loyalty and preserving their lives for the sake of filial piety.\footnote{33} Censor Chen Liangmo 陳良謨 (1589–1644) lamented that it was difficult to fulfill the duties of an official and a son at the

\footnote{31} Mao Qiling, “Bian zhongchen busiwen 辨忠臣不徒死文”, in his \textit{Mao Xihe quanj} 毛西河全集 (1745 edition), Section \textit{Bian} 辨, pp. 10a–11a.

\footnote{32} For Quan Zuwang's comment on Mao Qiling's view, see Quan's “Shu Mao Jiantao zhongchen busiwen chenhou 書毛檢討忠臣不死節辨後”, in his \textit{Jieqiting ji waibian 魚唡亭集外編} (append to his \textit{Jieqiting ji 魚唡亭集} [Sibu congkan 四部齋刊 edition]), 	extit{juan} 33, pp. 20a–21b. For his comment on Xu Qirui's choice of loyalty, see his “Ming Jinyi Xugong muzhuming 明錦衣徐公墓銘”, \textit{Jieqiting ji, juan} 8, p. 7a.

\footnote{33} See my article “Mingji shidafu dui zhongyu xiaohzi jueze 明季士大夫對忠與孝之抉擇”, \textit{Chinese Cultural Quarterly (Jiuzhou xuekan 九州學刊)}, 5.3 (February, 1993), pp. 5–23.
same time. When Zhang Huangyan 張煌言 (1620–1664), Vice Minister of War of the Left, refused to convert to the Qing cause, he also found it difficult to live up to the two competing virtues of loyalty and filial piety.

Indeed, once scholar-officials expressed an intention to sacrifice their lives for their country, their families and friends often tried to dissuade them by reminding them of the duty of filial piety. As a result, some scholar-officials actually changed their mind. The following are two examples.

When Zheng Zhen 鄭璽 (1613–1698), Vice Surveillance Commissioner, received the news of the fall of Beijing, he cried bitterly and attempted to kill himself by hanging. But he gave up the idea when his father begged him to live. His father reminded Zheng of Zheng's grandmother who had been a seventeen-sui widow when his father was born posthumously of his grandfather. As Zheng was her only grandson, Zheng was asked to have regard for his grandmother even if he did not consider the feelings of his father.

Wu Linzheng 吳麟徵 (1593–1644), Vice Minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices who died as a martyr after the fall of Beijing, had a son called Wu Fanchang 吳蕃昌 (1622–1656) who was a Government Student. Wu Fanchang wanted to follow his monarch and his father by committing suicide, but was prevented from doing so by his uncle Wu Linrui 吳麟瑞 (1588–1645) who reminded his nephew of the duty of an heir.

On the other hand, some scholar-officials still preferred death to life after they had been reminded of their filial duty. For instance, Ma Shiqi 馬世奇 (1584–1644), Adviser of the Household Administration of the Heir Apparent of the Right, hanged himself as a martyr after the fall of Beijing, but was rescued by his servants who requested him to preserve his life for his mother. However, Ma replied that since he was an official, he would bring disgrace to his mother if he did not sacrifice his life.

Liu Shu 劉曙 (d. 1647), District-Magistrate-in-waiting of Nanchang, decided to die for the country when Nanjing fell. However, he changed his mind because his father's body had not been buried and his mother was still alive. Later he

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34 Chen Liangmo, “Ti juemingci hou 題絕命詞後”, in his Chen Zhongzhen gongyiji 陳忠貞公遺集 (Siming congshu 四明叢書 edition), juan 3, p. 4a.


38 Mingji beiue, juan 21a, pp. 521–522.
participated in anti-Qing activities and was arrested by the Qing government. The Pacifierator of Jiangnan, Hong Chengchou 洪承疇 (1593–1665), attempted to win Liu to the Qing cause, reminding him of his duty to his aged mother. Nevertheless, Liu was not moved. He told Hong that the monarch and one's parents were deemed to be the same; he could not serve them in different manners.39

There were different views as far as the criteria of preferring one virtue to another were concerned. Among officials, there were two conflicting views. The first view gave preference to filial piety, i.e., one should not die so long as at least one parent was alive. Salt Commissioner Wang Sunwei 王孫蕙 (jinshi of 1640) urged his fellow native Zhao Yusen 趙玉森 (jinshi of 1640), Examining Editor, to recant the Ming dynasty and serve the leader of the peasant rebels Li Zicheng. In Wang's opinion, of all virtues, filial piety was most important. As Zhao's father was advanced in age, Zhao should recant his former ruler for the sake of filial piety.40

Wang's argument was simply an excuse for their apostasy. The excuse, however, revealed a rather common view that the scholar-officials with living parent(s) generally were not expected to die for the dynasty during the Ming-Qing transition. Even some martyrs accepted this view. For example, Meng Zhaoxiang had borne the desire to sacrifice his life before Beijing was in peril. Yet he told his student Xiong Wenju 熊文舉 (jinshi of 1631), Director of Merit Awards, to wait because Xiong had aged parents a thousand miles away.41

Also, after Huizhou fell to the Manchus, Jin Sheng 金聲 (1598–1645), Vice Minister of War of the Left and Assistant Censor-in-chief, told his subordinate Jiang Tianyi 江天一 (d. 1645), Judge of Huizhou, that he did not have to die because Jiang had an old mother. Nevertheless, the view that one should spare one's life for the sake of one's parents was not entirely accepted by scholar-officials. Jiang himself, for example, did not take Jin's advice and was executed, together with Jin, by the Manchus.42

The second view was in favour of sacrificing one's life on the grounds that "fulfilling one's duty of loyalty is also a way to fulfil one's duty of filial piety".43 According to some martyrs, they should give first priority to the duty of loyalty not because one could totally neglect filial piety, but because the latter could be upheld through the fulfilment of loyalty. The basic argument of this

39 Xu Zi 徐鼒 (1810–1862), Xiaotian jizhuan 小腆紀傳 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1977), juan 49, p. 524.
40 Jiashen zhuaxin lu, juan 5, p. 92.
41 Mingji beilue, juan 21a, p. 517.
42 Huangming sichao chengren lu, juan 8, p. 278a–b.
43 Citation from the letter of Ling Yiqu 凌義渠 (1593–1644), Chief Minister of the Court of Judicial Review, to his father. See Mingji beilue, juan 21a, p. 513.
view was that a filial son should not leave his parents feeling shame because of him. Dying for one's country would allow one's parents to be proud of this son. From this perspective, the sacrifice of one's life was not only an expression of one's loyalty, but also of one's filial piety.

