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SUPPRESSING REBELS, MANAGING BUREAUCRATS:

STATE-BUILDING DURING

THE TAIPING REBELLION, 1850-1864

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Suppressing Rebels, Managing Bureaucrats:
State-building During the Taiping Rebellion, 1850-1864

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This study uses the historical case of the Taiping Rebellion (1850-64) to examine the process of state-building in an early modern empire. I focus on the interactions between volatile battles the Qing state launched against the Taipings and the changing social relationships among state actors embedded in preexisting rules and established organizational norms. In the early phase of the rebellion, 1851-1856, Peking tended to address the problem of controlling rebellion-ridden provinces by deploying state agents closely linked to the Manchu center. At the same time, negative sanctions, jurisdictional indifference, and interpersonal conflicts all surged among state agents. The rebels' unpredictable actions, the sporadic sequencing of their battles, and their cross-jurisdictional mobility gave state actors numerous opportunities to act in ways that deviated from state interests. By the late 1850s, a new set of bureaucratic deployments emerged to address these problems. Colleague-officials had become more alike by dint of their ethnicities, provincial origins, and educational backgrounds. These changes in social ties and bureaucratic networks might have redrawn the parameters of the bureaucratic organization, creating a potential danger for central control. Applying the

idea of “vacancy chains,” I demonstrate that vacancies initiated in response to exigent demands in the battlefield could extensively impact the rest of the bureaucratic structure. The dynamics of vacancy chains brought together two distinct fields of social actions, linking rebellion suppression to the formation of the Qing bureaucratic field. By the 1870s, official careers appeared to be more stable than in the tumultuous 1850s, but the state bureaucracy as a whole had undergone—since the second half of the 1850s—a process of detachment. In the wake of the rebellion, provincial officials were more integrated into a provincial bureaucratic system that had been gradually made separate from the metropolitan bureaucracy. I ultimately provide a view of state-building as a continuous process whereby crisis and routine are intertwined, in which state rulers and their agents can at once build a “state” together and take it apart.

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Notes on Technical Matters

This work adopts the *pinyin* romanization system. Postal spellings are used for certain place names, such as Peking, Nanking, Canton, and Yangtze. The names of all Chinese authors of Chinese works are listed in *pinyin* in the bibliography, except when the Wade-Giles system was used in the original references. The names of Chinese authors of English works are listed as they appear in the original publications.

All Chinese names in the text are written first with the person's surname, followed by his given name. To simplify the text I sometimes write "Hong" instead of "Hong Xiuquan," though this is not the way Chinese would call each other in the nineteenth century. In private settings and personal letters, names given on coming of age, *zi* (字), were usually used. Emperor names are identified by their reign titles but not their personal names. Manchu and Mongol names are given in the Chinese form using the *pinyin* system.

In measurement, one Chinese *li* is about one-third of a mile. One Chinese tael is about 1.60 U.S. Dollars and 6s 8d British, according to the exchange rates in 1864.

CHAPTER 1

STATE-BUILDING AND SOCIAL REBELLIONS

This study uses the historical case of the Taiping Rebellion (1850-64)—one of the most subversive social uprisings in late imperial China and the most devastating civil war in world history—to examine the process of state-building in an early modern empire. As a way of gauging how state organizations reproduce themselves, I analyze the numerous organizational actions taken by nineteenth century Chinese state actors when they confronted the Taiping crisis. In this work, I take “state organization” narrowly to mean the government structure that supports a ruling regime, and “state actors” to mean primarily metropolitan rulers residing in Peking and prominent officeholders at the level of provincial government.¹ My focus is the interaction between volatile battles against the Taipings and the changing social relationships among state actors who were embedded in preexisting rules and established organizational norms. To examine the state's counter-mobilization is, thus, to look at the “organizational work” through which state actors could maintain the legitimacy of their rule. Despite their somewhat homogeneous background, nineteenth century Chinese elite state actors were divided by the organization positions they held and the jurisdictional boundaries they maintained (in addition to the factional and ethnic divisions they frequently encountered). How might

¹ Clearly, the “state” is a much more complex institution, of which the government structure is only a part. The choice of looking at the Chinese government structure during the Taiping Rebellion is primarily historiographical, as excellent studies have already shown how village/county level social structures supported and transformed the state during the mid-nineteenth century (see Kuhn 1970). Focusing on elite officials should also raise concerns over a potential bias in my analyses that favor toward those who were politically powerful, who constituted only a small portion of nineteenth century Chinese state actors (and the state's population). However, since the power elite had the capacity to negotiate with the state center (the court) more effectively than lower-ranking officials, the Chinese elite constituted a crucial force that could shape the state organization. Focusing on state elite thus provides us with an important angle to examine the state-building process.

state actors with diverse interests and different understandings of their social positions come to form joint actions in times of state crisis? How could these actions reshape the state organization as a whole?

Answering these questions may advance an understanding of state-building as a continuing process in which state organizational routines and crises intertwine. Whereas routine activities tend to reproduce taken-for-granted organizational actions, crises may require non-routine resolutions that can set new grounds for actions and relations.

Because, to some extent, all organizations experience both, what is at stake is not whether the state organization operates either in a routine or a crisis mode, but the ways in which routines define the limits of possible solutions in times of crisis, and how in the process of resolving a crisis that new historical conditions arise and set different limits for future actions (cf. Thelen and Steinmo 1992:1-32).

The Rise of a Revolutionary Situation

The Taiping (or “Great Peace”) Rebellion that spanned from 1850 to 1864 occupied an important place in the late imperial history of China. Striking at the Qing Dynasty a decade after the Opium War (1838-42), the Taiping movement disrupted the Manchu regime, which had ruled China since 1644, with a force unmatched by previous revolts. The movement's colorful mystique was rooted, both then and now, in the figure of Hong Xiuquan, the Taiping supreme leader, who claimed himself the brother of Jesus and possessor of the ability to channel God’s decrees. Beyond personal charisma, it was the Taipings' military capability that allowed them to achieve swift and alarming success toward their goal of toppling the Manchu regime. Between 1853 and 1864, the Taipings

established a parallel regime in the city of Nanking, controlling a large portion of the most prosperous regions in central-east China. In more than a decade of warfare, Taiping soldiers brought their revolutionary ideology, and sometimes the new social systems that attended it, to about two hundred walled cities and countless villages in China. Urbanites and rural dwellers witnessing the Taipings' arrivals probably found the group to be somewhat obscure, because the Taiping ideology was a hybrid of nineteenth century Christian evangelicalism, ancient Chinese philosophy, and cultural motifs inherited from an ethnic minority in the south called the Hakkas. Most extraordinarily, the group had systematically translated its ideology into political, military, and social organizations—some of them published and disseminated through religious tracts, pamphlets, proclamations, and prayers. The capacity of the Taipings' mobilization likely qualifies them to be considered as the first “modern” revolutionary movement in China's history.

To place this movement in a historical context, we can first trace the state-society relations of the Qing. The Manchu rulers who came to conquer China and establish the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) were faced with the challenge to assert legitimacy as external conquerors and to establish stable institutions that could rule the vast country.² With a population less than half a percent of that of China as a whole,³ the Manchus strove to accommodate the majority Han population while simultaneously preserving their Manchu identity, especially their pastoral lifestyle and combative skills. While adapting to the

² The term “Manchu” refers to the unified state a number of Jurchen tribes formed around the 1630s, immediately prior to their conquest of China. The Jurchens were peoples speaking a language of the Tungusic branch of the Altaic family, living both in pastoral and sedentary lifestyles. They resided in the northeastern frontier of Ming China, including what is now the Russian province of Primorskii krai and China's Heilongjiang province (Elliott 2001:47-52).

³ The Han-to-Manchu ratio is estimated to be 350 to one (Elliott 2001:3); the total Manchu population at the time of conquest (1648) was estimated to range between 1,300,000 and 2,500,000 (Elliott 2001:364).

Han tradition, a set of social and political institutions simultaneously established strict ethnic boundaries that affected social mobility, access of resources, and day-to-day interactions between Hans and Manchus.⁴ Tensions between dependency on Hans and the need to keep them in check configured an important part of the Qing state-building project.

The problem of controlling Han was intricately tied to the prevalent social uprisings that sprang up throughout the Qing's 268-year rule, though not all of them colored by an ethnic overtone. Home-grown challengers cropped up from sources as diverse as Ming loyalists, feudatory lords, members of secret societies and brotherhoods, followers of religious sects, impoverished peasants, and, not least, bandits or brigands. These collective movements did not always aim at overthrowing the states, nor did they always produce ideologically cohesive groups. However, in the eyes of the rulers and government officials they were all potential challengers to state authority—hence dubbed as “*fei*” (匪), which can be translated as “rebels” or “bandits.” Coping with these internal challengers, often by means of suppression, constituted a crucial part of the state's consolidation of power. Well-known predecessors of the Taipings include the Three Feudatories Rebellion in the seventeenth century, the numerous Muslim uprisings in the eighteenth century, and the White Lotus Rebellion that lasted for almost a decade between 1796 and 1804.

The Taipings emerged in the late 1840s, a period when social uprisings generally surged across the country (Yang 1975), challenging the “Mandate of Heaven” of the

⁴ For an overview of early Manchu state-building, see Wakeman (1985) and Rawski (1998). For analyses specifically discussing the Manchus' ethnic and cultural identity, see Crossley (1997, 1999); Elliott (2001); Michael (1942); and Rhodes (2000).

Manchu regime.⁵ Most Taiping members initially came from the lowest strata of rural Guangxi; particularly, they were peasants and manual laborers from an ethnic minority, the Hakkas. When local officials recognized the group as a threat to the area's law and order, a political movement was well under way. For some years, the group had armed and trained its members, while contemplating—at least among its leadership—a full-fledged uprising to overthrow the Qing. By early 1851, after a series of skirmishes with official troops, the Taipings' political ambition surfaced as a major anti-government force, quickly seizing the attention of the Qing state and holding it for the next fifteen years.

While rooting its ideology in Christianity, a foreign and likely contemptible religion to most rural Chinese at the time (Cohen 1961), the Taiping movement nonetheless drew on familiar grievances, appealing to its followers on both economic and political grounds. The Taipings' first proposed a kind of spiritual community that united followers as brothers and sisters under God; in a tightly knit network, they worshiped their leader, Hong Xiuquan, whose word was considered the representative of God (Hamberg 1854; Spence 1996). While the Ten Commandments were the basis for the group's beliefs, Taiping messages nonetheless resonated in local religion practices (Weller 1994; but see Boardman 1972; Shih 1967; Wagner 1982). More welcomed by followers was perhaps the discipline of Taiping soldiers: those smoking opium, gambling, stealing, or raping were severely punished. Enforcing these rules might have enhanced the moral purity of the Taipings, unmatched by other rebels, much less by Qing

⁵ For an overview of the history of the Taiping movement in English, see Hamberg (1854), Jen (1973), and Michael (1966). In the Chinese language, readers can consult the authoritative works by Luo Ergang (1937, 1955a, 1955b) and Jen Yu-wen (1944a, 1944b, 1962). Two recent studies of the military history of the movement are Chen et al. (2002) and Li (1982). Lindley ([1866] 1970), an Englishman who became an advisor of the East King, provided an inner look at Taiping military actions in the later phase of the movement.

officials or imperial soldiers. Their visions of a utopian state spoke well to the desperate conditions experienced by peasants and the marginal population in the post-Opium War years that was plagued with crop failures, natural disasters, and predatory banditry. In their ideas, lands would be redistributed, taxes restructured, and suppressions of the poor disappear. Reorganizing gender relations was perhaps the most revolutionary change of all: women were trained as soldiers, living separately from men and having a nearly equal status otherwise unknown in nineteenth century China. The receptions of the Taipings were clearly divided between the elite class and impoverished peasants. The Taipings' anti-Confucian stance also explains why state officials, who were both politically and culturally elite in the state, would find the rebels ethically and culturally repulsive, and would be highly unlikely to defect to their side.

By 1853 tens of thousands of committed Taiping soldiers completed a march of nearly a thousand miles from Guangxi. Engaging in heavy fighting along the way, the rebels reached the lower Yangtze and eventually settled in Nanking, a major economic, cultural and historical center of China. From 1853 to 1864, Nanking served as the Taiping Heavenly Capital, from which the rebels dispatched several expeditionary forces to expand their sphere of influence. By the mid-1850s, the dominance of the Taipings spanned a vast expanse of the Qing territory in Jiangsu, Anhui, Hunan, Hubei and Zhejiang provinces. Before their defeat in 1864, the rebels had left their imprints on all but two of China's eighteen provinces. It is estimated that Taiping soldiers were over one million strong, fighting imperial troops in scattered but prolonged battles in various scales. Furthermore, other rebellious movements followed suit and mushroomed across the country, most powerful among them including the Nian Rebellions (1853-1868), the

Muslim rebellions in the southwest (1855-1873), and the more long-lasting Muslim challengers in the northwest (1862-1877). The proliferation and diversification of state contenders thus deepened the crisis initiated by the Taipings.

The numerous revolutionary forces were both abetted by and contributed to the organization “chaos” in provincial bureaucracies. Although divisions and conflicts among state actors always existed, as did the ambivalent relationship between Peking rulers and distantly located provincial agents, the Taiping movement tended to increase the salience of these preexisting divisions. Because the rebels fought across many provinces, officials and commanders, who were dispersed in space, not only competed over resources and personnel, but also shirked their duties and blamed one another for their own failure. Inter-official conflicts thus spread widely as the Taipings changed their course of actions and expanded their movement over time. By the mid-1850s, the Qing state could barely contain the proliferation of the challengers and control the intensifying organization chaos within its government.

The circumstances facing the Manchu state easily qualify as a “revolutionary situation”: the emergence of powerful contenders challenging the state authority, the commitment of a significant portion of the population to the contenders, and the inability or unwillingness of the state to suppress the contenders (Tilly 1993:10). Writing in 1856, Karl Marx called the Taiping movement “the Chinese revolution,” predicting the imminent collapse of the Celestial Empire. He even went further to place the Taipings within a global trend of revolutions since 1848; accordingly, the Taipings would “throw the spark into the overloaded mine of the present industrial system and cause the explosion of the long-prepared general crisis, which, spreading abroad, will be closely

followed by political revolutions on the Continent” (Marx and Engels 1972:4). From a historical-comparative perspective, the Taiping Rebellion is a rich case to illustrate a process of state-building in the midst of both threats from domestic challengers and “disorganized” state actors.

State Response to Challenge

How did the Qing state respond to the Taipings? What kind of strategies did Manchu rulers and state actors seek to resolve the crisis, one that was both external and internal to the state organization? How might their attempts to cope with the rebels shape the state organization as a whole? While these questions are here posed in the context of late imperial China, they also allow us to examine broadly the process of early modern state-building in the midst of revolutionary situations. Existing studies tend to focus on the causes or consequences of rebellions and revolutions; the well-known work by Skocpol (1979) and Goldstone (1991), for example, both analyze the Taiping Rebellion (albeit with different emphases) in causal frameworks that link state breakdowns to the contentious events.⁶ From their studies, we learn much about the factors or causal mechanisms through which these contentious events take place (see also Tilly 1978; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Eisenstadt 1978; Goodwin 2001; Foran 2005), but relatively little about the interactive and organizational processes in which state actors react to challenges.

⁶ Due to the Taipings’ ultimate demise, Skocpol (1979) downplays the importance of the Taiping Rebellion because it did not conform to the definition of a social revolution—where fundamental structural changes have to be attributed to the revolutionary actions.

How, in the process of responding to threats, might the state organization be reshaped?⁷ My focal subject of analysis is the state organization, particularly its bureaucracy—a set of actors who were embedded in some institutional rules and practices, and were confronted with a more or less shared problem.⁸ Although organizational outcomes are important—in this case, the success of the Qing to eradicate the Taipings—I am primarily interested in the social processes that have led to these outcomes. To the extent that the state organization is not reducible to an apparatus through which state actors accumulate political or economic advantages (Evans 1995; Friedland and Alford 1991), organizational actions should be studied as social and cultural phenomena, sites where actors sought not only to pursue their interests but to create meanings and make sense of their social surroundings. Even when it takes a specific organizational form, bureaucracy is a social world in itself: norms and formal rules define boundaries of actions, and orient actors towards particular relations with one another (Weber 1978: 217-226). In this study, I attempt to find out how formidable domestic challengers shape these institutional processes.

An Analogy from State Formation Theory

The Taiping Rebellion was both a revolutionary uprising and a civil war.⁹

Because warfare was the center of the struggle, we may draw analogies from the

⁷ Social movement scholars pose this question as an issue of “how movements matter” (Giugni, McAdam and Tilly 1999; Amenta 2006). While most studies on social movement outcomes focus on the impact of social movement organizations on policy change, I follow a different direction and focus on potential changes in the state institutional configurations that include but not exhaust the policy domain.

⁸ Of course, a state consists of more than its bureaucracy. In a case of social rebellion of nineteenth century China, the military organization, systems of communal defense, and the state’s financial institutions were vital elements for state responses. In the subsections below, I explain why a focus on bureaucracy and not other sectors of the state may be more appropriate in this case.

“bellicist” perspective of state formation¹⁰ in order to develop a particular analytic direction for the empirical question at hand.¹¹

Tilly’s (1990) theory of state making provides an initial foundation, for the theory emphasizes the role of warfare in changing the organizations of and relations within states. Based on early European history, Tilly’s main question is how “national states”—a new political organizational form—emerged from a system of inter-state warfare, and from the various capacities by which rulers reacted to wars. The answer, according to Tilly, lies in the rising cost and expanding scale of wars after the 1490s. To alleviate the financial burden, territorial rulers needed to extract resources (funds and manpower) from different segments of the population. Their capacity to do so depended on whether the state was capital-intensive, coercion-intensive, or both. The various coercion-capital arrangements then determined the kind of allies with whom rulers could bargain. In capital-intensive states, merchants and capitalists supplied the needed resources, while landlords supported rulers in coercion-intensive states. In addition, rulers also struck bargains with the peasants—another source of taxes. All these alliances and bargains, however, came at a cost: in return, the state often guaranteed the population’s right to make claims on the state, giving rise to the notion of “citizenship.” In a parallel process,

⁹ The rebellion fulfills at least two criteria of a civil war. First, it was a massive, enduring armed conflict between two parties within a territorial state; second, the challengers had established a parallel regime, with some administrative structures, counteracting Peking.

¹⁰ See a succinct review of this perspective in Gorski (2003:5-10), who also names the set of relevant theories that emphasize the roles of warfare the “bellicist model” of state formation.

¹¹ These are analogies because the Taiping case, as it occurred in the late imperial period, cannot address the emergence of the “national state” as an organization form (see Tilly 1975). By the mid-nineteenth century, the centralized state had already been well in place in China. Even after the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911, the state form has been more or less intact. The analogy is nonetheless appropriate, because by the dawn of the Taiping Rebellion, the Qing state had completed more or less territorial consolidation and established a relatively stable state institution. The structure of its bureaucracy, for example, had experienced very minimal changes for a century by the beginning of 1850.

states could increasingly penetrate society by setting up direct ruling mechanisms, such as standing armies, standardized tax collection, and bureaucratic controls. The organizational form of a centralized state thus gradually took shape in the context of inter-state struggles, a process that represents the duality of “war making and state making” (Tilly 1985).

My simplified version of Tilly’s model likely flattens nuances and misses numerous variations across states, but the main message is clear: warfare infuses state rulers with authority to establish anew their relations with particular segments of society. Consequently, new institutions also arose around these emerging relations, forging a tighter—perhaps more controlled—link between the rulers and the ruled.¹² Using this analogy, our analytical focus in the Taiping case can become a bit narrower. Instead of a broad search for “state responses,” we may examine the organizational and relational aspects of the state’s reactions to challengers, focusing on the development of institutional arrangements, organizational structures, and social relationships over the course of military conflicts. In short, state-building is a process when the formation of social relations interacts with the development of new social institutions.

Although Tilly’s model provides us with useful analogies, the Qing experiences differ from those of early modern Europe in at least four critical ways. Firstly, the primary role of domestic revolts in shaping Chinese state institutions (Wong 1997:93-101) stands in contrast to European states’ preoccupation with inter-state warfare (see also Downing 1992; Ertman 1997; Centeno 2002). Domestic challenges in late imperial

¹² It should be noted that war making is not the only path to state-building (e.g., Skowronek 1982) and centralization is not the necessary outcome of state-building (e.g., Barkey 1994; Clemens 2006). I will elaborate these variations with respect to the Taiping Rebellion below.

China generally followed a bottom-up process: revolts tended to affect local and provincial administrations before their impact reached the national level. As we shall see in the Taiping case, revolts that spread across provincial jurisdictions gradually impinged on the administrative relations among provincial heads. Our analytical focus shall include not only the relationship between rulers and their intermediaries, but those relations among administrative units and among elites (cf. Lachmann 2000). Then, tracing upward, we can see how localized relationships (local within a bureaucratic segment) could shape power configurations at the national level.

Secondly, whereas European rulers could bargain or reformulate their relationships with a variety of autonomous social groups (e.g., nobility, landlords, clergy, merchants, urban oligarchies, the parliament, etc.), Qing rulers tended to lack these options (Wong 1997:102). Powerful social groups in China were often absorbed into and patronized by the state. As a consequence, state rulers tended to seek support from members of literati gentry and their government counterparts, state office holders. It seems at first glance that a highly integrated polity would give rulers the advantage to mobilize their agents effectively in times of crisis. But these established relations also imposed institutional constraints for new actions. For example, bargaining new relations with the gentry or with state officials would mean changing the entrenched networks and inter-group relations that supported the polity itself. In the Taiping case, we then turn our attention to the question of how new solutions could emerge given established political rules and institutional constraints.

Thirdly, Tilly tends to represent the relations between European rulers and their targets of bargaining solely based on exchanges of resources and power (to lay claims on

the state). We do not know, however, whether rulers could possibly negotiate with their ruling subjects without losing their credibility to dominate. Perhaps because these targets were autonomous holders of resources, they could grant obedience to the state in a relatively free manner. Qing rulers faced a different situation, because they needed to rely on groups that had already established political ties with the court—ties that were imbued with deep historical and institutional meanings legitimizing the rulers “Mandate of Heaven.” As the gentry and state officials were part of the legitimate order, any reformulation of their relations with the state would entail some changes in the established meaning of power, claims, and obligations attached to their roles. The challenge facing the Qing rulers was the maintenance of their legitimacy in the midst of volatile situations.

Lastly, the timing of the Taiping Rebellion in the course of Qing history (in its 207th year of reign) permits us to investigate state-building at a time when state institutions had been firmly established. By the dawn of the Taiping Rebellion, the Qing state came close to resembling the “modern” state form familiar to sociologists. The Qing had features such as the state monopolization of violence within the state (Kuhn 1970), a centralized bureaucracy in which offices and the officials were more or less detached from one another (Meztger 1973), a state-run welfare system serving as a security net in times of market fluctuation and natural disasters (Will 1990; Will and Wong 1991), and a state-sponsored examination system that infused moral training in members of the literati and integrated them into the state apparatus (Elman 2000; Man-Cheong 2004). While its extent of patrimonialism is debatable (Kuhn 1990; Weber 1978:1047-51), the Qing by the mid-nineteenth century was clearly a centralized

bureaucratic polity (Eisenstadt 1963), if not a specifically modern one (as is argued by Wong [1997]). To examine Qing response to the Taiping War, the languages of “consolidation” and “construction” are perhaps less useful than those of “institutional maintenance,” “organizational reproduction,” and “social reconstruction.” Thus, our analytical direction shall shift from an outcome-focus (how did an organizational form called the “modern state” arise?) to a concentration on state-building as a process (how did an established, well consolidated state cope with challenges, reproduce itself, and reconstruct state-society relations?).¹³

My outline here follows Weber’s general approach to the “state.” Not only is the state a social organization supported by rulers’ monopolization of collective violence and a framework of legitimation ([1918]1958:78), it is also a system of power associations in which rulers, administrative staff, autonomous status groups and ruling subjects interact and form more or less stable relations over time (Weber 1978:13-14). These political relations are imbued with the meaning of legitimacy, the belief that gives the dominant their credibility to rule (Weber 1978:212). State crisis commonly unhinges some of these relations and questions the “validity” of rulers’ legitimacy (cf. Habermas 1973:97-102). Indeed, for Chinese dynasties, internal uprisings—perhaps more than foreign warfare—had been interpreted as signs of imperial decline (Waley-Cohen 1999). Social rebellions on the scale of the Taipings could easily undermine the emperor’s “Mandate of Heaven” (Perry 2002).

Informed by an existing perspective of state formation, this discussion has suggested some key elements for analyzing the Taiping case. To trace how the state

¹³ This approach to understanding the “state” has been proposed by Bourdieu (1999) and Mitchell (1991).

responded to its (internal) challengers, we shall focus on the range of limitations the Qing rulers might have faced. These limits relate to the availability of alternative supporters and the institutional constraints imposed on particular strategies, especially regarding questions of legitimacy. These limits, I argue, are important if we are to understand how domestic challengers impinge on the continuous process of state-building.

Possible Relational Strategies

How exactly do rulers respond to internal uprisings? It may be reasonable to first mention the possibility of using military repression, as many early modern rulers had done. However, this option should be of limited use if we closely follow the definition of a revolutionary situation—recall that state rulers in a revolutionary situation are either unable or unwilling to suppress threatening contenders (Tilly 1993:10). When violent coercion is deemed illegitimate, it can instigate further revolts or resistance (della Porta 1995; Davenport 2005). It follows that rulers would likely need to explore other possible strategies to cope with threats.

“When faced with resistance, dispersed or massive, what did rulers do? They bargained,” says Tilly (1990:101). We may follow this suggestion and speak of some kind of “relational strategies” in addition to, or in place of, military repression. By these strategies, I mean the rearrangement of existing power relationships, or invention of new ones across important status groups (whether elite or not, challengers or not), such that rulers could place themselves in strategic positions vis-à-vis others to address the crisis of threats. In this study, I stress that new relational configurations afford opportunities to

amass resources and redefine boundaries and meanings of interests, although sometimes leading to contradictory results.¹⁴

Conceptually, rulers may negotiate with a range of alternative groups (erstwhile challengers, potential defectors, institutional allies, or neutral bystanders) by various strategies (co-optation, bargaining, coalition, ad hoc alliances, mediation, etc.). They may seek coalitions with non-challenging parties to suppress challengers; actively dissipate alliances between challengers and other groups; create new social actors to regulate existing power relations; attempt to keep non-challenging groups in a neutral position; and, not least, appeal to foreign powers by renegotiating international relations. What follows are several anecdotal examples from studies on state formation. Not all of them are about rulers responding to domestic uprisings, but they should inform us of the importance of relational arrangements in a state-building process.

The first example demonstrates how existing relations among non-challenging parties can be redefined. In explaining the rise of absolutist states, Perry Anderson (1974) argues that demographic and economic changes undermined the interests of landed nobility, who then allied themselves with state rulers to suppress peasant uprisings. Absolutist rule appears to be an unintended consequence of class relations. Again, according to Tilly's (1990) model, early modern European state rulers drew strength by undermining the mediating role of nobility who had prevented the central state from extracting resources directly from the population. At times, capitalists arose as alternative allies, allowing the state to bypass the nobility.

¹⁴ From a functional framework, S. N. Eisenstadt argues that the values that bind social relationships together may become incompatible to the redistribution of resources and the rearrangements of elite relations. Thus, new political goal attainments, assumed to be coherent across elites, can produce internal strains to the state (Eisenstadt 1958:71-72).

Beyond existing relations, rulers can construct new status groups and through them forge a tighter relation between metropolitan centers and periphery. The court of Louis XIII, under Richelieu, famously created the institution of *intendants*, who seized control of taxation and a host of state functions at the local level (Gruder 1968). The system was later reinforced and regularized by the court of Louis XIV after the Fronde Rebellion (1648-53), hence consolidating the absolutist era of France. Peter the Great (1689-1725) adopted a similar strategy in 1722 when he decreed the Table of Ranks, a hierarchical system that arranged state agents (military, civil, and court services) into 14 levels, wherein every agent, regardless of their lineage, had to work his way up the imperial bureaucracy (Meehan-Waters 1980). The general principle of these mechanisms is to create new political actors by absorbing otherwise autonomous state agents into the centralized legitimate order.

Relational strategies are political as well as religious and cultural, as demonstrated by Frederick William of Brandenburg-Prussia. He instituted a religious transformation in the state structure by installing Calvinist and “foreigners” to circumvent the power of territorial estates, which until the mid-1660s had been dominated by Lutherans. Gorski (2003:88) demonstrates that this confessional rearrangement further allowed rulers to impose a disciplinary culture on the state, turning citizens into subjects of control. The Qing’s Yonzheng emperor (1723-35) likewise disciplined his state agents by cultivating a furtive bureaucratic culture through a system of confidential reports—palace memorials—communicated directly from state agents to the throne. With this secretive form of information-gathering, state rulers could pit agents against one another and regulate the power between the inner and outer court (Bartlett 1991; Wu 1970).

The most direct response to internal challengers, perhaps, is cooptation. Karen Barkey (1994) has demonstrated how challengers could be absorbed into state apparatuses in the seventeenth century Ottoman Empire. Rather than completely uprooting the power of state contenders, Ottoman sultans granted bandit leaders governorships in return for their loyalty and governance in peripheral regions. Because bandit leaders had embedded ties and authority in peripheral territories, they were important mediators brokering the Ottoman state expansion project. Turning bandits into intermediaries of rule allowed the central state to reach the society without relying on costly centralized structures, such as bureaucracy or standing armies. This patron-client relationship between state rulers and banditry then constituted an important part of state centralization, a process that did not require the splintering of local authority, as was the case in most European models of state-building.

How well do these strategies fit the Qing case during the Taiping Rebellion? We can begin with cooptation. Awarding challengers with governorships was almost out of the question for the Qing, because this would mean a major break with the official selection mechanism through state-sponsored examinations. Furthermore, unlike an expanding Ottoman Empire that could generate new official positions over time, the Qing administrative apparatus was, by the mid-nineteenth century, rather static. The number of provinces, positions, and ranks in local government had been more or less fixed for at least a century. The only incorporation of the Taipings that could have occurred took place in the military, where a small number of surrendered Taiping generals were recruited to serve and lead the imperial troops counteracting the Taipings. Government officials, however, were extremely cautious about such “pacification” projects. In their

internal documents, officials broached the issues of the rebels' notorious disciplinary problems and the conflicts between official troops and the turncoats. State actors' concerns about loyalty were obvious, but, more importantly, Taiping generals and their rank-and-files were often uprooted soldiers, lacking the important local influence Ottoman bandit leaders could offer to the state. All these factors might have discouraged the Qing rulers from incorporating or bargaining with the rebels (and when bargaining had occurred, it was likely done cautiously).

In thinking of the kinds of actors and relational strategies available for Chinese state-building, R. Bin Wong argues:

European agendas of rule differed dramatically from those in China. In Europe, centralizing territorial rulers competed with institutionally distinct and powerful aristocracies, clerics, and urban elites... In China, the emperor worked to develop and sustain a bureaucracy able to meet routine tasks of administration and respond to crises swiftly and effectively. After 1100 there were no elites with strongly institutionalized corporate positions of power and authority independent of the state. The state's relationships to its elites therefore fell into a set of patterns unlike those found in Europe. (Wong 1997:102)

Lacking a nobility, ecclesiastical influence, or a burgeoning bourgeoisie, Chinese rulers were relatively free of competition in their consolidation project.¹⁵ At first glance, it seems that an integrated polity suggests great strength for the state to respond to crisis. Yet the paucity of powerful status groups may also stifle organizational flexibility. Qing rulers seemed to lack new alternatives from which they could draw material, personnel, organization or cultural resources. Even though forming alliances with autonomous

¹⁵ The seventeenth century Rebellion of Three Feudatories (1673-81), led by Wu Sangui, was similar to revolts by landed nobility. After the rebellion was suppressed, uprisings from powerful feudal lords largely disappeared from the later history of the Qing. Most social revolts throughout the rest of the Qing history came from the less privileged segment of the population (Perry 1980; Chesneaux 1973) or the changing roles of the gentry (Rankin 1986).

power groups is potentially dangerous, the existence of such an alternative, I will argue, offers the opportunity for rulers to act differently.

Qing response to the Taipings and Its Consequences

Is the above conjecture reasonable considering the historical facts? Philip Kuhn's (1970) seminal work on the Qing response to the Taiping Rebellion provides support for my arguments. His study also suggests new ways for us to examine how the Qing innovated strategies in the face of limitations. Let me first outline Kuhn's argument.

In *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China*, Kuhn (1970) shows that the Qing indeed had been left with very few options when the Taipings emerged in the early 1850s. The state's two regular military forces, the Green Standards and Eight Banners, were largely incapable of coping with yet another armed conflict after their defeats in the Opium War. To fortify defense at the village level, the state adopted a traditionally available model by arming and training civilians in the form of village organizations called "*tuan*." Unsurprisingly, arming civilians was a thorny issue given the prevalence of social revolts. Here the literati gentry were given a new role to regulate otherwise uncontrollable local militarization. Formally supervised under local officials, members of lower-ranking gentry (who shared with officials similar social status as candidates in the state civil service examination) were responsible for recruiting fighters and pooling resources for militia activities. First serving as volunteers or as temporarily paid soldiers, militia groups gradually transformed from auxiliary forces into nearly regular troops, on which the state heavily depended to counteract the Taipings.

The transformation of the militia movement was marked by the rise of the Hunan Army, directly led by a high-ranking Han civilian official, Zeng Guofan, also a gentry with a top degree. Retaining essential features of local militia by exploiting regional identities and the personal ties between soldiers and generals, the Hunan Army had become a self-financed and semi-professional force, able to cross provincial borders and defend other communities.¹⁶ This process of the professionalization and, more importantly, nationalization of the militia movement gradually turned the imperial campaign around. By 1861, the Hunan Army successfully retook Anqing (the capital city of Anhui Province), beginning a series of victories over the Taipings and leading to the rebels' final demise in 1864 (see Chapter 4).

For his leadership in successful campaigns, the state granted Zeng Guofan the highest post of the governor-general of Liangjiang in 1861, allowing him to command the military forces of four important provinces in the Lower-Yangtze. The Manchu court probably faced a dilemma by allowing a Han official to accrue tremendous military and administrative power. This concern was raised by other Han officials as well; they warned against setting a precedent for a governor-general to lead armed forces composed of his own provincial natives.

Let me simply outline the implications of turning the gentry into militia managers. First, Kuhn reveals the recurrent importance of the gentry class as a source of state mobilization not merely because the state had run out of alternatives, but because the gentry were deeply embedded in social life at the village and town levels. These gentry members, called *shisheng*, had long been bureaucratized and incorporated into the state

¹⁶ Financing the Hunan Army and militia troops depended on another organizational innovation. By means of a new tax system—the *lijin*—provincial officials could levy goods along significant points at the Yangtze. More importantly, funds collected tended to stay in the province for local use.

apparatus through the civil service examination (Elman 2000). Not all gentry members were office holders, but non-official gentry usually received some form of state benefits, and remained culturally elite at the community levels (Chang 1955). They were an important part of the state's legitimate order.

As Kuhn argues, existing organizational forms were readily available for mobilization of resources and personnel for nearly a decade prior to the Taiping uprising:

The interpersonal format—personal acquaintance and a history of customary cooperation among the gentry of a certain area—was already available on the basis of pre-existing multiplex and extended-multiplex association, the *she* [associations]. These associations were now converted to the purposes of local militarization. (Kuhn 1970:72)

It is true that the state did not have many alternatives as to the kinds of status groups or elite institutions from which central rulers could seek support. But the Qing was able to exploit an existing framework by turning inwardly to those who were legitimized by the state. (This “inward” looking will reappear when I discuss in subsequent chapters how Qing rulers mobilized existing state bureaucrats to counteract the Taipings.)

How did rulers keep the militia organizations under control? The answer lies in the legitimate claims the state could make over the gentry. For example, district magistrates—the highest state official in a county—were invariably the formal heads of militia forces (Kuhn 1970:101). The rise of gentry power would raise few problems of legitimacy because magistrates and gentry members were traditional allies in maintaining social order (Watt 1972). Whenever it was possible, the state further absorbed gentry managers into the formal administration; for example, some militia associations had assumed the functions of local defense similar to a government organ (Kuhn 1970:214).

While the state seemed to be much more cautious in the management of militia movements, other centralized functions had begun to devolve into the hands of local officials, gentry, and community notables. The financial system by which provincial officials could raise funds to support militia troops is one of these functions. The *lijin* system, a new tax levied on consumer goods to fund, for example, the Hunan Army, permitted the provincial governors to bypass the Board of Revenue in Peking and keep these funds for local and provincial goals. With respect to various aspects of public life, state bureaucrats after the Taiping Rebellion tended to delegate tasks such as crisis-relief and community security to literati gentry and local notables, hence emboldening their local power in the post-rebellion periods. The center of political significance in late Qing, at the level of public life, appeared to have shifted from Peking to provinces, where regional officials and their gentry counterparts were becoming more autonomous from the state (Michael 1949).

However, a simple dichotomy between centralization and decentralization does not capture the flexible political arrangement that had been evolved out of the counter-Taiping experiences. Kuhn suggests that the delegation of militia organization to the gentry group allowed the state to control rampant corruption, frequently committed by non-official administrators such as clerks and magistrates' runners. Raising the influence of militia associations had shifted local power "from a relatively uncontrollable and dangerous group (the clerks and runners) to a relatively sympathetic and predictable group (the gentry), or so it could be rationalized" (Kuhn 1970:214). The flexibility in this strategy is that the existing institutional framework could absorb any new roles taken up by the gentry without disrupting the state's legitimate order. New strategies coping

with the Taipings thus appeared less a deviation from routine bureaucratic practices than an improvement to local administration.

The tenacity of the centralized state organization is also reflected in the decade of postwar political stability, called the “Tongzhi Restoration” (ca. 1868-1881). During this period, officials made prominent through victories over the Taipings, primarily the networks of Zeng Guofan and his gentry circle, spearheaded a reform and modernization program, known as the “self-strengthening” movement. These reforms intended mainly to modernize the military and industrial infrastructure of China, attempting to turn the Chinese state into a modernized empire comparable to their western counterparts. Mary Clabaugh Wright (1957) argues that it was the reformers' Confucian moralism and their loyalty to the Manchu court that had sustained the state's recovery after the Taiping Rebellion until the early 1880s (see also Bays 1970).

Polachek (1975), however, argues that the reformist officials were less unified, and their political actions in the post-Taiping periods did not seek to restore the old order (see also, Pong 1994). Rather, the struggles between various high officials and local gentry over state finance (e.g., the *lijin* system) revealed deliberate efforts of high officials to construct a tighter and narrower network of their own (Polachek 1975:256). There was also evidence indicating that existing (survived) officials after the rebellion proposed to “purify” the state bureaucracy by regulating the access into the state officialdom of new men—officials who attained state offices during the rebellion period through military merits or office purchase¹⁷ (Kuhn 1995:322).

¹⁷ Although the state did not prohibit office purchase prior to the Taiping Rebellion, the practice was encouraged as a means to raise funds for the counter-Taiping campaign. Since only lower-ranking offices could be purchased, the practice did not immediately affect the state officialdom at the higher level.

In this study, I shall evaluate the impact of the Taiping Rebellion through an understanding of the power relationship between the central and provincial administrations at various levels—the mutual control strategies exercised by both rulers and provincial officials, the relationships among provincial jurisdictions, and the long term changes in the ways officials mobilized across the sectors of metropolitan government and provincial administration. Despite the seemingly critical role provincial officials played in mediating the relationship between the Peking center and local gentry, little historical work on the Taiping Rebellion has thus far systematically analyzed how this mediating structure—the provincial officialdom—shaped the overall counter-Taiping campaign. Similarly, we still lack a detailed study of how state response to the Taipings had been exercised at the level of provincial governments. Focusing on the Qing provincial administration perhaps provides the best means for us to apply the analytic approach I have laid out above. To fruitfully understand state responses to domestic challengers as a broad social process of state-building, I have turned to the configurations of ruler-subject relations, the issues of legitimacy embedding these relations, and the process of organizational reproduction.

From Battlefield to Bureaucracy

Qing provincial bureaucracy was the very site on which these processes could interact. It was probably the most important intermediary through which the Manchu court could extend some control over its Han subjects. Provincial officials were mostly Confucian in philosophical training, and they were gentry in status, but office-holding had made them a special kind of state agent. Once they entered the officialdom, officials

served the state for life, presumably in complete submission to central directives and decisions. Inside the bureaucracy, officials were bound by a myriad of organizational rules, institutional rituals and norms. Almost to an extreme extent, the *Great Qing Code* and the *Administrative Statutes of the Board of Civil Office* prescribed every detail of the official's bureaucratic life, from the frequency of their evaluations and the language used in bureaucratic reports, to their appropriate headwear and the social etiquette between high-ranking officials and their subordinates (Metzger 1973). State officials were representatives of the emperor, and thus they were also conduits of state legitimacy. By enacting and elaborating on existing institutional rules, much of the officials' daily operations contributed to the reproduction of the state organization.

There are three additional reasons why the provincial administration should be more analytically central in a study of the counter-Taiping campaign. First, whether they had combat experience or not, bureaucrats were often responsible for commanding military forces in times of revolt, and provincial governors were (in name) the commanders-in-chief of all provincial troops. Second, the state at times gave military personnel bureaucratic positions as rewards for their performance in suppressing social unrests; yet successful civilian bureaucrats rarely went to take up formal positions in the military. This asymmetric flow between state personnel reflects a strong preference toward civilian bureaucracy as a site of privilege and power (commonly known as “*zhong wen qing wu*” 重文輕武). Third, widespread revolts spilling across provincial borders figured significantly in the distribution of resources and personnel across administrative units. For example, during the Taiping War, provincial officials struggled over funds for

their own troops, and pointed fingers when things went wrong; these inter-jurisdiction relations then directly undermined the effectiveness of the imperial campaign.

Provincial officialdom was thus the most important site for the Qing to counter-mobilize, beyond its military forces. Given the limitation of communication techniques, and the might of the challengers, the Manchu court could not always directly give instruction on the battlefields, even if it wanted to. Delegating authority to provincial officials and military generals was a common way to solve this problem. Yet, to control the effectiveness of the officials would mean resorting to bureaucratic strategies by means of promoting, dismissing, and/or transferring state agents. These strategies then indirectly shaped the battlefields, but could immediately change the social relationships established within the bureaucratic structure.

These points direct us lastly to a set of specific questions regarding the Qing response to the Taipings at the level of provincial bureaucracy—a case of state-building in crisis:

- 1) What were the bureaucratic strategies—or rearrangement of bureaucratic relations—that rulers adopted to counter the Taipings? What impact did these strategies have on the counter-Taiping campaign?
- 2) How did established institutional norms and organizational constraints shape the rulers' strategies? How then did state actors formulate new solutions given those constraints? How did they maintain their legitimacy if accepted rules were broken?
- 3) To what extent could rulers achieve a dual goal of controlling the rebels and managing provincial officials at the same time?

- 4) If relational strategies changed, how and why did they change over time?
- 5) To what extent did bureaucratic strategies exercised at a particular time restructure the state bureaucracy as a whole? How did they affect central-provincial relations?

In summary, while I do not deviate from the “bellicist” assumptions of state-building, I shift my attention to bureaucratic relations, one of the few resources from which Qing rulers could draw in order to cope with domestic challengers. I build my analysis not on the battlefields or the direct contact between the state and its challengers, but turn to the indirect “translation” of actions—that is, the ways in which state responses in the battlefields brought to bear certain bureaucratic interactions, relations, and decisions that mattered to the relevant state actors and to the state organization as a whole. From the perspective of central rulers, the challenge emerging out of the Taiping Rebellion involved two mutually reinforcing processes: rebellion suppression and bureaucratic control. Ideally, after repeated encounters with the challengers, the state might learn how to deploy its state agents more efficiently, to the extent that the state can suppress rebellions and at the same time keep official agents under control. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, the translation between the battlefields and the bureaucratic structure was less than perfect, in part because state agents were constantly divided and re-divided by the changing battlefield conditions. Furthermore, rather than serving Peking center as means of bureaucratic control, established organizational rules and practices became resources by which state officials could maneuver to cope with uncertainty. These complications suggest that state reproduction in the midst of chaos should be an important motif in understanding Qing response to the Taiping challenge.

Structure and Practices of Provincial Bureaucracy

To place the upcoming discussions in a proper context, we can begin by describing provincial administration as an intermediary of the Qing rule.¹⁸ Outside the central government in Peking, a total of eighteen provinces formed the basic administrative units in China Proper (see Figure 1.1, p. 41). Excepting some variations, every two provinces were under the supervision of a governor-general (*zongdu* 總督), the highest-ranking administrator, who wielded overall executive, judicial, and military power. Subordinated to the governor-general in each province were usually three other “prominent officials” (*dayuan* 大員)—provincial governor (*xunfu* 巡撫), provincial treasurer (*buzhengshi* 布政使), and provincial judge (*anchashi* 按察使).¹⁹ Figure 1.2 (p. 42) illustrates variations in the provincial structures with respect to the relations among the four top officials. Characteristics of Qing administration, these positions were not defined by their responsible task domains, in spite of their formal titles. During times of rebellious activities or military conflicts, all of these top officials were expected to lead forces to counteract state enemies. In routine operations, overlapping jurisdictions and dual hierarchies deliberately allowed provincial agents to monitor one other.

Beneath these top positions were a host of lower-ranking circuit intendants, prefects, salt intendants, grain transport intendants, censors, prefects, and district magistrates; though less powerful, these tended to have closer relations with local elites

¹⁸ In this discussion, I focus on the top level of provincial bureaucracy. For the operations of lower-ranking provincial agents, such as district magistrates, see Watt (1972) and Ch’ü (1962). For the bureaucratic structure of the central administration, see Bartlett (1991) and Wu (1970).

¹⁹ Among the three positions, provincial governors represented the head of a province. The task of a provincial governor overlapped greatly with that of a governor-general, serving as a means of check and balance. Because the formal rank of governors-general is higher than that of provincial governors, I consider the latter a subordinate of the former.

and the populace, and thus constituted fundamental parts of local governance (Watt 1972). With about 15,000 counties (*xian* 縣) nationwide, lower-ranking officials administered day-to-day businesses, resolved judicial disputes, carried out public works, and organized local defense against bandits and revolts (Ch'ü 1962).

In this administrative structure, provincial officials at various levels served to mediate the power relationship between a mainly agrarian-based society and metropolitan rulers—an oligarchy consisting of the Manchu emperor, his Grand Councilors and a number of dominant princes and central officials residing in Peking. The intermediary of Qing rule also included a dual military structure, the Green Standards and Eight Bannermen, which worked, in different ways, hand-in-hand with the civilian bureaucratic system.²⁰ However, the general organizational culture that “emphasizes the civilian over military power” gave provincial officials significant leverage to govern. For example, commanders of Green Standard troops were generally under the control of provincial governors or governors-general. The structure of the Eight Bannermen was somewhat different: their jurisdictions did not correspond to any provincial administrative units, and provincial officials were prevented from intervening in the Eight Banner garrisons (Ding 2003:129). But after a long period of peace ushered in by the Qianlong emperor—who reigned from 1732-1795—the actual power of Banner generals had diminished (Ding

²⁰ Green Standards were regular provincial troops stationed in major provincial localities. Green Standard recruits were generally Hans. Their counterpart was the Manchu Eight Bannermen, a special socio-military structure originally established in 1601 from hunting groups among Manchu warriors prior to their takeover of China. Each Banner company consisted of about 300 warrior households; gradually the Banner structures embraced various functions of military mobilization, registrations, and taxation (Rawski 1998:61). Members of the Bannermen included Hans and Mongols who lived in Manchuria and had pledged allegiance to the Qing prior to 1644. Different companies were formed separately for the Han and Mongol Bannermen and their descendants. Besides being stationed in the capital, Banner garrisons had a wide presence in major strategic points across the country, including Canton, Fuzhou, Jinkou, Kaifeng, Chengdu, and Xi'an. Banners residential arrangements were largely segregated from the rest of the population—hence members tended to maintain distinctive identities and their northeastern customs, even when they considered Peking as their true home (Elliott 2001:98-100).

2003:172). The reduction of combative needs thus left provincial officials with considerable ruling capacity vis-à-vis military agents.

To keep provincial officials in check, Qing rulers adopted managerial methods analogous to those of other early modern states where rulers lacked sufficient information and technology to control state agents directly. The first mechanism of control began at the stage of official recruitment: the civil examinations. By “licensing” officialdom through the sponsorship of the statewide examinations, the state created a tightly monopolized system of politico-bureaucratic mobility; candidates usually would have to pass successive rounds of examinations until they achieved *jinshi* (進士) status, which entitled (but did not guarantee) their passage into officialdom’s highest echelons. Other variations existed, especially for Manchu candidates, but the general principle of this recruitment system was centralization and generality. The examinations uniformly tested candidates’ comprehensive knowledge of Confucian classics, talent at composing poetry and prose, calligraphy, and general state policy. That the tests stressed the candidates’ ability as generalists rather than technocrats explains why the state could freely appoint officials across different administrative units, and why civilian officials were expected to command military operations in times of war or rebellion.

Among the tens of thousands of examinees every year, only a handful would be selected in each successive examination level, and fewer still could actually attain an office in the state bureaucracy (less than 0.5% of the male population attained some kind of a degree, and only a small fraction of those could obtain an office).²¹ This stringent

²¹ It is somewhat a myth that an educated man, regardless of his class background, could attain social mobility via the examination system by spending long years in study (see Elman 2000; cf. Ho 1962). One problem with this otherwise equalizing mechanism was that wealthy families could afford private tutors to assist their sons to prepare them for an official career.

process did not necessarily guarantee the quality of the officialdom, however, because exam evaluations could be arbitrary and were prone to corruption, such as nepotism and bribery (Elman 2000). Since the content of these examinations stressed orthodoxy, the system tended to reproduce officials who were rule-following state agents. This, of course, does not mean that officials' actions would entirely align with the state's objectives, for agents were often caught between different kinds of institutional rules and social obligations, which could lead them astray from any collective goals (see Chapter 3). Nevertheless, officials' outlooks seemed to have guaranteed the rarity of defection; this was certainly the case in the Taiping Rebellion, when provincial officials were more likely to be charged with dereliction of responsibility than treason.

Bureaucratic procedures regarding official appointments and evaluations provided Qing rulers with another mechanism of control. All personnel decisions required, in principle, the deliberation of the Board of Civil Office (*libu* 吏部) and the approval of the emperor. Every three years or so, the board evaluated an official in a procedure known as *daji* (大計) to determine how suitable he was for a particular post. From these assessments, the official would be rotated by means of transferal, promotion, or demotion; he might also be recalled to the capital, suspended, or dismissed. The general principle of office rotation was to weaken the ties between state agents and their directly ruled subjects, and to prevent the agents from building local power bases and developing uncontrollable regional autonomy (Guy 1994:254).

Likewise, the system of "avoidance" (*huiji* 迴避) served to prevent officials with strong ties to hold offices in the same administration. An example of the avoidance rule was the prohibition of holding offices within the 500 *li* perimeter (about 150 miles) of an

official home county. In their official transferals and appointments, the Board of Civil Office would theoretically determine if potential conflicts of interests could arise between an official candidate and his future colleagues; close kin (e.g., fathers and sons, siblings) were generally prohibited from holding civilian offices together in the same administration (county, department, etc.), as were non-kin such as teachers and students. Ideally each appointment should “avoid” situations where individual officials would act out of self-interest at the expense of the state. Here, bureaucratic control means the detachment of officials with existing or potentially strong ties, and the redistribution of agents to conform to these avoidance principles.

Dissipating social ties among officials was accompanied by a mechanism to strengthen the agents’ relations to the center. Officials being “sent out” (*waifang* 外放) into the provinces would receive a special audience with the emperor. This meeting symbolically signaled the beginning of a personal relationship between the head of the state and his agents. Showered with imperial grace, those newly appointed then took on roles as representatives of the state, governing areas far from the capital. Zhang Jixing (張集馨), who became a provincial treasurer during the Taiping Rebellion, vividly recalled in his autobiography a meeting with the throne in 1836, when he was assigned to a position of prefectural magistrate in Shanxi province:²²

I have never expected to be a provincial official...the news was quite surprising, and I was in a state of panic. The next day I received an audience with His Majesty, who told me, “Without anyone’s recommendation, I have specifically selected you to the province.” I immediately kowtowed to His Majesty and said, “It is my honor to receive Your Majesty’s heavenly greatness.” His Majesty continued, “I

²² While Zhang had started his state career as a compiler in one of the ministries in the capital, he enumerated the length of his official career beginning from the year he was appointed to the provinces. This indicates the important meaning of being “sent out” for a state official.

have been fond of your conduct and intellect for quite a while, but I can only tell whether you will be a good administrator by your actual practices. Remember the difference between central and provincial officials. Even if you keep yourself strictly clean, you will remain an inadequate official without the ability to monitor your colleagues and, by that, fail to fulfill my mission. Local districts are complicated and filled with all types of personalities. You should always investigate, openly or subtlety, and report flaws in the district to your governors. (Zhang 1981: 22)

That Zhang described this particular meeting in detail suggests the meaningfulness of a personal, albeit asymmetric, relationship with the emperor. Personal trust, honor and loyalty were constitutive to the strength of this ruler-agent relation. Provincial governors, in particular, “represented the central court’s eyes and ears [and were] outposts of central authority in a sea of local interests” (Guy 1994:248). We shall see that during the Taiping Rebellion, these relations would be further emphasized, and be used more deliberately as tools for central control.

