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Reconstructing Order: Post-war Reconstruction after the Taiping Civil War, 1864-1874

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in History

by

Christopher C. Heselton

Dissertation Committee:  
Professor Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, Chair  
Professor Kenneth L. Pomeranz  
Professor Qitao Guo

2017



## **DEDICATION**

To my parents,

who always supported me even though they did not understand.

To my wife,

for always putting up with me.



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Kenneth Pomeranz, “Zhengtong Zongjiao Xingwei, Zhengtong Zongjiao Xinyang ji Taishan Niangniang [Orthodoxy, Orthopraxy, and the Goddess(es) of Mount Tai]” in *Qing Shi Wenti* [Issues in Qing History], 2011.

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Christopher C. Heselton, “Rock is not Revolution,” *China Beat*, December 23, 2008, <http://www.thechinabeat.org/>

Christopher C. Heselton, “Rock is not Revolution, Part II,” *China Beat*, December 28, 2008, <http://www.thechinabeat.org/>

## **ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION**

Reconstructing Order: Post-war Reconstruction after the Taiping Civil War, 1864-1874

By

Christopher C. Heselton

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Irvine, 2017

Professor Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, Chair

In the aftermath of the tumultuous Taiping Civil War (1851-1864), Qing officials began imagining a reconstruction of Chinese post-war society through broad programs that resettled refugees, demobilized the army, and rebuilt temples, roads, and academies. This was an ambitious program and unprecedented in the annals of Chinese history, seeking to radically restore Chinese society through government intervention. At the center of their plans, was an administration, the Reconstruction Bureau, which blurred the boundaries between state and elite circles to achieve their common goals of reconstructing order in the war-torn landscape. At the center of this project are a few important questions: how did they understand what they were doing? Why was it necessary to do this? What were their priorities? And above all else, what did reconstruction mean to them?

## Introduction

In the early 1850s, the Qing Empire slid into turmoil as a multitude of insurgencies arose across the empire and imperial control declined, embroiling the Qing in decades of disastrous civil wars, revolts, insurrections, and disorder that ranks as one of the most destructive periods in human history. The wars of the mid-nineteenth century were spread across the empire in largely unaffiliated uprisings: in the North China Plain Qing troops were constantly harassed by Nian raiders who disrupted imperial control along the Grand Canal from 1851 to 1868; in the Southwest, Yunnan was overrun by a Muslim uprising led by Du Wenxiu in 1854 where they established a Sultanate that lasted until 1873; neighboring Guizhou fell into a host of disparate ethnic and sectarian conflicts that lasted from 1854-1872; chaos erupted in Guangdong and Guangxi as various uprisings often characterized as Triad revolts emerged along with ethnic conflicts between Han and Hakka communities; Northwest China exploded into conflict in 1862 along ethnoreligious lines between Han and Muslim-Chinese, Muslim-Chinese and Turks, and sectarian divisions among Muslim sects, followed by the Kokandi invasion of Yakub Beg in 1865, which was not reconquered by the Qing until 1877.

Among these many conflicts in the mid-nineteenth century, none were more devastating than the Taiping Civil War, which would be fought over 16 provinces and ravaged the wealthiest and most densely populated regions of the empire threatening the existence of the Qing state. The Taiping Civil War, which lasted from 1851 to 1864, roughly contemporaneous with the American Civil War, was rooted in the Christian teachings of an aspiring Hakka scholar from Guangdong, Hong Xiuquan (洪秀全,



1814-1864). In 1837, he suffered a mental breakdown after his second failure in the provincial civil service examination, falling into a deep coma. In his delirium, Hong experienced a series of visions in which he ascended to heaven and met a Godly figure who claimed to be his father, bestowing on Hong a mission to exterminate "demons" that had corrupted the world, which he would later interpret as meaning the alien Qing imperial house and ethnic Manchus.<sup>1</sup> Hong later came to interpret his vision in 1843 as a message from the Judeo-Christian God from a translated Christian tract, believing himself to be the younger brother of Jesus Christ. With only a cursory knowledge of the intricacies of Christian doctrine, Hong began proselyting his new found religion, gathering a considerable following in the frontier hills of Guangxi near the town of Jintian. Calling themselves the God Worshippers, this tight-knit group of Christians rapidly grew in followers among the dissolute and disposed Hakka of the Guangxi Mountains. Fearful that this rising cult might present a danger to local order, Qing officials began clamping down on the God Worshippers in 1850. In the face of official persecution, the God Worshippers organized themselves into an armed camp to resist official persecution, which was met with the local Green Standard Army garrison, breaking out into open fighting in January, 1851.

Overwhelmed by the Qing military, in September, 1851, the God Worshippers set out across the empire in a desperate retreat for survival, marching across Guangxi, Hunan, Hubei, Jiangxi, Anhui, and Jiangsu provinces. They pillaged towns and ransacked cities as they went, doggedly pursued by the Qing army, but also gaining followers among the poor and disenfranchised who were attracted to a movement that promised spiritual salvation, opportunity for social elevation, and espoused an egalitarian communal lifestyle. On March 19, 1853, they sacked the old Ming imperial capital, Nanjing, which they made into the "Heavenly Capital" (天京) of their new imperial regime dubbed the Heavenly Kingdom of Peace (太平天國), but Western scholars have come to refer to them by the name "Taiping"

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996), 100, 144.

derived from the term “Peace” in the title of their state. To Qing loyalist, however, they were “rebels” (逆), “bandits” (匪), “thieves” (賊), or more colloquially “long haired devils” (長髮鬼), because the Taiping refused to shave their foreheads and braid their hair into a queue as demanded by Qing law as a sign of loyalty.<sup>2</sup> The Taiping kingdom was unlike anything in the long annals of Chinese history, combining Christian theocracy and a communitarian ideology with traditions of Chinese imperial bureaucracy. From Nanjing, they built a political regime that challenged the legitimacy and authority of the Qing with clear pretensions to rule the Chinese realm.

The Taiping were nearly successful in toppling the Qing dynasty. Shortly after capturing Nanjing, they launched a major expedition north to conquer Beijing, arriving within the outskirts of the nearby port city of Tianjin in October 1854 before they were forced to turn back as their supply lines were stretched and cold weather set in. At the same time, the Taiping dispatched a campaign back up the Yangzi River from where they had passed the previous year, occupying much of the middle Yangzi river valley until they were met with resistance from a combined Hunanese force of militias, mercenaries, and the imperial army in the spring of 1854. For much of the 1850s, the war front seesawed in the middle Yangzi river valley. Launching a counter-attack in 1855, the Taiping occupied most of Jiangxi Province, where they began instituting a regular bureaucratic administration to collect taxes, levy troops, and implement a political order. In the late 1850s, the Taiping were rocked by factional divisions and intrigue in the Taiping imperial court with an attempted palace coup, which weakened their momentum. Much of the territory they gained in the middle Yangzi River valley and Jiangxi slowly fell to advancing irregular provincial armies from Hunan and Hubei, and their days seemed numbered as they found themselves on the defensive.

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<sup>2</sup> Tobie Meyer-Fong, *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19<sup>th</sup> Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 82-94; Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, 109, 162-169.

Despite this, the Taiping would burst forth with new vigor in 1860 with an astonishingly daring invasion of the prosperous Jiangnan region in the lower Yangzi delta, capturing some of the empire's wealthiest cities and unleashing untold havoc upon a largely unprepared population. The 1860 invasion of Jiangnan was an especially traumatic experience for some the empire's most prominent literati who personally experienced the brutal horrors of war, displacement as refugees, the pangs of hunger and starvation, and a landscape marred by death and wanton destruction, which they recorded in numerous accounts and diaries. At its height, the Heavenly Kingdom of Peace occupied a territory of over 150,000 km<sup>2</sup> (roughly the size of England) with much of this territory containing the Qing Empire's wealthiest lands and roughly one-sixth of the population of China under its control.

Eventually, the Taiping were defeated. Although the Taiping managed to repeatedly defeat the regular forces of the Qing military, the Green Standard Army and the Eight Banner Army, and occupy a considerable swath of territory, resistance was persistent among landed gentry who organized, led, and funded militias and irregular brigades to fight the Taiping. The most successful of these irregular forces was the Xiang Army (湘軍), an irregular provincial army from Hunan led by the scholar-official Zeng Guofan (曾國藩, 1811-1872). The Xiang Army was a coalition of irregular brigades mostly from Hunan organized through informal personal ties amongst its leadership into a large professional military apparatus.<sup>3</sup> While not formally a part of the Qing military and for the most part independently funded, the Xiang Army fought for the Qing as if it were a part of the Qing Army. By 1860, as the regular army disintegrated in the invasion of Jiangnan, irregular provincial armies, particularly the Xiang Army, were essentially the last remaining stalwart defenders of the Qing and obstacles to the Taiping victory.<sup>4</sup> In the summer of 1862, the tide was beginning to shift against the Taiping as irregular forces closed in on the

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<sup>3</sup> Philip A. Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies: Militarization and Social Structure, 1796-1864* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 180-188.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen R. Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 134.

Taiping capital. Enduring a prolonged siege of two years, Hong Xiuquan died on June 1, 1864, either by suicide or illness, and the Heavenly Capital fell to the Xiang Army on July 19, 1864. A few pockets of Taiping resistance remained for a couple months rallying around Hong's teenage son Tianfugui until his capture on October 25, but the kingdom quickly unraveled between the late summer and early fall of 1864.

Usually, the narrative of the Taiping Civil War ends there with the fall of the Heavenly Capital and the capture of Tianfugui, leaving one with the impression that the conclusion of the war meant a return to normalcy.<sup>5</sup> Yet, scholars have long been aware that the tumultuous civil war had a lasting impact on Chinese society that would linger for more than half a century. The war was so singularly destructive and massive in scope that it is impossible to deny such an impact even though many scholars have had difficulty in sussing it out.

The most obvious impact was in terms of human life – the typical measurement of a war's destructiveness. Compared to relatively reliable estimates for other human conflicts, the Taiping Civil War ranks, even by conservative estimates, as the second bloodiest conflict in world history, surpassed only by the Second World War.<sup>6</sup> The most often quoted number of dead in the mid-century civil war ranges between 20 and 30 million dead.<sup>7</sup> More recent estimates have placed population loss as high as 87 million, of which 57 million were war deaths (the rest attributed to depressed birth rates for children that would have otherwise been born), yet these figures have engendered considerable controversy and many scholars have rendered attempts at calculating the human toll essentially futile.<sup>8</sup> To many these

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<sup>5</sup> For example, Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, 330-332; Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 348-354.

<sup>6</sup> By this I am excluding estimates for the Mongol conquest and the An Lushan War, which are both unreliable considering the period in which they occurred; moreover, the Mongol conquest should be thought of as a series of wars perpetrated by a state over a century and not a singular conflict. The Taiping Civil War was certainly the largest human conflict in terms of casualties in the nineteenth century.

<sup>7</sup> Yeh-chien Wang, "The Impact of the Taiping Rebellion on the Population of Southern Kiangsu," *Papers on China, Harvard University, East Asia Research Center* 19 (December 1965), 120-158; Ho Ping-ti, *Studies on the Population of China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 246-247.

<sup>8</sup> See, Cao Shuji, Ge Jianxiang, eds., *Zhongguo renkou shi* (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2000); Ge Jianxiang, *Zhongguo yimin shi* (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin daxue chubanshe, 1997); Jiang Tao, "Taiping tianguo zhanzheng yu wan

numbers, whether 20 million or 80 million, are an abstraction that is difficult to imbue with meaning besides to say that many people died tragically and violently, and perhaps that in and of itself is sufficient.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, the scale of the loss of life in some of the most economically vibrant regions of the Qing Empire is significant even if it cannot be precisely quantifiable, and that is not counting the emotional and physical scars the war left behind.

Another way to think about the impact of the civil war is in terms of displacement. The brutality of warfare dislocated countless millions of people, fleeing as refugees in search of safer places. As with casualty statistics, it is impossible to quantify how many people were displaced by war, but we can glean from accounts that it was a common experience for many, especially following the 1860 invasion of Jiangnan. Certainly, millions were uprooted, but it is difficult to be more precise than that. In Shanghai, for instance, which served as a favored wartime refuge for many wealthy gentry from the Jiangnan region, it is estimated that 1.5 million refugees crowded into the city.<sup>10</sup> North of the city gates of Rugao on the north banks of the Yangzi River was an enormous refugee camp of straw huts and make-shift shelters that supposedly, over the course of the war, housed 884,415 refugees.<sup>11</sup> While these numbers may be imprecise, references to large communities of refugees sheltering in abandoned builds or refugee camps built from straw and debris are numerous, suggesting that a substantial part of the population spent a period of time during the war struggling to survive away from home, and the displacement of a large portion of the population in some of the wealthiest and most productive regions of the Qing empire has broader implications for Chinese society. The movement of people over

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Qing renkou,” in *Wang Qing guojia yu shehui*, ed. Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenti chubanshe, 2007), 3-13; Hua Qing and Cai Hongjun, “Taiping tianguo shiqi Zhongguo renkou sunshi wenti,” in *Wang Qing guojia yu shehui*, ed. Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenti chubanshe, 2007), 64-75.

<sup>9</sup> Tobie Meyer-Fong, “Gathering in a Ruined City,” in *Lifestyle and Entertainment in Yangzhou*, eds. LucieB. Olivová and Vibeke Børdahl (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press, 2009), 37–61; *What Remains*, 1-2.

<sup>10</sup> Early Cranston, “Shanghai in the Taiping Period” in *Pacific Historical Review* (5:2, June, 1936), 155.

<sup>11</sup> Liu Huanxiu, *et al.*, *Rugao xian xuzhi*, (1929), 76.

considerable distances for extended periods of time inherently changes social and economic relationships as people's status, resources, and power in new and unfamiliar settings changed.

Wartime displacement, destruction, and death and their impact on productivity certainly had an economic cost, which could also be used to gauge the cost of the war. Its absolute effect on the Qing post-war economy has yet to be accurately measured, and scholarly estimates vary wildly, but there is general agreement that the war was devastating to the economy and potentially transformative.<sup>12</sup>

Imperial tax revenue declined precipitously, losing hundreds of millions of taels in taxes annually as lands were occupied by rebel forces.<sup>13</sup> Grain prices rose dramatically with post-war prices for rice more than doubled the pre-war years in the Jiangnan region.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, labor cost increased as did the exchange rate between copper coinage and silver *taels* by the end of the war.<sup>15</sup> More importantly for us the destruction of infrastructure and other capital losses in the war were extensive; bridges were destroyed, flood control, irrigation, and canals fell into disrepair, mulberry trees essential for silk production torn down, tools, implements, and looms were lost, and a scorched earth campaign perpetrated by both Qing and Taiping forces stripped the land of nearly everything of value. There are no tools that could allow historians to calculate the cost of this destruction, but it is evident that the destruction was widespread and on a massive scale, lasting for many decades following the war.

This is not to mention the ecological and environmental cost of war. The few remaining patches of forest in an already heavily deforested region were chopped down for timber to serve the military machine. In Jurong, for example, the remaining forested hills north of the city were entirely cleared by

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<sup>12</sup> James T. K. Wu, "The Impact of the Taiping Rebellion upon the Manchu Fiscal System," *Pacific Historical Review* 19:3 (Aug, 1950), 265-275; John K. Fairbank, Alexander Eckstein, and L.S. Yang, "Economic Change in Early Modern China: An Analytical Framework," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 9:1 (Oct., 1960), 1-26.

<sup>13</sup> Kent Deng, *Mapping China's Growth and Development in the Long Run, 221 BC to 2020* (London: Imperial College Press, 2016), 91.

<sup>14</sup> Wang Yeh-chien, *Database of Grain Prices in the Qing Dynasty* (Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 2013), <http://ccts.ascc.net/integration.php?lang=en>.

<sup>15</sup> Sidney D. Gamble, "Daily Wages of Unskilled Chinese Laborers, 1807-1902," *Far Eastern Quarterly* 3:1 (1943), 41-73; Robert C. Allen, Jean-Pascal Bassino, Debin Ma, *et al.*, "Wages, Prices, and Living Standards in China, 1938-1925: In Comparison with Europe, Japan, and India," *The Economic Historic Review* 64:1 (2011), 8-38.

the Taiping in the winter of 1857.<sup>16</sup> So thorough was this operation to clear the county of timber that in 1859, the Taiping had to resort to tearing out support beams and rafters from isolated and abandoned temples and cutting down the few decorative ancient trees in the courtyard – a practice that would continue in the post-war period as older buildings were torn down for resources to provide for reconstruction efforts.<sup>17</sup> Rivers also silted up as erosion and neglect led to the buildup of sediment. After over a decade of inattention, the mouth of the Qiantang River had deposited large quantities of silt in Hangzhou Bay, making the waters largely unnavigable and inundating some of the coastal lowlands.<sup>18</sup> The sea wall that protected the coast of Hangzhou bay from tidal bores, preventing the salinization of the soil, had fallen into disrepair, requiring a massive overhaul in the post-war period.

These are just some of the ways to think about the toll of the civil war, but there was also a psychological and physical toll as well. Scholars such as Tobie Meyer-Fong and Xiaofei Tian have focused on the emotional scars of the war and how it impacted people in the post-war period. For many survivors, the horrors they lived through traumatized them, resonating for the remainder of their lives; something evidenced in numerous accounts of survivors, such as Zhang Daye who as a child refugee witnessed acts of brutal violence, suffered starvation and disease, and grieved as many loved ones died.<sup>19</sup> These scars remained with him into old age when he wrote his memoir. There were also physical scars upon their bodies, a constant reminder of their experience. Not just scars from injuries and illness, but marks upon the body, such as brandings and tattoos, which were commonly employed by the Taiping as a form of punishment and a claim of ownership over subjects, providing a constant reminder to all, even years after the war's end, of the war they survived.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Zhang Shaochang, *et al.*, *Xuzuan Jurong xianzhi* (1901), 2131.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 2152.

<sup>18</sup> Mary Backus Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China: Zhejiang Province, 1865-1911* (Stanford University: Stanford University Press, 1986), 94.

<sup>19</sup> Zhang Daye, *The World of a Tiny Insect: A Memoir of the Taiping Rebellion and Its Aftermath*, trans., Xiaofei Tian (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 66-81.

Less tangible was the intellectual and cultural life that was ruined by warfare. Susan Mann, in her work on the women of the eminent Zhang family of Changzhou, discusses the impact of the civil war on the Zhang family and the broader implications for late Qing society. The war devastated and destroyed literary and scholarly networks. The majority of libraries and academies that dotted the empire did not survive the conflagration, and as Mann points out, “the complete obliteration of the rich written record” of both individual lives and scholarly traditions.<sup>21</sup> The war was an abrupt disruption to intellectual trend, which has been noted by Benjamin Elman who argued that the Taiping represented the end of *kaozheng* or evidentiary scholarship that emerged in the seventeenth century.<sup>22</sup>

Although ultimately victorious, the Qing lost legitimacy in the eyes of many subjects because of the war. Not only those who rebelled and answered the Taiping call to arms for spiritual salvation and the redistribution of land, but loyal Qing subjects, especially the literati, had their faith in the Qing shaken to the core. There was a sense in the post-war period that their world had been fundamentally altered by the war and not for the better. Corruption, mismanagement, and incompetence became hopelessly associated with the imperial court as subjects lost confidence. Mann demonstrates this sentiment through the candid letter of Zhang Yuesun to his Korean friend Yi Sang-jok, in which he bitterly complained of the court’s bungling of the war and liberally indicted inept and cowardly officials.<sup>23</sup> As many other scholars, such as Meyer-Fong, had noted, resentful condemnation of the imperial government’s prosecution of the war lingered for many decades in personal writing, even if they could not be expressed publically.<sup>24</sup>

There is no easy way to summarize the brutality of the war or the cost it imposed upon Qing society. The complexity and scale of experiences and events cannot be boiled down into much else

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<sup>21</sup> Susan Mann, *Talented Women of the Zhang Family* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 193.

<sup>22</sup> Benjamin A. Elman, *On Their Own Terms: Science in China, 1550-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 355-360.

<sup>23</sup> Mann, *Talented Women of the Zhang Family*, 194.

<sup>24</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 14-15, 167-169.



besides as general impression that the war of a large scale and its damage unprecedented. Nonetheless, the destruction was so severe that many Qing officials and local elites saw a need for a social and political program to respond to the aftermath of the war and rebuild what was lost. Their response would be unprecedented in the scale and scope of their activities, which imagined a network of local institutions that would oversee the pacification, resettlement, and restoration of political order in the parts of the empire devastated by war – something they called “reconstruction.”

### ***Defining Reconstruction***

Despite its ostensibly simple façade, reconstruction can be difficult to define in a post-war setting or even in the wake of a disaster. The word reconstruction itself emerged in the English language in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, but in its beginnings, it simply referred to rebuilding after war or disaster in general, and not necessarily as a specific set of post-war policies enacted by the state. In our understanding today, reconstruction is broadly defined as an organized approach, often by a state or multiple states as well as their constituent subjects and citizens, to mitigate the destructive impact of a conflict or disaster and to rebuild certain institutions and infrastructures. It can encompass programs of humanitarian aid, the building of roads, schools, government offices, and even new political arrangements and laws. Reconstruction can and is usually seen as, something performed by states, but of course non-government actors can and do also play a role in reconstruction as well. Before the nineteenth century in both Europe and China, rebuilding the infrastructure and buildings destroyed in conflicts was often left to local governments and local society to handle, and was usually not the responsibility of the central government. For the state, reconstruction was more of a processes of

delineating political settlements to a conflict, and rarely, if ever, were they concerned about or believed it to be within their power to ensure the livelihood of their subjects in the aftermath of war.<sup>25</sup>

Given the broad scope of actions considered in the realm of reconstruction, it can be hard to define something as belonging to a program of reconstruction. Is a school rebuilt ten years after a conflict reconstruction? How about a new school built five years after a conflict? Would repair work to a canal be considered reconstruction even if it would have needed repairs without a war as a part of maintenance? If a local elite donates money to repair a temple destroyed in the war, is that reconstruction? What if a new temple is built immediately after a conflict? Despite the difficulty in defining what precisely constitutes reconstruction, many states and individuals talk about rebuilding after wars and disasters, even if what is being rebuilt is actually something entirely new.

Following the Taiping Civil War, Qing officials were well aware of the shattered state of Chinese society and felt it was necessary to act through government policies and programs in order to restore civil order and recuperate state revenues. This may seem like a natural course of action for a state in the aftermath of conflict, but their vision of post-war reconstruction was unique in annals of Chinese history. In past conflicts, whether in China or elsewhere in the world, officials and elites did not imagine much of a role for the state in resolving social issues in the aftermath of war. Communities were largely left to their own devices to piece together their lives. In the nineteenth century, however, we see the emergence of the idea of reconstruction in many societies around the world, especially in the United States after its own roughly contemporaneous civil war. This would by the twentieth century become a perfunctory obligation of states after major conflicts, but few tend to think about the ideological

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<sup>25</sup> Andrew J. William, "Reconstruction' before the Marshall Plan," *Review of International Studies* 31:3 (2005), 541-58, 542; Fanny Coulomb, *Economic Theories of Peace and War* (London: Routledge, 2004); Christopher J. Coyne, "The Institution Prerequisites for Post-Conflict Reconstruction," *The Review of Australian Economics*, 18:3-4 (2005), 325-342, 325.

components that give context and meaning to the idea of reconstruction and how it has shifted over time.

Post-Taiping reconstruction represented a significant change in the idea of state, government, and power. Their ideas of reconstruction were ambitious and broad, including a host of social and economic issues that had not been imagined by officials in the past. The policies and programs drafted by Qing officials reveal a shift in the idea of state obligations towards subjects and the power and function of the state in the lives of subjects. They believed it possible, through state involvement, to create an ordered world on a grander scale ever imagined through social interventions.

Discussions about reconstruction after the Civil War can hardly avoid the towering figure of Zeng Guofan, who not only played a crucial role in defeating the Taiping but was also a key architect of post-war policy and reconstruction. Zeng was born in 1811 in the moderately prosperous town of Xiangxiang, Hunan. He came from a respected family of landed gentry with political ambitions in the imperial examination system. After years of torturous study, he passed the *jinshi* examination in 1838 and was appointed to various positions in the Qing bureaucracy and the prestigious Hanlin Academy in Beijing. When his mother passed away in 1852, he resigned his position in Beijing and returned home to observe ritual mourning. During his period of mourning, the Taiping invaded his home province and Zeng began organizing what would later be known as the Xiang Army, which ultimately defeated the Taiping. Towards the end of the war, Zeng had amassed considerable political power through his military successes, which granted him unparalleled independence from the imperial court in Beijing in decision making. In 1861, he was appointed Governor-General of Liangjiang, one of the most powerful positions in the Qing Empire and the central theater of the war. As Governor-General, Zeng began contemplating the kind of social and political order he wished to construct when peace was finally achieved and played a crucial role in drafting and deciding post-war policies.

Although scholars of the postbellum period have often thought of reconstruction as an extension of traditions of philanthropy and charity, such as Charles Wooldridge and Mary Backus Rankin, the concept of reconstruction evolved from a much longer history.<sup>26</sup> To understand what Qing officials meant when they claimed to be rebuilding society and its historical significance, we must first understand the context from which the idea of reconstruction emerged. In Chapter I, we will explore how the meaning of post-conflict reconstruction changed over the course of Chinese imperial history. Originating as an idea of military reforms in the wake of conflict, reconstruction had little to do with government involvement in the lives of its subjects before the late Qing. Their concern was with military preparedness, and this was particularly the case in the frontier regions, especially in the Southwest, where social instability made reconstruction of the military and military security a state priority. Reconstruction was above all else a frontier policy that did not question or seek to intervene in social stability. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, after the White Lotus War and Miao uprisings on the Hunanese frontier, a small number of frontier officials conceptualized a broader meaning for post-war conflict resolution that included a much more socially inclusive program that attempted to stabilize a society shaken by war. To prevent future bloodshed, these officials believed that besides military security a stable livelihood for subjects was necessary for security because people living in socioeconomic instability were likely to turn towards violence and rebellion for survival.<sup>27</sup> This idea of reconstruction, while limited in its impact in the eighteenth century, would step to the forefront in the

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<sup>26</sup> Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China*; Chuck Wooldridge, *City of Virtues: Nanjing in an Age of Utopian Visions* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015); William Charles Wooldridge, "Building and State Building in Nanjing after the Taiping Rebellion," *Late Imperial China* 30:2 (Dec., 2009), 84-126; William Charles Wooldridge, "Transformations of Ritual and the State in Nineteenth-century Nanjing," (Ph.D. dissertation: Princeton University, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> Daniel McMahon, *Rethinking the Decline of China's Qing Dynasty: Imperial Activism and Borderland Management at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Daniel McMahon, "Qing Reconstruction in the Southern Shaanxi Highlands: State Perceptions and Plans, 1799-1820," *Late Imperial China* 30:1 (June, 2009), 85-118.

mid-nineteenth century civil wars that shook the Qing Empire, especially in the middle and lower Yangzi River valley, where the Taiping Civil War had been especially devastating.

At the center of the Qing program for reconstruction after the Taiping Civil War was a set of extra-bureaucratic institutions known collectively as the Reconstruction Bureau. In the last couple years of the war as the end of the war came within sight, Qing officials began contemplating the possibility that the state would need to manage social issues to mitigate the many crises brought on by the war, planting the roots of what would become the Reconstruction Bureau. With the fall of Nanjing in 1864, Qing officials established the first of what would prove to be many reconstruction bureaus. These were state-sponsored administrations that attempted to manage post-war chaos and reconstruct order in a traumatized and shaken society. As the name suggest, these bureaus sought to rebuild institutions and structures lost in the war, but their idea of reconstruction was much grander than that. Bureaus were responsible for surveying and registering property with the state to restore government records lost in the war; managing abandoned lands; returning displaced people to their homes and providing new land for settlement to those who had no home to return to; restoring agricultural production through loans of tools, plough oxen, and seeds; reforming civil institutions of local law and order; repairing infrastructure, especially water control; and compiling a record of the loyal and righteous of the war. The reconstruction bureau and various specialized offices under its umbrella tried to manage postbellum society on a massive scale. Unlike in the past, military security was peripheral to their understanding of reconstruction. In fact, almost immediately after the end of the war, the Xiang Army undertook a rapid demobilization of the irregular army, reducing the occupation forces in the region. Instead, their concern was squarely focused on social stability and restoring a functioning economy, not only in order to replenish the state's coffers as soon as possible, but also to bring a modicum of stability and normalcy that would prevent a destabilized region from slipping back into bloody violence.

By looking at the various activities under the Reconstruction Bureau in Chapter II, we will gain an understanding of what many officials and local gentry saw as the purpose of post-war reconstruction and the kinds of institutions to undertake it. Many of the state's post-war policies in the regions devastated by war followed a set of loose thematic principles that guided their actions. Among them was the idea of "reviving cultured learning" (復興文教). This theme appears throughout sources to emphasize the importance of rebuilding libraries and academies and reinstating the civil service examination, but its meaning was much deeper. The civil war was deemed injurious to the cultured moral values of the literati, introducing violent militant values that brought further inhumanity and disorder. Officials agreed that violence was a necessary evil to stamp out heterodox forces, but now that the war had ended, it was time to restore proper values of men of culture and letters through learning, rebuilding academies, reinstating the civil service examination, and enforcing civil government.

"Returning home" or one's "native place" (歸籍) was another central theme of post-war reconstruction. Warfare had uprooted and displaced millions as many people had to make difficult decisions in order to survive. Desperate refugees languishing in far from communities were a potentially disruptive and dangerous element that threatened the order they wished to create. Officials were certainly sympathetic to the suffering of refugees, but there was also a tinge of apprehension at their potential for sedition if the situation got much worse. As the simplest course of action, officials were adamant that people displaced by the war should be sent home as soon as possible and furnished with state assistance. A more contentious issue in official discussions was what to do with people whose homes had been destroyed and had nowhere to go. These people were especially dangerous to the post-war order they wished to reconstruction because they were believed to be people who were likely former rebels or would potentially join in subversive actions. Officials sought to settle these people on lands abandoned in the war through in an impressive state resettlement program that aimed to settle and morally reform potentially seditious elements of society. In particular, there was an emphasis on

returning refugees to productive agricultural work, which held special significance as a socially restorative mode of production, but any vocation (業) was acceptable so long as subjects had a stable livelihood that kept them from turning towards seditious forces.

The resettlement of abandoned lands in the decades following the war has been something particularly noteworthy to later historians who noticed the peculiarly interventionist program established by the Qing. Mary C. Wright and Jonathan Ocko have remarked on the impressive scale of the policy to draw in settlers from as far away as Hubei through promotional notices.<sup>28</sup> Kathryn Bernhardt discusses this resettlement program lasting well into the 1880s.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, as remarkable as these resettlement policies allegedly were, information is very sparse. Only occasionally are there references to “guest people,” people “opening up lands,” and conflicts between locals and new settlers. One of the few things clear is that not only did refugees and people displaced by the war take advantage of abandoned lands in Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui, but also impoverished people from the Yangzi highlands, the marshes of northern Jiangsu and Anhui, and further inland.<sup>30</sup> These people were part of a wave of emigration seeking to escape extreme poverty and local instability for the fertile and productive agricultural lands of Jiangnan as well as wage labor in burgeoning treaty port cities like Shanghai.

Many of the scholarly debates on the postbellum period in Western scholarship have seen the Taiping Civil War and the post-war period as a watershed in Chinese state-society relations and the rise of a Chinese “civil society.” In *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China*, Kuhn asserts that Chinese society began militarizing over the course of the nineteenth century in response to social

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<sup>28</sup> Mary Clabaugh Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-chih Restoration, 1862-1874* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957); Jonathan K. Ocko, *Bureaucratic Reform in Provincial China: Ting Jih-ch'ang in Restoration Kiangsu, 1867-1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

<sup>29</sup> Kathryn Bernhardt, *Rents, Taxes, and Peasant Resistance: The Lower Yangzi Region, 1840-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

<sup>30</sup> Ge Jianxiong, *Zhongguo yimin shi*, 45-46.

instability, which over time morphed into the irregular armies. The crux of Kuhn's argument was that the Taiping conflict led to a devolution of state authority as society militarized, which would mark the remainder of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.<sup>31</sup> Kuhn's argument also conforms with Wright's perspective that Confucian values acted as a unifying aspect of Chinese society, claiming that the Taipings failed to establish a close relationship with local elites in conquered territories in part because of the strong ideological confrontation with Confucianism. In many parts of the Kingdom of Heavenly Peace, practical accommodations allowed the Taipings to compromise their ideological mission.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the Taiping and Qing approaches to military organization were not polar opposites, but mirrored each other in many aspects, further complicating a narrative of antagonistic ideologies and their contrasting methods towards society, government, and economy. Consequently, the militarization of local society with militia organizations and irregular armies led to a decentralization, which would over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries weaken the state and lead to the disintegration of central authority in the warlord period.

The central government was certainly weakened in the aftermath of the war. In reconstruction, provincial officials and the leadership of the irregular armies rarely shared anything more than general reconstruction policies with the imperial court. In fact, they do not mention the Reconstruction Bureau by name in their memorials to the Emperor and Empress Dowager, and some of the policies they do share with the imperial court seem to contradict what was actually done. The imperial government had little input in the drafting of post-war policy, and instead, these decisions were made mostly by provincial and local officials. Even though reconstruction was handled at the provincial and local level, these were still government officials, however, and they imagined and attempted to implement an ambitious set of programs. This in some ways calls into question how weakened the Chinese state was in

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<sup>31</sup> Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies*, 1-10.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 165-188.



the post-war. The imperial court may not have intervened into society and policy to the same degree as in the eighteenth century, which suggests a weakened state, but provincial officials were taking greater steps to intervene in society than they ever had before. Moreover, it is questionable how significant a role militarization played in the late nineteenth century in destabilizing Chinese politics. For the most part, the irregular armies that defeated the Taiping were demobilized at the end of the war, and many of the generals who led these armies to victory, while still maintaining an unparalleled degree of political power in the provinces, still remained deferential to the imperial court throughout the nineteenth century. The imperial government still had the authority and legitimacy to remove officials if they saw it fit to do so, and provincial officials still recognized the throne as the ultimate authority. Even when acting without explicit instructions from the imperial bureaucracy, they were doing so out of a belief that it was in the Empire's interest.

Another dynamic that has often been at the forefront of late nineteenth century Chinese history and the postbellum period is what some historians have termed the emergence of a Chinese "civil society." Among its chief proponents have been scholars such as Mary Backus Rankin and William Rowe who both see post-war reconstruction marking a major shift in the dynamics between local elites and officials.<sup>33</sup> Influenced by the work of Jürgen Habermas and the "public sphere," Rankin argues that the post-Taiping reconstruction of Zhejiang was the beginning of a new realm of social welfare based on independent elite-led philanthropic efforts constituting the formation of a fledgling civil society.<sup>34</sup> For her and Rowe, it was the failure of the state to intervene in the aftermath of the war that opened up this space in which elites were placed in a position to provide essential social services and welfare. The efforts of local elites in postbellum reconstruction and the reconstruction bureau have been seen as an

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<sup>33</sup> Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China*, 21-27; William T. Rowe, *Hankow: Conflict and Community in a Chinese City, 1796-1895* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 10, 183-186.

<sup>34</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989); Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China*.

initial step for local gentry into the world social management and imperial politics.<sup>35</sup> Rankin provides useful insight into elite efforts and philanthropy, but it is only part of the story and largely neglects the state's role in reconstruction. To be sure, local elites played a critical role in the Reconstruction Bureau and the formulation of policy, especially in northern Zhejiang where her research is focused; however, officials were consciously employing and appointing local elites to direct reconstruction projects because of their ability to raise funds through donations in elite circles. Officials were tapping into the wealth of local elites to achieve their policy goals. This did grant local officials a certain degree autonomy in directing the priorities of reconstruction, but these priorities were not at odds with official desires. In fact, a major part of reconstruction policies was intended to win back support from local elites. Furthermore, the reconstruction bureau acted with the authority of the state, was seen as a part of a set of informal state intuitions, and local gentry that ran the bureau reported directly to provincial and local officials and could be removed by officials.

Complicating this picture even further was the unevenness and different regional approaches to post-war reconstruction that shifts our view of the emerging "civil society" that Rankin presents. Northern Zhejiang relied heavily on local gentry to manage post-war relief, infrastructure projects, and the reconstruction bureau, but that was largely because this was a wealthy region with a number of local elites eagerly trying to reassert their position in an uprooted society. The state needed resources and gentry were willing to give because it was in their interest that a stable and prosperity returned for their financial benefit and the rehabilitation of their reputation in the community as men of goodwill. This was not the case everywhere, however. Most strikingly was the model of post-war reconstruction in Nanjing, which was deeply enmeshed in the local and provincial government. The majority of its staff for the first decade was not local, but former tent officers and affiliated clerks with the irregular army. As the former Taiping capital, Nanjing held a particular significance that made it the focus of state

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<sup>35</sup> Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China*, 34-92.

reconstruction efforts. The Nanjing bureau, which was termed as a provincial bureau, received a significant amount of funding from state sources, primarily the *lijin* tax. In fact, the organization of the Nanjing bureau looks a lot like many wartime institutions in that they were not officially a part of state administrations, but essentially fulfilled state functions under state supervision through personal ties to prominent and powerful men in the irregular army.

In the case of Nanjing, reconstruction seems to look more like the kind of post-war world described by Kathryn Bernhardt. Instead of seeing a weakening state in the postbellum period, Bernhardt sees the beginnings of a more interventionist state through resettlement programs in general and rent and tax collection in particular. She claims that in the aftermath of the war the state in general and the reconstruction bureau, in particular, had to reinforce the privileges of gentry landlords and the system of tenant farming by taking over the collection of rent along with taxes. This would by the twentieth century lead to a process of state involution, in which tenant farmers saw rent and taxes as one in the same, and thus saw state involvement as an intrusion on behalf of elites that left them embittered and feeling exploited. By the outbreak of the Second World War in China, the state was seen as an oppressive agent of the gentry and had lost its legitimacy.<sup>36</sup> In this sense, especially when it came to resettlement and rent collection on behalf of gentry, the post-war period looks like one of increased state participation; however, the picture in the aftermath of the war is fuzzy. In Anhui and Zhejiang, several reconstruction guidelines mention the collection of rent from abandoned lands given to settlers and managed by the Reconstruction Bureau, but those were on abandoned lands that the state appropriated and not on behalf of landlords; furthermore, it is unclear if this system of state tenants continued long after the war or not. The evidence is too unclear to say one way or the other.

Nonetheless, in looking at how reconstruction in Nanjing and placed like Zhejiang we see two different approaches to reconstruction: a more state-centered one that was able to pool resources from

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<sup>36</sup> Bernhardt, *Rents, Taxes, and Peasant Resistance*, 117-161.

across the province and concentrate them in the Nanjing area and one that relied more on the resources of local gentry in the prosperous Yangzi delta region. These models also imply that certain regions were more favored than others. Nanjing obviously benefited from the state's ability to provide it resources to rebuild and northern Zhejiang benefited from activist gentry investing in post-war projects, but many regions received little support from provincial governments and the gentry was too impoverished by a decade of warfare. These places had little recourse to undertake many of the ambitious projects outlined by the state. This seems to be particularly strong in Anhui where the reconstruction bureau had its beginnings in Anqing. After the fall of Nanjing, there was little official support in Anhui and local gentry was expected to make up the difference, but few seem to have done so. Thus we see a variety of different approaches to post-war reconstruction, which would have divergent impacts on local society.

It is questionable how successful Qing officials were in their mission to stabilize society and provide a livelihood for subjects victimized and displaced by war. There are no reliable statistics and facts on which to make this claim, and our picture of reconstruction at times may be foggy as our sources tell us little about how many of these schemes played out on the ground. For the most part, our knowledge of the Reconstruction Bureau comes from entries in gazetteers, and these sources come with many flaws. To begin with, few counties in the postbellum period had the financial resources after over a decade of war to produce a gazetteer. Gazetteers were a frivolous expenditure for a society recovering from war and trying to piece their lives together. Only a handful of counties concentrated in southern Jiangsu and northern Zhejiang had the resources to produce gazetteers during the Tongzhi reign.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The only exception was Jiangxi, where most counties had within a decade of the war published gazetteers from an upswing in gentry donations to glorify their own role in the war; however, since Jiangxi did not suffer as greatly as many of its neighboring provinces, reconstruction was not an important issue except in the very northern part of the province. Even then, reconstruction work there began well before the founding of the reconstruction bureau.

The most thorough look at reconstruction in a gazetteer comes chiefly from the counties in Jiangning Prefecture, where Nanjing was located.<sup>38</sup> These gazetteers were produced with considerable financial support from former officers in the irregular army who had their own reason to lionize the role of the state and the irregular army in restoring order to the region. A few counties in Jiaxing and Huzhou prefectures in northern Zhejiang also produced a handful of gazetteers in the 1870s. Here the compilation of gazetteers was handled by gentry who framed the reconstruction bureau less as a government institution and more as a charity organization. Even though local bureaus were also involved in water control, they rarely talk about the bureau's role in these projects. They instead emphasized the role of elites in rebuilding prized cultural institutions like academies and temples as if they were a philanthropic organization because these institutions were important to their sense of being and their proper role in society. After the 1890s and into the twentieth century, gazetteers were beginning to be produced with more regularity in the most heavily hit regions by the civil war, but by that point, decades had passed and memories had faded. Few saw the importance of discussing the uncertain times that followed the war. Occasionally a few pieces of information on the Reconstruction Bureau through the memories of those who lived through it and a smattering of text that was handed down and survived. This makes it difficult to discern how reconstruction played out on the ground and how effective it was, but they are also our main sources in understanding reconstruction.

Often overlooked is the role that spirits and ghosts played in post-war reconstruction, which will be the focus of Chapter III. Officials and gentry saw the rebuilding of temples as an essential part of reconstruction. The Taiping had launched a concerted campaign to destroy any element of folk religious beliefs, leaving few temples remaining. The Reconstruction Bureau took a leading role in the 1860s in many counties to rebuild temples, but an interesting question is why temples were deemed so

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<sup>38</sup> This includes not only Jiangning prefecture, but also constituent countries such as Jiangning, Shangyuan, Jurong, and Liuhe counties.

necessary considering the host of other issues that plagued post-war society and was there any significance in the temples they prioritized. In this I see officials trying to create a narrative that reasserted the state's role in state rituals that it had lost in the war. State cults were central to the legitimacy of the state as being able to tame, pacify, and direct the energies of gods and spirits for the benefit of the people. Temples and shrines reassured people the return of a proper spiritual and moral order in which the state was often central.

Another part of this was the creation of a new cult of loyalty that commemorated the war dead and the compilation of text that shaped the memory of war within the framework of loyalty. In this sense, I am deeply indebted to a recent resurgence of interest in the Taiping Civil War and its aftermath in the middle of writing this project, especially the works of Tobie Meyer-Fong and William Charles "Chuck" Woolridge.<sup>39</sup> Meyer-Fong's *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19<sup>th</sup> Century China* has been particularly transformative of our understanding of the emotional scars, memories, and experience of this horrific conflict. Central to her work was the cult of loyalty and the appropriation of the dead in the state's narrative to portray it as one of sacrifice. Similarly, Charles Woolridge focuses on state rituals during the reconstruction period in Nanjing, where the relationship between the state and local gentry plays an important role in defining local identity and memory of the war, and in particular the cult of loyalty. He also discusses the expansion of the meaning of loyalty to the state to include not just active resistance in battle, but also the refusal to submit through suicide.<sup>40</sup>

In Chapter III, I hope to build upon this issue of the cult of loyalty, sharing many of the same sources, but more from the perspective of the spirits of those who died, the state's role as a caretaker of ghosts, and fears of hauntings that needed to be pacified and controlled. With the millions of dead from the war, the ghosts of the dead were believed to haunt the ruins of cities and old battlefields.

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<sup>39</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*; Chuck Woolridge, *City of Virtues*.

<sup>40</sup> Chuck Woolridge, "What Literati Talked about When They Talked about Memory: Commemorating Resistance to the Taiping in Nanjing's Yu Gardens, 1900-1911" *Twentieth-Century China* 40:1 (2015), 3-24.

Wandering spirits could be threatening to the mortal world if they were not provided ritual offerings to stave off their hunger in the afterlife. The spirits of soldiers and the displaced were particularly terrifying because many had died far from home with no one to provide offerings to them, leaving them as tormented apparitions. With this came the role of the state as a responsible party of taking care of wandering ghosts through sacrifices. Of particular importance was the creation of the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty on Stone Bell Mountain, which reinterpreted loyalty for the common soldier and served as a way to provide ritual offerings in situ to soldiers who had died in battle for that mountain. In the post-war period, many more shrines of manifest loyalty were created across the empire to appease the spirits of those who died on nearby battlefields or far from home. At the same time, various other shrines to loyalty were a priority of the reconstruction bureau. They created shrines that commemorated the local loyal dead, interred the anonymous dead, provided offerings to their spirits, and compiled text to remember them.

As Meyer-Fong has eloquently argued, these projects worked to create a story of the war that focused on the virtues of loyalty to the state and allowed the state to claim ownership over them, but I would like to add that the state was also affirming its role in pacifying and taming the spirits of the dead.<sup>41</sup> By claiming them as the loyal dead, the state was assuaging anxieties of a traumatized population fearful of the ghosts of the war coming for them. Just as the state sought to return refugees home and resettle those without a home on abandoned lands, ensuring a peaceful and stable society, the Qing were also resettling wayward ghosts from the war, whether they be graves for the anonymous dead or battlefield shrines for the souls of fallen soldiers. Returning home represented the return to a morally ordered world just as much for spirits as the living.

Returning home was just as significant for soldiers as officials demobilized the irregular army, which will be the focus of our final chapter. Many of the soldiers in the irregular army, especially the

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<sup>41</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, Chapters 4 and 5, 99-134 and 135-175.

Xiang Army led by Zeng Guofan, were supposed to return home to their farms in Hunan at the end of the war. Part of the mythos of the Xiang Army was that soldiers were hardy simple country boys with ties to the land, but at the end of the war, many officials began questioning whether soldiers had homes and occupations to return to.<sup>42</sup> Many Taiping units that surrendered to the Qing were often incorporated into irregular forces over the course of the war. There were also anxieties that former bandits and morally suspect individuals were recruited as an expedient instead of recruiting from morally upright country lads. Zeng insisted that demobilization was an important issue in reconstruction, but post-war policies merely emphasized the necessity that soldiers would be sent home and not allowed to linger in the cities they occupied. Some officials proposed settlement programs for soldiers without occupations or homes, but Zeng denied the necessity of resettling soldiers to preserve the myth of strict recruitment guidelines. Ultimately, demobilization was a haphazard process in which many units were summarily dismissed wherever they were stationed, and many soldiers did not return home as they were ordered.

With this came anxieties about “drifting soldiers,” discharged veterans who lived through brigandry, theft, and murder. Drifting soldiers were a source of complaints and worries in the 1860s, continuing to surface well into the 1880s. They were seen as a dangerous and suspect underclass equivalent to bandits and beggars. For many years following the war, officials tried to forcibly remove drifting soldiers from their districts; being a drifting soldier was essentially criminalized because officials and communities believed that drifting soldiers must be criminals. Even soldiers who returned to Hunan were met with hostility and suspicion that they were involved with seditious secret societies. Drifting soldiers represented to many a failure of the state to contain the forces of violence they created and providing them a socially acceptable post-military livelihood. They were weapons sharpened by the state only to be callously cast aside after they had outlived their usefulness. This fear was in part an

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<sup>42</sup> Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies*; Luo Ergang, *Xiangjun xin zhi*, (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1984).



anxiety about the atrocities of the war and outsiders from the experiences of individuals and communities uprooted by the war, which they blamed the Qing for failing address, but it was based also a persistent fear of the danger of rootless men.

Just as refugees needed to be resettled, soldiers also required to be settled on the land. The failure of the state to resettle these people on land became a source of disquiet about criminality committed by drifting soldiers as well as a criticism of reconstructions inability to contain the dangerous remnants of the war. It is also intriguing to think about the contrast in the treatment of drifting soldiers and the ghosts of the soldiers enshrined in shrines of manifest loyalty. On the one hand, the state enshrined soldiers who died in battle as loyal servants of the Empire, housing them under the care of the state. These ghosts required the assistance of the state to prevent them from becoming wandering ghosts. On the other hand, drifting soldiers, the living veterans of their armies, became an object of state concern and popular fears because they were not settled or attended to by the state. Above all else, the focus of reconstruction was resettlement and returning home, and drifting soldiers were an affront to this project, resulting in open hostility and scorn directed at them.

Reconstruction was a series of projects that attempted to reimagine and restructure society according to an ideal in which subjects would have a stable livelihood and a proper moral order was restored. There was a lot that needed to be done following the civil war, but reconstruction ran up against a number of constraints that limited its effectiveness. In most places, officials and local gentry saw priorities everywhere and believed it was essential to act, but they tried to do too much without the financial resources to necessarily achieve what they set out to do in many places. Only a few places, such as the area around Nanjing and the lower Yangzi delta, had the resources to commit to projects to rebuild society, but most regions impacted by the war seem to have done little for post-war society. Various actors had different priorities in reconstruction, but were nonetheless acting towards a common goal. It is unclear whether the little that was done had any significant impact and lasting impact.

Nonetheless, our concern here is less about what was done, and more about what officials and local elites thought needed to be done to create a stable postbellum society. How did they understand what they were doing? Why was it necessary to do this? What were their priorities? And above all else, what did reconstruction mean to them?

## Chapter I

### **Evolving Reconstruction: The Idea of Post-War Reconstruction in Chinese History and Its Historical Meaning**

It is important to note that until now our discussion has been about the English term “reconstruction” and the evolution of the concept over the nineteenth and twentieth century in Europe and North America, but the “reconstruction” discussed in this dissertation is a project that happened in the aftermath of the civil wars of nineteenth century China. The concept of Reconstruction in China evolved out of a historical context entirely distinct from the modern ideal of post-war reconstruction in which the state plays a leading a role in directing the economy and stabilizing society after a conflict. The idea of reconstruction before the Taiping Civil War was entirely different and distinct, calling into question if we should even refer to it as reconstruction as we understand it today. Chinese imperial regimes before the nineteenth century saw little reason to intervene in society after conflict. The idea of reconstruction evolved over time as the meaning of the word shifted with official understandings of political power and political ideology.

Unlike the English word “reconstruction,” which at its root implies rebuilding things that were lost in conflict, the word in Chinese has a very different origin and context. This may seem obvious, but the word “reconstruction” has been employed without consideration to the context of the words origin, which will be essential to understand how historically unique post-Taiping reconstruction was in Chinese history. The Chinese idea of reconstruction is rooted heavily in military traditions. In the Song dynasty, reconstruction was limited to a kind of post-war diagnostic of the military to implement reforms based off of military experiences in previous conflict. By the Ming dynasty, officials employed reconstruction as

a way to improve upon administration and military effectiveness, especially on the frontier, in politically unstable regions. For the most part, reconstruction was a part of frontier statecraft. Officials were above all else concerned with military security. Achieving stability was conceptualized through the blunt cudgel of the military, and not through socially stabilizing policies and programs. Even in the heart of the Han Empire, Ming officials occasionally used the word reconstruction to describe their efforts at water control in the aftermath of flooding, but their focus was not on immediate relief to return society to a pre-disaster normal. For them, reconstruction was about improving water control infrastructure to prevent future flooding.

This was largely true for much of the Qing period as officials focused reconstruction efforts in the frontier; however, at the end of the Eighteenth century, in the wake of the conflicts on the Miao frontier of Hunan and the White Lotus War, a few Qing officials began presenting a very different idea of post-war reconstruction. Although still concerned with military security, these officials began proposing and implementing a kind of reconstruction that was concerned with social stability. They began thinking of the implications of livelihood on future conflicts, and that the best way to maintain security was to mitigate community conflicts over resources and ensure that subjects had a stable economic basis to support themselves and families. While the impact of these policies was questionable and they were undertaken without much support from the imperial court, these ideas on the frontier of post-conflict management represented a shift in the idea of reconstruction that would have implications in the post-Taiping period. The kind of reconstruction that we will see over the following chapters was an idea that evolved over time.

### *The Origin of the Word Reconstruction*

The Chinese term which I have chosen to translate as “reconstruction” is *shanhou* (善後). The word is a compound of *shan*, which means “good,” “to make good,” or “to improve,” and *hou*, which means “afterwards” or “aftermath,” and refers to the improvements the state ought to make in the aftermath of a war or disaster. While Charles Wooldridge has argued that the term *shan* referred to “doing good deeds” along the lines of charitable deeds (善舉), if we look into the etymological origins and usage of the word *shanhou*, we find that the word refers to simply “making something good” or “making improvements” in the aftermath.<sup>1</sup> The term was an abbreviation of classical expressions like “improving its aftermath” (善其後) or “providing support in its aftermath and improving the end” (持其後而善其終).<sup>2</sup> That is not to say that in the nineteenth century the *shan* in *shanhou* was not associated with charitable acts; on the contrary, reconstruction after the Taiping Civil War grew out of, drew inspiration from, and ran parallel to charitable organizations, closely linking reconstruction with philanthropy; before the Civil War, however, the association between “reconstruction” and “charity” was tenuous at best, because reconstruction operated under a different logic with very different historical roots.

The etymology of the word *shanhou* can be traced back to a phrase that appeared, somewhat fittingly, in *The Art of War*, but the context of its usage makes it clear that it has little to do with reconstruction as we tend to think of it. In *The Art of War*, the phrase *shan qi hou* is used, which means “to make good of its aftermath.” This phrase is often referenced as the etymological origin of the term *shanhou* in numerous Chinese dictionaries, but in its beginnings, it had nothing to do with reconstruction.<sup>3</sup> The phrase appears in this passage of *The Art of War*: “Now, when your weapons are dulled, your ardor dampened, your strength exhausted, and your treasure spent, other chieftains will

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<sup>1</sup> William Charles Wooldridge, “Transformations of Ritual and the State in Nineteenth-century Nanjing,” (Ph.D. dissertation: Princeton University, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Liu Xungao, *Jiangsu sheng jianfu quan'an* (1866), 2:53a.

<sup>3</sup> *Cihai* (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), vol. 1, 609.

spring up to take advantage of your extremity. Then no man, however wise, will be able to make good from that which must ensue."<sup>4</sup> In this passage, Sunzi is emphasizing the importance of logistics as well as the astronomical cost of waging a lengthy military campaign, which could eventually exhaust a state's resources leaving them vulnerable to a counter-attack. In this case, the underlined phrase "to make good from that which must ensue" is a translation by Lionel Giles that expresses the contextual meaning of *shan qi hou*. It clearly was more an expression of the vulnerability and helplessness of a state if resources are completely drained in a lengthy war; it simply means that you will not be able to turn a bad situation around. There is no suggestion here of any concerted effort by the state to stabilize a post-war society as we understand "reconstruction" in English; in fact, it is about potentially losing a war.

Over time, however, the phrase gained new meanings, particularly in military circles, as a kind of post-battle prognostic of how to make the military better after a failed or even successful battle. By the Song dynasty, the term was shortened to simply *shanhou* and was used to refer to a sort of post-battle or post-war assessment of military capabilities and as a space to suggest improvements. One of the earliest usages of the word in reference specifically to military assessment comes in a memorial written by Lü Yihao (吕頌浩, d. 1139). In 1125, on the eve of the Song-Jin Wars, Lü was a military officer in charge of military logistics for Hebei. During the reign of Huizong, the Song court allied itself with the Jurchen Jin state against their rivals the Khitan Liao state. While the alliance was successful in defeating the Liao in 1125, the Jurchens continued on pushing south occupying Song territory. It was at this time that Lü quickly rose through the military ranks as one of the main Song generals fighting against the Jurchens. Despite his efforts, the war proved disastrous for the Song. Their capital, Kaifeng, was sacked in 1127 and the Emperor Qinzong, and his father Huizong, the former emperor who had abdicated after initial failures in the war, were both captured by the Jurchens. Lü continued to fight the Jurchens under the

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<sup>4</sup> Sunzi, *Art of War*, Lionel Giles, trans., 2:4. <http://www.chinapage.com/sunzi-e.html#02>

Gaozong emperor until early 1131 when he was appointed to a series of important civil post, including Prefect of Lin'an (Hangzhou), the Song's temporary capital in the south, as well as Prefect of Nanjing, and Governor of Hunan. He served in a civil post until his death in 1139, but the war continued until 1142 with the signing of the Treaty of Shaoxing.<sup>5</sup>

Sometime in the 1130s, most likely as he was being transferred from military to civilian offices, Lü turned his attention towards reconstruction, but his idea of reconstruction was not about post-war stabilization. After all, the war was still being fought and the northern territories had already been lost. His idea of reconstruction was about military reform and strategy to revive the Song state's power. As a veteran and respected general in the war, Lü was particularly cognizant of the problems of the military, and wrote a memorial to the Gaozong Emperor entitled "A Submission of Ten Policies for Border Defense Reconstruction." Lü's memorial contained point-by-point reforms and strategies needed to prepare the Song military for any possible future invasions by the Jurchens. For Lü, reconstruction was essential to the state's survival. The policies included strategy and management issues including sections on "the advantage of ships," "policies on advancing troops along different paths" and "matters of military logistics."<sup>6</sup> These were military reforms to improve the army's effectiveness in battle.

While these issues may seem as nothing more than technical military issues, Lü argued that these changes were essential to the survival of the Song state in the south and reconquest of Song territories in northern China. These policies of reconstruction were crucial to the improvement of the military, and military power was the only force that could restore the Song. Interestingly, there is a parallel in how reconstruction was viewed aft the Taiping Civil War in the Nineteenth Century and the Song-Jin Wars of the Twelfth Century; reconstruction was intrinsically linked as a part of a dynastic

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<sup>5</sup> Zhou Yinghe, ed., *Jiankang zhi* (1261; repr., 1801), 716-740.

<sup>6</sup> Lü Yihao, *Zhongmu ji*, (Siku quanshu, c. 1130), 2:2a, Chinese Text Project, accessed January 18, 2014 <http://ctext.org/library.pl?if=en&file=3503&page=43>.

“restoration” (中興). As Lü stated in his memorial: “All of these so-called reconstruction policies... are an attempt at the enterprise of restoration.”<sup>7</sup> The concept of the dynastic restoration believed that the downward spiral of the dynastic cycle through proactive policies that strengthened the state’s power.<sup>8</sup> It was a second wind for a dynasty allowing for a revival, and this association between reconstruction and restoration would be reiterated in the late nineteenth century.

The association here between reconstruction and restoration is revealing because Qing officials in the late nineteenth century made similar connections between reconstruction and restoration. A state achieved the strength necessary for a restoration through proactive reconstruction policies. Despite the similarities in terminology, however, the meaning of reconstruction was vastly different in the Song dynasty than in the Qing. Reconstruction in the Song was a part of military parlance connoting major and necessary military improvements for a dynastic revival; whereas by the Qing, as we shall see, it evolved to mean much more than bolstering military power.

### *Reconstruction in the Core of the Empire*

By as early as the Ming, the word reconstruction began to evolve into a something more closely to what we think of when we say reconstruction. The usage of the term in military circles referring to improvements to the military continued, as evidenced in Sun Chaoxiao’s (孫朝肅, fl. 1610s) military treatise, *A Record of Reconstruction in Times of War* (軍興善後錄), which focused on ways to improve

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<sup>7</sup> Lü Yihao, *Zhongmu ji*, 2:2a; This is also mentioned in one of the oldest uses of the word *shanhou*, see, *Jiankang zhi*, 48 juan.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Clabaugh Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T’ung-chih Restoration, 1862-1874* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), 43-67.



the military's combat readiness.<sup>9</sup> The term also began to gain new meaning in the Ming and Qing periods as a set of policies in response to disaster or conflict, but what reconstruction was supposed to do differed on the frontier and in the core of the empire. In the Han-dominated heartland, reconstruction was something the state did in response to disasters to address what it saw as factors that led to the disaster – particularly reinforcing water control systems. On the frontier, we do not see reconstruction as a response to disaster (in fact, there are no accounts of reconstruction in response to disaster on the frontier) but to conflict. Along the frontier, reconstruction focused on military security and administrative control, echoing the military origins of the word. In this sense, reconstruction or *shanhou* was a set of policies that sought to address and improve upon what they saw as the most fundamental cause of disaster or conflict and social disorder. The divergent treatments of reconstruction in the core and periphery show that, while reconstruction attempted to achieve social stability after destabilizing events like wars and disasters, they approached them differently based on fundamentally different views of what controlled people.

In a search of the keyword *shanhou* among all gazetteers published in the Ming Dynasty on the Erudition gazetteer database, we see a sharp distinction in the context of the word's usage between the core and periphery of the empire. Although the distinction between core and periphery is difficult to define, in this case, the term periphery is defined as border regions where predominately Han Chinese neighbored significant populations of non-Han peoples. This could include places along the border of the empire, but also regions well within the boundaries of the empire, such as the Yangzi highlands where Han settlers often came into conflict with indigenous Hakka or the mountainous rim around Sichuan that was surrounded by ethnically diverse populations both within the empire in places like Guizhou and

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<sup>9</sup> No extant copies of A Record of Reconstruction in Times of War exist, but are referred to in numerous gazetteers with descriptions. See, for example, Li Mingwan, ed., *Suzhou fuzhi* (1883), 12785; and Feng Rubi, ed., *Changshu xianzhi* (1539; repr., 1687), 2242.

outside the boundaries of the empire along the Tibetan Plateau. The results showed that the term *shanhou* appears in 311 instances. Of these, a little over a third or 110 instances, were merely coincidences of the characters *shan* and *hou* appearing next to each other.<sup>10</sup> Among the remaining 201 instances, the word is used in several different contexts: at times it referred to a general empire-wide reform of the military much like the example of Lü Yihao in the Song Dynasty discussed previously (12 instances); in other cases, they discussed military reconstruction in specific locations along the frontier (17 instances); more commonly, the discussion was about reconstruction of the local military garrison and defense (117 instances); and in 24 instances the discussion was about local reconstruction after a disaster; another 27 instances were using the word in a general sense of turning around a bad situation such as in the example from *The Art of War* where it had no policy ramifications; and in four cases the context was unclear due to incomplete text.

If the context of the term *shanhou* is broken down regionally, there is a stark difference in how the word *shanhou* is employed in their discussions, depending on whether the gazetteer was written in a frontier region or the center of the empire. Of the 117 instances in which reconstruction of the local garrison was discussed, 109 instances were in frontier areas with the bulk of them (44 instances) concerning ethnic conflicts in western Guangdong. The remaining eight instances in the core of the empire were in Jiangsu (1 instance) and several coastal counties in Fujian (7 instances), which discussed reconstruction of naval defenses in response to the coastal raids that plagued the late Ming. Considering that the core of the empire produced considerably more gazetteers than the periphery and yet military reconstruction was discussed overwhelmingly on the frontier, this reveals that military reconstruction

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<sup>10</sup> This generally occurs at the end and beginning of sentences, because classical Chinese does not have punctuation; thus many sentences ended with *shan* meaning “to be good” or “to be improved” and then followed by a sentence that started with “afterwards.” Such as “At first he and Wang Anyou were good friends. Afterwards, over many discussions, they no longer got along.” (初與王安佑相友善後多議不合). Feng Shiren, ed., *Jiangyin Xianzhi* (1640), 787.

was far more crucial to locals on the frontier than those in the core of the Ming empire.<sup>11</sup> Social instability and loose state authority that frequently led to violence in the borderlands certainly play a role in this imbalance, but the core was no stranger to large-scale communal violence, especially during coastal raids of the late Ming and Qi Jiguang's response to it. The only other instances in which military reconstruction is discussed in core regions appears in biographies, but these passages are recounting the efforts of local heroes sent to distant frontier as officials (17 instances) or locals who served as important officials in the distant past who instituted some kind of reconstructing of the imperial military (12 instances).<sup>12</sup> When the term *shanhou* was used in core regions to refer to state policy, it was typically some kind of response to disaster (24 instances) and more often a flood control project (18 instances). Most were of these occurred in northern Zhejiang and Shandong along the Yellow River. In no case was *shanhou* used in a frontier region to refer to disaster response or flood control. Thus, *shanhou* or reconstruction seems to be a kind of policy largely associated with managing social stability on the frontier in the aftermath of conflict, but in the heartland of the Ming empire, reconstruction is used primarily in discussing flood control and mitigating disasters.

When reconstruction was discussed in the core of the Ming and Qing empires, especially Jiangnan and the North China Plain, it was almost exclusively in the context of water control and major flooding. Reconstruction in these cases often referred to the improvement and repair of water control and irrigation networks to reduce the risk of future flooding and improve agricultural output. For regions like Jiangnan, water control was crucial to agricultural production. The flat topography, numerous waterways, intricate irrigation networks, and high levels of annual rainfall meant that agriculture both benefited enormously from abundant water resources but was also highly susceptible to flooding. The

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<sup>11</sup> In fact, the majority of “coincidences” of shan and hou appearing in succession occurs in core regions (89 instances) is simply because more gazetteers were produced in the core, which increases the probability that such combinations will result.

<sup>12</sup> Most of those 12 instances were in reference to Lü Yihao.

dependence of the region on water control over centuries and millennia resulted in highly complex networks of flood control and irrigation that required considerable resources to maintain. In the North China Plain, irrigation networks were not as essential for agricultural production as in Jiangnan, but water control was still important for flood prevention, especially around the notoriously flood-prone Yellow River and the politically sensitive area around the capital Beijing. When these water control systems failed, reconstruction typically focused on rebuilding, repairing, and expanding these systems because of the importance of such a system in maintaining social stability and the livelihood of subjects. Flooding not only damaged flood control mechanisms but also revealed weaknesses in the system that needed to be addressed, and reconstruction policies were typically focused on addressing these very issues.

There are few specific examples of post-disaster reconstruction in either the Ming or Qing. Gazetteers and memorials often only made vague references to “handling matters of reconstruction” (辦理善後事宜) or making “policies” or “plans for reconstruction” (善後之策 / 善後之計) with little elaboration as to what exactly reconstruction entailed or meant. This is also true for much of Post-civil war reconstruction in the nineteenth century. What can be inferred from the few sources that go to any length to elaborate is that, at its heart, post-disaster reconstruction was concerned with maintaining stability and ensuring the livelihoods (民生) of subjects primarily through the maintenance, repair, and improvement of infrastructure – chiefly water control; and reconstruction was not necessarily a direct response to disaster, but a list of improvements and policies that should be made for the future prevention of disaster. It rarely, if ever, seems to have made any overtures towards intervening into the lives of subjects as a means of establishing order, providing assistance, or as a part of a grand vision of post-disaster order, but squarely focused on infrastructural improvements.

In some ways, reconstruction was something that happened well in the aftermath of a disaster. It was not about immediate relief but future plans for improvement to issues like water control. One particularly well-documented case in which the word reconstruction was used in the heart of the Ming Empire occurred in Tang County, Zhili Province. In June 1604, the Tang River broke its banks and inundated the county-seat in two feet of water. While no lives were recorded as lost in the flooding, there was considerable damage to property, which pushed local officials to take action on water control. The city had built dikes in centuries past to prevent flooding, but they had long eroded over time, leaving the city vulnerable to occasional flooding in an otherwise dry climate.<sup>13</sup> While minor flooding was generally not a major concern to the Ming court – agricultural production here was not particularly reliant on water control in the region - its proximity to the capital may have made social stability a particularly concerning issue; moreover, the Tang River flowed downstream to the port city of Tianjin, so flooding upstream could become a downstream problem later, interrupting traffic along the grand canal and the port.<sup>14</sup>

In the aftermath of the flooding, Yang Yigui (楊一桂), the magistrate of Tang County, proposed a major series of water control projects along the Tang River to prevent future flooding. Yang proposed a fairly large flood control project for the region that included dozens of miles of stone-faced dikes, which was very costly.<sup>15</sup> Yang's work in flood control was not the part that was referred to as reconstruction; instead, after completion of the project, just before the end of his tenure as magistrate, he discussed reconstruction in terms of future improvements, rules, guidelines, and repairs. It was an outline of things left undone that should be done in the future. He proposed six points of reconstruction, which were inscribed on a stele in late 1604 after repair works to the dike had already been completed:

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<sup>13</sup> Feng Weiming, ed., *Baoding fuzhi* (1607), 1436-1437, 2284-2285.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 1341.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 2284.

| Six Guidelines for Reconstruction (Tang County) |      |  |
|---|------|--|
| Yang Yigui                                      |      |  |
| Article 1                                       | 立河神祠 | Erect a shrine for the spirit of the river |
| Article 2                                       | 設水手  | Establish sailors                          |
| Article 3                                       | 獎勤勞  | Reward earnest work                        |
| Article 4                                       | 善修改  | Maintain repairs                           |
| Article 5                                       | 禁竊奪  | Prevent theft                              |
| Article 6                                       | 救凶荒  | Save from drought                          |

Table 1.1 - Li Peiku, ed., *Baoding fuzhi* (1895), 1533. Also mentioned in Feng Weiming, ed., *Baoding fuzhi* (1607), 2285.

Little is elaborated upon in these six points for reconstruction, and so it is hard to ascertain what many of them meant specifically. The first article, “Erect a Shrine for the Spirit of the River,” is the straightest forward and interesting. It is one of the only examples of the construction of a temple as a part of reconstruction until the Taiping Civil War, yet in this case, erecting a shrine to the spirit of the Tang River was most likely seen as a part of water control itself. By placating the restless spirits of the Tang River through ritual offerings, the spirit, and thus the river, could be tamed and controlled. The fourth article clearly indicates the importance of regularly maintaining the dikes; the fifth article probably referred to preventing theft of the stones used on the dike works but it is unclear; “establishing sailors” may have been in reference to water crews that saw to dredging and maintenance of the river’s flood control system; and the third and sixth articles seem to be general statements of state responsibility.

Regardless of the details of Yang’s six articles for reconstruction, what is clear is that these were things that were left to future officials and the local community to handle and should be maintained. Furthermore, reconstruction here is not a grand vision to restore an idealize pre-flooded Tang county nor a utopian vision of a perfect world. It is a set of practical recommendations for future improvement and makes no pretense to resolving any immediate crisis.

Since reconstruction had its eye towards future stability, when it came to natural disasters, reconstruction was almost exclusively linked to water control and as a response to flooding. Although

other natural disasters, such as earthquakes, droughts, locust, and typhoons (unless they caused flooding), often caused considerable damage and loss of life, we do not see the formulation of reconstruction plans in their aftermath. Discussions of reconstruction in the core of the empire were in response to disastrous flooding. This makes sense if we consider the fact that reconstruction was concerned with future prevention because flooding was one of the few forms of natural disasters in which the state could potentially intervene in advance through water control projects. There was little in the long run that the state could do, obviously, to prevent destruction from earthquakes, locust, tsunamis, landslides, or gale force winds, but flooding was one of the few kinds of natural disasters, besides perhaps drought, that the state had the power to substantially reduce risk. It is for this reason that reconstruction centered on water control because it was an issue in which planning could be used to prevent disaster and ensure stability.

Reconstruction was narrowly constricted to water control, but the purpose of water control was to safeguard the livelihood of subjects. Another example of the reconstruction of water control comes in the early Qing from Mu Tianyan (慕天顏, 1624-1696), the Governor of Jiangsu from 1676 to 1681. Large parts of southern Jiangsu around Suzhou and Songjiang Prefectures had experienced several major floods in the early 1670s because of the failure of water control systems in the area – chiefly due to poor maintenance. During his tenure as governor, Mu committed himself and considerable resources to revamping the poorly maintained water control infrastructure in the region with substantial assistance from local elites who were the ones who would benefit most from these efforts.

Just before Mu left office, he wrote an essay entitled “A Letter on Reconstruction” (善後疏), which was most likely intended for future generations of officials and local elites and emphasized the importance of maintaining water control for the livelihood of subjects: “It is our intention to maintain flood control in perpetuity, which is a major responsibility that... looks to the livelihood of all the subjects

of the state. Only the swampy lands of Jiangnan gains its wealth from land farmed by subjects that rely on the collection and disbursement of water through flood control.”<sup>16</sup> His letter goes on to detail concrete water control projects such as dikes, levees, sluice gates, and reservoirs to build upon the reconstruction of water control in the past decade. More importantly, Mu characterizes this project as a reconstruction effort. “Reconstruction plans” were about “Jiangnan’s water control,” and not much else.<sup>17</sup> What was important was that water control secured the future livelihood of farmers by preventing potential disasters and ensured that the agriculture of Jiangnan, which was dependent on water control, would continue to be productive.

Yang Yigui saw reconstruction as improving water control to prevent disaster in the wake of flooding. Mu invoked reconstruction as a set of policies to maintaining productivity and social stability in the Jiangnan region through water control projects, linking livelihood with state efforts. Although their emphasis differed slightly as to the necessity of water control, it is clear that in the heartland of the Ming and Qing empires, reconstruction was typically associated with hydraulic engineering as a preventative measure.

### *Livelihood, Relief, and Reconstruction*

The livelihood of subjects was essential to Ming and Qing officials like Mu for maintaining stability. It was generally believed that political disorder was primarily rooted in economic hardship. While individual leaders might be motivated by ideology, religion, and a sense of injustice, more fundamental issues of subsistence were believed by officials to drive their supporters to sedition. When people faced hardship collectively like in a disaster, they could be easily deceived and deluded by manipulative men with ulterior motives into treason. These people were generally portrayed as ignorant

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<sup>16</sup> *Changshu xianzhi*, 433-434.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 441.



and somewhat pitiful “coerced followers” (胁从) by Qing officials. They were people who were generally good but were misled by scheming rebels (the real rebels) taking advantage of their economic hardship, and even if subjects eventually realized they had unwittingly joined in treasonous plots, it was often too late for them to leave without facing the wrath of their insidious rebel leaders.<sup>18</sup>

Major disasters were often central to many of these narratives of coerced followers and rebellion. Qing officials believed that disasters made people especially vulnerable to the manipulation of underhanded malcontents because disasters often drove individuals and families to desperation.<sup>19</sup> There is certainly a logic to this that makes sense, despite the fact that it leaves little room for agency and personal belief, and it is a narrative that continues to play a major part in narratives explaining insurrection and rebellion even today, including the beginnings of the Taiping Civil War.<sup>20</sup> It is largely for this reason that Qing authorities paid close attention to issues of post-disaster relief and to a degree reconstruction, even if they were enveloped in a discourse of benevolent altruism. Reconstruction was indirectly concerned with preventing possible insurrection in the future. By reconstructing infrastructure, especially in places where water control and rice paddy agriculture was practiced, the livelihood of subjects could be secured, which in turn could nip rebellion in the bud.

Reconstruction was intended as a safeguard for the livelihood of Qing subjects (at least Han subjects). It was a preventative set of policies typically focused on water control for much of the empire and not a response to an immediate disaster. For the most part, reconstruction was not an interventionist policy in the lives of subjects, nor did it consider disaster relief or even rebuilding roads

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<sup>18</sup> Brian E. McKnight, *Law and Order in Sung China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 12-13.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>20</sup> Franz H. Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion: history and documents*, (Seattle: University of Washington, 1971); Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996)

and buildings destroyed, which we may generally think of as reconstruction.<sup>21</sup> It was generally limited in scope to only improving upon water control infrastructure that maintained the long-term livelihoods of subjects. The Qing did, however, possess an intricate system of providing relief in the aftermath of disasters since the late seventeenth century, but these projects were generally not included as a fundamental part of reconstruction and instead were considered a part of “relief” (賑).<sup>22</sup> Reconstruction and relief were never discussed in tandem because they were considered two inherently distinct categories in the minds of most imperial officials, even though there were certainly places with significant overlap.

Relief was not a form of social welfare or reconstruction, but was merely seen as a means to compensate farmers for losses incurred during disasters to ensure productivity as well as stave off a subsistence crisis that might lead subjects towards sedition.<sup>23</sup> Although relief was not considered a part of reconstruction to Qing officials before the Taiping Civil War, it did serve to some of the same ends as reconstruction as it sought to safeguard the subsistence needs of subjects through difficult times, which served to stabilize society much as reconstruction sought to do. Yet the focus of reconstruction was mostly on preventing future instability while relief served a more immediate end.

Many dynasties that came to rule over the Chinese empire, often maintained and provided disaster relief to some degree or another. The legitimacy of the state was measured in some ways by how they responded to disasters, and so many Chinese states made overtures towards post-disaster relief to some degree or another. In the Confucian worldview, disaster relief was an essential act of imperial benevolence. The failure to provide relief during times of hardship was a mark of a dynasty's

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<sup>21</sup> An exception to this would be buildings related to water control, such as Yang Yigui's proposal to build a shrine to the spirits of the river.

<sup>22</sup> Pierre-Etienne Will and R. Bin Wong, *Nourish the People: The State Civilian Granary System in China, 1650-1850* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1991), 230, 504.

<sup>23</sup> Lillian Li, *Fighting Famine in North China: State, Market, and Environmental Decline, 1690s-1990s* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 225.

moral decay. While many dynasties and empires in the past provided varying degrees of disaster relief, none was more impressive as the highly organized relief system that emerged in the eighteenth century under the Qing. In the high-Qing, the empire had built up an impressive relief system through the state-wide Ever-Normal Granaries (常平倉) funded largely through the sale of brevet ranks. Ever-Normal Granaries maintained stable grain prices by selling subsidized grain below market prices when prices were high to lower the market price and stocked up when prices were low. This worked to reduce major fluctuations in grain prices, which could devastate poorer families. During times of crisis, the state would intervene with direct distribution of grain or cash in quantities specified in great detail through imperial statutes.<sup>24</sup> The purpose of this relief, however, was to see farmers through lean times after a poor harvest, so that production could be maintained when things got better.<sup>25</sup>

By the early nineteenth century, the Ever-Normal Granaries and direct distribution became less effective as stocks declined and funds were reduced. Thus the state increasingly turned towards porridge kitchens (粥廠) as means to provide relief. Porridge kitchens were centers that provided porridge made from rice and other grains to sustain the poor and hungry during times of disaster. Typically, they were located in temples outside of cities, serving one meal per day at set quantities per person. Earlier in the Qing, porridge kitchens were used only in dire emergencies as a temporary expedient until full relief grain distributions could be organized. While the state increasingly employed porridge kitchens over direct relief in the nineteenth century, overall relief was less forthcoming during disasters like flooding, because of diminishing state funds. This meant that in many places local elites stepped up to provide relief through porridge kitchens operated privately by charities.<sup>26</sup> This was particularly the case in Jiangnan, where massive flooding in the 1840s motivated many local elites to become actively engaged

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<sup>24</sup> See, Will and Wong, *Nourish the People; Ibid.*, 236-241.

