

## **Fragile Bulwark: The Qing State in Jinan during the Taiping and Nian Wars**

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On the north bank of the Daqing River in Qihe County, Shandong, the militia drilled and waited. There was no guarantee they would be called into action, but since they were practically the last line of defense between invading Taiping forces and Jinan—Shandong’s capital—being unprepared was not an option. Granted, by this time they were guarding against only the remnants of a much larger army sent to invade North China after the Taiping had captured Nanjing and Yangzhou in early 1853. This army, led by Taiping general Li Kaifang, had swept westward around Shandong before looping back east towards Tianjin and Beijing, while a relief army, dispatched in 1854, marched up the Grand Canal through western Shandong, capturing Linqing, one of the province’s main commercial centers. The second army disintegrated under Qing counter-sieges and attacks, and what remained of the first was fighting its way south and was currently holed up in a town a little over 100 kilometers from Jinan.<sup>1</sup>

The diary of Jinan native Wang Zhonglin records that local elites who commanded the militia in Qihe gathered at night and practiced spirit-writing as they waited to join the fight against the long-haired southern rebels. One night, they were visited by a “night patrol spirit”

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<sup>1</sup> On the Taiping northern invasion see Lu Jingqi and Yu Shaozhong, “Taiping tianguo beifa yuanjun”; Su Shuangbi, *Beifa fengyun*; Li Renkai, “Beifa Taiping jun.”

(*xunye shen*), who told them that the deity Wenchang had heard their summons but was currently too busy to speak with them himself.<sup>2</sup> As the men conversed with this spirit, they learned that he had died fighting the Taiping the previous year in Nanjing. Now he was heading to Mt. Tai to register his name with the Heavenly Emperor so he could be reincarnated. The men replied that they were in Qihe, not far from Mt. Tai, which the spirit could see to the southeast.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> On spirit-writing and the cult of Wenchang, see Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 28-29; Goossaert, “Spirit Writing, Canonization, and the Rise of Divine Saviors,” 84-85, 87-94, 98-113.

<sup>3</sup> I am deeply grateful to Emily Mokros for directing me towards this invaluable source. WZLRJ, 60:128-32. On diaries and personal writings as a genre for studying the Taiping period, see Huntington, “Chaos, Memory, and Genre”; Jin, “Stitching Words to Suture Wounds.”



Figure 1: Map of Taiping Northern Invasion<sup>4</sup>

This story embodies the two core arguments that this essay develops regarding the history of defensive mobilization in Jinan in response to the Taiping northern invasion (1853-55) and successive attacks by Nian forces in the 1860s as well as various reconstruction projects. First, despite its location in North China, Jinan’s experiences of war in the mid-nineteenth century evidence a range of parallels and even direct connections to places in the southern half of the empire. Likewise, key themes of this ghost story, like militia leadership, spirit-writing, and

<sup>4</sup> Map by author with QGIS. GIS data from CHGIS.

ghosts of war dead, may be familiar to readers, even if the setting in North China is not.<sup>5</sup> Second, during the Taiping and Nian wars, Jinan became a “fragile bulwark” for the Qing state. Wang Zhonglin’s ghost story offers a miniature version of this ambiguity. On the one hand, we see a militia strategically deployed outside its home county and led by respectable members of the elite who were acting in cooperation with local officials and a commission from the court. On the other hand, there are unmistakable signs of ill-ease, no doubt fueled by knowledge of the calamities that had by then befallen much larger cities, like Nanjing.

Both arguments bear on the larger question of how mid-nineteenth century conflicts affected the Qing state. This question has been the subject of considerable scholarship and conflicting interpretations, at least among scholars working on the southern half of the empire. One well-established school of thought is that the Taiping War undermined the power of the central state since the court depended on both regional powerholders and local elites wielding unprecedented military, fiscal, and political power to achieve victory. In this interpretation, it was not so much the losses incurred during the wars as the means deployed to reverse them that fed the dynamics that would culminate in the fall of the dynasty in 1912.<sup>6</sup> Other scholars offer a very different interpretation of the political effects of the Taiping War, arguing that the court retained or at least regained a considerable degree of control over even the most powerful regional officials and that the war spawned institutional innovations—like greater reliance on

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<sup>5</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*; Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*; Alexander, “Virtues of the Vernacular”; Scott, *Building the Buddhist Revival*.

<sup>6</sup> Michael, “Introduction: Regionalism in Nineteenth-Century China”; Spector, *Li Hung-Chang and the Huai Army*; Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies*; Rankin, *Elite Activism*.

commercial taxation—that provided building blocks for future political development.<sup>7</sup> An entirely different trend in recent scholarship is to de-center the perspective of the Qing state and instead forefront the intimate perspectives of people who experienced warfare firsthand and dealt with its aftermath. Although the primary goal of this scholarship is not to advance a particular interpretation of the effects of the Taiping or other wars for the Qing state, its complication of seemingly straightforward political allegiances (i.e., pro- vs. anti-Qing) ought to inform how we interpret the political history of this period from the perspective of not only institutions but also individuals.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast to these rich and conflicting portraits of the mid-nineteenth century, scholarship on North China in the late Qing, with the exception of work on Tianjin, has converged on a broad consensus that not only the wars of this period (especially the Nian) but also concomitant ecological and humanitarian crises correlated with a decline in state efficacy.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Liu, “The Limits of Regional Power”; MacKinnon, *Power and Politics*; Kaske, “Fund-Raising Wars”; He, *Paths toward the Modern Fiscal State*, 153-79; Halsey, *Quest for Power*.

<sup>8</sup> Brown, “Rebels, Rent, and Tao Xu”; Zheng, “Loyalty, Anxiety, and Opportunism”; Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*; Wooldridge, *City of Virtues*.

<sup>9</sup> On the Nian, see Teng, *The Nien Army*; Chiang, *The Nien Rebellion*; Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries*. On later periods, see Li, *Fighting Famine*; Pomeranz, *The Making of a Hinterland*; Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State*. Studies of Tianjin have tended to emphasize prevalent cooperation between the city’s elite and the Qing government that resembles Jinan, although the presence of a powerful community of southern literati in Tianjin and the city’s transformation into a “hypercolony” made it very different from Jinan. MacKinnon, *Power and*

The catastrophic effects of the Boxer Uprising for local communities and the Qing state as a whole epitomized the mutually reinforcing nature of these twin processes of local crisis and state atrophy.<sup>10</sup> A common theme in scholarship on North China has been the absence of a stable, urbanized scholar-elite class that is often at the forefront of stories about Jiangnan. Instead, histories of North China tend to forefront militaristic rural strongmen who were just as likely to turn rebel as to fight on the side of the Qing.<sup>11</sup> When histories of North China depict scholar-elites fulfilling civil, state-sanctioned roles like philanthropy, it is often southern elites who take center stage, particularly in histories of interregional humanitarian relief.<sup>12</sup> In sum, North China often appears as a liability for the Qing state, and its native scholar-elites seem absent from the dynamic developments driven by southern elites during and after the Taiping War.

My argument that Jinan was a fragile bulwark offers a different perspective on these histories in two ways. First, insofar as cooperation between officials and the city's elite enabled the Qing to effectively defend Jinan throughout this period, its history stands against the narrative of the seemingly inexorable decline of state power in North China we see in existing scholarship. There is a history of fragility here too, though. I chart this history through three

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*Politics*; Kwan, *The Salt Merchants of Tianjin*, 89-103; Rogaski, "Beyond Benevolence";

Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity*; Shue, "The Quality of Mercy."

<sup>10</sup> Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*; Cohen, *History in Three Keys*; Tiedemann, "The Church Militant."

<sup>11</sup> Tang, "Local Defense Organizations"; Cui Min, "'Jing luan shi suo yi zhi luan.'"

<sup>12</sup> Rankin, *Elite Activism*, 142-47; Edgerton-Tarpley, *Tears from Iron*, 131-55, 189-210; Fuller, *Famine Relief*, 6-8.

periods: temporarily successful militia mobilization in 1853-55, unsuccessful mobilization in 1860-61, and a turn toward urban-focused physical defenses from 1861 on. In so doing, I argue that the decline of state power in North China was neither absolute nor inevitable and so offer some support to more optimistic arguments about the capacities of the late Qing state.

Second, interrogating what was responsible for Jinan becoming both bulwark-like and fragile leads me to de-center the putative line between state and society that has shaped much scholarship on this period.<sup>13</sup> Jinan's bulwark-like status depended on the cooperation of a range of actors both at different levels of the Qing bureaucracy and outside it altogether. The fragility of the city, which had negative consequences for Jinan, the surrounding countryside, and the Qing state more broadly, was a product of the limited capacities of both the elite and the Qing government. Infighting was one source of fragility, but it did not uniformly follow the contours of central/local or bureaucratic/extra-bureaucratic divisions. The unsuccessful empowerment of local actors, epitomized by the failed effort to construct a provincial militia organization under the leadership of Shandong people in the 1860s, was a greater liability than a runaway devolution of power from the center to the provinces. Thus, rather than seeing the Qing state in terms of a balance of power between these various actors, I suggest thinking of it as a cooperative project whose success hinged on their participation in distributing resources and exerting power across space.<sup>14</sup> Although this view of the state can fit the great variety of cases scholars have previously

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<sup>13</sup> Scholarship related to the late Qing and that I am building on in eschewing this perspective includes Reed, "Gentry Activism"; Platt, *Provincial Patriots*; Heselton, "Reconstructing Order."