How did the court maintain these relations once the officials departed from the capital? Although provincial officials were required to travel back to Peking to meet with the emperor once every three years or so, these occasions were insufficient to either sustain a ruler-agent relationship or keep an agent in check. The system of imperial memorials (*zouche* 奏摺), a confidential system of communication, provided an additional means that linked state agents to central power-holders. Developing from the need of direct communication during warfare, memorials were formalized written communiqués between the emperor (and the Grand Council) and state officials or generals in the battlefield. Normally, only higher-ranking agents had the right to directly memorialize to the head of state. In their correspondence, writers reported significant local events, outlined administrative achievements, discussed and proposed policy initiatives,

evaluated the performance of local officials, and made recommendations about bureaucratic rewards or sanctions on behalf of other officials. Memorials were not only the court's primary sources of information, but also forums for policy discussion among spatially separated officials.²³ They were also channels for officials to evaluate the performances of their peers and recommend rewards or punishments for others. This means of communication thus provided opportunities for forging alliances and relationships among state officials.

With some exceptions, memorials were generally confidential, accessible only to the emperor and a handful of officials.²⁴ This sense of exclusivity allowed the corresponding parties to express their personal opinions and feelings relatively free from reproach. Memorial writing was "a medium of choice for those officials allowed to use them" (Guy 2000:93). Additionally, the emperor could add his vermilion rescript to the margins of a memorial submission, hence providing a rare window through which officials could glimpse the monarch's inner feelings. Once a memorial was completely processed, the original document with vermilion remarks would be returned to the senders, who would usually receive other central instructions by means of imperial edicts or court letters (Wu 1970). The exchange between Peking and central China, both way, might require more than ten days' travel, depending the physical distance and the existence of blockades (erected by the rebels) between two points of communication.

²³ Since some parts of the memorial correspondence were regularly published in the form of the "Capital Bulletin" (*jingbao*), provincial officials were aware of each other's actions in the bureaucratic structure.

²⁴ The degree of confidentiality varied. For emphasis, officials sometimes wrote "confidential memorials" (*mi zou* 密奏) that reported highly secretive plans or, more often, the misconducts of higher ranking officials. Opening a confidential memorial without permission could cost one's life. Other memorials were confidential in the sense that only top provincial officials within a particular province might share their contents, unless otherwise instructed by the court.

This system of correspondence permitted another level of checks and balances among provincial agents, because more than one official could submit memorials about the same event or issue. Moreover, memorials' confidentiality further allowed state agents to make (legitimate) accusations against their peers.²⁵ In this way, crosschecked information frequently became evidence on which the court could hold agents responsible for their actions. This system thus effectually created a furtive, suspicious bureaucratic environment that could pit officials against each other. "Ruling through writing" (Bartlett 1991:56) was an essential character of Qing political practices.

The intermediary role of provincial officials came into question during the Taiping Rebellion not because the agents had turned against the state, but because they had generally failed to curb the challengers from expanding. To grapple with the new challenge, central rulers mobilized the different mechanisms of control outlined above. As we shall see in the following chapters, central rulers invoked notions of trust and loyalty more intensely to construct their relationships with state agents; likewise, bureaucratic sanctions against officials were more severely applied. It was the reinforcement of the existing control mechanisms, rather than deviation from them, that characterized the logic of central control during the Taiping crisis.

The Use of Data Sources

The data used in this study allow us to examine the day-to-day operations in provincial bureaucracy during the Taiping Rebellion, and to trace the structural

²⁵ Since officials knew the emperor could crosscheck their memorials for accuracy, misinformation, and disinformation, it is assumed that officials would only accuse each other on legitimate grounds, and not invent accusations that could be easily discredited. Of course, we can also assume illegitimate accusations were occasionally made anyway.

consequences bureaucratic decisions had on the career system of the provincial officialdom. First, I analyzed the voluminous imperial memorials that recorded the day-to-day exchanges between Qing metropolitan rulers and appointed officials in the counter-Taiping campaign from 1851 to 1864. The documents were recently published by the First Historical Museum in Beijing, entitled, *Historical Archives of the Qing Repression of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* (hereafter, QZZ). These fifteen years of bureaucratic documents thus provide us with a rare glimpse into the daily interactions among state actors within the bureaucracy.

Second, to examine how bureaucratic strategies take on a life of their own and produce consequences for the state as a whole, I focus on the career system in the provincial officialdom. Here I rely on the *Chronological Tables of Officeholders in the Qing Dynasty* compiled by Qian Shifu (1980). By “career changes” I mean the promotions, dismissals, transferals, and a range of other bureaucratic transitions an official could make across ranks, positions, provincial units, and administrative domains (departments, central vs. province, etc.). In the framework of a centralized state, these career transitions were central decisions, at least in name. Because central rulers lacked alternative mechanisms and sufficient resources to directly choreograph battlefield action, bureaucratic appointments provided one method for control. As it will be shown, reassigning state personnel and rearranging their relations became a means for counter-mobilization. Thus, from the perspectives of Peking rulers, controlling these appointments was one state strategy that could potentially resolve the dual task of suppressing challengers (by counter-mobilization) and controlling official agents (via sanctions and rewards).

Provincial officials, however, were not passive. To the extent that they could recommend rewards and sanctions for their peers through memorial writings, officials could also indirectly influence how personnel might be distributed across the bureaucracy. To prevent personal interests from entering bureaucratic appointments, the Board of Civil Office followed (in theory) numerous procedures to review and deliberate a proposed appointment. Certainly, these procedures were imperfect. For instance, decisions to execute imperial commissioners for their military failures were frequently commuted because their allies could appeal to the court or to top members of the Board of Civil Office. The interference of personal or coalitional influences made bureaucratic appointments products of negotiations rather than outcomes of impersonal evaluations.

These complications make it difficult to attribute the exact cause of any bureaucratic appointments. While not all bureaucratic decisions were intended by state rulers, they were nonetheless tolerable organizational solutions for some problems. This assumption is reasonable since all personnel decisions required ultimate central approval. The bureaucratic data I used reflect, at the minimum, this degree of tolerance from the perspectives of central rulers. Should we find any changes in the ways official personnel were distributed during the Taiping Rebellion, we can ascertain some changes in the organizational logic of counter-mobilization.

Outline of Chapters

In Chapter 2, I describe the initial reaction of the Qing court when it first encountered the Taiping challengers: a direct control strategy. In the early phase of the rebellion, from 1851 to 1856, the state tended to address the problem of control of

rebellion-ridden provinces through personnel deployment strategies that included the appointment of “central officials”—state agents with closed links to the Manchu center—as leaders of the counter-Taiping campaign. An analysis of the changing relationship between the emperor and his imperial commissioners will reveal the characteristics of central control, an important part of the state-building mechanism.

Chapter 3 discusses how strategic provincial agents adapted to this volatile situation. Among their numerous strategies, I focus on their written reports to the imperial memorials. While the metropolitan center had absolute power to deliver sanctions, provincial agents also managed to withhold access to information and, thereby, negotiate their sanctions and awards. This process opened up a space for a sense of agency, as officials could use memorial writings to establish or destroy peer relationships, and hence reposition themselves in bureaucratic networks. They blamed one another when things went wrong, composed recommendations for an ally, or mobilized resources for a client or disciple. However, as the Taipings prevailed in spite of constant official assaults, inter-official conflicts became more clearly understood as an obstacle to, rather than an advantage of, central control.

Chapter 4 suggests that a new set of bureaucratic deployments might have enhanced the coherence of the imperial campaign. Using a set of bureaucratic mobility data, I demonstrate that state strategies had gradually relaxed their overall “avoidance” principle around 1856-1859. In this mid-phase of the rebellion, official-colleagues had become more alike by dint of their ethnicities, provincial origins, and educational backgrounds. To a lesser extent, they were also more familiar, through their prior career experiences, with the locales they governed. All these changes might have redrawn the

parameters of the bureaucratic organization, entailing a potential danger for central control. I shall show, however, that a complete abandonment of the avoidance principle did not happen, for these changes were done rather selectively. Usually a buffer zone was created such that a certain principle was relaxed concomitantly with the tightening of other rules.

Chapter 5 considers the effects of bureaucratic deployments on the entire bureaucracy. Did bureaucratic decisions targeting the Taipings affect the rest of the bureaucracy? To answer this question, I examine the “vacancy chains” created in the provincial administration between 1820 and 1880. In this context, “vacancy chains” refer to the connected movements of civil-bureaucratic positions created when an official vacates his position through death, demotion, dismissal, or transferal. For instance, if a provincial governor leaves his post, a vacancy would be created at the governorship level; into this position a lower-level official would be promoted, leaving his own administrative position vacant, and so on. Tracing “where vacancies went” allows us to see how bureaucratic solutions targeting a “local” problem could have far-reaching ramifications for the entire structure. I shall demonstrate that the new state strategies that had emerged since 1856 had gradually increased the gap between two domains of Qing power: the central and provincial governments. Vacancies initiated in the provinces no longer moved back to the central administration, suggesting that provincial agents were becoming *more* provincial. The grip metropolitan rulers had on provincial agents was thereby eroding in the long run; this process may provide an additional understanding of the dynasty’s demise sixty years after the end of the Taiping Rebellion.

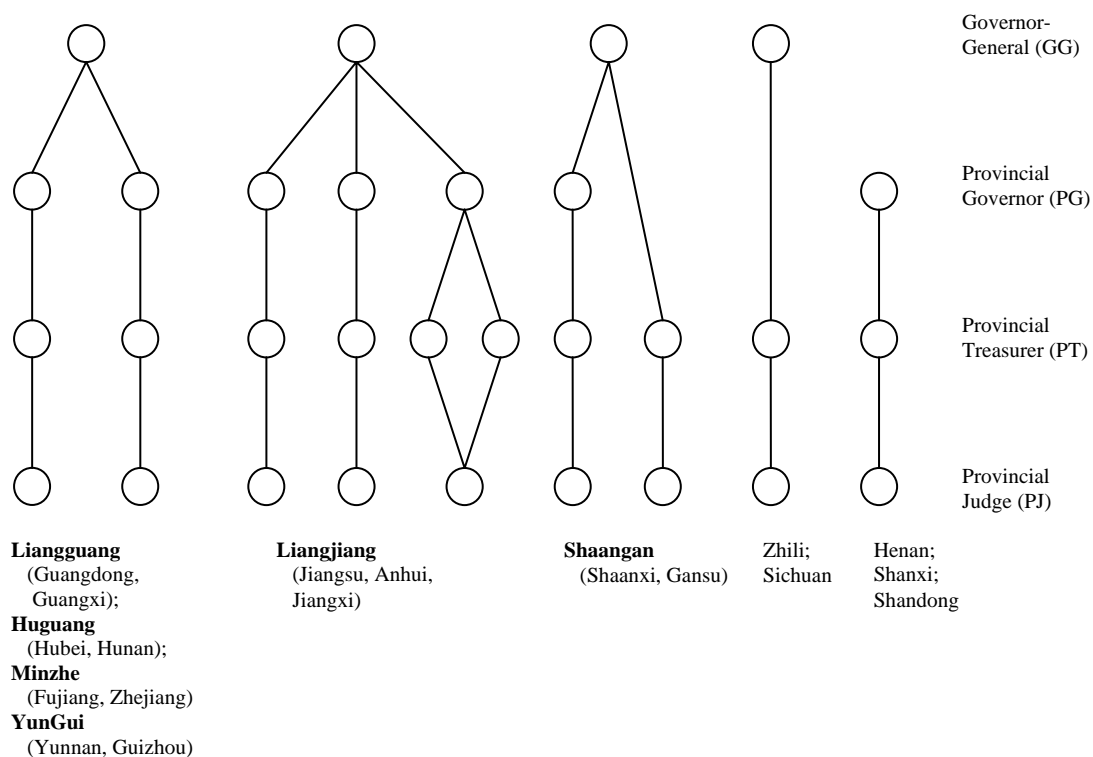
Figure 1.1: Administrative Provinces in China Proper: Qing Dynasty of the 1850s.



Source: Fairbank (1978:xi).

Note: Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Turkmenistan (Xinjiang) was not part of administrative provinces in the 1850s, since they were administered by the Office of Border Affairs (*Lifanyuan*).

Figure 1.2: Five Types of Provincial Administrative Units



Note: Bold fonts refer to the units governed by Governors-General.

CHAPTER 2

CONFIGURING CONTROL, 1850-1856

The court's appointment of Lin Zexu (林則徐) as Imperial Commissioner to Guangxi in late 1850 (DG30/9/13, October 17) marked the beginning of the Qing's central intervention to the Taiping crisis. Until 1864, a total of sixteen commissioners served the state consecutively as commanders-in-chief in the counter-rebellion campaigns, which spanned across more than two hundred battlefields over a fifteen-year period. Because these few special commissioners were bestowed with highly concentrated authority in commanding military forces, their relationships with central power-holders are keys to understanding the configuration of central control—that is, the mechanism through which the special commissioners in battlefields would conform to the demands and fulfill the expectations of power-holders in the distantly located metropolitan center. (As a reference for the rest of the discussions, Figure 2.1 [p. 83] presents the trajectories of all imperial commissioners dispatched during the entire counter-Taiping campaign.)

An important component that shaped the dynamics of control and autonomy was the great physical distance—ranging from five hundred to more than one thousand miles—between Peking and the southern battlefields towards which the commissioners headed. This chapter will show that the spatial gap that divided the emperor and his special agents was bridged by a combination of routine and non-routine organizational actions—including the strong personal ties the emperor sought to build and maintain with his appointees and the invocation of bureaucratic rules to cashier failing commissioners

(at least at the rhetorical level) at the emperor's will. Accordingly, I trace a series of organizational actions that shaped the relationships between central power-holders and their special agents through their continuing reactions to the powerful rebels.

Specifically, I examine how earlier selections of imperial commissioners conditioned the possibilities and limits for later appointments. In the following sections, I will selectively highlight the rebellion's most telling moments in a linear fashion, spanning from 1850 to 1856. Given the historical context, my goal is to make sense of how and why the serial appointments of imperial commissioners might appear organizationally necessary and appropriate.

The Emergence of the Taiping Movement, 1850-51

Following a conventional way to trace the development of the Taiping movement, let us begin with the story of Taipings' charismatic leader, Hong Xiuquan. Having failed in his third attempt to pass the provincial examinations that would lead educated men into the prestige of state officialdom, Hong reportedly fell into fits of mental sickness for a period of forty days in 1843 (Yap 1954). One of the several visions Hong claimed to see during his sickness featured a venerable man with white beard and blond hair revealing to him that the human race had allied themselves with demons and against the Creator of mankind (Boardman 1972:12). The divine figure bestowed upon Hong a sword and a seal, and enlisted him as an annihilator of evil spirits and exorcist of demons (Hamberg 1854; see also Jen 1967:10). These miraculous visions were fraught with Christian notions Hong likely had encountered during his examination trips to Canton in the early 1840s. A set of tracts distributed by a Canton missionary at the time, collectively entitled

"Good Words for Exhorting the Age," seem to have helped Hong make sense of his failure and humiliation (Spence 1996:51-65).

Upon recovering from his sickness, Hong began to preach about *shangdi* (上帝), the Lord of Heaven, claiming that he was the younger brother of Jesus. In 1844, the thirty year old Hong began a 250-mile journey to spread his beliefs from his hometown, the Hua county in Guangdong, to the Guiping county of Guangxi, where the Taipings would later emerged as a rebellious movement. The Christian themes of Hong's preaching appeared to revolve around ideas of repentance, the elimination of "perverted spirits," and the Ten Commandments. Aided by his cousin, Feng Yunshan (馮雲山), the future South King, and a small band of close friends, Hong gradually transformed his spiritual visions into a culturally, and later politically, subversive movement; soon enough, the group would explicitly replace "perverted spirits" with the Manchu empire.

At first, Hong's proselytizing belied little hint of political ambition. Without encountering any strong official opposition, Hong and his group managed to disseminate their unconventional version of Christianity during the second half of the 1840s under the banner of *Bai Shangdi Hui* (拜上帝會), or "the Society of the God Worshippers." On the surface the Worshippers were no more than another *hui*, or association, prevalent in Chinese rural life (though not all associations were legal). The concept of "*shangdi*" was not entirely incompatible with the Confucian tradition or the Qing political culture (Shih 1967); but the main obstacle for Hong was the anti-Christian bias that pervaded Chinese culture in the wake of the Opium War—Christianity and foreign aggression were perceived as inextricably linked. Especially among the educated classes, Christianity was considered heterodox to Confucianist traditions, and thus a threat to Chinese culture as a

whole (Cohen 1961:172).²⁶ This cultural conflict may explain partly why later state officials, who were both the political and cultural elite, would find the Taipings repulsive, and would be highly unlikely to defect to their side even when the rebels' power was ascendant.

Against this hostile backdrop, Hong in the mid- to late 1840s attracted followers primarily from the Hakkas (*kejia*, 客家), a culturally distinct group of migrants (Hakkas literally means “guest people”) who labored in rural Guangxi and around the Guiping county as stone miners, charcoal burners, and tenant peasants. The Hakkas were natural candidates for recruitment because Hong and other key Worshipper leaders were themselves Hakka ethnics originating from Guangdong. Similar to the recruiting process of some other social movements, neighborhood and kinship laid important foundations for the God Worshippers' membership. As Hung Jen-kan, one of the first converts, recalled:

[Hong] lectured to me from beginning to end on the power of God, the divine manifestations of Jesus, and his temptation by the devil.... Thereupon I felt as if I were waking from a dream and as if I were regaining soberness after intoxication; unconsciously I shed tears. I later removed from my home the tablet of the kitchen god, and all other ox, pig, and dragon demons. Next I told this to my father, my elder brother, my clansmen, friends, and relatives. (TP 3:6)

Rural Guangxi also proved a fertile recruitment ground because the Hakka population was frequently in conflict with the indigenous natives, the Puntis.²⁷ As economic and

²⁶ Christian missionaries and foreign wars in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had bolstered both Buddhism and Confucianism, even though the two Chinese traditions had been in long-standing conflicts (Cohen (1961:172). To protect their orthodoxy from foreign invasion, the erstwhile enemies found a common ground in maintaining an anti-Christian culture.

²⁷ "Puntis" is not an ethnic group, but a general term referring to the native population. The distribution between the Puntis and Hakkas in each county varied across the province (Xing 1983). In the region of Thistle Mountain, where the Worshippers settled, the Hakkas were the majority, although this is the most isolated region of Guangxi. In other central areas, the two populations may have been more or less equal. But in terms of power, the Hakkas were always the minority vis-à-vis the Puntis.

demographic pressures grew in the mid-century, a period of difficulty compounded by series of crop failures, the two groups entered into heated disputes over land, marriage agreements, and livestock with escalating intensity (Xing 1983).²⁸ Socio-economically inferior to the majority Puntis, the Hakkas were attracted by the God Worshipper's offers of daily security against both economic uncertainty and predatory bandits (Jen 1944a:171).

On the cultural front, the Worshippers were incensing the local gentry, who, as guardians of Confucianism, considered their practices not only heretical but illegal. The Worshippers scandalized local elites by destroying local shrines and smashing ancestral tablets in their divine mission to propagate monotheism (Weller 1994:39). Since popular Chinese religion professed a tacitly understood fusion of supernatural lore, ancestor worship, and the heritage of one's lineage, the destruction of shrines and tablets symbolized not merely contempt for folk deities but a wholesale threat to Chinese tradition (Boardman 1972; Michael 1966:4). The question, then, became whether (or for how long) the Worshippers could maintain their low profile and circumvent official suppression.

In 1847, a wealthy member of the local gentry, Wang Zhoxin (王作新), led his personal militia to arrest two God Worshipper leaders, Feng Yunshan (Hong's cousin and right hand man) and one other member. Wang managed to influence the district magistrate of Guiping, who detained the pair pending charges of "instigating the people

²⁸ In 1854, Hamberg, a Swiss missionary, recorded that "a feeling of enmity had long existed between the two classes [the Puntis and Hakkas], and every new incident only served to augment the hatred. At that time a very rich Hakka of the surname of Wun had taken a girl as his concubine, who had been promised to a Puntis man, and having agreed to settle the matter with her parents by paying a large sum of money, he peremptorily refused to give her up to the Puntis claimant" (Hamberg 1854:48-49).

by paganism and witchcraft to revolt” (Hamberg 1854:52; Jen 1973:38). Soon a trial was held at the magistrate's *yamen* (the office of a state official)—the first confrontation with state authority in which the Worshippers were involved. Perhaps eager to dismiss the case and avoid controversy, the district magistrate accepted Feng Yunshan's defense that “the worship of God (*shangdi*) was part of Chinese indigenous teaching” (Jen 1973:39). To the gentry's dismay, the district magistrate only ordered Feng expelled from Guangxi, and acquitted him of other charges. Later in 1851, a rueful imperial court would retroactively dismiss the same district magistrate who, by releasing Feng, missed a golden opportunity to suppress the Worshippers before their threat became full-scale insurrection.

The years between 1847 and 1850 saw the transformation of the Worshippers from fervent followers of a cult to militant soldiers fighting for the Taiping Kingdom. As they witnessed the hostility mounting against them, Hong and his followers began to prepare for potential conflicts, perhaps initially only with the Puntis in mind, by arming themselves. Because under Qing law it was illegal for civilians to possess weapons, an iron factory owned by one of the God Worshipper's families was used to secretly construct arms. It remains unclear, however, whether Hong's followers were conscious of his ultimate political ambitions.

In early 1851, Hong allegedly mobilized ten thousand God Worshippers from various counties of Guangxi, gathering them in the village of Jintian, where Hong had established a solid base camp in the nearby Thistle Mountains. While the exact date of the "Jintian Uprising" has been controversial, two historians, Jen (1944b) and Luo (1955a), independently concluded that it was DG30/12/10 (January 11, 1851). Upon the

uprising, followers were equipped to fight and organized quite differently from their rural neighbors:

All money and valuables had to be turned over immediately to the Holy Treasury, on penalty of death, but thereafter everyone was assured of food and clothing within the communal life that marked the Taiping organization. The able-bodied males were segregated, assigned to specific army units, and supplied with uniforms, bedding, and weapons—the latter having been dragged from Rhinoceros Pool though the new recruits were told their weapons came from heavens. In defiance of the Manchu custom of shaving head and face, Taiping instructions called for letting the hair grow, and soon, these men had the luxuriant growths that would lead their opponents' epithets for them, the "Long Hair Bandits" or "Hairy Rebels. Jen (1973:58-59)

Two historical facts are clear from the Qing records at the beginning of 1851. First, the God Worshippers began to engage in heavier military confrontations with imperial troops; second, their cryptic, anti-Confucian monotheism was now clarified by an expressly political agenda that Qing officials had to confront head-on. Just two days prior to the alleged Jintian Uprising, a Manchu lieutenant general (*fujian* 副將), Yiketanbu (伊克坦布), was killed during a skirmish with the Taipings near the Da Wang River, forcing officials to assess the Worshippers as a serious state threat. The event shocked the local administration, as a provincial judge reported in his memorial:

Gripping red cloths and swords while reciting heretical chants, the unshaved bandits (*zei* 賊) rushed to fight with no regard to their own lives. The bandits wore the same uniforms as those of our militia, who were frightened and then collapsed. Lieutenant General Ikedanbu then led his official troops to fight the bandits (*zei fei* 賊匪) and killed many of them. Outnumbered by their enemies, our troops were encircled. In heavy fighting, the colonel immediately died....This type of association bandits (*hui fei* 會匪) dared to mobilize their own kinds in great numbers. They openly resisted official troops, killed an officer as important as a colonel, and injured many officials, imperial soldiers, and militia members. We are deeply angered by their ferocity, which has reached an utmost limit. (QZZ 1:118; DG30/12/8)²⁹

²⁹ Memorial passages are my translation, unless noted otherwise. All citations from the published memorial archives in QZZ (1991-1996) first signal the volumes and page numbers in the published forms. The information following a semicolon indicates the original issuing dates of a memorial. Throughout the

Following this event, officials' memorials began to identify the God Worshippers as "the bandits of Jintian" (*jintian huifei*) or "bandits from Guangxi" (*yuefei*) (QZZ 1: 131; DG 30/12/20). By the time officials gradually discovered the Worshippers in late 1850 and early 1851, the rebels had amassed thousands and were ready to fight for the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom—the political destiny proclaimed by Hong Xiuquan, the Heavenly King.³⁰ (Figure 2.2 [p. 85] shows the paths of Taiping movement from 1851 to 1856.)

Constructing State Response, 1851-53

Although the Jintian Uprising is often viewed as the catalyst of the Qing's counter-mobilization in Guangxi, my reading of memorials indicates that the Qing campaign was initially a response to a more general problem, in which the Taipings had played only a supporting role. By the summer of 1850, government authority had shifted its attention from Hunan to Guangxi, after the Hunanese Li Yuanfa's (李沅發) uprising was sufficiently suppressed (QSL 12:12b; see Kuhn 1970:109-112). Remnants of the movement, however, drifted to the Hunan-Guangxi border, some integrating themselves into local banditry (QZZ 1:2; DG 30/5/20). In one memorial submitted to the emperor at the end of 1850, Guangxi officials claimed that social unrests had plagued seven out of every ten districts in the province (QZZ 1:47-48; DG30/9/13). Similar reports also

text, when indicating the specific year, month, and date of an event, I adopt the convention of historians by indicating, first, the reign year of an emperor (beginning with an acronym of the emperor, following by the number of years in his reign), and then the lunar months and dates.

³⁰ For convenient purposes, historians refer Hong's group after the Jintian Uprising as the "Taipings," but in Qing official documents the group had numerous names, such as "Jintian association bandits" (*jintian huifei* 金田會匪) and "Guangxi bandits" (*yue fei* 粵匪). In folk stories, the Taipings were sometimes called the "long-hair robbers" (*changmaozai* 長毛賊) or "haired rebels" (*fani* 髮逆), since the Taipings rejected to shave their foreheads.

suggested that all forms of rebellious activities were spreading across space. The "*fei*," or "bandits," reported in these memorials, however, did not form a monolithic category; they instead ranged from unorganized robbers to religious associations, from secret societies to political dissidents. Though officials were aware that good people might be swayed into banditry by coercion or economic hardship (QZZ 1:4-5; DG30/5/22), they nevertheless tended to view all "bandits" as lawless brigands.

In this context, the Taipings were yet another addition to an already extensive roster of unruly groups in Guangxi. Around the time of the Jintian Uprising, provincial officials were paying more attention to another band of rebels led by Chen Yagui (陳亞貴), the self-styled "Great King." Chen's red-turbaned followers, numbering in the thousands, "brandished flags emblazoned with treasonous words, rode rickshaws and horses, and possessed plenty of weapons, including cannons, spears, arrows and shields" (QZZ 1:34-35; DG30/8/29). The group clearly shared some similarities with the Taipings, especially their use of red turbans to signal membership. This suggests that local rebels were often indistinguishable in the eyes of state authorities; officials frequently acted with scanty information, especially against such secluded groups as the Taipings, whose leadership and ideology remained obscure to state officials until several months after the Jintian Uprising.

Peking's actions, however, did not depend entirely on provincial officials' reports. Toward the end of 1850 (DG30/8), twelve *shisheng* (gentry) from Guangxi traveled to the capital and beseeched central intervention in a crisis. Charging district magistrates with corruption and ineptitude, the gentry claimed that local officials generally ignored the bandits' marauds, and would deign to send one or two investigators only in the aftermath

of a pillage (QZZ 1:36; DG30/8/29). The complaint did not refer specifically to the God Worshippers or Hong Xiuquan, because the Worshippers at this point were only engaged in religious proselytizing and local conflicts with the Puntis, not looting. While charges of officials' incompetence was hardly news to Peking, the fact that the gentry journeyed all the way to the capital might have indicated the situation's seriousness. The gentry's actions also disclosed a more serious bureaucratic problem in Guangxi: had the province's governor or governor-general managed the matter appropriately, the gentry would not have had to bypass them and plead with the court.

Around the same time, the perceived inertia of the Guangxi top bureaucracy was confirmed in the several memorials from Governor-general Xu Guangjin (徐廣縉), who complained that Provincial Governor Zheng Zuchen (鄭祖琛, Xu's subordinate) "had never expressed the sincerity to amend the crisis [of rampant banditry]...Most of Zheng's descriptions in his memorials were neither true nor complete" (QZZ 1:26-27; DG30/8/14). As if admitting his own inability, the governor-general asked the court to appoint a "capable official" to Guangxi. The court, detecting a rift among high officials, rejected Xu's request. In his response, Emperor Xianfeng asserted that Xu should not circumvent his responsibility to vigorously quell the rebels, especially when the governor-general "had received tremendous imperial grace from the late emperor [Daoguang]" (QZZ 1:42; DG30/9/7). Convinced that both top and lower ranked officials in Guangxi were inadequate, the court by the end of 1850 reoriented its approach to the Guangxi problem: Peking began to intervene directly with a series of top-down strategies. The dispatch of an emissary, a position known as "Imperial Commissioner," represents one of the most dramatic changes. The strategy was clearly a response to the perceived

crisis within the Guangxi provincial administration, as the emperor confided to Lin Zexu, the first commissioner to Guangxi:

Provincial officials have many excuses: they claimed that the bandits often outnumber our imperial troops, the bandits are too dispersed, or the bandits are too far to reach. Never do you find these officials making appropriate plans according to opportunities or executing the right plans. (QZZ 1:65; DG30/9/27)

Control from the State Center

As the emperor's delegate, an imperial commissioner was the highest personal representative of the emperor. Although Qing bureaucratic regulations did not clearly define the special commissioners' jurisdictional authority and responsibilities, they were sanctioned in the same ways provincial governors-general and governors were sanctioned, suggesting that they were treated as "*fengjiang dachen*" (封疆大臣)—that is, high officials whose primary duties were to defend and pacify the peripheral territories (read: beyond Peking) of the imperial state. It should be noted that the organizational role of these commissioners in Qing state-building was an *ad hoc* affair, as the delegation would be dismantled at the conclusion of a military campaign. Yet, the occasional creation of this special power structure was ingrained in the Qing organizational routine, and invoked not just in warfare but also in other crises or state projects, such as territorial consolidation, the management of natural disasters and famine (see, e.g., Will 1990), and in the 1890s the artillery modernization projects. In warfare, similar positions as "Generalissimo" (*dajiangjun* 大將軍) in the state consolidation projects of the seventeen and eighteenth centuries, and "Grand Minister Commanders" (*jinglue dachen* 經略大臣) during the White Lotus Rebellion (1799-1803), served more or less the same bureaucratic function as *qinchai dachen* (欽差大臣), or Imperial Commissioner—the title of the special

agent dispatched to curb the Taiping Rebellion in the mid-nineteenth century. To tighten control over exigent circumstances, the emperor and members of the Grand Council would communicate directly with appointed commissioners through the palace memorial system, a means to hasten direct communication across great spatial distances.

Furthermore, this additional layer of intermediation between Peking and regular provincial officials intervened in the structures of routine governance, allowing the state center to increase what Michael Mann (1986) calls the “intensity of [state] power.”

In targeted campaigns, a special commissioner stood above all provincial officials and local generals with an authority specially bestowed by the throne. Upon leaving for his new post, an imperial commissioner during the Taiping Rebellion would receive an official seal and sometimes a sword used by venerable generals in the dynastic past—all these ritualistic gestures legitimized the authority of the commissioner, whose decisions were viewed as valid as the emperor's (at least in rhetoric). Mobilized along with a commissioner was his private staff, and occasionally the court would approve the company of several state officials and military generals (including the Bannermen in the case of the Mongol Commissioner Saishang-a discussed below).

Early commissioners in the Taiping crisis did not arrive Guangxi with heavy troops (besides a small group of bodyguards), but would take over the command of provincial garrisons and Banner forces preexisting in the province. However, the arrival of a special commissioner did not drastically alter the preexisting chains of command in the system of provincial defense. Rather, it was to tighten the link between the Peking center and the routine provincial government. For example, in normal times, the Green Standard garrisons across a province were under the command of *tidu*, or Provincial

Commander-in-chief, who was in turn accountable to governors-general or provincial governors, the highest officials in a province. During times of crisis, the governors in a crisis-ridden province would be put under the command of an imperial commissioner and with that all provincial military forces would be under the commissioner's control. Similarly, the commissioner had access to nearby Banner garrisons, which consisted of Manchu or Mongol soldiers stationing in specific locations independent from the Green Standards. Although a commissioner needed to work with provincial officials and military generals, and acted within bureaucratic regulations, he possessed a degree of authority and occasional legal discretions that could transcend all provincial power.³¹ In effect, the routine concentration of military power in a province was made even more concentrated in times of crisis. Yet, the addition of one individual as the emperor's personal representative during the Guangxi crisis did little to disrupt the routine of provincial governance. The situation would have been quite different had Peking dispatched a heavy military force from the capital to Guangxi.

The Political Meaning of "Imperial Commissioner"

The timing of central intervention in the Guangxi crisis at the dawn of the 1850s requires further explanation, because the reign of Emperor Daoguang (1821-1850) had generally neglected rebellious activities in sub-Yangtze provinces such as Guangdong and Guangxi throughout the 1840s. During these times, the Manchu Grand Councilor Muzhang-a (穆彰阿)—who ascended to power because the late Daoguang emperor had

³¹ For example, imperial commissioners usually had full judiciary discretion to execute lower-ranking military personnel (e.g., any officers below the rank of assistant lieutenant) without the prior approval from the court (Li 1982:235).

supported his appeasement of the British (specifically, the 1842 Treaty of Nanking)—ordered provincial governors in his patron-client network to suppress reports of economic problems and social unrest, especially from the sub-Yangtze provinces, in order to ease the burden on the state treasury (or his own financial machine; see Polachek 1992:262). Zheng Zuchen, the governor of Guangxi who had been criticized for covering up serious local problems, was part of this faction.

In early 1851, the nineteen year old monarch, Xianfeng, had just ascended to the throne less than a year after the death of Daoguang in DG 30/1 (February, 1850). The new emperor's involvement in the south led to immediate conflict with the powerful sixty-eight year old Muzhang-a, who was a political enemy of Lin Zexu, the emperor's first commissioner to Guangxi. The rift between Lin and Muzhang-a can be traced back to Lin's governorship prior to the Opium War (1839-42). As the governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi and also the imperial commissioner to manage the opium trade with Britain (1839), Lin provoked Muzhang-a's opposition by ordering a ban on all opium sales and smoking in Canton. Lin's stance stood explicitly in opposition to Muzhang-a's complacent approach to foreign affairs, and the Qing's eventual defeat in the war then led to Lin's banishment. This "inner Opium War"—to use Polachek's (1992) title—reconfirmed Muzhang-a's political power until the death of the Daoguang emperor.

At the accession of Xianfeng in 1850, Lin had already returned to his home province Fujian without holding any office. Probably influenced by his teacher Du Shoutian (杜受田)—who sympathized with Lin and his associated faction, the Shrine Association—Emperor Xianfeng sought to reinstate Lin to state officialdom against great

opposition from Muzhang-a (Polachek 1992:265-71). With the support of top officials such as Zeng Guofan and influential literati groups linked to the Shrine Association, Xianfeng cashiered Muzhang-a from all his offices in a dramatic strike at the end of 1850. In an imperial edict, the emperor claimed that the deceptive, self-interested Muzhang-a sought “only to placate the English at every turn” (QSL 20: 29a-30a; see also Polachek 1992: 270).

The reinstatement of Lin to the political scene suggests that the position of Imperial Commissioner carried with it great political meaning. As such, early commissioners were invariably high officials with strong ties to the center of state power. In the bureaucratic language of the Qing, the commissioners were “*qinpai*” (欽派), or “specifically dispatched by imperial decrees,” signaling a special meaning about the appointees’ personal relationship with the emperor. Thus the Qing state-building project during the Taiping Rebellion was both a reaction to and an active construction of a crisis, a process that cannot be easily disentangled from the politics of the inner court.

Shortly after the monarch decreed Lin to Guangxi, however, the commissioner died on DG30/11/12 (December 15, 1850) at the age of sixty-five, never reach Guangxi. His post was reassigned to a Han official, Li Xingyuan (李星沅), then in retirement in his home province, Hunan. At the age of fifty-nine, Li was an experienced former governor-general who had been rewarded the honorary title of Grand Guardian of the Heir Apparent (*taizi taibao* 太子太保) for having successfully suppressed the Han-Muslim conflicts in Yunan in 1847 (QSL 440:3a). Though less high-profile than his predecessor, Li's appointment followed a path similar to that of Lin's: both senior commissioners had prior experience dealing with rebellions and warfare in peripheral territories, and both

were at the moment of their appointment away from current provincial administration. This principle of appointing agents trusted by the court further extended to fill the top official vacancies in Guangxi. In parallel efforts, the court dispatched an additional senior Han official, the seventy-eight year old Zhou Tianju (周天爵), as Acting Governor of Guangxi replacing the dismissal of Zheng Zuchen, the client of the now dismissed Muzhang-a (QZZ 1:85; DG30/10/24). The provincial seat of Guangxi was clearly another politically sensitive position, and it was the recommendation of Du Shoutian, the emperor's teacher, that might have assured Zhou—a former governor-general of Hubei and Hunan—was an appropriate candidate for the post, even though Zhou was known for his explosive personality and harsh treatment to his subordinates (QSL 7:2b; Hummel 1943:779).

With respect to organizational routine, Zhou's appointment also deviated from what an acting governor was supposed to do. Usually, this temporary assignment provided administrative flexibility by enabling the state to circumvent the regular-appointment review process that could take months to complete. An "acting" official was to adopt the previous routine of the departed officer until the arrival of the "regular" appointee. Zhou's appointment gave this *ad hoc* position a new meaning, because he was to focus only on the Guangxi military campaign rather than general routine provincial affairs (QZZ 1:101; DG30/11/12). Through his new title Zhou could submit memorials to the emperor directly and had the power of a governor in commanding provincial garrison troops, a power only next to the imperial commissioner.³² Here we first see the flexibility of the Qing bureaucratic structure that could modify existing routine practices

³² Six months after his acting appointment had expired, Zhou remained in the Guangxi campaign as a "special military intendant" working hand-in-hand with Commissioner Li and his successors.

without entirely breaking with established norms (I further discuss this issue in Chapter 3 and 4).

More importantly, new appointees to Guangxi consistently occupied positions structurally quite different from other regular provincial officials. Early commissioners and special military attendants³³ generally did not come from the operating provincial bureaucracy, but from retirement, the metropolitan government, or the generals of the Bannermen. This pool of state agents, which might not necessarily be considered candidates for routine provincial offices, fashioned a new space for Peking to marshal strategic alternatives. Rather than tapping into the existing provincial bureaucracy in Guangxi, Peking bypassed it—a principal consistent with the perception of provincial officials' ineptness developed at the end of 1850. In short, the logic of central control was to circumvent the reliance on provincial governance structures as a source of state control and to establish, albeit *ad hoc*, a relatively independent operation.

Changing Meaning of Trust

Despite the presence of imperial commissioners and other special state agents in Guangxi, fighting escalated between the Taipings and imperial troops during the early months of 1851. Even though neighboring provinces of Guizhou and Hunan each added two thousand soldiers to the Guangxi campaign (QZZ 1: 65; DG 30/9/27), and Guangdong had contributed up to 300,000 taels in funding (QZZ 1; 153; XF1/1/5), the military energy in Guangxi was dispersed by numerous simultaneous uprisings across the

³³ Special Military Attendants were state agents dispatched to the battlefields with an additional title called “*zhuanban junwu*” (專辦軍務). They could have concurrent job titles in the metropolitan governments, but their special task would be on assisting Imperial Commissioners.

province (for instance, the rebels led by Ling Shiba, who attempted to enter Guangxi from Guangdong to merge with the Taipings). Explaining their dilemma to the court, Commissioner Li and Acting Governor Zhou collectively pleaded with the emperor: "Should the forces not be gathered in one location, official troops would not have enough strength to target one group. However, should their troops be split, they would be unable to deal with the several targets at once" (QZZ 1:242; XF1/2/21). They then warned the throne of an imminent disaster should "an important official (*zhongchen* 重臣) not be appointed to lead a unified force with greater strength" (ibid). Of course, Li and Zhou were supposed to be just those "important officials" the court relied upon; hence the emperor rejected the request, suspecting Li and Zhou were shirking their responsibilities by requesting another official on whom they could fob off duties. This seemed to be the first breach of trust between the emperor and his close agents.

By the spring of 1851, the court took a significantly new direction by dispatching a commissioner directly from Peking—as opposed to mobilizing commissioners from their home provinces where they were retired, as was done previously. Furthermore, rather than appointing a Han Chinese, the new commissioner was the Mongol Grand Councilor, Saishang-a (賽尚阿). Having served as the Minister of the Board of War and the Board of Revenue under the Daoguang emperor, as well as being former Imperial Commissioner to Tianjin in the wake of the Opium War, Saishang-a was the highest-ranked official to serve as Imperial Commissioner throughout the entire counter-Taiping campaign. Accompanied by two Manchu Banner deputy lieutenant generals, two hundred hired soldiers, forty bodyguards, and about thirty staff members, Saishang-a received also far more logistical support than did his predecessors. However, since hired

soldiers had been known in the past for disrupting and "humiliating prefectures and counties" on their journey, frequently engaging in smuggling, forcefully occupying commoners' residences, and abusing villagers; the worrisome emperor ordered the commissioner not to leave Peking until the others had departed, so that he could be watchful for those who misbehaved and punish them (QZZ 1:304; XF1/3/16). Though referring only to hired soldiers, this caution likely applied more broadly to the problem of initiating a large-scale military campaign, which tended to disrupt the livelihood of commoners and potentially aroused more anti-government sentiment. To forestall these problems, the court generally relied on the imperial commissioner, as a personal representative of the throne, to control and discipline his subordinate troops and officials. The heavy dependence on the individual's capacity to manage his subordinates explains why interpersonal ties were important in the construction of central control in the Qing context.

Rather than taking over the Guangxi campaign, Saishang-a was originally to assist the counter-rebellion campaign in Hunan-Guangxi border. Yet, rumors began to spread that Li Xingyuan would be removed and replaced (QZZ 1:305-6; XF1/3/16), though official documents did not cast Saishang-a's appointment in the ethnic terms that had apparently influenced his assignment. Since the current campaign showed no improvement—a problem compounded by the fierce interpersonal conflicts between Zhou Tianjue and other provincial commanders—the court discreetly reassigned Commissioner Li to Hunan (QZZ 1:358; XF 1/4/2).³⁴ Li's reassignment occurred right at

³⁴ Shortly after his reassignment, Li requested to retire and soon died (see QZZ 1:406-08; XF1/4/14). Zhou Tianjue, the acting governor who had increasingly provoked conflicts within the imperial campaign, was later recalled to Peking and later reappointed to suppress the Nian Rebellion.

the moment when Saishang-a's entourage arrived in the south in the summer of 1851.

Through a rather smooth transition, Saishang-a became the third imperial commissioner leading the Guangxi campaign, and the court hoped that he could quickly finish the job and return to Peking in a short time.

The ensuing importance of this personnel change can be gauged by the personal relationship built between the young Xianfeng emperor and the fifty-eight year old Saishang-a. Their correspondences often reveal an involved relationship, in which the emperor played the roles of a magnanimous monarch as well as a deferential junior to the elder commissioner. After learning Saishang-a had achieved "three victories in one day" in mid-1851 (QZZ 2:74-75; XF 1/6/7), the court immediately rewarded Saishang-a and his Banner team with numerous imperial gifts; and along with the rewards were the emperor's intimate words: "To sleep well is difficult, for Our³⁵ efficient and loyal troops are battling very hard in the hot summer of Guangxi" (QZZ 2:91; XF1/6/20). In a rather unusual manner, the emperor later wrote two poems to Saishang-a offering praise for and concern over the troops (QZZ 2: 199-201; XF 1/8/1).

The strengthening Taiping campaign, however, would weaken the trust and congenial relationships between Xianfeng and the commissioner. After the Jintian Uprising, the Taipings gradually fought their way northward. Two months after Saishang-a arrived in Guangxi, the rebels made a crucial move in late 1851 to occupy Yongan, a medium-sized walled city northeast of Jintian. As the occupation was a sign of failure, the emperor warned Saishang-a, who remained in the capital city of Guilin, some seventy miles from Yongan: "If [you] fail to capture the revolting leaders...We

³⁵ Following the convention of historians of the Qing studies, I translate the pronoun "I" and possessive pronoun "our" used by the emperor as "We" and "Our," respectively.

would place Saishang-a under heavy punishment without reservation” (QZZ 2:286; XF1/8*/9). As was common throughout the counter-Taiping campaign, the emperor alternated between employing an idiom of personal closeness and mobilizing bureaucratic controls to reestablish weakened relationships with his commissioners. If punished maximally, Saishang-a could be executed according to the law; yet, the emperor would first emphasize personal ties to motivate his official's behavior: “Now that the bandits continue running rampant and have invaded [Yongan], how would Our officials acknowledge their shame by trying their best to repay Our grace and redeeming their previous mistakes?” (QZZ 2:326; XF1/8*/19).³⁶

After their six-month occupation, the Taipings pushed past Yongan by breaking through the encirclement imperial troops had erected around the city's perimeter. The challengers continued northwards, advancing toward Guilin, the capital city of Guangxi. Unsuccessful in their attempt to take Guilin, the Taipings approached the northeastern Guangxi-Hunan border (XF 2/4; June 1852). By this time, the objective of the imperial campaign was to contain the challengers within Guangxi and prevent them from initiating a national crisis, since Hunan harbored one of the major tributaries of the Yangtze River—a channel leading to the economically vibrant region of Jiangnan. In a surprising move, the Taipings at the end of 1852 captured the township of Chen Zhou (Hunan), encountering almost no resistance. For this careless loss of yet another locality, Saishang-a received one of Peking's strongest chastisements:

For more than one year...various districts in Guangxi and Hunan were lost. According to the many memorials submitted, [Saishang-a] has only sent troops to pursue [the rebels] from behind, but has never conducted a raid on the rebels from

³⁶ For the loss of Yongan, the court punished the Saishang-a minimally with the order of an investigation by the Board of Civil Service (*jiabuyi*)—an act that could reaffirm a congenial relationship.

their front with innovative strategies. Where exactly was the campaign's commander? (QZZ 3:469; XF2/7/24)

Losing its patience, the court dismissed Saishang-a from his top post (QZZ 3:586-87; XF2/9/2); moreover, the once revered commissioner was arrested and sent to the capital for a criminal trial (QZZ 4:359; XF3/1/7). It was reported that Saishang-a broke down at the trial, and was overcome with fear and anxiety. Confessing his inability to suppress the revolt, he "begged for severe sanctions" (QZZ 5:528-29; XF3/1/22). Justified by the bureaucratic penal code that stated "generals and commanders-in-chief should be executed pending a trial if they have inadequately prepared for bandit attacks, leading to the loss of a city or locality" (QZZ 4:528-29; XF 3/1/22), the Board of Punishment sentenced Saishang-a to execution (with delay),³⁷ a sentence immediately approved by the court (QZZ 4:530; XF3/1/22). As it was common in the Qing bureaucracy to extend official punishment to close kins, Sai's four sons, who all held some offices in the central administration, were dismissed at the same time. Saishang-a's failure was due partly by his inexperience with the southern rebels. His Eight Banner generals, accustomed to fighting in northern pastoral plains, lacked the skills to combat enemies in the humid and rugged terrain of the south; some historians even suggest that Saishang-a, as a trained scholar beginning his career in the Hanlin Academy, had no knowledge of military affairs at all (Luo 1954).

After the failure of Li Xinyuan and Saishang-a, the court took a different direction in choosing imperial commissioners by favoring existing provincial officials and commanders who were accustomed to the places where battles took place. At the

³⁷ Execution with delay provided an opportunity for further appeal. After petitioning by other state officials, the court commuted Saishang-a's beheading in 1855. Commutation of severe sentences was a rather common practice, especially concerning punishments against top state officials.

moment when the commissioner position was vacated, the governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi, Xu Guangjin, rose as a possible candidate to fill the power vacuum. News of Xu's capture of Ling Shiba (凌十八), a key ally of the Taipings in Guangdong, had reached Peking (QZZ 3:406-413; XF2/6/22). Bestowed with the symbolic title of Grand Guardian of the Heir Apparent, Xu was therefore poised to replace the demoted commissioner (QZZ 3:586-87; XF 2/9/2). The perception of competence, accumulated through combat experience, now spoke louder than preexisting ties to the court. However, in the three months of his appointment Xu continuously disappointed the court by delaying his pursuit of the rebels with numerous excuses, especially when he dragged his way toward Hunan's capital, Changsha, as the Taipings laid siege on it (XF 2/9-10; November, 1852). With much less tolerance this time, the court immediately removed Xu from all his positions and sentenced him to execution (with delay), while his wealth was confiscated by the state—a fate much like that of his predecessor, Saishang-a.

Xu's failure did not, however, change the general principle of using officials with combat experiences to fill the imperial commissioner posts. As the successor of Xu at the end of 1852, Xiang Rong (向榮), the provincial commander-in-chief of Hunan, was one of the few military generals who managed to pursue the Taipings continuously since their uprising in 1851. Xiang's appointment then set another critical precedent of promoting military specialists as the overall commander of the counter-rebellion campaign. Among the seven commissioners dispatched prior to 1853 when the Taipings settled in Nanking (see Table 2.1, p. 84), five of them were rooted exclusively in the civilian bureaucracy (Lin, Li, Saishang-a, Xu, and Lu); and only two of them had some preexisting

experiences with the rebels prior to their appointment (Xu and Xiang). But among the nine commissioners appointed after the Taipings occupied Nanking, all of them had previously or concurrently held high military positions;³⁸ moreover, most of them fighting the Taipings prior to their appointment as Imperial Commissioner (Tuoming-a, Dexing-a, Xiling-a, Guanwen). As the commissioners were militarized, they were also likely to be drawn from the Manchu Bannermen. Being traditionally considered elite fighters and by virtue of their Manchu identity, the Bannermen captured both principles of central control: perceived competence and personal trust. Seven of the nine commissioners appointed in the post-settlement period were Manchus, and all but one (Hechuan) came directly from the Banner military establishment. These appointment patterns further indicate the fear of the Manchu court of assigning heavy armed forces to Han general-officials; the two Hans who could overcome the suspicion of the central court, Xiang Rong and Zeng Guofan, had firmly demonstrated their competence as military leaders prior to their appointment; and both were considered to be more or less indispensable in their times.

The selection of imperial commissioners generally reflects what it meant for Qing rulers to trust a state agent who had concentrated military power. We have seen that central power-holders had shifted from emphasizing strong pre-existing ties to evaluating state agents based primarily, though not exclusively, on their competence in combating the Taipings. The consecutive failures of Lin Xinyuan, Saishang-a, and Xu Guangjin—all of whom originated their careers in the civilian sector—might have contributed to a new principle of picking Manchu Bannermen as imperial commissioners. In contrast to

³⁸ Although Zeng Gofan may be considered as a civilian official, he was the commander of the Hunan Army at the time of his ascendance to Imperial Commissioner in 1860.

what one might expect of the Manchu court, the growing dependence on Manchu Bannermen had developed over a period of trial and error during the early 1850s. The continuing campaign might have allowed enough time for military officers to *demonstrate* their ability, whereas these opportunities were rarely available to early commissioners. In short, the preference toward Manchu commissioners was hardly an inevitable response for the Manchu power-holders; it was only through continuing encounters with the Taipings that certain strategies could be confirmed or rejected. To further understand these shifting strategies, we can trace new developments in the battlefields from 1853 to 1856, the most tumultuous years in the entire counter-mobilization campaign.

Splitting Central Command, 1853-56

Demonstrating extraordinary combat skills, the Taipings advanced into five more provinces between the end of 1852 and mid-1853, moving through Hunan, Hubei, Jiangxi, Anhui and Jiangsu, sometimes enduring great casualties. In Hunan, the Taipings managed to regenerate their mobilization efforts by recruiting thousands of new members. Among the new recruits were twenty thousand members of Hunanese secret societies who, familiar with local terrains, would pose as local militia or traveling merchants and penetrate targeted townships ahead of the regular Taiping soldiers (Spence 1996:163).³⁹ By early 1853, the revolutionary force reached its zenith. Within a matter of months, Taiping soldiers made brief occupations of or encirclements around cities as

³⁹ To make recruitment more palatable, the Taipings relaxed the disciplinary restrictions they imposed on Guangxi veterans, allowing the new vanguard to bring along their families and retain their hair queue, which represented submission to the Manchu state (Spence 1996:169).

strategically important as Changsha, Wuchang, Jiujiang and Anqing; they then completed a journey of more than a thousand miles (4,000 *li*), reaching the strategic region of the lower Yangtze.

