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

Noordam, B.

Chapter 7 – *Xinxue* and Qi Jiguang

Thoughts at the mountain pass temple

The sagely government of the present day extends across Heaven and Earth,
this precipitous high hill for what reason is it still named a border pass?
During my journey I wear a scarf and blanket which feel thin because of the autumn cold,
under the moon the meditation clock enters my dreams.
Cold water winding in small streams make a sound by the ancient trees,
fine mists are broken by daybreak and completely clears the mountains.
All my life passing flocks of gulls ridiculed me,
a single piece of sole loyalty with greying hair on both temples.

關嶺寺有感

聖治於今天地寬，
危岑何事尚名關。
客中幙被因秋薄，
月下禪鐘入夢間。
寒水遶溪喧古樹，
晴煙破曙滿空山。
平生却遣羣鷗笑，
一片孤忠兩鬢斑。[480]

This poem, probably written by Qi Jiguang in his later life, perhaps during his time of service on the northern frontier from the late 1560s onwards, conveys an image of self-sacrifice and steadfast loyalty in the face of some ridicule. Yet, the reasons for lampooning a military officer for priding himself on loyal service would appear not to be difficult to find in the context of the mid-sixteenth century Ming empire. If not the low esteem accorded the military in many literati writings or the deployment of troops as a cheap manual labour force, then the unequal status vis-à-vis civil officials and the harsh punishments often meted out by the latter to military officials would seem to be important negative incentives to those aiming for a military career.[481] The reality of this state of affairs can be gauged from Grand Secretary Xu Jie's 徐階 (1503-1583), who served during the

[480] Qi Jiguang 戚繼光. *Zhizhitang ji* 止止堂集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 10.
[481] Lynn Struve, *The Southern Ming, 1644-1662* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1984), 2-6.

1550s and 1560s, correspondence with his fellow civil officials. Serving in the influential capacity of personal advisor to the Jiajing emperor, he advised his fellow civil bureaucrats to refrain from overly mistreating their military colleagues during the military crises which faced the empire in the middle of the century. As unearthed by John Dardess, Xu Jie discussed this state of affairs with the emperor:

> The ruler thought it impossible to give the generals complete freedom of action; but if they kept on being humiliated and abused, they couldn't cooperate in the dynasty's defense. […] it's now bookish ex-students who plan and have charge, and they don't produce good results. […] The regional commanders, military men, have regional executive authority, yet the prefectural, subprefectural, and county officials disrespect them. The assistant regional commanders and mobile corps commanders can issue orders, yet the grand coordinator will flog them and yell at them as they kneel, which is too demeaning.[482]

Xu Jie's analysis of the nature of civil-military relations clearly shows the limited authority military officials enjoyed, as well as the intrusions of scholars in their affairs. In addition to this institutionalized abuse of the military by their civil colleagues, the danger of impeachment by the censorial branch of government for reasons of tactical misconduct or deficient training and recruitment practices was another potentially lethal threat.[483]

In this atmosphere of civil dominance and ever-looming maltreatment and punishment, stressing one's loyalty was probably of prime importance for any career-minded officer, who otherwise must have felt quite vulnerable and alone in the line of service. Indeed, one of the most recent extensive treatments of Qi's career in a western scholarly language even carries the title *Ch'i Chi-kuang, the lonely general*. This chapter-length exposition by Ray Huang dating back to 1981, starts off by taking Qi's miserable fate after an exceptionally successful career as a rather poignant example of a more general misère surrounding military personnel trying to attend to their duties surrounded by a civil bureaucracy which operated according to principles often detrimental to the military profession. According to Ray Huang, the military by its nature had to rely on certain strategies none of which "[…] could have met with the approval of civil officials preoccupied with the dogmas of restraint and moderation, and whose sense of history, virtually timeless as it was,

[482] Dardess, *A Political Life in Ming China*, 74-75, 98-99.
[483] Charles O. Hucker, *The Censorial System of Ming China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1966), 75-81.

made them most reluctant to accept the merit of any drastic action based on physical force, which to them led only to temporary and localized gains."[484]

Yet, as I will argue in this chapter, Huang presents a too monolithic interpretation of the civil bureaucracy's attitudes towards their military colleagues and Qi Jiguang was also not as lonely as he fashions himself in his poem. The image of the solitary loyal subject serving the empire on its borders was after all something of an important trope in (late) Ming frontier poetry, one that was shared by many military and civil officials serving on the outer edges who took the time to convert their experiences into literary self-fashioning. The frontier was a place where martial and official identities almost naturally tended to coalesce, and as I will argue below, this was especially true during the sixteenth century. The frontier was the outer rim and at the same time a contested zone where empires almost always had to stake their claims, and military force was an essential part of any imperial toolbox.

The central contention of this chapter will be that Qi Jiguang built his career in exactly this setting of a contested frontier, and that he succeeded by building this career on personal ties with civil bureaucrats, in contradiction to his self-fashioned loneliness. Central to this building of personal ties was a shared ideological commitment, which accommodated affinity with martial identities and new notions of friendship. I will contend that Qi Jiguang managed to benefit from the appearance of the more inclusive Neo-Confucianism expounded by Wang Yangming and his followers, which decentered the literati as the sole bearers of cultured learning and opened the gates to participants from other social groups. The phenomenon of Wang Yangming's Neo-Confucianism leading to a lowering of social boundaries has, for example, already been noted in the context of merchant activities,[485] but it remains unexplored in the case of the empire's hereditary military. Furthermore, this Neo-Confucian reinterpretation partially appeared in the context of (military) activism during inter-ethnic frontier conflicts, which would provide an attractive exemplar for identity and conduct during the sixteenth century. Below I will first present the evidence that Qi Jiguang was indeed a follower of Wang Yangming's *xinxue*, and second, show how Qi used this *xinxue* to bridge *wen* and *wu* and legitimate the military profession against the

[484] Huang, *1587,* 156-157.
[485] See for example: Richard John Lufrano, *Honorable Merchants: Commerce and Self-Cultivation in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 32.

backdrop of Neo-Confucian moral philosophy. Moreover, I will highlight the significance of Qi's engagement with Hu Zongxian's *xinxue* network for the advancement of his career.

Qi Jiguang's Ideas

The activist reinterpretation of the ideology by Wang Yangming - achieving fame due in no small part to his successful functioning as a military commander in several campaigns - seems to have returned the military profession to the gaze of at least some of the scholarly elites and civil officials. Yet, little research has been done on the role of hereditary military officers within this *xinxue*-philosophy. Qi's engagement with Yangming learning is confirmed by the introduction written by Qi's son for his father's *nianpu*, a genre containing a chronological reckoning of Qi's life and career:

> His appearance was dignified, his bearing was clear and embellished, he had a prominent nose and a square chin, the sound of his voice carried far, his disposition was composed, he had magnanimity, and he had full abilities in both *wen* and *wu*. He untiringly turned his filial piety [to his family] into his faithfulness [to the dynasty]; he did not manage his family members' livelihoods and he happily engaged himself with the classics. He was especially good at poetry and writing classical Chinese prose; he was an indirect [i.e. he did not learn from Wang Yangming himself] follower of Yangming and he greatly expounded innate knowing of the good. In his heart, he was transparently clear as if he was pure and chaste, and he took command of the refined and the vulgar having a Confucian's spirit and appearance.
> 狀貌莊嚴，丰神朗潤，隆準方頤，聲語洪遠，資性沉毅，有大度，具文武全才，孜孜以孝爲忠;不治家人生業，喜事經書，尤長詩翰古文;私淑陽 明，大闡良知，胸中澄徹如冰壺秋月，坐鎮雅俗有儒者氣象. [486]

From this quote, we can see that Qi Jiguang, according to his son, was indeed a follower of Yangming's philosophy, possessed civil and martial talents, and behaved like a Confucian in his dealings with other people in the course of his official career.

