


RESEARCH ARTICLE

Dynastic Transition and Local Experience: Zhao Pang between the Yuan and the Ming

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Abstract

This article examines the experience and transformation of the late Yuan Huizhou scholar Zhao Pang (1319–1369) during the transition from the Yuan dynasty to the Ming. In contrast to his reputation as a reclusive scholar devoted to his studies of the classics, and to later appraisals that viewed him as a Yuan “remnant,” Zhao actively engaged with the transition as it happened in his home region. Recovering this history from the writings in his collected works, this article reveals his attitude toward the powers that governed Huizhou in this period and shows both how his attitude remained consistent and how it changed. In place of the framework of loyalty and dynastic identity, this article proposes that local literati like Zhao Pang are better interpreted through local realities, and put in the context of the forms of literati writing and political participation that developed in the specific political system of the Yuan.

Keywords: dynastic transition; local experience; literati; Huizhou; war

Introduction: Huizhou in the war

The prefecture of Huizhou, / is located among myriad mountains. / Long ago, there was a change of dynasties (from Song to Yuan), / and the people surrendered, bringing peace. / But in the past years, the Huai soldiers / have crossed the Yangtze, invading Zhejiang, / Coming straight for Huizhou, / wreaking havoc, burning and pillaging. / Suddenly they arrived and continuously they came, / one retreat was followed by another. / Six victories and six defeats— / O how the peoples’ lives were filled with sorrow!

徽之為郡，介乎萬山，昔有革代，招附以安。
曩歲淮兵，渡江窺浙，直搗于徽，肆其燔劫。
突來薦至，奔北相仍，六勝六負，哀哉民生。¹

¹ Zhu Sheng 朱升, “Xing shumiyuan panguan Deng gong xunde song” 行樞密院判官鄧公勳德頌 in *Zhu Fenglin ji* 朱楓林集 (1616 edition, rpt. Tainan: Zhuangyan, 1997), 7.1b–2a.

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In the seventeenth year of the Zhizheng era (1357) of the Yuan dynasty (1276–1368), Deng Yu 鄧愈 (1337–1377), a general under the future founding emperor of the Ming, captured Huizhou circuit 徽州路 (modern Huangshan City, Anhui). The quotation above is the beginning of a poem titled “Ode to the Meritorious Virtues of Sir Deng, the Administrative Assistant of the Branch Bureau of Military Affairs,” written by Zhu Sheng 朱升 (1299–1370), a scholar from Xiuning county 休寧 in Huizhou.² Commissioned by the occupying power, Zhu Sheng’s ode bemoans the years of turmoil Huizhou has endured, then goes on to celebrate the virtuous deeds of General Deng Yu and his army, who restored order and alleviated the suffering of the local people. Yet the retrospective with which Zhu Sheng chose to start his account alludes to something important about periods of dynastic transition. When he emphasizes the relatively safe geographical position of Huizhou, he is telling us that different places experienced the war-torn period of “transition” differently. When he recalls that, less than a century earlier, Huizhou had experienced a relatively smooth change from the Song to the Yuan dynasty, he reminds us that the rise and fall of dynasties happens differently in different times.

The fall of the Yuan, or the process of the “Yuan–Ming transition,” comprised a nearly twenty-year period of war. It began with the Red Turban uprising in the north in 1351, which swiftly spread to the south. Subsequently, multiple military powers emerged, each controlling its own territory, a situation that continued as Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328–1398) gradually unified the realm, formally establishing the Ming dynasty in 1368.³ The questions we usually ask concern how these military forces succeeded or failed, emphasizing the key moments, locations, events, or strategies that influenced their victory or defeat. However, a dynastic transition is not only about those at the top fighting for power, but also about those at the bottom living through the war. Their lives faced sudden changes, and what happened during this transitional period affected their reactions to the new era. To focus on the governed rather than the governing, a local perspective must be included, as local circumstances were shaped not only by the broader trends of the war but also by the unique conditions of a specific region.

Huizhou has received little attention in the study of this turbulent period, perhaps because it did not play a strategically prominent role in the competition among the various military forces. But it was a wartime crossroads, first for the Red Turbans, coming from Qizhou 蕪州 and Huangzhou 黃州 in today’s Hubei province toward Hangzhou in the east, and later, for Zhu Yuanzhang’s army, coming from Nanjing to Huizhou’s north to the Eastern Zhe prefectures that lay to the south. Huizhou thus suffered many battles before ultimately falling under Zhu’s control, which then lasted for more than a decade until the formal fall of the Yuan. While the story of the conquest went on, the conquered locality stayed in place, experiencing the comings and goings of those troops who passed through. The people of Huizhou were left out of the narrative of expansion, but they have their own stories to tell about this period of change, stories that are as important as any grand narrative to understanding how the dynastic transition occurred. It is through them that we can see how wartime governance took root, and how that governance became a foundation of the new empire.

²On Zhu Sheng, see Hok-lam Chan, “CHU Sheng,” in *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368–1644*, edited by L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 348–350.

³For the overall situation of this period, see Edward L. Dreyer, “Military Origins of Ming China,” in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 7, *The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644*, edited by Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 58–106.

This study examines local action in and reaction to the transition through the experience of Zhao Pang 趙汭 (1319–1369), a prominent Huizhou classical scholar. Zhao, a close associate of Zhu Sheng, is an ambiguous figure in the context of dynastic transition. Born to a well-established local family,⁴ he dedicated himself to the study of the classics, never serving as an official, and not even taking a single civil service examination. After the Ming was established, he was summoned to compile the *History of the Yuan*, a symbolic act of the new regime marking the end of the Yuan dynasty and the succession of the Ming, but when that task was completed he chose not to enter official service under the Ming either, returning to his hometown, where he died in the winter of that year, at age fifty-one (*sui*).

Centuries later, Zhao would come to be included in the “Biographies of Confucian Scholars” (*rulin* 儒林) section of the *History of the Ming*, and Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582–1664), a leading scholar-official in the late Ming (who went through the Ming–Qing transition himself), in the biographies of poets he wrote for his anthology of Ming poetry, would recognize Zhao as “the foremost Confucian scholar of our dynasty” (*benchao rulin diyi* 本朝儒林第一), for his highly regarded studies of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.⁵ At the same time, because he declined to serve Zhu Yuanzhang’s regime, Zhao has sometimes been considered a loyal “remnant” of the Mongol Yuan, rather than a Ming subject. Qian Qianyi, though identifying Zhao as a Ming subject, also notes that Zhu Mujie 朱睦㮮, an imperial clansman, famous scholar and bibliophile in the mid-Ming, placed Zhao in the same biographical section as Boyan Zizhong 伯顏子中 (?–1379), among those who “remained loyal to the Yuan dynasty and upheld their ministerial integrity” (*Yuan yimin jian shou chen jie* 元遺民堅守臣節).⁶ Later, the *New History of the Yuan* (*Xin Yuan shi* 新元史) by Ke Shaomin 柯劭忞 (1850–1933) would include Zhao in its “Biographies of Confucian Scholars,” reclaiming Zhao as a Yuan subject. This article reflects on the framework of loyalty that is often used to interpret changes (or the lack thereof) in individual attitudes toward ruling regimes in times of dynastic transition, and proposes instead that exploring the local realities of wartime will provide insight into Zhao’s political involvements and his transformation over time.

⁴ Zhao’s grandfather, according to local history, was one of the influential local elites who donated his family wealth to save the people of Huizhou from a massacre planned by the Mongol troops during the Song–Yuan transition in response to a rebellion. As a result, he was appointed Vice Magistrate of Xiuning County; Gan Wenchuan 干文傳 (1276–1353), “Jinyi fuwei Huizhou lu Xiuning xianwei Cheng jun Long mubiao” 進義副尉徽州路休寧縣尉程君隆墓表, in *Xinan wenxian zhi* 新安文獻志, compiled by Cheng Minzheng 程敏政 (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 2004), 85.2083–2085. Although there are no records of high-ranking officials in the Zhao family, Zhao Pang once remarked: “At its height, the family’s wealth dominated the region, its scholarly tradition earned fame for Confucian learning, and those in office served as appointed officials” (當其盛時, 貲產擅一鄉, 家學以儒名, 在官為命士); Zhao Pang, “Dongshan yushe an shenzhu zhuwen” 東山寓舍安神主祝文, *Dongshan cunqao* 東山存稿 (Siku quanshu edition, rpt. Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1983), 5.48a–49a. This legacy allowed Zhao Pang to “sell family property” (鬻恒產) to fund his travels for study.

⁵ Qian Qianyi 錢謙益, *Liechao shiji xiaozhuan* 列朝詩集小傳 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2007), jia.15.1621.

⁶ The works of Zhu Mujie mentioned by Qian Qianyi are now lost. In his “Spirit Path Stele,” it is recorded that he authored *Biographies of Loyal Officials and Virtuous Women*; the biographies of Yuan loyalists including Boyan Zhizhong and Zhao Pang may have originated from this work. See Zhang Yigui 張一桂, “Ming Zhoufan zongzheng zhenguo zhongwei xiting gong shendaobei” 明周藩宗正鎮國中尉西亭公神道碑, in *Guochao xianzheng lu* 國朝獻徵錄, compiled by Jiao Hong 焦竑 (1606 edition, rpt. Tainan: Zhuangyan, 1996), 1.29a. Boyan Zizhong committed suicide in 1379 after being summoned. Having lived under the Ming dynasty, he was included in the *History of the Ming* under the biographies of ministers loyal and upright to the Yuan dynasty (*juan* 124).

For modern scholars, the question of dynastic identity—for Zhao and for other Yuan literati—has taken on special importance, largely due to an influential article about the “founding ministers” of the Ming by Qian Mu (1895–1990). Qian begins with the expectation that Zhao and his Han contemporaries would naturally have preferred the ethnically Chinese Ming over the Mongol Yuan, and he questions and criticizes their reluctance at serving the new Ming regime. What he highlights is not a matter of loyalty in the traditional sense, but rather a sense of emotional attachment that Zhao and other literati—now technically subjects of the Ming—continued to harbor toward the Yuan dynasty, rather than embracing the new dynasty. Later scholars have sought to frame the question differently. John Dardess found that these men lacked emotional attachment to any dynasty, and were instead devoted to the norms of their “Confucian profession.” According to Liu Hsiang-Kuang, developing Frederic Mote’s idea of “voluntary eremitism” and Tu Wei-ming’s “Confucian eremitism,” their refusal to take an official position was because they were dedicated to “the Way.” Other scholars have suggested that family allegiances can explain their life choices.⁷

Despite different approaches, both loyalty—whether to a regime, a profession, or the Way—and eremitism, whether voluntary or compelled, were determined by whether or not one held official position.⁸ However, if we shift our focus away from the regime-oriented framework of loyalty or dynastic identity, which tends to judge historical figures by the end result or focus on static values, and pay attention to what they did over the extended wartime period, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of their political engagement. Political participation was not limited to official service. Effective governance by officials required collaboration at the local level, and one way in which literati, with or without office, often contributed was through “literary service,” using their knowledge and writing ability to assist political operations and convey political viewpoints.⁹ Although they often held no formal office and possessed no direct authority, local literati like Zhao Pang became part of the political sphere through their literary activities, documenting history, praising local officials, and recording administrative or military achievements. In doing so, they indirectly expressed their views, providing a framework of interpretation and shaping public opinion.

This form of political participation was grounded in literati communication networks and the cultural authority they formed collectively. Scholars have noted that occasional writings, including prefaces, inscriptions, and poems were used to construct reputations,

⁷Qian Mu 錢穆, “Du Ming chu kaiguo zhuchen shiwen ji” 讀明初開國諸臣詩文集 and “Du Ming chu kaiguo zhuchen shiwen ji xupian: Du Zhao Pang *Dongshan cungao*” 讀明初開國諸臣詩文集續篇. 讀趙汴東山存稿, in his *Zhongguo xueshu sixiang shiluncong* (6) 中國學術思想史論叢(六) (Taipei: Dongda, 1978), 77–171; 172–200, especially on Zhao Pang at 180–94. John Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy: Professional Elites in the Founding of the Ming Dynasty* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 9. Liu Hsiang-Kuang 劉祥光, “Cong Huizhou wenren de yin yu shi kan Yuan mo Ming chu de zhongjie yu yinyi” 從徽州文人的隱與仕看元末明初的忠節與隱逸, *Dalu zazhi* 94.1 (1997), 32–48. Zhang Yi 章毅, “Yuan Ming yidai zhi ji rushi de zhengzhi xuanze: Zhao Pang, Zhu Sheng, Tang Guifang zhi bijiao” 元明易代之際儒士的政治選擇: 趙汴、朱升、唐桂芳之比較, *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao* 51 (2010), 51–66.