<sup>14</sup> Here I am building on critiques of the Weberian model of the state. See, for instance, Novak, "Beyond Max Weber."

studied, its utility is especially apparent in the case of Jinan because there it was obviously the weakness of the local elite and even regional officials that challenged the durability of the Qing state. The final section of the article considers how various reconstruction projects expressed the ambiguities of Jinan's experiences and reflected the continued participation of Jinan's elite in the Qing state, even after 1911.

### **Temporarily Successful Mobilization, 1853-55**

The Taiping northern invasion rendered Jinan as a fragile bulwark in several ways. The Qing government lacked the resources and manpower to address every strategic contingency and so focused its attention on priorities that it deemed more important than Jinan, which made the city vulnerable to attack. Nevertheless, Jinan's local elite demonstrated its capacity to mobilize militias both in the city itself and in the surrounding countryside. The encampment in which Wang Zhonglin and his colleagues encountered the ghost from Nanjing was one part of an increasingly formal and geographically extensive military structure managed by the elite that resembled the army led in Hunan by Zeng Guofan. However, this army and its elite leaders faced two obstacles that exposed distinct but related elements of Jinan's fragility. First, they struggled to adequately quell the psychological fragility of the city's residents, who were prone to flee at the first rumor of coming trouble. Second, this preference for flight over fight on the part of the city's residents compounded with the relative poverty of Jinan and the limited resources available from the court and provincial government to undercut the fiscal basis of this burgeoning army. As a result, Jinan's militia was quickly demobilized after the defeat of the Taiping invasion. In the short term this looked like a resounding success for the Qing, but both the conditions necessitating this demobilization and the lack of a pre-existing defensive



infrastructure would prove calamitous in later years.

As Taiping forces advanced from the south, a range of officials sharply debated the best strategy for defending the north. The banner troops normally garrisoned in Shandong at Qingzhou and Dezhou were occupied fighting the Taiping forces pushing north through Jiangnan. Meanwhile, Shandong Governor Li Hui commanded Shandong's own Green Standard forces as well as additional troops that the court dispatched from other provinces to reinforce him.<sup>15</sup> Li Hui argued vociferously and, ultimately, successfully for focusing the province's defenses on the Yellow River, which ran along Shandong's southern border and provided a natural defensive barrier.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, Li's subordinates, whom he left to handle civil and military affairs in Jinan while he personally led troops in the southwest portion of the province, naturally recoiled at finding themselves with only a few hundred troops at their disposal. Audaciously, they wrote a memorial themselves asking the court to send reinforcements for Jinan and Li Hui's position in the south (5,000 troops each) directly from Beijing.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, famed currency expert Wang Maoyin memorialized from his post as a censor in Shanxi that he had heard concerning reports about the state of defenses in Jinan, which he blamed on the incompetence of the officials Li had left in charge there. "The concern is not a lack of soldiers but a lack of a commander," Wang concluded.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Shandong was one of a few provinces where governors directly commanded Green Standard garrisons. Guy, *Qing Governors*, 187; Zhang Yao, *Shandong junxing jilüe*, 1:11-22.

<sup>16</sup> QZFZYTP, 4:565-67, 5:4-5.

<sup>17</sup> QZFZYTP, 5:497, 499.

<sup>18</sup> QZFZYTP, 5:470-71.

In the middle of this back-and-forth, Jinan native Mao Hongbin returned to his hometown under orders from the court to mobilize militias there. Mao had earned his *jinshi* degree in 1838 (the same year as Zeng Guofan) and at the time of his appointment was serving as a supervising censor (*jishizhong*) in Beijing. Mao sympathized with Li's decision to prioritize defenses along the Yellow River, but he worried about what would happen if the Taiping broke through Li's lines. Rather than packing Jinan itself with thousands of new soldiers—as Administrative Commissioner Liu Yuanhao and his colleagues had recommended—Mao suggested stationing smaller numbers of troops at strategic points on land routes between the Yellow River and Jinan to balance protecting the river, the province, Jinan, and Beijing.<sup>19</sup>

Governor Li rejected almost all of these critiques. He wrote to the court that if the Taiping breached his defenses on the river he would, of course, do everything he could to keep them from getting to Jinan. He found it more likely, though, that the Taiping would advance up the Grand Canal toward Beijing. Diverting forces to Jinan would undermine his effort to deny the enemy this route of advance, which ought to be the highest strategic priority. Li further promised to keep tabs on defensive preparations in Jinan while dismissing some of the specific concerns Wang Maoyin had raised.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, Li argued that the routes Mao wanted to defend were too treacherous to allow a large army to pass and that he was putting too much emphasis on defending Jinan. “He is quick to make plans without comprehending the overall situation,” Li retorted.<sup>21</sup> The court supported Li Hui's decision to concentrate defenses in the south.

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<sup>19</sup> MSSZG, 1:221-24.

<sup>20</sup> QZFZYTP, 5:495-97.

<sup>21</sup> QZFZYTP, 6:316.

The court's and governor's relegation of Jinan's defenses to a secondary priority—against the wishes of not only Mao but also the other provincial officials—made efforts to organize militia in and around Jinan essential to defending the city, maintaining order in the surrounding area, and preventing the people from panicking. Mao soon realized how difficult it would be to maintain a sense of calm while mobilizing people to participate in militias. He reported:

One of the difficulties is the people's spirit not being united; another is the people's hearts not being strong. After a long time of peace, the people do not know how to be soldiers. When there are no problems, they become luxuriant and carefree and are naturally tranquil. When there is alarm, they panic and lose their heads.<sup>22</sup>

In June 1853, a rumor spread that the Taiping had crossed the Yellow River into Cao County in southwest Shandong. "The people's hearts were shocked and terrified, and a large number fled in great confusion," Mao wrote. This crisis reinforced Mao's sense that Jinan's material and psychological security depended on organizing a defensive perimeter well outside the city. He concluded that "in order to defend what was near, it would first be necessary to defend what was far away."<sup>23</sup>

Mao and his lieutenants (drawn from the local elite) seem to have worked out a successful division of labor for organizing militia in both Jinan and the surrounding area, in cooperation with the local officials. In Jinan, they established a general bureau (*zongju*) that managed finances, oversaw training grounds inside the walled city and areas outside the gates,

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<sup>22</sup> MSSZG, 1:229-30.

<sup>23</sup> MSSZG, 1:233.

and monitored the comings-and-goings of local people through *baojia* heads. The walled city was split into five militia groups (*tuan*), while the east, south, and west suburbs were split into six, eight, and thirteen *tuan*, respectively. The total number of men trained in the city and its immediate vicinity may have reached as high as 6,000, although, given that the men were only required to train once every five days, they hardly constituted a professional army.<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile, Mao undertook extensive mobilization efforts in a 300-*li* circumference around Jinan that contained 600-700 villages. Traveling through this area, Mao and his colleagues grouped villages into *tuan* units, identified reliable men who could serve as militia leaders, and instructed them on proper procedures. They focused on the areas south and west of Jinan, along the Daqing River, the most likely route for a Taiping attack. By autumn 1853, they had formed three *tuan* in Licheng and Changqing counties and another to the east in neighboring Zhangqiu County. These *tuan* encompassed 274 villages—about one-third of the total that Mao had identified within the defensive perimeter, and Mao reported that around 20,000 people had volunteered to participate in these militias.<sup>25</sup> This loose-knit set of militias coordinated from a central location corresponded to what Kuhn calls “extended multiplex” organization in his study of militarization in Hunan.<sup>26</sup> Again, though, the militia members’ training was limited, and they

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<sup>24</sup> This upper estimate is based on Mao’s report that a total of 400-500 men trained at the city’s four training grounds each day, with a similar number training in the suburbs. Assuming each of these men trained only once every five days, this would yield 4,000-6,000 militia members, albeit, again, with a relatively low level of training. QZFZYTP, 10:38-44.

<sup>25</sup> MSSZG, 1:231-33.

<sup>26</sup> Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies*, 73-77.

were charged exclusively with defending their home areas.

