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QING MILITARY INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON GOVERNMENT, ECONOMY, AND SOCIETY, 1640–1800

Abstract

This article underscores the impact of the Qing dynasty's war making capacity and organization on non-military areas. Following a brief account of the Qing military establishment and its major operations in the first half of the dynasty, *i.e.*, 1640–1800, it explores several important examples of how Qing military institutions interacted with the civil bureaucracy and society at large. First, through the practice of appointing officials across the divide between the civil and military bureaucracies, military personnel penetrated into the domain of the civil state apparatus, quietly transforming the Qing government's makeup. Second, Qing military costs deeply influenced the distribution of dynastic financial resources and general administration at all levels. Finally, the Qing's wartime logistical system engaged both the civil bureaucracy and society, opening many opportunities for both civil bureaucracy personnel and the private sector, which in turn re-shaped the local socio-economic landscape.

Keywords

Qing dynasty, military institutions, bureaucracy, military finance, wartime logistics

INTRODUCTION

Being a conquest regime, the polity of the Qing dynasty (1644–1912) exhibited hybrid features. On the one hand, Manchu rulers retained Confucianism and numerous institutions from the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) both for pragmatic considerations and to legitimize their alien rule. On the other hand, they endeavored to maintain their own identity and traditions, including distinctive military values and institutions.¹ Scholarship on Manchu identity has mainly focused on Manchu efforts to preserve cultural heritage such as language and lifeways, largely overlooking the impact of their military institutions and culture on the state apparatus, economic behavior, social life, and popular culture. The long peace in the dynasty's heartland throughout the eighteenth century has helped obscure Qing military institutions' importance.

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¹Evelyn S. Rawski, *The Last Emperors: A Social History of Qing Imperial Institutions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999); Mark C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

This essay explores Qing war-making capacity and institutions, underscoring their impact on non-military areas. It first briefly recounts the Qing military system's establishment and Qing armies' major operations in the first half of the dynasty, circa 1640–1800. It then discusses how Qing military institutions interacted with the civil bureaucracy and society at large by focusing on three issues. The first is the penetration of Qing military personnel into the civil bureaucracy, which left less room to accommodate degree holders who lacked strong political connections and quietly transformed the Qing government's makeup. The second is the distribution of Qing financial resources along civil and military lines. Although a huge portion of the Qing revenues went to support military buildup, historians have only started recently to consider the economic and political impact of this fact. Third is the Qing's innovative wartime logistics, which engaged both the civil bureaucracy and society, not only opening up many opportunities for both the personnel of the civil bureaucracy and the private sector, but also reshaping the local socioeconomic landscape. Like the other contributions to this special issue, this essay argues that Qing military institutions transformed key elements of bureaucratic practice, economic behavior, and social life.

THE QING MILITARY SYSTEM'S ESTABLISHMENT

The Manchu Qing dynasty was founded on its military prowess. Long before the Manchus conquered China proper, they developed a full-fledged military system. Having first set up eight Banners for the Manchus, Nurhaci, the first of the forebears of the dynasty, then founded eight Mongol Banners and eight Chinese Banners, laying a foundation for the Manchu expansion and eventual conquest of China proper. Early in the seventeenth century, the Manchus engaged in constant military campaigns, first to secure control of Manchuria and then to expand into China, Mongolia, and Korea. During these years, the Manchus incorporated elements of rulership from both Chinese and Mongol traditions, while retaining the core values and functions of the original Banner system. After they invaded China proper in 1644 and toppled the Ming dynasty, the Manchus promptly created a new army, the Green Standard Army, to incorporate the defeated and surrendered Ming troops. More importantly, the Green Standard Army remedied a severe shortage of military manpower; the bannermen at this point totaled only about 100,000.²

When the protracted conquest finally ended in the early 1660s, the Qing had developed a clearly articulated system to utilize and compensate the two armies, the Banners and the Green Standard Army. Considered as elite, mobile field armies, the Banner units were stationed only in Manchuria, Beijing, and a handful of strategic locations in the recently subjugated Chinese lands. In the provinces, Banner garrisons lived in walled compounds, segregated from local Chinese populations.³ Meanwhile, the Green Standard Army, amounting to 550,000 men then, was stationed throughout the provinces (there were

²Chaoying Fang, "A Technique for Estimating the Numerical Strength of the Early Manchu Military Forces," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 13.1 (June 1950), 192–215.

³On the Banner garrisons, see Im Kaye Soon (Ren Guichun 任桂淳), *Qingchao Baqi zhufang xingshuai shi* 清朝八旗駐防興衰史 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1993), Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, 89–132, and Ding Yizhuang 定宜莊, *Qingdai Baqi zhufang yanjiu* 清代八旗駐防研究 (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 2003).

several garrisons in each of the provinces) to oversee local security. The Qing state openly distinguished between the two armies, with the Banners receiving preferential treatment over the Green Standard Army. Additionally, the Banners served in frontier wars as the main and elite forces, whereas the Green Standard forces acted as auxiliary forces. The division of the two armies was not only a military arrangement, but also a political statement intended to manifest Manchu dominance. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the total number of Qing military forces may have reached 800,000 (200,000 bannermen, and 600,000 Green Standard troops).⁴ Until the end of the eighteenth century, Qing's military forces were the world's largest.

After the Ming-Qing transition, the Qing military remained active. Only a dozen years after the last battle to suppress anti-Qing forces in central China, the dynasty was faced with another civil war. Wu Sangui 吳三桂 (1612–78), the *de facto* feudatory in the empire's southwest, rebelled in 1673, devastating the region and convincing many Qing officials to join him.⁵ Although Wu died in the middle of the conflict, the rebellion lasted for eight years and periodically the rebels seriously threatened the Qing dynasty. At one point, the young Kangxi emperor (r. 1662–1722) even considered leading his troops into battle in person, before being dissuaded by his courtiers.⁶ After the rebellion was finally quelled in 1681, the Qing was soon threatened by the Zunghar Mongols, the builders of a vast nomadic empire in Eastern Turkestan. This time, Kangxi led expeditions to the steppe three times in the 1690s—he was the only Qing emperor who went to war in person after the Manchus entered China proper. The Qing expeditions effectively frustrated the aggression by the Zunghar, whose leader, Galdan, subsequently died of illness.⁷ Nevertheless, the peace was brief, and the eighteenth century ushered in new military challenges. In his last years, Kangxi clashed again with the Zunghars, who had regrouped under a new leader, Tsewang Rabdan. More significantly, Kangxi made an unprecedented and risky decision to send an expedition to Tibet to expel a Zunghar army that had occupied Lhasa and taken captive the Dalai Lama, whom they then deposed. Kangxi's decision had a major impact on the trajectory of Qing empire building, leading the Qing to eventually turn Tibet into a protectorate.⁸ Despite his reputation as a benevolent monarch, Kangxi was also a far-sighted and unrelenting empire builder.

For the rest of the eighteenth century, when the Qing empire was ruled by the Yongzheng emperor (r. 1723–35) and the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736–95), the struggle against the Zunghar empire continued. The conflict culminated in Qianlong's coldblooded extermination campaigns in the 1750s, which wiped out the once-mighty Inner Asian power and slaughtered much of the Zunghar population. To the Qing, however, the payoff was

⁴Luo Ergang 羅爾綱, *Liying bingzhi 綠營兵制* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 7–9.

⁵For Wu Sangui and his rebellion, see Xiao Yishan 蕭一山, *Qingdai tongshi 清代通史* (Taipei: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1972), vol. 1, 449–83; Frederic Wakeman Jr., *The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 1099–1105.

⁶This occurred in early 1675 when Shaanxi's provincial military commander, Wang Fuchen 王輔臣, rebelled against the Qing, killing the commander-in-chief of the Qing forces, Moluo 莫洛, throwing Shaanxi province into chaos. Arguably, this was the war's most critical moment.

⁷Peter Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia, 1600–1800* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 193–208.

⁸For Kangxi's decision and the Qing expeditions to Tibet in 1718–20, see Yingcong Dai, *The Sichuan Frontier and Tibet: Imperial Strategy in the Early Qing* (Seattle and London: University of Washington, 2009), 76–83.

handsome, as a vast territory, Xinjiang (“New Dominion”), was absorbed into the empire. Clearly, the wars with the Zunghars in the long period of the 1690s–1750s were the most critical military engagements in Qing history prior to the Taiping civil war in the mid-nineteenth century.⁹

In addition, both the Yongzheng and Qianlong emperors were eager to further expand the empire and showcase the Qing dynasty’s might. Shortly after his enthronement, Yongzheng conquered Kokonor (today’s Qinghai) and replaced the local Mongol rulers with Qing administrators. At the same time, he sent another expedition to Lhasa to reassert Qing domination in Tibet. Yongzheng also launched a series of military campaigns in the southwest, i.e., Yunnan, Guizhou, and the southern parts of Sichuan, to buttress the results of his reform of non-Han communities by greatly curtailing the administrative responsibilities of indigenous elites and absorbing them into the regular dynastic administrative system, whereby bureaucrats were sent by the central government (known as the *gaitu guiliu* 改土歸流 campaign—the term means “replacing the *tusi* [indigenous leaders] with ‘regular’ officials”). Although often overlooked, these minor campaigns were brutal, killing tens of thousands of native residents, including women and children.¹⁰

Despite his preferred persona as a “cultured monarch,” the Qianlong emperor was just as active on the military front as either Kangxi or Yongzheng. In addition to annihilating the Zunghar empire, Qianlong conducted numerous other campaigns during his long reign. Those on the frontiers include campaigns to subjugate the Turkic Muslim principalities in Altishahr in the immediate wake of the Zunghar wars, two costly campaigns against unruly Gyarong chieftains in Jinchuan, a buffer zone between Tibet and China, and finally invasions into Myanmar and Vietnam.¹¹ Domestically, Qianlong waged campaigns to quell a sectarian uprising in Shandong, two Muslim uprisings in Gansu, a riot in Taiwan by the immigrants from the mainland, and Miao uprisings in Guizhou and western Hunan. Finally, in the early 1790s, a few years before his retirement, Qianlong ordered the dynasty’s last far-flung operation, an invasion of Gurkha Nepal via Tibet to ensure Tibet’s security. In his twilight years, the emperor took great pride in his military feats, styling himself as the “old man with ten military successes” (*shiquan laoren* 十全老人), even though some of his campaigns were pure disasters.¹² Clad in full armor and sitting on horseback, Qianlong had a portrait of himself painted by a European artist, which became a lasting reminder of the emperor’s penchant for military grandeur.¹³

⁹Perdue, *China Marches West*, 270–89.

