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Military employment in Qing dynasty
China

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This chapter explores the military structures in China between 1650 and 1900 from the perspective of labour history as devised by the Global Colleague on the History of Labour Relations 1500-2000. It will first present the basic structures of the Qing armies. There follows a discussion of the state of the art in research and the major issues and debates in this field. Finally, the authors assess trends and tendencies in the framework of the matrix of hypotheses developed within the research group Fighting for a Living.

The Qing armies, 1600-1911: a short overview

The Manchu Qing dynasty ruled China between 1644 and 1911. It originated from semi-nomadic groups of the Jurchen confederation who lived scattered across the today’s north-eastern Chinese provinces of Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang. These groups defined themselves as ethnically and culturally distinct from their mighty, numerous, and affluent neighbours in the south-west, the Chinese or “Han”, and began to refer to themselves as “Man” or “Manchus”. After 1600, their unifier, Nurhaci (1559-1626), organized his followers into socio-military units or companies. Family members and dependants were also registered in the military households. As far as our knowledge goes, “followers” implies the entire population that had pledged allegiance to Nurhaci, voluntarily or by force. In 1615, these companies were officially divided into the so-called Eight Banners. Not only the Manchus were grouped into these formations, but also Mongols, Koreans, and Chinese who had either lived in the areas north of the Great Wall or had submitted to the Manchus before they started their conquest of China proper in 1644. In 1635, Nurhaci’s son and successor Hong Taiji (r. 1626-1643) divided the Banners along ethnic lines, with a Manchu, a Mongol, and a Chinese (the latter also called the “Chinese-martial”) Banner assigned to each of the

1 On the fluid and “inherently transactional” concept of ethnicity, see Elliott, The Manchu Way, p. 17.
eight, resulting in an actual number of twenty-four Banners. The Banners were assigned different colours, according to the flags and uniforms they carried into and wore during battle. Their organization was dissolved only after the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912.

Precise and factual figures are unavailable and are subject to much recent debate. Roughly speaking, the estimates for the entire Banner population, including men, women, children, elderly, and dependants (bondservants and slaves)\(^2\) range between 1.3 million and 2.4 million in 1648, and 2.6 million to 4.9 million in 1720. The potential combat forces, that is, the entire male population between the ages of ten and sixty, may have been between 300,000 and 500,000 in 1648, and 850,000 to 1.6 million in 1720. However, according to one source, only one in three men in a military company actually engaged in combat.\(^3\) The number of companies has been estimated as slowly increasing from some 200 in 1614, to around 500 at the time of the completion of the conquest and assumption of rule over the previous Ming Empire (1368-1644), and 1,155 by 1735.\(^4\) A competing estimate that assumes the higher figures of companies given in the Qing statutes, 320 Manchu, 131 Mongol, and 171 Chinese Banner companies in 1644, arrives at a total of 168,600 men, which can be broken down into 96,000 Manchus, 39,300 Mongols, and 51,300 Chinese troops.\(^5\) The Banners also included a small number of Russians from the post of Albazin, of the peoples of the

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\(^2\) Bondservants (Manchu *booi*) were different from slaves (*aha*) in their status of being allowed to constitute special, hereditary bondservant companies attached to the Banners. Some of them played an important role in the management of the Imperial Household Department. Most of them were Manchus (in contrast to slaves, the larger number of whom were Chinese) and were affiliated to other, socially superior Manchu households. Although part of the Manchu conquest group, they nevertheless occupied a marginal position that made them entirely dependent on the throne for their status. While slaves worked in the fields, the *booi* were primarily used in domestic (and military) service. Evelyn Rawski and Susan Naquin are not so sure whether the bondservants were ethnically Manchu in their majority but instead say that they were Chinese captives from the period of conquest. See Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, pp. 81-84, 462 n. 95. See also Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, p. 167, as well as Naquin and Rawski, *Chinese Society in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 7.

\(^3\) Fang, “A Technique for Estimating the Numerical Strength of the Early Manchu Military Forces”, p. 204, based on statistics in the *Baqi tongzhi*. Late nineteenth-century observers speak of a strength of all Banner forces of 400,000 troops, 157,000 of them garrisoned in the provinces. See Heath, *Armies of the Nineteenth Century: Asia, II, China*, p. 28.

\(^4\) Fang, “A Technique for Estimating the Numerical Strength of the Early Manchu Military Forces”, pp. 208-209. Fang states that no new companies were established after 1735 (p. 204). Various estimates of the number of companies in the early period exist; most scholars agree upon the number of roughly 300 soldiers per company for the period before 1644; thereafter, one company was formed of 100 to 200 men of service age.

Solun, Daghur, Sibe, or Ölöd (formerly Dzungars), and troops of certain other Mongol tribes like the Chahar or Bargut. The Banner soldiers were mainly cavalry troops, but there were also infantry platoons and specialized musketeers and cannoneers, as well as a few garrisons of naval troops, both maritime and fluvial. The Banner troops displayed their highest efficiency as combat troops in the initial phase of conquest of China proper, the territory south of the Great Wall previously ruled by the Ming dynasty.

The Ming armies, as David M. Robinson explains in this volume, were formally bound to hereditary service, but a variety of forms of mercenary employment existed as well. While it is difficult to weigh the relative importance of the two types of labour relations in military occupations, we can assume that such legal arrangements were not entirely superseded. In any case, the efforts of the Ming to hold out against the military challenges of the Qing and internal rebellions required large amounts of military pay, no matter whether the labour relations were tributary or commodified; or, rather, such efforts would have required large expenditures. According to the fiscal historian Ray Huang, even repeated tax increases after 1618 remained, from a military point of view, a “slow and ineffectual mobilization of the empire’s financial resources”, which led to desertions to the bands of peasant rebels, or eventually to the Manchus. The garrisons of the capital Beijing had gone without pay for five months when the city fell in 1644.

The initial phase of Qing conquest roughly corresponds to the period 1600 to 1680. In a “second wave” of Qing conquest and expansion towards the north, west, and south-west (1680-1820), other – Han Chinese – armies became equally important as combat forces. This started out with the Kangxi emperor’s (r. 1662-1722) campaigns against the Russians in Albazin (1685-1686), against the Dzungars, a confederation of western Mongolian nomadic people in Central Asia (1696), and against Dzungarian influence in Tibet (1705-1706, 1720). In the middle and late eighteenth century, Kangxi’s grandson, the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736-1795) expanded the territory under Qing influence far into Inner Asia. Furthermore, he conducted military campaigns against what could be perceived as interior rebellions: in 1787-

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6 Huangchao tongdian, p. 70.
7 Huang, “The Ming Fiscal Administration”, p. 153, points out that “In the early sixteenth century, mercenaries had already begun to outnumber regular members of the wei-so garrisons in several northern frontier commands. Being mercenaries, the new personnel expected to be paid regularly.”
8 Ibid., pp. 167-168.
9 Ibid., p. 168.
10 Crossley, “The Conquest Elite of the Ch’ing Empire”, p. 313.
1788 against a rebellion of Fujian immigrants in Taiwan (which had been incorporated into the Qing empire in 1683), and in 1795 against the ethnic group of the Miao\textsuperscript{11} in the inland provinces of Hunan, Guizhou, and Yunnan. Although the emperor had styled himself “the old man of the ten completed campaigns”, “completion” implying “victory”, some of the campaigns against unruly border tribes and neighbouring tribute states ended in disaster or inconclusively, such as those against Burma (1766-1769) and Vietnam (1788-1791).\textsuperscript{12}

After 1644, the Eight Banners were employed as garrison forces in most Chinese provinces, with the highest concentration in Beijing and on the northern and western borders and with the lower density in the east and south.\textsuperscript{13} The inland provinces of Jiangxi, Anhui, Yunnan, Guizhou, and Guangxi had no Banner garrisons.\textsuperscript{14} At all times, the Banner people were largely outnumbered by the Han Chinese, who by 1644 may have numbered between 100 million and 150 million, and by 1776 about 260 million\textsuperscript{15} as against a maximum of 4.8 million Banner people of all ethnicities.

For the defence of the Chinese interior, the Qing relied on an army of Han Chinese soldiers under the command of Han Chinese officers subordinated to the Manchu superstructure of the provincial administration.\textsuperscript{16} This was the so-called Green Standard Army or the Green Battalions (\textsl{luying bing}).\textsuperscript{17} Its figures are usually assessed as three times higher than those of the Eight

\textsuperscript{11} “Miao” is a rather general term for all non-Chinese ethnic peoples in south-west China.

\textsuperscript{12} Woodside, “The Ch’ien-lung Reign”, pp. 251ff., points out that the “ten campaigns” refers to the wars between 1747 and 1792, which were carried out, in chronological sequence in: 1747-1749 against the Tibetan rebels in western Sichuan’s Gold River Valley (Jinchuan); 1755 and 1756-1757 against the Dzungars in Central Asia; 1758 against Turkic Muslim rebels in eastern Turkestan; 1766-1770 against the Konbaung dynasty in Burma; 1771-1776 once more in the Gold River Valley; 1787-1788 against a rebellion in Taiwan; 1788-1789 against dynastic quarrels in Vietnam; and in 1790-1792 two expeditions against the Gurkhas of Nepal who had invaded Tibet. The 1795 expeditions against the Miao in Yunnan and Hunan were not included.

\textsuperscript{13} Powell, \textsl{The Rise of Chinese Military Power}, p. 9, characterizes the garrison structure as semi-circles centring on Beijing; Elliott, \textsl{The Manchu Way}, pp. 94-96, describes four networks of garrisons guarding Beijing, the metropolitan area around Beijing, Manchuria, and the north-western frontier, and the Chinese provinces as “defense chains”.

\textsuperscript{14} Elliott, \textsl{The Manchu Way}, p. 369, Appendix C.

\textsuperscript{15} Shepherd, \textsl{Statecraft and Political Economy on the Taiwan Frontier}, p. 430, Appendix D3: “Area and Population of the Eighteen Provinces in the Late Eighteenth Century”, based on 1776 figures in the historiographic work \textsl{Qingchao wenxian tongkao}, ch. 19 (1936 Commercial Press edn).