Recognizing the limitations of both the urban and rural defenses, Mao set about raising a more intensively trained army. He set up two Righteous Braves bureaus (*Yiyong ju*) in Jinan to train men whom militia leaders identified as possessing martial acuity and were willing to deploy outside their hometowns. Ideally, these men would pay their own expenses, being motivated by the possibility of reward for meritorious service. However, the general bureau could arrange to pay stipends to worthy men who lacked the means to support themselves.<sup>27</sup> By early 1854, this force totaled 600 men. Mao used them to deal with bandits in the area around Jinan and raised 500 more to meet the crisis posed by the invasion of the Taiping relief force that took Linqing that year.<sup>28</sup> As the Taiping force marched north through western Shandong, Mao deployed his troops in two encampments in Changqing County on the south bank of the Daqing River. When Li Kaifang's forces retreating from the north occupied Gaotang, Mao established an additional encampment north of the river in Qihe. Together, these encampments protected the most likely routes of advance on Jinan and were positioned so that they could support each other in case of an attack. They also patrolled the surrounding area, arrested suspicious characters, and maintained contact with village militias on the borders of Licheng, Changqing, and Qihe counties.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> MSSZG, 1:231; QZFZYTP, 10:41, 43.

<sup>28</sup> MSSZG, 1:243-45.

<sup>29</sup> MSSZG, 1:245; QZFZYTP, 14:296.



*Figure 2: Map of Jinan Prefecture<sup>30</sup>*

The martial effectiveness and orderliness of these forces is admittedly difficult to evaluate, given the lack of detail in Mao’s reports about their day-to-day activities and that they never encountered the Taiping in battle. Tang Wing-hong and Cui Min show that there was a very thin line between loyalism and rebelliousness (albeit not necessarily sympathy for the Taiping) among Shandong’s rural militias.<sup>31</sup> However, their evidence comes from the period after the central coordination of these militias by Mao and his subordinates had ceased. Mao’s reports may well have painted an overly optimistic picture of the state of rural militias, but they deserve more attention, if not absolute credence, than they have received. The fact that Mao

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<sup>30</sup> Map by author with QGIS. GIS data from CHGIS.

<sup>31</sup> Tang, “Local Defense Organizations”; Cui Min, ““Jing luan shi suo yi zhi luan.””

managed to raise not only volunteer militias in the villages but also a more specialized, albeit small army drawn from them—a pattern that reflects the famously successful mobilization in Hunan under Zeng Guofan—suggests that these rural militias did not exist merely on paper and that, at least with coordinated leadership and suitable inducements, they were disposed to fight for, not against the Qing.

Nevertheless, however effective Mao's army might have been, it failed to ease the sense of vulnerability that Jinan's residents felt. Jinan native Wang Zhonglin later recounted that after the Taiping relief force captured Linqing in 1854 many among Jinan's elite fled to the mountains south of the city, where some of them had residences, and to mountainous areas to the east.<sup>32</sup> Many people returned when the Qing re-captured Linqing, but they ran away again as soon as Li Kaifang's much-reduced forces occupied Gaotang. Newly appointed Governor Chong-en reported, "Out of every ten establishments, nine are empty, and the majority of merchants have closed their businesses. Because of this, the markets are deserted. Every rich establishment and wealthy family has moved away."<sup>33</sup> In summer of 1854 Mao again complained about the people's military readiness, saying, "The peace has been maintained for a long time, and the people do not know how to be soldiers. There is no one with experience, and their courage has turned wanting."<sup>34</sup>

Aside from their questionable courage, the people in Jinan also lacked money, or at least they were not forthcoming with what they had. Jinan was much less wealthy than the great

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<sup>32</sup> WZLRJ, 59:631.

<sup>33</sup> QZFZYTP, 15:31.

<sup>34</sup> MSSZG, 1:244.

commercial centers of the south, where, given the right conditions, large sums of money could be raised for local defenses.<sup>35</sup> Mao reported, “Although Shandong’s capital city is famous, it is poor and distressed and has never had rich gentry or large households.”<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, Governor Chong-en claimed that rising silver prices and the Taiping invasion had disrupted commerce throughout the province.<sup>37</sup> The western portion of Shandong along the Grand Canal was most affected—both by the Taiping occupation of the Lower Yangzi and the northern invasion.<sup>38</sup> Jinan’s economy was tied to this region through the Daqing River, which the invasion made a crucial strategic corridor. This area was a key market for the wealthy (often extra-provincial) salt merchants in Jinan who made their living selling salt from the coast to the interior.<sup>39</sup> As a result, even the merchants who stayed in Jinan lacked money to invest in local defenses. This may explain why neither the elite nor the provincial government levied commercial transit taxes (*lijin*) like those that supported militias elsewhere.

As donations haltingly materialized, Mao relied on the provincial government for stopgap support. Before Mao’s arrival, Jinan’s elite had received an 8,000-tael loan from the provincial treasury to begin raising a militia. After Mao took charge of militia organization, his deputies canvassed for contributions in Jinan and surrounding counties. In Licheng, they received promises

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<sup>35</sup> See, for instance, Perry, “Tax Revolt,” 92.

<sup>36</sup> MSSZG, 1:247.

<sup>37</sup> QZFZYTP, 15:343.

<sup>38</sup> Buck, *Urban Change in China*, 25.

<sup>39</sup> On chronic problems in Shandong’s salt trade and the disruptions of the 1850s, see Ji Lizhen, *Ming Qing Shandong yanye*, 232-42.



of only 2,000 taels—not even enough to repay the loan from the provincial treasury. They received far greater pledges—42,000 taels—from Zhangqiu, which neighbored Jinan to the east. Most of this money came from the wealthy Meng family, who were natives of Zhangqiu.<sup>40</sup> Even then, in August 1854 Mao reported that he had received only 31,000 taels from these pledges. After repaying the provincial treasury and spending 8,000 taels to arm his men, he was left with 15,000 taels to pay for the upkeep of his forces.<sup>41</sup> This money was already running low by the time he began setting up encampments in Changqing, forcing him to turn to the provincial government for help again. Mao requested and received a loan of 8,000 taels from the salt treasury to keep his men fed and supplied. Although by this point the Taiping threat was dissipating, Mao and Chong-en agreed that Li Kaifang's occupation of Gaotang, so close to Jinan, necessitated keeping the encampments in place. Chong-en again ordered the provincial treasury and salt treasury to temporarily provide funding for Mao's troops with the intention that he would repay them with gentry contributions when the Taiping threat had subsided. Mao stressed the economy of his forces to the court, claiming that the operating expenses of the three encampments amounted to only 2,800 taels each month and that he and his colleagues' salaries and transportation costs were all paid through private contributions and did not draw on any government funds.<sup>42</sup> The court approved this course of action but ordered Chong-en to strictly supervise Mao and all officials in charge of defense forces to ensure that they economized as

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<sup>40</sup> MSSZG, 1:238-39; Jing Su and Luo Lun, *Landlord and Labor*, 132-37.

<sup>41</sup> MSSZG, 1:247-48.

<sup>42</sup> MSSZG, 1:248-49.

much as possible.<sup>43</sup>

The increasingly dire fiscal straits the province and the court were facing necessitated such economizing. In October 1854, Chong-en submitted an accounting of the extraordinary expenses Shandong had incurred since 1852. These included almost 1,000,000 taels for the province's Green Standard troops, 568,800 taels for transfers to other provinces, 336,700 taels to support the banner troops of General Sheng-bao, and 228,000 taels to provision troops passing through the province. Meanwhile, the war and natural disasters—which became much worse the next year with the flooding of the Yellow River—had caused Shandong to accumulate tax arrears totaling over 1,200,000 taels in the space of only two and a half years.<sup>44</sup> This fiscal crisis not only imposed material limitations but also fueled mutual accusations of corruption and mismanagement among provincial officials and Qing generals.<sup>45</sup>

Therefore, once the Taiping forces were defeated, demobilizing the militias was necessary so that resources could be diverted elsewhere. Already in October 1854, the provincial officials were reducing the number of hired soldiers in and around Jinan to conserve funds. In a rescript, the emperor concurred, “This is the only way it can be managed.”<sup>46</sup> Mao's garrisons remained in place until the next year but were demobilized after the defeat of Li Kaifang's forces. In July 1856, Chong-en reported that most militias in Shandong had been demobilized,

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<sup>43</sup> QZFZYTP, 15:370-71.

<sup>44</sup> QZFZYTP, 15:343-44.

<sup>45</sup> QZFZYTP, 15:420-421. Mao himself wrote an acerbic memorial impeaching Qing general Sheng-bao for a range of offenses. MSSZG, 1:251-69.

<sup>46</sup> QZFZYTP, 15:420-21.

except for some in the southwest portion of the province along the Grand Canal.<sup>47</sup> Mao and some of his subordinates received new appointments in the imperial bureaucracy—Mao himself would serve as governor of Hunan and governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi by the end of the war—while others returned to private life.

In some ways, the campaign against the Taiping northern invasion was a tremendous success for the Qing. It not only neutralized a direct threat to the capital but did so without having to depend too heavily on irregular forces like Mao's. However, the inability of Mao to overcome the twin challenges of the perturbed minds of Jinan's people and limited local funding was itself a setback for the Qing. Rather than a strong state dominating a weak society, Jinan in 1853-55 showed how extra-bureaucratic elite-led mobilization could benefit the Qing state, at least in auxiliary ways, like defending secondary strategic points like Jinan and policing the countryside. In this sense, the limitations of Jinan's elite were also the limitations of the Qing state. In the 1860s, elite-led mobilization proved even less successful and the effects for the North China countryside and the Qing state far more calamitous.

