

The Reason Behind the Collapse of Ming: How Did the Ming Dynasty's Founding Influence Its Subsequent Political Development

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Introduction

Born in 1368 A.D., after the fall of the Yuan dynasty, the Great Ming Dynasty, which ruled until 1644, was the last Chinese dynasty ruled by a member of the Han ethnic group. Throughout the Ming dynasty, Chi-na's population doubled, and trade, art, technology, and architecture reached new heights. However, the Great Ming Dynasty collapsed in 1644, its capital fallen to the rebel army led by Li Zicheng. This collapse was caused by several long-term causes embedded in its structure, which had eroded the government to the point of collapse. An important cause was the political structure that the founding emperor, Zhu Yu-anzhang, created at the initial phrase of the dynasty. The political system had been built up with several flaws that worsened as the dynasty evolved, which led to the rebellion and the collapse of the dynasty.

The Ming Founder's Experience and Ideology of Government

The collapse of the Yuan dynasty had great impact on Zhu Yuanzhang's ideology of government. In the end of the Yuan Dynasty, not only did it implement a strict policy of ethnic discrimination, suppressing and exploiting the Han people, and corruption in the administration of officials, they took all the money out of it and used it like sand. Zhu Yuanzhang was one of the lowest toiling people at that time. One of the members of the family, when burying their relatives, "was buried without a coffin, and was physically abused. Clothes, cover three feet above the surface, and lay out the glutinous rice syrup!" After Zhu Yuanzhang became a monk, the situation did not get relieved. After the the establishment of the Ming dynasty, in the second year of Hongwu (1369), Zhu Yuanzhang had recalled the past: "When Chang Sixi was in the civil society, he saw that there were many officials in the prefectures and counties who were not sympathetic to the people. They are often greedy for money and lust, drink alcohol and waste busi-ness, and treat the people in affliction with indifference. I really hate it, so today it is strictly forbidden by law, but when the officials corrupted and harmed our people, unforgivable sin. " It can be seen that Zhu Yuanzhang not only did not forget the scene at that time, but also and highlight that the main reason for this bad situation is that "Many officials do not show mercy to the people." Facing the sluggish admin-istration of officials at the end of the Yuan Dynasty and the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, Zhu Yu-anzhang's basic thinking is, "A more caring administration should be carried out and replaced the former administration that the Yuan dynasty built up."

Dependence Upon Emperor

The Ming governmental system required a talented emperor, since nearly the entire government was supposed to be directly controlled by the emperor. The Hongwu emperor had abolished the prime minis-ter and reduced other officials' executive power, reducing many of them to a merely advisory role. This significant change

came after the dismissal, trial, and execution of the senior chief counselor Hu Weiyong, who allegedly sought to establish a new dynasty. Many civil officials and their families were killed during this purge that continued for approximately a decade. In the end, 30,000 executions were made. The execution also included Li Shan-chang, one of the closest friends of the emperor, who despite his contributions to the founding of the Ming Empire, was executed along with over seventy members of his extended family. Zhu had come to believe that the political system gave too much power toward the officials. Another point that has been mentioned by historians is that the Hongwu emperor gained this belief of consolidating his monarchy from a long period of time by his advisors. Dardess argues that establishing this form of tyranny was “well within the moral and political framework”. This suggests that a major cause of the formation of this radical belief was those Confucian theorists. These Confucian theorists, who were from the eastern Zhedong area, believed that the main cause of the collapse of the Yuan dynasty was that the government failed to control the careerism and corruption within the civil officials. These ideas were spread and finally became key concepts of the government. This led to the preceding action: dismantling traditional bureaux, the Chief Military Commission, and the Secretariat. In addition, the complexity of the provincial government had prevented administrators from collaborating and dealing with affairs. The reconstruction of the central government in 1380, was not sufficient, where Zhu Yuanzhang abandoned the role of prime minister and gave the power to twelve top-echelon administrative agencies. From 1381 to 1383, many of the reorganizations of 1380 were moderated and kept to stabilize the unsettled situation of the newly-born Ming. This situation was clear for administration of the military, surveillance establishment, and the general-administration, as these powers had been given to the emperor and the power had been secured. When making this adjustment, Zhu Yuanzhang created a significant burden. According to the official History of the Ming, the emperor was required to cope with 1,660 documents, covering 3,391 separate issues, in one ten-day period late in Zhu Yuanzhang’s reign. The tedious process of reviewing documents, and the tremendous workload forced the Hongwu Emperor to understand it was impossible for a human to handle. Changes were soon made as the emperor appointed grand counselors outside the regular chain of administrative authority. In 1382, these officials were replaced by four special court attendants called the Grand Secretaries, who became the advisors that later gained substantial executive power. Even so, the Hongwu emperor himself managed his government until the end of his life. However, the central government structure he created required the emperor to carry out detailed supervision, and it is unlikely that it would be maintained by a less diligent successor.

