

# Biography of Hong Chengchou (1593–1665)

## (Excerpt from the beginning)

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Hong Chengchou, courtesy name Hengjiu, native of Nan'an, Fujian, was a scholar of Jinshi degree awarded in the Forty Fourth Year of Ming's Wanli Period. Hong went up in officialdom step by step. Eventually, he became the Vice Administration Commissioner of the Provincial Administration Commission of Shaanxi. In early Chongzhen period, rebels ran riot. Emperor Zhuangli (庄烈帝, posthumous title for Chongzhen), appointed him as Governor of Yansui (延绥巡抚) (Yansui, approximately present-day Yulin) and Governor-General for Three Regions (三边总督) (Yansui, Ningxia and Gansu) for his military talents. He attacked their ringleaders several times. This military feat brought him into Grand Guardian of the Heir Apparent (太子太保) and the Minister of War (兵部尚书). In this way, he could also govern military affairs of Henan, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Sichuan and Huguang. Of all bandit chiefs, Gao Yingxiang, who called himself "Dashing King", had the strongest strength. Li Zicheng served Gao. In a battle, Hong was defeated by the rebels. Emperor Chongzhen ordered Lu Xiangsheng to take over military affairs of Hebei and the above five provinces, and Chengchou to oversee Guanzhong. Chengchou broke war with Gao together with Li again. At this time, Chengchou got victory and captured Yingxiang. Zicheng continued the title of "Dashing King" and led a part of the rebel force to Sichuan. Chengchou outfought Zicheng and his men in each battle during this period. Then the rebel army fled to Tongguan Pass (潼关). Upon hearing this, Chengchou ordered the regional commander (总兵) Cao Bianjiao to set an ambush. Zicheng's army collapsed. Only 18 of the rebel force, including Zicheng himself, escaped on horseback to Shangluo. Almost all rebels on the Guanzhong Plain were swept off. This campaign occurred in the Third Year of Chongde Period.

Taizong<sup>1</sup> sent an expedition against Ming, which put the capital at danger. Chongzhen summoned Chengchou to guard the capital. In the next spring, he promoted Chengchou for Governor-General of Ji-Liao to take charge of military affairs. Chengchou **stationed Qin Army on the east**; Cao Bianjiao, Wang Tingchen and Bai Guang'en, awarded "Regional Commander of the East (东协总兵)", "Regional Commander of Liaodong (辽东总兵)" and "Regional Commander in

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<sup>1</sup> "Taizong" in this case refers to Hong Taiji, the founder of Qing regime.

34 Support of Bandit Suppression (援剿总兵)” respectively upon the imperial edicts, led their  
35 troops to join up with Ma Ke and Wu Sangui in charge of Shanhai Pass and Ningyuan respectively.  
36 Again, the Ming’s emperor gave orders to Yang Guozhu at Xuan Town, Wang Pu at Datong and  
37 Tang Tong at Miyun. Each of them then led their troops to guard the capital. The total force  
38 amounted to 130,000 with 40,000 horses. All the eight commanders were put under Chengchou’s  
39 command. Taizong led his troops across Daling River (大凌河). Then Zu Dashou went to guard  
40 Jinzhou. If attacked, Songshan, Xingshan and Tashan cities could provide reinforcements to each  
41 other. Chengchou arrived and governed the garrison. Emperor Zhuangli sent Zhang Ruoqi,  
42 Director of the Bureau of Operations and ordered the garrison to fight against the Qing army. The  
43 garrison marched into Songshan. Then Guozhu forfeited his life on the battlefield, and then his  
44 position was displaced by Li Fuming, Regional Commander of Shanxi.

