

HUI MUSLIM-LED ANTITAXATION MOVEMENTS IN CENTRAL CHINA'S HENAN PROVINCE DURING THE LATE QING DYNASTY

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ABSTRACT

This article first explores the historical background both in economy and politics in the late Qing dynasty, which accounted for many rebellions during the times. The Hui Muslim minority, rebelled in the Northwest and South China's Yunnan and Guizhou provinces, and all such rebellions were well-known. The Hui struggles against the corrupt government in Central China's Henan province, however, has been always neglected by researchers on Hui studies. In fact, there occurred large-scale antitaxation movements in *Huaiqing-fu* and *Kiafeng-fu* in Henan. Consequently, the persecution from the government was cruel. This article tried to fill in some of the blanks concerning the Hui studies in this period.

Keywords: The late Qing dynasty, Hui Muslims, antitaxation movements in Central China's Henan Province

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I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: ECONOMY AND POLITICS

Various factors accounted for the decline of the late Qing dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912. This is a big topic and many scholars have explored it and given various interpretations; however, a common consensus reached concerns the Late Qing's continuous economic recession and political corruptions. In fact, in the second half of the Qianlong era (1736-1796) since the 1770s, signs of dynastic decline began to show. China was essentially an agrarian society, but the Qing dynasty began to face a fateful problem—the inexorable pressure of a growing population with a limited quantity of productive land. During the four centuries from the early Ming dynasty to the late Qing dynasty, China's population increased six-fold, while cultivated land only tripled.¹ To express the problem in a simple way, a meal that was consumed by one person in the Ming dynasty had to be shared by almost two persons in the late Qing dynasty. In addition, land annexation by landlords became a serious social problem. From a historical perspective, land annexation had caused critical social and political crises; Emperor Qianlong, however, failed to recognize the problem. By the second half of his era, land annexation, pervasive bureaucratic corruption, and ethnic struggles had been becoming increasingly severe. At the same time, growth in the number of secret societies was closely related to the inefficiency of social control at the grassroots level.²

There is an old saying in China, “Those who win the Central Plains win China.” “The Central Plains” contained the core part of Henan province, with some additional adjacent regions in different historical times; today, “the Central Plains” is a synonym of Henan province only. I myself had not fully understood the significance of the saying until I started my research on the topic of Kaifeng antitaxation movement in the late Qing dynasty and read the sketchbook by the last Henan provincial governor of the Qing dynasty, Chen Kuilong, *Sketches in My dreaming banana-field chamber*.³ In the book, he mentioned that the annual grain tax that the Henan administration submitted to the Qing court during the Guangxu reign (1871-1908 CE) was “more than three million and ten [silver dollars]; an individual county [of Henan

province], the Xiangfu county, [the name was changed to Kaifeng county in 1913, but in 2014, it resumed the name “Xiangfu” and become a district of the city of Kaifeng], could pay more than one hundred thousand, surpassing the entire Guizhou province, which only has about nine thousand [silver dollars].” Considering the fact that Henan province traditionally had around 110 counties, the total taxes paid by Henan were at least 100 times as high as a frontier province like Guizhou in South China. One can image how crucially important an economic pillar Henan was during the dynastic period in China, with agricultural crops serving as the foremost economic support.

However, rich land for agricultural crops did not mean good repayment to the common peasants. After the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901), the total amount of the Boxer Indemnity that Henan shared to pay for the sake of the Qing Court —although there were slight differences to different statistical source —surpassed 2 million silver dollars.⁴ When the Eight-Nation Alliance invaded Beijing, Widower Cixi and Emperor Guangxi escaped to Xi'an, the capital of Shanxi province in northwestern China; when they returned to Beijing via Henan in 1901, they had lived at Kaifeng, capital of the province, for one month. To accommodate them, the Henan administration built up some new roads amounting to 1,300 *li* (6,500 kilometers) in distance and 69 temporary imperial palaces, all of which required nearly 1,900,000 *liang* of silver.⁵ “The facilities of the palaces were magnificent. When one paid a visit to the interior halls, one might feel that there were no distinctions between them and the Forbidden City [at Beijing].”⁶ Furthermore, “the local officials, to show their humbleness [to Widower Cixi and Emperor Guangxu], spent much to afford luxury.”⁷ Henan people could not avoid paying heavy taxes and “donations” for such kind of expenses by the local officials.