\textsuperscript{16} Powell, \textsl{The Rise of Chinese Military Power}, p. 12.

\textsuperscript{17} \textsl{luying} is a special reading used for this term. The alternative reading is \textsl{lüying}. See \textsl{Hanyu da cidian, haiwaiban} (Hong Kong, 1993), IX, p. 924, and Xing, “‘Lü/lüying’ de duyin”, p. 88.
Banners. The role of the Green Standard Army is less well documented and researched than that of the Eight Banners. It is agreed that it drew its personnel from surrendered Ming armies, from volunteers, and from local corps. The Green Standards consisted of both marine and land forces. The main functions of the Green Standards were, besides fighting in battle, those of a constabulary: patrolling on land and water, guarding government institutions such as granaries, capturing criminals and rebels, performing counter-insurgency activities, escorting important and precious convoys, such as copper for use in the provincial and capital mints or grain tributes for the capital, and transporting official mail and dispatches.

The decline of this army commenced in the early nineteenth century and became sorely visible in the defeat during the First Opium War (1839-1842). This mid-century watershed stands at the beginning of the last phase of the Qing dynasty, which was marked by the struggle against internal enemies – the White Lotus, Taiping, Nian, and Muslim insurgencies, to name just the most important. In addition, the foreign intrusion that started with the First and was aggravated after the Second Opium War (1856-1860) led to a series of armed conflicts with the larger west European nation-states as well as the United States, Japan, and Russia, and culminated in the Boxer uprising (1900-1901), when the internal and the external problems of the Qing converged.

Already in the eighteenth century, village militia (xiangyong, “Braves of the Townships”) were occasionally recruited by the local magistrates of some regions. The permanent deployment of Green Standard troops to campaigns in the border regions had deprived these townships and districts of their constabulary forces. In order to keep up public security, it had become necessary to recruit additional personnel on an ad hoc basis. Not much information is available about the payment procedures and the level of payment for these militia troops during the decades around 1800. During the Taiping rebellion (1850-1864), this method was transformed from

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18 Luo, Luying bingzhi, p. 1; Elliott, The Manchu Way, p. 128; Crossley, Orphan Warriors, p. 117, who quotes the figures 200,000 for Banner troops and 600,000 for Green Standard soldiers. This 1:3 ratio does not seem quite convincing in view of the more recent estimate by Elliott. However, with the important qualification that only one in every three Bannermen was actually called up to active service, this numerical relation seems to tally with reality. In the late nineteenth century, western observers quote the figure of 400,000 Green Standard troops, as indicated by Prince Ronglu: Heath, Armies of the Nineteenth Century: Asia, II, China, p. 28.


21 Luo, Luying bingzhi, pp. 115-272.
a temporary solution to standard practice to ensure the public safety of local regions, and another, new type of army came into being. These regional armies or yongying “Brave Battalions” (with a membership reckoned at about 300,000) were formed from several provincial armies that had stood under the command of powerful individual commanders, such as the Hunan army or the Anhui army. Western and Chinese scholars generally agree that these military organizations saved the Qing dynasty from an early demise – although they were supported by a small contingent of about 3,000 mercenary European and US troops, the so-called Ever-Victorious Army, as well. Manifold attempts were made to reinvigorate the Qing army, combining Green Standard ranks and officers with Brave Battalion methods of recruitment and employment, and adapting to western weaponry and training methods. The increasing recruitment of non-military personnel to replace the traditional professional armies of the Eight Banners and the Green Standards led, in the eyes of some scholars, to a subtle militarization of the local government.

Finally, as in the case of the Ming dynasty, arrangements with allied non-Han chieftains (tusi, “local administrators”) in the border areas who had accepted the suzerainty of the Qing emperors included that their soldiers, if necessary, would fight for the Qing. This was less the case with the western Mongols and the Kirgiz who were generally held to be very strong and a match for the Manchus. In contrast, the native tribes of China’s south-west (the Miao), of Tibet, Taiwan, and the Muslim city-states of the Tarim Basin were dealt with in a time-tested method by “using barbarians against the barbarians” (similar to the tenet of divide et impera). This means that a submissive native lord or king (of “matured barbarians”) dispatched his own native troops to fight against his neighbour or adversary (the “raw barbarians”). In many cases this was the preferable, because cheaper, method to pacify unruly tribes in the border regions. On the other hand, the collaborating native lord could enlarge his territory and probably would have a prestigious title bestowed upon him by the emperor. Yet this kind of indirect rule over the native tribes proved ineffective and thus was gradually given up in the course of the eighteenth century. Thereafter, the border regions conquered by the Qing were administered by imperial officials. The conquest wars in the south-western region were thus waged by three different types of

24 See Kuhn, Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China, pp. 211-225.
troops, namely Banner troops, Green Standard troops, and native or “ethnic” troops. A typical proportion between Banner troops, Green Standard troops, and native auxiliaries during an eighteenth-century war was about 1:10:3.25

State of the field and main debates

Though the study of Chinese military history is recently expanding in China as well as abroad, military labour during the Qing dynasty remains a relatively little-studied topic. The perspectives of ethnicity, institutional history, military finances, China’s frontier wars, and the debates on Chinese armies compared to armies worldwide offer important information and possible points of departure for the study of military labour in the early and mid-Qing dynasty armies.

Research into Manchu history has blossomed since the reopening of the First Historical Archives of China in Beijing, which houses the most important collection of Qing central government documents. The Eight Banners as a social organization figures prominently in this field. Important studies in English are Pamela Kyle Crossley’s Orphan Warriors (specifically the chapter entitled “The Conquest Elite of the Ch’ing Empire”), Mark Elliott’s The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China, and Joanna Waley-Cohen’s The Culture of War in China: Empire and the Military under the Qing. These scholars revise previous convictions about the Qing dynasty, which saw the Manchus as largely adapting to Chinese culture, especially to Chinese methods of civilian administration. The main intention of this new approach to Qing history is to demonstrate that a complex process of reciprocal influences continued throughout the Qing reign. In their analyses of the role of ethnicity within the Banners, this approach makes clear that the Manchus did not constitute a majority in the Banners, (and in some Banner garrisons in particular), so that it is not appropriate to simply equate “Banners” with “Manchus”. Crossley’s study on the conquest elite stringently analyses the fate of the Han Chinese or Chinese-martial within the Banners.26 The Chinese-martial, who had chosen to identify with the new rulers (but some of whom actually had Jurchen or Korean origins),27 were not treated as equals. Within the Banners they lost prestige and credibility when three powerful Chinese-martial

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27 Ibid., p. 321.
generals, Wu Sangui, Geng Jingzhong, and Shang Kexi, who for their help in
the conquest of the Ming empire had received large territories in southern
China, later betrayed their allegiance to the Qing in order to establish
independent dynasties of their own. The three generals were defeated in
the War of the Three Feudatories (1673-1681).

Further armed resistance against the Manchus arose from several de-
cendants of the Ming dynasty who established the ephemeral Southern
Ming Dynasty (1644-1662), and from Ming loyalist generals who wielded
power in central and southern China. The last Ming loyalist polity under
the rule of the Zheng clan was defeated on Taiwan in 1683. The incorpora-
tion of the island into the mainland province of Fujian marks the final
consolidation of Qing rule in China.

Elliot in The Manchu Way makes important points about the reasons
why the Banner people, although they were styled as “martial elites” by
the emperors and the central government, became impoverished in the
course of the dynasty. This was due to two reasons: the Banner population
increased, and some Han Chinese falsely claimed to belong to the Banners
in order to enjoy the support of the state. Therefore, the Qianlong emperor
incrementally expelled the Chinese-martial Banner households from the
Banner structure so that in the nineteenth century the equation of Banner-
man and Manchu corresponded to reality. The state shouldered increas-
ingly larger burdens for the upkeep of these warriors and their dependants.
In a study on the military expenses in the Qing dynasty, Chen Feng cites
figures for the Xi’an garrison in 1735 that suggest that the expenses for
the support of Banner families and horses were much higher than those
for the soldiers and officers. According to Elliott’s estimates, as much as
one-quarter to one-fifth of state revenues was used for the living expenses
of less than 2 per cent of the population. In comparison, the expenses for
the Green Standard Army, with about three times the personnel of the

28 For the “genealogical turn” in the early eighteenth century, when stricter proof of Banner
descent was demanded, see Elliott, The Manchu Way, pp. 326-333.
29 Ibid., pp. 342-344.
30 Chen Feng, Qingdaijunfeiyanjiu (Wuhan, 1992), p. 47, tables 2-12, cited in Elliott, The Manchu
Way, pp. 310-311, calculated that 42 per cent of the expenses in silver went on the wages of soldiers
and officers, 20.5 per cent for household dependants, and 37.5 per cent for horses; 7.4 per cent of
the grain disbursed was for officers and soldiers, 90.5 per cent for household dependents, and
2.1 per cent for the horses.
Banner Army, were higher in absolute terms but, at 27 to 32 per cent of state revenue, much lower proportionally (if the 3:1 ratio is correct).32

More economical ways of maintaining the Eight Banners might have been possible. The options would have been, for instance, to relax the ban on Banner people taking up occupations other than serving the state, or to assign land in military colonies to the Banner people where they could have organized their own upkeep. But the Qing state had other priorities, so that the role of the Banners changed from being mainly fighters to the display of the presence of the ruling elite in the capital and in the provincial garrisons.33

Monographs and studies on the Green Standard Army as an institution are much rarer than on the Eight Banners. In 1945, Luo Ergang (1901-1997), an eminent specialist on the Taiping rebellion, published a monograph which still is cited as authoritative in present-day scholarship. Since his focus is on the Taiping rebellion, the largest uprising in the Qing dynasty, his particular interest was in the decline of these armies, which proved to be quite inefficient by the 1850s, and their replacement by the new provincial forces.