When the father of Xu Zhi 許直 (d. 1644), Vice Director of the Bureau of Evaluations, attempted to stop Xu from committing suicide, Xu employed a similar argument with his father. According to Xu, his father had once written to him that he would be a filial son if he did not cause disgrace to his office. Since it was a disgrace for an official to live after his monarch's sacrifice of his life, Xu concluded that his choice of sacrificing his life was actually a fulfillment of his father's wish and his filial duty. Then he kowtowed to his father and committed suicide.44

Zhou Fengxiang 周鳳翔 (d. 1644), Advisor of the Household Administration of the Heir Apparent and Reader-in-waiting of the Hanlin Academy, explained to his parents the reason for his impending martyrdom along a similar line. He asserted that as the monarch had died for the state, there was no reason for his officials not to follow him in death. He had a better reason to die because he was a lecturer as well as an attendant. As his parents had given him birth, reared him, and taught him so that he had become who he was, it was important that he did not bring disgrace on himself, for such disgrace would inevitably bring shame to his parents. He believed that his mission would be completed as long as he sacrificed his life.45

As for scholars who held no official position, it was generally agreed that they had no duty to die for the country. The position was even stronger when their parents were still alive. For instance, some people thought that Xu Wangjia 許王家 (1607–1645), Supplementary Government Student of Changzhou who drowned himself as a martyr to the Ming cause, had two reasons not to sacrifice his life. First, Xu had not occupied office. In addition, he had living parents.46

In order to reconcile the conflict between the contesting virtues of loyalty and filial piety, some yimin scholars such as Sun Qifeng and Qu Dajun proposed a principle of compromise. According to this principle, scholars and officials had different roles to play. It was the responsibility of officials to fulfil the virtue of loyalty, whereas it was the duty of scholars to give priority to the virtue of

44 Huang Zongxi, Hongguang shilu chao 弘光實錄鈔 (contained in Volume Two of the Huang Zongxi quanji), juan 2, p. 43.
45 Jiashen zhuoxin lu, juan 3, p. 41.

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filial piety. In other words, there was no relative superiority or inferiority between the two virtues. It all depended on one's own responsibility.

Surprisingly, the view favouring compromise was not exclusively held by scholars who had not died for their country. Some martyred officials also maintained a similar view in justifying the choice of sacrificing their lives. Messenger Lu Pei's 陸培 (1617–1645) letter to his mother before his suicide best illustrates this point. Lu claimed that since he had passed the imperial examination in 1643, he no longer belonged to his mother. It would not be improper for him to violate the expectation of his ancestors by giving up his life. He was glad that he had two younger brothers who could take care of the rest of his mother's life, and asked his mother to assume that he had died in his infancy. Finally, he stressed that he was quite happy to follow the deceased monarch and requested his mother not to think that he was miserable.

Since Lu was no longer the possession of his mother after he had passed the imperial examination, his duty to die for the monarch was overriding as compared with that of taking care of his mother. On the contrary, Peng Liaofan 彭了凡, a lay scholar who wished to die as a martyr to the Ming cause, instead was strongly advised by Sun Qifeng to retreat to the former's native place because his uppermost duty was to fulfil the virtue of filial piety.

5. Should Scholar-Officials Save Their Lives According to Circumstances?

Although the sacrifice of one's life as a martyr to the Ming cause generally was regarded as an expression of one's moral integrity during the Ming-Qing transition, not all scholar-officials were willing to accept martyrdom without reservations. As Qian Xing pointed out, "if everyone dies at the time of national calamity, the whole country will be ruined; the monarch will be killed; and the whole world will be handed over on a silver platter to the enemy". In view of this concern, some scholar-officials treated dying for one's country as upholding the "everlasting principle" (shoujing 守經), whereas they viewed living as practising the "contingency principle" (daquan 達權 or xingquan 行權).

48 Zha Jizuo 柴繼佐 (1601–1676), Guoshou lu 國壽錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), juan 2, p. 50.
49 Sun Qifeng, "Fu Peng Liaofan", Xiafeng xiansheng ji, juan 7, p. 33a.
50 Jiashen zhuanxin lu, juan 3, p. 35.
The concept of the contingency principle was not accepted by all martyrs. When Ni Yuanlu 倪元璐 (1594–1644), Minister of Revenue, presented three cups of wine to Guan Yu's 關羽 (160–219) statue before his suicide, his relatives urged him to endure humiliation in order to leave the capital and organise an army to restore the Ming dynasty. Ni was angry. He pointed to Guan’s statue and said he would feel too ashamed to face the statue if he continued to live.\textsuperscript{51}

Tao Bochang 陶伯昌 (d. 1650), Investigating Censor, had defended Ningdu for one year before it fell to the Manchus. Before he died as a martyr to the Ming cause, he had considered carefully the options of maintaining the everlasting principle or practising the contingency principle. He wrote on a wall that from the books written by the sages and men of virtue, he only learned how to die according to the everlasting principle, but not how to live according to the contingency principle.\textsuperscript{52}

Nevertheless, the contingency principle was generally endorsed by scholar-officials who had not sacrificed their lives for the Ming dynasty. For example, Ji Luqi, on the one hand, stated that to die after the death of the monarch was “the cardinal principle of the universe” for all officials under all circumstances. On the other hand, he also pointed out that there were two kinds of loyalty and righteousness at all times. It was loyal and righteous for an official to die as the everlasting principle required. It was equally loyal and righteous for him to live but still adhere to the former dynasty in accordance with the contingency principle. In Ji’s opinion, dying was a more difficult choice, and he esteemed more highly the everlasting principle than the contingency principle.\textsuperscript{53}

Scholar-officials were not unanimous about who should follow the everlasting principle or the contingency principle. While Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–1682) highly approved of the virtue of Boyi 伯夷 and Shuqi 叔彊 of the Yin dynasty who had starved themselves to death at Shouyang in order to refrain from serving under two monarchs,\textsuperscript{54} he at the same time advocated the contingency principle. Gu agreed with the comment in Zuo’s Commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals that “it is better for an official to flee than to die at the national calamity”.\textsuperscript{55} Then he used the example of Bomi 伯靡 an official of

\textsuperscript{51} Mingji beilue, juan 21a, p. 530. Guan Yu was one of the representatives of the men of loyalty and righteousness in Chinese history. For his life, see Chen Shou 陳壽 (233–297), Sanguo zhi 三國志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), juan 26, pp. 939–942.