<sup>25</sup> Li, *Fighting Famine in North China*, 228-229.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

in providing relief through porridge kitchens. By the nineteenth century, porridge kitchens increasingly became the mainstay of relief efforts because it afforded providers, both state and charities, greater control in seeing that relief got to the people and would not be siphoned off by corruption or abuse from recipients. Porridge kitchens also seem to have gained more symbolic social capital as, in the words of Lillian Li, porridge kitchens were “the finest act of either Buddhist-inspired charity or Confucian-inspired community philanthropy.”<sup>27</sup> Before the Taiping civil war, porridge kitchens were, nonetheless, not seen as a part of reconstruction, but were a temporary expedient to resolve emergency subsistence crises.

Other charitable organizations, privately operated and officially sanctioned, also operated in the Ming and Qing. The kinds of civic services these organizations provided included orphanages, widow homes, ferries, and community schools, which had a long tradition in late imperial China. These organizations often received grants from local officials but were mostly funded by donations and land trust from local elites, who often defined themselves through their charitable contributions. These charitable organizations often played a major role in communities during and after disasters: orphanages took in children who lost their families, widow homes took in women that had lost their husbands; and communities often came together to rebuild ferries, bridges, schools, city walls, temples, and shrines.<sup>28</sup> While these are actions that might be considered part of reconstruction efforts today, Ming and Qing sources do not typically define these actions as reconstruction and were undertaken under highly variable local circumstances.

For the most part, reconstruction in the context of disasters was thought of in very narrow terms before the nineteenth century. Its focus was primarily on water control in regions where safety, stability, and agricultural production relied upon it. Reconstruction was about long-term stability, at times implemented well after disasters and looked towards the mitigation of risk in the long-term. It was not

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 182-185.

an act of imperial relief, but a plan of reform and action to prevent disaster by safeguarding the livelihood of subjects in the future. Before the Taiping civil war, issues of relief, subsistence, and rebuilding community institutions, while often undertaken in the aftermath of disasters, were not considered a part of state reconstruction plans, but were invariably left to the devices of local society and local officials. As we will see in the next chapter, however, after the civil war, relief and reconstruction became inextricably linked both institutionally and conceptually to charity and relief.

### *Reconstruction at the Margins of Empire*

While uprisings and revolts against imperial authority did occasionally occur in Han portions of the empire, interestingly enough, we essentially see no examples of discussions of post-conflict reconstruction there in either the Ming or Qing until the Taiping civil war. In fact, in the Ming and Qing, post-conflict reconstruction seems to have been a quintessential and unique part of frontier statecraft.<sup>29</sup> On the frontiers, reconstruction was defined very differently than in the Han portions of the empire and with very different goals in mind. In the borderlands of the Qing Empire, especially in the southwest, reconstruction generally referred to a set of policies implemented at the conclusion of a conflict that emphasized military preparedness and administrative jurisdictions. Along the frontier regions inherited from the Yuan dynasty and dominated by non-Han populations, military preparedness was crucial to maintaining control, particularly in places where conflicts between non-Han and Han settler populations were frequent. Military preparedness was not about preparation against invasion, but maintaining

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<sup>29</sup> While I have encountered a few places where the term *shanhou* appears in a few Song dynasty gazetteers, I remain in many cases uncertain of the sense in which they meant the word. Most likely the early Qing usage, where its meaning is much clearer, were a continuation of Ming usages and policies, but I cannot attest to that with confidence in the Song dynasty where its usage seems to be strictly about the military.

domestic security in regions with a potentially rebellious non-Han population that the Ming and Qing states found difficult to control and govern. Reconstruction became a standard part of post-conflict policies among non-Han populations in the southwest, which carefully redrew military and civil administrative jurisdiction that were typical of the infamous policies of *gaitu guiliu* (改土歸流) – policies that sought to regularize administration and erode the authority of autonomous ethnic leaders.<sup>30</sup> Reconstruction, when implemented after a conflict, sought to ensure that the military would be ready for the next conflict and that administrators would have the ability to stem conflicts before they began through more effective control.

The term “reconstruction” seems to be closely linked with the policies of the frontier. Despite the fact that few gazetteers were published in the Ming and Qing among the more impoverished and educationally underprovided southwestern provinces, a large number of the instances in which the term appears is along the frontier, and often in much greater detail than discussions in more developed and literate provinces of China proper. Along the frontier, it also meant something quite different than among predominately Han portions of the empire. In the aforementioned examples in Zhili and Jiangsu provinces, reconstruction was about water control to ensure the livelihood of subjects, but in the southwest, reconstruction was strictly in response to conflict and was about making adjustments to the military garrison to maintain security in the region. This kind of reconstruction echoed our example in the Song dynasty where reconstruction was seen as a form of military reform, but by the Ming, it was regularized as a standard set of policies at the end of hostilities that focused on specific security measures.

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<sup>30</sup> John E. Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist: China's Colonization of Guizhou, 1200-1700* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2007), 94-96.

While examples of reconstruction in the Ming are few and incomplete, there are a few. In 1533, for instance, after crushing an uprising in Zhaoqing Prefecture, Guangdong Province, a somewhat restless region along the provincial border with Guangxi (which was later incorporated into Guangxi Province), “reconstruction policies” are mentioned; although few specifics are mentioned at length, their concern is primarily with maintaining a defensive garrison to prevent possible future uprisings from taking cities again and administrative particularities. The only issue explicitly mentioned is maintaining a garrison of 3,000 local troops in the area.<sup>31</sup> In many other places in the southwest, we also see similar mentions of maintaining larger garrisons or establishing new outpost as a means to maintain security. In Guizhou, for example, after suppressing a series of Miao uprising along the Guizhou-Hunan-Hubei border region in the 1510s, Wan Tang (萬鎧, 1485-1565), wrote a set of reconstruction policies for the region. His focus was clearly on military and security matters. His idea of reconstruction, in short, included establishing a military position that oversaw the border region, sending several additional captain-rank officers to certain towns, giving captains additional authority, ensuring that the number of soldiers in the region are strictly maintained at 3,000 to safeguard the roads and guaranteeing soldier rations are promptly delivered, and strictly controlling native officials (土官).<sup>32</sup> In other cases, such as in Li Hualong’s (李化龍) “Twelve Articles for the Reconstruction of Bozhou” and “Eight Articles for the Reconstruction of Guizhou” written in 1600, the concern was rooted in drawing administrative districts to allow for the ease of maintaining law and order in the restless region.<sup>33</sup> In all of these cases from the Ming, the concern of frontier reconstruction is centered on military security and administrative boundaries and authority.

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<sup>31</sup> Dai Jing, Zhang Yue, eds., *Guangdong tongzhi chugao* (1535), 255; another similar case on can be found in the same source, *Ibid.*, 2290.

<sup>32</sup> Wang Lizhong, *Guizhou tongzhi* (1597), 1359-1362.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 2588-2605. Also see, Herman, *Amidst the Clouds and Mist*, 169.

In the Qing period, the picture is much clearer as more detailed reconstruction guidelines appear in sources. Reconstruction often was discussed in a list form referred to as “guidelines” or “points” (章程), which delineated the kinds of actions that needed to be done after a conflict. These guidelines often had a short headline that summarized what needed to be done with more detailed explanations following. When it came to reconstruction, these guidelines were overwhelmingly about military issues. In 1734, for example, after a series of ethnic Yi revolts in and around Pu’er Prefecture, Yunnan Province, and subsequent guerilla fighting, the Governor General of Yun-Gui-Guangxi, Yengisan (尹繼善, 1694-1771), proposed “Sixteen Guidelines on Reconstruction in Pu[er], Si[mao], Yuan[jiang], and Xin[ping] Counties.”<sup>34</sup> The headlines of the points were as follows:

| Sixteen Guidelines on Reconstruction in Pu[er], Si[mao], Yuan[jiang] Counties<br>Yengisan |  |
|---|--|
| Article 1   | The imperial brigade stationed in Youle should be transferred to Simao.  |
| Article 2   | Another magistrate for the county-seat of Puer should be added to assist in administration.  |
| Article 3   | The three brigades of Puzhen should receive reinforcements.  |
| Article 4   | The patrol area of the three brigades should be replanned.   |
| Article 5   | Since Puer Prefecture is a vast area, native soldiers should be carefully selected and professionalized.                                 |
| Article 6   | The city walls of Puer should be made of stone.  |
| Article 7   | Issues of officials smuggling tea and soldiers entering the mountains to harass people should be strictly dealt with.                    |
| Article 8   | The area around Youle should be exempted from the salt tax.  |
| Article 9   | Nearby villages and stockades should be incorporated for ease of administration.   |
| Article 10  | Weiyuan should be incorporated into Zhenwan.   |
| Article 11  | Permanent additions should be made to Yuanjiang’s garrison.  |
| Article 12  | The imperial garrison at Xinping should also be increased to help in suppressing [rebellion].  |
| Article 13  | The native officials (土目) of Yuanjiang and Xinjiang should be forbidden from abusing authority in the area to prevent harassment.        |
| Article 14  | Village militias should be transferred under military authority.   |
| Article 15  | Since Baoxiu Pass in Shiping Sub-District, Lin’an Prefecture, is a strategic location, a dirt wall should be built to assist in defense. |
| Article 16  | Strategic points should be maintained for defense.   |

Table 1.2 - *Yunnan Shiliao Congkan*, vol. 8, 447-453.

<sup>34</sup> Fang Guoyu, et al. eds., *Yunnan shiliao congkan* (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 1990), 447-453.



Among these sixteen points, military and administrative matters are the only issues at hand. A few, like articles seven and thirteen, are concerned with corruption and abuse of power, and articles five and thirteen, are directly concerned with the management of indigenous ethnic groups, but for the most part reinforcing, garrisoning, and delineating security boundaries were key components of reconstruction. Most other examples that have survived to the present, are much along the same line.

Even though the emphasis was on military security before the nineteenth century, reconstruction often also included issues such as bringing in settlers for state farms and ensuring access to the market. In the case of Wan Tang's tenure in Guizhou, while his own memorial does not mention anything beyond military issues, the gazetteer notes:

When the troubles with the Guizhou barbarians were settled, [Wan Tang] took on matters of reconstruction in particular, which strove to protect and gather the masses. All agreed that according to the old arrangements, he could chose commissioners (官徒) to inspect and bolster the ranks of the army, unite the villages and stockades, broadly recruit for state farms, establish marketplaces, open new roads, keep an eye on barbarian affairs, forbid and detain vagrants, and prosecute any remaining rebels, and so forth.<sup>35</sup>

Here we see a very different notion of reconstruction than Wan directly mentions in his own memorial.

While military security is his main focus, the gazetteer's note tells us that Wan understood reconstruction as more than maintaining local garrisons. The state of trade must have been important, as we see in his claim to "establish marketplaces" and "open new roads." In particular, his attention to "broadly recruit for state farms" (廣招屯種) and "forbid and detain vagrants" (禁補流民) is particularly interesting, because these are issues that were also discussed after the Taiping civil war. Despite his seeming concern for the livelihood of subjects and their implications for social stability, Wan's actual concerns may have been rooted more in issues of military logistics and support.

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<sup>35</sup> *Guizhou tongzhi*, 1359.

In eighteenth century Pu'er, we also see issues of state farms and vagrancy discussed along side reconstruction, but here the picture is a bit clearer. Although Yengisan's management of southern Yunnan's reconstruction may have been focused on military issues, his predecessor, Gao Qizhuo (高其倬, 1676-1738), also sought to expand state farms in reconstruction in order to increase the local garrison's revenue and supply. In the 1720s, Gao drafted guidelines of reconstruction for Lukui Mountain in Puer Prefecture in an earlier conflict in the same region which touched on many of the same themes discussed above. He was just as concerned with the military and administration as Yengisan, Wan Tang, and Li Hualong, but he also paid attention to the factors that led to the outbreak of conflict in the first place – essentially clan rivalries, corruption among native officials, as well as taxation – and addressed these issues through policies that prosecuted the offenders and lowered tax burdens. He also, like Wan Tang, opened new lands for settlement; his attention to opening new lands, was not, however, motivated by any perceived need to settle people displaced in the conflict on land to prevent future conflict and improve local stability, but as a part of supplying the local garrison through state farms that would supply the strained logistical lines of the frontier's garrison. In fact, his settlement policies were quite small in scale – only some 700 families – and were a part of the state farms.<sup>36</sup>

The inclusion of “state farms” in reconstruction was not about expanding the presence of Han settlers on the frontier or maintaining local stability by ensuring a livelihood for locals. During the fighting that overwhelmed Pu'er in the 1730s, the Green Standard Army was plagued by supply shortages as Yi partisans cut off the roads supplying their army. State farms were a way to ensure that the garrison would be supplied.<sup>37</sup> State farms (屯田) were a long-honored practice in Chinese statecraft, particularly along militarily sensitive frontiers. The practice has roots in frontier management in the Han dynasty, in which soldiers along the frontier were supposed to be self-sufficient through a rotation of

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<sup>36</sup> *Yunnan shiliao congkan*, 453-456.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 447-453.

military and farming duties.<sup>38</sup> Ideally, these farms provided the food for the military, and would regularly rotate between duties, eliminating the need for the state of provisioning garrisons in distant frontiers. While this ideal was perpetuated through many dynasties, it evolved in the southwest over time into a system of civilian tenants (民屯) that farmed state-owned lands that paid rent in kind directly to local garrisons, which formed the basis of their supplies. There were still state owned farms operated by soldiers on rotation (軍屯), but the bulk of a local garrison's revenue on the southwest frontier came from civilian tenants. Civilian tenants in many places were mostly Han recruited as settlers, although the boundaries between Han and native could become blurred, and in some places, natives were used in the military colonies.<sup>39</sup> When Wan Tang refers to "broadly recruiting for state farms," he is most likely referring to the expansion of state farms as a way to increase the local garrison's revenue. His motivation is not about settling people displaced by the conflict on lands to guarantee local stability or to expand Han settlement into the region.

Han settlers not a part of the military colonies were officially forbidden from settling in the frontiers as a way of preventing tensions between Han and native ethnic groups, which could lead to armed conflicts. It was illegal for Han settlers to buy land from natives, and such sales were generally not recognized as legal. The local government, nonetheless, was not always able to stem the flow of illegal Han settlers who had a variety of methods of avoiding state detection, such as was intermarrying with native or identifying themselves as an ethnic native. For the most part, illegal Han settlers managed to avoid the gaze of the state, but the government would periodically make attempts to stop Han settlers from moving in, particularly when ethnic tensions ran high. The fact that Han settlers often intentionally blurred ethnic boundaries was also a constant source of consternation and anxiety for officials not just

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<sup>38</sup> Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist*, 55-56.

<sup>39</sup> Donald S. Sutton, "Violence and Ethnicity on a Qing Colonial Frontier: Customary and Statutory Law in the Eighteenth-Century Miao Pale," *Modern Asian Studies* 37:1 (2003), 41-80.

because it made it difficult for them to control them but also because it challenged notions of cultural superiority over the native population and the rigidity of ethnic categories.<sup>40</sup> Illegal settlers were often derided in official sources as nothing more than “vagrants” (流民) who had little legal basis on the frontier and did not maintain a consistent residence; thus, Wan Tang’s concerns about “vagrants” may have referred to stopping illegal Han settlers in the region and not so much about a general anxiety about unsettled floating populations displaced by war.<sup>41</sup>

The point to take away from all of this going into the nineteenth century is that post-conflict reconstruction was a form of statecraft that was adapted to frontier management in particular. Discussions of reconstruction were invariably connected to issues of borderland security and ethnic management as well as post-war settlements that saw the eventual erosion of native autonomy in the southwest through *gaitu guiliu*. Reconstruction had evolved over time into a distinct form of policies that sought to address inherently frontier based questions. When reconstruction was invoked in the core of the empire, it was always in response to disaster, and flood control in particular. Part of the reason for this may be that, throughout much of the Qing and even the Ming, frontiers were some of the most politically and socially unstable regions of the empire prone to frequent instances of revolt and thus warranted special measures to prevent future conflicts. Their conception of prevention was to increase their military presence and redraw administrative boundaries. While issues like establishing state farms in the frontier were a part of discussions on reconstruction, their concern was not about ensuring social stability in the region per se but simply maintaining their military presence in the region.

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<sup>40</sup> Donald S. Sutton, “Myth Making on an Ethnic Frontier: The Cult of the Heavenly Kings of Western Hunan, 1715-1996,” *Modern China* 26:4 (Oct, 2006), 448-500.

<sup>41</sup> Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist*, 131-143.

### *A New Kind of Reconstruction?*

At the turn of the nineteenth century, there seems to have been a major shift in the way Qing officials and elites began to think about post-conflict reconstruction in frontier regions. Past traditions that emphasized military force still continued, but they were bolstered by reconstruction programs that attempted a broader state intervention into society to maintain stability. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Qing was shaken by two extremely costly civil conflicts: A conflict on the Hunan-Guizhou-Sichuan border region against Miao insurgents (1795-1797/1805) and the White Lotus War (1794-1804) along the Sichuan-Shaanxi-Hubei border. In the wake of these conflicts, officials began to think of reconstruction in starkly different ways than in the past, emphasizing the importance of livelihood and property in maintaining social stability.

The Hunan Miao frontier war was rooted in ethnic tensions between the native Miao and Han settler population. In the eighteenth century, the Han settler population along the western border of Hunan had dramatically expanded, causing tensions over resources between Han and Miao populations. Despite prohibitions on Han from purchasing Miao lands as previously discussed, Han settlers had gradually expanded through intermarriage, collateralized debt, and legal ethnic ambiguities, occupying the most choice lands in the region. Over time this worked to impoverish the native Miao population as Han settlers increasingly had better access to resources. As administration of the region was further integrated into normalized bureaucratic management of the empire through *gaitu guiliu*, Miao leaders were alienated from the local power structure while still retaining strong community backing and resources among the Miao population.<sup>42</sup> By 1795, the Shi and Wu clans of the region mobilized numerous Miao communities in the region to take back land from Han settlers. The Qing quickly

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<sup>42</sup> Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist*, 103-117.

responded by sending the Green Standard Army under the Governor General of Suchuan, Helin (和琳, 1753-1796; brother of the infamous imperial eunuch and court favorite Heshen), to attack Miao settlements, and the Miao insurgents responded by resorting to guerilla tactics. Official tactics resorted to equal measures of brutality against the indigenous population as well as undermining Miao alliances by awarding concessions to certain clans. Officials declared the war over in early 1797 after the capture of the main insurgent leaders and their stockade fortifications, but a running war against die-hard Miao guerilla fighters continued and other Miao villages continued to rise up until 1805.<sup>43</sup>

Despite the continuation of conflict in the region, Helin began turning his attention to reconstruction in Hunan in 1796, just shortly before his death. In a memorial to the Jiaqing Emperor, he outlined his idea of reconstruction, which was in numerous ways drastically different than many of his predecessors who served in the region only half a century earlier had proposed.<sup>44</sup> His reconstruction plan contained six articles (See Table 1.3). Helin's reconstruction plan is unique because it is one of the first discussions of reconstruction that shows a concern for social stability. Instead of solely focusing on bolstering local garrisons, which he still sees as important, he understands the mitigation of inter-communal violence and conflict as fundamental for maintaining social stability in the long run. His plan represents a radical break from the integrationist frontier policies of the past.<sup>45</sup> Many of the reconstruction policies in the southwest were framed within the policies of *gaitu guiliu*, which eroded the power of native chieftains through imperial bureaucratic power. This served not only to expand imperial power, but the greater integration socially, economically, and politically of many native ethnic groups along the southwestern frontier into the broader empire.<sup>46</sup> In this case, however, Helin is reversing course, arguing for greater

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<sup>43</sup> Daniel McMahon, *Rethinking the Decline of China's Qing Dynasty: Imperial Activism and Borderland Management at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 86-103.

<sup>44</sup> Helin, "zouni Hunan Miaojiang shanhou zhangcheng liu tiao zhe," Dan Xiangliang, ed., *Hunan miaofang tunzheng kao* (1884), 3:27a-35b.

<sup>45</sup> McMahon, *Rethinking the Decline of China's Qing Dynasty*, 97-103.

<sup>46</sup> Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist*, 103-117.

| <b>Six Guidelines on Reconstruction for the Hunan Miao Frontier</b> |   |
|---|---|
| Helin   |   |
| Article 1   | Land on the Miao Frontier must have their boundaries clarified and forbid Han from occupying them to prevent conflict.<br>苗疆田畝必應清楚界址毋許漢民侵佔以杜爭競也 |
| Article 2   | Garrisons on the Miao Frontier should each be unified [under one command] to join their power.<br>苗疆營汛應分別歸拼以聯聲勢也                                |
| Article 3   | The various Stockade Chiefs of the Miao Frontier should be considered for appointment in order to delineate authority.<br>苗疆百戶寨長名目應酌量更定以專責成也    |
| Article 4   | Walls on the Miao Frontier should each be repaired.<br>苗疆城垣應分別修理也   |
| Article 5   | Fowling Rifles and other weapons on the Miao Frontier should be handed in to authorities to eliminate [illegible].<br>苗疆鳥槍等項器械必應收繳以去□□也         |
| Article 6   | Those displaced by the conflict should each be settled to show them relief.<br>被難民人亦應分別安頓以示體恤也  |

Table 1.3 - Helin, "zouni Hunan Miaojiang shanhou zhangcheng liu tiao zhe," Dan Xiangliang, ed., *Hunan miaofang tunzheng kao* (1884), 3:27a-35b.

local indigenous autonomy (article three) and the segregation of Miao and Han communities (article one).

Helin's idea to also clarify boundaries was even more remarkable. While the prohibition on Han settlers purchasing or "occupying" Miao lands had long been in place, Qing authorities were often powerless to prevent the influx of Han settlers into the frontier despite repeated reiterations of the prohibition throughout the Ming and Qing periods. Helin's proposal reflects one of the few instances in which the state attempted to intervene in this matter directly, and in this case, he was proposing a major state project that sought to redistribute land through forcible resettlement on a large scale. Nothing was new about delineating boundaries between Miao and Han communities; officials had made numerous half-hearted attempts in this past. What is unique is that this was included as a part of reconstruction and that the state, at least initially, made serious attempts to implement such policies even though in the

end they ultimately fell apart.<sup>47</sup> In his first point, he claims that deputies were supposed to inspect lands along the frontier and determine whether or not certain lands originally belonged to indigenous Miao or Han settlers. Han settlers residing in lands determined to be originally Miao lands were to have their lands confiscated and resettled within Han territories, and the obverse was true for Miao residing in Han regions. The geographical delineations were large and broad; the southeast of Zhen'gan county was to be Han while the northwest was to be Miao; all of Yongsui prefecture was to be consider Miao except for the area around Huayuan; and the towns along the road between the county seats of Fenghuang and Qianzhou counties would fall under Han dominion, but the surrounding region would be Miao. These boundaries were supposed to reflect traditional demarcations from the early Qing, but some exceptions had to be made for practicality. In Songtao county, Guizhou, for example, Han and Miao communities were so mixed that authorities realized that any forcible resettlement would be nearly impossible to implement.<sup>48</sup> Segregating Miao and Han communities, in Helin's idea of a post-war order, was essential to maintain local stability because it ensured a relatively equitable distribution of resources and prevented disputes over property between Miao and Han communities.

Land was seen as crucial to long-term stability, and not just because segregating land ownership mitigated ethnic tensions, but also provided a livelihood for subjects. In Helin's sixth point, he also shows a concern for the livelihood of Han subjects displaced by the war (he does not mention the Miao however). He proposed settling Han refugees in Han territories that were abandoned by Han settlers that died in the conflict as well as providing funds for refugees to rebuild their homes.<sup>49</sup> His proposal was not termed in an altruistic concern for the plight of refugees, in fact he very sternly blames Han refugees for causing the conflict by occupying Miao lands illegally, but he is worried that after the war either these

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<sup>47</sup> McMahon, *Rethinking the Decline of China's Qing Dynasty*, 97-103.

<sup>48</sup> Helin, "zouni Hunan Miaojiang shanhou zhangcheng liu tiao zhe," 3:27a-35b.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*



refugees will try to reclaim lands in Miao territories, which would fuel future conflict, or having lost their livelihood, refugees could potentially turn towards criminality and sedition.<sup>50</sup> Helin is forceful in arguing that Han refugees, although bearing guilt in causing the war, should be settled on lands within Han territories to provide them with a livelihood and prevent them from becoming a latent factor in local unrest.

At the heart of Helin's reconstruction policies is an attempt to prevent conflict, and this is further evident in his fifth article to disarm the civilian populace. For centuries firearms were common among both Miao and Han settlers on the Hunan-Guizhou-Sichuan frontier.<sup>51</sup> Helin claims that people on the frontier claimed a right to them in the name of protecting themselves against wild animals, but this meant that "all Miao and even children were familiar with them," which deeply worried Qing officials.<sup>52</sup> Helin claimed that disarmament of the Miao was crucial to maintaining stability, and proposed that officials should be sent to Miao clans that surrendered to Qing authorities and buy back all weapons. Each person would receive two *liang* for rifles, one *liang* for swords, and five *qian* for spears. Qing authorities were also supposed to stop the private production and sale of saltpeter and iron to make weapons. At the time that Helin wrote this proposal, much of this part of the plan was underway. He claimed that he had already bought back or confiscated 15,000 weapons.<sup>53</sup> While it is dubious that this attempt to disarm the civilian population was effective, Helin was hoping that, by disarming the civilian Miao population and eliminating the black market for weapons, he could eliminate the potential for armed violence among communities as well as the state.

Helin did not live long enough to see his reconstruction plans implemented, dying shortly after drafting the proposal. His successors in managing the frontier crisis, most notably Governor-General of

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> McMahon, *Rethinking the Decline of China's Qing Dynasty*, 90-96.

<sup>52</sup> Helin, "zouni Hunan Miaojiang shanhou zhangcheng liu tiao zhe," 3:27a-35b.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

Huguang, Bi Yuan (畢沅, 1730-1797), Hunan Governor, Jiang Sheng (姜晟, 1730-1810), and Yan Ruyi (顏如燧, 1759-1826), a secretary in Jiang Sheng's personal bureaucracy, upheld Helin's proposal. In a 1797 memorial, Bi Yuan largely restated Helin's plan, arguing for the forcible resettlement of Han and Miao behind ethnic territories demarcated by a border wall (邊牆) and that Han settlers within Miao territories displaced by the conflict should be resettled on state farms (官田).<sup>54</sup> It was Yan Ruyi, who would expand Helin's ideas of reconstruction, gaining him a reputation as an expert in frontier management and post-conflict reconstruction in the period

Yan shared Helin's views of the purpose of reconstruction. From the beginning, Yan was critical of the short-sightedness of the ways reconstruction had been handled in the past and the emphasis on military force in frontier reconstruction. In his 1797 "Discussion of Matters of Pacifying the Miao and Reconstruction," Yan claimed:

There are things that seem difficult but are actually easy, and there are things that seem easy but are difficult... Planning for reconstruction is many times more difficult than devising strategies for extermination [of rebels]. Exterminators [ie. the military] plan for the power to respond to an incident at a given moment. Reconstructors [善後者] plan for the peace that reaches the edges in all matters. Those that have discussed frontier defense since time immemorial have expediently handled matters of importance, but have yet to formulate long-term policies.<sup>55</sup>

Yan is arguing that the purpose of reconstruction should be to create long-term policies that ensure peace and stability on the frontier, and that in the past, reconstruction on the frontier has focused too narrowly a knee-jerk military response to crises. Yan and his superiors saw reconstruction as a way to ensure a stable long-lasting peace through state policy that got at the root of the social and economic causes of rebellion.

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<sup>54</sup> Biyuan, "zouyi bianqiang yinei shiye pinmin fu laifeng xian chenggeng ru guanpantu zhe," Dan Xiangliang, ed., *Hunan miaofang tunzheng kao* (1884), 2:44a-46b.

<sup>55</sup> Yan Ruyi, "ping Miao shanhou shiyi yi," *Leyuan wenchao* (1844), 5:4a-13a.

While under Yan’s direction, reconstruction continued along the same line as the general plan devised by Helin, but Yan also added his own more specific points for reconstruction. For the most part, Yan’s plan for reconstruction along the Hunan frontier appears much more conventional. His proposal contained fourteen issues, which were as follows:

| Discussion on Matters of Reconstruction to Pacify the Miao |            |   |
|--|------------|---|
| Yan Ruyi   |            |   |
| Article 1  | 堅築土堡以資攻守   | Construct earthen fortresses to assist in defense and offense.                  |
| Article 2  | 廣開屯田以省軍費   | Expand state farms to conserve military expenses.                               |
| Article 3  | 酌設彝目以便苗治   | Establish native officials to assist in managing the Miao.                      |
| Article 4  | 固麻陽以壯鎮筸之聲援 | Fortify Mayang to strengthen Zhen’gan’s support.                                |
| Article 5  | 重浦市以厚辰州之屏障 | Pay attention to Pushi to thicken Chenzhou’s barrier.                           |
| Article 6  | 壯新寨以通永鳳    | Strengthen new stockade villages to allow passage to Yong[sui] and Feng[huang]. |
| Article 7  | 營洗溪以謹乾瀘    | Establish an encampment at Xixi to safeguard Qian[zhou] and Lu[xi].             |
| Article 8  | 重偉者以聯永乾    | Pay attention to Weizhe to connect Yong[sui] and Qian[zhou].                    |
| Article 9  | 防芭茅以扼松永    | Defend Baxu to control Song[tao] and Yong[sui].                                 |
| Article 10   | 移營花園以箝各土   | Move encampments to Huayuan to suppress each place.                             |
| Article 11   | 用鵬剿以清除孽役   | Use extermination patrols to eradicate evil subjects. (                         |
| Article 12   | 借牛種以恤難民    | Lend oxen and seed to relieve refugees.   |
| Article 13   | 禁買苗產以安苗業   | Forbid the purchase of Miao property to secure Miao livelihood.                 |
| Article 14   | 禁買苗產以安苗業   | Forbid the purchase of Miao women to end Miao wickedness.                       |

Table 1.4 - Yan Ruyi, “ping Miao shanhou shiyi yi” in *Leyuan wenchao* (1844), 5:4a-13a.

Ostensibly, Yan’s idea of reconstruction was very similar to Yengisan and Wan Tang. Nine of these points are familiar issues of defense, patrols, garrisons, and state farms, reflecting the kind of continuity in the concerns for frontier security. Yan was acting within a tradition of ideas of reconstruction along the frontier, and hence many of the similar military concerns, but the frontier was also a place where officials were open to new possibilities and borrowing from other parts of the empire and the distant past.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> McMahan, *Rethinking the Decline of China’s Qing Dynasty*, 132-163.

Despite similar military concerns, Yan also expanded the meaning of reconstruction, much as Helin did, by incorporating other much older ideas from the imperial past often categorized under the umbrella of relief. Most notably, his twelfth point, “lend oxen and seed to relieve refugees,” was something entirely new within the context of reconstruction, but was a practice with deeper roots within Chinese statecraft. Since as early as the Song, the state often lent out oxen and seed to encourage agrarian production either after disasters such as famine or as a part of state projects to open new lands particularly when it came to state farms. In the *Summary of Famine Statecraft*, a handbook and history of policies of famine relief published in 1821, the lending of oxen and seed to farmers is discussed going back to 996 when the Song Emperor Taizong ordered that relief be given to subjects suffering from a famine and oxen and seed lent out to those that did not have them to encourage a return to production.<sup>57</sup> These loan programs also often included farming tools such as plowshares as a package deal for startup capital, which was to be paid back, either in kind or in cash, after a period of time (usually three years). Although these state operated loan programs were commonly practiced, they generally did not appear in discussions of post-conflict reconstruction before the late-eighteenth century and were rare along the frontier except as a part of expanding state farms.

The ways in which Yan discusses state farms is also framed in an entirely different way. Although state farms were a common part of post-conflict reconstruction throughout the Ming and Qing periods, they were termed as a means to supply the military, as previously discussed. Yan still saw state farms as important for supplying local garrisons, but he understood state farms as playing a much broader role in providing land and livelihood to subjects. In his “Letter on Matters of Pacifying Rebels in the Three Provinces and Reconstruction,” he begins by making a typical argument for the expansion of state farms, claiming that by appropriating lands abandoned in the war, the state could expand garrisons on the Miao

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<sup>57</sup> Wang Zhiyi, “*dai niu zhong*,” Wang Zhiyi, ed., *Huangzheng Jiyao* (1806), 5:16a-b; Also see, Lu Zengyu, “*dai niu zhong*,” Wang Zhiyi, ed., *Huangzheng Jiyao* (1806), 5:14b-16a.

frontier by as much as 30,000 *mu*, but he goes on to outline the benefits of state farms for local stability: “Now, refugees and surrendered rebels will be settled and their expenses can be provided for. This policy will enrich them and imitate Chao Cuo’s policy of enriching the borders.”<sup>58</sup> His invocation of Chao Cuo (晁錯, c. 200-154 BCE), a Han dynasty prime minister, is in reference to his policies of settling frontier regions with Han migrants, to provide an economic basis to support border defense.<sup>59</sup> Yan also saw state farms as a way for the state to monitor, control, and punish Han settlers or as he termed it a form of atonement: “By settling on state farms, they can atone for their crimes and deceit.” The war itself was, in the eyes of Yan and many Qing officials, caused primarily by Han settlers pushing into Miao lands. State farms, therefore, acted not only as a means of provisioning the local garrison, but also a place to put people (mostly Han settlers) displaced by war and watch over them closely so that they could not move into Miao territories.

By 1798, Yan’s view of state farms had shifted completely to emphasizing its potential in maintaining social stability. In a memorial to the emperor on reconstruction for the White Lotus War raging across Sichuan, Shaanxi, and Hubei, Yan expressed concern that revolting subjects were driven to such desperate measures because of official corruption and poverty, and if the state wished to stamp out sedition in the region, they needed to provide a stable livelihood. Moreover, the militarization of local society made achieving peace even more difficult, because armed men who earned a living through violence were unlikely to put down their arms if there were no other alternatives for employment. State farms were a solution to this problem, and one Yan would continually emphasize:

The war has been going on for years, the army is getting older, and funds are lacking. The masses are tired and are pushed into large forests and deep valleys along with crafty rebels. There is nowhere to settle the rebels that have surrendered, and thus even though they have surrendered they rebel yet again. Subjects that were displaced do not have the resources to survive, and thus even though they are good, they continue to rebel. Many irregular village

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<sup>58</sup> Yan Ruyi, “*pingding sansheng luanmin shanhou shiyi shu*,” *Leyuan wenchao* (1844), 6:3b.

<sup>59</sup> Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 101 *juan*; Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, 49 *juan*.

troops and garrison soldiers are destitute and so they sell themselves out. I wonder what will happen once the troops are disbanded and the rations stop; they may very well turn against us and prolong the conflict. What is there that can be done to stop the conflict? Your humble servant foolishly thought that we should not follow the ancient method of state farms, but the destruction and betrayal in the three provinces [Sichuan, Shaanxi, and Hubei] has devastated no less than a hundred million *mu* of land. Those displaced and those that have surrendered have nowhere to go home to and irregular village troops and garrison soldiers have no livelihood. If they join into state farms and defend the land in militias, then I estimate that we could support several tens of thousands of soldiers. This will save on expenses while increasing the army and transform brigands into subjects.<sup>60</sup>

The fact that Yan claimed to have originally rejected state farms, reveals that supplying the local garrison was not his main concern because state farms were by nature intended merely to supply local garrisons. Upon considering the potential impact state farms might have on local stability, however, he articulates a version of state farms that sees them as a socially stabilizing program. Additionally, Yan is clearly anxious about militarization among the civilian population much more than maintaining a strong military presence in the region. His fears are clearly directed towards irregular troops and how to transition them to a civilian life, and it is in state farms that he sees a solution.

Yan Ruyi's proposal was met with considerable support from the imperial court. Yan was called to appear before the Grand Council to discuss his ideas on state farms and granted an imperial audience. He was immediately promoted to the rank of magistrate, despite the fact that he only held a *gongsheng* degree (usually, magistrates had a *juren* at the minimum). He was appointed as the magistrate of Xunyang County in southern Shaanxi in 1801, which was just emerging from the ravages of the White Lotus War. He would spend the next quarter century in various posts in southern Shaanxi, eventually serving as a circuit judge and provincial treasurer. Yan earned a reputation as an expert in frontier management and post-war reconstruction, and oversaw reconstruction in much of southern Shaanxi in the early nineteenth century.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Zhao Erxuan, ed., *Qing shi gao*, (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), 361:11391.

<sup>61</sup> McMahan, *Rethinking the Decline of China's Qing Dynasty*, 103-132.

In southern Shaanxi, reconstruction followed many of the same lines of thought laid out in the Hunan frontier years prior, but considerably more sustained attention was given to reconstruction in the region by the imperial court and local officials. Yan not only oversaw a large resettlement program for those displaced by the war, irregular village troops, and even surrendered enemies on state farms, he also sought to encourage stronger commercial connections with neighboring regional markets to provide alternative livelihoods for subjects and deepen its regional connections through commercialized crops (cotton, wheat, and fruits) as well as primary products (mostly timber). He directed a much-celebrated program (albeit its impact was probably very little) that imported mulberry trees for sericulture to promote a local silk industry, which could then be traded in neighboring markets in Hubei.<sup>62</sup> This would also allow the region to capitalize on the labor of women, who were generally seen as responsible for the work of weaving, spinning, and embroidering. Commerce and trade would integrate the region with more established and stable markets, and a stable economy would provide livelihood and thus security in the region.<sup>63</sup>

In order for such a commercial and agricultural expansion to take off in the region, Yan and many of his colleagues in the region believed that investing in local infrastructure was essential for economic development. In the early nineteenth century, southern Shaanxi officials rebuilt city walls, and new administrative offices constructed to expand their control over the region. New libraries were built, academies repaired, and old historical sites restored to create an atmosphere of learning and a local identity that was linked to the imperial project. More importantly for economic development, numerous infrastructural projects were undertaken: new weir walls, dikes, and reservoirs were built and old ones rebuilt; the imperial postal road was repaired; and irrigation and water control systems put in place. While none of these activities were new in and of themselves in late imperial history, it was something

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 119-120.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 116-118.

new in the context of reconstruction along the frontier. These were things often left to local government and community to resolve after a conflict and not the realm of post-conflict reconstruction plans in the previous century, but in early nineteenth century southern Shaanxi, the imperial court initially provided substantial funds for reconstructing, which would gradually wither after a decade.<sup>64</sup>

Part of the special attention southern Shaanxi received in reconstruction was due to the strategic position the region played in connecting northern China to the Sichuan basin. A crucial imperial postal road crossed the impenetrable steep Qinling Mountains through southern Shaanxi, providing an essential communication link between the imperial court, the eight banner garrison in Xi'an, and Sichuan. It is also difficult to deny that ethnicity played a role in the special favor southern Shaanxi received from officials and the court in reconstruction. Southern Shaanxi occupied a unique position in the political administration of the Qing empire. The region had been within the historical and cultural sphere of Chinese dynasties going back to the Zhou and was predominately Han in ethnic composition. Despite this, the region had also been a historically restless frontier zone. As Daniel McMahon characterized the region, it was a “non-state space” or in the parlance of Qing officials it was a remote region (奥区): “places ecologically frontier-like, peripheral, perilous, often multiethnic, sites of Han settlement, yet within the larger Qing realm.”<sup>65</sup> Consequently, locals, despite being Han, were often viewed by Qing officials with the same apprehensive eyes as many ethnic minorities - backward, uncouth, uncivilized, violent, sly, and unruly; nonetheless, they were still Han Chinese and thus viewed inherently different than the various ethnic groups of the frontier. The confluence of southern Shaanxi's frontier-like status and predominately Han population solicited special attention in reconstruction, unlike in the Miao regions of the Hunan frontier where, although the state formulated an ambitious

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 106 and 108.



reconstruction plan, these plans quickly fell apart and were never as comprehensive as southern Shaanxi.

Reconstruction in southern Shaanxi in the aftermath of the White Lotus War is somewhat revealing in understanding how the state might approach reconstruction in the imperial core. There were few major conflicts in the heartland of the Chinese empire that matched the Taiping civil war in terms of destruction and loss of life. Those few major conflicts – the Qing conquest and perhaps the Three Feudatories (which was most vigorously fought in the southwest) – we see little concern on the behalf of the state of instituting a consistent program of reconstruction in the modern sense, because there was no concept that the state was obliged or needed to act. Until the late eighteenth century, reconstruction was mainly the domain of the frontier and focused on strengthening the administrative and military power in the region. When it came to post-disaster reconstruction, it was primarily in Han-dominated regions of the empire, and in this version of reconstruction, its purpose was to ensure social stability almost exclusively by preventing flooding through flood control infrastructure. Even then, there was no sense that the purpose of reconstruction was to intervene directly into the livelihood of subjects through state initiatives.

It is hard to say how Qing officials would have imagined reconstruction in the wake of a hypothetical major conflict in the Han heartland of the empire before the nineteenth century because we do not have any examples of any post-conflict reconstruction in these regions nor significantly destructive conflicts on such a large scale. Since post-conflict reconstruction was for the most part enacted along the frontier, it is also hard to distinguish which elements reflect a Qing understanding of how to handle the frontier and which reflect their understanding of the state's obligation to post-war management. In the Ming, the only kind of post-war reconstruction mentioned was much like the frontier narrowly concerned with military reforms, but they were discussed in too little detail to say for sure. The way in which reconstruction unfolded in southern Shaanxi and the Miao frontier of Hunan

seems to suggest that ethnicity did matter, and Han subjects were in some ways privileged in the ways the state responded to post-war problems, even if these responses were still far from perfect.<sup>66</sup> Officials seemed to be willing to invest more in a predominately Han region and focused more on issues of livelihood than on the ethnic frontier, but it is clear that ideas of post-conflict reconstruction on the frontier were also broadening in the early nineteenth century to focus on issues of social stability.

In looking at Yan Ruyi's idea of reconstruction, we do see that the idea of reconstruction was changing, and increasingly emphasized the importance of providing a livelihood to subjects to maintain social stability. The meaning of reconstruction was radically different than what it meant in the Song dynasty, evolving from a straight-forward post-war diagnosis of military preparedness to a set of policies that sought to shore up the state's administration and military might on a restless frontier in the wake of a conflict, and ultimately at the turn of the nineteenth century, to a set of policies to enforce social stability by ensuring a reliable economic basis to keep subjects contented. In the aftermath of the Taiping Civil War, the Qing would embark on a massive project to reconstruct large portions of the empire devastated in the war, and although this project was unprecedented in size and scope, it will become clear in the following pages that they were influenced by these changes in the idea of reconstruction while also adding further to its character.

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<sup>66</sup> McMahon, *Rethinking the Decline of China's Qing Dynasty*.

## Chapter II

### The Reconstruction Bureau: Post-war Institutions, Organization, and the Meaning of Reconstruction

At the turn of the nineteenth century, in the wake of the Miao insurgencies and the White Lotus War, we see a cohort of Qing officials beginning to think of post-war reconstruction as a crucial component to regaining and ensuring a lasting social stability. Although these projects may not have borne fruit in the sense that their architects, such as Yan Ruyi and Helin, intended, it does demonstrate a broader idea and conceptualization of state power, its function, and its responsibilities to its subjects and the importance of political economy in maintaining social stability after the disruptions of war.

After the suppression of the White Lotus, the Qing Empire was relatively stable for half a century with few major conflicts. Most instances in which reconstruction was discussed during this period appeared in frontier policy, such as in Kashgar where Qing administrator grappled with Jahanghir Khoja's attempt to establish his own khanate in 1828, reverting back to issues of military preparedness and political dispensation in their discussions of reconstruction.<sup>1</sup> Following the First Opium War, the British inflicted little damage on the civilian population or infrastructure; therefore, discussions of reconstruction focused on minor repairs to city walls and improving defenses. Interestingly enough, the word reconstruction was also used as a term to refer to the implementation of the Treaty of Nanjing, which was referred to as "matters of trade reconstruction (通商善後事宜)," showing that the idea of reconstruction was rooted in the political resolution of conflict.<sup>2</sup> This term would be used after the

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<sup>1</sup> *Muzong Yi Huangdi Shi Lu*, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 86:54 (hereafter QSL); also see, Kwangmin Kim, "Profit and Protection: Emin Khwaja and the Qing Conquest of Central Asia, 1759–1777," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71:3 (2012), 603-626.

<sup>2</sup> QSL, 178:9.

Second Opium War as well.<sup>3</sup> It also may demonstrate a political discourse that denied defeat by terming the implementation of the treaty less as a concession to the British and more as a way to prevent future conflicts. Thus, the idea of social stability in reconstruction, while emerging at the turn of the nineteenth century, existed in tandem with older concepts and there is little evidence of a permanent shift in the concept, remaining as one among many policies for frontier statecraft.

The mid-nineteenth century would experience a series of massive, devastating civil conflicts, chiefly the Taiping Civil War, which threatened to uproot and overturn the social and political order. At the conclusion of these tumultuous conflicts, there was a revival of discussions about post-war reconstruction in a wholly new catastrophic environment, fundamentally and irrevocably transforming the state's role in post-war settlements in order to contend with major social, political, and economic dislocation. Unlike past conflicts in which post-war resolutions focused on security and political settlements or left reconstruction to local officials to undertake on an *ad hoc* basis, Qing officials and local gentry imagined a very ambitious program for post-war reconstruction that sought to restore the antebellum social and political order through a partnership between the state and local elites in a quasi-bureaucratic institution, the Reconstruction Bureau (善後局), to manage post-war issues across multiple provinces impacted by the war. The Reconstruction Bureau, as well as other post-war institutions and policies, sought to restore the political authority of the state, the social order, the privileges and status of local elites, and the economy through a series of interventionist policies regulated by the state and managed by elites outside the bounds of officialdom.

Post-war reconstruction grew out of institutions that emerged during the war to fight the Taiping, such as irregular armies and the *lijin* tax (釐金), which relied on a loose partnership between the state, extra-bureaucratic officials, and local elites. Officials granted local elites a degree of autonomy in managing the war and collecting revenue, more out of necessity than desire, blurring the boundaries

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<sup>3</sup> Wu Huiyuan, ed., *Xu Tianjin xianzhi* (1870), 282.

between officialdom and elites, to combat the Taiping. The growth of the powerful Xiang army, an irregular army under the loose command of Zeng Guofan, would initiate this new relationship between the state and local elites. This kind of political arrangement would extend into post-war reconstruction, where extra-bureaucratic officials (either local elites or former secretaries in the irregular army) were granted the authority to direct post-war reconstruction. Although there were shared ideas among officials and local elites about how to approach reconstruction and what needed to be done, there were significant differences in various regions in how it was approached and the resources available, favoring some regions and neglecting others.

Sources on the Reconstruction Bureau and reconstruction in the post-war in general are unfortunately highly fragmentary. Unlike in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when there were relatively thorough discussions of reconstruction between local officials and the imperial court, in the aftermath of the Taiping civil war, there was little discussion at the imperial court or between the imperial court and local and provincial officials. The few discussions that occurred were in highly idealized and superficial terms with only very general notions suggested to the imperial courts about what they were doing. In most reports to the imperial court about the retaking of a city from the Taiping or various other insurgent groups, military officials would often affix the comment that they were “handling matters of reconstruction” without any description of what that term meant.<sup>4</sup> This was, in part, because there was probably a tacit understanding of what “matters of reconstruction” referred to, but also the changing dynamics of power among local elites, officials, extra-bureaucratic officials, and the imperial court. The civil war seriously eroded the authority of the imperial court in the 1850s as

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<sup>4</sup> In most cases, officials simply make the remark “handling matters of reconstruction” in imperial memorials without any references to what they were doing specifically. For example see, Han Chenggeng, Luo Zhenyue, et al., eds., *Zeng Guofan quanji: zougao* (Changsha: Yuelu Shuju, 1987), vol. 1, 176-177 and vol 4., 2233 (hereafter ZGFQJ).

more decisions were deferred to provincial and local officials.<sup>5</sup> Officials further sought the support of local elites who were often appointed to run extra-bureaucratic institutions, increasingly making decisions that were previously the realm of officialdom. With the death of the Xianfeng Emperor on August 22, 1861 and shortly thereafter the ascension of the Empress Dowager Cixi in the imperial court, power, and decision making devolved more to provincial and local officials with only a tacit perfunctory nod from Beijing required to act (and in many cases not even that). Without any real need for imperial approval in the management of reconstruction that began in the early 1860s, there was little discussion between officials in the provinces with Beijing on issues of post-war reconstruction. A few memorials briefly outlined their policies, but in highly idealized and general terms that did not reflect the reality on the ground.<sup>6</sup>

Instead, decisions pertaining to post-war reconstruction were largely left up to provincial officials such as Zeng Guofan, and he often elicited the participation of local elites and extra-bureaucratic officials in determining and outlining the post-war settlement. Thus key sources in understanding post-war reconstruction come not from imperial memorials, but in the correspondence between Governor-Generals, Generals, Governors, local officials, local elites, and directors of reconstruction bureaus, where the general goals and organization of reconstruction were laid out. In particular, Zeng Guofan discussed in detail with many local officials and local gentry reconstruction in Jiangning Prefecture in the fall of 1864 in a series of memoranda and correspondence. Other governors such as Ma Xinyi and Ding Richang left similar records as well. However, these records are also incomplete and only tell us what these officials intended to do, and not necessarily how it worked in practice.

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<sup>5</sup> Philip A. Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies: Militarization and Social Structure, 1796-1864* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 161-163.

<sup>6</sup> For example see, ZGFQJ, vol. 7 3774, 3780, vol. 8 1775, 4250-4255, 4275, 4282.

Another crucial source for understanding the post-war period comes from various local gazetteers published in the years following the war. As an important guide to elite society and local history, gazetteers were an important medium for local elites involved in reconstruction to parade their efforts and loyalty to the dynasty publically. This was particularly the case in counties or prefectures where the compiler of the local gazetteer was also a former director of the local reconstruction bureau;<sup>7</sup> moreover, with the horrors of the war still fresh in their minds, compilers of gazetteers publishing soon after the war in the 1860s and 1870s were more likely to discuss reconstruction in detail than those published later. Unfortunately, publishing a gazetteer was a luxury for a society recovering from over a decade of war, and very few were published in the years following the war. Despite having a long history of frequent updates and republications of gazetteers in the Jiangnan region, the 1860s and 1870s saw few gazetteers published. In fact, this was the case for most of the middle and lower Yangzi River valley, the most heavily impacted region in the Qing Empire.<sup>8</sup> There is also an inherent bias in what kind of reconstruction works were discussed in gazetteers. Gazetteers served as a source for local prestige for the gentry, and post-war projects that elevated their status as men of culture and benevolence, such as rebuilding academies, temples, or charitable works, were emphasized and discussed at length, whereas projects that focused on infrastructure or routine administrative works such as settling refugees and surveying land were often ignored and received little attention from local gentry even if they did participate in such activities. It was simply more prestigious to be involved in providing relief for refugees or building a temple than rebuilding bridges, delineating property ownership, or repairing

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<sup>7</sup> In Tongxiang County, for example, Yan Chen who served as the director of the bureau also compiled the gazetteer. Yan Chen, ed., *Tongxiang xianzhi* (1887), 1-10.

<sup>8</sup> Exceptions to this were the provinces of Jiangxi and Hunan. In Hunan, veteran generals of the Civil War from Hunan invested in the publication of local gazetteers, which celebrated the role of Hunan in the war, but did not discuss post-war, partly because the destruction of the war was minimal there. Jiangxi benefited from a subsidy from Governor Shen Baozhen, resulting in nearly every county in the province publishing a gazetteer in the 1860s and 1870s; however, there was no local reconstruction bureau in Jiangxi except for the provincial Reconstruction Bureau, which was little discussed and performed little.

water control. Nonetheless, such projects that did not elicit prestige also involved large numbers of local gentry, because occasionally there remain occasional fragmented references to such projects.

One exceptional set of gazetteers were several gazetteers published in Jiangning Prefecture and its constituent counties. Jiangning Prefecture, the seat of the former Taiping stronghold of Nanjing, held particular significance for reconstruction. Not only because it was the former rebel capital, but also because it suffered terrible devastation during the war, which garnered particular attention and investment in reconstruction from Zeng Guofan and other Qing officials. Zeng intended for Nanjing served as the model for post-war reconstruction in the Jiangnan region, which makes gazetteers in Jiangning Prefecture, mostly published in the 1870s, especially revealing on how Zeng imagined these bureaus operating. These gazetteers tend to discuss in great detail how reconstruction worked and many of its projects. The attention paid to post-war reconstruction reflected both the importance of it to local society, but also the fact that the publication of these gazetteers were sponsored by Zeng Guofan and his protégées in the irregular army, who wished to highlight their role as restorers of peace and “cultured learning” to a society devastated by war. In these gazetteers, we get a much better look at the organizational structure and projects undertaken by the local Reconstruction Bureau and local officials.<sup>9</sup> It is by no means a complete project since its purpose was to celebrate the role of officials and state functionaries, but a much more complete picture than offered from many other sources.

Zeng’s vision for reconstruction included a much broader and more involved role for the state in the lives of its subjects. The Reconstruction Bureau oversaw numerous post-war institutions and offices that managed specific post-war issues and problems, such as infrastructural projects, instituting law and order, loaning oxen and seeds, and resettling refugees. These institutions borrowed heavily from imperial frontier statecraft but instituted reconstruction on a scale heretofore unseen in Chinese history. They also attempted to organize reconstruction along a regular bureaucratic model with offices and

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<sup>9</sup> Jiang Qixun, ed., *Xu zuan Jiangning fuzhi* (1880), 11-12, 699.



personnel with specific duties in the post-war landscape. At the same time, Zeng's idea of post-war reconstruction was rooted in neo-Confucian and *jingshi* philosophies of statecraft that emphasized selecting the right man for the job both in terms of moral character and expertise knowledge.<sup>10</sup> He believed that there was no need for a sprawling inefficient bureaucracy, but a small nimble structure of upright and capable men. This idea was molded in part by his own beliefs on proper governance, but also the realities of financial constraints in the aftermath of war.

The model that Zeng provided in the Reconstruction Bureau in Jiangning Prefecture provided a baseline for other parts of the empire to emulate; nonetheless, there were significant regional differences in how post-war reconstruction was handled. In Jiangning Prefecture, on the one hand, Zeng implemented an extra-bureaucratic system for reconstruction that was deeply enmeshed with the local government and Zeng's personal bureaucracy, giving the Reconstruction Bureau access to resources and influence. It was a more strongly state-controlled and bureaucratic model of reconstruction. On the other hand, the delegation of power into the hands of local elites and financial constraints led many local governments to turn to local elites. This was a more locally centered post-war reconstruction depending on local gentry experienced in fund raising and managing charities to gain access to their resources for reconstruction. Although local elites had considerable sway over local bureaus, they were by no means autonomous. They were overseen by officials and on occasion required local officials to intervene directly in bureau affairs, but local elites had considerable say over how the money they raised for the community should be allocated.

The Reconstruction Bureau was not a monolithic centralized institution but a loose collection of reconstruction bureaus that generally operated independently from one another, while sharing similar goals and a similar structure that brought together a wide array of participants from the state and local

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<sup>10</sup> Mary Clabaugh Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-chih Restoration, 1862-1874* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), 68-96.

society. Common post-war goals did not mean that their emphasis was necessarily in the same place nor did it mean that resources were equally shared among each other. Different models and priorities in local reconstruction would have different results, which would ultimately advantage certain places over others.

In the aftermath of war, officials and local elites viewed the hollowed ruins of the cities as an omen for traumatized and shattered social order. Fearing that the disorder following war could breed new rebellion, they felt that it was imperative to act to stabilize society and restore it to an antebellum order.<sup>11</sup> There was much that needed to be done, and the dizzying array of social, economic, and political issues they faced was an avalanche that threatened to overwhelm them. They were motivated by a common sense that a failure to mitigate the dislocation and destruction caused by the war. Nonetheless, with few resources at hand, it is questionable how effective their plans for post-war reconstruction was, but the fact that they imagined and attempted to enact a broader program that attempted to intervene and stabilize society is significant in itself, marking a shift from the idea of reconstruction that existed centuries before.

### *The Emergence of Post-war Reconstruction and Zeng Guofan*

The modern concept of reconstruction is often viewed as a set of perfunctory policies formulated at the conclusion of armed conflicts, and this was true for most in the Taiping Civil War. In other ways, post-war reconstruction emerged in the opening of hostilities as the state attempted to grapple with resistance and comes to understand the root of conflict in particular ways. As cities and territory were recovered in the war, the work of rebuilding and stabilizing society began almost immediately, whether out of some kind of humanitarian concern or out of strategic military calculations.

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<sup>11</sup> ZGFQJ, vol. 7, 4266-4269, 4282-4283.

In the early years of the Taiping Civil War, discussions about “reconstruction” were rare, but did occasionally appear even if only spoken of in vague terms. Upon retaking cities occupied by the Taiping, generals and officials writing to the imperial court would often make ambiguous statements about “handling matters of reconstruction” (籌辦善後事宜). As it stands these statements do not elaborate as to the meaning of these phrases. In fact throughout the war, what exactly constituted a “matter” of reconstruction that needed to be handled is often nebulously expressed through this phrase without much explanation. Central to this manuscript is an attempt to understand what was meant when officials stated they were undertaking reconstruction. What did reconstruction mean to them?

What reconstruction could potentially mean varied from person to person and the context of their time and place. It was by no means universally understood. Early references to reconstruction, while unclear from imperial records, seem to be essentially military considerations. Before 1860, there are no clear references to systematically providing relief, resettling refugees, restoring local production, or handling land disputes, nor are there many efforts to or emphasis on rebuild bridges, administrative buildings, or local academies. In desperate times of war, these things were largely superfluous to military imperatives. Nonetheless, we still see efforts after retaking cities referred to as “reconstruction.” In these, these references most likely reflected on older definitions that centered on military defense.

The major port along the Yangzi River, Jiujiang, for instance, was taken by the Qing on May 19, 1858, through a lengthy siege lasting well over a year, and a very rapid effort was undertaken to rebuild the walls. The siege heavily damaged the city walls; five of the seven gate towers were in ruin, large breaches were made in the northeast and southwest corners of the wall, the embrasures and merlons had crumbled away, and sappers had crisscrossed under the walls, weakening the foundations. The city walls were mostly intact, but the damage rendered them essentially useless for defense if the Taiping, who still remained a few dozen miles downriver, ever came back. Since Jiujiang was a critically

important strategic point along the Yangzi River, rebuilding the city walls was an immediate military priority upon recovering the city. Work began on July 21, with irregular soldiers often providing much of the labor with funds and material provided by the military, quickly levied fees, and the sale of imperial ranks, costing over 17,500 *liang*, an astronomical amount for a city during a time of war.<sup>12</sup> In little time, work was completed on January 20, 1859. The work on Jiujiang's wall was the kind of work referred to in many sources as a "matter of reconstruction" and repairing city walls was a basic function of reconstruction efforts.<sup>13</sup>

For the most part, discussions of reconstruction largely referred to these kinds of military and defense concerns during the war; thus it was far from the kind of notion of reconstruction that we understand today, which centers on social, political, and economic issues. Moreover, it was largely *ad hoc* and not a part of imperial policy. In fact, the imperial court was hardly involved at all even in the rebuilding walls, which was largely handled by the irregular army through who often used their own funds or raised funds from the local community, either by imperial brevet ranks, assessing surtaxes and transit taxes, or compulsory donations for projects such as rebuilding city walls.<sup>14</sup> In a number of ways, this looks familiar to the kind of reconstruction discussed in the previous chapter that was mostly concerned with issues of security and defense.

This would lead to a part of post-war reconstruction that would not only be true during the war but well after its conclusion. The imperial court would have little to do with post-war reconstruction beyond a tacit nod and a few occasional grants of funds that were rarely sufficient for even minor project. When it came to drafting post-war reconstruction policy, authority rested largely in the hands of local and provincial officials as well as the leadership of the irregular army and local gentry. It was a new

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<sup>12</sup> To put that into context, the same amount of money could have paid the wages of several irregular brigades for an entire year.

<sup>13</sup> Da Chunshi, ed., *Jiujiang fuzhi* (1874), 444-446.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*; Elisabeth Kaske, "Fund-Raising Wars: Office Selling and Interprovincial Finance in Nineteenth Century China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 71.1 (June 2011), 69-141.

nexus of policy making outside the court that made such decisions on the post-war settlement, which would incorporate a host of actors national and local as well as inside and outside the bounds of the imperial bureaucracy.

As is well-known to many historians through the work of Philip Kuhn and others before him, state authority devolved considerably into the hands provincial and local officials as well as local gentry as society mobilized more local resources to fight the war.<sup>15</sup> The imperial court was relatively weak during the war with the failure of regular imperial forces to effectively suppress the Taiping and other uprisings, leading to the rise of irregular provincial armies; moreover after the death of the Xianfeng Emperor in 1861, Beijing was essentially ruled by the Grand Council and a council of regents comprised of the Empress Dowagers Cixi, Ci'an, and Prince- Regent Gong who oversaw the young Tongzhi Emperor. Provincial armies that constituted the forefront of the imperial faction were also empowered in matters of state when it came to local and provincial governance. The state was still kept privy to happenings in the provinces, officials were still formally appointed by the bureaucracy, and major decisions still had to be confirmed by the emperor, but the actual center of power shifted towards provinces. Provincial officials did consult with the imperial court concerning post-war issues, including reconstruction, but the Grand Council generally deferred to the judgment of local officials, perfunctorily granting most provincial requests, especially those made by Zeng Guofan. Discussions with the imperial court about reconstruction rarely went into much detail, and once discussions were concluded, such issues were not brought up again in imperial records.<sup>16</sup> Thus when we talk about reconstruction efforts undertaken by the state, the real center of state authority rested in provincial administrations and local officials, varying across provincial boundaries. The bulk of the discourse on reconstruction occurred between

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<sup>15</sup> Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies*, 1-11.

<sup>16</sup> See, ZGFQJ, vol. 7 3774, 3780, vol. 8 1775, 4250-4255, 4275, 4282.

officials at the provincial, prefectural, and county officials and notable local gentry who acted as bureau directors and heads of charities.<sup>17</sup>

The issue of an organized state response to post-war reconstruction, instead of the *ad hoc* response undertaken by military commanders, began to emerge after the Taiping stronghold of Anqing, the provincial capital of Anhui, fell to the Xiang Army on September 5, 1861 after a protracted and bloody siege that lasted over a year. The Qing victory in Anqing was a major triumph in the war effort in what had proved to be an overall disappointing year for them. As the provincial capital and bastion of Taiping resistance guarding the way east towards Nanjing, Anqing held important symbolic significance for the Qing, and thus its reconstruction also gained importance to mark the return of Qing rule. That fall and winter work began, as expected after a victorious siege, to repair the city walls, which came largely out of the pockets of the irregular army. Zeng also moved the headquarters of the irregular army to the city almost immediately and began work on several public buildings destroyed in battle to at the least have a place to house his growing camp of bureaucrats.<sup>18</sup>

It was also at this point that Zeng became increasingly concerned about maintaining social stability in the region, turning his attention towards a mounting famine in the recently liberated regions along the war front, especially the wealthy Huizhou region in southern Anhui, which was especially dependent on the overland importation of food. In the lull in the campaign season in the winter of 1861-1862, Zeng turned his attention towards providing relief to refugees, establishing seven porridge kitchens (粥廠) each able to feed 3,000 people. Porridge kitchens were common practice in the statecraft of famine relief. They were typically set up in or around temples, as officials, generally weary of large numbers of desperate individuals, wanted them established at some distance from major cities and towns where displaced people were less likely to cause a disturbance. This was certainly the case

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<sup>17</sup> Han Chenggeng, Luo Zhenyue, et al., eds., *Zeng Guofan quanji: pidu* (Changsha: Yuelu Shuju, 1987), 322,324, 325, 335, 337, 338, 340, 341, 343 (hereafter ZGFQJPD).

<sup>18</sup> Zhu Zhiying, ed., *Huaining xianzhi* (1918), 439, 2053.

here, and Zeng was doubtful whether these porridge kitchens would actually be effective, stating in a letter to his brother, “this is nothing more than a minor repair.”<sup>19</sup> In some ways, it was a mere drop in the bucket of human suffering in the war, but it marked a first step in thinking about post-war reconstruction by expressing a concern for the survival and welfare of subjects and its potential implications for social stability.

Over the next couple years, Zeng would ramp up his efforts to feed refugees through several porridge kitchens and relief programs either through state sponsored bureaus or encouraging local gentry and charities to provide relief. Here we see Zeng experiment with different ways to provide famine relief. Within a year of taking Anqing, Qing officials, under Zeng’s direct encouragement, established the Support and Relief Office (養濟院) to provide relief for war widows, orphans, those maimed in fighting, and the destitute. As a government office, it received funding directly from the salt tax as well as a government land grant from which the office collected rent. The money was probably insufficient to support many people, as its revenue only amounted to 65 *liang* a month;<sup>20</sup> however, officials also managed to gain assistance from local gentry, who established a local charity, called the Support Hearts Bureau (養心局), to concurrently do much the same work.<sup>21</sup> A licentiate from a wealthy merchant family, Xu Maolin (徐茂林), led the effort at the Support Hearts Bureau. For much of the war, he was also deeply involved in relief work for war refugees within Taiping-occupied territory on the outskirts of Anqing.<sup>22</sup> A mixture of both state and local gentry efforts encouraged by the state in reconstruction was a common strategy employed in the postbellum period. When possible, officials

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<sup>19</sup> See, Han Chenggeng, Luo Zhenyue, et al., eds., *Zeng Guofan quanji: jishu* (hereafter ZGFQJS) (Changsha: Yuelu Shuju, 1987), 753; Lillian Li, *Fighting Famine in North China: State, Market, and Environmental Decline, 1690s-1990s* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 228-229; Stephen R. Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 251-252.

<sup>20</sup> *Huaining xianzhi* (1918), 360, 449, 1206, 1978.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 368-369, 389, 2860. He would also do something similar in Nanjing shortly after occupying the city in 1864 see, Mo Xiangzhi, ed., *Shangjiang liangxian xianzhi* (1874), 788.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 2860.

preferred to defer such relief efforts to local elites and rely on charitable efforts, operating more like a philanthropy than a state office, even if the state had a hand in its direction and establishment.

At the same time, a host of granaries was established in Anqing to provide logistical support to the irregular army under the office of the Liangtai (糧臺). The Liangtai was responsible for procuring grain for the military. It was the logistical arm of the Qing military, but during the Civil War also supported irregular armies. The Anqing Liangtai was staffed by men appointed from Zeng's personal bureaucracy, who he directed to also oversee civilian granaries as well as the military's. Essentially, Zeng used the military's logistical networks as a mechanism to manage civilian granaries, control grain prices, and provide deeply discounted grain to refugees when local charitable institutions and porridge kitchens did not suffice.<sup>23</sup> It was a decidedly different approach to famine relief from relying on the military and state resources and not local elites. Besides the military's involvement in supporting civilian granary's during this period in Anqing, there is little else discussed about its impact, but it does provide us two routes with which Zeng was experimenting as a way to handle post-war reconstruction: a model centered on traditions of state encouraged elite led philanthropy and another focused on carefully managed military granary that is reminiscent of that discussed by Pierre Etienne-Will and R. Bin Wong for the eighteenth century.<sup>24</sup>

The impact of these relief programs and charities are indeterminate, but Zeng's assessment of its impact as being no more than a "minor repair" was most likely true considering the magnitude of the crisis and lack of resources;<sup>25</sup> nonetheless, these acts of relief had symbolic significance. Porridge kitchens and relief granaries were common during the war and its immediate aftermath because they were seen as a benevolent act on behalf of the state that had restorative power to the moral fabric of

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 1528, 1585-1588, 1734, 2861-2862.

<sup>24</sup> Pierre-Etienne Will and R. Bin Wong, *Nourish the People: The State Civilian Granary System in China, 1650-1850* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1991).

<sup>25</sup> ZGFQJS, 788.



society.<sup>26</sup> In Yu Zhi's *Tears from a Man of Iron*, we also see the porridge kitchen depicted as an act of charitable benevolence. Yu describes the porridge kitchen as a place where the emperor's munificence was directly expressed as officials gave their wealth to beleaguered subjects: "It is not the case that Emperor's army is [bleak and dreary] like rain. Who is it that is mollifying our common people by giving money and dispersing food to satiate the hungry and poor?"<sup>27</sup> In the image at the bottom, we see a porridge kitchen where sickly men, elders, women and children collect bowls of porridge overseen by a benevolent well-dressed man of gentry status. At the table to the left, a clerk is providing downtrodden refugees with small gifts of money to support them.<sup>28</sup> These acts represented the return of a moral universe and a foil to the treatment faced under Taiping control.<sup>29</sup> Whether or not porridge kitchens and charities were impactful is beside the point. For this purpose what mattered is that the state could claim to have benevolent compassion for the plight of subjects during troubled times despite the astronomical cost and conflict, and therein lies an important part of post-war reconstruction; the creation of a narrative that promises a return to a proper moral order in which the state fulfilled its moral responsibilities to subjects. In this lay the fundamental power of reconstruction as a symbol of the restoration of a proper moral, political, and social order, in which Zeng and many other officials and military officers would increasingly invest their interest in the last days of the war.<sup>30</sup>

At the center of post-war planning was Zeng's *mufu* (幕府) or tent administration, a sprawling unofficial bureaucracy of military aides-de-camp and extra bureaucratic clerks that were in the personal employ of Zeng Guofan. Many officials and officers in the irregular army employed their own tent

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<sup>26</sup> Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley, *Tears from Iron: Cultural Response to Famine in Nineteenth-Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Yu Zhi, *Jiangnan tieleitu* (n.d.; repr., Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1974), 87.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>29</sup> Tobie Meyer-Fong, *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19<sup>th</sup> Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 22-62.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure 2.1 – “Delighted in the Re-rectification of Order, they Celebrate the Peace.”

Yu Zhi, “Le zhang zai zheng qi qing shengping,” *Jiangnan tielei tu* (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1974), 87.

administrations to provide administrative support, intelligence, and assist in governance. The various men who worked in the tent administration were called *muyou* (幕友) or tent companions, who became increasingly specialized over the course of the war.<sup>31</sup> A small cohort of these tent officers, such as Li Shuchang, Tan Ao, Li Hongyi, Pang Jiyun, Yang Wenhui, and Hong Rukui, was assigned to various task

<sup>31</sup> Jonathan Porter, *Tsêng Kuo-fan's Private Bureaucracy* (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies University of California, 1972), 20-22.

that would form the bedrock of his post-war administration.<sup>32</sup> By 1863, centering around these tent officers, several informal offices emerged in southern Anhui that focused on managing post-war chaos through bureaucratic means. Their functions varied. In Huizhou there was an agency called the Bureau to Encourage Agriculture (勸農局) responsible for settling land disputes and encouraging refugees who fled to return to farming;<sup>33</sup> another bureau called the Bureau of Oxen and Seeds (牛種局) provided start-up capital to returning refugees to encourage them to return to farming;<sup>34</sup> and a host of porridge kitchens, granaries, and state-backed charities provided famine relief.<sup>35</sup> They even began turning their attention to the more symbolic aspects of state control by constructing an administration to commemorate the dead in 1862 called the Bureau to Interview the Loyal and Righteous (採訪忠義局).<sup>36</sup> This loose collection of local administrators who handled wartime disorder with bureaucratic efficiency would eventually form the structural basis of Zeng Guofan's vision of post-war reconstruction at the end of the war.

### *"Reviving Cultured Learning"*

Zeng has primarily been known for his military role in leading the Xiang Army to defeat the Taiping, but that does not seem to be how he wanted to be remembered. Biographies of Zeng are often enveloped in a martial ethos, but he saw his role as a general as a burden taken on because of the necessities of the times, and he was self-admittedly a mediocre tactician. His talent rested in organizing men through his personal network, which allowed him to build a coalition.<sup>37</sup> Zeng considered himself a

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<sup>32</sup> Cheng Xiaojun, *Zeng Guofan de muliao men* (Shanghai: Dongfang chuban zhongxin, 2000), 403, 405, 442.

<sup>33</sup> Xie Yongtai, ed., *Yixian zhi* (1870), 1651-1653.

<sup>34</sup> *Huaining xianzhi*, 1711-1713.

<sup>35</sup> ZGFQJS, 788.

<sup>36</sup> ZGFQJ, vol. 2, 1197.

<sup>37</sup> Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies*, 180-188.

man of letters, embodying the qualities of literary or *wen* (文) virtues. The martial *wu* (武) values which he is remembered for in many ways clashed with his own sense of himself as a man of *wen* virtues. The dichotomy between *wen* and *wu* was an essential part of not only the imperial view of government structure but also morally imbued Chinese world views. *Wen* was a force of morality, compassion, and civility, representing the good in mankind; *wu* was a force of violence, destruction, and moral ambiguity. There were virtues in *wu* - bravery, courage, and loyalty - and it was necessary to maintain social order, but it was potentially disruptive to the social order unless tamed and contained by *wen* values. These were the two sides of state control in Chinese political discourse, reflected in the binary divisions of civil and military offices in imperial government, and were seen as the essential elements of political control. Wars were a time in which the blunt instrument of *wu* values pervaded, causing destruction and mayhem to restore social order, but reconstruction was about settling that social order, restoring the values of *wen* to a war-torn land.

While back in his native province, Zeng was and still is remembered as the general who led the Qing to victory, in the Jiangnan region he was remembered as the reconstructor after the chaos of war. This was an image that he seems to have actively cultivated and was certainly cultivated by his protégées after his death. The *Shangyuan and Jiangning Counties Gazetteer*, which encompassed the Nanjing urban area, published in 1874 shortly after he died, was essentially a celebration of the Qing victory over the Taiping. Its publication seems to have been financially supported by many officers in the irregular army, who were not necessarily locals, and it is covered with the fingerprints of Zeng's protégées. Zeng's legacy is celebrated throughout the gazetteer, both to bolster his image as a hero of the empire, and by extension, the image of his supporters in the irregular army; many of the latter were still governing the city and were involved in the gazetteer's publication.<sup>38</sup> Strikingly, Zeng's biography in

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<sup>38</sup> Many involved in the gazetteers publication were associated with Zeng, including Liu Kunyi, Liang Zhaohuang, Zhang Funian, Jiang Qixun (Chief editor), and Hong Rukui (reviewer). *Shangjiang liangxian zhi*, 11-18.

the gazetteer barely mentions his military career and successes. It only states that he was made the Governor-General of Liangjiang in 1861 and had led a large army to defeat the Taiping.<sup>39</sup> Instead of being portrayed as the conquering hero who liberated the city from the nefarious Taiping, he is depicted as the restorer of “cultured learning” and rebuilding Nanjing:

... then he moved to Nanjing, planning for reconstruction. He stated that in order to clear away the wartime atmosphere (兵氣), the most urgent thing was to revive cultured learning (興文教).<sup>40</sup>

The majority of his biographical account emphasizes his role in reconstruction and as the embodiment of literati values; he revived “cultured learning” and cleared “the wartime atmosphere” through various deeds of reconstruction that restored a properly ordered and moral universe based on *wen* virtues and not the violent and chaotic martial *wu* values. This stress on Zeng’s *wen*-ness was not just a rejection of the militarization of society during the war. It was also a way of characterizing reconstruction as the return of those *wen* values lost in the war through Zeng, who embodied the goals and values of reconstruction. In other words, reconstruction represented the rejection of wartime violence and the return of a civil order. The core slogan of his post-war policies centered on the idea of “reviving cultured learning” – a theme that crops up repeatedly in the record.

“Reviving cultured learning” was also a response to complaints about the rise of militarism and the rise of military authority during the war, which were at the heart of many post-war discussions about reconstruction. The power of the irregular army and military officers was cause for concern to many civil officials who felt marginalized from wartime politics; this was keenly felt among the historically powerful literati in what was in the 1860s war-torn Jiangnan. Invoking old adages about the separation of civil and military authority, the Censor of Shandong, Chen Tingjing (陳廷經), gained a lot of attention when he warned the court to be cautious about the power of military men in civil affairs after

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 2037-2038.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

the war in discussing reconstruction: “Confucius said, ‘upon completing studies, the student should become an official.’<sup>41</sup> Matters of governing the people have always been rooted in learning. One may conquer the realm on horseback, but cannot rule the realm on horseback.”<sup>42</sup> He then proceeded to criticize numerous military officers that held positions conventionally reserved for civil officials, including Peng Yulin who briefly served as the Governor of Anhui and Li Xuyi who served as the Governor of Hubei along with numerous minor officials such as magistrates and prefects. He pleaded with the court:

I am earnestly fearful that those of a military background or unversed in the ways of *wen* who wield great authority as petty officers or defer to military officers and let the Green Standard run local matters will manage the people with the methods one governs rebels, which will lead to resentment in the villages or lead to other disturbances.<sup>43</sup>

Chen’s position was that with the end of war civil authority over the military should be restored and clear distinctions should be maintained. He saw the military as an instrument of brute force, necessary in times of war, but wholly incapable of navigating complex social issues in places recovering from war. We see similar complaints from many other scholars and officials who, although deferential and respectful of Zeng Guofan - who by the mid-1860s was essentially above reproach - harshly criticize many of his protégées who rose to power through the irregular army.<sup>44</sup>

If reconstruction was to be represented by the cultured values of *wen* triumphing over martial *wu* values, then what did they imagine this restoration of culture in the post-war period to look like? Possibly the most succinct example that best encapsulates how many understood the value and purpose of post-war reconstruction comes from the following passage in the *Shangyuan and Jiangning Counties Gazetteer* in Zeng Guofan’s biography:

In the winter of that year [1864], he held the provincial examination. The next year [1865] he restored Zhongshan and Zunjing Libraries, hiring people to reside as lecturers and reinvigorating

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<sup>41</sup> This quote from Confucius is often interpreted as meaning that the duty of government should fall to the learned man rooted in scholarly traditions. *Lunyu*, 19:13.