⁸Frederick Mote notes that “the renunciation of the official life ... is the keystone of Chinese eremitism.” See his “Confucian Eremitism in the Yüan Period,” in *The Confucian Persuasion*, edited by Arthur F. Wright (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 202–40.

⁹In his discussion on the reform of Jinhua literati, John W. Dardess calls their writings “public service.” See his “Confucianism, Local Reform, and Centralization in Late Yuan Chekiang, 1342–1359,” in *Yuan Thought: Chinese Thought and Religion Under the Mongols*, edited by Hok-lam Chan and Wm. Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 327–68.

both for the authors and the recipients, and that such writing practices drew their power from literati networks and communities. These cultural practices originated earlier, but they became more prevalent in the Yuan, forming an effective mode of practice in the face of a bureaucratic system that disadvantaged the literati.¹⁰ The high demand for social texts extended to the political sphere, exemplified by, but not limited to, “steles of appreciation for departed officials” (*qusi bei* 去思碑),¹¹ providing authors with more opportunities to make their voices heard. This case of Zhao Pang’s wartime writings illustrates that literati networks, the writing practices that sustained them, and the relation of those networks and practices to government officials persisted, even if it ebbed and flowed, during the period of warfare.

The following discussion adopts Zhao Pang’s “Record of Conduct” (*xingzhuang* 行狀)—the earliest biographical account—as its narrative backbone, supplementing or contrasting it with Zhao’s collected writings and contemporary records to examine the less noticed aspects of his life and actions during wartime. Zhao’s life during the ensuing period of warfare—what would become the “dynastic transition”—went through two phases, discussed respectively in this article’s two main sections. The first phase, covering the years 1352 to 1357, covers Zhao Pang’s political participation during the Red Turban rebellion. The three subsections explore different dimensions of Zhao Pang’s political participation, each reflecting distinct approaches unfolding chronologically. They investigate how Zhao Pang supported his “state”—the Yuan regime—through literati writing practices, and even came to play a role in military matters. The second section follows Zhao’s response, from 1357 to 1368, to the rise of Zhu Yuanzhang. As the proto-Ming regime was consolidated in Huizhou, Zhao progresses from seeking refuge to accepting

¹⁰I have studied the genre of the preface (*xu* 序) and the social practice that literati used to establish reputation. See Wenyi Chen, “Networks, Communities, and Identities: On the Discursive Practices of Yuan Literati” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2007), chap. 4. Beverly Bossler’s research on exemplar texts from the Song and Yuan takes note of the new prevalence of poetry collections collectively praising exemplars during the Yuan period. This practice not only served a function of “social aggrandizing” but also reflected the literati’s participation in the literary community. See her *Courtesans, Concubines, and the Cult of Female Fidelity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), chap. 9. Recently, Yuan-heng Mao has explored this issue in the late Song through the early Yuan, see his “Networks and Fame: Literary Social Circles from the Late Song to the Early Yuan,” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies*, 52 (2023), 97–127.

¹¹Sukhee Lee in his study of Song and Yuan Mingzhou notes the popularity of *qusi bei* in the Yuan and describes *qusi bei* as a more political version of the parting preface, suggesting the connection between local officials and literati elites. See Sukhee Lee, *Negotiated Power: The State, Elites, and Local Governance in Twelfth- to Fourteenth-Century China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014), 258. I discuss how the flourishing *qusi bei* during the Yuan dynasty became a means for political participation in local society. Chen Wenyi 陳雯怡, “Yuandai *qusi bei* de shengxing yu yingyong changyu de zhuanli” 元代去思碑的盛行與應用場域的轉移, *Taida lishi xuebao* 臺大歷史學報 54 (2014), 47–122. In another study, I focus on these laudatory texts as “social writings” that could form one’s identity within literati networks. See Chen Wenyi, “Cong *qusi bei* dao yanxing lu: Yuandai shiren de zhengji songyang, jiaoyou wenhua yu shenfen xingsu” 從去思碑到言行錄——元代士人的政績頌揚、交游文化與身分形塑, *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 86.1 (2015), 1–52. Recently, Song historians have explored how writings such as prefaces, inscriptions, and letters were used to build connections and facilitate political communication. See Song Chen, “Letters and Parting Valedictions: Zhang Yu and Political Communication in Mid-Eleventh-Century Sichuan,” and Beverly Bossler, “Yao Mian’s Letters: The Epistolary Networks of a Late Song Literatus,” in *Political Communication in Chinese and European History, 800–1600*, edited by Hilde De Weerdt and Franz-Julius Morche (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021), 441–80, and 287–312. The similarities and differences of this practice in the different political structures of the two periods remain to be discussed.

his new rulers, once again using his writings to support individual officials and to express his concern for local affairs. The three subsections delve into Zhao's transformation, tracing events in Wuyuan, exploring the role of literati networks in the consolidation of governance in Xiuning, and, finally, demonstrating Zhao's acceptance of and cooperation with the new regime at the local level. Following Zhao's story, it is important to remember that he was a "node," however prominent, in a broader literati network. To this end, the discussion extends into the writings of some of Zhao Pang's associates, aiming to demonstrate the significant role this network played in the practice of social writing and in stabilizing a new political regime. In conclusion, I reflect on how Zhao Pang's transformation, as observed through his writings over this extended period, sheds light on the issue of dynastic identity, examining his experience from the perspectives of historical contingency and structural factors.

Supporting the Yuan in the literati way: 1352–1357

The "Record of Conduct of Master Zhao of Dongshan," written by one of Zhao Pang's students after his death, is primarily an academic biography.¹² Lengthy but selective, it is a portrait of a devoted, reclusive scholar. The first half of the "Record" describes Zhao's life events chronologically, from his family background and birth to his death and his descendants, while the second half concentrates on Zhao's scholarship. Yet even the biographical section primarily emphasizes how Zhao established himself as a scholar, particularly highlighting his travels to study and consult with esteemed scholars in different regions, beginning in the year 1337, when he was nineteen.¹³ By 1349, Zhao had concluded his study tour and returned to Huizhou, where he resided in his "Dongshan Study" (Dongshan jingshe 東山精舍) and began working on his *Collected Commentaries on the Spring and Autumn Annals*. However, that does not mean that Zhao was cloistered in the mountains. Although Dongshan is portrayed as an isolated site, owned by Zhao's family and intended as a place for reclusion by his grandfather,¹⁴ Zhao continued leading the lifestyle of an active local scholar, travelling around and maintaining social relationships with people in different places.¹⁵

¹²Zhan Xuan 詹烜, "Dongshan Zhao xiansheng xingzhuang" 東山趙先生行狀, *Dongshan cunghao*, appendix. We know very little about Zhan Xuan; the only information about him is from a short entry in a local gazetteer; Peng Ze 彭澤 and Wang Shunmin 汪舜民, *Hongzhi Huizhou fuzhi* 弘治徽州府志 (1502 edition, rpt. Beijing: Guojia tushuguan, 2013), 6.53a. A Wuyuan native, he was probably not Zhao's closest student but was invited to write the "Record" by a close student, along with Zhao's son. The entry on Zhao Pang ("CHAO Fang") in *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368–1644*, 125–28, written by John D. Langlois, Jr., is based on this source.

¹³On Zhao's study tour, see Wu Zhao Feng 吳兆豐, "Yuan ru Zhao Pang de youxue, sixiang tese ji qi zhixue licheng 元儒趙沄的遊學、思想特色及其治學歷程, *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao* 51 (2010), 25–50. Most secondary studies on Zhao Pang focus on his scholarship on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.

¹⁴Yu Ji 虞集, "Dongshan jingshe ji" 東山精舍記, *Dongshan cunghao*, appendix (supplemented from the Wenjing edition).

¹⁵For instance, in the spring of 1351, Chen Zuren 陳祖仁 (1314–1368), the top graduate of the 1342 palace examination, visited Huizhou and took a trip with Zhao Pang and Wang Rui to Mt. Huang with an introduction letter from Zhao's friends Ge Yuanzhe 葛元哲 (*jinshi* 1348) and Gao Ming 高明 (?–1359, *jinshi* 1345), whom he had befriended in Hangzhou when he traveled there in his study journey; in the winter, Zhao met with old friends including Ge Yuanzhe and Wang Hui 王禕 (1322–1373) in Hangzhou. Wang Rui 汪叟, "Qi ai ci" 七哀辭, in *Xinan wenxian zhi* 新安文獻志, compiled by Cheng Minzheng 程敏政 (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 2004), 49.1052.

Zhao's world changed in the third month of 1352, at age thirty-four, when Huizhou was invaded by the "Qihuang bandits," the southern branch of the Red Turbans.¹⁶ Yet the account in the "Record" of the ensuing years of turmoil and change, covering the last one third of his life, is very brief: Zhao flees to a life of seclusion, refusing official appointments and dedicating himself to his studies. Granted that the biography is oriented towards his scholarly achievements, it nevertheless leaves the impression that Zhao was "loyal" to the Yuan, or at least that he maintained an uncooperative attitude toward the future Ming. However, from Zhao's collection of writings it is evident that he did not simply hide in the mountains studying, but was also very involved in local events.¹⁷

The "Record" covers the crucial years of 1352–1357 with a sole item:

In the year *renchen* [1352], when the military uprising occurred, Master [Zhao] accompanied his mother to seek refuge, taking full care of her. Around the time the prefecture and the counties began to be recovered, his mother passed away due to natural causes.

壬辰兵興，先生奉母夫人避地，盡心調護，及郡邑繼復，而夫人以天年終。

Zhao Pang's mother, Madam Wang 汪 (1273–1352), died in the winter of 1352,¹⁸ only half a year after the Red Turban army invaded Xiuning. It was soon to be captured again, in the eleventh month. It was regained by the Yuan in the twelfth month, only to fall once more in the first month of the following year. It wasn't until the third month of 1353 that armies under the Yuan Administrator (*pingzhang* 平章) of Jiangzhe province, Saldan Bal, finally stabilized Huizhou. Thus it experienced three instances of being captured and recovered—half of the "six victories and six defeats" mentioned in Zhu Sheng's "Ode"—within the span of just one year. These are lost years in Zhao Pang's "Record"—but in fact it is through Zhao's writings that the state of affairs in Huizhou during that time can be reconstructed. Evidence from his literary collection shows Zhao's engagement with the unfolding situation in at least three different aspects: first, he used laudatory texts to express his perspectives on and concerns about local conditions; second, he actively looked for opportunities to present his observations and strategic insights regarding the broader situation to the Yuan government; and third, he became directly involved in military operations.

Praising Yuan officials—and voicing literati concerns

During the first three years of a seesaw battle between insurgent forces and the Yuan troops, Zhao Pang authored several works of a political nature: a farewell preface to a local official, a book preface for a provincial official, an appeal to retain a general, two inscriptions of military and political achievements, and two steles recording military

¹⁶These were the troops under Xu Shouhui 徐壽輝 (1320–1360), based in Hubei. See Yang Na 楊訥, "Tianwan Dahan hongjin jun shi shulun" 天完大漢紅巾軍史述論, *Yuanshi luncong* 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1982), 109–36.

¹⁷There are two versions of Zhao Pang's collected works: one is the Siku Quanshu edition, *Dongshan cungao* 東山存稿, consisting of seven volumes plus one appendix volume; the other is an undated manuscript edition, *Dongshan Zhao Xiansheng wenji* 東山趙先生文集, comprising eleven volumes, formerly in the collection of Huang Pilie and now held in the National Central Library, Taiwan (shelfmark 11072). The contents of the two versions are not entirely identical.

¹⁸Zhao, "Dongshan yushe an shenzhu zhuwen."

accomplishments. Why and how did Zhao, a scholar “hiding” in the mountains, produce so many records and celebratory writings during turbulent times? These occasional texts, spanning several genres, were more than mere formalities; they served as vital channels of communication, both among literati and between local people and officials. These laudatory writings had been a normal part of literati life in peaceful times, and even amidst the chaos of war and the initial period of stabilization, with little time for respite, efforts were still devoted to such endeavors. This reflects the importance of political propaganda and the need for local literati to bolster the personal prestige of officials, but also to the fact that literati, through such texts, played a significant role in political affairs.