¹⁰*Eertai zoushu* 鄂爾泰奏疏 (reprint: Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 1991), 6a, 8a, 23b, 32a, 32b, 46b, 50a, 57a, 74a, 114a.

¹¹The first Jinchuan war was launched by the Qing in response to a feud among the local chieftains in the Jinchuan area in northwestern Sichuan. It lasted for more than two years, 1747–49. Although the chieftain who initiated hostilities surrendered to the Qing, this campaign was inconclusive, leaving the area unstable for the following two decades. The second Jinchuan campaign was fought 1771–76, as Qing forces again attempted to subdue the local chieftains. The war was protracted and extremely costly, about 61 million taels being spent. At the end of the war, the Qing dynasty supplanted the tribal chieftains’ rule with the administrative system found in much of the rest of the empire and set up military colonies in the Jinchuan area.

¹²A case in point is the Myanmar campaign, which was a disaster. See Yingcong Dai, “A Disguised Defeat: The Myanmar Campaign of the Qing Dynasty,” *Modern Asian Studies* 38.1 (January 2004), 145–88.

¹³The portrait was painted by Giuseppe Gastiglione and is housed in Beijing’s Palace Museum. It appears on the cover of Crossley’s *A Translucent Mirror*, and in Perdue, *China Marches West*, 258.

The scope and strength of the Qing military are well known. Nevertheless, Qing military institutions have yet to receive proper attention from Qing historians. In fact, only in recent decades have scholars begun to engage seriously questions of Qing military history. Their work examines Qing frontiers and Qing management of the empire's margins, chiefly Chinese Eastern Turkistan, Tibet, Manchuria, Taiwan, and the south-western corner of the empire. Some of those studies explore, explicitly or implicitly, the impact of the Qing expansion and wars on the local areas, arguing that the Qing frontier expansion backed by its military machine played an instrumental role in transforming the frontier areas and affecting the economic life of the nation as a whole.¹⁴ Meanwhile, several scholars have noted that Qing military culture figured prominently in popular culture, a finding that resonates with what Peter Lorge and David Robinson argue elsewhere in this special issue for the Song and Ming periods, respectively.¹⁵ Work has also begun on Qing military organization, including its financial system, and material aspects of warfare such as weaponry and logistics.¹⁶

¹⁴On the Qing empire's northwestward expansion, see Perdue's *China Marches West*; James Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759–1864* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). In Chinese literature, the most prominent recent work includes Ma Ruheng 馬汝璈 and Ma Dazheng 馬大正, *Qingdai de bianjiang zhengce* 清代的邊疆政策 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1994) and Yuan Senpo 袁森坡, *Kang Yong Qian jingying yu kaifa beijiang* 康雍乾經營與開發北疆 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1991). Studies on the southwest frontier during the Qing include Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); C. Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China's Yunnan Frontier* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Donald Sutton, "Ethnicity and the Miao Frontier in the Eighteenth Century," in *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity and Frontier in Early Modern China*, edited by Donald Sutton, Pamela K. Crossley, and Helen F. Siu (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 469–508; "Ethnic Revolt in the Qing Empire: The Miao Uprising of 1795–1796 Reexamined," *Asia Major*, third series, 16.2 (2003), 105–52; John E. Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist: China's Colonization of Guizhou, 1200–1700* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007); Dai, *The Sichuan Frontier and Tibet*. For the Taiwan frontier, see John Robert Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy on the Taiwan Frontier, 1600–1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Emma Jinhua Teng, *Taiwan's Imagined Geography: Chinese Colonial Travel Writing and Pictures, 1683–1896* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004). The most comprehensive work on the Qing war in the second half of the eighteenth century is Zhuang Jifa 莊吉發, *Qing Gaozong shiquan wugong yanjiu* 清高宗十全武功研究 (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1983).

¹⁵The most important work in this regard is Joanne Waley-Cohen, *The Culture of War in China: Empire and the Military under the Qing Dynasty* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), and her chapter "Militarization of Culture in Eighteenth-Century China," in Nicola Di Cosmo, editor, *Military Culture in Imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 278–95 and 378–80.

¹⁶On Qing military organizations, see Elliott, *The Manchu Way*; Luo Ergang, *Lüying bingzhi*. Studies on the Qing military station in Taiwan include Xu Xueji 許雪姬, *Qingdai Taiwan de Lüying* 清代臺灣的綠營 (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1987). On the Qing military financial system, see Chen Feng 陳鋒, *Qingdai junfei yanjiu* 清代軍費研究 (Wuchang: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 1992). The only systematic study of the Qing logistical system in the Qianlong period is Lai Fushun 賴福順's *Qianlong zhongyao zhanzheng zhi junxu yanjiu* 乾隆重要戰爭之軍需研究 (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1984). Yingcong Dai also published several articles on the topic, "The Qing State, Merchants, and the Military Labor Force in the Jinchuan Campaigns," *Late Imperial China* 22.2 (December, 2001), 35–90, "Yingyun Shengxi: Military Entrepreneurship in the High Qing Period: 1700–1800," *Late Imperial China* 26.2 (December, 2005), 1–67, and "Military Finance of the High Qing Period: An Overview," in Nicola Di Cosmo, editor, *Military Culture in Imperial China*, 296–316 and 380–82. On war finances of the second Jinchuan campaign, see Ulrich Theobald, *War Finance and Logistics in Late Imperial China: A Study of the Second Jinchuan Campaign (1771–1776)*

Even closer, systematic analysis of military institutions promises to shed important new light on key issues in Qing history. Ray Huang once pointed out that war mobilization could extend the vigor of the founding generation of a dynasty long after it had secured the country. Wartime mobilization could provide “a temporary substitute for organizational logic” and force even a feeble state apparatus to function effectively.¹⁷ The early and high Qing from 1644 to the time of the Gurkha campaigns could be considered as an extended founding era, when incessant frontier crises prompted the state to peak performance to cope with the many campaigns listed above, and adjust its polity and policy to adapt to exigencies brought about by the military campaigns.

In this vein, it should come as no surprise that the Grand Council, the nerve center of the Qing dynasty, owed its origin to the Yongzheng emperor’s improvised wartime agency to process military correspondence during the Zunghar campaign.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the Qing state closely supervised provincial officials who were involved in the military operations (the civil bureaucrats’ involvement in war will be further discussed below). As a result, promotions, demotions, and dismissals occurred more frequently than during peacetime.¹⁹ In addition, communications between the center and the frontline stimulated physical connectedness between the capital and the even farthest points of the empire. The state opened and repaired roads, mapped territory, and acquired knowledge of the margins.²⁰ As the discussion below shows, military operations deeply shaped the economy. The time is ripe for the field of Qing history to think much more closely about how military institutions relate to broad historical questions, including center-periphery interaction, the emergence of new commercial hubs and networks, the spread of mapping new territories and people, and transportation infrastructure.

MILITARY INSTITUTIONS’ INFLUENCE ON THE CIVILIAN SECTOR

Although it fought numerous frontier wars from the end of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century, the Qing dynasty achieved an enduring peace in its heartland for nearly one and a half centuries after Wu Sangui’s rebellion was suppressed in 1681. In contrast to the Ottoman Empire, which constantly engaged in wars to secure its vast and diverse territories, the Qing dynasty, with the exception of limited ethnic and sectarian rebellions, coastal piracy, and banditry, usually along the empire’s margins or in less populated areas, maintained order and peace in China proper. Even during the Qing’s

(Leiden: Brill, 2013). Paul Lococo Jr. has a chapter on Qing weaponry in his dissertation, “The Military Campaign to Suppress the Lin Shuangwen Rebellion, 1787–1788” (University of Hawaii, 1998). Also see Nicola Di Cosmo, “Did Guns Matter? Firearms and the Qing Formation,” in *The Qing Formation in World-Historical Time*, edited by Lynn A. Struve (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005).

¹⁷Ray Huang, *Broadening the Horizons of Chinese History* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 14.

¹⁸For the origins and evolution of the Grand Council, see Beatrice S. Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers: The Grand Council in Mid-Ch’ing China, 1723–1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

¹⁹R. Kent Guy, *Qing Governors and Their Provinces: The Evolution of Territorial Administration in China, 1644–1796* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2010), 127–45, and 356–57.

²⁰On how Qing military operations contributed to the building of communication networks, see Sylvie Pasquet, *L’évolution du système postal: la province chinoise du Yunnan à l’époque Qing (1644–1911)* (Paris: Collège de France, Institut des hautes études chinoises, 1986), especially 179–236. In *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, Laura Hostetler explores the acquisition of ethnographical and cartographical knowledge in the southwest which was stimulated by Qing expansion in the area.

protracted war against the Zunghar Mongols on the empire's northwest frontier, when the dynasty mobilized to support the military campaigns, many people in the country hardly felt their effects. If they were not in the war zones or near the roads travelled by troops and transport workers delivering war matériel, even fewer were dislocated or uprooted because of the wars. Scholars and students in Jiangnan continued their research and preparation for examinations, opera actors in Beijing maintained their routine of practice and performance, and farmers everywhere in the empire paid no extra taxes to support those campaigns.