<sup>42</sup> Duo Qicai, ed., *Qishui xianzhi* (1880), 2409.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 2411.

<sup>44</sup> For example, Wang Kaiyun who deeply admired Zeng was scathing in his criticism Li Hongzhang, his brother, and many military officers who gained political power in the war. For an example see, Wang Kaiyun, *Xiangqilou shiwen ji*, Ma Xugao, ed., (Changsha: Yuelu Shushe, 1996), 476-478.

the civil atmosphere (士氣). He also gathered the displaced and settled them on abandoned lands with officials loaning them oxen and seed. He bought mulberry saplings from Huzhou transplanting them in the countryside to be planted. The woes of all the people were covered over by this. He allowed the literati to petition him, which he would read over when he had time. He was especially sympathetic and provided relief to the helpless and destitute (孤寒) such as widows from prominent families who could not survive on their own, giving them a thousand copper coins every month. The city porridge kitchens cared for refugees [with him] annually releasing funds to feed them. The three governors of Jiangnan attended to numerous neglected matters...<sup>45</sup>

The actions listed here were part of the tropes of reconstruction that surface repeatedly across many accounts about what should be done.

Gazetteers generally were quick to emphasize the importance of “reinvigorating the literary atmosphere” highlighting the role of academies, libraries, and other institutions crucial to the identity and status of the local gentry, and this was central to the mantra “reviving cultured learning.” For the compilers of the *Shangyuan and Jiangning Counties Gazetteer*, the creation of a “civil atmosphere” was opposed to the previous quotes idea of the “wartime atmosphere,” creating a wartime and post-war binary rooted in *wu* or wartime atmosphere and *wen* or civil atmosphere. What in particular marked the restoration of these *wen* virtues was the reinstatement of the civil service examination, which in Nanjing had not been held in the region since the beginning of the war, as well as rebuilding academies, testing halls, and libraries, such as the aforementioned Zhongshan and Zunjing Libraries.<sup>46</sup> Nanjing was not alone in underlining the civil service exam and rebuilding academies.

This was common across gazetteers in the period, and for many elites, the rebuilding of academies destroyed in the war was the most celebrated of all reconstruction project and more often than not was among the first undertaken. Although officials emphasize the importance of rebuilding academies as a necessity to cultivate men of talent in government, it was also an obvious overture to win support from local gentry who relied on the imperial civil service examination as a way to confirm

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<sup>45</sup> *Shangjiang liangxian zhi*, 2037-2038.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

their status and power in society. The examination provided a route to political power for some, but for most who would never rise to high office but would participate receiving licentiate degrees, an imperial degree, which required the recognition of the state, was a mark of prestige in local communities that affirmed their superiority.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the civil service examination and rebuilding academies as a part of “reviving cultured values” was a symbol of both the return of civil governance by the literati, but also the symbiotic relationship between the state and local elites. Despite the reinstatement of the meritocratic civil service examination in 1860 after a decade-long hiatus, the civil service examination became less important in achieving official rank with the rise of “recommendations,” the purchase of brevet rank, and the ascendancy of the irregular army.<sup>48</sup> Nonetheless, the restitution of the civil service exam played a greater symbolic role in representing the proper political order between the state and elites, even if the reality meant that one's chances of achieving an official positions were unlikely without proper personal connections.

The last part, as previously discussed, was the importance of imperial benevolence as embodied in state officials who provided relief for people through charitable acts with state funds (although in many cases state funds were nominal and mostly came directly from the personal pockets of officials and local gentry). Relief for refugees and the poor impacted by the war was a token gesture of the paternalistic view of the moral universe in which the Emperor cared for his subjects as a parent cared for a child. Orphanages were even more symbolic of that relationship as war orphans theoretically became wards of the state, even if these orphanages in practice were managed by local gentry and charitable societies.

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<sup>47</sup> Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 42-58.

<sup>48</sup> Benjamin A. Elman, *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 280-284.



The description of Zeng's effort in his biography, while certainly not covering every aspect of reconstruction after the civil war, summarizes some of the crucial elements that represented the kind of efforts that officials such as Zeng thought were crucial for restoring a society devastated by war and reestablishing stable political control. Above all, they were trying to win the support of local gentry who certainly had much to begrudge the failings of Qing officials in failing to protect them and in the persecution of the war. They reaffirmed the status of the gentry through the quick reimplementation of the civil service exam and rebuilding academies. The interest of the state and elites also coincided in restoring the kinds of economic and productive relationships for the benefit of the state's coffers as well as social stability. Moreover, it was crucial that the emperor in the abstract took center stage as the source of benevolent virtue to regain legitimacy in the eyes of subjects through generous acts that provided relief for the poor and displaced. These concepts were essentially the cornerstone of Zeng's vision for post-war reconstruction.

### *Wartime Institutions and Local Leadership in Reconstruction*

A relatively coherent vision for post-war reconstruction emerged shortly before taking Nanjing, developed primarily by Zeng Guofan from his experience in Anhui in the early 1860s. Zeng coalesced the various administrations that sought to manage post-war chaos into a somewhat unified administration, an idea of reconstruction that would be radically different than earlier Qing post-war reconstruction projects and would continue the ideas that had emerged at the turn of the nineteenth century, taking them further and applying them on an even grander scale. Unlike past reconstruction efforts, which were largely undertaken by local officials and the military on an ad hoc basis, Zeng envisioned an informal bureaucracy with a hierarchy of specialized provincial, prefectural, and county offices. This

bureaucracy was referred to as the Reconstruction Bureau and contained a multitude of branch offices and specialized sub-bureaus.

The first such Reconstruction Bureau, as far as can be determined, emerged in Anqing in April 1863 with Zeng's former tent officer, Li Shuchang (黎庶昌, 1837-1897), as its first director. Li was a native of Guizhou but was forced to flee from the wartime chaos in his home province to take the licentiate examination in Beijing where he received his licentiate in 1861 as a refugee. He was present in Beijing for the British and French occupation. In 1862, when the Empress Dowager invited officials to remonstrate, Li gained a lot of attention for his impassioned *Letter of a Myriad Words*, expressing some of the consternation and pain of these dark days with proposals for improvement. The Empress Dowager had been so impressed and moved by his plea, that she recommended Li as an imperial envoy to Zeng Guofan's tent administration. Li quickly became a closely trusted assistant and protégée of Zeng Guofan who he found to be a young man of talent. He was particular known as a proponent of the pragmatic *jingshi* school of statecraft, which he shared with Zeng Guofan and he would apply to his understanding in the administration of post-war reconstruction and his later career serving as a local official across the empire and an ambassador to Europe and Japan, for which he would later become known.<sup>49</sup>

Li was appointed in April 1863 as the director of the Reconstruction Bureau in Anqing, which was intended to coordinate resources and prioritize projects for reconstruction so as to manage the various unwieldy and often overlapping local administrations that dealt with post-war issues. Many of the previously mentioned organization established in Anhui in the early 1860s that dealt with issues such as granaries, relief, infrastructure, or the settlement of land disputes came under the umbrella of

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<sup>49</sup> A.W. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period, 1644-1912* (Washington: US Govt Print Office, 1943), vol. 2, 443-446; Qian Yiji, ed., *Qingchao bei zhuan quanji* (Taipei: Dahua shuju, 1984), vol. 4, 3308-3310;

the Reconstruction Bureau.<sup>50</sup> This created a hierarchy of bureaus with the Reconstruction Bureau essentially overseeing or coordinating a series of bureaus that specialized in specific issues.

The use of bureaus was unique in reconstruction policy but followed in the footsteps of numerous local and provincial wartime institutions that emerged during the civil war to supply and fund irregular armies. Despite their grand title, bureaus were not formal political institutions but extra-bureaucratic offices operated by gentry and minor officials. They performed social and political functions, acting with the authority of the state, and were often indirectly managed by officials. Formally they lacked power, but their association with the state often granted them the power to act in ways that were very much like state functionaries. In the past, bureaus were often founded by state officials to provide emergency relief during times of famine, similar to charities and benevolence halls; unlike charities, however, which were private institutions, bureaus operated in a much more ambiguous space between state authority and civic institutions, falling much more closely under government control.<sup>51</sup>

Bureaus were relatively rare before the Civil War, but during the war, bureaus flourished as the primary source of revenue for the irregular army. Chief among these wartime bureaus was the Lijin Bureau (釐金局), which imposed a transit tax or *lijin* on all commercial goods transported to market. In 1853, it was clear that conventional tax revenue would be insufficient to meet ballooning military costs and need to expand its sources of revenue. Financially strapped, the imperial court allowed magistrates to appoint commissioners (委員) charged with selling brevet ranks (another emergency revenue source) and soliciting emergency donations to issue special donation licenses (捐釐執照) to merchants to raise funds to improve the efficacy of collection. This was termed as a kind of “donation” (捐輸), but its voluntary nature is questionable; it was for all intents and purposes a tax on merchants according to the quantity and type of goods they produced and sold on the market, which would eventually be known as

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<sup>50</sup> ZGFQJPD, vol. 7, 324-326.

<sup>51</sup> Lillian Li, *Fighting Famine in North China*, 274-297; Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 651-652.

the *lijin*. By 1854, this system quickly spread across the empire as an emergency source of revenue for the war. The *lijin* was enforced through inspection stations along major commercial routes and at markets where their licenses would be inspected by local militias.<sup>52</sup>

Management of the *lijin* worked through a partnership between local elites, who were often involved in local militias, and local officials. In Hunan and many other provinces, the *lijin* was initially collected by a local bureau operated by gentry commissioned by the local magistrate. To streamline the process, trade guilds and merchants were also recruited to police their members and given a say in determining fees and issuing licenses to their members; they then forwarded the proceeds to the bureau. These proceeds were primarily used to fund militias, irregular military units, and other military expenses.<sup>53</sup>

The system was a stopgap measure that was subject to abuse and was poorly regulated at first. But beginning in 1855, it was reined in with the creation of provincial-level bureau, called the General Lijin Bureau (釐金總局), which oversaw local *lijin* bureaus, cracked down on abuses, standardized rates and practices, streamlined the process, shutdown redundant or unauthorized offices, and funneled funds away from local governments and towards the provincial government and the irregular armies.<sup>54</sup> In fact, by one estimate, the *lijin* made up about 60% of the Xiang Army funding.<sup>55</sup> Considerable latitude was granted to merchants in negotiating rates and they could be reimbursed if they were over-charged by corrupt functionaries at tolling stations and reported this to the general bureau. The General Lijin Bureau was technically overseen by the Provincial Treasurer who had the authority to direct funds; however, the actual day-to-day management was undertaken by commissioned gentry and commissioners who were outside the official bureaucracy and appointed by the treasurer;

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<sup>52</sup> Luo Yudong, *Zhongguo lijin shi* (1936; repr., Beijing: Shangwu yinshu guan, 2010), 21-29.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 21, 27.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-46, 74-88; Li Hanzhang, ed., *Hunan tongzhi* (1885), 5430-5434.

<sup>55</sup> Wang Kaiyun, *Xiangjun zhi*, (1881; repr., Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1983), 16:1a.

commissioned managers were, however, required to make public quarterly reports on earnings to the provincial treasury, which were posted publically at every bureau office, to safeguard against malfeasance.

The Lijin Bureau was just one among an assortment of such wartime institutions that worked to fund and supply the military. Another very similar bureau, the Salt and Tea Bureau (鹽茶局), issued a similar tax on the transit of tea and salt between provinces beginning in 1856. The Taiping occupation of Nanjing, breaking the long-established trade routes along the Yangzi River and the Grand Canal, led to serious disruptions in the tea trade and salt monopoly. The salt monopoly, which issued licenses to trade salt to merchants, was temporarily suspended, allowing for the private production and sale of salt, which was instead taxed in a similar manner to the *lijin*. The same was true for tea and other goods traded long distances between provinces. In fact, the salt and tea taxes were often referred to as *yanli* (鹽釐) and *chali* (茶釐), conflating it with the *lijin*, but in this case, it was formally referred to as a "tax" (稅) instead of a "contribution." The Salt and Tea Bureau was, in essence, a tax on commodities traded over long distances, focusing on salt and tea, but included other goods as well. The structure of the bureau was nearly identical to the Lijin Bureau, relying on commissioned gentry managers under the oversight of the Provincial Treasurer; eventually, the bureau was incorporated under the management of the Lijin General Bureau in Changsha in 1865 by Governor Li Hanzhang.<sup>56</sup>

Other wartime bureaus included the Military Provisioning Bureau (軍需局) and Eastern Campaign Bureau (東征局). The Military Provisioning Bureau was responsible for the procurement and logistics of vital supplies to the regular and irregular armies, funded through a combination of earmarked funds from the *lijin*, the provincial treasury, and branch offices that sold brevet ranks and collected supposedly voluntary contributions.<sup>57</sup> The Eastern Campaign Bureau, established in 1857,

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<sup>56</sup> *Hunan tongzhi*, 5314-5325.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 5433-5435;

acquired additional funding for the Xiang Army campaigning in Jiangxi, Anhui, and Jiangsu through an additional and highly unpopular 50% surcharge on the *lijin* tax that went directly to the bureau. These bureaus were all part of a system of provisional wartime institutions that formed the bedrock of the irregular army's support, especially in Hunan, providing funding, organization, and supplies for the war effort.<sup>58</sup>

Bureaus such as the Lijin Bureau, Salt and Tea Bureau, the Military Provisioning Bureau, and the Eastern Campaign Bureau were part of a continuum of extra-bureaucratic offices overseen by local and provincial governments yet generally managed by commissioned gentry (委紳) or commissioners (委員) who were not, for the most part, considered government officials, straddling conventional divisions between public and private institutions.<sup>59</sup> Commissioners in these bureaus were typically expectant officials awaiting assignment in the imperial bureaucracy or degree holders who had purchased imperial ranks with the promise of a tangible assignment. These were men who held imperial rank but without a substantive position in the bureaucracy and were assigned commissions in the meantime. In many cases, commissioners were close associates, protégées, and tent officers to provincial officials who either granted the position as an award or because they trusted them to carry out their duties properly.<sup>60</sup> On the provincial level, commissioned gentry were usually scholars who held *juren* degrees in the civil service exam, and in some cases were retired former officials who held *jinshi* degrees at the provincial level.<sup>61</sup> At the local level, bureaus were generally staffed by prominent local gentry who held civil service degrees ranging from *jinshi* to mere entry-level examinees (童生).<sup>62</sup>

What marked the difference between commissioned gentry and commissioners was not so much their status in the imperial bureaucracy, considering that many commissioned gentry were retired officials

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<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 5451.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 5443-5446.

<sup>60</sup> Porter, *Tsêng Kuo-fan's Private Bureaucracy*, 20-22.

<sup>61</sup> For example, see biography of Zhang Bingzhuo, *Hunan tongzhi*, 14352. Also see, Luo, *Zhongguo lijin shi*, 88-99.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

and eligible for office, but their status as locals and outsiders. Many commissioners were appointed by officials from outside the province whereas commissioned gentry were generally local gentry appointed or recognized by the provincial and local officials. Regardless, commissioners and commissioned gentry were part of a world outside the official bounds of the bureaucracy but were nonetheless deeply enmeshed in its world of officialdom.

This kind of ambiguous relationship between the state and bureaus, officials and gentry, and public and private institutions would continue in the reconstruction bureau, which has been interpreted by some scholars as encouraging a more active Chinese “public sphere,” where activist elites became increasingly assertive in matters of public interest and managing society. Yet, we should be cautious in looking at the reconstruction bureau as a wholly privately managed part of the public sphere and delineating a teleological line to activist gentry and philanthropy at the end of the nineteenth century. The ambiguity of the Reconstruction Bureau’s relationship between state and society, while perhaps striking to us, was something that was hardly worth mentioning in the 1860s, because officials and local elites saw themselves as part of the same structure that governed society, continuing practices of public governance that blurred divisions between state and private interest even though these interactions were less formalized in the past. That is to say, members of the gentry did not understand themselves as engaging “in new kinds of competition with official representatives of the state,” as characterized by Mary Backus Rankin; they saw themselves as cut from the same cloth as many of the officials who ruled over them, sharing both personal interest and political prerogatives.<sup>63</sup> When we think of the divisions of state and society, our focus is on sociological principles and a historical context rooted in Europe. This has been most famously embodied in the work of Jurgen Habermas, whose study on the rise of a public sphere in Europe led by a rising merchant class is more easily understood as being in opposition to an

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<sup>63</sup> Mary Backus Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China: Zhejiang, 1865-1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 3.

established aristocracy.<sup>64</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century China, the divisions between state officials and local elites was not as stark, and the boundaries between official state institutions, informally state-managed institution, and civic organizations were murky, working often in tandem and partnership, especially when it came to post-war reconstruction.<sup>65</sup> This, as we shall discuss further, also depends on where reconstruction was occurring. Reconstruction varied considerably in different places and over time as some regions received more state assistance and others relied on the largess of local elites.

For the most part, the Reconstruction Bureau is best understood as an informal state institution along the same lines as the Lijin Bureau and other wartime institutions. They were extensions of the state that were managed by private local interest in conjunction with local officials to achieve their common goals – defeating the Taiping, protecting their property, and maintaining control over society. This how post-war bureaus also operated minus the prerogative to defeat the Taiping, although there existed a concern of stamping out any possible resurgence of war, but reconstruction bureaus saw the way to assert control over a population devastated by war was through programs that sought to clean up after the war and restored the antebellum social and political order through a bureaucratized process that mirrored wartime institutions.

The way that wartime bureaus were organized would continue to manifest itself in the Reconstruction Bureau. The Reconstruction Bureau would also overlap with Zeng's tent administration, another informal institution that still acted with the authority and auspices of state functionaries. In some ways, the tent administration was an extension of wartime bureaus; they both drew from a similar pool of talent and were informal institutions with state authority. Tent officers would have a particular impact on reconstruction in Anhui and around Nanjing. Since early efforts at reconstruction in Anhui

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<sup>64</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

<sup>65</sup> R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 154-158, 163-165.



grew around specialized tent officers at the headquarters of Zeng's Xiang Army, personnel in the Reconstruction Bureau often emerged from the tent administration, such as Li Shuchang. This was particularly evident in Nanjing, where throughout the 1860s the reconstruction administration was comprised almost entirely of former tent officers, such as Tan Ao, Li Hongyi, Pang Jiyun, Yang Wenhui, and Hong Rukai.<sup>66</sup> Officially, their positions were referred to as "commissioners" in official communications since most were not locals, were appointed by officials, and were tied, even if indirectly, to officialdom, but they were also more commonly called "directors" (董) as the general title of the heads of Reconstruction Bureaus.<sup>67</sup>

Commissioners in the reconstruction administration had considerable power as essentially officials despite the fact they officially had no place in the imperial bureaucracy. It was a form of informal power that in some cases seems to have exceeded officially appointed local officials, particularly in the early years of reconstruction in the area around Nanjing. This seems to have only been the case, however, when tent officers were at the helm of the reconstruction administration, but Zeng also imagined a post-war settlement with numerous local county and prefectural bureaus, and although Zeng had many tent officers in his employ, he could not staff the entire reconstruction administration with his protégées. Tent officers, instead, were concentrated in the reconstruction administration in Nanjing and Anqing to provide a model of what reconstruction should look like.

Local officials, instead, were responsible for appointing and delegating responsibilities for reconstruction in most places impacted by the war, and they turned towards local gentry. The gentry were given considerable sway over reconstruction, but leadership in most local bureaus came from locals with strong ties to imperial politics and wealth and were still officially under the thumb of officials. In most cases, the bureau heads were referred to as a director or gentry director (绅董), but depending

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<sup>66</sup> Cheng Xiaojun, *Zeng Guofan de muliao men*, 403, 405, 442.

<sup>67</sup> There are a lot of examples of this. For a few examples see, Wang Lin, ed., *Jiangshan xianzhi* (1869), 298; Zhi Hengchun, ed., *Songyang xianzhi* (1875), 1001; Zhu Chengfu, ed., *Yuhang xianzhi gao* (1906), 61.

on the context they were also commonly referred to as commissioners and commissioned gentry just like the Lijin Bureau. The difference between the terms does not seem to carry substantive meaning except perhaps as a way of differentiating locals from outsiders. Those who were locals were generally referred to as directors, gentry directors, and commissioned gentry while outsiders were referred to as commissioners, and in most cases, directors of the reconstruction bureaus were local literati who possessed a degree and some financial means. Additionally, the Reconstruction Bureau was overseen by the provincial treasurer and was subject to the orders of local magistrates, prefects, governors, and governor-general depending where it fell on the hierarchy, thus it was deeply enmeshed within formal institutions of state power even though it was not recognized formally nor was it regularized within the imperial hierarchy.

The point here is how the reconstruction administration that emerged in 1863 and 1864 reflected many of the practices of wartime institutions such as the Linjin Bureau and the tent administration. These were informal institutions filled with people outside officialdom but personally close to those with power and tied to formal state institutions through various personal relationships with officials and through legal oversight. This begs the question of the division between public and private institutions first brought up in the work of Mary Backus Rankin.<sup>68</sup> These wartime and post-war administrations, even though not officially a part of the imperial bureaucracy, frequently acted as organs of state authority, especially the provincial government. Considering that for the most part this authority was regularly recognized despite the ambiguity of its position within the state structure, it seems reasonable to recognize these administrations as essentially functionary extensions of the state that merely went beyond our conventional understanding of Qing imperial authority. That is not to say that interest between the state and unofficial functionaries in the reconstruction administration did not conflict or require negotiation.

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<sup>68</sup> Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China*.

### *Reconstruction Guidelines and the Meaning of Reconstruction*

Zeng's vision for reconstruction in Nanjing, which would serve as the model for reconstruction across the provinces impacted by the civil war, was of a nimble, informal bureaucracy that gathered resources for state reconstruction projects. At the same time, Zeng encouraged the involvement of local elites from its very drafting to the management of the bureaus themselves. As discussed in the previous chapter, reconstruction policies in the past were often outlined in "reconstruction guidelines," which stated the objectives and projects for post-war reconstruction. Zeng's own reconstruction guidelines have been lost to the historical record; however, through his correspondence and reports, he clearly solicited input from both government officials and local gentry on reconstruction guidelines, forming the basis of his own reconstruction policies. Most of this correspondence comes to us in the form of memorandums or *pidu* (批牘) issued while he was the Governor-General of Liangjiang. These memorandums were part of a conversation in response to proposals and petitions from subordinate officials and gentry, as Zeng formulated his plans for post-war reconstruction in the late summer of 1864 through early 1865. Unfortunately, our view of this conversation is one-sided; we only possess Zeng's response to suggestions, but from Zeng's response we gain a view as to different and similar about ideas circulated concerning what should be contained within the reconstruction guidelines after the Taiping Civil War. Those that can be inferred from this correspondence is pieced together in Table 2.1.

List of Proposed Guidelines for Reconstruction Discussed by Zeng Guofan in the Summer of 1864

**Fourteen Guidelines for Reconstruction in Nanjing**

proposed by Chen Dong (陳棟)

|            |        |  |
|------------|--------|--|
| Article 1  | 建修學宮神廟 | Rebuild Imperial Schools and Temples             |
| Article 2  | 採訪忠義   | Interview the Loyal                              |
| Article 3  | 編查保甲   | Reconstitute and Inspect Baojia                  |
| Article 4  | 禁占房屋   | Forbid Soldiers from Squatting in People's Homes |
| Article 5  | 檢埋骸骨   | Collect and Bury Corpses                         |
| Article 6  | 洗除賊字   | Eliminate and Cleanse Rebel Words                |
| Article 7  | 禁革賊裝   | Forbid and Remove Rebel Clothes                  |
| Article 8  | 挑浚河井   | Unblock Wells and Clear Waterways                |
| Article 9  | 整理橋道   | Clear Bridges and Roads                          |
| Article 10 | 修復書院義塾 | Restore Libraries and Academies                  |
| Article 11 | 招復緞業   | Bring Back the Weaving Industry                  |
| Article 12 | 重修城垣   | Rebuild the City Walls                           |
| Article 13 | 清理田畝   | Clarify Property                                 |
| Article 14 | 清查公產   | Clarify Public Property                          |

**Seven Guidelines for Reconstruction in Jurong County**

proposed by Zhu Chengtao (朱成濤)

|           |      |   |
|-----------|------|---|
| Article 1 | 先修聖廟 | First Repair Holy Temples                           |
| Article 2 | 公建官署 | Rebuild Public Offices with Funding from the Public |
| Article 3 | 招集流亡 | Call Back Those that Had Fled                       |
| Article 4 | 清畝之法 | Establish a Way to Clarify Property                 |
| Article 5 | 編查保甲 | Reconstitute and Inspect Baojia                     |
| Article 6 |      | <i>Not Discussed</i>                                |
| Article 7 | 重在典商 | Bring Back Merchants                                |

**Eight Guidelines for Reconstruction in Jiangsu**

proposed by Hejing (何璟, 1818-1888)

|           |          |  |
|-----------|----------|--|
| Article 1 | 荒田入官之章程  | Abandoned Lands Should be Appropriated by the State        |
| Article 2 | 清查逆產     | Assess Rebel Property                                      |
| Article 3 | 荒田招墾之辦法  | Establish a Method to Settle Abandoned Lands               |
| Article 4 | 荒田領回之限期  | Established a Time Limit to Reclaim Abandoned Lands        |
| Article 5 | 嚴查冒占各弊端  | Strictly Enforce Bands on Falsely Claiming Land            |
| Article 6 | 籌給耕牛籽種   | Provide Oxen and Seed [to farmers for cultivation]         |
| Article 7 | 領墾荒田分別繳租 | Establish Rent Rates on Abandoned Lands Farmed by Settlers |

|  |         |  |
|--|---------|--|
| Article 8  | 安插降眾難民  | Settle People who Surrendered and Refugees         |
| <b>Four Guidelines for Reconstruction in Jintan County</b><br>Wang Qijin (王啟進) |         |  |
| Article 1  | 開墾荒田    | Reclaim Abandoned Lands                            |
| Article 2  | 建造考棚    | Rebuild the Testing Building                       |
| Article 3  |         | <i>Not Discussed</i>                               |
| Article 4  | 復修書院    | Rebuild Libraries and Academies with Public Funds  |
| <b>Six Guidelines for Reconstruction in Nanjing</b><br>Unknown                 |         |  |
| Article 1  | 募游民以廣耕種 | Hire vagrants to expand agriculture                |
| Article 2  | 畜蠶桑以資紡織 | Cultivate silkworms and mulberry to aid weaving    |
| Article 3  | 敦風俗以黜浮華 | Encourage proper customs to diminish extravagance  |
| Article 4  | 理財用以通商賈 | Organize finances for the flow of commerce         |
| Article 5  | 分庶務以課官司 | Divide responsibilities to urge government offices |
| Article 6  | 禁夜行以弭盜賊 | Forbid traveling at night to quell theft           |

Table 2.1 –ZGFQJPD, 324-326, 335-338, 343-345.

The issues brought forth in these guidelines would eventually lead to the formation of a plethora of specialized sub-bureaus under the purview of the Reconstruction Bureau to handle very specific issues. Not only did they try to address specific postbellum issues, such as settling landownership, repairing water control, or bringing back order, but they bureaucratized the entire process of reconstruction and civic organizations with specialized institutions that used to be handled by local magistrates and prefects. In Nanjing, there were a handful of agencies under the direction of the reconstruction bureau, which was in charge of particular aspects of reconstruction. Even though Nanjing was intended by Zeng to provide a model for reconstruction, the Reconstruction Bureau and its sub-bureaus required considerable financial support from the state and local elites that was not readily available in places still smoldering from the war, thus not everywhere was able to build the kind of complex hierarchy of agencies for reconstruction that developed in Nanjing. Some places only had a local Reconstruction Bureau, which handled all post-war issues; other places with a little more wealth might have a Reconstruction Bureau as well as an agency or two to handle particular pressing issues in

their area; there were even poorer counties that, from all available sources, seem to have never established any post-war agencies. Ultimately, whether any given place had a local Reconstruction Bureau and/or local sub-bureau were chiefly dependent on both the investment of local elites and local officials desperately pressed for cash.

### *Land Ownership*

A common description made by observers in the post-war period was on the destruction wrought on the countryside of Jiangnan. Such descriptions of misery and devastation did not lack hyperbole; however, a common thread running through these descriptions is that large swaths of land that had been abandoned and left untilled. For officials and gentry concerned with reconstruction, land was a crucial element of their work but also presented the greatest challenge.

Qing officials maintained records of property ownership and tax assessments in county registries, which was a system they had maintained since the Ming dynasty. These registries of property were often referred to as “fish scale registries” (魚鱗冊) because they contained diagrams of property outlines that resembled fish scales. These registries were horrifically outdated and according to many scholars by the nineteenth century no longer reflected the reality of property ownership in the late Qing; nonetheless, they were still important as a symbol of state power, maintaining the state's position as an indisputable arbiter of property rights and with this the right to collect taxes. Citing the fish scale registry was an important source of legitimating or delegitimizing property ownership, and was thus an important tool for local governments to enforce the status quo of ownership and ensure subjects paid taxes.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Denis C. Twitchett, Frederick W. Mote, *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 539-541.

When county-seats, fell to Taiping armies, fish scale registries and other government documents, as with nearly any conflict, disappeared in the chaos, either intentionally destroyed or accidentally in the. Few fish scale registries seem to have survived the fighting, and in the few counties in which the fish scale registry was preserved. The loss of the fish scale registry placed the state's position as an arbiter of rightful property claims into question. Even if the old registries on the eve of the war were notoriously inaccurate, they represented to people the official and rightful claims and the state's piercing eye into the affairs of its subjects.

Titles to property were also problematic to establishing a rightful claim to property in the aftermath of the war. Unscrupulous individuals could potentially forge such documents, and without surviving duplicates in the county-seat, as was generally required before the war, there would be no way to confirm its veracity; moreover, many officials claimed that many subjects had simply lost property titles as they fled in panic or their homes were burned to the ground, leaving many individuals without documentary proof of their claims. These issues were further compounded by multiple inheritance claims when distant relatives staked claims on land left by deceased or missing kin, concerning many officials about how to handle appropriate inheritance and what to do if it turned out the original owner had fled but would later return. The loss of government documents, especially when entailing property and tax assessments, was a major source of consternation for Qing officials and could prove to be a destabilizing issue.<sup>70</sup>

A key responsibility of the Reconstruction Bureau was to assess and recognize the legitimacy of people's property claims. These issues were often referred to as "clarifying and inspecting property" (清查田畝) in most reconstruction guidelines. During the war, official records and networks of tax collectors had been lost, leaving the state with no way of knowing who owned land. Many property

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<sup>70</sup> Kathryn Bernhardt, *Rents, Taxes, and Peasant Resistance: The Lower Yangzi Region, 1840-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 117-160.

owners also lost the deeds to their land in the chaos, leaving them with no evidence of ownership; moreover, with millions of refugees having fled from the war, there was a large amount of land that had been deserted, and officials were unclear if land had been abandoned because people had fled intending to return once the dust settled or if the former owners had died or did not intend to ever return. The state was unsure how to handle abandoned lands and how one should proceed to recognize land ownership, which was crucial to gaining support from the local gentry and reestablishing state tax revenues.<sup>71</sup> This chaos in the proprietorship of land also provided ample opportunities for people to claim land and run scams that the government was often at a loss to straighten out. The focus of many reconstruction guidelines attempted to address these issues of recognizing land ownership and mediating property disputes through various surveys of land ownership.<sup>72</sup>

According to Zeng, these issues first came to a head in 1861 and 1862 in the Huizhou region as the Taiping were chased out by his army. The famine that accompanied the intense violence led to many deaths in the region and uncountable numbers of people fleeing. Death and displacement left many fields abandoned in a place where land was scarce and highly valued. More often than not these lands were occupied and claimed by neighbors, distant kin, squatters, and powerful lineages. As refugees returned when the fighting subsided and multiple individuals made claims on abandoned lands in the early 1860s, conflicts emerged resulting in lengthy and entangled litigation. Zeng Guofan complained about the backlog of property suits in the Huizhou region and the headache they presented local officials.<sup>73</sup>

With magistrates overwhelmed by property suits, Zeng established in 1862 one of the earliest post-war bureaus, the Bureau to Promote Agriculture (勸農局) to, among other responsibilities, mediate and settle conflicting claims. The purpose of the bureau was to both clarify property rights and

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<sup>71</sup> ZGFQJPD, 335-337.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 323.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 323, 338-339.



provide loans of seed, tools, and oxen to farms to revive agricultural production and to encourage the displaced to return to their pre-war homes.<sup>74</sup> It is unclear how exactly these property disputes were mediated as Zeng only briefly mentions its role as mediator, but by 1864, these duties were often handled by the Reconstruction Bureau in many other counties affected by the war. The process employed by the Reconstruction Bureau was significantly clearer and often had ultimate authority in arbitrating and deciding property claims.<sup>75</sup>

Settling the issue of ownership was a major priority for the Reconstruction Bureau immediately after the end of hostility, and was closely linked to issues of taxation. As Zeng magistrate stated in 1868: "clarifying [property] is the most important matter of reconstruction" with the note that "[clarifying property] is also referred to as assessing taxation."<sup>76</sup> In Jiangning Prefecture Zeng played a major role in outlining the general procedure for "clarifying property." Of utmost importance was the need to complete the process of property assessment within a few months to ensure that property would be clarified by the fall harvest because tax assessments were intimately connected to property ownership. Surveys of each county were to be undertaken by the bureau overseen personally by the bureau director and supervised by the local magistrate.<sup>77</sup> Of course, under Zeng's vision of a slender Reconstruction Bureau, the bureau lacked the manpower to undertake an accurate and comprehensive survey of the entire prefecture. Instead, the bureau had to rely on the cooperation of local gentry to accurately survey properties across the prefecture within the limited timeframe. In Jiangning Prefecture, according to Zeng Guofan, this was supposed to be handled by bureau clerks who were sent to the countryside and interviewed local farmers and property owners to gain a general idea of property locations and acreage to build a rough estimate of tax assessments.<sup>78</sup> Zeng's priority was less about

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*; *Yixian zhi*, 1651-1653.

<sup>75</sup> ZGFQJPD, 322, 335-342.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 341.

accuracy and more about swift action and saving cost – something that he repeatedly emphasized in his comments on proposed guidelines.

While it is hard to verify this process in Jiangning Prefecture, the responsibility for assessing property was the single most important imperative of reconstruction bureaus across the empire. The job of surveying the land and determining ownership and tax burdens occupied the majority of these bureaus efforts in 1864 and 1865, and in many cases well beyond the immediate aftermath of the war. Records are scattered, as later administrations in the twentieth century rarely maintained such documents, but a few have survived. Among archival documents at the Hangzhou municipal archives are a smattering of “Assessment of Grain and Household Registry” (清釐糧產戶管). These documents were primarily issued in 1865 by an unspecified administration authorized by the Qiantang County magistrate; in other words, they were official documents issued by an unofficial institution, which is referred to in the officious looking seal on the cover as “The Bureau of Qiantang County.”<sup>79</sup> As we previously discussed, a bureau was not an official administration but carried a degree of stately authority and association as a public institution, and in this case in all likelihood referred to the Reconstruction Bureau. By "grain" the document is referring to an assessment of productive capacity and expected agricultural yields from property, which in turn would tell officials how much they could reasonably expect to collect in taxes. These documents essentially linked recognition of property, taxation, and household registration.

References are also made to a similar documents in some of the few reconstruction guidelines that focus specifically on property. In Tangxi county, Zhejiang, near the city of Jinhua, the local gazetteer describes the process of surveying and assessing property in considerable detail, and there the process seems to confirm the reconstruction bureaus’ role in property assessment as well as the emphasis on a

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<sup>79</sup> Hangzhou tongfutai jiangyuan land contracts, Box 26, folder 1-17, *Qingli liangchan huguan*, Hangzhou Municipal Archives Xiacheng District Branch.

rough taxation scheme. After its return to Qing control, the newly installed magistrate Tang Qingzhun (湯慶準) established local bureaus, referred to as a “village bureaus” (鄉局) to inspect all properties, and according to the bureau, taxes were to be assessed. Despite this, the county’s assessment failed as the tax revenue they collected fell short by over 3,000 liang. To rectify this, a new magistrate, Wang Yuexin (王曰新), was appointed the following year. Wang believed that the fault lied with local bureaus, stating that “the deficit in revenue was due to inconsistencies in grain assessment. If it does not go through county land surveys, then we will never have the truth.” Lacking the resources to actually undertake a detailed cadastral survey of the county, especially in a timely manner as the state demanded, the magistrate had to rely on the assistance of local bureaus to survey and assess the land. To strengthen his grasp over the several dozen local village bureaus surveying property, Wang established a county Reconstruction Bureau to which all local bureaus reported. The county reconstruction bureau was referred to as “the General Bureau”<sup>80</sup> (總局) much as in the case of Nanjing, but was used here to distinguish it from the village bureaus. The bureau served as a way for the magistrate to increase his oversight of the local bureaus and met out accountability without having to actually invest much in terms of county resources.

Along with the county reconstruction bureau, Wang also issued a series of guidelines in 1867 for assessment, describing the process for reporting land and disposing of abandoned property. The process, however, relied more on self-reporting than anything else but appears very similar to the Assessment of Grain and Household Registry in Hangzhou in that it employed much of the same terminology. To begin with, property owners had to go in person to the Reconstruction Bureau to assert their claim over land. Such claims were supposed to be verified through inspections and affidavits conducted by the Reconstruction Bureau. Upon verification, the county would issue a “stamped grain

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<sup>80</sup> *Tongxi xianzhi* (1932), 1277-1280.

assessment slip” (糧產印單) stating the property acreage and general location. Property owners would then take the document to the local village bureau, which would perform a second inspection and would be made public to verify there were no mistakes or conflicting claims. After the local village bureau had confirmed the veracity of the claim, property owners had to return to the county office and present the stamped slip, which would be reviewed, presumably, copied, and approved. With this, the county office would also include the individual into the household registry, and the slip would be returned and "valid in perpetuity."<sup>81</sup>

Although the Zeng's principal vis-à-vis property was to recognize the status quo antebellum, Magistrate Wang's guidelines also suggest that pre-war land titles and contracts were not necessarily valid, and were subject to review.<sup>82</sup> Regardless of whether or not property titles were lost, owners still had to present them to the county office and be recorded in the household registry, at which point even those with pre-war titles would still receive a stamped slip. In fact, Wang's guidelines made it a criminal offense to fail to report one's land even if owners still had their original deeds, claiming that the "stamped slip is the basis" of asserting one's claim and not titles, and "those without the slip" would be "punished according to the severity fitting the crime."<sup>83</sup>

Establishing a time-limit in which landowners could reclaim land was another major source of contention among reconstruction officials. Zeng Guofan's own opinion on this matter was unclear. While he agreed that a time-limit should be established to keep people from dragging their feet on reporting their land for tax assessments, Zeng was also cautious to avoid alienating landowners who were worried about their property claims, especially those who were refugees and were not quite willing to return immediately in the post-war chaos. The often cited period of time was 2 or 3 years, but Zeng left it to local officials and reconstruction bureaus to determine their own time-limits to report or claim land,

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 1282-1287.

<sup>82</sup> ZGFQJPD, 324-325.

<sup>83</sup> *Tangxi xianzhi*, 1282-1287.

resulting in a host of different time limits. Originally, the imperial censor in Beijing had suggested six months, but Zeng had felt that it was too short of a time and would cause anxiety among landowners who were still living as refugees in far off places. In Anhui, the provincial Treasurer, Qiao Songnian, set the statute of limitations at two years but allowed exceptions of up to an additional year for returning refugees so long as there were no conflicting claims. In 1869, the magistrate of Tangxi County gave landowners 8 months.

The time-limit was only loosely enforced, and the process of reporting land actually stretched on for years in many counties. Tangxi County would infamously drag on for 21 years. The Reconstruction Bureau was ordered to redo the entire process of registering and surveying land five times: 1867, 1869, 1878, 1882, and 1883. The first time, under magistrate Wang Yuexin, was done because of inconsistencies in the original registration performed by village bureaus that caused a shortfall in tax revenue. Wang formalized and centralized the process under the Reconstruction Bureau. The second survey was performed in 1869 by Wang's successor, Jin Pinyuan (金麟遠), who issued a new set of guidelines that reiterated Wang's from two years ago. Jin complained that local bureaus were dragging their feet, and after two years had failed to report their property. His main focus was on quickly compiling a complete fish scale registry before the fall harvest, which would be based on the "stamped slip." He also emphasized the need to grade land according to the soil's productive capacity and an accurate measure of the property's boundaries, which apparently was not performed in the previous survey. Nearly ten years later, in 1878, the local magistrate again complained that there were inaccuracies in the productivity of farmland, and ordered the Reconstruction Bureau to again survey the land over a seven month period to revise the fish scale registry; however, the new fish scale registry was found to be considerably under-reporting land and in 1882, another survey was undertaken with new guidelines based on those provided by the Reconstruction Bureau in a neighboring county. The 1882 survey was also found to be flawed because the official record only calculated the tax burden of land

owners and not the amount of land, so another survey was called in 1883, which would be the final survey of land.<sup>84</sup>

The compiler of the gazetteer claimed that the assessment and reporting of property was a complicated and difficult process and “not the case that there was insufficient earnestness and will” to complete the task; however, looking at the guidelines that were published over the years, it is clear that part of the problem was that many were underreporting or failing to report their land holdings.<sup>85</sup> The necessity to immediately report land to the Reconstruction Bureau and the repetition of punishments in all four guidelines recorded in the gazetteer suggest that it remained a problem; furthermore, the 1882 gazetteer was particularly concerned about absentee landlords, demanding that landlords that lived outside the county had to not only register their land with the bureau but also include themselves in the local village household registry. That suggest absentee landlords were able to hide land because they did not appear as a household in the local community. The guidelines also restricted the future sale of land to outsiders “in order to prevent abuses.”<sup>86</sup> The 1883 guidelines expanded its concerns to false reporting of sacrificial lands and academy lands. These were a kind of tax-free category of lands established to support ancestral sacrifices for prominent lineages and support local academies. They were supposed to be public properties managed for the public good but were typically managed by prominent landlords who might take a hefty management fee. The guidelines insinuated that properties were being reported sacrificial and academy lands as a kind of tax shelter.<sup>87</sup>

The process of assessing and registering land was hectic with many gentry attempting to manipulate and abuse the system, but it was essential to officials to restore tax revenue and to gentry to

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 1277-1280, 1288-1294.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 1280.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 1293-1297.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 1297-1300.

receive recognition of their property rights. The Reconstruction Bureau played a central role in taking on the complicated task, which despite its messiness, was eventually completed.

### *Resettlement*

Closely related to issues of property was the question of what to do with abandoned lands – another tricky issue. Although there are no clear numbers on the amount of land abandoned in the war, the preponderance of references to abandoned lands in both official and popular sources attest to the fact that this was a common issue. In Wucheng County, the local Reconstruction Bureau reported to the county magistrate that of the 7,166 *qing* of farmland before the war about 5,999 *qing* were being farmed in 1865. The remaining 1167 *qing* were considered abandoned lands (荒田) or 16% of the total farmable land in the count; moreover, of the 5,999 *qing* that was being farmed, the Reconstruction bureau claimed that 501 *qing* were newly settled abandoned lands (新墾荒田), comprising 10% of the total farmed land or nearly a quarter of the county's land before the war.<sup>88</sup> These number, however, should be taken with a grain salt. The reports over the next several years are inconsistent and re-report the previous year's numbers, suggesting these surveys were rough estimates at best.<sup>89</sup> They do represent a general sense that there was a considerable amount of land abandoned during the war, and the question many officials had after the war was what to do with abandoned lands.

Many reconstruction guidelines came to similar conclusions that the state should appropriate abandoned lands and take the lead in settling people on them. These policies were typically referred to as “reclaiming abandoned farmland” (開墾荒田) or “gathering [people] to reclaim abandoned farmland” (招墾荒田), reviving the kind of policies that were popular along the frontier in the eighteenth

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<sup>88</sup> Zong Yuanheng, ed., *Huzhou fuzhi* (1874), 2814-2820.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 2820-2835.

century.<sup>90</sup> These policies were often termed as an act of imperial benevolence by providing a livelihood for refugees and former rebels. The state could provide for them by giving them a place to settle and earn a living while also collecting revenue. Former owners would be given a period of time to reclaim abandoned lands, which in the meantime would be cultivated by people displaced in the war as tenants of the state. The land itself was managed by reconstruction bureaus or in some cases specifically designated Resettlement Bureaus (招墾局), which recruited settlers and administered the collection of rent and taxes.<sup>91</sup>

One of the more detailed discussions on abandoned lands and procedures in reconstruction guidelines came on February 28, 1865 in a conversation between Zeng and Hejing (何璟, 1818-1888), Ma Xinyi's successor as Provincial Treasurer of Anhui. In Hejing's reconstruction guidelines, he focused squarely on the issue of property, abandoned lands, and resettlement in eight articles (See table 2.1). Hejing's argument was that abandoned lands should be taken over by the state and that people displaced by the war should be settled on these lands tentatively unless somebody reclaimed the lands. In the meantime, the state would be entitled to collecting rent from settlers as proxy landlords, but the state would also provide loans of oxen and seeds to settlers to encourage the cultivation of land.<sup>92</sup> These same provisions discussed by Hejing would become the basis of Anhui Reconstruction Bureau.<sup>93</sup>

Not everyone agreed that the state should assume abandoned lands after the war, but there was general agreement that the state should play a role in settling abandoned lands, particularly with displaced people. As one reconstruction guideline for Nanjing proposed, the state should "hire vagrants to expand agriculture" on abandoned lands. Others simply believed that the state should "call back

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<sup>90</sup> William T. Rowe, *Saving the World: Chen Hongmou and Elite Consciousness in Eighteenth Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 216-222.

<sup>91</sup> *Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi* (1881), 193-194; Zhang Shaochang, et al., *Xuzuan Jurong xianzhi* (1901), 138, 325-326; ZGFQJPD, 335-337.

<sup>92</sup> ZGFQJPD, 335-337.

<sup>93</sup> *Anhui tongzhi* (1935), 3418-3419, 3887-3897.



those who fled” (招輯流亡) to reclaim their lands, which seemed to be an overestimation of state control over the population and a denial of the casualties of the war. Nonetheless, the idea of resettlement of abandoned lands sought to address two important issues: reviving the economic infrastructure destroyed in the war, which brought together state interest in collecting tax revenue and local gentry seeking to restore their wealth, and restoring social stability by tying to the land potentially dangerous people uprooted by the war and providing them with a livelihood.<sup>94</sup>

Little can be determined about how the relationship between the state and tenants actually played out, but the fact that the state intended to collect taxes from settlers is significant by reinforcing the system of tenant farming. The Taiping openly challenged the rights and privileges of landlords in the war, building on a wave of rent resistance in the 1840s and 1850s in the Jiangnan region. During the war, many landlords were forced to flee the approach of the Taiping for friendlier parts, losing access to rent revenue for several years during the war. Those who remained largely continued to function, but also lost many of their tenants who succumbed to the many miseries of war, were impressed into the Taiping's service or took to the road as refugees. In short, the war was devastating to the landlord system of Jiangnan that governed economic and social relations for centuries.<sup>95</sup> After the war's end, landlords whose status had been challenged in the war had to definitively establish their right to collect rent. Resettlement tenancy policies of Qing officials reinforced that system by limiting the options of people returning after the war. Reconstruction aimed to garner the support of the gentry by reinforcing a weakened system of landlord-tenant relations. Officials instead decided to create a system of state tenant farming for resettled subjects, which reinforced the relationship between landlords and tenants by not providing a more attractive alternative for potential tenants.

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*; ZGFQJPD, 325-326.

<sup>95</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 8-9.

State resettlement policies were successful nonetheless, attracting many settlers from quite far afield and lasting well into the 1880s. The purpose of these policies was seen by officials in part to provide a livelihood for those who were displaced by the war, and also provided resources to send refugees home. As the Anhui Reconstruction Bureau guidelines stated: "former rebels and refugees should be resettled...refugees should be appropriately provided relief and provided the resources to return home, and any homeless outsiders with a local director willing to vouch [for them] are allowed claim abandoned lands to cultivate."<sup>96</sup> It was one of the few reconstruction policies that were even noted in the foreign press at the time. As one Western correspondent commenting on the presence of a number of boats in Hankou noted:

These emigrants, as these people are in a certain sense, are natives of Shiang-yang-shien, proceeding down the river at their own expense to neighborhood of Nankin. In the province of Kiangnan... there are vast tracts of good land, which by death and desolation dealt out by the Taipings are now left without occupants or claimants.... The provincial authorities have invited persons from Hupeh and other provinces to remove these depopulated districts and become possessed of the freehold of these uncultivated lands, which, worst of all, yield no taxes.<sup>97</sup>

The author was deeply impressed with resettlement policies, claiming "it shows such a knowledge of political economy as we are not accustomed to connect with the ordinary methods of Chinese government."<sup>98</sup> Officials posted notices in far-off provinces to bring in settlers, and settlers did not necessarily have to be refugees.<sup>99</sup> Resettlement policies drew in many people from northern Jiangsu, northern Anhui, southern Zhejiang, and the middle Yangzi River valley to the lower Yangzi River region and northern Zhejiang well into the late-nineteenth century.<sup>100</sup> Many took up to farming abandoned

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<sup>96</sup> *Anhui tongzhi*, 3897.

<sup>97</sup> "The Kiangsu Province," *The North China Herald and Market Report* (September 21, 1867), 264:1.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Jonathan K. Ocko, *Bureaucratic Reform in Provincial China: Ting Jih-ch'ang in Restoration Kiangsu, 1867-1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 96-99; Bernhardt, *Rents, Taxes, and Peasant Resistance*, 87-91.

<sup>100</sup> Ge Jianxiong, *Zhongguo yimin shi* (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin daxue chubanshe, 1997), 45-47.

lands as “guest people” (客民), but many also streamed into treaty ports like Shanghai as a larger wave of migrants to the city that has been noticed by many scholars.<sup>101</sup>

Another significant part of resettlement policies is that they sought to restore a proper economic and social order rooted in agriculture and the home. An often repeated phrase, much like “reviving cultured learning” was to “return home” or “return to one’s native place” (回籍/歸籍).<sup>102</sup> Home represented a stable order as did communities in agricultural labor. Officials saw settling the displaced on abandoned lands, as a stabilizing force in the wake of a terrible war. Agricultural labor represented a return to a proper socio-economic order in which commoners were settled on the land and engaged in manual labor either growing crops or commodities for the market. So long as commoners were not on the land and working the fields, that social order could not prevail. Thus it was essential for the state and local elites that farmers returned to the field. It was even more important for a state that wished to restore tax revenue.

The emphasis on farming was not absolute. Influenced by the *jingshi* school of statecraft, which emphasized more practical than ideological state policies, Zeng emphasized the importance of occupation (業). His preference was for work in agriculture, but trades and commerce were also acceptable so long as they provided a stable livelihood. In Jiangning, for example, Zeng reestablished silk production and weaving through state-sponsored intervention, much as Yan Ruyi did in Southern Shaanxi at the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>103</sup> Chen Dong (陳東), a member of the local Nanjing gentry, proposed in his guidelines as his eleventh article that the state should “bring back the weaving industry” (招復緞業).<sup>104</sup> Another anonymous local from Nanjing argued that the state should “cultivate

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<sup>101</sup> Emily Honig, *Creating Chinese Ethnicity: Subei People in Shanghai, 1850-1980* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Bryna Goodman, *Native Place, City, and Nation: Regional Networks and Identities in Shanghai, 1853-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>102</sup> ZGFQJ, vol. 7, 4266-4270.

<sup>103</sup> *Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi*, 196.

<sup>104</sup> ZGFQJPD, 324-325.

silkworms and mulberry leaves to supply the weaving industry.”<sup>105</sup> In many ways, the silk industry was a stand-in term for restoring non-agricultural work as a catch-all term for market production. Zhu Changtao, a student in the academy at Jurong County, argued that the state should “bring back normal commerce.” Another proposed that the state should “organize finances for the flow of commerce.” The revival of the market economy, for many, officials and gentry alike, was an important task for reconstruction efforts, because it provided a stable livelihood for subjects and restored economic production.

### *Law and Order*

Law and order was of course another aspect of these guidelines. Although the Taiping were defeated, violence and criminality still prevailed in much of the Jiangnan region for several years after the war, and state control remained tenuous. Years of warfare and displacement meant that there were many desperate refugees, former rebels, ex-soldiers, and run-of-the-mill bandits willing to turn to crime for their own survival, and there was little the state could do to enforce order. Despite the victory, Jiangnan was far from socially stable, gaining a reputation in the 1860s as a den for criminal activity (See Chapter IV). Many of these reconstruction guidelines sought to impose state order and stamp out criminality and potential sedition. The most common response was to reconstitute the *baojia*, a system of community policing that at the beginning of the war had formed the basis of militias. In the postbellum period, Qing officials turned to militias and *baojia* as essentially a policing force against post-war disorder. This was often referred to as “reconstituting and inspecting the *baojia*” (編查保甲).<sup>106</sup>

Other issues of law and order were also emphasized. Chen Dong also proposed that squatting in people’s homes should be strictly forbidden: particularly by soldiers in Nanjing, who were notorious for

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 343-345.

<sup>106</sup> ZGFQPD, 324-327, 343-345.

taking over civilian homes after the city was taken, but also by refugees, who often took over abandoned homes in the war zone, causing problems for those returning after the war.<sup>107</sup> Another local of Nanjing wished to "forbid traveling at night to quell theft" – basically to impose a curfew.<sup>108</sup> At the center of these concerns was the enforcement of the law, especially where concerning property, and ending the kinds of criminal looting and robbery that were all too common during the war and remained a problem in its aftermath.

These were all issues that Zeng believed should be handled not by the military, but the *baojia* through regular community patrols. Although the *baojia* was not something new, playing a crucial role in organizing militias during the war, Zeng established Baojia Bureau or Security Bureaus (保甲局) under the control of the Reconstruction Bureau and the local magistrate in order to compel communities formerly occupied by the Taiping, and perhaps with suspect loyalties to Qing authorities, into regular patrol units strictly enforced by a specialized bureau.<sup>109</sup> In November 1864, four Baojia Bureaus were established in Nanjing, dividing the city into quarters with 102 patrols *jia* rotating duties for nightly patrols and enforcing housing ownership.<sup>110</sup> The outskirts of the city were also patrolled by seven Baojia Bureaus.<sup>111</sup>

Ostensibly, the *baojia* was a community organization to enforce law and order, but as Philip Kuhn argues, the real focus of the *baojia* was to create divisions between loyal and disloyal populations and monitor members.<sup>112</sup> That is to say, it was a form of social control. The state inserted itself into community organizations of self-defense and law enforcement in order to rein them in and maintain control. In cities like Nanjing, where the Taiping occupation had lasted a long time and residents were

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 343-345.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 325-327.

<sup>110</sup> *Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi*, 192-193.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>112</sup> Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies*, 145-148.

viewed with a degree of suspicion, the Baojia Bureau was a way of controlling the civilian population. Although Nanjing operated regular patrols in the 1860s, they were not the main force of law and order and were essentially ineffective. In 1866, crime had gotten so bad in Nanjing, that the mounted personal bodyguards (親兵) of unspecified officials regularly patrolled the streets with baojia patrolmen.<sup>113</sup> This also raises the question of whether the bodyguards patrolled with the *baojia* to assist them or to keep them contained, as community patrols were also known to harass the population.

In the cities, post-war Baojia Bureaus seem to have been divided into two administrations, which would form the basis of many modern police departments in Chinese cities at the end of the nineteenth century. In most cases, especially in the hinterlands around cities, baojia organized by the Baojia Bureau were smaller community organizations in the countryside that sought to detain criminals and mete out justice in the post-war chaos. The bureau often recognized already existing militias as the *baojia*, serving instead as a means to reign them in in the post-war period than to establish a policing force.<sup>114</sup>

The Baojia Bureau in Nanjing remained under the management of the Reconstruction Bureau until 1873, when it was handed over to a commissioner appointed by the Prefect of Jiangning with 18 bureaus across the city. The bureau was essential to maintaining order in Nanjing in the 1860s, and there is a mild suggestion of professionalization of the baojia. In the early twentieth century, many Baojia Bureaus were made into Patrol Bureaus (巡警局), such as in Taixing, Haian, and Jiangdu counties in Jiangsu, which would later become Police Departments (警察所).<sup>115</sup>

### *Removing Reminders of the Taiping*

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<sup>113</sup> Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi, 192.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>115</sup> Yang Jiyung, ed., *Taixing Xianzhi* (1886), 38; Zheng Zhendong, ed., *Xuzuan Taizhou Zhi* (1919), 439; Qian Xiang, ed., *Xuxiu Jiangdu Xianzhi* (1926), 71.

Remnant reminders of the Taiping regime were another issue heavy on the minds of many officials and gentry in their guidelines for reconstruction. Chen Dong emphasized the importance of quickly eliminating any vestiges of Taiping culture in Nanjing as soon as possible in his sixth point, “cleanse and eliminate rebel words” (洗除賊字), and the seventh point, “forbid and remove rebel dress” (禁革賊裝).<sup>116</sup> The Taiping adorned their capital in Christian artworks and slogans that were distinctive and offensive to many Qing elites. Slogans were painted on walls, declaring religious and ideological messages, such as “All the realms’ land will be farmed by the realm’s people together” or “The people of the realm do not keep private property; all things belong to God,” much in the same fashion that modern Chinese regimes hung and still hang banners with party slogans across the country.<sup>117</sup> These slogans would still have been apparent on the walls of buildings after Nanjing was captured by Zeng’s forces, insulting the sensibilities of Qing loyalist and challenging the state’s legitimacy, reminding people of what once stood there.

The Taiping also had a fondness for decorating public spaces with colorful murals that were not typical in many Qing cities. Although these murals generally did not carry overt religious and ideological messages, due to Taiping iconoclastic proscriptions against creating graven images of people, focusing instead on colorful and abstract images of symbolic animals and flowers, murals were culturally distinct enough from normative elite culture among the Qing that it served as a constant reminder of the previous regime. According to Luo Ergang, Taiping attachment to colorful public murals originated from folk art in minor popular shrines, where interiors were often painted with brightly colored murals, which would have been noticed by many.<sup>118</sup> With their lower-class origins from the southwest, the Taiping were also marked as culturally distinct by their clothing, dressing in brightly colored, especially yellow,

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<sup>116</sup> ZGFQJPD, 324-325.

<sup>117</sup> Mao Xianglin, “*Jiazi dong weifu Jinling shujian*” as quoted in Liu Shiji, *Mingqing shidai Jiangnan shizhen yanjiu* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1987), 75.

<sup>118</sup> Luo Ergang, *Taiping Tianguo bihua* (Nanjing: Jiangsu sheng xinhua shudian, 1959), 1-7.

garments that were considered gaudy and déclassé.<sup>119</sup> These slogans, murals, and clothing not only reminded Qing elites of the Taiping regime but also a time in which their authority and privilege was challenged by a vulgar plebeian culture of egalitarianism, which needed to be wiped clean with the reestablishment of Qing authority.

Eliminating the vestiges of the Heavenly Kingdom of Peace was, of course, central to post-war reconstruction. To rebuild, the old regime had to first be torn down root and stem and depowered through public spectacles in which symbols of Taiping power were discarded, and what was under the Taiping holy had to be nonchalantly profaned. Tearing down the symbols of power of a previous regime is hardly surprising; it is something that has been done throughout human history. What is surprising in the context of the Taiping Civil War was the bureaucratic and systematic approach the reconstruction administration and the state took to expunging the memory of the Taiping regime and its beliefs. Zeng established a bureau called the Bureau of Clearing Streets (清理街道局; also called the 清道局 for short) under the supervision of the Reconstruction Bureau. The purpose of the bureau was two-fold: first, to remove all public reminders, such as slogans and murals, from the public eye; second, to clear, repair, and maintain roadways and bridges from debris and other obstructions (such as palisade walls, barricades, and defensive structures) caused by fighting, as well as salvaging useful material from rubble.<sup>120</sup>

There is no mention of the Bureau of Clearing Streets in the gazetteers in the Jiangnan region after the war, even though Zeng explicitly mentions it operating in the fall of 1864. This was probably because it was a short-lived institution that quickly completed its mission; however, there is evidence of a bureau in Shanghai, where it was initially responsible for repairing roadways damaged during fighting against the Taiping. The bureau was originally attached to the county magistrate's office, but was

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<sup>119</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 64-98.

<sup>120</sup> ZGFQJD, 324-325.



funded by the reconstruction contribution fund (善後捐) with a budget of about 6,000 *liang*, and was managed by a local charity, the Hall of Benevolence to Protect Vitality (同仁輔元堂). After mismanagement by various elite managers, the local government took over the bureau, which also took charge of installing street lamps to the city's roadways. After funding from the reconstruction contribution fund dried up sometime in the 1870s, the state paid for the upkeep of the road through regular dues assessed on businesses, which were used to begin surfacing roads with asphalt. The Bureau of Clearing Streets remained in operation in Shanghai until November 1905, when it was incorporated into the Public Projects Bureau.<sup>121</sup> What is interesting is that an institution in Shanghai, the Bureau of Clearing Streets, which was originally intended to deal with post-war reconstruction became the foundation of establishing a modern municipal infrastructure such as street lamps and asphalt roads, and we see some post-war institutions for reconstruction, such as the Public Projects Bureau (工程局) and the Baojia Bureau also follow a similar course, playing a role in building modern infrastructure.

### *Rebuilding*

Of course, as the term reconstruction suggests, reconstruction also entailed the rebuilding of public structures destroyed and neglected during the war. It is hard to enumerate how many public buildings – government offices, temples, academies, etc. – were destroyed in the conflict, not to mention private homes, but for many cities, the war was highly destructive. Most local government offices were destroyed in the war, as were temples and academies, which we will discuss in chapter three. This was reflected in many of the reconstruction guidelines produced in this period; however, the gentry was more likely to focus on institutions of state power that also reaffirmed their own position in society, especially temples and academies. Zhu Chengtao forcefully claimed that “first holy temples

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<sup>121</sup> Wu Xiang, ed., *Shanghai xian xuzhi* (1918), 188-189.

should be repaired” and that government offices should be rebuilt at public expense.<sup>122</sup> Wang Qijin in Jintan County emphasized the need to rebuild examination halls, academies, and libraries.<sup>123</sup> Similarly, Chen Dong put as his first article that they should “rebuild imperial academies and temples” and “restore libraries and schools” as his tenth article.<sup>124</sup> Rebuilding was in many ways a central focus of reconstruction for local elites and officials who wished to see their authority returned to the center of public life.

Generally, in agreement with these proposals, Zeng was nonetheless compelled to point out priorities in these reconstruction guidelines. He agreed with Zhu Chengtao that temples and shrines most certainly should be repaired and rebuilt, but he also argued that this would have to wait a few years until basic needs of sustenance and state control were restored.<sup>125</sup> When it came to government offices, Zeng was of the mind that these were not a priority, contending that the people had endured so much that it was too much for the state to ask people to fund official opulence and that other projects were far more pressing for the wellbeing of the poor and displaced subjects.<sup>126</sup> Interestingly enough, Zeng’s stance was a guiding policy of reconstruction for quite a long time. The reconstruction of government offices was more often than not a low priority, especially for minor local offices, and rebuilding government offices followed much later than other issues. In most places, many officials in the Jiangnan region conducted their business from private residences refitted as public offices, sometimes for decades after the war.<sup>127</sup> Work to rebuild the Liangjiang Governor-General’s manor, which had been made into Hong Xiuquan’s palace and ultimately burned down in the final battle for the city, did not begin until 1871 and was completed in 1873. For many years, the Governor-General of

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<sup>122</sup> ZGFQJPD, 325-327.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 337-339.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 324-325.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 337-339.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>127</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 8.

Liangjiang, one of the most powerful positions in the empire, worked from a private residence.<sup>128</sup> This was largely a political gesture, suggesting the Governor-General and state keep modest accommodations and endure austerity in a time of dearth, putting the needs of subjects before their own. For a city like Nanjing, which had access to resources and funds that most places lacked, it was possible to rebuild the Governor-General's manor. In fact, Nanjing quietly rebuilt many of its government buildings in the 1860s, but it was important that the Governor-General be seen as focusing on the livelihood of subjects over his own comfort and convenience, placing his responsibility towards reconstruction before the privileges of power.<sup>129</sup>

Even though many local offices in Nanjing were rebuilt, in many places that lacked the resources of the regional capital, government buildings were some of the last projects of reconstruction. In the wealthy county of Tongxiang in northern Zhejiang, for example, the county magistrates "all lived in a subject's residence as the magistrate's manor until 1875" when the new manor was complete and was spoken of as an action of frugality in a time of crisis.<sup>130</sup> Tongxiang was a bit exceptional in its lateness. In many other places, the magistrate's manor was usually rebuilt sooner, generally in the late 1860s, as a necessity of local governance, but many subordinate local offices in a county such as local constables, jail houses, treasurers, military offices came much later if even at all. In Taihu County in western Anhui province, the Governor of Hubei, Hu Linyi, who was an active General in the irregular army fighting in Anhui, funded the rebuilding of the Magistrate's Manor shortly after its liberation in 1860, but nearly every other official – constables, county examiner, censor, treasurer, judge, and various miscellaneous offices in the county – continued to reside in private residences well into the 1870s.<sup>131</sup> Reconstruction generally deemphasized the importance of rebuilding state administration institutions; however, that is

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<sup>128</sup> *Xuxiu Jiangning fuzhi*, 236.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 236-241.

<sup>130</sup> *Tongxiang Xianzhi*, 481.

<sup>131</sup> Gao Shouheng, ed., *Taihu Xianzhi* (1922), 138. And it seems that some offices were never rebuilt at all.

not to say that it was not done. The deprioritization of government offices expressed a sense that the state would put subjects before officials in their time of need, placing the people's interest before official comfort. This was, for the most part, a symbolic action; some government offices were rebuilt shortly after the conclusion of the war, but a number of counties, generally those that lacked the resources, were very slow to rebuild government offices.

The civil service examination, central to Chinese state and society, was a part of the state administration that was prioritized in reconstruction. Most reconstruction guidelines, written by literati and gentry who sought political power and recognition of their status through the examination system, placed the rebuilding of academies, examination halls, and libraries at the top of their list. Elites in Jiangnan had for centuries dominated the imperial examination with only a handful of counties in Jiangnan comprising the majority of *jinshi* degree holders. The war had disrupted the ability of many Jiangnan elite to participate in the examination as local elites focused less on the study of the Confucian classics and more on militia organizing or sheer survival; moreover, many local examinations were discontinued, especially in occupied territories. This loosened the grip of Jiangnan elites over the examination system for nearly a decade, facilitating the rise of a political power base in Hunan and Hubei where many degree holders achieved status through irregular armies. In the aftermath of the war, many Jiangnan gentry wished to reassert their position in the imperial examination and political office through the speedy restitution of the examination system. In this regard, Zeng was in complete agreement and was central to his idea of reconstruction as the “restoration of cultured learning.” Almost immediately after taking Nanjing, Zeng turned his attention to repairing the sprawling examination hall in Nanjing, second only to the capital examination hall in Beijing. The Nanjing examination hall had, fortunately, survived the war; it had been used by the Taiping to hold their own parallel examination system based on Christian doctrine, and then miraculously survived the final bloody siege, something described as

“nothing less than miraculous light” in an otherwise dark time.<sup>132</sup> In November 1864, only months after the war’s end, the first provincial examination was held with about 15,000 examinees participating.<sup>133</sup> Rebuilding academies were a part of this effort to “restore cultured learning” in Nanjing with the prefectural academy rebuilt in 1865, Shangyuan and Jiangning counties academy in 1869, Liuhe County Academy in 1870, and Shenshui county academy in 1871.

Many local elites also encouraged the state to rebuild libraries, which were at the heart of education and test preparation, which Zeng and many local officials made a critical duty of reconstruction efforts. Almost immediately Zeng ordered the rebuilding of Bell Mountain Library (鐘山書院) in a new location with preliminary work completed by the winter of 1864, funding for which came from the Reconstruction Bureau with several expansions continuing over the following years.<sup>134</sup> Work also began in 1864 on the Phoenix Pond Library (鳳池書院) in Nanjing.<sup>135</sup> Many other were also rebuilt over the following years, although in many cases in different locations, but there were also a number of libraries that were never rebuilt. The same happened in many other cities and counties besides Nanjing, such as the Willow Islet Library (柳洲書院) in Jiujiang (rebuilt in the early 1860s), Five Lakes Library (五湖書院) in Huzhou (1870), Ziyang Library (紫陽書院) in Wuyuan County, Anhui (1867).<sup>136</sup> Even the relatively underfunded Reconstruction Bureaus in Dangtu County, Anhui rebuilt the Heavenly Gate Library (天門書院) in 1864, which was also where the Reconstruction Bureau set up its office after completion.<sup>137</sup> The libraries rebuilt after the war are too numerous to count, but in many places, libraries were a clear priority for both officials and local elites, because education represented a core element of the bond between the state and local elites.

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<sup>132</sup> Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi,, 181.

<sup>133</sup> Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism*, 79-85.

<sup>134</sup> Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi, 248.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

<sup>136</sup> *Jiujiang fuzhi* (1874), 845; Zong Yuanheng, ed., *Huzhou fuzhi* (1874), 1430; Ge Yunfen, ed., *Chongxiu Wuyuan xianzhi* (1925), 251.

<sup>137</sup> Lu Shige, *Dangtu xianzhi* (1921), 1395-1396.

Temples were another part of reconstruction efforts, because religion played a critical role in legitimizing the state's authority over spiritual forces. State cults in local communities received considerable attention from the Reconstruction Bureau, which funded the rebuilding of many state shrines and temples. The state's role in religious rituals was crucial to local society's belief in a chaotic spiritual realm, where the state used its authority to rein in and control wayward spirits and coax deities into granting favors. Housing spirits in homes and providing ritual offerings were essential to controlling spirits and gods, but the iconoclastic destruction wrought by the Taiping upon state and popular cults during the war meant that there were few remaining temples and shrines to shelter spirits and gods; this required their prompt reconstruction if the state wished to maintain control over the spiritual realm. For a war often viewed in religious terms as a punishment from the gods for moral depravity and as a challenge from an alien god, rebuilding temples had even more significance as having restorative power to the collective morality of society.<sup>138</sup> As we shall discuss in chapter three, efforts focused on rebuilding state cults that pacified the spirits of the dead in the war, and imperial cults to gods who provided assistance to the Qing victory, reflecting themes important to survivors of the war. Local popular cults were often left to locals to rebuild through their own fundraising efforts, but at times with assistance from the state and the Reconstruction Bureau. Buddhist temples, on the other hand, were generally left to their own devices, but many seem to have benefitted from an upsurge in donations to monasteries in the 1870s.

### *Infrastructure*

In the mid-1860s, another one of the most important issues of reconstruction for officials, especially Zeng, was infrastructure, chiefly city walls, water control, and bridges. City walls were heavily damaged from warfare, which should come as no surprise, with many sieges leaving gaping holes in

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<sup>138</sup> Meyer-Fong, 30-33.

walls, tunnels dug below wall foundations causing them to collapse; and in some cases, such as Hukou, Jiangxi, the entire city wall was dismantled by the Taiping to construct a fortress.<sup>139</sup> City walls were often repaired immediately upon retaking a city with labor provided by soldiers on garrison duty and rubble salvaged for construction material: such was the case in Anqing, Jiujiang, and Nanjing, where the walls were heavily damaged.<sup>140</sup> Walls were important as a defensive structure, although their importance defensively diminished during the war with the prevalence of cannon and rifles; they also played a crucial role in defining urban space and served as a symbol of state power since walled cities were generally administrative centers.<sup>141</sup> Therefore, rebuilding city walls worked to reconstitute cities as places where people could live under the protection of the state. This was particularly important in places, such as Hukou and Anqing, where the cities were largely devoid of civilians by the end of the war. In order to attract refugees to return or migrants to settle in cities, they needed to delineate an urban space in which they could come and ensure the presence and protection of the state.

City walls, bridges, and water control were projects often handled after the war by a subordinate office of the Reconstruction Bureau, the Public Projects Bureau, established in Nanjing by Zeng around December 1864 and lasted until 1880.<sup>142</sup> Many other places also established their own public project bureaus under the local reconstruction bureau - especially major cities such as Shanghai and Suzhou - and some of them lasted into the early twentieth century (such as our previous example in Shanghai).<sup>143</sup> The Reconstruction Bureau provided funding to the Public Projects Bureau, and the Public Projects Bureau was responsible for planning and overseeing the work for infrastructural repairs and rebuilding structures. The director of the Public Projects Bureau was usually a circuit intendant (道員) or

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<sup>139</sup> Yin Li, ed., *Hukou xianzhi* (1870), 169, 1467-1474.

<sup>140</sup> *Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi*, 138; *Jiujiang fuzhi*, 450-453; *Huaining xianzhi*, 312-317.

<sup>141</sup> Si-yen Fei, *Negotiating Urban Space: Urbanization and the Late Ming* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 76-124.

<sup>142</sup> *Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi*, 214-215.

<sup>143</sup> *Shanghai xian xuzhi*, 188-189.

a commissioner with experience in engineering projects, overseeing work across multiple prefectures at times.<sup>144</sup> The duties of the Public Projects Bureau were many: foremost, they were responsible for procuring, producing, and stockpiling construction material ranging from lumber, brick, and tiles and distributing them to priority projects, but they also planned, directed, and organized major projects or oversaw locally led projects provided funds by the Reconstruction Bureau.

Bridges were some of the most clearly recorded projects led by the public projects bureau. The destruction of bridges was part of a scorched earth campaign critical to military strategy in the war but would prove a major hindrance to trade and travel in its aftermath. This was particularly prevalent in Jiangsu and Zhejiang province, where warfare devolved into insurgency and counter-insurgency fighting in the early 1860s, destroying much of the infrastructure. In the post-war period, the public projects bureau was generally responsible for the reconstruction of bridges vital to trade. The Nanjing public projects bureau spent over 36,800 *liang* over an unspecified period of time on repairing bridges in Jiangning prefecture, including two large stone bridges outside the city gates, Changgan Bridge in 1872 and Zhonghe Bridge in 1876, specifically attributed to the bureau.<sup>145</sup> The same was true for many other Public Projects Bureaus. In Suzhou Prefecture alone, for example, the public projects bureau was recorded in the local gazetteer as rebuilding at least fifty bridges, mostly between 1871 and 1873.<sup>146</sup> Although these entries in gazetteers are usually terse, they do show that bridge repairs were a major part of the bureau's scope.

The public project bureau was clearly closely associated with water control, even though sources are not entirely clear what their role in water control was. There are only vague references to the involvement of the Nanjing public project bureau in water control, but we get a sense of its role in the reconstruction of the city's storm water management after the war. Flooding, flash flooding in

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<sup>144</sup> *Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi*, 191; *Taihu xianzhi*, 725.

<sup>145</sup> *Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi*, 277, 279.

<sup>146</sup> Li Mingwan, ed., *Suzhou fuzhi* (1883), 33-34.



particular, was controlled by a web of underground storm water pipes dating back to the early Ming, which quickly ejected accumulated rainwater from the city into the moat. On the eve of the civil war, in 1848, a massive flood that inundated the city, clogged up the storm water management system. Local elites had begun raising funds for its repair, but before work could begin, the city found itself under Taiping occupation, leaving the city vulnerable to flooding for the duration of the war. The flood control system in Nanjing was ignored during the war and as the city tried to rebuild, flooding at first seemed to be a low priority for the Taiping regime, and after the war, the same was true for the Qing reconstructors who had to contend with a myriad other post-war issues. In 1869, however, heavy rains brought minor flooding to the city, reminding the local government and gentry of the importance of flood control.<sup>147</sup>

The following year, the public projects bureau led an effort to dredge the outflow of the moat into the Yangzi River. Over the next few years, they continued dredging major waterways along the Qinhuai River, as well as repairing bridges while they were at it, in the hopes of mitigating flooding risk. They enlisted the aid of local elites who provided expertise and helped shoulder some of the cost. A much larger project came in 1875 with the complete overhaul of the city's stormwater management system in the southeast corner. The director of the public project bureau led the effort to unclog the storm water pipes; after which, a stele was erected describing their efforts and threatening residents with penalties for stealing stone bricks from the façade and dumping their chamber pots into the storm water system. The stele remains in Nanjing today. What role the public projects bureau played in water control is not entirely clear from the stele.<sup>148</sup> Their efforts are mentioned as an afterthought. It may be that much of the work of water control was delegated to local gentry or officials, as one statement

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<sup>147</sup> *Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi*, 194, 214-215; *Xuzuan Jurong xianzhi*, 497-500.