When battles began stretching across great distances, the Qing responded by increasing the number of imperial commissioners on the field. Following the occupation of Wuchang (the provincial capital of Hubei) in the end of 1852 (XF 2/12/18), the court commissioned two additional officials as leaders of separate imperial campaigns; both of these appointments were drawn from the provincial administration. Lu Jianying (陸建瀛), the governor-general of Liangjiang,⁴⁰ was ordered to lead his provincial troops from Nanking to counteract the challengers' advancement from the Yangtze upstream. His counterpart, the acting governor of Henan, Qishan (琦善)—a veteran Manchu official whom the court had used in the aftermath of the Opium War—would gather forces from Henan, attempting to intercept the Taipings at northern Hubei. Together the two commissioners were to block the challengers from further approaching the lower Yangtze, while another imperial commissioner, Xiang Rong, who had pursued the challengers from the southern routes.

State officials who were observing these new developments tended to resist dividing the power of the imperial force (e.g., QZZ 3:351-52; XF 2/2/25). They were concerned with potential disunity among commanders, particularly over incompatible personalities and conflicting self-interests. But these worries were overshadowed by a more urgent need for organizational flexibility: provincial officials had to be raised to the

⁴⁰ A governor-general of Liangjiang was the highest provincial official governing three provinces: Jiangxi, Anhui and Jiangsu. Because of the economic importance of these provinces, this governor-generalship was considered the most powerful among all provincial positions.

status of imperial commissioners so they could maneuver various resources across rigidly bounded provincial jurisdictions. For example, without the status of Imperial Commissioner, Qishan as the acting governor of Henan would lack the legitimate authority to mobilize forces belonging to the governor of Hubei, the province Qishan was assigned to defend. By breaking existing bureaucratic constraints, the assignment of multiple commissioners was a method to increase the officials' capacity to suppress the rebels.

Was splitting central command a sign of decentralization? As I shall discuss below, because numerous equally powerful imperial commissioners were unable or unwilling to coordinate their actions, the emperor (and his Grand Councilors) needed to regulate the distribution of resources across various campaigns and arbitrate the fierce competition over imperial trust among the commissioners. Perhaps inadvertently, these processes reinforced the court's central position in the counter-Taiping campaign. These processes will be discussed in the context of the Taipings' takeover of Nanking in 1853 and its aftermath.

Reaching and Entering Nanking

In the spring of 1853 (XF 3/2/12), Taiping troops reached the downstream of Yangtze, the economically and culturally vibrant region known as Jiangnan (which included provinces of Jiangsu, Anhui, and Zhejiang). After thirteen days of combat, the Taipings broke through the defenses of Nanking, a former capital during the Ming dynasty. A contemporary literatus, Wang Shiduo (汪士鐸), observed that the feverish Taipings were at least seven to eight hundred thousand strong: "Although [they are]

assembled like a flock of crows, we cannot break their spirit and disperse this rabble without gaining victories first" (quoted in Jen 1973:115). As in their previous campaigns, the Taipings creatively used a combination of strategies to force their way into the city. They exploded the city's walls and dug tunnels beneath them using Hunan coal miners—drumming as they dug to prevent the other side from detecting the tunnels' directions—and diverted the attention of imperial troops with paper effigies, used as decoys when the rebel attacked on another side (Jen 1973:116). Successfully overcoming Nanking's defenses, Taiping leaders soon founded their "Heavenly Capital" (*Tianjing* 天京), while Hong Xiuquan took his seat as the "Heavenly King." Once they assumed control of the city, the Taipings proclaimed that "[t]he Heavenly King, by order of the Heavenly Father and Heavenly Elder Brothers, comes to rule over the people of the world. Everyone must know the Heavenly Father and submit to the Heavenly King, fighting together for the new Kingdom and enjoying together heavenly blessing" (quoted in Jen 1973:119).

The population of Nanking was about 240,000 in 1853-54, half of which were non-combative family members of Taiping soldiers (Chen et al. 2002:852). With the settlement of Nanking, the Taipings would rule some parts of Jiangsu, Anhui, Zhejiang, and Jiangxi provinces in various stability and capacity until the Kingdom's demise in 1864. Some government structures had gradually been established in Nanking and its vicinity, including the beginning of conscription of the population (of men and women), circulation of currency, a civil examination system to recruit officials, and the establishment of two administrative provinces, Sufu (蘇福) and Tianping (天平), near Nanking. Under Taiping rule, trade with foreign power continued to some extent, and the economic life of the population in Taiping-controlled regions seemed to have recovered

gradually (see Lindley [1866]1970). At least initially, the Taipings managed to maintain a commitment to banning opium and ceasing any wanton slaughtering of common people. Observing strictly some of the prescriptions from the Ten Commandments, Taiping laws would severely punish those who had committed adultery and rape (Jen 1973:119). It is, however, difficult to evaluate the extent of stability in any of the government structures, because the Taipings were preoccupied by continuing military campaigns, aiming either to expand the Kingdom's territory or to defend themselves from the onslaught of the Qing forces.

In mid-1853, Hong Xiuquan ordered two large-scale expeditions to expand the Kingdom's influence.⁴¹ One of these, the Northern Expedition, was composed of 20,000 troops heading toward Peking via Anhui, Henan and Shanxi provinces. Another expedition headed west, revisiting areas along the mid-stream Yangtze, such as Wuchang (Hubei), Luzhou (Anhui), Nanchang (Jiangxi), and numerous places in Hunan. Together with the battles around Nanking, three different large-scale campaigns—with their boundaries occasionally overlapping—were going on simultaneously from 1853 to mid-1855.

The Qing government correspondingly expanded its counter-rebellion efforts by assigning more imperial commissioners to the battlefields. Between 1853 and 1854, a total of eight commissioners were appointed and/or dismissed over the one year period. Compounding the widening crisis were threats from other social rebellions, including the

⁴¹ The intention of these expeditions remains debatable. Besides expanding the territory for the new kingdom, historians suggest that Hong might have wanted to divert other Taiping leaders away from Nanking, where Hong's power was concentrated. According to Cheng et al. (2002:863-4), an early goal of the western expeditions was purely material—to accrue supplies for Nanking, which was experiencing a food shortage. The political goal of territorial expansion was only minor.

Little-Sword Society Uprising in Shanghai, the Nians in Henan, Anhui and Shandong (1851-68), the different Muslim rebellions in the southwest Yunan (1855-73) and later in the northwestern provinces of Gansu and Shaanxi (1862-1877). In spite of these diversions, Peking firmly believed suppressing the Taiping rebels to be the priority of the state, a stance the court did not alter even in the midst of another foreign conflict that culminated in the Second Opium War (1856-1860). It is in the context of heightened threats that I go on to discuss how the Qing responded to the multi-front war in the mid-1850s.

Multi-front Wars and Central Control

Central power-holders in Peking and state actors in the provinces were well aware that a prolonged occupation of Nanking would be devastating to the dynasty. The blockage in the lower Yangtze, for instance, would prevent “capital grains”—a main source of food supplies for Peking elites—from being transported northward via the Grand Canal. Moreover, tax revenue from the lower-Yangtze regions would be reduced tremendously. Immediately after the occupation of Nanking, the Qing established two sustained encampments on the north and south banks of Yangtze, each with about 17,000 imperial troops. Led by two different imperial commissioners, Qishan and Xiang Rong, the encampments would lay a rather long-term siege on Nanking, intending to cut off the Taipings from outside support and then exhaust them.

Yet the imperial forces encountered numerous problems. First, it is estimated that the Taipings had deployed 100,000 troops in Nanking and its vicinity by 1853, whereas the Qing had only about 40,000 (Chen et al. 2002:850). Second, the northern

encampment, led by Commissioner Qishan, was composed of northeastern soldiers from Jilin, who were unaccustomed to fight in the Yangtze's waterways. Third, the southern encampment under the command of Xiang Rong was frequently diverted to campaigns in mid-stream Yangtze, west of Nanking, thus undermining the capacity of an ideally concentrated force. But more serious problems actually stemmed from the command structure of a campaign that was now splitting into multiple heads.

As their purviews overlapped, various imperial commissioners began to compete with one another for resources, as well as competing for honor and for trust. Qishan, the commissioner leading the Northern Encampment, occasionally complained to the court about the unequal distribution of personnel, which he thought tended to favor the southern encampment under Xiang Rong. Simultaneously, Xiang was frustrated that his camp had often received requests to contribute aid for various campaigns west of Nanking, implying discreetly that Qishan could also have done so. Since most decisions of resource mobilization needed to pass through the metropolitan center and attain the symbolic and personal approval from the emperor, the distribution of funds and troops was imbued with meanings of personal trust from the emperor to his commissioners. As a consequence, the increasingly burdensome counter-mobilization brought out many complexities of interpersonal relationships, sometimes hidden within these tumultuous military operations. We can see the competition to win imperial trust most clearly in the emperor's response to the Northern Expedition from 1853-55.

This expedition began immediately after the rebels settled in Nanking. With 15,000 troops, the Taipings made their way through Henan and Shanxi provinces; by the end of 1853, they were heading toward Zhili Province, approaching Peking with

threatening speed. It was reported that 30,000 Peking residents fled the capital upon hearing of the approaching rebels (Jen 1973:181). Alarmed, the court frantically sought “capable officials” to cope with the crisis. Naerjinge (訥爾經額), the newly appointed imperial commissioner dispatched to prevent the Taipings from entering Zhili, deserted his troops and “abandon[ed] all his ammunition and other belongings including his official seal” (Jen 1973:181).⁴² Soon after, the court mobilized Prince Hui (惠親王), the emperor’s uncle, as Generalissimo (*fengming dajianjun*, 奉命大將軍), who was in turn assisted by Zenggelingqin (僧格淋沁), a Mongol Prince, as deputy commissioner (*canzan dachen*, 參贊大臣) (QZZ 10:14-15; XF 3/9/9). Among them, the court particularly depended on Zenggelingqin, who led 4,000 Manchu and Mongolian elite soldiers in defense of the capital (Jen 1973:192). An additional imperial commissioner, Shengbao (勝保), a former Grand Secretariat with a military background, would pursue the Taipings from Shanxi with 14,000 troops (Jen 1973:180). As a result of these appointments, toward the end of 1853 numerous troops converged around the city of Tianjin, one of Peking’s crucial seaports, as close to the Forbidden City as sixty miles. Here, the Taipings saw a real chance to overthrow the Manchu dynasty.

Facing this unprecedented threat, the battlegrounds near Tianjin boasted several imperial commanders with more or less equal status, all of whom aimed to defend the throne under imperial orders; from these numerous forces also grew some of the fiercest competitions among the special commissioners, especially between Shengbao and Zenggelingqin. Emperor Xianfeng seemed to have expected this conflict, and his

⁴² Naerjinge was later arrested and tried by the Board of Punishment, which delivered a sentence of beheading (with delay) (QZZ 10: #3877; XF3/10/17).

correspondence reminded Shengbao that the assignment of another special commissioner—referring to Zenggelingqin—did not alter or mitigate imperial trust in Shengbao. Despite such assurances, a contemporary official from Peking noted that in every memorial reporting a case of victory from Shengbao, there was another parallel memorial submitted by Zenggelingqin regarding the same event (QZZ 10:545-56; XF3/10/16). The redundant documents signaled the two were in discord—otherwise they would have co-signed the memorials. This observation was confirmed later when Shengbao complained to the emperor that Zenggelingqin’s staff was trying to monitor Shengbao’s actions in order to manufacture slanderous charges against him. Expressing his frustration, Shengbao then besought the court to dispatch another “trusted and important official” to replace himself (QZZ 11:119-20; XF 3/11/8). For Shengbao the amount of imperial trust was more or less equivalent to the amount of autonomy he had—that is, the autonomy to act without being supervised by another commissioner.

In confronting disputes between two equally important commissioners, the court’s reactions were inconsistent. At first, Emperor Xianfeng offered words of reassurance: “Shengbao is already an imperial commander; how could he not be the trusted and crucial one?” (QZZ 11:134; XF 3/11/9). Yet, to similarly placate Zenggelingqin, the emperor suggested that, “Should Shengbao successfully clear the threats to the capital, your contribution will be greatest, since you have defended the northern route” (QZZ 11:122; XF 3/11/8). Later the balance was tipped over to Shengbao’s side, when his troops performed more successfully than Zenggelingqin’s. In a following edict the court ordered Zenggelingqin not to interfere with Shengbao’s campaign for the purpose of “unifying the authority in the campaign” (QZZ 12:137-38; XF 4/1/10). Privately, Emperor Xianfeng

further told Shengbao that “If We don’t trust you, why shouldn’t We recall your troops back or execute you?” (QZZ 12:222; XF 4/1/8).

The competition among officials nonetheless provided the emperor the opportunity to pit the enemies against one another as well. When Shengbao made little further progress in his campaign during the early months of 1855, and at the same time Zenggelinqin achieved significant victories over the Taipings’ Northern Expedition, the court challenged Shengbao: “Now that Zenggelinqin was successful...why are we seeing Shengbao having no grip on the problem?...How can he feel no shame?” (QZZ 17: 46; XF5/1/21). Eventually, the court cashiered Shengbao in 1854 after a major defeat in the township of Linqing, and the Taiping Northern Expedition, which had threatened five provinces, came to an end in early 1855, when Zenggelinqin defeated its last strand in Lian Zhen (Shandong). Zenggelinqin had become the first special commissioner since 1850 who managed to complete his mission without being hastily dismissed in the midst of actions.

While the Qing government had successfully curbed the Taipings’ Northern Expedition, it was less successful in quelling the Western Expedition. Hong Xiuquan embarked on this expedition to the west in the mid-1853, shortly after the Northern Expedition had left Nanking. By the summer of 1856, about 15,000 western expeditionary forces had advanced, at different times, into upstream Yangtze in an attempt to expand the Taiping Kingdom west of Nanking. Battle sites during the Western Expedition did not form a linear pattern, as did those in the Northern Expedition. Repeating some of the tactics employed in their journey from Guangxi to Nanking, the Taipings’ Western Expedition would briefly occupy a locality, gathering supplies and

recruiting new members until they faced mounting government pressures to abandon the place, reoccupying it only if the opportunity arose. As a result of intermittent battles, towns and cities experienced constant oscillations of power, sometimes within a short period of time. As extreme examples, Wuhu in the Anhui province had changed hands no less than eight times, while Wuchang, the strategic capital city of Hubei, was occupied by the Taipings and then returned to imperial control thrice, in 1852, 1853, and 1855-56. The expansion of the warfare to the west also directly affected other imperial campaigns, especially those around Nanking. The Southern Encampment that surrounded the city suffered a major defeat in the summer of 1856, in part because, as the court recognized, the encampment was "weakened by its frequent contribution to other battles" (QZZ 18:450; XF 6/6/1).⁴³

To sum up, increasing the number of imperial commissioners originally allowed the Qing state to respond flexibly to new developments in the battlefields, but it also changed the relationships between the throne and its imperial commissioners—the men in whom the emperor placed special trust and confidence. From 1853 to 1859, at least three officers would simultaneously hold the imperial commissioner's offices that were located in different places. Because various imperial commissioners might be unwilling or unable to coordinate among themselves, the emperor as an arbitrator needed to intervene, at least at the rhetorical level. The increasingly widespread and expensive counter-mobilization thus reaffirmed the central role Peking rulers played in redistributing

⁴³ Even with this awareness, the court held Commissioner Xiang Rong responsible for "lacking the appropriate method to mobilize the troops." The defeat of the encampment then forced Xiang to transplant his military operation to Danyang, thirty miles away from the bank of Yangtze, where the commissioner died of sickness (though some historians suggest suicide—see Li 1982). Because of the death of Xiang, the Qing imperial campaign lost one of its most experienced generals since 1851.

resources and organizing military forces. The central state in the mid-1850s seemed to have come full circle to reencountering the organizational question it was facing at the outset of the Taiping Rebellion, namely, how to avoid hampering the campaign's efficiency in a fast-moving warfare while maintaining some level of central control.

Taipings in the mid-1850s

The Taipings were faced with a similar problem as they expanded their campaigns. The advancement of the Taipings' Western Expedition had stalled occasionally because leaders in the Heavenly Capital would order forces advancing to the west back to Nanking to supplement the ailing Northern Expedition. This persistent diversion may explain the Taipings' failure to take hold of strategic points such as Wuchang, Hubei, and the province of Jiangxi (Li 1982:299; 395-435). Furthermore, short-lived occupations often prevented the Taipings from establishing permanent ruling structures in the places they newly acquired. The rare exceptions were a portion of Jiangxi and a section of Anhui, where the Taiping "Wing King," Shi Dakai (石達開), known for his military and administrative skills, managed to implement local governments by allowing occupied peoples to take part in elections, or "if conditions made this impracticable, by appoint[ments] from among those of the populace willing to swear allegiance to the Taiping government" (Jen 1973:200). Local stability in these locales was also maintained, as Shi allowed landowners to retain their property, lowered taxes, and permitted trade. Exactly how well these governments were sustained is not known, however.

More devastating than any of their military defeats by the mid-1850s was the Taipings' internal disintegration in 1856. As the Western Expedition was fighting desperately to maintain the city of Wuchang and numerous locations in Jiangxi Province, the Taiping "East King," Yang Xiuqing (楊秀清), initiated a coup intending to topple the Heavenly King. Yang had been the second most powerful man in the Taiping movement since the Jintian Uprising. As one of Hong Xiuquan's right hand men and a sworn brother, Yang occasionally demonstrated his own ability to channel God's message to believers—a practice that Hong more or less claimed as his alone (Spence 1996:235). Yang's threat to Hong's supreme status was apparent, and in a clearly dissenting, insurrectionary move in the late summer of 1856, Yang—who was entitled “Nine Thousand Years Old”—forced Hong to grant him the supreme title of “Ten Thousand Years Old.” Symbolically, this would make Yang the same status as Hong, the only “Ten Thousand Years Old” among the Taiping leaders. In desperation, Hong mobilized two loyalists, Qi Rikan and Wei Changhui (韋昌輝), to suppress the coup, leaving tens of thousands of Yang's followers and other dissenters dead in Nanking. While Hong Xiuquan was the apparent victor, his legitimacy was undermined tremendously. The dissension indirectly led one of the strongest strands of the Taipings, commanded by Shi Dakai, to abandon Nanking in mid-1857. Shi would later launch his own independent campaign, still under the aegis of the Taipings, across provinces of Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangxi, Guizhou, and Sichuan, where he eventually surrendered to the Qing in 1863. Some historians, such as Jen (1973), have therefore argued that, in the wake of this fratricide, the Taipings had already begun their decline, though there was little evidence

showing that the Qing, even with full awareness of the Nanking struggle, managed to seize this opportunity to revive its own campaign.

Conclusion

Initially, Peking's determination to intervene in the Guangxi crisis was contingent on several processes: the growing prevalence of social uprisings in the region, the emerging evidence of local officials' ineptitude, the death of Emperor Daoguang, and the ensuing political struggle within the court. From these processes arose the salience of personal ties in delegating an imperial commissioner to distant battlefields. Over time, the Taiping Rebellion further shaped the state organization by forcing the Qing central rulers to attempt different organizational strategies to combat crises; from these organizational actions, new meanings of social relationships arose, especially those regarding the notions of personal trust between the monarch and his agents—a means to bridge the wide spatial gap between metropolitan rulers and distantly located state agents.

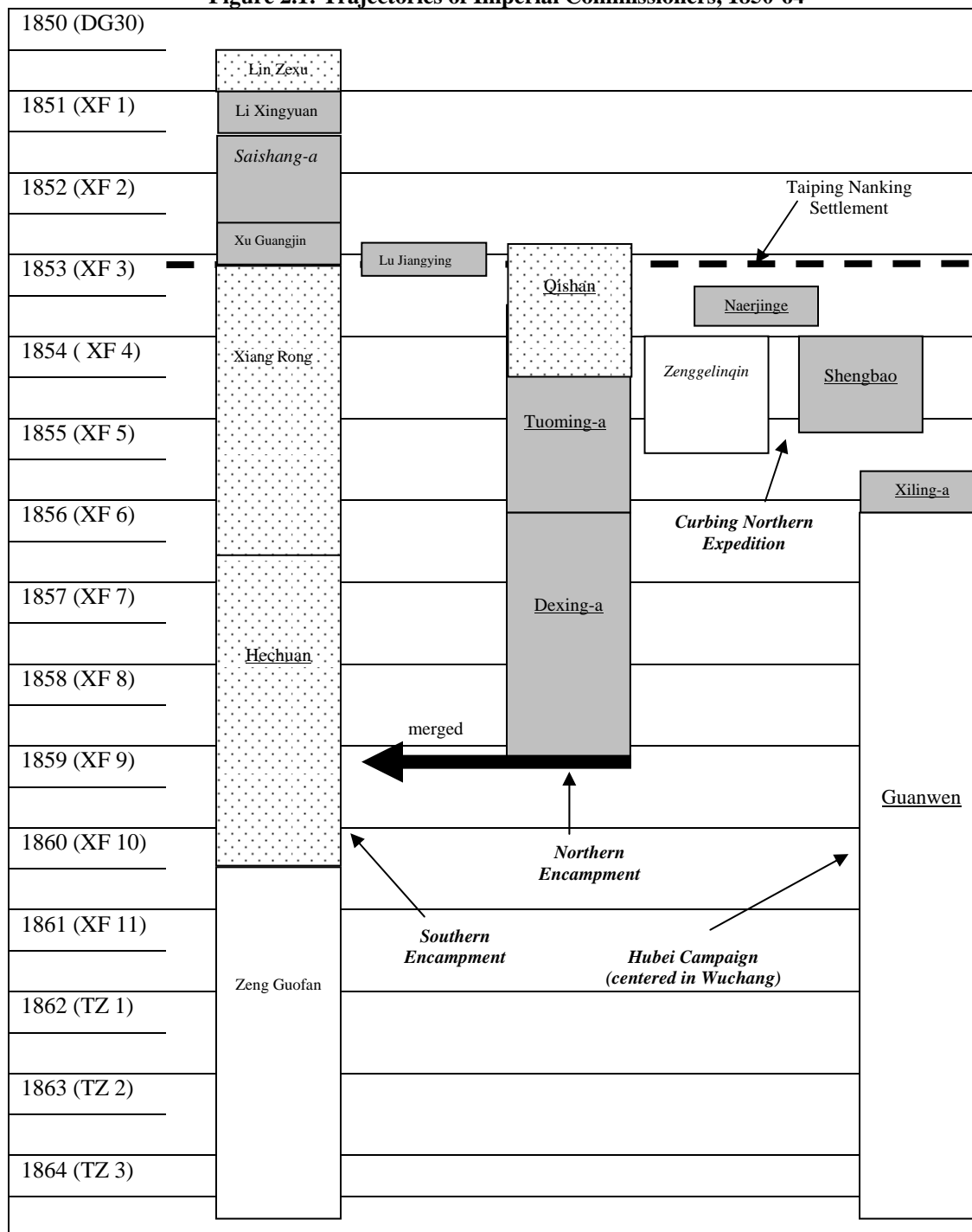
New battlefield developments constantly called for revisions of existing approaches to crisis management. My analyses suggest that each appointee's failure readjusted the conditions and criteria for evaluating successive candidates. The first three years of the Taiping rebellion then saw a series of organizational experiments that would determine the type of state agents capable of leading the counter-rebellion campaign during its later phases. The failure of Li Xingyuan, Saishang-a, and Xu Guangjin—officials originating from the civilian sector—seemed to have shifted the court's preference toward the military sector as a source of candidates. Simultaneously, the increasing use of military personnel led to the dominance of Manchu Bannermen, who

were traditionally viewed as elite fighters more closely tied to the court than the Han-based Green Standard Armies. After the Taipings occupied Nanking in 1853, the tendency had been to avoid non-Banner Hans as commanders-in-chief for the imperial campaign, until the rise of Zeng Guofan in 1860. We can conclude from the patterns of commissioner-appointment that central control—understood as a measure of how strongly tied imperial commissioners were to the metropolitan center—remained tight throughout the 1850s.

The warfare that had been expanding since 1853 further intensified the process of centralization, albeit in a paradoxical way. Since no single imperial commissioner could monopolize imperial trust after the fall of Nanking, the position of the special state agents became a less distinct role vis-à-vis other regular provincial officials. To be sure, imperial commissioners remained more powerful than provincial officials, but they had increasingly relied on the arbitration of the court (as did regular provincial officials) regarding issues of resource distribution, as well as competition over imperial trust. The structure of the Taipings' combat strategies—including their mobility and the spatial span—had therefore reinforced the central position of the court in regulating the imperial campaign.

It is doubtful, however, that this new opportunity for centralization helped the Qing to suppress the Taipings, since the rebels' advancements continuously demanded that imperial forces adapt to a fast-moving campaign that required organizational flexibility and state agents with local knowledge of battlefield terrain. To address this question, we shall examine the role existing provincial officials played in the counter-rebellion campaign. Here, metropolitan rulers were faced with a more complicated

problem than the management of sixteen commissioners throughout a fifteen-year period. Depending on the official ranks in question, the number of existing (top) provincial officials relevant to the imperial campaign could range from twenty to sixty at any time, simply because the Taipings spanned across many provincial jurisdictions. Next, I analyze the strategies through which metropolitan rulers exerted control over provincial officials, and how those officials, in turn, counteracted central strategies.

Figure 2.1: Trajectories of Imperial Commissioners, 1850-64

Ethnic Name code:
 Manchu = Underlined
 Mongol = Italicized
 Han = Regular

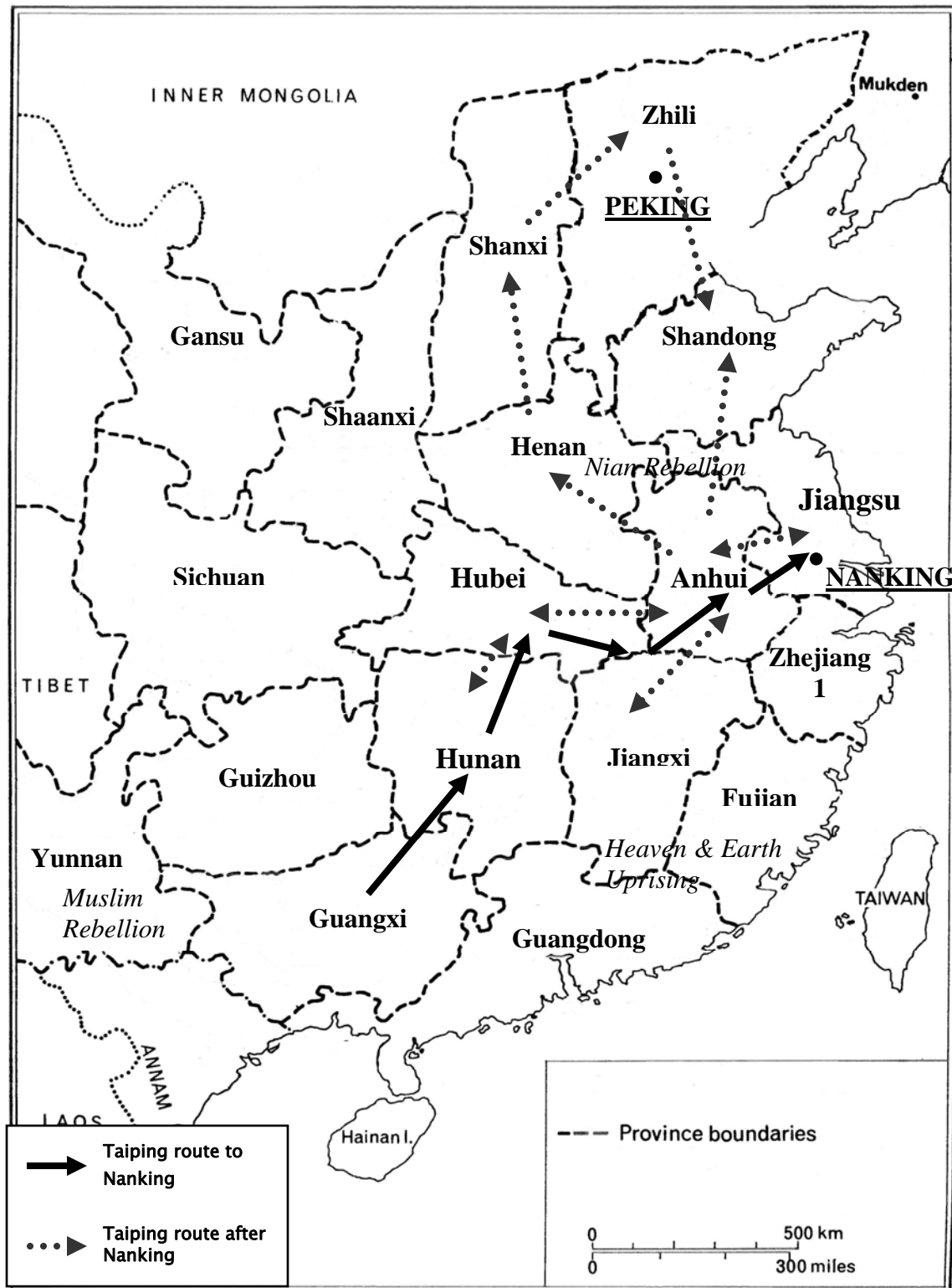
Career Outcome code:
 Dismissed = Grey boxes
 Death = Dotted boxes
 "Success" = White boxes

Table 2.1: Characteristics of Imperial Commissioners, 1851-64.

	<i>Appointed from 1850 to 1853 (Nanking Settlement) (N=7)</i>	<i>Appointed from 1853 (Nanking Settlement) to 1864 (N=9)</i>	<i>Total (N=16)</i>
Ethnicity			
Number of Hans	5	1	6
Number of Manchus	1	7	8
Number of Mongols	1	1	2
Background			
Number of civilian	5	1	6
Number of military	2	8	10
Outcome			
Number of ended with dismissed	4	5	9
Number of ended with death	3	1	4
Number of survival/success	0	3	3

Note: By their order of appointment, Imperial Commissioners appointed prior to Taipings' 1853 settlement were: Lin Zexu, Li Xinyuan, Saishang-a, Xu Guangjin, Lu Jianying, Qishan, and Xiang Rong. Post-1853 Imperial Commissioners were: Naerjinge, Shengbao, Zenggelingin, Tumeng-a, Xiling-a, Guanwen, Dexing-a, Hechuan, and Zeng Guofan.

Figure 2.2: Trajectory of the Taiping Movement, 1851-56.



CHAPTER 3

SPIRALING INTO ORGANIZATIONAL CHAOS

To understand how provincial officials responded to the Taiping challenge, we need to return to the organizational environment during the early 1850s—a period in which most of the organizational experiments took place. After a year of fruitless anti-Taiping campaigning, a sense of organizational chaos began to loom over the state toward the latter part of 1852. As the Taipings penetrated Hunan, moving speedily from county to county, state actors watched anxiously, formulating strategies to control volatilities both external to and within their organizational environment. The term “control” is admittedly imperfect here because most social actors try to control their environment in some way. Here I use the term broadly to cover a range of bureaucratic actions⁴⁴ that were identifiable responses to problematic situations: military defeats, the threat of punishment, draining of resources, interpersonal conflicts, and so on. For the Qing state actors faced with the Taipings, control meant grappling with or resolving some of these problematic situations.

Within the existing bureaucratic rules and organizational norms, how might state actors (both rulers and officials) act strategically and exert control? We can first pinpoint the system of negative sanctions, which organized many aspects of Qing bureaucratic life (see Guy 2000; Metzger 1973). Punishment against officials helped strengthen the imperial campaign to the extent that disciplinary actions could deter officials’ potential (and indeed frequent) failures. In a situation when organizational failure was as

⁴⁴ When bureaucrats acted in the name of their legitimate status from a particular position, vis-à-vis others in the organization, we may say they are engaged in “bureaucratic actions.”

commonplace as it was in the Taiping case, we may expect to find a wave of negative sanctions vigorously applied against state agents. While there is some truth to this, the linkage between punishment and organizational failure was not straightforward for the Qing. Too harsh a penalty could demoralize officials in battlefields, and yet too lax a penalty might encourage their inertia in addition to undermining the legitimacy of the rulers' authority. Below we shall see that it was this dilemma that gave state actors the leverage to negotiate, thereby generating a capacity for rulers and officials to control their uncertain environment.

In addition, jurisdictional boundaries (e.g., provincial or county boundaries, an office, a rank, etc.) gave state actors another set of organizational resources with which they could exert control. Both in spatial and positional terms, jurisdictions defined officials' authorities and identified the kind of resources they could access. In contrast to the court's hope that all officials across jurisdictions would act in accordance with the interest of the overarching imperial campaign, jurisdictional boundaries often set state agents apart. The problem partly stemmed from the fact that the task boundaries within the Qing bureaucracy were intentionally ambiguous. This ambiguity provided officials with ample opportunity to maneuver through the system, activating or suppressing the salience of jurisdictional boundaries. We shall see how actors' negotiations within and across jurisdictional boundaries gave them additional leverage over an uncertain environment.

These available organizational resources allowing rulers and state agents to act differently and strategically resulted from a flexible bureaucratic structure predating the Taiping rebellion. The goal of this paper is to trace how these otherwise resilient

components could also be turned into organizational constraints, and how diverse actors' responses to the Taiping war gradually brought the provincial administration into a state of chaos.

The Use of Negative Sanction and Its Consequences

Social revolts were unquestionably a serious crime to the Qing Empire. Under the *Great Qing Code*,⁴⁵ “plotting rebellion” (*moupan* 謀叛) was one of the “Ten Great Wrongs” (*shi e* 十惡), the ten types of actions “in which the crimes are very serious and the evil is extreme” (Jones 1994:34-35).⁴⁶ The punishment for conspiring or carrying out a revolt was the execution of the conspirator by slicing; moreover, the penalty would extend to the conspirator's relatives, as a certain number of his male household members would be decapitated and female members given to meritorious officials as slaves (Jones 1994:237-38). Since the state maintained no tolerance toward social revolts, state officials and local authorities (including the gentry) were expected to curb the growth of any suspicious rebellions to their full abilities.

While state agents took for granted the “evilness” of any deviants they dubbed

⁴⁵ Based mainly on the Ming legal framework, the first complete *Great Qing Code* (*da qing lü li* 大清律例), with 1049 sub-statutes, was issued by the Qinglong emperor in 1740; numerous new sub-statutes were added over the years throughout the rest of the dynasty. It is important to note that while the number of sub-statutes (*li*) had increased over time, the essential codes (*lü*) were not subject to major alterations. For translations of the Qing Code, I adopted William C. Jones's (1994) version, which includes only translations of the essential codes, not the sub-statutes.

⁴⁶ This view concerning the “Ten Great Wrongs” came from the legal commentary of the President of the Board of Punishment, Xue Yunsheng, whose work, *The Questions of Comprehending the Qing Statutes* (DLCY), provides the main source of Jones's (1994) translation of the *Great Qing Code*. Among the Ten Great Wrongs were less severe offences, such as “dismissing filial responsibilities” and “dismissing imperial rites,” which were considered “distortion[s] of ethics severe enough to be listed in the beginning of the Qing Code”(Jones 1994:34-35).

“*fei*,” or bandit rebels,⁴⁷ they were given few guidelines for responding to social outbreaks. Instead, it was through rules relating to bureaucratic punishment that state officials could gauge Peking’s expectations. This section discusses how negative sanctions, stipulated by both the Qing penal codes and bureaucratic regulations, shaped the ways state agents reacted to the Taiping crisis. I examine how the Taipings’ battles opened up opportunities for officials to negotiate with Peking. Furthermore, I discuss the processes by which actors’ negotiations could modify preexisting organizational norms, especially those relating to negative sanctioning.

Rules and Responsibilities

Qing provincial officials commonly held overlapping administrative roles, with their task boundaries somewhat ambiguously defined. This conception of officials as administrative generalists allowed bureaucrats to move across tasks and positions with ease. Staffing agents who were interchangeable (and thus replaceable) could ideally increase organizational flexibility and strengthen the officials’ capacity to monitor one another.

Defending against social outbreaks meant that a civilian official would have to take a dual role as both administrator and military commander of his jurisdiction. A provincial governor or governor-general, for example, was responsible for coordinating provincial garrisons (the Green Standard Army), and his subordinate bureaucrats for

⁴⁷ It was utterly impossible for any Qing officials to display open agreement or sympathy with the social and political causes of any social rebels. However, both central rulers and official agents understood that ordinary people could be “forced” to join rebellions or banditry under strained economic situations and widespread official corruption. The central state occasionally sanctioned a process of pacification (*zhaofu* 招撫), which commuted the punishments of revolting members under the condition that they would not join any anti-government activities again.

defending given provinces from bandit incursions. The circumference of officials' responsibilities were relative to their positions. Lower-ranking officials, such as district magistrates, were responsible for much smaller territories than their superiors; being physically close to their jurisdictions, however, they bore more responsibility for the logistics of local anti-Taiping defenses more than their distant superiors. In all, official accountability was territorially bounded, as revealed by the phrase "*shoutu zhi ze*" (守土之責), or "the responsibility to protect a particular locality." From these space-bound notions of accountability arose the negative sanctions levied against officials.

We can locate the relevant sanctioning rules from two places: the *Great Qing Code* and the *Administrative Supplementary Statutes of the Board of Civil Office* (hereafter the *Administrative Statutes*). While the *Great Qing Code* tended to distinguish penalties according to the various external conditions officials faced, the *Administrative Statutes* made distinctions according to officials' ranks. Let us first consider a commonly cited statute from the *Administrative Statutes*:

Of any walled-city of a district (*zhou* or *xian*) on the coast or in the hinterland, if it is lost to rebels: the district magistrate (*zhou xian*) charged with guarding the place will be dismissed and beheaded with delay;⁴⁸ any prefect (*zhi fu*) and director of bandit control in the same city [as the district magistrate] will be dismissed; any circuit intendant (*dao yuan*) charged with leading troops in the same city [of the district magistrate] will be dismissed; any prefect not charged with guarding the city [but who happened to be present] will be dismissed, while any circuit intendant of the same situation will be demoted by three ranks and transferred; the provincial judge and provincial treasurer (*liang si*) will be demoted by two ranks and transferred; the governor-general and provincial governor will be demoted by two ranks and retained at their original positions. (LBZL 37:15)

⁴⁸ "Execution with delay," or *zhan jian hou* (斬監候), was a procedure similar to an appeal process, in which an execution case would be pended upon further investigations by the Board of Punishment. Among top officials who received "execution with delay," many of whose executions were later commuted, were Saishang-a and Xu Guangjin, imperial commissioners in the early 1850s.

Given a particular provincial jurisdiction, the *Administrative Statutes* “distributed” punishments along official ranks: the lower an official was ranked, the more severe would be the punishment he would face. In the case of the loss of a locality, the severity of punishment ranged from demotion (by only two ranks) to execution. This drastic inequality clearly revealed an understanding of bureaucratic accountability as a function of officials’ physical proximity to rebellious activities. Lower ranking magistrates, for instance, should have become aware of suspicious activities before the news reached their superiors, distantly stationed in provincial capitals. The importance of spatiality is captured in the *Administrative Statutes* by an elaboration of the above rule: “When two district magistrates shared their administrative responsibilities in the same city, their penalties are to be determined by the *land* the rebels had breached” (LBZL 37:15; my emphasis).

Bureaucratic rules also considered other factors to determine official failures, including the extent of damage the rebels had caused in a jurisdiction: “If the city was not walled, or if rebels left immediately after the walled-city was pillaged, thus without a complete loss to the hands of the rebels, this statute [cited above] will not be applied [to the officials in that condition]” (LBZL 37:15). In spite of these elaborations, we do not know which factor—official rank, physical distance, or degree of damage—was most important in determining the severity of penalty. But we shall later see in the chapter that this openness might have facilitated a degree of flexibility for decision makers to negotiate with agents, and vice versa.

The bureaucratic rules in the *Administrative Statutes* generally made no stipulations regarding the agents’ actions, their motivations, or their capacities to defend.

The penal codes under the *Great Qing Code*, on the other hand, supplemented such guidelines:

Any general [i.e., imperial commissioner, governor-general, provincial governor, and other military officers, etc.] charged with guarding the frontier who is attacked and surrounded by the enemy in a fortified place, and does not make strenuous efforts to defend it, and abandons it without authorization, or who (*in peace time*) does not preserve and construct defences [sic] will,⁴⁹ if there is an attack by the enemy, and, as a result (*of his abandonment or lack of preparation*), the fortified position is lost, be sentenced to be beheaded (*with delay*). (Jones 1994:202-03; emphases original)⁵⁰

In a subsequent clause, the law stated that lower-ranking officials at the county levels would be subject to the same penalty if they were likewise inattentive to the places they were supposed to oversee.⁵¹ Unlike the *Administrative Statutes*, in the *Great Qing Code* equality across ranks was implied. In fact, this law was cited by the court to dismiss Commissioner Saishang-a, the highest and most prestigious commissioner in the Taiping campaign during 1852 (see Chapter 2).

Sanctions imposed on state agents were ideally commensurate with their actual mistakes, but what counted as “making strenuous efforts to defend a place,” as stressed by numerous statutes, was often a matter of deliberation. Decision makers (who were usually the presidents and vice-presidents of the Board of Civil Office or the Board of War) had to distinguish the most severe offenses from other forms of dereliction, such as

⁴⁹ Defense measures included fortifications, the construction of trenches and barricades, surveillance from high positions, routine patrols, etc. (see the commentary in DLCY:335).

⁵⁰ Italicized words appeared to be phrases added in a later version of the *Great Qing Code*, as it was indicated in Xue Yunsheng’s interpretation of the Great Qing Code, *Du Li Cunyi* (DLCY).

⁵¹ The Code for the rank and file was: “If (*officers or men*) are in contact with [i.e., in the face of] the enemy, and the persons who are on watch on the heights or on patrol fail to give notice [of this] in the fastest way so that there is loss of the city or injury to the troops, they will also be beheaded (*with delay*)” (Jones 1994:203).

deficient attempts to recapture a seized city, delays in reporting the rebels' progress, ignorance of the rebels' whereabouts, inaccurate intelligence, lack of communication with other officials, and failing to supervise one's subordinates. The structure of the law then "forced" decision makers to consider multiple factors, such as the spatial relations between officials and rebels, the degree of damage inflicted on a jurisdiction, the willingness of officials to defend, and the resources they had during a battle.

While these detailed distinctions may seem laborious, being able to distinguish among different types of guilt was vital for the maintenance of the emperor's image as a fair, just, and therefore legitimate sovereign (Guy 1994, 2000; Kuhn 1990). Metropolitan power-holders especially held that fair treatment for all officials and military officers could enhance the imperial campaign's discipline. For instance, only three months into the Taiping War, Grand Secretariat Zhuo Bingtian (卓秉恬) faulted provincial governors for being too lenient toward their mid-ranking subordinates (e.g., provincial-commanders-in-chief and their lieutenants). At the same time, the governors were too harsh on officers at the very bottom of the organizational hierarchy (e.g., district magistrates or sub-prefects) (QZZ 1:182-83; XF1/1/27). Because of these distortions, the state could not distinguish nominally competent officials who had committed strategic errors from those who were entirely free from guilt. The latter obviously should be better rewarded, according to the secretariat. Keeping sanctioning decisions strictly in line with existing prescriptions, Zhuo believed, would boost the troops' morale.

Traditionally, fairness and equitability had been important concepts in the Qing law. But in response to developments on the battlefields, new statutes were added to answer problems arising from unfamiliar conditions that would alter the meaning of a fair

battle. By the time the Taipings had passed through several provinces in central China, it was clear that some state officials were ill-equipped to preserve their own jurisdictions (mainly because they lacked resources, not motivation). In 1853, a new sub-statute was added, refining what might be considered fair punishments in a case of defeat:

...if the city had *sufficient* military supplies, any military general or district magistrate who does not make strenuous efforts to defend it, and abandons it without authorization, will be sentenced to beheading with delay according to the original code, with a memorial submitted to request an immediate execution; any prefect in the same city also will be beheaded with delay.

...if he had *insufficient* military force, and unexpectedly encountered rebels outnumbering his force, and as a result [of this encounter] lost the fortified position, he will be sentenced to exile in Turkistan to serve and expiate his guilt. (DLCY: 334; my emphasis)

State rulers' understanding of officials' responsibilities had clearly been adjusted to a quickly developing military reality. Given the enemies' strength, it would be unfair to punish state officials as if they were all equally well endowed with resources, weaponry, and troops. New laws then complicated interpretations. Not only did rulers need to ascertain whether agents had "made strenuous efforts to defend a place," they also needed to evaluate whether they had "sufficient capacity" to protect their jurisdictions. While memorials supplied information necessary for these evaluations, the very political nature of memorial reportage further complicated the central government's interpretation and deliberation. We shall consider the linkages between memorial writing and the ways in which officials controlled their foreseeable, if not inevitable, punishments.

Negotiating Sanctions

State rulers no doubt worried that memorials were providing them with distorted, overly subjective, or self-interested accounts of battlefield events. Emperor Xianfeng once told his top officials: “Our evaluation of the troop’s performance and delivery of rewards and sanctions depends on your memorials. If there exists any injustice, how could We make Our troops feel gratitude and fear?” (QZZ 4:149-50; XF2/11/25; see also QZZ 2:22; XF1/5/25). To the extent that battlefield reality needed to be interpreted and rearranged in a textual form, officials could use memorials to shape their career outcomes and avoid sanctions. Rather than serving as an indifferent means of communication, the acts of memorial writing (and the imperial responses) provided a platform upon which conflicting interests could be negotiated.

There was certainly a limit to how much agents could maneuver in this “rhetorical space,” however. Officials’ writings were bounded within the conventions of the memorial’s literary form and presentation format.⁵² There was also a question of validity: blatant lies would not pass unnoticed by the court, because multiple reports were available for verification (though how the court dealt with discrepancies varied from case to case). In general, the liberty memorial writers possibly could exploit did not lie in the selection of reported events, but in the ways the stories could be reframed and sequenced in different ways.

⁵² These limits included the calligraphic style (e.g., scripts were forbidden), the number of words (18-20) allowed in each line, conventional methods of writing salutations and conclusions, the appropriate manner to address the emperor and other officials, ways of quoting from other official’s reports or relevant edicts, and so on. Memorials relating to the imperial campaign were to be devoted solely to the development of military strategies; hence narratives should be stripped of flowery language, petty details about personnel conflicts, and other irrelevancies.

Since 1851, when the Taipings used guerilla tactics to advance into Jintian, the Taipings demanded specific organizational responses from the imperial forces. When they were not laying siege to particular places, Taiping soldiers tended to avoid direct confrontations with the imperial forces, moving quickly across space to create scattered and decentralized battling sites. This was precisely what Hu Linyi, the later provincial governor of Hubei, identified as a general problem of rebel-suppression in the 1840s: “The rebels travel like rats and the soldiers travel like cows. You cannot use cows to catch rats” (quoted in Kuhn 1970:119). The sporadic nature of the Taipings’ combats was reflected in officials’ memorials as well. An early report from Commissioner Li Xingyuan demonstrates how scattered battlefield actions were chronicled episodically in memorial writing:

The troops from Guizhou passed through the mountains cautiously, anticipating ambushes from the rebels. As the troops reached the lowland, they discovered numerous rebels hiding within the jungles; however, even our flaming arrow attack could not dislodge the entrenched rebels. When the rebels saw their conspirators signal them with a flag from the opposite side of Sanlixu village, they emerged and began to attack our troops. Qin Dingsan [a lieutenant from Guizhou garrison] bravely resisted the rebels along with the Quizhou troops, killing more than two hundred insurgents. By sunset the rebels continued to pursue the Hunan militia and blocked the return route of the Guizhou troops. One of the rebels’ leaders, dressed in yellow and red, was slain by the Guizhou troops. This killing frenzied the rebels, who suddenly put aside their heavy weapons and began to fight bare-handed with our troops. Although nine of our soldiers were killed, our troops had eliminated twenty rebels. In the northeast side of the battlefield, more and more rebels emerged; we lost several dozen soldiers, prompting our official troops to retreat. (QZZ 1:286-87; XF1/3/10)

Like many memorial reports over the course of the rebellion, battles with the Taipings were inconclusive. Memorial writers nevertheless turned such indeterminacy to their advantage. In Li’s report, the sequence by which events was told consisted of deliberate switching to and from a case of victory to one of setback. Although this might not

prevent the court from making any ultimate judgment about reward and punishment, such ambiguous narratives might have invited multiple interpretations. Because Li's report above constantly shifted between narratives of victory and failure, it would have been difficult for the state to gauge his competence and overall success, or punish him for a battle with an ill-defined outcome.

This, of course, did not mean that central rulers were always in a disadvantageous position; ambiguity was, in fact, two-sided. Reports that mixed equally successes and defeats provided a basis for the court to create flexible responses as well. Answering Li's memorial, the emperor selectively highlighted the positive sides of the campaign over its negative characterizations. Crucially, this selectivity allowed the emperor to pardon the officials:

Since the rebels are numerous and have been active for a long time, it is certainly not possible to eliminate them quickly.... Previously Xiang Rong has demonstrated his mettle in various battles, prompting me to eagerly anticipate further reports of victory. The recent battles in Wuxuan have proven somewhat successful, even though we have experienced setbacks. We should also praise Qin Dingsan's brave elimination of the rebel leader dressed in yellow. Even with these successes, you, my officials, should strive to cooperate and develop your plans more thoroughly to forestall future mishaps. *Therefore, none of you deserve impeachment.* (QZZ 1:340-41; XF1/3/24; my emphasis)

To negotiate potential sanctions, it was important for officials to include in their memorials episodes of victories, however minor they might seem.⁵³ A claim of victory provided raw materials for the court to consider rendering a favorable decision on an official's behalf. Given that they had demonstrated a certain number of *jungong* (軍功),

⁵³ There were probably other reasons why leniency was preferred to severe punishments—such as the senior status of Commissioner Li, his relationship with the emperor, the timing of the campaign, and the number of defeats occurring elsewhere at the time. Imperial edicts rarely discussed these reasons.

or military performances, bureaucratic rules actually allowed certain punishments to be commuted. Depending on the number of performances recorded and the quality of the accomplishment, the Board of Civil Services would reduce the severity of an original penalty according to prescribed rules. For example, two recorded military accomplishments could restore a rank lost in a demotion; and “military accomplishment of the first rank” would restore two descended ranks (*LBZL* 1:5b).

These bureaucratic rules were the manifestations of what Metzger (1973) calls “probationary ethics.” Allowing the condemned to atone for their prior mistakes gave officials an opportunity to restore their self-image as “charismatic leaders upholding ultimate responsibility for the fate of the empire” (Metzger 1973:400). Commuting officials’ punishments also represented a restoration of the ruler-agent relationship: pardoning an official was always an act of His Majesty’s magnanimity.

Just as the laws had been modified by new development in battlefields, so had negotiations of sanctions. By the second year of the rebellion, it was clear that both the Taipings and the officials following in their paths were conforming to a particular pattern. The rebel troops would roam through towns and cities, occupying or laying siege to a locality, only to abandon the place shortly later. Zhang Jixing (張集馨), whose autobiography we have discussed in Chapter 1, describes how officials took advantage of the rebels’ tactics as an opportunity to evade their own responsibility to defend locales:

When the alarm of the approaching rebels rang, local officials fled the city, resulting in the loss of the place but not of lives or wealth. They were dismissed [from their positions] because of the rebels’ occupation, but in the name of the city’s recovery they managed to have their offices returned. [Consequently,] officials were neither demoted nor dismissed, as their leisure and wealth accumulated. (Zhang 1981:278)

Unprepared to counteract their challengers, local officials every so often would flee their jurisdictions when the rebels approached (e.g., QZZ 4:133; XF2/11/20), assuming they would resume their posts when the rebels depleted local resources and had to move on to another city. But if we recall the laws discussed previously, fleeing their jurisdictions would probably place officials in danger of receiving capital punishment at the hands of the court. As Zhang protested, “in the name of the city’s recovery” officials seemed to be able to escape severe punishment. What might be the linkage between memorial rhetoric and the circumvention of negative sanctions?