A piece titled “Farewell to Sir Fang, the Supervisor of Xiuning County, upon the Completion of His Term,”¹⁹ from 1353, documents strategies for defending Huizhou proposed by Fang Meng 坊蒙, as well as the situation and issues at the outset of the conflict. Fang had become *darughachi* in Xiuning in 1350, before the start of the war, and the beginning of the preface describes Fang as a good official, concerned for the people and respectful of the literati (e.g., visiting local literati like Zhao), just like many “farewell prefaces” to departing officials in normal times.²⁰ However, Zhao devotes the rest of his account to the war situation, using Fang’s story to reveal how Huizhou was defeated and offering his own analysis. Fang’s strategies had not been adopted and Huizhou was taken by the bandits, and Fang fled. He was then appointed to defend Niuzhu 牛渚, a strategic location on the Yangtze river, where his suggestions to rectify military discipline and instructions were followed and the forces there were strengthened. In other writings Zhao criticized officials who escaped, leaving the people in the hands of bandits, but here Zhao laments the fact that Huizhou fell because Fang’s strategies went unimplemented, and that it was defeated again and the people suffered more because proposals similar to those made by Fang in Niuzhu were ignored by later officials. This farewell preface to Fang thus captures the war as understood from the perspective of Xiuning—a small locality caught in the conflict. Zhao concludes by pointing out that numerous problems remained, expressing his expectation that Fang, as a capable official with good political connections, might contribute to the welfare of the country. Praising Fang, by implication Zhao Pang also sets out the frustrations as a Confucian scholar without office, pointing out problems but forced to put his hopes on others.

Zhao’s “Stele of Recovering Xiuning County” and “Inscription of the Military Achievements of the Marquis Ba, the *darughachi* of Xiuning County,” while written on different topics and in different genres, both celebrate the contributions of Batma Siri 八忒麻失里 (1324–?).²¹ At the conclusion of “Inscription of the Military Achievements,” Zhao Pang notes that due to the ongoing instability of the war and the frequent change of commanders—three in total—Batma Siri’s “achievements have not yet been fully recognized.” This subtle remark tactfully hints at the purpose of composing this text. These laudatory texts, however, underscore local concerns for restoration. Batma Siri was not originally an official, but he was recommended and recruited as a courier of the Jiangzhe Branch Secretariat during the turmoil to raise troops and fight battles. After pacifying Xiuning, he was appointed as the *darughachi*, the position Fang Meng had left when Xiuning was captured by the rebels. To praise Batma Siri’s accomplishments, these texts depict the war in detail—or at least the version of the war that the official wanted to

¹⁹ Zhao, “Song Xiuning jianyi Fang hou zhiman xu” 送休寧監邑坊侯秩滿序, *Dongshan cungao*, 3.1a–5a.

²⁰ Chen, “Cong quqi bei dao yanxing lu.”

²¹ Zhao, “Kefu Xiuning xian bei” 克復休寧縣碑, *Dongshan cungao*, 5.60a–65a; “Xiuning xian dalugeqi Ba hou wugong ji” 休寧縣達魯噶齊巴侯 (達魯花赤巴侯) 武功記, 4.22a–28a.

present, which ended up being the only version passed down, thanks to Zhao's collected works. However, these texts—written around the second half of 1353, when the conflict was coming to a (momentary) end and individuals appointed during the war were being replaced by officials assigned through the regular bureaucratic process—not only commend their protagonist's military achievements but also highlight his efforts in restoration and reconstruction, including repairing roads, rebuilding homes, attracting merchants, restoring farming, and revitalizing the government by reviving school rituals and reconstructing offices. In addition, Zhao stresses, during his time stationed in Xiuning, no innocent person was killed during the post-war restoration, and none of the numerous military envoys passing through dared to commit acts of violence within its borders—an all-too-common disruption to civilians at the time. Expressing the gratitude of the local people, and their desire to retain and honor meritorious military leaders, Zhao gives voice to a local concern. In addition, Zhao wrote a "Petition to Retain Marshal Sha" for Batma Siri's superior general, Shahāb al-Dīn 沙不丁, who had governed Huizhou between its recovery and the court's appointment of a *darughachi* there. That petition also describes both what the general did in the war and his contributions to the recovery, claiming that the significance of the latter was "even more profound than his military achievements."²²

Zhao expresses his reflections on the problems of governance that led to rebellions in a preface to Heihei Guobao 黑黑國寶 (also written as "Hehe" 赫赫 Guobao), the Assistant Director of the Left of the Jiangzhe Branch Secretariat, who oversaw the administration in 1353, when Huizhou was initially restored. To commend his governance, his subordinates compiled a work titled "Record of Good Governance," which documented thirty aspects of his effective administration in Huizhou, and Zhao Pang was invited to write the preface. Beyond the achievement of "restoring peace and security to the people of the six counties of Huizhou, who had suffered losses," his preface places particular emphasis on addressing the root causes of the uprisings, underscoring the importance of learning from past disturbances to prevent future crises. This also reflects Zhao's perception that the war had already concluded. If Heihei could convey this message to the emperor upon returning to court, Zhao asserts, it would "ensure that with bandits subdued, the state's foundation will become even more secure," thus extending his achievements beyond a single region. Here, Zhao speaks on behalf of the literati and the people of Huizhou, and we once again see him trying to express his views through a recipient with an official position, much as he did in his farewell preface to Fang Meng.²³

Two other texts reveal the hardships endured in the aftermath of the war. Aside from writing for the generals in his home county of Xiuning, in 1354, when Zhao Pang went to Yi county 黟縣 to seek treatment from a doctor, he wrote an "Inscription of the Administrative Achievements of Marquis Zhou [Xilian] 周希廉, the Magistrate of Yi"; apparently through Zhou's facilitation, he also wrote a "Stele Commemorating the Meritorious Deeds of Sir Hami, the Commander-in-Chief of Jiangzhe Province" for

²²Zhao, "Dai juliu Sha yuanshuai zhuang" 代舉留沙元帥狀, *Dongshan cunghao*, 5.45a–47b. His two main achievements were granting amnesty to those who had mistakenly joined the rebels and eliminating excessive levies and extortion.

²³Zhao, "Jiangzhe xing zhongshusheng zuocheng He gong shanzhenglu xu" 江浙行中書省左丞赫公善政錄序, *Dongshan Zhao xiansheng wenji*, 1.10–12. Li Xiusheng 李修生, ed. *Quan Yuan wen* 全元文 (54) (Nanjing: Fenghuang, 2004), 1658.304–305 includes this text but mistakenly records "He" 赫 as "Su" 蘇.

Zhou's superior general, Hami 哈密.²⁴ Here we sense some shadows over the recovery of Huizhou by the government troops. "When the heavenly army arrived from afar," Zhao intones, "their punitive authority was unfathomable. Famine struck repeatedly and there were incessant levies—how many individuals lost their lives, how many families were destroyed?" The terrifying "heavenly army" here is not the invading force, but the troops of their own government, "recovering" this territory. This sets up the appearance of Zhou as a kind of hero: thanks to him, the people of Yi county were able to escape such misfortune. The aftermath of the (still ongoing) war was severe, and victory was not as simply sweet as imagined. People in Huizhou relied on the benevolent administration of officials like Zhou, who protected men who had been accused of "joining the bandits" and relieved the people from heavy levies for military needs. If the bandits arose due to deteriorated governance, the situation after recovery was only aggravated. This is probably why Zhao attached so much importance to post-war recovery. Similarly, speaking in the voice of the local people, Zhao writes that "the Commander-in-Chief (Hami) not only pacified and suppressed the rampant banditry in the region, an accomplishment of valor, but also appointed competent local magistrates (i.e. Zhou) to ensure peace and security, and allow us rest and recuperation." He commends these officials, but also expresses an expectation of them, as a Huizhou resident and as a Confucian scholar.²⁵

In one sense, these prefaces, inscriptions, and steles served a purpose similar to that they had during times of peace.²⁶ They aided the careers of their recipients, especially considering that this period saw a transition from temporary officials appointed during the war to regular appointments once peace was (so they thought) restored. At the same time, during a period of upheaval, detailed accounts of the war not only highlighted individual achievements but also proclaimed the victory of the government forces. However, with the emphasis on the restoration, it also exposed the hardships people faced during and after the war, revealing the darker side of victory. These were records for the future, preserving a local version of this history. More importantly they held significant immediate value: co-created by their recipients and their authors, writing was a kind of wartime action. Zhao probably remained in his Dongshan Academy, deep in the mountains, for most of this period,²⁷ but that apparently did not affect communication with the local government or its local agents, who gave him information about the battles and asked him to write these records. The fact that Zhao Pang was entrusted with this writing—the detailed information relayed at length, including specific dates, was likely sourced from their recipients—suggests an involvement and close association with both the local community and the military administration at this time. Performing their duties, the officials expected something of the literati scholar, and the literatus responded with expectations of his own.

²⁴Zhao, "Yi ling Zhou hou zhengji ji" 黔令周侯政績記, *Dongshan cungao*, 3.102b-108a; "Jiangzhe sheng duzhenfu Hami gong jigong zhi bei" 江浙省都鎮撫哈密公紀功之碑, *Dongshan cungao*, 5.55a-60a.

²⁵Zhu Sheng wrote a postscript for this inscription. Employing the format of a postscript to disseminate, communicate, and enhance the influence of a text was a common practice for Yuan social writing. During this turbulent period, however, surviving materials are scarce, and this postscript is one of the few that remain available to us today. Zhu Sheng, "Ba Zhao Pang Yi ling Zhou hou zhengji ji" 跋趙訪黔令周侯政績記, *Jiaqing Yi xian zhi* 嘉慶黔縣志 (1825 edition, rpt. Nanjing: Fenghuang, 2010), 4.20b-21a. On the mode of using postscript to communicate, see Chen, "Cong quasi bei dao yanxing lu."

²⁶For instance, Zhao, "Xiuning jianyi Fang gong minyu ji" 休寧監邑坊公閔兩記, *Dongshan cungao*, 4.18a-20a; "Jiusi tang ji" 九思堂記, 4.20a-22a.

²⁷Fragments of writings in his collection with reference to time and location indicate this.

In retrospect, historians consider the Gaoyou battle at the end of 1354 a turning point in the war, when the Yuan started to lose its advantage and the realm began to disintegrate,²⁸ but the people then, especially those in the Huizhou region, “located among myriad mountains,” would not have perceived it as such. In this moment of peace, Zhao Pang’s emphasis on restoration, in addition to military victories, highlights the importance local people attached to efforts made towards recovery: “nurturing and caring for the common people on behalf of the court in times of hardship.”²⁹ If the main purpose of a text was to glorify the officials, the generals, or the Yuan government, the local elite likewise inscribed their own values, promoting post-war recovery in their home region.

Indirectly proposing military strategies to the court

The tone of these texts stressing restoration also indicates some relief, hope, or wish, for the return of order when Huizhou was recovered after a sudden upheaval. Yet the wars around them were far from over, and Zhao Pang grew less optimistic:

The state, with its mighty power encompassing the four seas, commanded its generals to embark on a military campaign. Yet, after five or six years, the human and material resources of the population have been exhausted, while the bandits remain unabated.³⁰

國家以四海全盛之力，命將出師，今五六年，民力已屈而盜猶未息。

This is from Zhao’s preface to a collection of poems written by local literati at a farewell party for his teacher Zheng Yu 鄭玉 (1298–1358), a respected scholar from She 歙 county, the prefectural seat of Huizhou. In the autumn of 1355, the Yuan court dispatched envoys to Huizhou to appoint Zheng as a Hanlin Attendant. The recruitment of Zheng (and other respected literati) was itself a kind of response by the Yuan court to the pressures of the lasting turmoil. The literati debated whether Zheng should accept the post, and in fact this summons would eventually cost Zheng his life—he famously martyred himself when the future Ming authorities demanded his service a few years later.³¹ On this occasion, Zhao wrote two pieces: “A Letter to Congratulate Master Zheng Shishan on His Imperial Appointment” and “Preface to the Poems Sending Off Zheng, the Honorable Appointed to Hanlin.” The first was written when the envoys arrived, deliberating on whether Zheng should accept the offer, and the second after Zheng made his decision, offering him advice. Unlike the prefaces and records discussed in the previous section, written for external officials and generals, these two pieces represent channels through which local literati could directly convey their perspectives to the court. Moreover, as the conflict continued, their content shifts focus from reconstruction to strategic responses. Amidst

²⁸Chen Gaohua 陳高華, “Yuan mo nongmin qiyi zhong nanfang hanzu dizhu de zhengzhi dongxiang: jian tan Yuanmo de jieji maodun he minzu maodun” 元末農民起義中南方漢族地主的政治動向——兼談元末的階級矛盾和民族矛盾 (first published in 1964), in his *Yuanshi yanjiu lungao* 元史研究論稿 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1991), 277–78.

²⁹Zhao, “Yi ling Zhou hou zhengji ji,” *Dongshan cungao*, 3.107b.

³⁰Zhao, “Song Zheng zhengjun yingzhao ru hanlin shi xu” 送鄭徵君應詔入翰林詩序, *Dongshan cungao*, 3.60b–64b. *Dongshan Zhao xiansheng wenji*, 1.1a–3b.

³¹Zheng was thus included in the “Biography of Loyalty and Integrity” (*zhongyi* 忠義) section of the *The History of the Yuan*. On Zheng’s martyr, see Liu, “Cong Huizhou wenren de yin yu shi kan Yuan mo Ming chu de zhongjie yu yinyi.”

the seemingly endless war, Zhao seized this opportunity to propose military strategies, advancing his attempts to influence political affairs through writing, despite the constraints faced by scholars like him in the Yuan bureaucratic structure.