Flaws in Hongwu Type Economic System

The basic economic thought of Ming Taizu was prioritizing farming above all other economic activities. In particular, the Ming Dynasty was established during a long period of war, and in its early years, the people suffered from war and chaos for a long time, and social productivity had been greatly damaged. However, in order to unify the whole country, sweep away the feudal separatist forces and the still quite powerful Mongolian military forces, the Ming Dynasty incurred huge military expenditures. When the reunification was completed, the Mongolian forces were moving on the northern border, and peasant uprisings continued to break out in the interior. The Ming Dynasty still had to spread troops on its borders to be prepared. Numerous “military plans” have been increasing and unabated, every time in history. The policy of “lightening corvee and reducing taxes” [unclear] implemented in the early establishment of the dynasty has been illusory and unreal since the new emperor of the Ming Dynasty was established. There was concern that if the Ming Dynasty imitated the dynasties of the past dynasties and used the policy of “lightening corvee and reducing taxes”, the dynasty would vanish quickly. Additionally, if the Ming Dynasty could not resume and develop production as soon as possible under such a situation, its vast “national plan” and “people’s livelihood” would eventually lead to great disaster. Throughout the Hongwu period, Zhu Yuanzhang implemented a series of economic policies to restore and develop the small-scale peasant economy.

The farming policy of the Ming Dynasty, concentrated on the issue of military colonies. The scale of the military colonies in the Ming Dynasty was unprecedented. The original area of military settlements in the early Ming Dynasty was more than 903,300 hectares. These settlements were widely distributed in the border and central areas of Ming Dynasty. Land, once cultivated by the army, became the official land directly controlled by the state. The troops were hereditary, so they were different from the small farmers who cultivated the land. They had actually become serfs who had been directly controlled by the state for generations. It can be considered that Juntun was in essence a small-scale peasant economic system established by Zhu Yuanzhang nationwide that was most conducive to the country's super-economic exploitation. It profoundly reflects the Ming Dynasty government's strengthening of control and intervention over land and people. At the same time, the state gradually loosened its control and intervention over land and people, which is in stark contrast, and at the time of Jin Yuan, the state re-strengthened its control and prediction over land and people, but it complemented each other.

However, from the perspective of the internal structure of the small-scale peasant economy, that is, from the perspective of its production capacity, this structure was still unstable, both in terms of its ability to resist natural disasters and its ability to bear taxes and servitude. Therefore, although the government adopted measures such as reduction or exemption of labor and famine to prevent a large number of smallholder farmers going bankrupt, these were only a drop in the bucket. In order to improve the ability of small farmers to resist natural disasters and bear taxes and servitude, Zhu Yuanzhang frequently ordered the people to plant mulberry, cotton and fruit trees in the gaps, so that the land would not be spared and the people would be spared. Such degrees were often of a very strict and compulsory nature. If they violated the laws, "the whole family would be sent to the army." The key to the implementation of this policy lies in the government's "heavy accumulation of disciplines", which is already a very common phenomenon. Therefore, when the water is too early, the small farmers will be displaced, and they will go to the ravines. Since the ideal policy It is no longer plausible, the government can only increase their production, from the inside of the small peasant economic structure, to enhance its viability, so that the poverty level of the small peasants will not cross the critical point, and to ensure that the government can successfully implement super-economic forced exploitation.

