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**The soldier as a sage: Qi Jiguang (1528-1588) and the neo-confucianization of the military in sixteenth-century China**  
Noordam, B.

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## Chapter 5 – Wang Yangming at the Frontier

In the previous chapter we saw how Wang Yangming's philosophy could be used to legitimate *wu-praxis* against the backdrop of Neo-Confucian morality. In this chapter I provide an overview of the concrete military practices that were legitimated in the process. A few modern works exist that have delved into this more practical side of Wang's life, but none with reference to the list of problems mid-Ming governance was facing outlined in chapter three. My aims in this chapter are thus to first show how Wang Yangming engaged with these specific problems, and second, to argue that this engagement was part of a more general tendency within *xinxue*, predating Wang. Finally, I will argue that Wang's followers were as much engaged with spreading knowledge of his practical solutions as with his philosophical teachings and that these became a source of inspiration for succeeding generations of civil and military officials. Wang's practical career had an exemplary legacy as well, something which has received relatively little attention because of the tendency of modern scholars to focus on his intellectual accomplishments.

### Re-Centring Wang Yangming's Military Exploits

As part of his official career, Wang would be involved in four major military campaigns waged in the south of the empire, which for the most part took place during or shortly after one of the two periods of intensified collective violence posited by James Tong, namely 1516-1525. His first campaign took place roughly between late 1516 and 1518, and was waged in the borderlands between four southern provinces: (southern) Jiangxi, Fujian, Huguang, and Guangdong. The conflict he was sent to suppress there bore many of the hallmarks of the crisis outlined in the third chapter: socio-economic tensions over land and other resources, interethnic conflicts between Han Chinese and She 畬 and Yao aboriginals, and a degenerated hereditary military system which also lacked the authority to flexibly operate across provincial boundaries. The second conflict mostly took place during 1519 and was a rebellion of the imperial prince of the Ning 寧 fiefdom, Zhu Chenhao 朱宸濠 (r. 1499-1521), which took place in northern Jiangxi. Again, the usurping prince was able to generate support because drought and taxation pressures were causing hardships amongst the population of northern Jiangxi, and as a result he offered exemptions on rents and taxes

in exchange for support. Therefore, Zhu Chenhao's rebellion had a socio-economic component as well. Moreover, he sought to employ itinerant martial arts experts and military units comprised of Guangxi's "wolf soldiers" and other southern aboriginal groups. The last two campaigns took place in 1527-1528 in Guangxi province, and mostly revolved around a conflict of authority between local aboriginal Yao groups and the centralized administration of the empire.<sup>366</sup>

Modern scholars, with the exception of Guan Minyi and George Israel, often study the development of Wang's philosophy separately from his (military) activities on the frontier. In reality they developed side-by-side, and many philosophical insights were most likely inspired by service on the frontier in military and interethnic contexts, as Wing-tsit Chan has speculated.<sup>367</sup> This phenomenon should perhaps not be considered an entirely baffling occurrence. It was, in fact, on the frontier and in the midst of aboriginal society where Wang Yangming's version of *xinxue* was born. In the early 1500s Wang Yangming had angered a leading eunuch at court and was banished to the southwestern Guizhou province and lived among aboriginal Miao, amongst others, for a while.<sup>368</sup> The southwestern frontier at this time had been a militarized area since the beginning of the dynasty. According to John Dardess: "The Ming implanted a network of military roads, post stations, forts, and garrisons (together administered by "pacification commissions"). These power nodes recruited natives as soldiers, maintained surveillance over the people of the southwest generally, and intervened with violence to suppress native raiders and settle native disputes."<sup>369</sup>

It was in this environment where Wang Yangming's thinking took one of its most important turns and he claimed he had attained enlightenment. Surrounded by a non-Han society, he came to the conclusion that the principles of things did not exist independently outside of the heart-mind, but *were*, in fact, identical with the heart-mind.<sup>370</sup> Thus the principles buttressing civilization by extension were not to be discovered by studying external phenomena, but by cultivating one's own heart-mind. The symbolic significance of this discovery amidst a society lacking the trappings of Han Chinese civilization can hardly be overstated and it is surprising that it goes mostly uncommented upon in contemporary scholarship.<sup>371</sup> One cannot help but wonder

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<sup>366</sup> Israel, "On the Margins of the Grand Unity," 53-54, 69-70, 85-86, 154, 283-284, 334; Leo K. Shin, "The Last Campaigns of Wang Yangming," *T'oung Pao* 42 (2006): 105, 107.

<sup>367</sup> Wang, *Instructions for Practical Living*, XXV.

<sup>368</sup> Chan, "WANG Shou-jen," 1409-1410.

<sup>369</sup> Dardess, *Ming China*, 6.

<sup>370</sup> Chan, "WANG Shou-Jen", 1410.

<sup>371</sup> An exception is Wing-tsit Chan, see Wang, *Instructions for Practical Living*, XXV.

whether the image of the lone statesman-*cum*-philosopher wandering into a society and culture alien to his, devoid of all the amenities of refined life (apparently he initially had to reside in a straw hut), and consequently discovering the principle of civilization within himself, was not in the end a deviously smart example of *post-facto* literary self-fashioning. Whether genuine or not, the close connection between Yangming-*xinxue* and life among the non-Han frontier population points towards the potential of this new Neo-Confucian interpretation as a missionary frontier ideology. This connection is lacking in the *xinxue* of his Song dynasty predecessor Lu Jiuyuan and his contemporary Zhan Ruoshui, and seemingly foreshadows the activist evangelical zeal that the ideology would often engender in its more ardent adherents.<sup>372</sup> Wang Yangming himself committed himself to *jiangxue* 講學 (lecturing about learning in Neo-Confucianism), using the government schools established by the dynasty as part of the military garrison outposts as his platforms during his temporary exile in Guizhou, and he succeeded in gathering a number of aboriginal followers at the southwestern frontier.<sup>373</sup> In addition, many of his military campaigns would be directed against restless non-Han populations in the south of the empire during which he also availed himself of aboriginal military units on his own side.<sup>374</sup> It is thus no exaggeration to posit that his brand of Neo-Confucianism was forged in the fire of intra-cultural clashes and cooperation in the context of military activities.

In the early sixteenth century, Wang Yangming was but the latest of a line of civil bureaucrats who had been tasked with solving military crises in the empire's south during the mid-Ming period. After the southern Deng Maoqi rebellion, which, as we saw in chapter three, was still repressed by the hereditary soldiers and their officers, the leadership in the southern military theatre was increasingly taken over by civil officials with military authority. Their solutions to the military crises ran the gamut from brutal armed suppression to appeasement and accommodation. Civil official Xiang Zhong 項忠 (1421-1502) was an exponent of the former, suppressing a rebellion in Huguang province by force in the early 1470s.<sup>375</sup> Wang Yangming chose a middle way between these two extremes and generally sought a combination of appeasement and suppression, and civil and military governance solutions, to achieve lasting solutions, though the

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<sup>372</sup> John Dardess sees Wang and his followers as evangelizers of Neo-Confucianism, see: Dardess, *Ming China*, 89-93.

