

Cast Coinage of the “Ming Rebels”

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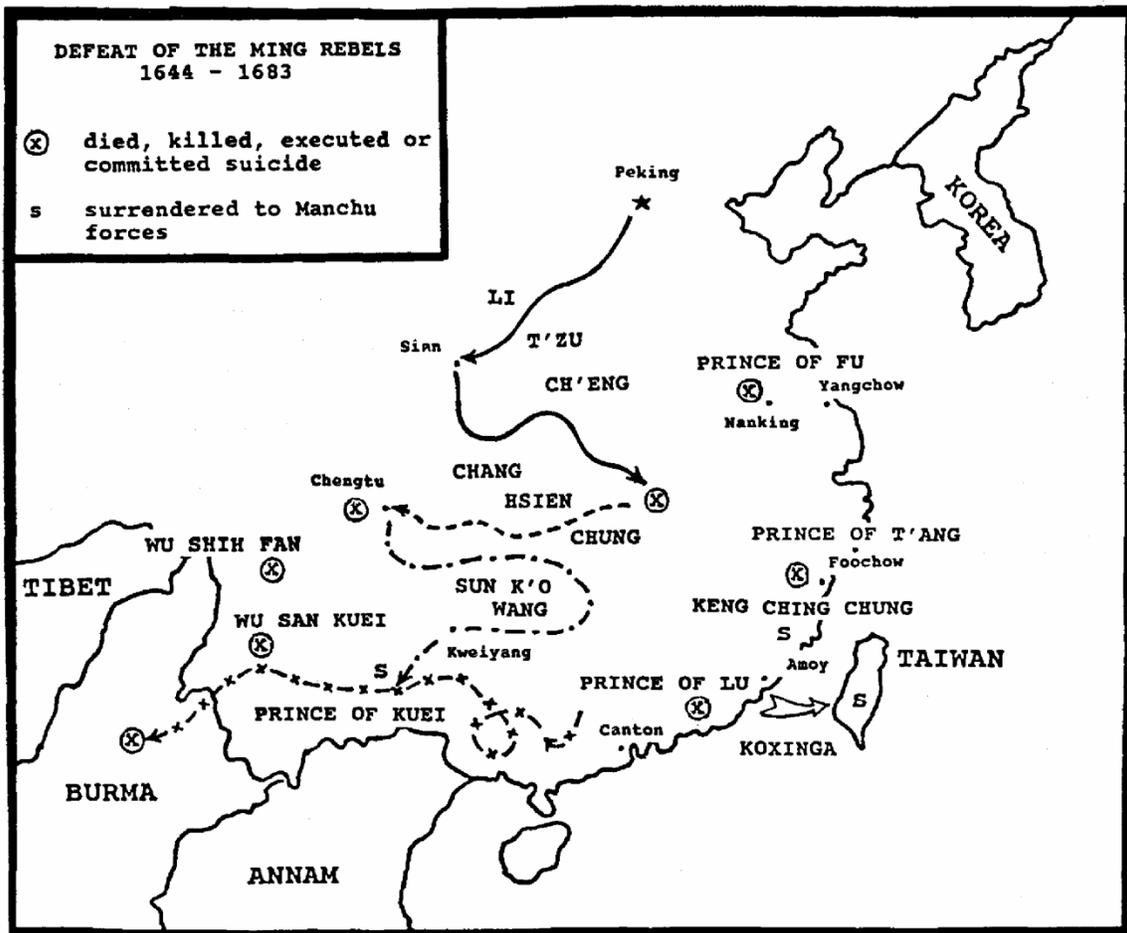
Collecting China's cast coins can be a very worthwhile and rewarding experience. While at first glance this endeavor may appear overwhelming to the average Westerner, it is in reality not difficult once you master a few guidelines and get the hang of it. Essential to a good foundation of knowledge is a clear understanding of the chronology of dynasties, the evolution of the cash coin from ancient to modern times, the Chinese system of dating, the Nien Hao which identifies the coin to emperor and thus to dynasty, and the various forms of writing (calligraphy) used to form the standard characters. Once this basic framework is mastered, almost all Chinese coins fall into one dynastic category or another, facilitating identification and collection. Some do not, however, which brings us to the subject at hand.

The coins of the Ming Rebels defy this pattern, as they fall between two dynasties, overlapping both. Thus they do not fit nicely into one category or another and consequently must be treated separately. To put this into historical perspective it is necessary to know that the Ming dynasty lasted from 1368 to the year 1644 and that its successor, the Ch'ing dynasty existed from 1644 to its overthrow in 1911. Therefore, our focus is on the final days of the Ming and the beginning of the Ch'ing dynasties.

The Ming era was a period of remarkable accomplishment. This was a time when the arts and craftsmanship flourished. Administration and learning soared to new heights. The Grand Canal, China's principal north-south navigation route, was improved and extended as were the Great Wall defenses against the northern barbarians. The architecture produced at this time remains unsurpassed, as does the fine porcelain, painting and textiles representative of the period. This was a time of learning, as the country was at peace, for exploration (as far away as the Persian Gulf and Africa), and for advancement in such arts as military science, medicine and literature. After three hundred years, due in part to less than able emperors, the dynasty set into decline. Having no enemies to conquer, the banner armies became lazy and fell into disuse.

In contrast to this the barbarian tribes to the north were uniting and becoming stronger. They long coveted the riches which lay to the south of the Great Wall. All that was needed was a leader they could follow. Such a man was Dorgon, a Manchu prince who was also a brave and effective soldier. His early successes included raids on some forty northwestern Chinese cities. Seeing the empire on the point of collapse, Dorgon turned his armies southward in 1644, conquering Peking and thus putting an end to the Ming dynasty.