After the Zunghar empire in Eastern Turkistan was eliminated, the once-turbulent Inner Asian steppe experienced the "*Pax Manchujica*," and the empire was free from any external threat. As a consequence, for the rest of the eighteenth century, vibrant developments elsewhere in society overshadowed military institutions. In the period 1750–1800, prosperity, including the building of new and more complex commercial networks and markets, the flourishing of scholarship, literature, and arts, and a rapidly growing population all seem to argue against war's centrality. Nevertheless, the Qing dynasty's military character continued to loom large, not only within the military domain, but also in non-military sectors, quietly influencing politics and society.

THE PENETRATION OF MILITARY PERSONNEL INTO THE CIVIL BUREAUCRACY

In fact, military institutions had shaped the civilian sector since the Qing dynasty's earliest days. A revealing instance is the penetration of military personnel into the civil bureaucracy. The Qing dynasty perpetuated the Ming civil service examination system to recruit Han Chinese educated in Confucianism to officialdom, but Qing rulers prioritized the accommodation of the upper echelon of the bannermen, who were initially not at home with the Confucian classics and Chinese literary skills. In so doing, they first made sure that the military bureaucracy was a protected domain for the bannermen. In addition to the leadership positions of all the Banners, bannermen were also appointed to the higher positions of the Green Standard Army, such as provincial military commanders (*tidu* 提督) and regional military commanders (*zongbing* 總兵). As the Banner population grew, more options were needed. Soon after the Manchus entered China proper, some bannermen were sent to fill the positions in the civil bureaucracy, especially high-ranking positions in the capital and provinces.²¹ The practice of appointing officials across the divide between the civil and military bureaucracies, which can be termed "cross-appointments," was not started by the Manchus. However, the Qing used this method more commonly than any other dynasty in Chinese history. Through this arrangement, military personnel penetrated into the domain of the civil state apparatus, deeply influencing the Qing polity's nature.

The practice of "cross-appointment" was a time-honored tradition. In fact, "*chujiang ruxiang*" 出將入相, meaning to serve as a general when leaving the capital and to become a prime minister when returning to the capital, was a prized quality for high-

²¹As Elliott (*Manchu Way*, 200–207) has demonstrated, Qing rulers tried to keep the Manchu and Mongol bannermen employed; if there were not sufficient slots in the military bureaucracy, they would be sent to other areas.

ranking personnel of officialdom in China's imperial past. This phrase was first used during the Tang dynasty when a number of leading military officials were appointed to high civil positions.²² As David Graff's essay in this special issue shows, in peripheral areas, Tang generals were also given administrative prerogatives, serving as *de facto* viceroys. The scheme ultimately led to the expansion of the power of some military officials, undermining Tang central authorities, and culminating in the An Lushan rebellion in 755–63. As one of the measures taken to weaken the military, the Song imperial house ordered that only high-ranking civil officials could serve as commanders-in-chief in wars. Similarly, high-ranking civil bureaucrats during the Ming times were also appointed as commanders-in-chief in wars, while military officials were barred from entering the civil bureaucracy. Nevertheless, conquest dynasties such as the Mongol Yuan and the Manchu Qing dynasties used the practice to benefit the conquerors, sending military officials to the civil bureaucracy, but not *vice versa*. In so doing, the horseback warriors were seamlessly transformed into political elites, changing the composition of the civil bureaucracy, which is often assumed to be composed mainly of advanced civil examination degree-holders.²³

However, it is sometimes difficult to identify China's political elites as exclusively civil or military officials, a distinction even more blurred due to the nature of the Qing as a conquest dynasty. Given the Manchus' roots as horseback warriors, one may be inclined to consider all Manchu bannermen more or less "military" men. The Manchus themselves, however, distinguished between the two cohorts. In 1683, Mingju 明珠, one of the leading advisors to the Kangxi emperor, explained it clearly: "Manchu officials are always cross-appointed (*wenwu huyong* 文武互用). There are civil officials who are appointed to military positions; and there are military officials who are appointed to civil positions. It's hard to have a unified rule."²⁴ Mingju's remarks reveal the distinction between the civil and military bureaucracies among the Manchu bannermen and confirm that cross-appointments were common, even blurring the divide at times.

Throughout the early Qing, many bannermen's bureaucratic alignments are difficult for historians to identify, largely because of cross-appointing. Some were unmistakably military officials, such as Fiyanggū 費揚古, Furdan 傅爾丹, Hailancha 海蘭察, Mingliyang 明亮, and Eldemboo 額勒登保, because they mainly served in military positions throughout their careers, establishing themselves as leading generals by participating in and commanding numerous wars.²⁵ However, it is more difficult to establish the identity

²²The phrase first appeared in the Tang dynasty. When Wang Gui 王珪 (570–639) praised Li Jing 李靖 (571–649) for his being capable of serving in both military and civil positions, Wang used the phrase *chujiang ruxiang*. Wu Jing 吳兢, *Zhenguan zhengyao* 貞觀政要 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), *juan* 2.

²³As R. Kent Guy (*Qing Governors and Their Provinces*, 15) notes, fewer than half of the provincial governors (*xunfu* 巡撫) up to the end of the eighteenth century held the *jinshi* degree; the rate was only 26% during the Qianlong reign.

²⁴Kangxi had asked his advisors about how long a mourning period Manchu officials should observe when their parents passed away. Mingju's reply was meant to say that all Manchu officials could not serve the three-year mourning period, because they could all have military duty even when they were in the positions of civil bureaucracy. *Kangxi qijuzhu* 康熙起居注 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1984), 121.

²⁵Fiyanggū (1645–1701) was one of the commanders of the Qing expeditions against the Zungar Mongols in the 1690s. Furdan (d. 1752) participated in the Zungar campaigns in the 1690s, and led the war on the

of those who split their careers between the civil and military bureaucracies. A full list of such people could be long; the most prominent among them include Ts'ereng 策楞, Mingšui 明瑞, Agūi 阿桂, Fuk'anggan 福康安, and Cangling 長齡.²⁶ Among the top echelon, some bannermen were primarily civil officials but were given military duties at times, assuming commandership in the campaigns, even dying in the line of duty as military commanders, such as Necin 訥親, Fuheng 傅恆, Wenfu 溫福, and Nayancheng 那彥成.²⁷ Rank-and-file Manchu bannermen also received cross-appointments, because the growing Manchu population created intense demands for employment opportunities.²⁸

The situation of Chinese bannermen, the so-called Hanjun 漢軍, differed somewhat. Chinese bannermen were more likely to be appointed to civil positions, especially as governors and governors-general. In the first decades following the Qing takeover, more Chinese bannermen than either Manchu or Mongol bannermen were appointed as

Zunghars in the Yongzheng period. Hailancha (d. 1793) was a Solon from Heilongjiang. Rising to prominence from the rank-and-file, Hailancha was a constant presence in the wars of the Qianlong period. Mingliyang (1735–1822) was another leading general of the Qianlong era, and one of the commanders of the campaign to suppress the White Lotus rebellion, though he experienced ups-and-downs repeatedly in his long career. Eldembo (1748–1805) distinguished himself in the wars in the late Qianlong period, and was taken under Fuk'anggan's wing. In 1800–1803, he was the commander-in-chief of the White Lotus war.

²⁶Ts'ereng (d. 1756) was the grandson of Ebilun 額必隆, a general of the founding generation and one of Kangxi's regents. One of the leading generals of the Qianlong period, Ts'ereng participated in several frontier wars (he was the commander-in-chief of the Qing expedition to Tibet in 1750). But he also served as governor and governor-general on several occasions. Mingšui (d. 1768) was a general of the Qianlong period, but he served in the posts of the civil bureaucracy such as Vice Minister of Revenue. In his capacity as the Minister of War, Mingšui was named the commander-in-chief of the Qing expedition to Myanmar in 1767. Having suffered a defeat, he committed suicide in a Myanmar jungle. Agūi (1717–97)'s career exemplifies the ideal of "*chuijiang ruxiang*." He participated in and commanded numerous wars in the Qianlong era, and then served as one of the leading grand councilors in the last two decades of his life. Fuk'anggan (d. 1796) was the most illustrious general in the late Qianlong era, although he was also considered to have "corrupted" the military with his overspending in war. Fuk'anggan was also appointed as governor and governor-general several times and headed ministries in the central government from time to time. Cangling (1758–1838) was a Mongol bannerman. In his long career spanning the Qianlong, Jiaqing, and Daoguang reigns, Cangling shuttled between the civil and military bureaucracies, and served both in the central government and the frontiers. He was one of the most important banner generals in the early nineteenth century.

²⁷Necin (d. 1749) had been the chief grand councilor before he was sent by Qianlong to oversee the first Jinchuan war. Necin was executed in 1749 for mishandling of the war. Fuheng (d. 1770), who was the younger brother of Qianlong's first empress, succeeded Necin to head the Grand Council. In 1768, he was appointed as the commander-in-chief of the Qing expedition to Myanmar. After the invasion's failure, Fuheng died of an illness contracted in Myanmar. Wenfu (d. 1773) served mainly in the civil bureaucracy. He was the Minister of Lifanyuan 理藩院 (Court of Colonial Affairs) when he was named co-commander of the second Jinchuan war. In 1773, Wenfu was killed when the Jinchuan forces raided and routed the Qing armies at Muguomu 木果木. Having been appointed to many important positions in the central government in the wake of the purge of Hešen 和珅 in 1799, Nayancheng (1764–1833), who was Agūi's grandson, was sent by the Jiaqing emperor to help lead the campaign against the White Lotus rebels. But Nayancheng failed to fulfill the emperor's expectations, thus losing almost all his positions. On Nayancheng's meteoric rise and disgraceful fall, see Yingcong Dai, "Broken Passage to the Summit: Nayancheng's Botched Mission in the White Lotus War," in Jeroen Duindam and Sabine Dabringhaus, editors, *The Dynastic Centre and the Provinces: Agents and Interactions* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 49–73.