45  
46 In the eighth month of the Sixth Year, Taizong made himself the commander-in-chief. The  
47 Manchu army stood between Songshan and Xingshan, setting their camps on the trunk road from  
48 the south of Wuxin River to the sea. On the other hand, Chengchou and Liaodong Governor Qiu  
49 Minyang with their generals stayed at Mount Rufeng, north of Songshan city; the infantry fell into  
50 seven camps along the road from Mount Rufeng to Songshan. Units of the cavalry were stationed  
51 in East, West and North of Songshan. Hong Taiji attacked them and got a defeat. Then our  
52 infantry were moved to nearby the Songshan city. Our Taizong was defeated again. Then he  
53 warned the generals, “This night they will surely flee in disorder!” So, Taizong Emperor set apart  
54 the troops to guard different garrison areas. According to Taizong’s order, they should dispatch a  
55 proper number of soldiers on an ad hoc basis, to chase and attack them to Tashan, if there was  
56 any sign of flight. Then the emperor sent our generals to cut off their retreats at the roads  
57 outside Tashan, Xingshan as well as Sanggaer Stronghold (桑噶尔寨堡). And even the road  
58 between west of Xiaoling River and the coast was also blocked. On that night, Wu Sangui, Wang  
59 Pu, Tang Tong, Ma Ke, Bai Guang’en and Li Fuming all led their men to retreat by the sea. As  
60 expected, they were killed in multitude abruptly by our ambush. At that time, Chengchou and  
61 Minyang fled to Songshan and garrisoned the city. Then Taizong moved the force to Songshan  
62 and advised to besiege the city. Cao Bianjiao abandoned the fortress at Mount Rufeng at night,  
63 attacking our Embroidered Yellow Banner’s one garrison area, Plain Yellow Banner’s four garrison  
64 area and even our Emperor’s own garrison area with his infantry and cavalry. Most of them  
65 fought to death. Being wound, Bianjiao fled back to Songshan. Wu Sangui and Wang Pu led the  
66 remaining soldiers to Xingshan. Then Taizong sent generals to ambush at Gaoqiao (高桥) and  
67 Sanggaer Stronghold. The Ming’s troops, during the flight from Xingshan to Ningyuan, were  
68 almost annihilated. Only less than half survived it, including Sangui and Wang Pu themselves.  
69 Among Chengchou’s force of 130,000, over 50,000 were killed. The generals all ran away. Only  
70 Bianjiao and Tingchen led a force of just over 10,000.

71  
72 When the city was besieged, Taizong sent an edict to summon Chengchou to surrender. In the  
73 ninth month, Taizong got back to Shengjing and ordered Doro Beilie and others to serve the army.

74 Chengchou and his men sallied, assaulting Embroidered Yellow Banner's Imperial Guards Brigade  
75 (摆牙喇, Bayara) and Palace Cavalry Brigade (阿礼哈超哈, Ariha Chaoha) with a force of 6000 at  
76 night. Upon being defeated, they had no way out. In the tenth month, Prince Su Hooge (肃郡王  
77 豪格) and Duke Mandahai (满达海) stationed troops at Songshan. To the twelfth month,  
78 Chengchou ordered a general and his men to set a night attack against Plain Red Banner's  
79 Imperial Guard Brigade and Palace Cavalry Brigade and Plain Yellow Banner's Mongol Camp when  
80 he got the message that their reinforcements from inside the Gate almost arrived. After being  
81 defeated, as the city gate was shut down, the army had no choice but to surrender to us. That  
82 accounted for more than a half. The remaining ones fled to Xingshan and got slain by ambush  
83 along the road. At first, Chongzhen ordered Yang Shengwu to reinforce Chengchou. Yang died and  
84 then Fan Zhiwan was appointed. They dare not march anyway in fear of our army's power.  
85 Chengchou and his men were besieged six months, consuming all what can be eaten. In the  
86 second month of the next year, Songshan's Vice General of Guard Xia Chengde sent his younger  
87 brother Jinghai to contact us secretly and bring his son called Shu as the hostage. In a night, our  
88 troops climbed onto the city wall by the scaling ladder vehicle along the battlements. Banbuli (班  
89 布里), soldier under Ashan (阿山) and Luoluoke (罗洛科) under Heluohui (何洛会) took the lead.  
90 Chengchou, Minyang, Bianjiao, Tingchen and others were captured. Their soldiers came to over  
91 3,000. This incident happened on the day of Ren Xu (壬戌) in the second month of the Seventh  
92 Year of Chongde Period. The emperor ordered to kill Minyang, Bianjiao and Tingcheng, but sent  
93 Chengchou to Shengjing.  
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95 Taizong wanted Chengchou to serve him, so let Fan Wencheng to persuade him to surrender.  
96 Chengchou at first abused Fan barefooted. Wencheng stayed and talked with him casually. All of a  
97 sudden, some dust of the beam fell onto Chengchou's robe. Chengchou promptly cleared it off.  
98 Wencheng returned and told the emperor, "Chengchou will not kill himself! He cherished his  
99 clothes so much. Would he do such thing?" The emperor went to see Chengchou and took off his  
100 coat to Chengchou, "Did you feel cold? Please put it on." Chengchou stared long at the emperor,  
101 and sighed, "Oh, you're a heaven-sent emperor!" Chengchou then kowtowed to him for  
102 surrender. The emperor felt overjoyed and gave him many gifts, even prepared wines and  
103 enjoyed the acrobatics. Some generals felt displeased, "My king, why do you favor him so much?"  
104 The emperor told them, "What do we want to do through all these years' wind and rain?" "To  
105 conquer the Central Plains!" "That's right! Chengchou is to us what a guide is to blind men. Now  
106 we get a good guide. How can I feel unhappy?" Replied him.  
107  
108 More than a month later, Zhang Cunren, Vice Administration Commander under the Court of  
109 Censors (都察院参政), said, "Chengchou felt glad about his survival. He should cut hair and be  
110 ready for a post." In the fifth month, the emperor summoned Chengchou and other generals

