

Review of *Qing ru Guan qian bubing yanjiu*
清入關前步兵研究 *Ming-Qing Military*
Revolution: Study on the Infantry Perspective
in Early Qing Period, by Zhang Jian (Beijing:
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Was Qing military superiority built upon its Inner Asian military culture, or upon a military revolution that commenced in the mid-1620s? Zhang Jian believes that it was the latter. In *Qing ru Guan qian bubing yanjiu*, he argues that the introduction of the European-style heavy cannon, *hongyipao* 紅夷炮, inaugurated a military revolution in the Qing army, transforming it into an infantry- and artillery-based early modern army. This not only led to the Qing's military success but also brought profound social-political change in the Qing state. Zhang's book recounts the Qing military revolution chronologically. The first chapter examines the changing cavalry-infantry ratio of Nurhaci's army, followed by Chapter 2, which explains how the Qing infantry, known as *oboi*, came into being. Chapter 3 recounts how infantry became the Qing standing army during Hong Taiji's reign. The last chapter retraces the roundabout formation of the Qing artillery corps.

Contrary to the conventional view, Zhang argues that Jurchen armored cavalry superiority, long regarded as a shining legacy of Inner Asian military culture, ended in 1626 when the Ming introduced *hongyipao* to defend its cities. The cannonballs shattered not only the charging Jurchen horsemen but Nurhaci's dream to conquer Liaodong. The story did not end here, however. Nurhaci's successor, Hong Taiji, found a means to regain strategic initiative: He learned from the enemy and introduced European-style artillery into his army. To better accommodate the new weapon into his "classic nomadic army," Hong Taiji reformed and built the infantry corps and artillery corps, respectively. The reform was a success, and by 1643, the Qing was able to defeat the Ming and capture all of its strongholds beyond Shanhai Pass, realizing Nurhaci's dream. The following year, Hong Taiji's successor conquered Beijing and inaugurated the conquest of China.

More importantly, the impact of the Qing military reform penetrated far beyond the military. Siege warfare was a war of attrition. In order to enlist more power into the infantry and artillery corps, Hong Taiji conscripted soldiers from other ethnic groups—Chinese bondservants, Joseon captives, surrendered Mongols, and the new Manchus. These non-Manchu people were not only given the status of soldiers but were admitted into the Eight Banners. This altered the ethnic and social composition of the Manchu state and eventually led to the creation of the Mongol and Hanjun divisions of the Eight Banners. Further, the conscription of non-Manchu soldiers shook the original Jurchen tribal social-military structure infused within the Eight Banner system. The new army branches diminished the political and military authority of the Manchu banner lords and facilitated Hong Taiji's centralization of political power. The Qing gradually morphed from a confederation to a state. In other words, Hong Taiji's revolution of military affairs inadvertently led to a full-blown military revolution that formed the basis of the emerging Qing empire. Zhang's study brings the military back into the center of the pre-conquest Qing. As Charles Tilly famously put it, "War made the state, and the state made war." War and military were the major drivers of Qing state-building. The social and political development of the pre-conquest Qing must be understood through the war context.

Zhang's military approach also situates the early Qing in a global history perspective. The Qing military revolution conforms with the developmental trend of many early modern Eurasian states: replacing infantry with cavalry, use of gunpowder weapons, expanding the army, centralizing state power, etc. Many historians have contemplated the idea of a Chinese military revolution comparable to the European one. Zhang's theory stands out with a very precise time point. He rejects Tonio Andrade's theory that the sixteenth-century Ming underwent a military reform and brought about an age of East-West parity. Given that the modernized Ming was defeated by the Jurchen "classic nomadic army" in the 1619 battle of Sarhū, Zhang contends, the Ming military reform was not a success. The real turning point was in 1626 when the Ming introduced the *hongyipao* into the China theatre. This kickstarted the aforementioned military revolution as well as the age of parity. Only since then did the Qing declare its military superiority in East Asia, outmatching Joseon, Japan, and other Inner Asian states.

Apart from the intriguing theory, Zhang's study stands out for its deep and critical interrogation of sources. The study makes extensive use of two major pre-conquest Manchu sources, *Manwen laodang* 滿文老檔 and *Neiguoshiyuan dang* 內國史院檔, supported by the Manchu and Chinese versions of *Qing shilu* 清實錄 and many other Chinese, Manchu, and Mongol materials. One problem with *Manwen laodang*, *Neiguoshiyuan dang*, and *Qing shilu* is that they underwent multiple rounds of editing and translation during the Qing and in modern times. Some of the original contents were edited and erased, while some new sidenotes were added during the eighteenth century.

Their multiple editions have confounded historians for decades. Zhang is well aware of this scholarly conundrum. When citing a text, he often compares the original text word by word from different editions before coming to a conclusion. In principle, the oldest versions are always more reliable than the later ones, but Zhang also analyzes the erasures and sidenotes added in the Qianlong era to examine how Qing historians understood these same historical events. Zhang sheds new light on many historical problems regarding the mysterious pre-conquest Qing. For example, he provides a more accurate estimation of the size of the Jurchen cavalry during Nurhaci's time; clarifies the changing meaning of cotton armor (Ma: *olbo*) and the cotton armor army (Ma: *olboi cooha*), which later became the infantry; and delineates the differences between the often-confused Black Banner (Ma: *sahaliyan ing*) and Han Army (Ma: *nikan i cooha*). All in all, Zhang's study serves as a textbook for methods and approaches in using pre-conquest Manchu materials.

An inevitable downside of the heavy interrogation of sources is that it occasionally distracts readers from the main arguments. Indeed, I wish Zhang would have expounded more on the socio-political impact of the infantry reform in order to give a more comprehensive picture of the military revolution, especially given the detailed historiography on that topic given in the introduction. Fortunately, Liu Xiaomeng reveals in the foreword that this book is but the first in a series of books by Zhang centering around the Ming-Qing military revolution. I look forward to reading his future works.