The final days of the Ming and the emergence of Ch'ing rule is a somewhat difficult and complex period, often confusing to numismatists. After all, those Ming Rebels who issued cash coinage in their own name were ten in number. They have been referred to by the various authors of books on coinage of this period as "pretenders", "scions", and "rebels". I prefer to call them all rebels, as their collective goal was to overthrow the newly established Manchu authority. The difference in terminology is explained by the fact that the pretenders and scions among them were direct descendants of former Ming emperors whose avowed purpose was to perpetuate the Ming dynastic line, while the others were ex-generals and adventurers who, for one purpose or another, wished to overthrow the Manchu invaders (the Ch'ing) and were content to perpetuate the old Ming line for their own self-serving purposes. All this activity was compressed into a forty year time frame - commencing shortly before the downfall of the Ming dynasty and ending with the defeat of the last of the rebels by Manchu banner men in the year 1683.



Before we proceed further, it is necessary to set the record straight as to the true identity of these men. There is a definite incongruity here. You will note that the title of this article uses quotation marks to designate the term "Ming Rebels" as having a special sense. Schjoth, in his catalog of Chinese coinage, lumps them all together for

convenience of cataloging. This is historically incorrect, for most were not rebels at all in the true sense of the word. Therefore, whitewashing this group with the term "rebel" is a complete misnomer! For example, some of these issues (Sun K'o-wang and Keng Ching-chung's) came years after the fall of the Ming dynasty. Others, as we have noted above, were pretenders attempting to perpetuate Ming rule, hardly overthrow it! Still others (Wu San-kuei and Koxinga) were strictly opportunists bending with the winds of fortune and opportunity. Strictly speaking, the only true rebels among them were Li Tzu-ch'eng and Chang Hsien-chung. The incipient local uprisings of the mid-to-late 1630s over which Li and Chang took control had all the markings of a formal revolution, thereby justifying the use of the term "rebel" in these instances. Having thus set the record straight historically, I shall nonetheless henceforth collectively refer to these men as "Ming Rebels" for the sake of convenience.

This is the story of ten men - princes, generals and bandits among them - who being Chinese all shared, to greater or lesser degree, the same common hatred of the foreign barbarian invaders from the north. Their common goal was to drive the Manchus from China's borders. Who were these nobles and brigands who left their imprint on numismatics and their coins behind as part of China's heritage? How successful were they? What happened to them? This paper is an attempt to shed some light on these matters.

Li Tzu-Ch'eng - (Li Zicheng)

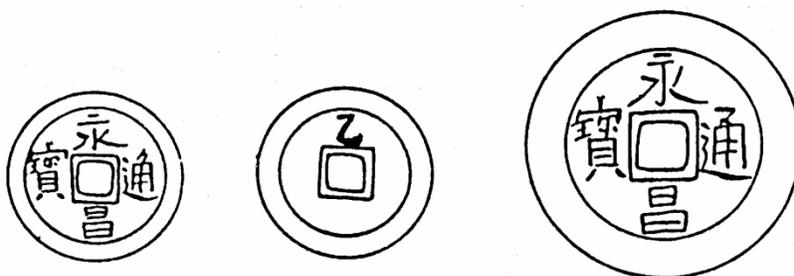
Corruption within the government in the late Ming period had led to economic depression and popular revolt. At the same time the nomadic tribes north of the Great Wall were becoming increasingly restless. Widespread famine was rampant due to successive years' crop failure. To raise money to suppress internal and external insurrection, the Ming court levied increased taxes on anyone they could lay their hands on as well as laying-off government employees in the more populated areas. Li Tzu-Ch'eng, a post station attendant in Shansi province, was one of those dismissed. He was skilled in both riding and archery and had a quarrelsome disposition which led him eventually into banditry among an army of the disaffected.

Li soon proved himself a skilled tactician ascending to leadership of his bandit army. His bandit career was successful due in part to his skill at eluding the Ming armies sent to crush him. Li styled himself the "Dashing King" designating Sian, in Shensi his capital. From here he conquered and controlled large areas of Shansi and Honan provinces. By the year 1643, having roamed over most of northern and central China competing for terrain and followers, he felt strong enough to take on the Ming seat of government in Peking.

In 1644, having given the name "Region of Grand Obedience" to his new kingdom and taking the reign title "Yung-ch'ang", Li turned his army north, capturing Peking in April. This drive involved hundreds of thousands of troops who sacked the towns resisting them, incorporating into their own army those who surrendered. His

army entered Peking without a fight, the city gates having been treacherously opened to them from within. The city then felt the horror of extortion, rape and murder. The last of the Ming emperors, Chuang Lieh-ti, had called his ablest general, Wu San-kuei (of whom we will hear more later), to the rescue; however, being preoccupied with the invading Manchurian barbarians, he arrived too late. Emperor Chuang Lieh-ti, hearing that the rebels had entered Peking, summoned his ministers. When none of them appeared he hanged himself in the imperial garden beneath the walls of the Forbidden City. Soliciting the aid of the invading Manchu armies to help restore the dynasty, Wu San-kuei joined forces with them. Their combined might was then turned against Li. Being defeated, Li fell back upon Peking for one last round of pillaging before abandoning the city to the oncoming Manchu army. On June 6th the Manchus entered Peking, seizing the country for themselves, thereby establishing their (Ch'ing) dynasty. The Ch'ing forces pursued Li and his ever diminishing army all the way to Hupeh where, in 1646, it is believed he was killed by local peasants while plundering the countryside for forage for his horses.

Li Tzu-Ch'eng had coins cast between 1637-1644 at Sian (Hsi-an Fu) in Shensi under the reign title "Yung ch'ang". They were few in number. Of the three bronze coins cast, two were one cash pieces, one with plain reverse, the other with the character "Yih" (one) above the hole on the reverse. The larger specimen, a value five, was well executed. All bear the legend "Yung-ch'ang t'ung pao" (currency of the Yung Ch'ang reign) on the obverse.