Looking at Hongwu's methods of finance, it is not difficult to find that the Confucian ideology of virtue economy was the basic guidance of Hongwu-style finance. The moral determinism of the economy makes the Confucian view on the nature of the economy, the function of the economy, and the operation mode of the economy all carried out from the perspective of a kind of morality, and this moral economic thought is exactly in line with the production mode of the natural economy of the small peasants and the needs of the patriarchal blood society. Therefore, Confucian economic thought tends to be convergent and conservative. It is based on benevolence, and emphasizes enriching the people rather than the country. However, Confucianism has no practical means to solve the problem of national economy and people's livelihood. The essence of its so-called "enriching the people" is nothing more than what Confucius said: "Do not suffer from being poor but suffer from unevenness, and do not suffer from poverty but suffer from insecurity." The conservative and backwardness of Confucian economic thought determines the above-mentioned basic characteristics of Hongwu-style finance, and the above-mentioned characteristics of Hongwu-style finance also determine its doomed outcome. First, the flattened "submarine bread" structure weakened the state's control over social and economic resources, and technically hindered the development of more advanced tax systems such as progressive taxation in the Ming Dynasty. More weakened control. Although "low tax rate, wide tax base" is the tax system approved by modern financial scholars, it must be supported by a corresponding commercial legal system and intermediate service levels—lawyers, accountants, banks, etc.—Otherwise, the corresponding tax system can only be a piece of paper, but like Hongwu-style finance, the country is built on a dangerous and unstable tax source. Once the tax cannot be collected as scheduled, the finance will be out of order, the public financial resources will be insufficient, and the public functions will not be able to be performed. Unfortunately, although the Ming Dyn-

asty had severe punishments and regulations, which stipulated that local officials could arrest and flog tax payers, many taxpayers in the writings of Gui Youguang and Gu Yanwu were even flogged to death or for failing to pay taxes on time. However, in the Ming Dynasty, local taxes were rarely paid, and the arrears of taxes and grains had become a common phenomenon: generally speaking, a county has levied 60% of the tax amount, it will be very difficult to collect the remaining 40%. Country gentry often use their specific identity to resist the collection of tax and grain. On the other hand, as the tax agent of the state, the country gentry often pays taxes in addition to the regular tax in order to compensate for their labor in collecting tax and grain for the country. conscription. On the one hand, due to the weak ability of the state to control rural organizations, it is difficult to grasp sufficient social resources, resulting in insufficient public financial capacity. On the other hand, the state's low tax rate is offset by the inefficient tax management system and levies other than the regular tax. Even if the grain production increases under the low tax rate, it is mostly swallowed up by the rural gentry and ordinary people. No benefit can be obtained. In other words, the proposition of Confucian economic thought to enrich the people through low tax rates in the practice of Hongwu-style finance can neither ensure the enhancement of the state's financial resources, nor can it truly achieve "hiding wealth in the people". It is difficult for the state to collect all taxes, but the burden on the people increases year after year. The people cannot be rich, but the country is poor.

Military Issue: The Flaws in The System of Weisuo

The system of Weisuo was an important system in Ming's military system. It was similar to the fu-ping system in sui dynasty. The soldiers were only soldiers when a war began. Zhang Chang, the minister of household in the Yuan Dynasty, first proposed the Weisuo. In the seventeenth year of Hongwu (1384), military guards were established in various military locations in the country.

One guard has an army of 5,600 people. There were thousands of households, hundreds of households, general banners, and small banners under it in sequence. The implementation of this law requires the cooperation of a household registration system that can guarantee the number of troops to maintain the operation of the guard system.