\textsuperscript{52} Xu Zi, Xiantian jizhuan, juan 50, p. 530.

\textsuperscript{53} Mingji beilue, juan 21a, p. 549.

\textsuperscript{54} Gu Yanwu, “Ye Yi Qi miao 諭夷齊廟”, in his Gu Tinglin shiji huizhu 顧亭林詩集彙注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1983), juan 3, p. 627. For a brief account of Boyi and Shuqi, see Sima Qian, Shiji, juan 61, pp. 2121–2127.

\textsuperscript{55} Gu Yanwu, Poem Two of “Weixian 淮縣”, Gu Tinglin shiji huizhu, juan 3, p. 596. For the comment of the Zuo’s Commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals, see Chunqiu Zuo- zhuàn zhengyi 春秋左傳正義 (Shisanjing zhushu edition), juan 49, p. 389 (vol. 2, p. 2091).
the Xia dynasty who helped Prince Shaokang 少康 to resurrect the dynasty some forty years after its fall, to support his position. Gu also criticized his contemporaries who did not follow the contingency principle, but only followed the choice of Boyi and Shuqi.  

Like most of his contemporaries, Diao Bao 刁包 asserted that the sacrifice of one's life at the time of national calamity was an act of righteousness. Therefore, even though Diao shared the common opinion that during a national calamity, to die was easy and to achieve the accomplishment of restoring the dynasty was difficult, he still insisted that to die was the everlasting principle and to achieve the accomplishment of restoring the dynasty was the contingency principle. However, so far as the values of the everlasting principle and the contingency principle were concerned, Diao's opinions were remarkable. According to Diao, the contingency principle which was usually regarded as inferior to the everlasting principle, could be upgraded to become the everlasting principle if the objective in question was ultimately achieved.  

In Diao's opinion, An Bing 安丙 (d. 1221) of the Song dynasty was a typical historical figure who had successfully achieved his desired accomplishment and upgraded the contingency principle to the level of the everlasting principle. An was in command of the Da'an Army when Vice Pacification Commissioner Wu Xi 呉曦 (1162–1207) accepted the title the Prince of Shu 蜀王 conferred by the Jin dynasty. Wu appointed An as the Grand Master of the Palace to be in charge of the administration of Sichuan. Since An did not have any opportunity to flee, and realized that he would not benefit the Song dynasty even if he sacrificed his life, he pretended to agree with Wu while covertly planning to overthrow Wu's government.  

Diao believed that the Song dynasty was in imminent danger when Wu rebelled. At that time, some officials sacrificed their lives; others fled or hurt themselves in order to refrain from yielding to the rebels. Although the above virtuous actions could put those recanlers to shame, these actions were not really beneficial to the Song dynasty. Hence, Diao deemed that An made greater contributions to the dynasty than the above officials. Thus, Diao advised people of later ages who might confront a national calamity to follow An's example.

56 Gu Yanwu, "Longwu ernian bayue shangchou ... 隆武二年八月上出狩 ...", Gu tinglin shiji huizhu, juan 2, p. 366. For the restoration of the Xia dynasty by Bomi and Xiaokang, see Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi, juan 29, p. 231 (vol. 2, p. 1933); and juan 57, p. 452 (vol. 2, p. 2154).
57 Gu Yanwu, Poem Two of "Weixian", Gu Tinglin shiji huizi, juan 3, p. 596.
because there was no harm in making short term concessions if there was a chance to achieve a more useful purpose.\textsuperscript{58}

Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–1692), in contrast to Diao Bao, was strongly against the idea of the contingency principle. Wang's view could be seen clearly in his commentary on Liu Kun 劉琨 (271–318), Commander-in-chief of Bingzhou at the end of the Western Jin dynasty (265–316). Liu made an alliance with Duan Pichan 段匹磾 of the Tartar tribe to resist the invasions of Liu Cong 劉聰 (d. 318) and Shi Le 石勒 (274–333), and later, under Shi's severe attacks, even sought Duan's protection. Wang strongly opposed Liu Kun entrusting himself to Duan. Wang said that an official should do only what was feasible at the collapse of his dynasty. Whether the official could succeed in restoring the dynasty was disposed by heaven. Thus he should not be afraid of failure; and he should have held this attitude even when he first embarked on his attempted restoration. Wang described the duty of a loyal official at the collapse of his dynasty as walking on a winding path where he had no way to retreat or step aside. According to Wang, when Liu Kun entrusted Duan to help him to restore the Western Jin dynasty, it was as if Liu seeking an impossible alternative way on the winding path and thus he was doomed to failure. This was because Duan was of a foreign race, and was therefore unreliable. In this respect, Liu's placing himself in the care of Duan was comparable to wandering in a den of wolves. His plan to restore the Western Jin dynasty was definitely not possible; therefore, his wish to taint Liu Cong and Shi Lie with his blood as a demonstration of his loyalty to the dynasty so as to show gratitude for honour received from the dynasty, would never be realized. Lamenting Liu Kun's stupidity, Wang urged people not to follow Liu's example. Wang suggested that the only option for an official who was isolated at a distant place at the collapse of his dynasty was to do what was proper in a straightforward (zhizhi 直致) way.\textsuperscript{59}

Pan Lei 潘耒 (1646–1708), Gu Yanwu's student who was born during the Qing dynasty, also expressed his opinion on the choice between the everlasting and contingency principles. Pan agreed that if he did not want to preserve his moral integrity by means of sacrificing his life or retiring from public life, an official might compromise out of consideration for the interest of the dynasty. Pan, therefore, was worried that if an official failed to carry out the contingency principle correctly, he would bring himself to ruin. Pan also feared that the contingency principle would be abused by officials of profit-before-everything

\textsuperscript{58} Diao Bao, “An Bing lun, 安丙論”, in his Yongliu ji 用六集 (twelve-juan edition housed at the Library of Congress), juan 9, p. 17a–b. For the life of An Bing, see Tuo Tuo, Songshi, juan 402, pp. 12188–12189.