We can find an answer in the case of the recovery of Yongan in the early spring of 1852. After occupying the Guangxi city for six months, the Taipings exhausted their supplies and proceeded northward. This move could mean that imperial troops had mounted sufficient forces to oust the Taipings from Yongan, or that official forces had failed to contain the rebels from advancing elsewhere. Not surprisingly, the Guangxi provincial governor Zou Minghao would prefer to claim that government armies were the driving force of this “recovery”:

We have noted that the treasonous rebels had persistently occupied Yongan city. Having been attacked by our troops’ sustained siege, and their supplies having been cut off by the surrounding militia, [the rebels] had exhausted both their weapons and food to arrive at a desperate situation. On the early morning of the seventeenth, [they] broke the siege under rainfalls, escaping toward the east. Heavy troops closely pursued, killing thousands of bandits and also capturing one bandit leader, Hong Daquan. The rebels knew that they had committed a grave crime, [so they were] resisting [our troops] to the death. Our troops attacked and pursued with great efforts. [Walking on] treacherous paths, worsened by slipperiness after rainfall and veiled by fog, some of our troops were killed.... When your official [Zou] learned this news, I immediately dispatched the provincial judge, Yao Ying [姚瑩], to Yongan city to console and calm down the people. (QZZ 3:50-51; XF2/2/26)

Here Zou portrayed himself as a key player who took the initiative to recapture the city. He continued his report by outlining plans to protect Yongan's vicinity, reaffirming that "the rebels' strength has been greatly undermined, as they escaped clumsily."

To conceive of a city's return as an accomplishment, officials on battlefields, as well as the rulers who interpreted memorial reports, must have been able to see a continual flow of actions as a sequence of truncated segments. In other words, they had to have seen the entire imperial campaign as a series of fragmentary events, somewhat detached from the entire counter-Taiping campaign. Because jurisdictional boundaries usually marked the beginning and end of an occupation or a battle, victories were therefore *locally* defined, even when the rebels escaped to a neighboring province contributed little to the overall success of the overall campaign. It is under this space-bound conception of official responsibility that a "success" amidst the flow of scattered and continuous battles can be understood.

There is little doubt that officials' use of the recovery rhetoric was seen as a cunning device for evading punishment. Speaking generally, one censor astringently criticized this practice: "When the rebels were gone, officials would claim that they had led forces to recover the city. They then corresponded with their superiors in order to hide their mistakes. [On behalf of their subordinates,] the superiors in turn beseeched the court to forgive the officials, on the basis that new performance [the recovery] could now eradicate any discussions of penalty" (QZZ 18: 65-67; XF5/12/20). But memorial writers were rather skillful in crafting their texts, and as fluctuating battlefield dynamics added nuance to their reports, writers could construct less straightforward or transparent narratives.

Zou's superior, Commissioner Saishang-a, chronicled this same event somewhat differently, showing a more intricate way of representing the recovery of Yong'an.

Saishang-a began by portraying a rather bleak picture:

After having been exposed to cold weather and hunger, as well as having dealt with heavy rainfalls and muddy, treacherous mountain trails—and with the poor weather conditions compounded with heavy fog covering the area—our troops had been fiercely confronted by the rebels, culminating in an overall failure [i.e., that the rebels were able to escape]. (QZZ 3:56; XF2/2/27)

Against this darkly painted narrative, the climactic capture of a Taiping leader, Hong Daquan, whose name closely resembled that of Taiping founder Hong Xiuquan, sounded all the more promising, and would lay the foundation for a recovery narrative.

Strategically placing the arrest story at the end of the memorial, Sai claimed the captured leader was Hong Xiuquan's adopted brother, and "had developed all the strategies" for the Taipings (QZZ 3:57; XF2/2/27). (Though historians would later discover that Hong Daquan was less significant a figure than Saishang-a thought, in 1852 his status was unclear.) With Hong Daquan's confessional statement appended to the report, Sai had elaborated his claim that "now, Yungan has already been recovered." Although the court expressed slight disappointment, for "only one leader was arrested" (QZZ 3: 86; XF1/3/11), the overall "recovery" of Yong'an nevertheless helped Saishang-a and his subordinates evade severe punishments. The commissioner was "dismissed while retained at original position"—a far less severe penalty than "true" dismissal, a more appropriate penalty according to the *Great Qing Code*.

New developments in the battlefield helped to absolve Saishang-a's guilt further. After they left Yong'an, the Taipings swiftly advanced northward, reaching Guangxi's provincial capital, Guilin. As a dismissed commissioner who now held his position only

temporarily, Saishang-a reportedly coordinated his actions with the provincial commander-in-chief Xiang Rong, who rushed his troops to Guilin and “calmed down the people there” (QZZ 3:107; XF 2/3/19). Responding satisfactorily, the emperor relieved Saishang-a from previous sanctions; instead of being dismissed, he would be “demoted by four ranks while retained at original position.”

Subtle distinctions in penalties did not always affect who remained in authority during the campaign. Saishang-a, for instance, would remain the paramount commander whether he was “dismissed while retained at original position” or “demoted by four ranks while retained at original position.” These symbolically meaningful distinctions, rather, allowed the court to legitimately exercise its power to sanction agents while simultaneously keeping those with experience within the bureaucratic system. More importantly, while official accountability was evaluated in reference to discrete jurisdictions, penalties were conceived in a continuous manner. As such, the court could reevaluate penalty decisions regarding a earlier failure (the loss of Yong'an) using a later event (the rescue of Guilin) as a reference point. In effect, disjointed segments of official tasks were now linked together through the organization’s probationary ethics.

Recognizing the need for pragmatism, Emperor Xiangfeng was probably as willing to excuse his officials as they were eager to see their punishment reduced. Constant replacement of top officials in the midst of heavy fighting could disarray lower ranking officers and stifle the campaign’s efficiency. Observers from Peking had been warning the court that when subordinates did not know who was to be their next superior they would wait helplessly, paralyzed by uncertainty (QZZ 1:305-06; XF1/3/16). Thus the court would justify its leniency on the basis that pardoned officials would be

absolutely useless should they be allowed to “stay outside of the project” (*zhizhen zhiwai* 置身事外). But it was also understood that good officers with the mettle and ability to command a large-scale campaign were hard to come by. Dismissing too many officials (even if they deserved to be removed) would likely cause a demographic crisis in the state bureaucracy.⁵⁴ The organizational dilemma confronting the Qing rulers was clear: when the laws were not strictly applied, rulers risked undermining their legitimate authority; yet too severe a penalty could disrupt the stability of the state organization. This dilemma was only deepened when the Taipings made their ways toward the inner part of China.

Revamping Organizational Norms

The Taipings' advance toward Hunan province in 1852-1853 marked a new phase of the imperial campaign. State actors now feared that the rebels would use the Yangtze tributary system to reach the empire's heartland, particularly the economic center of Jiangnan. This fear also prompted reflection into how wisely official sanctions had been handled. By the beginning of 1853, after the strategic city of Wuchang was lost (XF 3/2/14, January 12), anxiety grew among officials who worried that bureaucratic practices that highlighted (or exaggerated) victories over defeats were essentially harmful to the campaign. A censor charged that:

⁵⁴ Examples were abundant, and the court was rather explicit about the potential shortage of talent. For example, in 1853, after the Taipings successfully occupied Nanking and another important city, Yangzhou, an imperial edict claimed that “Qishan's [the imperial commissioner] title of the Banner Lieutenant had already been taken away, but if now additional punishments were imposed on him, it would eventually send him away from the project (*shi*)” (QZZ 5:423; XF3/3/1), implying that no one would lead the imperial campaign, at least for a brief period of time. Even though Qishan was highly criticized by numerous officials, he remained the commander of the northern encampment until his death in 1858. One official said that “we know that if Qishan is gone, there will be no more Qishan.”

Ever since the beginning of the imperial campaign in Guangxi, all military reports had been divorced from reality. We can raise a couple of examples here. For every report of victory, there must be a following report about defeat. When capital officials saw a victory memorial, they would predict that another one concerning failure was upcoming. Of course, in reality it did arrive. This has become routine practice. (QZZ4:267; XF2/12/22)

This sequence of “seesawing” reportage mirrored the strategy of narrative switching between positive and negative episodes I have described above. Just as ambiguous narratives allowed officials to negotiate their penalties, memorial submissions that routinely alternated between victory and defeat stymied a general evaluation of the campaign’s success. More complaints reinforced the idea of a crisis in bureaucratic control, as superior officials were now commonly conspiring to cover up their subordinates’ mistakes. They also reported losses only after their jurisdictions were recaptured, attempting to use “recovery” narratives to balance out their defeats (see QZZ 3: 320-21; XF 2/5/14; QZZ 3: 474-475; XF 2/7/25).⁵⁵ Most state actors now agreed that violations of bureaucratic rules were not only prevalent, but close to being a routinized practice.

To protect the law from further deterioration, state observers suggested punishing officials more severely than existing rules prescribed. This was particularly important for controlling misbehavior among superior officials. It was commonly known that discharged governors, for example, were still revered after their dismissals, and would be regaled with lavish meals and gifts by lower-ranking officials wherever they went. As

⁵⁵ The emperor was, however, reluctant to issue drastic changes. Responding to these complaints, the court issued no surprising comments: “I understand it is difficult to follow routine when considering personnel issues in military operations; therefore I allow [dismissed officials] to be retained in the campaign so that they could serve. If those who have guilt could demonstrate their gratitude and efforts, wholeheartedly repaying [the state], we don’t have to abandon all these officers” (QZZ 3:321; XF2/5/14).

argued by Yuan Jisan (袁甲三), a then mid-rank central official, imposing exile on disgraced governors would be a more effective punishment than merely dismissing them (QZZ 3: 320-21; XF 2/5/14). Disciplinary standards, he insisted, must be raised, and severe punishments should target agents at the top of the organizational echelon.

To examine how negative sanctions were woven into the changing bureaucratic norms, Figure 3.1 (p. 128) charts the extent to which negative sanctions were imposed on top provincial officials (rank 3a or above).⁵⁶ Due to data limitation, we cannot compare frequencies of sanctions between these officials and their lower-ranking subordinates. But we can infer that negative sanctions were “moving up” the bureaucratic strata by examining cases of sanctions over time, and comparing them across “Taiping provinces” and “non-Taiping provinces.”⁵⁷ The proportions in the figure show the relative frequencies of dismissals or demotions with reference to other career changes, namely promotion, lateral transfer, reassignment to the capital, and retirement (deaths are excluded).⁵⁸

From Figure 3.1, it is evident that the Taipings had dramatically increased the risk of negative sanctions for top-ranked officials. Entering the rebellious era,⁵⁹ officials

⁵⁶ Top provincial officials include: governors-general (GG), provincial governors (PG), provincial treasurers (PT), and provincial judges (PJ).

⁵⁷ Because Taipings constantly moved, the coding of the Taiping provinces changes by year (see Appendix 3A for the coding). Since the Nians and Taipings shared similar characteristics, occasionally formed alliances, and overlapped their activities geographically, I included Nian provinces with the Taiping provinces.

⁵⁸ A focus on the proportion of dismissals of all career changes (among all officials) in a period, rather than the percentage of dismissal to the total number of officials exist in a period, may capture better the “career news” about their colleagues officials were often aware of.

⁵⁹ All analyses in this work define the eighteen years between 1851 and 1868 as the “rebellious era,” roughly capturing the tumultuous years of the nineteenth century when social uprisings were most rampant in the Qing state.

governing Taiping provinces received 40 percent of total dismissals, contrasted against only 10 percent for those in non-Taiping provinces. Though somewhat attenuated, the difference between the two types of provinces remained steady in the following period, 1854-1856. But in the late 1850s, the frequency of negative sanctions in Taiping provinces diminished (though it remained higher or equal to the rates in pre-rebellion periods). By the years 1857-1859, the state levied about 10 percent of dismissals against officials in Taiping provinces. Furthermore, there was an interesting transition between Taiping and non-Taiping provinces: from 1863 to 1868, officials in non-Taiping provinces received notably higher frequencies of negative sanctions than those in Taiping provinces. This was likely due to the emergence of Muslim uprisings in the late 1850s in areas the Taipings did not previously reach. As the Qing wound down its campaign against the Taipings, it also refocused its attentions on the Muslim rebellions. The changing dismissal rates reflected not only the state's shifting attentions, but may also suggest that new strategies (other than punishment) had been developed in Taiping provinces.⁶⁰

Since state officials read imperial edicts routinely from capital bulletins, they were highly sensitized about the career changes of their peers; their social networks also

⁶⁰ There is some indication that the top echelon was in fact divided into two strata in terms of dismissal rates. Appendix 3B shows that governors-general and provincial governors generally experienced higher frequencies of dismissals and demotions than their subordinates one to two levels below, namely, provincial judges and provincial treasurers. Punishing the very top-ranked officials, however, seemed to be part of the general norm. In the Opium War years of 1839-1841, when a governor-general or provincial governor left his post (not because of death), 10 out of 36 times (28 percent) it was due to a dismissal or demotion. By contrast, only 7 percent of the time were provincial judges and treasurers punished. Likewise, at the dawn of the Taiping Rebellion, as social unrests became increasingly prevalent, about 26 percent of governors' departures were caused by negative sanctions, contrasted against a mere 3 percent for treasurers and judges. During the early rebellion years, more than 40 percent of career changes among governors were due to negative sanctions, while their subordinates' risks remained low (below 15 percent). In general, punishments seemed to have targeted the very top of the bureaucratic echelon.

helped spread this kind of information as gossip. We can further examine officials' morale by charting the relative proportions of dismissal or demotion against other forms of career outcomes. Figure 3.2 (p. 129) resembles the previous figure in that distinctions are made between Taiping and non-Taiping provinces only in the rebellious era, while the rest of the periods refer to frequencies for *all* provinces. The shaded areas in the figure and their proportionality may roughly represent the expansion and contraction of certain career opportunities experienced by state agents. Among the more dramatic changes was the expansion of dismissals in 1851-1853 within Taiping provinces—a clear sign of a hostile environment. Also noteworthy is the shrinking frequency of retirement in the same period, which seemed to have complemented the rise of dismissal. This may mean that dismissed officials in 1851-1853 (in Taiping provinces) would have been retired had they operated in a previous period. As a form of removing agents from the system, retirement thus appeared to mediate officials' opportunities for dismissal in the early rebellion years. But in 1857-1859, when frequencies of dismissals in Taiping provinces dwindled, we see an expansion of lateral transferals instead. Officials probably felt that they were likely to be removed from a current post and transplanted to another province, rather than be removed completely from the bureaucratic system. Lastly, promotion—the means of reward—had played a less significant role in balancing negative sanctions until the 1860s. Only in 1863-1868 did officials begin to “feel” an expansion in upward mobility vis-à-vis other forms of career outcomes.

To see negative sanctions from Peking's perspective, we can estimate the likelihood that officials would receive negative sanctions by taking into account such factors as an official's career experience, his current position, ethnicity, and whether

certain rebel groups were present in his jurisdiction—all factors that were recorded in the official biographical records kept in Peking. Table 3.1 (p. 130) considers the rates of dismissal or demotion among top provincial officials in the rebellious era, 1851-1868, in two logistic regression models, each with official-month as the unit of analysis. The dependent variable is a binary career outcome: it is coded 1 if an official was dismissed or demoted in a particular month, and 0 if otherwise (this means that promotion, transfers, retirement, and staying in the same post are lumped together). In a discrete-time event-history model, I seek to examine the odds that officials made a transition from holding some provincial top positions (ranked 3A or above) to dismissal/demotion (as opposed to other career state), given that the officials had not yet been sanctioned at the month.⁶¹ For convenience purposes, I call this the dismissal rate. All independent variables are time-varying (by month) except the officials' ethnicity (Hans=1, otherwise=0). I consider the following variables: the number of months an official had been in his top provincial post, his position in the month, the period of his office (1851-1856, 1857-1862, and 1863-1868). In addition, four concurrent state crises are examined: the Taiping Rebellion, the Muslim uprisings, the Heaven and Earth revolts, and the Second Opium War (also known as the Arrow War). Each crisis is measured separately by a binary variable indicating whether the crisis took place in the province administered by an official in a particular month—coded 1 if the crisis existed in the province in a particular month and 0 otherwise. In model 2, I allow that the dismissal rates in the Taiping and non-Taiping provinces to vary by periods; hence the interaction term "Taipings* periods."

⁶¹ Repeated dismissals or demotions of an individual official are allowed in the model.

Other things being equal, Model 1 shows that the odds of dismissals (as opposed to other career appointments) for officials in Taiping provinces were 1.75 times higher than the odds faced by officials in non-Taiping provinces ($\exp [.561] = 1.751$; $p < .005$). Interestingly, Muslim rebellions subjected officials to even higher dismissal risks ($\exp [.827] = 2.286$; $p < .004$). Since the Muslim Rebellion occurred in southwestern and northwestern provinces slightly later than the Taiping uprising, this result may indicate a level of institutional learning. (In fact, the Qing tended to apply the model of Taiping suppression to Muslim rebellions. Regardless of where officials were, agents operating during 1851-1856 were exposed to a significantly higher risk of dismissal than they would have in later years ($\exp [.525] = 1.69$; $p < .05$). Finally, the official's individual characteristics were unimportant, as were the positional differences among officials. In sum, the two important factors determining negative sanctions, approximated from the viewpoints of the central state, were the crises' timing and locations.

In model 2, interaction terms between Taiping provinces and time periods are introduced. There was only one pair of them to be significant, that between Taiping provinces and the time period 1851-1856 (other interaction terms between periods and crises were attempted, but none of them were significant). The odds of official dismissal in Taiping provinces during 1851-1856 were about 8 times as likely as the odds for officials in other provinces. The predicted probabilities in Figure 3.3 (p. 131) illustrate these differences, using an example that the official was Han with his provincial tenure (as top officials) enduring five years (62.1 months), the average of all top officials from

1851 to 1868.⁶² Although official position turned out to be a non-significant factor, we see that the gap in negative sanctions between governors (PG and GG) and their next subordinates (PT and PJ) was bigger in Taiping provinces during 1851-1856 than in other periods and areas. This then suggests some consistency with the general organizational approach, punishing more severely those who were at the very top than their subordinates.

The high prevalence of negative sanctions in 1851-1856 should be understood not only as an imposition from the court. I have so far argued that this result was brought on partly by Peking's increased use of dismissals as a means to discipline state agents, partly by the ongoing negotiation between rulers and officials, and partly by the Taipings' continuing success. Next, I go on to examine how this increasingly threatening organizational environment shaped the mutual relationships among state officials.

Mobilizing and Coordinating State Agents

Motivating official agents toward state interests had always been difficult for Qing rulers (and likely for most principals). Fearing censure, officials tended to avoid controversial or risky behaviors (*guoan* 苟安), shrewdly circumvented responsibility (*guibi* 規避), or blamed others for their own errors (*weiguo* 諉過). These “undesirable” practices revealed not only individual shortcomings, but also a structural dilemma whose

⁶² It should be noted that negative sanctions (or for that matter any other kinds of career mobility) were rare events given the unit of analysis as official-month. In most months officials would remain in the same position (“stay”) without experiencing any career change. For example, if an official took a position for one year, the career change would be at the end of the twelfth month. Since most official tenure in a particular post was no less than one year, the frequency of any career moves would have to be less than about 10 percent most of the time; further, dismissal would also have to split these ten percent among other career alternatives. This will therefore explain the very low probabilities of dismissal we show in Figure 3.3; the apparent rareness is partly a function of the unit of analysis selected.

root can be traced to several organizational mechanisms—such as office rotation and the avoidance rules—that routinely disposed Qing officials to fragmentation rather than unity. These mechanisms created transient office terms, undermined an official's sense of belonging to his administration, and discouraged the cultivation of strong ties among peers. While these measures provided the central government with a structure to preempt politically threatening alliances among agents, they were nonetheless bases of official inertia and interpersonal conflicts. The sporadic nature of anti-Taiping battles also disconnected agents' interests from each other, because the rebels did not affect all provinces at the same time. Given these unifying and dividing forces, how did rulers coordinate state agents holding diverse interests? Answering these questions shall allow us to see how battlefield actions reflected—and could be translated into—a state of organizational chaos that inclined state actors to both exert more control over and perpetuate their chaotic environment.

Jurisdictional Relations

It should become apparent to the reader by now that Qing officials were divided by at least two bureaucratic components: ranked-positions and administrative territories. (Administrative territories were themselves ranked by available resources, degrees of prosperity, extent of central control, etc.) In the bureaucratic vocabulary, the division of ranked-positions and administrative territories was unified under the term "*zhenyu*" (畛域), or "jurisdictional boundary," which conveyed both spatial and positional meanings. A jurisdiction was a relational concept, because it defined the parties with whom an official needed to cooperate, and restricted the span of an official's authority

vis-à-vis another. The capacity by which officials could respond to social revolts, or exert control over their surroundings, thus tended to vary according to officials' jurisdictions. In other words, state agents were constrained by the very structure that gave them (legitimate) official statuses.

The division of interests across jurisdictions can be shown by the spatial distribution of negative sanctions. Figure 3.4 (p. 132) shows that negative sanctions in 1851-1856 seemed to have "followed" in the rebels' path. Jiangsu, the province where the Taipings claimed their first settlement (in Nanking), unsurprisingly received the highest number of punitive cases. In fact, among the 42 sanction cases handed down by the court in these six years, only about 8 officials were dismissed due to reasons other than rebellion. If an official's career outcome constituted his interest to a great extent, then this figure reveals the crucial role jurisdictional boundaries played in dividing state agents' interests.

This may explain why bureaucrats would refrain from pursuing the Taipings once the rebels had advanced to another territory. Augustus Giquel, a French general commanding the Ever-Victorious Army, observed this tendency from the "mandarins" even in 1864, the closing of the rebellion:

Once on the lake we should advance our gunboats and those of the imperials. If the rebels hope at some point to retreat, we will at least be able to cut off their convoy [...] Everything is useless. The mandarins only wish for one thing—to see the rebels gone. They have a real chance to finish off the rebellion. To allow it to move to the provinces [countryside] is to perpetuate it indefinitely. But what do they care; let the others suffer. (August 26, 1864; Giquel 1985:101)

Since jurisdictional boundaries defined the beginning and end of accountability, officials felt various degrees of threat as the rebels surfaced and reappeared in their jurisdictions.

As we have already seen, this was occasionally of benefit to individual officials, who could assume that their problems would “go away” when the rebels eventually left their territories. Responding to this perennial problem, the court constantly reminded agents that they must be flexible and “ignore boundaries” (*bufen zhenyu* 不分畛域). Agents should, in short, act in consideration of *daju* (大局), or the totality of the campaign.

Despite such expectations, officials were given little guidance as to how they could effectively or wisely break their boundaries, and the *Administrative Statutes* did not clearly tell agents how they could legitimately interfere with each other’s plans and actions. Although the court had attempted to uplift provincial governors to the overarching status of Imperial Commissioner, allowing them to command troops across borders and thereby increasing the potential of inter-official cooperation, this solution could not address the problem of rivalry among state agents. When two commissioners of equal importance were present in the same battlefield, as in the case of Shengbao and Zenggelingqin in 1853-1854, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the court had to (artificially) place one under the authority of the other to “unify the authority in the campaign” (*shiquan guiyi* 事權歸一). As a result, Zenggelingqin had become more or less a subordinate of Shengbao, leading to increased animosity between them.

In the absence of clear guidelines, officials sometimes awaited specific imperial instructions before taking action, creating the impression that they were trying to circumvent responsibility. The acting provincial treasurer Zhang Jixing was criticized for being indecisive and inflexible for this very reason. When the Taiping Northern Expedition of late 1853 was advancing toward Tianjin, a seaport of Peking, Zhang was ordered by Commissioner Shengboa to lead fifteen hundred of the commissioner’s troops

to the county of Majiakou. The plan was to have Zhang defend the areas south of Tianjin. Meanwhile, Zhang's bureaucratic superior, the Manchu governor-general of Zhili, Guiliang (桂良), made a contradictory request, ordering Zhang to divert his troops to the provincial capital of Baoding, a city west of Tianjin, where pressure from the rebels was mounting.

This began the trouble for Zhang, as it was unclear as to whether he had the legitimate authority to redirect his regiment, which was rightly under the control of Shengbao. Even more troublesome was that Zhang was caught between two authorities, both having apparent claims over his troops. When Zhang seemed to have refused Guiliang's request, the governor-general appealed to Peking. In an imperial order, the emperor charged Zhang with lacking initiative and foresight: "Since you are the provincial treasurer of Zhili, how can you always wait for the court's order to mobilize your troops? Even when the troops are not under your jurisdiction, you are allowed to command them. You should not be rigid" (QZZ 11:3; XF3/10/26).⁶³ To the court, organizational flexibility meant officials' ability, when needed, to cross lines of authorities attached to a particular position or jurisdiction. But transgression of this sort might set off interpersonal conflicts as well. Inter-jurisdictional cooperation thus entailed at once questions about boundaries of authority and accountability, as well as the quality of social relationships among agents. At times these were inseparable issues.

The division of provincial spatial boundaries came to surface more clearly when financial resources were involved. Normally, provincial administrations were

⁶³ The reason why Zhang did not follow Guiliang's order was probably unimportant, since Zhang thought the charge was his superior's conspiracy to oust him (see Zhang 1981). If that was the case, the governor-general had succeeded: Zhang was dismissed at the end of the year.

responsible for funding provincial garrisons and local militia. But in times of a national crisis, Peking would appropriate funds to provinces through the Board of Revenue. As the war raged on, both provincial and central treasuries were gradually engulfed in a crisis. It was reported in early 1854, for example, that the northern encampment, located north of Nanking and led by Commissioner Qishan, had failed to pay its soldiers for six months (QZZ 12:473-74: XF4/2/11). The mounting risk of defection within the military was compounded by frequent epidemics and the widespread conflicts between generals and the rank and file. The financial health of the state directly affected the strength of the campaign.

Qing bureaucracy did have a routinized and flexible structure for cross-jurisdictional transferals of resources. Provincial governments regularly remitted surplus tax money and tribute grains to the capital under central regulations (the amount for each province and each year varied; see Hickey 1991). In times of crisis, the Board of Revenue would appropriate funds from the internal treasury or make loans and grant arrangements between two provinces. As a flexible measure, provincial administrators could access the appropriated funds, while resources were transported from one province to another through a method called *jieliu* (截留), or "interception." Given central approval, officials were allowed to intercept traveling funds for their administrative or military use, on the condition that arrangements were in place to reimburse the appropriate parties later. Widely used during the Taiping crisis, the system of interception was a legitimate organizational mechanism allowing flexible and quick responses to battlefield volatility.

Initially, the court condoned officials' interception requests that would allow, for example, Guangxi to intercept 130,000 taels originally appropriated by the Board of Revenue for funding military operations in Guizhou (QZZ 1:384-85; XF1/4/9). Meanwhile, Guangxi would ask the board to reimburse Guizhou later. But as the rebellion spread, and as more administrators were requesting *jieliu* or loans from other provinces, the situation changed. Provincial administrators began avowing that they had difficulties in raising enough funds to suppress rebels within their own jurisdictions, let alone enough to assist other provinces. As early as the winter of 1851, the governor of Hunan, Luo Bingzhang (駱秉章) claimed that his administration could contribute only half of the ordered 200,000 taels to Guangxi (QZZ 2: 512; XF 1/11/10). Indeed, because of social unrests in Hunan, the governor revealed that little was left in his treasury. In a similar case, the governor of Fujian, Wang Yide (王懿德) beseeched Peking in the early months of 1853 (XF 3/3) to excuse his province from the burden of sending 100,000 taels to Jiangsu, whose provincial capital, Nanking, had recently been overrun by the rebels. Fujian's provincial treasury was nearly empty after several previous donations, claimed the governor. Moreover, Wang tried to erase any doubt that his reluctance had to do with provincial divisions:

Your official [Wang] understands that all provincial treasuries belong to public wealth [*guotang* 國帑]. At times when revolt suppression is most urgent, we should all lend our assistance to other provinces. How do we dare separate ourselves by jurisdictional boundaries [*zhenyu* 畛域]? However, Fujian's treasury had already transferred [to other provinces] two hundred thirty thousand taels that were raised by donations from officials and the people. Besides the one hundred and ninety-eight thousand taels already sent to Jiangxi via the redirection from Hunan, another forty thousand taels were also transferred to support the soldiers from Guizhou province. Currently no more funds are available. (QZZ 6:184; XF3/3/25)

Generally acknowledging the real difficulty in provincial administrations, the court pursued no further demands (see another similar case in QZZ 12:123-25; XF3/12/29).

Changes in practice came when officials increasingly made “casual” interception requests throughout 1853 to block traveling funds. For instance, the provincial governor of Anhui, Jiang Wenqing (蔣文慶), had intercepted 70,000 tales transported from Zhejiang to Hunan without “one word to find a way to reimburse the urgent needs of the campaign”(QZZ 4:399-400; XF 3/1/13). These unauthorized appropriations troubled the court, which further discovered that officials would act on their own behalf, requesting donations from other provinces without prior imperial approval. For example, the provincial treasurer of Jiangsu, Ni Liangyao (倪良耀), privately requested tens of thousands in donations from Shanxi province “in the name of military emergency.” This was “unprecedented,” charged one deputy from the Board of Revenue: “even if financial assistance was necessary, the official [Ni] should still memorialize to the throne and report to the Board—that is, follow the appropriate procedure” (QZZ 6:578; XF3/4/29).

Central rulers were ambivalent, if not distressed, about the possibility that personal ties among officials were escaping central supervision—a clear breach of the organization’s avoidance and detachment logic. Peking’s anxiety in 1853, however, must be contrasted with an earlier event. In the summer of 1850 (DG30/6), a major Hunan campaign had completed its goal to eradicate the uprising of Li Yuanfa, who had fought against official troops along the Hunan and Guangxi borders since the late 1840s. The end of the campaign in 1850 had left surplus funds, whose use could now be diverted for other purposes. Instead of giving specific instructions to redistribute the resources, however, the court simply encouraged top officials of Hunan and Guangxi to “discuss

and coordinate” among themselves. The only condition the court imposed was that they “do not separate themselves by jurisdictional boundaries” (QSL 12:12b). That the court in the mid-1850s was more cautious in letting officials organize themselves privately revealed Peking’s increased ambivalence regarding control and flexibility. The court quickly rescinded its tolerant policy when officials appeared to be *too* autonomous. This sense of ambivalence would continue throughout the rebellious era.

From the purview of 1853, central regulations over cross-jurisdictional relations represented no consistent picture; at best, the court dealt with each interception request on a case-by-case basis. Seeing no consistent behavior, agents were again left with uncertainty and confusion. Given the threat of sanctions and the uncertainty they felt, how did officials relate to their colleagues within a given jurisdiction?

Social Relationships Within Jurisdictions

State rulers understood Mencius’ axiom: “Timing is not as important as the strategic positioning [of military forces], but positioning is still less important than *social harmony*” (QZZ 10:3713; XF 3/10/3). However, the Qing bureaucratic framework was far too suspicious to allow state agents to cultivate harmonious relations with one another. The numerous monitoring and detachment mechanisms were intended to disengage agents from both their ruling subjects and their colleagues. These measures might have prevented the fomentation of regional power, but they were deficient in coping with rebellions.

We can focus on the method of “accusatory memorializing” (*zoucan* 奏参), by which state agents could report wrongdoings of their peers directly to the throne. In this

state-sanctioned procedure, officials would blame their peers for certain bureaucratic errors and, sometimes, recommend corresponding penalties.⁶⁴ Being accused of a certain wrongdoing automatically implied that the accused was trying to conceal his mistake, because an official should ideally incriminate himself voluntarily (also through memorials), before someone else revealed his misdeed. To be sure, there were certain safeguards against false accusations, and bogus accusers would be punished according to bureaucratic rules. Still, the possibility of being accused was prevalent, and officials usually did not know about cases pending against them until they were made public or semipublic. Not surprisingly, the accused would interpret any unsolicited accusation as an act of animosity and slander on the part of his enemies (e.g., Zhang 1981). From the perspective of the court, accusatory memorials, especially the confidential ones, provided a crucial means for monitoring agents; they also signaled and disclosed the interpersonal relationships among official colleagues. In this sense, the truthfulness per se of an accusatory report was less important than its revelation of a “relationship problem” within a jurisdiction.

The Taiping Rebellion certainly gave plenty of opportunity for officials to accuse one another, rightly or falsely. Not surprisingly, battlefield failure was among the most common errors memorialized, but other offenses, such as the lack of preparation for rebels’ invasions, mismanagement of funds, delays in pursuing the enemies, and unwillingness to coordinate with other officials, also figured significantly. The direction in which blame was cast was important. In their memorials, superior officials routinely

⁶⁴ It should be noted that *zoucan* referred commonly to a type of bureaucratic action and not necessarily a specific kind of memorial reportage. The character and context of *zoucan* depended on whether the blame-casting memorial was a *mizou* (secret memorial) or a formal memorial (*zhengzhe* 正折).

disclosed flaws committed by their lower-ranking subordinates, who for the most part did not have the privilege to memorialize (at least in the context of a military campaign). Superiors, however, could not merely blame their subordinates without also implicating themselves. But being in control of their narratives, as they were in other reports, top officials could craft their accusations in ways to evade personal responsibility, to build alliances, or simply to present a case in a more flattering light. We can get a typical sense of these practices from an accusation made by Commissioner Xu Guangjin in 1852 regarding the fall of Yuezhou (Hunan). Previously the rebels had failed to break through Hunan's provincial capital, Changsha, but when the challengers arrived northeastward at Yuezhou, local defenses surprisingly had mounted no resistance. Naturally, someone had to be held responsible:

As Xiang Rong [provincial commander-in-chief of Guangxi] arrived at Yuezhou on the fourth of this month [XF2/11], the city was already lost to the rebels. And according to the confessional statements from the arrested bandits in Baling county, local officials of Yuezhou had left the city on the second of the month, and the district magistrate in the morning of the third. By the afternoon (*wu shi*), the bandits (*zeifei*) had arrived in three bands, defeating official soldiers and opening the city gate, at which point no one was on guard. The rebels (*fei*) immediately entered the city, stealing from the city's stock gunpowder, cannons, and food supplies. Upon reading these reports, your servants [we] were outraged and speechless.

...

A previous report had claimed that the commander-in-chief at Yuezhou and the circuit intendant from Wuchang had led forces sufficient to defend the city. They could vigorously resist the rebels even when the latter were in full strength. If they were able to hold up for two days, Xiang Rong could lead his troops to assist them on time and block the rebels' advance; these plans could ultimately eradicate the rebels all at once. [But now we know that] all previous claims about the employment of fishermen militia (*yuyong*) and other defense mechanisms were in fact empty words. [The officials] simply cannot escape their guilt.

...

Given [my] heavy responsibility and minimal capacity, your servant [I], Xu Guangjin, could not possibly attend to all the aspects of such circumstances as these. I humbly beseech Your Majesty's grace to dispatch an important official to

the assistance of the campaign from another direction, and to command all governors-general and governors in the Hunan and Hubei areas to focus on their defense. [This way] Xu can concentrate on the pursuit of the advancing rebels and more speedily eradicate them entirely. All civilian officials, military officers and the rank-and-file should be separately and seriously accused (*yancan*) and punished according to the Qing Code. Your servant, Xu Guangjin, had deployed improper strategies, causing the dispatched troops to fail to curb the rebels' advancement in a timely fashion. [I] cannot escape this guilt [either]; for that, I request Your Majesty to impose severe punishment [on me] in order to warn against future laxity. (QZZ 4: 85-86; XF2/11/9)

Being organizers rather than warriors enabled top officials to remove themselves from the ground-level responsibility for a particular defeat. Indeed, Emperor Xianfeng responded to Xu's memorial with just this logic. The ruler strenuously reproached local, lower-ranking officers, accusing them of "losing their conscience—expressing a sort of behavior completely outside the bounds of rationality." The outraged emperor continued, "should we fail to execute a few of those who were at fault, we will never be able to amend this habitual laxity [in the campaign]" (QZZ 4: 108; XF2/11/17). In contrast to the heavy punishment imposed on his subordinate, Xu, who had incriminated himself, managed to circumvent severe censure and was "dismissed while retained at original position."

In the above accusatory memorial, we see that the relationship between superior officials and their lower-ranking subordinates was organized primarily by supervision and domination. In fact the court encouraged this kind of relationship by frequent reminding top officials to discipline their inferiors. But at the level of top officials (rank 3a or above), expectations were different. Although top officials held different ranks, they were considered colleagues with somewhat equal status—hence the idea that prominent officials should, as the emperor expressed, "act in one body."

The most vivid case of conflict at the top levels was found in Nanking. When the rebels approached the city, top officials were in complete disagreement about what ought to be done. The imperial commissioner and governor-general of Liangjiang Lu Jianying (陸建瀛), whom the court had ordered to prevent the enemies' advance along the Yangtze, suddenly returned to Nanking to take refuge inside his *yamen* office. As he entered the city (on XF3/1/19), widespread panic caused many residents to flee, despite official orders to remain within the city. Guarding the same city, the Manchu garrison general Xianghou (祥厚) pleaded with Lu in writing and asked him to return to Yangtze upstream and protect the strategic entrance of Nanking. Xianghou protested,

the governor-general remained inactive for three days within his *yamen* office without responding to any of our correspondences. Our worry was mounting. Compounding the problem was that the provincial governor Yang Wending sought various excuses and insisted on moving himself to Zhenjiang [a city east of Nanking]—a decision without imperial approval. We have tried to prevent him from leaving, time and again, with Provincial Treasurer Qi Suzao and others not only joining the appeal but also shedding their solemn tears. Ignoring the safety of the country and his critical responsibility to enact a defense, Governor Yang left the city, despite all our efforts, in the morning of the twenty-second with absolute indifference. The people's panic multiplied, causing even more flights. (QZZ 4:546; XF3/1/23)

The organizational order at the top of the Nanking ruling echelon was on the brink of collapse before the Taipings even set foot in the city. That the officials were communicating with each other in writing rather than in person gave the court solid proof that they were in the midst of entrenched discord (QZZ 4:603; XF3/1/27). In light of this organizational chaos, the fall of Nanking thus appeared to be inevitable.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ The court also blamed Lu for setting off a chain of failures stemming from Lu's own erratic behavior: "had Lu Jianying not returned to Jiangning, Yang Wending [Jiang's subordinate] would not have had any excuse to move himself to Zhengjiang, and the people in the city would not have fled in panic" (QZZ 4:603; XF3/1/27).

A growing consensus among state actors now saw inter-agent conflict at the top of the bureaucratic echelon as the main contributor to the failing campaign (QZZ 10:376-77; XF3/10/3). Figure 3.5a-b (p. 133) shows the instances and distributions of blame by top officials (acting as accusers) in the first three years of the Taiping rebellion.⁶⁶ In general the overall frequency of blaming increased over the years. Figure 3.5a shows that the direction in which blames were cast had moved upwards along the bureaucratic strata from 1851-1852 to 1853. While lower-ranking bureaucrats and military officers were primarily targets of blame in early years, top officials began to receive more accusations from other top officials in 1853. Figure 3.5b further demonstrates that accusers in 1853 would blame their superiors as well (as in PJs/PTs on PGs and PGs on Imperial commissioners).⁶⁷

⁶⁶ We should caution that these are probably rough evaluations, as data are based on coding from published archives, which are in turn based mainly on the Qing's official history on the rebellion. My confidence in this analysis is suggested roughly by the number of memorial entries published in QZZ. It is almost impossible to know what exactly is missing in these published archives. The only thing we can be certain of is that the *Historical Materials from the Archives of the Qing Government's Suppression of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* (QZZ) contains a much more complete set of memorials than the Qing official history (*fanglue* 方略), published after the demise of the rebellion using the same basic memorial materials. One can nevertheless get an impressionistic sense of the QZZ's completeness by mentions of other memorials or events not included in QZZ. Overall, I found the missing entries not a serious problem. There are 736 and 861 entries, respectively, in the QZZ volumes of 1851 and 1852. In the tumultuous year of 1853, the number of entry is an unbalanced 4,609. Lastly, I believe that accusations against higher-ranking officials were rare enough to be captured sufficiently by the editors of *fanglue*, and were thus followed by editors of QZZ. Hence the data presented here should be more accurate in representing blame cast upon top officials.

⁶⁷ Similarly, in a later phase of the rebellion, Governor-general He Guiqing (何桂清) and his colleague Governor Zhao Deche (趙德轍) had written accusatory memorials criticizing their superior Commissioner Dexing (德興阿) in 1858, and Governor Qiling (耆齡) had criticized Governor-general Qingduan (慶端) in 1862. If these instances of "upward blame" appeared after all quite rare, it was because they signified a striking breach of the organization's entrenched, hierarchical boundaries, wherein distinctions between ranks were formally prescribed in administrative regulations (e.g., the rituals of greeting and visiting among officials, the ways officials should address each other in correspondence, the distinctions of the official attire and headpiece by status, etc.).

The best-known instance of mutual animosity between two top officials is found in Wuchang, the capital of Hubei province. Defending the city from the Taipings' second attack were the Han governor-general Wu Wenrong (吳文鎔) and his immediate subordinate, the Manchu provincial governor Chonglun (崇綸). The two officials succeeded the Hubei administration eight months after the Taipings' first occupation of Wuchang in early 1853 (XF 2/12/14). On that occasion, the entire provincial administration was eradicated. Reportedly sixty-five civilian officials—including the provincial governor, treasurer, judge, circuit intendants, educational directors, and the prefectures of Han Yang and Wuchang—were all killed in one fell swoop (QZZ 5:201-216; XF 3/2/15). By the year's end, the rebels returned as part of the Western Expedition. Local officials were probably still haunted by the city's recent history, and the strategic importance of Wuchang, as the gateway to Jiangnan, meant that the entire officialdom would closely observe the unfolding of the Taipings' second advance.

Instead of bonding together to fight against the “evil spirit,” contemporaneous observers saw entrenched conflict, and the return of the rebels prompted a serious quarrel between the two governors. Provincial governor Chonglun gathered support from the city's elite and decided to set up camp beyond the city wall, claiming that he would stop the rebels from invading; governor-general Wu Wenrong, meanwhile, having taken his post only recently and having few networks in Wuchang, interpreted Chonglun's foray outside the city as a cunning plan to escape danger. Outraged, Wu threatened the Manchu governor with a sword, declaring “we all live or die together with the city; an official below the [Provincial] Treasurer or Judge who dares speak of going out of the city shall be killed by my sword” (quoted in Jen 1973:199).

To garner imperial support, and perhaps also to evade an accusation from Wu, Chonglun wrote to the emperor, first requesting a relief from duties for ten days owing to persistent liver disease, brought on by exhaustion and further exacerbated by “the numerous cunning and shrewd personalities [in our team].” While this might have already implicated a serious rift among top officials in Wuchang, Chonglun continued: “Your slave has tried to convince the governor-general [Wu] to send troops to advance on numerous occasions to no avail. The governor-general would not dare leave the city to fight until reinforcements from the south arrived and cannons for the navy junks were made... Closing the city wall for a lengthy period has prevented the recovery of the people’s livelihood and wasted national funds” (QZZ 11:238; XF 3/11/16).

It is clear at the outset that the emperor was siding with Chonglun, as indicated by His Majesty’s marginal vermilion rescripts: “Whether the area is plagued with robbers (*zei*) or bandit-rebels (*fei*), how could the governor-general [Wu] reasonably remain inactive?” (QZZ 11:341; XF 3/11/26). In a subsequent edict, Wu was ordered to lead official troops outside the city. As the historian Jen (1973:204) contends, “Gleeful over the resultant order to Wu to go on the offensive immediately and leave the governor to garrison the city, [Chonlung] kept solemnly urging an attack on the Taiping until Wu, almost exploding with indignation, finally stormed out of the city before [Zeng Guofan’s] arrival and with only about 7,000 troops of his proposed force.” Following the imperial order, Wu was killed in combat, while Chonlung survived, having remained safely within the city garrison. One important consequence of the Wu-Chonlung conflict was the displacement of Hans from the governor-generalships of Hunan and Hubei. From the death of Wu to the end of the Taiping rebellion, two Manchus and one Han Bannerman

continued the line at the governor-general office. In a sense, the central state might have “corrected” a problem of status inconsistency.

Conclusion

This chapter elaborates on the process in which officials’ attempts to exert control had gradually brought them into a state of organizational chaos, a situation that generated greater uncertainty and thus produced, circuitously, more actions in need of control. I argue that the key contributors to this chaos were the parallel surges in negative sanctions, jurisdictional indifference, and interpersonal conflicts among agents from 1852 to the mid-1850s, if not later. Although the organizational structure state actors inherited was initially quite flexible in coping with volatility, the Taipings’ battle structure had turned these otherwise resilient components into an organizational liability. The rebels’ unpredictable actions, the sporadic sequencing of their battles, their cross-jurisdictional mobility, and their formidable power all gave state actors numerous opportunities to “act otherwise” (to use Giddens’s [1979] words).

In a sense, the rebellion set loose the meaning and usage of many preexisting and presumably flexible organizational components—such as the probationary mechanism of sanctioning, the system of memorial writing and accusatory memorializing, and the interception method for resource transfers and interception. Under an uncertain environment, state agents could apply these originally legitimate functions to cooperate with each other and suppress the rebels effectively, but they could also exploit these mechanisms to evade responsibility, pursue personal interest, or resolve immediate problems at the expense of the overall campaign. The combination of Taipings’ actions

and state actors' control attempts seemed to have produced increased organizational constraints, detaching the interests of agents from the rulers and from one another. Being unable to extend their efforts beyond jurisdictional boundaries, actors focused their attentions toward interpersonal relationships and immediate conflicts, hence instigating further chaos. In the next chapter, we shall see how other "relational strategies" were attempted to resolve these predicaments. How did Peking redirect agents' attentions to the campaign's totality? How could cross- and intra-jurisdictional relations be organized to reduce chaos and enhance the imperial campaign's efficacy?

Figure 3.1: Frequency of Dismissal: All Top-ranked Officials, 1833-1886

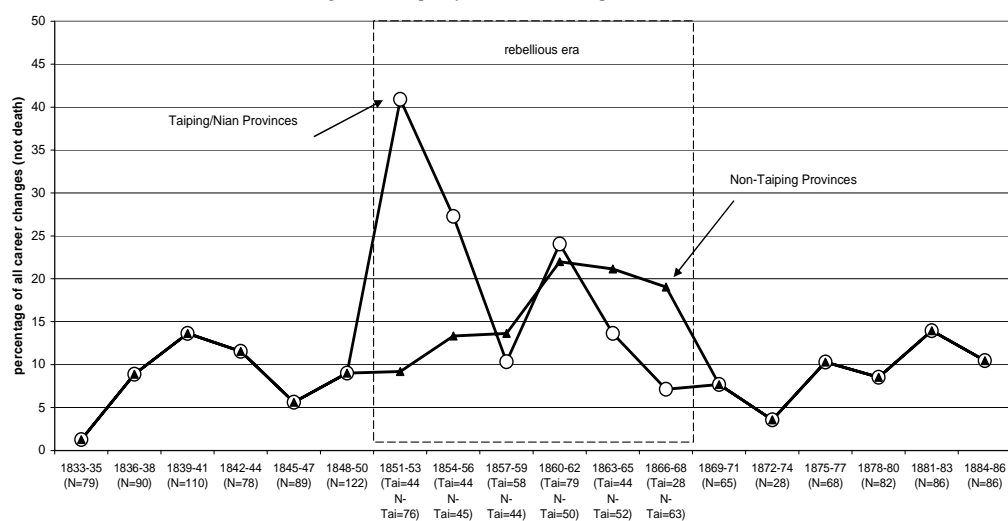


Table 3.1: Logistic Regression of Negative Sanctions (Piecewise Exponential Models), 1851-1868

	Coefficient (Model 1)	Robust standard error	Coefficient (Model 2)	Robust standard error
Covariates				
Constant	-5.679***	0.317	-5.266***	0.296
Months in provincial administration (as top officials above Rank 3A)	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.002
Hans (Omitted=Manchus, Han Bannermen, and Mongols)	0.087	0.216	0.143	0.221
Governors (Omitted=Provincial judges & treasurers)	0.180	0.230	0.212	0.224
Period				
1851-1856	0.525*	0.259	-0.491	0.353
1857-1862	0.280	0.263	0.052	0.324
1863-1868 (omitted)				
Provinces affected by Rebellions (Time varying by year)				
Taiping or Nian	0.561**	0.201	-0.540	0.406
Muslim Rebellion	0.827**	0.286	0.660*	0.298
Heaven-Earth Uprising	-0.031	0.242	0.011	0.247
Opium War	0.145	0.425	0.105	0.424
Interactions				
Taiping-Nian * 1851-56			2.081***	0.529
Taiping-Nian * 1857-1862			0.784	0.505
Taiping-Nian * 1863-1868 (omitted)				
N (official-month)	13,564 (of 334 officials)		13,564 (of 334 officials)	
-2 Log Likelihood	-657.859		-648.786	
Log Likelihood Ratio Test	Chi-sq=18.15 (p<.001, df=2)			

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

Figure 3.3: Predicted Probability of Dimissal or Demotion in Rebellious Era:
Taiping vs. Non-Taiping Provinces

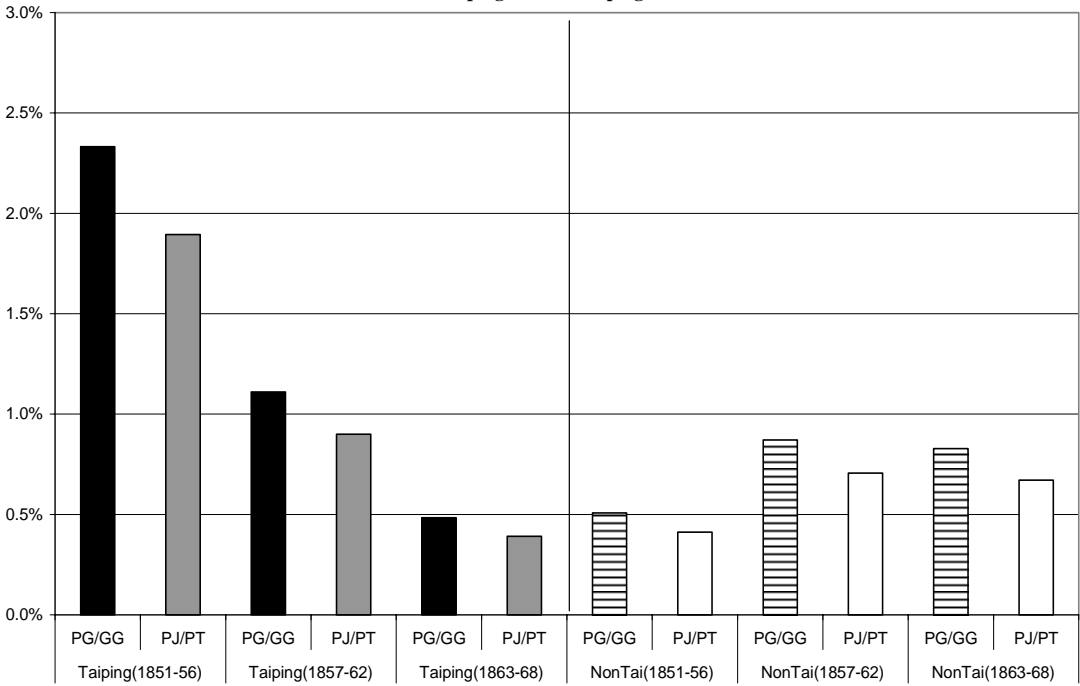
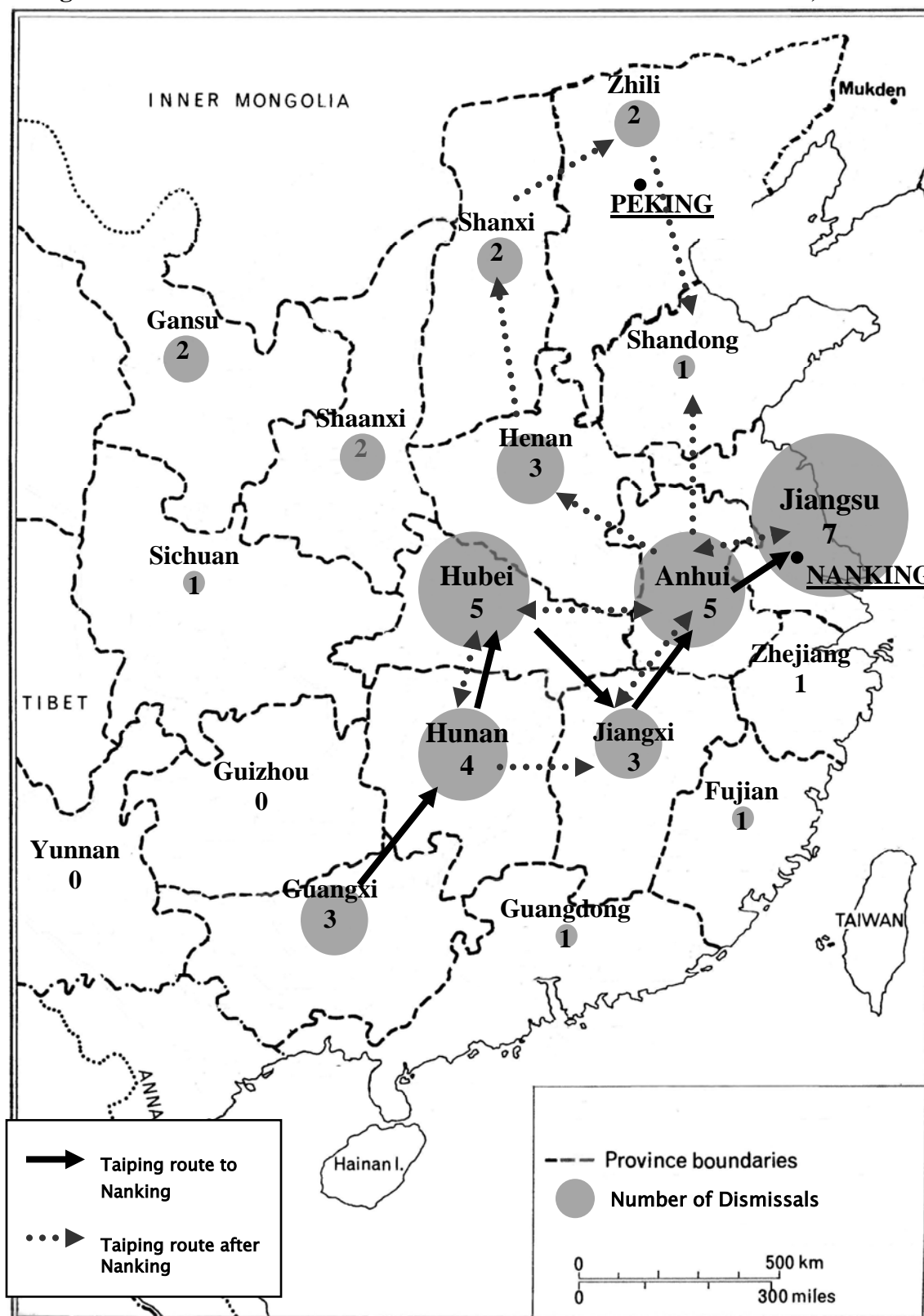
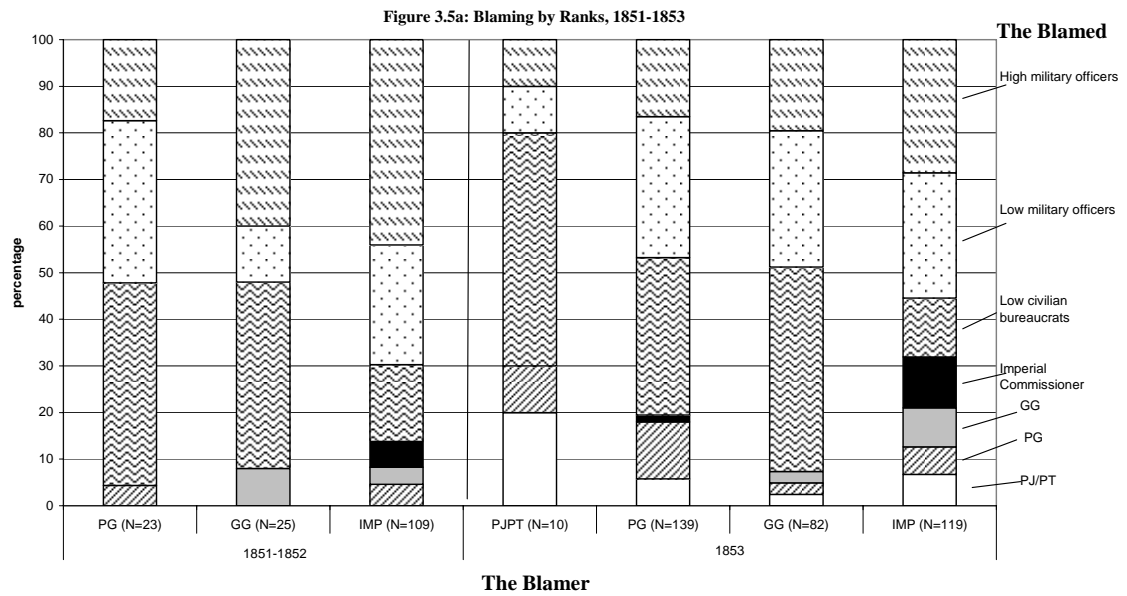


Figure 3.4: Number of Dismissals in the First Phase of Rebellious Era, 1851-56.