According to Zhao, he had originally intended to congratulate Zheng in person when Zheng received the summons, but on his way he encountered travelers fleeing from the direction he was heading, warning him that a Miao army was approaching: “In the midst of confusion and uncertainty, I hastened to return as well.” Once the rumors subsided, Zhao was too ill to make the journey, so he sent a letter instead. This letter suggests to Zheng that whether he accepts the position or not, he should take the opportunity to “write a proposal, listing his suggestions for maintaining order and peace, and thoroughly addressing the current issues,” to present to the emperor or the government. He represents Zheng’s appointment as a sign that the higher authorities (the emperor and the ministers at court) were beginning to listen to those below (i.e., the literati), a rectification of the earlier situation in which “those below speak but those above do not believe them,” a complaint that echoes his laments in the farewell preface to Fang Meng. The literati outside the court would finally have the opportunity to voice their opinions.³² This also demonstrates their identification with the Yuan state. During this period, they had naturally supported the government forces, regarding the invaders as “bandits.”³³ While they sought to criticize and diagnose the problems of the state, they had no intention of overthrowing the existing order.³⁴

Zhao Pang’s farewell preface for Zheng Yu was composed in the winter of 1355, when Zheng had decided that he would decline the position but still go to court to provide advice to the emperor, just as Zhao Pang had suggested. The preface actually contains Zhao Pang’s own strategy for pacifying the “bandits” —an excerpt would be recorded in Zhao’s “Record of Conduct,” as evidence of his “talent in statecraft” 經濟之才—with the hope that it might reach the court. We do not know whether or how Zheng incorporated Zhao’s suggestions into his own proposals, but the preface was appended to a collection of poems bidding farewell to Zheng and was intended for circulation. Through this occasion we see Zhao’s awareness and assessment of the overall military and political situation, and his intention to convey the “interests and grievances of the common people” to the authorities. Writing served as his mode of political action.

Direct involvement with local military affairs

Zhao Pang also appears to have had opportunities to apply his strategic insights through active participation in military affairs. The short biography of Zhao Pang as a “former worthy” in the *Xin’an wenxian zhi* (1497), a collection of writings of and on Huizhou people compiled by the prominent mid-Ming scholar-official Cheng Minzheng 程敏政

³²Zhao, “He Zheng Shishan xiansheng shou zhaoming shu” 賀鄭師山先生受詔命書, *Dongshan cungao*, 3.46b–49b. “He Zheng Shishan xiansheng shu,” *Dongshan Zhao xiansheng cungao*, 7.38a–40b.

³³Marxist historians, thinking in class terms, criticize the literati, as “landlords,” for this position. See Chen, “Yuan mo nongmin qiyi zhong nanfang hanzu dizhu de zhengzhi dongxiang: jian tan Yuanmo de jieji maodun he minzu maodun,” 268–89.

³⁴For instance, in a farewell preface in 1349 to a provincial official who was going to take a court position, Zhao Pang wrote: “peace has prevailed for a long time, and good laws and benevolent intentions have gradually lost their initial impact” (然承平日久, 良法美意, 寢失其初). Zhao similarly expressed his hope at the end of the preface that the recipient would relay his suggestions to the court. Zhao, “Song Jiangzhe canzheng Xie gong fu sinong shaoqing xu” 送江浙參政偈公赴司農少卿序, *Dongshan cungao*, 2.51b. *Dongshan Zhao xiansheng cungao*, 1.5a–6a.

(1445–1499), notes: “At the end of the Yuan dynasty, local militias were raised and [Zhao] assisted Marshal Wang Tong 汪同 (1326–1362) in defending the homeland. He was appointed Gentleman for Rendering Service [chengwulang 承務郎 (6b)], Office Manager of the Jiangnan Branch Bureau of Military Affairs.”³⁵ This is the only record of Zhao Pang being granted an official position for his involvement in military affairs and it is unclear what sources Cheng Minzheng relied on. In fact, this information is absent from the biography of Zhao Pang in the slightly earlier *Gazetteer of Xiuning* (Xiuning zhi 休寧志, 1491), also compiled by Cheng. Additionally, the official title mentioned is incorrect, as the Southern Branch of the Bureau of Military Affairs was established by Zhu Yuanzhang, not the Yuan dynasty, which had a Jiangzhe Branch of the Bureau. Although the reference to Zhao Pang’s official position appears questionable, a more direct source—Wang Rui 汪叡 (1323–1401), Wang Tong’s elder brother—suggests that Zhao did participate in military activities, likely due to his connection with the Wang brothers, albeit without mention of an official position.³⁶

Leaders of the local defense in this period, the Wang brothers of Wuyuan are worthy of separate discussion; here we need only note their success in organizing local militia, taking positions in charge of the Xiuning and Wuyuan areas in late 1356 and early 1357, and their close relationship with Zhao Pang. Wang Rui was originally just a scholar who was devoted to the study of the Classics, and he had engaged in mutual exchange and discussion with Zhao, five years his senior. Wang Rui’s younger brother, Wang Tong, on the other hand, was not interested in scholarly pursuits and instead devoted himself to military affairs. When the war broke out and their hometown of Wuyuan was in distress, Wang Tong led local militias in the defense, while Wang Rui offered his counsel to the government forces. When the Huizhou conflict reached a temporary resolution between 1353 and 1354, Wang Rui politely declined official positions and returned to the life of a scholar, while Wang Tong continued his military campaigns, under the leadership of Yuan generals, in Raozhou circuit, west of Huizhou. This was the period when Zhao Pang wrote the prefaces, records, and steles discussed above, praising the Yuan generals and local officials for the recovery. However, in the winter of 1355, as Zheng Yu departed for Hangzhou, on his way to the court in Dadu by sea, the Yuan army suffered defeats in Raozhou, and Huizhou was subsequently captured by the Red Turbans. Wang Rui was called upon once again, joining forces with Wang Tong to restore control of Huizhou.

Wang Rui would later recall that in the year 1356, when he led troops to restore Wuyuan and assumed the position of acting prefect, Zhao Pang “also assisted and advised the general guarding Huizhou, bringing peace to our hometown.”³⁷ This recollection reveals Zhao’s direct involvement in military affairs, in an advisory role. The details are unclear, but it is likely that Zhao was brought in on the recommendation of Wang Rui, who—as we are told in the biography Zhao Pang himself wrote of Wang Tong—held Zhao in great esteem: He praised Zhao for his knowledge and insight and advised Wang Tong to seek his counsel before taking action. However, when Zhao initially expressed his thoughts in letters and later explained them face-to-face, he was slandered by one of Wang

³⁵ Cheng Minzheng, *Xin'an wenxian zhi* (xianxian shilue shang) 新安文獻志. 先賢事略上.

³⁶ Zhang Yi 章毅, *Lixue, shishen yu zongzu* 理學、士紳與宗族, 130–40; Zhang Yi, “Zaichao huo juxiang: Yuan mo Ming chu shiru Wang Rui de chuchu xuanze” 在朝或居鄉：元末明初師儒汪叡的出處選擇, *Anhui shixue* 2021.6, 100–107.

³⁷ Wang Rui, preface to *Dongshan cunqiao*. Cheng Minzheng’s account of Zhao Pang “assisting Marshal Wang Tong in defending the homeland” (輔元帥汪同保鄉井) may be based on this preface.

Tong's subordinates, and his advice was ultimately disregarded.³⁸ It seems that complex personal factors hindered Zhao Pang's ability to fully serve in his role as a military advisor.

At the same time, Zhao was again using his writings to encourage the restoration of local order. Despite the constant threat of powerful enemies abroad and internal conflicts among the generals within, the latter half of the year 1356 saw a brief period of relative calm upon the successful recapture of Huizhou by the Yuan. During this time, Wang Tong held office in Xiuning and, amidst his military campaigns, he managed to establish an ancestral hall for his lineage. Zhao Pang wrote an inscription for this hall and speaks of the significance of preserving family heritage amidst the turmoil, setting it against the backdrop of the destruction of prominent families during the war. He praises Wang Tong for ensuring the survival of the Wang lineage and further emphasizes the broader social importance of honoring ancestors and maintaining lineage unity.³⁹ Such cultural works intended to foster social stability and revival were not limited to Wang Tong's own lineage. He also established a Shangshan Academy (Shangshu shuyuan 商山書院), with the intention, according to Zhao Pang's "Inscription of the Fields of the Shangshan Academy," of "establishing a stable dwelling to gather displaced literati, and to provide them with sustenance ... to ensure that literati can have a secure place to pursue their endeavors with a single-minded focus on their rightful duties."⁴⁰ During this period, Wang also built a house for his father and constructed a pavilion to enjoy the view, asking Tang Guifang 唐桂芳 (1301–1381),⁴¹ a literatus from She county, to write an inscription. Scarcely mentioning the war that gave Wang the status of general in charge of Xiuning, that essay simply conveys an atmosphere of tranquility and harmony, just like any record in a peaceful time. At the end, it connects this pavilion, representing Wang's filial piety, with the ancestral hall and the academy, highlighting Wang's governance as one that not only relied on military strength but also valued learning and engagement with literati. Zhao and Tang are two of the literati Wang associated with, and their writings for him exemplified the role literati played in the political sphere.⁴²

Thus, Zhao Pang began this unstable period of nearly twenty years supporting and assisting the Yuan government forces, praising the generals and local officials for their military achievements, but most of all, for the stability they restored at a time when Huizhou was still being exchanged back and forth between the "bandits" and the "state." The local Confucian scholar expressed his support, but also his expectations, and he even provided military strategies of his own. Cultural rebuilding projects, meanwhile, offer a glimpse into wartime life, when efforts were made to maintain normalcy in the course of a chaotic reality, and reflect expectations that an end to the wars and the arrival of peace might be near.

Zhao, while evading the bandits, had participated in restoring order in various ways. Nevertheless, this was only to be a short respite along the way to the end of the Yuan. As

³⁸ Zhao, "Zishan daifu Huainan deng chu xing zhongshusheng zuocheng Wang gong zhuan" 資善大夫淮南等處行中書省左丞汪公傳, *Dongshan cungao*, 7.32b–43b.

³⁹ Zhao, "Zhibentang ji" 知本堂記, *Dongshan cungao*, 4.15a–18a.

⁴⁰ Zhao, "Shangshan shuyuan xuettian ji" 商山書院學田記 *Dongshan cungao*, 4.28a–31a. Wang also asked Zhao to be in charge of the academy. Zhao, "Da shupan Wang gong (Tong) qing zhu Shangshan yixue qi" 答樞判汪公(同)請主商山義學啓, in Cheng, *Xinan wenxian zhi*, 43.

⁴¹ Tang Guifang 唐桂芳, "Xishan yilan ting ji" 溪山一覽亭記, in *Tang shi san xiansheng ji*, 19.2b–4a.

⁴² Tang, like Zhao, produced many occasional writings related to officials and political events, though his works were more centered on She County, the seat of Huizhou, where he was from, and was also one node within the broader literati network.

time passed, there was no peace in sight. “There is now no place to hide after several years of avoiding invaders,” Zhao Pang wrote in a poem when he traveled to Mount Huang, in the winter of 1356, “Where might I ‘slay’ some straw to build a quiet cottage?”⁴³ The next year, Deng Yu would lead his troops to take Huizhou for Zhu Yuanzhang. A new dynasty was on the horizon. But it would take a few years more for Huizhou people to accept it.

“The early years of our dynasty”: Zhao Pang and the proto-Ming, 1357–1367

In the seventh month of 1357, a new military force—new to Huizhou at least—descended south through Ningde circuit and captured Huizhou. We do not know how much the locals knew about this force. Zhu Yuanzhang had only crossed the Yangtze river in 1355, establishing his headquarters in Jinling in 1356. For the people of Huizhou, it was likely difficult to determine whether this army was different from the previous “bandits” and, if so, how it differed.

