After the Manchus relocated the Qing capital from Manchuria to Beijing in 1644, many officials who had been trapped there joined the new government, whether voluntarily or reluctantly. They became turncoats. Although the dynastic calendar had changed overnight, prompting literati-officials’ identities also to change abruptly, their public and personal lives underwent complicated and uneven adaptations in the early Qing. The moral images of turncoat officials—produced in court spectacles, imperial propaganda, memorials, and literary and artistic works—illustrate interwoven changes and continuities in political culture across the dynastic divide.

In this new era of political trial, the dynamics of image politics seem both familiar and alien. Factionalism at court provides an excellent example. It persisted but had become more complicated: it now existed among Han officials across generations, among the Manchus, and between Han and Manchu officials. The Qing conquest complicated the dynamics of Han factionalism. After the death of Regent Dorgon in 1651, who dominated the court and ruled on behalf of the young emperor, Manchu factionalism unfolded in battles over turncoats’ moral performance. Further, unlike Dorgon, who had shunned and suppressed the rhetoric of factionalism, in the post-Dorgon era, the Shunzhi emperor himself created a new discourse of factionalism and employed it as a tool for asserting Manchu moral superiority. In these circumstances, the unstable image of what I call the “loyal turncoat” mediated Manchu and Han factionalisms.
Although the moral claims made for political purposes sounded similar to those of the late Ming, early Qing image politics dealt with new complexities in political concerns and brought about nuanced changes in Confucian moralism. Manchu rulers and Han subjects now negotiated trust and favor through the gendered image of the loyal turncoat. The process of such negotiations, in turn, altered the political implications of some zhongxiao rituals. In addition, in both factional contests and the consolidation of the conquest, early Qing politics that played out as moral struggles helped reconfigure the moral-political division of labor among the ruling elite.

The Manchus seem to have had no clear blueprint for governing in their minds. In those years of uncertainty, they improvised much—with the turncoats’ assistance—as they strove to carry out the great enterprise of the Qing. The images of the “loyal turncoat” as son, father, and husband were at the heart of political experiments.

IMAGES OF HAN FACTIONALISM: THE TURNCOAT’S HAIR AND CONCUBINE

In Shunzhi 2/5 (1645), the night before the turncoat Li Wen (1608–1647) shaved his head and adopted the Qing hairstyle, he had a dream about the spirit of his hair, which called itself a “remnant subject” of the Ming. In the dream, Li’s hair confronted his decision to shave his forehead. Li wept, but then replied: “Men have hair, just as plants and trees have branches and leaves. They flourish in spring and wither in autumn, not because spring is blessed and autumn is condemned. [Men have hair,] just as birds and beasts have feathers and fur. They shed in summer but grow thicker in winter, not because winter treats us better while summer does not. [Change] is beyond our control. Therefore we have to live with it.” Eventually, in the dream, Li convinced his hair. The next day, he shaved it off.

Dynastic cycles, like seasonal changes, follow cosmological laws. By 1644, there had been many dynastic changes in history; new dynasties, including those created by non-Han ruling houses, were retrospectively seen as legitimate. Commenting on dynastic change was a familiar exercise for literati-officials. However, actually living through one and making life-and-death decisions within this milieu was new. The Ming-Qing transition was thus a mixed experience for turncoats, both familiar and foreign.

Meanwhile, the Manchus had become familiar with the Confucian discourse before moving the capital to Beijing. They had legitimized
Moralizing, the Qing Way

their rule and justified aggression against the Ming by employing concepts such as the Mandate of Heaven and zhongxiao. Further, they also had some experience dealing with Han literati, both officials and nonofficials, in the process of state making and expansion.

Still, when they actually descended the south side of the Great Wall, they were overwhelmed by the complexity of the situation that awaited them. At court, for instance, a particularly thorny issue was the many configurations of “generations” among the turncoats, which made Han factionalism almost unfathomable.\(^3\) Transgenerational factional sentiments were simply too strong and too deeply entrenched, and they ran through nearly the entire metropolitan bureaucracy.

The Manchu ruling elite and Han officials quickly discovered that straight talk was counterproductive. This can be seen in the discussions of policies regarding head shaving and the former eunuch faction. Turncoats in particular had complicated relationships with, and diverse attitudes toward, the Manchu rulers. Some joined the government reluctantly, wanting to wait and see how the situation developed before fully committing themselves; others wanted only to save their own skins and were always looking for opportunities to quit. Some actively sought recognition from the new rulers; certain officials tried to show their loyalty by voluntarily shaving their heads. A mandate that Han men shave their foreheads was suspended briefly after it triggered vehement anti-Manchu resistance among the literati. But some officials, such as Sun Zhixie (1591–1647) and Li Ruolin (d. 1651), had moved quickly on their own to have their heads shaved. These officials emboldened the Manchus and made life more difficult for other colleagues.\(^4\)

Han collaborators who did not voluntarily shave their heads resisted the prospect of resuming this policy in different ways. In Shunzhi 2/5 (1645), the vocal censor Zhao Kaixin (jinshi 1634) submitted a most critical memorial attacking Li Ruolin. He invoked the conventional factional rhetoric that “evil officials could not serve the emperor with the Way.”\(^5\) Jin Zhijun (1593–1670), Zhao’s friend, immediately submitted a memorial, appearing to praise the Manchu rulers and criticize Zhao. However, its actual intent was to defend Zhao and plead against reimposing the mandate.

Shaving the head or keeping the hair cannot determine a man’s moral character. If it is wrong to claim that only those who keep the hair are good men, then should we not label all those who have shaved as evil? After all, the empire has been unified. Both Manchu and Han
are now Qing officials and serving Your Majesty together. Officials offer their service to the court with sincere devotion, not with their appearance. The court has employed and recognized its officials not because they have adopted a suitable outfit but because they have a sincere heart. In addition, Censor Zhao has learned about the court’s unambiguous policy of permitting men to keep their hair. Why was he overly concerned about the court changing its stance simply because some colleagues advocated otherwise? The more suspicion, the more confusion. The court has issued the edict reiterating that those who do not wish to shave should not be forced to do so. We should have stronger faith that the kingly way is based on human feelings. I sincerely hope that officials of all ranks maintain a harmonious relationship and collaborate in serving this virtuous court and pursuing a government of benevolence and righteousness. Do not quarrel over head and hair!

Stressing the importance of sincerity over appearance, Jin’s memorial urged leaving the subject unmentioned, pretending it was a nonissue. Sincerity could authenticate loyalty. As long as loyalty was associated with one’s heart and not one’s appearance, the court had no reason to press Han subjects to shave. Jin in fact sensed the danger in framing head shaving in political terms: Once this debate became explicitly associated with factionalism, there would be no middle ground left between shaving and not shaving. It would offer Dorgon an opportunity to instead use appearance to define loyalty and enforce head shaving among all turncoats. Indeed, Dorgon saw through Jin and explicitly dismissed his ambivalence. A strict head-shaving policy ensued.