Appendix 3A: Coding of the Presence of Rebellions, 1851-1873

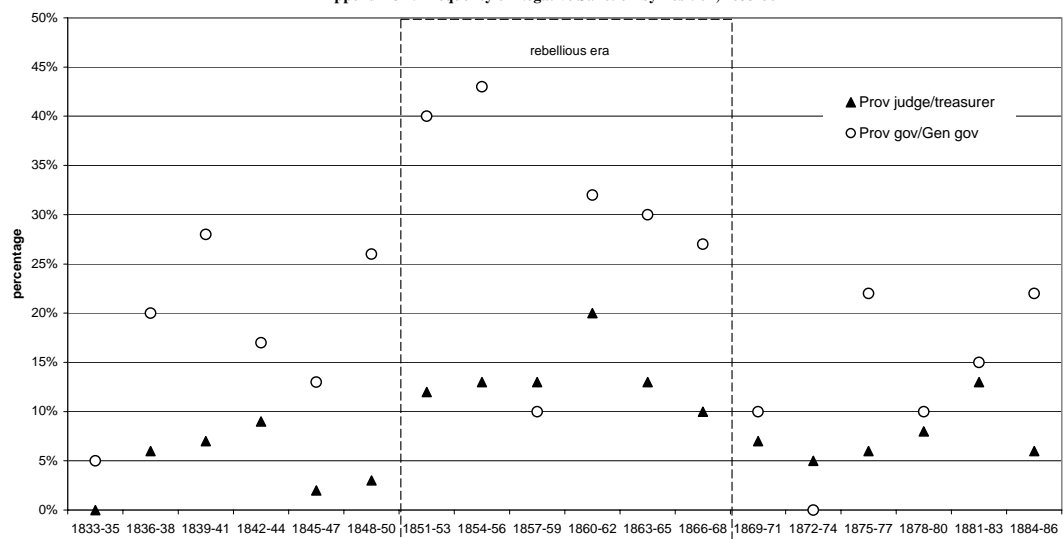
	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856	1857	1858	1859	1860	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865	1866	1867	1868	1869	1870	1871	1872	1873
Zhili		T	T					O	O	O							N	N					
Shanxi			T																				
Shandong				T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	N	N	N	N					
Honan			T	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	N	N	N	N					
Sichuan												T	T										
Shaangan																							
Shaanxi												T/M	T/M	T/M	M	M	M	M					
Gansu														T/M	T/M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
Liangjiang																							
Jiangsu		T	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	N	N	N	N					
Anhui		T	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	T/N	N	N	N	N					
Jiangxi			T/H	T/H	T/H	T/H	T/H	T/H	T/H	T/H	T/H	T/H	T/H	T/H	T	T							
Minzhe																							
Fujian			H	H	H	H	H	T/H	T/H	T/H	T/H	T/H	T/H	T/H									
Zhejiang						T	T	T/O	T/O	T/O	T	T	T	T									
Huguang																							
Hubei		T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T									
Hunan		T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T									
Liangguang																							
Guangdong		H	H	H	H	H	H/O	H/O	H/O	H/O	H	H	H	H									
Guangxi	T	T	H	H	H	H	H	H	T/H	T/H	T/H	H	H	H									
Yungui																							
Yunnan						M	M	M	M	M	M	T/M	T/M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
Guizhou												T											

Note: Bolded Terms represent the names of those areas administered by governor-generals (to whom two provinces were usually put under their control).

Provinces not combined as a unit had either one provincial governor or one governor-general, but not both.

Code: T=Taiping Rebellion; N=Nian Rebellion; M=Muslim Uprisings; H=Heaven and Earth Society Uprising; O=Opium War

Appendix 3B: Frequency of Negative Sanction by Position, 1833-86



CHAPTER 4

BUREAUCRATIC MOBILIZATION, 1856-62

The organizational chaos experienced by Qing state actors in the first half of the 1850s not only revealed an intimate relationship between rebellion suppression and bureaucratic control, but also established the organizational problem that state actors would have to confront in the decade's later half. As the Taiping Rebellion developed into a multi-front conflict, centralized control appeared both necessary (for distributing resources and arbitrating officials' conflicts) and insufficient (for devising locally appropriate strategies and solving exigent problems on the ground). The shortcomings of centralized control, as previous chapters have suggested, stemmed from a combination of organizational problems: Peking's usual suspicions over delegating too much authority to distantly located state agents, ambiguous and flexible organizational rules and norms which provided opportunities for officials to circumvent their responsibilities, and officials' inability or unwillingness to cooperate across or within jurisdictions. These internal problems seemed to require a change in the bureaucratic relations that could afford officials across and within jurisdictional boundaries opportunities to cooperate in concert.

Focusing on the changes in bureaucratic relations between 1856 and 1860, this chapter examines how central rulers and state actors tackled these problems at the level of provincial administration through "bureaucratic mobilization"—that is, the appointment and redeployment of state officials within the bureaucratic field. From the perspective of the court, different personnel arrangements could potentially increase organizational

efficiency by removing apparently inept officials and dispatching presumably competent ones. From the perspective of provincial officials, their capacities to recommend and influence personnel decisions would allow them to build social relationships and recreate anew the organizational environments in which they operated. Bureaucratic mobilization was thus a collective process that could potentially answer the simultaneous challenge of rebellion suppression and bureaucratic control.

While central rulers and state actors sought, independently or collectively, to reshape their organizational environment, existing organizational rules and norms often played a crucial role in enabling and constraining actors' pursuits. Given that numerous bureaucratic rules tended to detach officials from each other, how could the bureaucratic arrangement to integrate officials, if it existed, conform to existing organizational rules? If deviation from organizational rules had occurred, to what extent did they disrupt existing norms of state organization?

The Historical Context for Bureaucratic Change

Entering the second half of the 1850s, both the Taipings and the Qing imperial troops appeared to have been exhausted by the protracted warfare. In the following months after Yang Xiuqing's coup and an ensuing bloodbath at Nanking in the late summer of 1856, the Taipings lost Wuhan, a strategic point in Hubei on the Yangtze upstream (XF 6/11/22-24; December 19-21). By the end of the year, the Taipings had further given up most of the Yangtze river and its adjacent lake communication systems (Michael 1966:131). Battles in the second half of the 50s would concentrate in Anhui and Jiangxi provinces, apart from the vicinity of Nanking. The Taipings' morale in

Nanking now reached a low point, as the rebels' politico-religious ideology became less effective in mobilizing military actions (Michael 1966:121-22; 130). Further, their intermittent alliance with the Nian rebels in Anhui did little to dramatically improve their overall situation. The Taipings after 1856 were generally going on the defensive until Li Xiucheng (the "Loyal King") attempted to revitalize the movement in the early 60s.

In spite of these opportunities, the Qing imperial troops were as unable to revitalize their campaigns as the Taipings were, partly due to the overwhelming failure of the Southern Encampment around Nanking in mid-1856 (XF 6/5; June, 1856) and the ensuing death of Imperial Commissioner Xiang Rong (XF6/7/9; August 9, 1856), one the most experienced generals in the counter-Taiping campaign. The defeat of the Southern Encampment forced the imperial forces to retreat to Danyang, a county thirty miles away from Nanking—a move likely undermining the government's capacity to retake the city. Although the imperial forces did attempt to lay another siege on Nanking in late 1858, the effort was thwarted ultimately by the Taiping forces under the leadership of Chen Yucheng (陳玉成). From 1856 to 1860, victories and defeats of the Taipings and Qing troops generally was a seesawing affair across the battlegrounds of Anhui and Jiangxi (the two gateway provinces to Nanking). Thus, in contrast to their treatment of the eventful times of 1851-1856, historians generally characterize the second half of the 1850s as a time of stalemate (e.g., Chen et al. 2002:1269-2113).

The Rise of Hunan Army

This period of stagnation, however, saw the consolidation of a new military organization that would play a pivotal role in the Qing's recapture of Nanking in 1864.

Briefly discussed in Chapter 1, this new force was the Hunan Army, widely known as primarily responsible for eradicating the rebellion completely. The development of the Hunan Army and Zeng Guofan's rise to power are inextricably linked, and here I shall only relate the Hunan Army to the changing central-provincial relations during the Qing counter-mobilization in the mid to late 1850s.

The Hunan Army, or *xiangjun* (湘軍), began only as local reaction to the Taiping disruption. Shortly after the Taipings had begun their siege of Changsha (Hunan's provincial capital) in late 1852, the court ordered Zeng Guofan, then a retired vice-president of the Board of Rites, to assemble and supervise militia forces in Hunan, his native province. As Philip Kuhn (1970) has argued, across the county these militia forces were already well underway at the time. Although militias assumed various organizational forms, their basic characteristics revolved around a local identity: soldiers were recruited from existing social organizational units, such as lineages, community *baojia* (a local defense system), and multiplex units called *tuan* associations. Militarizing civilians was, of course, potentially dangerous for the central government; hence Zeng's assignment revealed less the devolution of state military authority than Peking's endeavor to keep widespread militia movements under the supervision of (former) state officials, rather than of local elite such as the gentry (Kuhn 1970:135-148).

Under the imperial order of late 1852, Zeng gradually built the Hunan Army from his native fellowmen and, being a highly revered figure in gentry circles, recruited commanders through his personal networks—among them were many Hunanese, Zeng's students, and actors recommended by his friends. To redress a prevalent problem with the imperial troops, in which “generals were unfamiliar with the rank-and-file,” Zeng's

army was built upon sets of nested patron-client relations: commanders were responsible for recruiting officers at the next immediate level (Kuhn 1970:147). Furthermore, as a former top official, Zeng was able to link himself to various provincial administrations, tapping into governmental resources to support his army. The strength of the Hunan Army was its dually directed social networks, which connected upwardly to the state bureaucracy and downwardly to village and communal networks.

The Hunan army also transformed the general meaning of "*tuan*," or "militia," by its ability and willingness to fight beyond soldiers' native provinces. Since the Taipings launched their Western Expedition, Zeng and his subordinate commanders had campaigned in Jiangxi, Anhui, and Hubei, where the Hunan Army had frequently suffered great casualties. Yet, compared to the regular imperial troops that were plagued with internal conflicts and lax in discipline, the relative coherence of the Hunan Army had since its inception posed the biggest threats to the rebels.

Demonstrating their leadership in campaigns involving the Hunan Army, lower-ranking officials such as Jiang Zhongyuan (江忠源), Hu Linyi (胡林翼), Liu Changyou (劉長佑), and Li Xubin (李續賓) were appointed to top provincial posts more speedily than if they had followed the routine path of bureaucratic promotion. For example, Jiang Zhongyuan rose from circuit-intendant (ranked 3B) to the provincial governorship of Anhui (ranked 2B) in less than one year during 1853. Normally, it would take a select few circuit intendants nearly a decade to reach such a high position—and most intendants never even had such an opportunity. Thus, the emergence of the Hunan Army not only provided the imperial campaign with a new form of military organization, but also supplied the provincial bureaucracy with a new kind of candidate—officials who were

"rooted" in the provincial administration and had been combating with the Taipings since the early 1850s.

The organizational model of the Hunan Army, especially its emphasis of local ties, would be echoed in—though not entirely copied by—the new bureaucratic arrangements that emerged in the middle phase of the rebellious era. In the following sections, I will discuss the changing patterns of bureaucratic mobilization in this period, and evaluate the extent to which these patterns conform to or deviate from the entrenched organizational norms that sought to detach officials from their jurisdictions and peers.

Bureaucratic Mobilization and Organizational Constraints

As state actors had witnessed in the early 1850s, the Taiping rebels skillfully maneuvered their way through battles by continually employing fresh recruits familiar with each new terrain incurred. Their unpredictable paths often meant that local administrators needed to respond quickly, gathering local knowledge of village geographies, population sizes, the structures of local resources and power, and connections among localities. Given that state resources were shared widely among numerous jurisdictions, officials ideally should have been able to coordinate with their colleagues within and across provincial jurisdictions—yet, up till the mid-50s, state actors had generally experienced widespread organizational chaos, marked especially by rampant inter-official conflicts among high ranking state agents. The Hunan Army could have provided a model for new bureaucratic changes, but existing organizational rules and norms, especially those based on the "law of avoidance" (*huibi* 迴避), discouraged the attachment of provincial officials to their jurisdictions or colleagues, thereby potentially

inhibiting vital communications among them. Responding to the Taiping challengers, bureaucratic mobilization would have to be reconciled with the avoidance principles and raise, once again, the question of bureaucratic control.

Framed as negative prohibition, avoidance rules encompassed a set of administrative regulations that are intended to exclude from the state administration all private interests, whether motivated by the individual himself, his family, native fellows, peers, or superiors. For example, an official was prohibited from holding offices in his home jurisdiction (or its vicinity), and individuals with strong ties (e.g., kinship relations, teacher-student ties) needed to avoid holding offices as colleagues within a jurisdiction or a department.⁶⁸ Although historians tend to portray avoidance practices as the result of a fixed set of rules (Wei 1982), these regulations, scattered throughout the *Administrative Statutes (Libu Zili)*, were in fact frequently ambiguous; their enforcement often relied on officials' volunteered information about conflict of interests, and exceptions were occasionally granted by the court. Where no obvious rules guided officials' bureaucratic practices, actors nonetheless would conform customarily to the principle of avoidance (for instance, in cases as to whether officials could show favoritism by recommending jobs for colleagues). Because the avoidance rules did not (and could not) cover all potential complications inherent in social relations, the court frequently needed to arbitrate conflicts of interests in bureaucratic appointments. We can fruitfully examine the process of central control and its relaxation by mapping patterns of bureaucratic appointments over time, vis-à-vis the principle of avoidance.

⁶⁸ For a general discussion of the law of avoidance, see Wei (1982). It should be noted that the law of avoidance extended beyond bureaucratic appointment to other aspects of bureaucratic life; for example, there were regulations that forbade an official to serve as an examiner in civil service examinations in which his relatives took part.

Re-engaging Officials with Provincial Ties

To examine how bureaucratic mobilization worked to reorganize provincial officials, we can first examine the changing sources of candidates who would replace outgoing provincial governors and governor-generals (hereafter “governors”). As I have suggested in Chapter 2, tightening central control to the Peking center often implied the deployment of centrally linked officials (or “outsiders” of provincial bureaucracy) as imperial commissioners and special military intendants. This pattern of control manifested itself similarly in governor appointments during the early phase of the rebellion. Entering the rebellious era, officials who previously held positions in the metropolitan government or military establishment replaced about 20 percent of total departing governors from 1851-56—a significant increase from their 10 percent in the 1840s. Meanwhile another 20 percent of the governorships were occupied by retired or previously dismissed veterans recalled into service (see Figure 4.1, p. 174). Given the static number of governor seats, increased occupancy of governorships by outsiders would mean the simultaneous suppression of existing provincial officials' mobility, either in the form of promotion or transferal.⁶⁹ As a result, only 60 percent of governors were replaced by existing provincial officials in the early 1850s, compared to almost 90 percent in the pre-rebellion late 1840s.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ “Existing official” is defined as the civilian state agents (but not military officers of provincial garrisons) who were already operating in the provincial administration of one of the eighteen provinces in China Proper.

⁷⁰ In analyses not shown here, the frequencies of existing provincial officials achieved governorship through promotion dropped from 56 percent (in 1845-50) to 43 percent (in 1851-56), and the transferal path dropped from 31.7 to 20 percent.

The meaning of taking a provincial post was highly significant. Capital officials tended to have minimal opportunities for upward mobility, while lacking opportunities to benefit from corruption or the numerous fees top provincial officials could receive from their subordinates as a supplement to the low income (Zhang 1970).⁷¹ The selection of provincial officials was presumably heavily influenced by the character of the official as a trustworthy agent (see Chapter 1, p. 33). However, once an official was sent out to the provinces, his relation with the throne would change; the official would now become a subject of heightened suspicion and supervision. There was probably a structural reason why the central state should worry, because officials appointed to the provinces tended to stay in the provinces for the rest of their careers (though it was not impossible for the court to recall any particular officials to the capital). This career structure would be problematic for controlling provincial officials once they departed the capital.

In the early phase of the Taiping Rebellion, the court frequently justified its decision of favoring an "outsider" of provincial bureaucracy to lead the provincial administration by arguing that these agents had not developed "the habit of inertia" endemic among provincial officials. It follows that officials directly dispatched from the central administration likely would act in accordance with the throne's interests, for they were less embedded in entrenched provincial social ties. The increased replacement of departing governors with centrally linked agents reflected this strategy of heightened control and direct intervention from the Peking center over the rebellion.

⁷¹ To curb the widespread corruption among provincial officials, the state formally provided officials with supplementary income known as "nourishing honesty funds" (*yanglianyin* 養廉銀), in addition to their regular salary. The amount of this supplement income was varied by provincial ranks (Hickey 1991:392). Central officials, however, did not have this benefit.

However, that outsiders lacked local knowledge about provincial affairs might have counterbalanced or even outweighed the benefits of their ties with the center. The return to using provincial officials by 1856 suggests such a realization. Figure 4.1 shows that by 1857-62 the bureaucratic trend favoring the outsiders began to reverse, as existing provincial officials gradually reclaimed a portion of top provincial seats lost in the early 1850s (from 62 percent in 1851-56 to 75 percent in 1857-62, and to 82 percent in 1863-68). For as long as three decades after 1856, central appointees would take up no more than 10 percent of vacant governorships.

An illustration to the problem brought by centrally linked officials is the newly appointed governor of Hubei in early 1854, Qinglin. Prior to his new appointment, Qinglin was a Manchu Vice-President of the Board of Rites, a high position in the metropolitan administration one step below a minister of the Six Boards. Several months after Qinglin arrived at his new appointment, his predecessor, the former governor of Hubei Chonglun, submitted to the court an accusatory memorial in which Qinglin was criticized for having "no knowledge of how to administer provincial and local affairs at all"(QZZ 14: 215-16; XF4/5/2). Although Qinglin had been a provincial examiner for several terms, his work did not, according to Chonglun, amount to actual administrative experience. Furthermore, by accusing Qingling's assistant, a Manchu lieutenant-general, of "lacking the ability of the Chinese language," Chonglun (a Manchu himself) further highlighted the problem of placing Manchu leaders in a position to manage a Han-dominated provincial bureaucracy or provincial garrison force (the Green Standards).⁷²

⁷² The Qing government was bilingual, so government documents and memorials were written in and translated into either the Manchu or Chinese language. By the nineteenth century, top provincial officials generally used the Chinese language, even if they were Manchus, as a means of routine

Evidence of the ethnic replacement of governor vacancies corresponds to the trend of reengaging existing provincial officials as key agents for provincial control. As shown in Figure 4.2 (p. 174), the court (and the Board of Civil Office) in the initial phase of the rebellion was quite eager to replace departing governors of Han origins with Manchu, Mongol, or Han Banner appointees—the presumable allies to the Manchu court. While only 13 percent of Han vacancies were occupied by non-Hans in 1845-50, the proportion rose to 35 percent in 1851-56. Just as the reliance of centrally linked officials faded quickly, the reliance on Manchu officials was also transient, declining from 35 to 20 percent in the second half of the 50s, and to 10 percent toward the last phase of the rebellious era. Conversely, Han officials after 1856 increasingly came to fill not only Han but also Manchu vacant governorships.⁷³ In the postbellum years of 1869-74, Hans would replace 95 percent of the 29 departing governors in the period, leaving only one vacancy for a Manchu appointee.

It should be noted that Manchu dominance in the provincial administration had already declined since the 1840s, only to rise again with the Taiping Rebellion in the early 1850s. Likely, the associated problems of non-Han commanders, as in the case of Commissioner Saishang-a I have discussed in Chapter 2, had become so apparent in the mid-1850s that existing provincial Han officials were reconceived as essential agents for combating the Taipings. An examination of patterns of governorship replacement supports the plausibility of this argument. Next I further examine the other forms of

communication. This should be compared to Elliott (2001:294), who suggests that in the eighteenth century the court had reemphasized the Manchu language among Manchu officials, an effort to revitalize the Manchu identity.

⁷³ In analysis not shown here, Hans replaced 70 percent of Manchu governor vacancies in 1857-62, surging from their 50 percent in 1851-56. In the last phase of the rebellious era, 1863-68, Hans replaced all 6 Manchu vacancies at the top provincial echelon.

bureaucratic mobilization that could engender officials' local knowledge of the jurisdictions they were to administer.

The Space and Time of Office Rotation

The emphasis on local knowledge can best be seen by the frequency of officials' career moves within and across jurisdictional boundaries, either via promotion or lateral transfer. An official moving within a province or toward a closely located province would presumably be more familiar with the local affairs he would encounter later. Examining the geographic patterns of officials' career moves, I define provincial boundaries in two ways. Normally two (or three) provinces under the control of one governor-general could form a unit, in which an official could move from one "sister" province to another (e.g., between Hubei and Hunan, or between Guangxi and Guangdong, etc.). Another kind of mobility is more restrictive, as the official made career move internally within the exact province of his current administration. In these two ways, the official could attain new posts either in a "restrictive province" or "unrestrictive province"—in either case retaining some degree of familiarity with the administrative affairs he was to face. In the following analyses, I will examine the spatial relations of these officials' career moves by collapsing of four highest positions in provincial bureaucracy: governor-general, provincial governor, provincial treasurer, and provincial judge. If an official were to move to one of these four positions within the provincial administration, in what period was he more likely to end up in a restrictive or unrestrictive province?

Figure 4.3 (p. 175) shows a long-standing suppression of strong attachments between administrators and their jurisdictions in the pre-rebellion years, beginning as early as the 1830s. During these years, no more than a quarter of officials would be promoted or transferred to a familiar jurisdiction, either in restrictive or unrestrictive provinces. Furthermore, this practice continued at the beginning of the rebellious era, if not slightly reinforced. This propensity to tighten rather than relax central control over provincial agents is consistent with the other initial responses previously discussed. Likewise, a dramatic shift took place in the mid-1850s, when officials started to move increasingly to other jurisdictions familiar to them. At the peak of the trend in 1857-59, close to two-thirds of officials' career moves would be made to a unrestrictive province and half within a restrictive province. However, despite this clear relaxation of the avoidance principle, the bureaucracy appeared to be very stable by the almost constant *differences* between the proportion an official would move to a restrictive province and the proportion that he would take a job in an unrestrictive one (as seen by the consistent gap between the two lines). Internal moves within a restrictive province were thus consistently less favorable than moves across sister provinces, even though the distance of official mobility was generally declining. Thus, it seems possible that the state organization would maintain certain aspects of the avoidance rules while relaxing some others.

To further examine the spatial relations of career moves beyond administrative boundaries, I measure the number of (physical) provincial boundaries an official would cross if he changed jobs within the provincial system. Figure 4.4 (p. 175) shows that officials had been consistently appointed to a province at least two borders apart from

their home provinces, hence conforming to the avoidance rules.⁷⁴ Yet, the spatial distance an official would have to travel between two posts dramatically dropped by the fourth year of the Taiping Rebellion. Top administrators by 1854 would be assigned to provinces contiguous with their current jurisdictions rather than those separated by another province (as represented by the declining line from 2 to close to 1). This tendency was intensified throughout the second half of the 50s and early 60s, at which time officials, on average, would move either across neighboring provinces or within their current administration. In Figure 4.5 (p. 176), Taiping provinces—defined here by jurisdictions in which the rebels had fought most intensely in 1851-1853⁷⁵—tended to absorb new administrators from provinces close to them; this result can be compared to the relative longer distance officials would move to southeastern and peripheral provinces.⁷⁶ These latter provinces, increasingly disrupted by burgeoning social uprisings in the late 50s, would adopt the practice (of absorbing nearby officials) developed during counter-Taiping campaigns and draw their new administrators increasingly from a neighboring province or from internal transfer.

Official rotation operated in a temporal dimension as well. Throughout most of the rebellious era, as Figure 4.6 (p. 176) demonstrates, top administrators on average

⁷⁴ Note that this distance is between the official's home province and his *first* post in the provincial administration. I exclude an examination of the distance between the official's home provinces and his later appointments, because later appointments tended to be conditioned by earlier ones.

⁷⁵ Unlike most definitions of Taiping provinces used in this work, these provincial types are static constructions, so they provide only a rough estimation of the boundaries of the Taiping influence. Taiping provinces were Jiangsu, Anhui, Shandong, Henan, Jiangxi, Hubei, and Hunan. These static definitions allow us to compare provincial types across a wider time frame.

⁷⁶ Southeastern provinces were Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, and Guangxi. Peripheral provinces were Sichuan, Shaanxi, Gansu, Guizhou, and Yunnan. Two other provinces, Zhili and Shanxi, are not included in the province-specific analyses, but are included in the total measures.

stayed in the same *position* less than two years and slightly more than two in the same *province*; rarely did they exceed the general organizational limit of three years (though officials who entered the provincial administration at the last phase of the rebellious era tended to have a longer tenure in a province). While the state appeared to have maintained tight control over the temporal dimension of office rotation, its approach to the spatial mobilization of provincial officials tended to deviate from the avoidance principle. Relaxation of the avoidance principle was thus exercised craftily, allowing some opportunities for officials to cultivate attachment to their jurisdictions and simultaneously disallowing the time long enough for officials to build up entrenched networks of interests in the localities they governed.

Engendering Official Coherence

To strip officials' private interests from bureaucratic practices, the central state generally favored placing officials with detached relationships as colleagues, and avoided placing those with strong ties in the same jurisdiction. This approach to bureaucratic placement reflected the state's longstanding opposition to factionalism, perhaps the main reason for the collapse of previous dynasties, such as the Ming (Polachek 1992). Yet, placing officials who were detached from one another as colleagues posed another problem for the state. As state actors had witnessed in the early part of the 1850s, official detachment was partly responsible for the frequent inter-official conflicts they experienced while encountering the Taiping rebels. Entering the second half of the decade, however, state actors would notice a significant decline in inter-official blaming

among the higher ranks.⁷⁷ This apparent coherence among bureaucratic agents might simply be a consequence of a routinization process, as the rebellion had by the mid-decade become a regular affair in bureaucratic life in certain provinces. However, an examination of how officials were placed together as colleagues will show that several systemic shifts in bureaucratic deployment might have provided a structural condition for officials to become more coherent.

In this section, I focus on the process of “identity matching” in pairs of official-colleagues, examining the degree of homogeneity in three salient social identities: 1) ethnic categories; 2) provincial origins; and 3) membership in an examination class. As will be expected, the norm of avoidance tended to discourage homophily among “colleagues”—a condition for mutual collusion among officials distantly located from the metropolitan center. Similarity in social identities, of course, did not guarantee congenial relations among administrators, but, as we shall see, organizational practices had often suppressed dyadic homophily in the early phase of the Taiping crisis, suggesting the critical role bureaucratic appointment played in shaping social relationships among state agents.

Ethnic Homogeneity

Manchu rulers—part of an ethnic minority amounting to less than half a percent of the total population—established bureaucratic procedures that would track Han and Manchu officials across divergent career paths. For example, a system of diarchy allotting equal numbers of vacancies to Han and Manchu officials in the central

⁷⁷ Because I do not have the count of total accusatory memorials officials made to other lower-ranking officers, this observation cannot be formally observed.

administration guaranteed an overrepresentation of Manchus. The salience of ethnicity was less formal in provincial administration, since no written rules regulated the distribution of offices among ethnic categories. Nonetheless, informal control prevailed, as Manchu officials still disproportionately held 20 percent of top provincial offices between 1830 and 1850, often holding governorships.

Figure 4.7 (p. 177) shows how the ethnic share in the provincial bureaucracy's top echelon had dramatically shifted during the rebellious era.⁷⁸ The proportion of Han Chinese had dropped from a level of 75 percent in the period 1842-51 to a low mark of 55 percent in 1856, a year that marked a turning point of the shifting relation between the two ethnic groups. Just as Manchu appointments replacing Han governors had gradually declined after 1856, the share of Hans in the top provincial administration had risen steadily since that year, reaching nearly 90 percent by 1864.⁷⁹

The predominance of Han officials in the postbellum Qing bureaucracy has been discussed often by historians, but the concentration of Hans in networks of collegial relations has received less attention (Chu and Saywell 1984; Ho 1962). Was it possible for the Manchu court to discourage a high concentration of Han officials by inserting the few available Manchus, to diversify the ethnic mix of a particular provincial jurisdiction? I address this question by measuring the degree of ethnic homogeneity in any pair of

⁷⁸ The base of percentage is the total number of official-months in a year. The proportion of ethnic composition is thus weighted by the time officials spent in the provincial administration. At the individual level, among 703 officials who held top four provincial posts (PJ, PT, PG, GG) from 1833 to 1886, 18 percent were Manchus, 76 percent Hans, 2 percent Mongols, and 3 percent Han Bannermen.

⁷⁹ The cross-sectional average can be misleading, because the same official will be counted repeatedly if he survived from one year to the next. The persistent increase in the proportion of Hans, for example, can be attributed to the longer tenure Han officials had, especially after the rebellious era. Thus, I reexamine the figure by restricting it only to newly incoming officials. I found no significant divergence from the overall findings (see the crosses in the Figure 4.7).

colleagues. All of the following analyses of dyadic homogeneity are based on tabulations of colleagues working in restrictive provinces—that is, jurisdictions where they were likely to have routine interaction (as references, analyses for unrestrictive are presented in Appendix 4-B, p. 183-85).⁸⁰

To examine the concentration of Hans in a colleague dyad, we need to be cautious of the changing marginal frequencies in a particular category. When one ethnic category dominates the provincial bureaucracy, any pair of colleagues is more likely to share an ethnicity than when the structure is more diverse. For example, if Hans were a dominant majority in the provincial bureaucracy, any pair of officials selected by chance at a given time would be more likely to be Hans even if they were not colleagues at the time. To take into account all possible dyads—not only those formed by colleagues—I examine the odds that a dyadic colleague is ethnically homogenous (as opposed to heterogeneous) and compare those to the odds that a pair of non-colleagues that is homogeneous (see Appendix 4-A [p. 172-73] for computation details). Equivalently, we can also compare the odds that a dyadic colleague is ethnically homogeneous (as opposed to a pair of non-colleague that is homogenous) to the odds that the dyadic colleague is heterogeneous (as opposed to a pair of non-colleague that is heterogeneous). Odds ratio measures thus approximate the perspectives of central decision makers, who tended to have a bird's eye view of the bureaucracy, and would have appointed officials by considering all likely dyadic combinations among officials. To read Figure 4.8 (p. 177), the log-odds ratios of

⁸⁰ The number of total dyads in the period is weighted by the months two colleague spent together in a jurisdiction. Consistent over time, there were about 65,000 pairs of possible dyad-months at the top provincial bureaucracy in every 3-year interval from 1833 to 1886. Among these possible dyads, about 10 percent were unrestrictive colleague-dyads—that is, officials who shared a provincial unit under one governor-general—and 4 percent were restrictive colleague dyads. Among all unrestrictive colleague-dyads, about 42 percent were restrictive dyads.

0 (or odds ratios of 1) roughly distinguished the two approaches to bureaucratic control. The logged ratio above the level of 0 (or odds ratios above 1) shows that bureaucratic deployment tended to favor homogeneity rather than heterogeneity, hence signaling that the principle of avoidance has been relaxed.⁸¹ Conversely, the log-odds ratios of a level below 0 represents a tendency toward heterogeneity and the tightening of the avoidance rules. Trends of dyadic homogeneity from 1851 to 1868 are represented separately for officials in Taiping and non-Taiping provinces. The coding of the Taiping provinces follows the time-varying scheme described in Appendix 3-A (p. 134).

As shown in Figure 4.8, bureaucratic control over Han concentration in a jurisdiction had been firmly in place in the pre-rebellion era, and was no less relaxed through the beginning of the mid-1850s. Prior to 1856, the odds that a pair of colleagues was composed of two Hans were always smaller than the odds that the pair was composed of two different ethnic categories. The low degree of homophily among Han dyadic colleagues, especially in Taiping provinces during 1854-56, reflects how the state organization might have regulated ethnic relations even *without* a diarchic system.

After 1856, state actors would witness important bureaucratic shifts, as established organizational practices were suddenly and evidently reversed, particularly in Taiping provinces. Between 1857 and 1861, there was an overall stronger tendency toward ethnic homophily among dyadic colleagues than that of previous years.

Furthermore, this trend had set a precedent for rearranging bureaucratic appointments to

⁸¹ Odds ratios provide a more interpretable reading than the log-odds ratios, but the latter is symmetric around 0 and thus serves as a more appropriate graphic representation with respect to the degree of relaxation and enforcement of the avoidance. When odds ratios equal one, the odds that a pair of colleagues would share an X identity (as opposed to heterogeneous) is the same as the odds that a pair of non-colleague that would be homogeneous (as opposed to heterogeneous).

the later times. Even though the degree of ethnic homogeneity among colleagues generally fell in the postbellum era, the log-odds ratios of Han dyads had rarely moved below the level of zero to any significant degree since 1856. Since the late 1850s the Manchu court had evidently tolerated the potential risk of Han concentration in provincial jurisdictions, and the change in organizational norms would last as late as the end of the 1880s.

Provincial and Regional Homogeneity

State actors in nineteenth century China frequently exploited their provincial origins, and not necessarily their broader ethnic identities, to forge exclusive social ties and political coalitions. This might explain why the law of avoidance expressly prohibited officials from holding offices in their home provinces. Because provincial identities were usually more salient for Han officials than Manchus, who would identified with one of the eight Banner categories, I include only Han officials in the following analyses. To examine the degree of dyadic homophily based on parochial identities, I consider both the odds that a pair of Han colleagues would share the same provincial origins (provincial homogeneity) as opposed to the odds that the colleagues originated from distantly located provinces (at least two borders apart). In a similar way, I consider the odds that official colleagues' home provinces would be contiguous with another (regional homogeneity) in comparison to the odds that the colleagues were distantly originated.⁸²

⁸² The odds ratios are drawn from a binomial logistic regression with "restrictive colleague" as a dependent variable, and "same origin" and "neighbor" as two independent variables. "Distant origins" is the omitted category. Regressions are run separately for each year interval from 1833 to 1886.

As may be expected, provincial homogeneity was strongly suppressed in Taiping provinces during the early phases of the rebellion. In periods of 1851-53 and 1854-56, it was quite unlikely for dyadic colleagues in Taiping provinces to share the same provincial origins (Figure 4.9, p.178), though the suppression of neighbor dyads was less severe (Figure 4.10, p. 178). Clearly, bureaucratic control over dyadic homophily had targeted provincial identity, a social identity more exclusive than relations formed by those with neighboring origins.

As the rebellion passed 1856, restrictions on placing officials of like parochial identity began to loosen, reaching its highest point in 1860-62 (the odds that dyadic colleagues shared the same provincial origins were twice as likely as those whose home origins were distant from one another). Thus, similar to the changing conditions of ethnic homogeneity, the year 1856 appeared to be a turning point, marking a key bureaucratic preference for dyadic homophily in Taiping provinces.

Yet, unlike ethnic homogeneity, the tendency toward provincial homogeneity did not last beyond the rebellious era. For almost two decades after the end of the Taiping Rebellion, it was very unlikely that provincial colleagues would share the same provincial origins (though the trend for neighboring origins is less clear). This finding may surprise historians who have argued that the Taiping Rebellion effected a postbellum consolidation of regionalism that undermined the Qing central authority and eventually led to the state's disintegration—a process often associated with the rise of the Hunan Army and Zeng Guofan (Michael 1949). At least with respect to top officials' parochial identities, there is little evidence to support the claim that the state had lost its grip on state agents at the rebellion's closing.

We can further evaluate the claim that Zeng Guofan's achievements had empowered him to recommend allies and his fellow Hunanese to numerous provincial seats across the state (e.g., Wright 1957; cf. Polachek 1975). Did Hunanese power surge during the rebellious era, and persist thereafter? To answer this question, I should first note that among the eighteen potential official-exporting provinces, few managed to dominate the Qing provincial bureaucracy. For example, Jiangsu and Shandong each commanded about a 15 to 20 percent share of provincial seats in the pre-rebellion years, while the remainder of the sixteen provinces each constituted less than 10 percent to the bureaucracy. Jiangsu province, which played a central role in the empire's economic and culture life, was a particularly well-known exporter of officials (Ho 1962; Elman 2000; Men-Cheong 2004). A comparison of officials from Jiangsu and Hunan can therefore reveal the changing patterns of regional dominance in provincial bureaucracy.

Figure 4.11 (p. 179) supports the views that the dominant status of Jiangsu had swiftly been undermined by Hunanese since the beginning of the 1860s. Most extraordinarily, during the period 1863-65, Hunanese staffed nearly one third of the top provincial seats, while none of the other provinces managed to attain more than a ten percent share. By the early 1860s, Hunan indeed had superseded Jiangsu as the key official-exporter, and Hunanese predominance seemed to have prevailed until the mid-1880s, long after Zeng Guofan died in 1872. Given that the figure presents a cross-sectional picture for each period, it is not clear whether the predominance of Hunanese was attributable to a process of stable replacement (Hunanese replacing a departing Hunanese), or to the fact that some Hunanese managed to retain their positions more consistently than members of other groups. Figure 4.12 (p. 179) focuses only on new

incoming officials and shows that although the proportion of Hunanese among all incoming officials had been relatively high since the mid-1850s, entrants from Hunan to staff top provincial posts began to drop sharply at the closing of the Taiping Rebellion in 1865. Thus, the previously observed dominance of Hunanese at top levels of postbellum provincial bureaucracy may be an artifact of some officials having sustained a long tenure in the system beyond the rebellious era.

To evaluate this argument, Figure 4.13 (p. 180) presents the number of additional years an official would be able to stay in the provincial system (not just in a position) if he survived, in a specific year, with more than five years of provincial experience.⁸³ In contrast to experienced officials from Jiangsu, Hunanese with more than five years' provincial experience (the dark dots) would have a much longer tenure if they survived the period 1853-1858, the stagnant and frustrating years in the counter-Taiping campaign. For example, while other officials with the same five-year experience would stay in the bureaucracy for another three to four years if they had survived in 1857 or 1858, Hunanese on average could last another 8 to 10 more years. Furthermore, Hunanese who survived the war and lived after the rebellious era would enjoy a similar situation, suggesting two waves by which Hunanese were more likely to be selected into provincial dominance. Thus, it is the long tenure of the surviving Hunanese that gave the impression of their prominence in Figure 4.11.

⁸³ A "tenure" in this analysis ignored the number of times officials were removed from the structure (by dismissals, retirement, etc.). I exclude officials with less experience here. But in analysis not shown here, I found that the period 1860-62 was the time at which survivors with less experience could attain a longer tenure if they were also Hunanese.

An examination of the degree of homophily among dyadic colleagues further fails to support the argument of an increased concentration of Hunanese in postbellum provincial administration. Figure 4.14 (p. 180) shows that the odds ratios that a pair of colleagues would be Hunanese (as opposed to like-origin colleagues from other provinces) had actually dwindled since the 1830s (though the first half of the 1850s did witness a brief surge of the Hunanese dyads).⁸⁴

Tracing the degree of provincial and regional homogeneity among dyadic colleagues over time, we have seen how the state organization managed to respond flexibly to the state crisis. While the Manchu center seemed to have allowed a break of the avoidance principle for a brief moment in the second half of the 50s and early 60s, the potential growth of provincialism was curbed immediately after the suppression of the Taipings. At least among provincial bureaucrats at the top echelon, there is little evidence supporting that bureaucratic appointments were becoming more parochial, or that officials from Hunan had dominated the bureaucracy as a result of the Taiping crisis.

Strong Ties from Metropolitan Examinations

Before 1908, when the state abolished its age-old civil examination system, hundreds of literati would gather every few years in Peking for about a month to compete for an entry license toward a career as a state official—perhaps the most prestigious social status an educated man could achieve. Successful candidates in the metropolitan exams received the *jinshi* (進士) degree, a common prerequisite for an entry-level appointment in the central or local administration. Because of their shared experience in

⁸⁴ It is also interesting to note that even with their low representation in the postbellum bureaucracy, Jiangsu officials were actually more concentrated in provincial jurisdictions in the early 1870s.

the examination process, candidates participating in the exam in the same year invariably identified each other as “classmates” (or *tongnian*同年, literally “same-year”).⁸⁵ Although classmate status did not necessarily lead to friendship, these readily available relations were solid platforms—far more solid than shared provincial origins or ethnicity—on which social actors could build exclusive relationships.⁸⁶

Another important social relationship constructed from an official’s examination experience was the tie to his “teacher”—specifically, the metropolitan examiners who determined neophyte officials’ initial career paths by granting them the *jinshi* degree. These examiners were usually high-ranking central officials, such as the Grand Secretariats or the presidents of the Six Boards, serving for one or more examination terms according to imperial directives. Depending on the particular examination season, about two to four central officials would serve in one examination term, as either the head examiner or assistant examiners. By linking themselves to the same teacher, officials graduating from different examination years could potentially form social ties with one another.⁸⁷ In the following analyses, I define a co-teacher tie as a dyadic link that is mediated *only* through a third party, the teacher (hence, classmates are not included in a co-teacher dyad).

⁸⁵ Other levels of state-sponsored examinations could also forge classmate relationships, so an analysis of classmate relationships based only on the metropolitan examinations is probably a conservative estimate.

⁸⁶ Depending on the year, about 50 to 90 percent of Han officials had attained the highest *jinshi* degree (the overall average is 67%). A separate examination system applied to Manchus. Although this exam also conferred *jinshi* degrees, very few Manchu officials in our sample possessed such a degree. Most often, Manchu officials attained offices primarily via the military and the Banner heritage, and sometimes through examinations that tested their military prowess. I therefore excluded Manchus from this analysis.

⁸⁷ Since classmate relationships were more exclusive than co-teacher relations, only about 30 percent of co-teacher dyads were classmates.

Whether through classmate relations or co-teacher ties, the strength of shared experiences through the state examination process was its potential to become a patron-client tie. As was well-known among state actors themselves, teacher-student connections could help one attain offices and forge political coalitions (Man-Cheong 2004: 171-72; Polechek 1992). Accordingly, the avoidance rules prohibited teachers and their students from holding positions together in the same administrative units. (The rule applied not only to examiner-examinee relations but to all types of teacher-student ties.) No formal rules, however, proscribed the relationships among colleagues who shared common teachers or who were classmates, despite the obvious ways these identifications could be used to build factions.

Even in the absence of formal regulations, it was still highly unlikely for state actors who identified each other as classmates to be placed in the same jurisdiction as colleagues in Taiping provinces during the first half of the 1850s (Figure 4.15, p. 181). But notably, by the later half of the 50s, having shared experiences as examination “classmates” had swiftly turned into a favorable social category for organizing bureaucratic relations in Taiping provinces (but not in non-Taiping territories). Reaching their peak in 1860-62, the odds that dyadic colleagues in Taiping provinces would be classmates were seven times as likely as the odds that colleagues would consist of heterogeneous examination graduates. The relaxation of the avoidance was transient, however. Just as provincial homogeneity had subsided by the end of the 1860s, common experiences in the state examination also lost their significance in arranging bureaucratic appointments at the closing of the rebellious era.

With respect to the co-teacher category, it is evident that the suppression of shared official ties via a third party (a teacher) had been sustained throughout the 1850s in Taiping provinces, as demonstrated in Figure 4.16 (p. 181), even when classmate relationship status enjoyed more favorable conditions from 1857 to 1862. By the 1860s, the odds of unrelated colleagues in Taiping provinces were five times ($\sim 1/0.2$) as likely as the odds that the dyad would be mediated (only) through a high ranking examiner. Though this result is not easily interpretable, I suspect that a stronger suppression of the co-teacher may be due to the high status of “teachers,” who were often important officials in the central government and potentially occupied a crucial role in faction-building.

Still, we must ask why the Manchu center would allow “dangerous” classmate status to potentially corrupt the ethics of provincial agents in Taiping provinces. The answer may lie in the fading importance of *jinshi* degrees as a license to top provincial officialdom (Figure 4.17, p. 182). For example, by the mid-1850s, only slightly more than half of incoming top officials held the high degree, compared to almost 90 percent during pre-rebellion periods. In other words, candidates who successfully passed the metropolitan examinations—the “normal” route to state officialdom—formed a weakening source of provincial agents. For instance, officials who rose in rank during the Taiping Rebellion tended to have a successful track record in the battlefield, but often had lower examination degrees (see Chapter 5). New mobility opportunities privileging military expertise, not academic achievement, may suggest why relaxation of the avoidance principles regarding *jinshi* classmates posed a less significant threat to the state in the later part of the rebellious era than in previous years.

The Flexibility of the Avoidance Norms

Let us summarize by asking how the bureaucratic mobilization reshaped colleague relationships in the midst of the Taiping Rebellion, given the avoidance principles. My conclusion does not depend on any one single indicator, but on examining multiple identity markers that appeared to be meaningful to the state organization and social actors within it.

If we examine patterns across the wider time spectrum of 1833 to 1886, the later half of the 1850s presented a significant time when provincial colleagues were, for a period ranging from three to ten years, more homogeneous with one another. The year 1856 consistently signaled a turning point, when organizational practices turned away from the principle of relational detachment, the core of the avoidance rules. Figure 4.18 summarizes the findings of dyadic homophily in Taiping provinces (as reference, Figure 4-F [p. 185] presents data on non-Taiping provinces). Prior to 1856, especially in 1853-56, bureaucrats in Taiping provinces generally worked in a heterogeneous and, perhaps, socially detached organizational environment. Not only did the state bureaucracy broadly suppress dyadic homophily among official colleagues, it also constructed an unambiguous hierarchy by which identity markers were variably “avoided.” Exclusive relationships, such as classmate ties and those formed by officials’ shared provincial origins, were strongly controlled, especially in the mid-50s. Contrarily, neighbors or those sharing ethnic identities tended to receive less restriction. Importantly, this hierarchy remained consistent through two time periods, 1851-53 and 1854-56. After 1856, we see more or less a reversal in the hierarchy: what was highly controlled prior to 1856 became a favorable condition for bureaucratic appointments. Most notably,

classmate relations—the most exclusive ties among all—had become important elements in forming dyadic colleagues in 1857-59 and 1860-62. That most trends went down after the end of the Taiping Rebellion in 1866-1868 suggests the unusualness of the late 50s and early 60s as brief periods of bureaucratic shifts.

Regulation and Tolerance of Official Coherence

The argument advanced in this chapter does not imply that the observed structural shifts could mechanistically enhance the coherence among officials or automatically undermine the power of central control. While bureaucratic appointments appeared to favor officials who were familiar with the provincial affairs of the jurisdictions they were going to encounter, and although official colleagues in the late 1850s would be more homogeneous with one another than they had in the early part of the decade, official coherence still needed to be constructed through officials' interactions, a process usually formed against the backdrop of central regulation and intervention. The following example serves to demonstrate how the principle of avoidance was entwined with the emergence of official homogeneity as the end of the 1850s approached.

From 1855-1861, one of the most strategically important jurisdictions, Hubei-Hunan, was governed by a partnership that both conformed to and deviated from the homogenizing patterns I observed above. That Hunan native Hu Linyi (胡林翼), a former provincial treasurer, was assigned to the governor seat of Hubei (Hunan's neighboring province) already illustrates a divergence from the avoidance principle. Hu Linyi would serve as the official link between the Hunan Army and the court, channeling government resources to Zeng, who lacked a full administrative title in the provincial bureaucracy

during the 1850s. Hu's ties to Zeng Guofan (also a Hunanese) were intensified by their close relations with Wu Wenrong, the former governor-general of the Hubei-Hunan and Hu Linyi's metropolitan examiner. Given this potential concentration of Hunanese power, the appointment of Guanwen (官文)—a former Manchu garrison general—as the governor-general of Hubei-Hunan (hence, Hu's superior) would presumably serve to monitor and exert control over Zeng and his Hunan Army.

Surprisingly, in great contrast to their predecessors, Chonglun and Wu Rengrong (whose infamous conflict has been discussed previously in p.124-26), Hu Linyi and Guanwen managed to build a coherent relationship—at least in the eyes of the court—that helped strengthen the Hunan Army campaign far beyond their own jurisdictions. Some historians describe the relationship between Hu and Guanwen two officials as one of pragmatic tolerance. Guanwen, reputed to be an unambitious, mediocre administrator, generally delegated decisions to Hu, who in return paid deference to the Manchu governor-general (Qinshi 1965:237); by so doing, Hu was able to acquire resources from a court with which Guanwen was closely allied.