mentality. These officials would use the contingency principle as an excuse to seek wealth and fame in the new dynasty while at the same time waiting for the possible restoration of the defunct dynasty. Abused as such, Pan argued that the contingency principle would do harm to the moral integrity of the officials. In order to prevent such double-dealing behaviour, Pan stressed that an official had to practise the contingency principle without violating the everlasting principle.60

Pan's suggestion of practising one principle without violating the other was still vague. It is, moreover, difficult to identify the true intentions of those who claimed that they were practising the contingency principle. No wonder Fang Wen 方文 (1612–1669) remarked:

[Although] Prime Minister Wen [Tianxiang] had expressed such loyalty as enough to move the spirits, some people still treated it with suspicion at that time. It follows that the only way of preserving [one's] moral integrity is to die. The moral integrity will be adulterated once the concept of expediency is brought into consideration.61

6. Would it Be Better for Scholar-officials not to Die?

Not all scholar-officials treated dying for the country after a dynastic change as a rigid principle. Some of them thought it was permissible to die or not to die. Tao Yuanchun 陶元淳 pointed out that Confucius (551 B.C.–479 B.C.) held flexible attitudes towards the choice of death as a virtue. On the one hand, Confucius highly valued those people who sacrificed their lives to preserve their virtue. On the other hand, Confucius also called people like Weizi 微子 and Jizi 箕子 who had not died for their dynasty, virtuous people. Hence, Tao advocated that it was not an inflexible rule for men of virtue to choose to die at the fall of their dynasty.62

60 Pan Lei, “Chongjian Di Lianggong ci ji 重建狄梁公祠記”, in his Suichutang ji 遂初堂集 (preface dated 1710, housed at the Library of Congress), juan 12, p. 7a.

61 Fang Wen, “Wang Yanwu shengji Wenxiang 王炎午生祭文相” of “Liusheng yuan 六聲猿”, in the Tushan xuji 竄山續集 (contained in his Tushan ji 竄山集, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1979), juan 12, p. 8b. After Wen Tianxiang had been captured by the Mongols, he was kept in prison at Yanjing for three years. Wang Yanwu 王炎午 (1252–1324) wrote a funeral oration entitled “Shengji Wen Chengxiang wen 生祭文丞相文” to urge Wen to sacrifice his life as a martyr as soon as possible so as to fulfil his duty of loyalty to the Song dynasty. See Cheng Minzheng 程敏政 (1445–1499), Songyimin lu 宋遺民錄 (Zhibuzuzhai congshu 知不足齋叢書 edition), juan 1, pp. 2a–8b.

62 Tao Yuanchun, “Zhang Zhongyu zhuàn 張仲玉傳”, in his Tao Zishi xiansheng ji 陶子師先生集 (contained in the Haiyu san Tao xiansheng ji heke 海虞三陶先生集合刻, 1881 edition), juan 4, p. 15a. For the source of Weizi and Jizi, see Note 83 below.
Wei Xi also held a flexible view on scholar-officials' choice between life and death. On the one hand, Wei considered dying for one's dynasty at dynastic change an act of righteousness. On the other hand, Wei thought that an official was beyond criticism if he had tried to rescue the dynasty and fled only when he found himself impotent. In Wei's opinion, the way this official took conformed to the principles of "being worldly wise and playing safe" (mingzhe baoshen 明哲保身) stated in the Book of Songs, and "living in retirement" (feidun 肥遜) recorded in the Book of Change. Wei cited the case of Qu Boyu 蓬伯玉 an ancient worthy highly regarded by Confucius and people in later ages, to support his argument. When Qu learned that his sovereign Duke Xian of the State of Wei 衛獻公 was murdered, instead of dying for Duke Xian, he fled from the frontier. Wei concluded that the sacrifice of one's life for one's country or sovereign was not an inflexible principle for an official.63

Since martyrdom was not the only option for scholar-officials at the collapse of a dynasty, when Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597–1680 or 1681) wrote biographies for the Ming martyrs, he disapproved of the concept that sacrificing one's life was a must for an official who was caught in a dynastic change. He said it was unobjectionable for the Ming officials to retire in seclusion and isolate themselves from the Qing government after the collapse of the Ming dynasty.64

Early Qing scholar Shao Tingcai also shared the above views when he wrote biographies for the yimin of the Ming dynasty. Shao said there was no fault in living in retirement. The yimin should not be criticized just because they had not chosen to die for the Ming dynasty.65

The moral integrity of yimin was highly esteemed during the early Qing period. Huang Zongxi called the yimin "the vitality of the heaven and earth" (tiandi zhi yuanqi 天地之元氣)66 Gu Yanwu also claimed that as long as there were yimin in the world, the political integrity of the former dynasty would not die with the dynasty.67

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63 Wei Xi, Part Nine of “Zawen 雜問”, Wei Suzi wenji, juan 19, p. 12a. Confucius' comment on Qu Boyu is recorded in The Analects 15.7.
64 Zhang Dai, Shiguishu houji 石匱書後集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), juan 23, p. 153; and his “Yu Ruoshui xiansheng zhuang 余若水先生傳”, in his Langhuan wenji 琰嬛文集 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1985), juan 4, p. 190.
67 Gu Yanwu, Poem Two of “Chensheng Fangji liangzunren xianhou jishi 陳生芳績兩尊人先後即世”, in his Tinglin shiji 亭林詩集 (contained in his Gu Tinglin shiwenji 顧亭林詩文集, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), juan 2, p. 329. The poem in the Gu Tinglin shiji huizhu (juan 3, p. 521) is slightly different.
Furthermore, the *yimin* were regarded as honourable and respectable as the martyrs. Mo Bingqing (1622–1690) emphasized that it was not a matter of superiority or inferiority between those who continued to live in grief as a *yimin* and those who died as a martyr.68

Huang Zongxi took the fall of the Song dynasty for his illustration. He called both the martyrs Wen Tianxiang and Lu Xiufu 鄧秀夫 (1238–1279) and the *yimin* Xie Ao 謝翱 (1249–1295), Fang Feng 方鳳 (1241–1322), Gong Kai 龔開 (c. 1221–c. 1305), and Zheng Sixiao 鄭思肖 (1241–1318) incarnations of "the vitality of the heaven and earth", and believed the above *yimin*’s names would ultimately be handed down along with Wen and Lu to the end of time.69

The importance of *yimin*’s role was also emphasised. After the fall of the Ming dynasty, many scholar-officials worried that Han Chinese culture might be destroyed by the alien Qing government. Under such worry, some scholar-officials claimed the chief duty of a Han Chinese at that time was to preserve Han Chinese culture and transmit it to later generations.70 In this respect, the sacrifice of one's life as a martyr to the Ming cause was counter-productive and therefore not desirable; to live was much better than to die.