<sup>148</sup> The stele, erected in 1875, only states rules and regulations and does not state who repaired the works. It is located on the south corner wall of Jiang Shoushan Former Residence Exhibition Hall, 18 santiaoying, Nanjing, Qinhuai District.

mentions: “[the bureau] delegated subordinate officials to manage such matters, oversee workmanship and due diligence to ensure its completion. This is how restoration work was handled in the five counties. In neighboring prefectures, [the bureau] sometimes handled it by selecting people to inspect the work.”<sup>149</sup> Regardless of the bureau’s role, it is clear from the references that water control was a part of their purview, but may have been a largely supervisory role or

Procurement and production of construction material was a major emphasis of the bureau’s work in Nanjing, stockpiling them in reserves for not only public projects, but also for sale to the public at regular prices. The bureau inserted itself directly into the market to direct resources to the city, using its funds to reestablish industries and markets and subsidizing construction cost. Timber was in high demand for construction, and with little timber available locally, the public projects bureau used its resources to directly purchase timber from up river mostly in Hubei, but also bought timber from abroad (most likely Southeast Asia), shipping them overseas. Stone was acquired from several quarries reestablished by the bureau just southeast of the city. For bricks, the bureau hired craftsmen from the town of Hushu some 30 miles southeast of the city. Other essential materials –iron, hemp, varnish – were obtained from the open market.<sup>150</sup> Curiously, the bureau made its resources available to residents of the city rebuilding their homes, subsidizing the cost of construction (by how much is unclear) by “giving them to the people at fixed prices.”<sup>151</sup> These activities in the market, particular in the environs around Nanjing, were a unique experiment in not only procuring resources but intervening in the market economy and influencing economies of scale.

Infrastructure was of particular importance to state officials because they provided the basis of production and security. The state invested considerable resources in such projects, even if compilers of local gazetteers rarely discussed some of the state projects for rebuilding destroyed infrastructure. Of

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<sup>149</sup> *Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi*, 214.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 202-203, 1148.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 202-203.

particular concern in the Jiangnan region was water control, which provided the basis for agricultural production in the marshy wetlands of the delta. Years of warfare left water control projects in a state of considerable disrepair while state funds were invested in the military. A critical task of the Reconstruction Bureau was to repair and rebuild critical infrastructure destroyed in war in order to restore economic activity.

### *Paying for Reconstruction*

The same organizational principles that governed wartime provincial bureaus would also be applied in Zeng's vision of state reconstruction and the reconstruction bureau. Much like the Lijin Bureau and Military Provisioning Bureau, the primary purpose of the reconstruction bureau was to raise funds, manage resources, and distribute them for post-war reconstruction projects, such as providing relief grain, rebuilding academies, repairing water control, and administering abandoned lands. Although there are no figures on the budget and expenditures of the Reconstruction Bureau, it is clear that the bureau had considerable resources at its disposal for a multitude of imperially sanctioned projects and a substantial budget. According to the *Jiangning Prefectural Gazetteer*, the Reconstruction Bureau raised several million *liang* over seventeen years from its founding to the publication of the gazetteer in 1881.<sup>152</sup> It is clear, however, that the Reconstruction Bureau in Nanjing was a central institution with considerable power and resources in the years immediately following the war, sharing responsibility with the state on administrative task and social control.

What we can piece together from the Nanjing Reconstruction Bureau's finances reveals an institution that drew from a variety of financial and material resources, which was made possible by Nanjing's symbolic and political position in the war; however, the lion's share of funding was derived

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<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

from state sources. Initially, funding for the Reconstruction Bureau came entirely from the state in what was characterized as an “Imperial Contribution” (天捐) or a one-time grant from the state; this made up the bulk of the bureau's funding until it was exhausted.<sup>153</sup> It is unclear from where this “imperial contribution” derived or how much it consisted of, but it most likely came out of the coffers of the irregular army, the provincial treasury, and loot pillaged when Nanjing was taken – in other words, it probably did not come from Beijing. Nonetheless, the Reconstruction Bureau quickly diversified its sources of funding in a way that reflected wartime institutions that emerged during the war to support the irregular army.

A part of the Nanjing bureau's budget was raised through its own fundraising efforts with the state's blessing. The bureau was, for example, granted the right to collect taxes on fish, water chestnuts, and wild rice gathered from Xuanwu Lake and exercised a licensed monopoly on lotus root and lotus leaves sold in the city. Before the war, this had been a customary tax collected by the prefect but was handed over to the Reconstruction Bureau in the after the war. The income from this tax, however, was relatively modest at about 1,000 *liang* annually (seasonally collected), and it is unclear why the Reconstruction Bureau was granted this source for income.<sup>154</sup>

More importantly, the Nanjing Reconstruction Bureau was actively engaged in the selling of brevet ranks and the collection of compulsory “contributions,” a common strategy for emergency state funding since the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, which gained considerable traction during the civil war period.<sup>155</sup> The selling of brevet ranks made up a substantial part of the Reconstruction Bureau's revenue although concrete numbers are difficult to come by. It was important enough that the Reconstruction Bureau established a branch office in the Lixiahe region, about 100 km to the east, called the Reconstruction Contribution Bureau (善後大捐局), accounting for 500,000 *liang* annually to the Reconstruction Bureau

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>155</sup> Kaske, “Fund-Raising Wars: Office Selling and Interprovincial Finance in Nineteenth Century China.”

according to the Jiangning Prefectural Gazetteer.<sup>156</sup> The Lixiahe region was essential for the Reconstruction Bureau's fundraising efforts, just as it was for the irregular army during the war, because the region, despite having been so perilously close to the frontlines of the war, was never occupied by the Taiping and weathered the war largely unscathed. This meant that the gentry there, unlike much of the rest of Jiangsu, Anhui, and Zhejiang, were more likely to have the means and willingness to purchase brevet imperial ranks and could afford compulsory "contributions" assessed on land in addition to regular taxes. Contributions for reconstruction were raised elsewhere as well, but we have less in terms of specific numbers when it comes to these regions. Yet this does reveal that the same kinds of mechanisms for fundraising used by local governments and irregular armies during the war became just as crucial to post-war reconstruction efforts, making up the bulk of the Reconstruction Bureau's funding.

The strategies employed by the Lijin Bureau to raise funds for the army were also used by the Nanjing Reconstruction Bureau, imposing a variety of informal *lijin* on specific products, but their purpose seemed less focused on earning revenue and more as a way to control the flow of resources.<sup>157</sup> Almost immediately after its founding in August 1864, the Nanjing Reconstruction Bureau founded the Gate Tax Bureau (門釐局), which taxed all sundry goods leaving and entering the city, which was managed and operated by the reconstruction bureau.<sup>158</sup> While it is unclear how much the Reconstruction Bureau earned from the Gate Tax Bureau, its purpose was less about collecting revenue than preventing the outflow of resources and wealth looted from the city. The Gate Tax Bureau had the authority to inspect all cargo and goods entering and leaving the city, and thus could prevent the removal of certain goods from leaving the city. The fact that the Gate Tax was abolished in June 1865, only 10 months after its creation, furthers the point that its purpose was less about revenue and more

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<sup>156</sup> Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi, 201.

<sup>157</sup> Chuck Wooldridge, *City of Virtues: Nanjing in an Age of Utopian Visions* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015), 117-121.

<sup>158</sup> Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi, 201.

about the prevention of looting and the outflow of wealth and resources from the city.<sup>159</sup> In fact, Zeng temporarily exempted goods transported into the city from the gate tax during the fall of 1864 to encourage trade into the city.<sup>160</sup>

In Nanjing, the Reconstruction Bureau played a uniquely critical role in controlling precious resources flowing into the city. Lumber, which was expensive and in high demand as the city began rebuilding, was one such critical resource that the government and the Reconstruction Bureau regulated heavily. The Gate Tax Bureau initially worked to inspect and prevent the removal of critical resources such as lumber; after it was abolished, Zeng Guofan implemented a Lumber Transit Tax Bureau (木釐局) based in the lumber markets of Zhenjiang, the largest market in the region, which worked to encourage the transportation of lumber to Nanjing through incentivized rates and discouraged the export of lumber from Nanjing through steep taxes. The transport of lumber was also discounted for certain regions devastated by war, such as Yangzhou, but higher tax rates were also imposed on lumber to southern Jiangsu.<sup>161</sup> The purpose of controlling and taxing these resources was to control the flow of certain resources to favor the reconstruction of regions deemed crucial by the state, in particular, Nanjing, but this also disadvantaged other regions impacted by the war with higher prices on precious goods.

A larger part of the bureau's funding came from the Jiangsu Provincial Lijin Bureau, which was required to provide a portion of its revenue to the Reconstruction Bureau. According to Luo Yudong's study of Lijin revenue and expenditure, the Reconstruction Bureau received from the provincial Lijin Bureau between 1869 and 1898, years for which we have reliable numbers, a total of 3.6 million *liang* over 29 years, with an annual average of 120,744 *liang*. To put that into perspective, the Jiangsu Provincial Lijin Bureau's average revenue over the same period of time was just under 2.5 million *liang*,

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<sup>159</sup> Woolridge, *City of Virtues*, 117-122.

<sup>160</sup> ZGFQJ, vol. 7, 4244-4248.

<sup>161</sup> *Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi*, 1148.

which means that, on average, nearly 5% of Lijin revenue went towards the Reconstruction Bureau. Funding varied from year to year, with a maximum of 290,384 *liang* in 1871 and a minimum of 27,357 *liang* in its last year of existence, but funding was generally much higher between 1869 and 1875, shortly after the war, ranging between 150,000 and 200,000 *liang* annually, after which funding steadily declined to an average of about 100,000 *liang*. These numbers do not include, however, the fact that the Lijin Bureau often directly funded specific reconstruction projects, particularly water control, which was managed by the Reconstruction Bureau, and in some years these funds could exceed the funds given directly to the Reconstruction Bureau, such as in 1872 when the Lijin Bureau provided over 230,000 *liang* for flood control. Together, this meant that the Nanjing Reconstruction Bureau alone received an average of 162,466 *liang* from the Lijin Bureau with some years, especially in the early 1870s, exceptionally higher, reaching close to half-a-million *liang* and taking up 14% of the Lijin Bureau's revenue in 1871.<sup>162</sup>

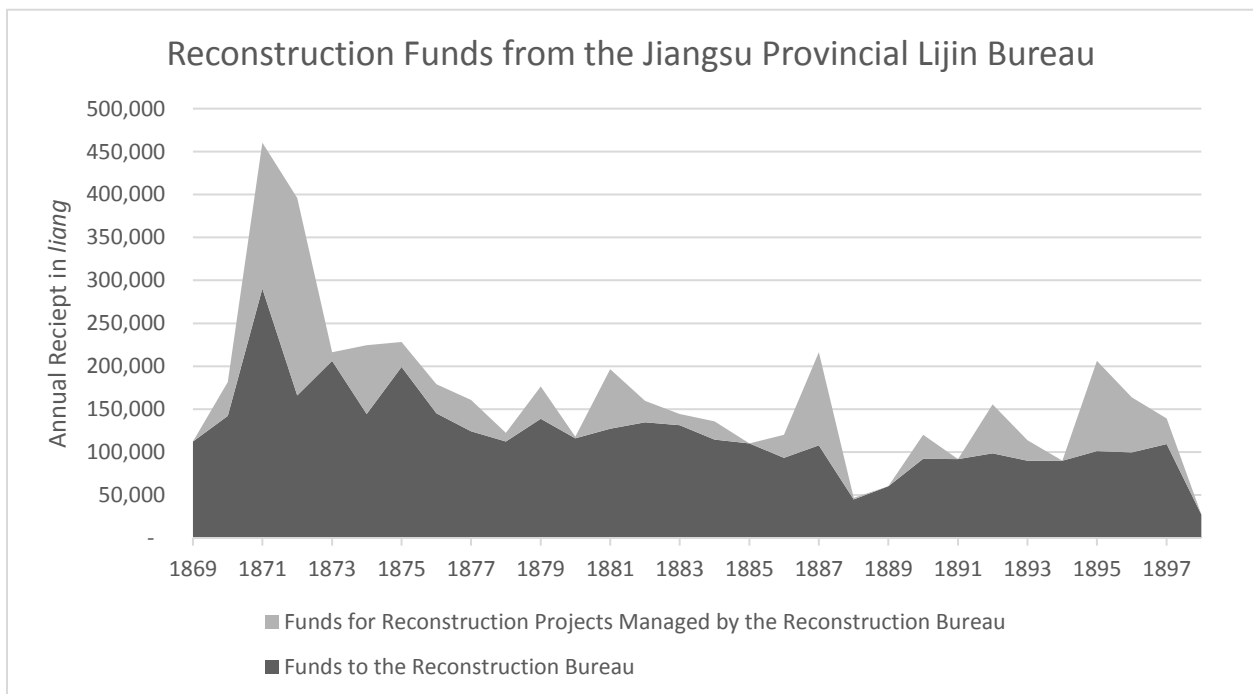


Chart 2.1 - Reconstruction Funds from the Jiangsu Provincial Lijin Bureau. Luo Yudong, *zhongguo lijin shi* (Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1936; reprint, Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 2010), 518-520.

<sup>162</sup> Luo Yudong, *Zhongguo lijin shi*, 518-520. Also see, total *lijin* revenue on 493-494.

The Reconstruction Bureau not only received revenue from the Jiangsu Provincial Lijin Bureau, but also from miscellaneous *lijin* levies collected locally and not incorporated into the provincial structure. Despite the provincial bureau, which by the end of the war oversaw and regulated most *lijin* taxes, many still remained under independent control by local governments and specific institutions, acting in essence like a tolling station. During the war, neighboring Liuhe County constructed a pontoon bridge across the Chuhe River with a *lijin* toll station charging a tax on all sundry goods and a toll to use the bridge referred to as the “bridge *li*” (橋釐). The revenue collected went towards the military until the city was occupied by the Taiping. After the war, the bridge *li* was reestablished to assist in local reconstruction efforts for the county and was allowed to remain a locally and independently managed source of revenue. As commerce returned to the region and revenue grew, it gained the attention of the Nanjing Reconstruction Bureau. In 1866, Governor-General, Li Hongzhang, ordered that half of the bridge *li* from Liuhe County should go to the Nanjing Reconstruction Bureau, and the other half be used for local reconstruction purposes. Revenue from the bridge *li* was modest at first; no more than a few hundred *qian* a month, but by the mid-1870s revenue had grown with 8,898 *qian* annually going to the Nanjing bureau. Locals were increasingly irked that local revenue was going towards reconstruction in the prefectural capital and not the county, so local gentry began petitioning the provincial treasurer in 1886 and 1887 that more funds be retained locally for reconstruction projects, such as the local academy and to repair the pontoon bridge. The funds were clearly important to the county’s reconstruction efforts. As the compiler of the gazetteer wrote: “expenses for the Wenchang Temple, Longevity Palace, and various projects, as well as the compilation of the gazetteer all, rely on this fund.” While their pleas were generally granted for specific project allowances, the Nanjing Reconstruction Bureau was still entitled to half in principle minus the additional grants. By 1903, the bridge *li* raked in a sizeable 47,000 *qian* annually, which went directly to build a modern school, and only then, after many



years of petitions, did the provincial treasure finally lift the Reconstruction Bureau's entitlement to half of the proceeds.<sup>163</sup>

This was not unique to Liuhe County. The Nanjing bureau also received specially earmarked funds from various local *lijin* stations in surrounding counties. In northern Jiangsu, for example, a special *lijin*, not under the supervision of the Jiangsu Provincial Lijin Bureau, was imposed on the trade of grain by the Office of Military Logistics (軍糧臺) and the Governor-General of the Tribute Canal (漕運總督) with certain rights over specific collection stations. During the war, this was used to fund the regular army and repairs for the Grand Canal. At the end of the war, ten percent of the levy on grain traded in Yangzhou was earmarked for the Nanjing Reconstruction Bureau, and another 10% went towards the local Yangzhou Reconstruction Bureau until 1870.<sup>164</sup> The same was also noted in Rugao County where 10% went towards the Nanjing bureau and 10% went towards the Yangzhou bureau, and this was most likely the case throughout many counties in northern Jiangsu.<sup>165</sup>

Another source of funding for the Nanjing bureau was from the Hubei Provincial Bureau of Overseeing Sales (湖北督銷局). At the end of the war, the imperial court along with Zeng Guofan's support decided to cease the Salt and Tea Bureau in order to re-impose the state's monopoly over the salt trade in middle Yangzi River valley, which had been suspended during the war. To regain control over the burgeoning privatized salt trade and smugglers that slipped between the cracks of state authority, the state founded the Bureau of Overseeing Sales based in Wuchang, Hubei and overseen by the provincial treasurer of Hubei (hence Hubei Provincial in the title even though it was a trans-provincial administration). The bureau's function was to ship salt from the Lianghuai salt fields up the Yangzi River to Wuchang and Changsha on behalf of licensed salt merchants, for a compulsory fee, to ensure that only licensed salt was sold in markets in the middle Yangzi River region. Anyone not shipping

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<sup>163</sup> Zheng Yaolie, ed., *Liuhe xian xuzhi gao* (1920), 138-141.

<sup>164</sup> Ying Xiangbao, ed., *Ganquan xian xuzhi* (1920), 339-340.

<sup>165</sup> Zhou Jishuang, ed., *Rugao xianzhi* (1873), 479.

salt along the Yangzi River through the Bureau of Overseeing Sales or found in local markets without a license issued by the bureau was deemed a salt smuggler and subject to punishment. The bureau also had the authority to implement price controls on salt, regulate production, and issue salt licenses.<sup>166</sup> The bureau was largely unsuccessful in its goal to stamp out salt smuggling in the middle Yangzi River region, where a wartime boom in small-time private salt merchants allowed many to continue to operate under the radar well afterwards. Nonetheless, the Hubei Provincial Bureau of Overseeing Sales was still profitable as many merchants from the lower Yangzi delta bristled at the opportunity to restore the profitable salt monopoly of the antebellum period. By order of Zeng Guofan during his tenure as Governor-General of Liangjiang, a part of the revenue collected by the Bureau of Overseeing Sales in Hubei was forwarded to the Nanjing Reconstruction Bureau, totaling 48,000 *liang* annually.<sup>167</sup>

Altogether, it is clear that the Nanjing Reconstruction Bureau had a considerable amount of wealth at its disposal to fund various projects from repairing flood control, rebuilding academies, and resettling refugees, but a precise figure is impossible to determine. If the figures reported from various sources discussed above are considered together, a reasonable ballpark figure might be from 500,000 *liang* to just shy of 750,000 *liang* annually before 1875. Afterwards, funding quickly diminished to just over 100,000 *liang*, excluding special funds for specific projects. To put that into perspective, the province of Jiangsu spent approximately 3 million *liang* annually on military expenses in the early 1870s, the largest ticket item in the provincial budget by far.<sup>168</sup> Thus there was political will and resources invested in undertaking massive reconstruction projects. More importantly, revenue for reconstruction in Nanjing was largely derived from the *lijin*, an important source of revenue for the state by the end of the war that played a crucial role in funding the irregular army.

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<sup>166</sup> *Hunan tongzhi*, 5315-5339.

<sup>167</sup> *Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi*, 191.

<sup>168</sup> Luo Yudong, *Zhongguo lijin shi*, 493-494.

In the financing of the Nanjing Reconstruction Bureau, there also emerges a clear pattern that favored reconstruction in Jiangning Prefecture generally and the city of Nanjing specifically. As the former capital of the deposed Taiping regime, the reconstruction of Nanjing carried particular symbolic importance as a model of the restoration of a Qing order; moreover, the city had a powerful ally in the Governor-General, Zeng Guofan, who made reconstruction into a mark of his own power and prestige as more than a general, but a restorer of cultured learning and civilization. This would continue with his successor Li Hongzhang who also had a chip on his shoulder to prove himself as more than a general, but a man of letters and culture. With this confluence of political attention and favor, Jiangning Prefecture gained access to a wealth of financial and material resources that, as we will discuss later, was not available to other regions impacted by the war. By funneling a portion of *lijin* taxes and other miscellaneous taxes from surrounding regions, such as Liuhe County's bridge *li*, the grain tolls and brevet rank selling in the Lixiahe Region, and even collecting a part of Hubei's fees from overseeing the transport of salt, this allowed Nanjing to pull in funding from across the province and even from other provinces for reconstruction, placing the region in a much better place to recover from the war compared to other regions. That is to say, the political economy of the post-war period was set up by the state to favor Nanjing's recovery over any other region, from which it would benefit in the decades to follow.

To complicate this slightly, however, the Nanjing Reconstruction Bureau was intended by Zeng Guofan to act as a provincial-level agency, hence the bureau was sometimes referred to as the General Bureau of Reconstruction (善後總局), which oversaw a hierarchy of local reconstruction branch bureaus (善後分局). In reality, except for two branch bureaus in Jiangning Prefecture, local reconstruction bureaus, for the most part, acted independently of the Nanjing bureau as we will discuss shortly; nonetheless, an indeterminate amount of the Nanjing bureau's resources went to local agencies across

the province for specific projects from time to time.<sup>169</sup> From all appearances, however, local bureaus relied on their own fundraising efforts for most projects and only received financial assistance from Nanjing for larger earmarked projects. Thus, even though the Nanjing Reconstruction Bureau was well funded and some of those funds were spent in other jurisdictions in Jiangsu province, the lion's share of the bureau's budget was spent within Jiangning prefecture to the detriment of other regions.

### *Divergent Reconstruction*

The intricate formula that delineated the administration of post-war reconstruction in Nanjing did not directly translate to most localities impacted by the war. The Nanjing Reconstruction Bureau had the support of the state and powerful political allies like Zeng Guofan to guarantee financial resources for reconstruction. Although conceptually the Nanjing bureau was supposed to act as a general bureau to oversee reconstruction across the provinces, in practice its resources were focused in the former Taiping capital and the surrounding Jiangning Prefecture. The destruction in Jiangning was immense to be sure, suffering more than most other regions and requiring a lot of resources, but it often came at the cost of denying provincial resources to the rest of the province. Ultimately, the provincial bureau only provided funds for particular projects, and local reconstruction bureaus were left to procure resources for their own reconstruction, led mostly by local elites.

Nanjing, instead, provided an outline of how an ideal reconstruction administration should look like for local governments, and in the aftermath of the war, many Qing officials and activist elites established their own reconstruction bureaus. They were much smaller affairs with only a few people who focused strictly on local post-war issues. For the most part, counties only founded individual

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<sup>169</sup> A few projects are mentioned as being funded specifically by the Nanjing General Bureau of Reconstruction. Hou Zonghai, ed., *Jiangpu beicheng* (1891), 461; Cao Yunyuan, ed., *Wuxian zhi* (1933), 6424-6425.

Reconstruction Bureaus that managed all general post-war affairs from resettlement to rebuilding state cults, but in a few cases, such as in Suzhou and Hangzhou, the Reconstruction Bureau oversaw a few sub-bureaus that managed specific issues.

For reconstruction outside of Jiangning Prefecture, we have only fragmented records and references that generally do not give us a complete picture. To gain a better view, we do have a better idea of post-war reconstruction in Tongxiang County in northern Zhejiang province, because the local gazetteer published in 1887 was compiled by Yan Chen, a prominent scholar from a wealthy merchant family and the first director of the local reconstruction bureau, who made sure his post-war work was highlighted.

Tongxiang County was among the most devastated in the war, suffering dearly from the chaos of the early 1860s. Much like the surrounding region, many of the county's temples and academies had been stripped down or destroyed, and untold numbers of civilians fled in the war. The destruction was particularly harsh in the north end of the county. In the war's aftermath, the most pressing issue was famine among the refugee population. Since many had fled, leaving crops unplanted, and trade networks were severed, there was a severe shortage of food and lack of access. Grain was very expensive. Another issue was roving bands of the "righteous army" (義軍) - rouge militias - and Lake bandits (湖賊) – lake pirates - that plundered the countryside for their own survival and to settle vendettas from the war.<sup>170</sup> The county was in shambles and was in desperate need of relief.

Before the Taiping occupied the county, Yan Chen, like many other Jiangnan elites, had fled to the port city of Shanghai where they fell under the protection of the powerful guns of the Western concessions. Shortly after Tongxiang County was liberated by Imperial forces in January 1864, Yan Chen received word in Shanghai from two friends who had stayed behind under Taiping occupation during the

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<sup>170</sup> Zhang Daye, *The World of a Tiny Insect: A Memoir of the Taiping Rebellion and Its Aftermath* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 82, 90, 144; Jonathan K. Ocko, *Bureaucratic Reform in Provincial China: Ting Jih-ch'ang in Restoration Kiangsu, 1867-1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 35-37, 44-46.

war. They wrote to him that the situation in their home county was dire; bandits still roamed the area and there was a severe famine. They pleaded with their compatriots who had taken refuge in Shanghai to purchase grain and bring it to Tongxiang, which was on the brink of starvation. Having previously been involved in famine relief before the war in the flooding of the 1840s and in the refugee community in Shanghai during the war, Yan Chen began raising funds for famine relief at the Tongxiang Native Place Association in Shanghai. He along with many others from their hometown managed to purchase over 1,000 *shi* of rice, and he took leave from the Native Place Association to personally oversee its delivery.<sup>171</sup>

In the spring, Yan petitioned Governor Zuo Zongtang to formalize his collective of activist gentry involved in famine relief as the Relief Bureau (撫恤局) and beseeched the governor for funds to provide additional relief grain. The governor agreed, appointing Yan as the manager of the bureau, and additionally, the governor gave the Relief Bureau the authority to “solicit contributions” (勸捐) – an ambiguous term we have already discussed the ambiguity of the term – in kind from landowners according to their property. These contributions, whether voluntary or compulsory, provided the majority of grain which was given out for relief, but it is not stated how much was collected in total. The Relief Bureau was also supported by the state to a degree but only received minimal assistance from the state, amounting to a couple hundred *shi*. Yan complained resentfully that his work in the Relief Bureau was largely ineffective for a lack of funds, saying there were 50 to 60,000 people starving, but he only had enough food to open three porridge kitchens for one meal a day over six months, which could only feed a few thousand.<sup>172</sup>

Raising funds for relief was the most difficult part in organizing relief, which was compounded by a number of people Yan condemned as “fake directors” (偽董) who swindled money from donors

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<sup>171</sup> *Tongxiang xianzhi* (1887), 678-685.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

claiming to represent the state, a militia, or a philanthropic organizations, which delegitimized his own activities and made potential donors hesitant.<sup>173</sup> In fact, there was a major crisis of confidence in philanthropic benevolence societies in the region. Benevolence societies have been suspected by historians such as Jonathan Ocko of being tax shelters in the post-war period, where local elites would transfer property to benevolence societies to avoid taxation while still pocketing a significant part of the rent and tax payments from tenants. Such accusations were directed by contemporaries at figures no less prominent than Feng Guifen, a prominent landlord and scholar from Suzhou who was one of the chief architects of post-war tax reform.<sup>174</sup> Having state support for a post-war philanthropies such as the Relief Bureau was less about access to state resources, though it did to some degree do so, but about legitimizing its work and assuaging concerns about how the money was being used in the face of doubts about the sincerity of philanthropy.

Yan's Relief Bureau was ultimately active for only a brief period of time, outliving its purpose by the end of 1864; however, the Relief Bureau provided the basis of the reconstruction bureau, which was established immediately following the disbanding of the Relief Bureau. Many of the same individuals in the county that raised funds for famine relief continued to work in the Reconstruction Bureau and their source of income seems to have been much the same.

Yan Chen was appointed by governor Zuo as the county director of reconstruction, and Yan established two branches for the county reconstruction bureau: one in the county seat and another in the wealthy merchant township of Qingzhen. Each branch bureau had its own assistant director under Yan: Xiao Yibin (蕭儀斌) in the county seat and Shen Baoyue (沈寶樾) in Qingzhen.<sup>175</sup> Both Xiao and Shen were both deeply involved in post-war relief in 1863 after their hometown was liberated by

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<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 1098.

<sup>174</sup> James Polachek, "Gentry Hegemony: Soochow in the T'ung-chih Period" in Frederick Wakeman, Carolyn Grant, eds., *Conflict and Control in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 211-256.

<sup>175</sup> *Tongxiang xianzhi*, 565.

imperial forces. Shen Baoyue was from a wealthy merchant family in Qingzhen. During the war, Shen purchased brevet ranks by contributing generously to the military despite the fact that the family business was declining from the disruption of war. When the Taiping invaded his hometown, he fled with his family to eastern Zhejiang. After the war, he immediately returned to his hometown and actively raised funds for famine relief. His biography dubiously claims that he contributed over 6,000 *shi* of grain, feeding over 70,000 starving people. On top of that, he provided funding for the local orphanage and a pharmacy for the poor.<sup>176</sup> There is little information on Xiao Yibin, but it is clear that he was from a respected family of merchants and scholars in Wuzhen, and the family manor was and still is a local landmark.

The background of the managers of the Reconstruction Bureau in the region is far from unique. Nearly every director of local reconstruction bureaus in southern Jiangsu and northern Zhejiang shared a similar biography. They were from wealthy families, especially those involved in trade, but were also deeply enmeshed in imperial politics, holding degrees in the civil service exam. More importantly, unlike in Jiangning, they were not deeply involved with the irregular army nor local militias but instead were tied to the world of philanthropy. A few examples outside of Tongxiang County include Bing Ding in Hangzhou, Liu Jishu in Huzhou, and Feng Guifen in Suzhou. For governors like Zuo, these people were essential in reconstruction because they could be tapped to raise funds through their philanthropic networks amongst the elites of Jiangnan, gaining access to more resources than the state could provide.

Of course, this was not an absolute. The state did indirectly provide resources by permitting them the right to collect revenues rooted in the *lijin* system, although there are no specific records of how much they collected. In Tongxiang County, they collected a minor surcharge on urban property called the "housing contribution" (房捐) in the township of Qingzhen. They also seemed to have inherited the Relief Bureau's authority to assess regular "contributions" on landowners called the "rice

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<sup>176</sup> Lu Xuefu, ed., *Wuqingzhen zhi* (1936), 1405.



contribution" (米捐).<sup>177</sup> A large part of their funding may have come from the "raw silk contribution" (絲捐). According to regulations, the raw silk contribution was charged an official contribution (正捐) of 16 *yuan* for every 80 bolts of cloth. In addition to this surcharge, there was also a 4 *yuan* local contribution (邑捐), which went to the local government, a sea wall contribution (塘工捐) of 2.4 *yuan*, which went to repair the sea wall in Hangzhou, and another reconstruction contribution of 2 *yuan*, as well as another 2.3 *yuan* for miscellaneous local expenses, which may also have gone to local reconstruction; therefore, every 80 bolts of silk was charged a total of 26.7 *yuan* in compulsory contributions with a significant part of that going directly to the local government and reconstruction efforts.<sup>178</sup> The fact that the Reconstruction Bureau collected earmarked revenue from the *lijin* mirrored what the Reconstruction Bureau in Nanjing did, but on a much smaller scale.

It is unclear how much was raised through such state-sanctioned funds, but entitlement to collect contributions on property and commodities was certainly a significant part of their funding. Nonetheless, it is clear that the majority of funding did or at least was expected to come through donations from local elites, and this made respected locals with experience in philanthropy a priority in appointing local directors. In fact, local reconstruction bureaus were described more like benevolent societies than as government institutions, emphasizing activities more in line with traditional philanthropic activities, such as orphanages and schools, and barely mentioning infrastructural projects such as bridge building and water control.

Since the Reconstruction Bureau was viewed publicly much more in line with philanthropies, it also had to contend with the lack of public confidence in charities in the post-war period. In the reconstruction guidelines discussed in Jiangning, the emphasis was on delineating the activities and

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<sup>177</sup> It is not explicitly stated that this is the same surcharge, but the description of soliciting contributions on landowners based on land and the "rice contribution" seem to be the same thing in principle. *Tongxian xianzhi*, 565.

<sup>178</sup> *Wuqingzhen zhi*, 958.

- Article 1 A bureau to manage reconstruction will be established to manage all matters of reconstruction. The current bureau in the county seat of Tongxiang will manage Puyuan, Tuzhen, and such areas. Another bureau in Qingzhen will manage Chenzhuang, Linzhen, and other places. Other than these, there will be no other bureaus established nor any public institutions in their name.
- Article 2 All expenditures and contributions raised must be clearly reported in conjunction with County authorities. Bureau directors are not allowed to send representatives to act on their behalf to prevent suspicion [of corruption].
- Article 3 Bureau operational expenses must be as much as possible restricted and must especially guard against malfeasance. Thus personnel will be few but salaries cannot not be low [ie. a small number of well-paid personnel]. Expenses will be self-monitored. If salaries are generous, then there will be no malfeasance.
- Article 4 Bureau expenditures of public funds will be handled by wealthy families and kept with them to prevent negligence and overages. The county-seat bureau will hand it over to Cao Hongsheng, and the Qingzhen bureau will hand it over to Xu Duanben. If the bureau needs immediate funds for payment and public funds are insufficient, they must halt work for expenses over 500-600 qian and await approval for appropriation; for expenses under 200 – 300 qian, the bureau may issue an IOU and borrow short-term from a large household. Once public funds become available, such debts should be cleared.
- Article 5 All Bureau income and expenses should be reported quarterly and displayed publically.
- Article 6 Any who have relatives who have impersonated officials, directors, or falsely claimed to hold imperial degrees are not allowed to serve in the bureau.
- Article 7 Gentry are forbidden from interfering in cases being litigated by the bureau. If the bureau is involved in litigation, the director must entrust it to local officials and explain the circumstances, especially in cases in which there are conflicts of interest that could lead to suspicions of favoritism and bribery on the part of bureau gentry impugning their reputation. Thus, it is at present determined that gentry directors of the bureau should only manage local public affairs and philanthropy within its purview, and should generally not be involved in litigation.
- Article 8 Any suspicion of directors, who use the bureau's name publically for non-bureau matters and for deceitful purposes, shall be immediately expelled upon word of it.
- Article 9 Besides managerial directors, only two personnel are permitted to handle directorial affairs: one clerk and one accountant. Personnel will only receive one dish per meal to prevent graft and conserve expenses.
- Article 10 Previously and newly founded local philanthropies will fall under the general management of the bureau.

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| Article 11 | Since expenses for matters of reconstruction are extraordinary and hard to implement, they must be prioritized for continuing appropriations in order of implementation.   |
| Article 12 | Except for their salaries, gentry directors shall receive no other compensation. If any local officials or commissioners attempt to extort money, in no case shall [gentry directors] entreat them.  |
| Article 13 | Since last year the area around Tangbei in the county fell prey to the ravages of the Lake Pirates, ruining houses and destroying farming equipment, the bureau shall provide funds for usefulness farming equipment, such as current discussions on waterwheels and building one hundred waterwheels for farming, which shall be loaned to people and repaid to the bureau after the harvest interest free. |
| Article 14 | It has been determined that the bureau shall send people to each village to interview the loyal, righteous, chaste, and filial, compiling a record of their name and the truth of their manner of death. One copy shall be submitted for inspection to the county government, and another detailed report to the provincial Reconstruction Bureau.   |
| Article 15 | Funds to repair local temples that fall under the purview of the imperial liturgy, such as the Temple of Wen[chang] and the City God shall be the responsibility of the bureau. All other [temples] are not matters for the bureau.  |
| Article 16 | Gentry directors shall not delegate responsibilities to county clerks except in rebuilding government offices unless county clerks are unable to do so themselves. It has been determined that government office projects will be handled by officials in order to avoid conflicts of interest.  |

Table 2.2 - Yan Chen, "Tongxiang xian shanhouju zhangcheng shiliu jielüe," *Tongxiang xianzhi* (1887), 702-707.

priorities of the bureaus' works. In the reconstruction guidelines in Tongxiang, however, we see a greater emphasis on regulating bureau personnel and finances to prevent malfeasance and restore public confidence.<sup>179</sup> The Tongxiang County guidelines for the local reconstruction bureau are the most complete and detailed of any guidelines in the period, reading as follows:

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<sup>179</sup> *Tongxiang xianzhi*, 702-707.

Of these sixteen articles for the Reconstruction Bureau, the majority focus on issues of managing personnel activities and finances, and they are for the most part quite detailed. Articles 2 through 5, 9, and 12, involve bureau expenditures, accounting, and personnel salaries to prevent, at least as they determined, embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds. Additionally, articles 6, 7, 8, and 16 limited the activities and qualifications of directors with an eye towards curbing corrupt behavior and conflicts of interest.<sup>180</sup>

Little is said about the actual post-war reconstruction activities of the bureau, which was the focus of guidelines in Nanjing. Only articles 13, 14, and 15 specifically touch upon bureau activities, but they go into much more detail than most other discussions on those three issues. Article thirteen clearly modeled itself after the Bureau to Promote Agriculture common in the post-war period in Nanjing and Anhui, but in this case, it incidentally mentions a very explicit proposed plan to rebuild waterwheels.<sup>181</sup> Article fifteen also mentions which kinds of temples the bureau could be involved in rebuilding, specifically delineating those in the imperial liturgy at the exclusion of unrecognized by the government, chiefly Buddhist temples, and article fourteen mandates the bureau's responsibility in compiling what would later be the local *Record of the Loyal and Righteous* (both of these issues will be discussed in later chapters).<sup>182</sup>

The difference in the focus of Tongxiang county's guidelines as opposed to that in Nanjing reveals a very different model for post-war reconstruction. One that viewed reconstruction less as an informal government institution integrated into political structures and more as a civic organization overseen by the local government in line with charities.

In reading local gazetteers in the Jiangnan region, one gains the impression that post-war reconstruction was an elite led effort that focused on rebuilding temples and academies destroyed in

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<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

the war. There are many prosaic accounts that celebrate their efforts. Little is said about their efforts at rebuilding infrastructure, such as bridges and water control, but local reconstruction bureaus were just as involved in such projects as elsewhere. The dearth of discussion in sources is largely because temples and academies were at the center of elite identity and prestige in the community, and were thus a central element of their narrative of post-war reconstruction. Bridges and water control, on the other hand, while certainly useful and beneficial to their interest, did not carry the same cultural capital, and so these efforts largely went ignored even though they did occur. This is evident because there are also occasional passing references made to such efforts, such as hundreds of bridges rebuilt by the reconstruction bureau spread across its pages.<sup>183</sup>

#### *Water Control and the Reconstruction Bureau*

What is unique about reconstruction in the Jiangnan region is a reliance on local elites for their ability to raise funds; yet despite local elite involvement in reconstruction efforts, it is also clear that the state played a significant role as well. Local elites may have been willing to donate to rebuild temples, which elites could take credit for, but funding did not seem to be so forthcoming when it came to larger infrastructural projects such as water control. Water control was vital to local agriculture, which heavily relied on water control to prevent flooding and to irrigate crops with regularity, but they were also costly, requiring a large pool of resources, and benefited local elites unevenly. Even though local gentry had an interest in rebuilding water control, the reconstruction bureau seemed to have difficulty raising sufficient funds among locals entry because of the steep cost; the government, however, had a much greater interest in restoring the economy than in rebuilding temples and academies for the sake of restoring tax revenue.

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<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 718-727; *Wuqingzhen zhi*, 448.

Ultimately, post-war water control projects in Jiangnan were largely funded by the state directly with local reconstruction bureaus and their local gentry directors acting as managers of such projects. The largest such project was rebuilding the Sea Wall along Hangzhou Bay, which required hundreds of thousands of taels of silver. The Sea Wall project, which began almost immediately after the war because it had fallen into such disrepair, did involve local gentry to manage sections of the work, but it was much more intensely overseen by the provincial government and does not seem to have involved the Reconstruction Bureau because of its scope that spanned several counties and prefectures.<sup>184</sup> As a side note, the Sea Wall project was also viewed by Governor Zuo Zongtang as a jobs program for desperate refugees, which he termed as more effective than direct famine relief or as he put it “using labor to replace relief” (以工代賑), but there do not seem to be too many public reconstruction projects during this period discussed in such terms.<sup>185</sup>

When it comes to the efforts of local reconstruction bureaus in water control, the evidence is scattered and brief. Although there are few discussions of these efforts, one such major water control project was led by the Reconstruction Bureau in Changxing County and was discussed at some length in the local gazetteer. Changxing provides us with an interesting example of the complex dynamics between local elites, the director of the Reconstruction Bureau, and the state.

Changxing County is home to possibly one of the most important and complex water control systems in the delta, the Lougang polders (澉港圩田) in northern Zhejiang. The Lougang polders was a major irrigation and flood control system built in 1189 during the Song Dynasty and is celebrated by some modern historians as a marvel of water control engineering in Chinese history on par with the Yellow River dikes, the Grand Canal, and the Dujiangyan Irrigation System. It was designed to control the flow of water from the Yangzi highlands through a series of 72 sluice canals that strategically emptied

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<sup>184</sup> Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China*, 93.

<sup>185</sup> Zuo Zongtang, *Zuo Zongtang quanji: zhajian*, Liu Qingpo, Liu Yangyang, eds. (Changsha: Yuelu Shushe, 1986), 125.

into the southern shore of Lake Tai, referred to as *lougang* (淞港), stretching west to east from Changxing County through neighboring Wuxing County in Huzhou Prefecture. For centuries, the sluices prevented flooding, claiming to have only failed once, and provided a reservoir of water for irrigation to some of the most fertile croplands in the empire.<sup>186</sup>

During the war, lack of maintenance and warfare led to the sluices silting up. The sluice gates and stones in the canal walls had also been torn up and removed by warring armies, leaving the sluices largely non-functional. In 1867, the director of the Changxing Reconstruction Bureau, Wang Shurui (王書瑞) petitioned the governor for funds to dredge the 72 sluices in Huzhou Prefecture, 34 of which were in Changxing county, arguing that there was a real possibility of flooding and that local agricultural production, without the irrigation it provided, had been depressed since the end of the war. Dredging and repairing the sluices could restore production and mitigate flooding risk. In his petition, Wang claimed that work had begun in early 1865 with funds raised from local elites by the Reconstruction Bureau, but the cost proved to be more than could be effectively raised in a short period of time, thus Wang was making the request to the imperial court. The request was granted and work ramped up on the Lougang Polders near the entrance of Lake Tai, which included dredging the canals, re-facing the canal's stone facade, rebuilding bridges across the channels, and repairing sluice gates.<sup>187</sup>

In Wang Shurui's petition to the court, he also included an unusually personal account of work already performed on the sluices by his predecessor in the Reconstruction Bureau, a man named Dong Junhan (董儁翰).<sup>188</sup> The background and efforts of Dong on the Lougang Polders reveal a way of handling reconstruction in the post-war period very differently than how the Nanjing bureau approached reconstruction, where reconstruction efforts were backed by reliable funding from state sources and the reconstruction administration was staffed by men who were intricately tied to

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<sup>186</sup> Wang Jiange, "Mingdai Taihu kou de chushui huanjing yu lougang xutian," *Shehui kexue* (2013:2), 143-154.

<sup>187</sup> Zhao Dingbang, ed., *Changxing xianzhi* (1869/1892), 971.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 2389-2390.

officialdom and powerful men like Zeng Guofan; the pattern of local reconstruction bureaus in northern Zhejiang and the delta of Jiangsu was to rely on wealthy local elites and merchants, and to request state funds only for critical projects when local funds were insufficient. The kinds of men who worked in the reconstruction bureau generally were not personal secretaries of officials assigned to the post, but mirrored the voluntary efforts of local charities and involved local elites to a greater degree, especially those with strong ties to trade. To be sure, the reconstruction bureau was still seen as a state institution, but local magistrates did not assign their associates to the bureau and instead recognized local elites in their role, imitating the ways many philanthropic societies operated. Although many of the directors and personnel of local reconstruction bureaus seem to have been degree holders, what mattered more to magistrates was that directors were well connected to commercial networks that were crucial for fund raising efforts for reconstruction projects and favored men with previous involvement in charity work.

Dong Junhan and his efforts on the Lougang Polders after the war was one such example. The Dong family lived in the well-off town of Hongxing Bridge in Changxing county and had the privilege of listing itself among the most influential families in the county. Both his grandfather, Dong Chao (董潮), and father, Dong Gui (董桂), were minor degree holders. Dong Gui, despite failing to obtain his *juren* degree, was a prominent merchant and writer in the community, authoring a travel log on his journey to Jingzhou in Hubei and a miscellanea (筆記).<sup>189</sup> Dong Junhan was the oldest of four brothers and two sisters and was supported by his family while he prepared for the civil service examination. In order to support him, his younger brother, Dong Lianghan (董良翰), was set up as a merchant in the prosperous nearby town of Wucheng, which was typical for elite families in the region. In 1852, Dong was successful in passing the provincial examination, achieving a *juren* degree, making him the most successful scholar in the family, but he had to discontinue his scholarly advancement with the outbreak of civil war the

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<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 2547.



following year. In the 1860 invasion of Jiangnan, the Dong family scattered, fleeing to small nearby towns where they hoped they would be left alone by the Taiping; however, few survived. His mother was killed by the Taiping in June 1860 along with his younger brother Dong Lianghan in Wucheng village. His oldest sister killed herself around the same time. When the Taiping fled the region in August 1864, they lacked the town of Shengshe where his third and fourth brothers had taken refuge during the war. His third brother drowned himself in a creek, his younger sister hung herself, and his fourth brother was executed by the Taiping.<sup>190</sup>

Dong's account, written in the winter of 1866, begins upon his return home in the fall of 1864. After having lost most of his family in the war, he returned to find that the family home in Hongxing Bridge had been destroyed: "Everyone is afraid to return home. After the war, neither the city nor the people are as they were in days of old. The land is so desolate that one's eyes cannot bear to witness it. Several of the rooms in my old family home were burned down, so I had to take up residence in Songjia Alley within the county-seat."<sup>191</sup> Shortly after moving to the city in late 1864, the Reconstruction Bureau was established and Governor Ma Xinyi appointed Dong as its first director. According to Dong, local reconstruction was directed by the Prefect of Huzhou, Yang Rongxu (楊榮緒, 1809-1874), and in his conversations with the prefect, "every time I discussed with him priorities of reconstruction, nothing surpassed the restoration of water control," but the prefecture and the reconstruction bureau had trouble raising funds to repair water control.<sup>192</sup>

The following fall, the governor came to Huzhou to inspect the region. Dong and other directors of county reconstruction bureaus called upon the governor, meeting him on a boat in the canals on the south of the city, where they all implored him for funding to dredge the Lougang sluices. The next morning they took the governor on a tour of the sluices in the prefecture, showing him how the canals

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<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 2389.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 975.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

had silted up. Dong pointed out the danger of flooding and prefect Yang argued that dredging the sluices was relatively easy compared to its benefits. When the governor returned to Hangzhou, he petitioned the court for funding to repair the Lougang sluices. The funds were granted and Dong was appointed to oversee the work.<sup>193</sup>

In the winter of 1865, Dong along with several local gentry in the prefecture, Han Zhonglin, Tu Guangwen, and Ding Youwu, spent two months planning for the repairs under the strong encouragement of the prefect. At the end of February 1866, the reconstruction bureau began hiring laborers to begin dredging and work shortly thereafter began. By early May, twenty-two of the thirty-eight sluices had been dredged and the sluice gates replaced and were fully operational, but work was halted because of heavy spring rains with work expected to continue in the fall.<sup>194</sup>

A scandal emerged over the summer that would disrupt the work. Laborers on the sluices went to the county judge with accusations that officials overseeing the project had been skimming from their wages, paying only half of what was owed. On top of that, unscrupulous gentry had hired men to extort money from laborers. The government hastily sent out yamen runners to villages, darting across the prefecture “like shooting stars” to borrow money, but the loans they received were not enough to payback the laborers. The local government was then forced to sell land to compensate the workers. The scandal discredited the local government in the eyes of the community. As Dong described the atmosphere: “The harm done was deep. To this day, the elders of the community still bitterly complain when it comes up.”<sup>195</sup> Work that fall could not continue, and this may have been the reason that Dong was removed from his position as director of the Reconstruction Bureau and replaced by Wang Shurui even though Dong maintained that he was uninvolved in the scandal, asserting that he kept scrupulous

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<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 975-979.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 979.

records of all transaction.<sup>196</sup> There is no word if anybody was punished for swindling laborers out of their pay.

Despite the scandal, the sluices were vital to reconstruction efforts and would continue under Wang Shurui in 1867 after he petitioned the governor for additional funds, which were granted. In total, dredging the channel, resurfacing the sluice walls, rebuilding bridges, and replacing sluice gates cost 3,892 *qian*, a relatively minor cost considering the benefits; however, the project was over budget by 617 *qian*, which was defrayed by the local reconstruction bureau through funds it raised through donations from the local community.<sup>197</sup>

What we get here is a complex picture that weaves together local gentry, gentry directors, and the state. What began as a local effort by the Reconstruction Bureau through fundraising to rebuild the sluice gates eventually turned into a state project through locally managed as the state stepped in to provide additional funding. With state support, the project moved quickly, but it also became subject to some sort of embezzlement scheme, which Dong claims was perpetrated by unnamed local officials, but local gentry according to the laborers. When such corruption became evident leading to potential social unrest, the state stepped in, borrowing money and selling off state lands, to quickly raise capital to pay off what was owed to workers who were swindled out of part of their pay by officials. Despite the corruption, the project still continued with mostly state backing and the Reconstruction Bureau picking up the shortfall. Ultimately, when it came to infrastructure projects such as water control, the state was involved in reconstruction in the Jiangnan region.

Reconstruction in the aftermath of the Taiping Civil War was imagined in a wholly unique way unlike the idea of post-war reconstruction that was invoked in the aftermath of violence before the eighteenth

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<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 980.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

century. While eighteenth-century officials such as Yan Ruyi certainly shared Zeng's concern for the welfare of subjects and its implications for social stability, Zeng sought to manage post-war society through an expansive administration of bureaus that would oversee, manage, and provide social stability. There are a lot of unanswered questions about the work of the Reconstruction Bureau due to a lack of sources, but reconstruction was intended to be a bureaucratically managed process handed by a confusing web of bureaus and sub-bureaus.

At the same time, institutions like the reconstruction bureau were a product of shifts in the political and social dynamics that occurred during the war, which invited the participation of local elites and gentry in political affairs and social management. The reconstruction bureaus, like many other organizations like militias during the war, blurred the lines between state and private interest and functions, defying conventional distinctions between public and private. The post-war period has often been framed within the bounds public and private distinctions in institutions and a retreating state as discussed in the works of scholars like Philip Kuhn, Mary Backus Rankin, and William Rowe among others.<sup>198</sup> For men like Zeng Guofan who acted as a governor-General while also leading military apparatus that commingled private and state sources of funding and leadership, these contradictions probably did not stand out as strongly as it does to present eyes. The interest of state officials and local gentry overlapped in numerous places in post-war reconstruction as they did during the war, which made gentry assistance invaluable to state goals but made the state just as essential to gentry aspirations for social stability.

Certainly, informal bureaucracies like the reconstruction bureau granted a degree of autonomy for gentry managers in post-war society, but this did not necessarily mean the complete retreat of the state. As we have seen, while the state often deferred to local gentry directors of local reconstruction bureaus,

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<sup>198</sup> Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies*; Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China*; William T. Rowe, *Hankow: Conflict and Community in a Chinese City, 1796-1895* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989).

the state did intervene when things were grossly mismanaged. The gentry could not act independently in post-war management and the state held considerable influence in shaping the management of post-war society. At the same time, the state required the cooperation of local gentry to help them rebuild and fund reconstruction projects. Thus the relationship is less competitive and more mutualistic and negotiated.

Starkly drawn distinctions between public and private obscure the reality not only of how Chinese contemporaries understood what they were doing, but also how these intuitions helped bring together constituents in a fragmented society. The reconstruction bureau presented a visible state presence in a society that was recovering from war. It was a source of reassurance of state control and assistance to a beleaguered population, which in and of itself must have had value to survivors trying to piece together their lives. With little administrative capacity after the war to manage society, the state needed the involvement of activist gentry to reweave the fabric of state control. This also had the effect of drawing in local elites into the framework of state power, reaffirming the status of elites in local society, reassuring them of state backing, and providing opportunities for local elites to gain entry into a political sphere that was denied to them during years of warfare, such as Yan Chen, Dong Junhan, Wang Shurui. It worked to integrate gentry back into the fold of imperial power.

Post-war institutions such as reconstruction bureaus have often been interpreted as a manifestation of a weakening and retreating state, and while it is undoubtedly true that the imperial court in Beijing had diminished authority in intervening in local affairs as they could have before the civil war, the reconstruction bureau can also be construed as a manifestation of a strengthening state presence in places that had been split by war and devoid of central authority for years. Regardless of the degree to which state officials or local gentry held sway over the work of the reconstruction bureau, its presence represented a substantial aura of state authority that reintegrated the state, local gentry, and subjects through various projects that would have a significant impact on many communities. Moreover,

when it comes to the reconstruction bureau, these were not imperial institutions, but provincial, as in the case of the General Bureau of Reconstruction in Jiangning prefecture, or one of many local prefectural or county institutions. They, therefore, represented state authority at a much more parochial level than the empire. Governors and Governor-Generals played a much greater role in drafting reconstruction policy and institutions that suggest in some ways a growing state power but at a much more local and provincial level. This brings to mind the question of what we mean by the “state” in discussions of diminishing state power. While the imperial court may have had less power in enacting its will in the provinces, provinces, on the other hand, seem to have expanded powers in shaping and directing the lives of subjects in the post-war period through reconstruction bureaus.

Lastly, our discussion of reconstruction bureaus in various region also reveals the unevenness and regional variation in the management styles and resources available. This, in fact, is why there remains throughout this text the question of whether to refer to these intuitions as the Reconstruction Bureau or reconstruction bureaus – whether they represented a unified institution or a loose collection of local post-war administrations. To this question, there is no clear answer. On the one hand, in theory, reconstruction bureaus were conceived as a broader network of local administrations that spanned across provinces with the General Bureau of Reconstruction in Nanjing at its head. The General Bureau of Reconstruction certainly shaped how many local bureaus were organized and provided an outline of their responsibilities and priorities – not to mention a limited amount of funding for projects. On the other, regional variations in the management of bureaus and the resources at their disposal call into question how cohesive and connected these bureaus were to each other. Only rarely do local reconstruction bureaus refer to other bureaus or the General Bureau of Reconstruction.

More clearly, however, are the different regional models to reconstruction and their implications in the post-war period. In Nanjing, we see a close relationship between local and provincial officials and bureau directors who were often personally linked to powerful patrons in the provincial

government. Nanjing held particular symbolic importance not only as the former stronghold and capital of the Heavenly Kingdom Peace but also as the provincial capital and one of the most devastated regions in the war. This made reconstruction in the Nanjing area a priority for provincial officials, and with this came access to state revenues and resources for reconstruction. Beyond Jiangning prefecture, reconstruction received significantly less attention from provincial authorities. The task of rebuilding was left to local officials who, short on state financial support, turned towards prominent and wealthy gentry to assist in managing the post-war order. This gave a certain leeway to the gentry in directing the priorities of reconstruction, but also meant that certain communities fared better than others.

In communities that relied on local gentry to rebuild, wealthier communities were more likely to have the resources to financially support reconstruction projects. This was particularly the case in southern Jiangsu, northern Zhejiang, the center of the Jiangnan region, where elites there had at their disposal considerable wealth to support the work of bureaus. Moreover, elites in that region were more easily able to take refuge in cities like Shanghai or flee north of the Yangzi River. While their homes were occupied during the war, the occupation was only a couple years and since many had their wealth tied to commercial enterprises and in cash. They managed to survive the war and preserve their wealth intact. With their wealth largely undisturbed, they could afford to invest in post-war reconstruction after the war. With political and financial resources, local gentry were able to lobby local and provincial officials to further support their projects. Thus in the Jiangnan region, we not only see activist gentry funding post-war projects, but we also see a degree of state funds put at the disposal of the reconstruction bureau most notably in infrastructural projects.

The same cannot be said for much of southern Anhui, which although never as wealthy as southern Jiangsu, was still relatively affluent and before the war had considerable political influence. Much of Anhui had to endure a much longer Taiping occupation. While Jiangnan saw its trade networks disrupted for several years, much of southern Anhui saw long-standing trade networks disappear for

over a decade. In its wake, new networks would emerge, but not necessarily in ways that favored surviving local gentry. In the Huizhou region, for example, the war proved to be a death kneel for salt merchants who had for centuries played a central role in the imperial state monopoly. The war put the salt monopoly on hold, leading to new powerful salt merchants emerging elsewhere far from the war at their expense. At the war's end, Qing officials implemented radical reforms to the imperial salt monopoly licensing system that prevented Huizhou merchants from regaining their predominant position.<sup>199</sup> After a lengthy war, elites in Anhui seem to have exhausted their wealth, as we do not seem the same scale of investment in either reconstruction bureaus or philanthropy as we do before the war or in Jiangnan. Reconstruction bureaus in Anhui only seem to have been active while Zeng's Xiang Army was supporting them before the fall of Nanjing. As official attention shifted to Nanjing and without substantial support from the gentry, reconstruction bureaus were relatively starved for cash and ultimately were unable to commit to major reconstruction projects and the region's recovery was much slower.

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<sup>199</sup> Madeleine Zelin, *The Merchants of Zigong: Industrial Entrepreneurship in Early Modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 140-160.



## Chapter III

### Pacifying Spirits: Temples, Ghost, and the Creation of a Wartime Narrative

Blasphemy flows fermenting catastrophe.  
It takes the name of the Heavenly Father as its deity.  
Whence were the temples of the Three Teachings destroyed?  
These days are all rendered hopeless.

The sacred dharma has been eradicated.  
The vibrant halls of gold and jade have been razed.  
Let the apocalypse run its course to allow an age of heroism  
The joy of Heaven is ultimately a self-deception.

- Yu Zhi, *Images from Jiangnan to Evoke Tears from a Man of Iron*<sup>1</sup>

The civil war led not only to the destruction of cities, roads, farms, and homes, but also temples, shrines, monasteries, and sacred text. As Yu Zhi, an eminent philanthropist, writer, and witness to the post-war disorder, expressed in the above song lyrics, the war was devastating to the religious life of the region. Religion was not just a collateral casualty of the conflict, but a conscious target of the Taiping as they came to occupy territory in the course of the war. Taiping iconoclasm and Christian religious doctrine steered the Heavenly Kingdom towards a concerted campaign to eradicate Chinese traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, as well as popular religious cults and practices. Religious idols and symbols of the Qing order were smashed, precious scripture burned, and temples razed to the ground wherever the armies of the Taiping reached. These were among the first actions any Taiping Army performed in places they conquered and governed in a concerted campaign to eliminate what they saw

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<sup>1</sup> Yu Zhi, *Jiangnan tieleitu* (n.d.; repr., Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1974), 48.

as idolatry, providing soil for their Christian beliefs to take root. Their reign of destruction upon the religious life of the Yangzi River valley was terrifyingly effective, leaving very few temples standing by the end of the war and a spiritual void in the lives of many survivors.

Taiping iconoclasm proved to be a rallying cry that brought many together in the imperial faction. The Taiping were like no uprising in China's storied past. They threatened to overturn not only the political establishment of the Qing, but also the orthodox religious order. For many who lived through the chaotic civil war, the events were almost apocalyptic in nature and risked invoking the anger of the gods. In Zeng Guofan's "A Call to Arms against the Yue Rebels," written in February, 1854 in the early days of the Xiang Army resistance, he termed the Taiping as an unprecedented threat that endangered not only the dynasty, but Chinese civilization as a whole.<sup>2</sup> In particular, he focuses particularly on the threat their heterodox beliefs represented to Chinese religious life:

Since antiquity good deeds and morality has existed in no small part due to the gods. The way of kings governs brightly, and the way of gods governs obscurely. Although there have been many vile and brutal usurpers and rebels, they have always respected the gods. When Li Zicheng went to Qufu, he did not violate the holy temple; when Zhang Xianzhong went to Zitong, he even made offerings to Wenchang. When the Yue rebels torched the academy in Linzhou, they destroyed its holy wooden pillars, the ten idols, and the two side altars, scattering them all over the floor. This is what has happened in all the lands and counties; first they destroy the temples, even those of loyal servants and righteous men such as the stern Lord Guan and King Yue, desecrating their palatial chambers and profaning their [the idols'] heads and bodies. Buddhist monasteries, Daoist abbeys, the City God, and the Altar of Grain - there is no [holy] court left unrazed; no idol left undestroyed. This enrages all the ghost and spirits...<sup>3</sup>

What made the Taiping so dangerous in the eyes of many was that they aimed to overthrow the religious order and establish an entirely new heterodox religion that did not honor the old gods.

While there is no sense of how widely this view was shared, many who wrote of the Taiping refer to the intentional targeting of religion as a part of their reign of terror. Those who witnessed the desecration of their holy sites would likely have agreed with this perspective. This was certainly the case

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<sup>2</sup> Zeng Guofan, "Tao Yuefei he," Peng Jing, ed., *Zeng Guofan quanji: shiwen* (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1986), 232.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

for Yu Zhi, who was clearly aware of Taiping religious doctrines that opposed popular forms of worship and idolatry, which led the Taiping to burn temples to the ground. He mourned their loss, yearning nostalgically for the vibrant colors and elegance that these sites of worship brought to his life and condemned the heterodox beliefs of the Taiping, which he saw as utterly “preposterous.” For men like Yu Zhi, the tragedy of the war was more than the loss of temples, text, and spiritual idols, but the destruction of the spiritual powers of the gods themselves. As he lamented, “This ruthless destruction has not ended there. The efficaciousness of the gods [神靈] has retreated and been rendered powerless.”<sup>4</sup> Central to the spiritual beliefs of China for millennia was the concept of “spiritual efficaciousness” or “potency” (靈), which determined the supernatural powers of spirits and deities. People worshipped spirits out of a conviction that certain spirits possessed more power than others; the root of that power, however, resided in the veneration and sacrifices made by participants in the cult, which worked to reinforce and strengthen their power. Thus, temples and shrines not only worked to channel the power of the spirits in favor of mortals, but were also in some ways the source of their power as the faithful venerated them and made offerings, confirming their status and power. Imperial recognition and favor through the awarding of ranks and patronage of temples furthered this power in state cults.<sup>5</sup> With their destruction in the war, however, Yu Zhi worried that the devastation the war unleashed on the temples and shrines of the realm meant that the gods were now powerless and in retreat, and would require a revival in faith to restore them to power.

Officials, the reconstruction bureau, and other post-war institutions were similarly concerned about the war’s destruction to religious life, making the restoration of a religious order a central part of reconstruction policies. They actively sponsored the rebuilding of various shrines and temples as a part

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<sup>4</sup> Yu Zhi, *Jiangnan tielei tu*, 48.

<sup>5</sup> Stephan Feuchtwang, *Popular Religion in China: The Imperial Metaphor* (London: Curzon Press, 2001), 23-24, 84-89, and especially Chapter 8, 214-222.

of their effort in order to restore the “original *qi*” in regions they were active.<sup>6</sup> Considering the constraints on resources and numerous social and economic problems that were the focus of post-war reconstruction, spiritual concerns almost seem trivial in the face of concrete material needs, yet in the mid-1860s, immediately following the war’s conclusion, reconstruction bureaus, local officials, local philanthropies invested considerable resources into building shrines, particularly state cults, as an important part of their reconstruction program. As previously discussed in Chapter two, Zeng agreed that along with imperial academies and libraries, temples and shrines should be a priority of the reconstruction administration, and he himself would sponsor a number of shrines both personally and through official channels in Nanjing and the Reconstruction Bureau.<sup>7</sup> The question here, then, is why did reconstruction focus on religious institutions? Why was this central to their sense of reconstruction? What did they believe it would achieve?

Typically, we think of reconstruction through the lens of the Second World War’s Marshall Plan or Reconstruction after the American civil war, in which reconstruction ostensibly focused on using state resources to rehabilitate the material life that reinforced a political, economic, and social stability favorable to the state. But reconstruction also works in a more subtle way, establishing a hegemonic narrative through cultural institutions that attempts to legitimize the post-war social and political order. That is to say, reconstruction is more than the nuts and bolts of managing the economy and achieving social stability in the post-war period through instruments of political control, but also a process of cultural reconstruction that validates the post-war order by contributing to a narrative that favors the dominant ideology of the state and justifies a sense that the post-war order is a return to a stable,

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<sup>6</sup> Li Hongzhang, “*Jiangsu jianfu quanan xu*,” Liu Xungao, ed., *Jiangsu sheng jianfu quanan* (1866), 1:2a.

<sup>7</sup> See, Han Chenggeng, Luo Zhenyue, et al., eds., *Zeng Guofan quanji: pidu* (Changsha: Yuelu Shuju, 1987), 324-325 (hereafter ZGFQJPD). Some of the temples he sponsored personally include the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty at Stone Bell Mountain, Hukou, Jiangxi, which we will discuss later, but also numerous minor shrines including the E’tingling Shrine, the Shenlong Shrine, Tianxi Changsheng Shrine in Nanjing, and a host of shrines in his native Hunan; Jiang Qixun, ed., *Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi* (1880), 267; Mo Xiangzhi, ed., *Shangjiang liangxian xianzhi* (1874), 324.

normal, and moral world that once existed. It produces a story that answers a longing among survivors of war to restore the *status quo antebellum* when the world war right. Religion is just as much a part of that cultural order, and is probably central to it for a society in which religion was often the target of the war.

In the 1860s, reconstructors were just as deeply focused on a cultural reconstruction that sought to revive the religious and cultural institutions destroyed in the war as they were with the general livelihood of Qing subjects, because these institutions reinstated a proper moral universe that explained the correctness and legitimacy of the Qing state and confirmed a system of social control. It may be easy to dismiss these projects to rebuild shrines and temples as objects of prestige for officials and local elites who funded their construction, but in these numerous temples we see the state and local elites attempting to assert their authority over spiritual belief in a sophisticated and conscious manner. These temples guarded against the forces of heterodox belief by shaping orthodoxy in a way that told a story of the war and of state power in which Qing authority over both the mortal and spiritual realms reigned supreme.<sup>8</sup> Rebuilt and newly built temples worked towards the construction of a narrative that legitimated Qing authority by enlisting supernatural support from the gods and spirits, contributing to a narrative of the war as a religious war, in which the Qing had emerged victorious. That narrative outlined a spiritual support of the Qing, solidifying their right to make ritual offerings as was their power and responsibility to do as a legitimate ruling regime.

Commemoration also played a crucial part in this post-war religious order. Memorials in the United States that commemorate those who died fighting in the United States, such as the Gettysburg National Military Park, are generally seen a secular project to honor the dead and their sacrifices, but the supernatural equally plays a role in the mythos surrounding such memorials. The treatment of the dead and the proper burial of bodies are central to the story of the Gettysburg National Cemetery,

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<sup>8</sup> Tobie Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 62-64.

demonstrating not only a cultural sense of morality, but a religious propriety according to Christian beliefs. Moreover, sites like Gettysburg are also places rife with stories of the paranormal in the public imagination.<sup>9</sup> They are places imbued with an unearthly aura in which the dead of the war continually reenact their last moments in life, and so these memorials are not only sites that lionize the dead and their sacrifices to the state creating a narrative of national unity, but also a site of intense spiritual confluences between the souls of war and the state they died to build, demanding to be heard by the living in the present.

This is even more true for post-civil war China in the late nineteenth century, where the state played a central role in confirming spiritual power, interpreted orthodox belief, and was seen as a mediator between the realms of earth and heaven, the living and the dead. The civil war was commemorated by the state and local elites through religious shrines and rituals, which were a central focus of the reconstruction administrations that quickly built shrines that commemorated soldiers and civilians who had died in conflict. Chief among these shrines was the cult of loyalty and its various forms, which began before the war as a state cult that exclusively enshrined military officers and civil officials who died in conflict, but during the war grew to include the souls of rank-and-file soldiers of the irregular army and later civilians, expanding the definition of who could be loyal and participate in the Qing imperial project. Recent scholarship on the post-Taiping period has also focused on these shrines as important sites of commemoration and religious rituals. Meyer-Fong, for instance, argues that the state appropriated the dead as loyal martyrs of Qing dynasty to create a narrative of the war that focused on loyal sacrifice;<sup>10</sup> Charles Wooldridge stresses that rituals around state cults in post-war Nanjing became important sites for local elites to assert their interest and autonomy by commemorating local civilian

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<sup>9</sup> There are a number of popular publications on the ghost of Gettysburg, but for a more scholarly view; See, Robert C. Thompson, "Am I Going to See a Ghost Tonight?": Gettysburg Ghost Tours and the Performance of Belief," *The Journal of American Culture* 32, no. 2 (June 2010): 79-91. John G. Sabol, *The Politics of Presence: Haunting Performances on the Gettysburg Battlefield* (New York: Author House, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 134-136.

dead.<sup>11</sup> In this chapter, in addition to exploring the importance and priorities in reconstructing shrines and temples, I also hope to add another dimension to post-war shrines of commemoration. The state was certainly appropriating the dead through stories of heroic sacrifice, but the state was also appropriating their spirits and asserting control over their ghosts, claiming to have “consoled” their wandering spirits and transformed them into the loyal dead who still fought for the Qing from a spiritual realm. This was a part of the narrative that spoke to the post-war period, the survivors, and structured not just the past, but the present, expressing the state’s control over the wandering ghost of the war just as it ruled the living.

### *What is Worth Rebuilding? The Reconstruction of Temples and Shrines in Changxing County*

The scar left on Chinese society by the destruction of religious and spiritual life was one that was deeply set in the minds of many who survived the war. The attack on not just the Qing but Chinese values that the Taiping represented, while ultimately defeated, was something that in the post-war period would emerge as critical issue of reconstruction. Zeng Guofan, aware of the symbolic role that religion played in both the spiritual cosmos and state legitimacy, made the reconstruction of temples and shrines, particularly state shrines, a central part of his mission; this was taken up by many reconstruction bureaus at the local level as well as local elites with considerable enthusiasm. In the Tongzhi reign, the regions devastated by the civil war experienced a boom in temple and shrine building and rebuilding that had possibly not been witnessed since the founding of the Ming dynasty as local officials and communities came together to restore the gods to the proper places they had lost in the war.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Chuck Wooldridge, *City of Virtues: Nanjing in an Age of Utopian Visions* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015), 133-149.

<sup>12</sup> See, Table 4.2.

In the act of rebuilding religious institutions after the war, we also encounter a hierarchy of priorities in the face of scarce resources that reflected the interest of different actors and beliefs about state power and the local community. In the immediate aftermath, the reconstruction bureau tended to play an active role in the building of shrines and temples, funneling state and private resources towards institutions deemed as essential to the spiritual order of the state and the local community as providing for refugees, resettling the land, and rebuilding imperial academies. Generally, most counties focused on similar sets of popular temples and shrines that were central to the imperial liturgy and held a deeper spiritual significance to people's experience of the war, providing supernatural assistance to the military or protecting the community from harm, as well as local concerns in the post-war period such as the restitution of their livelihoods. For the most part, these shrines and temples were dedicated to the usual suspects of this period - Lord Guan, Wenchang, and the City God – but we also see that these temples held special meaning for those who survived, allowing them to interpret the post-war period. Reconstruction bureaus focused on temple construction in the mid to late 1860s, slowly petering out in the early 1870s as the urgency of reconstruction and funding diminished, shifting to issues such as settling abandoned lands. By the late 1860s and early 1870s, the task of temple reconstruction was increasingly taken up by local gentry and merchants at the behest of the local government, allowing a space for them to assert a kind of religious order that emphasized a local identity within the greater Qing Empire.

Furthermore, Buddhist temples and monasteries were largely left out of the state's plans for reconstruction, which singularly focused on state cults. Buddhist institutions did not fall under the purview of state responsibility and played little function in acknowledging the empire, leaving the restoration of Buddhism to the patronage of local elites and communities of devotees. This did not mean that officials and reconstruction bureaus were unconcerned with Buddhism, but simply that state cults were considered more central to the functioning of a post-war religious order. Privately, many



functionaries responsible for reconstruction used their own resources to patronize Buddhist institutions, and personally saw Buddhism as an essential part of restoring morality to a land devastated by war.<sup>13</sup>

As in many cases discussed in previous chapters with the reconstruction of government offices, infrastructure, and academies, the reconstruction bureau was rarely credited directly for many projects, because its function was primarily to raise funds, manage resources, and prioritize projects; instead, in many cases, no one was credited with the reconstruction of temples and shrines or credit went to the local magistrate or local gentry that had pushed for the project and raised funds for the reconstruction bureau. Nonetheless, occasionally the work of the reconstruction bureau peeks from behind the curtain where it seems to have played an important part in the reconstruction of religious life, especially in the first few years immediate following the war.

The reconstruction bureau gave particular priority to specific temples and shrines within the structure of imperial cults. Of course, the bureau's work was limited since resources were limited, and so only a limited number of shrines and temples were provided with the resources to be rebuilt. Our best source for this is the *Changxing County Gazetteer*, whose compilers had a very high opinion of the former director of the local reconstruction bureau, Zhong Lin (鐘麟, c. 1826-1870), as the architect of the county's reconstruction, placed particular emphasis on the reconstruction of the county's temples.<sup>14</sup> Changxing county was an exception to the rule because of Zhong Lin's celebrated role in actively pursuing the mission of reconstruction of the county, allowing us to create a relatively complete timeline for the reconstruction bureau and other contributors to post-war projects as well as some of the temples and shrines that were not rebuilt (See, Table 4.1 and Table 4.2).

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<sup>13</sup> Zhao Dingbang, ed., *Changxing xianzhi* (1869; repr., 1892), 1225-1227.

<sup>14</sup> *Changxing xianzhi*, 2015-2017.

| Temples and Shrines Rebuilt in Changxing County (1863-1873) |        |      |                              |
|---|--------|------|------------------------------|
| Temple Name   |        | Year | Sponsor                      |
| Shrine of the Loyal, Righteous, and Filial                  | 忠义孝弟祠  | 1863 | Unstated                     |
| Shrine to the Earth God                                     | 土地祠    | 1865 | Magistrate                   |
| City God Temple   | 城隍庙    | 1865 | The Reconstruction Bureau    |
| Temple to Lord Guan   | 关帝庙    | 1866 | The Reconstruction Bureau    |
| Temple to the Striker God                                   | 斫射神廟   | 1867 | Local Gentry                 |
| Temple to the God of the Marshes                            | 佑民衍澤神廟 | 1867 | Local Gentry                 |
| Shrine to Wenchang  | 文昌祠    | 1867 | The Reconstruction Bureau    |
| Shrine to the Goddess of Silkworms                          | 先蠶祠    | 1867 | The Reconstruction Bureau    |
| Xianying Temple   | 顯應廟    | 1868 | Local Gentry                 |
| Temple to the Fire God                                      | 火神庙    | 1868 | Local Gentry                 |
| Temple to the Five Fortunes                                 | 五福庙    | 1869 | Unstated                     |
| Temple to Wang Erxiang                                      | 王二相公庙  | 1869 | Local Gentry (three temples) |
| Temple of the Yunhong Altar                                 | 雲鶴社廟   | 1869 | Local Gentry                 |
| City God Temple of the Sian Ruins                           | 四安古城隍廟 | 1869 | Magistrate                   |
| Temple of the Shengdu Altar                                 | 盛瀆社廟   | 1870 | Local Gentry                 |
| Temple of the Dujian Altar                                  | 都監社廟   | 1870 | Local Gentry                 |
| Temple of the Xulang Altar                                  | 許郎社廟   | 1871 | Local Gentry                 |
| Shrine to Marquis Geng                                      | 耿侯祠    | 1872 | Magistrate                   |
| Shring to Zhang Shuibu                                      | 張水部祠   | 1872 | Local                        |
| Shrine to the King of Sui Grain                             | 隨糧王祠   | 1872 | Magistrate                   |
| Temple to Lord Yao  | 尧帝庙    | 1873 | Local                        |
| Temple of Shun  | 舜庙     | 1873 | Local                        |
| Temple of the Martial Marquis Zhuge                         | 诸葛武侯庙  | 1874 | Unstated                     |

Table 3.1 - Table constructed from Temples listed in the Changxing County Gazetteer chapter on Temples and Shrines. Zhao Dingbang, ed., *Changxing xianzhi (1869/1892)*, 1069-1130.

| Buddhist Temples and Monasteries Rebuilt in Changxing County (1866-1886) |      |      |   |
|--|------|------|---|
| Temple Name  |      | Year | Sponsor   |
| Pingzheng Courtyard  | 平政院  | 1866 | Unstated  |
| Bianli Abbey   | 辯利教庵 | 1868 | Local Gentry  |
| Dinghui Monastery  | 定惠教寺 | 1868 | Monks   |
| Daxiong Monastery  | 大雄教寺 | 1868 | Zhong Lin, former director of Reconstruction Bureau, and Local Gentry |
| Tongyuan Temple  | 通元寺  | 1869 | Monks and Local Gentry  |
| Shuiyang Abbey   | 水洋庵  | 1869 | Local   |
| Shanglongwan Temple  | 上龍灣寺 | 1869 | Local   |

|                       |      |                  |                             |
|-----------------------|------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Guanyin Abbey         | 觀音庵  | 1869             | Monks                       |
| Yuying Hall           | 育嬰堂  | 1870             | Local Gentry                |
| Shousheng Chan Temple | 壽聖禪寺 | 1871             | Local Gentry                |
| Panlong Chan Temple   | 蟠龍禪寺 | 1872             | Monks                       |
| Xiuyan Temple         | 秀巖寺  | 1872             | Unstated                    |
| Longyan Temple        | 龍巖寺  | 1872             | Unstated                    |
| Xiabiyuan Temple      | 下碧巖寺 | 1872             | Unstated                    |
| Biyuan Chapple        | 碧巖精舍 | 1872             | Monks                       |
| Ciguang Temple        | 慈廣寺  | 1872             | Unstated                    |
| Danshan Temple        | 舟山寺  | 1872             | Unstated                    |
| Yinlong Chan Temple   | 隱龍禪院 | 1873             | Monks                       |
| Biefeng Monastery     | 別峰教庵 | 1873             | Unstated                    |
| Zhiyuan Abbey         | 祇園庵  | 1873             | Monks                       |
| Yelin Abbey           | 野林庵  | 1874             | Monks                       |
| Jixiang Monastery     | 吉祥教寺 | 1874             | Monks                       |
| Fuqing Abbey          | 福慶庵  | Tongzhi<br>Reign | Monks                       |
| Lianyu Abbey          | 蓮玉庵  | Tongzhi<br>Reign | Local                       |
| Ciyang Abbey          | 慈應庵  | 1875             | Monks and Local Gentry      |
| Benevolence Hall      | 同善堂  | 1880             | Magistrate and Local Gentry |
| Qingliang Temple      | 清涼寺  | 1881             | Monks                       |
| Dicang Palace         | 地藏殿  | 1881             | Monks                       |
| Guangfu Temple        | 廣福寺  | 1881             | Monks                       |
| Guanghui Temple       | 廣慧寺  | 1881             | Monks                       |
| Dongyu Palace         | 東嶽行宮 | 1886             | Monks                       |
| Zijing Temple         | 紫金寺  | 1886             | Monks                       |

Table 3.2 -- Table constructed from Buddhist monasteries and temples listed in the Changxing County Gazetteer chapter on Buddhist and Daoist Temples. *Zhao Dingbang, ed., Changxing xianzhi (1869/1892), 1244-1364.*

Like many counties in the region, nearly all of Changxing's temples and shrines were destroyed by the Taiping in a concerted campaign against idolatry, leaving few traces of religious life in the aftermath. In fact, the only structure of religious importance that unequivocally survived the war was the Golden Lotus Pagoda – something remarked upon with particular emphasis by the compilers of the local gazetteer.<sup>15</sup> It is difficult, however, to determine which temples and shrines were destroyed in the war. In

<sup>15</sup> The fact that the Golden Lotus Pagoda survived is strange, since as a towering pagoda it would have stood out over the landscape and was an easy target Taiping iconoclasm, but this was also the case in Suzhou, where the famed pagoda on Tiger Hill was also one of the few religious structures to survive the war. This may suggest that the Taiping were reluctant for some reason to destroy pagodas. *Changxing xianzhi*, 98, 1305.

most gazetteers, including Changxing's, temples are simply noted "currently ruins" (今已廢) or "Presently, already destroyed" (今已滅) generally without any specifics on how they were destroyed. In fact most of the temples and shrines listed in the Changxing gazetteer, as is common in many others written in the Tongzhi reign, were no longer extant at the time of its compilation. In some cases, these temples were most likely destroyed or fell into disrepair well before the war, but for most of them it is clear that these temples were in existence in the first half of the nineteenth century as there are references to them in the previous gazetteer published in 1805.<sup>16</sup> In all likelihood, the majority of these temples were destroyed in the war, but it is impossible in most cases to parse exactly which ones were destroyed in war, which had fallen to neglect in the early nineteenth century, and which ones were destroyed from other possible causes, such as flooding or fire. In table 4.3, where I have listed temples and shrines destroyed in the war, I have for the aforementioned reasons only included the names of temples and shrines that were explicitly stated as being "destroyed in the fires of war" (滅於兵火) or when a specific date is given that clearly coincided with the occupation of the city and warfare in the early Tongzhi period.<sup>17</sup> These shrines and temples are only a fraction of those not included which likely existed and operated on the eve of the conflict – many of which were noted as having undergone repairs at the beginning of the century – but they do give us a sense of their religious value in the post-war years. These were sites that were not deemed important enough to warrant rebuilding or mentioning in the gazetteer, and not essential to the mission of reconstruction or the local community.