The military system of the guards in the Ming Dynasty was actually based on the experience of farming in the history of China.

Under the Ming Dynasty Weisuo System, the main source of its army is Taicang. According to Song Bo of the Wanli Period: The Annual Customary Silver Supply increased to 3,600,000, which is eight times the amount in Hongzhi Period. Moreover, it can be seen from this that during the Hongzhi period (1488-1595), the Taikuang silver had been transferred to the army for 4,500,000 to 10,000 taels every year. As for the reason for the transfer of silver from Taikuang to the border, Ma Sen said at the beginning of the Longqing period: "Importing silver is not beneficial to the former, and the cost is expensive." Therefore, Taikuang silver became military expenditure, which originated in the years when the Ming government used to subsidize border soldiers

Due to the loss of the military camp, the year of the main soldier also depends on Taicang to allocate. Since then, the areas allocated by the Taicang annual regulations have become wider and larger, and by the forty-fifth year of Jiajing (1566), Taicang will generally be responsible for the annual allocation of main and guest soldiers from all sides. 1566, Taicang was generally responsible for the annual allocation of main and guest soldiers from all sides. "Ming Hui Dian" Volume 28 "Accounting IV" and "Bianliang" records: "The forty-five years of Jiajing, Ling Xuan, Da, and Shanxi, except for Mintun Yanyin, pay 120,000 taels of silver each year for main soldiers and 115,000 taels for guest soldiers. The main soldiers of Jizhou Town have a total of 56,280 taels of silver for Ma and Tai 2nd Road, 48,672 taels of silver for the 2nd Yanshi Road of Yongping Town, and 30,000 silver taels for the main soldiers of Miyun Town. Three thousand nine hundred and twenty-four taels. " In addition, the towns were ordered to add salt to the towns every year, and to extend the old case

of the main soldiers of Sui each year. Ningxia's main soldier is 21,922 taels and one cent. Due to the popularization of the Taicang years, the Ming government's financial situation fell into extreme difficulties. During the Wanli period (1573-1620), Zhang Juzheng comprehensively checked the names and facts, unified the service law,

To greatly increase the silver in the warehouse. Zhang Juzheng once said: "The ministers and others look at the number of the state's wealth and good offerings. The total amount of silver in the Taikuang is only more than 4.3 million, and the details such as Licheng, Naban, and the monks and Taoist plates are just a millimeter. All of them are in it." According to the "History of the Ming Dynasty, Food and Merchandise Records", the sixth year of Wanli, Taicang's annual income is more than 4.5 million taels, which is roughly in line with what Zhang Juzheng said. It can be seen that after Zhang Juzheng's rectification, the amount of silver in the Taikuang in the Wanli Dynasty had nearly doubled compared to that in the Orthodox Dynasty. However, with the increase of Taicang's annual income, the number of border soldiers also increased. In addition, the Wanli government used troops many times, and the military expenditure was huge, and the annual expenditure was astonishingly large. In August of the twenty-eighth year of Wanli, Wang De finished the event: "The country's annual income is only 4 million, and the annual output is more than 4.5 million. There is nothing to do at the end of the year. , The need for emergencies increases due to events. For example, Ningxia spends more than 5,832,000 taels of silver for a few months of military use. The Korean military, for the first and last seven years, cost about 1,216,000 taels of silver. " In order to cope with the increasing military expenditures, the Ming government had to move a part of the fiscal revenue that should have been put into the imperial government to the Taicang, which made the treasury silver in Taicang surge: "Records of the Great Examination Accountant, the true colors of each year, the color analysis, the total number is 14.61 million, and the people who enter the inner palace are more than 6 million, and those who enter Taicang are 4.61 million in addition to their true colors. It's strange." Of the total revenue of more than 14.6 million yuan, in addition to the more than 6 million yuan entering the Neifu, the remaining more than 8 million yuan were all transferred to Taicang. Of course, not all the silver in Taicang was used for military expenditures, and part of the administrative funds should also be spent here. According to Sun Chengze: "Taicang's silver has old warehouses and salary warehouses. ...All in all, it was only 4,968,562 1/4 centimeters. " If Sun Chengze's estimate was reliable, then military expenditures account for nearly 5 million of the 8 million silver in the warehouse. These expenditures were accounting for about 62.5% of the total amount. And in the preceding years, the account was increased to 66%. Within these expenditures, two-thirds are used for the main soldiers, and one-third One is for guest soldiers. As in "History of the Ming Dynasty" "The Biography of Bi Ziyuan" says: "The annual number of the towns is 3.27 million today, and the number of guest soldiers is one of the third." As the national strength of the Ming Dynasty became increasingly unbearable, the heavy military years of various frontiers could no longer be borne by Taicang. For a total of 20.6 million, 7.3 million were used in military. Compared with the national strength of the Ming Dynasty and the tax bearing capacity of the people at that time, it was almost an astronomical figure. At this time, the original intention of Taizu's early establishment of the Weisuo has disappeared, and the complete collapse of the Wei-suo system was reasonable. This led to a huge financial burden toward the Ming dynasty, which led to the collapse of the Ming dynasty.