Yung-ch'ang t'ung pao of the brigand Li Tzu-ch'eng. The cash coins were of two varieties, plain reverse and with the cyclical character "yih" above the central hole. Value five specimen is shown at right. All were cast in Hsi-an Fu (Sian) in Shensi province.

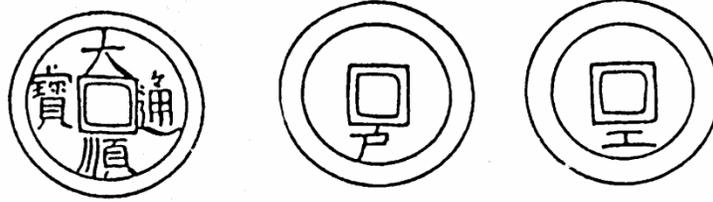


Li Zicheng - Cash. Yong Chang tong bao; Hartill #21.3

Chang Hsien-chung - (Zhang Xianzhong)

Chang Hsien-chung has been described as one of the most murderous ruffians ever to have disgraced the annals of China. Like Li, he was the bandit leader of an army of disaffected peasants who roamed northern China plundering and pillaging as they went. Shifting from base to base, never staying in one place long enough to be caught, they occasionally cooperated with one another against the common enemy. Chang maintained his capital at Ch'eng-tu in Szechuan province. There in the winter of 1644 he set up his "Great Western Kingdom" taking the reign title "Ta-shun" as his own. In Ch'eng-tu he established a civilian bureaucracy, held civil service examinations, minted coins and set up an elaborate system of military defenses. Suddenly, however, he acquired a mania for grandiose undertakings. He laid long range plans for the conquest of southern and eastern China as well as the Philippines, Korea and present day Vietnam. He became paranoid about betrayal, inflicting grotesque punishments upon those that stood in his way. Abandoning the city of Ch'eng-tu in 1646, he burned it to the ground adopting a scorched earth policy as his army swept eastward. In the end Chang did not last much longer than Li had done, being killed by Manchu troops in January 1647.

The whole of Chang's coinage consists of four specimens all bearing the inscription "Ta-shun t'ung pao". The cash coins are identical except for the reverses, which are plain, with "Hu" (Board of Revenue) and with "I" (Board of Works) appearing below the square center hole for their respective mints. The fourth coin, a value two, bears an "erh" (two) below the hole. Schjoth reports that these coins were highly sought after by seafaring men for use as charms.



Ta-shun t'ung pao coins constituted the money of Chang Hsien-chung, a murderous rogue who plundered western China from his base in Szechuan. His three cash coins had plain reverse, "Hu" for Board of Revenue and "I", the mint mark of the Board of Works.



Zhang Xianzhong - Cash. Da Shun tong bao; Rev: 'Gong'; Hartill #21.8

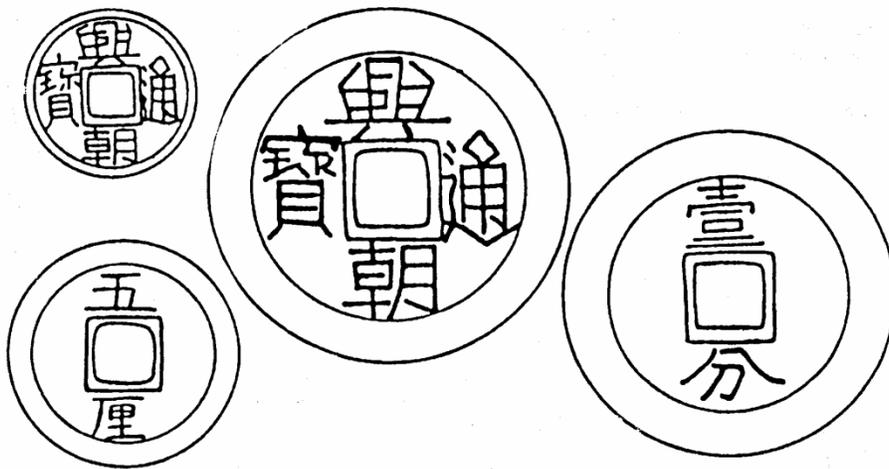
Sun K'o-wang - (Sun Kewang)

Sun K'o-wang was the adopted son of the bandit Chang Hsien-chung. Fighting in north China in 1644, first against the Ming and later against the Manchus, Sun so impressed Chang Hsien-chung that he made him his adopted son. He was then given the command of the Eastern army, whereupon he changed his name to Chang. After his "father" was killed, Sun K'o-wang led his troops south to Hunan where many of the rebels were killed in 1653. Rallying his remaining forces Sun fought a prolonged delaying action until he could join forces with the Ming insurgents in southwestern China. Arriving in Kweichow province he was proclaimed "Tung P'ing Wang" or Prince Pacifier of the East. It was at Kuei-yang in Kweichow province that he attempted to establish his seat of government. Before this could be carried out Sun was driven further south, finally crossing the mountains into Yunnan. There he cast his "hsing-chow" coinage. Hsing-chow in this instance was the name of the cash, not a reign name.

When things started to go against the Ming pretenders, Sun and his followers took advantage of the generous Manchu terms and surrendered, whereupon Sun K'o-wang was rewarded with the title "I Wang", or the

Patriot Prince. Such were the vicissitudes of warfare in that age.