Lu Shiyi 陸世儀 (1611–1672) asserted that the taking of one's life to show one's loyalty was of no practical use. He told his friend that the situation of the rise and fall of a dynasty was different in different times. It was up to heaven to dispose what should be occurring. Petty Confucian scholars like themselves could not achieve anything if they evinced a pessimistic spirit. In addition, they had a duty to bring enlightenment to later generations by retiring from public life.71 For these reasons, Lu was very concerned about the life and death of his friends, although he realized that it might seem trivial to pay attention to a person's life after the fall of the Ming dynasty. Since they had acquired Confucian

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68 Mo Bingqing, “Diao Li Cunwo daxing wei Lin Weisheng zuo 弔李存我大行為林偉生作”, in his Caiyincao shiji Caiyincao shiji (postscript dated 1931, housed at the Fung Ping Shan Library of the University of Hong Kong), juan A, p. 17a; and “Beijiu yu Wenruo zongtian bingshi Xiangzuo 被酒與文弱縱談并示襄左”, ibid., p. 51a.

69 Huang Zongxi, “Yu Gongren zhuan 余恭人傳”, Huang Lizhou wenji, p. 90. For the life of Lu Xiufu, see Herbert Franke (ed.), Sung Biographies (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1976), vol. 2, pp. 679–687. For the lives of Xie Ao, Fang Feng, Gong Kai, and Zheng Sixiao, see Cheng Minzheng, Song yimin lu, juan 2, pp. 1a–17b; juan 8, pp. 1a–7b; juan 10, pp. 1a–3b; juan 13, pp. 1a–6b respectively.

70 See my article “Lun Ming yimin zi chuchu”, Mingmo Qingchu xueshu sixiang yanjiu, pp. 67–77.

71 Lu Shiyi, Poem One of “Shi Yijiu erjueju 示虞九二絕句”, in his Futing xiansheng shiji Futing xiansheng shiji (contained in his Luzi yishu 陸子遺書, 1899 edition), juan 2, p. 10b.
learning, however, they had the responsibility to perpetuate such learning. Thus they should not overlook the adverse effect of their deaths.\textsuperscript{72}

Xu Fang 徐枋 (1622–1694) swore to follow his father Xu Qian 徐汧 (1597–1645), Hanlin Bachelor, as a martyr to the Ming cause when Nanjing fell, but was ordered by his father “to become a farmer” (i.e., retiring from public life) for the rest of his life instead.\textsuperscript{73} After Xu Fang had mourned his father’s death, he expanded a great effort in historical studies and finished with two books after working hard for more than a decade. He hoped by so doing he might be forgiven by later generations for remaining alive. On the other hand, Xu did not feel ashamed for remaining alive on the grounds that he had not lived merely in retirement, but had made some contributions to later generations.\textsuperscript{74} In this respect, he found fault with his contemporary Confucian scholars who gave up their lives, calling them irresponsible people. According to Xu, a Confucian scholar had the responsibility to understand the Six Classics so that they could pass on the \textit{dao} (道 the way) recorded in the Classics to later generations. “If my body exists, the \textit{dao} will co-exist with it; if my body perishes, the \textit{dao} will perish with it”, said Xu. As the existence of Confucian scholars was so important, they should not make light of their lives for the sake of the “petty moral integrity” (\textit{xiao}jie 小節 i.e., the virtue of sacrificing one’s life). Otherwise, the consequences would be these: the Classics would not be passed down; the \textit{dao} would became obscure; and the order of the world would become chaotic. For these reasons, Xu urged his contemporary Confucian scholars to retire from public life in order to protect themselves. He suggested that the longer they lived, the greater would be their influences. He also believed heaven would treat these Confucian scholars with grace. Not only would they be granted health and fame, but they also would be allowed to live to a fruitful old age so that they were able to survive the hard times and fulfil their duty of transmitting the \textit{dao} to a new generation.\textsuperscript{75}

The above discussion represents a view of some scholar-officials that the value of life was higher than that of death. To these scholar-officials, dying for one particular royal house served only for a “petty moral integrity”, and therefore not the “right way” (\textit{zhengshu} 正術).\textsuperscript{76} On the contrary, cherishing one's

\textsuperscript{72} Lu Shiyi, “Ji Rugao Wu Bai'er shu 寄如皋吳白耳書”, in his \textit{Lunxue chouda} 論學酬答 (contained in his \textit{Luzi yishu}), \textit{juan} 3, p. 21a–b.

\textsuperscript{73} Xu Fang, “Yu Fengsheng shu 與馮生書”, in his \textit{Juyitang ji 居易堂集} (\textit{Sibu congkan} edition), \textit{juan} 3, p. 10a.

\textsuperscript{74} Xu Fang, “Shucheng gao jiamiao wen 書成告家廟文”, \textit{ibid.}, \textit{juan} 15, pp. 20a–21a.

\textsuperscript{75} Xu Fang, “Zheng laoshi Tongan xiansheng qishi shouxu 鄭老師桐菴先生七十壽序”, \textit{ibid.}, \textit{juan} 7, pp. 10b–11a.

\textsuperscript{76} Chen Que, “Wen Cai Shangsheng jia yi beidaoyi yuanji yishou 聞蔡上生家亦被誅卹一首”, in his \textit{Shiji 詩集} of \textit{Chen Que ji, juan} 2, p. 636.

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life for the sake of the transmission of the *dao* to successive generations was a “great moral integrity” and the “right way”. From this perspective, the everlasting principle was to live rather than to die.

7. How Should Scholar-officials Make the Choice of Life or Death?

The choice of life or death was a matter of controversy among scholar-officials during the Ming-Qing transition. Either choice had its merits and demerits. Thus, some scholar-officials suggested that the ultimate yardstick for each individual's choice was whether the choice made was in conformity with the *dao*.