### **Unsuccessful Remobilization, 1860-61**

The Taiping threat to Jinan ended in 1855, but the city's experience of war was far from over. In the 1860s, attacks by Nian rebels repeatedly threatened Jinan and all parts of Shandong. This threat prompted new, even more systematic efforts to organize militias across the province, starting in 1860. However, province-level militia organization led by Shandong people quickly proved to be a political and military failure. The court's quick reversal of this policy again

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<sup>47</sup> Tang, "Local Defense Organizations," 132.

demonstrated how militarization did not initiate a runaway devolution of power from the court but also exposed how the limitations of elite power made both Jinan's security and Qing power in the region desperately fragile.

Over the course of the early 1850s, Nian groups carved out a home base in northern Anhui, extended the reach of their raiding expeditions across the North China plain, and even incorporated remnants of Taiping forces.<sup>48</sup> The northward shift of the Yellow River in 1855, after which it occupied the bed of what had been the Daqing River directly north of Jinan, compounded the Nian threat to Shandong. Flooding was initially worst around the Grand Canal, but Jinan did experience episodic and sometimes severe flooding after 1855.<sup>49</sup> For Shandong as a whole the humanitarian and ecological effects of the flooding were devastating, to say the least.<sup>50</sup> The river's change in course also had strategic implications, since it no longer provided a natural defensive barrier protecting the province from the south. Starting in 1856, the Nian took advantage of this situation and began launching raids into southwestern Shandong, although a mix of regular troops and militias that had been retained in that area prevented them from advancing farther into the province.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Teng, *The Nien Army*, 51-99; Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries*, 96-140.

<sup>49</sup> By the 1880s, the river's silt deposits had caused the bed to rise, which produced endemic flooding that required more systematic conservancy efforts. On the immediate effects of the change in course and local responses, see Hu, "The Yellow River Administration," 221-35.

<sup>50</sup> For a comprehensive treatment of the effects of the Yellow River on Shandong, see Amelung, *Der Gelbe Fluss*.

<sup>51</sup> Zhang Yao, *Shandong junxing jilüe*, 1:65-67.

By 1860, though, the military situation changed considerably. The threat of an Anglo-French invasion forced the court to withdraw troops under Mongol General Sengerinchen (Sengge-lin-qin), who had been charged with suppressing rebels in North China, to defend the capital. Meanwhile, a large number of local militias had sprouted up around the empire to aid the war against the Taiping, but most lacked centralized coordination, unlike the Xiang Army (Xiangjun) led by Zeng Guofan.<sup>52</sup> To better control existing forces and mobilize new ones against the multiplying threats the dynasty faced, the court appointed nine officials to serve as militia supervisors (*duban tuanlian dachen*) in their home provinces. Unlike local militia leaders such as Mao Hongbin, their mandate extended across entire provinces, giving them access to greater resources and allowing them to incorporate local militias into a more elaborate chain of command.<sup>53</sup>

Shandong's militia supervisor was Du Qiao, a native of Binzhou and an assistant minister in the Board of Revenue who was currently on leave to mourn the death of his grandfather.<sup>54</sup> The

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<sup>52</sup> In some cases, militia leaders held court-granted commissions similar to the militia supervisors (e.g., *duban tuanlian*), but there was no empire-wide implementation of these as province-level commissions until 1860. Wakeman, *Strangers at the Gate*, 164-67.

<sup>53</sup> Cui Min, "Xian Tong zhi ji 'duban tuanlian dachen,'" 76-79.

<sup>54</sup> Du Qiao's brother Du Han was a trusted confidante of the Xianfeng emperor, a member of the Grand Council, and one of the eight members of the regency council appointed for the Tongzhi Emperor that was removed by Empress Dowager Cixi and Prince Gong. After the coup, Du was initially sentenced to exile in Xinjiang but then allowed to retire home to Binzhou. I do not discuss these events in greater detail in the main text because they followed Du Qiao's removal

court instructed Du that his top priority should be defending against a potential foreign invasion of Shandong. However, he also oversaw ongoing efforts to defend against Nian invasions.<sup>55</sup> Du made Jinan his base of operations and established branch offices across the province, to which he frequently made tours of inspection. He staffed the General Militia Bureau in Jinan with a mix of elite men from Jinan and elsewhere in Shandong, expectant officials, and several men he had worked with in Beijing.<sup>56</sup>

Like other militia supervisors, Du encountered several problems that critically undermined his mandate. Although he had the authority to raise funds from across the province, gathering contributions proved immensely difficult, which is unsurprising given the effects of the war and ecological crisis on the province's people. Du claimed the situation was noticeably worse than it had been at the time of the Taiping invasion: "At that time many civilian households were still well-off. Moreover, the rebels had already pressed close, so people were more enthusiastic to contribute their energy and resources."<sup>57</sup> A censor reported that people in Jinan were complaining that one of Du's deputies (a native of Jinan) was putting undue pressure on them to contribute to militias.<sup>58</sup> Governor Tan Tingxiang eventually vindicated Du's

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as militia supervisor. Hou Yujie et al., *Binzhou Du shi*, 90-91.

<sup>55</sup> QSL, 320:714b.

<sup>56</sup> Du Qiao memorial on 1860/7/12 (XF 10/5/24), LFZZ, 03-4238-019; Du Qiao memorial on 1860/12/2 (XF 10/10/20), LFZZ, 03-4238-090; Du Qiao memorial on 1860/12/6 (XF 10/10/24), LFZZ, 03-4238-091.

<sup>57</sup> Du Qiao memorial on 1860/9/10 (XF 10/7/25), LFZZ, 03-4257-052.

<sup>58</sup> Bian Baodi memorial in 1860-1 (XF 10), LFZZ, 03-4238-109.

fundraising methods, but they were not effectual in any case.<sup>59</sup> In May 1861 Du reported that he had managed to raise only 12,086 taels (1,720 coming from natives of Jinan).<sup>60</sup> This was a paltry sum given the size of Shandong and was even less than what Mao Hongbin had raised from a much smaller area.

The financial constraints that Du, other militia supervisors, provincial governments, and the court all faced were one aspect of broader intra-governmental conflict over the authority of militia supervisors that played out both in Shandong and in other provinces.<sup>61</sup> As mentioned above, Shandong's local officials had faced a series of tax-resistance movements led by putative militia leaders in the years since the Taiping northern invasion. They were understandably hesitant, then, to actively support the further organization of militias that were under not their control but Du Qiao's. Du took directly to Beijing his complaints about local officials not adequately supporting his militias and even prosecuting militia leaders they accused of stirring up trouble.<sup>62</sup> Circumventing provincial officials in this way undercut their authority, and, in response, Governor Wen-yu and Sengerinchen both submitted memorials to the court criticizing Du for his lax control of militias.<sup>63</sup> With similar conflicts unfolding in other provinces where militia supervisors had been appointed, the court soon reversed course, effectively siding with the provincial officials. The court removed Du from his post in early 1861 and the remainder of

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<sup>59</sup> Tan Tingxiang memorial on 1862/4/22 (TZ 1/3/24), ZPZZ, 04-01-19-0058-014.

<sup>60</sup> Du Qiao memorial on 1861/5/18 (XF 11/4/9), LFZZ, 03-4323-042.

<sup>61</sup> Cui Min, "Xian Tong zhi ji 'duban tuanlian dachen.'" "

<sup>62</sup> See, for example, Du Qiao memorial on 1860/11/3 (XF 10/9/22), LFZZ, 03-4225-133.

<sup>63</sup> Cui Min, "Xian Tong zhi ji 'duban tuanlian dachen,'" 79-87.

the militia supervisors by the end of that year.

This decision marked the limit of large-scale militarization under the leadership of Shandong natives. Instead, overall responsibility for organizing and funding militias reverted to the provincial government. In the following years, the province did take steps to secure a more stable source of funding. In October 1861 Governor Tan Tingxiang received permission to use the proceeds of a customs tax on foreign opium collected at Linqing for military expenses.<sup>64</sup> The next year he reported that he had established a *lijin* bureau in Jinan to control and expand a series of similar taxes collected at various places in the province.<sup>65</sup> In this sense, then, Shandong's experiences show that the devolution of military and fiscal authority away from the government was by no means a runaway process.

However, the basic challenges confronting militia organization under Du Qiao and Mao Hongbin before him remained and left Shandong in a weak military position. The limited revenues that commercial taxes could produce in Shandong, the growing size of the area exposed to Nian attacks, and the administrative limits of the provincial government meant that much of the practical work of organizing defenses had to be delegated to a mixture of local officials and elites, with only loose coordination by the provincial government. These limitations combined with Du's own shortcomings as a leader—repeatedly noted by Wang Zhonglin, who traveled between his native Jinan and various other places in Shandong around this time—to make the strategy and organization of militias even around Jinan less coherent than during the Taiping

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<sup>64</sup> Tan Tingxiang memorial on 1861/10/13 (XF 11/9/10), ZPZZ, 04-01-03-0159-021.