As we have seen in the second chapter, the emerging Neo-Confucian movement of the southern Song distanced itself more and more from military affairs during the thirteenth century and its members focused mainly on philosophical pursuits. An important part of the reason may

[486] Qi Zuoguo 戚祚國, *Qi Shaobao nianpu* 戚少保年譜 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 1-2.

have been the need of the movement to cultivate a certain identity vis-a-vis contending interpretations of Confucianism in the empire. For them it was important to communicate to the world that the career path in service of the bureaucracy was subordinate to a quest for moral perfection and even sagehood. With the movement's path towards ideological hegemony, it probably also discouraged those genuinely inclined towards Confucianism to build a career on such pragmatic statecraft-derived pursuits as military merit. As Fang Cheng-hua has argued, in the course of late Song history those literati who had come to rely on military exploits as a gateway to a successful career found themselves increasingly struggling to reconcile this fact with the changing requirements of a legitimate Confucian identity.[487] This divergence between military action and literati lifestyles would persist in the Yuan dynasty, when Mongol rule mostly disenfranchised them from active participation. What had changed then by the sixteenth century that a hereditary officer like Qi Jiguang felt emboldened to dabble in *daoxue* and seek recognition as a sage, defying the opinion of one of the most influential Neo-Confucians of them all? It was Zhu Xi himself after all who had contended that the military officers should be discouraged from pursuing the path of sagely learning and instead focus on their martial calling in service of the polity. I posit that the explanation can be sought in the ideological openness and social flexibility of the budding Yangming movement and its reinterpretation of Neo-Confucianism.

To start with this advantage of social flexibility, I will elucidate Qi Jiguang's background and explain why *xinxue* could be attractive to a scion of a relatively poor hereditary military family growing up during the socio-economic conditions of the mid-Ming. The shift from hereditary military garrison supported by agricultural colonies to a system where officers turned into landowners with their own force of personal retainers from the mid-fifteenth century onwards has only been traced in detail for certain northern regions like Liaodong, a region where in any case officers enjoyed more freedom from government intervention and continuity in their posts because of the high-risk nature of the frontier. Qi Jiguang himself was born into the household of a hereditary military officer as well, and was chosen to follow in his father footsteps. His father's garrison was located in Dengzhou 登州 (modern-day Penglai 蓬萊), a city in the province of Shandong, an area which interestingly neither really belonged to the northern frontier, nor should be seen as part of the south-eastern coastal littoral. Shandong was an "in-between" province of

[487] Fang, "Junwu yu ruye de maodun," 36-51.

sorts and in the sixteenth century Qi Jiguang was drawn into the conflicts originating on both frontiers. In 1550 he was involved in the defence of Beijing against a Mongol raid launched by Altan Khan (1507-1582) and his successful efforts won him praise and he was noted as a talent by some in the ranks of the civil bureaucracy.[488] Before that he had been suppressing piracy along the coast of Shandong. In short: he had had experience with both kinds of frontier problems in the course of his early career, a factor which might explain his later successes at both frontiers. Through Qi Jiguang's writing we can get a sense of the social circumstances pertaining to the hereditary military households in Shandong and his views on the acquisition of landed estates by some members of the hereditary officer class in the mid-to-late sixteenth century. Qi describes himself as originating from a rather impoverished military family, not even possessing a cart drawn by horses for transportation.[489] If honest in this depiction of himself and his family's economic conditions, it seems that not all hereditary military officers were able to transform themselves into wealthy landholders by as late as the mid-sixteenth century.

In a passage that was published in his literary collection titled *Zhizhitang Ji* Qi makes the following somewhat bitter observation concerning his colleagues and contemporaries:

> Those of this generation serving as warriors accumulate gold and silk, extend their lands and residences, and have extravagant official honours. They protect their heads and necks and from time to time migrate [i.e. abandon their official posts]. Nowadays people call them the most intelligent. Making the utmost mental and physical effort when attending to one's official duties - doing all one can – and amidst fortune and misfortune being committed to the people while good luck is not in step [with this]; for sake of the empire forsaking one's family while nobility cannot be conferred, and with certainty becoming a deceased person worshipped for some time in a temple: nowadays people call them the most stupid. […] Shall I act intelligently? People desire this, but my heart-mind's conscious does not desire this. Shall I act stupidly? My heart-mind desires it, but people do not commend it. I have no choice and would rather not violate my heart-mind; is this acting stupidly? Stupid and also foolish? I should be called "the stupid foolish master". I have accepted the wisdom of that which I chose.
>
> 世之為武夫者，積金帛，廣田宅， 侈功名，保首領，與時遷移，今人謂之上智。竭心力，治職事，盡其在我，利鈍付人，時運不齊，為國忘家，不能封侯，必期廟食，今人謂之下愚。[...] 吾將為

[488] Millinger, "Ch'i Chi-kuang," 22-24.
[489] Qi Jiguang 戚繼光, *Zhizhitang ji* 止止堂集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 127.

> 智乎?人欲之，而吾心之知不欲也。吾將為愚乎？ 吾心欲之，而人不與也。必不得已，吾寧無違吾心，其為愚乎?愚而又愚乎？宜號曰“愚愚子″。吾儕當知所擇矣。[490]

Important to point out in this quote is Qi Jiguang's obedience to his heart-mind. This coupled with his wish to suppress his desires gives us a hint that the general shaped his moral beliefs according to Neo-Confucian doctrine, and Wang Yangming's ideology in particular. Obedience to innate moral intuition and a suppression of selfish desires were thus rhetorical tools Qi appropriated in order to distance himself from his self-serving colleagues and gain a veneer of respectability. But who was the intended audience for this display of Neo-Confucian frugality? I posit that this was the Neo-Confucian literati themselves. The above quoted statement seems like an attempt of Qi to declare his allegiance to the Neo-Confucian "project" and a conscious distancing from corrupt inherited military practices.

How could this revamped Neo-Confucianism be used to vindicate a military man's position within the imperial Chinese polity? Here I would argue that the appeal of Wang Yangming and *xinxue* in general extended beyond the exemplary function of Wang himself, but had a close relationship with the contents of the philosophy itself. The *xinxue* program "democratized" the ideal of sagehood, something admitted by Wang Yangming himself who stated that people with occupational backgrounds could aspire to be sages. This was an attractive ideal in a society which saw rapid socio-economic changes in addition to demographic growth. One such a group was the merchant class, a group whose profession was often disdained by Confucians. Merchants, whose numbers and importance in society grew, could now turn to Wang Yangming's ideas to claim moral respectability for themselves. Wang Daokun for example, a civil bureaucrat and scion of a merchant family, was greatly influenced by Wang's ideas and became in the word of one scholar an "apologist" for the merchant profession.[491] Wang Daokun was perhaps not entirely by accident also one of Qi Jiguang's closest friends.

Significant in the context of Ming civil-military relations was the fact that Qi Jiguang tried to use Wang Yangming's ideas to legitimate the *métier* of military men within the empire. In my view, this appropriation of Wang's ideas by Qi shows the suitability of this revamped Neo-

[490] Idem, 245-246.
[491] Qitao Guo, *Ritual Opera and Mercantile Lineage: The Confucian Transformation of Popular Culture in Late Imperial Huizhou* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005), 42-44, 48.