The Sun K'o-wang "Hsing-chow t'ung-pao" coinage consists of three basic coins, although there are variants in size and rim thickness which make precise cataloging difficult. Suffice it to say that the cash coin has an "I" (kung) at bottom on the reverse and may be found with wide and narrow rims. The value five piece also comes in two sizes, each with "wu" (five) above and "li" (cash) below the hole. The very large (45mm) candareen specimen shows "yih" (one) and "fen" (candareen) below the hole as is the case with the similar "Yung-li t'ung-pao" of the Prince of Kuei. The similarity of these coins makes me think that they were cast at the same mint. Those coins are extremely attractive and well executed.



Sun K'o-wang's coinage was cast in Yunnan after he joined forces with the Ming pretenders. Seeing the tide of war change in favor of the Manchus, he surrendered, was rewarded by the Ch'ing emperor Sheng Tsu, and was henceforth known as the Patriot Prince. Shown here are the "Hsing-chow" cash coins, value five coin, and obverse/reverse on the one candareen specimens. All Sun K'o-wang coins are of superb workmanship.



Sun Kewang - 5 Cash. Xing Chao tong bao; Rev: 'Wu li'; Hartill #21.12

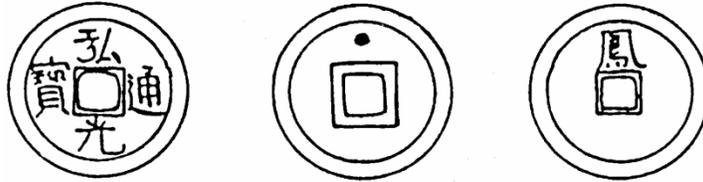
The "Southern Ming Dynasty"

After consolidating their gains in Peking and the north, the Manchus set about tracking down and eradicating all remaining vestiges of Ming influence. The so called "Southern Ming Dynasty" was made up of four princes, all pretenders to the Ming throne. These princes controlled their feudal fiefdoms from estates scattered throughout the lands south of the Yangtze River. Within a year the Manchu armies were at the Yangtze. Now having all the lands north of the Yangtze in their possession they turned their attention, one by one, to the remaining Ming princes and their supporters. Some scholars lump the four princes into the "Southern Ming Dynasty". Personally I think that this grouping leaves a false impression, as they did not unite to act in concert against their Manchu enemy, nor was there a single policy which governed their actions. As it turned out, this was but the beginning of a prolonged struggle. Resistance continued not only on the mainland but also on the island of Taiwan, then sparsely populated with Dutch trading settlements. These four pretenders to the Ming throne were the Prince of Fu, the Prince of Lu, the Prince of T'ang and the Prince of Kuei. We shall discuss their exploits and their coinage separately.

The Prince of Fu - (Period title: Hong Guang)

Grandson of the Ming emperor Shen Tsung (1573-1619), the Prince of Fu was the first to attempt to rally the Ming armies against the Manchu. After the confirmation of Chuang Lieh-ti's suicide, the Prince of Fu was declared his successor by a group of senior Ming officials, being thereupon enthroned at his seat of power in Nanking. The Prince of Fu quickly offered to make a deal with the Manchu regent Dorgon whereby the Manchus would withdraw north of the Great Wall in return for immense wealth and an annual subsidy. The deal was rejected, although Dorgon offered to allow the prince to retain a small kingdom if he would forgo all claim to the Ming succession. This the Prince of Fu refused to do. Instead of concentrating on Nanking's defenses, the prince set upon establishing an administrative bureaucracy. During 1645, while his court was preoccupied with internal bickering, the Ch'ing forces advanced down the Grand Canal, laying siege to the wealthy commercial city of Yangchow. The city was sacked for ten days finally succumbing to superior cannon fire. A month later Nanking yielded without resistance. After his capture, the Prince of Fu was sent to Peking where he died in prison in 1646.

The Prince of Fu's coinage is equally sparse, consisting of a series of four coins - three cash pieces and a value two coin. They were cast in the year 1644 at the Fengyang Fu mint in the province of Anhwei. All bear the reign title "Hung-kuang" (inscription: Hung-kuang t'ung pao). Of the three cash coins one has a plain reverse, one a star above the center hole and the other the character "Feng" to the right on the reverse which represents the mint at Feng-yang Fu. The value two piece shows the character "erh" (two) at right on its reverse. All coins are executed in the clerkly style of calligraphy.



The Prince of Fu's "Hung-kuang t'ung pao" included three cash coins with plain reverse, star above hole, and one with the character "feng" on the reverse for his mint at Feng-yang Fu in Anhwei province.

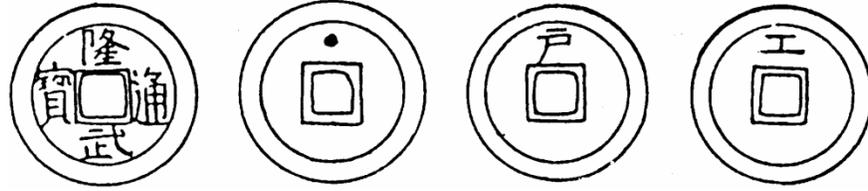


The Prince of Fu - Cash. Hong Guang tong bao; Hartill #21.15

The Prince of T'ang - (Period title: Long Wu)

After the Prince of Fu's death two brothers appeared to claim the Ming ascendancy. They were direct descendants of the first Ming emperor. The first of these was one Chu Yu-chien, the Prince of T'ang. Chu attempted unsuccessfully to lead resistance to the Manchus along the eastern seaboard from his base in Foochow. His accession to the throne took place in 1645, whereupon he took the reign title of Lung-wu. His tenure did not last long, however, as he was caught and executed in 1646.

Coinage minted for the Prince of T'ang consisted of six specimens - a mix of cash coins and value two pieces. The value twos have plain reverses as does one of the cash coins. The remaining one cash pieces have reverses with a star above the hole, "Hu" (for Board of Revenue) above the hole, and "I" (for Board of Works) above.