The differences between the Green Standard Army and the Eight Banners, and ultimately the question of why the Qing maintained two independent armed forces, have long preoccupied military historians. Scholarly consensus exists that, by the time of the Taiping rebellion, both were in bad shape, poorly equipped, with low morale – with the qualification made by Crossley in Orphan Warriors that the British were amazed at the fighting spirit which the Manchus displayed during the attack on the garrison of Zhapu near Shanghai in an episode of the First Opium War.34 The Manchus and the peasant population fought with “sticks, stones, rusted swords and wick-fired matchlocks” against old-fashioned, but still functional British flintlock rifles; hence their resistance was doomed.35

As for the differences between the two kinds of armies, Luo Ergang points out that the Eight Banner Army was concentrated in fewer garrisons, while the Green Standards were widespread over the entire country, and unlike the Eight Banners they were present in every province. The tasks of the Green Standards were more varied, and lowlier than those of the Banners, so that there was a clear hierarchy, also and especially in the pay scale,

32 Ibid., p. 310.
33 Ibid., p. 311.
34 Crossley, Orphan Warriors, p. 117.
between the two.\footnote{Luo, Luying bingzhi, p. 6.} Luo emphasizes that, nevertheless, the Green Standards served more important functions than the Banners: their numbers were greater,\footnote{Ibid., p. 7.} and they were the better fighters.\footnote{Ibid., p. 9.} There is a certain tendentiousness in this assessment. It was made at a time when the prestige of the Qing dynasty and its ruling elite, the Manchus, was at a very low point. This also highlights what may seem, in contrast, the somewhat apologetic and perhaps romanticizing nuances in the great interest in the Eight Banners shown in present-day China. The Qianlong emperor had already perceived that there was a gap between the claim that the Manchus were warriors dedicating their life to hunting, sports, and battle, and the fact that fewer and fewer Manchus were able to hit the target in archery contests and to speak Manchu. Yet when it came to substantial failure in war, the blame was often shifted to the “cowardly” Green Standard units that deserted rather than to fight the enemy.\footnote{See, for example, the first assessment of the disaster of Mugom in 1773, when a large camp was surprised and conquered by the enemy. The blame was laid on the “faint-hearted” Green Standard troops. Instead of executing all of them (amounting to several thousand men), the emperor spared their lives as he realized that they had to be supported and induced to fight by more contingents of Banner troops. See Pingding Liang Jinchuan fanglüe (Siku quanshu, Wenwu yuange edn, digital version Zhongguo jiben guji ku, 65, edict of Qianlong 38/7 [s. l. 6]/dingyou=9 (this citation refers to the ninth day of the seventh lunar month in the year 38 of the reign of the Qianlong emperor, or 28 July 1773)).}

The native troops were even less reliable because they often had family relations with those they had to battle against. Most military successes of the Qing armies in the eighteenth century were made possible only by the massive deployment of elite Banner troops from Beijing (the Firearms and Scouting Brigades) and the garrisons in the north-east, the homeland of the Manchus. Also among the elite troops were the Ölöd Mongols who had submitted to Qing suzerainty during or after the conquest of the Dzungars. Thus, troops marching from Ili in the far west and from Aigun on the banks of the Amur River in the north-east covered thousands of miles to reach the battlefields in Sichuan, Burma, Taiwan, or even Nepal. The wars of conquest in Dzungaria were predominantly waged by Banner troops. There is evidence that suggests that the Banner troops did not simply stay in the back while the Green Standard troops served as “cannon fodder”. While the proportion of Banner troops to Green Standard troops serving in a war was typically 1:10, some examples demonstrate that the proportion of
deaths on the part of officers in the Banners was 3:10 or even 7:10.\textsuperscript{40} If this is a representative sample, this would mean that proportionally many more Banner officers died for their emperor and for fame and glory than their colleagues in the Green Standards.

Due to the enhanced accessibility of archival documents, issues of military finance and logistics offer a large field for new inquiries into Qing military history. The ground-breaking study by Chen Feng has already been mentioned. Recently, important publications in English have been produced by Dai Yingcong.\textsuperscript{41} At least as much as the study on ethnicity, this monetary aspect relates to military labour in many ways. Dai Yingcong's work on the Gold River (Jinchuan) campaigns is especially explicit about labour conditions. Her studies highlight two distinct trends that stand in close relationship to labour conditions and labour relations: the Qing state at least formally put an end to corvée obligations, although they could remain disguised below the surface of general tax duties. In the Gold River campaigns, military employment was for the first time completely organized as large-scale hired labour. Dai Yingcong quotes a figure of 462,000 military labourers recruited in the six years of the second campaign (1771-1776) as against 129,500 warriors. The workers were mainly porters, since the Qing armies carried all their provisions and the silver for the soldiers' and officers' wages with them.

The second trend was the increasing involvement of merchants or, in other words, the representatives of the market in military finance. Alexander Woodside has emphasized this on a much more general level, by labelling the Qianlong emperor as “the big merchants’ emperor”.\textsuperscript{42} Merchants subsidized the Gold River campaigns and the later wars against the Gurkhas with millions of taels of contributions (a kind of tax equivalent to the regular taxation of entrepreneurship that was not levied),\textsuperscript{43} and this social group, much more than the imperial bureaucracy, organized the logistics of the second Gold River campaign. These two trends went hand in hand. Although this did not concern the warriors, it may well have been that the example of the Banner and Green Standard soldiers, who did receive wages, stimulated the recruitment of military labourers who were to receive

\textsuperscript{40} Theobald, “The Second Jinchuan Campaign”, p. 137.
\textsuperscript{41} Dai, The Sichuan Frontier and Tibet, esp. ch. 6, and “The Qing State, Merchants, and the Military Labor Force in the Jinchuan Campaigns”.
\textsuperscript{42} Woodside, “The Ch'ien-lung Reign”: “the salt merchants’ emperor” (p. 240), “the big merchants’ emperor” (p. 241), “merchant-loving emperor” (p. 267), or the Qianlong period as a “reign of plutocracy” (p. 239).
\textsuperscript{43} Ib\textit{id.}, p. 273. One tael of silver equals about 37.5 grammes at 95 per cent purity.
wages and food provisions like the soldiers. The emperor, despite the immense assistance the private hiring of porters provided the supplying of the troops, did not want to use the procedures of the Gold River campaign as a precedent for future wars. Officially, the problem was not the price of labour, since the logistics managers learned soon that it was as expensive to have an entrepreneur ship the rice as to have this done by the local magistrates. The core of the problem was rather the professed systematic mistrust of private entrepreneurship from the central government, which was convinced that supplying the army should remain *per definitionem* a task of local government. Yet it is not easy to assess how many of this type of statement decreed by the emperor were purely rhetorical, or to what extent the emperor’s mistrust was instead targeted towards an eventual embezzlement of funds which, as the logistics managers claimed, were necessary to pay the “expensive” private entrepreneurs.

Perusal of specific cases, if they have generated as much paperwork as that of the Gold River campaigns, can shed light on processes in the organization of military labour. These would remain hidden if the normative statutes and regulations about military organization alone were studied. Most of the campaigns of the Qianlong emperor are well documented and have left information, including such about military labour and service, which can be applied for further research. For instance, one topic is whether the first Gold River campaign (1747-1749) really was the one in which hired labour was engaged for the first time.44

Recently, the conventional wisdom that Chinese civilization was distinctly civilian and anti-military in outlook is being revised by several authors, for instance by Harriet Zurndorfer, Rui Magone, and Hans van de Ven.45 It is correct that, for extended periods of time, it was centralized imperial power that prevailed in China rather than military competition between small states and polities, as in Europe. However, this does not mean

44 The regulations for war expenditure in the *Junxu zeli* (*Xiaxiu siku quanshu* edn), *Hubu junxu zeli*, ch. 5, claim that the two Gold River campaigns were the sole instances when merchants were hired to procure and transport grain for the troops. Yet there is some evidence that as early as 1735 merchants were assigned to transport grain to the camps; see for instance *Pingding Junggar fangliüe* (*Siku quanshu*, Wenuyange edn, digital version *Zhongguo jiben guji ku*), *Qianbian* (First part) 39 (YZ 13/10/jiashen=19 [2 December 1735], 12/wuzi=23 [4 February 1735]), *Qianbian* 42 (QL 1/6/dinghai=28 [28 January 1737]) or *Qianbian* 44 (QL 4/4/yiyou=9 [16 May 1739]). Merchants or owners of camel herds were apparently able to ship grain at a lower price than the government with its “official camels” (*guantuo*).

that military organization was unimportant at any time in Chinese history.\textsuperscript{46} The idea that it was the prevention of warfare and “victory without war” that preoccupied the Chinese, rather than warfare aiming at decisive victory and the annihilation of enemy forces, is being discredited.\textsuperscript{47} At the same time, the often cited Chinese proverb that “a good man doesn't become a soldier, good iron is not made into nails”, points to a preference for the civilian sphere that lasted for hundreds of years. It stands in conjunction with lesser prestige for military than for civilian occupations and leadership functions. Such ideas were overcome in periods of dynastic or systemic change as in the twentieth century. Yet in view of the present brush-up of the military image, it seems necessary to keep the focus on the actual priority that was given to civilian office until the twentieth century.

**Labour relations in Qing dynasty military occupations**

Military labour can occur in all of the three great categories described in the taxonomy developed by the Global Collaboratory on the History of Labour Relations: namely reciprocal, tributary, and commodified. Reciprocal labour implies that workers provide labour within the household and the community. In most parts of the world from 1650 to 1800, this consisted of agricultural labour and mostly unpaid household work. However, it can also apply in some hunter-gatherer village communities, where defensive and hunting duties might form part of the (mostly) male life cycle. At the borders of Qing China, such arrangements are known in the Taiwanese indigenous population, where boys and men between age six and forty were expected to serve their community in this type of occupation.

In larger polities that cannot be regarded as part of the extended family, the labour power of the populace is often considered to be the property of the state or feudal and religious authorities. This work is not commodified, and the respective labour relations have been designated as “tributary”. For military labour, this type of labour relation can be found in military conscription, military corvée, and obligatory supply services of all kinds. A third category consists of commodified labour. This is the case if an employer acquires labour power and usually pays for it. In the case of military labour, mercenary troops and commissioned armies belong to this type.