Moreover, according to the records of "Ming History Geographical Records", it can be seen that the administrative envoys are in Shi Zhengmin, and have their own clear administrative divisions; all commanding envoys are in the jurisdiction of the guards, and the guards have neither territory nor jurisdiction. Its entire responsibility is only to protect the country and the people, and it is a purely military construction. However, as early as the early years of Hongwu, the border states and counties were often abolished, and the government affairs that should have been in charge of the prefectures and counties were handed over to the guards, so the guards had the dual power of leading the army and governing the people. Later, in places without prefectures or counties, government affairs were entrusted to the guards. This kind of guardhouse is generally called the real earth guardhouse. According to the records of "Ming History Geographical Records", there are 493 guards,

350 guards, and 2,593 guards. Among them, there were one hundred and twenty-five guards, thirty-two guards of the thousand households, and eleven of the thousand households. These real earth guards are all located in the border areas, especially the places under the jurisdiction of the commanding division of the city are almost all real earth guards. For example, the ten guards under the jurisdiction of the Wanquan Dusi are all the real guards, and the Xingdu division in Shanxi has fourteen guards, and the real guards are nine out of ten. This is obviously a workaround taking into account the special relationship between nations, but the system itself is inevitably thrown into chaos.

The Collapse of the Ming

With the continuous annexation of the military realm, there have even been cases where there is no military realm for the military to implement this system. Therefore, in order to maintain the stability of the army, the country began to continue to implement the farmland system, and at the same time the government provided supplies to the army. However, as a large portion of these supplies were utilized by officers at all levels when distributed, only a small portion fell into the hands of ordinary officers and soldiers. At the same time, the Ming Dynasty suffered quite frequent disasters. The court is caught in an ongoing economic crisis. At this time, the court even owed food and salaries to the army. However, when the Ming Dynasty was in an ongoing crisis, the post-Jin regime took advantage of the situation to begin its resurgence. In order to defend against foreign enemies, the court naturally needed a lot of money to maintain military spending. At the time, the only way to raise money was to raise taxes. However, the increase in taxes would inevitably cause the peasants to continue to rebel, and then as the peasants revolted, the Ming Dynasty began to collect training and repression wages, which was an endless cycle. Ultimately, the number of peasant insurgents was increasing and the number of government troops was decreasing. Some officers and soldiers of the Ming Dynasty were unable to support their families or even survive independently. They ran away one after another, even going straight to the insurgents. It is also an indisputable fact that the "main body" soldiers of the guard system have fled one after another.

Conclusion

From a political, economic, and military perspective, it is clear that Zhu Yuanzhang's political system was created with flaws that led to further chaos in the government and played a large role in causing end of the dynasty.

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