In this regard, the aforementioned “Ode to the Merits and Virtues of Sir Deng” by Zhu Sheng, Zhao Pang’s fellow Xiuning literatus, composed for Deng right after he took Huizhou,⁴⁴ served to interpret the nature of a newly arrived power for a local audience, showing them how it might rule. After the passage lamenting Huizhou’s suffering, cited at the beginning of this article, the Ode eloquently narrates the strategy of Zhu Yuanzhang, from his establishment of the Jiangnan Provincial Secretariat in Jinling on to the subsequent capture of Ningde circuit, which led to the assault on Huizhou, providing a full picture of the newly arrived power. It then turns to Deng Yu: “the prefecture and counties were brought under control without a single person being harmed,” in contrast with the previous period, when “the people of Huizhou had endured twelve instances of being subjected to military aggression, with no end in sight.”⁴⁵

In the course of alternating victories and defeats, “bandits” had never managed to occupy Huizhou for a long period of time. A key point of the “Ode” was to emphasize the difference between Deng’s army and the previous occupying forces:

The people say that this army is made up of our peers. Those in the past oppressed us—how could we align ourselves with them? The literati say that this army is different from the previous one, for their advisors are literati and they follow the customs and traditions of the Central Plains. The previous army forced the people into military service. Why force those weak individuals? It only unnecessarily harmed their lives. The previous army sought revenge in every matter, pointing fingers and inciting conflict, inflicting great suffering on the people. But now, with the new order in place, there is a clear distinction between the army and the people, since untrained people would be the first to flee in battle. With this new order, starting from today, we must not perpetuate a bad culture of animosity and retaliation. The refugees have settled down, gradually returning to their original way of life. In the village, there is farming and sericulture, and at home, there are poetry and books [being studied].

⁴³Zhao, “Bingshen (1356) dong you Huangshan” 丙申冬遊黃山, *Dongshan cungaoyi*, 1.25a.

⁴⁴According to his biography, Deng became Administrative Assistant of the Branch Bureau of Military Affairs, his official title in the Ode, in the third month of 1357 and was promoted to Associate in the fourth month of 1358. See Zhu Mengyan 朱夢炎, “Weiguo gong zeng Ninghe wang shi Wushun Deng Yu shendao bei” 衛國公贈寧河王謚武順鄧愈神道碑, in *Guochao xianzheng lu*, compiled by Jiao Hong, 5.96a–96b.

⁴⁵Zhu, *Zhu Fenglin ji*, 7.1a.

The key to all these accomplishments lies in tranquility and calm, which in a unified voice we attribute to the leadership of Deng.⁴⁶

民曰此軍，與吾為儕，曩者轢我，吾寧服懷。
士曰此軍，非曩之匹，閭幘衣冠，中原典則。
曩之來者，驅民為兵，何為強弱，徒殲厥生。
曩之來者，每事報復，指撻吹求，熾然荼毒。
今茲下令，軍民判然，不教之衆，奔北之先。
今茲下令，新自今日，毋長澆風，酷為指撻。
流離還定，漸復其初，里有耕桑，家有詩書。
凡此之功，在於鎮靜，萬喙同聲，歸功于鄧。

For the common people, the term “peers” implies that the newly arrived troops did not oppress them as the previous bandits had done. For Zhu Sheng and his fellow literati, the most crucial distinction lies in the fact that “their advisors are literati.” Zhu also claims, if at a very early stage, the return of normal life, and the passage resolves in the key of “tranquility and calm.”

Thus, the Ode served as a statement of the occupier, requested by Deng’s subordinate and to be inscribed on a county building,⁴⁷ but it was written by a local scholar, expressed in an established literary form, and giving attention to local concerns. This is what Zhao Pang’s texts about the deeds of Yuan generals had done several years earlier. In peacetime, local literati, whether in office or not, provided their services (and voiced their opinions) as “spokesmen.” In wartime their writings functioned as a kind of “propaganda,” but the form of political participation remained unchanged.

Zhu Sheng was one of the earliest to choose to serve Zhu Yuanzhang. For others, such as Zhao Pang, it was still an uncertain moment.⁴⁸ According to Zhao Pang’s “Record of Conduct”:

In the year *bingshen* [1356 (Note: should be *dingyou*, 1357)], the Heavenly Army [i.e., Deng’s army] conquered Huizhou. The commander [Deng Yu] respected the master’s [Zhao Pang’s] reputation and moral character, and sought to recruit him with courtesy, but did not succeed. In the year *dingyou* [1357], Zhao went to reside in Ke Mountain in Quzhou circuit, and in the year *jihai* [1359], he built a thatched hut in the ancient Lang Mountain in Wuyuan. These mountains were distant and secluded, and the affairs of the world were almost non-existent to him. He devoted himself to writing, and, despite experiencing hardships and flights, did not slacken in his pursuit of scholarship.

⁴⁶Zhu, *Zhu Fenglin ji*, 7.2–3a. For the purposes of explication, I translate this verse passage as prose.

⁴⁷Zhu, “Ode to the Merits and Virtues of Sir Deng”: “General Zhang Sicong was stationed in Xiuning County, where he spread the virtuous deeds of Sir [Deng], benefiting the local people. He also invited the local scholar Zhu Sheng to compose an ode to commemorate and spread this legacy” (將官張思聰戍休寧縣，能宣布公之德美以福其民庶，又請邑士朱升作頌以傳之); *Zhu Fenglin ji*, 7.1b.

⁴⁸As Song Lian 宋濂 (1310–1381), the Jinhua native who became “the first of the founding civil ministers” (開國文臣之首) of the Ming, summarized the situation: “At that time, the emperor (i.e. Zhu Yuanzhang) needed talented individuals, but those literati with abilities chose to hide in the mountains and valleys, unwilling to come out due to the ongoing war with an uncertain outcome” (時上欲用人，而秀民有才能者見方戰爭，勝負未分，皆伏匿山谷中不肯出). Song Lian, “Gu Jiangnan deng chu xingsheng dushi zhufeng Danyang xian nan Sun jun muming” 故江南等處行省都事追封丹陽縣男孫君墓銘, *Song Lian quanji* 宋濂全集 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji, 1999), 1649.

丙申 (1356, 當為丁酉) 天兵克定郡邑, 其主將慕先生名德, 禮羅不至。丁酉 (1357), 寓于衢之柯山。己亥 (1359), 結茅于星溪(婺源)之古閭山, 山深閭寥, 人事幾絕, 潛心著述, 雖當顛沛流離而進脩之功不少輟。

In this telling, Zhao Pang declined the invitation of the new power and spent these years in seclusion deep in the mountains, devoting himself to writing. But again that was only part of the story. Zhao Pang gradually became involved with the new regime, in the manner of a local scholar. The new regime, for its part, used literati networks to stabilize its control over the region. Beyond military force, the regime's success depended heavily on collaboration between officials—recruited from other regions—and local literati.

The changing attitude toward the new ruler: Zhao Pang in Wuyuan

When Zhu Yuanzhang's forces took Huizhou in mid-1357, Zhao Pang had gone into hiding at Ke Mountain in Quzhou circuit, just south of Xiuning county. He returned to Huizhou in the autumn or winter of 1358, when it seemed to be firmly in Deng Yu's grasp.⁴⁹ Zhao did not, however, return to his hometown of Xiuning, but, as noted in the "Record," went to Wuyuan, then under the jurisdiction of Wang Tong, the younger of the Wang brothers, and later of Wang Kegong 王克恭, dispatched by Zhu Yuanzhang. This marks the beginning of Zhao Pang's shift from supporting the Yuan to accepting the new local power. Zhao's writings about the two generals who successively governed Wuyuan bear witness to the process of Zhao's personal "dynastic transition."

In the first month of 1358, Wang Tong, who was originally stationed in Xiuning but had surrendered to the proto-Ming forces the previous year, captured Wuyuan, the last resisting county of Huizhou, for Deng Yu. In the fifth month, a counterattack by the Miao army led by Yang Wanzhe 楊完者 failed, and the situation in Huizhou gradually stabilized under Zhu Yuanzhang's military regime.⁵⁰ Towards the end of the year, Zhu Yuanzhang established "Xingyuan Yi 星源翼 Branch Bureau of Military Affairs" in Wuyuan, with Marshal Wang Tong serving as the administrative assistant (while his wife and children were held hostage in Jinling), and in 1359, Zhao came there to reside in the mountains. Considering Zhao's "assistance" to Wang Tong, as mentioned in the previous section, it seems clear that Zhao sought to place himself under Wang Tong's protection, rather than return to his hometown under an unfamiliar new ruler. His attitude toward Wang's surrender was, at the very least, not one of outright rejection.

This was the first time since 1352 that Huizhou had been under control of one power for more than two full years. During this period, Zhao Pang dedicated himself to his work on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* in the mountains of Wuyuan. Wang Rui, having left the military right before Deng Yu's arrival, first to mourn his mother in 1357 and then his father in 1359, was also residing in these mountains, allowing them to resume the scholarly life they had shared before the war.⁵¹ Unlike Wang Tong, Wang Rui and Zhao Pang did not join Deng Yu's side; however, they also ceased to engage in defending the Yuan against rebel

⁴⁹Zhao Pang mentions that he returned from a neighboring county in 1358 and mourned for Master Zheng, who died in the autumn of that year; Zhao, "Ti gengdu tang juan hou" 題耕讀堂卷後, *Dongshan cunqao*, 5.5a–6a.

⁵⁰On Yang Wanzhe and his Miao troops, see Wang Ting 王頌, "Yang Wanzhe yu Miao, Liao wuzhuang" 楊完者与苗、僚武裝, *Fudan xuebao* 復旦學報 2001.1, 64–72.

⁵¹Wang, Preface to *Dongshan cunqao*.

forces. They withdrew, and lived under Wang Tong's protection. In a sense, Wang Tong's surrender to Deng Yu and the subsequent restoration of local order were the conditions that allowed Zhao Pang and Wang Rui to focus on their studies in the mountains.

It was then that a shocking event changed everything, causing a crisis in Wuyuan and likely leading to a change in Zhao's attitude toward the new local power. Zhao Pang's "Biography of Sir Wang [Tong]," written after Wang's death in 1363, first describes Wang Tong's restoration of Wuyuan: he built city walls and trained the army, and thus the Confucian scholars returned, gaining him "a great reputation."⁵² Zhao emphasizes the achievements of stabilizing the region and reconstructing local society, just as Wang had done when he was guarding Xiuning for the Yuan. Yet in the summer of 1360, having controlled Wuyuan for more than two years, Wang Tong would suddenly abandon his troops during a campaign in Raozhou circuit and flee to Hangzhou, then still governed by the Yuan. At this critical moment, Wang Kegong, an affiliate of Zhu Yuanzhang, took over Wang Tong's duties to defend Wuyuan. The crisis caused by Wang Tong's sudden departure is documented in the farewell preface Zhao Pang wrote for Wang Kegong one year later, when he was promoted to govern the whole Huizhou.⁵³ Zhao recalls the whole process from Wang Tong's surrender to the forces of the future Ming to his surprising escape back to the Yuan. He first describes the trust Wang Tong received from his superior, Deng Yu, and, most importantly, the gratitude felt by the people under his protection in his hometown. Then he contrasts that gratitude with Wang Tong's betrayal of it. It is in this contrast that we see Zhao's implicit criticism of Wang Tong. He stresses the precarious uncertainty at the time: "Some claimed he died, others said he fled, and with belligerent people stirring up among them, rumors were rampant, and turmoil was about to occur once again." Against this background, Wang Kegong's merit lies precisely in the way he brought Wuyuan prefecture out of the crisis: "As soon as Sir Wang stepped forth from his carriage, both inside and outside [of Wuyuan] calmed down, and all was well. The people of the prefecture felt as if they had been reborn." In addition to lightening the burden of taxes and levies, one of harshest issues for the people in wartime, most of what he did—eradicating the powerful bullies, suppressing banditry, keeping other forces out of their borders—concerned local security. "Those who had suffered harm and survived disaster finally began to resume the pleasure of being alive."

Whatever truth lies behind this, the author's praise shows what he thought people needed to restore order after the war. His persistent theme is tranquility: nothing happened (*wushi*, "all was well")—this reminds us of the theme of "tranquility and calm" (*zhenjing*) in Zhu Sheng's Ode. Zhao then points out the significance of this peace in terms of the sufferings of a long war: "Xingyuan was finally settled, after nearly a decade of war: can we say that the grace and virtue of Sir Wang [Kegong] towards our prefecture were anything but profound?" Zhao's appreciation for Wang Kegong works together with his criticism of Wang Tong's abandoning the people who trusted him: where Wang Tong

⁵²Zhao, "Wang gong zhuan," 7.40b–41a. This is the only extant source describing Wang Tong's time in Wuyuan.

⁵³Zhao, "Song zongzhi Wang gong yi zhen Xin'an shi xu" 送總制王公移鎮新安詩序, *Dongshan cunghao*, 3.21a–23a. The entry on Wang Kegong in *Hongzhi Huzhou fuzhi* is completely drawn from this preface by Zhao, demonstrating the importance for the recipient of getting a laudatory text from the literati. See Peng and Wang, *Hongzhi Huzhou fuzhi*, 4.84a–84b. For this occasion, there is one poem extant, from Tang Guifang, who wrote an inscription for Wang Tong mentioned above; *Tang shi san xiansheng ji*, 20.39a–40a. On Wang Kegong, see Wang Hao 王浩, "Yuan Ming zhi ji Wang Kegong fuli Huizhou kao" 元明之際王克恭撫理徽州考, *Huixue* 徽學 10 (2018), 64–74.

went or why he left is not the concern, but only his sudden abandonment of his home and the harm it has caused. From the position of a Yuan subject, Zhao Pang “should” have supported Wang Tong’s “loyal” return to the Yuan court, but neither the preface written for Wang Kegong at that time nor the later “Biography of Sir Wang [Tong]” fully endorse Wang Tong’s actions. In the comment at the end of the biography, he praises Wang Tong for his “righteousness” (*yi*; note, not “loyalty”), but implies a critique by comparing Wang with Guan Yu 關羽, the famed general of the Three Kingdoms period whose “brains were no match for his bravery” (*mou busheng yong* 謀不勝勇).⁵⁴ Returning to the Yuan (and ultimately dying) was an unwise action, at that moment at least. Zhao Pang prioritized immediate local safety over loyalty to the court.