Following this round of confrontation over head shaving and its devastating outcome, more violent clashes boiled up among turncoats at court when the news of Nanjing’s fall and the destruction of the Ming Hongguang regime arrived. In Shunzhi 2/7 (1645), Dorgon instructed that the Hongguang emperor and his top officials be brought to Beijing. Until this point, a month earlier, one turncoat had already memorialized against offering positions to the “evil officials of the Southern Ming government,” in particular Ma Shiying and Ruan Dacheng. In response, the court announced that Southern Ming officials had been granted amnesty and their previous misconduct or crimes should not be discussed. The censor Wu Da (jinshi 1634) persisted and memorialized against reappointing any officials who had been identified as former eunuch associates or had been responsible for ruining the Southern Ming. He singled out Ruan Dacheng in this
vehement warning, hinting at unusually intimate ties between Ruan and the pro-Manchu grand secretary Feng Quan (1595–1672), a former eunuch associate.\textsuperscript{10}

In the minds of such men, their identity as loyal officials was an extension of their Ming self-image, to which opposition to the eunuch faction remained central. There arose a wave of impeachments against Feng Quan, a seemingly perfect target. In Shunzhi 2/8 (1645), the censor Du Lide (1611–1691) attacked Feng for attempting to recruit Ruan-Ma.\textsuperscript{11} Soon, several other censors piled on against Feng. Among them, Li Senxian (jinshi 1640) adopted the strongest rhetoric, requesting that Feng and his son be executed.\textsuperscript{12} So many memorials condemned Feng that the court announced that such memorials would no longer be considered or circulated.\textsuperscript{13}

Dorgon summoned officials of the rival factions and questioned them. He decided that this was a case of slander aimed at pro-Manchu officials who had shaved their foreheads and had their families don Manchu clothes ahead of other officials. Dorgon, already well informed on Ming factionalism, questioned the censors, including Gong Dingzi, as to why they continued to indulge in Ming-style factionalism and tried to incriminate turncoats who were loyal to the Qing. Gong and his factional allies were admonished and humiliated.\textsuperscript{14}

After these confrontations, the next round of factional attacks was aimed at individual officials’ moral performance rather than a faction, and hence was less likely to provoke a collective reaction. Take the charges against Gong Dingzi as an example. Gong’s father died in Shunzhi 3/4 (1646). Following the custom of requesting an official honor for the deceased parent, he submitted a memorial before taking leave to return home to mourn.\textsuperscript{15} But a serious charge against Gong for his lack of zhongxiao was leveled by the censor Sun Poling (jinshi 1646), who demanded that Gong’s request be denied:

Gong Dingzi was a traitor to the Ming; he served as a censor in the rebel government. The Qing appointed him to the position of censor and then promoted him to the Court of the Imperial Stud. However, he does not devote himself to work in order to pay back the imperial favor. Instead, he knows only banqueting and drinking, as well as chasing entertainers. Years ago he spent a fortune to buy a courtesan, Gu Mei. He was infatuated with her and lavished gifts upon her. His infatuation made him the laughingstock of Jiangnan. He has ignored his parents, wife, and children. Even with the news of his father’s death, he has not stopped carousing. Now he has the audacity
to ask for an official honor for his father so he can show off in his hometown.\(^\text{16}\)

This depiction of Gong as a disloyal turncoat simultaneously questioned his ability or intention to fulfill the roles of a loyal subject, a filial son, and a responsible husband and father. His infatuation with a concubine defined his moral defects and led him to ignore his filial and familial responsibilities, which in turn called into question his loyalty to both the fallen Ming and the Qing. Earning burial sacrifice from the court for one’s deceased father was an important filial duty and honor for an official. On the basis of these charges, Gong, who had always been a filial son,\(^\text{17}\) was deprived of this privilege because his sexual indulgence had led him to abandon zhongxiao ethics. That was not the end of the insult. Gong was also demoted two degrees in rank before he departed for his hometown to complete the three-year mourning term.

The impeachment of Gong for his lack of filial piety and indulgence in sensual pleasures shed light on the inseparability of factionalism, regional literati networks, and officials’ personal lives. Censor Sun’s father was the aforementioned Sun Zhixie, a longtime factional enemy of the Donglin-identified officials. Sun Poling himself had just passed the metropolitan civil service examinations in Shunzhi 3/3 (1646) and received his first official appointment just before memorializing against Gong.\(^\text{18}\) The senior Sun fell from imperial favor due to his deplorable performance as governor of Jiangxi in Shunzhi 2–3 (1645–46). He had volunteered to lead campaigns there to suppress discontent and ensure the smooth transfer of power to the Qing, but he failed so miserably in the provincial capital of Nanchang that a censor impeached him for incompetence. Sun then reported that the thousands of former Ming royal family members residing in Nanchang should be considered a potential security concern. He suggested that the court disperse them to various counties or even to other provinces if they were disobedient.\(^\text{19}\)

Nanchang was one of the large cities designated to provide for a prince and his household in the Ming. By the fall of the Ming, the former Ming royal family members in the greater Nanchang area, distinctively surnamed Zhu, had a history of intermarriage with locally prominent families. For example, Gong Dingzi’s friend Li Yuanding (jinshi 1622) had married Zhu Zhongmei (fl. 1621–61), a daughter of the Ming royals.\(^\text{20}\) The Ming loyalist Peng Shiwang (1610–1683), a good friend of Gong’s and of a few others in Gong’s circle, had
married the daughter of the Ming Prince of Ruichang. Hence, the sociocultural bonds between former royal family members and local literati in the region were significant. An assault on Zhu-surnamed families meant an assault on the local elite. Dorgon rejected Sun Zhixie’s suggestions; instead Sun was summoned back to Beijing in Shunzhi 3/4 (1646) on the grounds that local institutions had been stabilized and order largely restored. This was apparently an excuse to replace him, since Jiangxi was becoming a huge headache for the court. In effect, Sun’s political career was buried in Jiangxi.

This complicated backstory explains the sudden personal attacks on Gong Dingzi by the junior Sun soon after the elder Sun’s recall. Gong, an Anhui native whose ancestors originated in Jiangxi, had banded together with friends who hailed from that region, especially the aforementioned colleagues whose hometown was in the greater Nanchang area. The mutual detestation between this group and the Suns thus drew from several layers of sociopolitical friction and hostility: the Donglin-Fushe’s history of opposition to the eunuch associates in the late Ming, grudges between turncoats with different relationships to the Manchus, and different regional identities.

Factional enmity in the form of personal attack may also help explain the unusual punishment ordered for Song Yizhen (jinshi 1642), son of a prominent family in the greater Nanchang area. He had already been fulfilling official responsibilities as a commissioner in Hunan for more than half a year when he lost his job for having reported belatedly to his post. His punishment came immediately after Gong Dingzi was attacked and demoted. The language used in the official document concerning Song’s misconduct demands our attention. It specifically points out that his delay was caused by a detour to his hometown “in the company of a concubine.” If we compare this accusation with language used in similar documents submitted to the Board of Personnel reporting other delayed arrivals at new posts, it becomes clear that the phrase “visit his hometown in the company of a concubine” was unusual. Upon hearing this very personal charge, Song immediately confined himself to his residence and refused to continue with any official duties, even though a special session of the civil service examinations in Hunan was quickly approaching and demanded his urgent attention.

This series of personal attacks on Gong Dingzi and his Jiangxi friends reflects the shift in Han factional struggles from open confrontation to attacks on individual officials’ moral performance. Until
Regent Dorgon’s unexpected death in Shunzhi 7/12 (1651), Han factionalism appeared to have been brought under control, even though it persisted in a less confrontational, less political fashion. Soon, however, the image of the loyal turncoat would take on new significance under the Shunzhi emperor, whose first task in the post-Dorgon era was to establish his own authority.

MANCHU FACTIONALISM AND TURNCOATS’ ZHONGXIAO

After Dorgon died, Manchu factionalism erupted openly in the form of battles over turncoats’ moral performance. The ways in which the language of zhongxiao was deployed by the Manchu ruler and his officials defy simple generalization, however. They indicate that the Shunzhi emperor’s experiments with ruling techniques went beyond mere ideological promotion of Confucian practices.