Confucianism for building a bridge between *wen* and *wu*, in contrast to the older Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy. I will further show that the significance of this bridge extended far beyond the singular example of Qi Jiguang, as it was grasped by other *xinxue*-adherrents as well. An intriguing passage in Qi's literary collection *Zhizhitang Ji* shows how he benefitted from the democratization of sagehood to legitimize the use of force and the military profession, and I contend that part of the explanation should be sought by considering the implications of this philosophical discourse derived from *xinxue*:

> Master Sun Wu's [Sunzi] *Art of War*'s prose and meaning are both refined. Even if a sage uses soldiers, there lies no wrongdoing in this. It is not [that it is] not good, but in the end [it] is not ranked as Confucian. Let's suppose that someone is a sage and this man uses Sun Wu's methods. The *Military Classics* will then have a sage's implementation. Suppose you read the *Six Classics*, recite them and serve as a sage, but in your behaviour you ridicule and feign [the *Six Classics*], then the *Six Classics* will be [the same as] Sun Wu. On the contrary, what do you think of this person, the one using them? Therefore, owing to these variations in applying knowledge, if it lies with the gentleman, then it is called implementing rightful authority and if it lies with a vile person, then it is called implementing skills. The knowledge is the same, but the gentleman and the vile person for this reason differ. Why? Presumably if you follow the establishment of your heart-mind with non-rectification, from this difference it will manifests itself. How very strange!
> 孫武子《兵法》，文義兼美，雖聖賢用兵，無過於此。非不善也，而終不列之儒。設使聖賢，其人用孫武之法，《武經》即聖賢之作用矣。苟讀《六經》，誦服聖賢，而行則狙詐，《六經》即孫武矣。顧在用之者，其人何如耳。故因變用智，在君子則謂之行權，在小人則謂之行術。均一智也，而君子、小人所以分者，何也？蓋由立心不正，則發之自異耳。奚足怪哉![492]

According to this segment, there was nothing wrong or a-moral with *wu*-related activities as long as a sage implemented them. Military strategic thinking like that of Sunzi, often criticized for being immoral by Neo-Confucians like Zhu Xi, was just as virtuous (or rather a-moral) as the Confucian classics. The morality did not lie in the texts themselves, but in the action of those who employed it. If a sage engaged in military action guided by the military classics, then by its very nature it was a morally virtuous and legitimate action. Furthermore, reciting the Confucian classics did not automatically make one a virtuous person either. The moral authority shifted thus from the text itself to the moral agency of the person using it, an important consequence of *xinxue* as discussed in chapter four. It is unknown if Qi Jiguang used Sunzi's ideas on deception on the battlefield like

[492] Qi Jiguang 戚繼光, *Zhizhitang ji* 止止堂集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 262.

Wang Yangming did in deceiving the Prince of Ning his army was near. However, in a memorial Qi Jiguang defended the actions of a subordinate officer who had ignored the orders of a civil official. Using Sunzi's notion that a ruler should not interfere with the work of a military commander once he was active on the battlefield, Qi Jiguang defended the apparent disobedience of his military protégé.[493] This was a far-reaching acceptance of one of Sunzi's most controversial positions in the eyes of many Confucians. The justification for Sunzi for a military commander to refuse interference from a ruler was based on "[…] a claim for the existence of an extraordinary military realm, where the moral will of the emperor, the regular ethical values of society, as well as the normal bonds of duties and responsibilities that upheld the social hierarchy could be abandoned and where the authority of the military commander was supreme."[494] Within the framework of Wang Yangming's ideas, Qi Jiguang was thus able to reconcile Sunzi with his Neo-Confucian identity and defend the autonomy of the military vis-à-vis the civil bureaucracy.

Nor was Qi Jiguang the only one who reappreciated Strategist writers like Sunzi in light of Wang Yangming's Neo-Confucianism. This positive re-evaluation of the worth of the military classics can also be traced in the writings of another follower of Wang Yangming's philosophy, Hu Zhi 胡直 (1517-1585), a student of both Luo Hongxian and Ouyang De:[495]

> I once sighed forlornly that the ancient military administrative *Methods of the Sima* was not passed on, and Sun [Wu] and Wu [Qi] were only used to debate deception and to insistently state the *Military Classics* were not kingly [i.e. according to Confucian notions of benevolent rule] and appropriate to use. There was an elder who said with a smile: "You are no different. Well now, the *Tradition of the Changes* [a treatise elucidating the classic the *Book of Changes*, attributed to Confucius] warns against paying no attention to great affairs, and Confucius esteemed good stratagems that have success. The military puts stress on planning victory and puts little worth on planning not to be victorious, this even the Yellow Emperor and the Taigong were not able to go against, how much more is it so for later generations? Just at the moment of a plunder attack of treacherous barbarians, […] the ones commanding the troops have no unconventional plans and secret designs to achieve victory over the enemy. Thus saying "I act according to the kingly way" [Confucian benevolent government], this is largely inhumane. The difference of Sun [Wu] and Wu [Qi] to the Yellow Emperor and the Taigong was not a difference of their methods, but a difference of their heart-minds. The

[493] Qi Jiguang 戚繼光, *Qi Shaobao zouyi* 戚少保奏議 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 78-79.
[494] Ven, "Introduction," 7-8.
[495] D.W.Y. Kwok, "HU Chih," in *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368-1644*, *Part 1*, edited by L.C. Goodrich and Chao-ying Fang (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 624-625.

> difference between the public and the selfish of the heart-mind corresponds to the difference of the ways between the [virtuous] king and [unvirtuous] overlord, so how will you be able to dispose of the method?"
> 直嘗慨古軍政”司馬法”不傳， 而孫, 吳獨以辯譎徼稱”武經”，非王者宜用． 有長老先生哂曰: “子無異也．夫”易傳”戒機事不密，孔子貴好謀有成．兵家多算勝，少算不勝，此雖黃帝，太公不能違也，而況後世乎? 方猾夷之剽攻，巨盜之盤噬，［…］而將兵者不有奇算密畫以取勝敵，乃曰我為王道，是不仁之大也．黃帝，太公之異孫，吳，非異其法，異其心也．心之公私，即道之王伯分焉，子惡得廢其法乎?”[496]

Central to Hu Zhi's argument in favour of the worth of the *Seven Military Classics* was the validity of their stratagems and methods once they were applied by persons with the right heart-mind. The methods advocated by the military classics were not to be construed as being contrary to Confucian notions of kingship, as even such paragons of virtue as the Yellow Emperor, the Taigong and Confucius - sages from the remote past – were implied by Hu Zhi to have used them if the need had arisen, in order to protect the people. It would have been inhumane not to use these methods, if the result would have been an inadequate military response. This view on the morality of using the classics contrasts with the more cautious views of Neo-Confucians who stood more in the Cheng-Zhu tradition. In the seventeenth century, a scholar named Lu Shiyi 陸世儀 (1611-1672) for example had the following reservations about using the *Seven Military Classics* as part of the military examination system:

> *Sunzi*, *Wuzi*, *Methods of the Sima*, etc. of the *Seven Books*, generations have called them the *Military Classics*. Undoubtedly, the experts discussing the military shall nearly put them on par with the *Four Books* and the *Five Classics*. This is entirely mistaken. Of the *Seven Books,* only the *Methods of the Sima* approaches orthodoxy. Even if the *Sunzi* evaluates deception, those who study military matters still also have to exhaust the variations of military matters [i.e. study every aspect] after rectifying the techniques of their heart-minds. As for the *Wuzi*, it is base, and the remaining, like *Weiliao*, are profoundly coarse and rough. The *Six Secret Teachings*, *Three Strategies* and the *Questions and Replies of Duke Wei* all are forgeries and are all not worth looking at, but later generations' decrees have commanded to take them and examine the military officers [with them]. Is this appropriate? Amongst the military officers there are no [real/accomplished] men.
>
> The primary taboo when it comes to [training] military officials is to harm their techniques of the heart-mind through education. If their techniques of the heart-mind are incorrect, then the more they are used, the less

[496] Hu Zhi 胡直, *Hu Zhi ji* 胡直集, *Volume 1* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2015), 166.

useful they are. Using the *Seven Military Classics* in examining military officials is [exactly] harming their techniques of the heart-mind.

孫吳司馬法等七書，世謂之武經．蓋談兵之家幾以之配四書五經矣．此大謬不然．七書中惟司馬法近正．《孫子》雖權譎，然學兵者，心術既正之後，亦不可不盡兵之變。至《吳子》，則淺矣，其餘若《尉繚》甚粗畧．《六韜》、《三畧》、《衛公問答》皆偽書，皆無足觀，而後世功令率以之課武弁. 宜乎？武弁中無人也.

武臣第一不可，教壞他心術。若心術不正，愈有用，愈不可用。課武臣而以武經七書，教壞他心術矣.[497]

For Lu Shiyi, the morality seems to lie more in the writings themselves, and he was wary of advocating their use as examination materials for military officers. Even for persons who had morally rectified their intentions, military classics like *Sunzi's Art of War* would be difficult to use. Lu seems to imply that even a person with a rectified heart-mind would need to exhaustively study different possible military scenarios in order to know when deception would be appropriate to use. In addition, they were a moral danger to officers who had not inoculated themselves against their inappropriate methods by way of Confucian conditioning.