²⁸Fuge 福格, *Tingyu cong'an* 聽雨叢談 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 26; Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, 152–55.

provincial viceroys.²⁹ Given their advantage in learning the Confucian classics, this cohort was later required to acquire degrees through civil service examinations once they were appointed to the positions in the civil bureaucracy, whereas degrees were not required for either the Manchu or Mongol bannermen who were cross-appointed to civil positions.³⁰ In time, this cohort was bureaucratized and Confucianized. Starting from the Kangxi period, the Qing state compelled many Chinese bannermen to relinquish their bannermen status (some were sent to join the Green Standard Army) in order to curtail the increasingly high cost of maintaining the Banner system. This policy likely contributed to the Chinese bannermen's diminished presence at the Qing military's highest levels.³¹ By the end of the eighteenth century, the dynasty's first tier of military leaders included a mere handful of Chinese bannermen.³²

Yet the Chinese bannermen in civil positions were often given military duties throughout the eighteenth century. Although best known as a haughty satrap who was disgraced and then ordered to commit suicide for not showing due respect to the Yongzheng emperor, Nian Gengyao 年羹堯's career illustrates Chinese bannermen's important military role in the Qing state. In 1709, Nian became Sichuan's governor and later earned a promotion to governor-general of Sichuan and Shaanxi. In the early 1720s, Nian oversaw a successful campaign in Kokonor against a rebellious Mongol prince, which earned him a soaring reputation as an outstanding military commander, although the main contributor to the victory was Yue Zhongqi 岳鍾琪, the provincial military commander of the Green Standard Army in Sichuan.³³ Hence, Nian has usually been considered a military man by historians. Nevertheless, his upbringing and his initial official career placed him squarely in the camp of civil officials. He stated himself: "This subject is by nature a civil official (*chen ben wenguan* 臣本文官)."³⁴ When he was appointed governor of Sichuan in 1709, the Kangxi emperor especially warned him of the importance of maintaining good relations with the province's military officials.³⁵ Only when he began to shoulder more

²⁹For the situation of Chinese bannermen and their significance to the Qing during the conquest period, see Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, 89–128.

³⁰Fuge, *Tingyu congtao*, 27–28.

³¹On the Chinese bannermen's removal from the Banner system, see Ding, *Qingdai Baiqi zhufang yanjiu*, 224–35; Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, 340–42.

³²One of them was Qingcheng 慶成, the great grandson of Sun Sike 孫思克, an outstanding Chinese bannerman in the early Qing period. Qingcheng was a leading general in the White Lotus campaign and was promoted to the position of provincial military commander first in Shaanxi and then in Hubei. Zhao, *Qingshigao*, *juan* 346.

³³Nian Gengyao (d. 1726) was Yongzheng's confidant but offended the latter by not showing the due respect after the latter became the emperor. Nian was dismissed and disgraced shortly after the Qinghai campaign and then ordered by Yongzheng to commit suicide. On the Qinghai campaign, see Perdue, *China Marches West*, 243–48; Dai, *The Sichuan Frontier and Tibet*, 93–95. For a detailed account of Nian's fall, see Feng Erkang 馮爾康, *Yongzheng zhuan* 雍正傳 (Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 1999), 96–120.

³⁴Nian said this in 1720 after he was appointed to be the commander of the upcoming expedition to Tibet (but he ended up staying in Sichuan). *Kangxichao Hanwen zhupi zouzhe huibian* 康熙朝漢文硃批奏摺彙編, vol. 8 (Beijing: Dang'an chubanshe, 1984), 661.

³⁵Yingcong Dai, "To Nourish a Strong Military: Kangxi's Preferential Treatment of His Military Officials," *War and Society* 18.2 (October, 2000), 71–91.

military duties did Nian's persona change to the bluff martial figure, which became a conventional image in popular culture.³⁶

Like many Qing practices, cross-appointment for the bannermen was never clearly articulated in the Qing statutes. Nevertheless, it was used liberally. Looking back, Fuge 福格, a Chinese bannerman, observed in the latter part of the nineteenth century that the Qing did not maintain a rigid division between civil and military bureaucracies for the high-ranking officials:

Our dynasty models itself on the Three Dynasties [i.e., the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties] in that there is no set passage for bannermen to follow in their advancement within officialdom; the high-ranking officials are not defined as either civil or military officials.³⁷

Fuge intended to suggest that ranking bannermen could easily be cross-appointed in either of the hierarchies, so that it was not meaningful to label a certain bannerman as either a civil or a military person. Elsewhere, he observed: "The bannermen officials, both the civil and military ones, have opportunities to be promoted into the other hierarchy."³⁸ As an insider of the Banner hierarchy, Fuge's observations reveal at least two things. First, the Qing had no fixed policy principle when it came to the division between the civil and military bureaucracies. Therefore, one needs to draw one's own conclusion by researching the matter, as Fuge had done. Second, cross-appointment was so common that bannermen could not be defined as exclusively either civil or military officials.

In general, cross-appointment sent more military officials to the civil bureaucracy than *vice versa*. With few exceptions, it was exclusively used for the bannermen.³⁹ Although meant to aid bannermen in acquiring official positions in the face of the narrowing employment opportunities within the military domain, cross-appointment generated broader consequences. It served as a gateway for bannermen to invade the civil bureaucracy that had been the Confucian literati class's fiefdom. With their advantage as the conquering nationality, the bannermen's competition with the Chinese degree holders was never on an equal footing.

In this vein, their entrance into the civil bureaucracy via cross-appointment was a way to manifest and maintain the bannermen's political prerogatives. Competition intensified when both the Banners and Chinese populations expanded rapidly in the eighteenth century. Although many bannermen eventually grew accustomed to the civil bureaucracy, they remained standard bearers of Manchu military values for the Manchu rulers. Thus, this practice was designed to perpetuate Manchu dominance in China. In society, the fact that bannermen who lacked decades of training in the Confucian classics and hard-earned degrees came to occupy top positions of the civil bureaucracy counterbalanced the popular obsession with scholarship and scholars, which was especially entrenched in the affluent and urban areas. Coupled with the harsh punishment for

³⁶In some TV series on the Qing dynasty in China, Nian Gengyao is depicted as a rough and bandit-like military man, who is referred to by others as "Generalissimo Nian" (Nian da jiangjun 年大將軍).

³⁷Fuge, *Tingyu congtan*, 26. Fuge was the great grandson of Yinglian 英廉 (1707–83), a grand secretary of the Qianlong period. Fuge was a magistrate in the 1850s–1860s. *Tingyu congtan*, 1.

³⁸Fuge, *Tingyu congtan*, 21.

³⁹Fuge listed only a handful of such exceptions. *Tingyu congtan*, 21.

any slight disrespect to the Manchus and their culture in literary expression,⁴⁰ Chinese scholars and scholar-officials no longer publicly belittled or mocked horse-riding nomads and boorish military men in Qing times. Instead, it was the bannermen who often expressed their contempt for the Chinese civil officials' incompetence in military matters.⁴¹

MILITARY INSTITUTIONS AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Military institutions' importance in Qing times was also reflected in the dynasty's distribution of its financial resources. Although it was a universal phenomenon that the military establishment claimed the lion's share of the national resources, the case of the Qing dynasty was peculiar. The founding fathers of the Qing endeavored to avoid repeating the two mistakes committed by the fallen Ming. First, Qing rulers were determined not to over-tax the people. They believed a reduced tax burden was essential to legitimize alien rule and win the hearts and minds of the conquered Chinese. Indeed, one of the first decrees the new Qing rulers promulgated upon taking Beijing in mid-1644 was to abolish all the surcharges that the Ming had imposed in its last decades.⁴² Second, the Qing was adamant in doing away with the Ming treatment of its military—poor treatment of Ming troops was believed to be a key reason the dynasty fell. Qing rulers vowed to make the needs of its military personnel a top priority. In this vein, the Manchu rulers rejected military farm colonies as the primary means to finance its armies, even though some suggested using it to help support the expanding military forces in the early years of the dynasty.⁴³

Nevertheless, it was a difficult and delicate task to achieve both priorities. At some point during the long conquest, the Qing state would have to turn to taxpayers for more revenue if it intended to use public funds to support its armies and guarantee the well-being of military personnel. In 1659, the anti-Qing force led by Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功, a warlord based in Taiwan, made a successful sea-borne offensive against the mainland's southeastern coast. At one point, Zheng's fleet reached the city of Zhenjiang on the north bank of the Yangzi River, alarming the entire Jiangnan area. In 1659 and later, much of the revenue levied from Jiangnan had to be retained locally to finance

⁴⁰On literary inquisition in Qing times, see Pierre-Henri Durand, *Lettrés et pouvoirs: Un procès littéraire dans la Chine impériale* (Paris: École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1992), Jonathan D. Spence, *Treason by the Book* (New York: Viking, 2001), and R. Kent Guy, *The Emperor's Four Treasuries: Scholars and the State in the Late Ch'ien-lung Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1987).

⁴¹For example, in the spring of 1799 when Shaanxi dealt with the White Lotus rebels in the province, Hengrui 恆瑞, a Manchu and the Xi'an general, commented on his Chinese colleague, Qin Cheng'en 秦承恩, who was Shaanxi's governor: "Qin Cheng'en is a Chinese, not conversant with military affairs, so that his arrangements [of Shaanxi's defense] cannot be perfect." *Qinding jiaoping sansheng xiefei fanglüe* 欽定剿平三省邪匪方略 (reprint: Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1970), 94, 2b.