Prince of T'ang one cash coins, minted in Foochow

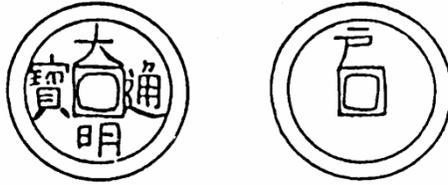


Prince of Tang - Cash. Long Wu tong bao; Rev: dot above. Hartill #21.36

The Prince of Lu - (Great Ming)

The other brother was the Prince of Lu. He was a younger brother to the Prince of T'ang. His base of operations was first in Chekiang, from which he was driven only to reappear in Kwangtung province. His reign was so short that he did not even have time to select a reign title, causing his coinage to be inscribed "Ta Ming" instead. He was executed when Canton fell to the Manchus in 1647.

The Prince of Lu's coinage, issued in 1644, consisted of four examples. These are cash coins bearing the legend "Ta-ming t'ung pao", one with plain reverse, one with "Hu" above the hole, one with "I" above, and one with the character "Shuai" (Commander-in-Chief). Fisher Ding also illustrates a very large piece in this series, however assigns it no value nor is its metallic content discernable.



The Prince of Lu's reign was so short that he didn't even have time to choose his reign name. His coins instead were inscribed "Ta Ming" (Great Ming). Shown is the Board of Revenue one cash minted in Chekiang.



The Prince of Lu - Cash. Da Ming tong bao; Rev: 'Shuai' above; Hartill #21.30

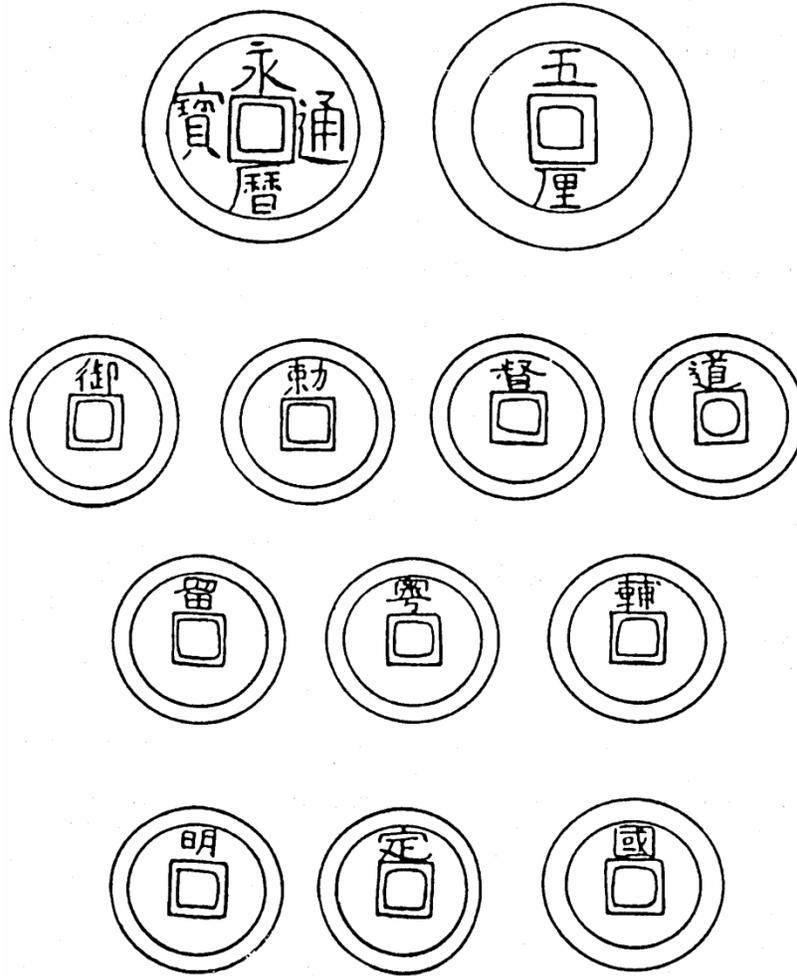
The Prince of Kuei - (Prince Yongming, later Prince of Gui)

Following the demise of the three princes above, the Prince of Kuei became the last hope for supporters of the Ming imperial cause. The grandson of Ming emperor Shen Tsung (1573-1619), the Prince of Kuei, twenty-one years of age at the time, was totally lacking in government or military experience. Forced from his feudal estate in Hunan he fled south settling in the mountains west of Canton. There in the year 1646, fugitive Ming officials proclaimed him emperor. Soon thereafter the approaching Ch'ing armies forced the Prince of Kuei to flee. He spent the next two years roaming about Kwangsi province making his headquarters first at Kweilin and then Nanning on the Annam border. There he found renewed support among those committed to Ming restoration. Following initial military successes against the Manchu armies who had spread themselves too thin, Kuei restored a working bureaucracy, resumed civil service examinations, overhauled his military command, and most importantly set up an administration capable of controlling the countryside and collecting taxes.

Regrouping in 1650, the Ch'ing armies attacked areas of declared support for Kuei, depriving him of his bases. For the next ten years the Prince of Kuei was forced to flee; first from Kwangtung, then back across Kwangsi into Kweichow province. No longer a Ming court in the formal sense, the prince and his followers lived a nomadic life as a band of fugitives. The only thing that kept them together was their common desire to resist the domination of their country by the barbarian Manchu. Forced once again out of Kweichow, the band sought refuge in the mountains of Yunnan. Here the Manchu army caught up with them, defeating the Prince of Kuei's army decisively at Lu-Chiang, causing the rag-tag remnants to finally cross the Chinese border into Burma.