Another seventeenth-century literatus in the Cheng-Zhu tradition with objections to the moral content of the Strategists was Zhang Lüxing 張履祥 (1611-1674) from Zhejiang province. He even criticized Wang Yangming using their ideas: "When Yangming used the army he often used deceptive schemes to gain victory, but Confucians do not act like this." 陽明用兵多以詐謀取勝，儒者不為也.[498] Zhang was an ardent critic of Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming's philosophies, who thought both tended to produce arrogant and deceitful people. Furthermore, the lack of emphasis on external *gewu* was an illegitimate shortcut in the process of moral self-cultivation.[499] Moral subjectivism was thus an important point of Zhang's criticism vis-à-vis *xinxue*.

Especially Lu Shiyi did not entirely contradict the position of Hu Zhi and Qi Jiguang on the uses of the military classics – after all a sage had to go through moral rectification before he

[497] Lu Shiyi 陸世儀, *Si bian lu jiyao* 思辨録輯要, edited by Zhang Boxing 張伯行 (SKQS), 17:1.

[498] Zhao Yuan 赵园, *Zhidu. Yanlun. Xintai – (Ming Qing zhiji shidafu yanjiu) xubian* 制度•言论•心态——《明清之际士大夫研究》续编 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2006), 126.

[499] Zhang Tianjie 张天杰 and Xiao Yongming 宵永明, "Zhang Lüxiang you Wang fan Zhu de xinlu lichen jiqi dui Wangxue de pipan" 张履祥由王返朱的心路历程及其对王学的批判, *Xibei daxue xuebao* 西北大学学报 40.5 (2010): 156-158.

could use them –, but it is notable that both Hu and Qi refrain from ethical criticism of the methods advocated in works like the *Wuzi*. Qi Jiguang even regards them as no different from the Confucian *Six Classics*, a position frowned upon by Lu Shiyi.[500] A scholar like Lu was not disinclined towards military activities; a biography notes that he studied martial arts.[501] However, it seems the case that the moral subjectivity of the Wang Yangming-school had the potential to legitimate a wider variety of possible military methods and activities. I argue that these new attitudes towards the military canon constitute one manifestation of a "liberating effect" of *xinxue* at work vis-à-vis martial activities, which no doubt had positive consequences for the relationship between Neo-Confucian scholar-officials and the military branch of Ming government. It can be assumed that these new attitudes also legitimated the engagement with military thought by Neo-Confucian scholars, and I hold that this can therefore provide an explanation the close connection between military activism and the new Neo-Confucian ideology.

Qi Jiguang's Career: *Xinxue* in Practice

Qi Jiguang manifested Wang Yangming's philosophy in the midst of his military career as well, at least if we can believe the narration of his son in his chronological biography. He related an event that purportedly happened during Qi's service in the south, when he was engaged in quelling the Wokou disturbances. Qi Jiguang was just crossing the Zhejiang frontier into Fujian and met two literati, whom I have not been able to identify:

> The 26th the day of wushen (8-9th month) he took a shortcut into Fujian from Pingyang, and around this time Tu Zhongwei and Ye Buyi were debating correct quietude and discussing innate knowledge of the good. They had never experienced talking with a soldier. Regarding soldiers' conduct, they were familiar with their ways. Master Ye marvelled at them and inquired: "How do you achieve not having distracting thoughts?" My father said: "Thoughts are not allowed to arise." Ye again asked: "How do you have time for quietude?" My father said: "You consider the time of quiet sitting as quietude? If you consider this quietude,

[500] Lin Cunyang 林存阳, "Lu Shiyi zhixue quxiang yu dui li de tiren" 陆世仪治学取向与对礼的体认, *Liaocheng daxue xuebao* 聊城大学学报 1 (2002): 66-67.
[501] Rufus O. Sutur, "LU Shih-i," in *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period, Volume 1 A-O*, edited by Arthur W. Hummel (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 548.

then at the time you encounter stimuli, where does the quietude go? I do all day long, one after the other, and I dare not give rise to loathing on account of my exhaustion. I merely perceive achieving activity and quietude as not being two [separate] conditions. For example, during battle, I merely know that exterminating bandits is my task, so again, how can I leisurely and at ease contemplate? If you cause yourself to be moved by distracting thoughts, then you become flustered, and I am for this reason without fear and hence each time I am effective.

二十六日戊申，自平陽　從間道入閩，比時途中惟與葉布衣論正静，講良知，未嘗言兵。兵之行止，悉中規矩，葉子奇之，曰：“得無有雜念　乎?”家嚴曰：“念不可起。”葉又曰：“静時如何?”曰：“君認默坐時爲静乎？若以是爲静，則遇感應時静着何處？予　終日紛紛，不敢起憎厭與勞倦，只見得動、静無二境。譬之臨陣時，止知剿賊爲務，又何暇易慮？使雜念一動，便即張皇，予所以無懼而輒效者，以此也.”[502]

It seems that Tu Zhongwei and Ye Buyi were surprised that a military man like Qi was able to reconcile Neo-Confucian moral self-cultivation with a military lifestyle. How could one achieve a calm nature in the midst of the battlefield? The key, according to Qi, was (echoing Wang Yangming's ideas on the subject narrated in chapter four) that one should remain calm irrespective of external activities or non-activities, and this means the heart-mind should be calm. No matter whether one engaged in meditation, or a military campaign, in both instances one should not be aroused and preserve a calm nature. This is in line with Wang's philosophy, with posits that a calm heart-mind was necessary for *liangzhi* to be discerned and successfully extended.

Qi's son perhaps included this anecdote to show his father was sincerely putting Wang's philosophy into practice, and lecturing literati about it for good measure. We have seen that Qi Jiguang had already served on the northern frontier against the Mongols, and accrued experiences against pirates at the coastal areas of his native province of Shandong. In the course of the 1520s coastal disturbances started to undermine the stability of the south-eastern coastal areas, including those of the Southern Metropolitan province, Zhejiang, and Fujian. In the 1550s and 1560s these disturbances would reach their climax as the Wokou crisis, which would see pirate raids reaching overland into Jiangxi and spreading southward along the coast to Guangdong. The immediate cause of this unrest could perhaps be sought in a government crackdown on the hitherto relatively relaxed tribute trade, which under the Zhengde emperor had been allowed to semi-legally expand beyond its original scope. A number of disturbances caused by Portuguese and Japanese traders

[502] Qi Zuoguo 戚祚國, *Qi Shaobao nianpu* 戚少保年譜 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 82.

and the succession of Zhengde by the more xenophobic Jiajing emperor eventually caused the suspension of tribute trade and a strict enforcement of the hitherto lax *haijin*. This might have encouraged wealthy Chinese merchants to renege on debts accrued with Japanese, who as a result tried to collect their outstanding debts by force. Another result of the renewed enforcement of *haijin* was the metaphorical throwing of a lit match into a dry haystack. As we have seen in chapter two, demographic growth and the resultant pressure on landed resources had made much of the coastal population dependent on trade, smuggling, and fishery. These disadvantages groups now all had no choice but to turn to illicit activities to provide in their livelihoods. Contemporary Ming observers therefore already knew Wokou were no longer Japanese by majority, but mostly Chinese combined with other foreign groups dependent on trade with China, like Ryukyans. In time these would coalesce in armed bands who raided coastal settlements and even inland areas like Vikings.[503] In the mid-1550s Qi would become part of the campaign to exterminate these groups. In comparison with Wang's campaigns, therefore, the focus of the military campaigns shifted to the coastal areas of the south-eastern seaboard. Nevertheless, there are signs that the Wokou disturbances coincided with non-maritime incidences of banditry, a phenomenon that has attracted relatively little attention from modern historians. Especially in Fujian, the Wokou raids of the 1550s tended to coincide with coalescing of so-called "mountain bandits" (*shankou* 山寇) in armed bands that rose in revolt. Qi Jiguang's campaigns also aimed to suppress these disruptive elements.[504] I argue that we should see the Wokou crisis of the mid-sixteenth century as part of a continuum of southern violent upheavals stretching across the mid-Ming period. As I shall show below and in the remaining chapters, the failure of the old hereditary military system necessitated the formation of a new combined civil-military elite which had to devise new solutions to this problem, and Wang Yangming and his followers would play an essential role in this process during the first half of the sixteenth century. Qi Jiguang's own career provides strong evidence of the mutual benefits of civil-military *Annäherung* against the backdrop of the *xinxue* network in the process of devising these solutions. A hereditary military official like Qi benefitted from their patronage and protection from impeachments, whilst the civil officials and non-serving literati could make use of the military expertise of a hereditary military official loyal to the Neo-Confucian

[503] Lim, "From *Haijin* to *Kaihai*," 6-11.
[504] Liu, "The World of Rituals," 48.

moral cause. Below I will trace Qi's career and highlight the instances in which it benefitted from interventions by people in the *xinxue* network.

