

Analysis on Reasons of Zhongqi Yue's Conviction after he Losing the Battle with the Jungar Tribe

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Abstract: Zhongqi Yue was a famous figure in the Yongzheng era of qing dynasty. He managed and planed the military affairs of the border areas after the major general gengyao nian. In the battle of with jungar, he changed from a prestigious general to a prisoner. The reasons behind the great change were complicated. The emperor Yongzheng passed the buck; colleagues hit him when he was down. Zhongqi Yue's improper deployment and public opinion's criticism were also reasons. Meanwhile, there were deep contradictions between Manchu and Han officials in the qing dynasty. The ups and downs of individual's destiny in history are thought-provoking.

1. Introduction

Zhongqi Yue, a famous feudal official and military general in qing dynasty, made great contributions to the management of southwest and northwest border areas in the reigns of kangxi, Yongzheng and qianlong. In Yongzheng's reign, Zhongqi Yue was recruited for the battle with jungar, in which he made no great achievements or significant mistakes. Why was he removed from his position and sentenced to be executed after the battle? The reasons for this sharp change worth the comprehensive analysis. Up to now, there are no in-depth discussions in the academic circle on this issue. This paper intends to restore the history and disputes at that time through combing and analyzing basic historical materials such as archives, documents, memorials and imperial decrees.

2. From the Perspective of Emperor Yongzheng

The main reason for punishing Zhongqi Yue was the personal opinion of the supreme ruler, who held power over officials' life and property. He could determine the rights and liabilities in the battle with the jungar tribe at will.

First of all, although Zhongqi Yue proposed to fight with jungar, the final decision was made by emperor Yongzheng. Relying on the two feudal officials, gengyao nian and Zhongqi Yue, emperor Yongzheng successfully pacified the rebellion of luo bu zang dan jin and subdued qinghai; with the help of nai luo's counterattack as well as Zhongqi Yue's advice and suggestions, the emperor Yongzheng squashed the rebellion of albuba and stabilized tibet. In the context of repeated victories, of course, he hoped to follow up and crush the jungar tribe completely, so as to complete the unfinished work of emperor kangxi. The highest decision-maker craved for greatness and success; he was not fully aware of the situation of his enemy and himself. The error in strategic assessment forced the whole campaign into a passive situation. Secondly, the jungar area threatened the security of the mongolian and tibetan. It was necessary to occupy it, but the time was not right. The emperor Yongzheng made four major mistakes. First, he didn't know the political situation of the jungar; second, he didn't know the military power of jungar; third, he didn't know geographic conditions of jungar; fourth, he didn't know the strength of agriculture and animal husbandry of jungar. In the eighth year of Yongzheng (1730), the keshetu ranch was robbed in december. In june of the next year, the north road army was defeated near the he tong po. Emperor Yongzheng gradually realized that it was not easy to eliminate jungar, and his dissatisfaction with the protracted war gradually turned to the main general.

First of all, he criticized Zhongqi Yue's march into the back land. The camels and horses were

stolen in the battle of Keshetu Mountain, the responsibility should be taken by Yue. Later, he reprimanded Zhongqi Yue that he did not know the terrain and could not grasp the military opportunity; the state was worrying. Afterwards, when the enemy invaded Hami from Turpan, Emperor Yongzheng accused Zhongqi Yue for planning to respond to the attack instead of taking the initiative. In the end, in Wukeke Mountain, he allowed most of the Jungar forces to escape. The Qing army fell short of success for lack of a final effort. The emperor said, "Zhongqi Yue, who is a military expert, is not mediocre. But his decisions are inappropriate. Lessons from the past should be learned. Later, you should be self-conscious. I still look forward to you!"

In the August of 1732, the Prince Heshuo and his son-in-law, Ce Ling, defeated Xiao Ce Ling Dun Do Bu in Erdenizhao. Finally, the emperor found a candidate to replace Zhongqi Yue. This battle greatly frustrated the morale of the Jungar army. The campaign entered the stage of confrontation; the states sought a truce and peace. At this time, when the overall situation was initially determined, Zhongqi Yue had no use. In addition, several Manchu officials impeached him; Emperor Yongzheng made the decision to abandon Zhongqi Yue completely. Zhongqi Yue became the "scapegoat" for the failure of battle with the Jungar tribe.