\textsuperscript{46} Van de Ven, “Introduction”, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 2, citing Geoffrey Parker.
If applied to the armies of the Qing dynasty, the specific situations need to be assessed separately for the Eight Banners, the competitors to the Banner Armies in the Ming-Qing transition, the Green Standard Army supply services, specialists, civilian officials, militia troops, the Taiping army and provincial armies, and the new armies established after 1865.

The Eight Banners constitute an example of polyethnic, tributary labour that was a “hereditary privilege”, rather than an onerous obligation. The court had taken the political decision to support this “conquest elite” in money and kind, even if they were not active in military or civilian service. Banner people were not supposed or allowed to take up occupations other than service for the state. This could be military for combat or garrison duty, but also civilian. It was only near the end of Qing rule, in 1863, that the ban on market-oriented occupations was officially lifted. In other words, this type of labour was not entirely free, since it was linked to descent, and formally options other than service were not allowed.

While the Green Standard troops also supervised the postal service, patrolled cities and spots of strategic importance, caught bandits, and suppressed rebellions, the Banner troops were mainly deployed to wage war. Yet there were also exceptions like the Guards Brigade in the capital which had to provide personnel to protect the imperial palace. Banner troops were not generally used when a crisis erupted. Most wars began as a local problem of unrest or an imminent threat to a particular locality. Therefore, the first troops to be dispatched were Green Standard troops, not Banner troops. If a local crisis expanded into a war, it was still considered a local affair for which the governor-general of the respective region was responsible. In such cases Banner troops from the local Banner garrison(s) were dispatched to support the Green Standard units. Yet the Banner garrisons were quite small and could mobilize only a small number of troops. If not sufficient, Green Standard troops from other provinces were also sent for assistance. In contrast, elite Banner troops from the capital and the north-east were sent to the war theatre only if really necessary. Bannermen, although more expensive than Green Standard troops, also proved to be more effective. The designations of particular Banner platoons (like huoqiyīng “Firearms Bri-
gade”, pao xiaoji “artillerymen”, or niaojiqiang canling “musketry regimental commander”) in the Qing statutes date from the early eighteenth century. Therefore it is not certain how many troops had muskets, cannons, and howitzers, and how many of them had to fight with bows and arrows. The latter were seen as genuinely Manchurian and were of great use in the wars against the Dzungars. The copper-plate engravings52 depicting the victories of the Qing show a high number of mounted archers, but also musketeers, gunners, and sword-fighters. Gunnery seemed not to have been a monopoly of the Artillery Brigade in the capital. Guns or howitzers were in many cases cast on the spot, for which purpose experts had to be available.

When dispatched to the battlefield, Banner troops were given so-called baggage pay (xingzhuangyin) that was different for each officer rank. It was higher for Banner troops from the north-east than for those from the provincial garrisons elsewhere, but lower than the baggage pay for the troops from the capital. On the way to the theater of war and in the field, the troops were given a so-called salt-and-vegetable (or “salted vegetable”) pay (yancayin) to buy food. The regulations concerning the baggage pay, the salt-and-vegetable pay, and the number of menservants and horses an officer versus a common soldier could dispose of were extremely complex. In the beginning, the regulations differed from province to province, and there were many imbalances so that by the late 1770s the emperor ordered the compilation of a nationwide code of regulations for military expenditure, the Junxu zeli. The level of payment in this code was generally somewhat higher than before. The baggage pay was a quite high amount and was roughly equal to one year’s salary. It could be paid out to the family that remained in the home garrison, but it could also be forwarded to the destination where it was paid out in the camp. From this money, the soldier had to acquire weapons, clothing, a tent, and a horse, but there also was sufficient money left over to pay back his debts.53 No wonder a war was seen as an ideal opportunity to make money. The salt-and-vegetable pay was not very high. It was meant to be just sufficient to still hunger and to regenerate physical strength. Alongside this, everybody was given a fixed amount of rice (about one litre) per day. The distribution of rice was to prevent the tendency to save money instead of spending it on food. Yet there were also cases reported where troops sold their rice in order to earn

some cash. The duration of service is not easy to assess. Banner troops had a lifelong obligation to serve, but their actual service in war depended on the location of the garrison and the length of the campaign. Troops from the coastal provinces were very rarely involved in wars: only during those against Burma, Taiwan, and Vietnam. The garrisons with the highest potential to be activated for campaigning were located in Shaanxi, Gansu, Sichuan, Hubei, Hunan (the “belly of the empire”), the capital Beijing, and the north-east. The longest single campaign of the eighteenth century was the second campaign in the Gold River region, which lasted for fifty months. Furloughs were totally unknown, unless a soldier was wounded. In this case, he was granted three months’ leave, and he could also return to his home garrison during that time. The Banner troops served thirty-one months on average, Green Standard troops thirty-eight months, and native troops forty months.

The bondservants, who served, among other obligations, as supply forces for the Eight Banner soldiers and officers, were less free than the warriors, but some among their ranks could gain great personal influence and wealth. For instance Cao Yin (1658-1712), the director of the Imperial Silk Weaveries in Nanjing and concurrently supervisor of salt production and distribution in central China, gained those important civilian positions due to his close personal relationship to the Kangxi emperor. Yet few bondservants rose that high. Most spent lives dependent upon their Banners and the household they were assigned to. Elliott gives figures of the ratios of dependants per employed Bannerman as 10:1 in locations with lesser work opportunities, but for Beijing about 5:1.

Not all dependants were bondservants. One group that stood even lower in the hierarchy were the slaves that were assigned to specific Banner households which they could not leave. However, social mobility was possible. Thus, many slaves could rise to the ranks of bondservants. The specific tasks of the dependants of Bannermen in warfare still need to be explored. However, a few words can be said about the special type of manservant (genyi, literally “follower servant”) that each warrior (officer or common

54 Pingding Liang Jinchuan fanglüe, 57, fols 25b-26b (QL 38/r3/dinghai=28).
56 Hummel, Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period, pp. 740-742.
57 Elliott, The Manchu Way, p. 117.
58 Ibid., p. 51.
59 The term yi is the same word as for unpaid corvée labour of ancient times, making it seemingly a kind of slave labour, which is not correct. The Manchu term is dahaltu, which also means “following servant”.
soldier) disposed of during wartime. The menservants were important for the everyday processes of a campaigning army. They served their masters in erecting the tents, cooking food, cleaning clothing and weaponry, guiding the sumpter-mules, cutting grass for the horses, carrying letters, or forwarding information; some were used as translators. The menservants of the Green Standard troops could even be used as soldiers and therefore in some provinces were called “supplementary troops” (*yuding*). Although most sources speaking of menservants are related to campaigning, there is also evidence that they were used in peacetime and for civilian purposes. This circumstance and the fact that menservants to the Green Standard troops were automatically seen as part of the corps lead to the conclusion that they were not explicitly recruited for warfare but were permanently affiliated to military households. In the case of the Banner households it has to be assumed that bondservants and slaves took over this role, while in the case of the Green Standard this function may have been performed by sons, youngsters, and new recruits (*xinmubing*). Even native officers were allowed the privilege of maintaining menservants.

Menservants thus stayed with their masters in the war theatre as long as the latter had to fight. If their masters died, they were obliged to bring back the coffins. Yet this applied only to Banner officers, not to common soldiers, and was not the case for the Green Standard officers. Menservants were also paid out salt-and-vegetable money and were given a daily ration of rice. Moreover, menservants of the Banner troops received their own sumpter-horses to transport luggage, tent, and weaponry. The common troops of provincial Banner garrisons had an allowance for one manservant per two soldiers. In Green Standard units, ten common soldiers were entitled to receive wages for three menservants. This means that between a quarter and a third of the fighting corps were menservants and had a position, seen from their duties, somewhere between the status of labourers and *ad hoc* fighters. The regulations in the code for military expenditure state only how much the government would pay for. If a soldier preferred to be served by his own manservant instead of sharing one with his colleagues, he would have to pay that manservant out of his own purse. Conversely, a lieutenant served by only two menservants could claim to have employed three menservants and receive the extra money.

The time period of the Ming-Qing transition corresponds to the cross-section year of 1650. This transition was of relatively short duration. Mul-

60 Compare *junxu zeli, Hubu junxu zeli*, chs 3-4.
61 See below and n. 100 for an explanation of this term.
Multiple arrangements occurred in military labour relations. On the whole, the situation is not as well documented as for the Ming and Qing dynasties, and military statutes or legislation are not available for the contending armies of the southern Ming, the Ming loyalists, and the Three Feudatories. The polity that lasted longest was that of the Zheng clan (1647-1683), founded by Zheng Chenggong (1624-1662), also known as Koxinga. Zheng Chenggong’s army and navy comprised people who were recruited in different ways. Based on textual evidence in the scattered sources on the Zheng government, the Taiwanese historian Shi Wanshou has pointed out that in the early stages Zheng’s troops, which he raised practically from scratch, were a mere 300 men, whom he had recruited in a manner that suggests commodified labour. Additional fighters joined him on their own initiative to defend the cause of the Ming. Zheng’s father Zhilong had been a freebooting trader who had already established an army and navy of his own, which at first he led into battle against the Manchus. When promised the governorship of two important south-eastern provinces, Zheng Zhilong defected to the Qing in 1655, but the Qing did not keep their word and took him to Beijing where he was kept under close supervision. His remaining soldiers were divided among other commanders of his family, and gradually joined Zheng Chenggong’s forces.