Zhejiang

We can follow the unfolding of Qi's career, as fashioned by Qi himself and his son, in his *nianpu* and a piece of prose writing preserved in his literary collection, titled *Min hai jishi* 閩海紀事 (*Fujian Ocean Chronicle*).[505] The latter text narrates Qi's service from 1555 until 1563. A reading of the important junctures of his career during this time reveals that *xinxue*-adherents were involved in almost all cases. This pattern can only not be proven for the very beginning of his career. Qi Jiguang was dispatched to Zhejiang in 1555 on the basis of a recommendation by two censorial officials, namely He Xi 何熙 (dates unknown) and Yong Chao 雍焯 (dates unknown), whose ideological affiliations I have not been able to ascertain.[506] Qi served for a while as a manager of hereditary military farmland, probably on account of his literacy. After a year he was transferred to a new post in which he was to assume a more active combat posture.

It must have been around this time that we can find the earliest evidence of Qi's involvement in *xinxue*-circles. Although the exact order of events cannot be ascertained, at some point Qi was brought to the attention of Hu Zongxian. This either allowed him to be embedded in Hu's network of officials, or his embeddedness in this network in the first place allowed Qi access to Hu Zongxian. Without exact dating of the passage I will cite below, this chicken-and-the-egg situation might never be resolved, but in any case, the Wang Yangming-network of followers played an important role in his future career. Ivy Maria Lim, based on evidence gathered from Qi Jiguang's *nianpu*, argues that Hu Zongxian already knew Qi in the autumn of 1556, liked him, and promoted him to a higher position within the anti-Wokou military organization. Lim is also of the opinion that the personal relationship between Hu and Qi was important in the formative stages of the latter's career, but she argues that it is hard to ascertain how intimate the two were on a personal level.[507] Qi's adherence to *xinxue*-ideology can thus serve to throw a new light on the constitution of his early career and the important role of connections with civil officials and literati therein. An

[505] Qi Jiguang 戚繼光, *Zhizhitang ji* 止止堂集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 121-126.
[506] Millinger, "Ch'i Chi-kuang," 24; Qi Zuoguo 戚祚國, *Qi Shaobao nianpu* 戚少保年譜 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 16.
[507] Ivy Maria Lim, "Qi Jiguang and Hu Zongxian's Anti-*wokou* Campaign," in *The Maritime Defence of China: Ming General Qi Jiguang and Beyond*, edited by Y.H. Teddy Sim (Singapore: Springer, 2017), 34-35, 40-41.

enlightening passage which Julia Ching cited in a biographical sketch of a Ming scholar-official dating from 1976,[508] but which has never shown up in any treatment of Qi Jiguang or the Ming military in general, gives us a treasure trove of information about his early career:

> The gentleman [Qian Dehong] was also good at recognizing a person's abilities. The gentleman told the Minister of War Hu Meilin [Hu Zongxian] who was just then putting remote areas in order: "We must for present times explain military command." He recommended that they read the former master's [Wang Yangming] *Memorials* and *Official communications*. In the 34th year [of the Jiajing reign] [1555] Wonu [`Japanese' pirates] burned and looted the countryside. Zhushan [Qian Dehong] wrote *Discussion about assembling and training village militia* and recommended it. To start with, he recommended disciple-soldiers, present-day Army Commander Qi Jiguang and Commander Liang Shouyu. The soldiers relied on their abilities to achieve great successes. Meilin [Hu Zongxian] thanked the gentleman and said: "At first I suspected your Confucian disciples were not well-versed in military strategy, only afterwards did I recognize the good military command of the officers."
>
> 君善識人, 大司馬胡梅林方尹姚, 君曰:"必爲當今明將." 勸其讀先師《奏疏》、《公移》. 三十四年倭奴焚掠鄉居緒山作《團練鄉兵議》, 以贊成之. 首薦門下士, 今都督戚繼光、總兵梁守愚, 卒賴其力以成大功梅林謝君曰: "始疑公儒門, 不嫻將略, 乃知善將將也". [509]

This quote comes from a biography of Qian Dehong written by his fellow-disciple Wang Ji, who claimed descent from the same ancestor as his master. His own relatively short civil career was spent mostly at the Ministry of War. Intriguingly, one of his sons would choose a military career instead of a civil one, by opting to sit through the military examinations. A sign, perhaps, of the growing significance of the military as an alternative career path within the *xinxue*-movement.[510] Because Hu Zongxian does not seem to know Qi Jiguang during the events narrated by Wang Ji, I hold that this must have taken place sometime in 1555 or 1556, when Qi had just come to the south-eastern coast. This means that Hu Zongxian's cognition of Qi Jiguang can be related, I contend, with Qi's following close association with Wang Yangming-adherrents during his career in the south-east.

Wang Ji's description of his fellow-recruiter's life and work yields many interesting insights, which all shed light on the basis of Qi Jiguang's successful career. First of all, it reveals

[508] Julia Ching, "WANG Chi," 1351-1355.
[509] Wang Ji 王畿, *Wang Ji ji* 王畿集 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2007), 591.
[510] Ching, "WANG Chi," 1351-1352.

the fact that Yangming-scholars did in fact have disciples belonging to the hereditary military. That this phenomenon was not limited to Qi is vindicated by the mention of another military officer within the same text. Other research points to the fact that Qian Dehong was not the only follower of Wang with military disciples. Zou Shouyi spread his master's teachings in the capital by making pleas for giving attention to *daoxue* and convening meetings for this same purpose. He also tutored a man named Li Cai 李材 (1529-1606), an ambitious scholar who deliberately sought to model his career on Wang Yangming's and for this reason chose the military profession. Later on, he would take this modelling even one step further and attempt to launch his own reinterpretation of Neo-Confucianism. In this sense he took Hu Zongxian's emulation of Wang even further. Nie Bao brought a military officer of the Embroidered Uniform Guard in the capital to the fold when Nie was serving prison time, and this officer named Dai Chuwang 戴楚望 (dates unknown) was his guard. Dai corresponded with other first-generation followers as well, and tried his best to protect Nie and others in the sometimes-forbidding environment of the capital penitentiary facilities.[511] Another perhaps more famous military disciple was the hereditary officer Wan Biao 萬表 (1497-1556), who associated with Qian Dehong, Wang Ji and Luo Hongxian among others.[512]

Second, Wang Ji's biography of Qian Dehong highlights the relevance of personal connections between officials and non-commissioned scholars in advancing careers. Qian apparently was personally acquainted with Hu Zongxian. Prominent first generation Yangming followers like Zou Shouyi and Qian Dehong were well acquainted, and a disciple like Hu Zongxian serving in powerful government positions offered opportunities to push the career of promising talents (and fellow disciples) like Qi Jiguang. This is an example of shared ideological commitments facilitating networks of patronage within and outside of government service, highlighting the significant role retired officials could play in personnel selection and promotion. This network thus transcended the civil-military binary and offered career opportunities for the hereditary military.

A third point that I would like to raise is the role these networks performed as channels for (military) knowledge circulation, a phenomenon that will be highlighted in the ninth chapter.

---

[511] Hauf, "The Jiangyou Group," 58-60.

[512] Lin Shangzhi 林尚志, "Cong wujiang shijia dao xueshu mingzu: Mingdai Zhedong rujiang Wan Biao (1498-1556) zhi yanjiu" 從武將世家到學術名族: 明代浙東儒將萬表 (1498～1556) 之研究 (MA thesis, National Taiwan Normal University, 2009), 119-140.