<sup>65</sup> Tan Tingxiang memorial on 1862/1/21 (XF 11/12/22), LFZZ, 03-4400-089.



invasion.<sup>66</sup>

One way to look at this episode of provincial militia mobilization is as the state clawing back power that members of the local elite—Du and his subordinates—had accumulated. However, internecine conflicts were a likely outcome of introducing another channel of authority into the putatively hierarchical territorial administration whether this channel was occupied by natives of the province (like Du) or by extra-provincials (like other officials subject to the rule of avoidance). Indeed, Du’s relationships with local people proved about as problematic as his relationship with provincial officials. The deeper problem facing the court and the Qing state as a whole was the ineffectiveness of people like Du Qiao in mobilizing and distributing manpower and resources. Had Du been able to forge a province-wide militia that could effectively resist Nian attacks, then the political complications his position caused may have been worth the court’s trouble, as was the case with the Xiang and Huai armies. Instead, Du’s militia organization was dispensable on account of its deficiencies, and provincial officials would instead have to muddle through with the resources they could muster in cooperation with local elites.

### **Building Walls, 1861-68**

The failure of province-level militia organization hamstrung efforts to resist Nian attacks in rural areas both around Jinan and across Shandong. Instead, strategies for defending Jinan increasingly focused on the walled city and the immediate suburbs, which marked a decisive shift from Mao Hongbin’s strategy of defending what was “far away” in order to defend what

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<sup>66</sup> WZLRJ, 59:547, 630-32, 60:30-31, 49, 109, 178-79.

was “near.” The most visible embodiment of this approach was the construction of an outer set of city walls around Jinan, starting after especially severe Nian attacks in early 1861. The walls and the defenses organized around them reflected both the continued collaboration between Jinan’s elite and the local/provincial government and the limited capacity of this alliance to project power into the city’s hinterland. In other words, the physical construction of Jinan as a bulwark spoke to its own underlying fragility and, even more so, the continued vulnerability of areas outside of it.

Attacks by multiple columns of Nian forces in early 1861 demonstrated the vulnerability of Jinan and large swathes of the province. One of these columns looped south and east around Jinan, raiding the area around Mt. Tai and capturing and looting the important market town of Zhoucun in Changshan. Another column advanced along the now-Yellow River toward Jinan, pushing past smaller Qing forces in neighboring Changqing County and militias in Qihe and Jiyang that were supposed to defend the approach to Jinan, the route guarded by Mao Hongbin’s encampments in 1854-55.<sup>67</sup> (This was the route guarded by Mao Hongbin’s encampments in 1854–55.) A mix of forces led by Governor Qing-sheng and Sengerinchen finally turned back the Nian advance a mere six kilometers from Jinan.

The Nian forces themselves did not reach the walls of Jinan, but the panic they caused was hard enough to keep in check. This panic drove a wedge between the occupants of the walled city, many of whom were officials, and those of the urbanized areas outside the city walls (“suburbs”) and countryside. Wang Zhonglin recorded that as the Nian army approached, the officials decided to shut the city gates, stranding the people outside. This caused a particular

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<sup>67</sup> Zhang Yao, *Shandong junxing jilüe*, 1:122-25.

uproar in Jinan's most-populated suburb outside the west gate, where many of the residents were Hui (Chinese Muslims). Wang decried the failure of officials and militia leaders to effectively organize among this group, since he found Hui people "brazen" (*hanran*), which made them good fighters but also a potential source of trouble.<sup>68</sup> Before closing the city gates, the officials had failed to adequately stockpile food and supplies and so had to re-open them to allow merchants to bring in their wares. The Hui residents of the suburb took this opportunity to send their children, elderly people, and women into the city, where, without anywhere else to go, they settled in the streets. The officials and militia in the city tried to force them out, but Wang recorded that the people replied, "We are all the common people of the imperial household (*huangjia*). When you heard the rebels were coming, you closed the gates. You were protecting [yourselves] but abandoning us to the rebels."<sup>69</sup> Only after negotiating with the Hui leaders did the officials convince them to leave.

Besides indicating the social, including inter-ethnic, tensions the panic of a potential Nian attack could inflame, this incident highlighted how defenseless even areas in Jinan's immediate vicinity were. In response to this problem, Du Qiao, who remained in Jinan despite having been removed from his post as militia supervisor, proposed constructing additional fortifications in areas under threat of Nian attacks as part of a strategy of "strengthening the walls and clearing the countryside." The court still held out hope that the local elite could work with officials to strengthen the people's resolve, immunize them against panic in the face of the enemy, and turn militias into a useful fighting force. However, it also allowed Du to borrow 7,000 taels from the

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<sup>68</sup> WZLRJ, 60:76.

<sup>69</sup> WZLRJ, 60:135.

salt treasury to fund building earthworks outside Jinan's walled city.<sup>70</sup>

The earthworks did much more than quell the fears of the Hui and the majority of the city's population, who lived outside the walls.<sup>71</sup> They also enclosed areas that were important to city life, like the markets in the southwest suburb and Jinan's most famous scenic site, Baotu Spring (Baotu quan), where Governor Tan Tingxiang set up his command post. The newly protected area also included a fair amount of land that was not heavily urbanized at the time. As refugees flocked to Jinan to seek relief from Nian attacks and natural disasters in the coming decades, the population density of these areas grew considerably.<sup>72</sup>

In conjunction with continued mobilization of an urban militia, the earthworks proved effective in helping to defend the city. In autumn of 1861, the Nian launched another series of attacks on Shandong, again probing along the Yellow River. This time, they got close enough to Jinan to attack both villages outside the new fortifications and the earthworks themselves. Members of the elite organized militias, made repairs to the earthworks, set up additional defensive barriers outside of them, and even led sallies against detachments of Nian troops who approached.<sup>73</sup> Although militias manning the earthworks did engage Nian forces, the biographies of men involved in the city's militias suggest that the new defensive measures were largely successful in deterring concentrated Nian attacks, thereby minimizing the casualties suffered by the city's defenders.

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<sup>70</sup> QSL, 346:1115a-15b, 347:1126b.

<sup>71</sup> Wang Shouzhong and Guo Dasong, *Jindai Shandong chengshi*, 66.

<sup>72</sup> XXLCXZ, 13:4b.

<sup>73</sup> XXLCXZ, 40:10b, 23b-24b, 27a.

Things were very different outside the earthworks. Unlike 1853-55, when Jinan served as a base for militia mobilization in outlying areas, the forces inside the earthworks seem to have done little if anything to support surrounding villages. Likewise, Qing forces were either occupied elsewhere or too slow to react to the fluid and wide-ranging maneuvers of Nian forces across the countryside. Rural villages did mobilize defenses and resisted Nian attacks vigorously but without coordinated support from Jinan. Northeast of the city, a militia led by *juren* Chen Dapeng fought one of the fiercest battles against Nian forces. The militia initially prevailed, but was overwhelmed when the Nian returned with a larger force, and Chen and many of his men perished.<sup>74</sup> We see this theme of village militias initially repelling Nian forces only to be defeated by larger detachments in other biographies of people who died in these attacks, along with even more frequent descriptions of outnumbered rural militias stubbornly resisting but ultimately falling to the rebels.<sup>75</sup> This trope may be a narrative device—giving heroes their play before relating their tragic but inevitable downfall—but it corresponds to what we would expect from the combination of Nian raiding tactics and the uncoordinated state of defensive arrangements.<sup>76</sup>

The effects of the 1861 attacks on individual communities and across the countryside were often catastrophic. In fighting on the north bank of the Juye River to the east of Jinan at

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<sup>74</sup> XXLCXZ, 42:12a-12b.

<sup>75</sup> XXLCXZ, 42:14b, 15b.

<sup>76</sup> Wang Zhonglin's diary does not continue into autumn 1861. However, in the preceding months he repeatedly deplored the state of rural defenses and the need to unite villages into stronger defensive units. WZLRJ, 60:106-10.

least fourteen members of a single family unit, the Yan's, were killed.<sup>77</sup> The Nian themselves were not the only threat, since local people could take advantage of the disruption to plunder property left behind or assault stragglers.<sup>78</sup> The 1926 *Revised Licheng County Gazetteer* records the names of more than 2,700 men and 1,200 women who were killed in the Nian attacks of 1861 alone.<sup>79</sup>

Even though Jinan's fortifications and militias offered the city physical protection, the anxiety and fear caused by Nian attacks still affected people inside the walls. This sense of fragility is especially evident in a record of a homicide that occurred during the 1861 Nian attacks. The victims were a group of five Mongol banner soldiers who had been stationed between the south gate and the earthworks. One of them had fallen ill and received permission to enter the city with his companions to seek treatment. When they went to an inn near the east gate of the city to inquire about a room, however, their "non-standard speech" and "suspicious bearing" alarmed the innkeeper, Ma Changchun.<sup>80</sup> Ma reported them to the (presumably Han) militiamen defending that section of the wall, between ten and twenty of whom came to investigate. Uncomfortable with the situation, the banner soldiers tried to leave, but one of the

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<sup>77</sup> XXLCXZ, 42:12b-13a, 24b, 31a-31b.