These three recruitment methods are referred to as “free recruitment”, “self-recommendation”, and “incorporation of allied troops”. Zheng Chenggong succeeded in expanding his sphere of influence in south-eastern China, so that by its high point in 1658, according to contemporary sources it boasted 170,000 armoured men, 8,000 soldiers with iron [weapons?] (tieren, lit. “iron men”), and 8,000 battleships. However, after a grave defeat during an attack on Nanjing, Zheng had to take refuge on Taiwan in 1661 and died in the following year. In the expansionary phase between 1655 and 1659, troops who had first fought for the Qing defected or were made to surrender to Zheng’s army. This constituted a further manner of recruitment, the so-called incorporation of enemy troops after capitulation. After the large-scale retreat to Taiwan, which involved a siege and the eventual expulsion of a contingent of Dutch colonialists in the service of the Dutch East Asia Company VOC, a relatively peaceful period continued until the mid-1670s. Military colonization was a matter of survival for the Zheng regime as a...
whole as well as for the individual soldiers. The Zheng government launched several land-cultivation campaigns in Taiwan, where soldiers were expected to clear the land in a labour arrangement that resembled tenancy. Due to the steady decrease in the Zhengs’ military manpower, military conscription and corvée labour were implemented as a matter of last resort. The latter was utilized especially for military labour, for transportation of provisions, and for the rebuilding of a fort. The era of the Zhengs is thus a case in point for a trend of changing from more commodified to more tributary labour for reasons of labour scarcity and lacking finances at the end of a short-lived rule.

According to Luo Ergang, employment in the Green Standard Army was voluntary, but it was intended to last a lifetime. It was hereditary in the sense that at age sixteen the sons of soldiers had the right – but not the obligation – to present themselves for mustering and, if found acceptable, be admitted to the army as “apprentice” or “expectant” soldiers (yubing, literally “surplus” or “reserve” soldiers). These apprentice soldiers served as auxiliaries; apparently not all companies had them in sufficient numbers. The documents of the Gold River campaign provide for a particular number of hired labourers per hundred soldiers, which was higher (eighty) if those soldiers had no “apprentice soldiers”, and lower (fifty) if they had.

The troops of the Green Standard Army were reimbursed for the same items during war as the Banner troops, but at a much lower rates. Baggage pay, for example for a cavalry soldier of the Green Standards, was 10 taels, for infantry troops 6 taels, for a provincial Banner cavalry soldier 20 taels, for a provincial Banner infantry or artillery soldier 15 taels. Elite Banner soldiers from the capital were given 30 taels, yet native soldiers received only 3 taels. Part of the reason for this was that native troops normally were locals and did not have to cover a large distance to reach the war theatre. The salt-and-vegetable pay and the daily provision of rice were equal for soldiers of all types of troops and for all ranks. A colonel was not given more to eat than a common soldier. If he wanted to eat better, he had to pay for this from his salary.

66 According to Shepherd, Statecraft and Political Economy on the Taiwan Frontier, pp. 94-96, 30 per cent of the harvest was to be paid to the public treasury for the first three years, and thereafter was to be taxed regularly. Ploughs and seeds were provided for by the government.
67 Ibid., p. 103.
68 Luo, Luying bingzhi, p. 231.
70 Compare Junxu zeli, Hubu junxu zeli, chs 1-3.
Another important issue is that the baggage pay for the Green Standard troops was granted without conditions: the troops did not have to pay it back. For the Banner troops, it was usual in some provinces, at least nominally, that the troops had to pay back the baggage pay after the campaign. In the beginning, this seems to have been the common procedure, but over the course of time it became customary that the emperor, after a victorious campaign, waived the back payment and bestowed upon the troops the baggage pay *ex post* as a gift. According to the early local regulations for war expenditures and the later nationwide code for them, this was actually against customary usage, although there were also some precedents for such a practice in earlier wars. Yet the necessity to keep the troops in a state of permanent alertness for campaigning, and the desire of the Qianlong emperor to foster his most trusted and most efficient military units, the Manchu Banners, led to the custom that baggage pay was a grant regardless of the legal situation. In other words, while in the early Qing period it was the duty of a soldier to make ready his equipment and to bring it to the site of military operations, the professional soldiers of the mid Qing period were well paid (baggage pay corresponded to one year’s wages) for their active service.

As Dai Yingcong has pointed out, the Qing state experimented with a large contingent of wage labourers in the first and second Gold River wars. These porters, workers, and militia were recruited first from the local population, sometimes including women and children, in completely free arrangements or as part of the corvée these people owed to their local officials or chieftains (in case of the native ethnic groups) who had pledged allegiance to the Qing. In the latter case, one can speak of a kind of indirect, but paid, corvée service. In ancient China, three types of taxes had been paid: grain (the men’s duty), textiles (produced by the women), and corvée labour for the construction of dams, dykes, official buildings, tomb mounds, or – most famously – the Great Wall. In the sixteenth century, the system of corvée labour was finally abolished. However, the household and tax registers were still an important source informing the government about the potential labour force of the population. If needed, labourers could be drafted based on the tax registers but, unlike before, their work had to be paid adequately with wages, which were regulated, but at least near the market price. For instance, the repair of dams was still done by labourers recruited from the peasant population, but they were paid, as were those who carried rice to the camps in the war theatre. The latter were recruited from the villages, marched to a predefined logistics station, and carried rice from one station to the next in a kind of relay system. The difference
between the Gold River campaign and other wars is that the first as well as the second campaign resulted in static warfare in which troops had to be provided with rice over a long period of time. The recruited peasants, although paid, had to return to their fields, otherwise the grain yield, and consequently the tax yield, of the district would decline. Labourers deserted in droves, even when they were allowed to return home after three, later five, months of service. The only way to keep them at their work was to pay them much more than the nominal 2.4 taels a month, plus a free daily rice ration. Labour cost for porterage in the steep mountain paths of the Gold River region skyrocketed (by a multiple of up to five).

The managers of the logistics apparatus had discovered that with such prices it was equally costly to have a private entrepreneur commissioned with the rice transport. The entrepreneur would then supervise the recruitment and the replacement of deserters. The entrepreneurs did not have access to the tax registers, but recruited their labourers in the labour market. Immigration into the province of Sichuan and the increase in the local population had led to a growing surplus in the labour force in the eighteenth century. The chance to earn some money in the war logistics process even attracted people to immigrate into the respective provinces. When the war was over, the porters were set free again, leading to all the social complications that widespread unemployment causes. The porters recruited by the government, as well as those hired by private shippers were short-term employees, some in a contract with the government, others with a private merchant. In the second case, there were no restrictions upon ethnicity or gender, but in the first case, the government recruited only registered males. There was, nevertheless, the possibility of having somebody else take over the duty to carry the rice. There were also rice porters from the native tribes who were mainly used on the paths of the high plateau. If employed by the Qing government, they were also regularly paid and given a daily ration in barley but, if delivering corvée (in the old sense as part of the tax liability) to their chieftain, they seem not to have been paid.

The Banner garrisons had a certain number of regularly employed professional craftsmen, such as arrow-makers, bow-makers, blacksmiths, bronzesmiths, musket-makers, saddlers, and ship’s carpenters. The most important of these artisans were the bow- and arrow-makers and the blacksmiths.

They were, similarly to the menservants, called jiangyi, “craft labourers.”\textsuperscript{72} As an integral part of the army (called “official labourers”, guanyi), they could be called specialist troops, especially if entrusted to build palisades, wooden bridges, or pontoon bridges, or casting cannons in field foundries. Since many of them had to operate with a number of specialized tools and implements, they were given a baggage pay of no less than 10 taels. Physicians were even entitled to a certain number of menservants.

The Green Standard Armies did not have “official craftsmen” in their garrisons. The production of weapons was done by craftsmen on the private market. During war, when there was a need for new sabres, swords, daggers, halberds, and all the fantastic range of polearms the Chinese used, blacksmiths were hired to produce new arms. The cost for the production of arms was fixed locally and could be reclaimed according to certain rules about the lifespan and the overhaul of weapons.\textsuperscript{73} The cost lists also included, besides the material cost, an entry for the labour cost. Craftsmen of all types who were hired to serve the army in a campaign were treated quite generously. They were paid a baggage allotment which was geared to the distance to the war theatre (between 5 and 6 taels). Such craftsmen could also be granted a family allowance (anjiayin, literally “money to appease the family”) if living far away. On the way to their destination, they were paid a certain daily sum of money to buy food (0.06 taels), and outside the borders given 1 litre of rice. On the spot where the craftsmen had to work, they were paid monthly sums between 2 and 3 taels, depending on the physical demands of the work. Tailors, map-makers, wood-cutters, ship’s carpenters, and blacksmiths were paid less than cannon-casters. Both the men and their families at home were given daily allowances of 1 litre of rice. Yet these regulations became valid on a national level only during the late 1770s. Previously, the regulations concerning their pay differed widely from province to province. Most of the specialists were hired for a longer period, at least several months. Otherwise their deployment cost would have been too high. References to physicians are very scarce, but it is known that they could either be recruited from the population or come from the Imperial Academy of Medicine. The members of the latter presumably treated only

\textsuperscript{72} As in genyi, and as noted above, the word yi is derived from the designation of old, unpaid corvée labour.

\textsuperscript{73} Junqi zeli (1791 edn), in Gugong zhenben congkan, 293 (Haikou, 2000): see regulations for the weapons of each particular garrison.
Civilian officials played an important role in the organization of the logistics behind the battle lines. Naturally, they were, like the professional soldiers, paid their normal salary, but also received baggage pay, salt-and-vegetable pay, and daily provisions of rice. As with the soldiers at the front, an excellent performance of their duties could result in rewards or even promotions. Yet service in the logistics branch was not a very popular task for someone who normally lived in a mansion in the district capital, for example, as a district magistrate. During wartime, they were obliged to leave the city where they were appointed and move to a logistics station somewhere on the way to the war theatre. Civilian officials had to oversee logistics stations, and the number of stations they were responsible for depended on their official rank. Since it was not a very popular task, the logistics lines were mostly put into the hand of newly qualified officials who had passed the state examinations but had not yet been appointed to a post. They were, during that time, not given a salary and did their job in the hope of being moved up in the line of waiting officials and being selected for appointment somewhat earlier than average. Another group of officials who served without monetary pay in logistics were those who had been demoted because of some offence. They were virtually enslaved and redeemed their offence (shuzui) with unpaid service in an unpopular position. Even very high officials could be degraded to service in the military supply without financial payment, as the case of the previous governor-general of Sichuan, Artai, during the second Gold River campaign shows. The proportion of civilian officials to troops was, in the case of this war, about 7,100.75

Depending on who led the campaign, a whole entourage of civilian officials of the central government could participate, such as physicians, astronomers, members of princely households, scribes, secretaries, translators, edict drafters, members of the ministries (the Censorate, the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, Imperial Entertainments, Judicial Review), and so on. All of them were granted baggage pay, salt-and-vegetable pay, daily rations, and a fixed number of beasts of burden.