<sup>373</sup> Bian, *Hu Zongxian chuan*, 56-57.

<sup>374</sup> Israel, "On the Margins of the Grand Unity," 334.

<sup>375</sup> Filipiak, "The Effects of Civil Officials," 6.

precise balance between these four elements would differ between the four campaigns. This depended on his assessment of the motives behind the rebellion against legitimate imperial authority. George Israel has argued that these assessments were intimately linked with Wang's philosophical convictions, i.e. whether he perceived rebellion and banditry to be fuelled by illegitimate selfish desires, or whether they were caused by unjust imperial governance or socio-economic hardships. In the former case Wang tended to rely more on the military instrument. In general, he tried to "awaken" a pang of guilty consciousness by way of moralizing proclamations amongst the areas and populations affected by disorder and entice people to give up their illegal behaviour and reform themselves. In this way, he attempted to sow discord among enemy ranks and separate those who had become followers of rebellion by coercion and involuntary choice from the hardcore bandits and rebels. The remaining hardcore Wang would then judge as irredeemable and he would proceed to exterminate them in order for them to not form a threat to virtuous subjects of the empire. Being a Neo-Confucian did not automatically make Wang an appeaser who believed in the power of virtue alone to bring rebellious subjects to heel. Instead, his mixed approach was inspired by his realization that amnesty did not work as a permanent solution in the absence of military force and rewards and punishments to back it up.<sup>376</sup> The carrot, in other words, did not work without the stick. In terms of his philosophy Wang was convinced that, although all people (including aboriginals)<sup>377</sup> possessed the same *li* in their heart-minds, in practice some had such contaminated *qi* that moral admonitions and appeasement would not be sufficient and coarser methods, like for example extermination, would be necessary. In Israel's words:

Thus, Wang Yangming's philosophy of self-cultivation and explanation for people's differing capacities for sagehood broadly parallels his scale for measuring levels of civilization. And the closer to sagehood and individual might be or the more civilized a people, the more they can be expected and allowed to act as autonomous agents; the more obscured and less well-endowed an individual might be or the more uncivilized a people, the more they will require various forms of legitimate coercion, or benevolent intervention.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> Israel, "On the Margins of the Grand Unity," 55-58, 77-78, 89-90

<sup>377</sup> According to Wang, aboriginals possessed the same *liangzhi* as Han Chinese, nevertheless they were closer to animals than Han Chinese because their *qi* had been clouded more by selfish desires. See: Shin, "The Last Campaigns of Wang Yangming," 116.

<sup>378</sup> Israel, "On the Margins of the Grand Unity," 325.

During and after the four campaigns, therefore, Wang Yangming would diagnose the “disease” and prescribe a “medicine” consisting of differing balances of *wen* and *wu*. The more “civilized”, therefore, Wang Yangming assessed a rebellious group of subjects to be, the more he would rely on civil governance solutions that appealed to their better moral natures,<sup>379</sup> as we shall see below. Yet, Wang was not the only civil official to rely on a combination of civil and military governance solutions, so in what way can we consider him a departure from previous practices? Did his Neo-Confucian commitments play a part and thus have an impact on these practices?

Filipiak notes that Wang Yangming was one of the most famous examples of a civil bureaucrat that advocated for an integrated civil-military solution to the challenges posed by demographic growth and the socio-economic tensions, interethnic conflict, and volatile migration this caused in the south of the empire. He mentions precursors to Wang Yangming, Mu Wenhui 目文會 (dates unknown, fl. in the late fifteenth century) and Yuan Jie 原傑 (1417-1477), who tried integrated civil-military approaches as well in 1476 in the south. These included the formation of new administrative units, setting up of military posts and schools, land redistribution and registration of the population.<sup>380</sup> However, a more analogous precursor to the meeting between philosophical renewal, frontier pacification, ethnic governance problems, and military activities might already be seen during the 1460s in Wang Yangming’s spiritual ancestor, Chen Xianzhang, also known by his sobriquet Baisha 白沙. It is more analogous, in my view, because his philosophical reinterpretation of Neo-Confucianism was the glue and inspiration binding a network of officials together in finding an integrated civil-military approach to interethnic socio-economic and political conflicts. In addition, as we shall see below, this Chen Xianzhang’s activist Neo-Confucian reinterpretation led this network to try and inculcate Neo-Confucian values and behaviours in local society. Since Zhan Ruoshui was a student of Chen Xianzhang, Wang Yangming might have been inspired by Chen’s example via his friend,<sup>381</sup> for Wang Yangming endeavoured during his campaigns to combine his civil and military solutions with a strengthening of Neo-Confucian values in society.

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<sup>379</sup> Idem, 340-341, 345-350.

<sup>380</sup> Filipiak, “The Effects of Civil Officials,” 5-6.

<sup>381</sup> I did not find concrete evidence for this in Wang Yangming’s writings, however the personal connection between Zhan and Wang makes possible a connection between Chen and Wang, and the former a possible source of inspiration for the latter. See: Wang Shouren 王守仁, *Wang Yangming quanji* 王陽明全集, 2 vols (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992).

In the seventeenth century, a literatus from Guangdong named Huang Shijun 黃士俊 (fl. 1607),<sup>382</sup> wrote a commemoration of the rebuilding of a local temple dedicated to Chen Xianzhang. In it, he made the following observation:

[Chen Xianzhang] was subordinate to the Right Minister of War, the venerable gentleman Zhang, the Supreme Commander of Guangdong and Guangxi; he took the military as woof and the civil as warp [i.e. he took both *wen* and *wu* as the foundation]; he pondered the excessive turmoil caused by war faced by Jiangmen [...]

屬右司馬張公督兩粵，緯武經文，念江門當兵燹之餘 [...] <sup>383</sup>

Jiangmen was (and is) a city in Guangdong province and part of Xinhui county, where Chen lived. The troubles alluded to in the above quote must refer to the Yao - an aboriginal group we encountered in chapter three - wars that disrupted the area in the 1460s and which Chen indeed witnessed. Huang Shijun further states that Chen “belonged to” Supreme Commander Zhang, however Huang must have made a mistake during the composition of his commemoration. The Supreme Commander in charge of both Guangxi and Guangdong provinces during this episode was either Han Yong 韓雍 (1422-1478), or his successor Zhu Ying 朱英 (1417-1485). Probably Huang Shijun refers here to Zhu Ying, since he, according to David Faure, was noted to be “more popular” with Chen than Han Yong.<sup>384</sup> The office of Supreme Commander or *zongdu* 督都, was in itself a symptom of-, and a response to the military crisis outlined in the chapter three. It was a further development of the post of Grand Coordinator, *xunfu* 巡撫, which combined the authority to coordinate the affairs of the provincial commissions of the censorate, military and civil bureaucracy, as well as a direct line of communication to the throne and the power to impeach officials under his authority, the latter of which was acquired by concurrent appointment as a high-ranking censor. Grand Coordinators were envisaged as temporary positions of combined authority in a certain area (usually not exceeding one province, or an area which lay in the border regions of neighbouring provinces), which was given in case of a (military) emergency.<sup>385</sup> The Supreme

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<sup>382</sup> Steven B. Miles, “Imperial Discourse, Regional Elite, and Local Landscape on the South China Frontier, 1577-1722,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 12 (2008): 112.