Zhang Huangyan claimed that both his life and death could be described as righteous. After the Qing government had seized Zhang Huangyan who had engaged in anti-Qing activities for nineteen years, they tried every means to win him over to the Qing cause. However, Zhang rather preferred death. He said:

> There were many rises and falls since ancient times. At the transition of each rise and fall of a dynasty, there were loyal officials and righteous men [who died for the fall of their dynasty] as well as fleeing officials or scholars in retirement [who preferred to live]. When it is righteous to die, to die is better than to live; when it is righteous to live, to live is better than to die. This is because one should sacrifice one's life for a just cause, but not preserve one's own life at the expense of one's integrity.77

On such grounds, Zhang explained that he was not afraid of death since his capture by the Manchus did not mean that he loved to die and hated to live. On the contrary, it just showed that he did not intend to shirk his duty but wished to finish it.

The idea of making the choice of life or death according to the *dao* was prevalent among *yimin* scholars. In Sun Qifeng's opinion, loyalty, filial piety, benevolence, and righteousness were all individual composite sections of the *dao*. Scholar-officials should not make up their mind in advance but should make their choice according to circumstances. Therefore, when Wen Tianxiang intended to preserve the Song Dynasty at the course of its demise, he did not rush to die, for the longer he lived the longer the Song dynasty survived. Sun elaborated on his theme, asserting that what was vital for life was to live in accordance with its natural tendencies. If scholar-officials could do so, they would not mind surviving after a dynastic change. What was vital for death was to die with one's heart at ease. If scholar-officials could do so, they would not use death as a means of evading their responsibilities. On these grounds, Sun observed that many late Ming martyrs actually died because of agitation caused by

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personal feelings. To Sun, those who died for no righteous reason were merely fishing for fame and abusing their courage.

Chen Que expressed his views on the relativity between the choices of living or dying in the light of the dao more thoroughly than other scholar-officials during the Ming-Qing transition. Chen pointed out that everyone had a life. One's life was valuable only after one had made it beneficial to society. Everyone would die. One's death was valuable only when one died without regret. In Chen's opinion, only if one could “die for loyalty” or “die for filial piety”, one would not feel regret for one's death. If a person of virtue, who had no good reason to die, destroyed his life by indulging himself in grief and stress, Chen considered such death as “the fault of a person of virtue”. Furthermore, even one wanted to die for loyalty or for filial piety, one should proceed in accordance with the dao. Chen explained:

It is natural for a loyal official to die for loyalty, and a filial son for filial piety. This should not be regarded as “dying in haste” (susi 速死). If he does not die when he ought to do so, he is afraid of death. This is called selfishness and stupidity. If [he is] not afraid of death and does not die in haste, ... then his will acts according to nature and in compliance with the teaching of ancient sagacious kings.

Therefore Chen emphasized that it was a virtue to die in accordance with righteousness. To do otherwise, was “to die in vain” (wangsi 墕死). He also said: “Life and death are common occurrences. Who doesn't have to die? It is no worthy of amazement. It is only dying in a way beneficial to others which is difficult.” As Chen insisted that people should not “live in vain” (wangsheng 墕生 or “die in vain”, when they managed to achieve righteousness in life they did not have to sacrifice their lives. Chen pointed out that among the “three benevolent men in the Yin” (i.e., Weizi, Jizi, and Bigan 比干) only Bigan could be described as dying for the dynasty. Nevertheless, Bigan was killed by King Zhou 紂王 instead of committing suicide. If Bigan had not been killed, he definitely would not have killed himself but probably would have joined Weizi and Jizi to pledge allegiance to the Zhou Dynasty. Moreover, Chen drew an analogy of the life and death of human beings with the changes of nature. As the changes of nature tallied with the movement of the dao of heaven, life and death were also two expressions of the dao of heaven. Thereupon, Wenzi, Jizi, Boyi and Shuqi were virtuous in their own ways. As Weiji and Jizi wished to preserve

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78 Sun Qifeng, “Yulu 語錄”, Xiaofeng xiansheng ji, juan 1, p. 2a–b.  
81 Chen Que, “Ku Wuzi Zhongmu wen 哭呂子仲木文”, ibid., juan 13, p. 321.  
82 Chen Que, “Da kanhua yiwen 答龜化疑問”, ibid., juan 15, p. 373.

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the ancestral line of the Yin dynasty, they did not decline the hereditary titles and territories granted by the Zhou dynasty. As Boyi and Shuqi determined to maintain the cardinal guides and the constant virtues, they did not regret refusing the salary offered by the Zhou dynasty. In short, these four men of virtue would have done the same as any other had done, had they been put into the other's position. To most people, sijie (死節 virtue of dying) generally referred to dying for one's country especially at the collapse of one's dynasty. Chen, however, argued that only after one had avoided "living in vain" and "dying in vain", can one achieve the "virtue of dying". According to Chen, the jie in sijie should be read in the light of lijie (禮節 rites) and yinjie (音節 pitches and metres) in the sense that it had to be conducted in a precise way such as rites should be followed strictly and as pitches and metres required the tones and beats to be exact. Chen lamented that there were few people who could achieve sijie after the Xia, Yin and Zhou dynasties. Although Chen was disappointed at the great number of scholar-officials who since the three dynasties had died impulsive deaths, without regard to what was right or wrong, he was especially indignant to see that an enormous number of people had died in a similar way since the fall of the Ming dynasty.\textsuperscript{83}

One may well associate the above viewpoint with the concept of the contingency principle. However, they are not identical as in the latter concept the contingency principle was generally ranked lower than the everlasting principle. Notwithstanding the fact that the practice of the contingency principle may actually have allowed its followers to make more contributions to society in reality, it was still regarded as second best when compared to the everlasting principle.