The king of Burma initially offered sanctuary to Kuei's followers, but had a change of heart, massacring most of them while holding the prince and his family virtual prisoners. Undaunted, the Ch'ing army, under the command of Wu San-kuei (now a Manchu general), crossed into Burma to attack what was left of the prince of Kuei's entourage, whereupon the double-dealing Burmese king handed over to them what was left of the tattered Ming court. The Prince of Kuei was transported back to Chinese territory, where in 1662 while in Yunnan province he and his only son were executed by strangulation. The Ch'ing had now eliminated the last of the "legitimate" threats to their rule. It now only remained for them to track down and eliminate the remaining "rebel" supporters of the Ming cause.

The Prince of Kuei's coinage is more extensive than that of the other pretenders due to his sixteen year tenure as "emperor". In the beginning (1646) he took the reign name of "Yung-li" while still in Kwangtung province. Approximately thirty different coins can be ascribed to this series. The "Yung-li t'ung pao" coinage consists of a wide variety of interesting cash coins, value twos, a value five and several large candareen denominated coins. Specimens exist in ordinary, grass, and seal script. Most have plain reverses. Among the cash pieces may be found a Board of Revenue with "Hu" above the hole, several Board of Works coins with "I" (kung) above, below and to the right of the hole; two coins containing stars, one with the star below and the other with stars above and below the center square. An interesting series of twelve coins exists each bearing a single character above the hole on the reverse. These are: "yu", "ch'ih", "tu", "pu", "tao", "fu", "liu", "yueh", "fu" (different character from proceeding), "ming", "ting", and "kuo". Schjoth explains that these coins form the following imperial mandate: "The Governor-Generals, the Taotais, and the Prefects are charged by the Emperor to guard Yueh (that is Kwangtung and Kwangsi), and assist the Ming to settle the state."



The Prince of Kuei issued more coins than any other Ming rebel. Shown above is his "Yung-li t'ung pao" value five. Below may be seen ten of the twelve coins (Schjoth did not know of "pu" and "fu") spelling out the mandate charging his governors and generals to defend the Ming cause.



Prince Yongming - Cash. Yong Li tong bao; Rev: 'Ming' Imperial Message, H# 21.69

Multiple cash coins consist of two small "Yung-li"'s, one with "erh" above the hole, the other with "erh" (two) above and "li" (cash) below. Three larger value two specimens appear in seal, running hand and grass characters. A still larger value two exists with plain reverse. Rounding out the multiples are two value five coins, one with narrow rim, the other with wide rim both bearing the character "wu" (five) above and "li" (cash) below the center hole. Last in this series are two coins, one large (44mm) and one smaller (36mm), which bear the inscription "yih fen" (one candareen) using the same positioning of the characters. The large candareen piece is a very impressive coin.

Wu San-kuei - (Wu Sangui)

Wu San-kuei is deserving of a prominent place in China's history due to his many and varied exploits. Wu worked both sides of the fence, so to speak, and lived to regret it. You will recall that Wu San-kuei was the trusted Ming general who invited the Manchu hoards into Peking in the first place when threatened with Li Tzu-Ch'eng's rebel invasion in 1644. The Manchus stayed on, not as allies but as conquerors; thus the Ch'ing dynasty was born. Wu, seeing which way events were turning, went over to the Manchu cause. It will also be recalled that it was he who hunted down and murdered the Prince of Kuei, the last of the Ming pretenders. After leaving Burma, Wu was confronted with what to do with his troops. Seeking guidance, he received a personal letter from the Ch'ing emperor Sheng Tsu (better known to Western numismatists by his regnal title "K'ang-hsi"), advising him that plans were being made to transfer and resettle the soldiers and their families from the south to new lands in Manchuria allocated for this purpose. The emperor wrote that he was also sending special commissioners to assist in the process. In his letter Sheng Tsu cited the ample precedent for disbanding troops after a military threat had passed and thanked Wu profusely for his loyal service to the Manchu empire.

At first agreeing to this plan, Wu quickly had second thoughts. Did he not have a large and powerful army under his command? Could he not overcome the weak Manchu forces in south China? He also had a large following among the people with former subordinates occupying strategic positions. His son in Peking was also in a position to stir up trouble. Lastly, he counted on the support of the remaining Ming loyalists because of their anti-Manchu racial hatred. As a consequence, Wu became convinced of his ability to drive the Manchus out of China once and for all. He sent a letter back to the emperor with this message: "I will return to Peking, if you insist, but I will be at the head of a hundred thousand men."

Thus began, in December 1673, the San-Fan Rebellion, also referred to by historians as the War of the Three Feudatories. Wu lost no time in imprisoning the imperial commissioners and in executing the governor of

Yunnan, a Manchu loyalist. Having done this, he proclaimed a new dynasty - the Chou - which was to endure for eight years. The rebellion was an instant success in the southern provinces. Civil and military leaders rushed to join forces with Wu. Those of importance who refused to join were imprisoned, exiled or killed.

When news of the revolt reached Peking in January 1674, panic gripped the capital. Rumors circulated that the Manchus would abandon Peking and return to Manchuria. Even some of the European Jesuits serving the Ch'ing court made preparations to accompany the emperor on his flight north. Many believed the Manchus lacked the will to fight. Sheng Tsu was quick to respond, however. A revolt of locals bent upon burning the imperial palace was suppressed and its organizers executed. Included among those arrested was Wu's son who was accused of planning the affair. As nothing was found to implicate him, the emperor ordered him to commit suicide, instead of death by mutilation, as a gesture toward past services rendered. In reality Wu's son was killed not for any specific crime, but as a means of disheartening the rebels.