111 when holding court. Chengchou knelt down outside the gate, crying fearfully, “My Majesty, I  
112 used to be a Ming’s general. I led a force of 130,000 to reinforce Jinzhou and defeat you. Later on,  
113 I came to Songshan and got captured when the city was breached. I thought I would die. You  
114 didn’t kill me at that time. That’s a great mercy, a great favor. Now you summon me here, so I feel  
115 greatly guilty. I dare not get in now!” The emperor ordered, “Chengchou, your words are  
116 absolutely right! At that time, we were enemies because we were in two opposing sides. How  
117 could I mind what you have done? It was due to the help of Heaven, I conquered Ming’s troops  
118 and then took Songshan, Jinzhou and other cities. Why should I blame you for that? Heaven has  
119 the virtue of cherishing life, so do I. Now you know you’re favored. So, you ought to serve me  
120 whole heart and soul. Okay? I used to capture Zhang Chun. He could neither die for Ming nor  
121 serve me. Finally he died to no avail. You, don’t behave like him!” Then Chengchou and others  
122 walked in. They were asked to sit in the hall and drink tea. Our emperor told Chengchou. “In my  
123 eyes, Ming’s emperor turned a deaf ear to the capture of anyone of the royalty. Though  
124 commanders fought hard and got captured, or resisted to exhaustion and gave in, the emperor  
125 would kill their wives and children, otherwise expropriate them to be slaves. Is this a new  
126 institution or an old one?” Chengchou replied, “There was no such institution in the past. It  
127 appeared just recently when the **courtiers** (朝臣) presented their own views to the Emperor.  
128 Since then it has been like this.” Our emperor heaved a deep sigh, “This emperor is too dull and  
129 cruel and the courtiers are all downright swindlers. For this reason, many victims were  
130 slaughtered. Commanders fought almost to death and finally surrendered because they had no  
131 choice. He could take some money out from the treasury to redeem them. Why did he punish  
132 their wives and children? Chongzhen treated innocent people too cruelly!” Chengchou shed tears  
133 and kowtowed, “Your Majesty’s words are the kindest!” As Emperor wanted to return to his  
134 bedroom, he ordered to prepare a banquet for Chengchou and others in the hall. When they  
135 finished the dinner, Grand Secretary Scifo (希福) and others uttered an imperial edict, “I lost my  
136 sweetie, the First Concubine, just now! So please eat your fill and do not mind my absence!” All  
137 of them kowtowed to show their gratitude. Upon hearing Chengchou’s death, Chongzhen offered  
138 sacrifices to him and erected a shrine outside the capital. He and Qiu Minyang were enshrined  
139 together as martyrs. When Emperor Zhuangli was about to attend the memorial ceremony  
140 himself, he suddenly heard Chengchou actually surrendered, so he stopped doing that. Upon  
141 surrender, Chengchou belonged to Embroidered Yellow Han Banner, one of Chinese Eight  
142 Banners (汉军八旗) under Eight Banner system. Taizong treated him very well. However, all his  
143 life the emperor granted no official to him.  
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