

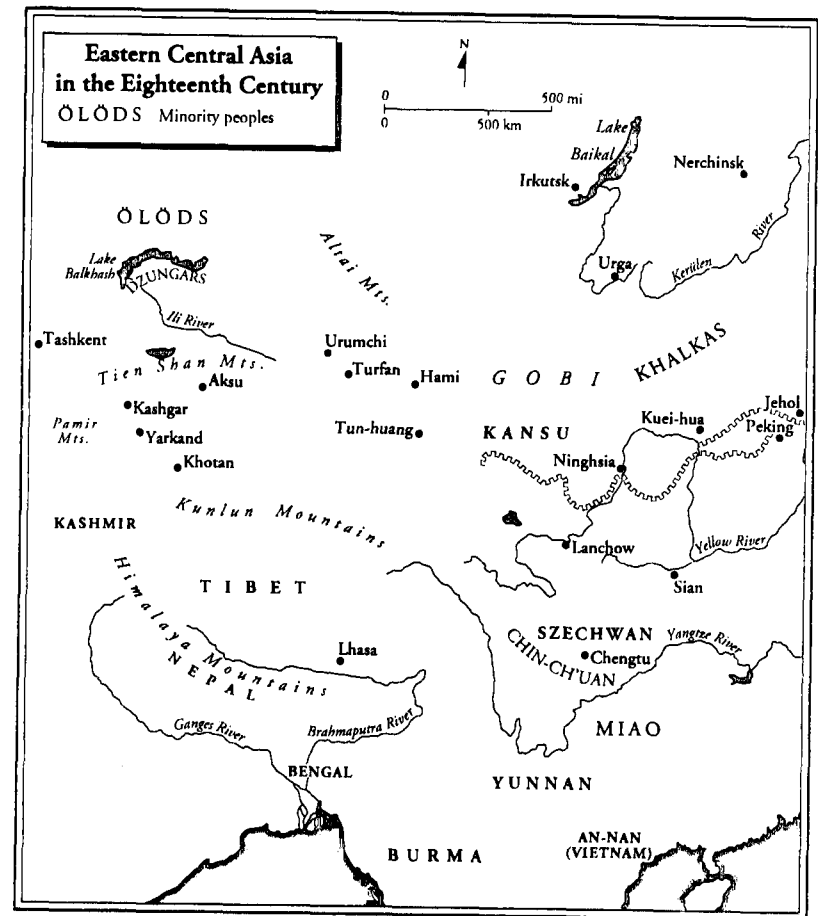
early Han empire. Su Wu had spent nineteen years "eating snow" and "smelling sheep" among the Hsiung-nu, before returning to the reward of a high official post at the Han court.<sup>32</sup>

Here was a Manchu emperor trying to imagine the emotions and scruples of two different Chinese prisoners of war, centuries apart and belonging to two different social classes, in two quite different forms of non-Chinese captivity. The spectacle shows how self-confident Ch'ien-lung was in inhabiting and interpreting a Chinese mental world. But it also shows the conflicts between the various elements in the eighteenth-century court's ideology. Ch'ien-lung's need to see the rice-planting Burmese as being as unvaryingly barbaric as the Hsiung-nu, in order to provide a stable external reference point for the comparative measurement across dynasties of Chinese political and cultural loyalty, worked against his court's equally significant agenda of demolishing negative Chinese pictures of the frontier peoples the Ch'ing empire was trying to assimilate or control. In the end, the ceaseless struggle to win the obedience of the Chinese themselves, the basis of the empire, won out. It necessitated the survival, even at the top, of static, undifferentiated images of the frontiers as places of martyrdom-inflicting otherness in which the most traditional types of Chinese loyalty could be tested and renewed.

#### THE POLITICS AND ECONOMICS OF CH' IEN-LUNG'S WARS

In the last decade of his reign, Ch'ien-lung referred to himself in a grandiose way. He adopted the style name of the "Old Man of the Ten Completed Great Campaigns" (*Shih-ch'üan lao-jen*). By this Ch'ien-lung meant to refer to a series of wars over most of his reign, from 1747 to 1792, and in all of which, with varying degrees of validity, he claimed victory. The ten wars comprised three expeditions into central Asia from 1755 to 1759, two against the Dzungars and one against the Turkic Muslims known in modern times as the Uighurs; two wars, in 1747-1749 and again in 1771-1776, to suppress the Tibetan minority of western Szechwan known in Peking in the eighteenth century as the "Golden Stream" (Chin-ch'uan) hill people; a war with the Konbaung dynasty in Burma, from 1765 to 1769; an invasion of Vietnam, in 1788-1789, with the pretext of restoring a collapsing dynasty there; the repression of a rebellion in Taiwan, in 1787-1788; and two wars in Tibet and beyond against the Gurkhas of Nepal (1790-1792) in order to solidify Ch'ing control in Tibet.

<sup>32</sup> P'eng Yüan-jui, comp., *Kao-tsung shih-wen shih-ch'üan chi* (Peking, 1794; rpt. Shanghai, 1936), 42, pp. 529-30.



Map 7. *Eastern Central Asia in the Eighteenth Century*. John K. Fairbank, ed. *Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, Part 1*, Vol. 10 of *The Cambridge History of China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), Map 3, p. 55, Map 4, p. 67, Map 5, p. 104.

