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The soldier as a sage: Qi Jiguang (1528-1588) and the neo-confucianization of the military in sixteenth-century China
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Stellingen (Prepositions)

I

Qi Jiguang was far from a “lonely general”; the very success of his career can to a great extent be explained with reference to the personal connections he cultivated with civil officials and literati belonging to the Wang Yangming movement. His eventual fall from grace was because of very similar reasons to those of civil bureaucrats: the loss of patronage opportunities, factional strife and enmity of the emperor.

Cf. Ray Huang, 1587, *A Year of No Significance: The Ming Dynasty in Decline* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1981), 156-157.

II

Qi Jiguang’s manuals should not be understood as a “singleton technique” produced either by a culture that seeks truth in revelation rather than in experiment, or one where the state micromanages all research. In fact, Qi Jiguang’s manuals are the product of a relatively open network of circulating knowledge, produced and commented upon by military professionals, private scholars, interested amateurs, and civil bureaucrats.

Cf. Geoffrey Parker, “The Limits to Revolutions in Military Affairs: Maurice of Nassau, the Battle of Nieuwpoort (1600), and the Legacy,” *The Journal of Military History* 72.2 (2007), 369.

III

The notion that Qi Jiguang’s manuals are a proof of continuity in military drill practices because China never lost its classical culture begs the question why these manuals were written. A continuity of classical culture could only be turned into an advantage on the battle ground when it was accessible, via personal connections with the scholastic community, to a practical military man with the authority to effect concrete changes on the training field, and who could therefore appropriate and reapply its lessons.

Cf. Tonio Andrade, “The Arquebus Volley Technique in China, c. 1560: Evidence from the Writings of Qi Jiguang,” *Journal of Chinese Military History* 4 (2015): 134-136.

IV

As with the invention of musketry volley fire in early modern Europe by Dutch military thinkers, who were inspired by military ideas of Greek and Roman authors, Wang Yangming and Qi Jiguang derived practical lessons from ancient Chinese authors and applied them to their own circumstances. Classical learning therefore functioned as more than a mere source of authority and legitimation for innovation.

V

The sixteenth-century Chinese vogue for leadership with combined civil and military talents is mirrored in the statecraft writings of the period, which concern both civil and military affairs. Intellectual history which only considers civilian mentalities and civilian governance is akin to contemplating the function of a horse cart without realizing the importance of the horse.

VI

The military revolution debate can only be resolved when the field of Area Studies continues to pick up the gauntlet. Scholars affiliated to Area Studies should continue to approach the debate with the help of their specialist language skills.

VII

The added value of researchers who study a culture alien to their own is their ability to identify and critically question phenomena which researchers studying their own culture take for granted.

VIII

Far from facilitating research, digital humanities and its attendant mass digitization of primary sources increase a researcher's workload, because they progressively remove the excuses for the researcher to not use all the possible resources he or she should use to answer his or her research questions accurately.

IX

Institutionalized area studies by their very corporate nature and interests tend to reify the notion of the alterity of their objects of study and make the dialogue with global history more difficult than it needs to be.

X

Being a historian of premodern times is akin to being a detective investigating a crime scene in which victims, witnesses and perpetrators are all long dead. It is only possible to interrogate remains of lives lived long ago without an interpersonal dialogue being possible to verify the findings.

XI

The phenomenon of binge watching television series comes from the innate need of humans to give meaning to their existence by reflecting on the possibilities of lives unlived and choices not chosen. Narrated lives are a substitute for life experiences not experienced.

XII

Conformity is the result of an individual's undeveloped ability to reflect on self and society and the resultant inability to perceive alternative ways of being. The duty and value of the humanities lie in developing this reflexive ability.