Dorgon’s Dominance and Demise

The changing images of the turncoat official Huang Tu’an (jinshi 1637) corresponds neatly to some key moments in Manchu factional infighting. After his successful military suppression of the rebels and bandits in Yizhou near Beijing, Huang was promoted to the governorship of Gansu in Shunzhi 2/4 (1645). He attempted to turn down the promotion with the excuse that he had to take care of his aged mother, but his petition was firmly rejected. He was ordered to report immediately to his new post in the northwest where the rebels were still many and active. About a year later, Huang was made governor of Ningxia. He again petitioned to retire to take care of his mother. The Board of Personnel determined that Huang’s petitions were not really motivated by filial devotion but were simply attempts to avoid challenging appointments to war-torn areas in the northwest. Lacking loyal commitment and sincere filiality, this official should expect to lose his official status. Just this occurred in Shunzhi 3 (1646), when Dorgon was consolidating his dominance over Manchu nobility rivals and also tightening his control of the Han bureaucracy, exploring ways to turn it into an obedient and efficient governing machine.

Several top officials, led by Grand Secretary Fan Wencheng (1597–1666), felt the Board of Personnel should not have so crudely dismissed Huang’s request. Indeed, Huang had an eighty-one-year-old mother and his plea to retire and fulfill his filial duties was completely
legitimate, Fan observed. These officials hoped to discuss the case with Dorgon but failed to find an opportunity. So they reported the case to Prince Jiagalang, Dorgon’s major rival and co-regent. Jiagalang told the officials to wait and did not intervene. Nonetheless, Dorgon disciplined Fan Wencheng and his colleagues for breaching protocol and taking the matter to Jiagalang. Huang Tu’an, Jiagalang, and the officials involved with the matter all received some form of punishment. Huang was judged to have faked filial piety and failed to demonstrate true loyalty.

After Dorgon passed from the scene and the Shunzhi emperor began to assert his own authority, in Shunzhi 9 (1652), with the support of Fan Wencheng, Huang’s zhongxiao commitment earned him back his official status. Huang’s political misfortune in Shunzhi 3–4 (1646–47) conveniently served as evidence of Dorgon’s mishandling of the government: by punishing an official for petitioning to fulfill his filial duty, Dorgon had ignored the principle of governing with filial piety. This maneuvering allowed the emperor to justify the elimination of his political rivals.

Whereas Huang’s filial commitment helped earn back his career, by contrast, Grand Secretary Song Quan (1598–1652) lost his job due to an alleged lack of zhongxiao. Merely two months after Dorgon’s death, the case against Song emerged, put forth on the same day by two different censors, Chen Diaoyuan (jinshi 1639) and Wang Tingjian (jinshi 1646). Chen leveled two charges: first, Song Quan’s memorial to the Shunzhi emperor, in which he was expected to offer insightful suggestions on policies for the post-Dorgon period, was empty and vague; second, Song had violated the principle of zhongxiao by acceding to Dorgon’s duoqing order and presiding over the ceremonies of the metropolitan civil service examinations when he should be mourning his mother.

Wang Tingjian’s memorial elaborated on the question of zhongxiao: “[Proper mourning over] the loss of one’s parent is a matter of following the traditional rules of the Three Mainstays and Five Constant Virtues (san’gang wuchang). While Song Quan’s service might have been needed by the government, which could justify his duoqing, did he really have to don celebratory garments to interview the examination candidates? He cared about cultivating the mentor-disciple bond but ignored his filial duties.”

Both censors concluded by urging the emperor to announce the arrival of a new political era by dismissing the unfilial, disloyal Song
immediately. The court assumed the posture that it would not wrong Song. At the emperor’s request, the Board of Personnel was charged with “investigating” the case and reporting the results of their discussion to the emperor. A month later, the board decided that the two censors’ accusations against Song were true and recommended that he be ordered to retire immediately. The emperor “agreed” with their suggestions. Song promptly left the capital and returned to his hometown in Henan, where he died of an illness one year later.

By portraying Song Quan as an unfilial son and disloyal official, these attackers took aim at the remnants of Dorgon’s clique without explicitly saying so. It was Dorgon who had ordered the duoqing and appointed Song to preside over the examinations when he should have been in mourning. The official record shows that in Shunzhi 5/12 (1649), “the Grand Secretary Song Quan requested [leave] to observe mourning for his deceased mother. The imperial edict ordered: since the Grand Secretariat deals with a great deal of important business, [Song Quan] should continue his duties as usual but could observe mourning privately to complete his zhongxiao (yi quan zhongxiao).” Never a factionalist himself, Song was implicated because Dorgon had trusted his administrative skills. Once Dorgon had been politically denounced, Song’s case offered an opportunity for the Shunzhi emperor to condemn Dorgon and get rid of his former followers. Song’s duoqing record made him a convenient case the emperor could use to press factional purges and flaunt his newly acquired authority. This episode reveals the court’s preference for negotiation through the language of Confucian ethics over overt purge when it could be avoided. At the same time, however, Manchu infighting unwittingly reinforced the association between the loyal turncoat and Confucian ethics.

The Shunzhi Emperor’s Experimentation

The post-Dorgon court shed the regent’s high-handedness but unleashed Han factionalist energies and led to new rivalries among the Manchus. The Shunzhi emperor was inconsistent in his ruling style, but his tireless adjustments and experimentation makes his reign fascinating to the historian. A revealing example was how he sent political messages through the image of Song Quan. In his battles with Dorgon’s faction, the emperor endorsed the censors’ relentless attacks on Song’s lack of zhongxiao. But merely a year later, upon
Song’s death, the emperor rejected some officials’ suggestion that the Song family should not receive an imperial condolence. He insisted on granting the Songs the most prestigious mourning allowances, such as nine imperial mourning altars, a posthumous honorary title for Song, officials to perform mourning, and an imperial edict of mourning. This de facto restoration of Song Quan’s moral image reveals the emperor’s interest in allowing the language of Confucian ethics to play a prominent but nuanced role in politics.

The emperor’s attitude toward the repeated moral attacks on another turncoat, Dorgon’s reliable ally Chen Mingxia (1601–1654), offers an even more interesting example of how this ruling technique helped the emperor and the turncoats navigate the matrix of intertwining Han and Manchu factionalisms. Chen came under attack about two months after Song Quan’s retirement. The assaults began with a lengthy memorial by a censor named Zhang Xuan (d. 1651), which listed ten crimes Chen had supposedly committed. The main charges included promoting Dorgon’s agenda, affiliating with former eunuch associates, mishandling personnel matters as a result of factional concerns and self-interest, violating mourning norms, and so on. That Zhang listed Chen’s betrayal of zhongxiao ethics among the top charges is highly instructive. He makes the familiar connection between Chen’s disloyalty—to the dynasty and to the young Shunzhi emperor himself—and his lack of filial devotion, arguing that after his father died, “[Chen] cared only about his career and showed no grief. He found excuses to take the duoqing order. Dorgon granted him five hundred taels of silver and a leave to return home to properly bury his father. However, he rushed back to court to secure power and Dorgon’s favor, ignoring his father’s burial. . . . He cares little about the emperor or his father and therefore should be condemned.”

To stress the severity of Chen’s violations, Zhang invoked Song Quan’s case: “The former Grand Secretary Song Quan has been ordered to leave the government because he supervised the metropolitan examinations during the mourning period. Chen Mingxia’s circumstances are ten times worse than Song’s!”

Chen’s impeachment was followed by one unexpected turn after another. First, the all-Manchu panel of officials who delivered judgment did not refute Zhang’s accusations but suggested that because Chen’s duoqing had happened a long time before and was covered by an imperial amnesty, Chen should not be punished for it retroactively. Instead Zhang was executed shortly thereafter by the order of
Tantai, the Manchu president of the Board of Personnel and Chen’s ally. Merely three months after that, things took an even more dramatic turn. The Shunzhi emperor accused Tantai of having formed a faction with the late Dorgon, claiming that Tantai had executed Zhang and dismissed the charges against Chen in order to protect factional interests. Tantai himself was then executed in Shunzhi 8/8 (1651). Still relying on Chen as a political tool, the emperor did not order severe punishment for Chen but rather used his case to strategically position himself amid the Manchu and Han factionalisms.