<sup>383</sup> Chen Xianzhang 陳獻章, *Chen Xianzhang ji* 陳獻章集, Volume 2 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 950.

<sup>384</sup> Faure, “The Yao Wars in the Mid-Ming,” 182.

<sup>385</sup> Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China, Volume 1* (Taipei: Southern Materials Center, Inc., 1985), 255.



Commanders could exercise the same authority over an area of up to five provinces. These new offices thus temporarily overruled the checks and balances maintained through a deliberate fragmentation of authority instituted by the founding emperor, an override which was increasingly necessary as demographic and socio-economic changes started to outstrip the ability of the old institutions to keep a lid on local disturbances. The size of these disturbances would increasingly take a supra regional form as the mid-Ming unfolded. It is therefore not surprising that the institutions of Supreme Commander and Grand Coordinator appeared more frequently after about 1450,<sup>386</sup> providing officials the opportunity to more effectively devise and implement a truly integrated civil-military approach to governance.

It also provided ambitious activist Neo-Confucian reformers like Chen Xianzhang a convenient link to influence policy and the implementation of their Neo-Confucian ideas on a large scale, provided they were able to establish productive ties with a Grand Coordinator or a Supreme Commander. Chen Xianzhang, unlike Wang Yangming, was not a serving official or military leader, but according to Faure he “[...] taught a philosophy of the mind as well as practical administration [...]”.<sup>387</sup> As we have seen above, this practical angle of his studies included military aspects as well, although his surviving writings do not provide any further information in this direction. Nor is it possible on the basis of these writings to ascertain his attitude towards the *Seven Military Classics* or knight-errantry.<sup>388</sup> Chen counted amongst his disciples many influential locals, including subordinates of the Supreme Commander, with whom he devised governance solutions with a strong Neo-Confucian agenda of moral improvement. This group included Guangxi province’s Tao Lu 陶魯 (1434-1498), a civil bureaucrat with considerable military accomplishments as well, and Jiangxi province’s Ding Ji 丁積 (fl. 1478), a civil bureaucrat with a tax reformist agenda. Together they formulated policies aimed at culturally assimilating the Yao. Tao Lu’s military contribution was the recruitment and training of a militia outside of the *weisuo*, which was considered an innovation in that area at that time. Yet, he considered the civil policy of assimilation the ultimate goal. This entailed, first, the registration of Yao households in the *lijia*-system, which, thanks to Ding Ji, had shed its burdensome manual labour corvee obligations

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<sup>386</sup> Jun Fang, *China’s Second Capital – Nanjing Under the Ming* (London: Routledge, 2014), 71-74.

<sup>387</sup> Faure, “The Yao Wars in the Mid-Ming,” 171.

<sup>388</sup> Chen also endeavoured to add archery practice to the regimen of learning he subjected his disciples, including Zhan Ruoshui, to. He was warned, though, that it might interpreted by the government as a preparation for eventual rebellion. See: Huang P’ei and Julia Ching, “CH’EN Hsien-chang,” in *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368-1644, Part 1*, edited by L.C. Goodrich and Chao-ying Fang (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 154.

(which were often abused by arbitrary local officials) in exchange for a more attractive regularized payment in cash. Furthermore, Chen and Ding wrote a popularized version of Zhu Xi's ritual family instructions, which taught the proper execution of weddings, burials, and sacrificing, amongst other things.<sup>389</sup> Thus cultural assimilation and the spread of Neo-Confucian prescriptions rode on the back of civil-military governance solutions inspired by its activist "philosophy of the mind"-tendencies.

Chen Xianzhang's activities surrounding the Yao disturbances thus showed many of the hallmarks that would come to characterize Wang Yangming's campaigns, and, as I will argue, the campaigns Qi Jiguang was part of later. Wang Yangming's last campaign even took place in the same area in Guangxi Chen Xianzhang had been involved in half a century earlier, and Wang was politically supported by Chen's disciples during incidences of strife within the bureaucracy.<sup>390</sup> Nor did the entanglements stop there. The above alluded to similarities between Chen and Wang's Yao campaigns included the exercise of great authority by a Grand Coordinator (or Supreme Commander) in combination with a commitment to a Neo-Confucian activist philosophy of the mind, the exchange of ideas in the realm of military and civil governance solutions, cooperation between officials and literati *ex officio*, the raising of militia commanded by officials with combined civil and military competences, the reform of the taxation system, an ideological inclusivity marked by an openness towards the possibility of cultural assimilation of ethnic minorities, and a commitment to the moral improvement of the population. It seems to have been Wang Yangming's military acumen that ensured his being recommended to the military leadership of the four campaigns. Because of his acquaintance with the then Minister of War Wang Qiong 王瓊 (1459-1532), who was convinced of Wang Yangming's talents as an official, he was recommended and appointed to lead these campaigns as Grand Coordinator or Supreme Commander.<sup>391</sup> Therefore, like his predecessor working with Chen Baisha in Guangxi, he benefitted from the wide civil, military, and censorial powers this institution granted him. Like Qi Jiguang would later, Wang had attracted the attention of the metropolitan bureaucracy by

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<sup>389</sup> David Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2007), 95-98.

<sup>390</sup> Faure, "The Yao Wars in the Mid-Ming," 182. Faure also notes (p. 178) that a third campaign in 1537 was led by Guangdong native Weng Wanda 翁萬達 (1498-1552), who also happened to be a follower of Wang Yangming. See: Ma Chor-kin 馬楚堅, "Weng Wanda shengping yu sixiang (1498-1552)" 翁萬達生平與思想 (1498-1552) (PhD Diss., University of Hong Kong, 1998), 45-55.

<sup>391</sup> Israel, "On the Margins of the Grand Unity," 37.

composing a memorial suggesting policies dealing with the nomadic threat from the northern steppe.<sup>392</sup> This memorial was written before his conversion to Neo-Confucianism and from it we can glean his early military thought. An additional source for this early phase of his thought is his commentary on the *Seven Military Classics*, which also predates his renewed interest in Neo-Confucian learning. Modern scholars Fan Zhongyi, Sumner Twiss, and Jonathan Chan studied these writings, and especially the latter two came to the conclusion that Wang's ideas seem to have been heavily influenced by *Sunzi's Art of War*, whilst George Israel claims some elements of the *Wuzi* and the *Weiliaozi* also played a part.<sup>393</sup> Below I will summarize the most important findings of these modern scholars, and also add the ideas Wang later articulated in his memorials dealing with his campaigns. Important to note is that in his discussions of strictly military matters, Wang did not make an explicit link between these affairs and his brand of Neo-Confucianism, although his convictions could have shaped the type of military policies he preferred. A key contribution of Qi Jiguang would be his explicit application of Neo-Confucian thought in the context of the military ideas outlined in his manuals, as we shall see in chapter ten.