<sup>78</sup> On the case of a woman raped by one of her neighbors as her family fled the Nian attacks, see Zhou Zupei memorial on 1864/12/12 (TZ 2/12/4), XKTB, 02-01-02-3049-003.

<sup>79</sup> See *juan* 42 and 49 of XXLCXZ.

<sup>80</sup> The memorial describing this case does not identify Ma's ethnicity, but it is worth pointing out that Ma is a common name among Hui people and, as we have seen, Jinan had a sizeable Hui population.

militiamen slashed open a bag they were carrying on their horses and noticed two pieces of red silk inside. Because Nian soldiers wrapped their heads in different colors of silk and the “red banner” Nian were currently attacking the earthworks, the militiamen grew even more suspicious and tried to arrest the soldiers, three of whom they killed in the ensuing skirmish.<sup>81</sup> Meanwhile, one of the soldiers who had gone off to purchase food for the group was killed in an unrelated dispute, leaving only one of the original five alive.<sup>82</sup>

The conflict with the Hui residents of the suburbs and the mistaken killing of banner soldiers described above reflect the tensions latent in the seemingly straightforward act of preparing defensive fortifications. As in 1853-55, the question was not just which areas to protect but also which areas to leave vulnerable. The strategy of making Jinan a bulwark turned rural areas into sites of martyr-production, given the limits of militia organization there. By this token, the Hui and other suburban residents were fortunate that they wound up inside the walls, protected by a mix of government troops and elite-organized militias. Yet walls were not an absolute antidote to the fragility fostered by the threat of infiltration, which could drive people on the inside to turn against each other.

Nian invasions waxed and waned for seven years after 1861, until the Nian were decisively defeated in 1868. The death of Sengerinchen in battle in 1865 and the court’s decision to send Zeng Guofan and the Huai Army northward marked a turning point in the fight. Over the next three years, Zeng and then Li Hongzhang set up a series of defensive lines in an attempt to

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<sup>81</sup> On fears of spies and the use of cloth to mark loyalties during the Taiping War, see Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 69-70, 89-92.

<sup>82</sup> Tan Tingxiang memorial on 1863/4/3 (TZ 2/2/16), ZPZZ, 04-01-27-0038-006.

control Nian movements and gradually grind down their forces. In conjunction with this overall strategy, Zeng started building up the fortifications of villages and cities.<sup>83</sup> After Zeng's efforts to keep the Nian out of Shandong altogether failed, Li eventually succeeded in splitting the Nian army in half and trapping the eastern portion on the Shandong peninsula, where it caused great devastation but was eventually defeated.<sup>84</sup>

In this period, the threat to Jinan and its immediate vicinity was less imminent than in 1861, but investment in urban defense continued. Between 1865 and 1867, Governor Yan Jingming, Administrative Commissioner (and future governor) Ding Baozhen, and Licheng Magistrate Tao Shaoxu oversaw the conversion of the earthworks into a stone wall that, while still shorter than the inner wall, was much more formidable than the earthworks. Members of the local elite, including Mao Hongbin, who returned to Jinan that year, helped supervise the project.<sup>85</sup> Private contributions from the elite and officials, including 3,000 taels from Jinan Prefect Xiao Peiyuan, funded the construction.<sup>86</sup> Again, though, the provincial government advanced funds to cover the cost provisionally, drawing from the *lijin* bureau that had been established by Governor Tan Tingxiang.<sup>87</sup>

The latter portion of the war against the Nian thus produced extremely mixed effects for the relationship between Jinan, its surrounding area, and the Qing state. Jinan itself fared far

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<sup>83</sup> Chiang, *The Nien Rebellion*, 101-04.

<sup>84</sup> Teng, *The Nien Army*, 150-68.

<sup>85</sup> XXLCXZ, 38:4a, 40:5b, 7a-8b, 16b-17b, 44:22a.

<sup>86</sup> Ding Baozhen memorial on 1868/9/27 (TZ 7/8/12), LFZZ, 03-4916-006.

<sup>87</sup> XXLCXZ, 13:4b.



better than the countryside and other cities in Shandong, like Linqing, and elsewhere, like Nanjing and Suzhou, that had had fallen to Taiping and Nian forces and were then recaptured. The city's security, embodied by its new walls, reflected the resilience of the Qing state and testified to the possibility of effective cooperation between the government and the local elite. Nonetheless, the juxtaposition between Jinan's security and the violence suffered by areas not far from those walls, which spilled into the city through occasional bursts of self-inflicted wounds and the scores of people who sought refuge there, illustrated how the wars against the Taiping and Nian had over-stretched the capacity of the state to project power across its territory. This juxtaposition between threat and control, between devastation and security, characterized the lived experiences of people in Jinan but also the ways in which people narrated their understanding of the relationship between what happened in Jinan, beyond its walls, and elsewhere in the empire.

### **From Blade to Brush**

The story of the ghost from Nanjing that opens this essay appears in two places in Wang Zhonglin's diary. The first re-telling is in the context of Wang recording a trip he took to climb Mt. Tai in October 1858. This was a period of relative calm for both Wang Zhonglin personally and central Shandong as a whole. As Wang describes the scenery and famous sites around the mountain's peak, he also records various legends about this sacred space, including one about ghosts gathering there to seek reincarnation from the lord of the mountain. In this context, his reminiscence of the ghost from Nanjing comes across more like a distant war story than a

commentary on current events.<sup>88</sup>

The second appearance of this story in Wang's diary comes over two years later, in early 1861, under very different circumstances. In 1860, Wang had fled Beijing in the face of the Anglo-French invasion and made his way back to Jinan, bouncing between there and Qihe, directly across the Yellow River. Between his travels and news received from friends, he was keenly aware of the deteriorating social order across North China, punctuated by the growing threat Nian forces posed to central Shandong, even Jinan itself, by early 1861. His diary entry for March 15 records developments in Tai'an: the city itself had been closed for many days, Qing troops had not yet been dispatched, and the Nian outnumbered them anyway. Meanwhile, the rebels roamed freely across the countryside and even up onto the sacred mountain, killing people who had sought refuge in Mt. Tai's famous Red Temple (Hong miao).<sup>89</sup>

This state of affairs apparently reminded Wang of that night in the camp in Qihe, prompting him to again recount his encounter with the ghost of the man killed in Nanjing and seeking new life at Mt. Tai. Wang concludes the entry with a reflection on divine warning:

Lord Guan, Patriarch Lü, and all the great immortals have through spirit-writing repeatedly urged people to repent with haste, saying that the years of *xin* and *ren* could bring leniency. This year is *xin-you* [1861-2], and a great column of rebels from Anhui is about to arrive in the territory of Jinan. The slaughter they have perpetrated along the roads is already wretched. I cannot bear to speak of it!<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> WZLRJ, 59:295-96.

<sup>89</sup> WZLRJ, 60:126-27.

<sup>90</sup> WZLRJ, 60:132.

In fact, Wang's diary does speak a great deal about the destruction wreaked by Nian forces as they raided across Shandong and, as in the passage above, frequently connects these depredations to people's failure to reform their behavior and so escape the judgment foretold by the spirits from whom they sought direction.<sup>91</sup>

The contrast between these re-tellings—especially Mt. Tai becoming a place of death rather than new life—reflects the complex experiences of Jinan and its environs during and beyond the Taiping and Nian wars. The physical reconstruction of culturally significant sites in Jinan and the texts produced about them resonate with similar projects in other parts of the empire (especially in Jiangnan) that were on the front lines of the Taiping War and have been at the forefront of scholarly attention. What was strange about Jinan, at least compared to Jiangnan, was the chronology of this process of reconstruction. Between the defeat of the Taiping northern invasion in 1855 and growing Nian penetration of Shandong in the 1860s, Jinan was at the front of the reconstruction curve, a model for how order could be restored to regions still afflicted by war. However, the continuation of fighting against the Nian even beyond the conclusion of the Taiping War meant that a final wave of reconstruction in Jinan began even later than in the south. This history of reconstruction reflects both the national scope of the sense of fragility the wars occasioned—albeit refracted through local experiences—but also the geographic extent and temporal coincidence of post-war reconstruction projects in both north and south.

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<sup>91</sup> Wang's interpretation of these events as a form of cosmic retribution that demanded repentance and attachment to spirit-writing as a medium through which divine warnings were conveyed resonates with scholarship on the well-known Jiangnan philanthropist Yu Zhi. Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 21-63; Alexander, "Virtues of the Vernacular," 150-220.