We can gain insight on their relationship through several incidents in 1857-59. Prior to a temporary leave due to the death of his mother, Hu—when the court now considered indispensable in the counter-Taiping campaign—reassured his staff that they could rely on Guanwen to command “the entire campaign in the southeast.” In the eyes of Hu, the governor-general had “a generous ability to embrace many [opinions], with the courage of listening to others selflessly” (Hu 1857: 207). Likewise, Guanwen held Hu in high regard in reciprocation. In early 1859, when the court proposed to transfer Hu to

Anhui (the province once again being threatened by rebels), Guanwen raised strong opposition to the proposal, attempting to keep Hu in Hubei:

Your slave and Hu Linyi have been exchanging collegial words.... Hu Linyi is a solid man of courage; he has the capacity to control the entire situation. Should he be assigned to Anhui, Hubei and Hunan provinces would be left unattended. If he is stationed in Wangzhou [Hubei], midway between the battles of Hubei and Anhui, he could then take care of both provinces. (QZZ 21: 207; XF9/2/14)

To the Xianfeng emperor, the truthfulness of Guanwen's praise was probably less important than the fact that the governor-general's proposal reflected the "exact opinions of Hu Linyi." It was obvious to all contemporaneous observers that the relationship between these two governors in the late 1850s was vastly different from the prevalent conflicts that occurred between their predecessors. The partners were to become the model-colleagues to the entire provincial bureaucracy.

Should Hu Linyi and Guanwen be involved in personal conflict in the manner of their predecessors, the Hunan Army likely would have lacked the necessary support from Peking. The essential link between Zeng and Peking was Guanwen. Being a former Manchu garrison general and later a close ally with the Empress Dowager, the governor-general served as a trusted voice for the Hunan Army. Guanwen's involvement also alleviated Peking's worry, since the Hans' military power obviously had been increasing over the years. Between Zeng and Guanwen, however, was the mediation of Hu Linyi, who had frequently offer tactical suggestions about the Hunan Army for Guanwen.

To illustrate these two levels of mediation, consider a case in mid-1859 when Sichuan was threatened by more than 100,000 Taiping troops led by Shi Dakai. In Hu Linyi's opinion, Zeng Guofan's current forces in Hunan and Jiangxi could be mobilized to rescue Sichuan. If Sichuan was free from the rebels, its safety could benefit neighboring

Hubei and Shanxi as well. But to make the Hunan Army efficient in Sichuan (that is, in a different jurisdiction), Zeng Guofan had to be promoted to the governor-generalship of the province. To propose these views to the court, Hu could have submitted a memorial himself. Instead, he deferred to his superior Guanwen, partly because the latter had more legitimacy to *speak for* another province than Hu. In a private letter, Hu urged Guanwen to submit a “confidential memorial” to reflect these ideas, because “no one else but a minister [*zhongtang* 中堂, that is, Guanwen himself] could have the ability to advise the throne; no one else but a minister could be brave enough to do so” (Hu 2:322; XF9/5/6). Hu then supplied all the details in the plan for Guanwen to consider.

Seven days later, Guanwen submitted just such a confidential memorial, containing almost the exact content Hu suggested (QZZ 21:351-52; XF 9/5/13). In response, the court approved Guanwen's request partly, ordering Zeng to proceed to Sichuan from Jiangxi (QZZ 21: 375-76; XF 9/5/21). However, the proposed appointment of Zeng received no comment. As late as 1859, Peking clearly was still reluctant to grant a high office to a militarily powerful Han official. At any rate, the series of events that followed had made Zeng's move no longer necessary; eventually he was to remain and focus on the Anhui campaign (see QZZ 21:415-16; 21:586). And although Hu's original proposal had not been fully realized, the Hunan-Hubei administration demonstrated how interpersonal coherence could forge inter-jurisdictional relations (i.e., sending the Hunan army to help Sichuan).

Coda: Consolidation of the Imperial Campaign

Despite the stalemate since 1856, the Taiping campaign continued to expand geographically. Resenting the Heavenly King's decision to kill the East King, Yang Xiuqing, in his 1856 coup, the Wing King, Shi Dakai, departed Nanking in mid-1857 with more than ten thousand followers (XF 7/5/11; June 2). This split inaugurated Shi's six year independent movement outside the Lower Yangtze. Shi's army moved to threaten the southeastern provinces of Zhejiang and Fujian in 1857-58, returned to Guangxi in 1859, and advanced as far as Sichuan in 1860. This expansion then stretched the Taiping War more than a thousand miles in the east-west direction across five provinces. However, the lack of coordination between Nanking and Shi's army had hampered Shi's advances, and without Nanking's support Shi's army eventually surrendered to the Qing in Sichuan by 1863. Similarly, other Taiping commanders lacked coordination with one another, instead clinging to their own resources until the Qing forced them to participate in joint actions (Michael 1966:130). This threat of decentralization resembles the experiences of the Qing in the early part of the 1850s.

In contrast to the Taipings' decentralizing propensity, the Qing commanders witnessed a series of mergers through which various imperial campaigns were placed under fewer imperial commissioners' control (see Figure 2.1, p. 83). Most notably, this period saw the integration of the Northern and Southern Encampments surrounding Nanking. The reason for this merger, however, was less a strategic plan than a result of a series of fall-outs in the imperial campaigns. Since the summer of 1857, the northern and southern camps had made several attempts to retake the city without any success, eventually resulting in the dismissal of Imperial Commissioner Deqing-a of the Northern

Encampment in 1859 (XF 9/2/5; March 9). Unlike previous dismissals, Deqing-a's vacancy was not replaced; rather, his forces were put under the control of Hechuan, the commissioner leading the Southern Encampment. Previously absorbing the commands of the Zhejiang campaign southeast of Nanking, Hechuan now controlled the military affairs of the Lower Yangtze, Anhui, Jiangxi, and Zhejiang.

When Hechuan committed suicide in the spring of 1860 (XF 10/4/6; May 26) after the Southern Encampment suffered another overwhelming defeat by the Taipings, Zeng Guofan, the commander of the Hunan Army, succeeded all Hechuan's forces and was named Imperial Commissioner. By the time Zeng came to replace Hechuan, he brought with him not only the Hunan Army but also the Anhui forces, which he was previously assigned to command;⁸⁸ furthermore, Zeng was simultaneously made the governor-general of Liangjiang. This concentration of power enjoyed by a Han Imperial Commissioner (circa the beginning of 60s) was unprecedented.

The turning point of the Hunan Army's campaign came during the late summer of 1861, when Zeng Guofan—now the most powerful man in provincial bureaucracy, if not the entire state organization—orchestrated the recovery of Anqing, a gateway to Nanking and a strategic point that had long been held by the Taipings. Pleased by the return of Anqing in 1861, the court immediately issued an edict urging all provincial governors to emulate the Hunanese model (QZZ 23:638-39; XF 11/12/9). What distinguished the Hunan Army from the rest of the imperial troops, proclaimed the emperor in the 1861 edict, was not the bravery of the Hunanese per se, but the ability of the Hunan Army

⁸⁸ An important part of the Anhui campaign consisted of the Anhui Army (*huai jun*) led by Zeng Guofan's student and later prominent governor-general of Zhili, Li Hongzhang (see Spector 1964).

leaders in "selecting talents from a relevant locality," or *jiudi qicai* (就地取才). Since talents theoretically existed everywhere, according to the emperor, commanders and provincial officials should spot and use them appropriately to enrich local forces. As I have shown throughout this chapter, the state had already adopted this approach of official appointment since 1856.

The battlefield stalemates during 1856-1860 perhaps disguised an important shift in the relationship between the Manchu center and the Han-dominated provincial arena. The court's sanction of a regionally based armed force, and its willingness to grant Zeng Guofan the centralized authority to command both the Hunan Army and official troops, suggest that the Manchu court was at least tolerating the risks associated with devolving military power (which could potentially turn officials into local warlords). Like other militia troops, the Hunan Army was expected to disband after the defeat of the Taipings (and it did), but toward the end of the 1850s officials associated with the Hunan Army had already occupied numerous top provincial posts, likely through recommendations of Zeng and his allies (Zhu 2003). While Zeng's efforts were crucial, it still required the tolerance, if not accommodation, of the central court. Throughout this chapter, I have shown that Zeng's ascendance in 1860 was made possible by a wave of changes in bureaucratic mobilization that were already underway at least half a decade prior.

How these changes could be reconciled with existing organizational practices—which detached official agents and prevented them from strongly identifying with their administrations—has been a puzzling issue. While some historians argue that the Manchu center had no choice but to loosen its grip on powerful and effective Han

commanders like Zeng, I argue that the relaxation of central control was craftier and more cautious. Because Qing bureaucratic regulations and organizational norms were far from a set of monolithic proscriptions, conflicts of interests and contradictions of goals were often resolved by state actors enforcing select aspects of the norms and ignoring others. Further, the relaxation of the avoidance rules tended to last only for a brief period—just long enough for state actors to cultivate a sense of coherence in midst of the chaos brought by the Taiping war. However, there remains a question as to how these brief changes could generate bigger structural changes in the entire bureaucratic structure, not just within the provincial administration but also throughout the metropolitan government. This will be a subject of discussions in the next chapter.

MEASUREMENT OF DYADIC HOMOGENEITY

To measure the degree of homogeneity among official colleagues, we need to take into account official dyads that did not form colleague relations—that is, a pair of officials who were part of the provincial bureaucracy at the same time but did not hold offices under the same provincial unit. Without taking the non-colleague dyads into account, any observations found could result from the overall demographic change in the entire bureaucracy. One of the questions I attempt to answer in this chapter is whether or not the degree of dyadic homogeneity is higher among dyadic colleagues than non-colleagues, but I exclude relationships between top provincial agents and their lower-ranking subordinates. Former colleagues are also not considered here. Each colleague dyad is symmetric, and for each month there is an N by N square matrix consisting of all officials who were working in the provincial bureaucracy in a particular month.

Four combinations regarding dyadic homogeneity are possible given all dyadic pairs in the provincial bureaucracy at a given month m of a particular year t :

	Same characteristics	Different characteristics
Colleagues	A_{tm}	B_{tm}
Non-colleagues	C_{tm}	D_{tm}

Taking durations of relationships into account, each cell is the total number of dyad-months in a particular combination given a time frame. For each year, the odds-ratio of a homogenous colleague dyad relative to a heterogeneous relation is computed as:

$$\Omega_t = \frac{\sum_{m=1} A_{tm} / \sum_{m=1} B_{tm}}{\sum_{m=1} C_{tm} / \sum_{m=1} D_{tm}} \quad (4.1)$$

where t is the year from 1833 to 1886, and m is the month where dyads existed (if an intercalary month appears, a year has 13 months). When the odds-ratio is at the value of 1, the odds that a pair official-colleague would be homogenous (as opposed to heterogeneous) equal the odds that a pair of non-colleagues would be homogenous (as opposed to heterogeneous). In this case, the bureaucracy is free from any concentration among officials with a certain characteristic. When the ratio is greater than 1, the relative odds of a homogenous colleague-dyad increase by the number of times expressed in Ω ; conversely, when the ratio is smaller than one, the odds of homogenous colleague-dyads are smaller than those of homogeneous non-colleagues. When presenting the odds-ratios graphically, I take the natural log of Ω , whose level of 0 is equivalent to the odds-ratio of one.

Figure 4.1: Sources of Incoming Governors-General (GG) and Provincial Governors (PG)

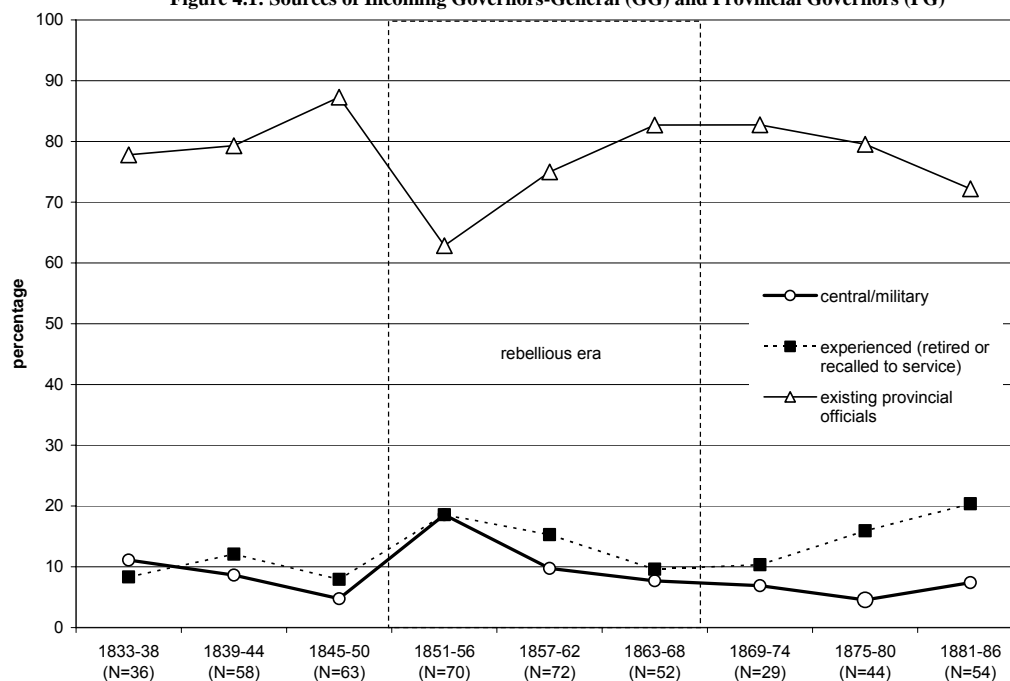
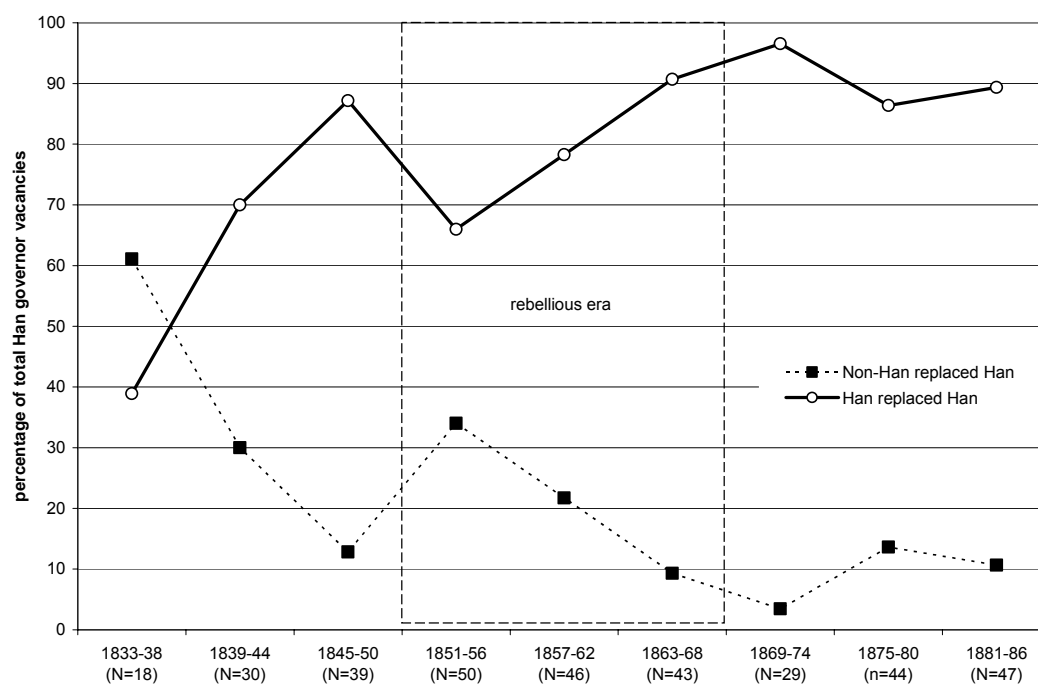


Figure 4.2: Ethnic Replacement of Han Governors (PG and GG)



Note: "Non-Han" includes Manchus, Mongols, and Han Banners—social groups that were closely tied to the Manchu court.

Figure 4.3: Proportion of Officials Moving to Familiar Jurisdictions

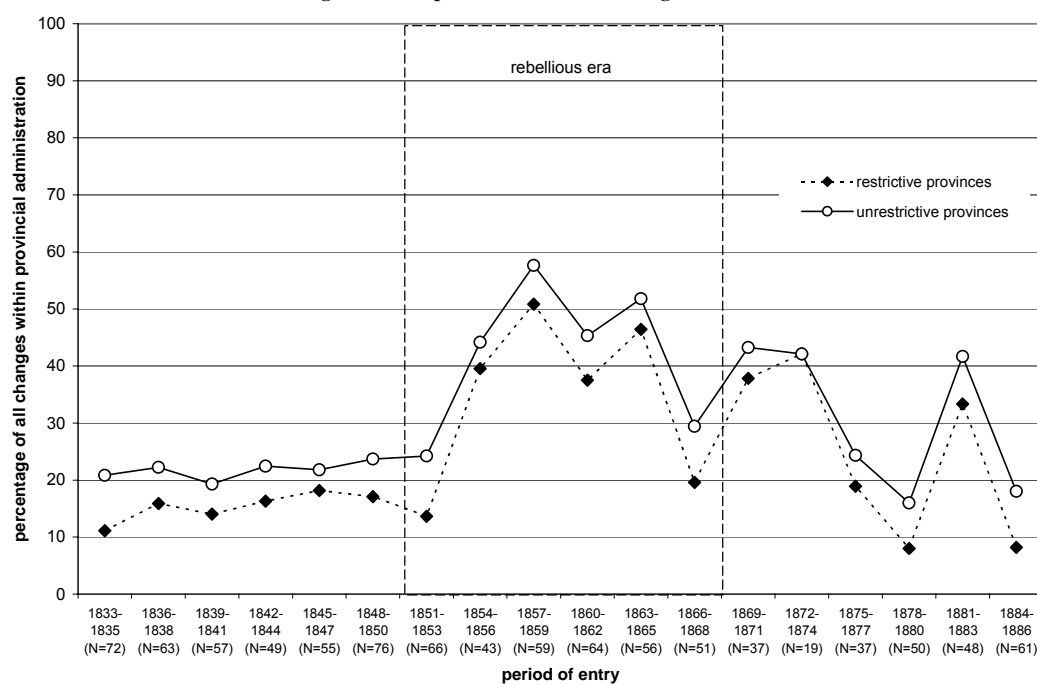


Figure 4.4: Average Province Crossed to a New Position

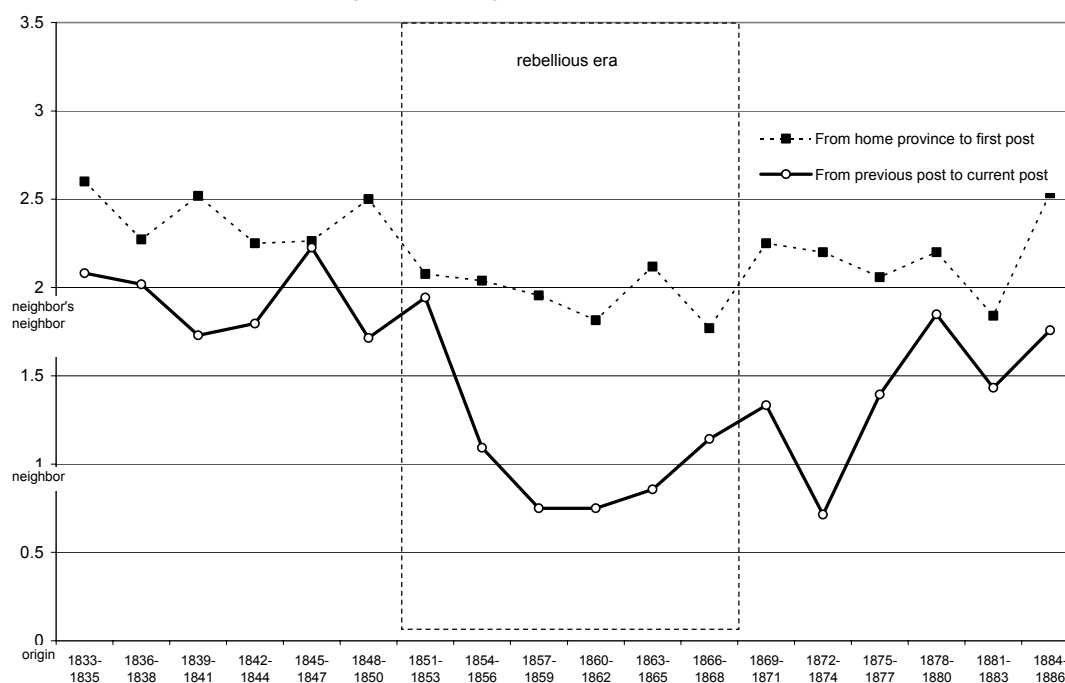


Figure 4.5: From Current Province to Next Province by Regions

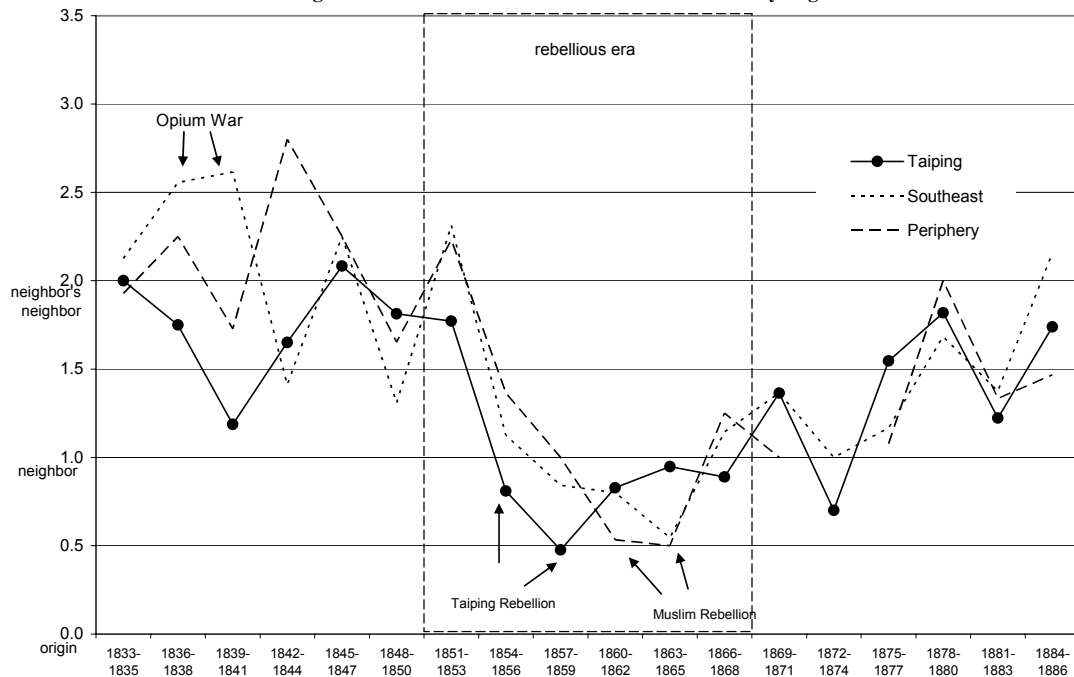


Figure 4.6: Average Length of Tenure

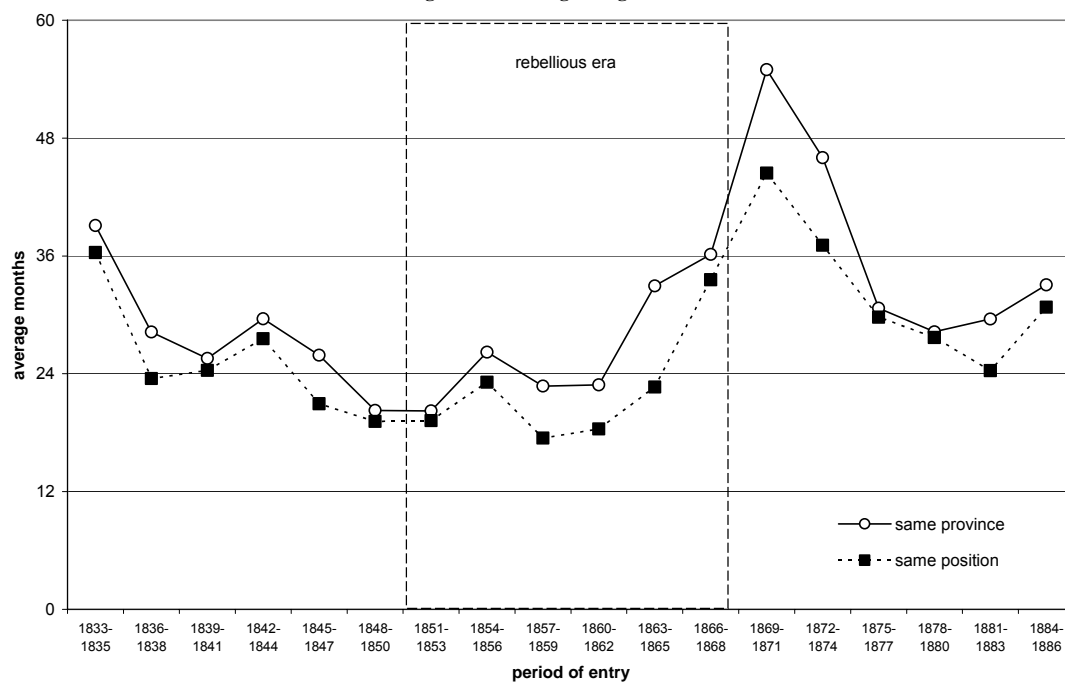


Figure 4.7: Ethnic Composition in Top Provincial Bureaucracy

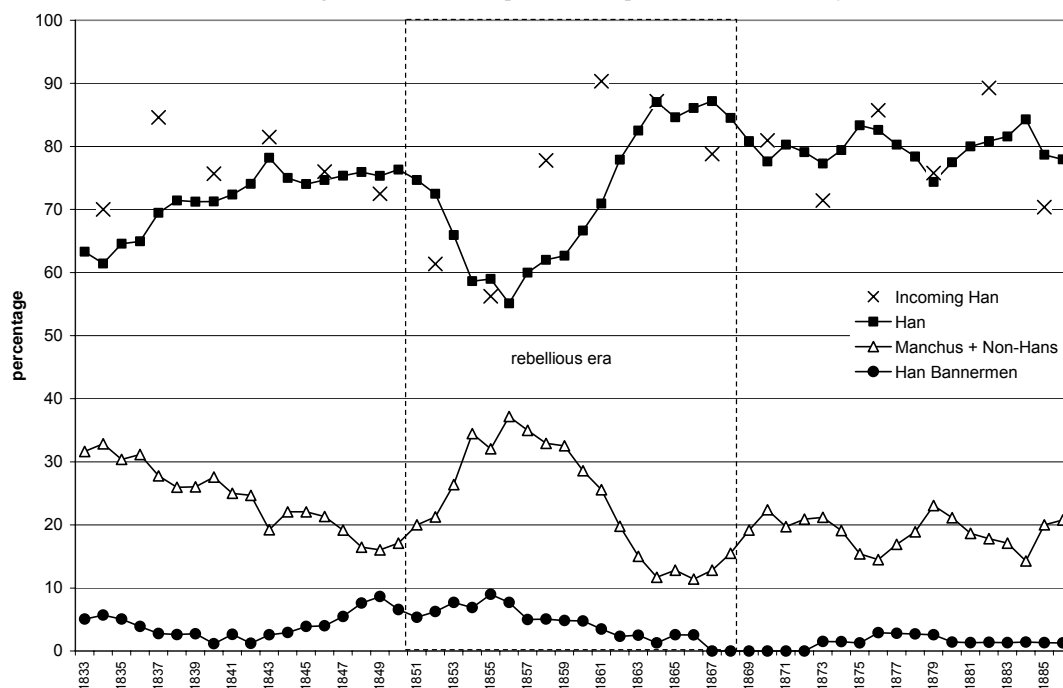


Figure 4.8: Ethnic Homogeneity (restrictive colleagues) - Same-Han (vs. ethnic mix)

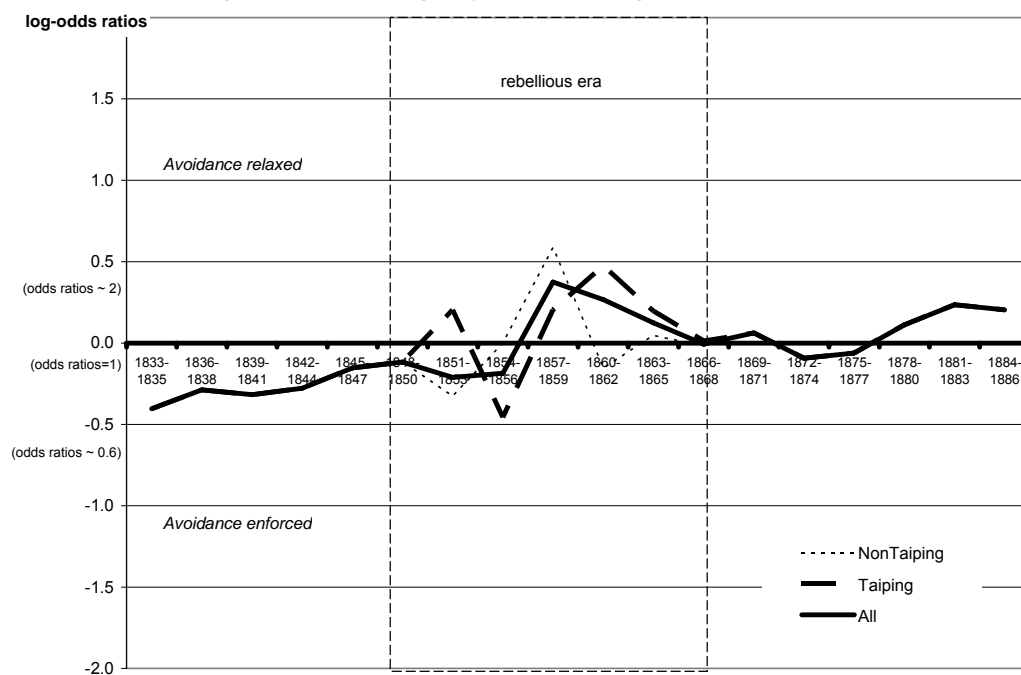


Figure 4.9: Provincial Homogeneity (restrictive colleagues) - Same-provincial origin (vs. distant origin)

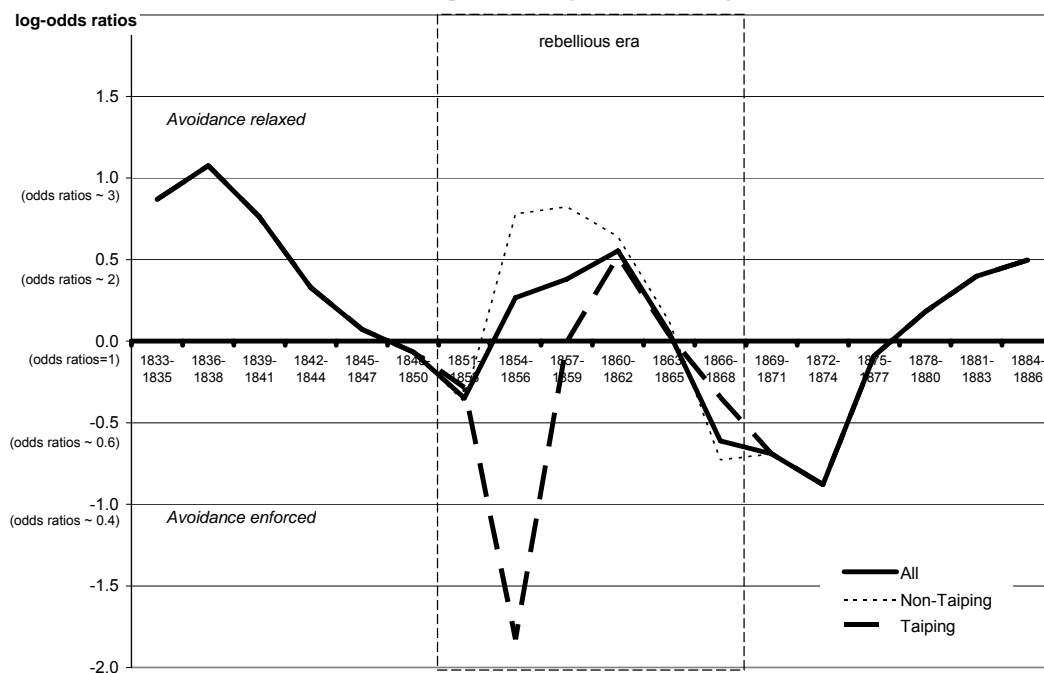


Figure 4.10: Regional Homogeneity (restrictive colleagues) - Neighbor origins (vs. distant origins)

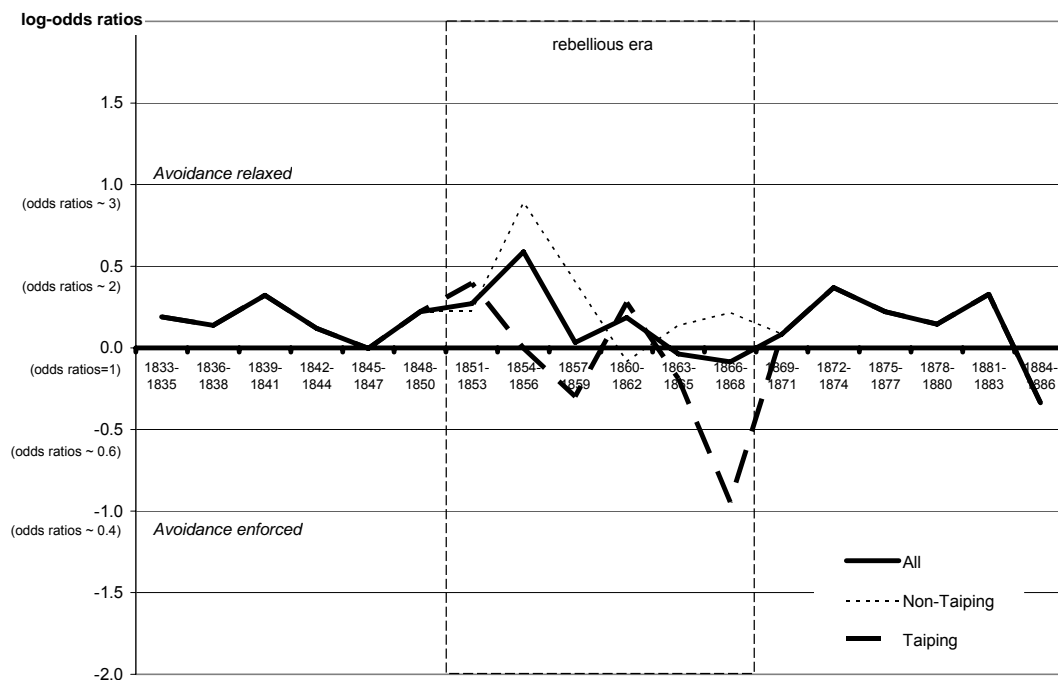


Figure 4.11: Share in Top Provincial Positions by Officials' Provincial Origins

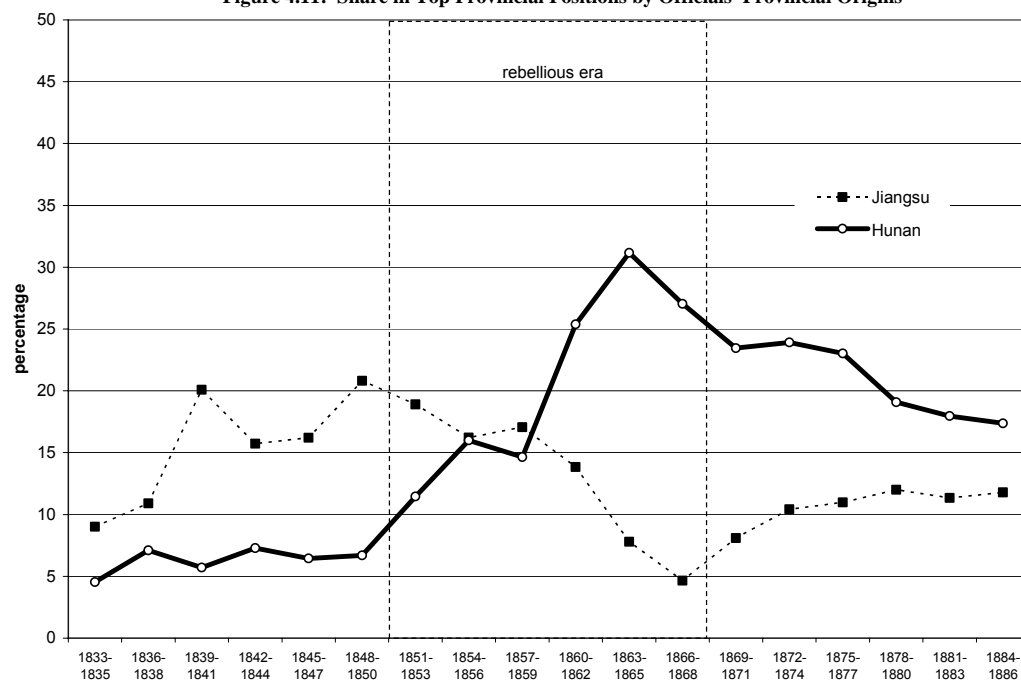


Figure 4.12: Officials From Hunan Province

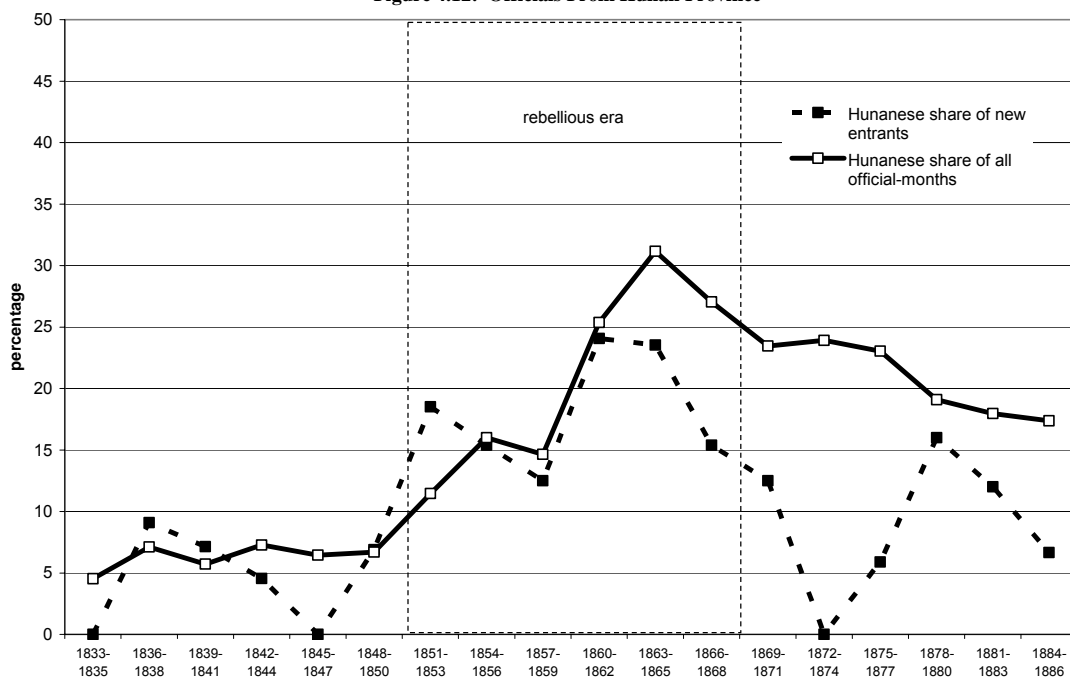
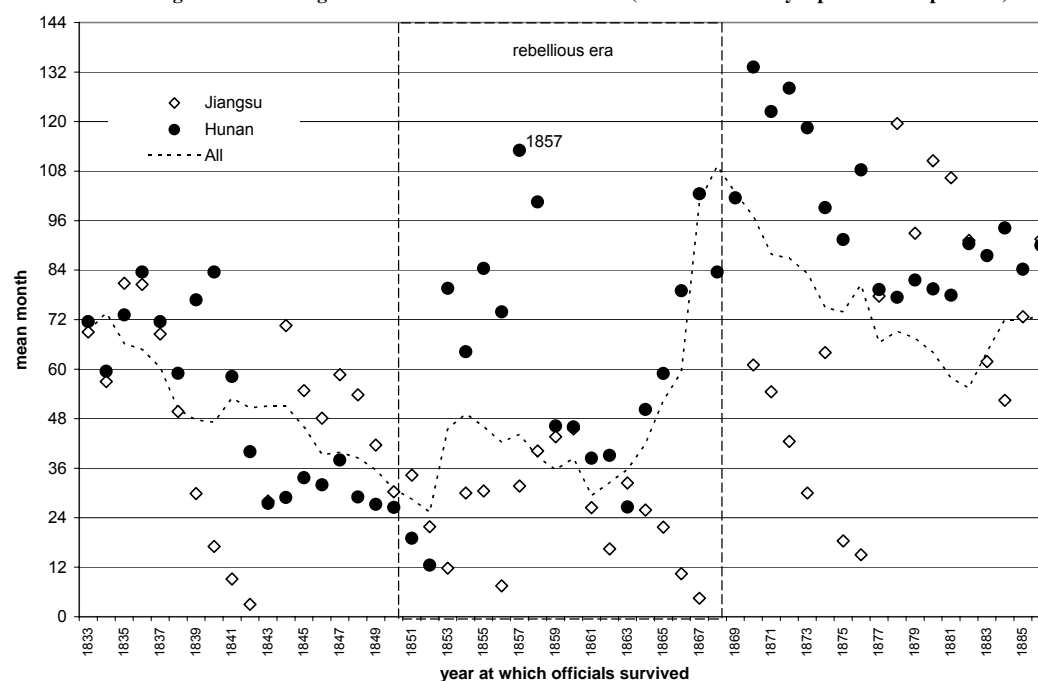
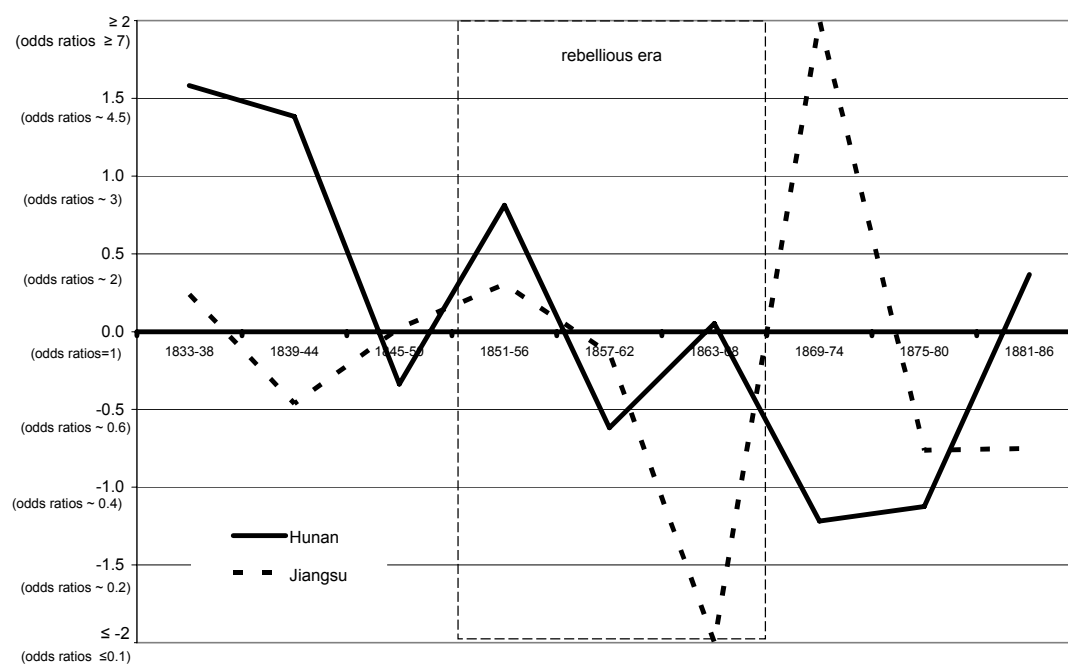


Figure 4.13: Average Month Left in Provincial Tenure (officials with > 5 yrs provincial experience)



log-odds ratios

Figure 4.14: Provincial Homogeneity by Origins



log-odds ratios

Figure 4.15: Dyadic Homogeneity (restrictive colleagues) - Classmate

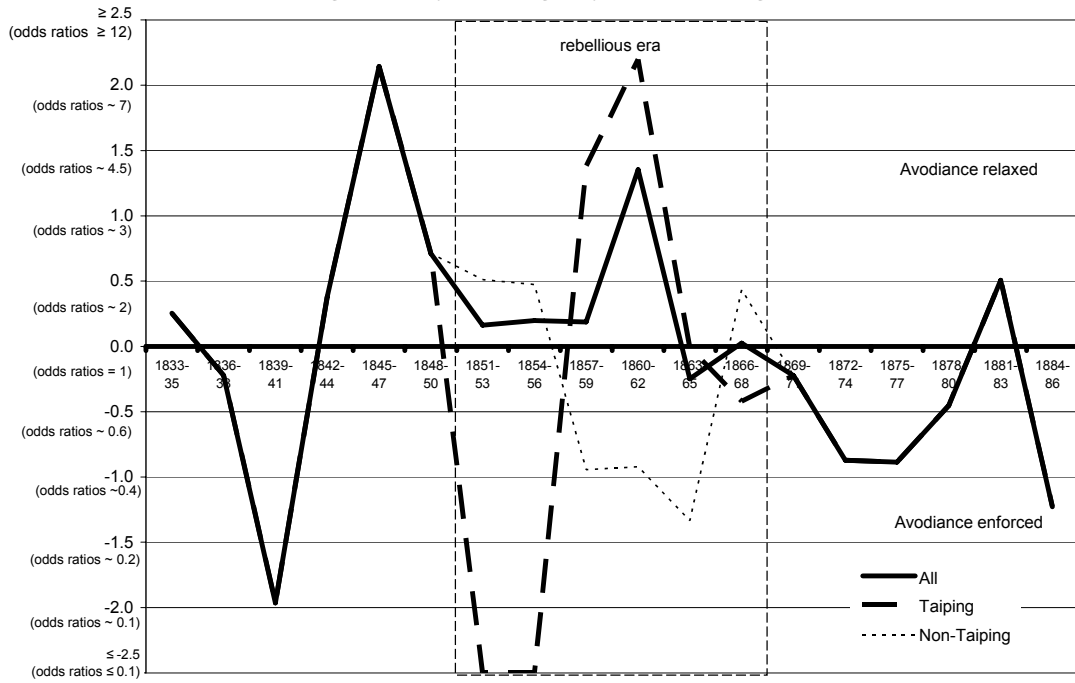


Figure 4.16: Dyadic Homogeneity (restrictive colleagues) - Co-Teacher

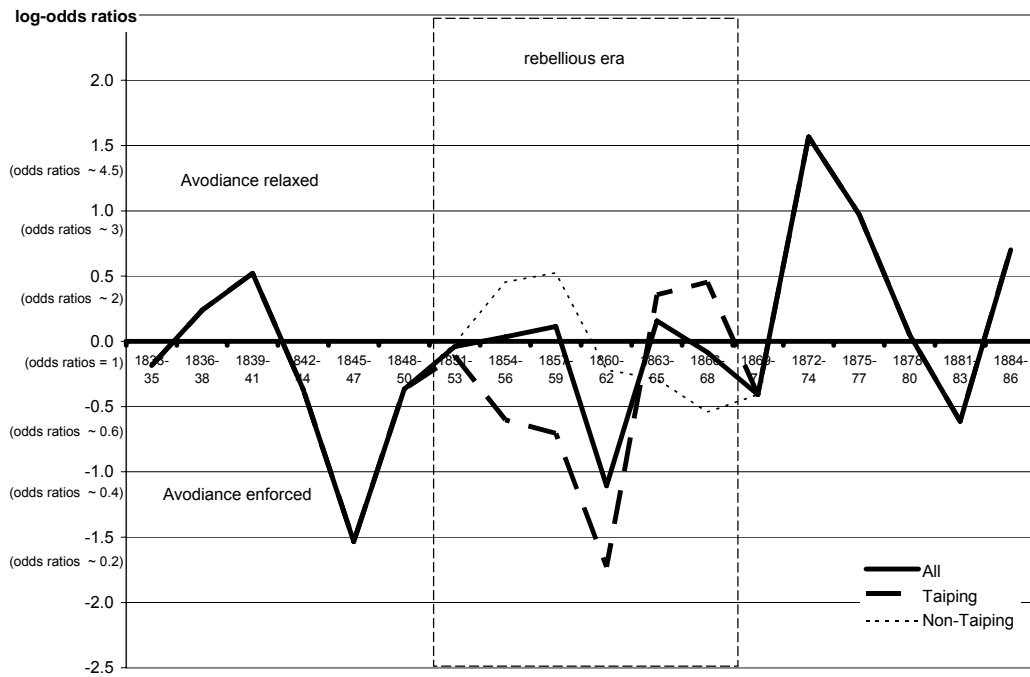


Figure 4.17. Distribution of Jinshi Holders

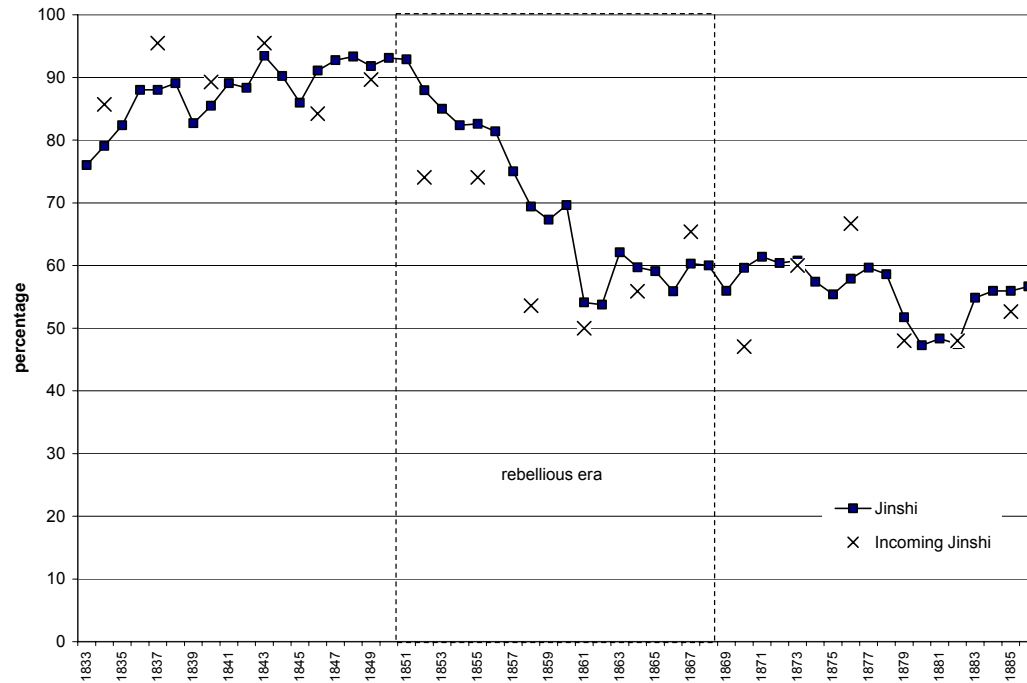
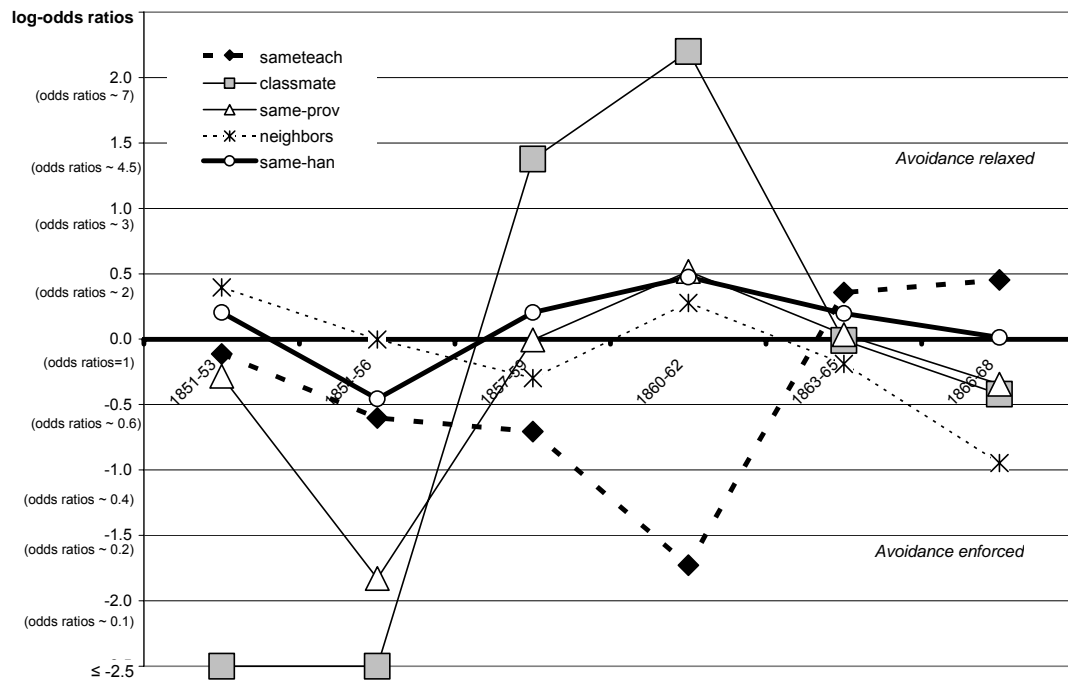