The highest-ranking civilian members of the central government who took part in campaigns were generals and marshals. This sentence must be stressed, because it points out the very important issue of the “amphibious” decision.76

74 Junxu zeli, Hubu junxu zeli, ch. 6.
76 Dai Yingcong, unpublished manuscript on the functions of civilian officials in warfare.
character of the Bannermen. As members of the Banners, officials in the State Council or the Grand Secretariat were either by definition or by nature soldiers. However, if there was no war, they acted in civilian positions and performed civilian duties like those of salt supervisors, supervisors of the Imperial Canal, censors, provincial judges, or governors. The entirety of the military forces dispatched to the battlefield was normally commanded by a governor-general. Yet if the campaign was so large that troops from other provinces were involved, command had to be assumed by a member of the central government, such as a grand minister commander (jinglüe dachen) or a grand minister consultant (canzan dachen), and the respective persons transmuted back into real soldiers.

The bureaucracy of the Qing Empire thus involved many parts of the population and employed them for the purposes of war. In this respect, warfare was regarded as an aspect to be administered not very differently from any other day-to-day affair. At the end of the eighteenth century, all financial aspects of warfare were regulated bureaucratically, including the wartime allowances of professional troops and the labour corps. The amounts the state would spend on baggage pay, food, special clothing for specialists, family allowances, labour pay, and allowances on days when labourers were not working were regulated. Yet it is not known if the sums listed in the regulations corresponded to the real pay the labourers received. In many cases it might have been more, in order to induce them to remain in the job, but in other cases less, since a high rate of unemployment might have forced military labourers to accept lower wages. In the first case the officials in control of logistics would have to find the extra money to pay the labourers. In the second case, they could embezzle a part of the funds allotted to the payment of the labour corps.

The 1790s mark the point from which the dynasty could no longer cope with the rebellions in the interior with Banner troops and Green Standards alone. During the uprising of the White Lotus (c. 1790-1805), an originally religious, later overtly political, group that harboured strong anti-Manchu feelings, the use of militia or “local corps” (tuanlian) to keep the insurrectionists out of the villages and prevent the villagers from joining their numbers, was introduced by representatives of the local elites. In Philip Kuhn’s analysis, in the militia system of the middle of the nineteenth century, two strands of intentions and motivations were blended together: the bureaucratic efforts to keep control over the countryside and a kind of “natural” and more spontaneous militarization implemented by local

77 Kuhn, Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China, p. 38.
elites trying to defend their property and communities.\textsuperscript{78} Therefore, the militia structures were complex, since this was not a case of one centralized dynastic army, and norms set by regional and local administrations would typically differ in their realization \textit{in situ}. Levels of armament, fortification, and professionalization could vary widely, depending on leadership and funding, both of which were organized locally by the elites. Co-operation between individual militia corps was possible, and the more complex the corps was, the better the options for funding and professionalization. While on the lowest level, and from the perspective of the local bureaucracy, an element of conscription or at least obligation prevailed, the larger corps could hire mercenaries, the so-called braves (\textit{yong}). If funds permitted, these professionals usually were provided with better weapons.\textsuperscript{79} Kuhn cites an example of a complex militia corps near the city of Canton which consisted of more than 10,000 hired mercenaries and which could mobilize, if needed, a “reserve” force of several tens of thousands in the villages.\textsuperscript{80} It was active in the 1840s, when it operated against the British in the First Opium War.

While the White Lotus insurrection was subdued with the efforts of Banner Armies, Green Standards, and militias, militarization on a higher professional level, which had already set in earlier, was institutionalized in the course of the next great challenge, the Taiping rebellion. This was implemented in parallel structures: both the Taiping army and the provincial armies were organized along similar lines, according to the degree of militarization, as conceptualized by Kuhn (see Table 12.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orthodox</th>
<th>Heterodox</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The regional army</td>
<td>The community in arms</td>
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<tr>
<td>\textit{Yong} (mercenaries)</td>
<td>\textit{Gu} (bandits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Tuanlian} (local militia)</td>
<td>\textit{Tang} (secret society lodge)</td>
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\textit{Source:} Kuhn, \textit{Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China}, p. 166.

The next large insurrection was a movement with its beginnings during the First Opium War, 1838-1842. At the start, the Taiping organized themselves

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., p. 64.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p. 69.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., p. 70.
as military formations that were similar to those of the militia. In Nanjing, where the entire Banner garrison population was wiped out, they established one army for each of their leaders, but created no single Taiping army under unified command. 81 The original eight Taiping corps and regiments included about 30,000 men. 82 When the Taiping rebels reached Nanjing in 1853, they were estimated at about 2 million people. 83 Basically, the entire Taiping population was organized in military units, and units of female combatants existed as well. 84

In reaction to the great danger of the anti-Manchu and anti-Confucian Taiping insurrection, which threatened the interests of the local elites whenever they passed on their trek to Nanjing and later to Beijing, provincial elites wove together individual militia groups to form large armies. Their structure was similar to that of the Taiping armies. 85 Their soldiers were not confined, like the militia, to defence in their native or nearby localities. Furthermore, not the available, but specifically the able men were recruited from the local peasantry. The pay was said to be four times higher than that of the “regular army”, and the soldiers actually received it, which often was not the case in the standing army. 86 The financial support came largely from the provincial sources, not from the central government. A particularity of these armies was that personal command played a decisive role. In contrast to the Green Standard Armies, where the higher-echelon officers were not supposed to work in their own home regions, 87 the soldiers at the level of the battalion (500 men) were expected to maintain personal loyalty to their commander. Battalions could be given the personal name of their leaders, and if due to death or retirement this officer was no longer in command, rather than replacing him, the unit was dissolved and had to be replaced by a newly recruited one. 88 Likewise, the armies owed loyalty to their founders, with whom they were identified: for instance, Zeng Guofan and Zuo Zongtang with their Hunan armies, Li Hongzhang with the Anhui army, and Yuan Shikai with the Beiyang army. This was so prevalent that Luo

82 Ibid., p. 476. Kuhn, “The Taiping Rebellion”, p. 273, quotes a figure of some 20,000 by c. 1850.
84 Ibid., p. 276.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid., p. 472.
88 Kuhn, Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China, p. 148.
Ergang captured the phenomenon in the phrase “bing wei jiang you” (the soldiers belong to the general).\(^8^9\)

The last phase of the Qing dynasty after the defeat of the Taiping rebellion in 1864 was characterized by efforts to ward off foreign intrusion and to quell interior rebellions that mushroomed all over the empire. Provincial armies were deployed for the latter purpose. Yet for the former aim an invigorated army and a navy under central command seemed necessary. For this reason, attempts were made in 1865 to reform part of the Green Standards that were stationed in the vicinity of Beijing, in the form of the “disciplined forces” (lianjun), which were to be trained in western military methods by Chinese and western instructors, and equipped with modern and unified weaponry and uniforms. They were to be organized and paid like the Anhui and Hunan armies. If we can trust western observers, this step toward an army reform did not have any great effect. Rather, it was the military reforms by the provincial armies, especially the modernization of weapons, ammunition, and military methods, which had convincing results. The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 triggered a series of further attempts at military modernization, among which those by Zhang Zhidong in Hubei and by Yuan Shikai in the northern provinces surrounding the capital were most successful and became the nuclei of the private armies of Republican warlords in the twentieth century.\(^9^0\)

Both armies were known for good and regular payment.\(^9^1\) The north China army, which was established in 1895, was in fact intended as a first step towards a centralized army. With many halts and hindrances – and the Qing dynasty came as close as ever to abdication in the course of the Boxer uprising (1900-1901) – a systematic army reform was promulgated in 1905. The new field army (Lujun) was tightly modelled on the Japanese army and stressed not only the education of officers, but also the qualifications of ordinary soldiers. Interestingly, it provided for a kind of “voluntary conscription” or “selective service”, so that the idea of a conscript army was fostered, but at the same time the state retained the right to select the most able candidates. Provision was made, for instance, that one-fifth of the enlisted men should be literate.\(^9^2\) Yet ambiguity remains about the degree of freedom in choosing a military occupation. As an American military attaché reported, localities were ordered to find a certain number of men,
and it was for the local officials to decide whom to choose. Furthermore, the army reform provided for clear command structures and uniformity of weapons and apparel, and had a clear pay scale that ranged from 1,600 taels per month for a corps commander – a corps was to include 1,595 officers, 23,760 enlisted men, 4,469 horses and mules, 108 cannons – to a monthly 4.2 taels for privates. The army was devised as a reserve army, with regular troops and first- and second-class reserves, as in European armies. Regulars were to serve for three years; after their regular service, first-class reserves were available for another three years, and second-class reserves for four. The reservists of the first class were to be paid 1 tael, while the second-class reserve men received half a tael per month, except when on active duty. The plan foresaw that in the course of seventeen years (by 1922) the Chinese Field Army was to include thirty-six divisions, that is, more than 400,000 men.

One pressing problem it did not solve or discuss was that the provinces still had more control over their divisions within the Field Army than the central government, because they financed the divisions that were stationed in their regions. The other was that the Eight Banners and Green Standards were retained, if in smaller numbers. Efforts had been made to train and drill part of the traditional armies in western ways, but change was slow, and the Manchu central government was not prepared to give up the Banner registration for good.