The anti-government movements by ethnic minorities in general, and the Hui people in particular, in the late Qing dynasty, occurred more frequently in the densely populated provinces, such as Gansu and Yunnan. Henan is an interior province, where the Hui minority

1 The population increased from 65-80 million to 400-450 million; cultivated acreage grew from approximately 425 million *mu* to 1,200 million *mu*. See Albert Feuerwerker, *Rebellion in Nineteenth-Century China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), 47.

2 Jian Bozan, ed., *Zhongguo shi gangyao [A Concise History of China]* (Beijing: renmin chubanshe, 1983), 326-327.

3 Chen Kuilong, *Meng jiao rting zaji [Sketches in my dreaming banner-field chamber]*, first block-printed in 1925 (Beijing: zhonghua shuju, 2007). As Chen is a man from South China and acted as an official in the North, the title expression of his book, “*dreaming Banana-field Chamber*,” is understandable.

4 The Boxer Protocol was signed on September 7, 1901, between the Qing Empire and the Eight-nation Alliance; the latter had provided military forces after China's defeat in the intervention to put down the Boxer Rebellion by the eight-power expeditionary forces. The war indemnity is called the *Geng-zi* Indemnity in Chinese and Boxer Indemnity in English (“Geng-zi” year refers to 1901). This is one of the unjust treaties in modern China.

5 Zhao Xianglin, “1904 nian Xiangfu Li Yuanqing kang liang shishi diaocha” [Field research on Li Yuanqing's anti-taxation movement in Xiangfu in 1904] in *Henan wenshi ziliao* [Henan historical documents and literature], no. 16 (printed at Zhengzhou, 1985), 144.

6 Wu Yong, narrator, Liu Zhixiang, transcriber, *Gengzi xi shou congfan [Collective essays of westward wanderings in the Gengzi year]* [1904], no. 4 (Shanghai, daode shuju, 1943), 143.

7 Wu Yudeng, “Cixi hui luan yu zu” [Widower Cixi met her obstacles when returning to Beijing] in Xiao Qian, ed., *Zhongzhou yi wen* [Anecdotes from Henan] (Beijing: zhonghua shuju, 2005), 23.

are scattered nearly in every county, and their struggles against the Qing dynasty had achieved great influence of the degree of the Northwest Hui Rebellions, also called the Dungan Rebellions by Western researchers, in Northwest China (1862-1877), and the Yunnan Hui Rebellion (1856-1873), which is also called the Panthay Rebellion. The Hui anti-Qing movement in this province could not win independently; they had to unite the neighboring Han Chinese communities to reach their goals. However, their rebellious spirit, which had made them the pioneers of the movement, remained similar to that of the nonwestern Hui and the Yunnan Hui. Researches on the activities of the Hui people in the comparatively sparsely populated regions, however, has been neglected by many researchers in Hui studies.

II. THE HUI-PIONEERED ANTITAXATION MOVEMENT IN HUIQING-FU IN NORTHERN HENAN

On March of the 29th year of Emperor Guangxu's reign according to the Chinese lunar calendar (1903), an anti-taxation action was undertaken by the Hui people in northern Henan. Sangpo is a Hui village in Mengxian County in the Huaiqing-fu, with has a comparatively large Hui population in northern Henan province. According to *The Annals of Sangpo*, it had 1,200 households with a total population of more than 10,000 during the Gaungxu reign (1875-1908).⁸ According to the "memorial to the throne submitted by Henan governor Zhang Renjun," which was dated the sixth of leap May of the twenty-ninth year of the Guangxu reign (which is on June 30, 1903 CE); there had occurred mass upheavals in some counties in northern Henan.⁹ This memorial also traces the factors that led to the unrest. Previously, the crop-taxation policy in Henan had been carried out according to established regulations, but in this year (1903), the provincial administration, in order to expand its army units, gave new orders to the people, levying taxes one and half times higher than in past years.

Mengxian county started the antitaxation action first, followed by Wuzhi and other counties. Some officials reported this to the emperor, blaming the provincial administration's

⁸ Mai Shunxiang, ed., *Sangpo zhi* [Annals of Sangpo] (unpublished annals, 2015), 17.