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<sup>16</sup> Xing Shu, ed., *Changxing xianzhi* (1805), 625-667, 735-832.

<sup>17</sup> Although I will admit it is certainly possible that run-of-the-mill disasters, such as flooding or fire not caused by conflict, may have led to the destruction of some temples while under Taiping occupation, considering the ideology of the Taiping it is unlikely that natural disasters got to them before they did. Another possibility though is that some temples may have fallen into disrepair in the 1850s and 60s as communities concentrated their resources in supporting the war effort. Generally, "destroyed in the fire of war" and many similar phrases were common in gazetteers to describe the destruction. For a few example, see, *Changxing xiangzhi* (1869; repr., 1892), 1250, 1274, 1281.

Changxing county was among the last reclaimed from the Taiping. It was one of the last strongholds of Taiping resistance in the region after Nanjing fell, holding out for a months after the collapse of the Taiping capital. After the restoration of Qing authority in the city, a newly appointed magistrate along with local elites began organizing reconstruction efforts. A reconstruction bureau was established sometime in early 1865 under the direction of the local magistrate with Wang Shurui (王書瑞), an eminent local *jinshi* scholar with experience in the imperial bureaucracy, serving as the first director. Under Wang's leadership in its first year, the bureau focused on rebuilding infrastructure destroyed in the war, including bridges, the walls of the county seat, as well as a major flood control project along the banks of Lake Tai.<sup>18</sup>

The following year, Wang was succeeded by Zhong Lin as the director of the reconstruction bureau. Zhong was much more concerned about the state of religious and ritual reconstruction than infrastructure. During his tenure between 1866 and 1868, he oversaw the construction of several temples and shrines as well as the local academy. His work in this regard brought him significant appreciation from the compilers of the local gazetteer, who lauded his work, unlike his predecessor whose name was generally mentioned only in passing. Among his most celebrated contributions were several temples and shrines that were financed through the reconstruction bureau at his behest as director. These included the Temple of the City God (城隍廟, 1865), the Temple to Lord Guan (關帝廟, 1866), the Shrine of Wenchang (文昌祠, 1867), and the Shrine to the Goddess of Silkworms (先蠶祠, 1867).<sup>19</sup> These temples and shrines represented some of the first rebuilt in the county; in fact, the only shrines rebuilt before the temple to the city god were small shrines built by the magistrate within the compound of the hastily rebuilt local academy as part of the project to reestablish the civil service examination. These shrines included the shrine to the earth god (土地祠, 1865) and the shrine to the

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 308, 1076-1078.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 1076-1078, 1078-1079, 1105, 1125.

loyal, righteous, and filial disciples (忠義孝弟祠, 1864), and most likely also the shrine of meritorious officials (名宦祠) and shrine of virtuous villagers (鄉賢祠).<sup>20</sup> These first shrines sponsored by the local magistrate were smaller structures that played a role in the state cults that surrounded the civil service examination, and could be considered a part of the rebuilding of the local academy. Zhong Lin's temples, however, were larger independent structures that were intended to be central to official rituals and community worship and not directly associated with the academy.

It is hardly surprising that these four temples were among the first rebuilt by the reconstruction bureau in Changxing county, and with the exception of the Goddess of the Silkworms, it was common for these temples to be the first rebuilt after the war in many counties. The City God, Lord Guan, and Wenchang were popular deities before the war among the literati. They also had particular significance to people's experience in the war as guardian spirits.<sup>21</sup> When beset by strife, many turned and prayed to these gods for protection from those who would do them harm, and they were often credited with assisting civilians escape disaster, protecting communities from invasion, and providing imperial troops with victory. The first temples rebuilt after the war seem to have been to gods that provided spiritual protection to the survivors. Throughout the war, numerous miracles were attributed to these especially potent spirits, which required reciprocal offerings of appreciation from mortals, which included imperial "promotions" within the pantheon of gods and rebuilding of temples destroyed. Thus, it makes sense that the first temples and shrines rebuilt in the aftermath would be dedicated to the gods that many saw as overseeing their survival in the war and were also central to community worship.

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<sup>20</sup> It is not clear when the shrine of meritorious officials and shrine of virtuous villagers were rebuilt, because there is no note of its reconstruction in the gazetteer, but both were labeled within the local academy compound among the gazetteer's pictures, so they were certainly rebuilt between the end of the war and the publishing of the gazetteer. While it is possible they survived the destruction of the war, it is unlikely considering that the local academy was destroyed in the war, which would have included these two shrines. *Ibid.*, 424-427, 429, 470-473, 1122-1123,

<sup>21</sup> Meyer-fong, *What Remains*, 28-37.

Sincere collective prayer to the city god could provide protection to the community from the Taiping. In February, 1863, for example, Luo Guozhong (駱國忠, 1835-1873), the garrison commander of the city of Changshu, received word that were approaching with a massive army.<sup>22</sup> With only a small garrison to defend the city, Luo had little hope of holding the city. Luo lead his soldiers and the townspeople to pray and provide offerings at the Temple of the City God to ask for his protection and to deliver them from peril, which they believed were answered. When the Taiping army arrived, a cloud of fog stopped them from storming into the city immediately. The Taiping then proceeded to lay siege, blasting the city walls with cannon. A few days later, late at night, a breach was made in the walls and as the Taiping prepared to assault the city, “spirit fires” (神火) appeared on the surrounding mountains “as if a great army of soldiers were there. The masses of rebels fled in panic... countless of them were dead... To this day, residents have sang the praises of the god’s efforts.”<sup>23</sup> The city god and its army of spirits had saved the city from the rebel attackers and forced them to flee. Sometime after the battle, the residents of the city petitioned the emperor to provide the city god with a promotion for its protection of the city.<sup>24</sup>

Lord Guan was also an important god that gave miraculous victories to devotees. As the patron god of war, Lord Guan was central to the religious life of the military, but he was also popularly worshipped as a powerful protector of the weak and an exemplar of honesty, loyalty, and fraternity. As a martial spirit, however, Guan was often credited with military victories through divine intervention on the behalf of imperial forces. On May 11, 1864, Li Hongzhang wrote to the imperial court for funds to rebuild the Temple to Lord Guan in Changzhou. According to Li, the Huai army met fierce resistance from

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<sup>22</sup> Luo Guozhong was also a former Taiping brigadier who switched sides just a few months before this incident. While there does not seem to be any commentary about this in the gazetteer in association with this incident, it may be significant considering that Luo would have formerly been a practitioner of Christianity as a Taiping officer. Zhao Erxuan, ed., *Qing shi gao*, (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), 431:12316-12317.

<sup>23</sup> Zheng Zhongxiang, ed., *Changzhao hezhi* (1904), 809-810.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 810.

the rebels while besieging the city of Changzhou. The Taiping sallied forth attacking day and night in the middle of incessant cold heavy rains that disabled their rifles. Terrified that his forces could not withstand the assault, Li prayed to Lord Guan for his protection and assistance. Li's prayers were answered: "fortunately, relying on its [Lord Guan's] spiritual efficaciousness, they [the Huai Army] were protected and the driving rains were mysteriously dispersed; furthermore, at the most critical moment in the assault on the city, the wind suddenly shifted making their rifle and cannon fire more effective, allowing them to capture the city..."<sup>25</sup> Victory, as Li portrayed it to the emperor, was achieved through supernatural assistance, and thus it was only fitting that the temple to Lord Guan be rebuilt as a reward for his spiritual service to his army.

The reconstruction of temples and shrines to gods like Lord Guan and the City God were intricately tied to their spiritual role in the war as protectors of the community. It was partially a reward for their divine service to the imperial victory and saving lives. Since the experience of many who lived through the war were seen through spiritual terms, it only made sense that reconstruction efforts would necessarily involve the rebuilding of cults that were seen as efficacious in the war.

Other deities, while not necessarily directly linked to supernatural protection during the war, nonetheless reflected particular aspirations of survivors of the war and the goals of reconstruction. Chief among them was probably the god, Wenchang, who intersects with the interest of reconstruction in a multitude of ways. Most notably, Wenchang was primarily known as the patron spirit of the literati in the examination. Prayer to Wenchang was believed to help one in their studies and could bring success in the imperial examination.<sup>26</sup> As a spirit associated with the scholarly success, Wenchang fit within Zeng Guofan's vision of reconstruction as "restoring cultured learning," and in fact, many of the shrines to Wenchang were rebuilt first within the walls of local academies since these academies were often the

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<sup>25</sup> Wang Qigan, ed., *Wujin Yanghu xianzhi* (1879), 550-551.

<sup>26</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 27-29.



first project undertaken by the reconstruction bureau and local governments. Seeking to reclaim their position in the imperial bureaucracy after the absence of the civil service exam for over a decade, local elites, especially in the Jiangnan region, were certainly motivated in assisting with rebuilding shrines to Wenchang.

Not only was Wenchang the patron god of the examination and knowledge, but was also a widely popular deity in the nineteenth century associated with upright governance, justice, incorruptibility, filial piety, and at times martial courage (particularly as a manifestation of Zhang Yazi).<sup>27</sup> Although there do not seem to be many stories associated with Wenchang manifesting himself during the war, he was nonetheless a crucial part of people's religious life in the post-war period as well as an extension of reconstruction itself. Wenchang shrines were among the first rebuilt, showing that both the government and locals found some meaning in its restoration. In Changxing, in fact, the rebuilding of the Wenchang shrine engendered considerable controversy. The community was in unanimous agreement that the shrine to Wenchang should be rebuilt, but there was disagreement about its location. Before the war, the Shrine to Wenchang had been located in front of the local academy, which was located outside the gates of the county seat's city walls, but Zhong Lin, director of the reconstruction bureau, had decided to rebuild the shrine within the walls of the county seat away from the academy that was rebuilt a few years earlier. His detractors argued that its new location would favor those who lived in the city, who were also more likely to be from a merchant family and sit for the provincial-level examinations in the imperial capital and not the Zhejiang examinations directly. Zhong, however, resisted these complaints, dismissing their claims of favoritism for urban examinees, and also that Wenchang was deserving of a geomantically more potent location nearby as a way to both to reward the god and to increase his potency, which would work to the favor of all.<sup>28</sup> Although Zhong does not explicitly link

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<sup>27</sup> Zhao Yongxiang, "Rudao rongde de quanshan shu: yi 'wenchang hua shuxiang zhu' wei lie," *Zhongguo zongjiao* 12 (2011), 43-46.

<sup>28</sup> *Changxing xianzhi*, 458-460.

Wenchang to the war and Zhong may well have been using his authority as the director of the reconstruction bureau to favor the interest of urban students from merchant families, like himself, the fact that he terms the construction of the shrine as rewarding Wenchang with a better site than before shows this kind of reciprocal relationship between mortals and the divine, as well as a means to increase a spirit's power.

Of course there was considerable variation among localities as to which temples should be rebuilt first, which often reflected local spiritual interest. In Changxing county, as well as much of Huzhou Prefecture to which it belonged, the reconstruction bureau also rebuilt the shrine to the Goddess of Silkworms, reflecting local economic priorities in spiritual belief.<sup>29</sup> Huzhou Prefecture was the center of the silk industry in China before the war. As a part of the Reconstruction Bureau's mission towards economic rehabilitation discussed in chapter 2, encouraging the revival of the silk industry was a major theme of economic reconstruction. Well before the war, the goddess of silkworms played a major part in local religious life in Jiangnan, especially in places where sericulture was prevalent, because the goddess ensured a bountiful harvest of silkworms.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the reconstruction of the shrine to the goddess of silkworms was a reflection of both spiritual desires for economic prosperity after a period of dearth and poverty.

The vast majority of the temples and shrines rebuilt were not, however, rebuilt through the auspices of the state and the reconstruction bureau, but through contributions made by local elites, who often pooled together resources and capital for their reconstruction. The state and by extension the reconstruction bureau were among the most active actors in building temples in the first few years after the war, but by the late 1860s, funding from the state and the bureau diminished as the sense of urgency

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 1125.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 663.

faded and the focus of reconstruction shifted.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, elites recovering from the privations of the war began turning their attention towards rebuilding many of the lost religious institutions as a mark of their own cultural prestige, philanthropy, community activism, and local identity.

Many state cults received funding from the local gentry, but the state shrines that local gentry were willing to invest money into seemed rooted less in state priorities and more in local spiritual interest and an assertion of a local identity.<sup>32</sup> The first privately funded state cult in Changxing in 1867, sponsored by a wealthy local tribute student named Wang Yongzhen, was dedicated to the God of the Marshes that Protects the People (佑民衍澤神).<sup>33</sup> Receiving imperial recognition in the state liturgy in 1811, the God of the Marshes was primarily a cult indigenous to Changxing and the region around Lake Tai. The cult centered on the worship of the spirit of Wang Tianying, a clairvoyant boy from the Ming dynasty and a native of Changxing who had saved many people from drowning in Lake Tai before later drowning himself, after which he became a powerful spirit that inhabited the marshlands around Lake Tai. The God of the Marshes was often referred to as the God of Lake Tai (太湖神) and was widely worshiped because he was believed to protect fishermen on the lake from capsizing and to save people from drowning. In this sense, the God of the Marshes had a definitively local relevance to places like Changxing where the lakes and canals of the region were a central part of their way of life. Moreover, as a deity believed to have been a local to Changxing in life, the reconstruction of his temple was also an assertion of local identity within the state cult.<sup>34</sup>

In the same year that the temple to the God of the Marshes was rebuilt, another temple was built to the Striker God (斫射神) through the contributions of unspecified locals.<sup>35</sup> Just as in the case

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<sup>31</sup> This is evidenced by the fact that the local Reconstruction Bureau does not seem to take on any projects after 1868.

<sup>32</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 150-162; Woolridge, *City of Virtues*, 150-174.

<sup>33</sup> *Changxing xianzhi*, 1102.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 1100-1102.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 1085.

with the God of the Marshes, the Striker God was the spirit of a local archer from the Tang dynasty, Chen Baxian (陳霸先), who led a unit of Changxing archers in military campaigns to exterminate pockets of resistance and banditry in the chaos following the An Lushan War (755-763). The temple celebrated a local martial prowess and essence; thus it may have been a way of asserting a local martial tradition that extended into their own image of their role in the civil war they themselves had lived through. It is also interesting to note the potential parallels between a figure like Chen Baxian, who helped eliminate bandits left over from a civil war in the Tang dynasty, and the predicament of the community at the end of the Taiping civil war, plagued by post-war disorder.<sup>36</sup>

The kinds of state shrines that were rebuilt later were, more often than not, state shrines that were popular but more distant to local narratives, spiritual concerns, and local identity. That is not to say they were irrelevant to locals, but less central to their spiritual lives. For example, temples to the ancient sage kings Yao and Shun who were celebrated as the mythological founders of Chinese civilization, were not rebuilt until 1873, nearly a decade after the war. Similarly, a shrine to the Marshal Zhuge Liang, a widely celebrated general in Chinese history romanticized in the Ming novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, as well as a major martial spirit worshipped across the empire, was not rebuilt until 1874. These were all figures that were familiar in Chinese history and mythology and important to religious and cultural identity to many locals from Changxing county just as they were across much of the Qing empire; they were potent and powerful spirits that helped shape the history of the realm, but neither intersected significantly with the local community in terms of their spiritual concerns or their local identity. In some cases, local magistrates were unable to obtain sufficient funding from the local gentry to support the reconstruction of certain temples and shrines, and would instead have to resort to using state funds for temples deemed necessary, such as the case in the temples to Marshal Geng and King Sui of the Grain, both of whom were not local but tied the county to the empire. Thus, among private

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 1085, 2587-2588; Zong Yuanheng, ed., *Huzhou fuzhi* (1874), 2975, 3812.

sources of funding for the reconstruction of temples, shrines and temples that celebrated a local identity were a major focus of temple reconstruction.

Possibly of greater interest is not what was rebuilt, but what was not rebuilt. Quite a number of state shrines and temples were never rebuilt, and this may imply a shift in the religious commitments of the state and the religious life of locals. Although, as previously mention, it is unclear when many of the religious sites in Changxing county were destroyed – and the same is true in many other counties - there are some commonalities among the few for which we do have more specific information. For example, in essentially every region ravaged by the civil war, the local Altars of Earth and Grain (社稷壇) were almost universally destroyed, and very few were rebuilt in the aftermath.<sup>37</sup> For millennia, as far back as *the Rites of Zhou*, Chinese dynasties venerated the gods of earth and grain as a central component of political legitimacy although they were originally venerated separately. The god of the earth was a spiritual administrator of the territory while the god of grain held sway over the harvest of grains. The founder of the Ming Dynasty, the Hongwu Emperor, placed particular emphasis on the centrality of the altar in Chinese religiosity with the combining of the altars as one and funding the construction of altars in every county as mandatory, appearing in later gazetteers first as the foremost of state cults. A central duty of any emperor was to performing ritual offerings twice annually to these gods. Proper ritual offerings to the gods brought peace to the land and bountiful harvest to the people. Failure to properly perform these rituals brought on the ire of the gods and calamity to the empire. As a religious microcosm of the empire, every county also had their own altars of Earth and Grain that spiritually governed the county and harvest of their jurisdiction. Local magistrates as the presiding official were required to lead these

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<sup>37</sup> One of the few examples of the Altars of Earth and Grain being rebuild was Taicang Sub-Prefecture in 1865. Wang Zuyu, ed., *Taicang zhouzhi* (1919), 130-131.

rituals much as the emperor would. These rituals continued until the very end of the Qing dynasty, and even beyond in Yuan Shikai's failed aspirations to become emperor in 1915.<sup>38</sup>

Why the altars of earth and grain were not rebuilt is not entirely clear. Since they were not rebuilt, there is little commentary on them except that they were destroyed. It could be that the earth and grain gods were no longer seen as a central part of the political legitimacy of the state at the local level, and locals no longer saw it as efficacious. Essentially, it may be that there was no longer any interest in the cult; however, it is odd considering that the altar of earth and grain were still listed first among state cults in nearly every gazetteer after the war, just as it had been for many centuries before, suggesting that it still occupied a central position in hierarchy of state cults even though they no longer existed physically.<sup>39</sup> It may serve as a reminder of the proper orthodox liturgical hierarchy, which still existed in many counties that were not occupied by the Taiping, serving as a placeholder for a properly ordered religious universe. It may also be that the actual physical structure was not seen as essential to the cults performance. All that was important was proper ritual offerings, and the structure itself was not central. Rituals at the altar, unlike many other state cults, did not center on idols and were not performed indoors, but performed on a large open-air platform altar. The altar occupied the center and around the altar to the sides of the main entrance were structures, "residences," (居) that housed each of the gods as well as another building for storing ritual implements and accouterments located on the opposite end of the main gate to the altar. The residences of the gods were not central to these rituals, and thus the residences may not have been necessary. In Taihu County, Anhui, for example, the altar of earth and grain, like many places, was destroyed in the war and was not rebuilt. The gazetteer notes that all that remained after the war was the "base of the altar;" it also notes, even after describing it as being destroyed in the war, that rituals continue to be performed at the altar. Thus it may be that, even though

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<sup>38</sup> Feuchtwang, *Popular Religion in China*, 65-76; Denis C. Twitchett, Frederick W. Mote, *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 874-877.

<sup>39</sup> *Changxing xianzhi*, 1069-1070.

the altars were rarely rebuilt to their ante-bellum splendor, veneration and ritual offerings to the gods of earth and grain continued.<sup>40</sup> The same seems to be true for many other “altars” in Chinese religious life, such as the Altar of the Wind, Clouds, Lighting, Rain, Mountains, and Rivers (風雲雷雨山川壇), the Altar of Agriculture (先壇), and the Altar of Hungry Ghost (厲壇), which were generally destroyed in the war and never rebuilt even though biannual rituals do seem to have continued.

### *Rebuilding A Buddhist Order*

Up until this point, our discussion has been centered on state cults, a category often considered separately as *tanmiao* (壇廟) in local gazetteers, distinguishing them from popular cults without imperial recognition as well as Buddhist and Daoist institutions. When it came to rebuilding Buddhist and Daoist temples, which were classified separately as *siguan* (寺觀), the state generally did not provide assistance. As with state cults, the vast majority of these temples were destroyed in the war. The few that survived were usually rural monasteries and temples far from major cities and towns. While recognized and occasionally patronized by the state, they were not a part of the formal imperial liturgy of state cults, and were thus considered by officials as a private religious affair. Buddhism and Daoism were not integral to the legitimacy of the state in the same way as many imperial cults that placed the state and the state’s control over the spiritual world at the center, and so Buddhist and Daoist institutions were left to largely fend for themselves. Buddhist and Daoist temples generally relied on the financial support of the local community as well as grants of temple lands, which were owned as a corporate entity by the temple (not individual monks) and provided income and sustenance for the monks who worked it or provided rental income from tenants. In the post-war period, the state could and sometimes did confiscate temple lands from temples destroyed in the war, but for the most part

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<sup>40</sup> Fu Zhaopeng, ed., *Taihu xianzhi* (1872), 191.

temple lands were respected so long as there was an individual that the community was willing to recognize as the abbot and the land was actively worked by either monks or tenants.<sup>41</sup> Thus, while the state was unwilling to provide assistance, many temples destroyed in the war could still collect income from temple lands.

The reconstruction of Buddhist temples was much slower than with state cults, which benefited from state resources as well as perhaps local gentry willing to contribute to such projects to ingratiate themselves with officials. In Changxing County, the first Buddhist temples rebuilt, at least those recognized by the state, did not begin until 1868 with three projects beginning that same year. The revival of Buddhist and Daoist institutions was relatively steady with a few each year until 1872 when an explosion of Buddhist temple and monastery construction began with seven that year alone (See Table 4.2). Funding for these temples are generally credited to three vaguely defined sources, if they are noted at all: at times, the local community pitched in raising money for a temple's reconstruction with no single predominant donor; at other times, temples were funded by a handful of or an individual wealthy member of the local gentry; according to the local gazetteer, however, it was more common for monks to raise money for the reconstruction of a temple on their own from various sources of income such as land.<sup>42</sup> Many of the temples only list an individual monk as raising the money for such projects. This suggests that perhaps monks raised the money themselves by soliciting small donations, or by accumulating income from temple lands still held by the temple trust, or more likely some combination of the two.<sup>43</sup> Despite the gazetteers' claims, nonetheless, one should be cautious in accepting these claims at face value. Gazetteers are notorious for crediting individuals not necessarily according to the amount of money and resources provided, but according to their status in the community and social

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<sup>41</sup> There are a few examples of temple lands being confiscated, even when surviving monks claimed it, and they seem to be concentrated in northern Anhui and Jiangsu. See, *Taihu xianzhi*, 357-358; Li Wei, ed., *Liu'an zhouzhi* (1872; repr., 1904), 438; Yu Qinglan, ed., *Susong xianzhi* (1921), 1671-1677.

<sup>42</sup> *Changxing xianzhi*, 1099, 1225-1227, 1231, 1323, 1351.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 1243-1249, 1309, 1316, 1323, 1350, 1353.



hierarchy. In most cases, this means that magistrates and other officials were credited with funding projects when in many cases their contributions were nothing more than a token offering to get the ball rolling. In the cases of these monks who raised their own money for temple reconstruction, we should be cautious, but if it was not the case that these monks raised the funds, then it seems peculiar that Qing officials or local gentry were not credited with the projects.

Although state officials and the reconstruction bureau did not intervene or support the rebuilding of Buddhism in local communities, they often intersected in their personal lives. One of the first Buddhist temples rebuilt in Changxing was the Temple of the Great Buddha (大雄教寺). This temple was a central part of the Buddhist community in Changxing, occupying a large portion of the county-seat and located right next to the county magistrate's office. As a large Buddhist temple complex, it was filled with numerous shrines and halls that served various religious functions, but this also meant that reconstruction proceeded piece-meal as contributors funded particular projects within the temple complex over time. The first project towards rebuilding the temple complex in 1868 was a bell tower, and was initiated by none other than Zhong Lin, who was by then the former director of the reconstruction bureau. Zhong used his personal wealth to rebuild the bell tower, or so it seems, but others would follow his contributions in later years setting an example as the temple was rebuilt piece by piece.<sup>44</sup> This does not seem to be unique among officials in the formal bureaucracy as well as for those working in the quasi-official extra-bureaucracies that emerged at the end of the war. Contributing to the rebuilding of a Buddhist temples was not just an act of accumulating local cultural and political capital for the individual, but also an act of piety that extended the mission of post-war reconstruction through their own personal involvement.

Probably the most fascinating intersection between the reconstruction bureau and Buddhism was in the life of Yang Wenhui (楊文會, 1837-1911). Yang is a monumental figure in the revival of

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 1225-1227.

Buddhist scholarship and global Buddhist discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Numerous scholars have written about his lifetime of work on Buddhist theology and building a global dialogue with scholars in Japan, India, and Europe. Often missed or glossed over in his biographies is how he came to dedicate his life to Buddhist scholarship.<sup>45</sup> Yang's father, Yang Chizao (楊擣藻, d. 1862), received his *jinshi* degree in the 1838 palace examination, the same year as Zeng Guofan, and served as a secretary on the Board of Punishment in Beijing, moving his entire family, including an infant Wenhui, to the imperial capital. After a career of seven years, Chizao retired from imperial service for unclear reasons, relocating his entire family back to their home in Shidai County, Anhui. During his time in Beijing and in Shidai county before the war, Wenhui received what was most likely a typical education in the classics in preparation for the civil service examination.<sup>46</sup>

This would all change when the Taiping came to Shidai in 1853. As a member of the local gentry with considerable prestige, Yang Chizao took a leading role in organizing militia resistance in the region referred to as the “five counties,” serving under General Zhou Bailu and Jiangxi Governor Zhang Fu (張芾, 1814-1862). The “five counties” of southern Anhui saw some of the most intense combat for a sustained period throughout the war from the initial Taiping entry into the region until 1861. During this period, the Yang family was constantly moving around the border region of Anhui-Jiangxi-Zhejiang-Jiangsu, either as refugees or following Chizao's militia as the front moved. Wenhui may possibly have served with his father in the militia, considering that many of his biographies note that as a young man

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<sup>45</sup> Yoshiko Ashiwa, “Positioning Religion in Modernity: State and Buddhism in China,” Yoshiko Ashiwa and David L. Wank, eds., *Making Religion, Making the State: The Politics of Religion in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 55-58; Francesca Tarocco, *The Cultural Practices of Modern Buddhism: Attuning the Dharma* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 51-54; Zhang Hua, *Yang Wenhui yu Zhongguo jindai fojiao sixiang zhuanxing: you yin ru lei, you qi ru xia* (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe).

<sup>46</sup> Wu Kunxiu, ed., *Chongxiu Anhui tongzhi* (1879), 9164-9165; *Anhui tongzhi gao* (1935), 11905-11906.

he was skilled in martial arts and archery, and he was also in his late teens and early twenties at the time, the ideal age for military service, but this is purely speculative.<sup>47</sup>

At some point, however, a young Wenhui served as a personal assistant to governor Zhang Fu and general Zhou Bailu, which was probably because of his father's role in militia resistance in the region. In 1861, after Zhang Fu resigned from his position as governor for a major military failure, Wenhui's father was transferred under the command of Zeng Guofan, and soon appointed to his personal bureaucracy, most likely because of their common association in the palace examination in the same year. Wenhui's father worked in Zeng's newly formed Bureau to Interview the Loyal and Righteous, which we will discuss more of later. Again, Wenhui benefitted from his father's new position under Zeng. In 1862, he was given a position in the Anqing Bureau of Rice and Grain, one of the many reconstruction administrations under the reconstruction bureau established in Anqing. In this case, the Bureau of Rice and Grain rebuilt and managed granaries supplying food to civilians either through direct distribution of grain or at various porridge kitchens. Wenhui remained in his position for over a year, but resigned after his father passed to mourn his death. When the Reconstruction Bureau was established in Nanjing, Wenhui's experience in logistics made him a prime candidate to promotion as a bureau director, as was the case with many of the directors of the Reconstruction Bureau who generally served in similar positions in logistics. In 1866, Zeng promoted Wenhui to Director of the Public Projects Bureau, overseeing and funding infrastructural and hydrological projects in Jiangning Prefecture under the auspices of the Reconstruction Bureau. In the Public Projects Bureau, Wenhui showed a particular talent for engineering, surveying, and cartography with a particular interest towards newer Western models introduced at the time. In fact, Zeng Guofan had explicitly encouraged all officials to undertake land

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<sup>47</sup> *Anhui tongzhi gao*, 6230-6236; Yang Wenhui, *Yang Renshan Jushi wenji*, Ji Xianlin, ed. (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 2006).

surveys after the war using methods inspired by Western cartographic and surveying techniques, with which Wenhui was particularly taken.<sup>48</sup>

Despite his position of power in post-war Jiangning that could have served as a springboard into an official career (many of his colleagues in the Reconstruction Bureau would later become officials), Wenhui seems to have not been inclined towards a political career like his father. He had instead developed an interest in Buddhist theology after reading *Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana* in 1863 while in mourning for his father; his official career was merely a means to make an income. During his tenure as director of the Public Projects Bureau in Nanjing, he encountered several other clerks within the bureau that held similar interest in Buddhism. According to his biography, for many months, this group of Buddhist enthusiast within the bureau would “engage in lengthy conversations” about Buddhism that “delved into the roots of the schools and teachings[宗教]” long into the night after a hard day’s work at the bureau. Their conversations focused not only the principles and theories of Buddhism, but also lamented the destruction of Buddhist temples, text, and the deterioration of faith from the war: “[They] believed a world in dharmic degeneration [末法世界] completely relies on the transmission of scripture for the salvation of the myriad living.” As this cohort of Buddhist devotees in the reconstruction bureau saw it, the Taiping represented the third age of dharmic degeneration that heralded the end of a kalpa. More important than reconstruction of the material world was the reconstruction of the dharma for the salvation of mortal souls. They especially mourned the destruction of religious and philosophical text. The Taiping had so thoroughly purged Buddhist text and religious life in the territory they occupied that it was difficult to come by even the most basic text from the *Buddhist Cannon*.<sup>49</sup>

This group of devotees resolved themselves to revive Buddhist faith in post-war Jiangnan through the republication of Buddhist text lost in the war. Wenhui and a dozen associate, many of whom

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

also worked under the reconstruction administration, drafted a compact that set forth a plan to raise funds from donors and begin the painstaking work of carving woodblocks to reprint scripture. This seems to have been something they did alongside their responsibilities in the reconstruction bureau for a period of time, but different versions of his biography conflict. According to some biographies, Wenhui was essentially dismissed from the public works bureau, because Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang saw that he “languished in the position;” other sources claim that he and his friends had received a generous donation from a wealthy merchant and Buddhist devotee, Zheng Xuechuan, to found the “Jiangbei Office for Carving Sutras” (江北刻經處) or, as it is sometimes called in English, the Scriptural Press in Yangzhou. Xuechuan invited Wenhui to assist in carving these woodblocks, which he accepted and resigned his position in the public works bureau. His reasons are unclear, but it is certain that Wenhui was more interested in recovering and reprinting Buddhist scripture than a career as an administrator working for the reconstruction bureau.<sup>50</sup>

This would turn out to be his life’s work. Wenhui spent the next several years along side his colleagues painstakingly carving woodblocks by hand to reprint scripture. He also spent some time collecting lost text in places like Jiangxi and Suzhou. He similarly worked painting temple murals and sculpting religious idols. By 1874, Wenhui would establish another office in Nanjing, which still operates to this day creating hand-made woodblock prints. During this period, Wenhui was not completely removed from his work as a bureaucrat. In 1873, Li Hongzhang supposedly offered him a position, which he declined, but the next year, he took a position at the Nanjing Bureau for Defense Planning (籌防局), and the year after that he managed the Hankou Projects Supervision Bureau (監工程局). In 1878, Wenhui would also serve as a personal secretary to the Chinese diplomat and Zeng Guofan’s oldest son, Zeng Jize, on his diplomatic mission to Europe, where he would spend three years. He would later return

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

to Europe in 1886 on another diplomatic mission, spending his time mostly in London, where he met the renowned Japanese Buddhist scholar, Nanjo Bunyu (南条文雄, 1849-1927). The two developed a close correspondence and friendship, and Nanjo would provide hundreds of scriptures from the *Buddhist Canon* long lost to Chinese scholars. Although Wenhui spent many years on-and-off as a secretary in many informal bureaucracies beginning with various reconstruction administrations, his focus remained on his work printing Buddhist scripture. Even while in Europe, he continued to correspond with Buddhist scholars, raise funds, give lectures on Buddhism, and as one Western observer claimed, “he was the first Buddhist missionary to Europe.”<sup>51</sup> By the late 1890s, the Scriptural Press expanded with branch offices in Beijing, Tianjin, Changsha, and Nanchang, printing out thousands of copies of Buddhist sutras, religious treaties, and even the philosophical works of Zhuangzi and Laozi. By the end of his life, his eulogy claimed that he was responsible for the printing of over 10,000 images of the Buddha and reprinting over a million copies of Buddhist scripture as well as eight philosophical and religious commentaries that he himself authored.<sup>52</sup>

Although Yang Wenhui is remembered globally as a monumental figure in the revival of theological interest in Buddhism and somewhat as a modernizer of Buddhist scholarship, Wenhui’s life work in Buddhism was motivated at the outset by a desire to revive the Buddhist faith after the civil war. His mission began as a mid-level bureaucrat in the reconstruction administration, but his work there and his experience in the war led him on a course that saw something more significant in the revival of religious faith than the actual physical reconstruction of the post-war landscape. Though we do not have a record of his understanding of the importance of Buddhism in the post war period, his later writings

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Jan Kiely, “Spreading the Dharma with the Mechanized Press: New Buddhist Print Cultures in the Modern Chinese Print Revolution, 1866-1949,” Cynthia Brokaw and Christopher A. Reed, eds., *From Woodblock to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, circa 1800 to 2008*, (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2010), 186-189; Xiao Ping, *Jindai Zhongguo fojiao de fuxing yu Riben fojiaojie de jiaowang lu*, (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 2003), 130.

about religion and war can perhaps lend us some insight. In his collected works, *A Miscellaneous Record that Cannot Wait*, Wenhui writes a piercing criticism of what he sees as the amorality of modern states and imperialism in an article entitled “Looking to the Future.” He argues that modern states motivated by profit and their own interest turn their back on the plight of the poor and hungry, leading to disorder:

There are countless people without a livelihood. They weep in hunger; they cry from cold; their screams of pain are everywhere. How could there not be those who bring chaos? ... All the literature, science, mathematics, and engineering simply discard and change, bringing barbarity to the pure and honest people of our time like an age of flood and famine. This brings disorder and the beginnings of extreme governance. Over time, the writings of ritual and music [the classical Chinese canon] recede, giving rise to cycles of order and disorder as nothing more than pain. What are the myriad toiling lives to do?<sup>53</sup>

In this case, Wenhui sees the root of chaos in immoral governance that seeks only profit and power, abandoning the most vulnerable in society. Thus, people have no option but to engage in disorder to survive. Buddhism, he continues, is the only path through which society can remain at peace through instituting a moral code that curbs the excesses of extreme governance. It teaches compassion for the plight of those suffering, which is reflected in the governance of society by providing for its needs.<sup>54</sup>

Wenhui was clearly intending this article as a scathing attack of Western imperialism and modernity, but it may also be that it reflected his philosophy of the importance of religion in a period of chaos that he himself lived through. Perhaps, reviving Buddhist faith in the aftermath of the civil war was more important than rebuilding irrigation dikes because he saw something more profound in the religious message of Buddhism relevant to his time. Reconstruction might work to bring material goods to a population devastated by war, but what about their souls? Might a compassionate society lead to officials that cared for the suffering of others? Might this prevent this endless cycle of order and disorder? Perhaps all those years ago Wenhui saw Buddhism as a spiritual panacea to the ills of a traumatized post-war society and a way to prevent future violence and destruction.

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<sup>53</sup> Yang Wenhui, “*Guan weilai*,” *Yang Renshan Jushi wenji*, Ji Xianlin, ed. (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 2006), 264-265.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

Of course not everyone saw Buddhism as an integral part of post-war reconstruction. Agnostic Confucian hostility towards Buddhist clergy which had existed for many centuries still remained in the post-war period. In the conventional social order of Confucian orthodoxy that divided society into four classes – farmers, scholars, craftsmen, and merchants – monks and priest had little role and were viewed as nothing more than social parasites that provided little in terms of tangible benefits. In a period in which society was still reeling from war and resources were scarce, some Confucian scholars saw Buddhist as being a drain on limited resources at a time when people should be engaged in reviving agricultural production. In an article entitled “On Transforming Insects into Farmers,” this perceived parasitic role of Buddhist monks were firmly placed as a problem for reconstruction. The author argued that monks “eat but do not farm; wear clothes but do not weave” and were thus draining vital resources from society without being engaged in productive labor. He thus proposed that:

As it concerns our current times, the places trampled by the Yue rebels has left abandoned wastelands that are not managed. We should have all Buddhist monks and Daoist priest sent to these places to settle the land with official commissioners to monitor them; moreover, we should sell all temple property to buy farming implements and have the temple idols moved to imperially sanctioned shrines so that they are useful. To have people overseeing incense as their vocation while there are expanses of abandoned land as far as the eye can see is to have people sit and eat the livelihood of the people!<sup>55</sup>

This scheme to resettle monks so they would no longer be a burden on a society devastated by war, while entirely impractical and fanciful, does reveal a certain hostility towards Buddhist and Daoist in the post-war period, especially Qing literati who viewed Buddhism and Daoism as the ignorant superstitions of the masses. The fact that the reconstruction bureau did not directly participate in the rebuilding of Buddhist and Daoist structures echoes these attitudes, maintaining a suspicious distance from popular beliefs not within the official religious structure.

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<sup>55</sup> “*Huachong wei nong shuo*,” *Shenbao* (July 2, 1872), 1:54, 1.



Yet, reconstruction was not entirely detached from popular religious belief even if it did not intervene directly. It is important to note, as in the case of Zhong Lin, these attitudes were not universal among the literati, and while some may have kept their distance from Buddhist and Daoist beliefs professionally, they were certainly supportive in their private dealings. It is difficult to judge prevailing attitudes about Buddhism and Daoism among elites in reconstruction and the post-war period. Did some believe a Buddhist revival was necessary for the salvation and stability of society? Or was popular religious belief deemed an unnecessary luxury and burden in a time when resources were scarce and society was trying to rebuild? In all likelihood, Zhong Lin probably represented the most common view of Buddhism and Daoism within the administration of reconstruction, and the revival of Buddhist and Daoist institutions in the early 1870s across much of the region shows that Zhong Lin or even Yang Wenhui were not alone in their personal mission to revive Buddhism in China, finding something significant within Buddhism that addressed the needs of post-war society.

Individuals such as Wenhui may have found meaning and solace in scripture that answered many of the questions asked by a society trying to recover from war, but the state and the reconstruction administration generally left Buddhist institutions to their own devices, intervening only on a personal level and not as representatives of the state. Instead, the focus of reconstruction was centered squarely on state cults, which worked to reestablish of a properly ordered religious universe destroyed by the Taiping. In this sense, the state was emphasizing its role as a mediator between a mortal and spiritual realm able to manipulate the gods through proper ritual observance, moral rectitude, and housing their idols in temples. Contrasting with the iconoclasm and heterodox beliefs of the Taiping, state reconstruction produced a narrative of legitimacy in which the state was engaging in an act of restoring a natural ante-bellum order, and this was something that many would have observed in their own communities as temples were gradually rebuilt and restored.

The reconstruction of the Qing religious order did more than portray the state as restorers of the old, but also as a state that tamed and controlled the ghosts created by the war through new interpretations of pre-existing state cults. When it came to rebuilding temples, particular emphasis and priority was given to state cults repurposed to commemorate war dead, and with this came new and novel interpretations of their purpose as a means to console and pacify the souls of the dead. The focus of these projects often undertaken by the Reconstruction Bureau was the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty, which evolved from a way to commemorate exemplary military officers who died to enshrine the souls of all soldiers and civilians that perished in the civil war. The war dead were remembered through the listing of their names in shrines and creation of a *Record of the Loyal* compiled through interviews in the aftermath of the war, forming a narrative of loyal sacrifice, but the shrines themselves served as a way to pacify and settle wayward ghosts, transforming them into not just people who had died for the Qing in life, but spirits that continued to serve the Qing in the afterlife.

### *The Ghost of War*

Winter clothes enter the pool, forming a group  
Rotten corpses buried in the corner of the wall without distinction  
Sorrows ended on the road outside Lingxing Arch  
When the sky is dark, the ghosts cry; it is too much to bear hearing.<sup>56</sup>

This poem was one among many in Lu Yitian's "Lyrical Record of the Plight of Hangzhou" that sings of the sorrow and tragedy that befell the city of Hangzhou when it fell to the Taiping in 1860. Published in *Tears for Hangzhou*, a compilation of essays, poems, and biographies of the civil war produced in its aftermath, Lu Yitian's poems provide us a visceral sense of how some people thought of

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<sup>56</sup>Lu Yitian, "Lu Yitian Hangcheng jinan shi," *Gengxin qi Hang lu* (Hangzhou: Qiantang Ding shi kanhang, 1895), vol. 2, 757.

the war and its numerous tragedies through poetic representations. This poem in particular was one of several that spoke of the ghost of war haunting the sites where they died. Discussions of ghosts and the supernatural to a modern reader may seem to be an abstract spiritual discussion or a literary allusion to express trauma, grief, and painfully bitter memories, especially when they are expressed in poetic form. Ghosts were also something believed to be real to many who lived through war and for many both their memories and the physical spaces around them were haunted by the ghosts of war, lingering well into its aftermath. These stories of ghosts were more than a general expression of mental anguish, but were closely linked in their minds to moments in time, events, and specific sites and locations that were haunted by their spirits. Many of these sites, even if they were not commemorated in an official record or with a shrine, were probably well known to local communities in their own local narratives and stories among themselves, pointing out the site where bodies once laid, large groups committed suicide, and where a beloved one was murdered.

Lu's poem represents one of these stories commemorated in poetic form, and for him the deaths he spoke of were more than an expression of grief, but were associated with a tangible event, time, place, and story. Accompanying Lu's poems were often short explanations of the story. In this case, Lu's poem describes a massacre and mass suicide on the grounds of the Hangzhou academy in May 1860. In this story, Lu claims that some of the shaken notables of the city sought refuge in the city's academy as the Taiping raided their homes for valuables. Some attempted to conceal themselves within the shrines on the academy's grounds; others loitered in the courtyard hoping that the rebels would not bother them. After a couple days, they were found out and the Taiping began indiscriminately slaughtering the people that had taken shelter in the academy. The terrified civilians ran in panic. Among them were seventy individuals that decided it was better to end their own life in a pond on the grounds of the academy than at the end of a Taiping spear. Dressed in their warm winter clothes, they threw themselves into the pool where they died. After the Taiping had cleared the academy, they unceremoniously piled

the bodies in a ditch outside the academy's doors next to the Lingxing archway and hastily covered them in dirt. Lu notes that after the war, stray dogs would occasionally dig up the bones of hands and feet from the dirt pile, uncovering a horrific past that was best forgotten.<sup>57</sup> These memories of atrocities were often expressed through ghost stories that connected specific events and places of the war to the present circumstances that survivors found themselves in.

It is hard to escape the sense of a haunted landscape when reading descriptions of the desolate post-war world. Cities lay in ruins as nothing more than “crumbled walls and broken tiles” and bodies lay strewn across the land out in the open, untended, and neglected. In fact, the image of corpses laying in piles in abandoned buildings or in the middle of fields or chocking up rivers were commonly invoked by survivors of the war to articulate the trauma and horror that they experienced. In Yu Zhi's *Tears for Jiangnan* entitled “Corpses Everywhere Left to be Tugged on by Pigs and Eaten by Dogs” (Figure 1) we see an image of a war torn rice paddy scattered with corpses being feasted upon by wild dogs and pigs. Several of the bodies have been decapitated while two others have had their limbs ripped off by the wild dogs and pigs devouring them. In the lyrics that introduce the image, Yu wrote:

Everywhere corpses lie.  
Blood and flesh soak the fields.  
None record their title and name.  
Dogs and pigs unwittingly bite like mad.<sup>58</sup>

Yu's morbid song, although intended to be provocative to move wealthy gentry to donate money to charities working on reconstruction, also provides us with a sense of the traumatic experience that survivors lived through. While these descriptions and images may seem hyperbolic, they should not be dismissed as exaggerations. These were most definitely tragedies that people experienced in the war and recalled with deep sorrow. Instead, they should be thought of as descriptions that reflected the

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Yu Zhi, *Jiangnan tielei tu*, 12.

ways in which people processed the horrors they experienced and helped survivors to explain to themselves how they survived such tragedies.<sup>59</sup>

For many survivors of the war, the image of massive piles of corpses and dead bodies dotting the countryside represented not only the destructiveness of the war, but also the destruction of a properly ordered moral universe in the course of the war. As Yu Zhi and many others described it, “the affairs of the living have seen heaven and the earth overturned.”<sup>60</sup> Overturning heaven and earth, the ultimate amorphic arbiters of moral justice in the cosmos, was a common phrase to express an extreme violations of propriety and civility even before the war, but the phrase must have taken on a more powerful meaning for those that survived the war. It was no longer a mere trifling social faux pas, but the violation of the most basic of human qualities that separated man from the dogs and pigs that feasted on the dead. As Meyer-Fong argues: “Burying the dead was therefore a powerful symbol of moral order, of a world and human relationships as they ought to be...”<sup>61</sup> The masses of corpses lying in the fields made it clear that many had failed to conduct the most basic of funerary rituals. The failure of many to undertake proper burial rites represented a moral failing of the deceased’s relatives and kin. For sons that failed to bury their parents, this represented the ultimate violation of filial piety.

Those that were able to find and recover the bodies of their relatives were extolled as paragons of virtue while those that left their loved ones to rot in the field to become carrion for the wild dogs and pigs were seen as “just like those dogs and pigs.” In Figure 1, there are two pairs of individuals that represent these two extremes. One pair is walking on top of an embankment carrying a body on a stretcher. The dead body is most likely a relative of the pair and is being carried away to be properly buried. These two are engaging in correct moral conduct despite the horrors of the war that surround them. Most disturbing in this image, however, are the two individuals who continue to indifferently

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<sup>59</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 3-4.

<sup>60</sup> Yu Zhi, *Jiangnan tielei tu*, 12.

<sup>61</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 100.

plough and rake their paddies even though a dead body lays right next to them. To Yu Zhi, these individuals represent those that are “just like those dogs and pigs.” Although Yu Zhi does absolve some that failed to bury their kin due to the chaos of the war, the fact that many bodies were unceremoniously left out in the open left Yu and many others with the sense that the war had destroyed the last remaining tenuous threads of human morality.<sup>62</sup>



Figure 3.1 – “Wandering the Wilds, Their Corpses Fill Ditches.” Yu Zhi, “siye liuli, zhuantian goushu,” *Jiangnan tielei tu* (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1974), 13.

<sup>62</sup> Yu Zhi, *Jiangnan tielei tu*, 12-13.

Burial and ritual offerings to the dead were not only the most basic representations of morality, they also served a more practical spiritual purpose to comfort and appease the spirit of the deceased. Although practices and beliefs varied across the Qing empire, the Chinese conception of the afterlife generally held that spirits lingered around the place of their death and their bodies as ghost. In the afterlife, spirits still require many of the things that the living do to remain comfortable and live their afterlife – food, money, clothes, and other possessions. As ghost, however, they are unable to procure these items, and therefore, required that those among the living, preferably their decedents and relatives, see to their other worldly needs, which were provided through period ritual sacrifices to ancestral tablets or grave stones. This was generally performed in the family’s home, cemeteries, or, for larger wealthier families and corporate lineages, ancestral halls. There periodic sacrifices and ritual obeisance were essential to appeasing spirits and ensuring their comfort in the afterlife. Improper burial or the failure to provide offerings of food or spirit money risked the possibility that spirits would become restless, hungry, and even enraged. Spirits that had been improperly seen to by the living harried them by haunting their dreams or causing misfortune.<sup>63</sup>

Even more terrifying than the spirits of the dead improperly attended to by the living were spirits that were left entirely unclaimed and untended. For many that died far from home or left unburied, their spirits were liable to become “orphaned souls” (孤魂) and “wild ghosts” (野鬼) that haunted the landscape in which they died. These spirits were “without a master” or “without a host” (無主), with the master/host usually being a family member. Masterless spirits could become particularly malevolent, because they fell outside the bounds of the rituals and offerings that sought to tame and control them. These spirits were often believed to be “hungry ghost” (餓鬼) because there was no one

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<sup>63</sup> Arthur Wolf, “Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors,” Arthur P. Wolf, ed., *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 131-183; Emily M. Ahren, *The Cult of the Dead in a Chinese Village* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973).

to provide victual offerings to their souls; they therefore tormented the living to gain attention to the offerings needed for their sustenance. These were common tropes in Chinese ghost stories and an unspoken article of faith in popular religion for centuries, but the civil war brought a new aspect to this fear of wild ghosts.<sup>64</sup> The war had left untold numbers of civilian deaths – many of who never received a proper burial and died far from home – so the fear of potentially dangerous rogue spirits was pervasive. Without any spiritual controls and offerings from the living, these “wild ghosts” wandered the land in pain and torment; they are often described as howling and wailing in the middle of the night out of pain and anguish – perhaps hoping that some among the living would try to assuage their tortured souls.

In the aftermath of the civil war, the piles of unburied bodies that were scattered across the land implied that there would be many orphaned souls and wild ghost wandering the land. The author of the *Little Gazetteer of Fengjing*, a small but wealthy town outside of Shanghai, wrote in his account of local wild ghosts that “Since the Xianfeng reign, there have been many such stories [of wild ghosts], particularly in the early years of the Tongzhi reign. Some say they are the grieved souls and dangerous spirits from after the war gathering.”<sup>65</sup> The author of “Annals of Defending the City above Hang,” an account of the defense of the Huizhou region from the Taiping, describes many civilians fleeing to the hills only to starve and become hungry ghost: “Our people had nothing left to eat and tens-of-thousands of rebels scoured the wilds of everything. Within a few weeks, many were nothing more than hungry ghosts.”<sup>66</sup> For the most part, these hungry wandering ghost were known only by an ominous howl or cry on dark and rainy nights. In Tears for Jiangnan, Yu’s illustration “Under Dark Clouds and Pouring Rain, Spirits and Ghost Call Out into the Night” captures the fear of wild ghost haunting the land just at the moment that the war was coming to a close and reconstruction was beginning. He pictures two people sitting at a table in their home while three dark and disheveled ghostly figures, one carrying its head in

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<sup>64</sup> Feuchtwang, *Popular Religion in China*, 41-48, 65-66.

<sup>65</sup> Cao Xiangjun, ed., *Chongji Fengjing xiaozhi* (1897), 580.

<sup>66</sup> Xie Yongtai, ed., *Yixian zhi* (1870), 2228.



its hands, wander a wet and dreary landscape.<sup>67</sup> In the song lyrics that accompany the image, Yu describes orphaned souls that cry and howl all night, keeping the protagonist awake:

How deeply tragic it is!  
In the middle of the night, suddenly there is a sorrowful wail.  
Through the driving winds and torrential rains, I cannot bear to listen.  
They moan like they are experiencing Ruoao's torment.  
Despondently, I keep looking for the sun to rise.  
Waiting to express my grievances.  
I send my wife and child away, and ask my good friends.  
They point out that several people gave their life away.<sup>68</sup>

In this song, the chilling cries in the night are from the ghost of people that were killed nearby who have no decedents left to provide for their needs in the afterlife; thus, they remained wild and uncontrolled by the living.

Spirits who died with vengeance in their hearts and unresolved injustices were particularly potent or *ling*, requiring careful attention to ritual offerings. The war produced many spirits who died in such ways, and if improperly cared for, could turn their fury on the living, harassing them with misfortunes, hauntings, terrifying them nightmares, and causing death. The need to pacify potent vengeful spirits through ritual offerings was a central part of Chinese religious life. These spirits, particularly malevolent ones, could, however, be pacified by the community, erecting shrines for the spirits and making dutiful offerings to appease their wayward souls. Before the war, this was often performed through ritual offerings conducted at the Altar of Hungry Ghost or the Temple of the City God (in many cases the rituals involved both).<sup>69</sup> As previously discussed, however, most altars of hungry ghosts did not survive the war intact and few were rebuilt, much as in the case of the Altar of the Earth and Grain. It is difficult to know whether this was significant or not since it seems that rituals may still have continued despite the destruction of the altar and reworked to fit what was available. Nonetheless,

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<sup>67</sup> Yu Zhi, *Jiangnan tielei tu*, 66-67.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Feuchtwang, *Popular Religion in China*, 24-26, 65-67, 74-75.

the ghosts of the war were not only a painful reminder of the past, but were a spiritual force that threatened the present, requiring ritual appeasement.

It is also interesting to point out that this concern about wild ghost threatening the living and thus requiring ritual appeasement may in some ways paralleled by a need to rebuild temples to the Gods who also needed to be appeased if they were to bestow their benefits on worshipers. The distinction between gods and potent spirits was largely an issue of degree than kind. The focus of worship in Chinese popular belief was often on godly figures that had once been mortals and died tragic and brutal deaths. The stories associated with these gods paid considerable attention to their apotheosis from mortal to powerful spirit. Many gods began as tormented spirits who were viewed as especially potent, deserving elaborate dedicated shrines to placate their wrath and perhaps be coaxed into assisting mortals with their supernatural powers. Over time, offerings to some powerful ghost gradually transitioned to veneration of a powerful deity as certain spirits were believed to be particularly efficacious in bringing fortune and avoiding disaster.<sup>70</sup> In many ways, the dividing line between gods and ghosts was blurry as a god was essentially viewed as a more powerful, effective, and popular ghost.

While the wild ghosts of the war were often portrayed as wailing in torment, the most common ghost stories centered on an even more threatening kind of ghost produced by the war: the ghost of soldiers that haunted the battlegrounds on which they fell. Ghost soldiers were a category of ghosts all of their own. They were often referred to as “soldiers of the nether” (陰兵) and were a particularly potent variety of ghost, because of their dramatically horrific and violent deaths in battle as well as their own violent roles in prosecuting the war. In death, soldiers could be just as destructive and violent as they were in life, making them a frequent object of fear in the post-bellum period.

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<sup>70</sup> Stevan Harrell, “*When a Ghost Becomes a God*,” Arthur P. Wolf, ed., *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 193-207.

In many of these stories, soldiers did not haunt as aggrieved individuals, but as a collective unit that fell in battle. These ghost of the nether were always unnamed, and if at all identified, it was perhaps by the name of the general under whom they served. Stripped of their identity and individuality, these ghost soldiers served as part of a greater army of ghosts who had all died violently together and haunted the post-war landscape. In Jurong County, Jiangsu, one person recalls returning home shortly after the war only to find that “weeds and grass have grown over everything and bleached bones lay exposed. In the few crumbling buildings that remain, corpses lie in piles.”<sup>71</sup> The ruined panorama of his former home not only harbored corpses, but also the spiritual remains of an entire ghost army:

In the day, ghosts can be heard calling out among the ruined walls and broken tiles. At night, the sound of wolves howling and things like that are broken by the sound of children crying. In the alleys, the clamor of men and horses can be heard fighting. Behind the walls, the sound of marching – Stomp! Stomp! Upon opening the door to look, there are 10,000 soldiers and horsemen carrying their weapons on their shoulders along with lanterns, torches, and furled banners, and they continue on incessantly until it suddenly falls quiet. These are the soldiers of the nether.<sup>72</sup>

Sightings of ghost armies were often mentioned in the post war period, frequently finding their way onto the pages of the “Strange Omens” sections of many local gazetteers written after the war and even onto the pages of newspapers like *The Illustrated News from the Lithography Studio*. In 1886, an article entitled “Soldiers Fighting in the Middle of the Night” appeared in *The Illustrated News of the Lithography Studio* about a sighting of ghost in the small village of Taiping Bridge, just outside the city of Jiaying, Zhejiang. The author describes an incident in which the ghost of soldiers reenacted an ethereal battle around the village:

In the First Month [February, 1886], around Taiping Bridge just outside Jiaying, residents were suddenly awakened to a loud racket and confusion. They thought that a fire alarm had been raised. When they ran out of their homes, they could see lights from torches shining. They then heard the sound of rifles and cannons firing near and far. In the darkness, they could hear the beat of drums and toot of horns, and a military gong being beaten wildly like a mad dog. They

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<sup>71</sup> Zhang Shaochang, *et al.*, *Xuzuan Jurong xianzhi* (1901), 2174-2175.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

knew this was not a fire alarm, but were from bright ghost. The villagers were terrified of them. As these evil spirits entered the village, they chased the villagers off.<sup>73</sup>

Places that had found themselves at the center of fighting in the war were often littered with fearful accounts of soldiers of the nether. The fear that the army of the dead inspired among survivors of the war could even be seen as analogous to the fear they felt towards the army of living during the war.



Figure 3.1 – “Fighting Soldiers in the Middle of the Night.” Tian Ying, “Ye ban ao bing,” *dianshizhai huabao: da ke tang ban* (Shanghai: Shanghai huabao chubanshe, 2001) vol. 2, 317.

<sup>73</sup> Tian Ying, “Ye ban ao bing,” *dianshizhai huabao: da ke tang ban* (Shanghai: Shanghai huabao chubanshe, 2001), vol. 2, 317.

Battlefields were commonly at the center of these hauntings. Battlefields have a powerful lure as sites of spiritual potency. The knowledge that many people died collectively in horrifically violent deaths lends these places certain supernatural properties that transmogrify these locations into almost sacrosanct spiritual realms detached from the physical terrain around them. Its spiritual power is also deeply associated with state power, as the souls of the dead fought to shape and preserve the state, and thus battlefields often become a center of ritual state commemoration that allows the state to tap into a spiritual realm. One need only think of the centrality of Gettysburg in commemorating the American Civil War and the numerous popular ghost stories associated with the site, and as we shall discuss, this would also hold true for China in the wake of its own civil war.<sup>74</sup>

The haunted battlefield in nineteenth century China was also one of great despair and wasted life that evoked classical depictions in China's literary past. The most common image of the battlefield and soldiers of the nether derived from the eighth century text "Visiting the Battlefield and Thinking of the Past" (弔古戰場文), written by Li Hua (李樺, 715-778) who had himself lived through the bloody An Lushan Civil War (755-763). In this tale, Li visits a fortress on the dry barren frontier, which had been the site of many battles in the past. The garrison commander informs him, "This is an ancient battlefield. An entire army fell here. The wail of ghosts can be heard here on dark days." Li then describes in horrifically vivid detail the soldiers of the nether reenacting an ancient battle between an unspecified Chinese defender and an invading barbarian horde in the midst of a freezing winter. The story focuses on the horror of these soldiers' deaths. Soldiers who died miles from home and their families on a barren frontier for a cause they did not understand, leaving them locked forever in combat in a spiritual realm.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> See, Robert C. Thompson, "Am I Going to See a Ghost Tonight?: Gettysburg Ghost Tours and the Performance of Belief." John G. Sabol, *The Politics of Presence: Haunting Performances on the Gettysburg Battlefield*.

<sup>75</sup> Li Hua, "Diao gu zhanchang wen," *Zhongguo zhexue shu dianzihua jihua*, January 5, 2016, <http://cetxt.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=686963>.

The greatest tragedy and the source of the suffering of these nether soldiers is that they died away from home without the care of their families in the afterlife.

Although the point of Li's tale is more of a warning against senseless violence and the virtue of literati values over the cruelty of martial values, "Visiting the Battlefield and Thinking of the Past" was the primary reference point for many Chinese after the Taiping Civil War when thinking about the ghost of fallen soldiers. In the text that accompanied the Yu Zhi's illustration, Yu directly references Li Hua's tale and tells his readers that this is something that they themselves have lived through in the civil war:

Those that have read the tale of "Visiting the Battlefield and Thinking of the Past" have often heard of ghosts crying out on dark days. Every time they close the book they cannot help but be saddened. Today is much like in antiquity, for we have all seen it before our eyes, and sense that the ancients really were not fooling us – The dead are amongst us!"<sup>76</sup>

Even in the story of the ghostly battle at Taiping bridge that appeared in the *Illustrated News from the Lithography Studio*, the author dismissed rumors of dark soldiers from the civil war haunting this as people reading too deeply into "Visiting the battlefield and Thinking of the Past":

The sayings about dark soldiers cannot be entirely believed. If you read "Visiting the Battlefield and Thinking of the Past," it claims that on dark days and black nights you can hear the howls of ghost. Readers feel an unbearable sorrow for the plight of soldiers, but this is no more than moving, and not an eyewitness account.<sup>77</sup>

The experience of the civil war for many survivors brought Li Hua's story to life for them, because they themselves were eyewitnesses to such wanton violence and death, but that also left them anxious about their ghostly remains that lingered on the battlefield.

These soldiers of the nether and orphaned souls that wandered the devastated waste made by war represented a force of spiritual chaos and disorder. It was a remnant presence of the past that threatened the present and fell outside the bonds of spiritual controls established by the state. Even though the state had established religious mechanisms to tame dangerous wayward spirits through the

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<sup>76</sup> Yu Zhi, *Jiangnan tielei tu*, 66-67.

<sup>77</sup> Tian Ying, "Ye ban ao bing," vol. 2, 317.

altar of the hungry ghosts, the war had destroyed the proper religious order of the state and with it established mechanisms of control. Moreover, the war had been such a horrifically traumatic event that led to the ignominious deaths of millions that some may have questioned how effective such controls could be in taming the ghost of war. Ghost were both a manifestation of traumatic wartime memories as well as an anxiety about spiritual controls that served to protect them from these memories. Thus rebuilding a post-war religious order was crucial not only to regain the favor of the Gods, but also to pacify potentially dangerous spirits. Here, we see another focus of post-war reconstruction. The state not only needed to reclaim its legitimacy in an orthodox religious order by rebuilding temples, but also had to reassert its control and authority over malevolent spirits created by the war in order to assuage the anxieties about otherworldly disorders.

### *The Cult of Loyalty*

The souls of soldiers who died fighting were of particular concern to Qing officials and the irregular army. Considerable attention was paid to collecting the bodies of fallen soldiers and ensuring that they were given proper funerary rites. Ideally, the bodies of soldiers were shipped from the frontlines back to their families, but the exigencies of war meant that this was not always possible. As the war mounted and the gravity of the conflict became clearer, concerns for the souls and proper ritual respect for soldiers emerged in the minds of many officials and military officers. Although there were established cults for the military that focused on death in wartime, these rituals focused on military officers, and paid little attention to the common soldier. The regular army of the Qing was comprised of two important divisions: the Eight Banners (八旗), which formed the basis of Manchu of the seventeenth century conquest of China, and the Green Standard Army (綠營), which was molded from Ming soldiers who surrendered to the Qing. Though these divisions were distinct, the status of soldier was hereditary,

making them distant and detached from established civilian communities; thus the spiritual needs of common soldiers were generally not addressed in the imperial liturgy, which focused more on agrarian patterns of life.<sup>78</sup> Many of the soldiers fighting in the Civil War were members of agrarian communities and essentially volunteered for service in the irregular army. The Civil War saw a more direct participation of agrarian communities in warfare, which meant that there was an increased concern about providing proper ritual observance for the souls of fallen community members, especially those who could not receive proper burial by their families.<sup>79</sup>

With little in terms of religious precedence for the souls rank-and-file soldiers in the imperial liturgy, officials and officers adopted and reinterpreted established imperial cults to serve the spiritual needs of soldiers. At the center of official rituals for fallen soldiers was the concept of “loyalty” through a series of loosely related state cults. Interpretations of these cults of loyalty varied substantially, but they all served a similar purpose in providing a ritual space to appease the souls of soldiers of varying ranks and memorialize their deeds in life. The most common cult to appease the spirits of soldiers that emerged in the war was based on the re-appropriation of the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty, but other shrines were also reinterpreted under the framework of loyalty too; moreover, these shrines of manifest loyalty would expand greatly in the post-war period, not only setting a ritualized precedent for settling the dead, but also playing a central part in post-war commemoration of the dead. Forming a central component of the Qing narrative of the war, these sites served as both a site of commemoration and a means of supernatural controls over dangerous spirits.

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<sup>78</sup> Mark C. Elliot, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 34-39, 128-131; Kwang-Ching Liu, “Ch’ing Armies of the Post-Taiping Era,” John K. Fairbank and Kwang-Ching Liu, *The Cambridge History of China: Late Ch’ing, 1800-1911, Part 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 202-211.

<sup>79</sup> Philip A. Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies: Militarization and Social Structure, 1796-1864* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 151-152.



The boundary between commemoration of war and religious ritual is often ambiguous. Commemoration of war is often thought of in terms of a secular state giving meaning to the sacrifices of soldiers as protectors of the nation, but commemoration is also performed in state ceremonies that largely resemble and borrow from established religious rituals. In societies where religious authority resides in the state, such as in nineteenth century Qing China and many others, commemoration overlapped indistinguishably with a spiritual realm. Stately commemoration of the Taiping Civil War was an essential part of a narrative in which the dead were appropriated to legitimize the state's existence, but it is also important to also think about the ways religious belief played an important role in shaping the form of commemoration and understandings of its purpose. Nineteenth century Chinese, just as many people across the world, interpreted their world in spiritual terms, and commemoration of war dead was no different. Tribute to the dead, although certainly involving the state through official participation in rituals, was performed in shrines, where the names of the dead were often inscribed on tablets and offerings were made to their souls. While we may view commemoration in secular terms, survivors would have understood commemoration in terms of its place within a spiritual order that sought to appease a realm of ghost.

It is in this sense that post-war reconstruction efforts in rebuilding a religious and cultural order was most active, constructing both a secular narrative of the war of loyal sacrifice but also asserting state control over the souls of the dead through commemorative shrines of loyalty. During the war, the focus of loyalty was squarely on the common soldier who sacrificed themselves on distant battlefields where their spirits lingered in spiritual limbo on earth. After the war, the ways in which soldiers were ritually appeased and commemorated as the loyal dead expanded to include all subjects, nominally without regard to rank, in numerous local shrines of various names. It was an expanded notion of loyalty that encompassed the breadth of Chinese society and numerous ways, both major and minor, that subjects could be loyal. By appropriating the dead of the war as loyal martyrs, the state was not only

building a narrative that legitimized their rule, but also asserting control over the spirits produced by the war in rituals to console the loyal dead. In other words, the state was not only engaged in an act of commemoration and memory, but also playing a role settling the dead on a spiritual plane, much as reconstruction also sought to settle refugees of the war.

### *The Shrine of Manifest Loyalty*

The Shrine of Manifest Loyalty was a relatively novel imperial shrine at the time of the civil war, and had only been a minor part of imperial liturgy in its beginnings. The first Shrine of Manifest Loyalty was ordered built in 1724 by the Yongzheng Emperor in Beijing, and was completed in 1728. The Beijing shrine was originally intended to be the only of its kind in the empire. The shrine centered on the collective worship of the souls of imperial officials that had sacrificed their lives in war for the empire. While some civil officials that had died in conflict were listed, the shrine focused on the regular imperial armies of the Eight Banners and the Green Standard, and the majority of men enshrined were military officers. In its initial conception, the shrine honored exemplary military and civil officials that had died in wars of Qing expansion since the founding of the dynasty to make their loyalty manifest to Qing subjects and serve as models of unswerving loyalty to the dynasty.<sup>80</sup>

The shrine consisted of two ritual categories: the *zhengsi* (正祀), or main altar at the center of the hall, and the *fusi* (祀祀), or side altar, which were found to either side of the main altar. On the altars were spirit tablets inscribed with the names of those enshrined in the altar. The main altar was on the north wall of the hall and paid homage to particularly noteworthy sacrifices by civil officials and military officers who perished fighting for the Qing since the empire began under Nurhachi, to the war of the three feudatories, the conquest of Tibet and Altishar, and was updated with each new conflict. The

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<sup>80</sup> Fu Deyuan, "Li Hongzhang yu Baoding Huaijun Zhaozhong Ci gong suo," *Hebei Shifan Daxue xuebao* 29 (2006:6), 124-131; Fu Deyuan, "Li Hongzhang yu Huaijun Zhaozhong Ci," *Anhui shixue* 3 (2003), 71-82.

names on the main altar were placed in order of rank with the highest ranks in the center and descending downwards on both sides (though some were posthumously elevated in rank, which would change the order). The side altar was located on both sides of the main hall and was dedicated to lesser military officers and civil officials that had died in war, but under less heroic or exemplary circumstances as deemed by the imperial authorities.<sup>81</sup>

The emphasis of the shrine was to demonstrate and indoctrinate proper values of loyal service to the empire through examples of individual loyalty and sacrifice. Even though the shrine claimed to house and appease the “loyal souls” (忠魂) of the venerated dead, its spiritual components were secondary to its purpose discussing the deeds of the dead in life; moreover, the souls of common soldiers who had died in war were not included in the shrine. The common soldier was not a subject of individual loyalty, but merely an extension of the loyalty of their commanding officer. In essence, only imperial officials were worthy of veneration as exemplars of loyal virtue.

The Shrine of Manifest Loyalty in the imperial capital, Beijing, was the only one of its kind in the empire throughout the eighteenth century, but with the conflict against the White Lotus insurgents at the turn of the century, the number of men eligible for enshrinement at the shrine expanded greatly. The Jiaqing Emperor thus ordered in 1802 that every province and prefecture should erect a small Shrine of Manifest Loyalty to honor the sacrifice of the local men who had died in the empire’s wars while in service. In the years that followed, Shrines of Manifest Loyalty spread across the empire. The men enshrined were local men that had achieved rank in the regular army or civil bureaucracy and perished in war, and more often than not these shrines would only venerate a handful of local men of considerable rank. To qualify for enshrinement, one had to be of the fourth rank or below in the military or of the third rank or below in the civil administration in the imperial ranking. In simpler terms, this included men of imperial rank ranging from a company captain (把總) to Lieutenant General (副參領) in

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*; *Daqing Huidian shilie*, juan 49:34.

the military and from a local Constables (巡檢) to a Circuit Judge (按察使) in the bureaucracy.<sup>82</sup> These shrines were intended to provide exemplars of loyal imperial service from the local community, tying the locality to a broader imperial project since most who died in war were not serving locally but in various conflicts across the empire.

Most of the shrines of manifest loyalty built in the Jiaqing reign were modest structures - generally small covered rooms of three columned bays (approximately 9 meter wide) – revealing its humble position in local rituals. They were typically located on the grounds of prefectural and county offices along the north wall neighboring other minor state shrines within government compounds. Despite the rapid expansion of this cult of manifest loyalty through imperial order at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the shrine seems to have played little importance in the religious, cultural, and political life of the early nineteenth century. Most gazetteers before the 1850s do little more than note their existence and their location within the compound of prefectural or magisterial offices, which meant they were largely inaccessible to the public except by a select few on certain ritual occasions. While diagrams of county offices in gazetteers often prominently labeled major shrines in the compound, the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty often went unlabeled, because the martial values of loyalty and sacrifice were not at the core of the values local literati and gentry wished to revere when compiling gazetteers. Even though local martial valor was venerated within the walls of county and prefectural offices, its status in public ritual was largely relegated to obligatory official ceremonies that had minimal involvement from the local population unlike other state cults in the imperial liturgy such as the City God. The shrine was more a sign of imperial religious fiat than an actual manifestation of a desire of locals to pay tribute to the sacrifices of members of their community; thus perfunctory closed rituals were held once in the spring and once in the autumn by local officials to honor the loyal dead, but little more is generally said of the shrine than that. Although the shrine made the sacrifices of the local community for the empire in

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<sup>82</sup> Fu Deyuan, “*Li Hongzhang yu Huaijun Zhaozhong Ci*,” 81-83; *Daqing Huidian shilie*, juan 49, 34.

some ways more accessible to that community, it seems to have had little meaning to the families and descendants of the dead themselves.<sup>83</sup>

An important exception to this was the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty in Jingmen, Hubei, where the shrine appears to have been a major site of commemoration for a region that was heavily impacted by the White Lotus War. The Jingmen Shrine of Manifest Loyalty was built under imperial order in 1797 and was one of the few pre-Taiping Civil War shrines that had its own independent shrine compound (ie. not located within the walls of a government office). Unlike most of these shrines erected in the Jiaqing reign, the Jingmen shrine carried particular significance to the community because Jingmen had been deeply involved in the White Lotus War with many local notables in imperial service perishing in the conflict. The fact that a separate shrine compound had been built - largely through local contributions - shows its significance to the local community that was deeply affected by the war. After a generation, however, the shrine's importance diminished as it fell into disrepair by the mid-nineteenth century through neglect.<sup>84</sup>

In 1854, in the middle of the Taiping Civil War, interest in the shrine would be restored. After the city was sacked by the Taiping in April, 1854, the local community mobilized for local defense with many men going off to serve in irregular units fighting against the Taiping. With the militarization of the community, many locals looked again to restore the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty in honor of the service of their departed ancestors in the White Lotus War and the new souls that were certain to arrive with the new conflict. An entirely new shrine was built on a new site even grander than the last, and was built again largely through local contributions led by a local gentry and minor official Zhou Houji (周厚基). Renewed interest in the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty was clearly sparked by their own experiences in the

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<sup>83</sup> For some example of post-White Lotus Shrines of Manifest Loyalty, see, Zhu Wu, ed., *Chenzhou zongzhi* (1820), 1011; Xu Shaozong, ed., *Wugang zhouzhi* (1817), 612-613; Zheng Lian, ed., *Ankang xianzhi* (1853), 387-390.

<sup>84</sup> En Rong, ed., *Jingmen zhili zhouzhi* (1868), 935-937, 2395-2396.

civil war and a desire by local gentry to commemorate fallen relatives.<sup>85</sup> Zhou Houji himself applied for and received enshrinement for three of his own relatives that had fought and died in the civil war. The number of men enshrined at the shrine dramatically increased in the 1850s. Before the civil war, only eight men were enshrined all of whom were military officers in the local garrison. By 1868, there were twenty-five men enshrined (twenty-one military officers and four civil bureaucrats), and all but one of the seventeen new additions were for men that had died in the mid-century civil wars.<sup>86</sup>

A major question for this restored shrine was who was worthy of enshrinement. Following the Taiping invasion of Jingmen and the subsequent participation of locals in the ongoing war, the number of applicants for enshrinement vastly increased in the 1850s and 60s. Many were trying to have their ancestors that fought in the White Lotus War recognized, perhaps as a way for locals to establish their own martial *bona fides*. As the author of the “Illustrated Description of the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty” in the *Jingmen Gazetteer* complained:

Since the incidents involving the deaths of soldiers and civilians, their sons and grandsons have on their own accord impertinently added [their names] for special enshrinement. According to the gazetteer compiled by Wang Xu [the previous gazetteer], only eight men of official rank, 49 civilians, and 89 soldiers died in the past 80 years... yet over 1,300 officials and soldiers have been requested for enshrinement. How can people be so excessive?... How can the shrine cover every person’s accomplishment so indiscriminately as if without any limitations? What would there be to make manifest [if we did so]?<sup>87</sup>

The author clearly believed that the shrine should be reserved only for ranking military and civil officials that clearly manifested their loyalty through sacrifice and imperial service. Thus to accommodate the numerous other requests for enshrinement, particularly of civilians, a compromise was made by resurrecting the long-neglected Shrine of All Loyals (全忠祠), which had been originally founded in the Ming dynasty to commemorate loyal service to the previous dynasty and had only been marginally maintained in the Qing; now the shrine would be dedicated to civilians and soldiers that died in

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<sup>85</sup> Zhou Houji, “Yijian Zhaozhong Ci ji,” *Jingmen zhili zhouzhi*, 2395-2396.