Wang Tong’s departure threatened Wuyuan’s hard-won stability, including the quiet life of his brother Wang Rui, who was taken with his family to Jinling, ending his scholarly pursuits with Zhao Pang in the mountains. It is at this moment that we can clearly observe a change in Zhao Pang’s attitude: he became more prone to accept Zhu Yuanzhang’s wartime rule in Huizhou, with his focus on local peace and safety, after ten years of war.⁵⁵

Zhao would go on to commend Wang Kegong, as the local representative of Zhu’s forces, on several other occasions. These include a poem, “Silver Peak: Describing Virtue, With Preface,”⁵⁶ describing how Wang Kegong’s peaceful governance of Wuyuan extended to nearby Dexing, in Raozhou circuit. “The people could preserve their lives and became a governed population once again ... All of this was bestowed by Sir [Wang].” Six years later, when Wang Kegong was transferred to Shaoxing in 1366, Zhao Pang again wrote a farewell preface, concluding his account of Wang’s governance by emphasizing that “from that point on, all was well [*wu shi*] in our prefecture,”⁵⁷ a fact for which the Huizhou people were deeply grateful. Again, the common theme in all these texts is local peace and security.

At a time when there were not only several major powers but also numerous small groups of “bandits” roaming the land, for those striving to survive, order took precedence over any choice between the higher powers in the wars that led to the fall of the Yuan and the rise of a new dynasty.⁵⁸ This response was shaped and built up over a decade of turmoil; the initial fervor and belief in the value of the established order, along with the expectation that the state could quell the rebellion and restore peace, gradually faded. After prolonged warfare, the desire to return to stability became paramount, outweighing the original expectation of restoring the order of the Yuan, their “state.” Beyond the devastating effects of war, time itself also became a significant factor. Zhao now contributed, through his writings, to the new order, with local well-being in mind.

⁵⁴Zhao, “Wang gong zhuan,” 7.43a.

⁵⁵It is worth noting that, despite the praise for the restored peace in Wuyuan, Zhao Pang also emphasized in this preface the need for relief from the heavy taxes that had been imposed on the people of Xiuning, his home county, as one of the expectations set for Wang Kegong’s appointment to govern the entire Huizhou.

⁵⁶Zhao, “Yinfeng shude shi bing xu” 銀峰述德詩并序, *Dongshan cungao*, 4a–5b.

⁵⁷Zhao, “Song Wang fuma duwei fu Guiji xu” 送王駙馬都尉赴會稽序, *Dongshan cungao*, 34a–36a.

⁵⁸For instance, Dong Xing 董興, an officer dispatched by Zhu Yuanzhang to guard Yi county of Huizhou, was worshiped in a shrine for successfully leading local militia in resisting the depredations of bandits. Peng and Wang, *Hongzhi Huzhou fuzhi*, 4.84b.

Stabilizing new rule through literati networks: Zhang Sicong and Ren Yuan in Xiuning

During the years that Zhao Pang spent in Wuyuan, first under Wang Tong and then Wang Kegong, his home county, Xiuning, was headed by Zhang Sicong, the military officer who commissioned Zhu Sheng to write the “Ode to Sir Deng’s Meritorious Virtues.” He had been sent by Deng Yu to take Xiuning in 1357, and he managed to rule it, as Deng Yu did for the whole of Huizhou, for four years. When Zhang followed Deng Yu to Poyang in Raozhou circuit in 1360, his subordinate, Ren Yuan 任元 (1328–1362), who had previously studied under Zhao Pang, came to invite Zhao to compose a farewell preface. The fact that Zhang Sicong insisted on having a preface from Zhao Pang, a Confucian scholar he had never met and who had not returned to Xiuning during his four-year rule, and that he eventually obtained it, reveals the network of literati behind the consolidation of governance in Xiuning and its role in enabling literati writings to fulfill a political function.

At the beginning of the “Preface Sending Off Mr. Zhang of Yizhen to Serve in Poyang,”⁵⁹ Zhao Pang recounts how in 1357 he “lay ill” at Ke Mountain, where his neighbors were, he said, all refugees with no other place to go. Zhao then quotes observations from someone in Xiuning at that time, telling how Zhang Sicong had pacified Xiuning by summoning the leaders of the local community, interacting with the literati, and controlling the military forces. The description underscores that it was a time “when disturbance came from all directions and people’s hearts were not settled,” and contrasts that with the resulting state of affairs, when “peace and order were restored in the county.”

Zhao goes on to describe how the following year, when he returned to Huizhou, staying in Wuyuan, someone came from Xiuning and reported how, in contrast to military officers in other areas who allowed local ruffians to oppress the people to gain benefit, under the leadership of Mr. Zhang, the soldiers conscripted from Xiuning were treated fairly, with well-behaved young men from respectable families receiving good treatment and those causing harm being punished, regardless of personal ties. “As a result,” it stresses, “my hometown experienced relative peace and stability.” The word used repeatedly to describe Zhang’s merits is “peace” (*an*). Zhao had to rely on secondary accounts because he himself was not present. At the same time, by quoting others’ accounts he was able to imbue his words of praise with some degree of ambivalence, keeping himself a certain distance from the preface he had been induced to write.

In addition to relating what his hometown people had said about Zhang’s beneficial rule in Xiuning, Zhao describes Zhang Sicong’s goodwill toward him personally: an order had been issued to find Zhao but Zhang did not force Zhao’s return by putting pressure on the local people. Recruiting respected local figures was an important method of governance in an occupation, but different approaches could yield different outcomes. We can contrast this way of handling the matter with the case of Zheng Yu. Appointed Hanlin Attendant by the Yuan in 1355, Zheng had escaped to Jiande circuit, to the east of Huizhou, when Deng took Huizhou in 1357, and when Jiande circuit also fell to Deng he went to the mountains of Xiuning. But in 1358, Zheng’s brother was taken hostage and he was forced to meet Deng Yu—yet he refused to serve the new power, committing suicide

⁵⁹Zhao, “Song Yizhen Zhang jun fu Poyang xu” 送儀真張君赴番易序, in *Dongshan Zhao xiansheng wenji*, 2.27a–28a.

to uphold his integrity.⁶⁰ Zheng would not have needed to face such a test of integrity if, at that moment, he had been left alone to continue his “secluded” life in the mountains. In this regard, Zhang Sicong was showing great favor to Zhao by refraining from summoning him directly. We do not know whether or not Zheng Yu’s suicide affected the way Deng Yu and his officers dealt with local literati, but the casual note in the “Record of Conduct” that “the commander admired Mr. [Zhao]’s reputation and virtues, recruiting him with courtesy, but [Mr. Zhao] did not accept it” conceals complex circumstances, involving who happened to be in charge of a place and when, as well as the way relations with notable literati were managed.

Nevertheless, Zhao Pang does not merely present the Xiuning people as the grateful subjects of Zhang Sicong. The next paragraph sees Zhao reminding his readers, and his sponsor, of the significance of the “Heavenly way” during a time of war and killing, urging them to “bear in mind the principles of distinguishing right from wrong, discerning the virtuous from the wicked, respecting human life, and saving the lives of the innocent.” Thus, while affirming Zhang Sicong’s performance, Zhao Pang still managed to admonish him, demonstrating his own detachment from and reservations about the new power.

Zhao was not enthusiastic in composing this preface. Originally, Zhang had sought an audience with Zhao. Though it was unsuccessful (due to Zhao’s “illness”), Zhang persisted in his efforts to have Ren Yuan elicit a tribute from Zhao, even after Zhang had left Xiuning. Ren mentioned the farewell poems composed by other literati upon Zhang’s departure, aiming to convey to Zhao, whether or not it reflected reality, a shared positive sentiment toward Zhang among the local literati, as suggested by the occasion. In the end, Zhao agreed to write this preface, thus joining in the collective gesture, but appended a demurral that mixed pride and humility: “How could my speech be sufficient to serve as a tribute to Zhang?” Zhang’s insistent request and Zhao’s gesture of declining reveal that even amidst the chaos of war, the written word remained an important medium for governors and the governed. These farewell texts were written not just to bid farewell, but as a nod of recognition to their recipients, signifying that Zhang Sicong had earned legitimacy in his rule over Xiuning. Equally significant is that up to the time Zhang Sicong left Xiuning, Zhao Pang had neither returned there nor met him in person. The composition of this preface was due not to the writer alone (whatever reservations he may have had), but to the local literati network in which these writings were produced and circulated. Thus, while Zhao’s case provides an example of an esteemed local scholar being sought after, the individual was part of a network, wherein each literatus might have made different choices and demonstrated varying allegiances, yet his actions derived influence from the web of interconnected relationships.

The network node through which Zhang Sicong sought Zhao Pang’s endorsement was Ren Yuan, one of Zhao’s students. Before the outbreak of the war in 1352, Ren had been a bright young Confucian scholar, first studying under Wang Kekuan 汪克寬 (1304–1372), another renowned *Spring and Autumn Annals* scholar and a close student/friend of Zheng Yu, and later under Zhao.⁶¹ In 1362, when Ren Yuan passed away, Wang Kekuan wrote a eulogy, depicting an image of a bright young scholar:

⁶⁰Wang Kekuan 汪克寬, “Shishan xiansheng Zheng gong xingzhuang” 師山先生鄭公行狀, in *Huangu ji* 環谷集 (Siku quanshu edition, rpt. Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1983), 8.10b–20a, esp. 15a–16a. Note that this was not the first time controlling forces made demands of Zheng Yu. He was summoned twice by the Red Turbans when they took Huizhou in 1352, but bribed his way out of it. He was able to decline again in 1353, when he was called on by a Yuan official after Huizhou was recovered. *Huangu ji*, 8.12b, 13a.

⁶¹On Wang Kekuan, see John D. Langlois, Jr., “Wang K’o-k’uan,” in *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368–1644*, 1385–87.

In the year *guiwei* of the Zhizheng era [1343], [Ren Yuan's] father ordered him to study under me, learning the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the *Zuozhuan*, and the *Hu Commentary*. He quickly grasped the profound principles within them. He studied poetry in the ancient and modern styles, becoming skilled in its composition and achieving a pure and distant aesthetic. He copied the calligraphy of Ouyang Lücheng [Ouyang Xun, 557–541], capturing the essence of his brushwork. He frequently visited me in the mountains of Huanggu, and went with me to Taiping in Xuanzhou, never parting from me. When I compiled *The Collected Annotations on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, Benchu [Ren Yuan's *zi*] made valuable contributions. In recent years, chaos and unrest have prevailed. Benchu gathered righteous militia to defend his hometown, but then he was captured. In the spring of the year *renyin* [1362], I was residing at the foot of Mount Huangshan when I suddenly heard the news of his passing at the residence of his wife's family due to illness. He was only thirty-five years old.⁶²

至正癸未，其父始命之從余講學，授春秋、左傳、胡氏傳，輒通大義；學古近體詩，句法圓熟，興趣清遠；臨歐陽率更帖，尤得其筆意。屢訪余環谷山中，相從於宣之太平，無時相舍。余編著春秋纂疏，本初與有功。比年矛戟搶攘，本初糾集義兵扞衛州里，遂被擒焉。壬寅之春，余寓黃山之麓，忽聞其抱疾歿於外舅之居，年方三十有五。

Ren was an excellent student, mastering not only the classics but also poetry and calligraphy. Without the one line mentioning Ren's participation in local volunteer defense (1352) and his subsequent capture (1357), we would not have noticed that his life made a big turn from that of a "normal" Yuan literatus. Even with that one line, we still do not learn of his important activities from the time he was captured up until his death in 1362. Similar to the effect of Zhao Pang's "Record of Conduct," the eulogy downplays Ren's role in the wartime world, instead emphasizing his scholarly qualities and achievements, presenting him as a refined literatus rather than a figure associated with war or conflict. I am not certain if there was an intent to minimize or omit martial elements to reinforce the ideal image of scholars devoted to cultural and intellectual pursuits, even—perhaps especially—amid turbulent times. However, this certainly leads us to underestimate these scholars' involvement during wartime and obscures the transformative impact of the war on their lives. In fact, Ren joined Zhang's army after being captured.⁶³ Moreover, he was a crucial figure in Zhang's control of Xiuning.