## Recruitment

Wang Yangming usually resolved to raise his own army of village militia troops because of the limitations of the hereditary *weisuo* garrisons. In the southern areas, the *weisuo* troops were already greatly diminished in actual strength and were furthermore mostly tasked with coastal defence duties and were therefore not free to be culled from their assigned garrisons to attend to tasks further inland. Compared to their involvement in the Deng Maoqi rebellion in the century before, Wang Yangming did not find the hereditary *weisuo* military units useful enough to rely on for his purposes. Already by his time it was also common to mobilize aboriginal troops from other provinces, but they were considered by Wang Yangming to be too slow to be put into action effectively. Village militias had found widespread use from the Hongzhi 弘治 (r. 1487-1505) Emperor's reign onwards, but Wang judged them too fickle to be a reliable instrument aiding in the suppression of rebellions. Wang wanted to raise and train a militia elite force and his need for

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<sup>392</sup> Idem, 45, 48-49.

<sup>393</sup> Fan, "Wang Shouren de junshi sixiang," 228; Israel, "On the Margins of the Grand Unity," 48-49, 92, 196; Sumner B. Twiss and Jonathan K.L. Chan, "Wang Yang-ming's Ethics of War," in *Chinese Just War Ethics: Origin, Development, and Dissent* (London: Routledge, 2015), 154.

quality recruits formed another reason he would rather not use the hereditary garrison troops, whose pre-selected nature made severely restrained Wang's prospects of fielding an army of high quality crack troops. According to Chinese military historian Fan Zhongyi, the primacy of the process of recruitment was thus from the first a priority within the military thought of Wang Yangming. During his first campaign, for example, he requested the officials of each county (*xian* 縣) in his area of operations to select between four- to six hundred of their courageous men under thirty who were also versed in martial arts.<sup>394</sup> It is unfortunately impossible to gain precise statistics or even rough estimates of the average population per county in the south of the empire, because it was measured in the big clusters of households, with the number of households potentially varying between 55 and 164.<sup>395</sup> However, even with a conservative estimate of a total Ming population of around 50 million with most of them living in the southern provinces, it becomes clear that even smaller counties probably contained several thousands of subjects, even if we are only counting the officially registered ones. According to James Tong, in 1584 a medium-sized county could contain 30,000 inhabitants, thus these recruitment numbers, even allowing for a significant population growth between the beginning of the sixteenth century and 1584, would mean Wang Yangming intended to skim the military labour pool for the cream of the crop of martial talent in order to use them as his personal model troops.<sup>396</sup>

In institutional terms, Wang relied heavily on the censorial branch of the provincial governments to facilitate his recruitment drive, largely bypassing the faltering hereditary military. When it came to recruiting an army, he used his wide-ranging powers and ordered a censorial institution called the Military Defense Circuit, *bingbei dao* 兵備道, of which most provinces had multiple on prefectural or multi-prefectural level, to conscript soldiers and put hereditary military *and* civil officials deemed capable in charge of them. The existence of this institution, staffed by provincial censorial officials, was probably a post-1450 development, which was symptomatic period for civil bureaucratic and, especially, censorial intrusion into military affairs.<sup>397</sup> This intrusion was initiated on the northern frontier, but had penetrated by this time to the empire's south as well. The conscription for Wang Yangming's army probably aimed for militia, local "police" personnel attached to the censorial commissions and village men known for their strength,

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<sup>394</sup> Fan, "Wang Shouren de junshi sixiang," 225; Israel, "On the Margins of the Grand Unity," 58-61.

<sup>395</sup> Tong, *Disorder under Heaven*, 32.

<sup>396</sup> Idem, 3.

<sup>397</sup> Filippiak, *Krieg, Staat und Militär in der Ming-Zeit*, 131-231.

bravery and general martial potential.<sup>398</sup> Eventually the force he would use in the south during all his campaigns would mostly consist of soldiers drawn from all groups of the civilian population mentioned above, including militia, “police” and everyone possessing and willing to wield martial abilities in the service of the empire. Added to these were some *weisuo* soldiers drawn from their garrisons in the region of operations and, significantly, “reformed subjects”, *xinmin* 新民, who were former bandits had been pacified and previously been offered amnesty. Especially this last group seems to have been rather numerous.<sup>399</sup> The common denominator binding them all together was the fact that they were recruited within the region itself. Another change was the devolution of authority for recruitment and command downward to provincial level and below, and its apparent transfer away from the *wu*-branch of government. Gone were the days that the Ministry of War designated a metropolitan-level hereditary military officer to command a number of *weisuo* soldiers gathered together for the occasion to quell provincial or multi-provincial unrest. Instead, the Ministry of War appointed a civil Grand Coordinator who ordered the censorial sub-provincial Military Defense Circuits to recruit military forces from a variety of sources from within their regions of jurisdiction and also select and appoint commanders from both *weisuo* garrisons and the civilian bureaucracy in the area.<sup>400</sup> It is also not entirely clear if the *weisuo* commanders commanded soldiers in their original *weisuo* units, or whether these original units were mere recruitment pools for new to-be-formed units. The overall picture that emerges is an increasing marginalization of the role of hereditary officers in suppression of unrest, the commanding of forces on the battlefield (a function now shared with *wen* officials) and a related diminishment of the number of hereditary military forces actually deployed in the course of the campaign in relation to forces of a different origin. Still, it could have been worse in the case of the deployment of aboriginal troops from outside the province who would have likely brought their own commanders. This latter scenario seems to have been the only other option, which Wang Yangming wanted to avoid for reasons of speed, or lack thereof. It is thus clear that Wang had to enlarge the scope of the military labour market to include sections of the population hitherto not tapped into, a symptom of the breakdown of the original military institutions in the southern part of the empire.

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<sup>398</sup> Israel, “On the Margins of the Grand Unity”, 61.

<sup>399</sup> Idem, 93, 109.

<sup>400</sup> Idem, 245. These included *wen* officials from provincial, prefectural and county-levels of the administration, as well as *wu* officials from the provincial commissions and local *weisuo* units.

An overall related goal of these recruitment policies was to reduce the burden of expenses on the local population by hiring a smaller number of elite troops in theatre, instead of bringing in more expensive troops from outside the afflicted area. Keeping the number smaller also meant little damage was done to local agriculture. This was a policy Wang had already articulated in his earlier memorial dealing with the northern frontier, and which is congruent with Sunzian and Confucian ideas.<sup>401</sup>

## **Training**

The primacy accorded to practical training was another cornerstone reflected in Wang's ideas of raising a capable militia. According to Wang, the regular hereditary troops had for a long time not implemented proper training and drilling, which was essential in his view to make a unit operate as one body whenever orders were given. Moreover, the training that was done was all style over substance. Instead, men who were already had similar talents and abilities were supposed to be organized in units together, in order to make the best use of them. Therefore, this reemphasis on drilling and practical training was to be preceded by a selection process during which every recruit's physical traits and skills would lead to a pairing with the most suitable choice of weapon.<sup>402</sup> The importance of training had been articulated in military classics like the *Wuzi* and *Weiliaozi*, for reasons of instilling cohesion in the troops and ensuring battlefield effectiveness.<sup>403</sup> The criticisms directed at Ming practices and the proposed solutions, however, were specific to Wang Yangming.