Since the choice of life or death was of no significant difference as long as it was made in compliance with the dao, in evaluating a person, Qi Zhiqian 齊之千 did not employ as criteria that person's choice of life or death or other factors such as whether he committed suicide or was killed. His yardstick was whether that person had completely preserved his virtue (chengren 成仁). He said one could choose whether to live or to die. If one had no choice but to die then it did not matter whether one died by committing suicide or was killed by

\textsuperscript{83} Chen Que, "Sijie lun 死節論", \textit{ibid.}, \textit{juan 5}, p. 152. The designation "the three benevolent men in the Yin" was given by Confucius in \textit{The Analects} 18.1. For a brief account of Bigan, Weizi, and Jizi, see Sima Qian, \textit{Shiji, juan 3}, pp. 107–109. The analogy of Bigan with the Ming martyrs during the Ming-Qing transition by Chen Que was actually wrongly drawn. According to Sima Qian, Bigan, who persistently tried to stop his monarch King Zhou doing evil, was killed by King Zhou for that reason. That is to say, unlike the Ming martyrs, his death had nothing to do with the collapse of his dynasty. Moreover, unlike King Zhou who was treated with contempt and hatred by his subjects for his evil doings, Emperor Chongzhen, the last emperor of the Ming dynasty, was respected by his subjects for his suicide at the collapse of the dynasty.
others. The fact was that one had died. Why should they have to die in the same manner? If the criterion of judging a person was whether he had completely preserved his virtue, it was not necessary to ask whether he had chosen to die or not in the first place.84

Also, Wei Jirui 魏際瑞 (1620–1677) did not identify all the choices of death of the scholar-officials as an expression of siyi (死義 dying righteously). He said for some persons it was more righteous to live than to die, whereas for others even death was not enough to compensate for their faults.85

8. The Easy Consciences of the Martyrs Versus the Guilty Consciences of the yimin

Notwithstanding the fact that before their suicides many martyrs were advised not to die, they could often refute that advice in a just and forceful tone. When Ling Yiqu learned from his student Li 李 the news of Emperor Chongzhen's death, Ling decided to commit suicide. Li tried to calm Ling down and persuade him to follow the ancients who preserved their lives for the benefit of the dynasty. Nevertheless, Ling reprimanded Li harshly, asserting that if Li was a friend of morality and justice, they should encourage each other to fulfil the duty of loyalty. Li should not whimper like a child.86

Before Qi Biaojia's suicide, his friends You Hongsun 猶鴻孫 and Zhu Jiuyuan 祝季遠 discussed with him matters about ancient and modern loyal officials trapped in the transition of dynasties. His friends intended to persuade him to follow those officials who had undergone great suffering and waited in patience for the revival of their own dynasty. To Qi, the choice of death was an expression of loyalty. Thus, he disapproved of his friends' attempt to stop him from committing suicide. Qi thought that a man of virtue would express his love to his friend in a virtuous way. Spoiling a person could only belittle a person rather than turning him into a virtuous man. For this reason, good friends and brothers would help each other to attain morality and justice. If a person tried to prevent his friend or brother who had decided to die for a virtuous purpose from doing so, this person was a sinner under the Confucian ethical code.87

84 Qi Zhiqian, “Xie Li Bo'an laoshi zhuan xiangong zhuanshu 謝黎博堇老師譜先公傳書”, in his Jianzhai wenji 兼齋文集 (edition of nineteen juan with a supplement of four juan housed at the Harvard-Yenching Library, Harvard University), juan 3, p. 26b.
85 Wei Jirui, “Zailun siyizhuan shu 再論死義傳書”, in his Wei Bozi wenji 魏伯子文集 (contained in the Ningdu san Wei quanji), juan 2, p. 11a.
86 Mingji beilue, juan 21a, p. 513. For Ling Yiqu's official title and dates, see Note 43.
Moreover, despite the fact that martyrs felt sorrow for the death of the monarch and the collapse of the dynasty, they had peaceful minds about their own martyrdom. Provincial Graduate Zhu Yuan 祝淵 (1611–1645) claimed that he did not care whether his martyrdom would be recognized in history, as what most valuable to him was to have an easy conscience. 88

When Liu Zongzhou was starving himself to death, his student Wang Yuzhi 王毓芝 asked him about his state of mind. Liu replied that some people could not face their parents, wife, and sons in life; but he was able to face heaven and earth and his ancestors when he died. Some people strove for life and failed, but he sought death and achieved it. Some people always lived in anxiety and fear, but his mind was at peace. 89

In fact, what the martyrs sought was an easy conscience, regardless of other people's praise or ridicule, understanding or misunderstanding. On the contrary, despite the fact that some yimin put forward various views that martyrdom was not a duty for scholar-officials after the collapse of the Ming dynasty, or even reprimanded some martyrs for dying in vain, they could not help feeling guilty-conscience because they had not died as a martyr. Undoubtedly, as Liu Zongzhou said, they were living in anxiety and fear.

Huang Zongxi and Zhang Huangyan organised a volunteer corps to support the Prince of Lu after the Qing armies took Nanjing. Later when Huang felt that there was very little he could do and as the Qing government had decreed an order of arrest for all members of families of the active Ming loyalists, which meant that the life of his mother was jeopardized, he decided to abandon political activities and retire to his home. When Huang composed the epitaph for Zhang who had persisted to fight the Qing armies for almost two decades, he felt himself inferior to Zhang due to his choice of taking care of his mother. Huang also worried about whether people of later generations would accept his choice. 90

Qu Dajun claimed that he intended to lay down his life for the country when Guangzhou fell to the Manchus in 1646. He then joined his teacher Chen Bangyan 陳邦彥 (1603–1647), Supervising Secretary of the Office of Scrutiny for War, to organise a corps to attack Guangzhou. Chen was killed by the Qing armies after his defeat. Some of Chen's students also sacrificed their lives at the same time. Although Qu maintained that he had not died as a martyr because of

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88 See the notes in Chen Que's poem “Ku Zhuzi Kaimei 哭祝子開美”, Shiji of Chen Que ji, juan 7, p. 745.


his duty to his aged mother,\textsuperscript{91} in his biography of Chen, he revealed that he had pangs of conscience and dreaded to face his teacher and fellow students because he had not died as a martyr like them.\textsuperscript{92}

Furthermore, some yimin felt ashamed if they found that some others of similar status as themselves had died as martyrs, even though they did not know the latter personally. In his biography of the martyred Government Student Xu Wangjia, Wei Xi described that Xu Yuzhong 許玉重 (d. 1644), Government Student of Wumen, starved himself to death in the district academy in 1644. Wei had little doubt that the two students were of the same clan, and wondered why there were so many outstanding men among the Xu. Wei himself was also a former Government Student, but was dragging out an ignoble existence for the time being. He could not find a place to hide his shame from the two Xus.\textsuperscript{93}