3. From Perspective of Zhongqi Yue Himself

He Made Some Mistakes in the Battlefield Command and Dispatching, and he Was Responsible for the Major Mistakes of His Subordinates.

First, compared with Emperor Yongzheng's strategic decision-making mistakes, Zhongqi Yue also belittled the enemy. The Jungar Mongolia was different from Heshuote Mongolia; Xinjiang was different from Qinghai. The isolated force penetrated deep into the territory of his enemy; Yue underestimated the flexibility and bravery of the Jungar cavalry in fighting, ignored the weakness of his own army in equipment, baggage and supply, and gradually lost his prestige. The quick victory of the conquest of Luo Bu Zang Dan Jin lied in Zhongqi Yue's surprise action. At that time, Zhongqi Yue's proud tactics were used by Galdan, leading the Qing army to a passive position. It was difficult for the Qing army to defend, but also difficult to attack. Second, Zha Lin should be responsible for the defeat in Koshetu battle. Zhongqi Yue's early arrangement was not comprehensive, and he should also take certain leadership responsibility. After returning to Beijing, Zhongqi Yue recommended Chengbin Ji, the governor and military counsellor of Sichuan Province, to take charge of rear services. Chengbin Ji ordered the deputy general Zha Lin to lead his soldiers to the area of Koshetu Kalun to herd camels, but Zha was timid and scared of cold. He ignored the safety of hundreds of thousands of horses and camels. "He ordered just 50 people to herd, and led other soldiers to avoid the cold in mountains and valleys. They held banquets every day, and took pleasure with prostitutes." The serious dereliction of duty of first-line generals provided the Jungar army with an opportunity. Zhongqi Yue did not properly arrange the affairs before his departure, and entrusted irresponsible subordinates. Therefore, he also needed to share the joint liabilities. Moreover, after returning to the camp, Zhongqi Yue knew that the reported numbers of stolen camels and horses as well as casualties were quite different from the fact, but he intentionally concealed the fact to protect his subordinates. Third, he moved the camp to Mulei and made the pledge, which was careless. From the perspective of geographical location, Mulei was located between Urumqi and Balkul; there were mountains in the south and desert in the north. It was not wrong for Yue to move troop and pitch camps here as a strategic fulcrum. However, in order to regain the trust of Emperor Yongzheng, Zhongqi Yue made the pledge to show his determination. "If there is something wrong, you can punish me, as well as my wife and son seriously". That became a perfect excuse for ministers to attack him afterwards.

4. From the Perspective of Public Opinion

The slander and two treason cases made Zhongqi Yue fall into the vortex of public opinion, which aggravated the emperor's suspicion. It was the external factor of his conviction.

It's lonely at the top. "Zhongqi takes charge of three provinces and is in charge of the army. A lot