The earliest sign of “post-war reconstruction” in mid-century Jinan was the renovation of the city’s shrine to Lü Dongbin (or Patriarch Lü), undertaken by Jinan Prefect Chen Kuan and recorded by Mao Hongbin, the primary local militia leader during the Taiping northern invasion. This shrine was located near Baotu Spring, which, despite being outside the city walls, was an area of great cultural and political significance. Both the Kangxi and Qianlong emperors had bestowed inscriptions on the spring when they stopped in Jinan on their way to/from the ancestral home of Confucius in Qufu and Mt. Tai. During the Taiping northern invasion, Prefect Chen had made offerings at this shrine on the first day of every month, and so its reconstruction was an act of gratitude for the protection Lü had afforded the city. Chen began the project in spring of 1854—before the Taiping threat had fully passed—so it may have begun as an act of supplication as much as gratitude, but by the time it was finished in the autumn, the people felt safe enough to use its completion as an occasion to celebrate the fact that their city had escaped the fate of places like Nanjing and Linqing that had fallen to Taiping forces. Lü Dongbin was one of the deities Mao Hongbin and others invoked when practicing spirit-writing, and so it was especially appropriate that Mao would write a record of the construction.<sup>92</sup> Besides recompensing the protection and guidance Lü had provided, Mao’s record also commemorated Chen’s sincere veneration of Lü, which had “manifested spiritual power and had turned the resolve of the people into a firm wall like metal and stone.”<sup>93</sup> “Taking up a brush” to write this

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<sup>92</sup> It is unclear if Chen’s patronage of Lü’s shrine was itself related to spirit-writing, but Lü was broadly associated with the practice. WZLRJ, 60:12-13; Goossaert, “Spirit Writing, Canonization, and the Rise of Divine Saviors”; Lai Chi Tim, “Shijian, xiulian yu jiangbi.”

<sup>93</sup> Mao’s melding of the efficacy of Lü as a deity and Chen as a human official is unsurprising in

record was only a temporary reprieve from warfare for Mao, who noted his impending departure to assume a post of his own in Hubei—much closer to the war against the Taiping.<sup>94</sup>

The reconstruction of Lixia Pavilion (Lixia ting) by Salt Controller Chen Jingliang (a native of Fuzhou) in 1858—the same year as the first mention of the ghost story in Wang Zhonglin’s diary—further demonstrates how Jinan could be a model of reconstruction in the years after the Taiping northern invasion. Like Baotu Spring, Lixia Pavilion—located on an island on Daming Lake within the walled city—is also one of Jinan’s most famous scenic sites and housed an inscription made by the Qianlong emperor when he visited the city in 1748. Chen—as described in Fang Zongcheng’s record of the renovation—by no means saw this project as detached from the ongoing war in the south: “Now I am not in a post where I am meant to pacify the rebels, but fulfilling its responsibilities can still be of help to pacifying the rebels.” The connection Chen drew between this project and the ongoing war was threefold. First, repairing the pavilion bolstered the moral resolve of the local people by allowing them to enjoy not only beautiful scenery but also the uplifting calligraphy of a great emperor. Second, it made Jinan a model that could bring encouragement to people who lived in areas occupied by the Taiping:

If amity rises like steam, and evil tendencies are daily dispersed, then although there are people in areas that have fallen to the rebels, they will hear of this spirit and will admire

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light of Sarah Schneewind’s discussion of the practice of constructing shrines to living officials as a way both to lay claim to their power and to affect the behavior of subsequent officials.

Schneewind, *Shrines to Living Men*, 207-34.

<sup>94</sup> XXLCXZ, 21:10a-11b.

the happiness of our people's great peace (*taiping*); in the end they will not grow accustomed to fornication and treachery and thereby trample themselves in the bitterness of death.

Finally, by repairing this structure before it collapsed, Chen was embodying the kind of administrative foresight that the empire had lacked. Chen compared his own good practices to the maladministration on which he blamed the outbreak of the rebellion: "If we wait until [the tower] has already collapsed and then try to manage (*li*) it, then the work will be double and the success half. The spread of the rebels is due to this."<sup>95</sup> Despite its distance from the war, Jinan could model the renovation that the whole empire would need to avoid future calamities.

The Nian attacks of the 1860s, particularly 1861, brought more attention to heroic sacrifice and violent death. One of the earliest instances of this new kind of reconstruction was Prefect Xiao Peiyuan's renovation of the city's shrine to Tie Xuan, who had served as an official in Jinan during the civil war between the Jianwen emperor and Zhu Di, the Prince of Yan (later the Yongle emperor), in the early Ming. Loyally supporting the emperor in Nanjing, Tie had defended Jinan stoutly and—at first—successfully against Yan forces. Eventually, though, Jinan fell, and Tie was tortured to death, earning him a place in the pantheon of both loyal officials and local heroes. In 1792, salt official A-lin-bao constructed a shrine to him (*Tie gong ci*) on the northwest bank of Daming Lake in Jinan.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> XXLCXZ, 18:5a.

<sup>96</sup> Tie had previously been honored alongside six other martyrs of the civil war in the Shrine to Seven Loyals (*Qizhong ci*) inside the city that was constructed in the early Qing. Hu Delin, *Licheng xian zhi*, 11:26a-28a; XXLCXZ, 14:14b-16a.

In his record of the shrine's renovation, Prefect Xiao recounts that he first heard of Tie Xuan as a boy growing up in Yunnan. He wished to look at the portrait of Tie housed in his shrine, but his fellow townspeople scoffed at this notion, saying, "Will you see him in a dream?" Now, forty years later, Xiao had, in fact, come to Jinan and finally had an opportunity to visit Tie's shrine. He was disappointed, though, to find that Tie's shrine in Jinan was not only in disrepair but also held only a spirit tablet, not a portrait. While he gathered money for the renovation, Xiao looked for an image of Tie on which to base a portrait but to no avail. One night he fell asleep on the steps of the shrine overlooking Daming Lake and dreamed that a man presented him with an ornate volume containing both a biography of Tie and his image. Upon waking, Xiao hired first a painter and then a sculptor to reproduce the image he had seen in his dream and installed the resulting bust in Tie's shrine.<sup>97</sup>

Xiao's renovation of Tie's shrine bore similarities to Chen Jingliang's renovation of Lixia Pavilion in the sense that he expressed faith that connection to past worthies and the artifacts associated with them—the Qianlong emperor's calligraphy and the image of Tie Xuan—could aid in moral transformation. Xiao wrote, "If we are able to gaze on their portraits, especially if we can be aware of the clothes they wore and their smiling countenances, then not only will our admiration of them be buttressed, but moreover our minds will be made to possess a spirit for performing loyalty and righteousness."<sup>98</sup> However, Jinan's proximity to war and a greater sense of its own fragility—reflected in the story of Tie's loyal martyrdom—imbued Xiao's moralistic reconstruction with an emphasis on the immediacy of loyal sacrifice that was different from

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<sup>97</sup> XXLCXZ, 14:16a-17b.

<sup>98</sup> XXLCXZ, 14:17a-17b.

Chen's repair of Lixia Pavilion. Likewise, the construction of a shrine to Sengerinchen after his death in battle against the Nian in 1865 and, like elsewhere in the empire, a new Manifest Loyalty Shrine (Zhaozhong ci) in 1870 to honor soldiers and civilians who died in fighting against the Taiping and Nian reminded Jinan's residents that their city had sometimes been very close to the fighting.<sup>99</sup>

A synthesis of these images of Jinan as a site of loyal sacrifice and a place well-served by its elite and imperial officials dominated local cultural politics for a remarkably long time. The late nineteenth century saw the construction of posthumous shrines to Zhili Governor-General Li Hongzhang and Shandong governors Ding Baozhen (served 1867-76) and Zhang Yao (served 1886-91), who were venerated for their contributions both to the war against the Nian and post-war projects, like Yellow River hydraulic projects and humanitarian relief.<sup>100</sup> As David Buck argues, these monuments reflected how Jinan's elite mobilized their involvement in helping the city navigate the mid-century crises to establish their status in the city and their recognition that cooperation with officials and attachment to the dynasty had been an integral element of these

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<sup>99</sup> Like elsewhere in the empire, Jinan's first Manifest Loyalty Shrine had been built in the wake of the White Lotus Rebellion. *XXLCXZ*, 14:30b-31a; Bonk, "Loyal Souls." On the construction of Manifest Loyalty Shrines in the post-Taiping south, see Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 137-63; Wooldridge, *City of Virtues*, 141-48; Heselton, "Reconstructing Order," 208-58.

<sup>100</sup> Ding, Zhang, and others who served as governor had also held subordinate posts within the provincial administration, meaning that their record of service in the province was even longer (and more complex) than their tenure as governors would suggest.



experiences.<sup>101</sup> The petition submitted by Jinan’s elites—headed by former militia leader Li Qing’ao—requesting construction of a shrine for Ding praised his service in Shandong but also his continued attention to the province’s welfare after his promotion to governor-general of Sichuan. Specifically, the petition celebrated his prompt compliance with a court order to transfer funds to Shandong for hydraulic projects, which reflected how his “public-minded and loyal management of state affairs did not distinguish between territorial divisions.”<sup>102</sup> These reconstruction projects thus melded localist interests and awareness of the translocal dimensions of Jinan’s history into a durable form of Qing loyalism.