⁴²*Daqing lichao shilu* 大清歷朝實錄 (Tokyo: Okura shuppan kabushiki kaisha, 1937–38), Shunzhi period, 6, 9a–11a. 112, 7a–b.

⁴³Military colonies were set up in some areas throughout the Qing dynasty, especially Xinjiang in the wake of the elimination of the Zunghar empire. See Perdue, *China Marches West*, 324–57. However, the method was never the major or universal means to support the armies.

the battle against Zheng and build ships for the Qing forces. In 1659, no taxes, either in grain or in cash, were transported to Beijing from Jiangnan.

To use the limited funds more efficiently, the Qing state ordered that only the campaign in Yunnan against the last Southern Ming regime be supplied by state funds. Military forces in other provinces were to raise funds locally to support themselves.⁴⁴ However, the Yunnan campaign turned out to be enormously expensive. In 1660, it cost more than 9 million taels of silver, exceeding the state's total annual income, which was 8.75 million taels. The Ministry of Revenue complained: "To exhaust the country's entire revenue income is insufficient to support a single province's expenditure."⁴⁵ Meanwhile, as the Green Standard Army rapidly expanded to absorb surrendered Ming soldiers and anti-Qing rebels, many complained bitterly about the shortage of military funds. In fact, many troops had to live off the land as they did not receive enough funds.⁴⁶

In early 1661, the Shunzhi emperor died. Facing a shortage of funds exceeding 5,700,000 taels of silver nationwide, the new administration, headed by Oboi 鰲拜, the young Kangxi emperor's regent, reneged on the promise against levying extra taxes upon the people. Early in the autumn of 1661, it reinstated the "militia surcharge" (*lianxiang* 練餉) used by the Ming dynasty in its final years.⁴⁷ This act sparked local officials' immediate and intense resistance. Initially, this surcharge was levied at the same rate as in Ming times and the levies were to be surrendered twice a year to the central government. However, after several provinces claimed that there were no surviving Ming records that indicated the rate of the surcharge in their provinces, the central government changed its policy to a universal one extra *fen* or one hundredth of a tael (1 tael equals 37–40 grams) of silver on every *mu* (approximately one-sixth of an acre) of taxable land.

However, it still caused confusion and protests as some argued that the productivity of land varied from *mu* to *mu*, so it was unfair to levy uniformly one *fen* on every *mu*. Some also complained that war devastation and poor harvests rendered taxpayers in some areas totally incapable of paying any surcharges. Many warned that this policy would inevitably cause widespread land flight. When the deadline approached, only a few provinces submitted the due levies in full. In the capital, several high-ranking officials openly criticized levying the surcharge, because it broke the new dynasty's vow to avoid faulty Ming practices. Embarrassed, the Oboi administration abandoned the policy at the beginning of 1662 (the first year of the Kangxi reign), only five months after it was promulgated.⁴⁸

This incident is significant on a number of counts. It showcases the extraordinary fiscal difficulties of the conquest era, which made it almost impossible for the Qing leadership to adhere to both of their commitments. At the same time, it demonstrates that tax increases were an expedient method to offset fund shortages and that Qing rulers were

⁴⁴ *DaQing lichao shilu*, Shunzhi period, 137, 9a–9b.

⁴⁵ *DaQing lichao shilu*, Shunzhi period, 136, 22a.

⁴⁶ Numerous memorials in this regard can be found in Zhang Weiren 張偉仁 ed., *Ming Qing dang'an* 明清檔案 (Taipei: The Institute of History and Philology of the Academia Sinica, 1986–95), A1–A9.

⁴⁷ *Qingdai dang'an shiliao congbian* 清代檔案史料叢編, vol. 4 (Beijing, Gugong bowuyuan, 1979), 1–2.

⁴⁸ *Qingdai dang'an shiliao congbian*, vol. 4, 34–37 and 40; *DaQing lichao shilu*, Kangxi period, 4, 9b; 5, 8b–19a; 5, 19b–20a.

not adverse to such a policy. However, the policy's failure foreshadows Qing fiscal management in the coming decades. Increased taxes posed political risk, even though the Qing state possessed the power and networks to impose such increases. Having failed to impose more taxes, the Qing had to find other ways to raise funds to complete their conquest.

Although more research is needed to explain fully how the young Qing dynasty survived the protracted and highly expensive conquest without fiscal collapse, the Qing's firm grip on the fertile Jiangnan area was essential. On several occasions, the Qing violently suppressed taxpayers' protests against over-exaction.⁴⁹ In addition to Jiangnan, the Qing also bore down hard on Shaanxi province, collecting taxes years in advance to acquire sufficient grain and cash to support the conquest campaign.⁵⁰ The occasional high-handedness was the price to pay for honoring the promise not to have a general tax increase.

Having survived the conquest, the Qing state kept its commitment not to raise taxes nationwide while fully supporting its two armies with state funds. Fortunately for the Qing, as the war-ravaged economy recovered, the economic boom of the eighteenth century worked to its advantage. There was no repeat of the 1661 incident in the following two centuries; the Qing kept its promise not to exhaust the taxpayers to meet the expanding needs of the dynasty, including the costs of maintaining the two armies. In doing so, the Kangxi emperor played an instrumental role, setting a high standard when it came to supporting the military. In 1670, shortly after he had freed himself from his overbearing regent, Oboi, to take the reins of government, the young Kangxi emperor raised the monthly stipends to all rank-and-file Manchu bannermen by one tael of silver and increased their food rations. In the edict to order those increases, he said: "The Manchu bannermen are the country's foundation. [We] must take extra care of them, even though the country is at peace."⁵¹ To Kangxi, the most important thing to maintain the troops was to ensure that they received pay on time every month: "What is considered good in treating soldiers is no more than to deliver the amount of stipends and food rations they deserve to their hands. This is the only proper way to nurture the military (*yangbing zhidao* 養兵之道)."⁵²

Under Kangxi's auspices, a complex system to compensate military personnel took shape in the early eighteenth century, the framework of which would stay in place until the mid-nineteenth century. In general, bannermen were much better compensated than the Green Standard troops. An ordinary bannerman's monthly stipend was four taels of silver, but the Green Standard soldiers' monthly pay was between one and two taels. Meanwhile, both bannermen and the Green Standard soldiers received food rations in

⁴⁹In 1661, the Qing state severely punished the participants of a tax protest in Jiangnan. See Lawrence D. Kessler, *Kangxi and the Consolidation of Qing Rule: 1661–1684* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 33–34; Jerry Dennerline, "Fiscal Reform and Local Control: The Gentry-Bureaucratic Alliance Survives the Conquest," in *Conflict and Control in Late Imperial China*, edited by Frederic Wakeman Jr. and Carolyn Grant (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 86–120.

⁵⁰For a case study on the Qing's exactions in Shaanxi during the Shunzhi period, see Chen Xue 陳雪, "Chuanyun yu Hanyun: Shunzhi nianjian Shaanxi de junliang choucuo" 川運與漢運：順治年間陝西的軍糧籌措, *Qingshi yanjiu* 1 (2016), 83–93.

⁵¹*DaQing lichao shilu*, Kangxi period, 32, 22a.

⁵²*DaQing lichao shilu*, Kangxi period, 183, 8b.

kind (sometimes issued in cash *ad hoc*). The structure of paying the troops both in cash and in kind provided some cushion against inflation, since an increase in the prices of rice and other foodstuffs would devalue their pay. Generally speaking, troops' wages were not high and did not increase in the following two centuries. To supplement regular pay, the Qing state granted military personnel various awards and subsidies in peacetime, some being regular and others being *ad hoc*, with more generous compensation in wartime, which will be discussed below. Separately from the rank-and-file, military officials were paid via a different system and according to their positions. Similar to the salary system of civil officials, military officials' wages were modest, although the Banner leaders were more favorably treated. Understanding the situation, the Kangxi emperor adopted a *laissez-faire* attitude when it came to military officials' illicit sources of additional income and often advised civil officials against being overly stringent with military colleagues' pursuit of profit.⁵³ As he put it, "One should not demand that military officials be too clean" (*Fan wuguan buke zezhi guoyuqing* 凡武官不可責之過於清).⁵⁴ Throughout his long reign, Kangxi advocated those points untiringly. He even breached bureaucratic rules in patronizing and protecting military personnel, especially the two armies' upper echelons.⁵⁵

Given the Qing military's size (the total number of the two armies was about 800,000 most of the eighteenth century, and 860,000 at the highest points in the period), even moderate peacetime pay to military personnel was a colossal fiscal commitment for the central government; a huge portion of the annual revenue income had to be allocated to that end. Although estimates vary, the highest estimation is that more than 70 percent of all the revenues collected each year had to be used to pay the two armies.⁵⁶ Many scholars, however, have yet to appreciate fully the impact of military expenditure on the dynasty's economic life and political structure.

As the size of the garrison armies varied from province to province, the military funds needed by them differed in amount, sometimes by a huge margin. A quantitative study of the provincial finances in 1746–48 spearheaded by Helen Dunstan has revealed some stunning details. In the late 1740s, the cost of troops' stipends was over 80 percent of some provinces' total yearly expenditures and in the range of 60–70 percent in several other provinces.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, some provinces with high military expenses had only moderate or small tax quotas. Consequently, their own revenues could not meet their needs. More often than not, those needy provinces were on the frontiers and had large numbers of soldiers. Discrepancies in needs and income prompted the Qing state to classify all the provinces into three categories: the provinces that did not need funds from outside of their own provinces; the provinces that needed outside funds; and those that had a surplus and could send a portion of their taxes to other provinces. The funds that were transferred to other provinces were referred to as *xiexiang* 協餉 or *xiejiyin*

⁵³For detailed discussion of Kangxi's lenient attitude toward his military officials, see Dai, "To Nourish."