## **Military Leadership**

Wang also proposed in his first memorial a series of measures meant to ensure the steady supply of military leadership talent in times of peace, including ideas on how to raise moral excellence of the officer corps. These measures were meant as a solution for his perceived deficiencies of the military examinations outlines above. His proposed solution was to recruit from amongst the

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<sup>401</sup> Twiss and Chan, "Wang Yang-ming's Ethics of War," 154-155, 161.

<sup>402</sup> Fan, "Wang Shouren de junshi sixiang," 226.

<sup>403</sup> Sawyer, *The Seven Military Classics*, 203-204, 235.

hereditary officers and literati who had engaged in bookish learning of the military arts, and teach both groups fighting techniques as well as military strategy and leadership. Thus, he required these men to be both versed in *wen* and *wu*, which in this context meant physical and literary accomplishments. In other words, Wang sought to unite the bookish armchair literatus-cum-general with the illiterate (but martially accomplished) hereditary military men and forge a pool of talent from them which had the advantages of both and the shortcomings of neither. This would have closed the gap between theory and praxis which had come to exist by the Song dynasty (and had persisted into the Ming). Significant, in my view, is that Wang did not advocate the military officers to become well-versed in the Neo-Confucian *Four Books*, he only mentions the classics in his memorial. It would therefore be premature to conclude that Wang at this early stage of his career advocated to inculcate Neo-Confucianism in the officers, and at most prescribed a classicist content.<sup>404</sup>

Two other aspects that were important to Wang Yangming in this respect concerned the relationship of the military officers to the civil authority they were serving and were probably interrelated in Wang's mind. First of all, he advocated that an officer's loyalty, *zhong* 忠, was more important than his skillset and abilities. Without this loyalty, an officer, no matter how capable otherwise, would first choose to defend his own life and the security of his family instead of risking his neck for the ruler. With this emphasis on loyal military leadership, Wang's second point becomes feasible. This point concerns the overhaul of the balance of authority between military and civil branches of government. As we have seen, by the sixteenth century various groups had gained control of various parts of the military administration. Eunuchs served as the eyes and ears of the emperor himself, civil bureaucrats controlled logistics, promotion and demotion, censors could supervise and meet out punishments and certain civil bureaucrats even raised their own armies and took command in the field themselves. This was partly the result of the negligence of the hereditary officers themselves; as their status and influence in the imperial project diminished after the end of the pro-active military policies of the Yongle emperor, they were often more interested in carving out landed estates for themselves in lieu of keeping the strength and integrity of the formations under their control intact. As we have seen, this resulted in a particularly institutionally restricted kind of officer corps, who had hardly any authority even when

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<sup>404</sup> Chang, *Wang Shou-jen as a Statesman*, 172; Twiss and Chan, "Wang Yang-ming's Ethics of War," 154.

commanding soldiers in the field. Wang wanted to change this situation. In his view, successful leadership could only follow non-interference from other sources of government authority and unified power and freedom of action in the hands of the officers. In short, officers should no longer be “held back at the elbow” *chezhou* 掣肘, or impeded by other government branches.<sup>405</sup> This was a privilege Wang also requested for himself when he was in command of an operation.<sup>406</sup> The whole system of punishments and rewards also needed to be rebalanced: the court should attach more value to experienced and courageous officers and punish their minor mistakes more lightly.<sup>407</sup>

As we have seen in the first chapter, the stress on a well-educated and sophisticated officer corps, which was allowed to operate with autonomous authority once on the battlefield, was articulated in the military classics. This desire can be assumed to have acquired extra poignancy during the mid-Ming and its erosion of hereditary military authority.

### **Military Operations and the Military Intelligence Staff**

During his military campaigns Wang also took pains to organize a private *ad hoc* staff tasked with broad concerns pertaining to military operations and military intelligence. These were sought amongst the local hereditary military officers and other locals who were respected, like venerable elders. These men were meant to supply advice and intelligence on the bandits, local geography, and strategy. In addition, they were to act as go-betweens betwixt Wang and local society.<sup>408</sup> This staff allowed Wang to employ people with specific knowledge and skillsets, whilst circumventing the regular bureaucracy.

### **Deception**

This stratagem was heavily indebted to Wang’s early reading of *Sunzi’s Art of War*. Sunzian stratagems would serve him well during his campaigns. A famous example dated from the

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<sup>405</sup> Israel, “On the Margins of the Grand Unity,” 163, 168-169; Twiss and Chan, “Wang Yang-ming’s Ethics of War,” 227.

<sup>406</sup> Wang Shouren 王守仁, *Wang Yangming quanji* 王陽明全集, Volume 2 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992), 315.

<sup>407</sup> Fan, “Wang Shouren de junshi sixiang”, 227.

<sup>408</sup> Twiss and Chan, “Wang Yang-ming’s Ethics of War,” 161-162.



campaign against the usurping prince of Ning. Wang deliberately sent out messengers to be captured by the opposing forces, carrying falsified messages which were meant to give the impression the imperial loyalists were already poised to invade the prince's heartland. This made the prince cautious in moving his forces, buying Wang precious time to build up his own forces. In his commentary on the military classics Wang defended Sunzian deception as not amounting to the morally reprehensible act of lying, but rather as preventing the enemy from seeing clearly his employed strategy.<sup>409</sup> The case of his deception employed against the Prince of Ning seems hard to justify on these grounds, however. Perhaps at this time he could invoke his doctrine of moral subjectivity based on *liangzhi*, a doctrine he had not developed yet at the time he wrote his commentary on the military classics.

### Rewards, Punishments, and Discipline

Wang emphasized the use of rewards and punishments to ensure proper discipline and order within the ranks, a theme repeatedly iterated in the military classics.<sup>410</sup> Israel traces Wang's ideas in this regard specifically back to the *Wuzi* and *Weiliaozi*. In particular, Wang wanted his soldiers to fear his punishments more than the enemy.<sup>411</sup> Wang did add his own admonition that these rewards and punishments had to be implemented promptly and without delay in order to be effective. A reward bestowed after too much time had passed would not be felt as a reward anymore, and a similar situation held true in the case of punishments. The punishments themselves were quite severe. In the case of retreating or disobeying orders, the hapless soldier would immediately lose his head. Wang Yangming's concern with pacification and endeavoring to spare the civilian population the burdens of military disruptions, the same severe punishment was meted out to those soldiers who preyed on the commoners and caused disruptions in the local social fabric. Again, this was a concern that could be found in Confucianism and *Sunzi's Art of War*. Wang also advocated that a commander should not shrink back from punishing those intimately related to him, in order to make his subordinates guard against infractions. Another concern for Wang, which we can relate more directly to the specific mid-Ming context of the campaigns, was stopping

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<sup>409</sup> Idem, 162-163.