⁹ Zhang Renjun, "Henan *xunfu* Zhang Renjun zou Henei deng xian junzhong kang liang wei shu zhe" [The memorial to the Throne submitted by Henan Governor Zhang Renjun concerning people's gathering for anti-taxation in Henei and other counties] (on the six of leap May month of the twenty-ninth year of the Guangxu era), in The First Chinese History Archive, ed., *Xinhai geming qian shi nian minbian dangan shiliao* [Ten years' historical documents concerning civil commotions prior to the 1911 Revolution] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 195-198.

improper policy, and the emperor immediately stopped the execution of the new policy by Henan governor, Zhang Renjun. Zhang, in his memorial to the emperor, defended himself by mentioning that some unprisings had occurred before. He states that the triangular regions of Henei, Wenxian and Mengxian counties, some bandits had congregated, and the local administration had tried to wipe them out but was never successful. His "reformation policy," which was to increase the taxies for military purposes, was generally tolerate, as it was, for example, in Wenxian county; this was due to the county gentry, who had negotiated with him and persuaded him to decrease the taxies to some degree. However, the Hui people from Sangpo in eastern Mengxian County, having heard the news, called on the people of their county to follow the way of Wenxian County; they demanded the government also decrease their taxies. According to Zhang, they "distributed anonymous fliers, collected a group of people, and petitioned to the county administration hall on February 25 [Chinese calendar]. The county mayor, Sun Shoupeng, met them at the hall. He persuaded them in many ways, but they had many people gathered there and refused the mayor with awful noise." Facing the dilemma, Mayor Sun avoided the petitioners and left for the inner chamber. The petitioners entered the walls and set fire to the front house and garden hall. The soldiers who were on guard came to extinguish the fire, and the petitioners all fled.

The Sangpo Hui from Mengxian County instigated the antitaxation movement. It had great regional impact on other counties in the Huiqing-fu in northern Henan. Counties that joined the movement covered Wenxian, Henei, and Yanwu;¹⁰ these neighboring counties all followed Sangpo's example. The word "Hui" was never mentioned in such historical documents, even when the story of Sangpo was told; but in fact, the people from Sangpo were all Hui people. Petitioners from other counties also included Hui people. Unfortunately, no detailed names of villages have been given, otherwise a researcher could find more traces of the participation of the Hui and their stories.

On the western frontier where Wenxian borders Mengxian County, the inhabitants were encouraged by the actions of the Sangpo Hui people. Zhang continued in his memorial:

They colluded with many people around and claimed to be against the crop-levying policy. At the time, the regional commander of [the Yellow] River North, Zhou Wanshun, ordered troops from his camps to persuade the people; however, they re-gathered [afterward] and insisted in petitioning to the county administration.... Their

¹⁰ Henei is today's Qinyang County; Yanwu is one part of Yuanyang County today.

demands were, first, to stop levying taxies, and second, to release the two men who had been imprisoned.¹¹

Obviously, to dispatch troops was not for “negotiation,” but rather in order to threaten the people; the imprisoned men were described in this Governors’ memorial as “robbers” who had colluded with bandits. The administration agreed to all the demands, but just as a temporary expedient measure.

In Henei county, “some innocent people who had been instigated by rebellious bandits gathered at the Taishan Mountain Temple for a meeting.... the county mayor Miao Xie led the troops to suppress and persuade the people.” However, contrary to the mayor’s expectation, they threw clods of soil at the mayor. The mayor gave up and immediately returned to the county seat, but the people kept running after him. Zhang continued that, a higher-leveled administrator,

the prefect of the Huaiqing-*fu*, Fu Yun, ordered that the [walled] city gates be closed temporarily so that the rebelious bandits were kept outside the city; however, they collected some firewood from houses along the road [to the city gate] and set fire to the [wooden] city gate. The *fu* and county staff [both administration were in the same city] informed the military camps to capture the rebellious bandits as they extinguished the fire.¹²

One can image the shockingly bad relationship between the administrative officials and the common people.