⁵⁴*Kangxichao Hanwen zhupi zouzhe huibian*, vol. 8, 836.

⁵⁵Dai, "To Nourish."

⁵⁶Chen Feng, *Qingdai junfei yanjiu*, 8–9.

⁵⁷Provinces where military expenditures were over 80% of their total expenditures included Guangdong (86.90%), Fujian (86.01%) and Sichuan (83.28%). See Helen Dunstan, "The Finance of Imperial Munificence: How Simple Quantitative Work Can Help Us Rethink High-Qing History," *T'oung-Pao* 100 (2014), 188–89.

協濟銀, both meaning “assistance funds.” Provinces that supplied the assistance funds were called *xiejisheng* 協濟省 (provinces that provide assistance). Since the major purpose of those funds was to pay the armies (for some provinces, their administrative expenditures also needed to be supplied in part from outside), the funds were sometimes referred to simply as *bingshiang* 兵餉 (army stipends). This system reflects the Qing state’s assessment of each province’s value, some being economically important while others were strategically important.⁵⁸ By using the assistance funds system to transfer funds from affluent provinces to strategically vital but economically needy provinces, the Qing state adopted flexible policies that reflected each region’s value to the state.

The assistance funds system affected nearly all the provinces. Because the Banner and Green Standard garrisons were distributed throughout the empire, it would not have been cost-effective to first have the provinces transport their taxes to Beijing and then send them out again to the provinces in need of the assistance funds. Instead, a lateral transferring system was set up to deliver the funds from province to province without having them first sent to Beijing. In this system, the funds needed in the provinces were first deducted from the taxes due to the central government and retained in the provinces. As a result, a majority of the taxes collected were not delivered to Beijing.⁵⁹ Provinces with a surplus packed the assistance funds, which were always hefty silver ingots, and delivered them to the needy provinces either annually or biannually. In addition to those at either the giving or receiving end, those few provinces that neither gave nor received might be required to take care of the transport of the funds if they were located on the routes those funds travelled through. Dunstan’s study shows that procedures and rules were scrupulously set and that the process required enormous attention and effort from officials in all the provinces involved.⁶⁰ During officials’ periodical reviews, handling of the assistance funds was an important factor in the assessment of job performance. Nationwide, supporting the military was not merely a rhetorical claim by the emperor, but also a highly demanding administrative operation that engaged nearly the entire civil bureaucracy on a regular basis.

The civil bureaucracy’s involvement in maintaining the massive military forces in the Qing times is a complex issue, which deserves further research. What follows are a few preliminary observations. First, the Qing dynasty developed procedures to fully support its armies with state funds, as had been laid down by its founding fathers. Throughout the first half of the dynasty, the state was largely successful in fulfilling this commitment through lateral transfers of the assistance funds, although other measures were also adopted to help guarantee the well-being of both the bannermen and the Green Standard personnel.⁶¹ Second, the Qing state was greatly constrained financially, because a large portion of the revenues was reserved and delivered to the armies, which conditioned or minimized

⁵⁸I have presented this argument in *The Sichuan Frontier and Tibet* by exploring the changing strategic significance of Sichuan for the Qing state.

⁵⁹There are also different estimates on the percentage of the taxes retained in the provinces. According to Shi Zhihong 史志宏, 25%–33% of the total tax income was delivered to Beijing each year. See Shi Zhihong, *Qingdai Hubu yinku shouzhi he kucun tongji* 清代戶部銀庫收支和庫存統計 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2009), 1.

⁶⁰Dunstan, “The Finance of Imperial Munificence.”

⁶¹To help the two armies acquire extra income, Qing state pushed them into entrepreneurship by issuing capital funds to the army units, letting them make profits from setting up businesses themselves or investing their capital with merchants. See Yingcong Dai, “Military Entrepreneurship in the High Qing Period.”

the state's spending in the other areas. As is well known, the Qing dynasty had a fairly small civil bureaucracy—the number of the officials who were paid by the state was tiny relative to the empire's total population, by both global standards of the eighteenth century and modern standards. The Qing dynasty's limited financial capacity partly explains this phenomenon. Third, at the provincial level, funding garrison forces also absorbed a great deal of resources. Its impact on the provinces was twofold. First, money to support the garrisons in many provinces constituted the lion's share of their operational budgets, which made military needs the provinces' highest priority. Second, the lateral transference of assistance funds was an enormous administrative undertaking and among the provincial government's most important obligations. It directly and indirectly influenced civil officials' careers and ordinary people's livelihoods. We are only beginning to grasp fully the significance and repercussions of the lateral circulation of the taxes in Qing China.

Despite its success in supporting the military garrisons outside the capital for many decades, the system of lateral circulation of revenues may have played a role in the erosion of the central government's grip on the provinces, given that most of the revenues due to the central government were not delivered to Beijing, but were either retained in the provinces or transported to other provinces. In the latter part of the eighteenth century, most provinces failed to deliver their revenues due to the central government on time, accumulating increasingly large arrears. In the many wars either against foreign enemies or domestic rebels, as discussed above, the state often went after the affluent provinces for financial contributions to help fund the operations, which exacerbated the problem of arrears.⁶² During its prolonged campaign to suppress the White Lotus rebellion, the central government turned to the provinces and the private sector for money after the central treasury was nearly depleted. Many provinces had to dig from their own reserves to comply with Beijing's orders.⁶³ After the campaign, it became even more difficult for the central government to make the provinces pay taxes and clear arrears. In fact, long before the mid-nineteenth century, when decentralization figures so prominently in narratives of the political and military changes transforming state and society, the state's leverage in commanding provincial resources had been deeply compromised.⁶⁴

MILITARY INSTITUTIONS AND ECONOMIC LIFE

War made clear the Qing dynasty's capacity to mobilize civil bureaucracy and society, although it directly affected only certain areas.⁶⁵ Unlike the modern military system that usually is a syndicate encompassing both combat and logistical functions, the

⁶²For example, during the second Jinchuan war, about 40% of the total war funds were from a number of provinces. Theobald, *War Finance and Logistics*, 121–37.

⁶³After 1800, the central treasury no longer disbursed funds to the war; war funds basically came from provincial treasuries, merchant donations, and other sources. Overall, more than 14 million taels of silver were extracted from the provinces in this protracted war. For a detailed account of this situation, see Yingcong Dai, *The White Lotus War in Late Imperial China* (unpublished manuscript).

⁶⁴Shi, *Qingdai Hubu yinku shouzhi he kucun tongji*, 45, 109–11; Chen Feng, “Qingdai caizheng zhichu zhengce yu zhichu jiegou de biandong 清代財政支出政策與支出結構的變動,” in Chen Feng, *Qingdai caizhengshi lungao 清代財政史論稿* (Beijing: shangwu yinshuguan, 2010), 139–43, 145–47.

⁶⁵Peter Perdue, “Military Mobilization in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century China, Russia, and Mongolia” *Modern Asian Studies* 30.4 (1996), 757–93.

Qing dynasty did not build and maintain a regular top-down logistical system. In peacetime, except for firearms and some cold weapons, which were manufactured in official workshops and distributed to the army, the army's other weapons, equipment, and supplies other than staple foodstuffs, were usually acquired from the local market. In wartime, the Qing state turned to its local government and civilians in the war zone to create *ad hoc* logistical services. Basically, the Qing always underwent two mobilizations each time it waged a war. First, the armies—both the mobile field forces, i.e., the Banner units in Beijing, Manchuria, and other places, and the Green Standard forces—were deployed and marched to the front. Second, in the war zone, the local government, from the provincial level to the county level, was mobilized to support the operations. Open-ended and improvisational, the Qing wartime logistical system was bound to involve the non-military sector and personnel.

Generally, the governors-general and governors whose jurisdictions were involved in the war were ordered by the throne to command the military operations or serve as the chief executives of the logistical services. In the war zone, *ad hoc* offices, *junxuju* 軍需局, or “logistical bureaus,” were set up, which were usually staffed with prefects, magistrates, clerks, and expectant office-holders. Having taken shape during the war against the Zunghar Mongols during the Yongzheng period, the logistical bureaus were responsible for receiving and issuing war funds, hiring civilians to serve as porters, servants, and guides, and coordinating with local officials in support of military operations. There was no set format for the composition of the logistical bureaus. Sometimes, they consisted of no more than one boss and several assistants, although they were usually under the close supervision of either a governor-general or a governor in the war zone.⁶⁶ In addition, some local officials were also recruited by the armies to march with them and handle their logistical needs on the spot.

Besides those working in the logistical bureaus and embedded in the armies, all other local government personnel in the war zone were obliged to aid campaigns in their jurisdictions by maintaining communication lines, organizing militias, building forts, securing cities, towns, and passes, building or repairing roads and bridges to facilitate the movement of the armies, destroying them to obstruct the enemy, housing injured and sick troops, hosting logistical convoys and commissioners passing through their areas, relieving and settling displaced civilians, and so on. When local officials and functionaries in the war zone were not sufficient to meet a campaign's needs, the central government would send to the front their counterparts from other parts of the country as well as Beijing. Many expectant officials responded enthusiastically to the call to go to the front, for wartime service often served as a steppingstone to formal appointments to offices, greatly shortening an otherwise agonizingly long waiting period.⁶⁷

⁶⁶For the origins of the logistical bureaus, see Chen, *Qingdai junfei yanjiu*, 265. For their role during the two Jinchuan wars, see Yingcong Dai, “The Qing State, Merchants, and the Military Labor Force in the Jinchuan Campaigns,” 45–48; Theobald, *War Finance and Logistics*, 34–36.