Figure 4.18: Comparisons of Social Identities (restricted colleagues), Taiping Provinces



APPENDIX 4-B

Figure 4-A: Ethnic Homogeneity (unrestrictive colleagues): Same-Han (vs. ethnic mix)

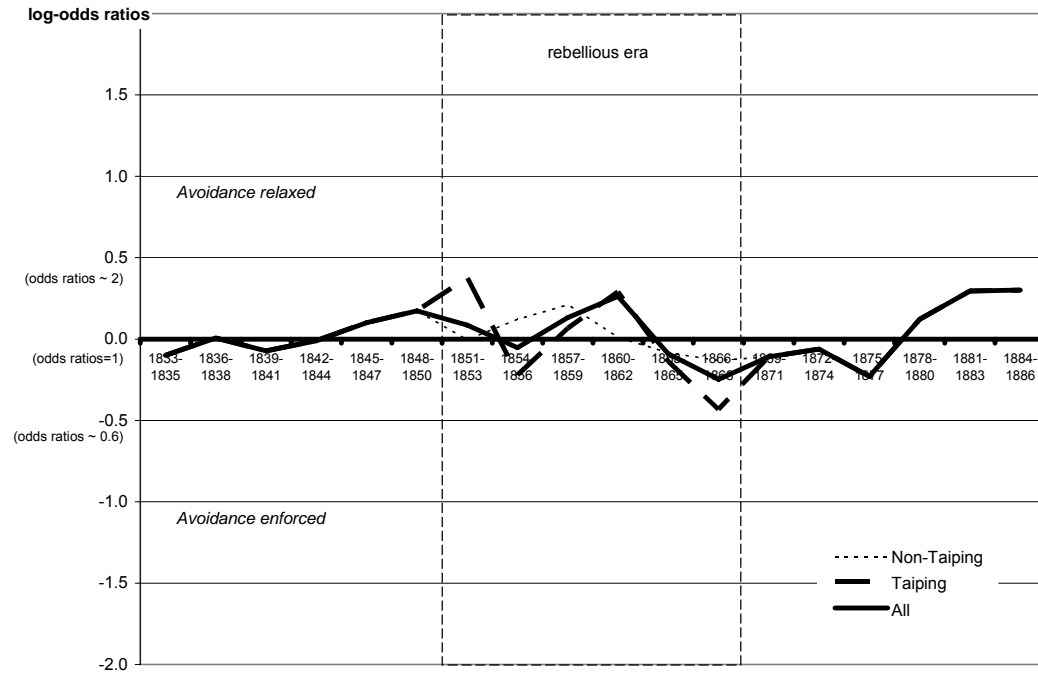


Figure 4-B: Provincial Homogeneity (unrestrictive colleagues): Same-provincial origin (vs. distant origin)

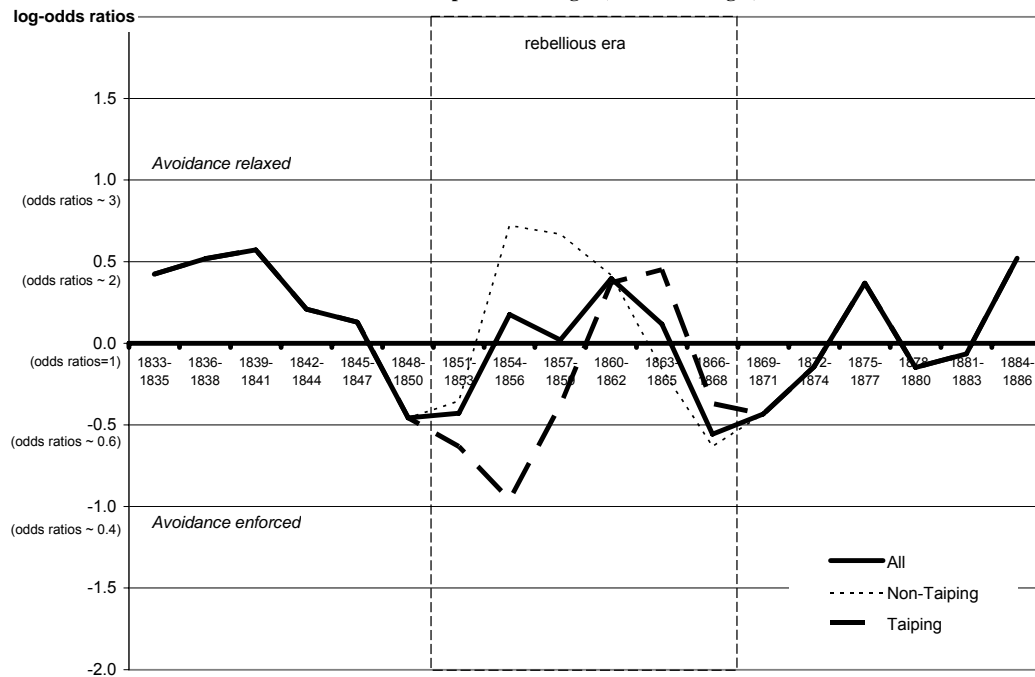


Figure 4-C: Regional Homogeneity (unrestrictive colleagues) - Neighbor-origins (vs.distant origin)

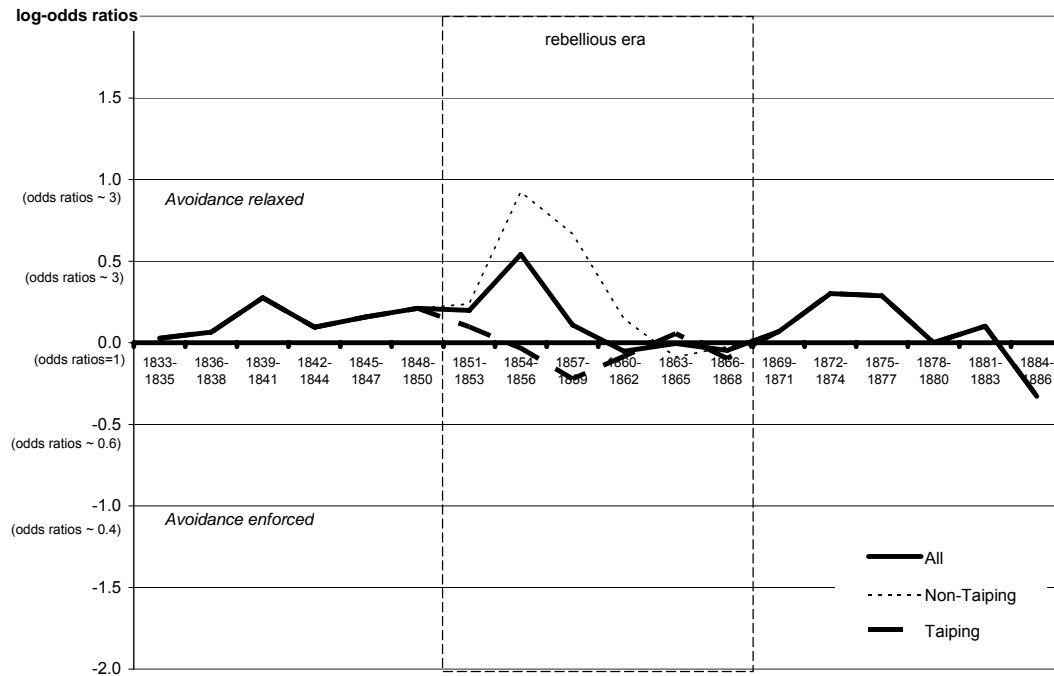


Figure 4-D: Dyadic Homogeneity (unrestrictive colleagues) - Classmate

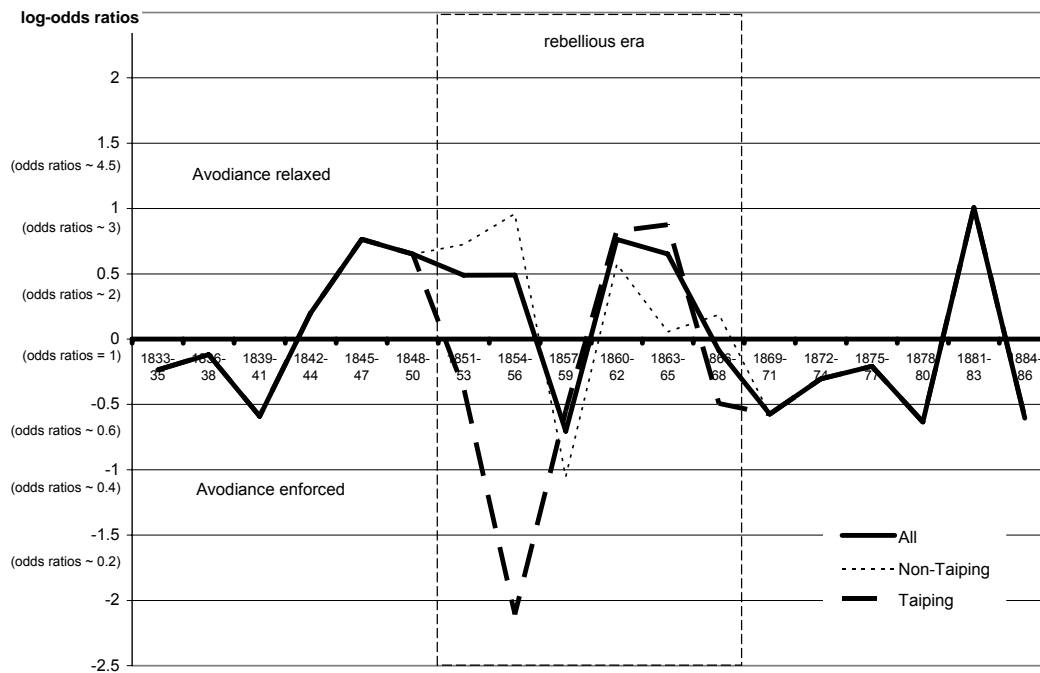


Figure 4-E: Dyadic Homogeneity (unrestrictive colleagues) - Co-Teacher

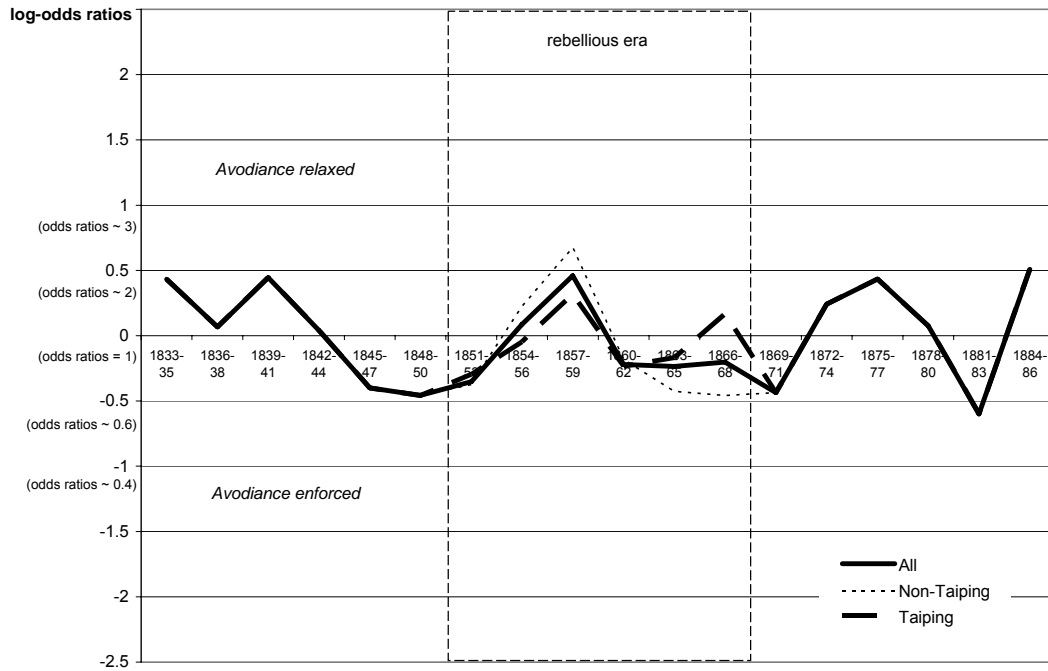
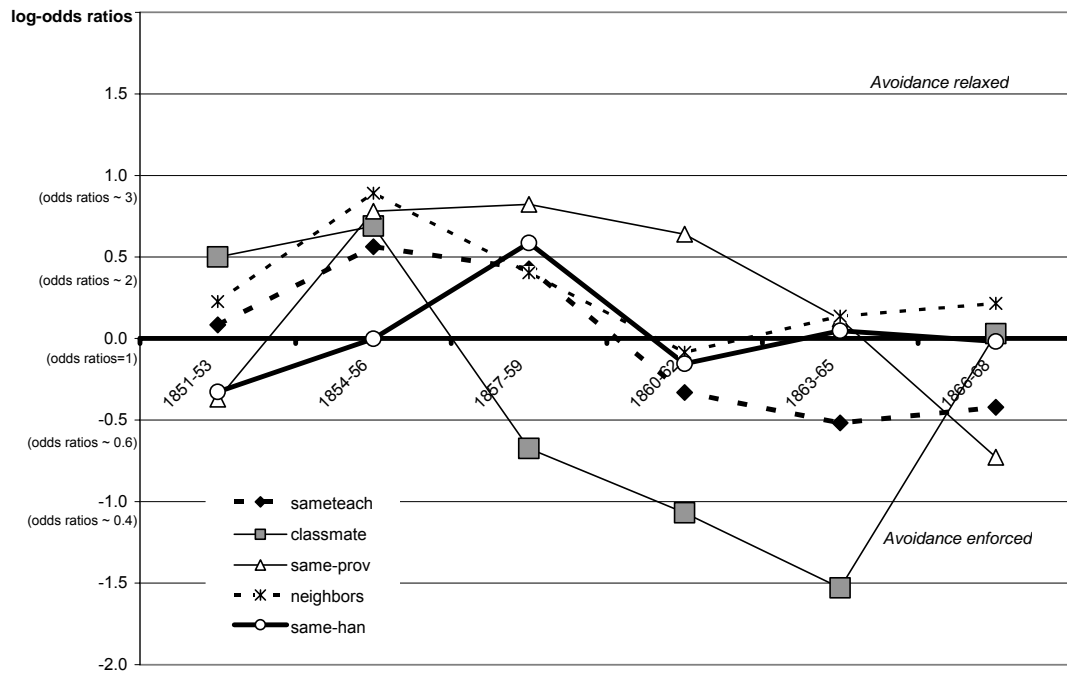


Figure 4-F: Comparisons of Identity Markers, Non-Taiping Provinces



CHAPTER 5

FROM EXIGENCY TO STRUCTURE

As a state strategy to rebellion suppression, the bureaucratic mobilization of nineteenth-century officials comprised a series of personnel decisions through which the state could meet the exigent demands from the volatile warfare. These decisions filled a personnel vacuum when commanders or high officials had fallen in battle, removed those who were deemed hopelessly incompetent, or introduced to the bureaucratic arena new agents who had, at a certain moment, demonstrated the promise of future success. By forcing Qing power-holders to continually rearrange bureaucratic relations among state officials, the Taipings directly “translated” circumstances from the battlefields into personnel decisions that could potentially reshape the state bureaucratic organization as a whole.

Consider, for example, the case of the death of Jiang Wenqing (蔣文慶)—the governor of Anhui who had apparently committed suicide as the rebels marched into the provincial capital, Anqing, in early 1853 (XF3/1/17; February 24). Immediately after receiving the news of Jiang’s passing, the court assigned the governorship vacancy to Zhou Tianzou, the veteran who had previously worked with former Imperial Commissioners Li Xingyuan and Saishang-a in Guangxi (see p. 58). Zhou was to serve as an interim governor for about a month until the arrival of Li Jiaduan (李嘉端), a vice-minister of the Board of Punishment chosen as the new governor of Anhui. This transferal of a metropolitan official to the provincial administration filled a power vacuum in the Anhui administration, a momentary organizational problem that needed to

be solved immediately. But organizational problems did not stop at the level of the Anhui governorship. Li Jiaduan's departure in fact initiated a series of personnel reshuffling that would affect several other state officials, some of whom were not related to the counter-Taiping campaign. To replace Li Jiaduan, Luo Duanyan (羅惇衍), an assistant censor (ranked 3A),⁸⁹ would be promoted to vice-minister (ranked 2B) of the Board of Punishment, and Lei Yixian (雷以誠) was to be promoted from vice-minister of the Court of Rites (rank 4A) to the now vacated assistant censor post.

Bureaucratic mobilization such as this brought out at least two concerns to the state organization. Viewed from the perspective of the bureaucratic system, the above example features three consecutive personnel decisions, one of which involved the transfer of a state official from the metropolitan administration to the provincial government, while the other two rested on promotion within the metropolitan administration. The primary concern of the state organization thus rested on a vacancy dynamic: who could replace a departing official? From where, and at which position, should he be drawn to fill a vacant position? These concerns highlight the interconnections of vacancies and the coupling of government sectors, in which and across which state agents could be mobilized.

From the perspective of the individual official, he was probably much less concerned with the question of who would replace him than with the career direction towards which he was heading. For instance, being transferred to the provinces, the rest

⁸⁹ The Censorate in the Qing was a central agency responsible for monitoring all state bureaucrats in the metropolitan or provincial government. Stationed in Peking were a total of two ministers (ranked 1B) and four vice-ministers (ranked 3A). Under these high-ranking officials were a troop of censorate intendants operating in fifteen different *dao*, or intendant districts, throughout the country.

of Li Jiaduan's career would likely remain in the provincial administration, paving his way toward an even potentially higher position of governor-generalship. Normally envied by other central officials, this career move nonetheless entailed a great degree of risk in the Taiping war period, as the official would face a higher chance of dismissal and even death.⁹⁰

An individual career was never entirely independent of the vacancy structure that shaped the career of another individual official. This is crucial for understanding the Qing bureaucracy, since the system was comprised of generalist officials who were more or less technically eligible to assume vacant positions in most agencies or provinces. Given this structural flexibility, what constrained state power-holders from freely mobilizing state actors was a set of organizational rules that determined the ranking towards which an official could be promoted or transferred. Thus, career advancement and vacancy dynamics worked dually to construct each other; while individual career movements opened up new vacancies in the bureaucratic system the availability of vacancies in the system simultaneously constrained or enabled career opportunities.

To further understand the linkage between the counter-Taiping campaign and bureaucratic mobilization during the Taiping Rebellion, this chapter pays attention to the ways in which vacancies were created, the characteristics of officials who occupied newly vacated positions, the mobility steps officials took when acquiring vacancies, and the interconnections among these steps. Tracing the sequential and connected career moves allows us to describe the process by which bureaucratic decisions made at a

⁹⁰ Officials could not openly reject an imperial order that sent them to the Taiping war zone, but some did drag their feet when traveling to assume their new positions. As a result, the court often needed to know the location of the newly dispatched agents and punish those who appeared to take too long a time to arrive at their new posts (a case that would be interpreted as an evasion of responsibility).

particular point and place, and for a particular individual, could affect other officials at other positions and places in the state organization.

Systemic Connection of Bureaucratic Vacancies

The mid-nineteenth century Qing bureaucracy was a stable, bounded labor system in which the quantity of positions and hierarchies had undergone no significant changes since the end of the eighteenth century.⁹¹ It was also an internal labor market wherein vacant positions were primarily filled by officials who had already gained entry into the system. Furthermore, organizational procedures governed the order and progression of job mobility, resulting in only a few of the routinized job ladders officials would normally use to construct their careers.⁹² Within the state bureaucracy, the division between the metropolitan and provincial administration divided officials' careers in two generally followed different paths, indicating a fragmented rather than integrated career system. While lower-ranking officials tended to be able to change jobs between the two administrative sectors, the frequency of administrative-crossing at the higher bureaucratic echelon was low. During the Taiping Rebellion, top metropolitan officials moving from the central government to take a provincial governorship thus conveyed special meaning to the state organization, reflecting a pronounced strategy through which the central state could manage rebellion suppression.

⁹¹ At any point since the end of the eighteenth century, governing the eighteen provinces in China Proper were, in total, eight governors-general, fifteen provincial governors, one governor of grain transport and two governors of river conservatory, nineteen provincial treasurers, and eighteen provincial judges. In this study, these 63 positions will constitute the internal labor market at the level of top provincial bureaucracy.

⁹² For a general discussion on the concept of the internal labor market, see (Kalleberg and Sorensen 1979: 359-60; Doeringer and Piore 1971; Kerr 1950).

Once an existing official was chosen for the job, a new vacancy in the bureaucracy would be opened, demanding yet another personnel decision to be made. Given these self-reinforcing dynamic within this internal labor market, personnel decisions directly and indirectly linked to the counter-rebellion campaign would potentially exert systemic impact on the state organization as a whole. How would organizational decisions that seemingly responded only to the localized and immediate need to find replacements for specific departing officials affect or even change the character of the overall state bureaucracy? I will answer this question by applying the ideas of vacancy chains.⁹³

The original vacancy chain model assumes a system of limited resource units (e.g., offices in a career system) in which actors can attain the unit only when another surrenders it. Presumably, actors wanted a “better” or “bigger” resource, and attaining a new resource unit meant abandoning the current one. Examining the Qing bureaucracy, it is not imperative to assume the wants or desires of social actors because extant organizational procedures had determined the eligibility of official promotions and transfers, as shown in Figure 5.1. Merit was important in considerations of promotion, for example, but the *Administrative Statutes* regulated the career steps that officials needed to take in order to achieve promotion. By dividing all state officials into nine ranks, with each rank subdivided into two,⁹⁴ the Board of Civil Office normally

⁹³ Apart from studying a career system, sociologists have used the vacancy chain model to understand the housing market in a neighborhood and even the migration patterns of hermit crabs. For a general discussion of vacancy chain models, see Chase (1991). For formal modeling that incorporates a sampling procedure, see White (1970). For the use the formal models in empirical cases, see Abbott (1990); Chase and DeWitt (1988); Smith (1983); Stewman (1975).

⁹⁴ Officially, all Qing bureaucratic positions were differentiated by nine ranks, with each rank further subdivided into two levels, commonly signified by western scholars as the level of A and B. For example, a rank of 2B was half a rank higher than a rank of 3A.

transferred an official across positions of equal rank, or promoted an official one half-rank above his existing rank. Promotion of one full rank or more was rare for all top provincial officials (and so was demotion within the provincial system). Given these routinized patterns, the vacancy, or the creation of a new slot in the system, would usually trigger an official to move in from a lower position. This would then create a trickling down effect in which slots continued to be opened up (in a downward direction) and filled (in an upward or lateral direction) until the last slot was acquired by someone outside the system (e.g., a new graduate of the civil examination) or abandoned (which rarely happened in the nineteenth century).⁹⁵

In a relatively static bureaucratic structure like the Qing system—one that does not frequently generate new positions or abandon existing ones—the creation of an *initial* vacancy or the *first* mobility opportunity would depend solely on some official's leaving the structure as a whole. A vacancy chain in the Qing bureaucracy would be initiated when an official exited the state organization permanently or temporarily by dismissal (*ge* 革.), relief from office (*jie* 解), withdrawal for mourning (*tingyou* 憂),⁹⁶ retirement (*xiu* 休), resignation (*ba* 罷), or death. If viewed only from the perspective of the provincial administration in China Proper, an official could also depart the provinces by transfers to a new position in the metropolitan government (or other government sections, such as the

⁹⁵ A common way a vacancy chain could be terminated was when existing officials were allowed to hold more than one job concurrently. While concurrent titles holding was common in the Qing bureaucracy—provincial governors commonly held a concurrent title of the vice-minister of Six Boards—these titles did not entail the occupation of a real position. Accordingly, I do not consider title-holding as occupancies of a job vacancy.

⁹⁶ An official with deceased parents generally observed a three-year mourning period, at which time his state responsibilities would be lifted and his position replaced permanently by another official. But after the mourning period, the official would be eligible again for a job with a rank equivalent to or higher than his former position.

military or administrations outside China Proper's eighteen provinces) or recall to the capital without a specific task (*zhao* 召). If we further restrict the career system only to prominent officials as defined in Figure 5.1, officials would leave the system if and when demoted to a position lower than a provincial rank of 3A or a metropolitan rank of 3B.⁹⁷

Figure 5.2 illustrates the scheme for observing the dynamics of vacancy chains given the Qing bureaucracy. In Example A, an initial vacancy at governor-general level is occupied by a provincial governor (step 1), whose vacancy is then taken by a provincial treasurer (step 2). Furthermore, another provincial treasurer laterally transferred to the vacant treasurer position (step 3), hence triggering a second opening at the treasurer level, into which a provincial judge would be promoted (step 4). Finally, the vacancy movement would terminate by the introduction of a lower-ranking official to replace the vacancy of the provincial judge (step 5).⁹⁸

If we consider only the mobility patterns of the provincial system, the introduction of any metropolitan official could terminate mobility opportunities for existing provincial officials. In Example B, after an Academician from the metropolitan administration took up a vacant provincial governor's position (step 1), three more vacancies were sequentially created within the metropolitan administration. If no provincial official moved to occupy one of these three vacancies, the vacancy chain would remain open in the metropolitan government until a lower-ranking central official

⁹⁷ My decision of defining the bounded system at the rank of 3A (provincial level) and 3B (central level) follows the Qing understanding of '*dayuan*,' or prominent officials. When proclaiming new bureaucratic assignments, imperial edicts would only mention the names of prominent officials (in a sequence of vacancy and replacements) and ignore naming those officials lower than the defined boundary (even though more of them would be affected by the vacancy chain dynamics).

⁹⁸ It should be noted that in reality the vacancy chain should continue until the last position was filled by a new entrant (someone completely outside the officialdom), so the system boundary I draw in Figure 5.2 serves only the analytic purpose of focusing on higher-ranking officials.

came into the system and terminated it (step 4). If a provincial official were to replace, say, the Academician, then a new vacancy would reemerge in the provincial administration (but this is not the case in Example B).

The number of continuing interdependent movements of filling and vacating positions in a system gives the measure of “chain length”—that is, the number of steps between the initial vacancy and the final slot in the system newly occupied (or, defined in terms of positions not people, the number of vacancy moves sequentially at the time the vacancy leaves the system). For instance, when a position is vacated and immediately filled by someone outside the system, the chain length is one. In Example A and B (Figure 5.2), the length of the hypothetical vacancy chains are five and four, respectively. If we view the provincial administration as a separate system, the chain length in Example B will be one, because the newly created vacancy immediately left the provincial system and will never return to it. Given a defined system boundary, the measure of chain length gives the number of affected officials whose career would be changed by *one* initial vacancy opening.

The length of vacancy chains can tell us about the degree of interdependency in a system. When a system is tightly linked, the average chain length might be long, suggesting officials’ careers are closely connected. In such a case, we expect to see that a single vacancy would create many rippling effects within the system. In a hierarchical career structure that precludes lateral transfer, a tightly coupled system also entails greater opportunities for promotion. Conversely, chain length might be shortened if the system is loosely organized, producing a smaller rippling effect in a system when any

vacancy is opened. The manner by which vacancies are filled then tells us about the character of the system as a whole.

The following analysis is based on the four-volume mobility charts presented in Qian Shifu's (1980) *Chronological Tables of Officeholders in the Qing Dynasty*. From these mobility charts I constructed a dataset that recorded the characteristics of vacancy chains initiated at the four top positions in the provincial administration during the fifty-year period between 1833 and 1883. When a vacancy left the boundary of rank 3A for a lower post in the provincial system and 3B in the central system, the termination of the vacancy chain is noted. This procedure yielded a total of 759 vacancy chains from 1833 to 1886, with 1,482 vacancy movements between two positions.

Initiation of Vacancies

The sheer increase in the total number of official vacancies during the rebellious era evidently demonstrates an intimate relationship between battlefield actions and (potential) bureaucratic change. Unprecedented since at least the 1830s, about fifty governors (provincial governors or governors-general) departed the provincial system during 1851-62, about twenty fewer slots than those generated during the tumultuous years of the Opium War, 1839-44. Likewise, the number of vacancies initiated at the level of provincial judge and provincial treasurer rose from forty-five every six years in the 1840s to about seventy in the 1850s and early 1860s. The constant personnel change and frequent reconfigurations of state officials might have accelerated the organizational chaos widely experienced by state actors.

Although retirement remained the dominant reason for top provincial officials to leave their positions during the rebellious era, negative sanctions—both in terms of dismissal and demotion—became a more important factor in the initiation of vacancy chains in the early phases of the Taiping Rebellion than they were in the latter half of the 1840s. As shown in Figure 5.3 (p.214) nearly half of the departing governors (PG and GG) in the provincial administration were negatively sanctioned in the first six years of the Taiping Rebellion. The proportion of dismissals among state officials would likely have been higher if more had survived the war. For instance, Anhui Governor Jiang Wenqing cited above would have been dismissed had he not committed suicide as a result of a failure in battle. Counted together, dismissal and deaths accounted for 70 percent of all vacancy chains initiated by the departure of a provincial governor or governor-general. To simplify, I will call these chains: “Governor-chains”. Vacancy chains initiated at the level of provincial judge and treasurer—“Judge/Treasurer Chains”—follow a similar pattern, though the effect of dismissal on opening new vacancies at these positions was generally less pronounced (Figure 5.4).⁹⁹

Examining the reasons of officials’ departures further allows us to evaluate the extent to which the provincial career system was connected to that of the metropolitan government. The shaded sections at the top of Figures 5.3 and 5.4 represent the portion

⁹⁹ A comparison between Taiping and non-Taiping provinces shows that negative sanctions dominated the departure of governors in the Taiping provinces during the first half of the 1850s. In 1851-56, negative sanctions initiated about 60 percent of governor chains originating in Taiping provinces, while only 15 percent in non-Taiping provinces were initiated by dismissal or demotion. A similarly marked difference between the two types of provinces is found among judge-treasurer chains: negative sanctions initiated 30 percent of these chains in Taiping provinces, while only 7 percent in non-Taiping provinces. After 1856, however, dismissal of governors would initiate less than a quarter of governor chains in Taiping provinces, but about half of the chains in non-Taiping were launched by negative sanctions. In the post-rebellion years, the decline of dismissal as the initiation of a vacancy chain was more pronounced among governor chains than chains related to the judges and treasurers.

of all initial vacancies (at the provincial level) that was caused by officials' transfers to the metropolitan administration (or "central transfer"). If they were transferred at all, provincial judges usually took a prefectural position in the Manchurian capital, Mukden (or Fengtian), or Peking (Shutian), while provincial treasurers would assume the minister posts of one of five "Courts" (a kind of sub-departments under the Six Boards). Higher ranking governors would be transferred to assume the position of vice-minister or minister of the Six Boards. In other words, these vacancies were part of chains that originated in the central government. The number of connected vacancies thus provides a barometer for the degree of coupling between the two administrative sectors. However, as the figures show, inter-sector relations were in general weakly maintained by official mobility dynamics, except in the 1830s. On average, only 10 to 15 percent of top provincial officials would leave the provincial bureaucracy by means of central transfer.

While inter-sector mobility was mildly expanded in the 1850s and 1860s, central transfer shrank more clearly in the wake of the Taiping Rebellion—for instance, from 20 percent in the 1840s to no more than six percent among all governor chains in the 1870s. There were also periods in post-rebellion years when no provincial vacancies were caused by central transfers. Although the reduction of the interconnection between the two administrative sectors was moderate, there existed a clear change in the relationship between the central and provincial government in the aftermath of the massive bureaucratic mobilization during the rebellious era. Once they held high provincial positions they were transferred to the central government. Toward the end of this chapter, I will discuss how the lack of such a personnel interchange across

administrative sectors in the post-rebellion era hints at a sustained change in the bureaucratic organization in the wake of the rebellious era.

To see how vacancy dynamics could produce larger ramifications in the bureaucratic structure, let us trace the serial replacements of state officials, or the movement of vacancies, from the beginning of a chain. When a vacancy was initiated in the provincial administration, which officials—and how many of them—would be affected? The state agent who came to occupy an initial vacancy constitutes the first “move” in a vacancy chain. Whether the arriving official was from the provincial system, the metropolitan government, or outside of either system, would determine the next vacancy, and the administrative sector in which other officials could possibly compete over the ensuing openings “downstream” in the bureaucracy. Previously, I have shown that the state had increasingly appointed “outsiders” of provincial bureaucracy as governors during the early part of the 1850s (p.174). With this observation, we would expect that metropolitan officials, military personnel, or veteran officials (those who were previously dismissed or retired) would similarly occupy the first vacancy initiated by the governor’s departure. Figure 5.5 (p. 215) supports this expectation and further indicates that, during 1851-1856, provincial “outsiders” were more likely to replace departing governors in Taiping provinces (more than 40 percent of departing governors) than non-Taiping ones (20 percent). More importantly, the use of these outsiders was seemingly a strategy for controlling top-most provincial agents in provinces broached by the Taipings, because the same strategy was not evident among the governors’ subordinates, provincial judges or treasurers, as shown in Figure 5.6. Accordingly, the analyses in the rest of the chapter will primarily focus on governor-

chains, which appeared to be more critical to bureaucratic control during the rebellion crisis.

Provincial “outsiders” replacing departing provincial officials would entail one of two consequences concerning the length of a vacancy chain, measured by the number of steps between the initial vacancy and the final slot in the system newly occupied—or, equivalently, the number of officials who would be mobilized given an initial vacancy opening. First, if the outsiders held no formal position, as did those who were previously dismissed or retired, the vacancy chain would be immediately terminated, because no more slots were generated in the bureaucratic system. Necessarily, this would shorten the length of a vacancy chain, implying that fewer officials within the defined system would be affected by the governor’s departure. Shortening chain lengths also implies that strata of the bureaucratic system were only loosely interconnected—a sign of a decoupled system. Second, if the outsiders came from the metropolitan administration, then their transfers to the provinces would open up new vacancies in the central government—in other words, the vacancy chains would “move out” of the provincial system.¹⁰⁰ As a consequence, the careers of existing provincial officials would be less interwoven with each other, while those officials in the metropolitan system were becoming more connected (at the level of job mobility).

¹⁰⁰ In this study, I define all lower-ranking central officials (lower than 3B) and military personnel to be outsiders of the bounded system. However, given that the military was a bureaucratic organization, it is possible to trace how provincial vacancy chains affected the military system. Since the focus of this study is the interchange between the provincial and metropolitan sectors, and since the number of military officers entering the provincial administration is relatively small compared to that of central officials (from 0 to 5 percent), I exclude an analysis of the military chains.

Characteristics of Vacancy Chains

We can first examine how vacancy movements deviated from the “ideal” patterns expected when officials would be promoted one step (or half a rank) above his current position prescribed in the *Administrative Statutes* (Figure 5.1). For example, we would expect that chains initiated from the provincial top echelon—those of provincial governors and governors-general—would have a longer chain length than those initiated from their subordinating positions. In the ideal pattern, the departure of a governor-general (GG) would cause the promotion of a provincial governor (PG), followed by the promotion of a provincial treasurer (PT), and then a provincial judge (PJ). Given that the rank 3A defines the boundary of the “prominent” provincial officialdom, the vacancy chain at this level would be terminated by the introduction of a lower-ranking provincial official (“low-local”) to replace the departing provincial judge. As a result, a total of four officials would be affected by the initial departure of a governor-general (i.e., low local → PJ → PT → PG → GG). Likewise, vacancy chains initiated from the lower level would ideally follow a similar pattern, with officials moving one step up the hierarchical ladder (i.e., low-local → PJ → PT → PG; or low-local → PJ → PT; or low-local → PJ).

Figure 5.7 (p.216) shows that this ideal mobility pattern was greatly disrupted in the first phase of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-56, for vacancy chains initiated at the level of the governorship (the thick dotted line). Whereas 30 percent of Governor-chains in the late 1840s would follow the ideal pattern of sequentially promoting lower ranking officials, one step up at a time, only 10 percent of the same type of chains did so from 1851-56. A more dramatic drop is evident if the definition of an “ideal” vacancy chain is

relaxed (the thick solid line) and redefined by including lateral transferals within an upwardly-mobile vacancy chain (e.g., low-local \rightarrow PJ \rightarrow PJ \rightarrow PT \rightarrow PT \rightarrow PG \rightarrow GG).¹⁰¹

Unconventional chains were composed in different ways. A chain could be immediately terminated or shortened by the introduction of an outsider to provincial bureaucracy, such as a metropolitan official or veteran official, to replace a departing official along a given chain. Even when the vacancy chain remained in the provincial system, officials who made unusual jumps in their career trajectory (most notably advancing from a provincial judge to a provincial governor) could similarly disrupt the ideal pattern of a vacancy chain. Table 5.1 (p.221) shows that both processes had undermined the ideal pattern during the 1850s, though the termination of vacancy chains from external agents had played a more dominant role in leading the chains astray from such an ideal. After a short period of disruption, the year 1856 marked a gradual shift toward “normalcy” that would last beyond the rebellious era. By the mid-1870s, about 50 percent of vacancy chains would attain the ideal pattern (by the relaxed definition), a significant difference compared to the 20 percent observed in the early 1850s.

The changing composition of vacancy chains further implies a change in the number and the kinds of officials who would be affected by an initial departure of top provincial officials. Here I distinguish vacancy chains more specifically by whether a

¹⁰¹ In the formal model, an ideal-typical vacancy chain assumes that a current position is the only determinant for attaining a future one, or, conversely, that one’s current status is determined only by one’s past position one step prior (i.e., a first-order Markov process). This provides an expected model against which observed data can be tested. Researchers can predict the volume and characteristics of mobility (e.g., chain lengths, individual attributes) based on a vacancy model (Chase 1991:144). A difference between what is theoretically possible and what is actually observed can tell us about the nature of an organization and its change (Stewman 1986). In an analysis using a much smaller set of data, I found that the first-order Markov process can fully describe the Qing mobility structure. This is not surprising given the strict bureaucratic rules that limited all official promotion to usually one step, and promotion in more than one step was considered very unusual (Chu and Saywell, 1984).

chain was initiated by the departure of a governor-general or provincial governor. As shown in Figure 5.8 (p. 216), in the two decades prior to the Taiping Rebellion, vacancy chains created by the departure of a governor-general—the highest office in a province—on average affected four other officials (of the ranks 3B or above) in the entire bureaucratic system, most of whom were provincial officials. Entering the rebellious era, an exit of a governor-general had increasingly affected central officials' careers due to the fact that central actors were occupying more vacancies at the provincial level. The years 1851-56 were extraordinary because it was the only time when fewer provincial officials were promoted or transferred than were central officials, given an initial exit of a governor-general. In this early phase of the Taiping Rebellion, one provincial official would make a career move following the departure of the governor, but two central officials would do likewise. At one level below, the departure of provincial governors (Figure 5.9, p. 215) produced similar patterns, but the effects on central officialdom were slightly less pronounced.

As I have argued previously, the vacancy dynamics shown here also reflect a shifting strategy of central control by the second half of the 1850s. A process of re-engaging provincial officials was apparent when fewer central officials would be affected after 1856 by an initial opening at the top of the provincial echelon. That the average length of vacancy chains (solid line in Figure 5.8) continued to be shortened in 1857-62, even when central officials had stopped filling provincial vacancies, suggests that the state had simultaneously recalled another group of provincial outsiders—namely, veteran officials—to service in the latter half of the 1850s.

Career Opportunities and Vacancy Chains

Dispatching central officials to the battlefield had extensive effects on official mobility. Not only might a provincial governor experience fewer chances to move up to the governor-general post, but so would his subordinates whose promotion depended also on their superior's mobility. However, these mobility obstacles might be counteracted by the availability of vacancies through frequent dismissals and death among officials leading the counter-rebellion campaign. As a result, there might be some contradictory effects here in terms of whether or not officials from the lower ranks benefited from the organizational chaos.

To discern how vacancies at top provincial ranks might affect ranks at lower levels, Figure 5.10 (p. 218) shows the number of vacancies available at each position strata resulting from a departing governor-general. Each bar represents the average number of positional vacancies following the departure of a governor-general (the average number is low because Governor-chains usually generate one vacancy or less downstream). The years 1851-56 clearly stood out as a period of shrinking opportunity for governor-generals' subordinates. Mobility opportunities here can mean either promotion or lateral transfer. When a governor-general left his position in the early 1850s, this personnel decision on average generated almost no new openings at the level of provincial treasurer and provincial judge (though there had been less impact on provincial governors). Transferring provincial outsiders into the provincial administration thus directly reduced the mobility opportunities within the provincial administration. As the state increasingly reincorporated provincial agents into the

counter-rebellion campaign in the second half of the 1850s, mobility opportunities for them also expanded accordingly.

So far my analyses have not distinguished promotion from lateral transfers, though they obviously entailed distinct meanings to the career of an official. Figure 5.11 (p. 219) analyzes officials' promotions that had occurred in any step along a vacancy chain. Here we see that the departure of a provincial governor or governor-general encouraged more promotions for central officials in the early 1850s than in the pre-rebellion 1840s. Mirroring this effect was the shrinkage of promotion for provincial officials, from 50 percent of all vacancy steps in the later 1840s to 25 percent in the early 1850s. Again, the second half of the 1850s witnessed a clear revision of the dynamic, as central officials rarely benefited from vacancy openings at the provincial level since 1856 until the end of the 1880s. In the post-rebellion years, central officials had become more or less insulated from bureaucratic changes across administrative sectors. More crucially, for a long period of three decades after 1856, provincial officials were to stably enjoy 40 to 45 percent of promotion opportunities that were connected to a governor's exit. This pattern appears to be stable even though veteran officials had also been brought back to serve the provincial administration more frequently in the post-rebellion years.

Thus far I have discussed career-opportunity structures as a phenomenon detached from the career trajectory of any individual official. Since an individual career was the result of a confluence of factors, the construction of individual careers perhaps followed a somewhat different logic than that of the vacancy dynamics, including his job performance, his factional affiliation, and the availability of vacancies; all of these factors could further interact with historical circumstances. The career structure I am concerned

with in the following analysis is the frequency and the type of job movements an official made during his provincial tenure. By ignoring the province to which an official was appointed, I will focus only on position mobility and examine the series of offices a bureaucrat had occupied between his first position at the top provincial administration and the last position before his eventual departure.¹⁰²

If we follow the career of an official who began at the position of Provincial Judge—a path that accounted for about 70 percent of all entry points into the top provincial bureaucracy—we shall roughly observe twenty-one career trajectory types, each representing a combination of career steps among four top positions: provincial judge (1=PJ); provincial treasure (2=PT); provincial governor (3=PG);¹⁰³ and governor-general (4=GG). In Table 5.2 (p. 222), each trajectory type is denoted by a serial number. For example, the series of 12343 represents a career path: PJ → PT → PG → GG → PG. These sequences are simplified to ignore steps of lateral mobility within the same rank. I also ignore the interruptions of provincial tenure in between positions by intermittent dismissals, retirements, or suspensions.

Despite the hundreds of possible combinations,¹⁰⁴ top provincial careers seem to have converged into only a few dominant patterns (from 5 to 14 patterns), reflecting a highly institutionalized career system based on administrative regulations. Given that a

¹⁰² In this analysis, a ‘provincial career’ is limited only to top provincial positions: provincial judges; provincial treasurers; provincial governors; river governors; and governors-general. In my data, I trace a career trajectory from the official’s first elite position to last one before his death or other reasons that prevented him from returning to the provinces ever again. I counted any interruptions (retirement, demotion, recalled by capital, etc.) as part of the trajectory so long as the official had returned to the provincial administration later.

¹⁰³ Governors included provincial governors (*xunfu*), directors of grain transport (*caodu*), and directors of river conservatory (*hedu*).

¹⁰⁴ For example, if the provincial judge made five more steps beyond his first position, there will be 1,024 combinations.

provincial judge stayed in the provincial administration without leaving immediately after his first position (i.e., pattern 1 [PJ]), at least more than half of the time his career would take an upward and linear direction. From his current position, he would be promoted gradually, most often in one step each time. Among those who had an opportunity to promotion, some would be terminated after reaching the rank of provincial treasurer (pattern 12 [PJ → PT]), but others could achieve a position as high as the governor-generalship (pattern 134 [PJ → PG → GG] or 1234 [PJ→PT→PG→GG]).¹⁰⁵ For the rest of the trajectory types, officials' experiences oscillated between promotion and demotion, as in the pattern 12123 which denotes the trajectory: PJ → PT → PJ → PT → GV.

Figure 5.12 (p.219) divides these different career sequences into three types. First, an “ideal” sequence represents a progressive career path, one through which a provincial Judge would move upward one step each time along the hierarchical ladder until he reached the position of provincial governor (123) or governor-general (1234; at each step, the official could make several lateral moves, such as 122334). Second, officials who followed an ideal trajectory can be compared to the unconventional “high flyers,” who skip one step of the hierarchy and advance from, for instance, the rank of provincial judge to provincial governor. Third, if a provincial judge never reached beyond his judgeship, or if he only achieved one promotion to the rank of provincial treasurer, his career could be categorized as “stagnant” (although in the eyes of most Qing bureaucrats

¹⁰⁵ The notion of ‘linearity’ should be qualified. In this analysis I ignored any interruptions in between two positional steps. For example, a provincial judge may be promoted to a provincial governor [from 3 to 4] with an interruption in between. Such interruption can include retirement, a recall from the capital, or a demotion to a provincial rank lower than PJ.

and commoners, any man reaching the level of provincial judge would have to be extraordinary).

Did provincial judges envision a different career future if they entered the provincial administration in the rebellious era? Figure 5.12 shows that provincial judges of the 1850s cohort experienced fewer opportunities to achieve an ideal career trajectory; they were also more likely to confront a stagnant career in face of the Taiping Rebellion. This stagnant period, however, was balanced by a slight increase of unconventional career paths that allowed officials to advance two steps at each time. As Jiang Zhongyuan (江忠源) had famously demonstrated, fast-pace promotion served as a form of rewards to those who had shown success on the battlefield. Having commanded several successful attacks on the Taipings in Hunan during 1852-53, Jiang was promoted from a lower ranking position of circuit intendant to the provincial judge of Hubei in 1853. After staying in the position for only a few months, Jiang was again promoted to the provincial governorship of Anhui. His case was not unique, however. As Figure 5.12 shows, there were nine cases of this form of speedy promotion (13 of 134) in the rebellious era, about 10 percent of all officials in the period. State crises thus appeared to some provincial officials as times of opportunity, but for others a period of stagnation.

But by the 1860s, and for the rest of the post-rebellion years, new provincial judges would have experienced different career prospects, as they would be put on a more linear career trajectory, leading them progressively toward a governorship. The changing vacancy dynamics we have previously seen probably afforded new opportunities for officials to build a different career. As central officials stopped filling up vacancies at the provincial level, about one-third of entering provincial judges from

1863 to 1886 would enjoy a career that would raise them to a governorship or governor-generalship. From the perspective of the individual official who managed to enter the provincial administration in the post-rebellion years, the provincial bureaucracy would provide them with advantageous and stable career opportunities, a situation very different from that in the early 1850s.

Toward Structural Detachment

Creating a tighter link between the center and provinces produced, perhaps unintentionally, a new structural constraint in the state bureaucracy during the early phase of the Taiping Rebellion. Filling provincial vacancies from the center meant cutting short mobility opportunities, particularly among officials in the provincial administration. We have seen that when governors departed from the provincial bureaucracy, vacancies tended to move to the central administration rather than stay within the provincial sector. This central strategy appeared to be inefficient, as I have argued in the previous chapters. In this chapter, I have examined this problem from shifting mobility structure and vacancy dynamics, through which provincial officials and their careers were eventually reincorporated into the counter-rebellion campaign.

An analysis of vacancy dynamics revealed that new bureaucratic mobilization by the second half of the 1850s had rested on: (1) a decrease in negative sanctions against officials; (2) a decline in dispatching central-military officials to the provinces; and (3) an increase in the promotion opportunities for local officials. Once the state stopped using central officials and started installing local ones to fill provincial vacancies, this new “local strategy” led to many structurally-induced promotions within the provincial

administration. In a situation where numerous vacancies were opened at a time, an official was, to some extent, structurally forced to get a promotion when a vacancy chain did not stop immediately before arriving at his position.

This strategic shift had exerted great impact on the interchange of state agents between the provincial and metropolitan bureaucracy. When a central official took a new job in the provincial government, this career move would either immediately terminate the vacancy chain (if the central official was from a lower rank) or further trigger other vacancy openings in the metropolitan administration. Cross-sector movements did expand during 1851-56, but they were quickly retracted by the second half of the 1850. Since then, a new central-provincial relationship had gradually developed.

Taking all vacancy chains produced at the provincial level, Figure 5.13 (p. 220) shows that when a vacancy was created at the top provincial level (from provincial judge to governor-general), more than 90 percent of resultant chains would affect no central officials (solid line). More importantly, this trend had lasted for as long as three decades from 1856 and 1886. Likewise, the proportion of new provincial vacancies that were immediately occupied by a central official dwindled in the post-rebellion era (dotted line), again suggesting a decline of interaction between the provincial and metropolitan sectors. The detachment between the two administrative sectors was further compounded by the reduction of mobility opportunities from the province to the central government after the rebellious era, as we have seen in Figures 5.3 and 5.4.

By the end of the Taiping Rebellion and into the 1870s, provincial officials' careers would be insulated from those officials operating in the metropolitan administration. The career system at the provincial level thus formed a more or less

enclosed structure, in which an official who managed to gain entry could reasonably hope for progressive promotions along the hierarchical ladder, and achieve the “ideal” career trajectory within the provincial arena. This chapter argues that this systemic change was a product of strategic shifts concerning how bureaucratic vacancies were created and reoccupied. Because Qing bureaucratic vacancies were often interconnected to one another, vacancies initiated as a response to the exigent demands in the battlefields could exert extensive impact on the rest of the bureaucratic structure, perhaps with unintended consequences. The dynamics of vacancy chains thus brought together two distinct fields of social actions, linking rebellion suppression to the formation of the bureaucratic field.

Coda

The fall of Nanking on July 9, 1864 marked the most significant victory of the Qing campaign against the Taipings since 1851. One month prior to the city’s collapse, the Heavenly King, Hong Xiuquan, died of illness (but some suggest suicide) in the besieged city that the rebels had firmly held for more than a decade. Hong’s throne passed down to his four year old son, who managed to escape from Nanking but was later captured at the end of 1864. By mid-1865, the imperial government had eradicated almost all of the movement’s remnants, achieving a clear triumph over the most formidable challengers the dynasty had ever encountered since its inception in 1644.

The closing of the Taiping Rebellion also marked the eventual victory of the Hunan Army and Zeng Guofan, who had orchestrated not only the recapturing of Nanking but numerous other campaigns that had become the greatest menace to the rebels. Zeng’s influence on other imperial campaigns was also apparent. By the mid-

1860s, officials who were connected to the Hunan Army were dispatched to curb rebellions still threatening other parts of the country. Most notably, Zuo Zongtang, a Hunanese and a close ally of Zeng, led a counter-rebellion campaign and successfully suppressed the Muslim Rebellion in Northwest by the early 1870s. Further, the Nian Rebellion—which had once been the ally of the Taipings—was brought down (in part) by the Anhui Army under the leadership of Zeng Guofan’s protégé, Li Hongzhang.

Zeng, Li, and Zuo—all of whom were loyalists to the Manchu dynasty—would become the most prominent state officials in the post-rebellion era. Advocating both the ethical and practical virtues of Confucianism, these men introduced a series of “self-strengthening” initiatives based on their military experiences in the Taiping War. From the late 1860s to the early 1880s, they launched a series of programs aiming to modernize the state’s arsenal and navy industries (see e.g., Ocko 1983; Pong 1993; Wright 1957). In these years the state experienced a brief period of stability, known as the Tongzhi Restoration, a phase of the late Qing history that lasted until the early 1880s. Rising from years of violent and costly warfare, Qing state-builders seemed to have not only salvaged the state from the bloodiest civil war in world history (approximately twenty million lives had been lost), but also managed to usher itself into a period of recovery.