The numbers of the diverse armies were not precisely known to anybody, and the estimates vary widely, not only for the absolute number of men employed, but also for those who would, in the case of war, be able to actively defend the country. On the eve of the 1911 revolution, when a military mutiny ended more than two thousand years of imperial rule, the numbers of the various armies were given as shown in Table 12.2.

93 Ibid., p. 235.
94 Ibid., p. 178.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid., p. 268.
Table 12.2 Troop strengths of Qing armies around 1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Number of men (official figures, rounded up)*</th>
<th>Variant estimates (rounded up)**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patrol and defence troops, <em>Fangying</em>  (refers to the provincial armies)</td>
<td>334,000</td>
<td>French General Staff 1908: 216,000; US military attaché 1909: 157,000; <em>China Year Book</em> 1912: 277,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banner Army, <em>Qiying</em></td>
<td>263,000</td>
<td>1911: 255,000 men, of which 38,000 trained in the <em>Lujun</em>; 37,000 trained in the patrol and defence troops or comparable units; the remaining two-thirds untrained or of no military value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Green Standards, Luying</em></td>
<td>133,000</td>
<td>It is doubtful whether they could have mustered more than 50,000 men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>New Army, Lujun</em></td>
<td>286,000</td>
<td>Between 748,000 and 807,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,016,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
* Shen, “Xinhai geming qianxi woguo zhi lujun ji qi junfei”, p. 140

Trends over time

In the context of the Fighting for a Living project, the trends over time need to be interpreted by a six-layer matrix. In this matrix changes over time in six determinants of labour conditions and relations are described and correlated with each other. These determinants are, first, technology (hard and soft skills, such as technology of weapons and machinery, techniques of recruitment, or the inner structure of the army); secondly, political and socio-economic disruptions (often caused by war); thirdly, economic and financial factors (such as availability of funds or the rise of a monetized mar-
ket economy); fourthly, demographic factors (such as the sudden availability of new populations or a decline in population growth); fifthly, conditions of supply and demand of labour (such as the army’s competition with other employers for labour); and, finally, ideological factors (such as ideas on the suitability of military labour, or the ideal of nation-building as a common cause). Instead of presenting a matrix with quantitative, binary (yes/no) elements in which those determinants are described as “chronological vectors”, we prefer a qualitative description by which the particular scalar sizes and their change over time can be much better specified. The following large changes in labour relations in the Chinese military can be observed in the cross-section years 1650, 1800, and 1900. These are sample years which the Global Collaboratory on the History of Labour Relations chose for the comparative analysis of labour relations worldwide.⁹⁸

The takeover of the imperial reign by the Manchus resulted in a transition around 1650 from the Ming corvée military service to the mercenary Green Standard Army, or – roughly – from tributary to commodified labour, with all the intermediary phases explained by David M. Robinson in his contribution in this volume, “Military Labor in China, c. 1500”. It remains to be discussed whether the transition from tributary conscripted, to commodified mercenary military labour is a process that occurred between 1500 and 1650, or whether mercenary labour was, already by 1600, so firmly established that no actual conscription occurred at all.

The ethnic composition of the conquest elite made the new formation of the Eight Banners necessary. With focus on the Manchus, this can be analysed as a transition from ethnic tributary to polyethnic tributary, which in the late eighteenth century comes back to a mono-ethnic model (Manchus only).

For the supply services of both Eight Banners and Green Standards, there was a rise in free wage labour for transport and specialist tasks that was largely organized by the market. This constitutes a change around 1800 from tributary (as a tax obligation in kind, or corvée) to commodified labour remunerated with monetary wages. Wars, especially those against insurgents, were increasingly organized by the local governments in the districts. The organizational complexity of the labour corps decreased because of shorter distances and diminished need for labour services.

Militia and mercenary, proto-provincial armies took over defence tasks from the Eight Banners and especially from the Green Standards.

If the transition from Green Standards to local militia is considered, this represents a change from commodified to tributary labour, since the local militia troops were originally conscripted from the peasant population. The ensuing transition from local militia to provincial armies in the second half of the nineteenth century reflects a change from tributary to commodified labour, since the troops were mercenaries hired by the proto-warlords. Here, change lay in the employing institution rather than in the labour relationship, namely the two-stage transition from the central government into the hands of the localities and then to the provinces.

At the end of the nineteenth century, a transition occurred from commodified labour in the lifelong mercenary Green Standards, and from tributary labour in the Eight Banners to *de facto* professional armies that were, however, established with the intention of introducing conscription. In actuality, the conscription was carried out in ways different from those envisaged. Rather than calling up all able-bodied male citizens to duty, localities decided how to fill their quotas and, in case of emergencies, took recourse to conscription. The transition back from provincial to imperial employment, which the newly established Ministry of War had hoped for, was not fulfilled.

**Explanations for transitions in the matrix of hypotheses**

The matrix of hypotheses for the explanation of change in military labour relations developed by the Collaboratory Fighting for a Living project provides for six options. In the following, we discuss which of these factors carried the most weight in the given cross-section years. Before going into details, it is necessary to stress the very long-term trend of increasing monetization in China between 1500 and 1900. Its beginnings are discussed in Robinson’s contribution, which also makes clear that “tributary” labour could be remunerated with regular stipends and additional gifts and grants. Monetization certainly played a major role in the rise of hired military labour over conscript labour. Nevertheless, tributary military labour in China was not confined to conscription and, given the further increase in population between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, the high amount of labour freely available for the military did not necessitate the use of conscription.
Why did labour relations in military work change?

Military technology, with respect to both “hardware” (that is, weaponry and armour) and “software” (in the sense of military skills), did not significantly influence change around 1650 from tributary to professional labour relations, and thus the change from Ming hereditary military households to Green Standards, or from the rise of the new tributary labour relations in the Banners. Muskets and cannons were used, as before, yet the Manchus particularly valued the skills of mounted archers and considered bows and arrows as genuinely Manchu weapons. Banners armies (hence the tributary rather than the mercenary type of military occupation) were seen as elite troops mainly deployed for the great conquest wars in the border zones. In the initial phase of the naval campaigns between the Ming or Ming loyalists and the Qing, the former had a decisive technological edge over the latter. However, also from this perspective the identification of the naval officers and mariners with the Han Chinese rather than the “foreign” Manchus determined whether people would join the Zheng or the Qing navy.

By 1800, gradual change had occurred in the supply services, in the form of a shift from tributary corvée to commodified hired modes of employment. As far as skills are concerned, the characteristics of the hired form of labour included the possibility of finer specialization, since experts such as cannon-casters or tent-makers could be employed for the conquest wars. The change from the commodified mercenary labour in the Green Standards to the tributary modes in the form of early local militia organization were brought about not by change in the military technology, but again in the field of skills and organization. This type of warfare, which was concentrated in the rebellions in the interior, made the use of specialists and elite troops seem less essential. The technological level of the troops decreased generally during the nineteenth century until the period of self-strengthening and military modernization.

By 1900, change from the mercenary Green Standards to professional, regional armies (which did not bring about a change in labour relations) and the change from Banner Armies to professional armies (which certainly did affect the labour relations, from tributary to commodified) were in full swing. The introduction of modern, western-style weaponry, military drill, and command structures significantly altered the relationship of the troops to their employing agency. With the purchase of new technology in the second half of the nineteenth century, craftsmen from among the population were either incorporated into the arsenals or became suppliers, especially in ship-building. The general trend was that technical expertise
in armaments and ammunition was more and more integrated into the organization of the modernized mercenary armies.

War and the ensuing political and socio-economic disruption played a role in the change in military labour relations as well. This was clearly the case in the integration of what had been the army of the previous rulers and its new designation as the Green Standards, which represents a commodified type of labour relation. On one hand, this was necessary to bind the labour force to the new rulers, and on the other hand because the conquest of China by the Manchus called for a specific type of military unit, consisting of Chinese who could fight against their compatriots and neighbouring peoples. The Manchu population was far too small to take over this task, and the Manchu troops with their cavalry units were not appropriate for battles in many parts of China. The conquest war of China by the Manchus was thus an opportunity to reorganize and reinstitute the previous troops of the Ming dynasty and other contenders.

The Manchus were a conquest elite who in the course of the seventeenth century gained supreme rule over the majority Chinese. The need for constant vigilance of “resident aliens”\(^9^9\) made them garrison their own people, and maintain and foster them as professionals who were theoretically forbidden to seek jobs as civilians. Thus, the working and living conditions of those in the garrisons, rather than labour relations, were modified by the eventual victory in the warfare between the 1630s and 1683.

The large conquest wars in the border regions in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries brought about a change in labour relations since they necessitated the quick recruitment of labour to maintain efficient logistical operations. Specialists were required to supply labour, expertise, and materiel to the military. Tributary labour was not sufficient to meet the demands of the army, so that labour had to be recruited on the market instead of from the population included in the tax registers.

This situation changed with the relocation of war into the interior of the empire. Military operations became less professionalized. War was still an omnipresent phenomenon in the first half of the nineteenth century, but instead of elite troops fighting against enemies with the same level of fighting skills, soldiers fought against inferior rebel troops. The social problems of China's growing population contributed to the increasing internal rebellions, often inspired by millenarian religious ideas.

The change in 1900, from the declining Green Standards and Banners to professional armies, was influenced by the more efficient warfare of the

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imperialist powers. This stands in conjunction with a greater impact of naval warfare, an operational theatre that had been de-emphasized by the Manchus in the eighteenth century. Since the Opium Wars, the Manchus lost sovereignty over parts of their territory. These losses included, for instance, Hong Kong 1842/1898, the international concessions in the treaty ports since 1842, Taiwan 1895, the Jiaozhou Bay (in Shandong province) 1897, Lüshun/Port Arthur 1898, and dependencies in North Vietnam (1884) and the Ili River Basin in today’s Xinjiang, annexed by Russia in 1871 and partly restored to the Qing Empire in 1881. The military weakness on the part of the central government drove home the notion of how urgent military modernization was in terms of both armaments and military skills. Defeat in war was thus a trigger for change in military organization that also had effects on labour relations.