<sup>410</sup> See for example: Sawyer, *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*, 249, 263.

<sup>411</sup> Israel, "On the Margins of the Grand Unity," 92, 196.

officers from pocketing the pay meant for the soldiers. Severe punishments for these infractions were instituted as well. Wang also meant to enforce a few collective punishments. If one unit of 50 men lost in battle, one of its two constituent squads would lose their heads over it.<sup>412</sup>

## Morale and Courage

In many of the military classics, especially the *Wuzi* and *Weiliaozi* mentioned above, moral and courage are mostly seen as an outcome of a balance between the allegiance nourished by rewards and the fear engendered by punishments. In this regard Israel nevertheless makes a sweeping claim which is not backed up by the sources. Israel seems to imply that Wang thought the innately good moral nature of the heart-mind, or *xin*, would have a significant impact on the morale and courage of the soldiers:

For Wang, should the cause be both righteous and a matter of life and death for the emperor and the country, then individuals should rise to the occasion uncoerced, or at least with minimal coercion. This was simply the natural response of people's righteous sentiments (*yi li zhi xin*) rising in communal solidarity in the face of an immanent [sic] threat to the whole, not in the modern sense of the nation, but rather in the very Confucian sense of that fabric of personally meaningful social order most exemplified through devotion to one's ruler. On the other hand, should the enemy's cause be wrong or bad, and driven by material or selfish interests (*gong li zhi xin*) then it would be easy to snatch away their fighting spirit.<sup>413</sup>

It is certainly possible that Wang thought along these lines, but in his extant writings I could not find a discussion which featured this connection between moral sentiments and military action. I shall argue in chapter ten that Qi addressed exactly this moral dimension of warfare, and connected Wang's *xinxue* with the problematic surrounding the inculcation of courage in the troops.

## Organization

Wang's military thought elevated troop organization to a level of high importance. This was first of all a game of numbers. The building blocks of the army were units of 25 soldiers, designated

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<sup>412</sup> Fan, "Wang Shouren de junshi sixiang", 227-228; Twiss and Chan, "Wang Yang-ming's Ethics of War," 164.

<sup>413</sup> Israel, "On the Margins of the Grand Unity," 197.

*wu* 伍, which can be translated as “squad”. Using this basic building block, the units would grow progressively larger through stages of 50, 200, 400, 1200 and 2400 men. Each of these divisions was to be led by an officer progressively higher in rank, supported by assistant commanders in the larger formations. In this organizational scheme, Wang differed markedly from the established practice of the old hereditary *weisuo*. These took a unit of ten plus one leader as the basic building block, and then proceeded through stages of 55 (plus a commander), 112 (commander already included), 1120 (commander already included) and 5600. According to Fan Zhongyi, the goal of Wang’s innovation was to make sure the different army units connected well with each other and would act in battle similar to limbs belonging to the same physical body and the different ranks within the hierarchy would be entrusted with each other. What Fan does not make clear, however, is in which way a simple shifting of the numbers could have helped Wang accomplish these two goals. In comparison with the old *weisuo* organizational structure, Wang’s scheme did have more intermediate units below a thousand men strong, which would have meant more officers guiding fewer men in battle. I argue this had the benefit of bestowing better organizational flexibility and command oversight in the heat of battle. Another feature of this organizational scheme was its utilization of a system of official tokens - *fu* 符 (or tallies) granted to the officers with which they could identify the soldiers in their units as genuine members of the military hierarchy when they called up for duty. The officers of every subsequent organizational layer would receive one of these *fu*. In case the order was given for a given unit to move, these tokens were checked against a duplicate of these tokens in the office of Wang Yangming himself. In this way, it was thought it would be possible to be on guard against traitors and fake soldiers.<sup>414</sup> Wang’s writings are not entirely clear on how this could help to weed out these traitors. His following sentence seems to shed most light on its intended function at the lowest *wu*-level of organization:

After the organization and selection has been settled, every five men are given a card [*pai* 牌] on which the 25 names and surnames of the *wu* are together fully listed, in order to make them associate and familiarize [with each other]. We call this the *wu*-token.

编选既定，仍每五人给一牌，备列同伍二十五人姓名，使之连络习熟，谓之伍符。<sup>415</sup>

<sup>414</sup> Chang, *Wang Shou-jen as a Statesman*, 190; Fan, “Wang Shouren de junshi sixiang”, 226; Israel, “On the Margins of the Grand Unity,” 93.

<sup>415</sup> Wang Shouren 王守仁, *Wang Yangming quanji* 王陽明全集, Volume 1 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992), 541.

These tallies thus took the shape of some kind of cards which could be written on. It seems that Wang wanted both the men within a given unit as well as the command hierarchy one level up and the highest commanding authority to have knowledge of the men serving in that exact unit. Instead of giving each squad of 25 men one tally, every five men received one with the names of the entire *wu* listed on it. That the men were expected to become familiar with one and another probably means their close association was intended to be a deterrent against infiltration.

The inspiration for this system seems to have come from the *Weiliaozi*:

The orders for binding the squads say: “Five men form a squad, share one tally and receive it from the office of the commanding official. The squads’ losses or gains conform to it. If the squad gains and does not lose, there are rewards. If the squad loses without gaining, the members will be killed and the families injured.

東伍之令曰：五人為伍，共一符，收於將吏之所，亡伍而得伍當之。得伍而不亡有賞，亡伍不得伍，身死家殘。<sup>416</sup>

In the *Weiliaozi* this system is explicitly coupled with a regimen of collective rewards and punishments, a connection Wang does not make in his writings. Nevertheless, Wang seems to have been solely responsible for reviving these ideas during the Ming dynasty, as I could find no antecedents before Wang’s time. The official dynastic history of the Ming provides no evidence of a similar system being utilized before the early sixteenth century, and neither does the *Da Ming Lü* 大明律 (*Laws of the Great Ming*), which was the dynasty’s law code compiled at the end of the fourteenth century, which included rules and regulations for military personnel as well.<sup>417</sup> A final source I consulted is the *Huang Ming jingshi wenbian* 皇明經世文編 (*Collected Statecraft Writings of the Imperial Ming*), which was edited in 1638 by Chen Zilong 陳子龍 (1608-1647).<sup>418</sup> This was the largest compilation of statecraft writings edited during the Ming, and it appeared near the end of the dynasty. Included were the ideas of around 400 officials serving the empire from its earliest beginnings until the late Ming times during which it was compiled. Their ideas

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<sup>416</sup> *Weiliaozi* 尉繚子(CSCS), 43.

<sup>417</sup> Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 546.