<sup>86</sup> *Jingmen zhili zhouzhi*, 935-941; The one exception was An Bang who died in the White Lotus War, but was not enshrined until the 1850s.

<sup>87</sup> *Jingmen zhili zhouzhi* (1868), 940-941.

conflict.<sup>88</sup> Thus, Jingmen would have two shrines dedicated to loyalty: one for officials of rank at the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty and another for soldiers and civilians without imperial office at the Shrine of All Loyal. The same principle would be held for those that died in the Civil War, and thus the number of men enshrined in Jingmen by the end of the war would only be 25 in total, but the Shrine of All Loyal would commemorate hundreds of men.

Who exactly was worthy of enshrinement and how the dead could be properly commemorated was precisely the kind of question that concerned many that lived through and experienced the civil war were concerned with. The war against the Taiping was unprecedented in many respects, but probably more so was its scope, which enveloped the lives of a broader spectrum of society than in wars past. As Tobie Meyer-Fong has described the civil war, it was a “total war” involving entire communities mobilizing men and resources for war through militias and irregular brigades, entire cities were utterly reduced to smoldering piles of debris, and millions of civilians were forced to flee for their lives as refugees on the road.<sup>89</sup> The sheer scale of destruction and the broader participation of society in war led many to reconsider this question of who was worthy of being remembered and enshrined in the local community.

### *Stone Bell Mountain*

On October 25, 1857, in a combined amphibious and land assault, the forces of Xiang Army under the command of Admiral Peng Yulin captured the strategic city of Hukou after nearly five years under Taiping occupation. Over 3,000 men and a handful of prominent brigadiers and captains had died in the assault on the city. This was in addition to two other failed assaults in January, 1855 and

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<sup>88</sup> By commoners (士民), they most likely meant local literati and gentry than common farmers. Also, the term they used for soldiers (兵勇) included both regular soldiers as well as irregulars, and most likely militias too; *Jingmen zhili Zhouzhi*, 954-956.

<sup>89</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 11-12.

September, 1855 that led to the deaths of a few thousands more irregular sailors. Despite the mounting death toll, a total of five major battles were fought around the city, because the city was situated at the confluence of Lake Poyang, a great lake that occupies the center of Jiangxi province, and the Yangzi River. Hukou was also an easily defensible position surrounded on the north, east, and south by steep hills, and to the west the mouth of Lake Poyang. The city's crowning military feature, however, was Stone Bell Mountain, a towering limestone karst over 40 meters tall that loomed over the shore of Lake Poyang on the west side of the city. This peak rising from the shore had a long and storied history. Historically, it referred to as "the lock and key to the lakes and rivers" (江湖鎖匙), because the mountain proved to be a formidable fortress with steep cliffs that gave a commander control over the lake and access to the Yangzi River.<sup>90</sup> This made the mountain an important military asset in times of war and thus a major objective of the Xiang Army in the civil war. With the city now under his control in the fall of 1857, Admiral Peng turned his attention towards rebuilding the city and solidifying his control.

After taking the city, Peng established his naval headquarters there as the seat of his irregular naval force, and thus the city's reconstruction became one of his priorities during the war. Much of the city's reconstruction was done under his supervision, financial support, and direction. Two chief projects occupied Peng's mind, which he began in earnest almost immediately after its occupation. The first was to rebuild the city's walls. Under Taiping occupation, the commanding general of Taiping garrison, Huang Wenjin, had ordered the city walls of Hukou dismantled brick by brick for material to build a massive fortress on the pinnacle of Stone Bell Mountain and Meijia Islet just across the waters, between which he built a massive chain to block the entrance to the lake. The Taiping had essentially transformed Stone Bell Mountain into a citadel but left the largely abandoned city un-walled and defenseless. Rebuilding the city wall was a vital priority with the war still raging and the threat of the Taiping returning ever present. Peng almost immediately had work begun on the city wall, but this would prove to be a

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<sup>90</sup> Duan Li, ed., *Hukou xianzhi* (1870), 533-537; Hu Chuanzhao, ed., *Shizhong Shan zhi* (1883), 10:22a-66b.



formidable goal under the financial and material constraints of an ongoing war. It would require over 200,000 *liang* and take four years to complete.<sup>91</sup>

Curiously, Peng's second priority was the construction of a major shrine in honor of the three thousand men that had fallen taking the city over the course of the war. The city had been taken with much blood from the Xiang navy's marines, and he was particularly stirred by the death of his predecessor, Xiao Jiesan (蕭捷三), who died from a direct cannon shot to his ship from the fortress in an assault on September 4, 1855.<sup>92</sup> Peng sought to honor the sacrifices of his fellow Hunanese sailors with a shrine to house their souls on the battlefield in which they died, and he did so by appropriating the state cult of Manifest Loyalty, christening this new shrine as the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty or at times the Chu Army Naval Shrine of Manifest Loyalty.<sup>93</sup> Peng and many military men like him over the course of the war and its aftermath would appropriate the shrines of manifest loyalty as a part of post-war reconstruct, reinterpreting the purpose of these shrines as a site of memory, commemoration, and enshrinement of the dead. These shrines served not only a purpose in commemorating the dead, but also in pacifying the spirits of fallen soldiers in the afterlife and transforming their souls into loyal servants of the dynasty.

The Hukou shrine was the first of many such shrines erected over the course of the war and its aftermath and would radically reinterpret the meaning of loyalty within the imperial liturgy and local communities to suit the spiritual and commemorative purposes of a civil war that devoured millions of lives over the course of over a decade. The Shrine of Manifest Loyalty is not only significant for being the first of its kind during the civil war, but also because of its trace in the historical record. In 1883, two decades after the war, several veteran Hunanese generals from the war supported the compilation of *the Gazetteer of Stone Bell Mountain*; typically, the genre of gazetteers focused on counties, prefectures, and

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<sup>91</sup> *Hukou xianzhi*, 169, 1467-1478.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 534; *Shizhong Shan zhi*, 10:22a-23b.

<sup>93</sup> Chu Army was another name for the Xiang Army. The Chu Army referred more broadly to the irregular forces from Hunan and Hubei while the Xiang Army more specifically to Hunanese forces. *Hukou xianzhi*, 156-157.

provinces, and when gazetteers were dedicated to anything else, they were usually focused on important religious sites, gardens, and places of natural beauty, such as Mount Tai, Emei Mountain, or the gardens of Suzhou – generally places of travel and pilgrimage. In this case, the gazetteer treats Stone Bell Mountain as a religious and cultural site, which it most certainly was, but at the center of the gazetteer is the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty and the heroically depicted battles for the mountain in the civil war. Moreover, the shrine's prominent position at the top of Stone Bell Mountain, a well-known landmark across the empire, meant that the shrine was also an important part in the local *Hukou County Gazetteer*. Published in 1870, the Hukou gazetteer was likewise financially supported by many patrons from the irregular army, such as Peng Yulin and Shen Baojing (沈保靖, 1828-1903), who served as one of Li Hongzhang's personal secretaries.<sup>94</sup> Unlike many of the other shrines to loyalty erected after the civil war for which information is limited, we are provided with a broader view of the Hukou shrine and its meaning to those who constructed it through these gazetteers, but it is also important to note that the view we have is predominately one from the perspective of military men, especially those in the irregular army, whose focus was not just on celebrating and commemorating the actions of their own men, but also in bolstering their own deeds and reputation through association with the heroism of the shrine.

The Hukou shrine is significant and unique for a host of reasons. To begin with and most importantly, Peng expanded the meaning of loyalty and participation in the imperial cause to include all irregular soldiers. The question of who was worthy of enshrinement that was present at the Jingmen shrine in the early days of the civil war had become largely a non-question for Peng Yulin. The Shrine of Manifest loyalty was not to be a shrine dedicated to officers and officials of imperial rank, but a shrine to all soldiers of the irregular army that had died in the battles for Hukou, including rank-and-file soldiers. Peng, who himself was not of a particularly privileged background, saw the common soldier just as

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

capable of performing deeds of loyalty, bravery, and sacrifice as officers. Therefore, the shrine was laid out to incorporate the souls of the common soldier. Officers were still given a place of privilege at the altar, but instead of spacing out officers according to rank at the main or side altars, all officers, regardless of rank, were enshrined at the main altar – thirteen officers in total in Hukou. Unlike the Shrine in Beijing and the numerous shrines erected in the Jiaqing reign, where the side altars were reserved only for minor military officers who held imperial rank, the Hukou shrine included all soldiers who died in service. The Hukou shrine gave meaning to the sacrifices of the soldier regardless of rank, which was dedicated essentially to the three thousand men in the Xiang Navy that had died in the failed attempts and eventually successful attempt to take the city of Hukou and the surrounding area.<sup>95</sup>

This was more than just a conceptual enshrinement as it also included the detailed recordings of the names of the dead soldiers. Although we no longer have the list or tablets with the specific names of the men who lost their lives, it is clear that Peng and his subordinates kept a detailed list of the names of fallen soldiers regardless of rank to compile such a record for the shrine. In a letter to his subordinate on May 28, 1858, for example, only half a year after Hukou came under Qing authority, Peng Yulin wrote to his subordinate to provide a list of the names of soldiers that died at Hukou for their enshrinement:

Also, please review the enlisted men that have perished in your brigade over the last few years and send a list, so that they may be entered into the shrine's registry. Make sure to clarify their hometown, rank, date, and place of death of the each soldier that died, and whether or not they are eligible for posthumous reward, so that they may be entered individually for enshrinement.<sup>96</sup>

Some of the names of the individual soldiers enshrined in Hukou survive in the *Hukou Gazetteer*, often under accounts of skirmishes and battles, where the men who died are listed in order of rank with the rank and file coming after military officers. Inside the shrine, the names of fallen soldiers and officers were inscribed on spirit tablets (神牌), made of wood or bamboo. At the main altar, the names of

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<sup>95</sup> Zeng Guofan, "Hukou xian Chu jun shuishi Zhaozhong Ci ji," *Hukou xianzhi*, 1455-1457; *Shizhong Shan zhi*, 50a-51a.

<sup>96</sup> Peng Yulin, *Peng Yulin ji*, Liang Shaohui, ed., (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2008), vol. 2, 228.

officers, their official rank, and their title inscribed on an individual spirit tablet, where they were placed on the altar and arranged according to their respective ranks. Along the side altars, the spirit tablets of rank-and-file were hung on the wall. To save space and resources, the names of soldiers were grouped on a single spirit tablet according to their unit, which could inscribe up to 50 names from the same brigade or company.<sup>97</sup> The halls were festooned with the names of the dead on the wall, which calls to mind the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington D.C.

The inclusion of the names of fallen soldiers was part of what gave the shrine its spiritual authority. Names have power. By naming the soldiers enshrined in Hukou, the shrine was claiming to know the heroic deeds of sacrifice that these men made. They were not faceless men that died in vain in a pointless conflict. They were not men who died from a stray bullet or carelessness. They were men that died heroically in battle manning their battle stations and charging gallantly up Stone Bell Mountain. Naming the dead enshrined in Hukou, made a claim control over their spirit. They were not left to be a wandering spirit to haunt the mountain, but individual spirits were called out and given a home in the shrine.

Peng's inclusion of irregular soldiers by name in the shrine also expanded the meaning of loyalty and who could be loyal. Above all, this act of loyalty was not centered on their commander or the emperor, but towards the state. Inscribed in stone at the entrance to the main hall of the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty, Peng wrote a quintet for its dedication that said: "Now we sadly think of these heroic spirits; performing ritual sacrifices for them; there is no high and low station in righteous sacrifice; what is most important is that they gave their life for the state; remaining eternally loyal."<sup>98</sup> Peng is clearly saying that the sacrifice is being made for something more than the dynasty. Moreover, Peng's critical

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<sup>97</sup> Fu Deyuan, "*Li Hongzhang yu Huaijun Zhaozhong Ci*," 72.

<sup>98</sup> Peng Yulin, *Peng Yulin ji*, vol 2., 140.

statement was that sacrifice and loyalty was something that anyone could accomplish and embody without distinction “between high and low station.”<sup>99</sup>

Of course, the veneration of officers and officials continued at the main altar at Hukou and focused its attention on a single individual. At the main altar, thirteen officers that perished in the battle were enshrined. Their names were each carved onto their own spirit tablet, which included their official title and rank in life (or posthumously awarded in some cases). The correct position was crucial to properly honoring the souls of the dead as it preserved the social hierarchy between high and low from life and carried it into the afterlife. Placing a lower ranking individual before a higher ranking individual was not just an affront to proper social protocol, but risked aggrieving the souls as they rested. Enshrined at the center of the main altar, at least until 1872, was the spirit of Admiral Xiao Jiesan of the Xiang Navy, who had died in the battle for Hukou and was Peng Yulin’s predecessor.<sup>100</sup> Although very little is known about Xiao outside his role in the 1855 battles for Hukou, stories of Hukou and Stone Bell Mountain are centered around him. Peng was clearly moved by Xiao’s sacrifice as he wrote numerous odes and poems referring to Xiao during this period, and he made Xiao the embodiment of loyalty and bravery at the shrine, and while other men were enshrined at the main altar, their stories are subsumed by Xiao’s narrative, practically transforming the shrine into a shrine dedicated to Xiao alone.<sup>101</sup> The centrality of Xiao did not necessarily diminish the place of common soldiers enshrines, because they were still present and named – something that did not happen in past Shrine of Manifest Loyalty – and stories of the shrine above all emphasize the 3,000 dead in the battle over all else.

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> While Xiao Jiesan outranked Peng Yulin in the early days of the war, Peng was essentially the defacto admiral of the Xiang Navy from the beginning. Before 1857, Xiao and several other officers outranked Peng, but were appointed because they were of higher status in the gentry with imperial degrees while Peng was lower class and only held the lowest degree in the military examination at the time. Eventually, Peng would be promoted in rank essentially based on his merit in the course of the war, but even before that, he was essentially give carte blanche to run the navy by his superiors.

<sup>101</sup> *Hukou xianzhi*, 230, 534, 1455-1487.

Eventually, however, Xiao would be dethroned from his privileged place at the center of the main altar after the death of Zeng Guofan in 1872 when Zeng was enshrined at the center of the Hukou shrine and Xiao was displaced to the side. Actually, Zeng is the only individual enshrined in Hukou that did not fight or die in any the battles of Hukou, but Zeng's eminence in the irregular military of the civil war became the focus of commemoration after his death.<sup>102</sup> Even today, the shrine, which still stands, is deeply associated with Zeng Guofan. When the shrine went through a massive renovation in 2011, the local park administration also had a statue of Zeng erected on the platform in front of the main gate to the shrine.<sup>103</sup> Xiao's name was largely forgotten over time, but the veneration of the individual continued with Zeng at the center.

The Shrine of Manifest Loyalty in Hukou was significant not only because of who it enshrined, but also its location. Peng selected as the site for his new shrine the peak of Stone Bell Mountain. Stone Bell Mountain had been well-known for nearly two millennia of Chinese history. It appears in one of the earliest work of Chinese geography, *The Classic of Waterways*.<sup>104</sup> Stone Bell Mountain was perhaps most notable and remembered for "The Record of Stone Bell Mountain," a short essay speculating on the origin of the mountain's name by the renowned Song poet, Su Shi (more commonly known as Su Dongpo). Su visited the mountain in the summer of 1084. Su Shi wrote about the natural beauties of its waters and stone cliffs: "Facing the deep waters, a light breeze drums the waves. The water and rocks collide into each other echoing like a drowned bell... people often wonder how a bell can sound in the

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<sup>102</sup> *Shizhong shan zhi*, 3:1a-4b.

<sup>103</sup> "You weidao de Jiangxi chuchu yu Hunan jinmi lianxi," *Huasheng zaixian xinwen* (November 7, 2013), <http://hunan.voc.com.cn/>.

<sup>104</sup> The first mention of Stone Bell Mountain is in the *Classic of Waterways*(水經). The dating of the book is unclear. It has conventionally been attributed to Guo Pu(郭璞), who lived around the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, but some scholars claim that the work was made perhaps as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> century during the Han dynasty. The *Classic of Waterways* has long been lost to historians except in its incomplete yet much expanded form as the *Commentaries on the Classic of Waterways* (水經注) by Li Daoyuan (酈道元) in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century. The version of the *Commentaries* that exist today is incomplete and does not mention Stone Bell Mountain, but many poems and gazetteers quote the *Classic of Waterways* as saying "Stone Bell Mountain is at the mouth of Pengli" – Pengli being another name for Poyang Lake.

water even though waves cannot ring.”<sup>105</sup> Su’s essay on Stone Bell Mountain for many calcified a natural romanticism and nostalgia about the mountain for generations of literati after. For a millennia since Su Dongpo’s visit to Stone Bell Mountain, locals and visitors alike have written of the ethereal beauty of the mountain’s towering white peaks along the banks of Poyang Lake, imitating the words and fashion of their beloved poet. Each generation has added pages of poems, couplets, essays, records, and myths to the anthology of literature on the mountain.<sup>106</sup>

These generations of stories on the marvelous beauty and history of Stone Bell Mountain in literature made the mountain into a unique center of social and religious life, particularly for local literati, and an important stop for travelers moving up and down the Yangzi River. It was here that men of letters often gathered to enjoy each other’s company, compose poetry, drink wine, and make merry. Many of these men, and even some women, donated large sums of money to build temples and shrines, crowding this small limestone pillar with numerous holy sites including the Temple of the Treasured Bell (寶鐘寺), the Deer Palace of the Great Buddha(麓大佛殿), Guanyin Pagoda(觀音樓), Stone Buddha Pagoda(石佛樓), Temple of the Nine Kings (九王廟), Jiji Shrine(即濟廟), and Shrine to Di Renjie(狄梁祠) among numerous other. Stone Bell Mountain was already a sacred site well before the civil war began. These temples were places where visitors and locals came together to bask in the glory of nature, pay homage to spirits, and reconnect with the past.<sup>107</sup>

Stone Bell Mountain’s past was not all poetry and prostration, but was also mired in a bloody history. This peak rising from the shore was historically referred to as “the key to the lakes and rivers” (江湖鎖匙), because the mountain proved to be a formidable fortress with steep cliffs that gave a

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<sup>105</sup> Su Shi, “*Shizhong Shan ji*,” *Hukou xianzhi*, 1220-1222.

<sup>106</sup> These examples range from the Song up to the eve of the Civil War. Many are merely imitating Su Shi’s style of prose describing the mountain, but some even copied his title as well. See, Zhou Bida, “*Shizhong Shan ji*,” *Hukou xianzhi*, 1224-1225; Tang Qu, “*Shizhong Shan lu*,” *Hukou xianzhi*, 1285; Luo Hongxian, “*Shizhong Shan ji*,” *Hukou xianzhi*, 1286-1287.

<sup>107</sup> *Shizhong Shan zhi*, 3:4b-19b.

commanding view of the city of Hukou, Poyang Lake, and a view that stretched as far as Lushan some 80 km away, giving commanders the ability to coordinate naval maneuvers operating around the Yangzi River and Lake Poyang. This made the mountain an important military asset in times of war. Even before the Qing, Stone Bell Mountain had been home to fortresses and military offices stretching back many dynasties.<sup>108</sup> Before the eruption of civil war in the region in 1853, centuries of peace at the heart of the empire made the mountains bloodier past distant and irrelevant to most locals and visitors. This part of its history was not discussed in the poetry about Stone Bell Mountain. The interest of scholars and gentry remained focused on the mountains as a natural wonder and spiritual home. That is until the civil war brought new meaning to these hallowed stones.

By building the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty on Stone Bell Mountain, Peng was tapping in to the prestigious history of the mountain but was also reinterpreting the mountain's significance as an important site of commemoration for the civil war. The importance of the shrine was magnified by the fact that it held the most prominent position on the mountain at the very pinnacle of the spire facing over a cliff on the west side overlooking the Lake Poyang. The Shrine was built, perhaps with a tinge of symbolism, on the ruins of the main bastion and cannon battery of the Taiping fortress that once stood there. The shrine itself was a grand and impressive structure, magnifying its centrality to the sacred spire. The shrine was entered by walking around the shrine to the west side past a series of pavilions and minor shrines in a garden complete with rock statues and pavilions, after which one came to a terrace overlooking the water. At the east side of the terrace was the shrine's main entrance, which resembled a memorial archway with a large double door on a raised platform that was accessed by stairs on either side. Two large lion statues, symbols of imperial power and prestige, stood on both sides of the gateway on top of the raised platform. Inside was a long narrow courtyard with the main hall on the far end, where the main altar and side altars were located. The project included more than just the shrine. At the

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 9:1a-38b.



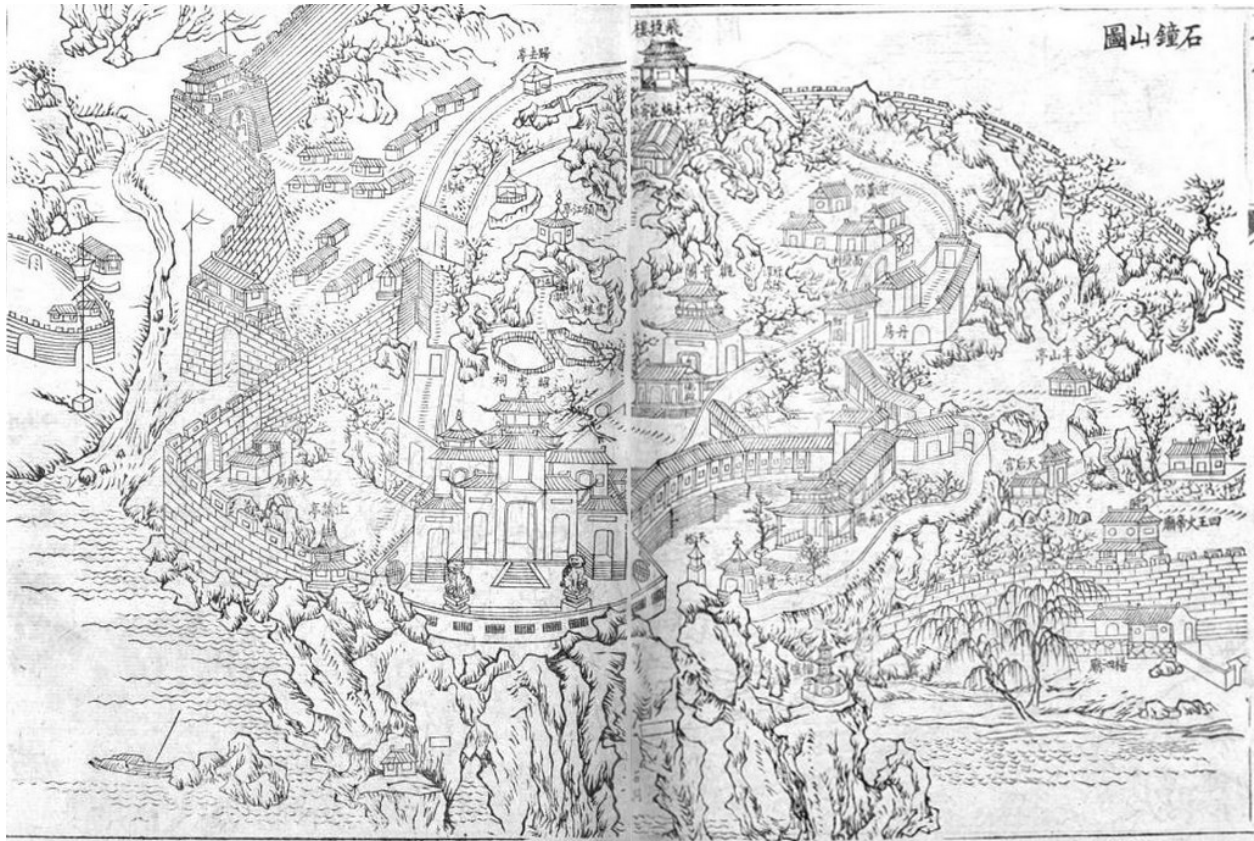


Figure 3.2 – “Picture of Stone Bell Mountain.” Hu Chuanzhao, ed., *Shizhong Shan zhi* (1883), tu:3a-3b.

same time, Peng also built the gardens and pavilions surrounding the shrine, especially the rebuilding of the famed Edict Pavilion (上諭亭) where Su Dongpo once visited. Over the 1860s and 1870s the complex would expand with numerous other pavilions, pagodas, shrines, and temples to Guanyin, Tianhou, and various other deities. But the center piece of Stone Bell Mountain was the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty. Its centrality can also be attested to by the fact that in every pictorial representation of Stone Bell Mountain, both in the *Hukou County Gazetteer* and *Stone Bell Mountain Gazetteer*, in which the shrine is conspicuously labeled at the top of the image.<sup>109</sup> This is made all the more evident with the map of Hukou City, which with limited space to display all the sites on Stone Bell Mountain, chooses only to label

<sup>109</sup> *Shizhong Shan zhi*, 3:4b-19b.

the naval office (Peng's headquarters), the Chamber of Guanyin, the Edict Pavillion, and at the very top and most prominently labeled is the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty.<sup>110</sup>

The distinction of the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty among the hallowed grounds of Stone Bell Mountain as a place of culture and spirituality also worked to redefine the mountain not necessarily by its poetic and religious past, but as a battlefield memorial to the civil war. Although the battles for Hukou were far from the most decisive and dramatic engagements of the civil war, the gazetteers of Hukou and Stone Bell Mountain both recounted these battles in copious detail. They tell stories of heroism, sacrifice, and bravery as thousands of loyal irregular troops stormed musket and cannon fire by land and water charging towards Stone Bell Mountain or to cut the chain that blocked the mouth of Lake Poyang.

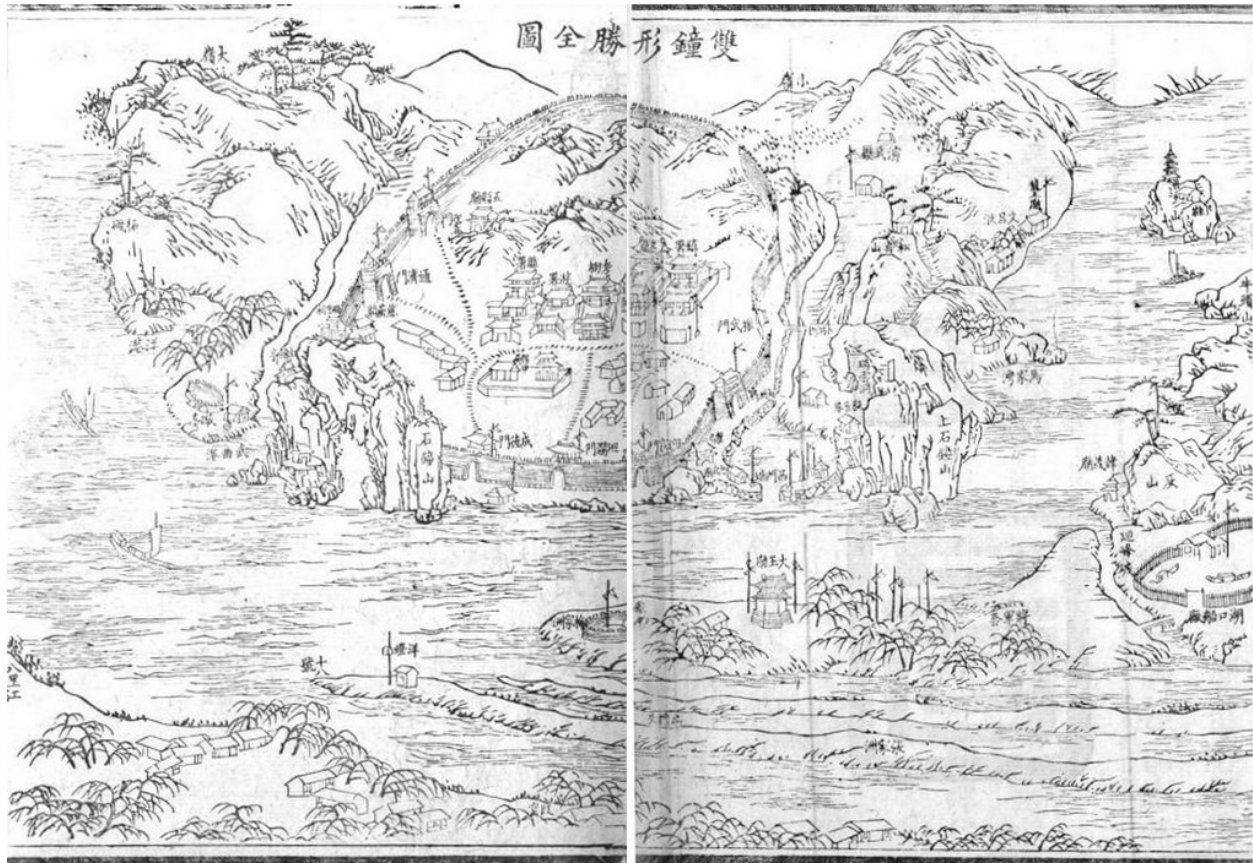


Figure 3.4 – “A Map of the Majesty of the Two Bell Mountains.” Duan Li, ed., *Hukou xianzhi* (1870), 57-58.

<sup>110</sup> *Shizhong Shan zhi, tu*, 3a-3b; *Hukou xianzhi*, 57-58.

Particular attention was paid to the Xiang riverine navy – an irregular naval force attached to the Xiang Army, which paid a vital role in securing the Yangzi River in the war – but it does also include references to land brigades of the Xiang Army, principally brigades from Pingjiang under the command of Li Yuandu, who participated on the land side of the final assault on the fortress at Stone Bell Mountain.<sup>111</sup> The shrine was built specifically for them, but in doing so, Peng redefined Stone Bell Mountain as a battlefield and the shrine as a battlefield memorial that emphasized martial values of sacrifice, courage, and loyalty.

As a battlefield shrine, the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty at Stone Bell Mountain was seen as a house for the souls of the dead on the battlefield upon which they fell. The purpose was not only commemoration, but to “console loyal souls” (慰忠魂) of soldiers in the afterlife.<sup>112</sup> The first Shrine of Manifest Loyalty built in Beijing in the Yongzheng reign also used the phrase “console loyal souls,” but the focus was on the deeds and sacrifices of individual officials in life. The inclusion of all irregular soldiers that had perished in the battles for Hukou shifted the focus away from the individuals enshrined at the main altar to an anonymous mass of nether soldiers enshrined on the side altars, making the purpose of the shrine chiefly to pacify the spirits of soldiers. Moreover, although the Beijing shrine claimed to contain the souls of martyred heroes of official rank, none of them had actually met their end on the grounds near or around the Beijing shrine, dying instead in far flung battles mostly along the frontier of the empire. The spirits enshrined at the Hukou shrine had all died essentially within sight of Stone Bell Mountain, making their ethereal aura eerily present in the walls of the shrine. Thus, the shrine was a means to tame, appease, and see to the other worldly needs of nether soldiers in the afterlife through rituals performed by state officials. In fact, one of the first rituals of sacrificial offering, was

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<sup>111</sup> *Shizhong Shan zhi*, 10:19b-29a

<sup>112</sup> *Hukou xianzhi*, 1548; *Shizhong Shan zhi*, 8:8a, 16:35b.

made by Zeng Guofan and Peng Yulin in August, 1858 who were the commanding officers of the dead when they were alive.<sup>113</sup>

The shrine not only acted as a way to appease the spirits of the nether soldiers, but also worked to enlist them to aid the imperial cause. They were not just loyal in life, but loyal in death as well. We see this in a popular ghost story associated with the shrine that appeared in both the Hukou and Stone Bell Mountain gazetteers, as well as in other writings by Peng. The story took place later in the civil war, a couple years after the shrine's completion, when the Taiping made an attempt to retake a poorly defended Hukou. In January 1861, as Li Xiucheng was distracting the Xiang Army in Huizhou with a bold offensive, a motley Taiping force of mostly new recruits was sent to retake Hukou under the command of Huang Wenjin, the former garrison commander of the city. Hukou was only defended by a small naval detachment and marine garrison under the command of Ding Yifang, Peng's subordinate officer. Peng Yulin's forces scrambled to reinforce the city of Hukou, arriving just a day before the Taiping had managed to encircle the city. The next day, January 23, 1861, the Taiping attempted to take the city with brute force. They charged at the gaping hole on the south side of the city wall still under construction, and brought ladders to scale the east and north sides. Peng's marines held their line through eight long hours of combat, and managed to beat back the Taiping under a hail of musket fire and some well-placed barrels of explosives along the southern opening in the wall. Victory was essentially in the hands of Peng's army, which had managed to hold the city against a numerically superior force, inflicting massive casualties on the enemy army. The Taiping army withdrew back to their camp at Maying Bridge demoralized and sensing their impending defeat.<sup>114</sup>

Despite the resolute defense of Hukou by Peng and Ding, the ultimate victory in this battle did not go to Peng's irregular navy nor the Taiping's motley army, but instead to the spirits of the loyal dead.

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<sup>113</sup> *Shizhong shan zhi, juanshou*, 1a-9a; ZGFQJ, vol. 2, 875-879.

<sup>114</sup> *Shizhong Shan zhi*, 10:57a-58b.

Central to the mythos and power of the Hukou shrine was its supernatural role in recruiting spirits of fallen soldiers to defend the city in this battle. After his thwarted attempt to take the city by brute force, Huang Wenjin decided to instead use cunning by attempting a night raid on Stone Bell Mountain from the north side by scaling the mountain the next night, yet there Huang's raiders are believed to have encountered the supernatural guardians of Stone Bell Mountain:

That night [January 24, 1861], there were suddenly lights as numerous as the stars that appeared on the mountain [Stone Bell Mountain] face, and they moved together and apart. From afar and near, [everyone] thought the rebels had come on the attack. Soon, under the dark clouds and shroud of night, a cold wind roared. All the soldiers got up and stood on guard. When the sun rose, [they] found that the rebels had fled. They captured one [or some] of their injured rebels. Upon interrogation they learned that the rebel leader, Huang Wenjin, was determined to take Stone Mountain. In the day, they pillaged many of the villages [around Hukou], but at night they broke into groups trying to outflank [Stone Bell Mountain]. When one side sounded the signal, the other side climbed up the rear of the mountain in the dark. Behind them, a contingent of swordsmen brought up the rear, who were ordered to behead any that dared flee. They advanced under their captains. The front ranks saw that there were faint flashing lights on all sides of the path up Stone Mountain. They thought [the lights] were from imperial troops coming to meet the enemy in battle. The rebels panicked and ran back, falling over each other. Since the ranks in the rear mistook them [for charging imperial troops], they opened fire. The swordsmen chopped off heads like crazy and until they were dead. Bodies were strewn all along the mountain path. What people could not understand was the roaring wind that night and the distant lights that went out [in the morning?]. Where did these lights come from? It was probably the loyal souls from the Shrine on Stone Bell Mountain, who used these phosphorescent flames to warn the imperial army and drive off the rebels.<sup>115</sup>

In this story, the loyal spirits enshrined at the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty were given credit for the final victory over the Taiping in this battle. This fantastical story of guardian spirits of fallen soldiers protecting the city earned the shrine on Stone Bell Mountain a certain aura of spiritual potency that tamed and controlled the loyal souls for purposes beneficial to the protection of the local community, claiming that when properly consoled, the dead were not just appeased, but could serve the living in the afterlife, guarding them against their enemies. They were a benevolent force, and not a mysterious and threatening force of chaos. They maintained order and security even in death, and it was the state by providing proper ritual appeasement of the spirits of the dead that the souls were recruited as protectors.

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<sup>115</sup> *Shizhong Shan zhi*, 8:7b-8a.

When discussing the commemoration of the dead, Meyer-Fong argues that the dead were appropriated by the state as loyal martyrs of state, dying in courageous resistance to perfidious rebels that overturned the moral orthodoxy.<sup>116</sup> Shrines like the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty worked to this end, but they also worked to appropriate and assert control over their spirits, transforming them into loyal souls that continued to serve the dynasty even in death. By the end of the war, these shrines played a spiritual role in taming the soldiers of the nether world. Faith in the spiritual potency of such shrines was part of what made the cult of loyalty so central to commemoration; not only because they served a purpose in remembering loyal martyrs, but also because they played a spiritual role in consoling the ghosts of the dead. In other words, the state was not only asserting a narrative of the war that enshrined loyal sacrifice, but also asserting a proper role as pacifiers of spirit in the aftermath of the war. The state was reclaiming a space in the spiritual realm where it was dominant.

### *Remembering the Loyal*

The Stone Bell Mountain shrine would initiate a trend of shrine construction that would be followed throughout the course of the war and well after in the post-war years. Shrine of Manifest Loyalty would become a common way of enshrining and commemorating the dead for soldiers, but they represented one part of a broader phenomenon in post-war reconstruction: a spreading cult of loyalty, which not only enshrined fallen soldiers but also civilian dead. As a cult that emerged from practices within the irregular army and considering the decentralized nature of the Qing state after the war, practices and forms of commemorating the dead varied considerably without a set standard from the imperial court; nonetheless, many counties in the post-war period would build shrines that consoled the spirits of the dead from the war that centered around the theme of loyalty and sacrifice for the dynasty.

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<sup>116</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 98-99.



While the irregular army would largely set the standard for the enshrinement of soldiers in war time under the encouragement of Zeng Guofan, the reconstruction bureau would also, very consciously, promote a form of commemoration of the war dead for civilians. In this sense, the irregular army's influence on commemoration would also be felt in the commemoration of civilian deaths, equally expanding the notion of participation in the imperial project and loyalty, but also creating a narrative of the war that focused on similar messages of loyal sacrifice and pacifying spirits that appropriated the souls of the dead as a part of post-war reconstruction.

Shortly after construction began in 1857 on the Hukou shrine, Zeng Guofan would sponsor the construction of two other shrine's, much in the image of Hukou, in his native province of Hunan, initiating a wave of shrine construction to console the souls of irregular soldiers that died in battle. In July 1858, Zeng donated 3,000 *liang* to the construction of a Shrine of Manifest Loyalty in Pingjiang, and two months later, directed the construction of another Shrine of Manifest Loyalty in his hometown of Xiangxiang.<sup>117</sup> It is hardly surprising that these two locations erected shrines; both of these counties comprised the core of the Xiang Army. The majority of officers in the Xiang Army were from Xiangxiang, as were many soldiers, and brigades from Pingjiang had a reputation as capable and disciplined fighters.<sup>118</sup> Both of these shrine modeled themselves in many ways after the Hukou shrine even though the Xiangxiang shrine was given a privileged status by Zeng Guofan, although officially unrecognized, as the "general shrine" (總祠), and sources on both the Hukou and Pingjiang shrines claimed to comply with the Xiangxiang.<sup>119</sup>

*The Xiangxiang County Gazetteer* does not go into much detail about the liturgy, enshrinement, or reasoning behind the shrines construction, focusing instead on the officers enshrined at the main altar; however, the founding of the Pingjiang shrine is quite a bit clearer in the *Pingjiang County*

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<sup>117</sup> Zhang Peiren, ed., *Pingjiang xianzhi* (1874), 1035-1037.

<sup>118</sup> Luo Ergang, *Xiangjun xinzhì*, 160-166.

<sup>119</sup> Qi Dewu, ed., *Xiangxiang xianzhi* (1874), 454-456.

*Gazetteer*. Although the Hukou shrine was the first of these shrines, efforts to build the Pingjiang shrine began in 1856 through local contributions from the gentry, but the process of raising funds was slow in a time of crisis, so construction of the shrine would not begin until July 1858 when Zeng donated a large sum of cash to its construction. The Shrine of Manifest Loyalty on the grounds of the county magistrate's office was still maintained and functioned during the war, but as the local gazetteer noted, existing shrines were deemed insufficient to house the numerous spirits born through Pingjiang County's participation in the irregular army. As the gazetteer claimed: "since the rise of the military [the civil war], the masses of souls [眾靈] of those that have died out of loyalty are too many to be sufficiently provided for in the many shrines in the academies and temples."<sup>120</sup> This may have been partly to maintain imperial regulations on imperial ranking at the existing shrine while also providing a way to "console the loyal souls" of the rank-and-file who were dying in the war. As an independent shrine located on the main streets of the town and not the county magistrate's office, it also created a grander and more publically visible (and accessible) way to commemorate and enshrine the dead for the community in a way that was more appropriate for the scale and significance of the war to them.<sup>121</sup> Moving the shrine made commemoration of the war and those who died into a public ritual no longer bounded within the walls of the local government compound, but by preserving the older Shrine of Manifest Loyalty within the government compound, the proper imperial rites were preserved.

Just like the shrine at Stone Bell Mountain, the Pingjiang shrine also broadened the definition of who could be loyal and sacrifice themselves for the state through enshrinement at the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty. Although specific numbers and names are not recorded in the *Pingjiang County Gazetteer*, except for the main altar, but it is clear that the number was well in the thousands. Among many of the biographies in the gazetteers were also included the names of the enshrined officers and

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<sup>120</sup> *Pingjiang xianzhi*, 1035, 2576.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 1035-1037.



under their names in many cases were included the names of the soldiers under their command who also perished and received enshrinement at the Pingjiang shrine. For example, many of the soldiers from Pingjiang that died in the second battle for Hukou were also enshrined at the side altar in the Pingjiang shrine. The gazetteer contains a twelve page long list of their names, over 650 individuals from six brigades.<sup>122</sup> This was only one of many such lists in the gazetteer and by no means the longest.<sup>123</sup> These list would typically begin, after the biography of their commanding officers enshrined at the main altar, with the comment “at the same time these soldiers died,” followed by the list, and then ending with “all are enshrined at the Shrine of the Loyal and Righteous.” In the gazetteer, the dead are listed according to the battles in which they died, but it is hard to say if within the shrine that was how soldiers were enshrined.<sup>124</sup> In the case of Hukou, soldiers were enshrined according to their company or brigade.<sup>125</sup> Nonetheless, we see a similarly expanded idea of common soldiers being worthy of enshrinement and commemoration.

The ways that this kind of commemoration of soldiers was defined was largely through officers in the irregular army, especially men like Zeng, Li, and Peng, and not through imperial liturgical decrees. These shrines were essentially novel interpretations of older shrines approved by the dynasty, and with imperial approval, it gave these new interpretations considerable room to create their own meaning outside the imperial framework. When building these shrines, the imperial court certainly gave perfunctory approval, but there were no strict dictates to comport with imperial regulations and there was considerable variation in how they were understood.<sup>126</sup> Allowing rank and file soldiers to be enshrined was one common way that these men chose to commemorate the dead that was distinct from

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<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 1692-1707.

<sup>123</sup> The Battle for Huizhou has a much longer list of rank-and-file soldiers from the county who died in battle. *Ibid.*, 1742-1753.

<sup>124</sup> There are two entire chapters of the Pingjiang gazetteer that lists those who fell in battle. *Ibid.*, 1652-1847.

<sup>125</sup> Fu Deyuan, “*Li Hongzhang yu Huaijun Zhaozhong Ci*,” 72.

<sup>126</sup> *Pingjiang xianzhi*, 257-261.

imperial precedence, but it is clear that the question was still controversial to some. As far as we can tell in Pingjiang, the distinction maintained between the older Shrine of Manifest Loyalty established in the Jiaqing period and newer shrine built in 1858 speaks to the persistence of this questions. Moreover, there was considerable inconsistency in the naming of these shrines, partially to maintain these distinctions but also because there was no set standard. Although these shrines to the loyal dead were clearly molded in the image of the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty, they were referred to by various different names: the General Shrines of the Loyal and Righteous (Zeng's preferred name for it), The Old Xiang Encampment of the Loyal and Righteous, the Xiang Army Shrine of Manifest Loyalty, with other qualifiers added that stated that particular shrines were for the Chu or Huai army or navy.<sup>127</sup> By setting different and inconsistent names, officials were hesitating to claim that it followed directly according to the imperial liturgy while also claiming a relationship to it.

The Pingjiang and Xiangxiang shrines were distinct from the Hukou shrine in other important ways. To begin with, neither was conceived of as a battlefield shrine, but were instead seen as shrines dedicated to local irregular soldiers that mostly died away from their hometown. Instead of enshrining the souls of men who died nearby, it brought home the spirits of those who died from afar. In this sense, the shrine was erected for the local community specifically to commemorate and house the spirits of locals, and would hold a greater sense of importance in the local community for their sacrifices in the civil war.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, it seemed to serve a purpose to assist in assuaging the spiritual anxieties about the death of local soldiers far from home for potential recruits and their families. Of significant spiritual concern to many Chinese in the nineteenth century and even before was dying far from home, because many worried whether or not their souls would be able to find their way home to receive offerings to

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<sup>127</sup> *Xiangxiang xianzhi*, 454,456; *Shangjiang liangxian xianzhi*, 736; *Anhui tongzhi*, 1408, 1941; *Yixian xianzhi*, 1755; Li Mingwan, ed., *Suzhou fuzhi* (1883), 4275.

<sup>128</sup> Li Yuandu, the commanding general of the brigades from Pingjiang, wrote a stele describing the construction of the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty, concluding that it was essential to "console the ghosts" of soldiers, and to "call the loyal dead home." Li Yuandu, "Hejian Pingjiang xian Zhongyi Ci bei," *Pingjiang xianzhi*, 2575-2578.

fulfill their needs in the afterlife.<sup>129</sup> By erecting a local shrine for the community, the shrine positioned itself as a beacon to bring their souls home. The shrine may also have served as a propaganda tool to gain more recruits from the community by showing the irregular army took care of the souls of their soldiers in death, promising potential recruits a prominent place in the community's shrine should they die, while also valorizing the irregular army as a bastion of loyalty and courage in a time of crisis.

In Hunan, local shrines of Manifest Loyalty would take on a particular significance valorizing the local contribution and sacrifice for the empire through the irregular army. Some Hunanese counties, such as Liuyang County, would also follow in the steps of the Pingjiang shrine and build an entirely new shrine to the war dead in the aftermath of the war.<sup>130</sup> Not every Hunanese county built a new shrine during or after the war like in Pingjiang, Liuyang, and Xiangxiang, but many counties refurbished and enlarged existing shrines established in the Jiaqing reign.<sup>131</sup> More importantly, as in Hukou and Pingjiang, the number of souls enshrined would dramatically increase as each county sought to remember and honor their local soldiers who perished, continuing this expansion in enshrining the common soldier.

Outside of Hunan, these shrines tended to follow the same vein as the Hukou shrine as battlefield memorials to commemorate soldiers of the Xiang and Huai armies that died in the area. A handful of such shrines to soldiers who died in the war were built, including one in Anqing (1861), Nanjing (1864), Guilin, Wuchang (1872), Ningdu, Suzhou (1874), Huishan (1864), and Hefei (1892). These shrines were portrayed as battlefield shrines in the same vein as the shrine at Hukou although all of these shrines were conveniently located within major cities except the shrine at Huishan. Li Hongzhang was especially dedicated to the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty as a way to commemorate the men under his command, establishing seven over his life time, and the Shrine would also be appropriated by both Peng

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<sup>129</sup> Arthur Wolf, "Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors," Arthur P. Wolf, ed., *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 131-183.

<sup>130</sup> *Liuyang xianzhi* (1873), 671.

<sup>131</sup> *Qiyang xianzhi* (1870), 445-446; *Xinning xianzhi* (1893), 396-397; Li Hanzhang, ed., *Hunan tongzhi* (1885), 6344-6345.

and Li to commemorate later wars in the nineteenth century. To commemorate sailors who died in the Sino-French War (1884-1885), Peng would later build a Shrine of Manifest Loyalty on Mawei Island near Fuzhou – the site near a major skirmish between the French and Chinese navy, which it claimed to commemorate. In addition to ordering the construction of the shrines at Huishan, Wuchang, Suzhou, and Hefei for the Huai Army’s involvement in the Taiping Civil War, Li would also build numerous such shrines to commemorate the Huai army’s involvement in other conflicts, such as one in Taiwan (1885) for Huai soldiers defending against the Dai Chaochun uprising (1862-1865), one in Baoding in memory of soldiers who fought against the Nian (1888), and another shortly after his death in Tianjin (1905) for Huai soldiers who died in the war against the Nian.<sup>132</sup> Clearly, Peng and Li saw the cult of manifest loyalty as an appropriate way to commemorate fallen soldiers, but these shrines also worked to bolster their own reputation as military leaders and were put in locations where they were sure to have influence on how they were perceived by selecting prominent and storied locations much like the shrine on Stone Bell Mountain. These shrines were closely associated with their founders and the military men who led those enshrined in battle, bolstering the reputation and prestige of men like Peng and Li.

### *Interviewing the Loyal and Righteous*

By the end of the civil war, Shrines of Manifest Loyalty had become a popular way to commemorate the death of soldiers. Most counties in Hunan had either built, rebuilt, or refurbished a shrine of manifest loyalty as a way of lionizing the loyalty of local soldiers and appeasing their spirits in the afterlife, and even outside of Hunan many were built to remember the sacrifices of irregular soldiers on the battlefield. These shrines would also come to have greater significance after the war as officials and locals turned to reconstruction in Jiangxi, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Anhui, shifting the focus to

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<sup>132</sup> Fu Deyuan, “*Li Hongzhang yu Huaijun Zhaozhong Ci*,” 80-81.

commemorating and enshrining civilian dead. In some cases, the Reconstruction Bureau directly funded or sponsored the construction of Shrines of Manifest Loyalty, but in many others, local officials and the local gentry would take the initiative in building shrines to loyalty, expanding further upon the definition of who was loyal in subsequent iterations. Shrines of manifest loyalty built across much of Jiangnan were, in many ways, a central part of reconstruction efforts as they provided a place to commemorate, remember, and think about the war, allowing the state and the local community to structure and interpret their experience. It also, much as in the case of Hukou, served a spiritual function for the community in consoling the souls of the loyal dead; only in this case the loyal dead were no longer soldiers fighting in far off places, but local members of the community who actively resisted through militias and even those who did not necessarily take up arms, but nonetheless embodied properties perceived as loyal.

These shrines to loyalty dedicated primarily to local civilians were among the first projects undertaken in the aftermath of war, either under auspices of the reconstruction bureau, local officials, or local gentry, revealing its importance to the entire enterprise of post-war reconstruction. Tribute to civilian casualties evolved through a confluence of institutions that grew out of the war through the irregular army and heavily influenced by Zeng Guofan. Part of this was the shift previously discussed in how rank-and-file soldiers were commemorated during the war at the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty, expanding the notion of loyalty to include a broader segment of society. Another component was a conscious effort on the part of Zeng's military headquarters to systematically record the deeds of civilians who died in war that exemplified the virtues of loyal sacrifice to the state. This was accomplished in an institution that fell under the umbrella of the Reconstruction Bureau referred to variously as the Encampment Bureau to Interview the Loyal and Righteous (行營採訪忠義局), which

would later be called the Bureau to Interview the Loyal and Righteous (採訪忠義局) or simply the Bureau of the Loyal and Righteous (忠義局).<sup>133</sup>

Beginning in 1860, in the midst of the war and immediately following the disastrous Taiping invasion of southern Jiangsu, Zeng became attentive to the importance of commemorating civilian contributions to the war in the wake of the horrific tales of suffering coming out of the Jiangnan region at the hands of the Taiping. On August 19, 1860, he wrote the first of what would prove to be many reports to the imperial court on exemplary civilians who had died in the war, based on work by a newly established office attached to his headquarters that he referred to as the Bureau to Interview the Loyal and Righteous. In his report, Zeng stated that he had tasked the Bureau of the Loyal and Righteous with collecting stories from survivors who had witnessed their friends and family die in resistance to the Taiping rebels. Their stories were to be collected and collated into a record to commemorate the deeds of loyal subjects that had died tragically in the war. Those who perished in particularly exceptional circumstances which demonstrated their loyalty to the empire were to be given special commendations, which Zeng would write in regular reports to the court, and would often request that a special shrine be dedicated to their spirits along with a reward given to any surviving family members.<sup>134</sup>

The kinds of people deemed loyal by the Bureau of the Loyal and Righteous were overwhelmingly members of the local gentry who held civil service degrees, especially when it came to special commendations; nonetheless, the idea of loyalty was expanded in terms of what constituted loyal resistance for civilians. As Charles Wooldridge argued, loyalty for civilians who died in the war did not require one to take up arms against the enemy. Refusal to submit and recognize the authority of the Taiping under threat of death or committing suicide upon the fall of one's city into rebel hands were

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<sup>133</sup> ZGFQJ, vol. 2, 1197; *Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi*, 207.

<sup>134</sup> ZGFQJ, vol. 7, 1197.

considered valid form of resistance.<sup>135</sup> A common trope in many of these stories is that loyal subjects would “curse the rebels [to their face], refusing to submit” (罵賊不偏) followed by a brutal and horrific death at the hands of insulted Taiping soldiers.<sup>136</sup>

The first report of the Bureau to Interview the Loyal and Righteous that Zeng forwarded to Beijing focused on the story of Cheng Mei (程枚, 1788-1860), a *ju ren* from Shucheng, Anhui. His story follows many of the common tropes associated with civilian and gentry resistance. During the war, he was quite elderly and had retreated to a country estate outside the city of Ningguo, where he spent much of the war, but his son had taken up organizing local militia resistance in the area. In early 1860 Ningguo fell to the Taiping. Soon afterwards, a band of Taiping soldiers went to Cheng’s country home to loot and pillage the manor, where Cheng “cursed the rebels, refusing to submit.” Incensed, the soldiers barricaded Cheng and seven other family members in their home and burned the house down with them still inside. Shortly thereafter, Cheng’s son rushed to save his father, arriving to find soldiers outside the blazing inferno that was his home. Alone and outnumbered, he attempted to fight off the entire contingent of Taiping who easily cut him down then and there. Cheng’s sixth daughter, who was hiding outside the house and witnessed what happened from afar, drowned herself in a nearby river instead of being ravaged by the enemy soldiers. This story is typical of many of the stories recorded by the Bureau to Interview the Loyal and Righteous during and after the war, intersecting with a number of common tropes in these reports: cursing the rebels, horrific deaths, the death of an entire family, involvement in the militia, fighting back against the enemy despite impossible odds only to be butchered, and women committing suicide by drowning to avoid being raped. In many ways, Cheng’s story checked all the boxes in the tropes of loyalty and sacrifice for civilians during the civil war, and this made him worthy of special

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<sup>135</sup> Chuck Wooldridge, “What Literati Talked about When They Talked about Memory: Commemorating Resistance to the Taiping in Nanjing’s Yu Gardens, 1900-1911” *Twentieth-Century China* 40:1 (2015), 3-24.

<sup>136</sup> For example, see biographies of Xia Ding, Song Shaozhou, Hu Kun, and Wang Shenqing, among many others. *Zhejiang zhongyi lu* (), 2 *shang*:28a-28b, 2 *xia*:15a, 7: 1a-1b, 7:35a.

commendation. Zeng believed that Cheng Mei was particularly exemplary and worthy, requesting the construction of a “dedicated shrine” (專祠) for him and his family. It does not seem that a dedicated shrine was ever erected in his honor in his hometown, even though the imperial court did approve such a project, because no funding seems to have been provided. He was, however, enshrined at the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty in Ningguo after the war, and his story recorded in detail in the local gazetteer as well as the *Anhui Record of the Loyal and Righteous*.<sup>137</sup>

By the end of the war, Zeng’s reports on the Loyal and Righteous to Beijing became a perfunctory task done every few months. Increasingly, his reports did not focus on specific individuals, but consisted of statistical reports of the number of loyal subjects. For example, his eighteenth report on the loyal and righteous, on April 17, 1864, just listed the number of dead: “... in Qianshan and Huoshan counties in Anhui, there were 12 officials who sacrificed themselves for their principles [殉節] and 1177 gentlemen were martyred along with 158 women.”<sup>138</sup> The stories of these men and women were simply too numerous to be presented in any other way than as a number, which deemphasized the actions of the individual and instead transformed them into a collective mass of the Loyal and Righteous subjects. While the numbers erase individual suffering, they present loyalty as a common property of subjects shared across a broad spectrum of society, shaping the narrative of the war as one of mass and popular resistance by loyal Qing supporters.

The Bureau of the Loyal and Righteous began as an office that moved with Zeng’s headquarters and the army as the frontlines moved. For most of that time, the bureau was staffed by several of Zeng’s personal secretaries, including Yang Chizao, whom we already discussed, as well as Chen Ai. Chen Ai was a *gongsheng* from Shidai county, Anhui, a region ruined by the war. When the war broke out, he was in Beijing trying to progress in the imperial examination, but quickly returned home to support his family.

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<sup>137</sup> ZGFQJ, vol. 7, 1197-1199; *Anhui tongzhi*, 8822-8823; Zhao Fengzhao, ed., *Shucheng xianzhi* (1897), 1001-1002.

<sup>138</sup> ZGFQJ 4022.



After the Taiping managed to take Shidai County in early 1860, he snuck through the enemy lines to Zeng's headquarters in Qimen, where he was given a position in Zeng's personal bureaucracy overseeing the Bureau to Interview the Loyal and Righteous along with Chizao, which he oversaw for three years. The purpose of the Bureau of the Loyal and Righteous was originally to collect the stories of sacrifice and loyalty among the gentry in Anhui. According to Chen's somewhat dubious biography, the idea of the bureau was originally his. When he first met Zeng, he supposedly proposed the idea and the idea impressed Zeng so much that he was put charge of the task. Regardless of its accuracy, his biography recounts the rationale for bureau's existence in interesting terms: "Since the rise of military affairs, those that died refusing to submit to the ravages of the rebels in the villages and cities of the area are countless. Their sincerity makes them national martyrs [國士] like any brave marshals [虎臣]. By taking the position to interview, the spirits and souls of those who passed can be consoled with words in the Nine Springs."<sup>139</sup> The Nine Springs is a reference to the afterlife in Chinese mythology, and so Chen biography is claiming that the purpose of collecting these stories of loyal martyrs was just as much about consoling their spirits as providing exemplars of loyalty for living subjects to emulate.<sup>140</sup> The vocabulary used to discuss the Bureau of the Loyal and Righteous is remarkably similar to that used in the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty, which claimed to "console the loyal souls," and then also compares civilians who died in the war to "brave marshals," which is another way of referring to military officers. Although the kinds of detail used in his biography are dubious, especially considering that the source dates to the Republican period, it does conceivably reflect what he may have understood as the bureau's purpose in collecting accounts of loyal sacrifice during the war, and connects the commemoration of civilian deaths with those of soldiers.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> *Anhui tongzhi*, 6144-6146.

<sup>140</sup> Laurence G. Thompson, "On the Prehistory of Hell in China," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 17 (1989:1), 27-41.

<sup>141</sup> *Anhui tongzhi*, 6144-6146.

Part of the emphasis on the bureau's work was that the loyal and righteous were revealed through "interviews." By claiming to "interview" the loyal and righteous, the bureau was asserting a higher evidentiary standard. That is to say, their reports were claiming that these stories of martyrdom were not mere hearsay and mythologizing, but had testimonial backing through a scrutinizing process that sought the truth conducted by scrupulous members of the gentry. Supposedly reliable accounts were nominated and collected into "cases" (案) submitted in regular petitions with supporting documents to the court in Beijing. Each case could include hundreds of individuals considered for awards and commendations, but only a few were actually granted. Although the bureau included in each report hundreds of individuals, the bureau did not claim that it was revealing all loyal and righteous subjects who sacrificed themselves in the war, but only those whose deaths could be supposedly verified through evidence in the form of eye witness testimonies.<sup>142</sup> In the notes at the beginning of *The Zhejiang Record of the Loyal and Righteous*, it unmistakably points out that the biographies provided are based on official memorials and reports from the Bureau of the Loyal and Righteous, and not on family biographies, and information from family biographies are only included if they "are trustworthy and there are verifiers [ie. witnesses]."<sup>143</sup> This left open the possibility that there were countless more loyal subjects, but that they could not be verified for a lack of witnesses, evidence, or simply that there were too many. In Zhejiang, for example, the author of the gazetteer, Yan Chen, who also worked as the director of the local Reconstruction Bureau, claimed that across the province there were over 200,000 loyal martyrs, and that in his county alone, Tongxiang, there were a thousand and a few hundred who were interviewed, but of these only eight were actually nominated for actual honors and rewards.<sup>144</sup> By making such claims, they were suggesting that loyalty was normative and widespread behavior during the war and that the majority of these accounts of loyal sacrifice were credible, but merely could not be substantiated. These

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<sup>142</sup> ZGFQJ, vol. 7, 1197-1199.

<sup>143</sup> Zhejiang caifang zhongyi zongju, ed., *Zhejiang zhongyi lu, fanlie* (1867), *juan shou*:1a.

<sup>144</sup> *Tongxiang xianzhi*, 1888.

reports on the loyal and righteous carefully maintained that the individuals named were only those that could be confirmed, suggesting to readers that the true figures were probably more but unverifiable.

When Zeng began cobbling together the Reconstruction Bureau in August 1864, the Bureau of the Loyal and Righteous was moved to Nanjing from its former headquarters in Anqing and was placed under the administration of the Reconstruction Bureau as a sub-bureau. For Zeng commemorating those who had died was an essential part of reconstruction, and the mission and structure of the Bureau of the Loyal and Righteous would be expanded as it settled down in Nanjing. The Nanjing bureau office evolved into an office that focused on the Liangjiang Governor-Generalship (Jiangsu, Anhui, and Jiangxi provinces), leading many to refer to it as the Liangjiang Bureau of the Loyal and Righteous.<sup>145</sup> While there is little detail on the process of their work, it certainly involved multiple literati investigators over many years charged with collecting reports and testimonies as well as conducting interviews about candidates. The Bureau to Interview the Loyal and Righteous proved to be a very popular post-war institution among the gentry, who actively sought to have their own family members and those they knew who were lost recognized.<sup>146</sup> Other provincial Reconstruction Bureaus in Jiangxi, Zhejiang, and Hubei, following in step with reconstruction work in Nanjing, also established their own Bureaus of the Loyal and Righteous with their own dedicated staff comprised of prominent local literati.<sup>147</sup> Many local Reconstruction Bureaus, even though they did not have a separate sub-bureau to conduct interviews, compiled and investigated their own local cases to recommend to the Liangjiang Bureau of the Loyal and Righteous or other provincial bureaus. This would be a project that would consume their energies for many years, as local

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<sup>145</sup> *Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi*, 207.

<sup>146</sup> Such as in Tongxiang County mentioned above. *Tongxiang xianzhi*, 1888.

<sup>147</sup> *The Anhui Record of the Loyal and Righteous* appears to have been lost, but *The Jiangxi Record of the Loyal and Righteous* (1874), *The Liangjiang Record of the Loyal and Righteous* (1872), and *The Zhejiang Record of the Loyal and Righteous* (1873) are still extant. There is also the *Record of Manifest Loyalty* (1872), which was also published by the Bureau to Interview the Loyal and Righteous.

gentry and literati actively participated in the hopes that their relatives who died in the war would be remembered and honored, but also serving as a way of gaining prestige for their family as loyal subjects.

The bureau continued for decades functioning as an investigatory office to recommend subjects for posthumous commendations and awarding grants to the decedents of the loyal by providing periodic reports to the court. The Bureau of the Loyal and Righteous in the post-war period shifted its focus towards compiling biographies and accounts of the acts of loyal sacrifice of civilian subjects as a record for public consumption and memory. This record was generally referred to as *The Record of the Loyal and Righteous* (忠義錄). Perhaps reflecting a shift away from its military roots and towards literary conventions and commercial print culture, these records made the war available for public consumption through engaging stories that gave readers a more immersed description of wartime sacrifices through individual stories, which would result in numerous printed biographical accounts and editions. The Liangjiang Bureau of the Loyal and Righteous published its first edition of *The Liangjiang Record of the Loyal and Righteous* in 1872, over a decade after the bureau began its work, and work continued for many years afterwards as new evidence emerged and more individuals and families were nominated for commendations and awards, which were published in a second and greatly expanded edition in 1887. Other provinces also published their own accounts; *The Zhejiang Record of the Loyal and Righteous* was first published in 1867, and a subsequent edition was published in 1874; and *The Jiangxi Record of the Loyal and Righteous* was published in 1874. In addition, many unaffiliated records of the Loyal and Righteous were produced, including *The Gengshen Record of the Loyal and Righteous, Tears for Hangzhou*, and *A Record of the Honors Bestowed upon the Loyal and Righteous of Jiangyin*, to name just a few.<sup>148</sup> These works included numerous biographical accounts and names of individuals and families that died in the conflict. The first edition of *The Liangjiang Record of the Loyal and Righteous*, for

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<sup>148</sup> Tang Chenglie, *Gengshen zhongyi lu* (n.d.; repr., Taizhong: Wentingge tushu youxiangongsi, 2010); Ding Bing, *Qi Hang lu* (1896; repr., Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1969); Gao Guanlan, *Jiangyin zhongyi enjing lu* (1874; repr., Beijing: Beijing yanshan chubanshe, 2008).

instance, contained 49 cases of nominees for honors and commendations out of a total of 81 official request made in memorials, but the later editions supposedly contained as many as 600 cases of nominees for Jiangsu Province alone.<sup>149</sup> The work produced by various Bureaus to Interview the Loyal and Righteous and local gentry created not only a narrative of sacrifice and loyalty, but a whole industry of publications to commemorate the war, suggesting a desire among the literate to remember those they lost and understand how their own experience fit into the broader picture of the war.

Ostensibly, the primary purpose of the record was to publicize the stories of individuals who were the subjects of official requests for commendation and honors after investigations of their cases; however, the record also served as a source to structure and understand the war under the rubric of loyalty by describing countless accounts of subjects of various background performing acts of sacrifice and loyalty. As one gazetteer claimed, the purpose of recording their names was both “to enshrine them for spring and autumn sacrifices” and “to establish a biography for posterity.”<sup>150</sup> *The Liangjiang Record of the Loyal and Righteous* was divided into six categories of commendation: Entire Families that perished (全家殉難); Officials and Gentry nominated for rewards (請恤官紳); Militiamen nominated for rewards (請恤團丁); Officials and Gentry nominated for commendations (請旌官紳); Subjects nominated for commendations (請旌士民); and Women nominated for commendations (請旌婦女). These categories were intended to demonstrate that a broad spectrum of society performed feats of loyalty in their respective roles including novel ways of interpreting the idea of loyalty. Notably, the category of “subjects” or *shimin* is included, which suggest commoners as participators in loyal deeds, and is wholly distinguished from “officials and gentry” who were imagined as degree holding literati and bureaucrats.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> *Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi*, 207; *Xuzuan Jurong xianzhi*, 342.

<sup>150</sup> *Tongxiang xianzhi*, 1888; *Xuzuan Jurong xianzhi*, 342.

<sup>151</sup> *Liangjiang caifang zhongyi ju, Liangjiang zhongyi lu* (1887; repr., 1902), *falie*.

Although the category of “subjects” tended to favor local gentry and students who did not hold a degree in the civil service examination system, it did embrace a number of cases of commoners who were not a part of the elite world, including farmers, monks, petty merchants, craftsmen, and even a former beggar. *The Zhejiang Record of the Loyal and Righteous* tells of more than just the suffering of the gentry class, but also a vegetable gardener from Haiyan County, Shen Zhangda, who after the city fell and the Taiping began impressing locals for corvee labor, led popular resistance in 1860 only to die in a hopeless battle; moreover, the resistance he led in Taiping occupied territory is described not as a militia, but as a “mob gathering,” suggesting that it was a spontaneous mass uprising and not an organized militia.<sup>152</sup> Another story from *The Zhejiang Record of the Loyal and Righteous* centers on a man named Lu Youyu (陸湧餘) who had once lived as a beggar and during the war served as an ardent member of the local militia, and died seeking vengeance for the death of his mother at Taiping hands.<sup>153</sup> A fortuneteller (巫者) named Shi Yuanyou (石元佑), “encountered hardship [from the invasion], and exclaimed ‘Heaven is no longer the Heaven of the Qing dynasty. What use is it for me to live?’ He then swore a parting oath to his mother’s grave and poisoned himself.”<sup>154</sup> Through the kinds of categories of subjects included in the record, we have an inclusive image of a broad spectrum of society supporting the dynasty.

Women were also incorporated into the record directly linking their sacrifices to loyalty to the state, but the ways in which women were considered loyal subjects was largely through protecting their chastity by committing suicide in the face of sexual violence from Taiping soldiers. The cult of chastity that surrounded women of the war was part of a longer cultural phenomenon in China that celebrated female chastity and women who committed suicide when their chastity was violated or had the potential of being violated as an expression of dedication to their husbands, future husbands, or

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<sup>152</sup> *Zhejiang zhongyi lu*, 61-297; Wang Lin, ed., *Haiyan xianzhi* (1877), 2002.

<sup>153</sup> *Zhejiang Zhongyi lu*, 61-325.

<sup>154</sup> Tang Xunchun, ed., *Shangyu xianzhi* (1891), 1019.

departed husbands. This was often expressed as a virtue equivalent to masculine loyalty to the dynasty. Women maintained their loyalty to their husbands, even after their deaths, by preserving their chastity, even if it meant their own death, just as men maintained their loyalty to the dynasty by sacrificing their lives in war. Acts of women preserving their chastity through suicide, while certainly praised, were not termed as acts of loyalty to the state, but to their husbands.<sup>155</sup> Loyalty to the state was the realm of men. In *The Record of the Loyal and Righteous*, however, chaste martyrdom was portrayed as an act of not only loyalty to their husbands, personal virtue, and family honor, but also the state. Committing suicide because of sexual violence or the fear of it, or from learning of the death of one's family and loved ones, was reinterpreted as a moral political act in support of the dynasty.

Although *The Record of the Loyal and Righteous* gives one the impression that loyalty was a broader social phenomenon in the war, in which all subjects participated, there is evidently also a hierarchy in the way the record was structured. Loyal deeds undertaken by officials and gentry were valued more than those of subjects and women in how the record ordered and categorized them. As *The Zhejiang Record of the Loyal and Righteous* explicitly states about the biographies presented:

Biographies are divided into eight sections: first, ranking officials; followed by generals and soldiers; followed by generals from other provinces; followed by gentry and commoners in the militia; followed by gentry and commoners who died in the war; followed by expectant officials; followed by those who lived abroad; and followed by female martyrs.<sup>156</sup>

Ranking was central to the organization of the record, ordering society into strict categories and valuing their contributions differently while presenting loyalty as something that all could do in their respective stations in life. Moreover, it is important to point out that, even though these categories hint at a more inclusive idea of loyalty, the reality was that most loyal and righteous martyrs were generally from the gentry elite and typically held lesser degrees in the civil service examination. Even those who did not

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<sup>155</sup> Susan Mann, "Widows in Kinship, Class, and Community Structures of Qing Dynasty China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 46.1 (1987), 37-56; Paul S. Ropp, "Passionate Women: Female Suicide in Late Imperial China – Introduction," Paul S. Ropp, Paola Zamperini, and Harriet T. Zurndorfer, eds., *Passionate Women: Female Suicide in Late Imperial China*, (Boston: Brill, 2001), 3-22.

<sup>156</sup> *Zhejiang zhongyi lu, fanlie*, 1a-3b.

hold degrees were mostly from an elite background - merchants, students, and land-holding gentry. Only rarely are the stories of more underprivileged members of society told. Nonetheless, the presentation of these stories, while not entirely reflecting a wider breadth of society, was intended to leave an impression that it represented a cross-section of loyal Qing subjects, making the war into one of popular resistance.

The emphasis of the bureau was on the record and biographies of loyal martyrs, but the record's mission to honor and extol the dead would lead to a close association to the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty. Many of the people approved for honors and listed in *The Record of the Loyal and Righteous* also received enshrinement at the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty, and the two were often closely associated in function. The purpose of the record was to describe the stories of those who were enshrined at the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty and various other shrines of loyalty. It was the guide to understanding the importance of the site and those who were enshrined within.

As previously discussed, the shrine began as one dedicated solely to military officers and was reinterpreted by the irregular army to include soldiers during the war, but in the post-war period, the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty came to be a central site to pay homage to and console the spirits of all loyal subjects – civilian and soldier alike – who died in the war. This was particularly the case in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, where local literati who led reconstruction efforts and the compilation of commemorative text such as *The Record of the Loyal and Righteous* dedicated themselves to the experiences of local civilians in the chaos and suffering of the war, particularly after the 1860 invasion of Jiangnan.<sup>157</sup> Their experience of the war was not a military one for the most part, and this was reflected in the way they sought to remember the war; moreover, even though there were irregular armies from the Jiangnan region in addition to countless militias, they were never as organized as the Xiang and Huai armies and were not

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<sup>157</sup> *The Zhejiang Record of the Loyal and Righteous* overtly states that the vast majority of the biographies contained were post-1860, emphasizing the suffering of gentry and commoners in the war.



popularly praised as being central to the ultimate Qing triumph or the narrative of the war, and thus the position of irregular armies in Jiangnan was, while nodded to in passing, secondary in commemoration. When it came to praise for the military, their adulation was towards the irregular armies of Anhui and Hunan or the Green Standard Army, but when it came to locals, their adulation was largely reserved for the suffering of civilians and the sacrifices of the militias. For the literati investigators of the bureau, their experience of war was largely one of defeat, displacement, and unspeakable horrors that led them to focus on the deaths of their loved ones, and not necessarily on the martial valor of imperial troops on display in Hunan or the shrine on Stone Bell Mountain. With this experience of the war, shrines of manifest loyalty in the Jiangnan region shifted attention away from soldiers and towards local civilians.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, the construction of shrines of Manifest Loyalty became central to the commemorating war dead, but with an emphasis placed on civilians rather than soldiers. Most counties built a Shrine of Manifest Loyalty or some kind of shrine to the loyal, though at times under various names, very shortly after the conclusion of the war, and these became important memorials to local communities even though before the war they were largely ignored. In Suzhou, the Taiping occupation had led to the destruction of the old Shrine of Manifest Loyalty, as in many counties, but in 1867, the magistrate of Changshu County, Kuai Demo (蒯德模, 1816-1877), led an effort to reconstruct the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty in a new location on Ping Bridge Street. This new shrine was larger and grander than the old shrine, and was intended to serve as a place of commemoration for the city's dead in addition to soldiers who fought to liberate the region from Taiping occupation.<sup>158</sup> The stele in front of the city's shrine, authored by the prominent scholar Feng Guifen who had been instrumental in authoring tax reforms for the region in the reconstruction period, divides the shrine into three broad categories of enshrinement:

In general, there are three categories [of people] enshrined: All those enshrined at the old [pre-war] shrine; those in the Xiang and Huai armies who died in the campaigns to pacify the Wu region as well as

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<sup>158</sup> Cao Yunyuan, ed., *Wuxian zhi* (1933), 2040.

Min [Fujian], Zhe[jiang], and eastern Yue [Guangdong]; Those officials, gentry, and commoners from Suzhou Prefecture who died in the capture of cities in 1860 as well as those [locals] who died in other provinces and prefectures.<sup>159</sup>

By containing not only soldiers who were for the most part not local, but also local civilians in enshrinement, Suzhou's Shrine of Manifest Loyalty expanded upon the broader inclusion of loyalty seen at the Hukou shrine.

The basis for including civilians in enshrinement at the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty was often derived from the work of the Bureau to Interview the Loyal and Righteous, connecting commemoration with post-war reconstruction. Feng's stele inscription for the Suzhou shrine, explicitly makes this link by citing *The Record of the Loyal and Righteous* and the Bureau to Interview the Loyal and Righteous:

Since the founding of the dynasty, [Suzhou] has not known war. Those officials [from Suzhou] who died fighting far off, never amounted to more than a few. Ever since the cities of [Suzhou] prefecture and its counties fell to the Yue rebels one by one until the Wu [region] was pacified by Lord Li [Hongzhang] of Hefei, there has been unending deaths of civil [officials], military [officers], gentry, and commoners. The record published by the Bureau of the Loyal and Righteous, on imperial orders, has enshrined ten-and-some-thousand people [at the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty].<sup>160</sup>

This inscription also makes it clear that the war gave prominence to the shrine, because so few had died in conflict before the Taiping Civil War. Suzhou was not unique in this regard. Many biographies, for example, of people who were enshrined at shrines of manifest loyalty would also cite *The Record of the Loyal and Righteous*.<sup>161</sup>

The construction of the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty is credited to local officials, as is the case in Suzhou where Peng Demo is credited for the work; however, some counties note the involvement of the Reconstruction Bureau in building these shrines. In the town of Wuqing, Zhejiang, the director of the local Reconstruction Bureau, Liu Jishu (劉既澍), is credited for building a local Shrine of Manifest Loyalty

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<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 2039-2040.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> For example, the biographies of Wang Houguang and Qian Jiwen; Hua Chun, ed., *Qingyang xianzhi* (1891), 1081-1082; Xu Yaoguang, ed., *Jiaying fuzhi* (1879), 5248.

among numerous other feats of post-war accomplishments.<sup>162</sup> Similarly, the director of the Reconstruction Bureau in Sheng County, Zhejiang, built the Shrine to the Loyal and Righteous as a part of his duties.<sup>163</sup> Even if the Reconstruction Bureau was not involved in the construction of these shrines, many officials of the reconstruction period did as shrines to the loyal were commonly built in the mid-1860s, and enshrinement was essentially based off who was memorialized through the work of the Bureau to Interview the Loyal and Righteous.

