

succeeds, a gaint step toward social and political stability will have been made.

I am well aware of the short-comings of this article. The fiscal data on which this study is based will be revised as research continues. Only further study of provincial and local politics of the late Qing and early Republic could substantiate my suggestions that the rise of warlordism was in part the product of the military establishing its domination over local society at least in some regions, the erosion of county finances, and provincial elites wrecking attempts by the central state to extend its power and draw more resources from local society. If this article can only be an initial exploration of these difficult topics, I nonetheless believe that the study of such practical matters as public finance and local and provincial politics provides a better approach to warlordism than one that focuses on the moral or cultural attitudes of the warlords themselves.

Commemorating War in Eighteenth-Century China¹

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Reviewing his long reign in 1792, the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1736–95) hailed his military triumphs as one of its central accomplishments. To underscore the importance he ascribed to these successes, he began to style himself ‘Old Man of the Ten Complete Victories’ (*Shi Quan Lao Ren*), after an essay in which he boldly declared he had surpassed, in ‘Ten Complete Military Victories’ (*Shi Quan Wu Gong*), the far-reaching westward expansions of the great Han (206 BCE–220 CE) and Tang (618–907) empires. Such an assertion, together with the program of commemoration discussed below, served to justify the immense expense incurred by frequent long-distance campaigning; to elevate all these wars to an unimpeachable level of splendor even though some were distinctly less glorious than others; and to align the Manchu Qing dynasty (1644–1911) with two of the greatest native dynasties of Chinese history and the Qianlong Emperor personally with some of the great figures of the past.²

Qianlong’s ten victories included the wars of conquest in Xinjiang—the Zunghar, Ili and Muslim campaigns (1755–59); two wars to suppress rebellious Jinchuan minorities in Sichuan pro-

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² See Lu Zhengming, ‘Qianlong Di “Shi Quan Wu Gong” Chu Tan’ (A Preliminary Investigation of the ‘Ten Great Victories’ of the Qianlong Emperor), in *Zhongguo Junshi Shi Lunwen Ji* (Collected Essays on Chinese Military History), edited by Nanjing Junchusi Bianyan Shi (Research and Editorial Department of the Nanjing Military Region) and the editorial department of ‘Shi Xue Yue Kan’ (Historical Studies Monthly) (Kaifeng: Henan University Publishing Company, 1989), 239–58.

vince (1747–49, 1771–76), wars in Burma (1766–70), Annam (Vietnam—1788–89) and Taiwan (1787–88), and two wars against the Gurkhas in Nepal (1790–92). During Qianlong's reign Qing armies also three times defeated insurgent Muslims, first at Wushi in Xinjiang in 1765 and then in Gansu in 1781 and 1784; they crushed millenarian rebels in Shandong in 1774; and they quelled unruly Miao minorities in Yunnan and Hunan in the 1790s, but the emperor dismissed these domestic uprisings as unworthy of inclusion in his catalogue of ten. Thus, the period sometimes described as the height of 'Pax Sinica' in reality saw almost continuous military activity, albeit mostly restricted to limited areas within China proper or the vitally important imperial periphery.³

A sequence of multi-layered commemorations marked the conclusion of these wars. These emanated in large measure directly from that most authoritative source, the Qianlong Emperor himself. A notoriously prolific writer and poet whose literary oeuvre purportedly amounted to tens of thousands of poems and essays, Qianlong lent his authorship to some fifteen hundred poems and essays that specifically concerned the major wars of his reign. Authentic or not, the presentation of such texts as the emperor's own work, published most often in his own instantly identifiable calligraphy, gave his extraordinary prestige to these particular portrayals of the campaigns and made it quite clear that, whatever the reality, this was the way in which the wars were to be remembered.⁴ To emphasize this even further, the emperor periodically observed that he intended the memorial texts he composed should 'instruct and edify later generations into the distant future (*chuishu jiyuan*).'⁵ These commemorative writings were engraved on huge monuments installed in Beijing and elsewhere, incorporated in paintings, hung as calligraphic scrolls that adorned halls and pavilions within the imperial palace complex, and reproduced in many of the huge imperially sponsored compilations of the time. Ritual celebrations of victory attended by multitudes of civil and military

³ *Shi Quan Ji*, in Peng Yuanrui, comp., *Gaozong Yuzhi Shiwen Shi Quan Ji* (The Qianlong Emperor's Prose and Poetry on the Ten Great Campaigns), edited by Xiong Hui (Zhengzhou: Guji Chubanshe: 1989–90), 671.