One year later, a second complaint against Chen for lacking zhongxiao was lodged. The turncoat Luo Guoshi (jinshi 1637) had impeached Han officials on the Board of Personnel for manipulating personnel decisions for factional reasons. He presented as examples the delayed reappointments of two friends, Hao Jie (jinshi 1637) and Gong Dingzi, after they had fulfilled their respective mourning terms. Luo argued that manipulating personnel policy not only indicated corruption, but more seriously, demonstrated officials’ neglect of the importance of zhongxiao. Those who had dutifully completed mourning were not being rewarded. This appeared to be criticism of the current board president, but Luo’s real target was Chen Mingxia, who was given a duoqing and did not mourn for the full three years for his deceased father. In this memorial, he painted Chen as an enemy of zhongxiao. Although there seemed to some consensus that Chen had indeed obstructed the reappointments of Gong and Hao, the Shunzhi emperor did not act on this charge. He still needed Chen in the Grand Secretariat, and no personnel action ensued.

In the end, a damaging impeachment leveled by Grand Secretary Ning Wanwo (1593–1665) offered the emperor a timely opportunity to get rid of Chen Mingxia. Chen was executed in Shunzhi 11/3 (1654). Mysteries surrounding this case still persist. Some scholars believe that Chen was suspected of Ming loyalism, while others argue that the emperor grew alarmed by signs of Chen’s interference in government procedures. It seems that Chen’s deep involvement in both Han and Manchu factional infighting finally appeared to challenge imperial authority and provoked the emperor’s suspicions. Pertinent to our investigation here is the recurring charge of Chen’s violation of zhongxiao: Ning’s memorial cites “public opinion” that Chen lacked zhongxiao and tolerated his son’s criminal behavior.

These three attacks on Chen Mingxia during Shunzhi 8–11 (1651–54) show the flexible ways in which the language of zhongxiao operated
in political communications endorsed by the Shunzhi emperor. As the
cases of Song Quan and Chen Mingxia show, it was the emperor who
determined whether and when a Han turncoat could be considered a
zhongxiao exemplar. In his efforts to manage the interlocking Man-
chu and Han factionalisms, the image of the loyal turncoat as filial
son seems to have become his most adaptive, effective tool.

TRUST, FAVOR, AND THE RECOGNITION
OF FILIAL EXEMPLARS

The pervasive, complex nature of early Qing factionalism was one
of the factors that made the political environment full of uncertainty
and distrust. Factional competition went beyond court intrigues and
threatened the consolidation of the Qing conquest, in particular, the
military and political campaigns to suppress resistance. Maneuvers
around the gendered image of the loyal turncoat shed light on the
many trials of the Manchu rulers and their turncoat subjects. Confucian
ethics provided a language of communication by which they
could negotiate trust and favor.

Building trust and displaying favor through marriage alliances had
proved effective for Manchu and Mongol nobles since the beginning
of the Qing empire. However, this method generated few sustain-
able benefits in Manchu attempts to secure loyalty from turncoats.46
Manchu rulers considered giving a Manchu woman to a Han official
an explicit gesture of trust, in conformity with certain social prac-
tices the Manchus retained even after coming to Beijing.47 But it also
provided Regent Dorgon a means of surveillance and control.48 For
example, Feng Quan’s loyal service to the Qing court earned him
a marriage to a Manchu woman arranged by Dorgon (cihun Man-
zhou).49 Another turncoat, Hong Chengchou, was also accorded this
honor. Both Feng and Hong were already married, but their Manchu
women could not be subjected to the strict wife-concubine hierarchy.
Therefore, some sort of special arrangements had to be made. The
familial upheaval and breach of literati-official gender norms caused
by such an “honor” were not easily managed.50

Han literati in general, the turncoats’ social base, did not neces-
sarily reject Manchu-Han liaisons per se, but they probably preferred
arrangements that accommodated the Confucian gender order. The
Manchu lady bestowed upon Feng Quan was termed not a “con-
cubine” but a “secondary wife” (ciqi), in clear contradiction of
Confucian norms. When she died in Shunzhi 10 (1653), she was given the posthumous title of “first-rank lady” (Yi pin furen). The literatus-historian Tan Qian mentioned this in his documentation of a sojourn in Beijing, suggesting that this honor was inappropriate, since Feng’s Han wife had already received a title from the Ming as his official wife. When Feng’s Manchu woman obtained a prestigious official title from the new government, the statuses of the women became confused. As an ill-fated foot-binding ban demonstrated, interference with Confucian gender norms produced no benefits for the Manchus but only incurred higher political costs. The image of the Han husband of a Manchu secondary wife was simply not compelling for the elite.

Hence, Manchu rulers had to look elsewhere for more effective ways of negotiating trust and favor with turncoats. As they became invested in communicating through the language of zhongxiao, the turncoats responded accordingly. This process, in turn, changed the political implications of some zhongxiao rituals, such as the three-year mourning term.

The Manchu rulers quite frequently issued duoqing orders to Han officials, preventing them from resigning so that they could mourn for the required duration. At first glance, such orders seemed to confirm some Han literati’s claim that the Manchus were barbaric and morally inferior. Han literati’s loyalty to the fallen Ming and implicit criticisms of the Qing came to center on mourning rituals, and especially the issue of duoqing, the practice of which they saw as emblematic of moral decline. However, duoqing also operated as a crucial instrument of communication in the early Qing. The more frequent issuances of duoqing did not necessarily signify a disassociation between filiality and loyalty, nor did such orders in any way diminish the importance of zhongxiao as a general expression of morality. Rather, the focus of zhongxiao rituals was moving elsewhere: when the Manchu ruler issued a duoqing order or permission for an official to retire to take care of his parents, he was sending a signal of trust and favor (or lack of them).

We can detect a pattern of duoqing orders in this period. When an official’s service was urgently needed or trusted, the Manchu rulers would insist on a duoqing order. If these political figures later lost imperial favor, accusations of violating zhongxiao ethics could arise and be employed as a strategy of moral-political attack. Meanwhile, returning home to fulfill one’s filial duties (zhongyang) or briefly
visiting parents (guixing) were negotiated privileges. Even though many Han officials continued to follow mourning rules by resigning from office to mourn for twenty-seven months, as soon as obtaining a leave to mourn or take care of one’s parents had to be negotiated, it became an opportunity for officials to display publicly their zhong-xiao and for the court to convey trust and favor. The importance of negotiating over such requests and expectations as a political tool increased accordingly. Consequently, the court now, by the very act of contemplating officials’ requests to fulfill filial obligations, could take credit for promoting Confucian ethics even when it deprived some officials of the opportunity to complete mourning. In other words, duoqing was being transformed from an undesirable, controversial measure into a technique of ruling and a site of politicking. In the early Qing, turncoats’ experiences exemplified how this experiment proceeded and the nuanced political effects their images as loyal turncoats now had.

Testing (Dis)Trust: The Case of Hong Chengchou

In Chongzhen 15 (1642), following a devastating defeat in the northeast, the Ming official-general Hong Chengchou (1593–1665) surrendered and began to serve the Qing after a period of imprisonment. At the time, the Ming court still believed that Hong had died in battle. Hong played a major role in the Qing conquest of southern China after 1644. He was made the top official in Jiangnan. But he still had to earn the rulers’ trust.

During Shunzhi 2–4 (1645–47), a critical moment in the Qing pacification of the southeast, it became clear that dissatisfaction among the collaborators and renewed appeals for resistance were roiling localities around the country. Much of this development could be blamed on oppressive Manchu control over surrendered Han civil and military officials as well as the Han population. At this moment, Hong’s political life was no less unpredictable than the volatile situation in the south. Hong instinctively realized it would have been extremely risky for him to lead the campaign to “pacify” Jiangnan. Like many other turncoats, the political and social connections he had cultivated in his many years of service to the Ming could have easily implicated him in a case of sedition in this hotbed of resistance.