With Hu Zongxian's attention successfully drawn, Qi was placed under Grand Coordinator of Zhejiang Ruan E's command, a man we have already met in the context of *xinxue*. Qi would be work together with another hereditary military officer, Yu Dayou 俞大猷 (1503-1579), who was a scion of a Fujianese hereditary military family. Although he did embrace a Neo-Confucian identity, his allegiance was initially with a particular branch of Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism originating from Fujian.[513] This branch was known to have held fast to orthodoxy in the face of the popularity of the Wang Yangming-movement during the sixteenth century.[514] There are signs he was positively inclined towards *xinxue*, although he was not always as positive about its followers in his own time. In a letter to a certain Xu Fengzhu, he describes his attitude towards the teachings and latter-day followers of Wang Yangming, and he expresses some misgivings about the latter:

> Correspondence with Xu Fengzhu
> For a period of time, Master Yangming implemented the Way and passed it on to later generations. Whether it was to recommend for him to be ennobled, or whether it was to recommend for him to be placed in the Confucian temple for worship, one after another the memorials submitted to the emperor were exceedingly many, [but] honestly none were like the famous master's personal and in-depth words, nor written as clearly. From then on and afterwards, literati with aspiration for the Way without exception were inspired and aroused. All turned the famous master into Confucian orthodoxy and established the benevolence of the red flag [a metaphor for Wang Yangming]. Who was not known to make an effort! Solemnly they extend thanks to Master Yangming, [but] later on they did not arrive for the benefit of the villagers: how dare they forget the famous lord's teaching of no [social] distinctions? They do not undertake it honestly and with heartfelt sincerity. I won't say more.
> 與徐鳳竹書
> 陽明夫子道行於一時，傳於來世。或薦之復爵，或薦之從祀，先後章疏甚多，實未有若名公言之親切而著明也。自此而後，志道之士，無不感發而興起者，皆名公爲道統立赤幟之惠也，其誰不知勉歟！謹爲陽明夫子先致謝，他日不至爲鄉人者，敢忘名公無類之教耶？不任誠悃。不宣.[515]

This letter's contents display a high regard for Wang Yangming's teachings and writings, but Yu Dayou is not satisfied by the activities of those of the social elite claiming to follow his example.

[513] Fan Zhongyi 范中义, *Yu Dayou chuan* 俞大猷传 (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2015), 4-7.
[514] Zhou Tianqing 周天庆, "Lun Mingdai Fujian Zhuzi xuepai de lixue shi yiyi" 论明代福建朱子学派的理学史意义, *Xiamen daxue xuebao* 厦门大学学报 202.6 (2010): 67-68.
[515] Yu Dayou 俞大猷, *Zhengqitang quanji* 正氣堂全集 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2007), 529.

For a hereditary military man like Yu, the one criticism that carries so much weight with him that he singles it out, concerns the social equalization implied by Wang Yangming's ideology, but not borne out enough by the social elites. In this letter, he appears to criticize them of hypocrisy.

During his service in Zhejiang, Qi Jiguang also met Tan Lun, at that time a magistrate of a county, during a military campaign. Tan Lun would become a lifelong supporter and friend in the civil bureaucracy. The two would become fast friends and for many years continued to cooperate both at the northern frontier and the south-eastern seaboard.[516] When he was serving in the north he was Qi Jiguang's civilian superior as Supreme Commander in the early 1570s. During a speech to his subordinate soldiers in the north he describes his long-time associate Tan Lun (as translated by Pak Shun Ng):

> You might wish to stay alive, but as for me, I have no qualms about life or death. Not only do I think this way, the Supreme Commander and the Grand Coordinator are also prepared to die on the battlefield for the country. If you do not believe [in our resolve], I have known the Supreme Commander for fifteen years. When he is on the battlefield, he is always riding unaccompanied in front of others. I know very well his goals and ambitions. He would rather sacrifice his life than be criticised by low-ranking staff. He once told me, `I don't have a character that would survive in the capital.'[517]

From this quotation, we can clearly see the strong bonds of mutual trust that had come to exist between some military and civilian officials during this time. Also evident is Tan Lun's activist martial bent, which contrasts with his attitude towards service in the capital. Tan Lun was a man of action, who made his career at the frontier and would rather stay out of the political snake-pit that was Beijing. An eighteenth-century compilation of Tan Lun's memorials contained a preface written by the editors and compilers of the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書, comparing his achievements with those of Wang Yangming:[518]

---

[516] Chaoying Fang, "T'AN Lun," in *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368-1644*, *Part 2*, edited by L.C. Goodrich and Chao-ying Fang (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 1243-1246; Thomas G. Nimick, "Ch'i Chi-kuang and I-wu County," *Ming Studies* 1995.1 (1995): 19.

[517] Pak Shun Ng, "Qi Jiguang's `Oral Instructions from the Podium'," *Journal of Chinese Military History* 3.2 (2014): 168.

[518] The *Siku quanshu* is the largest collection of Chinese literature of the imperial age in existence. It was commissioned in the eighteenth century by the Qianlong 乾隆 emperor (r. 1735-1796) of the Qing dynasty (1636/44-1912). See: Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 273-277.

> From beginning to end his military service approached thirty years, and he accumulated merit for beheaded enemies numbering 21,500. His honour was not below that of Wang Shouren [Wang Yangming] and Confucians look back and speak highly of Shouren, and by using Shouren [as an example], the ones assisting in gathering followers and lecturing about learning [*jiangxue*] became numerous.
> 終始兵事垂三十年積首功二萬一千五百計其功名不在王守仁下而儒者顧艷稱守仁則以守仁聚徒講學羽翼者衆也.[519]

It is unclear whether the compilers were aware of Tan Lun's own ideological leanings, but it is instructive to note the strong association still felt far into the Qing dynasty between Wang Yangming's example and martial activism by civil officials, an association that seems to have carried a positive evaluation in this instance.

Qi's association with Ruan E also allowed him to get himself heard with Hu Zongxian. Qi wanted to retrain troops in 1557 and Ruan E made sure the suggestion was sent up to Hu. Unfortunately, the plans had to be shelved because of pressing military emergencies. In 1559, Hu gave Qi permission to recruit and train troops in Yiwu 義烏 county in Zhejiang province. Hu also sends a memorial to the throne praising Qi Jiguang for his meritorious services. Hu made the magistrate there, Zhao Dahe 趙大河 (1508-1572)[520], into Qi's military censor. Zhao Dahe is mentioned in Wang Yangming's *nianpu* as belonging to a group of *tongzhi* 同志, or "like-minded friends" belonging to the movement of Yangming followers.[521] According to Lu Miaw-fen, this term indicated a group of friends that was "[…] bounded by the same resolve to engage in sagely learning."[522] Intriguingly, and thereby hinting at the close-knit connections and cohesion that existed within this network, a contemporary biography of Zhao Dahe, written by his relative Zhao Yongxian 趙用賢 (1535-1596), notes that he read Wang Yangming's writings and, like Qi Jiguang, became a follower of Qian Dehong.[523] For a military officer like Qi it was very important to have a well-inclined military censor backing him up. The function of these censors was reporting the

[519] Tan Lun 譚綸, *Tan Xiangmin zuoyi* 譚襄敏奏議, 3-4.
[520] Chen Xuewen 陈学文, "Mingdai kang Wo jianjun Zhao Dahe pingshu yi Zhao Yongxian zhuanxie de muzhiming wei zhongxin" 明代抗倭监军赵大河评述以赵用贤撰写的墓志铭为中心, *Jiangsu keji daxue xuebao* 江苏科技大学学报 9.2 (2009): 10-16.
[521] Wang Shouren 王守仁, *Wang Yangming quanji* 王陽明全集, *Volume 2* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992), 1337.
[522] Lu, "Practice as Knowledge," 223.
[523] Zhao Yongxian 趙用賢, Song shi ji ji 松石齋集, 19:285.

officer's conduct to the throne, impeaching officers who were in violation of regulations, being an interface with other local civil bureaucrats, and requisitioning the logistics the officer needed.[524]