Some yimin still had an uneasy conscience even if they did not compare themselves with the martyrs. For example, Zhou Yinghou 周穎侯 wished to commit suicide in 1644 and had written his last words in preparation for his death. He ultimately changed his mind because his eighty-year-old grandparents and aged parents begged him to do so. From then on he considered his existence a disgraceful one, even though he had retired from public life as a yimin.\textsuperscript{94}

On the other hand, some scholar-officials felt sorry for their unsuccessful attempted suicides. Censor He Hongren 何宏仁 managed to throw himself off a cliff in 1646. He did not die and was rescued by some scholars who urged him not to attempt suicide again. Then he went to Mount Taojie to become a monk in order to avoid being forced to take any Qing office. He gave his friend Li Mixia 李秘霞 a sealed letter and asked Li to keep it for him. Many years later, immediately before He's death, he asked Li to open and read the letter in which he lamented that he was not loyal to his monarch nor was he filial to his parents because he had failed to become a martyr. He demanded his body not be put in a coffin but before it was burnt, to be exposed to the deserts for three days in order to show his sin of disloyalty. He also demanded his ashes not be buried in his family graveyard in order to punish himself for his failure to fulfil the requirement of filial piety.\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{91} Qu Dajun, “Qutuo ji 屈沱記”, in his Wengshan wenchao 翁山文鈔 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1946), juan 2, p. 28b. (There are two p. 28 in this juan. Here is refered to the second page.) Also “Sishi xianyeshi zeng Bingbu shangshu Chen Yanye xiansheng aici 死事先業師贈兵部尚書陳年野先生哀辭”, Wengshan wenwai, juan 14, p. 1ab.

\textsuperscript{92} Qu Dajun, “Shunde Jishi Yanye Chengong zhuan 順德給事巖野陳公傳”, in Xu Xinfu 徐信符 (ed.), Wengshan yiwen ji 翁山佚文輯 (appended to the Qu Dajun's Wengshan wenchao), juan A, p. 14b.

\textsuperscript{93} Wei Xi, “Xu Xiucai zhuan 許秀才傳”, Wei Shuzi wenji, juan 17, p. 130a–b.

\textsuperscript{94} Fang Wen, “Zengbie Zhou Yinghou 贈別周穎侯”, Tushan ji, juan 3, p. 9b.

\textsuperscript{95} Wei Xi, “Ming Yushi Hegong Jiazhuang 明御史何公家傳”, Wei Shuji wenji, juan 17, p. 113a.

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Fu Dingquan 傅鼎銓 (d. 1649), Examining Editor of the Hanlin Academy, was rescued when he attempted to hang himself to death. A scar was left on his neck. Fu felt compunction everytime he was asked about it. But unlike He Hongren who retired in seclusion for the remainder of his life, Fu managed to die as a martyr in 1649 when he raised a corps in Fuzhou.  

Even the martyrs themselves felt uneasy before their martyrdom when they thought of their teachers, friends, and colleagues who had sacrificed their lives for the Ming dynasty. Chen Qianfu 陳潛夫 (1614–1646), Chief Minister of the Court of the Imperial Stud, determined to die not only for his monarch, but also for his friend Lu Pei to whom Chen felt inferior as Lu had died as a martyr one year before. Moreover, before Zhang Huangyan finally died as a martyr, he showed admiration for the many people who had sacrificed their lives in Shaoxing, and he felt ashamed of himself.

9. Epilogue

The views on martyrdom expressed by scholar-officials during the Ming-Qing transition are intricately complex. Although scholar-officials were concerned with the question who should die as a martyr to the Ming cause, there was no unanimous agreement reached. Both positive and negative comments can be found in every single case.

Some of the arguments on martyrdom were merely high-sounding. For example, no matter how some martyrs argued that “officials should sacrifice their lives for moral integrity so that both loyalty and filial piety would not be in arrears”, they in fact regarded loyalty more important than filial piety. Actually, they “died for the country but overlooked the family”. On the other hand, the emphasis of one's duty to one's parents by some scholar-officials was merely “an excuse to cover up their sin of not being able to die” for the country.

The views of the yimin are particularly worth special consideration. On the one hand, the yimin praised the martyrs and their martyrdom in general, notwithstanding the fact that they themselves had not sacrificed their lives. On the

96 Huangming sichao chengren lu, juan 8, p. 276a–b.
97 Ibid., p. 303b.
98 Shao Tingcai, Dongnan jishi, juan 9, p. 267.
99 The first quotation was from Chen Liangmo's writing which he wrote on a table after the fall of Beijing. The second quotation was from Chen's speech to his close friend Li Fangtai 李芳泰 before Chen committed suicide. See Mingji beilue, juan 21a, pp. 538–539.
100 See Chen Mo's 陳謨 (jinshi of 1712) preface to Li Tianzhi's 李天堙 (1591–1672) Shen yuan yi ji 順園遺集 (Qing edition housed at the Harvard-Yenching Library, Harvard University), juanshou 卷首, p. 8b.
other hand, they put forward various justifications based upon personal or public interests in order to explain, directly or indirectly, why certain types of people did not have to die as martyrs. Some even criticized certain martyrs had died in an “unreasonable and radical” (jiaoji 矯激) way,\textsuperscript{101} or “had died in vain”. However, these views had positive meanings at that time as they also stressed not “living in vain” after the collapse of the Ming dynasty. The concept of this long-lasting duty of living was one of the factors contributing to the prosperity of early Qing scholarship.

Nevertheless, it is ironic that those who were criticized could die boldly, whereas those who criticized lived with guilt and shame, to the extent of enduring a “life-long stress”;\textsuperscript{102} or treating death as “the utmost happiness in the land under heaven” and envying those friends who had died before them.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{101} See Fang Wen's “Guangping ye Shen Jiemin gong ci 廣平謁申節愍公祠”, Tushan xuji, juan 2, p. 7a. Fang himself did not agree with this view.

\textsuperscript{102} See the letter which Chao Mingsheng replied to Xu Fang's “Zhi Chao xiaolian Duanming shu 致巢孝廉端明書”, appended to Xu's letter in Xu's Juyitang ji, juan 3, p. 1a.

\textsuperscript{103} Chen Que, “Ji Wu Zhongmu wen 祭吳仲木文”, Wenji of Chen Que ji, juan 13, p. 307.