Wu was then declared an outlaw. A general amnesty was announced concerning the masses in the rebel movement in the time honored ploy of driving a wedge between leaders and followers, encouraging the latter to defect. This policy remained in effect until near the end of the war, when it became apparent that the cause was lost.

Wu's first year of campaigning was a huge success. Several key military leaders from Fukien, Kwangsi and Shensi came over to his side including one Keng Chingchung, who issued cash coins in his own name (see below). Wu's military successes left him in control virtually of all lands south of the Yangtze. In 1678 Wu San-kuei declared himself emperor of the Chou dynasty at Heng-yang in Hunan. He now held half the empire under his control. At this point, the rebellion almost succeeded in destroying the Ch'ing. Unfortunately for Wu, his military successes were not matched by civil ones. He failed because he was unable to attract the Ming loyalist scholars to his banner. This was due to three reasons: (1) the scholars could not forgive Wu for inviting the Manchus into China in the first place, (2) it was he who had hunted down and murdered the last Ming prince in Burma, and (3) Wu was not attempting to restore the Ming lineage, but instead was setting up one of his own.

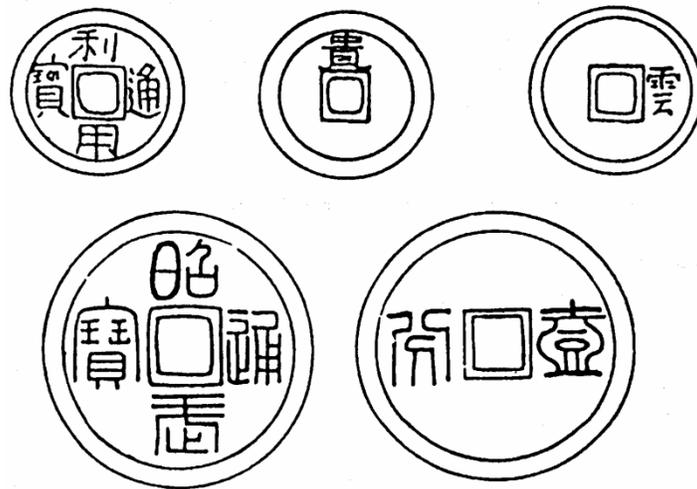
Wu even suggested in further communication with Sheng Tsu that the empire be divided between them with the Yangtze River the north-south dividing line. Before a reply came Wu learned of his son's execution, thus ending any hope of reconciliation or further negotiating. The war dragged on for six more years with the imperial forces (under Chinese leadership - not Manchu generals) gradually gaining the upper hand. Support for the cause eroded. Ultimately, Wu's forces occupied only the strongholds of Yunnan and Kweichow. When he died unexpectedly of dysentery, all appeared lost. His grandson, Wu Shih-fan, became the second Chou dynasty emperor.

Wu San-kuei's coinage falls into two distinct groups. The first, under the reign name "Li-yung", was issued

from his seat of government in Yunnan-fu. The second, appearing after establishment of the Chou dynasty, bears the legend "Chou-wu-t'ung pao".

Of the "Li-yung t'ung pao" series a total of nine coins exist. There are four cash coins, one with plain reverse, one with "li" (cash) to the right of the hole, one with "kuei" (for Kweichow) above the hole, and lastly a cash coin showing the mint mark "yun" (for Yunnan-fu) at right. Two value twos were cast. The first contains a "yun" for Yunnan-fu similar to the one cash piece, the other has a reverse with "erh" right and "li" left (value two). Next is a single 31mm coin of value five depicting a "wu" (five) above and "li" (cash) below the hole. Rounding out the series are two impressive one candareen pieces of 39mm with wide rims inscribed "yi fen" on either side of the square hole. On one specimen the inscription is read "yi fen" from right to left, on the other the characters appear top to bottom.

The "Chao-wu" grouping is composed of four specimens, three of which are cash coins. Of these, two have plain reverses, one being executed in ordinary script, the other in seal script. The third cash coin (also in ordinary writing) contains an "I" (kung) for Board of Works below the hole. The final Wu-San-kuei piece is a large (35mm) coin in seal writing. This piece has narrow rims and the two characters "yi" and "fen", also in seal writing, which are read right to left.



Wu San-kuei first issued coins using the reign name "Li Yung". After establishing the Chou dynasty his coinage carried the inscription "Chao Wu". Three cash coins are shown above with mintmarks "kuei" for Kuei-yang in Kweichow and "yun" for Yunnan-fu, the coin on the left has a blank reverse. Below is the one candareen specimen of the Chou dynasty. This coin was cast in seal writing.



Wu Sangui - Cash. Li Yong tong bao; Rev: 'Li' at right; Hartill #21.87

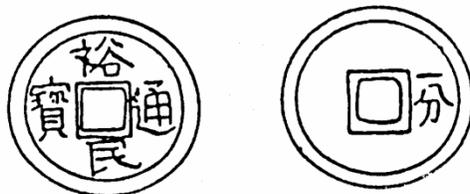


Wu Sangui - Cash. Zhao Wu tong bao (Zhou Dynasty), Rev: 'Gong' below; H#21.106

Keng Ching-chung - (Geng Jingzhong)

Keng Ching-chung had started his own insurrection on the south China coast after the outbreak of the San Fan Rebellion. He quickly joined forces with Wu San-kuei to overcome the weaker Manchu forces, capturing Fukien province in 1674. Two years later, however, he surrendered deserting Wu San-kuei in November 1676 after submitting to the Ch'ing. The Manchus lost no time in turning Keng's forces against the Chinese pirate Koxinga, then ravaging the coast as a supporter of the Ming cause. A year later he was arrested, charged with treason, taken to Peking, and there executed in 1681.

While in Fukien Keng Ching-chung minted "Yu-min" cash. Two have plain reverses (one narrow, one wide rimmed), while one has "yi fen" (one candareen) to the right of the center hole. The last specimen is a larger coin with "yi" right and "ch'ien" left (one mace).