Yangwu county seemed to face more serious situation. We know this through another memorial, which was submitted to the throne by the governor-general of Fujian and Zhejiang provinces, Xi Liang, on the 27th of leap May of the 29th year of the Guangxu reign (July 21, 1903). This was in fact Xi Liang’s report to the emperor; Xi had been entrusted by the emperor to investigate Henan governor Zhang Renjun and the true conditions in the province.¹³ He stated that even when he was investigating the conditions in Huaiqing-*fu*,

11 Zhang Renju, “Henan *xunfu* Zhang Renjun zou Henei deng xian junzhong kang liang wei shu zhe,” 195-198.

12 Ibid.

13 Xi Liang, “Min Zhe zongdu Xi Liang zou chaming Henan qian liang gaizhang jibian bing fansi bei can yuanyou zhe” [The memorial to the Throne submitted by Fujian and Zhengjiang Governor Xi Liang concerning the reformation of taxies in Henan and the proposal of impeaching Henan Governor] (on 27th of leap 5th month of the 29th year in the Guangxu reign), in the First Chinese History Archive, ed., *Ten years’ historical documents concerning civil commotions prior to the 1911 Revolution* (Beijing: zhonghua shuju, 1985), 198-202.

On the thirteenth of leap May [July 7, 1903], several thousand of people gathered and entered the [Yangwu] administration for petition of increasing taxes. They even dared fight against the soldiers of the rear unit of a battalion commander Tian Zhenban’s gun troops and they hurt some of the soldiers. Subsequently, they destroyed the office table, the office’s carts and sedan chairs, and the belongings of the front house. The staff escaped harm. The people became reckless in desperation because they had not been informed of the order by the Throne that all the levies of additional taxes should be stopped.¹⁴

In this report, Xi, when expressing his positive stance toward the provincial governor, Zhang Junren, also mentioned the stories of Sangpo. The memorial states that when the Hui people from Sangpo petitioned the Mengxian administration, they indeed set fire to the front house and the garden house; when the soldiers on guard came to extinguish the fire, the petitioners all fled. The claim that some men were killed by the administration when they made their petition was a “rumor.” However, when the people of Wenxian County petitioned, a young woman was killed by the guarding soldiers. Xi Liang explained in the memorial that the two imprisoned men, who were brothers, had been imprisoned one year prior; through the petition, their mother pressured the administration to free them. As mentioned earlier, the administration agreed the demand, but just as a temporary expedient measure — soon after, they re-captured the two sons, and, moreover, imprisoned the mother as well. The young woman was her daughter, and was attempting to protect her mother, but she was injured by the soldiers, and died the next day. Xi Liang reported that a box of fliers for antitaxation publicity was discovered in their house; this was obviously planned to defend the soldier in their killing of the girl.

These were the antitaxation movements in the three counties in northern Henna. The struggles were spontaneous and the so-called rebels were not well organized. However, they were victorious in pressuring the administration to stop the hash taxation policy. Moreover, regardless of the official reason, the provincial governor, Zhang Renjun, was ordered to leave Henan (he went to Guangzhou to take a new position). The Hui villagers from Sangpo were the pioneers of the northern Henan’s antitaxation movement. However, this is not the end of the movement; in fact, a larger-scale movement arose in the regions around Kaifeng, the provincial capital, which was directly led by the Hui people.

14 Ibid.

III. THE HUI-LED ANTITAXATION MOVEMENT IN XIANGFU IN EASTERN HENAN

Chen Kuilong, a native from Guizhou, was entrusted with the mission of Henan governorship at the critical and difficult moment when so many counties in northern Henan were undergoing upheavals. Unfortunately, as the last governor of Henan on behalf of the Qing dynasty, he was not successful in overcoming these difficulties.

Dealing with financial problems remained the most important task; and considering the mistakes of his previous office holder, he was not ready to use a direct method to enact taxes. His approach was indirect: he first established a *qingyuan* bureau, or land investigation bureau, in order to re-measure the land of the peasants, so when he enacted taxes, he would have rationale; this was perhaps done to avoid the previous governor's mistakes. The findings of the bureau showed that many peasants along the Yellow River possessed more land than had been registered. Chen Kuilong immediately ordered that those who possessed "extra" lands should pay additional taxes for the past 18 years.