<sup>418</sup> *Da Ming lü* 大明律, edited by Liu Weiqian 劉惟謙 et al (XXSKQS); *Huang Ming jingshi wen bian* 皇明經世文編, 8 vols, edited by Chen Zilong 陳子龍 et al (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002); *Mingshi* 明史, edited by Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 et al (SKQS).

were put in chronological and thematic order, and military affairs have a significant presence among them.<sup>419</sup> Although not exhaustive, these sources can be assumed to have compiled and recorded the most influential ideas concerning army recruitment and organization, and Wang's ideas certainly seem to have blazed a new trail in this area. They are significantly more sophisticated than the ideas of civil official Sun Ru 孫孺 (dates unknown), who - in the context of the empire's south - had proposed in 1494 to make service in militia a part of the corvée obligations of civil households. Concerning recruitment and registration he had the following ideas: "Select those who are able-bodies of age and strength, record their age and description in the registration book and leave it with the officials." 選年力精壯者以充籍其年貌在官.<sup>420</sup>

I posit that the reason this system worked was because Wang Yangming recruited and organized men from the same geographical areas in corresponding units. Therefore, considering the fact that many of these were selected from men with pre-existing martial proclivities and thus presumably belonging to a common military labour market, many can be assumed to already have been acquainted with one and another. This also helps put into context Wang's dictum that the sentiments between officers and men would need to resemble that of elders and juniors of the same family.<sup>421</sup> I posit that the transplantation of the social structure and values from civilian life to the military realm should have been facilitated under these conditions. As I will argue in chapter ten, Qi Jiguang would further build on these principles and elaborate them.

## Financing

The question of how Wang Yangming financed his campaigns has unfortunately received little attention, and therefore not much is known about it. According to Twiss and Chan, Wang had no qualms about using the resources belonging to those groups he had deemed irredeemable in their evils. Therefore, a certain amount of plunder and pillage was admissible under certain conditions. His rationalization for this behaviour was that these resources were probably illegally exacted from the good people in the first place, and that using them prevented burdening these same good people

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<sup>419</sup> William Stewart Atwell, "Ch'en Tzu-lung (1608-1647): A Scholar-Official of the Late Ming Dynasty" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1974), 81-82.

<sup>420</sup> *Ming shilu* 明實錄, volume 30 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiu yuan lishi yuyan yanjiu suo, 1966), 1702, via: Filipiak "Saving Lives", 158.

<sup>421</sup> Fan, "Wang Shouren de junshi sixiang", 226; Israel, "On the Margins of the Grand Unity," 93.

further.<sup>422</sup> During the first campaign, the central imperial and concerned provincial treasuries were unable to cover the necessary expenses. Therefore, Wang resorted to levying salt tax on merchants from Guangdong, who were allowed to import salt to the areas affected by banditry. He also resorted to centralizing the income from customs tax levied on goods traded between the provinces under his purview, in the process attempting to weed out corruption by reducing the customs locations and streamlining the procedures.<sup>423</sup>

Based on this sparse information, I have to cautiously conclude that during Wang's campaigns the old arrangements described in chapter three were no longer sufficient to defray the costs of military operations. In line with Song dynasty-practices, Wang relied more on taxation on commercial goods in lieu of the land tax, in addition to plundering the enemy.

### Civil Governance

Both during and after a given campaign, Wang Yangming tried to implement a number of civil governance solutions applied, as we have seen, according to his estimation of the level of civilization of the affected population. Wang employed two measures during his campaigns in areas he already deemed sufficiently civilized, which I will detail below.

The first was the implementation of a mutual security and surveillance system imposed on the civilians, the so-called *baojia* 保甲 system, which Wang called the *shi jia pai fa* 十家牌法 ("ten-family card-method"). This was a method originally championed by the statesman Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086) during the Northern Song. It entailed the division of the population in a certain area in groups of ten families, the members of which would have their names and other general characteristics recorded on a card, or *pai* 牌 (note the similarity with Wang's army recruitment and organizational system), which would then circulate amongst these families in turn. They would bear responsibility for making sure that no new faces would appear in their group of ten families. In case members were missing, or new faces had appeared, it was their duty to report it to an official. It was thus utilized by Wang Yangming to weed out bandit infiltrators from a certain area affected by disorder. In case of transgressions, the whole group would be collectively punished. In addition, Wang prescribed moral persuasion to induce good behaviour. The system

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<sup>422</sup> Twiss and Chan, "Wang Yang-ming's Ethics of War," 166-167.

<sup>423</sup> Chang, *Wang Shou-jen as a Statesman*, 141-149.

had become so important by the end of the dynasty that it had spread over half of the empire. Despite other Ming officials experimenting with it before Wang, it seems to have taken off as a regular measure starting in his own period of activity.<sup>424</sup>

The second measure was the community covenant (*xiangyue* 鄉約), a Neo-Confucian approach towards organizing sub-bureaucratic government by and for a community of people themselves, including dispute mediation and resolution, defence and the maintenance of the proper hierarchical social order.<sup>425</sup> It had been popularized by Zhu Xi himself, but it was only widely implemented first during the Ming dynasty. Zhu's aims were as follows:

Through systematic and regular mutual exhortation and observation, common ritual, and organized charity, supported by written registers of membership and the recording of good and bad deeds, a moral and social order reminiscent of the classics but missing in Chu's own time was to be achieved.<sup>426</sup>

Again, Wang was not the first to implement it during the Ming, but the measure really seems to have taken off during and after his time as an official and his version of the *xiangyue* would become one of the most influential during mid-sixteenth century. Moreover, Zhan Ruoshui was also known to have been involved in the foundation of one. An important purpose of a *xiangyue*, thus, was to bind a community of people together with a covenant of rules aimed to improve moral behaviour. Wang intended the *xiangyue* to be built upon his *shi jia pai fa* and, reminiscent of Chen Xianzhang's to spread Neo-Confucian moral behaviour on the back of military activity, to aid in his "civilizing mission".<sup>427</sup> In the words of Kandice Hauf: "Wang's covenant was meant to regulate many facets of life, including settling of disputes, educating people about proper marriage and funeral customs, and mutual aid, especially in helping to pay for funerals and weddings."<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> Israel, "On the Margins of the Grand Unity", 62-65.

<sup>425</sup> Hauf, "The Jiangyou Group," 253.

<sup>426</sup> Conrad Schirokauer and Robert P. Hymes, "Introduction," in *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China*, edited by Robert P. Hymes and Conrad Schirokauer (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1993), 23.

<sup>427</sup> George Israel uses the metaphor of the "civilizing mission" for Wang's aims, see: Israel, "On the Margins of the Grand Unity", 47. Yonghua Liu, "The World of Rituals: Masters of Ceremonies (*Lisheng*), Ancestral Cults, Community Compacts, and Local Temples in Late Imperial Sibao, Fujian," (PhD diss., McGill University, 2003), 11-15, 292-293; Schirokauer and Hymes, "Introduction," 22-23.