Trust had to be mutual between Dorgon and Hong. Neither wanted to make a fatal misstep, nor would they abandon their joint enterprise
unhesitatingly. In early Shunzhi 4 (1647), the exposure of a massive anti-Qing network in Jiangnan, whose main leader had been Hong’s subordinate, seriously tested the relationship between Hong and Dorgon. Hong’s first attempt to remove himself from this dangerous situation occurred at the end of Shunzhi 4/2 (1647), when he submitted a filial son’s request to observe mourning for his father, who had died five years before (in Chongzhen 16/9 [1643]). That same month, some of Hong’s family members and servants from his hometown, Quanzhou in Fujian, had gone to Nanjing to join him. Hong submitted a memorial claiming that this was when he first learned of his father’s death. This memorial did not go through regular channels to reach Dorgon’s desk. Hong had a personal messenger deliver the memorial, which read in part:

A servant called Chen Ying’an had come to Jiangnan with my brother and son. He was the first to arrive at my office on 2/20. I summoned him and asked about my family, and heard the shocking news that my father, due to years of illness, had passed away on the twenty-seventh day of the ninth month in the year of guiwei (i.e., Chongzhen 16, a Ming reign year that Hong avoided using). Upon hearing this, I was struck by deep sorrow. I recalled that in the ninth month of the year of guiwei, I was being taken care of by Your Majesty in [the earlier capital] Shengjing. During the years when my father was ill, I failed to serve at his side. Nor could I fulfill my mourning duty upon his death. An unfilial son is not a good man. During the transition I moved first to Beijing and then to Jiangnan. Letters from [my home in] Fujian could not reach me. Then since I was appointed to lead the campaign in Jiangnan, in the past three and half years I dared not think of personal matters. Now having learned about my father’s death, I cannot stop weeping in my office. . . . Observing the three-year mourning shows a son’s filial devotion and is common practice everywhere. I beg Your Majesty and Imperial Regent to allow me to return to Beijing to complete three years of mourning for my father.58

This image of a loyal turncoat conveyed three extremely important—and delicate—messages to Dorgon. First, Hong highlighted his loyalty to the new dynasty by invoking his days in the old Qing capital as well as his service during the pacification campaign in Jiangnan. He did not request to return to his hometown in Fujian to mourn, as dictated by mourning norms. Instead, he asked to “return to Beijing,” showing that this was not an excuse to withdraw from service to the Qing and that he was not plotting against the regime. Second, he suggested that he understood many friends, former and current colleagues, and even relatives might have become involved in seditious activities, but
he had isolated himself from personal connections and had dedicated himself to the Qing cause. Presumably this self-imposed isolation had prevented Hong from learning about his father’s death sooner. Lastly, Hong asked for a gracious way to excuse himself from this mission and for Dorgon to appoint a trustworthy official to replace him if Dorgon so wished.

This move proved to be politically savvy, leaving room for both sides to contemplate, observe, and negotiate carefully. The subsequent months brought the arrest and killing of some high-profile Ming loyalists. Exchanges about this filial son’s strong desire to mourn for his father tested the degree of Dorgon’s (dis)trust. Even if Hong could not send or receive letters from home before 1644, and even if it was true that he had significantly limited the amount of personal communication with his old colleague-friends, it was unlikely that he had not learned of his father’s death until Shunzhi 4 (1647). Before the arrival of the first group of family members in Nanjing, since Shunzhi 3 (1646), communication had taken place between his office and home in order to make travel arrangements, especially on the domestic front, which was significantly complicated by two problems: the presence of his Manchu bride and his mother’s refusal to join her turncoat son.59 When they communicated about these matters, the death of his father had to be one of the first things reported to him.

Would Dorgon be willing to go along with Hong’s story and negotiate with him through the zhongxiao image Hong presented? In fact, Dorgon accepted the image Hong projected in his missive. In reply to Hong’s request, the imperial order expressed sympathy for the Hong family’s loss, but directed Hong—because the court relied on his talents in this campaign—to observe the mourning rituals in his official Nanjing residence, so that he could “fulfill both loyalty and filial piety” (zhongxiao liang quan). This short response closed with a statement that the court was weighing its options and asked Hong to wait for further instructions.60 In other words, the court and Hong had reached a mutual understanding that he was not to be implicated in the resistance movement around him; the court trusted him to a certain degree and would not easily lose faith in him and his military and administrative capabilities.

However, as more anti-Manchu plots across Jiangnan came to light and some of Hong’s former colleagues and friends were implicated, both his anxiety and Dorgon’s suspicions quickly escalated. Hong renewed his request for a mourning leave in Shunzhi 4/4 (1647) and
received another, similar reply. Finally, in Shunzhi 4/7, it was decided
that Hong would be granted a leave to complete mourning in Beijing
and the official Ma Guozhu (d. 1666) would replace him.61 Between
this time and his return to the capital, Hong insisted on including the
phrase “Hong Chengchou in observance of mourning in office” (jìn
shòuzhì Hong Chéngchóu) when referring to himself in memorials.62

The court collaborated in dressing up his transfer as a gesture
toward governing with filial piety, noting that it should be publicized
as an instance of allowing a loyal official to fulfill his filial duties.
After returning to Beijing, Hong participated in a public event that
promoted the Qing court’s posture: he delivered a lecture to the new
jìnshí cohort on the meaning of the Confucian teaching of zhóng-
xióo.63 A decision based on suspicion turned into a manifestation of
imperial favor and a display of the court’s commitment to “govern-
ing with filial piety” through its recognition of a loyal official’s filial
devotion.

If Dorgon’s decision to let Hong resign and observe mourning ritu-
als for his long-deceased father sent a message of trust tinged with
suspicion in Shunzhi 4 (1647), then in contrast, the duòqíng order
issued by the Shunzhi emperor in Shunzhi 9/5 (1652), upon the death
of Hong’s mother, was crystal clear. Hong had just survived the
emperor’s latest round of factional persecutions aimed at Dorgon’s
associates and was deemed trustworthy enough to supervise the most
difficult military campaigns in southern China. Hong requested a
mourning leave, but the emperor refused to grant it. Instead, he told
Hong to continue his service while observing mourning rituals pri-
vately.64 Significant trust was confirmed in this duòqíng order.

Testing Favor: The Case of Feng Quan

Hong Chéngchóu steadily secured imperial trust and favor with his
carefully crafted image of the loyal turncoat—a simple man who
concerned himself with nothing other than military campaigns and
familial duties. Feng Quan, another Han grand secretary, had a rather
different experience. He was a bearable choice among worse or less
controllable turncoats at court, anxious about losing imperial favor.
His factionalist baggage and insecurity, and the Shunzhi emperor’s
mixed feelings about him, colored their communication over Feng’s
filial performance. It intrigued contemporary literati who were paying
close attention to court politics.
When Dorgon died and the Shunzhi emperor began purging Dorgon’s men, Feng, widely seen as a factionalist trusted by the late regent, seemed to be desperately trying to stay relevant. In Shunzhi 8 (1651), upon Song Quan’s departure, the emperor ordered Feng to retire, too, but later summoned him back. In the ensuing years, imperial favor was at best inconsistent and often mixed with contempt. Between Shunzhi 10 and 13 (1653–56), the upper echelon of Han officials had to ride out dangerous instability. Of these officials, Chen Mingxia was executed, and Gong Dingzi became head of the Censorate only to be demoted to the very bottom of the metropolitan bureaucracy with astonishing speed. Feng offered his service wherever the emperor needed him. After Shunzhi 13, when he was ordered to retire, the emperor kept him nearby for some time as a consultant. He was an obedient and convenient tool.