of officials suspect and envy him.” Even the Emperor Yongzheng said, “for several years, those who slander Zhongqi have not only written a lot of letters of accusation, but also called Zhongqi as the descendant of Fei Yue (a patriotic general of the Song Dynasty)”. With the growing of Zhongqi Yue's prestige and power, the environment and his special identity made him trapped into the complex and delicate conflicts between Manchu and Han officials and suffered by rumors. In 1727, the fifth year of Yongzheng's reign, Zonghan Lu called out on the streets of Chengdu to falsely accuse Zhongqi Yue of rebellion. The next year, Jing Zeng and Xi Zhang wrote letters to him and colluded the rebellion. Zhongqi Yue handled these cases carefully. In the latter case, Zhongqi Yue even made a vow to get the confession and the truth. His loyalty dispelled some suspicions of Emperor Yongzheng at that time. When Emperor Yongzheng criticized Jing Zeng, he pointed out, “Zhongqi Yue is honored by the state. He is loyal and brave. Yue has conquered Tibet and pacified Qinghai. He is a pillar of the state.” Another letter expressed, “Zhongqi Yue and me, as the monarch and the minister, are of one heart. The loyalty, justice and selflessness of Zhongqi Yue are rare among ministers since ancient times.” However, to be in the king's company is tantamount to living with a tiger. The Emperor Yongzheng, who survived through the fighting among nine princess, always wanted to guard against the ministers who were in charge of the military power. This is true to Gengyao Nian and Zhongqi Yue. Yongzheng's hypocrisy, suspicion, hatred in mind and lacking of grace were vividly revealed when he dealt with issues about his younger brothers; while Zhongqi Yue was only a minister of Han nationality. He suspected the ministers, but he still used them, petted them, and paralyzed them, in order to manipulate them. This shows that Yongzheng inherited the skill of emperors' domination in the past dynasties and tried to eliminate people he suspected. When he needed Zhongqi Yue, he was generous in his praise. Among the emperor's memorials, there were such high praises as “the prodigy of the era”, “the pillar of the country, the best general in this century”, “both courageous and wise, both loyalty and diligence”, “the right-hand man”. When Zhongqi Yue was abandoned, the expressions changed completely. The imperial decrees were full of such severe words such as “miscalculation, miscarriage, negligence and fallacy”. Yongzheng's imperial mentality is the same as his comments on the memorials of Gengyao Nian. “If I listened to slanders and blamed the meritorious officials, I can only save my virtue as the emperor, but unable to take care of your virtue as the minister”. All praises and punishment came from the emperor's opinion. From trust, suspicion to discard, the fate of Zhongqi Yue also reflects the autocracy of the feudal imperial power.

5. From the Perspective of Officialdom Conflict

Court officials such as Ertai, Guangsi Zhang and Zhalang'a vied for impeachment, which was the direct thrust for Zhongqi Yue's final conviction and sentence.

Emperor Yongzheng's dissatisfaction with Zhongqi Yue was becoming more and more obvious. Can the officials who had conflicts with Yue stand still? Just as the case of Gengyao Nian, when he was condemned and lost his position, every one hit him. In March 1732, the 10th year of Yongzheng's reign, Ertai, the grand secretary and other ministers, firstly accused Zhongqi Yue. “Yunzhuo Shi was responsible for the defeat in Wukeke Mountain, but Yue can hardly absolve himself from the blame... He neglected his duty and indulged the enemies, and his reports were not true. He failed your hope and trust. Please order to severely punish Zhongqi Yue”. When Ertai was the governor of Yunnan Province, he was ordered to work with Zhongqi Yue on transferring Wumeng and Zhenxiong from Sichuan Province to Yunnan Province. They had an old grudge. Zhongqi Yue's could not directly criticize Ertai's behaviour. In the memorial, he accused Ertai of sending Yunnan officers and soldiers to “go deep into the great pass and cause casualties”. However, the Emperor Yongzheng showed the letter with E and intensified the contradiction. In April, the Ministry of Military replied the memorials of Ertai and others. “Culprits invaded Hami with five or six thousand people from Wuke mountain into Kalun. Zhongqi Yue was at a loss. The culprits plundered the livestock and came back slowly from Takunaku. Zhongqi Yue does not have enough wisdom to predict the enemy's actions, or enough courage to annihilate the enemy in the face of conflicts. According to the military criminal code, his crimes cannot be defended. His