Even though *The Record of the Loyal and Righteous* also counted women within the framework of loyalty to the state, women were generally excluded from enshrinement at the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty. Instead, the Shrines of Manifest Loyalty were often paired with the Shrine of Filial and Chaste Martyrs, which were rededicated after the war to focus on women who died in the conflict. As Feng Guifen notes about the Suzhou and Nanjing shrines, “[they do] not include women who perished in the war, and enshrine them separately in the Shrine of the Chaste and Filial.”<sup>164</sup> Construction on the Suzhou Shrine of Filial and Chaste Martyrs began in 1866 under the magistrate Kuai Demo and completed in 1868 right next to the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty. In Shi Qu’s record of its reconstruction, he specifically notes the pairing as intentional, likening the loyal sacrifice of men in war to chaste martyrs of the war.<sup>165</sup>

Female chastity during the turmoil and hardship of war was celebrated as an especially significant virtue. Considerable anxiety surrounded the fact that the displacement, destruction, and disorder of conflict threatened the cultural institution of female chastity; the inhumanity of wartime circumstances, placed women in difficult circumstance where they had few options available and little control over their own bodies. Although a difficult choice, women who committed suicide to protect their virtue was for many male literati a sign of their dedication and loyalty to their husbands and family,

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<sup>162</sup> *Wuqing zhenzhi* (1937), 1407.

<sup>163</sup> *Shengxian zhi* (1870), 1035.

<sup>164</sup> *Wuxian zhi*, 2039-2040.

<sup>165</sup> *Suzhou fuzhi*, 4043.

speaking volumes of their moral virtue in times of adversity. In the post-war period, many literati and officials in the Jiangnan region were concerned that the war had degraded the virtues of female chastity, perhaps because men questioned the chastity of women who survived, and this necessitated a reconfirmation of these virtues through state power that would restore what they deemed to be proper values through the cult of chastity. Describing the reconstruction of Suzhou's Shrine of Filial and Chaste Martyrs, Shi Qu argues for the necessity of establishing role models for women to follow in order to revive values of chastity:

Chaste martyrs are protectors of conscience and propriety. Since the misfortunes of war, the inhabitants have fled and the land abandoned. Few with hearts do not desire to raise them and keep them safe. Our magistrate takes particular note that their deaths should be lauded and praised to transform and guide the living [women] and inspire them... Just as the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty ranks husbands who die out of loyalty, these women die as [chaste] martyrs. Thus our magistrate admonishes them that its significance is deeply profound and vast. It should be sung sincerely and disseminated. What more is there to say!<sup>166</sup>

For Shi Qu, the reconstruction of the cult of chastity in the postbellum era was to serve as a way to encourage women who survived to model themselves after those who sacrificed themselves in war. He also acknowledges that fathers and husbands may wish for the women in their lives to be safe during times of war, but believes that protecting their chaste virtue intact is more important and that their deaths can serve as an example to others. The cult of chaste martyrs was just as crucial to reconstruction for many gentry as the cult of loyalty, because these shrines represented to them the reconstruction of a cultural and moral universe that was felt lost in the war.

In other cases, the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty presented all loyal martyrs of the war, including women, displaying a broad panorama of a loyal society of Qing subjects. This is most evident in the Hangzhou Shrine of Manifest Loyalty. The Hangzhou shrine was completed in 1872 largely through funds from the transit tax ordered by the provincial government. It was a grand, sprawling complex built by Jingtai gate, including a large garden with a pond on the southeast corner called Gao Gardens, seven

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<sup>166</sup> *Suzhou fuzhi*, 4043-4044.

courtyards with dozens of shrines to the loyal, and several dedicated shrines to local heroes on the southwest corner. Each of the courtyard shrines enshrined specific segments of Qing society according to their social status. The courtyard at the main entrance was surrounded by shrines to officials (官員); to the west was a courtyard dedicated to the families of officials (官眷) who died. North of the official courtyard, was a courtyard for gentry (紳士) with shrines just to its west for gentry women (紳婦). To the east of the gentry courtyard, was a courtyard with shrines to mostly soldiers of the regular army, irregular armies, and militias as well as an additional shrine to the gentry and another to gentry and commoners who died away from home (流寓紳民). In this courtyard, the largest shrine was dedicated to gentry who led militias in the war (例恤紳士). Along the north wall of the compound, just behind the aforementioned courtyard, was a long narrow courtyard dedicated to commoners (民人), and to its west was another compound to commoner women (民婦).<sup>167</sup>

Shrines of manifest loyalty were intended in the post-bellum as state religious sites to pacify the spirits of the war through ritual offerings as well as a public memorial for local communities, much as they were for civilians. Reconstruction efforts focused on these issues, because it illustrated an image of the war as one of loyalty and sacrifice and portrayed the state as assuming its proper place in the moral and religious order. The state cared for the souls of the dead through ritual practices just as it ought to, and the treatment of the dead was central to reconstruction for this reason, allowing the state to fulfill its role in society. We see the importance of this not only in commemoration at the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty, but also in the treatment of bodies of the war. Of particular concern to many, as we saw in Yu Zhi's descriptions of the war earlier in the chapter, were the numerous bodies left unburied by the war that littered the land. Left unburied and uncared for, these bodies were prone to become unsettled spirits in the afterlife and spoke of the moral degradation wrought by the war.

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<sup>167</sup> *Qi Hang lu*, vol. 1, 136-140.

Collecting the remaining bits of bone strewn about became a central element of local reconstruction efforts and local communities as representative of the reconstruction of the moral fabric of communities recovering from war. Government officials, soldiers, and gentry participated in gathering unburied human remains bones from anonymous victims of the war to provide them with a proper burial in mass graves called Mounds of the Righteous (義冢) or Mounds of Righteous Martyrs (義烈冢). Many of these projects were undertaken through state directives, ordering soldiers to collect bones in the countryside in the post-war years, but in most cases local charities and activist gentry hired laborers to collect remains. The reconstruction bureau was also deeply involved in some communities, establishing mounds of the righteous to ensure the dead received a proper burial. In Nanjing, for example, the reconstruction bureau funded several mounds of the righteous at Yongji Temple and Qingliang Mountain. According to the gazetteer, the prefect of Jiangning, Feng Bonian, ordered the reconstruction bureau to collect bones to be buried at Yongji Temple in 1870, which was run by local monks. The reconstruction bureau also bought land for the Qingliang Mountain mound and started an endowment of 2,000 *liang* for mounds of the righteous everywhere in the prefecture 1871.<sup>168</sup> In Hangzhou, the Reconstruction Bureau almost immediately after the war funneled funds through donations into the reestablished Benevolence Society (同善堂), a philanthropic organization that specialized in various charities including burials for unclaimed bodies. The reconstruction bureau asked the benevolence society to hire people to collect thousands of human remains in 1864, and had them buried in dozens mounds located at two sites: one in the mountains north of Hangzhou's West Lake and another to the south of the lake next to Lightning Peak Pagoda. The Governor General of Minzhe, Zuo Zongtang, had these mounds called "Mounds of Righteous Martyrs."<sup>169</sup> The collection of bones and

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<sup>168</sup> *Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi*, 1160.

<sup>169</sup> *Qi Hang lu*, vol. 2, 539-540.

corpses for burial began shortly after the conclusion of the war, and were considered a central part of reconstruction that brought together local gentry and the state as a sign of the restoration of order.

Much as with the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty, whether for soldiers or civilians, Mounds of the Righteous were seen as a way to pacify spirits and state involvement was central to pacification. The Hangzhou shrine erected by the Benevolence Society and Reconstruction Bureau was not initially recognized as a state project, and instead as a local act of charity, hence the Reconstruction Bureau used the Benevolence Society to do its work. In October 1866, the director of the Hangzhou Benevolence Society, a wealthy cloth merchant and renown bibliophile, Ding Bing, wrote a petition to the court with the sponsorship of Governor, Ma Xinyi, and the Reconstruction Bureau to get imperial recognition of the mounds of the righteous. In the petition, he described his efforts at the Benevolence Society to bury thousands of dead and requested that the court allow these mounds to be a part of the imperial liturgy. Part of his case, was the need to pacify loyal orphaned souls through imperial rituals:

Fallen soldiers of Zhejiang have the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty where they receive offerings. Fallen officials and gentry have the Shrine of Venerable Righteousness (崇義祠) where they receive offerings, as well as annually at the Altar of Hungry Ghost, where there are official and festival offerings of wine to feed wandering spirits (游魂). Thus, I thought of the martyred souls and loyal bones (烈魄忠骸) [before] Hangzhou was retaken who have no place to seek, and have interred them together in these 57 mounds, but the sepulcher covered in spring grass has no sovereign (無上) over the people of the mounds. They are standing on the banks suffering autumn winds crying for help. Who does not pity the torment of Ruobao that these ghost suffer? They worry about clothes to wear in the rain and burning under the sun. They are eternally lonely and scared in the depths of their hovels, only sorrowful for the herder's flute and the woodcutter's song. There is no way to distinguish the remnants of those fallen in battle.<sup>170</sup>

Ding's rhetoric focuses on the fact that many of the loyal dead are included in the imperial rites, including the "wandering spirits" of those whose bodies were not recovered, but nonetheless were enshrined and received offerings at the Altar of Hungry Ghost, yet the anonymous remains of people scattered about the land did not receive similar treatment. The anonymous dead are termed as being likewise loyal despite their anonymity, and the lack of proper ritual service to their souls had left them in

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<sup>170</sup> *Qi Hang lu*, vol. 2, 485.

torment. He claims that the lack of a “sovereign,” implying state officials who represented the emperor, to perform these rituals left these spirits to a life in purgatory, and the state should perform these functions to pacify their souls. Ding would explicitly request that the same rituals conducted at the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty and the Shrine of Venerable Righteousness be performed at the mounds. His comparison to the Altar of Hungry Ghost reveals a place for the Mounds of Righteous Martyrs and the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty as also serving to pacify potentially dangerous wandering spirits from the war. Although Ding’s motivations for including the mounds into the imperial liturgy were probably motivated by other reasons, chiefly to gain imperial patronage to reduce the cost of upkeep for the Benevolence Society, the way he frames his proposal is significant in that he is terming as a duty of the state to pacify loyal souls who suffer in the afterlife and could potentially become dangerous.

The terminology he employs reflects both an association with the cult of loyalty and a concern for wandering spirits in the afterlife. Ding Bing was involved in establishing numerous other mounds of righteous martyrs across Zhejiang and particularly in the Zhejiang area. He often termed his work as pacifying and consoling the loyal dead with phrases such as “the righteous souls and loyal spirits will be appreciative in the Nine Springs” (義魄忠魂在九泉感激) or “pacifying ghosts and making them manifest” (安幽魂而昭).<sup>171</sup> State rituals had the power to pacify the underworld, but this is also in many ways similar to the role the state was trying to play in rebuilding society after the war, pacifying those displaced and devastated by war through resettlement programs and asserting the primacy of a natural order and the state over subjects. Ding Bing’s brother, Ding Wu, who was also involved in the work of the Benevolence Society erecting mounds of the righteous, described his work in 1873 on a mound by Gen Mountain, “As stated in the radiant *Record of the Loyal and Righteous*, [we] invite spirits to come (招邀靈之來), moving their bones to the foot of the mountain, receiving their essence from the nether (淵源),

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, 494.



burying them under a towering stone gate. Where else is there to mourn the orphaned loyal (孤忠)?<sup>172</sup> The word “invite” here is in some ways significant as it mirrors the usage of the word “to gather” (招集) used in the vocabulary of reconstruction in which the Reconstruction Bureau described its work as “gathering those who fled.”<sup>173</sup> Ding Wu spoke of inviting these spirits and moving them to the mounds at the foot of the mountain as if it was settling them in place, within an ordered spiritual realm, much like the Reconstruction Bureau believed it needed to settle the living on farmlands to achieve an ordered realm for the living.

The ordering of the post-war world in the eyes of officials, bureaucrats, bureau directors, gentry managers, and local gentry was more than creating a stable society through social programs and the manipulation of the political economy. It was also about a cultural reconstruction that reordered the world in moral and spiritual terms. The government, reconstruction bureau, and various other post-war institutions viewed religion as central to reconstruction, because it restored an order in which the state fulfilled its proper role in a spiritual realm and created a narrative which legitimated the state and social order. The creation of these narratives came not just through textual works like *The Record of the Loyal and Righteous* or *The Stone Bell Mountain Gazetteer*, which told stories structuring people’s memory of the war, but also through the brick and wood of shrines and temples that were built, indicating the return of a well-ordered cosmos where the emperor lorded over the spiritual realm, ritual practices in which the state pacified wayward souls, and burying the dead, where state and society pieced together morality in the world by picking up each fragment of bone.

This cultural reconstruction created not only a narrative of loyalty in which the entirety of Qing society participated, but also spoke to their own times and concerns in the post-war period. Anxieties

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 567.

<sup>173</sup> For example, Zhu Chengtao in his reconstruction guidelines uses this term “to gather those who have fled,” which we discussed in chapter two. ZGFQJPD, 324-325.

about the moral decline of society in war needed to be addressed through moral deeds. Fears of the orphaned souls and wayward spirits, casualties of war, needed to be pacified so that they were not a threat to the living. The loyal dead needed to be accounted for not only to create a narrative of the war, but also to recruit their souls in support for the living. The pacification of the spiritual realm also reflected the concerns of the post-war world. Anxieties about wandering ghost and the imperative to assuage their tormented souls mirrored anxieties about desperate people displaced by war who the reconstruction bureau believed needed to be resettled in order to achieve post-war social stability. We also see this in the kinds of temples the state rebuilt, focusing on state cults that reproduced an image of martial strength to Lord Guan, cultured learning through Wen Chang, and state order through the City God. Locals also had their own view cultural reconstruction, which while often overlapping with state prerogatives, could differ considerably, choosing to asset a local identity that reflected their own image in the war and concerns about safety and livelihood. Buddhism was not a state priority, but Buddhist temples were rebuilt largely through their own means relatively quickly in the 1870s, as many officials and gentry saw Buddhism as a compassionate bulwark for the future against the immorality and inhumanity experienced during the war.

Commemoration and narratives of memory can be tricky things. They present us with a tidy vignette of the world, explaining events with surety and confidence, yet it is can be difficult to decipher their meaning imbedded in a time and place we will never experience, and we cannot ascertain for sure how representative they are of other people in these times. Many of the stories and events in this chapter give us a neat picture of the war and its aftermath from the perspective of officials and gentry, most of whom were highly educated and wealthy, never experiencing the true hardships of the war. We will never know if their understanding was shared with others of their time, especially among the poor, displaced, and dispossessed who lived and experienced these tragedies in ways their superiors would never understand entirely.

My suggestion here is less about the narrative of the war that reconstruction created, but about why these narratives were important to reconstruction. Cultural reconstruction was just as much a part of post-war reconstruction as any other aspect of this ambitious state and local project, but considering the dearth of resources and manifold crises that plagued post-war China, the question is why reconstructers, whether state, gentry or somewhere in between, saw temples as a priority in reconstruction, especially in the early years of reconstruction when other more material issues were more exigent. For men like Zeng Guofan, Zhong Lin, Peng Yulin, or Yang Wenhui, cultural reconstruction was just as important, because they believed that the narratives they told through these projects created the same kind of social stability as resettlement policies by assuring subjects of reconstruction of a moral and religious order, legitimizing the position of the state and a social hierarchy. This was a very cognizant understanding of reconstruction that material livelihood was not enough; reconstruction also had to convince people's minds that all is well and proper to achieve stability, and for this reason it was a priority of reconstruction.

In many ways, this is not all that unique for post-war reconstruction, which relies largely on symbolic projects, schools, memorials, cultural centers to express the aspirational goals of state's recovering from crisis to fulfill the expectations of those they wish to rule. Even more practical projects in reconstruction, bridges, roads, government offices, and flood control, can in some ways also act as symbols, imbuing them with a sense of restoring normalcy, a better past that will never be, or a brighter future that may not come.

## Chapter IV

### Drifting Soldiers: Demobilization, Criminality, and Post-bellum Order

*A cask of rice, a pot of wine;  
Out the city gate, westward I go;  
Ahead there are no villages, behind no dogs follow.  
Suddenly, a person arrives; his uncle he must find;  
Out of nowhere, a fist then flies in a crippling blow;  
With a three foot hemp rope, they pull away and off I go;  
A cask of rice, a pot of wine;  
By force, they emptied me of all in my hands.  
How is it they emptied all from my hands?  
Not even my clothes and pants are any longer mine to hold.  
Not until last night at the third watch, did the Chen family I behold.*  
-A limerick recounted by Pan Zhongrui, 1865

The above, was a form of *kuaiban* (快板) or limerick recorded in Pan Zhongrui's (潘鍾瑞, 1822-1890) *Jottings from a Noble Life* (麟生閒筆). Pan was a native of Changzhou, Jiangsu that had made a name for himself as a scholar of archeology and poetry, which gained him employment in the neighboring city of Suzhou, where he resided the majority of his adult life.<sup>1</sup> When the Taiping occupied Suzhou in June 1860, unlike most, he remained in the city, living under Taiping occupation. He wrote quite a bit about life under the Taiping, and unlike many other natives of Jiangnan that lived briefly under the Taiping regime, he observed and wrote about what was happening around him with an unusually keen eye.<sup>2</sup> Many of his works about the Taiping, such as *A Record of the Nightmare of the Gengshen Year* (庚申噩夢記) and the *Record of the Trellis Deer of the Suzhou Dais* (蘇台麕鹿記) have been used by many historians over decades to understand life under Taiping rule, but his essay *Jottings*

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<sup>1</sup> Pan Zhongrui, "Linsheng xianbi," *Xiangchan zashi* (c. 1865), Suzhou Library.

<sup>2</sup> Introductory notes by Zhang Zhengdian in *Suzhou shizhi ziliao xuanji* 27 (2002), 70.

*of a Noble Life* has often gone ignored since its concern was not with the war, but the months following the conclusion of the war.<sup>3</sup>

*Jottings of a Noble Life* was written by hand on a small bounded journal of only nine page in the year after the Taiping capital fell and was never published. Like many of his writings during the war that talked about life under the Taiping, *Jottings of a Noble Life* tells us much about the anxieties and concerns of life after the war. The limerick he scribbled in his *Jottings of a Noble Life*, describes a robbery on a country road in a darkly humorous tone. While on the way, the protagonist of the rhyme is approached by a man asking for help finding their uncle at which point he is assaulted, bound by a rope, and dragged off. There they rob him of everything in his possession, including his clothes, leaving him to wander naked to the home of the Chen family in the middle of the night.

Pan claimed that this limerick was widely shared in the area around Suzhou. He himself had picked it up from a friend, and suggested the rhyme may have given rise to the common expression “to be uncled” or “carrying uncle” (*bei niangjiu*, 背娘舅).<sup>4</sup> The precise origin of the word is unknown, something that nearly every reference to the word states, but it is clear that the word emerged in the Jiangnan region in the 1860s and remains in use even today in the local Wu dialect.<sup>5</sup> If Pan’s understanding of the term is correct, then the term meant that someone was robbed in a ploy in which a criminal approached their victims claiming to be looking for their uncle. As a much later source defined the term, it meant “to rob someone traveling in the middle of the night” and that the term originated in the fact that criminals would knock their victims out, tie a rope around their necks, and haul them on their back, which looked like they were carrying a drunkard (*jiugui* 酒鬼). In the local dialect, the term

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<sup>3</sup> Pan Zhongrui, “Gengshen emeng ji,” *Xiangchan jingshe jiben*, vol. 6, Suzhou Library; Pan Zhongrui, “Sutai mi lu ji,” *Xiangchan jingshe jiben*, vol. 7-8, Suzhou Library.

<sup>4</sup> The character *bei* is written with the character 背, which literally means “to carry on one’s back,” but its usage suggest that it could be understood as the homophone 被 – a passive construction modifier – and the term *niangjiu* should be understood as verbification of the word.

<sup>5</sup> The term has fallen somewhat out of favor in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and its meaning now has more to do with swindling wealthy people. See, *Caifeng Magazine* 12 (1982), 32.

for a “drunkard” was often referred to as “uncle” (娘舅) because they both contained the homophone *jiu*. Being “uncled” or robbed on the country road by highway brigands was a part of post-war life and was a common topic of conversation and concern throughout the 1860s and beyond.

Regardless of its origin, the term, as well as Pan’s limerick, contains a kind of sardonic humor towards the post-war chaos that belies an uneasiness about post-bellum stability and the degradation of social morality hidden in every day speech. Post-war Jiangnan was full of colorfully dark colloquialisms about the disorder of the post-war years that marked their unease in ways reminiscent of gallows humor. When gangs comprised of former Taiping soldiers, irregular troops, and desperate men raided villages, they were often described as “hitting the tip” or “vanguarding” (打先峰). Bandits that had robbed another group of bandits were said to have “knocked over the cage” (倒退籠).<sup>6</sup> The slang which many survivors of the war used to speak of the war and post-war disorder reveals their own anxieties about the fact that, despite the restoration of Qing authority in their homeland, criminal bands still operated with impunity and disorder still reigned in the regions devastated by warfare.

The fear of criminality and disorder in the years after the war bares an anxiety about the supposed perpetrators of these crime, the weakness of the state, and the failures of reconstruction. Common fears in the post-war period were directed not at the rebels that had brought the chaos nor the millions of desperate refugees displaced by the war, but at the irregular soldiers that once fought to protect the empire. The *yong* embodied their apprehension about wartime atrocities and chaos, and once disbanded, veterans of the irregular army became the object of their anxieties about post-war disorder. There was a persistent fear that the discharged soldiers of the irregular armies that had been crucial in the defeat of the Taiping had turned to crime as a way to sustain themselves after the war. Veterans were recast not as brave *yong* that sacrificed themselves to the nation as Peng Yulin tried to

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<sup>6</sup> Fan Zhongxiang, ed., *Jiading xian xuzhi* (1930), 5:74a.

mold their image at the Shrine of Manifest Loyalty at Stone Bell Mountain and other shrines of commemoration to soldiers of the irregular armies, but as an unrooted criminal lot of drifting soldiers – *youyong* (游勇 or 遊勇) - that existed at the margins of society preying upon innocent people. The state, which had trained these soldiers to kill and fight and made them into ruthless butchers, released them at into society after the war. Although there were suspicions that remnants of the heterodox Taiping remained hidden in plain sight in the village and towns of Jiangnan, the eyes of most Chinese cast the majority of their suspicion towards discharged soldiers at the end of the war, and often saw the irregular soldiers and the Taiping as essentially synonymous.

Pan Zhongrui made similar connections between drifting soldiers and former Taiping as the root of social disorder. As Pan described in his *Jottings of a Noble Life*:

Since the war, the people of the city of Suzhou have been destitute and the alleys are desolate. Rogues wander the night in dark corners. When they encounter someone, they suddenly take them down. Sometimes a gang of three or four of them will steal their clothes and things, and then leave them naked; some even beat them to the ground with clubs and fist; sometimes they tie a leather strap around their neck and then pull them off to some secluded spot where they beat the life out of them. These kinds of people are all rebels that had surrendered or those that threw their lot in with the irregular army and later were abandoned [discharged].<sup>7</sup>

The chaos and instability in the region hit hardest by the civil war was often blamed on the militant elements left by the war, both friend and foe, for many decades. And while the disorder of the post-war years was often blamed on former rebels and veterans, veterans who fought for the Qing bore the brunt of these suspicions and were closely linked to the vicious depravity of their former enemies, either in deed or in identity.

Qing officials were well aware of the problem of drifting soldiers. Discussions on reconstruction frequently brought up drifting soldiers and demobilization in the mid-1860s. As Zeng Guofan explicitly stated in one discussion “demobilization was the most important matter of reconstruction.”<sup>8</sup> Drifting

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<sup>7</sup> Pan, *Linsheng xianbi*.

<sup>8</sup> Han Chenggeng, Luo Zhenyue, et al., eds., *Zeng Guofan quanji: zougao* (Changsha: Yuelu Shuju, 1987), vol. 7, 4250 (hereafter ZGFQJ).

soldiers were an affront to the post-war order they wished to construct and their plans for reconstruction. Qing officials attempted to forcibly send veterans home upon discharge, but what they did not consider was that not all soldiers had a home to return to. Disbanding the irregular armies that fought the Taiping would prove to be a failure of reconstruction in that, even though they did eventually manage to disband the Xiang Army by the late 1860s, it formed a class of rootless veterans in the Jiangnan region who many believed to be behind much of the criminal activity in the area.

The horrific reality of the war that many subjects experienced left them embittered about the atrocities committed by armies on both sides and anxious about the fluid unstable nature of post-war society full of unfamiliar strangers that seemed to aimlessly wander the land, and they expressed these sentiments through complaints about the conduct of imperial troops in the war as well as post-bellum criminality and disorder perpetrated by former soldiers. This was a competing post-war narrative that did not find its way into official accounts, but weaved its way through the mouths of survivors, in popular sources, and even in official correspondence. Like most narratives, it took on a life of its own that, while reflecting a definitive social reality, also embodied embellished fears of symbolic significance. There certainly were drifting soldiers that had turned to crime and banditry at the end of the war, but the drifting soldier represented something more about the kinds of fears people harbored about post-war instability, dislocation, class, and reconstruction.

### *A New Class of Criminal*

In the years after the civil war, although peace may have been politically achieved through military force, the end of the war did not mean the end of all problems for those living through these times. The war had deeply scared much of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, and Jiangxi provinces, leaving much of the region in a state of instability. With millions displaced, the economy in shambles, much of the



infrastructure in ruin, and a state desperately trying to regain administrative control over formerly occupied territories, the areas most heavily impacted by the war were far from stable. Victory did not mean the automatic restoration of state authority in the regions affected by war, and it was these places, where the change in regimes left a power vacuum, particularly in the countryside, that were filled by many desperate people struggling to survive as brigands, thieves, and piracy. It would take time and considerable resources from the state and local gentry to reassert some semblance of law, order, and stability in places like Jiangnan. Any relief that survivors got from the conclusion of overt hostilities were replaced by anxieties about the instability of post-bellum society and the identity of strange people.

Although nothing like crime rates and statistics are available in post-war period, there is a prevailing sense that crime was a major social problem in the areas devastated by warfare. Pan Zhongrui was particularly concerned about the lawlessness and criminality in the province. In Suzhou, he described the area around the newly built testing hall, located outside the city in an isolated marsh to the south, as a particularly dangerous place to be at night. Criminal gangs, hoping to catch a wealthy student unaware in the late hours, often hid in the brush along the road to and from the Academy, where they would ambush their victims and frequently left them for dead. He recounted that there was a rumor that a young prodigy who had gone missing when coming from the Academy, and many believed that he had been murdered by brigands on the road. Pan himself was not sure if the rumor was true, but believed it to be somewhat credible. Post-war Suzhou was a dangerous place. As he exclaimed, “no one dares go out at night!”<sup>9</sup>

Pan’s sense of insecurity is paralleled in many accounts, popular sources, and official records in the post-war period. While the danger to life and limb from the war had receded by the end of 1864 with the defeat of the Taiping, there still remained a prevailing sense of danger to life and property from

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<sup>9</sup> Pan Zhongrui, *Linsheng xianbi*.

criminals, gangs, and bandits. Highway robbery was portrayed as a common problem along the major roads between cities along with theft, burglary, kidnapping, and extortion. Robbers are often portrayed as hiding in bushes and tall grasses along roads ready to pounce, entangling their victims with pole snares, robbing them of their clothes, and then leaving them for dead.<sup>10</sup> This in many ways runs contrary to the view of Mary Wright who portrays reconstruction in the post-war period as an unqualified success in stabilizing post-war society through conservative Confucian statecraft. Chinese “traditional” values, embodied in principles such as ritual propriety and incremental change, led to a natural “equilibrium” in the aftermath of the conflict that was conducive to a stable society and “make possible a period of domestic order and stability.”<sup>11</sup> This would ultimately condemn the Qing Empire as the West, not the Civil War, introduced destabilizing elements in the late nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Post-war society was surprisingly stable, but that is not to say that reconstruction policies resolved the problems that lingered from the war. Criminality, or at least a fear of criminality, was a recurring theme in many works in the Jiangnan region, where it was believed for decades after the war that it just was not as safe outdoors as it was before the war.

This fear of criminality and disorder was embodied in the figure of the rootless discharged irregular soldier in post-bellum society. This gave rise to a new term in the Chinese social lexicon: the “wandering soldier” or “drifting soldier” (*youyong*).<sup>13</sup> The word *you* means to travel, wander, drift, or float, and *yong* refers to specifically the soldiers of the irregular army as opposed to soldiers in Qing conventional forces, which were referred to as *bing* (兵). The term *youyong*, “drifting soldier,” had been used for at least a century before the civil war, but the term was generally used to refer to mercenary

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Clabaugh Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-chih Restoration, 1862-1874* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), 125, 204.

<sup>12</sup> Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism*, 156.

<sup>13</sup> There are two variants of the character *you* (游 and 遊) used interchangeably and are pronounced the same. The former the former is generally more common and means float or drift. The latter refers more to travelling or drifting.

escorts hired on a short-term contract that were looking for work.<sup>14</sup> In the aftermath of the civil war, however, *youyong* had come to refer to soldiers that had been discharged from the irregular army and lived an itinerant existence, and the fact that they were vagrant drifters with military experience made them the object of both official and popular fears. To be sure, there were a number of soldiers in the regular army who were discharged after the war, especially in Shandong, just as many irregular soldiers after the war, but the image of the vagrant veteran was more closely tied to the irregular soldier.<sup>15</sup>

In some ways, the drifting soldiers in the late Qing period are akin to the oft romanticized *rōnin* (浪人) of Tokugawa Japan. *Rōnin* were warriors of the samurai class that had lost their master, leaving them to lead the rootless life of a drifter. The term *rō* (浪) in *rōnin* meant to drift or wander much like *you* (遊) in *youyong* meant to drift.<sup>16</sup> Just like drifting soldier of the irregular army in post civil war China, *rōnin* were professional soldiers that were denied their profession and were seen as a major source of social instability, criminality, and unrest by Tokugawa officials. They were often vilified by the state, a source of fear among commoners, and the butt of jokes in dramas, but they were conversely also romanticized as free-spirited men of honor. Unlike the *rōnin*, however, *youyong* were never bounded to a promise of perpetual servitude as retainers. Their stint as soldier, while in some cases may have lasted as long as a decade or more, was never intended or promised as a permanent position. Eventually, soldiers were supposed to return to their former lives as civilians; moreover, drifting soldiers were never romanticized the same way as the *rōnin* were at times in Japan and in the West.<sup>17</sup> There was no equivalent to the legend of the 47 *Rōnin* or Akira Kurosawa films like *Yojimbo*, *Sanjuro*, and the *Seven Samurai* for Chinese soldiers of the irregular army. The image of these drifting soldiers was generally one

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<sup>14</sup> Philip A. Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies: Militarization and Social Structure, 1796-1864* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 46-47.

<sup>15</sup> Wing-hong Tang, "Local Defense Organizations in Shantung, 1853-1863: from Loyalism to Rebellion" (MA Dissertation, University of California, Davis, 1973).

<sup>16</sup> In fact the Japanese *rō*, which derives from the Chinese character *lang*, also means to drift or wander in Chinese, and is still used in Chinese today in terms like *liulanghan* (流浪漢), which means "drifter."

<sup>17</sup> Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies*, 102-104.

as a ferocious force of violence, depravity, abuse, and criminality without any sense of nobility, loyalty, or honor that have often been imbued in *rōnin* in popular literature and film.

Unlike the pre-war *youyong* who were essentially armed escorts for traders and occasionally officials, the drifting soldier of the post-bellum period was in some ways a subcategory of the more common “vagrants” (遊民) that were increasingly pushing their way into marginal occupations in the growing port cities like Shanghai at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> As a category of vagrant, these soldiers were associated with many of the same stereotypes, prejudices, and views that were commonly associated with vagrants in general. Many scholars, such as Matthew Sommer, William T. Rowe, and Philip Kuhn, have discussed Qing official concerns about vagrants and various itinerant professions as being a threat to social order.<sup>19</sup> Qing officials were inherently suspicious of people who were not tied to land, community, and an occupation.<sup>20</sup> After the civil war, Qing officials were sympathetic towards the plight of people displaced by the war – refugees; they were seen as unfortunate people thrust into desperation by circumstance, deserving imperial benevolence in the form of relief. Their status was temporary and could be alleviated through reconstruction.<sup>21</sup> Irregular soldiers, despite also being displaced by the war, albeit more voluntarily and in the service of the Qing Empire, were not granted the same degree of compassion. Even though they were discharged at the end of the war, soldiers that failed to reintegrate into communities and suitable occupations were permanently branded as a class of drifting soldiers. Instead of warranting imperial grace in the post-war years, they were met with official scorn as a dangerous vestige of the civil war, an element of criminality, and a threat to society.

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<sup>18</sup> Emily Honig, *Creating Chinese Ethnicity: Subei People in Shanghai, 1850-1980* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Bryna Goodman, *Native Place, City, and Nation: Regional Networks and Identities in Shanghai, 1853-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>19</sup> Matthew Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 9-15, 96-100; William T. Rowe, *Saving the World: Chen Hongmou and Elite Consciousness in Eighteenth Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 303, 312; Philip Kuhn, *Soul Stealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 45, 49-72;

<sup>20</sup> Rowe, *Saving the World*, 303-312.

<sup>21</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 50-61.

The fact that these men posed a threat to communities in the post-war years because of their vagrancy was further compounded by the fact that they were young and –most likely – single men. Qing officials were anxious of young male vagrants as a particularly dangerous group. Practices of sex-selective infanticide, which overwhelmingly favored males, meant that a significant portion of the male population would never be able to marry, and these unmarriageable men were typically those that were the most impoverished, property less, and socially marginalized. This drifting population of perpetual bachelors scraped out an itinerant existence on the margins of society. They were typically referred to as “bare-branches” (光棍) because these men were not surrounded by family the same way that leaves surrounded the branches of a tree.<sup>22</sup>

As mostly young single men, drifting soldiers fell easily into the most dangerous category of vagrants and “bare-branches.” Conceptually, they were removed from the patterns of agricultural life and the protection of rural communities in serving in the irregular army, and thus they easily fit into the anxieties and tropes of rootless people in the popular imagination and official writing. Moreover, military life was an overwhelmingly male space much like the “bare-branch” society of day laborers. In this sense, soldiers mirrored the kind of male-dominated bachelor society of rootless laborers and thus the stigmas that accompanied rootless laborers were easily grafted onto former soldiers after the war.

Even though these former soldiers shared much in common with other bare-branch laborers as well as the prejudices of society, they were categorized as a wholly distinct subcategory of vagrants. As former soldiers, they were permanently marked by their time in the irregular army as “drifting soldiers” despite the fact that they no longer were soldiers in an official capacity. It was an identity that followed them for most of their life so long as they remained outside the bonds of family and community. Their identity as soldiers made them all the more dangerous than the typical vagrant. In an 1880 article from the *Shenbao*, the author described drifting soldiers as a new kind of dangerous class of vagrants:

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<sup>22</sup> Sommers, *Sex Law and Society in Late Imperial China*, 96-101.

If one is without an occupation, they are not considered rightful subjects [齊民] and we call them “vagrants” [遊民].... Irregular soldiers [勇丁] are not like [these vagrants]. They were recruited temporarily as the material to conquer the realm. Their strength was borrowed to great effect, but this is also another way in which people became vagrants. Therefore, used improperly they could in the beginning be strictly controlled but could never be led, but this kind of material, once used, is like a dull blade made suddenly anew by the blacksmith with a whetstone. When it is cast aside to no longer be used, its sharpness is still there. Were someone else to pick it up and try it out, it could prove disastrous. Since the irregulars of the war that maintained the peace and were disbanded, they were often not settled on land. They gathered to become highway brigands, making them an ambuscading army among the vagrants. To distinguish them [from other vagrants], we call them drifting soldiers. This is something of great concern.<sup>23</sup>

As the author describes, these veterans of the civil war were like a sword crafted by the state only to be callously thrown aside, and now the fear was that the blades were acting on their own and pointing towards innocent civilians. It was this supposed propensity of veterans to criminality that made these drifting soldiers a particularly insidious threat in the minds of the state and civilians, making them a major fixture of the post-war social landscape. As highly trained and experienced professional soldiers, these veterans were generally no strangers to violence. In the irregular army, their skill for violence was contained, controlled, and directed by their commanding officers. With their discharge leaving them to wander the streets leaderless in far off places far from home, their talent for violence was no longer contained by their officers, giving them free reign to apply their skills on peaceful communities. The author of this article also associated these men as a dangerous yet distinct class of vagrants that threatened the moral social order and needed to be parsed out from among the run-of-the-mill vagrants that were increasingly common in cities like Shanghai where the author presumably lived.<sup>24</sup>

The lives of many of these veterans likely followed many of the same contours of the labor market as other rootless vagrants, but there are few places in which veterans of the civil war make themselves known within peaceful occupations. Their identity as former soldiers was only significant to observers when they were engaged in violence, theft, robbery, and sedition; otherwise, they melded back into an anonymous mass of rootless laborers and even farmers and settlers. Former soldiers were

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<sup>23</sup> “*Shuo chu yong youseng*,” *Shenbao* (October 19, 1880), 1:2684, 1.

<sup>24</sup> Honig, *Creating Chinese Ethnicity*.

cast as the most dangerous category of vagrant people although most probably integrated back into civilian life. For most they were still criminals who opportunistically robbed people on the road or burglarized shops, and in some cases, caused large disturbances and instigated unrest.

Interestingly, the sexual violence and depravity commonly associated with rootless men does not seem to appear in association with drifting soldier.<sup>25</sup> During the war there were certainly numerous accounts of irregular soldiers committing rape and other sexual crimes;<sup>26</sup> however, in the post-war period, such stories are not common in the trope of wandering soldier while stories of theft and brigandage abound.

The number of stories in the decades that followed the war of these discharged veterans wandering the countryside and committing criminal and violent acts are too numerous to describe in their entirety here. At their best, these vagrant soldiers were seen as nothing more than swindlers and con-artists. In these kinds of stories, these former soldiers, although not overtly violent, used their appearance of authority and strength to extort money from unsuspecting townspeople and farmers. In one story from *The Illustrated News from the Lithography Studio* in 1885, a notice was placed on every telegraph pole running across Jiujiang Prefecture stating two things: “do not tether oxen and horses to the telegraph pole,” and “drifting soldiers are not allowed to use this as a pretext to swindle and harm the people.”<sup>27</sup> From the context of the story, it seems that drifting soldiers were occasionally hired to patrol the telegraph poles to ensure that they were clear of obstructions and to check for any damage. The notice was placed to ensure that people knew that these former-soldier hired to patrol telegraph lines did not have the authority to assess fines and therefore people should not believe these claims if

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<sup>25</sup> Sommers, *Sex Law and Society in Late Imperial China*, 125, 138-140.

<sup>26</sup> Rania Huntington, “The Captive’s Revenge: The Taiping Civil War as Drama,” *Late Imperial China* 35, no. 2 (2014), 1–26; also see, Zhang Daye, *The World of a Tiny Insect*, trans. Xiaofei Tian (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 18.

<sup>27</sup> Jin Tangxiang, “*Xunyong rao min*,” *dianshizhai huabao: da ke tang ban* (Shanghai: Shanghai huabao chubanshe, 2001), vol. 1, 54.

any patrolling ex-soldiers did so. In this story, however, a wandering soldier did just that. The ex-soldier approached a farmer, Mr. Liao, claiming that his ox had struck a telegraph pole, damaging it, and he thus needed to confiscate his ox temporarily. Mr. Liao, in the middle of plowing his fields, making the ox indispensable to his work, quickly chased down the former soldier and gave him 500 copper coins to get his ox back; the soldier then obliged.<sup>28</sup> This story was presented in *The Illustrated News from the Lithography Studio* not as surprising news, but as a humorous example of the audacity of a drifting

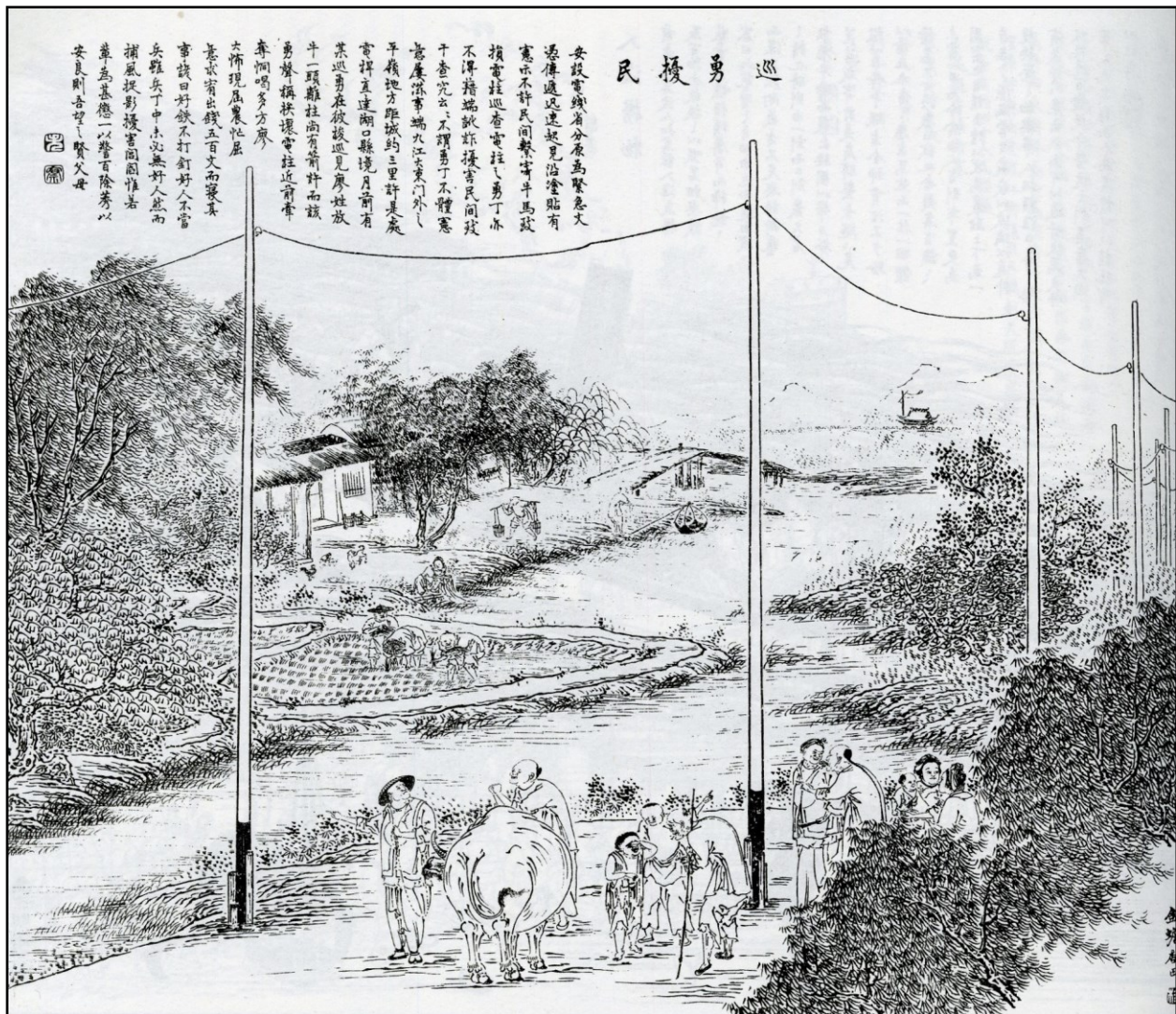


Figure 4.1 – “Patrolling Yong Harass the People.” Jin Tangxiang, “Xunyong rao min,” *dianshizhai huabao: da ke tang ban* (Shanghai: Shanghai huabao chubanshe, 2001), vol. 1, 54.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*



soldier in extorting money despite notices claiming they did not have the authority to assess fines and punishment.

More often than not, veterans of the civil war were epitomized as the source of crime when it came to theft and banditry. As one article entitled “The Source of Thieves,” written half a century later in the early Republican era, claimed that veterans and deserters of the irregular armies were the main source of bandits well into the twentieth century: “Since the civil war, deserters and drifting veterans from neighboring counties came here to become this [thieves]. There are drifters [formerly] from our county’s own military garrison that would collude with local scoundrels and rouses to lay ambushes while they led them. Thus there are many robbers here... bad soldiers are actually the main source of thieves.”<sup>29</sup> The author of this article characterizes soldiers (and in the twentieth century, former police officers) as the origin of highway robbers as if bandits and thieves were unknown prior to the civil war. Of course banditry was not a new phenomenon that resulted from the war; however, this writer believed that theft and banditry had become significantly more prevalent in the decades after the war and former soldiers were often the primary suspect.

The most common image of the former soldier was as a thief and burglar. These stories are common in the page of the *Shenbao* newspaper in the latter-half of the nineteenth century. In one story from the *Shenbao* in 1874, a lace embroiderer that lived alone in a small apartment in Nanjing along Yixing alley recounted a robbery by a drifting soldier. One morning in November, he went out and locked the door. When he returned in the afternoon, he noticed that the lock had been tampered with, and immediately worried that his home had been robbed. When he entered the room, it was too dark to see anything, but out of nowhere the thief grabbed him by his queue, threw him to the ground, and put a sword to his throat. The thief threatened the embroiderer with death if he screamed, so he complied. The thief used the embroiderer’s queue to tie him to a pillar, and then proceeded to collect all the silk,

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<sup>29</sup> Yuan Xingchuan, ed., *Xinghua xian xiao tongzhi* (n.d.), 90a-b.

threads, and tools of his trade into a bundle and fled the scene. The embroiderer was unable to catch the thief that robbed him, but he firmly believed that the thief was a drifting soldier. Not only did the thief carry a soldier's sword, marking him as a former soldier, but he soon thereafter learned that Peng Yulin's Riverine Navy had recently begun recruiting in Nanjing, which "once the disbanded soldiers from up river got wind of it, they came in droves, and among them were drifting soldiers claiming to look to be recruited, but were actually there to commit crimes." With so many drifting soldiers in Nanjing, the author claimed there was a crime wave of similar burglaries committed by drifting soldiers.<sup>30</sup>

Although drifting soldiers were often blamed for instances of theft and burglary, many articles in the *Shenbao* often went only so far as to implicate drifting soldiers without any clear support. In many cases, thieves are only described as "looking like an irregular soldier discharged outside their homeland" (容留外籍散勇).<sup>31</sup> In the previous story, the author is able to identify the burglar because he carried a soldier's weapon, but in many stories of supposed drifting soldiers committing crimes, soldiers are stereotyped more by their roughhewn facial features and brusquely threatening mannerisms; anyone fitting such descriptions was assumed to be a drifting soldier, and drifting soldiers were assumed to be thieves. Accents were another give away and a sign of danger. In Zhang Daye's autobiography, he recounted a journey to southern Zhejiang in the 1880s where he ran into some men crossing a ferry who he suspected to be drifting soldiers because of their Hunanese accent. The accent made him cautious. He made sure to travel in a large group of people on the main road, and gave the men the slip as soon as possible. He very clearly expressed that they would try to rob him if they found themselves on secluded mountain path.<sup>32</sup> People who looked or sounded like they might be a former soldier were often suspected and summarily accused of being criminal.

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<sup>30</sup> "Qu qie cheng qiang," *Shenbao* (November 14, 1874), 3:783, 3.

<sup>31</sup> Xie Yongtai, ed., *Yixian zhi* (1870), 2210.

<sup>32</sup> Zhang Daye, *The World of a Tiny Insect: A Memoir of the Taiping Rebellion and Its Aftermath* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 10-11, 37-38.

Even more dangerous than individual cases of drifting soldiers burglarizing shops and homes were stories of drifting soldiers getting together into gangs. Our story of the Nanjing embroiderer hinted at the kinds of worries people had about drifting soldiers getting into groups and congregating in the same place. Gangs of drifting soldiers were a major concern to both civilians and officials, because they were feared to be viciously violent, well-coordinated, and could easily disguise themselves as irregular army troops. These gangs typically targeted local gentry and merchants travelling on country roads, but were also feared to be a potential source of rebellion. On many occasions, drifting soldiers still donned their uniforms, and were able to use this to their advantage. In one such case on May 12, 1875 in Taohuawu, just outside Shanghai, a shop clerk carrying over a hundred taels to repay a debt spotted a group of what he thought were four soldiers dressed in uniform and carrying a banner. Although he could not identify which brigade they belonged to, he assumed that it was safe to walk through, but as he approached near, the soldiers got into a quarrel blocking his way along the road. He quickly hid nearby to wait for the fighting to finish, but the soldiers soon found him, stabbed him in the arm (or leg) with one of their swords and robbed him of all his money. Fortunately, the shop clerk survived this incident.<sup>33</sup> These veterans, who often continued to wear their uniforms and carry their weapons after the war even after being discharged, were able to lure their victims into a false sense of security with their officious appearance as members of local irregular troops or the regular Green Standard Army.

While many of the anxieties and concerns held by officials and local elites were certainly not a figment of their imagination, it is important to note that drifting soldiers were not the only desperate individuals that had turned to crime to survive. Drifting soldiers were only one aspect of the post-war disorder that filled the social vacuum at the end of the civil war; many other desperate people also turned to banditry, theft, and murder. This included local militias called “Righteous Militias” (義團) by locals with a hint of sarcasm, because many righteous militias were groups of men who lived off of

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<sup>33</sup> “*Youyong zishi*,” *Shenbao* (May 13, 1875), 2:932, 2.

pillaging and looting, and only nominally claimed to be aligned with the Qing. Zhang Daye condemned these men as just as rapacious as the Taiping. These groups continued to raid across Jiangnan with relative impunity for several years after the war.<sup>34</sup> Many of the boat people that plied the lakes and canals of the Jiangnan region, for instance, turned to piracy during the war and continued even in the aftermath. After the defeat of the Taiping, Governor Ma Xinyi turned his attention towards pacifying many of these pirates along the shores of Lake Tai through equal measures of brutality and negotiation. He hired a former pirate to advise him in suppressing the pirates along the Lake, which bore fruit by late 1866.<sup>35</sup>

In fact, the unusual circumstances of Ma Xinyi's assassination on August 22, 1870 while serving as the Governor-General of Liangjiang (the only governor-general in Qing history assassinated in office) centered around a pirate named Zhang Wenxiang (張汶祥). Despite numerous problems with the investigation, the chief interrogator, Zhang Zhiwan, concluded that Zhang had fought for the Taiping during the war. In the chaos that followed the war, he had joined a gang of pirates raiding the coast of Zhajiang, but his pirate comrades were massacred under Ma's orders in 1866 as a part of his campaign to restore order to the war-torn land; additionally, one of Ma's officers had supposedly absconded with Zhang's wife. When Zhang tried to seek redress for his grievances over a year later, Ma flatly refused to meet with him. From then on, Zhang had been on a quest of vengeance for his fallen comrades and his abducted wife, which he eventually succeeded in doing, or at least that is what the investigation would have us believe.<sup>36</sup>

Whether or not the investigation's conclusions were accurate is not something I wish to debate, but what I find significant, regardless of its veracity, is that it demonstrates that bandits and pirates were

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<sup>34</sup> Zhang Daye, *The World of a Tiny Insect*, 82-83, 94, 98.

<sup>35</sup> Jonathan Ocko, *Bureaucratic Reform in Provincial China: Ting Jih-Ch'ang in Restoration Kiangsu, 1867-1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 36-37.

<sup>36</sup> Li Ciming, Zhang Daogui, and Ding Fenglin, *Zhang Wenxiang ci Ma*, (Changsha: Yuelu Shushe, 1986).

not the only source of post-war disorder in southern China; former rebels and militias also turned to banditry and piracy just as former soldiers who fought for the Qing, and yet Qing officials and commoners alike were more terrified of former soldiers of the irregular army than they were of pirates, former rebels, and militiamen who turned to piracy. The terrifying image of the drifting soldier lingered throughout the nineteenth century, whereas anxieties about former rebels, when such claims were made, were often short lived and rare.<sup>37</sup>

In fact, part of the reason that there seems to be little concern about former rebels in the post-war period is largely because drifting soldiers were closely associated with the Taiping. Irregular soldiers were seen to be either of the same brutish ilk as Taiping soldiers or more directly former rebels themselves. The boundaries between Qing loyalist serving in the irregular armies and the Taiping army were porous. Throughout the course of the civil war, surrendered Taiping units were often incorporated *en masse* into the irregular army or as individuals, and the same was also true of Qing irregular units that submitted to the Taiping; some brigades mutinied and joined neither side, living off of loot and plunder.<sup>38</sup> This was a fact of the war that was well known to those who lived through the conflict; furthermore, both sides were equally culpable in wartime atrocities, particularly in the Jiangnan region, casting the most tragic episodes of the war on soldiers in general regardless of the side they fought for. Soldiers on both sides were seen as equally ruthless and violent.<sup>39</sup>

We see both this association of the ruthlessness of irregular soldiers towards civilians and former rebel soldiers in the irregular army manifest itself in two different takes on a very popular story

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<sup>37</sup> There were a few scares, to be sure, but most fizzled out quickly. For example, in Jiande County, Zhejiang there was a scare in 1871 of religious sectarians (教匪), evoking images of the Taiping who had occupied the region less than a decade earlier. This was met with a rapid military mobilization and suppression of any heterodox religious cults in the region. See, Xia Riao, ed., *Jiande xianzhi*, (1919), 72.

<sup>38</sup> Xiaowei Zheng, "Loyalty, Anxiety, and Opportunism: Local Elite Activism during the Taiping Rebellion in Eastern Zhejiang, 1851–1864," *Late Imperial China* 30:2 (2009), 39–83; Tang, "Local Defense Organizations in Shantung, 1853-1863."

<sup>39</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 17, 23, 35, 56, 68, 86, 150-151.

in the post-war years discussed in an article by Rania Huntington.<sup>40</sup> The 1874 *Xiangxiang County Gazetteer* shares the story of a young woman from Nanjing named Huang Shuhua, who lived most of her life under the Taiping. When the city fell to the Xiang Army, she witnessed her entire family massacred before her eyes by irregular soldiers. Instead of killing Huang along with her entire family, two of the soldiers took her captive, implying their intention to either rape her, force her into a marriage, or to sell her off. When her captors were discharged from the army (probably only a few short days later), the soldiers brought her back to their hometown in Hunan. As they made their way home, they stopped at an inn in Tan market just outside of Xiangxiang, Hunan. There Huang got her captives drunk and then poisoned one, slit the other's throat, and then after scrawling in blood her story on the wall, she hung herself on the rafters.<sup>41</sup> This portrayal of Xiang soldiers is as brutal, cruel, and rapacious men, paralleled the kinds of mercilessness violence of the Taiping in Qing sources of the time, reflecting similar anxieties among commoners and gentry about soldiers of both sides of the war.

A decade after the story's appearance in the *Xiangxiang County Gazetteer*, the story was adapted as an opera script complete with illustrations. The opera followed many of the same contours of the original story, but with one significant change: the irregular soldiers that kidnapped Huang were transformed into former Taiping soldiers that had surrendered and joined the Xiang Army in the last days of the war.<sup>42</sup> Huntington argues that this change was most likely made to avoid evoking the ire of state authorities by sullyng the reputation of Xiang forces – through which many Qing officials had risen to political prominence - but it was also a very credible change for most readers, reflecting part of the reality of the war. In the last days of the war in particular, Taiping soldiers surrendered in droves and often joined imperial forces fighting against their former comrades.<sup>43</sup> The permeable boundary between

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<sup>40</sup> Rania Huntington, "The Captive's Revenge: The Taiping Civil War as Drama," 1–26.

<sup>41</sup> *Xiangxiang xianzhi* (1874), 23, 25b-26b. Han Changfeng, ed., *Hunan difangzhi zhong de taiping tianguo shiliao* (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1983), 343-344.

<sup>42</sup> Xu E, *Lihua xue* (1887), University of California Hathi Digital Trust.

<sup>43</sup> Huntington, "The Captive's Revenge," 12, 16-17.

loyal soldier and seditious rebel in the end meant that the identity and loyalty of irregular soldiers was questionable. Was a drifting soldier a paragon of loyalty to the state that fell on hard times after the war or was he a perfidious rebel turncoat that now wandered in search of victims?

Unlike former Taiping, however, the figure of the irregular soldiers was a convenient vessel for the anxieties of Chinese society in the post-war period. Former rebels were unlikely to publicly display their past. Either they melded back into civilian life, where their past could be easily forgotten, or they continued on serving in the irregular forces loyal to the Qing; therefore, it was hard to mark and identify a former Taiping soldier in the days following the war. Conversely, irregular soldiers were a much more visible part of post-war life. Irregular soldiers served as an occupation force on garrison duty, of course, and still wore their uniforms, making them easily identifiable; in many cases, discharged soldiers also continued to carry their weapons and wear their uniforms. Discharged soldiers that still donned their uniforms were a readily recognizable figure, and their association with wartime atrocities, former rebels, and criminality made them an easy target to pick out of a sea of strangers. Furthermore, soldiers, even when they did not wear their uniforms or carry weapons, were still believed to be identifiable by their outsider accents, rough-hewn facial features and scars worn by years of fighting, and a uppity cavalier demeanor.<sup>44</sup> The struggles and torments that many civilians experienced during the war years left them embittered towards soldiers on both sides, but also weary of strangers. The war had uprooted people out of their familiar lives and into dangerous and terrifying circumstances full of unfamiliar people – desperate refugees, marauding bandits, conquering rebels, and abusive irregular soldiers. Among the various figures of the civil war, the irregular soldier was the only one that remained a fixture of public life in the post-war years in a way that was easily visible. They were strangers who people could attach a clear wartime narrative, which evoked memories of wartime carnage, abuse, and suffering. Irregular soldiers were a visible reminder of the horrors of the war and the role they played in it.

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<sup>44</sup> *Yixian zhi*, 2210.

Drifting soldiers were not always subject to outright resentment and mistrust. At times, irregular soldiers received a measure, however small, of sympathy. Although soldiers were still viewed as brutal forces of violence that had become criminals after the war, some viewed them as victims of circumstance who had contributed to the peace of the empire. Duan Qi (段起, d. 1888), who we will discuss in more detail later, lamented in his reconstruction proposals the fact that many of these soldiers had dedicated and given their lives to the Qing cause and yet were neglected at the end of the conflict.<sup>45</sup> These soldiers were deserving of recognition but were all too often dismissed as criminal. In an article from the *Shenbao*, irregular soldiers are discussed with a tinge of sympathy as victims of the negligent of state policy and military officers:

Today in the southeast the peace achieved by exterminating the many armies of the Nian and long-hairs was all done by irregulars hired on a temporary basis, and they were not uniformly managed soldiers. After the situation had been pacified, the vast majority were not discharged at first; some found their provisions and salary had been in arrears for one or two months or even three or four months. On the eve of their discharge, they were paid and supplied an order to return home. In these cases, they used this for their travelling expenses and did not cause any trouble. On the way [home], they wandered a bit only to find that their money had its limits. They spent at will and exhausted all their funds. They traveled hungry for a time unaware of the edicts that had been passed [forbidding drifting soldier and requiring them to return home]. Eventually, they returned [home] to no longer find a loving home with their family and were forced, because of the edicts, to continue moving. Thus they stayed on the roads drifting and leaving the boundary of their hometowns. They could not cross the border unless they were expelled or received official escort. Thus, regardless of whether or not they were in their native places, they were still relegated to drifting. The commanders that oversaw them know that this is illegal but they remained dissolute [in doing the right thing]. A group of them, knowing each other on a regular basis [in their wanderings], could form a band, sometimes with ten people and sometimes several dozens, in order to survive, and hence they could become thieves there and a source of many cases of robbery in that place. If they did not steal, then they would starve, thus is their fate to the end of their days. How unfortunate.<sup>46</sup>

The sympathetic tone with which this *shenbao* article discussed drifting soldiers provides a common explanation for how they came to be rootless drifters. Irregular soldiers were unable to return home because of the callous way in which the state disbanded soldiers. The disbandment of irregulars, in this article and many others, were described as “abandonment” or “being discarded” (棄). Incapable of returning home and without any occupation, it was easy to understand why many soldiers drifted as

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<sup>45</sup> ZGFQJ, 8:1934.

<sup>46</sup> “*Shuo chu yong youseng*,” *Shenbao* (October 19, 1880), 1:2684, 1.



criminals at the end of the war. This trace of sympathy for the plight of drifting soldiers and concern about crime perpetrated by veterans also unveils a criticism of the failures of post-war reconstruction and demobilization.

### *Demobilizing the Xiang Army*

After the fall of Nanjing on July 19, 1864, demobilization became an important issue and was almost immediately begun in early August even though pockets of Taiping loyalist were still holding out in northern Zhejiang. As many military men saw the situation, the end of the conflict was in sight, and over the course of the war, the Xiang Army had ballooned to, by some estimates, to as many as 120,000 men, proving a heavy strain on the finances of the state.<sup>47</sup> A quick demobilization was termed as a financial necessity to avoid bankruptcy. There was also a political element to affecting a rapid demobilization; although Zeng Guofan had managed to crush the Taiping, there were hushed whispers in Beijing about the kind of power that Zeng had accumulated in his hands through the Xiang Army and the potential threat this posed to the imperial dynasty. Even the foreign press speculated that Zeng might turn his army north and claim the throne for himself.<sup>48</sup> There is no evidence beyond speculation that Zeng considered this possibility, but Zeng was cognizant of the rumors swirling around his triumph; thus, he knew that in order to alleviate the fears of the court, he would have to quickly disband the military force he had built up over a decade.

As a gesture of his loyalty, Zeng announced to the court on August 5<sup>th</sup> that he would disband the Xiang Army as soon as possible.<sup>49</sup> On August 14<sup>th</sup>, he claimed that this would begin immediately with half

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<sup>47</sup> Luo Ergang, *Xiangjun xin zhi*, (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1984), 196.

<sup>48</sup> Stephen Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010), 255-257.

<sup>49</sup> ZGFQJ, vol. 7, 4250.

of the core of his army stationed along the Yangzi River between Nanjing and Anqing, some 50,000 men under the command of his brother Zeng Guoquan, would be disbanded by the end of the month. In the same declaration, he also requested leave for his brother who he claimed had fallen ill from being overstressed by the effort to capture Nanjing – another way for him to signal his sincerity in disbanding the Xiang Army. A remaining 12,000 men would be put on garrison duty in Nanjing and another 15,000 men would be stationed across Anhui as they were gradually disbanded over the fall of 1864.<sup>50</sup> On the same day, Zeng also ordered the entirety of General Xiao Yanqing's (蕭衍慶) division of 9,000 men in Zhenjiang to disband as well as the remnants of Wei Zhijun's entire division of 2,500 men in southern Anhui.<sup>51</sup> Thus, in the month of August alone, Zeng had ordered the discharge of approximately 34,500 men by his own estimation.

The process of demobilization was not much of a process at all, and singularly focused on, much as in the case with the refugees and people displaced by the war, on returning soldiers home. Zeng believed that exhausted after years of war his men yearned to return to their families and farms; soldiers should “each return to their roots” as he described it.<sup>52</sup> The process was straightforward enough: weapons, ammunition, and material would be collected from the men and carefully catalogued to make sure soldiers did not bring any home with them. Officers would compile a report of all the men under their command including information such as their hometown, occupation, and family, which would be forwarded to officials in their hometown so that they could be monitored by the state after discharge. Soldiers would also be provided any rations and salary still in arrears or at least a promissory note to be redeemed in the near future. For many stationed around Nanjing, soldiers would also be provided transportation home on naval barges under armed escort; the escort was there less for the

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 4266.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 7, 4267.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 7, 4150; vol. 8, 4667-4668.

protection of soldiers and more so to ensure that soldiers were kept in order and would not jump ship.<sup>53</sup> Zeng was adamant that soldiers return home, and thought it necessary that they be compelled to return home with force if necessary. For most soldiers in the irregular army not stationed in Nanjing, they would not be given transportation directly home, but instead a travel stipend to pay for their own way home, making it impossible for officers to actually ensure that the men indeed did return home.<sup>54</sup> Once discharged, however, soldiers were no longer the responsibility of the irregular army, but the responsibility of local civil officials.

Disbanding the Xiang Army and other irregular brigades in the region would prove much more complicated than Zeng anticipated. Besides the issue of drifting soldiers, which we will shall discuss more later, the salaries of soldiers in many brigades were deeply in arrears. At the end of the war, the Xiang Army alone owed soldier 5,000,000 *taels* in rations and pay. In some of the worst cases, entire brigades were owed nearly a year's salary. The first wave of brigades promptly disbanded in August were mostly units that had been well funded throughout the war or those that were owed minimal back pay that could be more easily paid off. In some cases, officers issued soldiers promissory notes that could only be redeemed in Changsha or Nanjing at a future date, which seemed to be initially successful. For brigades deeper in the red, however, such as Bao Chao's massive division of 20,000 men, which comprised as much as a quarter of the Xiang Army's debts, Zeng opted to hold off disbandment until they could be paid back in full, which would take until as late as the end of 1866 for some brigades.<sup>55</sup>

For soldiers, demobilization was a contentious issue. Tension was palpable in the air of many brigade camps on the eve of disbandment. Prosper Giquel, a French mercenary that had served alongside many irregular brigades and former rebels in the summer of 1864 under the command of Zuo Zongtang, described the end of the war as a period with an uneasy atmosphere for many Chinese

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 7, 4668.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 7, 4150; vol. 8, 4667-4668; Also see Luo, 193.

<sup>55</sup> Luo Ergang, *Xiangjun xin zhi*, 193.

soldiers. Once the fighting had ended, soldiers were aware that they were soon to be disbanded but there was considerable confusion about the process. Officers remained tight-lipped about disbandment or gave conflicting information to their men, and when the order came it was often sudden. Giquel was expecting that his mercenary corps and the irregular brigades he fought alongside would be discharged with triumphant fanfare, only to be baffled by the impromptu suddenness of their discharge. Originally, Governor-General Zuo Zongtang told Giquel in October that his contingent would be disbanded on November 17, 1864;<sup>56</sup> the next day, however, Zuo suddenly asked that they be disbanded on November 1<sup>st</sup> instead, because Zuo was worried that his contingent “would not be as peaceful as it has been until now.”<sup>57</sup> While Giquel was not pleased with this arrangement, hoping to get another months pay for his men, he had no choice but to agree. Then, two days later, on October 19, Giquel received an immediate order to disband.<sup>58</sup> What Giquel probably did not understand was that this tension he felt rested most likely on a concern about the conduct of his men, who had been making mutinous murmurs only a month before.

Giquel also made observations among the ranks of Chinese units around him that were disbanded. In fact, the first disbanded were the former Taiping rebels that his men had fought beside in several battles. Although they had obediently fought for the Qing in the last days of the war, often serving as cannon fodder in some of the most dangerous operations, they were unceremoniously disbanded on September 5<sup>th</sup>, just a couple days after they had helped capture the city of Huzhou. As Giquel wrote in his diary: “The governor has just disbanded almost all the former rebels who fought alongside the imperial troops in the last campaign. They received their wages and were thrown into the street. What a nice breeding ground for criminals we have hatched for the province.”<sup>59</sup> The impromptu

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<sup>56</sup> Prosper Giquel, *A Journal of the Chinese Civil War*, trans. Steven A. Leibo and Debbie Weston (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 118.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

disbandment of these men does not seem to be the case alone for former Taiping adherents in the irregular army, but also a common description of disbandment for many irregulars.

Mutiny was a serious issue at the end of the war. Many soldiers in brigades deep in arrears were on the brink of mutiny as worries mounted that they would be disbanded without being given back pay. Zeng had no choice but to delay disbanding these units until they could be paid, but even then many soldiers were restless and increasingly agitated by the failure of the army to pay them as they languished in garrison duty. Protests and mutiny became all too common among the irregular brigades. After the war, for example, a large segment of Bao Chao former division (he himself retired in 1864 relinquishing command to his subordinates) was stationed along the Sichuan-Hubei border under General Song Guoyong's (宋國永), amounting to over 8,000 men. In March of 1865, the men had become frustrated by insufficient rations, the lack of pay, and the monotony of garrison duty. They protested their poor conditions and initiated a march towards the provincial capital of Hubei to demand payment. General Song pleaded with his men to have patience but instead they killed him and continued marching, arriving in the town of Jinkou, just a dozen miles from Wuchang, where they proceeded to loot the town. After that they then took over the city of Xianning (just 40 km south of Wuchang), and launched raids into neighboring Hunan and Jiangxi provinces. The mutineers were quickly put down by an irregular force hastily assembled by the Governor of Hunan, Li Hanzhang, but it marked a trend to come over the next several months.<sup>60</sup> Many other irregular units protested, rioted, and mutinied over back pay and rations, and there would be another two mutinies from Bao Chao's former division alone and dozens more from various other irregular brigades.<sup>61</sup>

Demobilization was a crucial issue for Zeng Guofan – his political future depended upon it - but it was predicated on the idea that as long as soldiers were fairly paid and returned home then they

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<sup>60</sup> *Xianning xianzhi* (1866), 979; Feng Anlan, ed., *Xianning xianzhi* (1882), 695, 696, 1142; 615; Luo, *Xiangjun xinzhì* 193.

<sup>61</sup> Luo, *Xiangjun xinzhì*, 193-195; Gu Jixi, ed., *Puqi xianzhi* (1866).

would easily slip back into civilian life on the farm. This assumption, while certainly true for many soldiers in the Xiang Army, was based in a myth about irregular soldiers that he himself helped to forge in the early years of the war and has managed to endure in the historiography of the Taiping Civil War and the Xiang Army until the present.

### *The Problem of the Xiang Army's Origin*

One of the more consistent narrative threads in explaining the effectiveness of the irregular armies and the Xiang Army in particular has been their careful selection of recruits with meticulous attention to their social background. Zeng Guofan and many officers in the irregular forces repeatedly emphasized that their soldiers were recruited solely from among the ranks of “simple and honest” (樸實) lads that were rooted on the farm and that irregular brigades shared a bond through their common hometown origins.<sup>62</sup> While this might have been an ideal held closely in the ranks of the Xiang Army, the reality for all the irregular forces fighting for the Qing, however, was much more complex, rendering such claims about the “simple and honest” agrarian roots of irregular soldiers as largely a myth. It was not always possible for officers to maintain strict compliance with these requirements considering the pressing demands of the war; moreover, the hodge-podge nature of irregular forces meant that there was little central authority to ensure they were adhered to strictly.

For Philip Kuhn, the rise of the irregular forces in the Taiping Civil War represented the pinnacle of a process of militarization in Chinese society and the professionalization of private irregular forces that stretched back to the White Lotus Rebellion at the turn of the nineteenth century. The breakdown of social stability at the turn of the nineteenth century beginning with the White Lotus War led many local officials and gentry to look towards the often-neglected *baojia* system of mutual security and

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<sup>62</sup> Luo, *Xiangjun xinzhì*, 138-139.

policing as a method to organize local militias for community defense. Militias played an important role in maintaining local stability and fighting small bands of brigands. They provided the state with an auxiliary fighting force without substantially disrupting agrarian patterns of life and production. Although traditions of Chinese imperial statecraft often looked upon the militarization of civilians as potentially dangerous, militiamen were still firmly tied to the soil and were not professional soldiers, partially assuaging the fears and concerns of the imperial court or at the very least deemed an uneasy necessity in an emergency.<sup>63</sup>

While often sufficient for minimal policing work in the countryside, militias were not well-equipped and well-trained professionals, making them inadequate when faced against larger forces of resistance in pitched battles. Thus, at moments of crisis, some officials also hired small brigades of more professionalized *yong* (勇) to help in local defense and to bolster the ranks of the regular army. *Yong* got their beginning as camp followers in the eighteenth century that the regular army would sometimes hire for some of the more dangerous work. Since these men would often be hired for the most dangerous military operations, such as storming a fortress, they came to be known as *yong*, which literally means braves. These *yong* were essentially mercenaries or soldiers-for-hire, often found among the dissolute ranks of criminals and bandits that accompanied military campaigns, which while they generally were not trusted by officials, they proved to be an expedient during times of war. By the early nineteenth century, they became a regular component of local defense during instances of crisis as local gentry and officials hired their own private brigades of *yong* to supplement regular forces. This process of ratcheting militarization would culminate in the civil wars of the mid-nineteenth century as these private brigades would come to constitute a professional irregular military force of outside the direct control of the established conventional military of the Qing Empire.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 138-139.

<sup>64</sup> Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies*, 9-15, 24-28, 151-152.

On the eve of the Taiping civil war, brigades of *yong* were still hired by local magistrates from among bandits, outlaws, and other people dispossessed by society when the conventional military seemed less effective at grappling with growing resistance to Qing rule, but as officials became more reliant on *yong* for local defense, they were also concerned about the kind of impact these *yong* had on the communities they were supposed to be protecting and their loyalty to the state. Although *yong* were effective at suppressing banditry (in which many had formerly participated) and insurrection, they could also cause more trouble than they were worth. Similar doubts also surrounded the Green Standard Army, who were typically not local, and thus were prone to harass the local population. Some officials saw local recruitment as a better alternative to maintaining security. A professional local military force was less likely to harass their own community while also providing effective security and defense. Some officials, particularly in Hunan and neighboring southwestern provinces began reigning in *yong* by carefully choosing *yong* based on their background and insisting on stricter recruitment requirements, stressing the importance of hiring locals as *yong*.<sup>65</sup> While these units were still referred to as *yong*, they were no longer the mercenary bands recruited among outlaws that they once were. By creating a more professionalized local military force, however, they were drawing men out of established agricultural communities and modes of labor and production.<sup>66</sup> With increasing regularity, magistrates hired *yong* locally for local defensive and offensive operations, which helped ensure that soldiers would not pillage local communities.

At the same time, magistrates were also more proactive in organizing local militias, but the rise of local brigades of *yong* meant the militias were less of a military necessity than they were about maintaining the loyalty of the local community. After the initial emergency of the Taiping incursion into Hunan in 1852, the role of the militia in military defense was deemphasized; instead, officials looked to

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 105-112.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.



*baojia* and militias as a way of policing local disorder and preventing people from participating in seditious activities. As Zeng Guofan pointed out as the purpose of militias in 1853, it should “emphasize the ‘unit’ and not the ‘training’,” which was a play on the word for “militia” in Chinese – a compound of the words “unit” and “training” (重團輕練).<sup>67</sup> His meaning was that the more important purpose of militias was to unite communities, allowing locals and officials to be able to distinguish between insiders (those supportive of the Qing) and outsiders (those resisting the Qing or at the least suspicious). As a military unit, however, the militia would not play a major role except under extreme conditions. Therefore, one way to look at militias is not as an unprofessional military force, but a component of local policing against potentially rebellious members in the community and local bandits.

According to Philip Kuhn, although these militias were no longer a crucial military force in local defense, they were a useful recruitment ground for local *yong* brigades. While the evidence is not quite clear, which Kuhn himself admits, it seems to be a reasonable conclusion. The earliest locally hired non-mercenary *yong* brigades were generally an extension of powerful corporate lineages. Since many communities in southern China were centered on corporate lineage identities, *baojia* often enveloped extended kinship networks, and this meant that militias were also closely integrated into corporate lineages, which would later be translated into irregular units.<sup>68</sup> This was certainly the case for Jiang Zhongyuan (江忠元), who often is pointed to as one of the architects of militias and irregular forces in the period. He built his small army of 2,000 Chu irregulars (楚勇) in Xinning county, Hunan based on his lineage’s own militia. The local lineage militia he began organizing in the mid-1840s recruited from among the poorer members of his clan, drilling them in weapons use and tactics; the purpose of these militias initially, however, was mainly to prevent poorer clan members from joining the spreading tide of insurrection. By late 1851, when the Taiping were moving towards the Hunan border, Jiang mobilized

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 145-146.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-82.

the best of his lineage militia to assist conventional forces in blocking the Taiping's northern march, which became the backbone of the irregular brigades under his command as the Chu irregulars the following year.<sup>69</sup>

Not all extended lineages could muster an entire brigade of irregulars as Jiang's clan was able to, but many irregular units were built up by recruiting from among multiple militias based on lineage connections in a particular county or prefecture. With the entry of the Taiping into Hunan in 1852, local gentry began organizing militias with greater haste, and some were cognizant that the Taiping threat would have to be met with a more professionalized force than just militias. Imitating the precedence of Jiang, Wang Zhen from Xiangxiang, Hunan, along with Luo Zenan and Luo Xinnan, began recruiting what they called "civilian-soldiers" (民兵) from among the ranks of the militia registry rolls of several prominent lineages in the area. These civilian-soldiers, over 1,000 strong, were an even more professionalized and trained component of the local militia forces, and Kuhn suggest that Wang clearly saw them as playing a larger role in the province's defense against the Taiping invaders as a model for a professionalize local defense army.<sup>70</sup>

While it is impossible to determine if all the local irregular brigades of the period followed in the footsteps of Jiang and Wang, they certainly were a source of inspiration for many irregular Hunanese brigades established in the period. When Zeng Guofan arrived on the scene in 1853 with instructions to organize local militias, he clearly saw Wang Zhen's Xiangxiang brigades and Jiang Zhongyuan's Chuyong, with whom he was both personally acquainted, as models to imitate in cobbling together the Xiang Army. He required brigades that wished to join into the Xiang Army to adhere to principles, which he clearly defined and would be repeated in numerous guides to irregular brigades for decades to come.

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-117.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 136-142, 146.

These principles that Zeng drafted seemed to be based off earlier models established by Wang, Jiang, and even Hu Linyi, and would have made militias a viable starting point in recruitment.