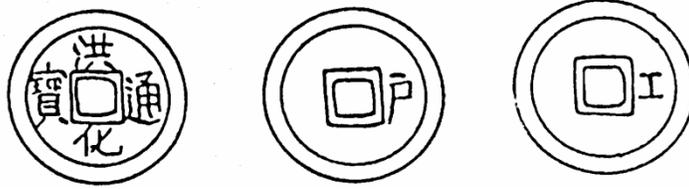
The rebel Keng Ching-chung issued "Yu-min tung pao" in Fukien in 1674. A one cash coin is shown at left and the reverse of the candareen specimen ("yi fen") at right.



Geng Jingzhong - Cash. Yu Min tong bao; Hartill #21.122

Wu Shih-fan - (Wu Shifan)

The tide of war had turned against the rebels even before Wu San-kuei's death. Now it accelerated as whole army units deserted and went over to the imperial side. Wu Shih-fan, grandson of Wu San-kuei, became the second emperor of the Chou dynasty. His empire lasted another three years while the remnants of the Ming forces fell back upon their base at Yunnan-fu. The end came for Wu Shih-fan when he was trapped by several Manchu generals in Kunming. There in December 1681 he ended his life by committing suicide. Sheng Tsu ordered Wu's principal subordinates put to the sword as he could ill afford to have such men remain at large. This action put an end to the Ming rebellion in south China.



Examples of the coinage of Wu Shih-fan, the second Chou dynasty emperor. Casting coins with the reign name "Hung-hua", his empire lasted a mere three years.



Wu Shifan - Cash. Hong Hua tong bao; Rev: 'Gong' at right; Hartill #21.119

The coinage of Wu Shih-fan is limited to three specimens. Wu Shih-fan took the reign name of "Hung-hua" and cast cash coins bearing the inscription "Hung-hua t'ung pao", one with plain reverse, one for the Board of Revenue bearing the "hu" mint mark and one for the Board of Works with the "kung" designation.

Koxinga - (Zheng Chenggong)

Although he did not issue any coins in his name, no discussion of the Ming Rebels would be complete without a word about Koxinga. His Chinese name was Cheng Ch'eng-kung, but he is known to the Western world as Koxinga. He was the most feared enemy of the Ch'ing, and for good reason! Initially he fought the Manchu on the mainland, later (1661) driving out the Dutch and setting up a base in Taiwan where he and his heirs continued fierce resistance to the Manchus. His part of the insurrection was not crushed on the island until 1683 when the last of the Ming defenders laid down their arms.

Koxinga was a sea raider, a polite term for pirate, and he was good at it! He ravaged the China coast from Kwangtung in the south to Shantung in the north, successfully combining piracy and support for the fallen Ming dynasty. Koxinga's raids developed into a wider coastal war. He became so troublesome that the Ch'ing court, in an effort to deny him supplies, ordered the coastal population evacuated in 1661. All inhabitants were

ruthlessly removed ten miles inland with savage efficiency and markers set up to delineate the forbidden zone. Anyone venturing into the area without authorization of the Manchu did not return.

This remarkable naval leader maintained a fortified base at Amoy from which he traded as far away as Nagasaki in Japan and Macao to the south. His trading companies dealt in silks, porcelains and sugar which he sold in exchange for the naval supplies required to maintain his Ming fleet. It was not until he launched a misguided frontal attack upon Nanking that his mainland forces were defeated.

Forced to abandon his base at Amoy, Koxinga moved his operations to Taiwan from whence he continued to harass the Fukien coast. Taiwan at that time was a largely inaccessible place consisting of a few Dutch settlers and a large non-Chinese native population. Although Koxinga died in 1662, his heirs carried on the fight from the former Dutch settlement of Zeelandia in Taiwan and from his island base in the Pescadores. The Manchus, inexperienced as they were in naval warfare, sent two expeditions against them in 1664 and 1665, both of which failed miserably.

The commercial enterprises in sugar cane, salt and rice flourished, augmented by tens of thousands of loyalists fleeing from the mainland. Thus, Koxinga's sons and grandsons exercised control of and managed the first Taiwanese Chinese population that was not largely aboriginal. Koxinga's heirs raided the high seas with a free hand in the name of the Ming cause for another eighteen years due primarily to the Manchu's preoccupation with the War of the Three Feudatories in south China. It was not until Wu San-kuei's death and the ultimate defeat of his forces that the Manchus could successfully turn their attention to Taiwan. It took a fleet of three hundred war vessels to subdue the last of the Ming forces. This crushing victory took place in the Pescadores in July 1683.

After the fall of Taiwan, the remaining Ming loyalists went underground and into secret societies, continuing to resist the "barbarians" from within. The new dynasty had at last proved itself, most Chinese giving to it their grudging support. The Ming rebel movement had run its course and the consolidation of Ch'ing rule was complete.

As a group, the coins of the Ming Rebels are highly desirable being both attractive and well executed. For the most part they are moderately accessible on the market, which is remarkable considering their limited distribution and short duration. The wear some specimens reveal would indicate, however, that their life in circulation may have surpassed that of the issuer by a considerable margin! It is possible to assemble a collection of these historic coins, even today, at modest cost given a little perseverance.



Zheng Chenggong (Seal script, attributed to Koxinga) - Cash. Yong Li tong bao; Hartill # 21.81

Editors Note: Title names are presented in the original Wade-Giles with (Pinyin) Chinese character transcriptions now added. To view a host of actual coin photos for all of the "Rebels", please visit the Southern Ming and Qing Rebels page at the Moneta Museum, online at: <https://tinyurl.com/ming-rebels>

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