The "Ten Great Campaigns" was a public formula whose myth-making properties were designed to transcend the historical facts. The ten wars in the formula had little in common. Ch'ien-lung's adversaries ranged from the rulers of Nepal, Burma, and Vietnam, to a far less lofty Hokkien "trouble-maker" on Taiwan who led the first Triad rebellion in Chinese history.<sup>33</sup> The seizure of Sinkiang was an unquestioned and impressive reality. The Ch'ing military expeditions to Burma and Vietnam resulted in humiliating

<sup>33</sup> David Ownby, *Brotherhoods and secret societies in early and mid-Qing China* (Stanford, 1996), pp. 55-71.

disasters, of a kind that could be disguised only by diplomatic finesse and by specious propaganda. It has been estimated that Ch'ien-lung lent his authorship to about fifteen hundred poems and essays commemorating his major wars, and then saw to it that such writings were engraved on huge stone monuments, scattered from Peking to west China. Themes from the wars and his writings about them were also incorporated into paintings, including those done by European artists at his court, and appeared as well on calligraphic scrolls hung in his palaces.

How well all this trophy-making conjured up a supportive public opinion is another matter. Ch'ien-lung made a special effort to install stone war memorial monuments at Peking's Imperial College (*Kuo-tzu chien*), the center of official higher education. This may have been intended as spine-stiffening morale therapy for the students there who despised soldiering. It also might be thought to counteract the pacificism of famous Chinese literati who most influenced them, like Fang Pao, whose picture of Chinese history contrasted the relatively peaceful two thousand years from the Yellow Emperor to the late Chou with the allegedly slaughter-filled two millennia of disorder that characterized the unified empire.<sup>54</sup> Court memoirists in the Ch'ien-lung reign's immediate aftermath remembered an emperor who stayed awake at night to read military reports from central Asia or Burma, bullying his eunuchs to get him more information and preventing his senior on-duty ministers from so much as eating their meals.<sup>55</sup> The K'ang-hsi emperor, more at home on his own battlefields, had not felt the need to devise so much propaganda.

#### *War and the bureaucratization of Southwest China*

Ch'ien-lung's five wars in Sinkiang and Tibet, and the postwar political and social orders in those regions that resulted from them, have been described elsewhere.<sup>56</sup> Of the five remaining and less well known of the ten campaigns, at least three (the two wars with the western Szechwan Tibetans, and the invasion of Burma) and perhaps as many as four (the brief Vietnam war) could be plausibly linked to the eighteenth-century court's promotion of a major shift in the Chinese state's historic territorial strategies for controlling people and resources in the four southwest provinces of Szechwan, Yunnan, Kweichow, and Kwangsi.

<sup>54</sup> Joanna Waley-Cohen, "Commemorating war in eighteenth-century China," *Modern Asian Studies*, 30, No. 4 (October 1996), pp. 869-99. For Fang Pao, see Fang Pao, *Fang Pao chi*, ed. Liu Chi-kao (Shanghai, 1983), I, pp. 73-4.

<sup>55</sup> Chao-lien, *Hsiao-t'ing tsa-lu*, I, pp. 15.

<sup>56</sup> Joseph Fletcher, "Ch'ing Inner Asia c. 1800," in *Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911*, Vol. 10 of *The Cambridge history of China*, ed. Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 35-106.

The no-nonsense Yung-cheng emperor, in the spring of 1725, had singled out these four provinces for having the most unacceptably confused administrative boundaries in China. The result, as the emperor publicly saw it, was the court's inability to clarify local responsibilities for bandit suppression in the southwest, which had also harbored various anti-Ch'ing forces in the previous reign. Yung-cheng further complained about the southwest's interprovincial and interdistrict struggles over the rights to revenues from mines, salt, and tea production and trade, and the region's evasion of the principles laid down in the *Chou li* and *Mencius* for basing humane government upon firm boundaries.<sup>57</sup> Yung-cheng had ordered land surveys and boundary determinations for the southwest.

The eighteenth-century emperors' attempted shift from imprecise frontiers to more defined boundaries in the southwest led to warfare that was not included in Ch'ien-lung's Ten Great Campaigns formula as well as wars that were. Ch'ien-lung's own ambivalence about some of the warfare explains this. The shift in policies in the southwest involved a decline in tolerance for non-Chinese hereditary lordlings of a sort the Ch'ing court accepted in central Asia. The conversion of ecological disputes into political quarrels was just one of the unforeseen consequences. The imposition of a more impersonal and unified administrative culture from Peking threatened to destabilize fragile power-sharing arrangements along the Burmese and Vietnamese frontiers, where minority chiefs might be loyal by tradition to both the Chinese court and royal courts in Southeast Asia. The Chinese court literati were divided. Those who favored the policy shift argued that the non-Chinese hereditary chiefs in Kweichow, Szechwan, Yunnan, and Kwangsi were the last remaining holdouts against the general trend of imperial history toward the defeudalization of office-holding in China. Their transformation into circulating, nonhereditary bureaucrats, Chinese or minority, therefore could be seen as being the final consummation of that trend.

The tragedy of the southwest in the Yung-cheng and Ch'ien-lung reigns was that it became the laboratory for the combination of two historical trends, not one. Political defeudalization got mixed up with the dispossession of aboriginal peoples. The combination acquired an added meanness from the fact that it coincided with a crisis of downward mobility and immiserization among the eighteenth-century Chinese literati. That limited both their idealism and their acceptance of more humane educational forms of assimilation of southwest minorities.

These minorities included members of the Tibeto-Burman language family (such as the Yi or Lolo of Szechwan), members of the Tai language group

<sup>57</sup> *CSL-YC*, 30, pp. 23-23b.

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