Among these principles, Zeng emphasized that all brigades should be recruited from a single locality. Among brigades the locality could vary. At times they recruited from a few communities within a county; at other times, men were recruited widely across a prefecture. In theory, however, brigades did not recruit men from beyond a particular prefecture were predominately highly localized within a specific county.<sup>71</sup> The locality of a brigade was often an essential part of the unit's identity and a convenient marker. Throughout the war, brigades were typically addressed by their home region: brigades from Ningxiang county were *ningyong* (寧勇); the hardy and ferocious *pingyong* (平勇) fabled in the war were from Pingjiang county, and the *hengyong* (衡勇) were from Hengzhou Prefecture. In fact, the Xiang army may have gotten its name not just because Xiang was an abbreviated term for Hunan, but also because the majority of the brigades were from Xiangxiang, Xiangyin, and Xiangtan counties along the Xiang River, which were all referred to as the *xiangyong* (湘勇) as brigades and later applied to the entire army.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, brigadiers were also from the same locality from which they recruited their men and were typically close to many soldiers through extended kinship and patronage networks. This also made personal loyalty to commanding officers for soldiers an essential component to irregular brigades, which would be reflected in the cult of loyalty so vigorously promoted by Zeng. Although these hometown connections in the irregular army emerged out of a need for local defense in Wang Zhen and Jiang Zhongyuan's cases, Zeng continued these principles as the army grew into an

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<sup>71</sup> Luo, *Xiangjun xin zhi*, 138-145.

<sup>72</sup> In fact, early in the war these irregular brigades were also referred to as the *chujun* and *chuyong*. *Chu* was an abbreviated term for Huguang, incorporating both Hunan and Hubei, but as the brigades from Xiangxiang, Xiangtan, and Xiangyin and their leadership came to dominate the irregular units in the region, the term *xiangyong* and *xiangjun* became more prevalent.

offensive force, because these connections also helped to ensure unit cohesion, discipline, and obedience.<sup>73</sup>

The hometown connections of these brigades have often been used by scholars, such as Luo Ergang, to explain the effectiveness of irregular armies in the war, arguing that these shared hometown bonds between commander and soldier as well as among soldiers were crucial for maintaining unit cohesion and discipline.<sup>74</sup> Since many soldiers fought alongside men who shared the same home county, hometown, and were in many cases from the same lineage and shared patronage networks, it meant that their deeds in war, even far from home, could easily reach back home. Moreover, it meant that officers could maintain discipline and pursue punishments for insubordination, desertion, and crimes committed in war since they knew where these men were from and knew them personally. Since soldiers and officers intimately knew the hometown origins of their comrades, soldiers were inclined to stay within the disciplinary bounds of their commanders and earnestly fight for the lives of their comrades in battle. Of course, the fact that irregular soldier were generously paid, well-armed, and rigorously drilled certainly had a considerable impact on their fighting effectiveness; nevertheless, numerous historians have seen the shared ties from home among soldiers and officers as a crucial elements of the irregular armies.<sup>75</sup>

Zeng also stressed the importance of determining the status and social background of soldiers in their local communities, which was just as important to Wang Zhen and Jiang Zhongyuan before him. Since many of the irregular brigades revolved around lineages and militias, they most likely were comprised of young men with backgrounds known to their officers and had some sort of stable status in the community mostly rooted in farm work. This would continue to be an important principle of recruitment as Zeng built his coalition of irregular Hunanese brigades. Before being inducted into the

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<sup>73</sup> Luo, *Xiangjun xinzhì*, 139.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

irregular army, officers were required to survey biographical data on potential recruits including their hometown, family, astrological information, and occupation. A strong preference was given towards strong young farmers with strong family ties and access to land.<sup>76</sup> In the sixteenth century, the renowned general and military strategist, Qi Jiguang, had also emphasized this point in his treatises, stating that “sturdy, obedient, peasant youth” should be recruited and “drifters and city-slickers” rejected outright. In the 1850s, Zeng echoed these standards: “In recruiting, the young and strong with the character of a farmer are best. If his hair is oiled and face smooth with the character of a townsperson or a yamen runner, they should not be used.”<sup>77</sup> Young farm boys were preferred in the irregular armies not only because they were believed to be able to withstand the physical rigors of military life, but also because they were seen as morally superior over crafty city folk. Country lads were seen as simple, honest, and hardworking, making them excellent candidates for soldiers, whereas town folk were viewed with suspicion as shiftless, insubordinate, and physically fragile.

Part of what made lads from a farming background morally superior was their engagement in agricultural labor itself. Countless Chinese philosophers of statecraft stretching back to the time of Confucius saw farming as a morally positive force in society that inculcated positive values that were conducive to social stability. People with access to land to farm were seen as the root of national wealth and stability, and would be unlikely to join in rebellious or heterodox movement. This moral quality supposedly found in the soil plowed by farmers would thus be reflected in the character of the troops recruited into irregular brigades. On the other hand, Qing officials tended to view people employed in trades and other professions tied to a market economy with the same misgivings they held for the vagaries of the market. They were fickle, unstable, variable, and contentious, making them poor stock from which to draw recruits for the army.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, 138; Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies*, 124-126, 145-151.

<sup>77</sup> Zeng Guofan, “*Ying gui*,” *ZFGQJ shiwen*, 463.

<sup>78</sup> Luo, *Xiangjun xin zhi*, 138; Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies*, 60, 209.

This would, of course, also have implications for demobilization at the end of the war. Men with access to land would have a stable occupation to come home to when the war was finally over. Their family farms back home, tended by relatives, would still be available to them. Those not bound to the land in agricultural work did not have the same guarantees that steady work would be waiting for them back home when they would ultimately be demobilized. Moreover, the kinds of strong family ties that were important in agrarian labor would also give soldiers from the country a reason to return after the fighting and potential support as they settled into civilian life. Therefore, the social background of soldiers rooted in agricultural labor was not only important to ensure the selection of the physically fittest, most disciplined, and morally upright soldiers possible, it was also believed to secure post-war social stability by guaranteeing a post-war livelihood for the men in service. After the war, soldiers that were originally farmers could be easily reintegrated into civilian life.

The truth of the organizational structure of the Xiang Army would prove much too complicated to fit neatly under these established guidelines for irregular brigades. The Xiang Army is often depicted as a united military organization under the command of Zeng Guofan, and has been taken by many historians to represent the entirety of irregular forces that fought in the war. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Xiang Army was not based on a formal structure, but organized along hierarchical bonds of personal loyalty. Zeng was merely at the apex of these personal relationships from which he was able to build a coalition of independent brigades.<sup>79</sup> He did certainly maintain control over considerable resources, which he could divvy up among brigades that comported themselves in line with his orders, but Zeng did not have the power nor interest to intervene in the minutiae of brigade management. It may have been possible to maintain strict control over recruitment criteria among the brigades at the center of the Xiang Army's complex network of personal relationships, but along the periphery of the Xiang Army, brigadiers looking for expedient solutions to a military crisis may not have

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<sup>79</sup> Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies*, 180-188.

been so strict; moreover, this did not stop local gentry and officials from recruiting their own irregular units outside of Zeng big-tent army.

When units were out of line, the only recourse was to order disbandment of the entire unit by impeaching the commander, because units were personally tied to their brigadier and not the irregular army. When a brigadier was impeached, his entire unit was disbanded and returned home, and an entirely new unit had to be raised to take its place, so this was not a very attractive option. This was something that Zeng did practice over wayward brigades, but only infrequently; moreover, when Zeng exercised this authority, it was typically over issues dealing with the brigadier personally, such as malfeasance or immoral conduct, and rarely the actual conduct of his men or the violation of regulations.<sup>80</sup> Zeng may not have been as bothered by the inconsistencies in the recruitment process in the face of the dire struggle at hand, and so hard realities overtook set principles.

Additionally, it was common in the war to incorporate surrendered enemy brigades *en masse*. The realities of war and the desperation of military leaders to bolster their ranks overrode concerns about the loyalty and social origins of surrendered enemies. Entire brigades switched sides according to the shifting winds of the war with some units changing sides multiple times in order to preserve their life, property, wealth, and position. Some were even rewarded with substantive positions within the Qing imperial bureaucracy (and the Taiping most likely did as well, but there is little direct evidence).<sup>81</sup> Several Taiping Kings and prominent general, such as Wei Zhijun, Liu Weizhen, and Deng Guangming, surrendered to the Qing and were incorporated into the Xiang Army. While the men in these units came from uncertain backgrounds, officials and military commanders showed little concern about the origins of the men serving in these units.

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<sup>80</sup> Luo, *Xiangjun xin zhi*, 147.

<sup>81</sup> Zheng, "Loyalty, Anxiety and Opportunism," 39-83.

It is also important to note Zeng's Xiang army was not the only irregular army that fought in the conflict, and it is hazardous to assume that Zeng's ideal was practiced universally among all irregular forces. Numerous counties, prefectures, cities, and provinces built up their own irregular brigades and coalition armies. There are of course the more well-known irregular armies such as the Huai army led by Li Hongzhang and Chu army led by Zuo Zongtang, which were spin-offs of the Xiang army later in the war, but there were lesser known irregular armies such as the Chuan, Wan, Su, Gan, and Yu armies that operated along the periphery of the war or were formed much later. Additionally, there were many irregular brigades hired by magistrates for local defense or limited offensive campaigns. These units were individually small, but most likely made up the majority of the irregular forces fighting in the civil war for the Qing. Some of these irregular forces were actually quite large; the Yangzhou Defense Army, which cobbled together remnant Green Standard Army troops defeated after the Second Battle of the Jiangbei Encampment and local *yong* for the purpose of defending the city of Yangzhou and northern Jiangsu province, was comprised of 20,000 to 30,000 men.<sup>82</sup> These armies, which made up a significant portion of the irregular fighting forces arrayed against the Taiping, were well outside the direct control of Zeng Guofan, and it should not be assumed that these other irregular forces necessarily followed in Zeng's model.

Despite the constant reiteration in sources on irregular brigades selection criteria, the reality was much more complex. While it was almost certainly an ideal maintained in the beginning, as the war progressed, officers and generals had to make difficult decisions, and the most expedient decisions for the war effort were not necessarily decisions that adhered to the principles set out in the formative years of the irregular armies. Many brigades even within the Xiang Army recruited would replenish their ranks and hire reinforcements wherever they happened to be stationed, and when Taiping units surrendered, they were often included in the irregular forces. Irregular armies were not centrally

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<sup>82</sup> Xie Yangeng, ed., *Jiangdu xianzhi* (1883), 1047; ZGFQJ, vol. 7, 4282, 4283.



controlled, but were more so a coalition of largely independent brigades that did not necessarily follow the rules stipulated by their supposed superiors. This meant that Zeng and other leading military men in the irregular armies, even if they themselves emphasized the importance of recruiting hardy young farm boys all from the same hometown, were not always in a position to ensure its enactment; nonetheless, they would continue to present irregular soldiers as being from such backgrounds well after the war was over. As the war drew to a close in 1864 and Zeng moved to demobilize the Xiang army, many officials would begin to question the myth of the hardy Hunanese farm boys in the irregular armies in their discussions of reconstruction.

### *Reconstruction and the Debate over Drifting Soldiers*

Despite Zeng's carefully crafted image of irregular soldiers, the complex vicissitudes of an irregular army came to rear their head in official discussions at the end of the war. A significant number of irregular troops were lingering in formerly occupied territories, which deeply worried Qing officials attempting reestablish rule over their jurisdictions. Prominent officials - both civil and military - many of whom were active in the war but not closely affiliated with the Xiang Army, began to question the background of irregular soldiers in discussions of reconstruction, and were critical of the haphazard demobilization of irregulars. These officials began forwarding proposals to the imperial court for deliberation to find a solution that would reintegrate irregular soldiers back into civilian life. Some of these plans put up for discussion, though they were ultimately either rejected or left unimplemented, reveal a view of demobilization as a crucial part of reconstruction that went beyond ideas of state power and responsibility expressed in past conflicts. The architects of these plans demonstrate a perspective that saw interventionist policies, much like those to resettle those displaced by the war, as crucial to

post-war stability, arguing that the state needed to take action in reintegrating soldiers into civilian life lest they become the root of future rebellion and calamity.

Complaints of drifting soldiers disbanded from the irregular army began as early as 1861 - well before Zeng began his massive demobilization of the irregular forces in 1864 - but these reports did not surface in imperial correspondence, as the war itself occupied the majority of official attention.<sup>83</sup> As a Qing victory came within sight, local officials began complaining to their superiors and military officers about drifting soldiers loitering in their districts and harassing local communities. Out of these reports came a discussion among high-ranking officials about developing some sort of procedure for demobilization and creating policies that would ease the transition of veterans into a settled post-war civilian life. Despite numerous claims by Zeng Guofan throughout the war that the vast majority of his troops were landed country boys from Hunan, many of these officials began questioning these narratives, suggesting a laxness in recruitment that enabled morally questionable sorts into the irregular forces. It seemed that a significant number of irregular soldiers had no home or occupation to return to after the war, and this presented a challenge to their mission to reestablish peace and stability in the provinces torn by war; therefore, the focus of the discussion was on what to do with these unemployed veterans. The kinds of proposals put out were reinterpretation of policies well-established in antiquity for a new purpose and on a much greater scale than had ever been considered before, including the establishment of state farms in the Jiangnan region to resettle veterans, transferring unemployed troops to Green Standard Army, and establishing a pension program for veterans to aid their resettlement into civilian life.

These debates over drifting soldiers at the end of the war revolved around the question of how to appropriately *anzhi* (安置) veterans, which could either mean vaguely “to make arrangements” or more concretely “to resettle on land”; more literally, it meant “pacify and situate.” Many of the

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<sup>83</sup> *Yixian zhi* (1870), 2206.

proposals that suggested some form of *anzhi* for veterans meant it in either sense of the word as a “resettlement” or “arrangement.” Either way, these kinds of proposals ran contrary to what Zeng Guofan thought was necessary for veterans, believing that all that was required was that veterans returned home. Claims that soldiers needed some kind of “resettlement” or “arrangement” implied that veterans had no home or occupation to which to return at the war’s end. Therefore, the debate devolved into two positions: on the one hand, Zeng Guofan and many of those closest to him, who emphasize the importance of ensuring that soldiers returned home; and on the other hand, several officials and military men who, although some served as commanders of irregular units during the war, were not directly a part of Zeng’s complex of irregular provincial armies: they argued for the need to establish some sort of state led “arrangement” or “resettlement” for veterans as a part of post-war reconstruction.

Questions about drifting soldiers emerged just before Zeng announced the demobilization of the Xiang Army and other irregular units in August, 1864. The man who first broached the issue came not among the typical commanding ranks of the irregular army, but a Manchu general from the White Banner of the Eight Banner Army by the name of Fuminga (富明阿, 1805-1882). Fuminga was an experienced commander in the civil war with the scars to prove it. As a Lieutenant General from the White Banner, he commanded banner troops in some of the bloodiest battles of the war north of the Taiping capital and the Yangzhou area, including the Battle of the Jiangbei Encampment in 1858. After the Battle of the Jiangbei Encampment, the regular forces in the area were in complete disarray, having suffered a terrible defeat at the hands of the Taiping. Desperate to rebuild their forces in the region, Fuminga’s superiors decided to incorporate new irregular units recruited locally in the Yangzhou area into the regular army. This new mixed unit army became known as the Yangzhou Defense Army and was comprised of men from the Eight Banners, the Green Standard Army, and local irregular *yong* brigades. In 1859, Fuminga was gravely injured in a skirmish at Bailong Temple that left him with a dozen stab

wounds, which put him out of commission until 1863. In 1864, just as the war was coming to an end, he was awarded the title of the General of Jiangning, which made him the ranking military general of all Eight Banner forces in the region as well as inheritor of the hodgepodge Yangzhou Defense Army.<sup>84</sup>

As the General of Jiangning at the end of the war, Fuminga was responsible for overseeing the disbandment of the irregular forces in the Yangzhou Defense Army. In the early summer of 1864, shortly before Nanjing fell, Zeng Guofan ordered Fuminga to disband the irregulars of the Yangzhou Defense Army in order to save on funding.<sup>85</sup> The ultimate defeat of the Taiping seemed close at hand, and Zeng was urgently looking for ways to save on military cost in face of the massive debt the army had incurred over years of warfare. Fuminga dutifully began disbanding the Yangzhou Defense Army, numbering somewhere in the area of 6,000 irregulars. Within in a couple months, however, it became clear that disbanded troops were becoming a nuisance to local officials and a latent portent of future disorder. In fact, one former soldier from the Yangzhou Defense Army, Chen Yushu, took to highway robbery after being discharged and had murdered several people in the area with the rifle he had kept from his service – a case that from its casual reference in memorials seems to have been a well-known scandal. He was eventually captured and summarily executed in late 1864; Chen represented one of many drifting soldiers. Officials were more fearful of drifting soldiers gathering in large gangs, such as one reported by Fuminga in June, 1864, where an unspecified number of discharged veterans had gathered at a temple near Sidunzi, Jiangsu, located on the Taiping Islet in the middle of Yangzi River just 30 km east of Zhenjiang.<sup>86</sup> While there are few specific details on many of these gangs, they were more common than most officials seemed willing to admit, which is evident from the deep concern they shared about the presence of discharged veterans.

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<sup>84</sup> Zhao Erxuan, ed., *Qing shi gao*, (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), 417:31.

<sup>85</sup> *ZGFQJ*, vol. 7, 4118.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

Several months after disbanding the Yangzhou Defense Army, with reports of drifting soldiers beginning to pour in, Fuminga drafted a proposal for deliberation among the Grand Councilors that suggested they look towards tried-and-tested policies of state farms to resettle soldiers. In his memorial dated June 26, 1864, he complained that “it has been stated that in places like Jiangsu and Zhejiang there are ever more discharged soldiers each day, but there is no method for their resettlement [安置], and these troubles could lead to future calamities.”<sup>87</sup> The potential danger, as Fuminga saw it, was that many of these veterans did not have land or an occupation after the war to support them and keep them out of trouble; thus, it was crucial that a meticulous survey be made of the employment prospects of soldiers before they were discharged. As Fuminga put it:

Before being disbanded, local officials should order officers to interview the soldiers in questions to ascertain if they have an occupation [業] to return to, land to farm, or family members to support them in their hometown. This should be recorded down in a registry provided to the local official, and disbandment should be handled according to the registry.<sup>88</sup>

Only soldiers that had an occupation, access to land, or family in their hometown to support them would be allowed to return home. These soldiers had the financial resources to settle back into civilian life and were believed to pose little danger to the community.

Veterans that were unemployed, had no family, and no occupation in their hometown were potentially dangerous and needed to be carefully managed by the state. Fuminga found inspiration in time-honored frontier policies of state farms, but much like Yan Ruyi before him, he saw state farms not so much as for the revenue and logistical support it could bring the military as originally intended, but as a way to ensure post-war social stability among the ranks of veterans of the war. Such a proposal must have struck people as both logical and yet unusual at the same time. As Fuminga pointed out, “In the area between Meng, Ying, Feng, and Pi [Northern Anhui], there are vast stretches of fallow land as far as the eye can see; and for a thousand *li* in Jiangsu and Zhejiang there are stretches of desolate land,” and

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 7, 4149-4150.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

thus it made sense to find “a method to resettle [them] on state farms” in the lands laid waste and abandoned by the war for those veterans that had no home or occupation to which to return.<sup>89</sup> This was a policy that mirrored the kinds of resettlement policies being discussed for civilians and the deposition of abandoned lands going on at the same time. This idea must have also seemed strange because it was applying an institution better known as a part of frontier statecraft than it was in the cultural and economic nucleus of the Qing Empire. It suggested that the war had been so utterly devastating that the once prosperous core of the Lower Yangzi Delta had been rendered into a scarcely populated frontier where land was abundant. More likely though, it reflected a borrowing from traditions of statecraft on post-war reconstruction that were more associated with the frontier than the imperial core.

Yet, Fuminga was not the only nor was he the first to propose opening the lands abandoned and devastated by war to state farms. Nearly a year earlier, Zheng Xiying raised the possibility of the state taking possession of abandoned lands as part of a system of state farms, and many years after the war, Huang Xitong (黃錫彤), a salt gabelle commissioner, would continue such calls for state farms in the Jiangnan region to resettle drifting soldiers.<sup>90</sup> Zheng partially argued that state farms could serve as a place to settle disbanded soldiers and civilians: “In the future when the [occupied] cities have been retaken, those irregular soldiers without an occupation to rely upon... will not have to just sit in hunger and cold. If they are discharged and sent to state farms, they will be able to provide themselves with food and clothing and preventing any renewed troubles.”<sup>91</sup> Although he argued for state farms as providing the benefit of settling disbanded soldiers, his focus was primarily on the issue of providing income for the desperately underfunded military and state. There was no concern about drifting soldiers and social stability in Jiangnan, such as Fuminga expressed. In fact, Zheng suggested that civilian tenants

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 3780-3742; *Muzong Yi Huangdi Shi Lu*, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 161:14.

<sup>91</sup> ZGFQJ, 3780-3782.

and not so much soldiers themselves would actually farm state farms – a plan that more resembled the kind of schemes that would ultimately be followed by Qing officials after the war.

In this sense, Fuminga was discussing state farms in a very different way than Zheng or other Qing officials that made such suggestions at the end of the war. He was merely borrowing the terminology of state farms to describe a resettlement project for veterans, because his proposal bore little resemblance to the original intent, purpose, and operation of state farms long practiced on the frontier and suggested by other officials. For men like Zheng Xiyong, the term “state farms” was a practice in frontier statecraft used to support the military financially and logistically. Fuminga’s usage of the term suggest something very different, and may better be described as an attempt to find a corollary with a legitimate basis in precedent that could be easily grasped by other officials. Regardless, his description, however vague, was clearly distinct from the established meaning of “state farms” along the frontier, and instead revealed a kind of policy primarily concerned with maintaining social stability among former soldiers. Fuminga was not concerned with issues of military funding, but finding a place where veterans would have a stable livelihood and would prevent them from turning to crime.

Ultimately, despite his ambitious plans for establishing state farms, Fuminga’s proposal did not generate substantial debate and veterans for the most part were never resettled on state farms or any kind of land or occupation as far as I have been able to deduce. This seems quite odd considering the fact that, as previously discussed, officials were zealously recruiting settlers for much of the 1860s and 1870s to resettle abandoned lands in the Jiangnan region. It seems as if it would have been very easy to incorporate veterans into such programs, so why were veterans of the irregular army left out? Two factors seemed to have been working against this possibility: for one, Zeng Guofan opposed resettling veterans on state farms, because, as he claimed, Xiang Army soldiers from landed farming families in Hunan, and thus would not be necessary. Any implementation of a resettlement program for veterans would contradict his claims about the background of his soldiers, leaving Zeng open to criticism. Instead,

Zeng emphasized that soldiers should “each return to their roots” and “return home” under the careful supervision of the state.<sup>92</sup> The second reason, which we will discuss in greater detail shortly, is that after the war most local officials were opposed to allowing disbanded soldiers into their community. Veterans were a suspect class of rough men that they believed would only cause trouble in their district; local officials spent their energies in expelling drifting soldiers, and not providing them with land to remain.

Fuminga was not the only official anxious about drifting soldiers. The Censor of Shandong, Chen Tingjing, who had proposed changing the provincial borders as a part of his suggestions for reconstruction (See, Chapter 2), also proposed in the same memorial transferring irregular soldiers who might cause trouble in the regular Green Standard Army. Chen was just as worried about reports of veterans becoming criminals after being discharged as he was about former criminals having been allowed into the ranks of the irregular army. As Chen stated:

Ever since we allowed surrendered troops [降卒, ie. Taiping soldiers that had surrendered] to join our ranks, the flow has been non-stop. They continually flip sides surrendering and rebelling to the point that the soldiers of each province recruited into the major irregular armies are nothing but jobless vagrants who have become bloodthirsty and see murder and arson as a common sight! [皆無業游民性成凶悍殺人放火視為故常] Even if we send them back to farming, there will not be peace.<sup>93</sup>

The censor believed that proposals that sought to resettle soldiers, such as Fuminga suggested, would not be enough. Irregular soldiers were vagrants by nature or former rebels that had surrendered, and the war had made them into ferocious bloodthirsty brutes that needed to be contained and controlled. It would be impossible to expect them to settle down in a peaceful rural life on the farm, because they were morally corrupted men.

He even pointed to several recent cases in which former veterans, after being discharged and resettled, had turned to wantonly looting local communities. Some of the irregulars that fought in

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 8, 4931.

<sup>93</sup> Chen Tingjing, “*Shanhou shiyi zouyi*,” Duo Qicai, ed., *Qishui xianzhi* (1880), 2401-2412, 2405; Also see summary in *Muzong Yi Huangdi Shi Lu*, 75:4.



Suzhou in the Huai Army had been recruited in Guangdong. Shortly after being discharged and sent back to Guangdong in 1864, there were numerous incidents (he claimed 17 total in the previous month) of these former soldiers robbing and looting in several counties in the Pearl River delta within their first month back.<sup>94</sup> One such group near Guangdong and Xiangshan had gathered into a gang of over a thousand men, stolen boats, and proceeded to hound merchants plying the waters. Chen went so far as to accuse the Governor-General of Liangguang, Mao Hongbin, of shamefully hiring these veterans-turned-brigands again into the local irregular army, which only exacerbated the problem as these men now used their new official status to extort locals for “donations” (勒捐), which had alienated local merchants. This scandal was made all the more scandalous because “it was carried in the news of the detestable foreigners.” (切齒外國載之新聞).<sup>95</sup>

For Chen, irregular soldiers were morally contaminated by their supposed background and experience of the war, and thus they could not be resettled into a peaceful civilian life. At the same time, as the censor of Shandong deeply entrenched in the ongoing conflict with Nian insurgents, he was woefully aware of how inadequate the regular troops were for the crisis. While the Taiping had been defeated in 1864, the Nian had surged forward with increasingly bold resistance against Qing authority, and the troops of the local Green Standard garrisons were pitifully undermanned, ill-equipped, and suffered from poor morale.<sup>96</sup> Many officials had already begun lobbying for Zeng Guofan or Li Hongzhang to send a contingent of irregulars north to reinforce the regular army after the fall of Nanjing, because the regular army had repeatedly failed in containing the Nian insurgents, who

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<sup>94</sup> *Qishui xianzhi*, 2405.

<sup>95</sup> An interesting quote, showing that he was reading foreign newspapers or was aware of them, and found it problematic that the dirty laundry of the Empire as being aired in the foreign press. I speculate he was less worried about what such news bore for the Empire's image abroad, and more so that foreign powers could use it as a pretext to demand more treaty rights. *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Elizabeth J. Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), 127.

threatened the capital.<sup>97</sup>Chen saw in this a solution to both the military crisis in the North China Plain as well as other parts of the empire in conflict and the issue of demobilization in the Jiangnan and mid-Yangzi River region; soldiers of the irregular army could be transferred to the Green Standard Army permanently: “Select among the most skillful and capable of these surrendered soldiers and deserters [降卒逃勇, ie. from the context, he clearly meant it as a derogatory term for irregular soldiers] to reinforce the ranks of the Green Standard Army man for man.” This would enable the state to “keep them under control so they don’t cause renewed sprouts [of rebellion] to emerge by them gathering together. Thus their strength is divided and weakened.”<sup>98</sup> He then went on into detail suggesting specific military post that were in desperate need of reinforcement not only in the North China Plain, but also in other parts of the empire where local garrisons were undermanned. His point was to recruit the most unsavory members of the irregular army and incorporate them into the Green Standard Army, allowing the state to replenish its ranks with veterans and, as an added bonus, maintain state supervision and control over potentially destabilizing social elements.

Just as with Chen’s suggestion of redrawing the administrative boundaries of Jiangsu and Anhui previously discussed, his discussion of transferring irregular troops to the regular imperial army was deeply rooted in more established statecraft tradition of post-war reconstruction that emphasized shoring up military preparedness. While he shared concerns about the social implications of demobilization along the Yangzi River for local stability, his discussion focused more on the minutiae of redeployments, suggesting that not only should the Green Standard garrisons of the North China Plain be reinforced and incorporate irregular troops, but other places of the empire where garrisons were undermanned, such as the Hanzhong region of southern Shaanxi, should also be reinforced. The Hanzhong region was not at this time under any specific military threat, but instead, Chen saw it as a

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<sup>97</sup> ZGFQJ, vol. 8, 4387.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 2406.

preemptive military preparation for any future disorder by increasing the Qing's hold over the strategic region. He cited historical precedent, claiming that in previous dynasties control over the Hanzhong region played a decisive military role by controlling vital mountain passes that allowed armies to move between northern and southern China. These discussions reveal that Chen's chief concern lay not with maintaining social stability per se, although that certainly was an additional benefit, but in military control and preparedness, reflecting yet again a very different and older idea of post-war reconstruction than many officials at the time exhibited.

For the most part, Zeng Guofan's response to both Fuminga and Chen Tingjing's proposals for settlement of wayward veterans of the irregular army in either state farms or the regular army was outright rejection and denial. These proposals struck at the heart of one of Zeng Guofan's claims about the effectiveness and discipline of his troops that, chiefly, they were all landed men with common family and hometown connections, and these proposals presented an affront to these claims. They implied that the men of the Xiang Army were comprised of many landless, unemployed, and rootless vagrants, brigands, or former rebels, which Zeng strongly denied:

Since the very beginning, in recruiting Xiang irregulars, we selected village farmers [鄉里農民]. Most have an occupation; very few are rootless. Once back pay has been paid, they can be safely returned home and will not cause any further complications. As to claims of recruitment of reinforcements [during the war], there have been many accusations in this regard, but your humble servant does not believe this to be the case.<sup>99</sup>

In this case, Zeng was either willfully ignorant of the reality of the men under his command or he was attempting to protect the legacy of the Xiang Army and his own reputation for maintaining order among the ranks of the Xiang Army by denying to his superiors in Beijing the possibility that the Xiang Army harbored potential elements of social disorder.

He also saw these proposals as impractical, and in this sense his objections may have been founded. In response to Fuminga's claims, he argued that there were too many poor men among the

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<sup>99</sup> ZGFQJ, vol. 7, 4250; also see, vol 8., 4670 and 4742.

ranks of his army that would jump at the opportunity for premium state farm land in the Jiangnan region, making it an expensive proposition for the state during a period strained finances. Moreover, he claimed that the abandoned lands were scattered across the region and not concentrated, which would make it exceedingly difficult to keep an eye on veterans in civilian life and collect revenue from state farms.<sup>100</sup> Zeng found Chen Tingjing's proposal even more unfeasible and berated the folly of his plan. Most soldiers in the irregular army were typically much better paid than regular soldier. Asking well-paid and experienced veterans to take a pay cut in the regular army was not something Zeng believed most his men would do willingly:

The salary of irregular troops is twice that of cavalymen [in the Green Standard Army] and four times that of garrison soldiers [in the Green Standard Army]. The rations for the cavalry are pathetically little, and garrison soldiers only receive a stipend 1 *tael* a month, which isn't even enough to provide for their food and clothing. Who would be willing to go 1,000 *li* away for a position that didn't pay enough to provide for their food and clothing? Even if you wanted to use honest and hardy soldiers from Hunan to reinforce the Green Standard Army in Sanjiang, they would not be willing. The only ones willing are the drifting rootless ones [游隨無歸者].<sup>101</sup>

As Zeng concluded, "thus, state farms are something we cannot do, and reinforcing the [regular] soldiers is also something [the irregular troops] will not be willing to do [屯田固非所能，補兵亦非所願]".<sup>102</sup>

One proposal for making arrangements for irregular soldiers at the end of the war that garnered more support, or at least little criticism, was a proposal forwarded by the Governor of Jiangxi, Shen Baozhen, from one of his subordinates Duan Qi. Like many other Hunanese men of his generation, Duan participated in the war as a brigade captain, but he was not a part of the larger Xiang Army complex centered on Zeng. In fact, he had visited Zeng early in the war in a bid to gain a position among his growing personal staff, but Zeng denied him a position. Duan, nonetheless, found a position in Shen's personal bureaucracy, and was given command of a local irregular brigade in eastern Jiangxi. Towards the end of the war, he was promoted as the superintendent of military logistics in Jiangxi, making him

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<sup>100</sup> ZGFQJ, vol. 8, 4671.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

responsible for supplying mopping up operations against remaining Taiping loyalists along the Jiangxi-Fujian-Zhejiang border. As a superintendent of provincial logistics, he was close to many issues of post-war reconstruction, and his experience commanding men in the war made him closely attuned to the inner workings and potential dangers of irregular soldiers.<sup>103</sup>

As the issue of demobilization began to move to the forefront of official discussion in the fall of 1864, Duan also raised concerns about the variable and disorganized recruitment practices during the war that allowed less-than-ideal men into the irregular army, which could potentially lead to post-war disorder:

Since the war began, each province has recruited irregular troops. At first, importance was attached to carefully selecting [recruit], but this caution was an intention at the beginning that quickly came to an end. As the war progressed, the portents of future troubles increased as problems were made worse. Partially as an expediency to assist in fighting a strengthening rebel [force] and their desperate need for men in defense, brigades did no carefully select [recruit] in the emergency, recruiting anywhere they were and often putting people from different places together as a family. There were some brigades and divisions that in the beginning were all from the same county or prefecture, but because many died in battle or of illness, they added to their numbers wherever they were, and they could not maintain the same standards with these replacements. There were even those among the rebels that extricated themselves from their evil and joined us. They were ordered into brigades where they served, and these people banded together those from every corner. Soldiers have been deployed for a long time, but hiring irregulars was more common, and obtaining these people was particularly arbitrary and random.<sup>104</sup>

His complaints were particularly against past practices that allowed men from different places and unclear backgrounds into the ranks of the irregular army, which resulted in soldiers that no longer shared common hometown bonds that made them loyal and kept discipline in check. With so many replacements and new recruits from places unfamiliar, commanders could not be certain of the background of his their men. Duan also pointed out that some were former rebels (although it seems in most cases, former Taiping soldiers were kept in segregated units, and more often than not, they were the exact same units from the Taiping), which carried with other concerns about their loyalty to the

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<sup>103</sup> Zhao, *Qing shi gao*, 451.

<sup>104</sup> ZGFQJ, vol. 8, 4669-4670.

state. With unclear backgrounds and origins, Duan assumed the worst: that they were possibly rootless laborers, mercenaries, criminals, bandits, former rebels, and other unsavory characters that he believed were prone to cause trouble.

At the same time, Duan also saw irregular soldiers as men that made contributions and sacrifices for the state that should be recognized, even if they were less than perfect. Unlike the usual way in which most officials talked about drifting soldiers, Duan was sympathetic to the plight of veterans and believed they were deserving of the state's assistance. He makes it clear that even though some soldiers may turn to life of rootless wandering and criminal activity, "these drifting soldiers had once given their all in the brigades and are men of official rank [該游勇等有曾經在營立功保有官職之人]."<sup>105</sup> He also reminded officials that "these soldiers each has the potential for good by nature [該勇丁等各具天良]," and were thus deserving of the state's benevolent assistance for their service.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, not all soldiers should be condemned because some became criminals; "numerous soldiers served in the irregular armies, each of varying moral quality [勇丁人數即多莠良不一], and thus should not be universally condemned because of the actions of a few."<sup>107</sup> Failure to see to the livelihood of soldiers after the war would be to "abandon" (棄) them, to forget their sacrifices, and to punish the majority for the crimes of a few, pushing them all into a life of crime, banditry, and sedition.<sup>108</sup> These former soldiers were not to be disparaged and condemned as criminals, but deserved their sympathy and assistance.

To prevent veterans from becoming drifters and potential criminals, the proposal that Duan put forward articulated a plan that would "succor" (養) soldiers through a pension intended to keep veterans loyal to the state and keep them from becoming a social problem. Veterans that returned

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 4675

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 4671.

home should be provided a regular pension based upon the regular stipend rate provided to regular soldiers of the Green Standard Army of equivalent rank. According to Duan Qi's proposal, this stipend would be awarded every three months (once every season) according to their rank at the time of their discharge. Officers of the highest rank, such as Division Commanders, (rank 1a-b) should receive a yearly stipend of 81 *liang*. Mid-level officers, such as lieutenants, brigadiers, and captains (rank 2a-3b) should receive a monthly allowance of 5 *dou* (37.5kg) of rice. For all lower ranks, sergeants, corporals, and privates in the irregular army, they would be awarded a monthly allowance of 2.5 *dou* (18.75kg) of rice.<sup>109</sup>

For Duan, this pension was not only about providing an income for veterans as they settled back into civilian life, although that was important, but was tantamount to a formal recognition of their rank as if they were members of the regular army and recognized their service in a way that was visible to their home communities. There were several benefits, he argued, to this recognition and financial remuneration. For one, it was a way for the imperial court to demonstrate their benevolent grace and gratitude to veterans for their service, thus securing their continued loyalty to the empire by giving meaning to their service. Veterans that felt appreciated for their contributions in the war were likely to stay loyal and would hesitate to sully their contributions by joining local secret societies and bandits. On top of that, recognizing their rank officially with a substantive stipend would give their contributions to the war a mark of prestige and value in local communities, which meant veterans would want to maintain their reputation as loyal servants of the emperor in the eyes of the community. Furthermore, if veterans joined in any illegal or illicit activities, they could be cut off from the stipend, which would make veterans think twice before causing trouble. As Duan argued, only stupid veterans would continue to cause trouble if it meant losing their stipend and their smarter comrades would actively admonish and discourage any troublemakers. Moreover, veterans could serve as important assets to local

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 4673.

communities if their loyalty was secured through such recognition, because they could be called upon to assist the local government in bandit suppression, and even work to dissuade any local veterans “that could provide sanctuary for any drifting soldiers and brigand types that might come from the outside [凡外來游勇匪類非有窩留之人]. Lastly, if veterans were properly cared for by the state with a regular pension, any other rebels, bandits, or secret societies that might emerge there would find it difficult to find recruits among veterans – something that worried many Qing officials.<sup>110</sup> For Duan, providing for veterans financially was about more than straight-forward issues of livelihood, but also an issue of recognition, prestige, and reputation, and this was certainly something that many Qing officials at the time strongly supported.

Duan Qi would later be well known for his particular attention to veteran issues in the post-war period. His proposal for a veteran pension and providing stipends to those that went home are prominently mentioned in several of his biographies, including *The Draft History of the Qing*. Multiple biographies of Duan note that he was deeply respected by soldiers at the end of the war for his advocacy on their behalf.<sup>111</sup> According to one story that appears in two different versions of his biography, in 1865 an entire brigade in Bao Chao’s division had mutinied in protest to their officers unfairly distributing their rations. Once Duan had heard of the mutiny, he quickly rode out alone to negotiate with the mutineers, riding straight through the entrance of their encampment. He was immediately set upon by the guards who managed to cut his cheek (or nose in another version). Before he could be killed, however, one of the mutinying officers recognized Duan and yelled out “That’s Duan, Director of Military Logistics!” Immediately, the mutineers threw down their weapons and kowtowed to him, submitting to him and surrendering to Qing authority. This story was probably more apocryphal than anything else, but it does suggest that Duan was well regarded among irregular soldiers

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 4674.

<sup>111</sup> Zhao, *Qing shi gao*, 451; Li Hanzhang, ed., *Hunan tongzhi* (1885), 14019.



because of his concern for the welfare of soldiers and that he was willing to intervene personally when he believed they were treated unfairly.<sup>112</sup>

There is no record of Zeng Guofan response to Duan Qi's proposal, if he even responded at all, so it is unclear what Zeng thought about Duan's criticism of the Xiang Army and his proposal for veteran pensions. We do, however, have a reply from Qiao Songnian, the Governor of Anhui Province, recorded in the *Qing Veritable Records*. Although Qiao vaguely agreed with Duan that there should be some "method established to support their [veterans'] needs" (設法糊口), he was much more concerned about the officers in the irregular army than the rank-and-file troops. Instead, he suggested that officers be allowed to sit for the military service examination after their discharge, and if they successfully passed the exam, they could be inducted into the Green Standard Army.<sup>113</sup> Qiao's suggestion was essentially about retaining the experience of officers by providing them a pension from the Green Standard Army, if they passed the examination, and also recognition of their contributions in the irregular army. He was not concerned about drifting soldiers like Duan Qi was, and his suggestion was essentially a modification of Duan's proposal to the point that it was no longer directed towards the same goal of post-war stability that Duan espoused. Nonetheless, Qiao's modified proposal was accepted by the Grand Council and disseminated through an edict.

Although these proposals were essentially rejected, they exhibit the kind of shift in post-war reconstruction that emphasized the role of the state in establishing social stability through strong state policies and programs. This was an altogether different idea of the state, its function, and its obligations that saw social stability as leading to the stability of the state. Zeng may have been correct that such ideas were infeasible for a state financially strapped and politically shaken, but that did not change the fact that many officials understood the state as being able to do more for its subjects and veterans than

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<sup>112</sup> *Hunan tongzhi*, 14019

<sup>113</sup> *Qing shi lu*, juan 85.

considered in the past. It also reveals that many officials were beginning to question whether or not the militarization that had been engendered by the war might portend more instability and conflict in the future. By recruiting, training, and arming people they deemed morally repugnant or at the least suspect, they wondered whether or not demobilization was unleashing a tide of drifting vagrants and brigands upon an unsuspecting civilian population.

### *Reinstituting Law and Order: Expelling Drifting Soldiers*

Despite Zeng's denial that drifting soldiers presented any problem to local governments, reports of drifting soldiers robbing, looting, and pillaging the post-war landscape were common, which presented a challenge for reinstating law and order in war ravaged region. For the most part, officials continued to repeat Zeng's mantra that "each should return to their roots" for many years after the war even to little effect.<sup>114</sup> The issue of drifting soldiers became a crucial part of local efforts to enforce law and order as local officials reinstated *baojia* policing and militias under the banner of protecting the community not from rebels but from drifting soldiers that plagued their community. Post-war law and order focused on expelling suspicious people in general and through violent means if necessary, and the most questionable outsiders were those that seemed to be former irregulars, and this would hold true not only for the devastated regions of Jiangnan, but also for Hunanese soldiers that did actually return home. Irregular soldiers were typed and marked by communities as a dangerous and criminal lot that needed to be expelled by force if necessary.

After being discharged, soldiers were essentially on their own. Zeng Guofan had absolved the irregular brigades and their commanders of any responsibility to their men after being discharged. Demobilization meant that soldiers were to return to civilian life as normal subjects without any special

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<sup>114</sup> ZGFQJ, vol. 7, 4250.

privileges or consideration. The ruined city of Nanjing was full of discharged veterans at the end of the war; many of whom did not return home and decided to settle in the city. Zeng, however, made it entirely clear that he had washed his hands of any obligation to his former soldiers, particularly if they were not Hunanese, and despite his claims to wish to reintegrate them into civilian life. This was made abundantly clear in one incident in Nanjing in late 1864: a group of former Xiang Army soldiers had taken up residence in an abandoned home. When the Baojia Bureau, which we will discuss momentarily, came to register them for the baojia night patrols, the former soldiers refused claiming they were not locals and were former soldiers, and thus were exempt from any obligation to serve in the local *baojia*. When the Baojia Bureau brought this issue up with Zeng, he replied that only active service members were exempt from *baojia* responsibilities, but soldiers that were disbanded and residing in the city were no longer the military's responsibility, and should be considered normal subjects with all accompanying duties required of a subject.<sup>115</sup> As former soldiers, they were no longer privileged in the same ways they once were and should still serve in the local *baojia*.

Since the irregular military no longer had any obligation towards veterans, the issue of drifting soldiers fell on the shoulders of civil officials. Although former soldiers were tolerated in the hollowed out city of Nanjing as settlers, soldiers were not warmly welcomed outside of Jiangning Prefecture. Officials focused their effort on expelling soldiers from their jurisdiction as an extension of Zeng's policy of returning soldiers home. Several unnamed bureaus were established across Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces by their respective governors that granted amnesty to drifting soldiers that turned themselves in and allowed the state to send them home. These bureaus were generally described as bureaus that "collected discharged soldiers to escort beyond the [mountain] passes" (收留散勇送下關) and were predicated on the notion that the reason soldiers "failed" to return home was because they lacked the

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<sup>115</sup> Han Chenggeng, Luo Zhenyue, et al., eds., *Zeng Guofan quanji: pidu* (Changsha: Yuelu Shuju, 1987), 324 (hereafter ZGFQJPD).

funds to travel or had “forgotten to return” (忘返).<sup>116</sup> They needed only to be provided with transport home, which the state was willing to pay for if only to get rid of these unwanted individuals. These bureaus not only would provide an (armed?) escort home at government expense, but also a stipend for food while they waited equivalent to 60 *wen* a day. These policies also extended to any family members and kin accompanying them, who would receive 60 *wen* per person, 30 *wen* for children under 5 *sui*, for up to 20 people per veteran, revealing that many soldiers had begun to settle down in the region.

These bureaus do not seem to have been all that successful. In 1868, the Governor of Jiangsu, Ding Richang, sent out a notice complaining that there were still too many drifting soldiers in the province and ordered the establishment of more branch bureaus in Suzhou and Songjiang Prefectures where drifting soldiers seemed to be prevalent. Ding was under the impression that the bureau in Suzhou was too far for poor veterans to conveniently travel to with their meager means, and thus wanted to establish more bureaus in the hinterland that would be more accessible to drifting soldiers. A general amnesty was declared for discharged veterans of the region extending from March to September, 1868, with a personal notice from Ding that made a very personal plea to veterans:

Notice to all discharged soldiers: If you and your kind hurry up and return home, you can be reunited with your flesh and blood; you can farm your land; and no one will try to arrest you. How appropriate! How relieving! If you do not heed these words and loiter about here, over time your life will be meaningless and will lead to you becoming a brigand. Your time here is contrary [to what is right] and is putting your life in the hands of a strange town. Your parents, wife, and children back home keep their eyes peeled desiring your return. How could they not wonder whether you have already met your end in a strange town. Consider this carefully: Is it worth it to change your plans and return home or to loiter about and not return? As of the posting of this notice until the end of the eighth lunar month, we will allow discharged soldiers to go and report themselves to the bureaus of Suzhou and Songjiang Prefectures, where you will be provided with money and an escort home. If by the end of the eighth lunar month you have not returned home, our office will strictly order local officials to detain any drifting soldiers to be delivered to the provincial government where they will be punished according to military law.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Ding Richang, *Fu Wu Gong die*, 19:1a-2a.

<sup>117</sup> Ding, *Fu Wu Gong die*, 19:2b-3b.

This personal appeal to drifting soldiers attempted to play on their sentimental longings for home that officials assumed would be universally understood as well as threats of punishment for failure to comply. Ultimately, it is unclear if this plea for drifting soldiers to return home was successful since there are no other records of these bureaus, but it is doubtful considering that complaints of drifting soldiers in the Suzhou region would continue for another couple of decades.

For the most part, drifting soldiers were met less often with amnesty and emotional appeals to think about their families than with outright hostility. Post-war justice was harsh and swift albeit spotty and uneven. Until 1868, much of the Jiangnan region was under martial law and judicial review was suspended. The question of law and order was generally beyond the means of the state in the post-war chaos. Civil institutions were still being rebuilt and there was little capacity for the enforcement of the law. The military was also overstretched since many irregular brigades had been disbanded, and thus typically only intervened in issues of law and order when they constituted a potential threat to the state, such as large groups of bandits or the robbery of transit tax collection stations. Military and civil officials rarely bothered themselves with rounding up petty thieves, highway robbers, and individual murderers.<sup>118</sup>

Between 1864 and 1868, issues of crime and punishment often fell on the shoulder of the Reconstruction Bureau and local society through the *baojia* system. The *baojia* system, which had played a pivotal role in the militarization of Chinese society, would reprise its earlier role as more of a mechanism of law and order in the post-war years, and this was performed through the organizational work of the Reconstruction Bureau. While *baojia* had been important for the organization of militias in the early years of the war, militias were generally only maintained during moments of crisis in any given locality under Qing authority. For many places, militias seemed to have stopped regularly meeting after the mid-1850s as the war moved further east, and with it went official attention to *baojia*. In many

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<sup>118</sup> Ocko, *Bureaucratic Reform in Provincial China*, 33.

places that had been invaded and occupied by the Taiping, militias and local *baojia* had disintegrated as many community members fled. In some places, however, particularly in the lower Yangzi delta, some militias continued to operate as part of an insurgent resistance movement behind Taiping enemy lines. At the war's end, Zeng appointed the Reconstruction Bureau to handle issues of law and order by reorganizing local *baojia* and militias to police their communities and handle issues of justice.<sup>119</sup>

How exactly this was undertaken is unclear and from the little information available it was variable across regions. Law and order was clearly important to Zeng Guofan who emphasized the importance of the *baojia* in filling this role. In Nanjing, where Zeng had the greatest influence over reconstruction, the Reconstruction Bureau established the Baojia Bureau in October, 1864 led by local gentry commissioner but under the supervision of the Prefect of Jiangning.<sup>120</sup> Baojia Bureaus were common across southern China earlier in the war, but their focus would be shifted in the post-war years. Baojia Bureaus were initially concerned with registering the population for the local militia for community defense. As the military threat receded, many counties discontinued their Baojia Bureaus to conserve resources. After the war, these new Baojia Bureaus were revived, but their primary responsibility was to register residents into the *baojia* and to make sure they maintained policing patrols that maintained law and order. In Nanjing, the bureau was initially only concerned with urban law and order but it quickly expanded into the surrounding hinterland with multiple branch bureaus across and around the city. Enforcement of *baojia* regulations seems to have been strictly adhered to as Zeng paid particular attention to its organization with considerable discussion going back and forth on its implementation. The Baojia Bureau became an important post-war institution in Nanjing, which would last well into 1890s.<sup>121</sup> Other regions would also establish *baojia* bureaus, but most seem to have been

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<sup>119</sup> ZGFQJPD, 324.

<sup>120</sup> Jiang Qixun, ed., *Xuzuan Jiangning fuzhi* (1880), 192-193.

<sup>121</sup> Zhang Shaochang, *et al.*, *Xuzuan Jurong xianzhi* (1901), 318.

established well after the war and seem to have little connection to the Reconstruction Bureau;<sup>122</sup> many of these *baojia* bureaus would later be made into police departments in the early twentieth century.<sup>123</sup> In some cases, local Reconstruction Bureaus directly assisted local officials in registering the population into *baojia* and handling issues of justice;<sup>124</sup> while in other cases, organizing *baojia* seems to have been an affair of the local government that had little connection to the Reconstruction Bureau.

The Reconstruction Bureau also seems to have played a role, at least temporarily, in meting out justice. This may have been only a temporary role before the reinstatement of civil administration and shortly after a city had been reoccupied. In one case of abuse of power from September 1864, just as the war was winding down in the Jiangnan region, Field Marshal Sun Jialang (孫家煊) was charged with extorting money from refugees. In August, Sun went to the residence of a prominent refugee from Jiangyin, Jiang Yihe (江義和) based on rumors that he had heard, which although the investigation does not state what Jiang was suspected of, it was most likely an accusation that Jiang had willingly collaborated with the Taiping. When Jiang failed to collaborate, Sun had him detained along with his wife and her maidservant for questioning. In the interrogation, Jiang was searched and stripped of seven silver dollars, which Sun gave to his personal guard. Jiang continued to refuse the accusations against him, at which point Jiang was sent to the Reconstruction Bureau for a trial. The Reconstruction Bureau, however, not only determined that the accusations were baseless, but reported to Governor Li Hongzhang that Sun Jialang had used such rumors to shake down Jiang, and suggested that this was not

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<sup>122</sup> For example, in Yangzhou the *Baojia* Bureau is noted as being established in 1881. The Jurong county *Baojia* Bureau is noted as being established in 1894 as was the Taixing county *Baojia* Bureau. See, *Jiangdu xian xuzhi*, 784; *Xuzuan Jurong xianzhi*, 318; Yang Jiyong, ed., *Taixing Xianzhi* (1886), 38.

<sup>123</sup> In Yangzhou, for example, the *baojia ju* founded during the war was made into the local police department in 1908. This was also the case in nearby Taizhou and Gaochun Counties. In 1909, the *baojia ju* in Shanghai was disbanded and replaced by a police department as well. *Jiangdu xianzhi* (1926), 71; Zheng Zhendong, ed., *Xuzuan Taizhou Zhi* (1919), 439; Liu Chuntang, ed., *Gaochun xianzhi* (1918), 95; Wu Xiang, ed., *Shanghai xian xuzhi* (1918), 765.

<sup>124</sup> For example, see *Qing shi lu*, 112: 4-5; Liu Huan, ed., *Rugao xianzhi* (1929), 473; Wan Fayuan, ed., *Yongming xianzhi* (1905), 509.

the first time such an incident had occurred. Although the governor's ultimate investigation was inconclusive, he nonetheless confessed that such rumors swarmed around Sun and he generally handled such matters incompetently, and was therefore sent into service in exile along the frozen frontiers of Heilongjiang.<sup>125</sup>

While the Reconstruction Bureau seems to have only had a brief time as an arbiter of justice during the chaotic years at the end of the war before civil administration had been entirely restored, criminal prosecution and property litigation in many places was later handled by another Bureau called the Investigation Bureau (發審局). The Investigation Bureau was not an entirely new invention in the post-war period. The first Investigation Bureaus were founded just on the eve of the Civil War to handle backlogs of legal suits in counties overwhelmed by the number of cases. The Investigation Bureaus, like many other bureaus, were staffed by gentry commissioners who typically held a *jinshi* degree and were of some rank in the imperial bureaucracy equivalent to a magistrate, but not officially serving as an imperial official. Besides this, there is little information about the Investigation Bureau before the war, but it was quickly revived by Zeng Guofan at the end of the Civil War.<sup>126</sup>

The relationship between the Investigation Bureau and the Reconstruction Bureau or the Baojia Bureau are unclear, but they were established around the same time and was intended as a post-war institution to handle criminal cases. On October 26, 1864, Zeng established the Investigation Bureau to handle the enormous number of legal cases that emerged in the post-war period. Zeng frequently complained that the vast number of cases were a constant sources of consternation for magistrates – most of them dealing with property disputes that emerged from the war, but some were also criminal matters such as theft, murder, and brigandry that were the remnants of wartime chaos.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> *Qing shi lu*, 112: 4-5

<sup>126</sup> Zhang Shiming, “*Bao shi chen zhengyi*” de chengben: wanqing fashenju de falü jingji kaocha,” *Qingshi yanjiu* (2009:4), 1-7.

<sup>127</sup> Mo Xiangzhi, ed., *Shangjiang liangxian xianzhi* (1874), 760-761; ZGFQJPD, 337.



The Investigation Bureau, like its predecessor before the war, was staffed mostly by men who were a part of the informal bureaucracy. The Bureau's staff investigated petitions filed concerning criminal accusations, and more importantly issues of property, and in particular ownership claims and squatting. The investigators would issue a verdict upon the conclusion of their investigation, which would be sent to the circuit judge or magistrate. Although we do not have any samples of cases handled by the Investigation Bureau, the finds of the bureau most likely received perfunctory approval from local magistrates, because the bureau is discussed in sources as essentially being the ultimate arbiter in legal cases<sup>128</sup>. If investigators' findings led to a false conviction, investigators were supposed to be removed from office and punished to the same extent of the falsely convicted. In Jiangsu, the Investigation Bureau also handled issues of posting bail (取保) and guarantors (取具) involved in ongoing litigation, which they were required to approve or decline within three days.

Regardless of the auspices under which *baojia* were reconstituted after the war, *baojia* were an important part of post-war law and order and were given a free hand in administering justice. As essentially a local community organization often led by local gentry, *baojia* implemented justice as they saw fit with little interference from government officials. For many communities, the target of their justice was often directed towards drifting soldiers. Being a drifting soldier was in and of itself criminalized in the post-war years as drifting soldiers became synonymous with brigands and thieves. People suspected by local communities of being a drifting soldier were detained and in some cases summarily executed. The Governor of Jiangsu, Ding Richang, complained in 1867 that many *baojia* were wantonly executing people under suspicion of being drifting soldiers without any evidence, but the realities of post-war left justice in the hands of communities traumatized by war and suspicious of outsiders.<sup>129</sup> In one case, a *baojia* patrol led by the Tang clan in Ruizhou, Jiangxi picked up four outsiders

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<sup>128</sup> Xuzuan *Jurong xianzhi*, 366.

<sup>129</sup> Ocko, *Bureaucratic Reform in Provincial China*, 75.

on suspicions of being drifting soldiers. They immediately executed them and reported the incident to the magistrate. The magistrate, Xi Xiangyun, was not convinced and had four men from the Tang clan detained and interrogated. Xi concluded that the four men had been wrongly executed; however, since the war was still raging, the men of the Tang clan were eventually released.<sup>130</sup> In many ways, drifting soldier had become a word for any suspicious outsider that did not belong in the community, and *baojia* took their presence as a threat to the local community that needed to be dealt with extreme prejudice.

Officials were not entirely detached from this post-war violence perpetrated against suspected drifting soldiers. Concerns about wandering veterans became the impetus for official calls for the reinstatement of militias and *baojia* in many counties. A particularly striking case was in Yi county located in the Huizhou region of southern Anhui. The immensely prosperous region of Huizhou had been utterly devastated by the war. The county occupied a strategic position with mountain passes that could provide easy entry for the Taiping Army into eastern Jiangxi and southern Zhejiang, and so Yi and neighboring counties were subject to Taiping incursions at least six times over the course of the war in addition to countless raids, which destroyed much of the region's infrastructure. Years of war also cut the county off from trade with the Yangzi River region, which the local economy was heavily dependent on for its income and sustenance. With the Taiping conquest of Jiangnan to the east in 1860, the entire region was cut from its secondary source of food imports, and acute food shortages devolved into a massive famine.

The strategic importance of the region, however, also made it an important focal point of defense. In 1858, Zeng moved his headquarters to neighboring Qimen County and used the strategic passes of Yi county's Sheep's Pen as the linchpin of his defensive strategy for several years. Zeng's encampment helped protect the region, relieving locals of the responsibility of maintaining local

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<sup>130</sup> Huang Yanjin, ed., *Ruizhou fuzhi* (1873), 605.

defense.<sup>131</sup> Local militias were no longer required with the presence of a massive professional irregular army in the county, and so they were disbanded and the local Baojia Bureau (保安局), which organized the local militia and *baojia*, was closed down in 1859 most likely to shift resources to more professional soldiers.<sup>132</sup> During Zeng's time in Qimen, relations between the defending irregular troops and the local population seem to have been strained. Zeng had placed a minor surtax on every *mu* of cultivated land in the region to help fund his army, which did not endear him to the locals and was a source of numerous complaints to the imperial court; moreover, there were numerous incidents of soldiers abusing locals, which Zeng dismissed in official reports most likely to protect his men from prosecution.<sup>133</sup> The disbandment of the local militias and the baojia bureau was most likely in order to prevent conflicts between irregular forces and local communities while the Xiang army was stationed in the region.

As the war progressed, the region began to lose its strategic importance. In 1861, Zeng moved his headquarters to Anqing and began pushing towards the Heavenly Capital. By 1862, the war was beginning to shift decisively in favor of imperial forces as the Xiang Army progressed up to the walls of Nanjing. Since defense of Yi County was no longer as central to the war, Zeng began disbanding irregular units that he deemed too costly and superfluous to the war effort in mid-1862. The Liang Brigade stationed in Qimen County was disbanded in April 1862 and the vanguard of Wei Zhijun's Division was disbanded in May 1862. The expectation of Zeng and many officers in the Xiang army was that upon being disbanded, troops would return to their homes of their own accord. Instead of going home, however, many of the soldiers formerly of the Liang brigade and the Wei Zhijun division made their way

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<sup>131</sup> Stephen Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 197-199.

<sup>132</sup> I should note that the term they use in Yi County for *Baojia* Bureau is actually *Baoan* Bureau or "Security Bureau." Although the names differ, the function is the same. Names for bureaus were not necessarily consistent and in some cases various post-war institutions went by multiple names. *Baojia Bureau*, "Qie chou junxiang shu," and "Gongqing: zou shu Xu bingbei yi zhan," *Yixian zhi* (1870), 2191-2206, 2215-2216; Zhang Renfa, "Bing yixian tuanfang tiaokuan," *Yixian zhi* (1870), 2206-2212.

<sup>133</sup> ZGFQJ, vol. 6, 3245.

to Yi County where some loitered in the county seat – possibly looking for work – forming gangs or took to banditry along the same mountain passes leading into the county they once defended.<sup>134</sup>

This proved to be a major concern for local officials and locals as they began undertaking their own reconstruction in the region as the war moved further away. In 1862, the acting magistrate of Yi County, Zhang Renfa (張仁法), was deeply concerned by the rise of bandit gangs comprised of drifting soldiers, deeming them a greater threat to the county than the actual Taiping still present a couple hundred kilometers to the north. As Zhang stated the problem:

Since clearing all the roads [of rebels] in southern Anhui, the brigades have been disbanded. The number of discharged soldiers has grown, and they have set themselves up in the mountains and valleys of Yi [county]... Drifting soldiers and discharged troops have made their way to the city, which has been quite terrifying for the people.<sup>135</sup>

The arrival of drifting soldiers from the Liang brigade and Wei Zhujun's division put the local government in an awkward position; the very soldiers that once protected the county now threatened them.

In response, the magistrate reinstated local militias, which had been disbanded when Zeng established his headquarters in the region. The *baojia* Bureau was restored and provided with detailed regulations pertaining to the organization, procedure, and management of militias, which had essentially become tantamount to *baojia* policing. Although the organization of militias through the *baojia* bureau was still termed a military action, the nature of the enemy had changed. Militias were now a crime fighting force, as *baojia* were originally intended, and less of a military force to fight rebellion, but they still maintained a martial tone as they strove to combat the scourge of drifting soldiers threatening their lands as the Taiping had a couple years earlier.<sup>136</sup>

Like many of the other bureaus in the period, the *Baojia* Bureau was managed by local elites appointed by the magistrate for a brief term. Although the bureau answered to the authority of local

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<sup>134</sup> *Yixian zhi*, 91-92, 1804.

<sup>135</sup> Zhang Renfa, "*Bing yixian tuanfang tiaokuan*," *Yixian zhi* (1870), 2206.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 2206-2212.

officials, financing and day-to-day management was firmly in the hand of the bureau's gentry managers. The county Security Bureau was also organized in a hierarchical fashion in the county, with the headquarters in the county seat responsible for coordination among multiple branch bureaus scattered throughout the countryside. The branch bureaus were responsible for maintaining regular militia patrols and training, and mustering the militia during incidents when the militia was called up. Each militiaman was required to perform one patrol every month in the area under their branch office's jurisdiction to the county office and then back. The management of branch bureaus, however, was not through appointment by the magistrate, but was largely left to local communities, which most likely meant that local militia branches were dominated by the most prominent and wealthy members of small communities.<sup>137</sup>

Zhang saw the reformation of the *baojia* as critical to restoring order and eliminating the threat of drifting soldiers. The purpose of the militia was almost exclusively to capture and prosecute any wandering former soldiers in the territory, and the guidelines were quite strict. According to the regulations established by Zhang, "all brigands, drifting soldiers, or similar crimes of theft and sedition (土匪游勇同為盜賊厥罪)" were to be arrested, handed over to the Baojia Bureau, and then sent to the magistrate for prosecution. The fact that being a drifting soldier was explicitly equivocated with "similar crimes of theft and sedition" is revealing. It meant that discharged soldiers were immediately guilty; being a rootless former soldier was a crime in and of itself. One's identity and status made one a criminal by association.<sup>138</sup>

Who was a former soldier was a judgment made primarily on appearance: clothing, mannerisms, and even accent. As Zhang claimed in his regulations, a drifting soldier was anyone who "dressed or comported themselves like a soldier, carried a short sword or any dangerous weapon, and

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<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 2208-2209.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 2210.

even appear as if they are outsiders,” and they were to be penalized under military law.<sup>139</sup> Any drifting soldiers that resisted being detained were to be immediately “executed without exception.” The only way any veteran in the region could be exempt from punishment for lingering in the county was if their former commander vouched for them personally, which I imagine would have rarely happened if ever.<sup>140</sup>

Part of the fear of drifting soldiers was extended to any outsiders residing in the county. Zhang’s regulations stipulated that every home was to be inspected to verify residency and enrollment in the militia. Any individual renting land with an “unclear background” (來歷不明), except in the case of married couples, were to be immediately expelled from the county under suspicion of being a loitering former soldier.<sup>141</sup> Since these soldiers were mostly unrooted and unmarried men from outside the county (and province), all unrooted and unmarried men, such as poor laborers, became associated with these crimes. It wasn’t just these men with unclear backgrounds residing in the county that were punished. Landlords were forbidden from renting housing or land to outsiders, and any found doing so would be reported to the Baojia Bureau as harboring drifting soldiers. If a second violation occurred, then the landlord would be punished.<sup>142</sup>

Zhang claims that the use of militia had been effective in ousting vagrant veterans from the county, for which he is celebrated in the local gazetteer, and warned that militias should maintain vigilance, because the war, clearly drawing to a close, would mean that more drifting soldiers might wander into the county. Militias could serve as a deterrent to prevent former soldiers from loitering in the county for long and causing trouble: “Presently, all discharged former soldiers coming from the outside have gotten wind [of the militias] and stop in their tracks. The borders are peaceful only because

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<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 2211.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 2211-2212.

[militias] have been effective. Now we must remain more vigilant than ever.”<sup>143</sup> Militias were thus an important part of maintaining social stability, as Zhang saw it, by expelling drifting soldiers and other suspicious outsiders, particularly those who were unmarried men, out of the county, leaving the issue for other counties to deal with themselves.

Yi County was unique in the regard. As late as 1869, Yangzhou was a city described as “full of drifting soldiers with many stealing (游勇充斥城中多盗).” To deal with the perceived threat of drifting soldiers in the city, the vice-magistrate, Li Guangxi (李光熙), went on a strict *baojia* registration drive. In this case, the purpose of *baojia* was most likely as a way to determine the status of residents and exclude undesirable elements from the city like drifting soldiers. Li was not interested in registering civilians into the *baojia* as a means of community policing per se, because he also hired ten small contingents of, ironically, irregular soldiers to patrol the city and detain any suspected drifting soldiers. In this case, hiring *yong* to patrol the community made a lot of sense. By doing so, the city was employing *yong* that would otherwise have been a problem for the community, and their martial skills and familiarity with other *yong* may have made them effective suppressing them. Regardless of their reasons, this system of nightly *yong* patrols in Yangzhou directed against drifting soldiers remained in effect for a considerable amount of time – until at least 1883.<sup>144</sup> The degree to which *baojia* were reconstituted after the war is unclear, but in many cases in which *baojia* were called upon, it was often termed as necessary to deal with the criminal threat presented by irregular soldiers.

The thrust of post-war law and order was directed towards not just drifting soldiers specifically, but outsiders in general. Drifting soldiers simply were simply an easily identifiable figure in the post-war landscape and were viewed as particularly dangerous. In the case of Yi County, this was not much of an exaggeration. Generally, post-war society was suspicious of all people from the outside. The war had

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<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 2212.

<sup>144</sup> *Jiangdu xian xuzhi* (1883), 701.

plunged many communities into unfamiliar and dangerous situations and places full of strangers as refugees poured into their communities or they themselves became refugees. Many were traumatized by their experience in the war, and most likely sought solace in the peace of a stable and familiar community. Drifting soldiers represented a threat to that return to a tranquil post-war life and a constant reminder of the dangers of the war.

### *The Soldiers that Returned Home*

Official and community hostility towards drifting soldiers was pervasive throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century and particularly in the decade immediately following the civil war, but suspicions directed towards discharged soldiers did not end in the parts of the empire devastated by war. Even in Hunan where many soldiers of the Xiang Army originated, officials and communities remained apprehensive of veterans of the irregular army. While officers were celebrated as heroes, the rank-and-file soldiers of the irregular army did not receive a warm welcome home as saviors of the empire, but were elided in public discourse except as a potentially dangerous segment of society. Those returning home were met with official hostility as they organized *baojia* to arrest and expel drifting soldiers from their community and suspecting them of participating in subversive activities through secret societies.

When word reached Hunan that Nanjing had fallen, although many families with men off fighting in the Jiangnan region may have felt a sense of relief, official response was not exactly celebratory. The Governor of Hunan, Yun Shilin (惲世臨, 1817-1871), saw the end of the war as the beginning of an influx of armed men hardened by years of war that presented a threat to local stability. Shortly after the fall of Nanjing, the governor disseminated an edict in the province eerily similar to



Zhang Renfa's baojia regulations just discussed above, ordering the reinstatement of local militias to maintain vigilance with the incoming influx of veterans returning home:

Now that Nanjing has been retaken, the provinces of the southeast will gradually be cleared [of the Taiping]. With the disbanding of brigades, soldiers will be making their way home, and drifting soldiers from the brigades will come with them in droves. Instances of them getting together in gangs of three to five to opportunistically rob are an unavoidable inevitability. It is imperative that we prepare the militia to protect our locality.<sup>145</sup>

Yun complains that over the course of the war that discipline of the irregular army had degraded, and warns that militias needed to be prepared "to defend against the wickedness of drifting soldiers (以防游勇之肆行)" who, unlike their former enemies that were a danger that could be understood and anticipated, were unpredictable and could disperse and come together like the wind, melting into the local population. The governor ordered all militias to immediately arrest any drifting soldiers in their midst, and to immediately "execute without exception (格殺勿論)" any drifting soldier that dared to resist arrest. Eventually, Yun hoped that as returning veterans realized there was no way to remain a drifter at the margins of society, they would "of their own accord come to regret [their lifestyle] and become good subjects."<sup>146</sup>

The fear of drifting veterans was rooted both in their itinerant lifestyle and removal from agrarian communities, something that officials believed predisposed them to violence and criminality. Yun believed that the vagrancy of these soldiers was a moral choice that many soldiers had regrettably made. If only these soldiers were able to realize the error in their ways and settle down, they could then become a "good subject." The definition of a good subject, however, was someone who was embedded in agrarian communities and labor, but the war had essentially removed people from their communities for as long as a decade and patterns of rural life. Although many, maybe even the majority, of irregular soldiers were still able to reintegrate into their rural communities, after being absent for years fighting

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<sup>145</sup> *Hunan difangzhi zhong Taiping Tianguo shiliao*, 129-130.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

in the war, some soldiers may have come home to find little support from their family and community, leaving them as drifting veterans in their home province. Although circumstances may have robbed some veterans of a stable post-war livelihood, the state made vagrancy criminal by default, regardless of their contributions to the war effort. This seems particularly strange, where the vast majority of irregular soldiers originated, but it may also be due to the fact that a considerable number of the soldiers returning to Hunan had also fought for the Taiping Army, joining during the original invasion of Hunan in 1852 or later in 1854, and at the end of the war switching allegiances to the Qing.<sup>147</sup> Irrespective of the reasoning, many irregular soldiers that returned home were not welcomed home. The supposed moral superiority of irregular soldiers recruited from farming communities was no longer assumed at the end of the war. These soldiers had been detached from their homes for far too long to be considered to retain the moral qualities they possessed at the beginning of the war. They were not considered a part of the fabric of proper agrarian society as they may once have been. Thus they were assumed dangerous and a threat, warranting the reestablishment of local militias to protect villages from returning soldiers.

Of course, Yun's proscription against drifting soldiers was directed squarely at those that had no land or stable livelihood. Many soldiers who still had ties in their home community, an occupation, a family or a home did in fact return, but as former soldiers of the Xiang Army, they were still viewed with suspicion. The bonds built between soldiers and even their officers persisted in their home communities well after the war, and they became a major power in local politics and society in Hunan. Although officials were willing to accommodate former officers into local politics, they were also very apprehensive of the kind of bonds between lower class ex-soldiers that had returned after the war. They had a shared experienced, knew how to act as an organized unit, and had military training. These

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<sup>147</sup> Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996), 160-168; Zheng, "Loyalty, Anxiety and Opportunism," 39-83.

personal networks and gatherings of veterans of the civil war were often condemned by officials as a secret society, often referred to as the Elder Brother Society (哥老會).

Of course, the Elder Brother Society did represent a real underground movement of like-minded individuals who were typically veterans of the civil war, but official denunciation of the Elder Brother Society came to be conflated with any gatherings of veterans in general, serving as a reminder of the danger they posed to society. The Elder Brother Society began shortly after the end of the civil war. Having spent years combating the Christian Taiping, many veterans returning from the war were appalled by the influx of foreign Christian missionaries, protected by treaty, which they saw as a dangerous and heterodox religion of their enemy. Building upon the relationships built through the irregular army, officers and their men often gathered in a secret society to voice their displeasure through the production of anti-Christian and anti-foreign leaflets, intimidation, protest, and even riots. Unlike many secret societies in China, which were usually associated with anti-dynastic sentiments, sedition, and organized crime, the Elder Brother Society was generally supportive of the Qing, but were against the presence of Christians and foreigners in China and the Qing officials that protected them out of treaty obligations. For officials, this distinction was insignificant and the Elder Brother Society was still characterized in official sources as participating in sedition. The Elder Brother Society was extremely powerful in the local politics of Hunan. It was for this reason that for much of the nineteenth century, foreign missionaries rarely went to Hunan, and the few that did were generally chased out of the province by mobs. Local officials often played a tight balancing act between placating the crowds of veterans enraged by the presence of foreign missionaries or just foreigners in general while also attempting to mollify foreigners to prevent complaints from reaching Beijing.<sup>148</sup> While official sources tended to term the Elder Brother Society as a conspiratorial and seditious criminal network, the Elder

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<sup>148</sup> Stephen R. Platt, *Provincial Patriots: The Hunanese and Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 34-40.

Brother Society had very quickly become a blanket term for any anti-state activities involving veterans of the civil war. The terminology the Qing used to describe the Elder Brother Society and more official fears of politically active and highly organized veterans from the lower rungs of society. It was easier to dismiss them as a seditious secret society than to actually address their power and grievances.

While some incidents, primarily concerning anti-Christian expressions, did in fact include an organized element through the Elder Brother Society, not all incidents seem to necessarily be part of any organized movement. Officials used the moniker Elder Brother Society to condemn any action seen as contrary to the state. In one such instance, in the autumn of 1870 at the Pearl Pavilion in South Village, Xiangtan County, Hunan Province, an incident occurred in which the vice-magistrate, Ge Zhiping (葛治平), was attacked by a large mob. The vice-magistrate raised a militia to attack the mob gathered against him, but he sustained wounds in the fray that eventually led to his death. The incident raised alarm bells all the way to the imperial court, fearful of another rebellion. Official sources claimed that the attack on the vice-magistrate of Xiangtan County was perpetrated by the Elder Brother Society. The Governor-General of Huguang and the Governor quickly mobilized a force of irregular troops to defeat the uprising of the Elder Brother Society. After a few months, the Governor claimed that his forces had defeated the rebels and disbanded the irregular forces assembled.<sup>149</sup>

Wang Kaiyun, author of the first history of the Xiang Army and a native of the region, gave a very different account of the events that claimed that there never was an Elder Brother Society uprising in the region. In Wang's telling, the incident was ignited when the vice-magistrate Ge attempted to extort money from out-of-work veterans of the Xiang Army that regularly gathered around the Pearl Pavilion. Indignant about the vice-magistrate's abuses, the veterans gathered around Ge and attacked him. Ge managed to flee from his assailants, and the mob shortly thereafter dispersed, but Ge later died of his wounds. Eventually, a rumor spread that the attack was perpetrated by the Elder Brother Society

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<sup>149</sup> *Hunan tongzhi*, 7565; *Qing shi lu*, 160:118, 121.

as part of the beginnings of a rebellion, and they were led by a man by the surname Zhang. Terrified by the rumors, the governor mobilized over 6,000 irregular troops and occupied the county for several month, but Wang claims that no rebels were ever captured nor was a man with the surname Zhang. Instead, Wang suggest that whenever unemployed ex-soldiers were involved in an incident the Elder Brother Society was immediately implicated even if there was no evidence of their involvement, and whenever the Elder Brother Society was raised, it immediately evoked the fear of officials that rebellion was imminent.<sup>150</sup>

It is difficult to tell whether or not Wang's account is accurate, but it does tell us that there was a perceived connection between the Elder Brother Society and unemployed wandering veterans, and that Wang himself was dubious about a connection between drifting soldiers and the Elder Brother Society. As far as Wang saw it, any incident involving veterans, led people to jump to the conclusion that the Elder Brother Society was involved. It also implies that concerns about the Elder Brother Society pervasive in the late nineteenth century were not so much directed at secret societies per se, but represented a fear of the lower-class soldiers who had once filled the ranks of the irregular army.

The Liling County Gazetteer is surprisingly vague about what happened considering that several prominent veteran generals were sent to lead a considerably force of irregulars into the county for several months. The gazetteer noted that the vice-magistrate was killed fighting a "secret society," which had taken to hiding out in the mountains, and were ultimately suppressed by an irregular force consisting of soldiers from Xiangtan, Xiangxiang, Liling, and Hengzhou counties under the command of the experienced brigadier general Li Guangliao.<sup>151</sup> The fact that the incident is glossed over by the gazetteer and that the supposed uprising is only described as a "secret society" suggest that Wang's account may be closer to the truth; moreover, it suggest that the compilers of the Xiangtan Gazetteer

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<sup>150</sup> Wang Kaiyun, *Xiangjun zhi*, (1881; repr., Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1983), 1:25a-26b.

<sup>151</sup> Chen Kun, ed., *Liling xianzhi* (1948), 58; *Hunan tongzhi*, 7565.

were hesitant to definitively implicate the Elder Brother Society either because they were not involved or there was no uprising to speak of.

The Elder Brother Society was perceived as a threat to Qing authorities after the war not because of its anti-Christian activities, with which many officials would have privately sympathized, but because it represented a powerful group of organized veterans in local society, threatening their own power in society. Thus the Elder Brother Society became a catchall term in the post-war years for any gathering of veterans in Hunan, even if there were no clear political motivations. In the case from Xiangtan, an isolated incident of unemployed veterans that collectively responded to official abuses with violence was blown out of proportions by officials terrified that these veterans signified a wave of rebellion.

Just as with many drifting soldiers in the lower reaches of the Yangzi River, veterans of the irregular army that returned home to Hunan were met with many similar official suspicions although local fears seem to have been much more subdued. What made many of these veterans suspicious to officials was that their time at war had distanced soldiers from their agrarian communities into an unsettled world of violence and chaos. Although these men were originally from Hunanese farming villages, they no longer possessed the moral qualities of the farmer. With their moral integrity in question, officials viewed veterans as a danger that needed to be contained lest they became the root of a new rebellion.

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