⁴ On the significance of a powerholder's calligraphy, see Richard Curt Kraus, *Brushes with Power: Modern Politics and the Chinese Art of Calligraphy* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1991).

⁵ See, for example, *Shang Yu Dang* (Archive of Imperial Edicts) (Beijing) Qianlong ('QL') 41/8/20, 293.

officials as well as by visiting dignitaries also became an integral component of imperial power. Court painters recorded these events in careful detail, producing a whole genre of documentary painting featuring a series of sets of war illustrations (*zhantu*) and several groups of portraits of meritorious officials involved in the different campaigns (*gongchen xiang*). Together with such trophies as the weapons and personal belongings of defeated rebels, these paintings were displayed in specially designated pavilions located in the center of Beijing, the Zi Guang Ge (Pavilion of Purple Light) and the Wu Cheng Dian (Hall of Military Achievements). Additional versions of the paintings also were kept in the imperial palaces for the daily enjoyment of the emperor and his court, while thousands of copper engravings of the war illustrations graced public buildings all around the country and were presented to individuals privileged to receive imperial largesse. In short, the official commemoration of war in eighteenth-century China became a major social, cultural and political enterprise, one that was conducted under specifically imperial auspices.

This essay describes the different ways in which war was officially commemorated in the Qianlong period, focusing mainly on stelae and their inscriptions, military ritual, and paintings, all of which were closely interwoven. The essay considers the objectives underlying the production and dissemination of these monuments and records and the extent to which their purposes, articulated or otherwise, were achieved. It takes into account a curious phenomenon recently pointed out by Harold Kahn, that is, that the various memorials and their offshoots took on a life of their own; the accomplishments, 'as ritually celebrated and formally recorded, themselves became the triumphs, transcending mere event and historicity.'⁶ The essay focuses on the Qianlong reign because of that emperor's own particular interest in war and its commemoration. He displayed this near-obsession with warfare and its trappings and uses, for example, by taking a close personal interest in the direction of campaigns, for instance leaving strict instructions to awaken him immediately at any time upon receipt of dispatches—he often refers to extended periods of virtually sleepless nights; and by insisting on examining

⁶ Kahn, 'A Matter of Taste: The Monumental and Exotic in the Qianlong Reign,' in Chou Juhsi and Claudia Brown (eds), *The Elegant Brush: Chinese Painting under the Qianlong Emperor 1735–1795* (Phoenix, Arizona: Phoenix Art Museum, 1985), 288–302, at 293, citing Sabine G. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1981), 271.

draft versions of all textual and visual representations of his wars before these circulated among any kind of public audience. In 1760, for example, after reviewing a poem on the pacification of Xinjiang, *Ping Xiyu Shi*, composed by favored scholar Shen Deqian, Qianlong complained that several points were quite inaccurate, and specified very precisely all the changes he wished made.⁷ On another occasion Qianlong's instructions to Sichuan governor-general Wenshou and provincial commander-in-chief Mingliang, to select the precise spot and to report on the size of the stone slabs for the monument, so as to facilitate his composition of the inscriptions show his attention to every detail involved in the production of a war memorial.⁸

Closely intertwined with the emperor's passion for warfare was his preoccupation with bolstering and even reinventing the indigenous culture of the ruling Manchus, in large measure to counterbalance the notorious potency of Chinese civilization. The commemoration of war was absolutely relevant to this cultural project. Thus, the production of war memorials and military paintings significantly intensified after 1759, when Qing armies brought to a triumphant conclusion a long series of campaigns initiated by Qianlong's illustrious grandfather, Kangxi (1662–1722). In that year the Qing conquered Xinjiang, thereby massively expanding the territorial extent of the empire and dispelling forever the nomadic threat to China's Central Asian borders, as well as fulfilling the desire of Qianlong, at once filial and competitive, to emulate Kangxi. As we shall see, the glorification of the conquest was intended to achieve several purposes; at its most straightforward, it demonstrated Qing power and thereby heightened anew the Manchus' legitimacy as rulers of China, an issue on which the Qing at its mid-eighteenth-century zenith remained keenly sensitive.⁹ This sensitivity related for the most part to two different phenomena. First, as I have discussed elsewhere, Qing monarchs suffered from a tricky ambiguity. Ultimately dependent on military power as the foundation of their rule in China, they nonetheless cultivated civilian accomplishments—Qianlong's mass production of poetry exemplified this tendency—in a bid to present themselves as thorough-going Con-

⁷ *Shang Yu Dang* QL 25/3/5, 149. For another example dating from sixteen years later, see *ibid.*, QL 41/12, n.d., 506. See also Yang Xin, 'Court Painting in the Yongzheng and Qianlong Periods of the Qing Dynasty, with Reference to the Collection of the Palace Museum, Peking,' in *The Elegant Brush*, 343–87, at 356–7.