It is through Ren that Zhang Sicong was able to "befriend those who were learned and virtuous," as described in Zhao's preface. He established connections with local literati by way of Ren, who came from a wealthy family with good local networks. After Ren was captured, Zhang appointed Ren to assist him in governance, and Ren played a key role in transforming the military occupation into viable civil rule. An elegiac address to "Brigade Commander Ren Benchu," attributed to Zhang Sicong and preserved in a local gazetteer, commemorates Ren's assistance to Zhang in the governance of Xiuning: "As the guardian of Xiuyang (i.e. Xiuning), you assisted in maintaining order and discipline." In particular, Ren added the "Confucian" elements: "You taught me with books, supporting me with your actions. [So that] I began to progress, not only in emphasizing military affairs but

⁶²Wang Kekuan 汪克寬, "Ku Ren sheng Benchu aici, you xu" 哭任生本初哀辭有序, *Huangu ji*, 2.6a–8b.

⁶³In Zhao Pang's recollection, Ren Yuan himself recounts "being captured and joining Mr. Zhang [Sicong]" (見獲而從張君). Zhao, "Song Yizhen Zhang jun fu Poyang xu."

also in upholding Confucian learning.”⁶⁴ Another Xiuning literatus, Zhu Mo 朱模 (1313?–1370), wrote in his farewell poem to Zhang Sicong that “at the time the path of expressing opinions was open for the Confucian scholars,” and “this was thanks to Brigade Commander Ren in the private secretariat.”⁶⁵ Zhu Mo himself led a local militia in 1352 to protect his lineage and, later in 1363, apparently after accepting the new ruler, he was appointed as a local official in other counties and prefectures under Zhu Yuanzhang’s control.⁶⁶ For this appointment, there were farewell texts from local literati, including a preface from Zhao Pang to encourage Zhu to prove the “effectiveness of Confucian government.”⁶⁷ Although his collected works have not been preserved, some of Zhu Mo’s poems can be found in local gazetteers. Along with writings by other literati dedicated to him, these works reveal that, like Zhu Sheng, Zhao Pang, and Tang Guifang, he was an active participant in the literary and social circles of local scholars at the time. Together, they collectively represented the role of non-official literati within the political sphere.

During wartime, many records were lost (or perhaps never created). It is only through the social writings of literati—fragments preserved in collected works or local gazetteers—that we gain glimpses of Zhang Sicong’s “achievement” of “riding alone to Xiuyang and ‘cultivating the wilderness,’”⁶⁸ seemingly effortlessly pacifying Xiuning county. In reality, this was made possible through Ren Yuan’s network. While the richness of Zhao Pang’s collected works makes him the protagonist of this study, he was not a central figure in this network that contributed to securing Zhang’s rule over Xiuning. However, by examining him as one node, we gain insight into the existence and significance of this network. In addition, it was precisely such literati networks that provided the foundation for Zhao’s, and other literati’s, writings to exert influence.

Life under Zhu Yuanzhang’s regime: Zhao Pang in Xiuning

The composition of farewell prefaces for Wang Kegong and Zhang Sicong signifies Zhao Pang’s reluctant but gradual acceptance of the rule of Deng Yu’s army. It was 1361, four years after Deng Yu had captured Huizhou. The next year, Zhao finally ended his self-exile and returned to his home county, Xiuning. While he declined official appointments and devoted himself to Confucian studies, this did not entail complete withdrawal from the world. Through his writings, he continued to participate in typical political and social interactions between officials and literati.

⁶⁴Zhang Sicong 張思聰, “Ji wanhu Ren jun Benchu wen” 祭萬戶任君本初文, in Cheng Minzheng 程敏政 and Ouyang Dan 歐陽旦 *Hongzhi Xiuning zhi* 弘治休寧志 (1451 edition, rpt. Beijing: Shumu wenxian, 1988), 34.7a–7b.

⁶⁵Zhu Mo, “Song Zhang zongguan fu Poyang” 送張總管赴番陽, *Hongzhi Xiuning zhi*, 18a–19a. Also see “Song Ren Benchu zhi Linchuan jian ji Zhang Zongguan” 送任本初之臨川兼寄張總管, *Hongzhi Xiuning zhi*, 18a–19a.

⁶⁶Zhu Sheng, “Kuzhu Zhu shi zupu xu” 苦竹朱氏族譜序, *Zhu Fenglin ji*, 4.4a–5a.

⁶⁷Zhao, “Song Zhu Zifan fu Laian xian zhubu xu” 送朱子範赴來安縣主簿序, *Dongshan cunqao*, 2.30a–31a. *Dongshan Zhao xiansheng ji*, 1.12a–13a. This preface also indicates that Zhao accepted, willingly or reluctantly, the idea of his fellow literati serving Zhu Yuanzhang’s regime.

⁶⁸Zhu Mo, “Song Zhang zongguan fu Poyang.”

According to the “Record of Conduct,” Zhao continued to decline all summons:

In the spring of the year *renyin* [1362], [Zhao] returned to Mount Dongshan. At that time, the Great Ming had established its capital in Jinling [1356], and our county had been under its control for six years. Officials repeatedly summoned him for service, and then for discussing the rituals [of the new dynasty], but he was able to decline them all due to illness.

壬寅春歸東山，時大明龍興創業金陵，吾邑已附屬六年矣。有司屢奉命徵辟，繼以議禮召，皆以疾得辭。

Zhao’s reasoning is demonstrated in two letters, to Assistant Surveillance Commissioner Liang and Assistant Grand Councilor Cai respectively, in his collected works. Both letters explicitly describe a long history of physical frailty (the second letter in particular provides detailed accounts) and express his inability to take on official duties. In addition, he painstakingly contrasts his study of the classics (*jingsheng wenshi* 經生文士) with useful learning for practical application (*dangshi zhi wu* 當世之務), the former deemed to have been put away awaiting a time of peace, the latter useful in a time of war. His elder and fellow scholar of the classics, Zhu Sheng, the author of the “Ode,” had transformed from the former to the latter smoothly, becoming one of Zhu Yuanzhang’s most famous advisors, but Zhao Pang insisted on the role of a classical scholar—though we now know that Zhao did, at one point, participate in military affairs. Both letters express a strong hope that his studies of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* would be his true contribution to future generations.⁶⁹

Nevertheless, while Zhao declined the summons as a “hermit” from the “central” government (that is, the “Grand Councilor” of the Branch Secretariat of Jiangnan, Zhu Yuanzhang), he maintained a close relationship with local officials, especially Wang Kegong. He participated in social interactions between local officials and literati, as in ordinary times, and his relationship with Wang Kegong did not stop with playing the role of the literatus subject providing praise as a literary service. In contrast to Deng Yu’s direct order for Zheng Yu to surrender, and similar to the way Zhang Sicong handled Zhao in Xiuning, Wang seems to have cultivated Zhao’s support in a gentler way, beginning with the special attention he paid to Zhao’s health. Zhao Pang tells the story in a farewell preface for the doctor Tang Sigong 唐思恭: when Wang Kegong came to govern Xingyuan, he heard Zhao was sick and sent messengers to bring him over and take care of his illness, and as all the doctors in Wuyuan had failed to cure Zhao, he sent a letter to look for physicians in east Zhejiang. That was how Tang came to Wuyuan.⁷⁰ In the preface, Zhao further explains why he appreciated this medical treatment so much: he had figured out principles in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* that had perplexed scholars for a thousand years, and “while the ideas may be certain, my book is not easily completed. This is why I am deeply concerned about my illness.” Zhao took the opportunity to express his appreciation (which is to say, expectation) of the new commander, who took care of

⁶⁹Zhao, “Yu Liang ancha shu” 與梁按察書, *Dongshan cungao*, 3.50b–51b, “Da Cai canzheng shu” 答蔡參政書, 3.54b–57a. Zhao apparently maintained a good relationship with this Assistant Grand Councilor Cai: when Cai was appointed to be in charge of the Branch Secretariat of Fujian, Zhao wrote a farewell poem to him: “Song Cai Qixian canzheng xingsheng Fujian” 送蔡齊賢參政行省福建, *Dongshan cungao*. 1.37a–37b. The title of this poem in an anthology *Shicang lidai shixuan* 石倉歷代詩選 includes “jian jian Wang duwei” 兼簡王都尉: sending a note to Wang Kegong as well.

⁷⁰Zhao, “Song Tang Sigong gui Jinhua xu” 送唐思恭歸金華序, *Dongshan Zhao xiansheng wenji*, 1.13a–15a.

everyone under his governance, allowing Zhao to live peacefully in the mountains, recovering naturally with the lifestyle the doctor suggested, and to write his book (though that was against the doctor's orders). At the end of this preface, Zhao Pang included a message to his old friends Wang Hui 王禕 (1322–1373) and Su Boheng 蘇伯衡, who were from the same circuit as Dr. Tang. This reflects a communication practice developed during the Yuan dynasty, where prefaces served as a medium of exchange among literati. With the restoration of transportation and regional connectivity under unified control, such exchanges became viable once more. In this sense, Zhao Pang's farewell preface for Dr. Tang not only fulfilled its personal purpose but also effectively broadcast the new general's virtues to other regions, illustrating how literati communication could serve to promote political messages across territories. More broadly still, that Wang could invite a doctor from "east Zhejiang" was because by 1360 Zhu Yuanzhang had gained control over Wuzhou, Quzhou, and Chuzhou, the interior lands of eastern Zhe. The expansion of secure territory meant the possibility of travel and communication within a larger area, another aspect of normalcy resumed, and the restoration of communication itself could be conveyed through literati communication.

The scholarly masterpiece that Zhao was so concerned with was finished and later published with Wang Kegong's sponsorship—by the Shangshan Academy, the one Wang Tong had founded to relieve literati after the war, as noted above, and had by now become an asset that Wang Kegong could make use of. Extant editions of Zhao Pang's works on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* are derived from these publications, and a note indicates that it took five years to prepare the woodblocks for the printing of the book, highlighting the challenges of undertaking such a task in the aftermath of the prolonged war.⁷¹ Instead of directly recruiting his local scholar, as new ruling generals often tried to do, Wang supported his devotion to his studies of the classics.

In return, and perhaps from a sense of gratitude, Zhao Pang's literary services even extended to assisting Wang Kegong with administrative writings. These include a "Sacrifice Text for the Temple of King Wang in Wuyuan (Written for General Wang Kegong and Envoy Wang Guangyang)," ⁷² and an official letter to Wang Pu 王溥, a general in Jiangxi, that Zhao Pang wrote for Wang Kegong in 1363.⁷³ A poem Song Lian wrote to Zhao Pang mentions Zhao having been a *ke* 客 of general Wang.⁷⁴ It remains uncertain whether the term *ke* refers to Zhao having been Wang Kegong's guest during the latter's efforts to treat his illness, as mentioned above, or whether it denotes Zhao's role as an adviser in Wang's service. Zhao Pang might not have really served as a formal private secretary, but his involvement with the local official was more than social or occasional. Yet a farewell preface Zhao wrote to Wang Pu's envoy shows that he was in Xiuning at the time, which suggests that he might have been helping with the writing remotely.⁷⁵

⁷¹Zhao Pang, *Chunqiu zhuci* 春秋屬辭, the 1493 edition based on the 1360–1364, Shangshan Academy edition, rep. Zhonghua zaizao shanben edition (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan, 2005).

⁷²Zhao, "Ji Wuyuan Wang wang miao wen (dai zongzhi Wang Kegong, fengshi Wang Guangyang zuo)" 祭婺源王廟文 (代總制王克恭、奉使汪廣洋作), *Dongshan cunqao*, 5.47b–48a.

⁷³Zhao, "Dai Wang zongzhi hui Wang zuocheng" 代王總制回王左丞, *Dongshan cunqao*, 3.51a–53b.

⁷⁴Song Lian, "Ji Zhao zhengjun" 寄趙徵君, *Hongzhi Xiuning zhi*, 38.16a. We are not sure if this general Wang is Wang Kegong, but we do have some information about Wang's "guests" from local literati, such as Jin Bao 金瑤, Liao Tengkuai 廖騰燦 and Wang Jinzheng 汪晉徵, *Kangxi Xiuning xianzhi* (康熙) 休寧縣志 (1693 edition, rpt. Beijing: Beijing tushuguan, 2012), 6.926–967.

⁷⁵Zhao, "Song Shangrao Zhang Mengxun fu huan Xujiang xu" 送上饒張孟循父還吁江序, *Dongshan cunqao*, 3.24a–26a.