Jiangxi, Fujian, and Guangdong

In 1561 the disturbances moved northwards to Jiangxi province, and the Grand Coordinator there, Hu Song, requested assistance from Hu Zongxian. Tan Lun, who had worked with Qi Jiguang in the past, thereupon sent a letter to Hu Song recommending Qi Jiguang.[525] This is another clear instance of the network functioning to support its members in the official bureaucracy. In Jiangxi Qi Jiguang was supported by the military censor Xu Chi 徐栻 (1519-1581).[526] He once requested an imperial edict to have Wang Yangming worshipped in the Confucius temple.[527] After the operations are finished, Hu Song praised Qi Jiguang in a memorial to the throne.[528]

In 1562 Qi Jiguang was ordered to enter Fujian in order to combat the Wokou there. At the border he was met by Wang Daokun, who would be assigned to be his military censor in that province by Tan Lun. From 1563 onwards, Fujian would become a permanent posting for Qi Jiguang, serving first under Tan Lun, and later under Wang Daokun as Grand Coordinator of Fujian.[529] This year was not fortuitous for the *xinxue*-network on the coast. Hu Zongxian was charged with corruption and abuse of power and lost his commission of Supreme Commander. Most modern research holds that this was the result of a struggle of power at the court between Xu Jie and Hu's patron, Yan Song.[530] With Hu Zongxian's administration ending, his *mufu*, or private staff, also ceased to exist, but many civil officials aligned with *xinxue* seem to have been able to escape persecution. Indeed, Qi's own narrative of his time in Fujian, the *Min hai jishi* specifically dwells upon his meetings with *xinxue*-officials and literati. Among them are Ma Sen 馬森 (1507-1580), a Fujianese Wang Yangming-follower, his co-follower You Zhende 游震得 (dates unknown), and the Chen Xianzhang-follower Liu Tao, whom we have already met in chapter six.

[524] Millinger, "Ch'i Chi-kuang, Chinese Military Official," 168-174.
[525] Idem, 47.
[526] Qi Zuoguo 戚祚國, *Qi Shaobao nianpu* 戚少保年譜 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 72.
[527] Yang Zhengxian 楊正顯. "Wang Yangming "nianpu" yu congsi Kongmiao de yanjiu" 王陽明《年譜》與從祀孔廟之研究. *Hanxue yanjiu* 29.1 (2011): 164-165.
[528] Millinger, "Ch'i Chi-kuang,"; 46-47; Qi Zuoguo 戚祚國, *Qi Shaobao nianpu* 戚少保年譜 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 71-72.
[529] Millinger, "Ch'i Chi-kuang," 58, 64.
[530] Lim, *Lineage Society on the Southeastern Coast*, 78-79.

Specifically, Ma Sen played an important role in bringing Liu Tao and Qi Jiguang in contact with each other.[531] Both Tan Lun and You Zhende reported Qi's merit to the throne during his time in Fujian.[532]

Although not narrated in Qi's *nianpu* or *Min hai jishi* during this period, the commander came into contact with Guo Zaoqing 郭造卿 (1532-1593), a literatus from Fuqing prefecture in Fujian who was known for his prose and poetry. He was connected to several members of Wang Yangming's movement, highlighting both the importance and closely-knit nature of relations within this network:

> Guo Zaoqing, courtesy name Jianchu, was a man from Huanan. As a successful candidate in the lowest level of the civil service examinations he was thought highly of by his father's friend Ma Sen (courtesy name Gongmin), and [it] caused him to be taught by the school of Luo Hongxian (courtesy name Wengong). As Wo rose up in Fujian and migrants came from Wu and Yue [Nan Zhili and Zhejiang], Junior Guardian Hu Zongxian and Li Sui (courtesy name Xiangmin) courteously sent for him. When Xinan's Minister of War Wang Daokun was pacifying Fujian, he courteously made him [Guo Zaoqing] his distinguished guest of honour once he saw his marvellous writings and his high competence. And when Protector-general Qi Jiguang was in Fujian he had merit pacifying Wo. He offered wagons and cavalry to Zaoqing and deeply trusted him with his heart-mind.
>
> 郭造卿，字建初，化南人。為諸生器於父友馬恭敏森，令受業羅文供洪先之門。閩中倭起，客遊吳越，胡少保宗憲、李襄敏遂禮致之，新安汪司馬道昆撫閩，一見奇其文而高其行，禮為上賓，而戚都護繼光在閩，有平寇功，枉車騎於造卿，甚委心焉。[533]

In this excerpt from Fuqing's gazetteer we can recognize many names associated with Wang Yangming's movement. It makes clear how membership of its network opened many doors in terms of education and career opportunities, if outside of the official bureaucracy. It is implied that Hu Zongxian, Li Sui, Wang Daokun, and Qi Jiguang all used Guo Zaoqing as part of their private staffs. As with many other of the *xinxue* network members, Guo Zaoqing combined literary accomplishments with military merit, and was even offered command over military forces by Qi Jiguang. Since these forces are referred to as "wagons and cavalry", it would seem that Guo's

[531] Qi Jiguang 戚繼光, *Zhizhitang ji* 止止堂集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 122, 124-125.
[532] Millinger, "Ch'i Chi-kuang," 59; Qi Zuoguo 戚祚國, *Qi Shaobao nianpu* 戚少保年譜 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 95
[533] *Fuqing xianzhi* 福清县志 (Beijing: China National Publishing Industry Trading Corporation, 1997), 14:1451.

service later on the northern frontier is alluded to, where these kinds of forces were used. Indeed, we know that Guo would later serve in Qi Jiguang's private staff, and would write on military frontier affairs.[534]

Between 1564 and 1567, Qi would campaign into Guangdong, during which time he seems to remain under command of Grand Coordinator Wang Daokun. In 1567 Qi was requested to serve in the north, although Wang Daokun wanted to keep him in the south.[535] It seems that with his shift northwards, a new phase in Qi's basis of his career started. Instead of being buttressed by the help of *xinxue*-followers in the civil bureaucracy, he came under the patronage of the most powerful official at court. This same official also attempted to suppress the Wang Yangming-movement. What had happened in the meantime in the political landscape and how did it affect Qi's career?

Northwards

The strong association between Wang Yangming's philosophy and military activism by literati in the sixteenth century should not surprise us. According to Miaw-fen Lu, Wang's military campaigns gained him both political and cultural capital in the form of political connections and links with educational institutions in the areas in which he had been active and the prestige gained by his meritorious service. The latter was then capitalized upon by his disciples by establishing the link between Yangming's learning and his (activist) merit. In other words: his successes as a military leader served as proof of the virtue of his reinterpretation of Neo-Confucianism. Yangming learning was thus for the most part sold on the back of military success.[536] Qian Dehong, for example, wrote a history of Wang's campaign against the Prince of Ning, which was published after Wang's death.[537] Furthermore, after a brief period of attempting to reconcile his ideas with those of Zhu Xi, Wang gave up this pretence and claimed he had recovered the true way of learning.[538] This implicit opposition to Zhu Xi became an identity dividing line according to Bol: "[…], the differences between Wang Yangming's and Zhu Xi's teachings made it clear that that

[534] Wan Ming 万明, "Cong Qi Jiguang de wenhua jiaoyou kan wan Ming wenhua shiyu xia de "wu chen hao wen" xianxiang" 从戚继光的文化交游看晚明文化视域下的 "武臣好文" 现象, *Ludong daxue xuebao* 26.4 (2009): 5.
[535] Millinger, "Ch'i Chi-kuang," 57-79; Qi Jiguang 戚繼光, *Zhizhitang ji* 止止堂集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 124-126.
[536] Lu, "Practice as Knowledge," 59.
[537] Julia Ching, "CH'IEN Te-hung," in *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368-1644*, *Part 1*, edited by L.C. Goodrich and Chao-ying Fang (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 243-244.
[538] Idem, 54-58.