The localist loyalism of Jinan’s elite was so durable that it outlasted the Qing itself, as evidenced by the *Revised Licheng County Gazetteer*, one of whose main compilers was Mao Hongbin’s son, Mao Chenglin. Completed in 1924 and published in 1926, this gazetteer was upfront about its Qing sympathies, continuing to treat the Qing as the current dynasty and refusing to discuss events beyond 1911. The events of the mid-nineteenth century, especially the 1861 Nian attacks, loom large in this loyalist telling of local history. The “loyal martyrs” (*zhonglie*) and “exemplary women” (*lienü*) sections list, respectively, around 2,750 men and 1,200 women who were killed in the Nian attacks of that year alone. The fact that this number exceeded the total number of soldiers and civilians enshrined in the local Manifest Loyalty Shrine (one or two thousand), demonstrates that, like elsewhere, compiling their own lists of war dead provided a way for Jinan’s local elite to express the virtues of their native place without

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<sup>101</sup> Buck, “Public Monuments.”

<sup>102</sup> “*Jing bao quanlu*,” *Shen bao*, 1886/7/21, 10.

relying exclusively on formal, government-sanctioned honors.<sup>103</sup> The centrality of the 1861 attacks in local history is especially evident in the list of chaste widows in the gazetteer's section on exemplary women. *Juan* 49 of the gazetteer contains the first portion of the list of chaste widows followed by the list of women killed in the 1861 attacks. The list of chaste widows then continues in *juan* 50. Based on the dates when imperial honors were bestowed on these women, it appears that the list of women killed in 1861 was intentionally used to divide the chaste widows between those who received honors before and after this date. However, only about one-fourth of the approximately 1,600 entries in the second list of chaste widows include dates for honors, reflecting, again, how the gazetteer compilers supplemented government recognition with their own local investigations.

As an extended ghost story, the *Revised Licheng County Gazetteer* is an appropriate conclusion to this narrative of post-war reconstruction and a bookend to Wang Zhonglin's diary. It is an impressive culmination of dual assimilative processes: of the suffering of the people outside Jinan's (enlarged) walls into the history of the city and of Jinan's local history into that of the Qing state. The gazetteer also reflects the strong interregional currents of reconstruction activity, reminding us that while highly localized, experiences of the war created a shared affective milieu that was not restricted to the south or to southern literati. The fact that it was completed in the 1920s, though, does suggest some final questions about interregional divergences and the relationship between the events of the mid-nineteenth century and the fall of the Qing Dynasty.

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<sup>103</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 163-71.

## Conclusion

Jinan's history as a fragile bulwark is in some ways necessarily distinct, but it was nevertheless integrated into intra- and interregional histories of the late Qing. In terms of North China, Jinan's experiences help expose the contingency and immediate causes of the fragility of the Qing state in the region and—although it is beyond the scope of this essay—the base on which a range of actors would try to re-extend the power of the Qing state into the North China countryside in the dynasty's last decades, with predictably mixed success. Meanwhile, both Jinan's immediate experiences of war and modes of responding to it—whether through blade or brush—resonate with histories of the southern half of the empire.

There is also a story of divergences here. In particular, the history of wartime elite activism in Jinan leads us to a very different place from similar narratives focused on southern elites. Scholars have tended to interpret the growing involvement of southern elites in public affairs as at least foreshadowing the decline of the Qing state. For example, Janet Theiss argues that more direct elite involvement in honoring chaste widows in the post-Taiping era—as we see in the *Revised Licheng County Gazetteer*—reflected the growing irrelevance of the state as an institutional entity, despite enthusiasm for norms it sponsored.<sup>104</sup> Recent scholarship focusing on the wartime experience and post-war reconstruction has distanced itself from this tendency to link developments in the mid-nineteenth century to the fall of the Qing.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, these newer histories of the post-Taiping period share with earlier work a focus on how this period disrupted existing structures and assumptions, even if they do not frame this disruption in terms

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<sup>104</sup> Theiss, *Disgraceful Matters*, 215-17.

<sup>105</sup> Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 10; Wooldridge, *City of Virtues*, 10-12.

of a civilizational sea change or a clear-cut trajectory toward one revolution or another.<sup>106</sup> In any case, Jinan's history of post-war reconstruction leads to a very different place: members of the city's elite not only opposing the revolution but continuing to attach themselves and their city—subjectively, if not institutionally—to the Qing state well after Puyi's abdication.<sup>107</sup>

Jinan's history thus suggests an alternative to the way of thinking about state and society that has shaped or at least loomed behind prior histories of the late Qing. Whether we look at how Jinan's elite protected their city and thus served the dynasty in cooperation with imperial officials, how their limitations impaired the capacities of the Qing state, or how their attachment to the state kept it alive in ghost-like form after 1912, it is apparent that elite activism was essential and even inherent to the operation of the imperial state. Thinking in these terms, the expanding scope of elite activities itself cannot say much about why the dynasty fell. Instead, we have to look at the more subjective question of how elites understood their role in society in relationship to the broader political project embodied in the Qing empire. In line with recent hesitancy to draw firm links between the Taiping era and the fall of the Qing, the persistent loyalism of Jinan's elite shows how, at least in subjective terms, the legacy of the mid-nineteenth century wars could lead away from and not toward revolution. As we continue to wrestle with the aftermath of the Taiping period, looking to less familiar cases like Jinan will help us maintain an open mind about the variety of ways in which the experiences of that period affected how people across the empire related to the Qing state and thus how the Taiping and Nian wars did or did not contribute to the downfall of the dynasty.

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<sup>106</sup> Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism*; Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*, 2:100-16.

<sup>107</sup> On the phenomenon of Qing loyalism, see Lin Chih-hung, *Minguo nai diguo ye*.

## Glossary

A-lin-bao	阿林保
baojia	保甲
Baotu quan	趵突泉
Binzhou	濱州
Cao	曹
Changqing	長清
Changshan	長山
Chen Dapeng	陳大鵬
Chen Jingliang	陳景亮
Chen Kuan	陳寬
Chong-en	崇恩
Daming	大明
Daqing	大清
Ding Baozhen	丁寶楨
duban tuanlian dachen	督辦團練大臣
Du Han	杜翰
Du Qiao	杜翻
Fang Zongcheng	方宗誠
Gaotang	高唐

hanran	悍然
Hong miao	紅廟
Huai	淮
huangjia	皇家
Hui	回
jishizhong	給事中
Jiyang	濟陽
Jing-lin	景霖
Juye	巨野
li	里
li	理
Licheng	歷城
Li Hui	李德
Li Kaifang	李開芳
lijin	釐金
Li Qing'ao	李慶翱
Lixia ting	歷下亭
lienü	烈女
Linqing	臨清
Liu Yuanhao	劉源灝
Lü Dongbin	呂洞賓

Ma Changchun	馬長春
Mao Hongbin	毛鴻賓
Meng (family)	孟
Nian	捻
Qihe	齊河
Qing-sheng	慶盛
Qufu	曲阜
Seng-ge-lin-qin	僧格林沁
Sheng-bao	勝保
Tai'an	泰安
taiping	太平
Tan Tingxiang	譚廷襄
Tao Shaoxu	陶紹緒
Tie gong ci	鐵公祠
Tie Xuan	鐵鉉
Tongwaxiang	銅瓦廂
tuan	團
Wang Maoyin	王茂蔭
Wang Zhonglin	王鍾霖
Wenchang	文昌
Wen-yu	文煜

Wu Diankui	武殿魁
Xiang jun	湘軍
Xiao Peiyuan	蕭培元
xunye shen	巡徂神
Yan Jingming	閻敬銘
Yiyong ju	義勇局
yong	勇
Yu Zhi	余治
Zhangqiu	章丘
Zhang Yao	張曜
zhaozhong ci	昭忠祠
zhonglie	忠烈
Zhoucun	周村
zongju	總局

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### ABBREVIATIONS

- CHGIS                    CHGIS, 2016, “1820 Layers UTF8 Encoding,”  
<https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ST5KKM>, Harvard Dataverse, V1.
- LFZZ                    *Lufu zouzhe* (Extra copies of Grand Council memorials). Zhongguo diyi  
lishi dang’anguan (First Historical Archives).
- MSSZG                    Mao Hongbin. *Mao Shangshu zougao* (The memorials of Mao Hongbin).



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- QSL *Wenzong xian huangdi shilu* (Veritable Records of the Xianfeng Emperor). hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw.
- QZFZYTP *Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'anguan. Qing zhengfu zhenya Taiping tianguo dang'an shiliao* (Archival materials on the Qing government's suppression of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom). 26 vols. Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe. 1992.
- WZLRJ Wang Zhonglin. *Wang Zhonglin riji* (Diary of Wang Zhonglin). 2 vols. *Lidai riji congchao* 59-60. Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe. 2006.
- XKTB *Xingke tiben* (Board of Punishments routine memorials). *Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'anguan* (First Historical Archives).
- XXLCXZ Mao Chenglin, ed. *Xuxiu Licheng xian zhi* (Revised Licheng County gazetteer). Jinan: Licheng xian zhi ju. 1926.
- ZPZZ *Zhupi zouzhe* (Palace memorials). *Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'anguan* (First Historical Archives).

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