⁸ See *Shang Yu Dang* QL 41/8/20, 293.

⁹ On the Qing conquest of Xinjiang and its aftermath, see Joanna Waley-Cohen, *Exile in Mid-Qing China: Banishment to Xinjiang, 1758–1820* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

fucians whose authority stemmed primarily from their moral virtue, their scholarly attainments and their benevolence as rulers.¹⁰ Second, the sensitivity indirectly concerned the real dearth in Manchu culture of any artistic and literary tradition comparable to that of their Chinese subjects, whose attitude to other civilizations tended to resemble the patronizing 'orientalist' approach identified in western cultures by Edward Said.¹¹ To some extent, then, the celebration of victories and the commemoration of wars arose out of a sense of cultural rivalry; it was the imperial purpose to demonstrate that martial prowess was a mark of superior civilization, not merely an attribute of bandits, and thus that the exaltation of warfare properly belonged at the center of the cultural activity of the time. However, there were still further complexities to all the glorification. First, the emperor undoubtedly wished to exercise control over the way in which his wars were remembered—to 'put an accurate spin' on them and thereby to manipulate the judgement of history. Second, he hoped to fend off what he clearly perceived as a profound threat to Manchu identity after a century of assimilation while at the same time wishing to stiffen the sinews of Chinese culture, because he considered its great emphasis on civilian culture inadequate for so extensive and powerful an empire as the one over which he ruled. This was in effect the very reverse of the much-vaunted sinicization of the Manchus; it constituted an attempt to integrate Chinese civilization with the Central Asian khanates Qianlong also sought to represent. His ultimate goal, as we shall see, was to draw together his diverse subjects under the overarching umbrella of a uniquely Qing form of nationalist ideology.¹²

Stelae Inscriptions

During Qianlong's reign war memorials in the form of engraved stelae sprang up all over the country, especially in the vicinity of

¹⁰ See Joanna Waley-Cohen, 'China and Western Technology in the Late Eighteenth Century,' in *American Historical Review* 98.5 (December 1993): 1525–4, at 1527.

¹¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978). For a more recent view in an Asian context, see Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993). See also Laura Hostetler, 'Chinese Ethnography in the Eighteenth Century: Miao Albums of Guizhou Province' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1995).

¹² See Pamela Kyle Crossley, 'Manzhou Yuanliu Kao and the Formalization of the Manchu Heritage,' in *Journal of Asian Studies* 46.4 (November 1987): 761–90; Crossley, 'The Rulerships of China,' in *American Historical Review* 97.5 (December 1992): 1468–84; and see below.

the main Qing capitals in Beijing and Chengde and at important battlefields and other centers of military success. The production of such monuments fell firmly within the indigenous tradition, for the Chinese, well known as the inventors of paper, were also past masters at creating more permanent written records in the form of stone engravings. Long known as an art form, such stelae inscriptions had also been a common form of private and public memorial in China since at least the earliest days of the empire. The subject-matter of their inscriptions—here we do not even include representational ones—covered an enormous range of topics—posthumous praise for virtuous women; the construction or repair of an important public building; the dispatch of a fleet; the establishment of a religion; the record of an episode of local history, and so on. A famous and elaborate stone-engraved record was a twelfth-century scaled map of the entire Chinese empire at the time, including major rivers.¹³ What was notable about the eighteenth-century production of war memorials was the sheer quantity—they numbered at least in the hundreds—and the empire-wide distribution. In both cases the scale may have been unprecedented.

Memorial stelae often were very large and the effort involved in creating them was colossal. They usually were made up of three originally rectangular pieces; the main body, which rested on the second part, a base set on the ground, and was surmounted by a third stone slab. All three parts, especially the base and top, might be ornately carved (see Figures 1a and 1b for the tombstone of Fu Heng, one of the great figures of the Qianlong period whose career was intimately tied in to the Ten Great Campaigns). Apart from the actual composition of the text, in the case of Qing war memorials often done at least putatively by Qianlong himself, there was a calligrapher for both the main text and the heading able to write in different scripts; a stone carver; a geomancer who designated the most auspicious day for actually erecting the monument, and probably the precise location; and workers involved in the physical setting up of the stone.¹⁴ In addition, someone had to take responsibility for coordinating all these endeavors. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that problems

¹³ See Cordell Yee, 'A Cartography of Introspection: Chinese Maps as Other than European,' in *Asian Art* (Fall 1992): 29–45, at 30–1; for an illustration, see Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954–), vol. 3, pl. 81 (fig. 226). The map dates from 1136.