Politically, the emperor had vacillated between demoting and promoting Feng. However, he showed favor by celebrating Feng’s mother’s longevity and Feng’s filiality, frequently permitting Feng to take short leaves to visit his mother and having garments and portraits made for her by palace staff. Feng’s celebration of his mother’s birthday in late Shunzhi 11 (1654) became a well-attended *zhongxiao* spectacle at which his colleagues elaborated on the significance of being granted such short leaves. These arrangements benefited both the emperor and Feng. They allowed Feng to avoid a long period of absence from the court and the prospect of losing imperial patronage due to such an absence; they also earned the emperor ringing praise for his commitment to “governing with filial piety.”

On Shunzhi 12/2/16 (1655), Feng once again requested leave to visit his sickly mother, whose condition had deteriorated drastically. Fearing that this short leave might be extended indefinitely by the emperor, who seemed to be less and less interested in keeping him at court, Feng obviously waited until the last minute, because his mother died before he could reach home in Zhuozhou, which neighbored Beijing. Then Feng requested mourning leave. The Shunzhi emperor ordered a *duoqing*, telling him to mourn privately and continue to serve at court. Feng proceeded to request imperial burial sacrifices and obtained them. By meticulously carrying out the protocols surrounding a *duoqing* order, the emperor seemed to indicate his intention to keep Feng at hand for a while longer. However, in less than a year, the emperor ordered Feng’s permanent retirement.
Contemporaries read the exchange between the emperor and Feng Quan over the latter’s *zhongxiao* image with deep interest and extracted political messages from it. In some people’s eyes, Feng’s request to complete the three-year mourning term was merely a superficial gesture toward filial piety for political purposes. To these observers, the emperor was not fooled. For example, the literatus Tan Qian, who was staying with a Hanlin Academician and was well informed on court politics during this time, included in his diary a celebratory essay he composed to praise Feng’s *zhongxiao* on behalf of his official patron and friends. But Tan also documented and mocked Feng’s superficial filiality. He recorded that Feng, by writing to the emperor about his mother’s death and conveying his seemingly strong desire to observe the three-year mourning term, simply aimed to keep the communication with the emperor flowing and to secure a *duoqing*. The existence of both entries in one book shows that officials and the literati commonly communicated political messages through their *zhongxiao* image.

Tan’s account provides rich information about how this sort of delicate communication proceeded between the emperor and officials:

Qing rituals, such as those regarding mourning, all follow those of the Ming. . . . [Upon his mother’s death,] Feng was just compiling a book to secure favor and a *duoqing* order (*qifu*). He reported the death of his mother. The imperial edict expressed earnest condolence. However, wise men knew that Feng was using this only to shorten the mourning term. He then indeed received the imperial order of *duoqing*. Although he resisted the order twice, his language was not strong. Feng told others: “I could not do anything [about the *duoqing* order]. The Qing dynasty does not value mourning for deceased parents.” One hundred days later, Feng Quan went back to office, even though the emperor did not send for him; nor did the emperor ask to see him. In the course of spending months on his book project, finally Feng Quan was able to meet with the emperor together with fellow grand secretaries. His Majesty’s attitude was clear. . . . Officials today all observe proper mourning. Feng Quan alone did not want to comply with the norm. Earlier, Song Quan and Chen Mingxia had been granted *duoqing*. So Feng Quan hoped to follow suit.

It is certainly inaccurate for Tan to claim that officials all completed the three-year mourning term because the Qing inherited the Ming system with regard to this practice. Nonetheless, his claims reveal the public impression that Feng tried desperately to retain imperial favor and that the Shunzhi emperor was the one who stipulated when and how a turncoat could successfully display a *zhongxiao* image.
Contemporary interpretations of Feng’s loyal turncoat image, as reflected in Tan Qian’s diary, demonstrate that officials and the literati read with utmost care the smallest details in the exchange between the emperor and turncoats about filial piety, even though they risked overinterpretation and misinterpretation. Tan’s account also unwittingly affirms that people were aware of the subtle change in the implications of imperial decisions about officials’ filial practices. The familiar association of loyalty and filial piety remained in the image of the loyal turncoat, but the focus of zhongxiao rituals was shifting. No longer did turncoats’ fulfillment of filial duties alone demonstrate their zhongxiao virtue. Now the process and effort of negotiating over when and how that performance should take place was a crucial part of political communication. A related change in image politics brought about by the political experiments in the Shunzhi reign was the reconfiguration of the moral-political division of labor among the ruling elite.

A DISCIPLINING COURT AND MANCHU SUPERIORITY

From the very beginning of the Qing, competition for moral superiority occupied a central place in politics for both Manchu rulers and turncoats. In Shunzhi 3/4 (1646), the first metropolitan civil service examinations of the Qing dynasty were held. The essay topic on policy spoke to the Manchus’ early experience with Han bureaucrats and reflected a particular kind of moral-political pose. Toward the end, the essay question stated: “To accomplish the great enterprise of the empire, we must unify everyone’s heart and will. The Manchu way of successful governing (Manzhou zhi zhi) derives from prudent officials and sincere people. Today, what should we do to make sure Manchu and Han officials, as well as the common people, share the same will and goal?” The notion of Manzhou zhi zhi, the “Manchu way of successful governing,” reversed the self-serving Han discourse of moral superiority and assigned to Manchu rulers the role of morally transforming Han officials, not vice versa. The notion of “the Manchu way” cleverly appropriated Confucian vocabulary to construct Manchu superiority.

This examination question foresaw the entanglement of factionalism and competition for moral superiority. As pointed out earlier, many layers of political division had become crisscrossed in the Shunzhi reign. Further complicating the situation, after reclaiming power
from Regent Dorgon, the Shunzhi emperor appropriated a late-Ming factional terminology, *Nan-Bei dang* (Southerner-Northerner factional divide), and used it in a blatantly self-serving fashion against Han officials. Because the Qing first conquered the north, northerners enjoyed a more prominent standing at the beginning of the new dynasty than they had in the late-Ming metropolitan bureaucracy, especially in the top echelons of government. Still, the so-called Northerner-Southerner divide did not really correspond to the sociopolitical realities of the early Qing. Additionally, although the factional leaders of these two camps allied themselves with rival Manchu aristocrats, the Shunzhi emperor appropriated the language of *Nan-Bei dang* to chastise Han officials for protecting Han interests against Manchu exploitation. Therefore, the idea of Southerner-Northerner factionalism proved an effective excuse for ethnic discrimination and persecution. This rhetoric allowed the Shunzhi emperor to discipline his wayward turncoat subjects. Its ethnic dimension was framed in such a way that the turncoats’ collective moral image would suffer the most. It was a trope in the Shunzhi emperor’s image politics through which he asserted Manchu—and his personal—superiority.

The emperor’s disciplining project took shape when his personal life became a target of criticism among Han officials. The young emperor’s sexual life seemed to be attracting attention of all sorts and might have truly worried Han officials. In Shunzhi 10 (1654), the censor Guo Yikun warned the emperor not to pursue potency-enhancing medicine and suggested that he moderate his sexual activities. Guo was scolded for “remonstrating to gain fame” (*guming*). Then another censor, Ji Kaisheng (1627–1659), pleaded with the emperor to stop the practice of selecting young women from Yangzhou and fetching them to the imperial palaces. Ji’s criticism, whether based on rumor or not, did not exceed his responsibilities as a Confucian official. But it outraged the emperor so much that he had Ji exiled and blocked him from benefiting from any amnesties issued during the emperor’s lifetime.