The perspective of economic and financial factors hinges on a series of interconnected questions. Was the availability of funds the cause for warfare, or its effect? In a recent study, Kuroda Akinobu cites figures suggesting that in a comparison of the Qing and the British Empires in 1783, the Chinese treasury possessed a surplus of about six times its yearly tax income of that year, while the public debt of the British Empire amounted to twenty times the annual tax revenue in the same year. According to Kuroda’s account, the total British debts amounted to an equivalent of twenty times the yearly expenditures of the Chinese state.

This implies that Chinese emperors and officials of the central government harboured the idea that wars could be waged only if funds were sufficient. Again and again the Qianlong emperor persuaded the accountants of the Ministry of Revenue (hubu) that there were sufficient funds in the state treasury and that there was no need to be stingy in case of war. Yet any government spending had to be set off against the revenues. Following John Brewer’s persuasive argumentation, during the same period, the British Empire waged wars, for instance in the Seven Years War and the American War of Independence, in order to gain profit. The funds to wage these wars came from credits.

Kuroda attributes the profit-oriented type of warfare to the fundamentally different development path of currency-dependent versus credit-dependent societies. For labour relations, the question is how the wealth

100 Kuroda, “The Eurasian Silver Century”, p. 269.
of the Chinese public treasury arrived in the hands of those working in the high-risk group of military labour, and whether more or less liquidity of the currency influenced the way in which soldiers were recruited and employed. Did the transition from tributary labour service, which was imposed or conferred on particular households, to mercenary, voluntary arrangements coincide with greater availability of monetary means to pay the soldiers and the supporting services? In other words: did the – mostly non-monetary – tributary labour diminish, or was it altogether abolished for commodified labour arrangements, when money to pay for the military wages was available in sufficient amounts?

The cases under discussion here open some perspectives on these questions. We see in the transition from the Ming to the Qing that both dynasties had two main types of military labour. In the Ming, this was hereditary registration as military household, and therefore legally bound and unfree labour, with a basic arrangement that provided land for the soldiers, but also wages. The labour arrangements for the mercenaries (that is, soldiers hired by individual commanders, the so-called housemen) were, at least legally, if not in actual practice, easier to change or leave altogether.104 Thus the latter may have constituted the better work opportunity, also because it offered more frequent intervals of wage payment than was the case for hereditary military households.105 In the Qing, the tributary kind of labour relations was not inflicted upon the Banner people as an onerous obligation; it was instead considered a privilege, both in terms of payment and regarding the social and status assets that came with it. The more commodified military labour in the Green Standards did not command the same dignity, nor was the remuneration as high as that of the Banners. As we have seen, the number of Green Standards may have been about three times as high as that of the Banner people. This shows that, from the perspective of the soldiers, a higher commodification of labour did not necessarily lead to more desirable and better-rewarded employment. From the perspective of the state, the hereditary character of the positions in the Banner structure made a constant supply of professional troops possible. In a kind of paternalistic relationship, the state would care for its elite troops: the Banner soldiers.

104 See Robinson’s contribution in this volume, “Military Labor in China, c. 1500”, especially where he points out that housemen could take on their employers’ surnames, and that their status was vaguely in between hired labourers and family members. The same occurred with bondservants in the large households of the Yangzi delta in the late Ming period. See McDermott, “Bondservants in the T’ai-hu Basin during the Late Ming”, p. 679.

105 As Robinson points out, in comparison to the regular garrison soldiers, housemen were privileged in regards to their wages and other prerogatives.
permanent availability of troops ready for combat was important enough to finance such a costly group of specialists.

For the supply services in the eighteenth century, the advisers for military finance understood that, ultimately, hiring people from the labour market was neither more expensive nor more difficult to organize than levying the services of peasants for military service by means of tax registers. One reason was that the involuntary workers often absconded and had to be replaced. In a similar way, after 1800 it may have superficially seemed cheaper to recruit peasant military service for bandit-suppression militia than to sustain a professional army for this task. Yet the problem here was that militias were worse trained, poorly equipped, and less motivated than the provincial armies that eventually fought the bandits and rebels. In order to achieve specialization of skills and armament for defence against internal and external enemies, nineteenth- and twentieth-century military reformers sought to attain increases in military budgets. China's defeats in the manifold imperialist challenges of the nineteenth century are largely attributed to a lack of finances for military modernization. In contrast, the case of the struggle between the Nationalist and communist armies in the 1945 to 1949 civil war shows that the military modernization of the Nationalist (Kuomintang) army did not suffice if motivation of the soldiers and credibility of the commanders were lacking.

The demographic factor influenced changes in military labour relations mainly in two ways. First, with the Manchus, a new population became available as fighters and garrison soldiers. A favourable tributary and elite status was conferred due to this ethnic self-definition. Secondly, the period between 1650 and the end of the Qing was one of population growth, with only a slight, temporary decline in the middle and late nineteenth century. Both the military and its supporting services gained an abundant labour force from a general increase in China's population. This made conscription largely unnecessary. With respect to the tributary labour of the hereditary Banner households, this increase brought about a situation where only a minority of adult males could be engaged in military service. The solution to the economic problem of supporting the Banners was to lift the ban on non-military jobs and to virtually dissolve the Banners in the late nineteenth century.

The issue of competition for military labour between the regular state army and other “employers” is most evident in the last phases of the Ming and the Qing dynasty, as actual rivalry arose which could not be treated as mere peasant rebellions to be quelled easily, without posing serious threats. In 1650, such competition occurred between the Ming-loyal armies, local
rebel leaders, and the Qing Banners that gradually conquered the country from north to south.

Due to the professed intention of the Qing to provide a better livelihood for their subjects than the preceding Ming dynasty, military labour relations changed from the tributary household registration system of the Ming to the more commodified Green Standards in the Qing. In fact, the corvée obligations were also gradually abandoned in many sectors of civilian occupations for the state, such as in construction or textile production, and instead the workers were hired. For the supporting military labour in the eighteenth century, the permanent long-distance campaigns to the frontiers required a large labour corps, which was supplied by the increasing population. Around 1800, the demand for military labour forces decreased, leading to rising unemployment in border provinces such as Sichuan. The more militias that were set up, the less the regular armies, Green Standards and Banners, were occupied with campaigning, leading to lower motivation, poor training, and fewer opportunities to earn additional income by baggage pay and financial rewards for victories. For the militia troops, the recruitment of peasants for military service may have provided additional income for those living from agriculture, but also impeded them from engaging in their main occupation. The change to commodified labour by recruiting the unemployed can be seen as an inevitable consequence of the first attempts to apply corvée recruitment to cope with rebellions from within.

Finally, the factor of ideology, especially ideas on the suitability of military labour, and the ideal of nation-building, also becomes perceptible in periods when radical change took place. Around 1650, this was the accession to power by the Manchus, who defined themselves as warriors who had inherited the “Mandate of Heaven” and thus the legitimacy of rule over the Chinese despite their non-Han descent. This, as has been shown in the preceding paragraphs, favoured a tributary kind of labour relations. On the other hand, the contending defenders of the Han Chinese Ming dynasty could mobilize a part of their armed forces precisely because loyalty to previous rulers formed an important element of the Confucian state ideology. It is hard to assess whether the motivation of the anti-Qing fighters was mainly rejection of the rulers from beyond the Great Wall or actual loyalty to the Ming. The voluntary nature of the arrangement, at least in its initial phases, probably played an important part in the relatively long-lasting rule of the Zheng family. At the end of the Qing dynasty, the idea of nation-building combined with rising nationalism with racialist undertones that rejected the Manchus, who had proved inefficient in warding off both
foreign aggression and internal challenges. The Manchu self-image of being a born group of warriors was disrupted by the warfare of the mid-nineteenth century; it seemed outdated in an atmosphere that strove for nationalistic modernization.

Conclusion

As a result of the discussion of possible causes for change in military labour relations, we have seen that military technology, war, financial and economic factors, demography, supply and demand of labour, and ideology all had an impact on military occupations between 1650 and 1900. Yet it is not easy to evaluate their impact in regard to the labour relations in question, which are of a tributary or commodified nature. The tributary mode corresponds to the Ming military household registration, the attempts at conscription in the Ming-loyal interlude of the Zheng clan in the 1670s and early 1680s, the Qing Banners, the supporting services in the period of corvée obligations before the expansionary warfare of the Qianlong emperor, and the militia in the early nineteenth century, as well as the efforts in the course of the 1905 military reforms to introduce universal conscription. The commodified mode includes the initial phase of the Koxinga's recruitments, the Green Standards, the nineteenth-century provincial armies, and the New Army. As this list shows, there is no unilinear trend suggesting that tributary arrangements necessarily precede commodified labour relations. Rather, the two coexisted for long periods in Chinese history. The two attempts at conscription originated from different motivations. The first, by the Zhengs, was initiated because of the imminent danger from a formidable adversary which was conquering all of China. Demographic factors stood in conjunction with defections from Taiwan to the mainland; in simple words: not enough men would voluntarily serve the cause of the Zheng clan. In the second case, universal conscription was not necessary because enough volunteers were willing to join the army, if it could pay. It is only from the middle of the twentieth century onward that both the Republic of China (after the exodus to Taiwan) and the People's Republic of China have commenced conscription systems. On the mainland, this is realized as a selective service system; on Taiwan the draft is more universal, but is in the process of being lifted.

A perspective on the present situation can accentuate the fact that a change in military labour relations is a complex, multi-causal event that hinges on many factors. In addition to the factors discussed, what needs to
be taken into account in the case of Qing China, especially in the nineteenth century, and up until the foundation of the People’s Republic of China, is the tension between centralization and particularism. Superficially, even if labour relations do not seem to change and (apparently) remained commodified, there are political aspects during the Republican era which affected the equation. It made a big difference for the command structures within the armies, the loyalty of the soldiers, and regularity of payment whether the employer was the central government or a provincial leader who might aspire, with the help of his army, to rule the entire country. The competition from outside – and thus the threat of war by foreign powers or, as in the case of Taiwan, against an overbearing competing polity – has also been a major ingredient in the combination of changes and continuities between the 1650s and today.