¹⁴ Valerie Hansen, 'Inscriptions: Historical Sources for the Song,' in *The Bulletin of Sung Yuan Studies* 19 (1987): 17–25, at 17.

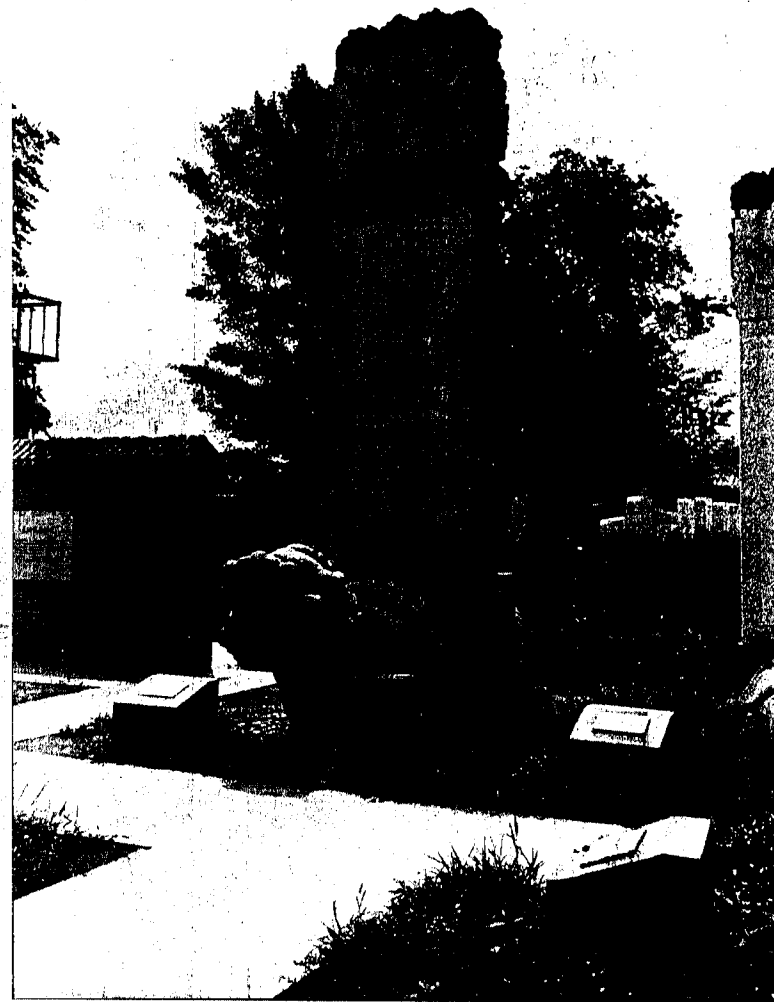


Fig. 1a Fu Heng's tomb (front).

sometimes beset the production even of imperial war memorials. In 1761 Agui, then serving as military lieutenant-governor (*dutong*) at Ili, the newly established seat of government in Xinjiang, reported that some of these recently erected monuments had already toppled over. Apparently, in more than one instance not only had the base been too small, but also the top, instead of consisting of a single block