⁶⁷It was usually the case that expectant personnel were awarded offices when a war was concluded. In 1721, in the wake of the Tibetan expedition, Nian Gengyao requested to appoint them to vacant positions in Shaanxi and Sichuan, which was endorsed by Kangxi. See *Kangxichao Hanwen zhupi zouzhe huibian*, vol. 8, 838. It also occurred in the wake of the Zunghar campaigns in the 1690s, the two Jinchuan campaigns, the Gurkha campaigns, and the White Lotus war.

Also attracted by service to the military were members of the literati class. In Qing times, commanders often had both the civil officials and scholars on their staff when they went to war. Civilians would help the commanders with a wide spectrum of tasks, from providing advice to clerical duties, including drafting correspondence and drawing maps. Some literati who had served in that capacity wrote memoirs afterward of their experience with the armies and in war, glorifying violence and cheering for the invincibility of the Qing military. The most important works of this kind from the eighteenth century were by Wang Chang 王昶 and Zhao Yi 趙翼, both being renowned for their literary achievements.⁶⁸

Moreover, two distinctive practices of the Qing dynasty made the Qing wartime mobilization unprecedented, involving large numbers of civilians from all walks of life and transforming the socioeconomic landscape in the war zone. First, unlike its predecessors, the Qing dynasty did not include corvée, or compulsory labor obligation, in its tax policy. When the state needed manpower for public projects such as water projects, highway building, and city wall building or repair, as well as the projects of the imperial household, for example, building or repairing palaces, temples or imperial gardens, the state used only paid laborers. Although he did not create this practice, the Qianlong emperor was particularly vocal in its praise. He once observed: “It had been a practice since ancient times to levy labor tax. Only our dynasty does not do this.”⁶⁹ On another occasion, he pointed out that those public projects in fact provided employment opportunities to the poor people: “When our country has projects to do... [we] pay for both materials and labor. Not only are the people not burdened at all, the poor also benefit from the job.”⁷⁰ Qing historians have drawn attention to the abolition of corvée tax. Dai Yi argues that the public work during the Qing dynasty functioned as a relief to the poor and natural disaster victims.⁷¹

In wartime, the Qing state hired civilians to transport grain and other matériel and to provide other services to the armies. As early as the conquest period, Manchu conquerors sometimes paid the civilians for transporting funds and grain to support the conquest campaigns. In 1673, shortly after Wu Sangui started his rebellion, Mishan 米思翰 (1632–75), the Minister of Revenue, suggested allocating funds from the state treasury and paying all military expenses with state funds, including military labor, which became a regular rule for the ensuing military campaigns.⁷² Because the money used to pay military laborers was from the war funds allocated by the central government instead of from the provincial treasuries, the logistical authorities usually paid the

⁶⁸Wang Chang (1725–1806) participated in the Myanmar campaign and the second Jinchuan campaign on the staff of the campaigns’ commanders. He penned *Zheng Mian jilue* 征緬紀聞 and *Shujiao jiwén* 蜀微紀聞 on the two campaigns. Zhao Yi (1727–1814) was on Fuheng’s staff during the Myanmar campaign and was on Li Shiyao’s (the governor-general of Fujian and Zhejiang) staff during the campaign against Lin Shuangwen’s rebellion in Taiwan. He wrote *Huangchao wugong jisheng* 皇朝武功紀盛, which records seven Qing military campaigns.

⁶⁹Qianlongdi 乾隆帝, *Yuzhi shiji* 御製詩集 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983), *juan* 23.

⁷⁰Qianlongdi, *Yuzhi shiji*, *juan* 20.

⁷¹Dai Yi 戴逸, “Qianlongdi he Beijing de chengshi jianshe” 乾隆帝和北京的城市建設, *Qingshi yanjiu ji* 清史研究集, 6 (1988), 37.

⁷²Zhao Erxun 趙爾巽, *Qingshigao* 清史稿 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), *juan* 268, Mishan’s biography.

military labor force highly—of course, it was easy prey to wartime corruption. In addition to wages, sometimes laborers also received food rations and other allowances. Even labor force casualties were compensated.⁷³

Consequently, the cost to hire military laborers in a war was often among the largest expenditures. In the second Jinchuan campaign in 1771–76, more than 460,000 persons were hired to serve as porters to transport foodstuffs and other matériel and guard the grain stations along the transportation routes. Correspondingly, the cost amounted to 32 million taels of silver, which was more than half of the total war funds allocated by the throne.⁷⁴ In addition to human labor, warfront logistical services also paid for draft animals such as mules, camels, and horses. Naturally, the money went to their owners, who went with their draft animals to handle and care for them. During the campaign to suppress the White Lotus rebellion in 1796–1805, the cost of draft animals increased steeply because of both the scarcity of mules and horses in the war zone and the manipulation of officials who were in charge of logistics. It eventually cost 12 taels of silver to hire one mule for one month, which was equal to the annual stipend of a Green Standard infantry soldier, becoming one of the biggest expenditures in that campaign.⁷⁵

A second important dimension of Qing wartime military policy is that because the state compensated its military forces highly when they were deployed to war, Qing armies functioned as massive consumption corps. Qing wartime finances were structured much differently from those in peacetime, and the state was far more generous in its treatment of forces sent to war. First, deployed armies were all paid *yancai yin* 鹽菜銀. Although it means literally “salt and vegetable silver,” it was a de facto wartime monthly stipend, and the rates were set according to military personnel’s rank and position. This practice began early in the dynasty, and during the early and high Qing periods, the throne raised stipends from time to time. In addition, rates for Green Standard soldiers were about the same as their monthly cash stipends in peacetime, namely, one to two taels of silver, while the rates were slightly higher for rank-and-file bannermen.

Most importantly, this stipend did not replace their regular monthly stipends, which were still issued in their home garrisons to their families. Therefore, all military personnel received double wages whenever they were deployed for war.⁷⁶ In addition to salt and vegetable silver, officers and soldiers alike were also granted other subsidies when deployed. One was *xingzhuangyin* 行裝銀 or “equipment subsidy.” Issued upon their deployment, this subsidy was meant to help the troops make their weaponry and equipment ready, given that many failed to use their limited regular stipends to maintain weapons and equipment in good shape in peacetime. Initially, deployed forces had to pay back the equipment subsidy through deductions from their monthly stipends. As the throne often exempted them from paying back the borrowed money after the war, this item evolved into a regular allowance. By the late eighteenth century, the subsidy

⁷³This occurred in the second Jinchuan campaign. The families of the laborers who died in action or of illness were entitled to compensation of 2–4 taels of silver. See Dai, “The Qing State, Merchants, and the Military Labor Force,” 52. However, laborers’ death compensation was not stipulated in *Junxu zeli*.

⁷⁴Dai, “The Qing State, Merchants, and the Military Labor Force,” 75.

⁷⁵Dai, *The White Lotus War*.

⁷⁶*Qinding Hubu zeli* 欽定戶部則例, 1865 edition (reprint: Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1968), 73, 41a, and 79, 26a–b.

was set at 6–10 taels of silver for the Green Standard soldiers, and 20 taels for the Manchu bannermen.⁷⁷

In addition to those fixed wartime incomes, the regular troops could also expect to receive rewards and awards at the emperor's discretion. In addition to being rewarded with cash, promotions, or honorific titles, for a victory or meritorious deeds, they might also receive awards *en masse* either on the occasion of festivals or as special favors from the emperor. Added to favors directly from the throne, army commanders also granted awards to troops or even civilians serving in the armies as an incentive. Money needed for those awards was usually taken from war funds, even though some commanders did pay out of their own pockets. More often than not, commanders bought gifts, usually silks and satins, from businessmen who flocked to the war zone, and then gave them to the troops as awards. This practice, known as *shanghao* 賞號 (“materials for awards”), did not exist when the Manchus conquered China; it was started by some field commanders early in the eighteenth century, became well established by the middle of the century, and even survived the Qianlong emperor's effort to abolish it. *Shanghao* contributed to the rising costs of war in the eighteenth century.⁷⁸ Marveling at the military's abundant wartime income, Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794–1856) remarked:

Two differences separate the management of military affairs of our dynasty from that of the previous dynasties. One is that our dynasty uses fewer soldiers [in war]. The other is that our dynasty pays more to the soldiers [when they are deployed].... During all the preceding dynasties, military campaigns were supported by adding taxes on people. Therefore, there were more soldiers but less money for them. But our dynasty uses only the state funds [to support campaigns] without increasing taxes. Therefore, our dynasty deploys fewer soldiers, but pays them more.⁷⁹

To a great extent, Qing capacity to mobilize society to support military operations was fueled by the war funds lavishly allocated by the central government in each of the wars. Given that both military personnel and civilians hired to support the operations had cash to spend, merchants, peddlers, and venturesome people were attracted to the warfront, sometimes from afar, and traded with the two cohorts. As early as the three expeditions against the Zunghar Mongols in the 1690s, a throng of merchants and peddlers traveled with the Qing armies over long distances from China proper to the heart of the steppe. Although the main foodstuffs needed by the armies, rice and wheat, were transported by designated troops led by high-ranking Green Standard officers, which was not often the case in the wars of the eighteenth century, the other needs of the military forces were met by traders, some of whom perished during the long and hard journeys.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ *Qinding Hubu junxu zeli* 欽定戶部軍需則例 (reprint: Haikou, Hainan chubanshe, 2000), *juan* 1.