Manchu and Han officials during this period also vocally discussed another contentious matter concerning the emperor’s personal life: his complete dismissal of the first empress and his attempt to replace the second within merely two years. The emperor’s relationships with his imperial wives and consorts, in particular his unrestrained expressions of affection toward certain women against the expressed wishes of the dowager empress, set Han officials back on
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their heels. Dismissing the empress without any moral justifications, but simply because she fell out of the emperor’s favor, was considered a sign of disorder at the very heart of the empire, the moral-cosmological center of human life. Han officials begged the emperor to change his mind, while the Manchu political elite, not sharing the same Confucian perspective, convened and decided they had no reason to oppose the emperor’s wish. Although the emperor got his way the first time, he faced tremendous pressure and moral admonitions from Han officials—with support from the dowager empress—the second time.

Qing emperors could not ignore or dismiss Han criticisms of their performance of masculine virtues such as filial piety and gender propriety, and they often became defensive when criticized in these areas. The Shunzhi emperor fought back by accusing turncoats of factionalism and questioning their loyalty. The pamphlet *On Admonishing Officials’ Minds* (Yuzhi renchen jingxin lu), commissioned in Shunzhi 12 (1655) by the emperor and written by the turncoat Wang Yongji (1600–1659), can be viewed as the Shunzhi emperor’s major propaganda campaign against the turncoats. This imperial publication emphasizes that officials must strive to correct themselves in mind and manner so as to earn their ruler’s trust. This admonition was echoed in the emperor’s harsh punishments in several high-profile cases of moral violations and factionalism among turncoats, including that of Gong Dingzi. It was precisely at this moment that the emperor began to appropriate the terminology of Southerner-Northerner factionalism and use it extensively in his disciplining project.

The Shunzhi court turned into an arena of moral struggle. Accusations of lack of zhongxiao now frequently appeared in official memoranda. So did charges of other types of ethical defects. As a result, the collective moral image of Han officials grew tattered. In Shunzhi 12/7 (1655), the Board of Personnel reported that Yang Qi’e (jinshi 1642) twice took mourning leave but, instead of remaining at home, he had gone to Suzhou, the epicenter of literati self-indulgence and moral decadence. “He has completely forgotten about his deceased parents and ignored his duties as a son. This should not be tolerated.” Eventually, Yang lost his position and was ordered to return home.

In Shunzhi 13/10 (1656), censors submitted more impeachments, including one accusing Fa Ruozhen (1608–1691) of frivolity and another claiming that Xu Tingqing (jinshi 1647) had taken the
daughter of a staffer as his concubine. Still another accused vice president of the Board of Works Cheng Zhengkui (1604–1676) of improper behavior in his private life, such as indulging in drinking and visiting courtesans. Fearing the potentially serious repercussions of these moral attacks and hoping to depart the court with grace, Cheng requested a leave to return home to mourn the death of his stepgrandmother. But it was not granted. Instead, Cheng lost his job for his lack of self-discipline.

The punishment of the new jinshi Qian Yuanxiu in Shunzhi 15/10 (1658) shed light on the connection between the emperor’s disciplining project and the court’s broader campaign against literati interests in the empire. President of the Censorate Wei Yijie (1616–1686) accused Qian Yuanxiu of being unfilial because his father, Qian Kaizong (jinshi 1652), had been arrested and exiled for insufficient supervision as an examiner in the infamous Examination Scandal (Kechang An) in Shunzhi 14/11 (1657). Wei pointed out that Qian Yuanxiu sat for his exams even though his father had been arrested and was headed for court on that same day. He suggested stripping the junior Qian of his official position. The emperor agreed. Punishing Qian Yuanxiu demonstrated the court’s commitment to governing with filial piety, elevating its moral image at a moment when the Examination Scandal created fear and controversy among the literati.

In fact, censor Wei Yijie had devoted close attention to scrutinizing colleagues’ personal lives. He was most rigorous in emphasizing the importance of filial virtue for officials. In Shunzhi 15/5 (1658), he had already proposed to the emperor that filial sons, if their exemplary deeds could be verified, should receive county-level official positions. In Shunzhi 17/4 (1660), Wei also memorialized to impeach Dai Mingyue (jinshi 1634) for not remaining at home during his mourning leave but spending that time in the capital area.

Some scholars suggest that Wei, as well as certain other censorial officials, under pressure from the emperor, were sometimes forced to find fault with colleagues. Others consider Wei’s “ethical fervor” to have stemmed from “a particular sense of moral probity that characterized younger Han officials” who identified themselves with the Qing instead of the Ming. It is easy to underestimate and oversimplify the Shunzhi emperor’s role in the disciplining project. In fact, symptomatic of the various experiments the emperor carried out, his handling of Han officials’ moral images could sometimes be nuanced but relentless at others. To confirm his moral superiority and political
authority, the emperor monitored the agents of his disciplining project, such as Wei, making sure their attacks would serve only his interests. This much is clear from his reaction to Wei’s impeachment of Lü Gong (1603–1664).

When Chen Mingxia fell from imperial favor, factional officials committed themselves to attacking those who were once close to him. Memorials about Lü Gong’s alleged factional ties to Chen flooded the emperor’s desk in Shunzhi 11/3 (1654), when it was decided that Chen would be executed. Lü, who had taken first place in the civil service examinations of Shunzhi 6 (1659), was never attracted to acquiring power through factionalism. The emperor had admired him and hesitated to let him go. Lü submitted a request to retire because of illness, in which he confessed that he had experienced kidney problems. The vagueness of his language led to the impression that he was referring to impotence. One censor complained that Lü had used “licentious language” in the memorial. This response prompted Lü to request retirement again, and the emperor let him go.

Later, when Wei Yijie attacked Lü’s moral performance, the emperor reacted differently. Wei accused Lü of indulging in drinking and sexual activity, supposedly the causes of his illness, and never reporting to the emperor after his departure from court. At about that time, officials impeached Wei himself for negligence and nepotism. The emperor took those charges seriously and now demanded that Wei explain himself. Eventually, he exempted Wei, but the other two officials who had been implicated with him in the nepotism charge lost their jobs. At the same time, however, the emperor told Wei not to be so critical of Lü and refused to act on Lü’s alleged moral defects. In other words, the emperor tolerated Wei to an extent, but he also stopped Wei from overexercising moral surveillance. The emperor’s treatment of Wei and Lü once again reveals the complex ways he experimented with Confucian ethics in order to convey and negotiate trust and favor. It also reflects his determination to maintain moral superiority over his Han subjects.

**IMAGE CONQUEST**

The foregoing discussion calls into question the claim that Han officials such as Wei Yijie “assigned” the emperor some role in their “civilizing” project. The emperor was not assigned a role but actively fought to claim moral superiority, using the moral image of turncoats...
as a tool. Viewed in retrospect, the experiments of the Shunzhi reign set in motion some important trends in the political culture, in particular the gradual shift of the locus of image politics from officials to the monarch. Such trends would crystallize in the Kangxi reign. A telling example is how, during the campaign against the rebellious Three Feudatories from Kangxi 12 to 20 (1673–81), the young Kangxi emperor established his moral stature before the whole empire.

Already by this time, the Kangxi emperor was familiar with political negotiations in the language of Confucian ethics. He exhibited an extraordinary ability to engage in image politics as the leader of the campaign to suppress the rebellions. Indeed, the Qing victory involved successful imperial efforts on many fronts. Not only was it necessary to mobilize a huge amount of military and financial resources, but the court also launched broad-based and highly effective propaganda projects. The three feudatories—Wu Sangui (1612–1678), Geng Jingzhong (1644–1682), and Shang Zhixin (1636–1680)—either had joined the Qing or had ancestors in service to the dynasty before the capital was moved to Beijing. To meet the goal of reaching out to Han officials and people, the Kangxi emperor’s mobilization campaign tailored an image for each of the three men’s families, a delicate task to be sure.