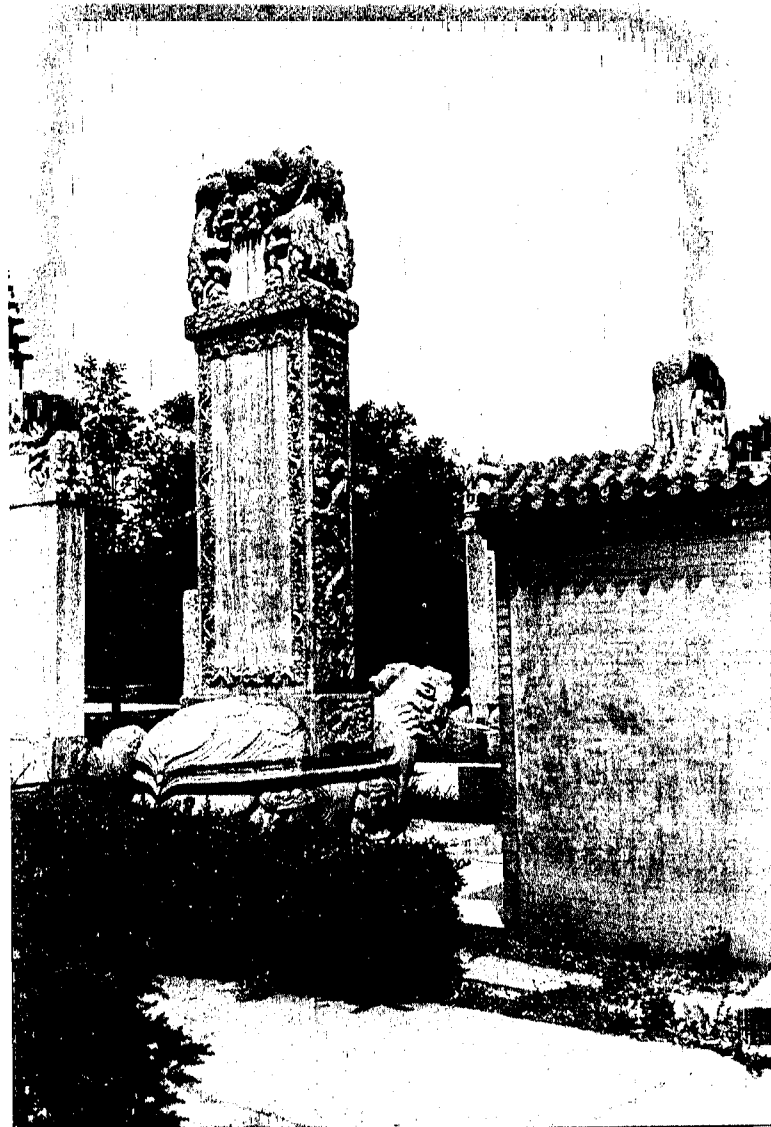


Fig. 1b Fu Heng's tomb (back).

of stone, had been made of separate slabs that had now sundered into several pieces. Qianlong was outraged. Noting that he had ordered the stone workers and engravers for the monuments in question expressly selected in China proper and brought to Xinjiang to work on the project, he ordered Shaanxi-Gansu governor-general Yang Yingju at once to investigate all the details; who did the work, who

hired them, how many people had been involved? Heads would clearly roll. Not only did this disaster, coming only a year or two after the conclusion of the war, speak ill of Qing workmanship, but also it was a humiliatingly brief life for a monument intended to extol Qing imperial might in perpetuity. Calamities such as this only rarely came to light; we cannot know whether they were in fact quite common nor whether perhaps in some cases they may have been the result of sabotage in the form of deliberately poor workmanship or desecration by the disaffected. Indeed, the very considerable expense undoubtedly involved in creating and setting up memorial stelae may well have given rise to opposition at various levels of society, but this is something upon which we can only speculate.¹⁵

Qing war memorial inscriptions generally presented a very manicured image but nonetheless often provided valuable information, both direct and indirect. Such texts included, for instance, detailed accounts of battles and summaries of the main events of an entire war or series of wars, as well as records of related incidents such as the organization of new military forces. An early extant example is a stele erected after the first of the Ten Great Victories, the first Jinchuan war (1747–49). As was often the case with such monuments, it originally stood in a memorial temple, the *Shi Sheng Si* (Temple of True Victory). Although the temple itself no longer exists, the stele still stands in a somewhat overgrown stone pavilion located in the Fragrant Hills (*Xiangshan*) to the west of Beijing, between a ruined guard tower once used for drilling assault troops and the former imperial military inspection grounds (*Tuancheng Yanwu Ting*). The open-sided stele pavilion has a double-storied roof of yellow tile (this color roof-tile was reserved for imperial use) supported by red pillars at each of the four corners. The three parts of the square stone stele rise altogether 7.7 meters high, with an inscription in a different language on each of its four sides: Manchu, Mongol, Chinese and Tibetan. See Figure 2 (*Shi Sheng Si* pavilion). The inscription on the 1749 *Shi Sheng Si*, composed and calligraphed by the Qianlong Emperor, confirms the proposition that commemorating war had much to do with legitimation, for it goes out of its way to situate this most recent victory in the longer sweep of Chinese history. First, the text draws attention to an earlier namesake temple erected by Hong Taiji (1592–1643), venerable second leader of the pre-conquest Manchus. Hong Taiji's monument, set in the early

¹⁵ *Shang Yu Dang* QL 26/2/13, 103.