title of nobility should be deprived. He should be removed from position as the governor, but still take the duty of the general to check his future performance.” In August, the Vice General of the West Road, Guangsi Zhang, who was the former subordinate of Ertai, impeached Zhongqi Yue again. He accused Yue did not properly dispatch troops, collect food and funds, and control the generals and soldiers. He pointed out six items combined with his own experience. “Zhongqi Yue intended to use the carriage from Balikun to Mulei. But along the way, the gullies are rugged with sands, so it is not suitable to use the carriage. Moreover, Mulei is surrounded by enemies. The roads to animal husbandry are not safety. The main force should not station in this place”. In this abyss of suffering, Zhalang'a, the governor of Shaanxi Province and the general of the military office, handed on a secret letter to impeach Yue again. “From generals to petty officers, they did not cherish the soldiers but abuse them for pleasure... The loyalty and bravery of soldiers gradually disappeared; decadence and laziness became the lasting habits.” Zhalang'a was a relative of Zanlin. Zanlin slanders Zhongqi Yue in front of Zhalang'a in order to shirk his responsibility of the defeat in Keshetu ranch. The repeated impeachment became the last straw to crush the camel. Emperor Yongzheng finally made the decision, and issued an edict to list Zhongqi Yue's crimes. “He was careless in nature, neglectful in handling affairs, and regarded the important national military affairs as ordinary things. The rewards and punishments were inconsistent; the orders changed constantly. He did not care for soldiers, and did not accept good advice. He was arrogant, disrespectful and headstrong. As a result, he missed opportunities for combat; military affairs were in chaos, and the morale was low... All the words in his former memorials were false and deceitful, which was a way to disguise his mistakes. It's hard to count all his crimes that endanger the realm. Zhongqi Yue should be dismissed and put into custody of the Ministry of War. I will send another minister to interrogate him.” The grand secretary and others proposed to behead Zhongqi Yue right away, and Emperor Yongzheng changed the order to be behead afterwards.

6. From the Perspective of Class Contradiction.

The insurmountable gaps between the emperor and his subordinates, and between Manchu and Han officials are the deep reasons why Zhongqi Yue became a victim.

“In the entire Qing Dynasty, Zhongqi is the only Han minister who became the major general and in charge of all Manchu officers and soldiers.” Zhongqi Yue was not even a member of the “Eight Banners“. He “seized” the “lucrative post“ of the governor of the northwest frontier which lured all civil and military forces. He naturally attracted the public's attention and envy. The case of Zhongqi Yue was exactly the reflection of the contradiction and struggle between Manchu and Han officials in the early Qing Dynasty. According to the records of *Xiaoting Miscellany*, after the Keshetu Ranch was robbed, Chengbin Ji caught Zhalin and wanted to behead him. Yue, who just returned the camp from the capital, was shocked. He scolded Ji, “Manchus found the state. They unite with each other and alienate other nationalities. How can we fight against them?” So he ordered to release Zhalin. This record reflected the contradictions between the Manchu and Han groups and the embarrassing situation of Zhongqi Yue at that time. The West Road Army led by Yue was mainly composed of Green Banner soldiers, and the generals are mostly Han people. He knew that the contradiction between Manchu and Han was concentrated on him. The objective contradiction between Manchu and Han lead to the very unstable relationship between him and Emperor Yongzheng. In this western expedition, he, a Han person, became the major general. He was in a high position and has great power, which was unprecedented. Although he exercised great care like walking on thin ice, it was still unavoidable to be blamed. Judging from the actual situation of the West and North troops, Zhongqi Yue was arrested and nearly killed several times even though he made no major mistakes. Fu Erdan was defeated in Hetongbo, but he left safely without heavy punishment. The comparison between them reflects the great difference between Emperor Yongzheng's treatment of officials from the eight banners and the Han's green banners. In the Qing Dynasty, the Han people were suppressed, prevented and suspected everywhere. For Zhongqi Yue, who was born as the Han nationality, the contradiction can not be avoided. It can be seen from the fact that the Emperor Yongzheng fully accepted the impeachment from important

Manchu officials such as Ertai and Zhalang'a.

7. Conclusion

Zhongqi Yue became famous in pacifying the chaos in Tibet and Qinghai, but he was destroyed for the battle with the Jungar tribe. All kinds of reasons are really complicated, which makes people sigh. Fortunately, the Emperor Yongzheng gave consideration to Yue's hard working before, or he needed to protect his image so he did not want to do too much. The emperor took pity on Yue and sentenced him to be executed afterwards. In Qianlong's reign, Zhongqi Yue revived. He persuaded Sha Luo Ben, the Chieftain of Dajinchuan, to surrender by thirteen horsemen. He once again showed the nature of being brave and resourceful, and finally achieved the reputation of “the great warrior to three emperors”.

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