In Kangxi 12/12 (1674), an edict was issued to all the civil and military officials as well as commoners in Yunnan, Wu Sangui’s power base, in which the emperor assured his subjects that he believed they were “all born with a zhongxiao nature.” Since a government committed to promoting zhongxiao carried the Mandate of Heaven, the emperor argued, it should not be difficult for his subjects to understand which of these two camps—those who followed the seditious leader Wu Sangui or those who remained loyal to the Qing—was blessed, and which was doomed. The emperor ordered this edict to be widely disseminated in Yunnan so the message could reach everyone.

A couple of months later, the emperor issued another edict condemning Wu. Two places in this document where he elaborated on the first edict are of special interest for our purposes. According to the emperor, the court had done its utmost to reward the Wu family and had ordered them to relocate from their power base in Yunnan so the grandfather, father, sons, and grandsons could be united. The emperor hence summarized Wu’s crimes as “violating zhongxiao and betraying righteousness.”
This constituted a drastic departure from Wu’s earlier public image, which had been circulated widely in literati society before the rebellion. The popularity of this earlier image of Wu is noted by the literatus Ye Mengzhu (1623–after 1692), whose private documentation of the dynastic transition very carefully describes Wu’s filial and loyal sentiments.\textsuperscript{108} This image had been spread through a number of early Qing novels that depicted Wu as a moral paragon. One of these, \textit{Story of Zhongxiao} (Zhongxiao zhuan), explicitly suggests that Wu’s surrender to the Qing and participation in the conquest of Beijing derived from his strong desire to fulfill filial duties.\textsuperscript{109}

The dissemination of the Kangxi emperor’s new message upon the outbreak of fighting helped reshape the public’s impression of Wu. This shift is reflected in a later literary rendition of a phrase from the imperial edict, “violating \textit{zhongxiao} and betraying righteousness.” In a sensational scene in \textit{The Frost of Guilin} (Guilin shuang), a play about the campaigns against the Three Feudatories composed by the Han official Jiang Shiquan (1725–1784), a loyal Qing official invokes this phrase when confronting Wu Sangui.\textsuperscript{110}

Meanwhile, the Kangxi emperor painted a different image for another rebellious feudatory, Geng Jingzhong, in the hope that Geng would break his alliance with Wu Sangui. In an imperial edict issued in Kangxi 13\textsuperscript{6} (1674), the emperor emphasized the Geng ancestors’ loyalty to the Qing. Considering their contributions and out of concern that the severe punishment of the Geng men in Beijing would “terminate their lineage,” the emperor ordered that the Geng family be treated benevolently, unlike the harsh measures he took against the Wu clan.\textsuperscript{111} A month later, he further instructed the Board of War that even if the Qing army eliminated Geng’s forces, he would still allow the Geng clan to collect and bury their ancestors’ bones.\textsuperscript{112} Such edicts confirmed the emperor’s moral supremacy and publicized it as standing in stark contrast to the disloyalty of the men who had betrayed both the dynasty and the \textit{zhongxiao} tradition of their families.

During these campaigns against the Three Feudatories, the court also set up Han bannerman-officials from the Fan lineage—in particular Fan Wencheng and his son Fan Chengmo (\textit{jinshi} 1652)—as emblems and standards of \textit{zhongxiao}. In the Shunzhi reign, the incorporation of Fan Wencheng as a Confucian erudite into the founding myths of the Qing had promoted a narrative of mutual attraction between the Manchu rulers and Han literati that aimed to erase the crucial historical distinction between “loyalty” (\textit{zhong}) and the
Manchu concept of a slave's dedication to his master (*jurgan*). In the Kangxi reign, during the campaigns against the Three Feudatories, Fan Chengmo, governor-general of Zhejiang and Fujian, had been imprisoned and murdered by Geng Jingzhong. Fan subsequently became the symbol of *zhongxiao* in the empire, and his *zhongxiao* reputation was enthusiastically publicized by the court. Fan's borderland identity as a Han-bannerman gave his moral-political image a subtle ethnic dimension that made his exemplariness into a demonstration of Manchu moral superiority. Thus, during a crucial period in the Qing struggle to survive and adapt, the Fans represented a particular stage in the transformation of the Confucian moral-political system, whereby the moral-political leadership status of Han literati-officials began to decline in the shadow of the Manchu conquerors.

Between 1644 and 1682, Manchu rulers had to learn along the way how to consolidate their political authority. Survival and adaptation demanded creativity and tactfulness on the part of all political actors. The deployment of Confucian ethics as a language of communication was indispensable in this process, especially when the subject was complex and sensitive, necessitating extraordinary care and subtlety. Factionalism, favor, and trust were such matters. The creative use of Confucian ethics in the political experiments the Manchu rulers and the turncoats formulated as they strove to deal with the changing political situation affirmed the importance of *zhongxiao* in political communication.

In this process, individual turncoats as well as Han literati sensed that *zhongxiao* rituals were taking on new political implications. They realized that the court recognized and honored *zhongxiao* ethics and other Confucian ethical expectations differentially and sometimes expediently. This situation explains the Qing’s seemingly contradictory tendencies in handling officials’ mourning rules. On the one hand, *duoqing* cases became more frequent compared to the late Ming; on the other hand, the resign-and-mourn policy continued, and many officials completed this moral-political duty. In Shunzhi 10/4 (1653), the court went so far as to stipulate that Manchu officials in the metropolitan government should begin to follow this mourning procedure as well. The seemingly contradictory attitudes toward the practice of *duoqing* actually exemplify the improvisational nature of early Qing politics rather than suggest a breakdown of the *zhongxiao* concept. For instance, *duoqing* had gone from an undesirable compromise between the *zhongxiao* ideal and practical concerns to
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As a process of negotiation over favor and trust, the emperor increasingly set the terms for displays of moral exemplariness. Hence, the continued importance of Confucian ethics as a language of political communication did not foreclose Confucian moralism but accommodated changes to it.

The changing image of the loyal turncoat complicates the conventional understanding of the Manchu rulers’ deployment of Confucian teaching as evidence of either sinicization or instrumentalism. While Qing developments upgraded the importance of officials’ moral performance in political processes, the court’s agendas and intended messages were not simply ideological. Therefore, it is reductive to cast its intentions as either sincere or hypocritically expedient. It is also problematic to see its practice of Confucian moralism as fundamentally different from—and even inferior to—that of the literati.116

Further, the emperor was hardly a passive receiver of Han officials’ efforts to wield their “gentlemanly influence.”117 While the Shunzhi emperor did not necessarily make his turncoats better sons, fathers, and husbands, his reign certainly succeeded in establishing Manchu moral superiority over their Han officials. Increasingly, Qing emperors outshone Han officials in moral image, taking the lead in propaganda campaigns against men who had failed to carry out their political responsibilities across generations and dynasties. The shift in the central locus of image politics took place gradually, subtly, and unevenly. Manchu rulers, from the beginning of the dynasty in the northeast, understood the potential of Confucian ethics as a political tool. Manchu emperors claimed “sagehood” by showing their familiarity with Confucian classics and patronizing literati scholarship.118 In the Kangxi reign, when the emperor transformed the lectures on Confucian classics into public spectacles that displayed his superior intellectual insights, he even took over the instructor’s role from his Han officials, in effect turning them into objects of his jiaohua (civilizing and transforming).119

It is important to note that the political experiments of the Shunzhi and Kangxi reigns also had a personal aspect. Confucian family tales once again came into play as the image of the loyal turncoat was intensely negotiated. This trend began with the Shunzhi emperor’s struggles with Manchu and Han factionalisms and his disciplining of turncoats through his use of the language of Confucian ethics in court politics. The experiments continued into the Kangxi reign, with an emperor now deeply engaged in Confucianism on political, intellectual, religious, and cultural levels.