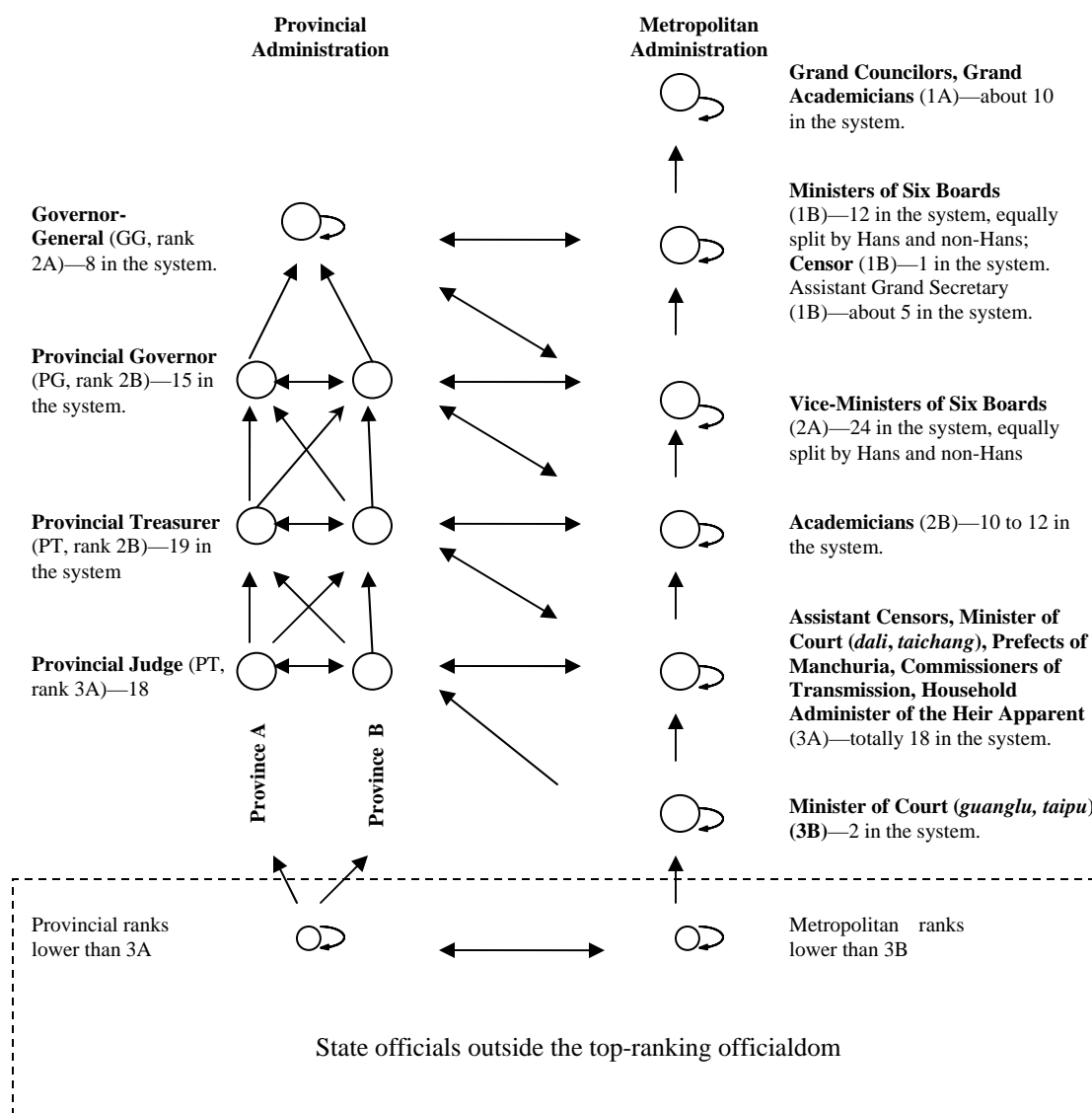
In the historiography of the Taiping Rebellion, the mid-nineteenth century crisis is also connected to the ultimate demise of the Qing dynasty in 1911. According to the typical explanations, the adoption of the Hunan Army model, which heavily depended on strong provincial ties among state agents, had undermined central control over local governance (e.g., Michael 1949). Having experienced growing autonomy in managing the militia campaigns against the Taipings, a new class of gentry emerged as the

dominant voice of local affairs, especially on the allocation of resources at the county levels (Polachek 1975). Rankin (1987) further argues that the gentry-literati members after the Taiping Rebellion tended to formulate a sense of national consciousness through inter-provincial ties. This process later facilitated the growth of a national movement that could be linked to the 1911 revolution, which eventually toppled the Manchu dynasty. Thus, the very methods of effective rebellion control—the promotion of local militia and arming civilians—had, in turn, become one of the reasons of the state's decline.

This study does not directly explain why the Qing dynasty fell apart in the twentieth century; rather, it demonstrates what the Qing empire had become at each stage of the counter-Taiping campaign, and how each of the stages set different problems for state actors to solve. Given the constraints of the existing organizational rules and norms, state rulers and their agents engaged themselves in different trials and errors, all aiming to control the volatile situations created by the Taiping challengers. Their conformity to and deviation from institutional rules, such as the law of “avoidance” and the arrangement of vacancy chains, are important in our understanding of how they could generate new actions, given available resources and circumstances.

The ways in which bureaucrats were rearranged then exerted different effects in the battlefield and the bureaucratic field. I have shown how the reincorporation of provincial officials had enhanced inter-official cohesion and, at the same time, generated a structural condition that could detach the metropolitan government from the provincial administration. While these bureaucratic rearrangements might have allowed the central state to control both its agents and the rebels more effectively, the entire bureaucratic system had been disrupted, so far as system integration was concerned.

Figure 5.1: Routine Mobility Paths in 19th Century Qing Bureaucracy



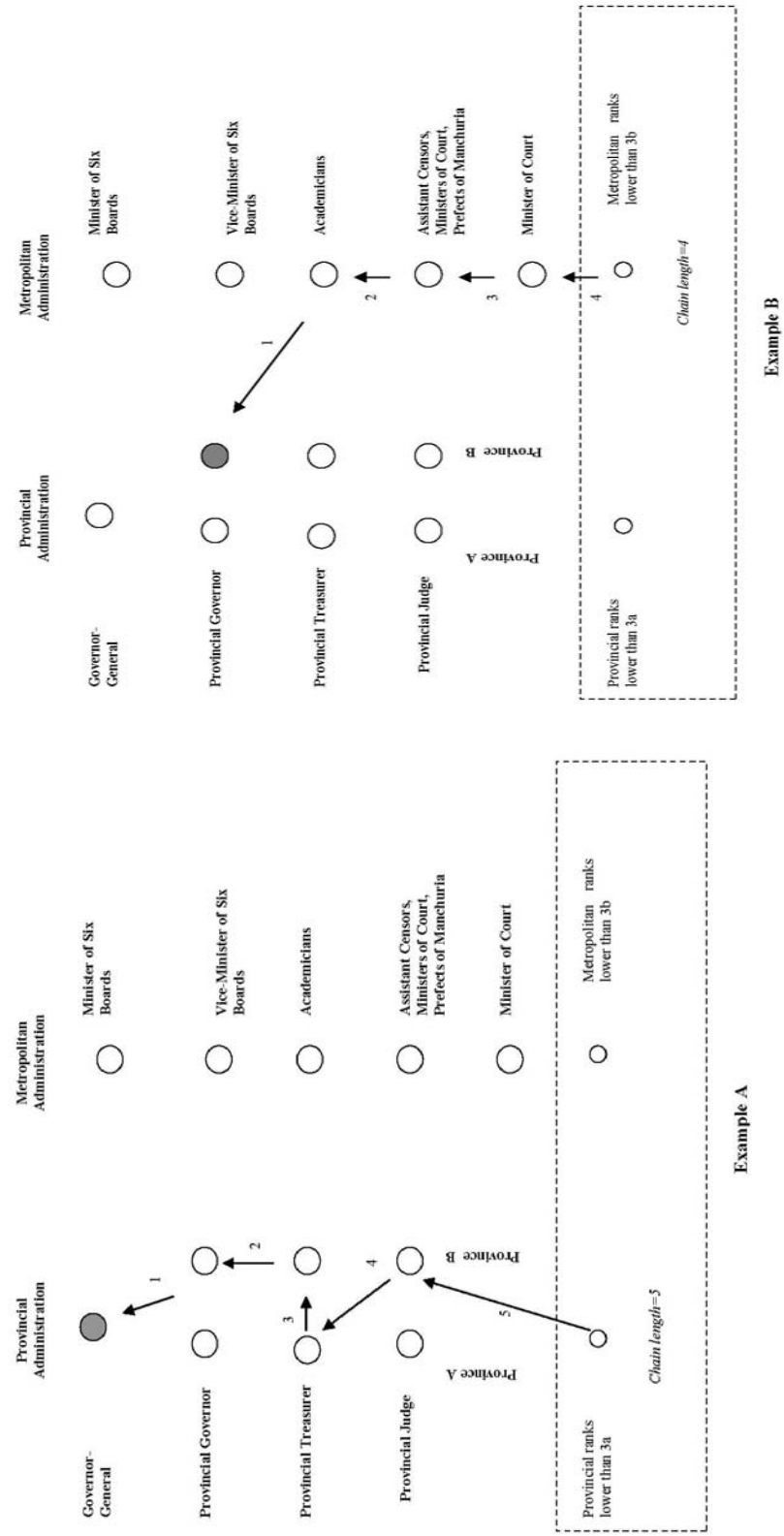


Figure 5.2: Examples of Vacancy Movements

Figure 5.3: Sources of Initial Vacancies, Governor-Chains

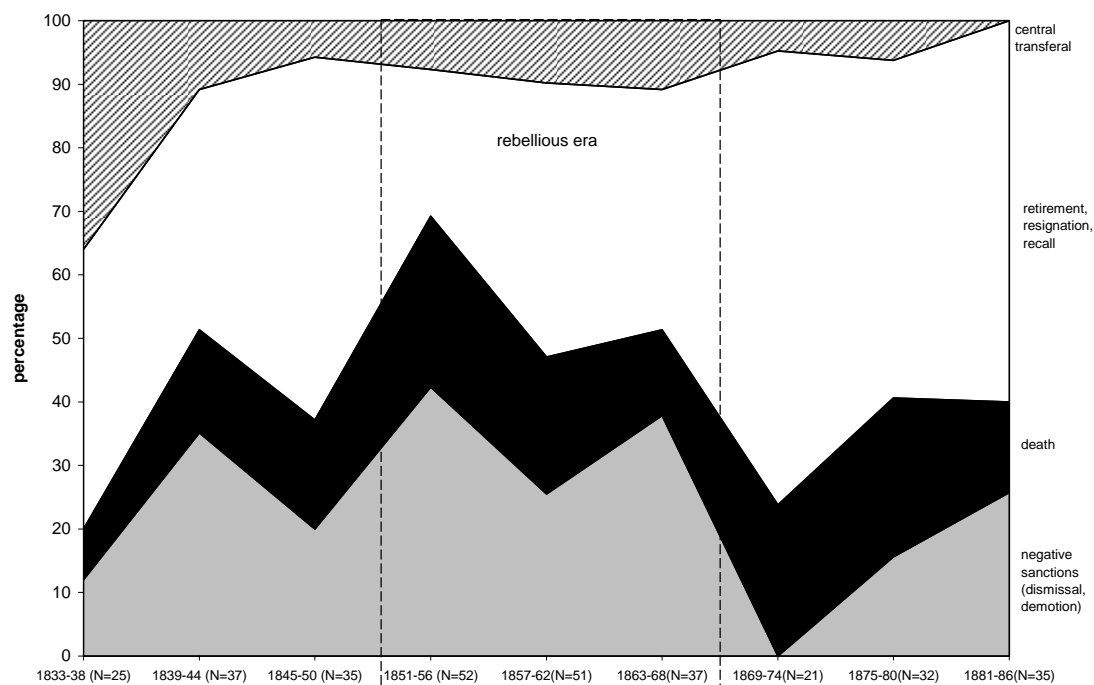


Figure 5.4: Sources of Initial Vacancies, Judge/Treasurer-Chains

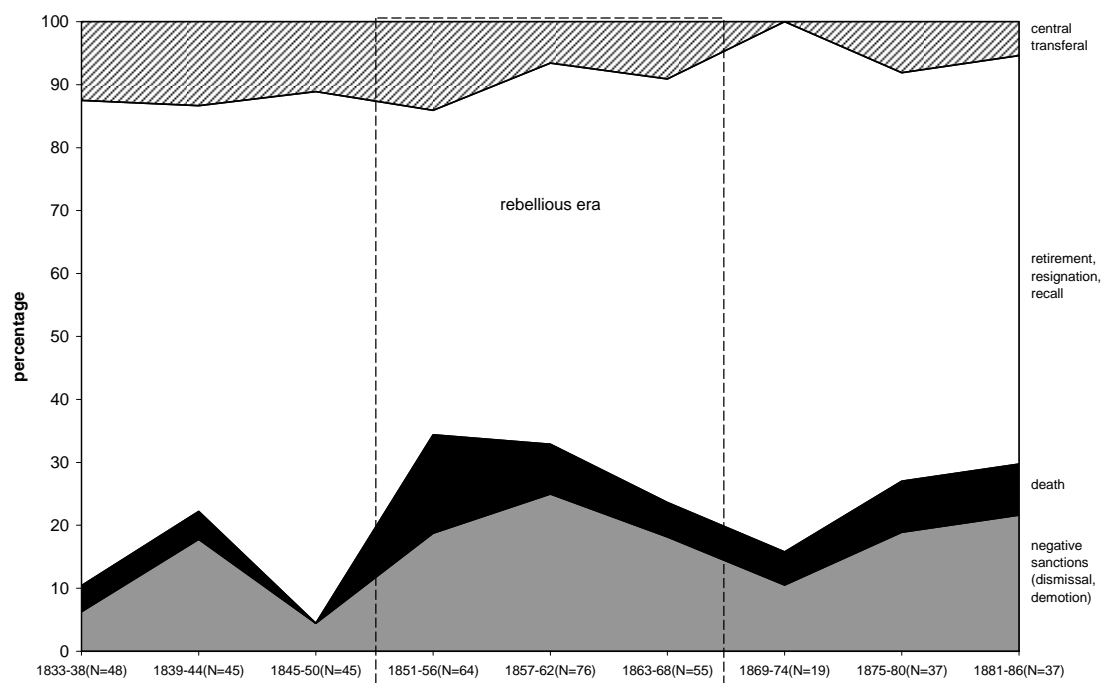


Figure 5.5: "Provincial Outsiders" to Initial Vacancies, Governor-Chains

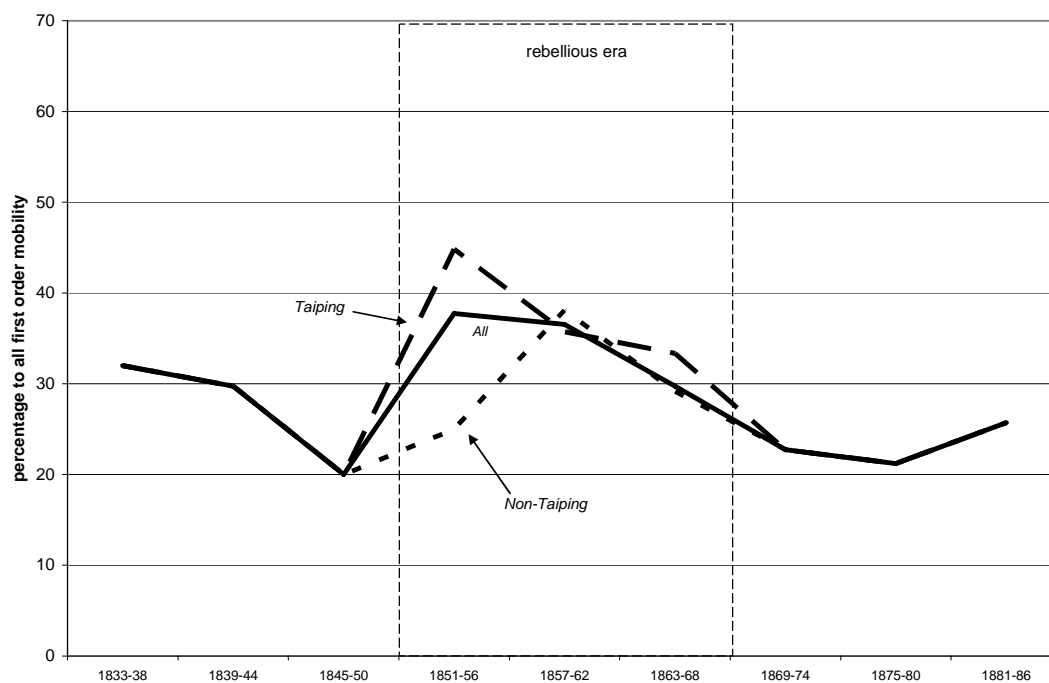


Figure 5.6: "Provincial Outsiders" to Provinces, Judge/Treasurer-Chains

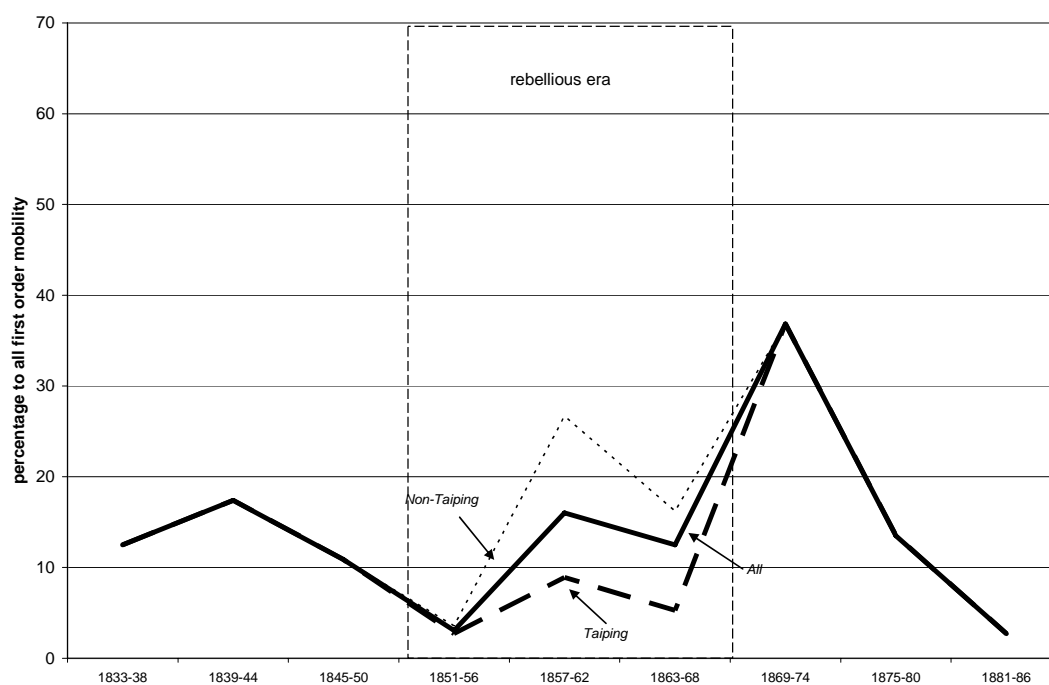


Figure 5.7: "Ideal" Career Paths by Vacancy Types

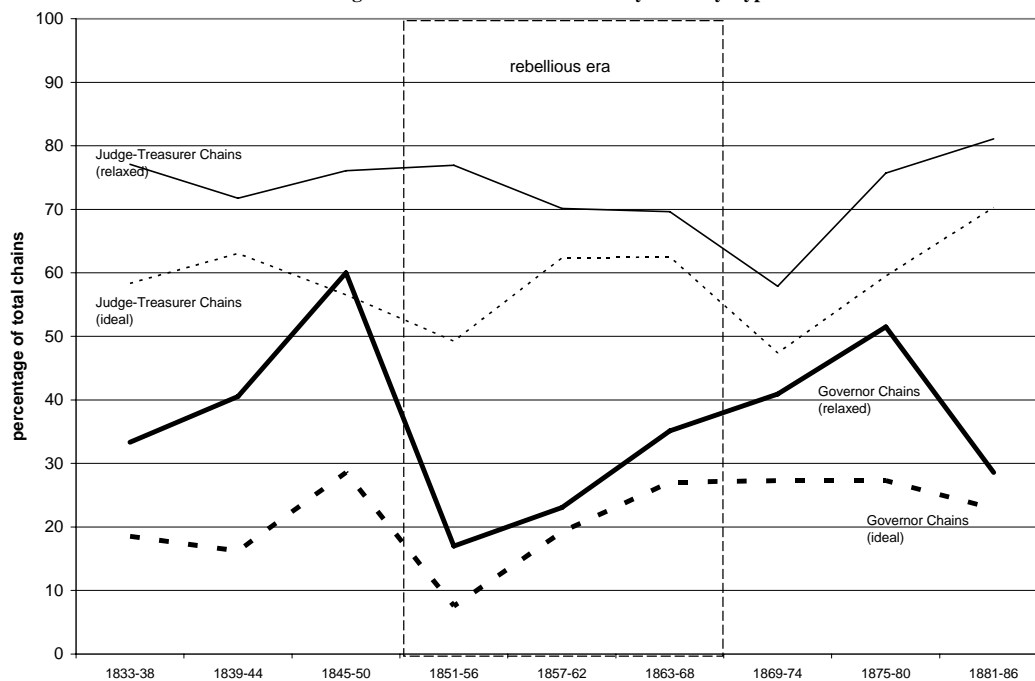


Figure 5.8: Number of Officials Affected, Governor-General Chains

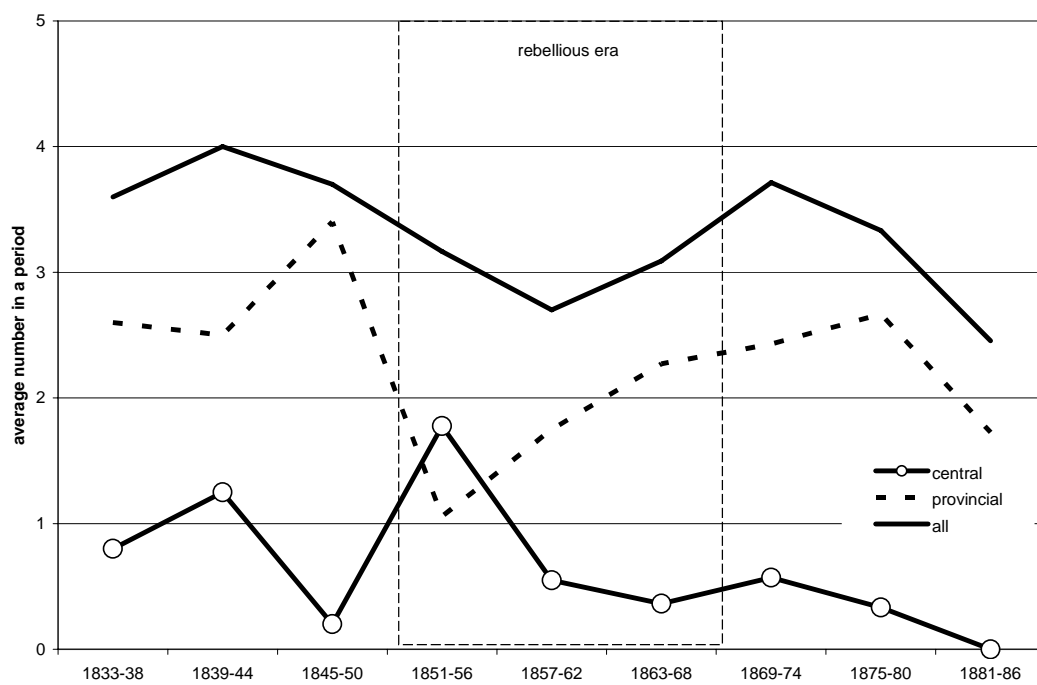


Figure 5.9: Number of Officials Affected, Provincial Governor Chains

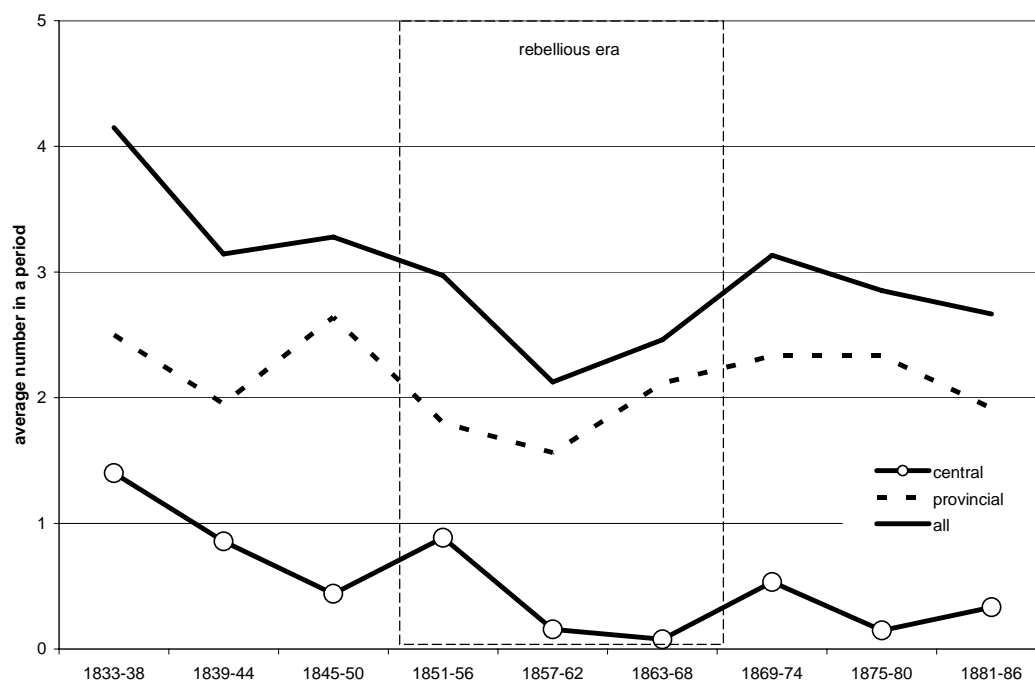


Figure 5.10: Average Number of Provincial Openings Following the departure of a Governor-General

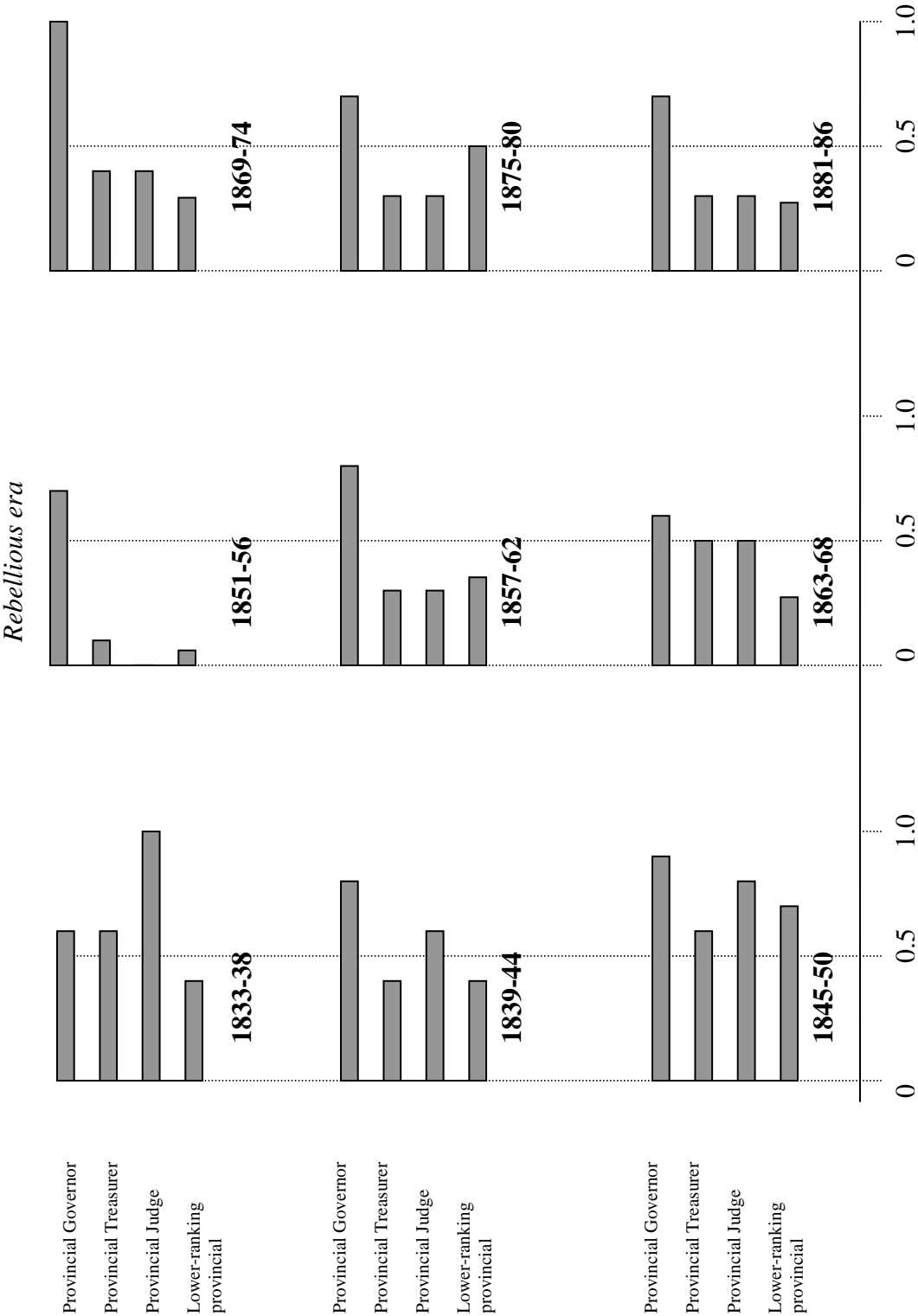


Figure 5.11: Proportion of Promotion Generated from Governor-Chains

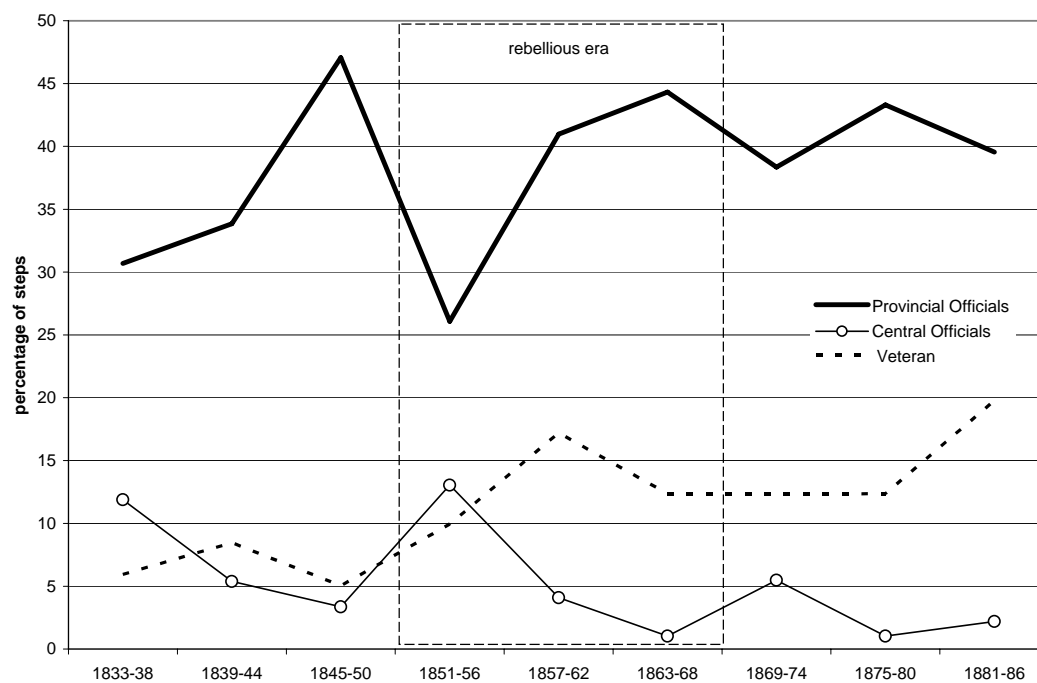


Figure 5.12: Career Sequence

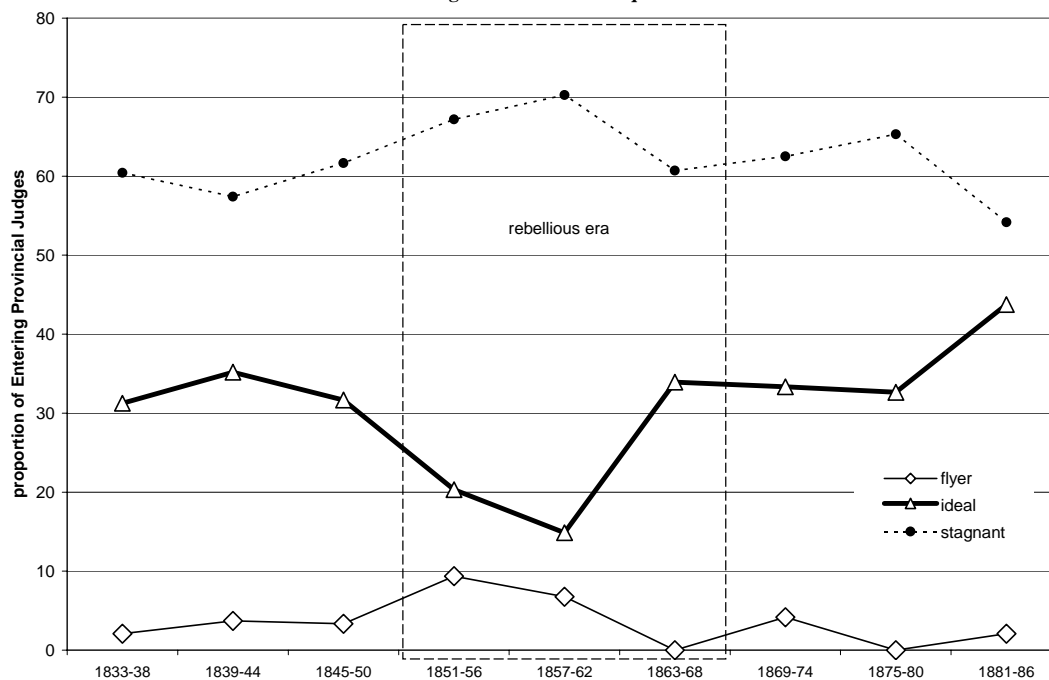


Figure 5.13: Provincial-Central Interaction, All Provincial Chains

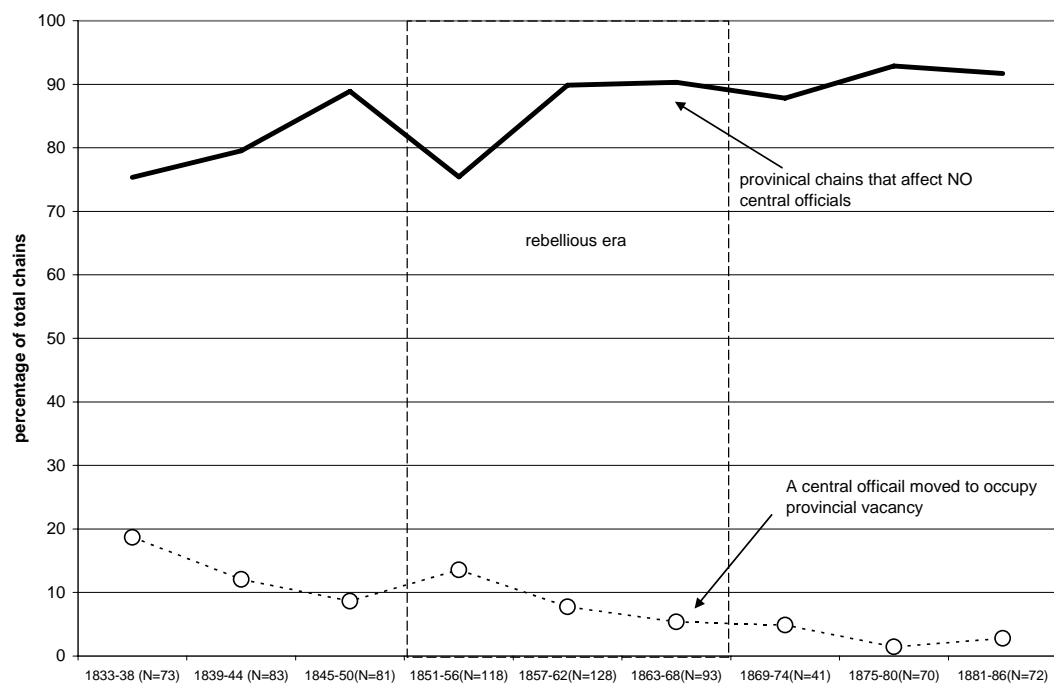


Table 5.1: Types of Vacancy Chains: Governor-Chains (percentage)

	<i>1833- 38</i>	<i>1839- 44</i>	<i>1845- 50</i>	<i>1851- 56</i>	<i>1857- 62</i>	<i>1863- 68</i>	<i>1869- 74</i>	<i>1875- 80</i>	<i>1881- 86</i>
Ideal Chains	52.0	40.5	65.7	22.6	26.9	45.9	45.5	51.5	34.3
Immediately terminated	12.0	18.9	14.3	18.9	38.5	35.1	13.6	21.2	22.9
Lateral moves then terminated	0.0	8.1	0.0	1.9	1.9	5.4	4.5	12.1	11.4
Lateral moves then replaced by central officials	4.0	0.0	2.9	7.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.0	5.7
Immediately replaced by central officials	20.0	13.5	8.6	18.9	3.8	0.0	9.1	0.0	2.9
Chains consisting of mobility of two-steps	0.0	2.7	2.9	7.5	7.7	5.4	0.0	6.1	2.9
Terminated at the level of Treasurer or Governor	12.0	16.2	5.7	22.6	21.2	8.1	27.3	6.1	20.0
Total Chains	25	37	35	53	52	37	22	33	35

Table 5.2: Career Sequence of Provincial Judges (percentage)

<i>Sequence</i>	Entering Years								
	1833-38	1839-44	1845-50	1851-56	1857-62	1863-68	1869-74	1875-80	1881-86
1	16.7	20.4	26.7	31.3	35.1	30.4	16.7	32.7	18.8
12	39.6	35.2	30.0	32.8	33.8	30.4	45.8	32.7	35.4
13	2.1	3.7	1.7	6.3	4.1		4.2		2.1
121	4.2	1.9	3.3	3.1					
123	25.0	22.2	20.0	15.6	9.5	16.1	29.2	30.6	35.4
134			1.7	1.6	1.4				
1212					1.4				
1232				1.6	1.4				
1234	6.3	13.0	11.7	4.7	5.4	17.9	4.2	2.0	8.3
1343				1.6	1.4				
12121			1.7						
12123	4.2			1.6	1.4	1.8			
12312					1.4				
12323		1.9							
12343	2.1		1.7						
121234			1.7						
123124		1.9							
123234						1.8			
123434					1.4	1.8		2.0	
1234123					1.4				
12312123					1.4				
Total chains	48	54	60	64	74	56	24	49	48

Note: All sequences ignore intermittent retirement or dismissals.

Codes:

1=Provincial Judge

2=Provincial Treasurer

3=Provincial Governor

4=Governor-General

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

As the Taiping Rebellion demonstrates, state-building in mid-nineteenth century China was a pliable process: through divisions and conflicts that frequently arose among actors in various segments of the state organization, state rulers and their agents marshaled different sorts of resources to fend off the formidable Taipings. In coordinating state bureaucrats on the one hand, and mobilizing military forces to suppress challengers on the other, state actors collectively defined and redefined the parameters of their subsequent actions, shaping the circumstances and problems they would later confront. Although existing organizational rules and accepted practices often limited the range of possible actions, state actors nonetheless retained a degree of flexibility and autonomy mainly resulting from uncertainties in the battlefield and from the inherent ambiguity of the state bureaucratic framework (thus providing rulers and state agents with ample opportunities to negotiate with one another). The general phenomenon of the state-building process necessitates an intertwining dynamic of crisis and routine that forces state actors to maneuver given resources to solve new problems. In order to understand the crisis-routine dynamic, we must ask to what extent political opportunities generated from a crisis allow state actors to *re-create* the “state,” and to what extent these opportunities reinforce the established rules of the game. To answer these questions, I trace one state’s response to a formidable challenge—a large-scale social rebellion in the form of a civil war.

The specific institutional outcomes generated by warfare are probably specific to each state, but the duality of war-making and state-making seems to be a common feature in many state-building cases (Downing 1992; Centeno 2002; Ertman 1997; Tilly 1985, 1990). The transformative capacity of warfare, as I have shown, lies in its propensity to bring battlefield circumstances to bear on institutional state routines. This linkage between warfare and state institution, however, is not automatic, for it requires the mediation of preexisting organizational rules and practices that establish the boundaries of legitimate action and delimit the kinds of social networks in which state actors could rearrange their social relationships.

In our case, Qing rulers deployed both bureaucratic and patrimonial strategies to maintain their legitimacy, or the “Mandate of Heaven” (see e.g., Weber 1978:1047-1051), suppressing social rebellions by bureaucratically controlling state agents personally appointed by the throne. Yet, limited by their “infrastructural power” (Mann 1985) and a lack of communication technology between the Peking center and distantly located state agents, Qing rulers depended both on the *appearance* of direct-rule (e.g., centralized bureaucratic appointment and the memorial system of reportage) and on a range of *self-reinforcing* mechanisms that meant to keep state agents in check (e.g., the overlapping authority and task boundaries among top officials). As a severe and rapidly expanding crisis, the Taiping Rebellion significantly unhinged this state complex, forcing rulers and their officials to reconfigure established methods of governance. The story of the Taiping Rebellion thus provides us with an analytically useful opportunity to examine a general phenomenon of state-building, understood here as a sustained system of interactions between crisis and organizational routine.

Each chapter of this study tackles an aspect of the shock brought about by the Taipings, and examines how each component of the Qing's response to the rebels fit together in configuring and restructuring the "state in crisis." Chapter 2 demonstrates how the dispatch of trusted imperial commissioners—a routine means of central control—allowed Peking rulers to tighten their grip on the battlefield. While this strategy might help the court to bypass inept provincial agents, the use of centrally linked officials proved problematic when the Qing needed to counter flexible, quickly spreading rebels who were locally knowledgeable and had a "hometown" advantage. Consequently, the dismissal and reappointment of imperial commissioners appeared as a series of organizational experiments, with each major failure in the battlefield bringing new adjustments to the criteria for selecting commanders or official leaders for the battlefield. But the exercise of central control by state rulers—a critical component of state-building—is not unidirectional; rather, we have seen that central rulers moved back and forth between bureaucratic and patrimonial strategies, threatening state agents with negative sanctions on the one hand, and cultivating patron-client relations on the other. The Taiping Rebellion thus destabilized established ruler-agent relations, engendering fresh opportunities for state actors to negotiate new power relations.

Chapter 3 describes how organizational resources were used by state actors to manage the uncertainty they confronted. As I have conceived them, resources convey both structural and cultural characteristics, including organizational rules, norms, legitimate practices, and behavioral schemas. I have analyzed specifically how officials constructed rhetoric in memorial reports, invoked rules and sanctions to control one another, and enforced symbolic boundaries to limit resource transfers across

jurisdictional borders. But because the Peking center could only weakly manage agents' crafty ways to circumvent responsibility or accrue personal interest, these inherently flexible and sometimes ambiguous organizational rules became liabilities to the state. Furthermore, officials could only marshal available (i.e., limited) resources to cope with exigent problems arising from their "local" environment at the expense of the "global" interest of the state. State officials' manipulation of memorial narratives to portray a different "reality" about the battlefield (in order to avoid blame for tactical failures) reveals this divergence of interests between rulers and agents. Thus, state actors used organizational resources in the manner of Swidler's (1986) "cultural tool kit," applying them as means to create new opportunities for further actions, consequently reproducing the state as a dynamic, rather than static, institution.

Chapter 4 analyzes one emerging solution that counteracted the organizational chaos state actors experienced in the first phase of the rebellion. This chaos was formed, in part, by the confluence of two equally unstable factors: the unpredictability of the rebels and the ambiguity of a state organizational framework ripe for manipulation. But most directly it was the "avoidance rules"—which generally discouraged the formation of strong ties among state officials—that undermined the collective spirit of officials and their willingness to cooperate. Tracing the enforcement and relaxation of "avoidance" in its various forms, I have demonstrated how these rules were relaxed over time, permitting officials with similar social characteristics (e.g., ethnic and provincial identities) to collaborate as colleagues. This transformation of bureaucratic networks could have had important implications for potential build-ups in regional power, which would have posed obvious threats to the state center. My analyses, however, found that the relaxation of the

avoidance rules was generally brief and nuanced. Peking rulers did risk allowing provincial officials to garner more power as a means to control the rebellion, but once the threat had subsided the court quickly rescinded some of its previous relaxations. This demonstrates an unexpected degree of flexibility in a nineteenth century Chinese state plagued by serious economic and political problems (Weiss 1980).

Chapter 5 tackles the relationship between new bureaucratic deployments and their diffusive effects on structuring the state organization. By analyzing how top provincial offices were vacated and filled, we can link decisive bureaucratic deployments made in response to changing battlefield conditions to the wider institutional configuration. The vacancy chain analysis I apply allows us to see how agents separately located in the bureaucratic organization could affect one another through the interdependence of vacancy movements. I have shown, for example, that central officials dispatched from Peking to fill vacated provincial positions in the early part of the 1850s not only stifled the promotion opportunities of provincial officials, but also altered the inter-sector relationship between the provincial and central bureaucracies. By the later half of the 1850s, the reincorporation of provincial officials produced what might be considered a structural detachment between the metropolitan and provincial administrations, as state officials made fewer career moves across the two bureaucratic sectors. Bureaucratic rearrangements might have facilitated the state in fulfilling its dual goals of controlling state agents and suppressing rebels, but in the process the entire bureaucratic system had also been altered. From the perspective of the system itself, the Taiping Rebellion's impact on the state organization was widespread, extending to areas that did not have direct contact with the rebels.

Overall, the Taiping case allows us to see the general phenomenon of state-building in terms of the transformation of organizational relationships. Just as the “state” is not a unitary entity that acts monolithically (Mitchell 1991), “state actors” do not form a coherent category that can transparently and automatically connect interests and actions to group memberships or powerful positions held. The state organization that I have tried to portray is fraught with social divisions that, by organizing state actors in divergent ways, allow them to opportunistically invoke or suppress existing institutional rules on some occasions but not others. The possibility of alternative actions in the process of state-building depends partly upon actors’ capacities to maneuver through these existing rifts, and partly upon their ability to construct anew social relations for “fresh action” (to use Harrison White’s [1992] phrase). Given these fluctuating interests and shifting social positions, building and maintaining a governmental structure for state rulers entail the dual task of coping with threats and keeping state agents in check. I have shown that each part of this dual task may demand different, and possibly incompatible, strategies and social logics, leading to consequences not entirely controllable by state rulers. State-building is thus neither unidirectional nor teleological; rather, it is a continuous process in which actors engender new social relations and develop modified practices to manage uncertainties and control threats they potentially face.

Within this deliberation, I have demonstrated several conceptual and empirical strategies that may further our analyses of state-building well beyond the particular example of the Chinese nation-state. First, building upon a “bellicist” model of state-formation—as advanced particularly by Tilly—I have framed internal challenges, such as civil wars and large-scale social rebellions, as key forces in state transformation and

development. This approach diverges significantly from state-formation theories founded on European history and experience, in which inter-state warfare typically plays a strong role. The difference between internal (violent) challenges and external warfare is important, at least, in spatial terms. In nineteenth century China, external threats often occurred along the eastern and southeastern coastlines, and had limited impact on inland administrations; internal social rebellions, however, could emerge anywhere in China Proper. In cultural terms, internal challengers also unnerved the Qing more radically than foreign warfare because the former signified the exhaustion of the imperial "Mandate of Heaven." (Waley-Cohen 1999; Perry 2002). The degree of attention and the amount of effort a government devotes to suppressing political threats are thus shaped, in part, by culturally understanding the sources of threats. Future studies on state-building and state-formation will need to provide theoretical guidelines for understanding how external and internal forms of warfare can differently and variably shape state-society relations or intra-bureaucratic relations of the state.

Conceptually, this study also stresses the state's dualistic and simultaneous goal of controlling rebels and managing bureaucrats. More broadly, this problem can be understood by the ways in which actors join together two forms of state power: the power of monopolizing violence and the power of bureaucratic organization. The mechanism through which social actions exerted in one site can be "translated" consequentially into another may depend on the degree of autonomy between the two. In the Qing case, the intertwining of the state's military establishment and bureaucracy was facilitated by the dual role civilian officials played in military campaigns, for they needed to simultaneously attend to military commands and daily bureaucratic routines in their own

jurisdictions. The widespread nature of the Taiping Rebellion revealed a tension in this otherwise flexible practice, as officials were caught between duties rooted in their specific jurisdictions and those that, addressing the total counter-Taiping campaign, required cross-jurisdictional cooperation. Rulers' numerous attempts at bureaucratic rearrangement can be seen as efforts to reconcile two incompatible logics of social actions. Future studies of state-building can examine the mechanisms by which different orientations of actions and sets of goals are reconciled or transformed through mutual influences. Accordingly, our analyses must take seriously those actions engendered between actors and actors, or among social entities, implying that state-building is a thoroughly relational process (see Emirbayer 1997).

To further advance a relational analysis of state-building, I concentrate on the social relationships among state actors. I have examined social relationships from various angles, including the meanings of interpersonal relations interpreted and constructed by actors, the interactions and divisions of actors inhabiting various organizational positions, and the personal networks of actors joined in pursuing state goals. Social network analysis has become an important tool particularly for scholars of historical sociology because a network approach stresses the importance of social interaction as a mechanism that links the micro social world to larger social structures (Bearman 1993; Gould 1995, 2003; Padgett and Ansell 1993). Attending to the personal networks of social actors also motivates researchers to move beyond analyzing the state structure only in terms of inter-group alliances or conflicts (e.g., gentry and officials, rulers and capitalists, peasants and nobles, etc.), prompting us to think of the state, along

with its concomitant organized social relationships, in terms of the concrete linkages between actors and their actions.

Beyond personal networks and relationships, I have also framed the state as a structure of career opportunities (cf., Bourdieu 1999), as an organizational mechanism that mediates the social relationships among state officials. To empirically reveal the interdependence of officials through career opportunities, I have used the idea of vacancy chains to investigate how particular organizational moves have ramifications for larger structural changes. The vacancy chain analysis takes us beyond thinking of individual actors as the loci of actions, for it reveals that the rearrangement of official personnel exerts social forces and potentially reshapes the state organization. Such an approach also defines the state as an entity held together by organizational mechanisms which allow distantly separated state officials to affect each other's career fortunes. Although the administrative-bureaucratic apparatus is considered one of the most important features of the state, the inter-linkages among individual careers have rarely been studied in the state-building literature (even if prosopographical studies of state bureaucrats in early modern states are quite common—see, for example, Chu and Saywell 1984; Harding 1978; Kunt 1983; Pintner and Rowney 1980). Future studies of state-building can focus on the relational dynamics generated not only by interpersonal relationships among state actors, but by the shifting relations among the positions held.

Finally, I maintain that state-building is a multifold process whose formation may not be reduced to a few mechanisms or a few sets of relational dynamics. This study has only focused on elite state actors, who not only held positions distinct from their lower-level counterparts but also harbored different concerns over how and what to achieve in

terms of state objectives. Peking center, for example, was concerned less with the means by which lower-officials accomplished state goals than *whether or not* they fulfilled their duties, such as covering tax quotas and quelling social uprisings (e.g., Ocko 1983:108-127). The disjunction cautions us against hastily assuming a coherence necessarily exists among state actors across different levels of the state organization during the state-building process; we are further cautioned to attend to multiple levels of political orders and to appreciate a more complex machinery of the "art of the state" (see Shapiro, Skowronek, and Galvin 2006). This study thus provides a particular example of how to conceptualize the state as a tightly focused, dynamic process, wherein the arrangement of forces and deployment of (elite) state agents is both consequential for the realization of state-goals and constitutive of the state itself.

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- LBZL *Libu Zeli* (Regulations and Precedents of the Board of Civil Office). Taiwan: Chengwen chubanshe, 1966.
- QSL *Qing Shilu* (Veritable Records of the Qing), Reign of Emperor Xianfeng, 1850-1861. Taiwan: Huawen shuju.
- QZLC *Qing Shi Lichuan* (The Biographies in *Qing Shi*).
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- TP The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents, edited by Franz Michael. 3 vols. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966-1971.
- XFSYD *Xianfeng Shangyu Dang* (Edicts of the Xianfeng Reign Issued through the Grand Secretariat). Guangxi: Guangxi Renmen Daxue Chubanshi, 1996.
- ZGNB *Qingdai Zhiguan Nianbiao* (Chronological Tables of Officeholders in the Qing Dynasty), edited by Qian Shifu, 4 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980, 1997.

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