⁷⁸ An early case of issuing *shanghao* to the troops occurred in the first Qing invasion of Tibet in 1718–20, when Nian Gengyao used his own salary to buy silks to award his soldiers. See *Nian Gengyao Man Han zouzhe yibian*, 210–11. In the first Jinchuan campaign, Fuheng, the special commissioner sent by the Qianlong emperor to supervise the war, did the same thing. But it was Fuheng's son, Fuk'anggan, who greatly abused this practice, spending large amounts of the war funds to buy gifts for his troops in all the wars he led in the late Qianlong era, which was repeatedly criticized by the Jiaqing emperor (r. 1796–1820). In 1802, the Ministry of Revenue officially renounced this practice. *Qinding jiaoping sansheng xiefei fanglüe*, 344, 14a–15b.

⁷⁹ Wei Yuan 魏源, *Sheng wu ji* 聖武紀 (reprint: Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), *juan* 11.

⁸⁰ *Qinzheng pingding shuomo fanglüe* 親征平定朔漠方略 (reprint: Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1987), 13, 24a; 14, 8a–b; 18, 29b–30a.

Throughout the eighteenth century, armies were always accompanied by hordes of businessmen who traded with the soldiers, officers, laborers and other civilians hired in the war and met all their needs. The commodities they brought to the front soon expanded from necessities to luxuries such as silks, satins, liquor, tobacco, dried seafood, jewels, and so on, turning the war zone into a massive makeshift market. In fact, in some campaigns, traders set up booths and formed what contemporaries termed *maimaijie* 買賣街, literally “commercial streets.”⁸¹ By the end of the eighteenth century, entertainment too emerged. In the campaign to suppress the Miao uprisings in Guizhou and Hunan and the long campaign against the White Lotus rebels, generals enjoyed performances by opera troupes, singers, and dancers when they threw parties or banquets in their headquarters.⁸²

Those non-military activities in wartime transformed the areas involved. The massive consumption by all parties greatly stimulated both the local and national economy—goods from afar were brought in and new commercial networks were set up. To facilitate the armies’ movement, physical connectedness between the center and the margins had to be upgraded. In Yunnan’s southwestern border regions, several new roads were created during the conflicts with Myanmar in 1765–70 to transport matériel and to deliver military correspondence. Thanks to the new roads and the revamped military relay-horse postal system in Yunnan, the time needed to communicate between Yunnan’s western borders with Myanmar and Beijing was shortened by one-third, from more than two weeks to ten days.⁸³ Similar scenarios occurred in other campaigns.⁸⁴

The improved transportation conditions in turn prompted businessmen who came to trade with the armies in war to either stay put or keep the areas within the scope of their business operations after the war ended. In the wake of the Myanmar campaign, more Chinese immigrants moved to Yunnan’s border regions. Merchants came as well, opening mines and setting up other enterprises.⁸⁵ After the second Jinchuan war, some outside merchants set up the first shops and restaurants in the mountainous and sparsely populated Jinchuan area.⁸⁶ Having served as the headquarters of the logistical operations in Sichuan during the White Lotus war, Dazhou, a middle-sized town in north-eastern Sichuan, became a bustling hub of goods and merchants from neighboring provinces. Meanwhile, Shaanxi’s Xing’an, a town by the Han River in the province’s southwestern corner, experienced a similar transformation.⁸⁷

⁸¹For instance, the “commercial streets” occurred in the second Jinchuan war. See Dai, “The Qing State, Merchants, and the Military Labor Force,” 64–88.

⁸²*DaQing lichao shilu*, Jiaqing period, 39, 17b–18a; *Qinding jiaoping sansheng xiefei fanglüe*, 90, 18b–19a. See also Dai, *The White Lotus War*.

⁸³Lai Fushun, *Qianlong zhongyao zhanzheng zhi junxu yanjiu*, 100, and map 3 in appendix; *DaQing lichao shilu*, Qianlong period, 1219, 25–26; Pasquet, *L’évolution du système postal*, 179–229.

⁸⁴For example, Peter C. Perdue presents a convincing case in *China Marches West* that the Qing expansion to the northwest facilitated the development of commerce between China proper and Xinjiang by building infrastructure, providing security and unifying currency, among other things. Perdue, *China Marches West*, especially 378–406. On commerce in Xinjiang after the fall of the Zunghar empire, see Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, 113–93.

⁸⁵C. Patterson Giersch, “‘A Motley Throng’: Social Change on Southwest China’s Early Modern Frontier, 1700–1880,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 60.1 (February 2001), 67–94.

⁸⁶Dai, “The Qing State, Merchants, and the Military Labor Force,” 78–80.

⁸⁷Dai, *The White Lotus War*.

Outsourcing the logistics in wartime to the civil bureaucracy and local society testifies to the Qing state's effective political control of the provinces and skillful management of its resources. Nevertheless, given that so much money was sent to and spent in the war zone, abuses and misappropriations of the war funds were rampant. Ultimately, the state was unable to control fully how the war funds were spent and proved powerless in the face of warfront corruption. Throughout the long Qianlong era, campaigns became increasingly expensive. In the second Jinchuan war, the state allocated as much as 60 million taels of silver, which in turn pales in comparison to the colossal cost of the White Lotus war, in which 120 million taels of silver were allegedly spent, depleting the central treasury's abundant savings. Not surprisingly, warfront corruption was more pervasive in the latter campaign. While the dynasty entered its financial downturn, numerous *nouveaux riches* headed home from the war with piles of cash and cartloads of goods. Erosion of the Qing dynasty's fiscal solvency during its last military campaign in its golden age speaks volumes about the momentous impact of the military activities on the dynasty's fortune.

CONCLUSION

As this essay has demonstrated, Qing military institutions were vitally important during the early and high Qing periods, circa 1640–1800. Given the long peace of the eighteenth century in the dynasty's heartland, we may doubt war's centrality. Nevertheless, the survival of Manchu traditions valorizing the military and the creation of preferential policies and systems kept military institutions at the top of the state's priorities, placing the military personnel, especially the bannermen, in a privileged position *vis-à-vis* their Chinese counterparts in the civil bureaucracy. With the bannermen's ready penetration of the civil bureaucracy and many provinces spending a great deal of their energy and resources to help guarantee the supply of funds to every local garrison and outpost in their provinces, it is no exaggeration to consider what occurred in the high Qing period as a "routinization" of the military presence. In other words, the intertwining of the military institutions with the non-military institutions was *bona fide* reality, deeply influencing the dynasty's political, economic and social systems and the lives of civil bureaucrats and civilians.

After all, this phenomenon was a manifestation of highly centralized state power. By exercising its political leverage, the Qing state could move the bannermen from military ranks to civil positions without being hampered by bureaucratic and ideological obstacles, transfer taxes collected in the provinces from one place to another to make sure all the garrisons and outposts were well supplied, and mobilize both the civil bureaucracy and the private sector to work in the *ad hoc* logistical system when a campaign was waged. Those practices in Qing China sharply contrasted with what unfolded in Western Europe in the early modern period, namely, that the constant wars stimulated the reinforcing of the state power so that the state was capable of levying more taxes to fund the military machine. In delineating the differences between the Qing case and the European situation, Peter C. Perdue has maintained:

From the defeat of the Three Feudatories in 1681 to the outbreak of the White Lotus Rebellion in 1796, the Qing rulers faced no external or internal military threats requiring major military reforms. China's revenues were based on relatively light taxation of a prosperous agrarian economy. European states, by contrast, had to extract greater levies from a more backward agricultural base.

Brandenburg-Prussia, faced with creating a “first-rate state from a third-rate economy,” relied on heavy agrarian levies which severely hampered the growth of the rural economy. England, on the other hand, was forced into innovative measures, particularly excise taxes and the creation of a national debt, to meet growing fiscal demands. The Qing rulers in the eighteenth century were fortunate in that they could meet the demands of the bureaucracy and military without unduly burdening the peasant, and they faced no pressure to tax commerce. On the other hand, the light hand of the state meant that the relative impact of state policies decreased as the economy grew.⁸⁸

Perdue was the first to highlight the different routes Qing China and Western Europe took when it came to the effect of war on the political structure and taxation policy. While in Europe centralization came as a result of wars, in Qing China, a highly centralized state had long been in place, which enabled the Qing rulers to allocate a large portion of its revenues to support the military establishment. Therefore, the two armies of the Qing dynasty were much better financed than their European counterparts. Meanwhile, the Qing did not need to increase taxes, given a vastly prosperous economy and a large agrarian base for taxation. More importantly, the Qing state chose not to increase taxes, as explained earlier in the essay. For the Qing, the problem was ensuring delivery of funds to the armies all over the country.

In this regard, the “assistance funds” system and the lateral transferring networks were important innovations that guaranteed the delivery of the military funds to all garrisons and outposts. Nevertheless, toward the end of the eighteenth century, the Qing state ultimately felt the strains of maintaining its huge military system. The lateral transferring of the revenues ultimately loosened the central government’s grip on the provinces. Similarly, the state’s generous financial support to wars led to widespread wartime corruption. It was no coincidence that the abundant reserves in the central treasury were depleted in the White Lotus war, the last war in the golden age of the Qing dynasty. For the Qing dynasty, like all its predecessors, maintaining its massive military institutions and supporting all the military personnel were among the most critical matters of the state. Likewise, the success or failure in fulfilling the missions was tied to the dynasty’s wax and wane. Meanwhile, these are also the issues that place Qing history within the global context, providing a significant angle from which one can view and explore the uniqueness of Qing China in the early modern world. As in early modern Europe, military activities initially helped maintain the vigor of the Qing dynasty, prompting the ruling elites to search for ways to compensate for deficiencies in the state apparatus. Unlike Europe, where wars propelled the centralization of state power, the highly centralized Qing China headed in a different direction with the eighteenth century winding down; the Qing commitment to its military establishment turned out to be more detrimental than beneficial to the health of its fiscal system and, in due course, its political stability.

⁸⁸Peter C. Perdue, *Exhausting the Earth: State and Peasant in Hunan, 1500–1850* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1987), 75–76.