[sic] there were now in fact two kinds of Neo-Confucianism. Some associated Zhu Xi-ism with the status quo and established authority, against which activist scholars who wanted to make their mark on the world could agitate."[539] Bol further posits that the Yangming movement should be understood as phenomenon which arose outside of court patronage and the examination system and was a reaction to the status quo from the literati of the southeast of the empire.[540] Therefore, I argue that military activism was one of the ways in which this reaction could manifest itself.

How did the centre respond to this challenge? Both the Jiajing emperor and a portion of the court officials tried to declare the teachings of Wang as heterodox and suppress his movement by demolishing private academies propagating his teachings. The same also happened at one point to Zhan Ruoshui and his ideas and following. The ideas of Wang were criticized for their moral subjectivity and branded as "empty talk" and his tendency towards unconventionality was framed as glory seeking by his detractors. Lu Miaw-fen concludes that in the end the debate at court was not about the virtue of Wang's ideas themselves, but merely about their political implications. According to Lu, what was at stake was in effect Neo-Confucianism bursting out of the grip of imperial ideological control.[541] In my view, Lu makes an artificial distinction here: it was the very nature of Wang's ideas which made them a political problem. Yet, the court debate on Wang's ideas and virtues was not the most important one during Jiajing's reign. It was not until the 1570s that the most severe suppression of Wang Yangming's ideas occurred under the Grand Secretary Zhang Juzheng.[542] As a Grand Secretary, Zhang formally had an advisory role as top of the regular bureaucracy. However, the Jiajing emperor and his successor, the Longqing emperor, both relied on the Grand Secretaries for governance and thus their de facto power was very significant during most of the sixteenth century.[543]

When I review the impact of the repression of the Wang Yangming movement and the private academies during the Wokou crisis, it seems this hardly hindered the activities of Hu Zongxian's activities as a Supreme Commander – if at all. Hu Zongxian and Hu Song published Wang Yangming's writings, and, as chapter nine will show, promoted their own campaign against the Wokou within the lineage of Yangming statecraft activities and ideas. When Hu Zongxian does

[539] Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, 99.
[540] Ibidem.
[541] Lu, "Practice as Knowledge," 64-74.
[542] Idem, 71.
[543] Dardess, *A Political Life*, 35-36.

get disgraced and relieved from his post, it seems to be as a result of a factional struggle at court, and quite unrelated to ideological concerns. During the Wokou crisis, the two most important Grand Secretaries were Yan Song and aforementioned Xu Jie. The two were rivals and each commanded a network of civil and military officials who fought the Wokou. Yan Song had the most successful network, containing Hu Zongxian and, by extension, his entire official and non-official staff. As long as they were fighting a threat like the Wokou pirates, Xu Jie was pragmatic enough to cooperate with Yan Song. Xu Jie's network would conduct operations from the Nan Zhili province northwards, whilst Yan Song's would handle operations from Zhejiang southwards. Around 1562, however, Hu Zongxian was relieved of his post on charges of power abuse and in 1565 he was again implicated in a corruption charge when Yan Song definitely fell from power. Both instances have been mostly ascribed to Xu Jie's scheming in both modern and contemporaneous accounts.[544] The irony is that Xu Jie was closely associated with many of Wang Yangming's prime disciples and was an active within *jiangxue* circles.[545] In this case, it seems factional politics trumped ideological commitments.

This picture of the seeming irrelevance of ideological commitment remains consistent when Zhang Juzheng took over the reigns as Grand Secretary in the 1570s. On the one hand, he cracked down hard on the manifestations of Yangming learning outside of the bureaucracy in the shape of private academies and societies, but on the other hand he was patron to many of the military talents who were associated with the movement and who had served in the campaigns against the Wokou. Qi Jiguang and Tan Lun belonged to this group. This close association with Zhang Juzheng might explain the surprising absence of any reference to Qi's association with Qian Dehong and the Yangming movement in his collected literary works, the *Zhizhitang ji*. Since this was published during the 1570s,[546] it is possible Qi exercised a modicum of self-censorship. The preface to his *nianpu* does clarify this connection, but this was written, compiled and published by one of his sons after his death in 1587,[547] when the Wang Yangming movement was no longer facing state suppression. It seems state suppression was mostly aimed at *xinxue*-adherents who were operating outside of state purview in private academies and societies. Officials with a record

[544] Ivy Maria Lim, *Lineage Society on the Southeastern Coast of China: The Impact of Japanese Piracy in the Sixteenth Century* (Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2010), 134-135, 139-144.
[545] Dardess, *Ming China*, 7. Yan Song's ideological affiliations, on the other hand, I have not been able to ascertain.
[546] Fan, *Qi Jiguang pingzhuan*, 350-352.
[547] Qi Zuoguo 戚祚國, *Qi Shaobao nianpu* 戚少保年譜 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 1-3.

of loyal and effective service could continue their careers, as long as they did not use them as a platform to launch ideological attacks on state orthodoxy. Some would continue to try, however, like abovementioned Li Cai. That the imperial centre was suspicious of the subversive potential of *xinxue* was not entirely paranoid.

Qi Jiguang weathered all these suppression attempts with success. After 1567 he was ordered to serve on the northern frontier to reorganize the defences *in situ*. Building on his reputation and successive promotions he had acquired in the south, he would eventually command 100,000 troops at a critical position north of Beijing, an unprecedented concentration of power in the hands of a military official at this stage of the Ming dynasty. He improved the physical defences of the Great Wall and organized combined-armed units consisting of battle carts armed with canon, cavalry, and infantry. As I will argue in chapter ten, Qi introduced many of his organizational innovations he conceived in the south in his northern army. During much of his time in the north he was under patronage of the powerful Grand Secretary Zhang Juzheng, whom we met in the previous chapter as an important reformer of the empire's finances. His reform zeal extended to the military as well, and for this reason he extended his protection to talents like Qi.[548] It stands to reason that his close association with Zhang and his own possible downplaying of his *xinxue* connections allowed him to keep exercising his extensive authority.

When Zhang Juzheng passed away and the Wanli 萬曆 emperor (r. 1573-1620) came of age and asserted himself to assume the reins of government himself after coming to resent the influence of his erstwhile mentor Zhang, he also progressively purged Zhang's protegees from officialdom. Qi fell victim to this as well late in his career and was deprived of his important command and transferred to remote Guangdong. Here he became ill of health and resigned, although the emperor did not allow him to end his career with a clean record and sent a decree officially dismissing him from service. Qi died soon after.[549] This sad end of the by now truly "lonely general" only goes to show how important personal relations were in maintaining one's career at this time, and it points towards the undoubtedly invaluable role the *xinxue* network played in buttressing Qi's initial meteoric rise.

[548] Ray Huang, *1587, A Year of No Significance: The Ming Dynasty in Decline* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1981), 174-185.
[549] Huang, *1587,* 184.

We have seen how Qi Jiguang seems to have benefitted strongly from his association with *xinxue* literati early in his career. In this chapter I have argued that *xinxue* was able to build bridges between *wen* and *wu* socially and culturally, and its popularity during the sixteenth century can explain the upsurge of literati interest in military and martial affairs. Yangming-thinking could strengthen the legitimacy of the position of the military and martial action in realm, but it could also facilitate the formation of personal ties between military men and literati in and out of government and thereby help buttress Qi Jiguang's career. Furthermore, it facilitated the spread of military knowledge among literati and military men, who used their shared commitment to Yangming learning as channels for knowledge transfer, which was needed during the many crisis the Ming empire faced during the sixteenth century, a facet I will return to in the next chapters. In chapter nine I shall return to the influence of Wang Yangming's governance solutions on the anti-Wokou campaign. In chapter ten I will argue that Qi built his military ideas on those of Wang and took them a step further by integrating the latter's philosophical message in his training methods. However, there are two additional reasons why an association with the *xinxue* network was so beneficial. The first is a new esteem accorded to the notion of friendship. An additional reason was the renaissance of the value system of the knight-errant, with its strong emphasis on reciprocal brotherhood ties, within its ranks. In the next chapter I will explore the ways in which friendship and the moral exemplar of the knight-errant – known for operating outside of bounds of imperial authority - struck a chord with a group of Wang Yangming's followers. In addition, within the knight-errantry tradition forms of social bonding were articulated, the discourse of which was again traceable within Qi Jiguang's writings.