One sign of the relative stability of Huizhou under Zhu Yuanzhang's control is that Zhao Pang and other local literati began to interact with local officials as they had before the war. These local officials, however, were often surrendered officers, officials or literati from localities that Zhu had previously conquered. Later, Huizhou would see its own literati appointed, sometimes forcibly, to other places as officials. After Zhang Sicong took Xiuning, the county magistrate appointed was Qian Renyou 錢仁友. He was not a local resident, and little is known of his personal details. First a courier of Jiangzhe province participating in military action, he might have surrendered to Zhu Yuanzhang's army before being appointed to Xiuning. Zhao was not in Xiuning then, but he wrote "Preface to the Plan of the Hall of Family Celebration of Sir Qian, the Xiuning Magistrate," around 1361, after the succeeding Magistrate arrived. The little information we have about Qian comes exactly from this preface, written for a social activity celebrating Qian's reunion with his parents. For people long suffering from the turmoil, Zhao claims, this reunion was not just a blessing for this one family but a symbol of peace for the whole county.⁷⁶ The scroll of painting and poems created for Qian reveals the resumption of interactions between officials posted in the locality and local intellectuals. For the posted officials, this reflects a process in which previously conquered regions became integrated into the governance structure of the new regime and played a role in the conquest and administration of subsequent areas. For the local literati, this indicates their cooperative attitude toward the new rulers. While war outside continued, the locality had resumed a certain order, at least on the surface.

These officials, who represented the conquerors, were sometimes themselves also among the conquered. Zhao Pang wrote a "Inscription of Retreat into Books in Yunlu" for He Yue 何燾, the Assistant Magistrate of Xiuning, appointed in 1364. Originally an official under Chen Youliang 陳友諒, one of Zhu Yuanzhang's main enemies, he was appointed to serve in Xiuning after his surrender to Zhu. Zhao's inscription declared his own intention to decline official appointments, and tactfully supported He's wish to resign and return to his hometown to continue his family line, framing it as an act of filial piety. Whether due to illness (Zhao) or filial piety (He), not serving was no longer a personal choice but needed justification: "the aspiration of scholars to live in seclusion is a last resort."⁷⁷ These conquered literati were now facing a new political reality, as they themselves had become part of the process of conquest. In these writings, again, the heavy toll on the people during wartime repeatedly appears. Zhao emphasizes Qian Renfu's benevolence, which earned the people's affection, as the reason why the people celebrated his reunion with his parents. For He Yue, Zhao praises his performance—such as overseeing many difficult tasks without resorting to coercion—as a contrast to his desire to resign. Zhao also wrote a preface in honor of Zhu Zhen 朱珍, the county magistrate appointed in 1364, intended to express hope for Zhu's reappointment when his term was completed, likely in 1367 or 1368.⁷⁸ This piece specifically highlights the hardships

⁷⁶Zhao, "Xiuning xianling Qian hou jiaqing tu xu" 休寧縣令錢侯家慶圖序, *Dongshan Zhao xiansheng wenji*, 3.29a–31a. Another extant piece related to this event, "Inscription on the Scroll of Qian Renyou's Hall of Family Celebration in Xiuning," was written by Zhao Pang's friend Huang Shu 黃樞 (1318–?), one of Zhu Sheng's students and also a Xiuning literatus active in literary social activities. See Huang Shu 黃樞, "Ti Xiuning Qian zhixian Renyou jiaqing tang juan" 題休寧錢知縣仁友家慶堂卷, in his *Houpu Huang xiansheng cun ji* 後圃黃先生存集 (1550 edition, rpt. Beijing: shumu wenxian, 1988), 1.21a–21b.

⁷⁷Zhao, "Yunlu shuyin ji" 雲麓書隱記, *Dongshan cunghao*, 4.2b–6a.

⁷⁸Zhao, "Xiuning xianling Zhu jun kaoman xu" 休寧縣令朱君考滿序, *Dongshan cunghao*, 2.28a–30a.

faced by the local community during times of war and praises Zhu for his effective management.

The fact that all of these writings about interactions with local officials were done after 1361 indicates a change in Zhao Pang's attitude. He might not have wanted to serve the new government, but he accepted the existence of new local rulers as the new status quo. Stable governance had been established in Huizhou, and though war continued in various areas around them, the denizens of Huizhou, in a bubble, regained a semblance of peaceful life, albeit under heavy burdens. Nothing was certain. But they resumed their old ways of working with their new governors. This interaction between ruling officials and the literati of the conquered local society also operated trans-locally, among literati conquered at different times, reflecting the gradual process of connecting various regions and incorporating them into the new regime.

Conclusion

Zhao Pang's "dynastic transition" lasted eighteen years, a period in which he responded to the changing political situation by engaging with it on a local scale and in the manner of a local literatus. Reading his literary collection, we see him completing and publishing his works on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* during this tumultuous period of war, and vigorously promoting the theories he had developed from his teacher. This aligns with the image of a scholar portrayed in his "Record of Conduct" and later acknowledged in history. However, other works in his collection reveal that the classical scholar had another dimension—as a literatus actively engaging in social and political affairs through his writings. Zhao did not lead a volunteer militia like some of his friends, but he was not a scholar recluse, regardless of the impression his "Record" might convey. Zhao composed many prefaces, inscriptions, or steles for generals or local officials during this period. These texts were not static written records but actions during wartime, playing a role in the turbulent times he experienced. His writings served various purposes, including seeking personal advancement for his texts' recipients (in continuity with the function of literati writing in peaceful times); consolidating governing authority by praising military achievements; promoting the procedures of recovery and reconstruction; and conveying admonishment through commendation. Conversely, those in power also showcased the recognition and collaboration of scholars through these texts. Local literati provided such "literary service" without necessarily holding official positions. Thus, whether or not one held an official position is not the sole criterion for determining whether a literatus participated in politics. The participation of non-official literati through writing was integral to the political culture. Its continuity during the wartime reflects the importance of this kind of communication among the scholar-official group.

Zhao Pang's actions, while political, were not necessarily connected to a strong dynastic identity. He did support his "state," the political order represented by the Yuan court, and tried to help pacify "bandits" at the beginning of the war. But at stake was the order of life threatened by the turmoil, which was not a question of one state or another, since it was a war between the bandits and the government, not between two states. After Deng Yu took Huizhou under Zhu Yuanzhang's control, a new order gradually took shape. Later Ming authors would refer to the period from 1357–1367 as the "early years of our state/dynasty" (*guochu* 國初), but at that time, the Yuan had not yet collapsed, and the Ming, as a dynasty, had not yet been established. In terms of dynastic identity, this was a period of uncertainty and ambiguity. In terms of practical governance, it was a reality

that the people of Huizhou lived through for more than a decade. Zhao continued to involve himself with politics through his writings, focusing on practical local matters, without reference to the change in higher-level authority.

In this regard, it was lasting uncertainty in a fragmented world that put the dynastic framework in limbo. We may compare the circumstances of this period with the Song–Yuan transition, as Zhu Sheng did, but with a slightly different focus. Despite prolonged and intense wars between the Song and the Mongols on the border, the socio-political order of the core of the Southern Song remained largely undisturbed. It was not until 1276, when Bayan captured Hangzhou and the Song Dowager Empress, the emperor, and the court officials surrendered, that everything changed overnight. Then, all the inland prefectures and counties that were surrendered by the court's order faced an immediate identity crisis: a sudden shift from foreign enemy to “our state/dynasty,” despite claims of a peaceful transition.⁷⁹ The experience of the “Yuan–Ming transition,” at least in Huizhou, was very different. Though the Yuan remained, in name, their “state,” many individuals had new rulers, and they did not know if the current power, or someone else, would become their state in the end. Thus, state identity is less, not more, significant to our understanding of this period. For almost twenty years, Huizhou individuals lived in this ambiguity, even as the order of life, politically and economically, was gradually reconstituted. The court in Dadu grew more and more distant, while the court in Jinling behind the new local governance loomed ever closer. The Yuan–Ming transition did not occur at a clear point in time, but took shape as local people resumed their regular order of life.

Zhao Pang's wartime reality was the immediate place where he and other survivors lived, and his concern was for the interests of local people which he, as a non-official local literatus, could directly address. Zhao's concerns for the local and his identification with the state were not necessarily in conflict, but the importance of the local gradually increased over time. Initially, local security was closely tied to the state. However, as the war dragged on, this connection loosened, and local security became the primary focus. In a sense, the frequent changing hands of power in the first stage laid the foundation for the Huizhou people to accept the new regime in the second stage. Their desire for security and stability was stronger than five years earlier, when the rebellions had just started, as shown in the emphasis of Zhao's writings. It is also worth noting that, if the “state/dynasty” (*guojia* 國家, *guochao* 國朝) identity was not always the primary framework for people's lives, neither did “local community” necessarily require a distinctive “local identity.”⁸⁰ Rather, “the local” simply refers to the actual conditions of life

⁷⁹On the issue of loyalism in this period, see Jennifer W. Jay, *A Change in Dynasties: Loyalism in Thirteenth-century China* (Washington: Western Washington University, 1991) and Richard L. Davis, *Wind against the Mountain: The Crisis of Politics and Culture in Thirteenth-Century China* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1996). Jennifer W. Jay's research on Song loyalists—often cited for its identification of three types of loyalist figures—does not aim to reduce them to fixed categories. Rather, this typology serves as a starting point for examining how loyalist behavior varied across different historical moments. Her work critically explores how the idea of “absolute loyalism” was constructed in historiography—by both contemporaries and later historians—and brings to light a gradual process of compromise and accommodation, rather than one of unwavering resolve. This approach reveals the complexity of the concept of loyalty and the historical conditions under which it was invoked.

⁸⁰Compare the case of Wuzhou, which did develop a kind of “local identity”: Chen Wenyi 陳雯怡, “Wu Wenxian zhi yi”: Yuandai yige xiangli chuantong de jiangou ji qi yiyi” 「吾婺文獻之懿」——元代一個鄉里傳統的建構及其意義, *New History* 20.2 (2009), 43–114.

in local society. What we see here is not a contrast between local and state identity, but between local reality and a disappearing state, a special condition of a long period of war.

Zhao Pang's experience must be understood within the broader political context of Yuan literati and their shifting fortunes. While individuals may have made different decisions, they operated within a shared structural framework. It was the prolonged period of war that led to a shift in attitudes toward the state, but for Zhao Pang, and other literati, this shift was possible because they existed within a structure that allowed for such changes. Concepts like loyalty are important value systems that had an effect on people's actions, but value systems change with time and their effect is conditioned by the historical environment. For most non-official scholars like Zhao Pang, loyalty was not the primary framework through which they thought and acted at the time. The reasons lie not in individual factors but in the broader political structure of the Yuan dynasty. Southern literati, in particular, had limited opportunities to enter officialdom under Yuan rule, and still less chance of rising to high positions. Compared to the late Southern Song period, when passing the civil service examination was difficult but those who succeeded formed the dominant stratum of the bureaucracy, Yuan literati—especially from the south—rarely had such prospects. Ultimately, these changes influenced the ways in which “loyalty” was performed during the dynastic transition. This structural limitation, on the one hand, made new modes of political participation more prevalent and significant; many literati engaged in politics through writing rather than holding official positions, and as a result, political engagement could not be fully reflected by whether or not one held office, as mentioned above. On the other hand, even though these literati could participate in politics without official status, their relationship with the state differed from that of officials. If loyalty's essence was grounded in the bond between ruler and minister, as one modern study of office-holders has shown,⁸¹ those who were not part of the bureaucracy—often due to a lack of opportunities—were not bound by this concept. Their connection to the court was inherently weaker. This does not mean that these literati rejected the Yuan dynasty as their state or that they lacked a concept of loyalty. Rather, in the context of their real-life choices and circumstances, loyalty did not take precedence as a guiding value. The strength of dynastic identity requires cultivation. The Yuan dynasty failed to foster such identity—not so much because of its status as a “foreign” regime, but because its political structure was rooted in an alien cultural framework.

Like all individual experiences, Zhao Pang's story developed in a highly contingent historical context, even more so as his actions were shaped by the profound uncertainty of wartime. Nonetheless, it reveals a structural result of the Yuan political system, as reflected in the oft-unnoticed political participation of literati.

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⁸¹Hsiao Chi-ching 蕭啟慶, “Yuan-Ming zhiji shiren de duoyuan zhengzhi jueze: yi ge zu jinshi wei zhongxin” 元明之際士人的多元政治抉擇--以各族進士為中心, *Taida lishi xuebao* 32 (2003), 77–138. Hsiao argues that late-Yuan jinshi, regardless of ethnicity, showed no less loyalty than their late-Song predecessors. This loyalty was driven primarily by the ideal of ruler–subject allegiance, while the Han–barbarian distinction played a relatively minor role in the transition from a “barbarian” (Yuan) to a “Han” (Ming) regime. The conclusions are limited to the *jinshi* group, which suggests that another framework might be needed to interpret the actions of non-official literati.

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