<sup>428</sup> Kandice Hauf, "The Community Covenant in Sixteenth Century Ji'an Prefecture, Jiangxi," *Late Imperial China* 17.2 (1996): 10.

After the campaigns were over these measures were meant to stay in effect. In the aftermath Wang would also recommend reorganizing the regular governance of the affected areas according to his assessment of their level of civilization. After his first campaign, for example, he judged the ethnic tensions between aboriginals and Han to mask socio-economic tensions between different groups. Israel speculates that Wang knew that many Han simply fled their registered status within the old *lijia*-system and appropriated an aboriginal label with all the exemptions from tax and corvée services that entailed. In this case Wang advocated creating new counties, registering the populations as regular subjects, and extending regular bureaucracy and governance. In the case of his third campaign, Wang judged the Yao not ready for regular governance and advocated a policy of gradual assimilation, which entailed leaving the old indirect forms of governance through aboriginal chiefs intact. He did try to intersperse the Yao with more regular Han settlers, giving the area a broader taxable base of the government and opening up vistas for assimilation. Next to that, he suggested providing the Yao with Confucian schools in order to spread knowledge of proper rituals.<sup>429</sup>

### **The Legacy of Wang's Military Praxis**

Wang Yangming offered a comprehensive system of civil and military measures to solve the crises of southern governance – socio-economic pressures, ethnic tensions, lack of military leadership and military labour, financial shortages, ideological draught – in the early sixteenth century. In terms of the balance of *wen* and *wu*, Wang saw the latter as a measure of last resort, as was usual within Confucianism. In line with his own philosophy, he made the resorting to *wu* depend entirely on his perception of the moral qualities of his enemies, the extent to which their selfish natures irredeemably clouded the innate goodness in their heart-minds. He coupled his military campaigns with a “civilizing mission” to morally reform the stricken regions, which made his efforts transcend those of other civil officials and which put him in a tradition together with Chen Xianzhang. Wang's example further shows that inherent structural deficiencies, especially in the empire's sparsely garrisoned south increasingly subjected to socio-economic and demographic dynamics, the need arose for officials with combined *wen* and *wu* talents. As will have become clear, many of his practical civil and military measures were not his own original invention.

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<sup>429</sup> Israel, “On the Margins of the Grand Unity”, 53-54, 69-70, 83-84, 118, 377-380.



However, his legacy would be insured for a number of reasons. First of all, he brought all these innovations together in one comprehensive program, and was able to implement them owing to his commissions as Grand Coordinator and Supreme Commander. Second, I suspect they enjoyed widespread fame because of the simultaneous spread and fame of Wang's Neo-Confucian reorientation. Third, Wang's followers, disciples, and admirers would contribute to the spreading of these ideas. The first collection of his writings, both philosophical, and concerning practical civil and military governance, already appeared in 1536 (and would see many later editions).<sup>430</sup> These were all conditions that did not apply to other officials and literati who were working on similar comprehensive solutions, including Chen Xianzhang.

Nor was the circulation of Wang's ideas restricted to the sixteenth century. A certain Chen Longzheng 陳龍正 (fl. early 17th century), aided by Fan Liangshu 樊良樞 (fl. early 17th century), compiled two treatises on Wang's *baojia*-system and his *xiangyue* community compact methods.<sup>431</sup> Another treaty on the *baojia*-system circulated under Wang's own name, as well as a treatise on his more specifically military solutions.<sup>432</sup> Both Chen and Fan lived in the seventeenth century during the waning years of the dynasty and apparently thought Wang's ideas still relevant for their present predicaments. In chapter nine I will turn to the influence of Wang's specifically military thought on later sixteenth and seventeenth-century developments.

More immediately, however, was the influence of Wang's ideas on the coming southern military crises of the mid-sixteenth century, the menace caused by the *Wokou*-pirates. A foreword, written by Wang Daokun 汪道昆 (1525-1593), to a collection of Wang Yangming's memorials, probably meant to aid prospective civil bureaucrats to be posted in the south, reflects the relevance of Wang's exemplary career for newcomers in the business of governing the empire:

Preface to the memorials of the supervisor's office of southern Gan [southern Jiangxi Province]

High ranking senior officials using memorials to the emperor by the famed of this present age would do no better than use those of Mr. Yangming. He possessed civil and military talents and his meritorious activities commenced in southern Gan. Nowadays, of those which are praised and put down in writing, the examples of southern Gan are in the majority. I once served Mr. Wu Yaoshan and we discussed the author's career. When

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<sup>430</sup> Wing-tsit Chan, "WANG Shou-jen," in *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368-1644, Part 2*, edited by L.C. Goodrich and Chao-ying Fang (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 1416.

<sup>431</sup> Xu Baolin 许保林, *Zhongguo bingshu zhijian lu* 中国兵书只见录 (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1988), 143.

<sup>432</sup> Xu, *Zhongguo bingshu zhijian lu*, 142-143.

he engaged in official affairs, he used the minister [Wang Yangming] to explain himself in a letter to the emperor. His affairs were knowledgeably written down and clarified, like Mr. Yangming's.

南贛督府奏議序

公卿大夫以奏議名當世者，宜莫如陽明先生。先生具文武才，其勳業由南贛起。今所稱載，則在南贛者居多。余嘗侍堯山吳公，論作者之軌。公則以人臣敷奏，務深切著明，陽明先生是已。<sup>433</sup>

Wang Daokun was involved in the anti-piracy campaigns of the mid-sixteenth century as a civil official and against this backdrop became a friend of Qi Jiguang. We will meet him again in future chapters as a member of Qi's network of civil and military officials. For now, his example shows the importance Wang's example had for succeeding generations of officials, including Qi Jiguang.

I contend that it is no accident that different versions of *xinxue* have a similar tendency towards military activism. This tendency can already be traced in the life and career of Liu Jiuyuan and Liu Jiuling during the Southern Song, continuing with Chen Xianzhang and his followers, before reaching its apogee with Wang Yangming and his adherents. In all three cases, a *xinxue* philosophy was articulated, stimulating a shift away from book learning towards (martial) activism amidst failing military governance and socio-economic tensions in the empire's southern provinces. During the Ming it would become heavily associated with a "civilizing mission" among the empire's southern aboriginal populations as well. In the next three chapters I will show how widespread Wang Yangming's *xinxue* philosophy was under the civil and military official leadership of the southern anti-Wokou campaigns, whilst in chapter nine I will argue for the importance of Wang Yangming's practical military solutions among this same group as well. It will become clear that Wang's integrated civil-military solution had a more important legacy in the later sixteenth century than any of the other earlier Ming civil officials pioneering an integrated approach, proving the resonance of the synergy between Wang's governance praxis and moral philosophy among sixteenth-century literati and soldiers. This synergy was lacking amongst the pioneering civil officials preceding Wang, with the possible exception of Chen Xianzhang.

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<sup>433</sup> Wang Daokun 汪道昆. *Taihan ji* 太函集, Volume 1 (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 2004), 435-436.