However, the governor neglected a historical truth. The Kaifeng regions were located in the old beds of the Yellow River, the lands that the Yellow River floods reached had been covered with sand and made alkaline. Forty-five years ago, a native from Xiangfu county named Wang Yide, who was newly promoted as Governor of Fujian and Zhejiang provinces in the eighth year of the Xianfeng reign (1858), left Beijing and went to his new office in Zhengjiang via Kaifeng. He witnessed the poverty of the people in Kaifeng and the difficulties in cultivating the land along the old river beds. Feeling sympathetic to his countrymen, he submitted a memorial to the throne explaining that he saw the lands covered with sand and that the lives of the peasants were difficult; thus, he requested the emperor should exempt the region from taxes.¹⁵ From that time on, the peasants along the Yellow River started to cultivate the lands for agriculture because they were exempt from taxes.

However, Chen Kuilong had his own perspective: first, once such "extra" lands were taxed, the financial income of the provincial administration could be annually increased by over 10,000 *liang* of silver; second, he had considered the factor that the peasants paid in their hard work for the past decades, but since "18 years" prior, such lands had already become "cultivated lands," and the freedom from taxes should have come to an end because such lands originally

did not belong to private properties. This followed the old Chinese saying, "All the lands in the world belong to the King, and all the human under the Heaven are King's people." On August 20, 1004, an announcement was issued by Governor Chen, which people could read in any public place; the announcement said the "extra lands" should be taxed for the past 18 years.¹⁶

Two societies must be introduced here as they played important roles in the protest movement, "the Cotton Society" and "the Tiger Society." The former was an organization that balanced the relationships of the cotton-field owners and the free cotton pickers. When the cotton became ripen, the owners would harvest first, and then they would open the field to allow the poor people to pick the remaining cotton; there was always some cotton left in the fields following hand picking. As some cotton harvesters were not self-disciplined, the landowners sometimes suffered a loss. The method chosen to solve the problem was that the cotton society would organize local operas being performed during the harvest season; the days during the performances were for the landowners' harvest, and the time when performances ended became the signal that the fields were open to poor cotton pickers. This has become a tradition.

The Tiger Society was an organization that protected people against the government. When wanderers and beggars, who were generally poverty-stricken people, died in some village, the local administration would come to bully the villagers for money under the excuse that this was "on behalf of the dead"; this was one type of the bureaucratic corruptions in the late Qing society. To defend the villagers, the Tiger Society would organize all the villagers to stand against the governmental officials who blackmailed them.

Li Yuanqing was a well-known Hui man and leader of the two societies. He lived at Zhitai village, which was one of the 13 villages scattered along the eastern skirt of the county city. He later became the leader of the Kaifeng antitaxation movement in 1904; in this year, he was 64 years old. The 13 villages provided the basic strength of the movement because they were bound with the two societies, "the Cotton Society" and "the Tiger Society," and thus they could be easily united.

Soon after the announcement, several meetings were held, attended by first, the 13 villages, and, later, 54 villages, including many from the northern bank of the Yellow River. A young Hui man, Su Quanfa, age 33, is worthy of mentioning here as he did much work for the movement. He was a vegetable planter and a peddler of bean sprouts. He was strong and joyful,

¹⁶ According to Zhao Xianglin, several versions exist concerning the time of the announcement. The correct time was identified through consensus with the memories of several elderly people. See Zhao Xianglin, "Field research on Li Yuanqing's anti-taxation movement in Xiangfu in 1904," (note 5), 155.

¹⁵ Shen Chuanyi, ed., *Kaifeng Annals [Henan Kaifeng xian zhi]* (block-printed in the twenty-fourth year of the Guangxu reign [1898]), 15, "renwu, guochao [personalities in the contemporary dynasty]," 70.

and was always willing to help a victim. During the movement, he went everywhere to organize meetings and distribute fliers.

The meeting members all agree that the payment of taxes for the past 18 years would lead to a year of famine; the policy was intended to drive the people to death. However, the reactions of the people were peaceful at the beginning; they paid visits to the county administration four times, and one time they negotiated with the county mayor, Kong Fanjie, in person. Those who paid visit and tried to negotiate with the government were the members of two local social societies, the Cotton Society and the Tiger Society. The last time they gathered more than 100 persons, but unfortunately, the result was discouraging. The administration insisted on collecting the extra taxes and the villagers had to pay for the past 18 years.

A mass conference held in Bojiudian, a village located at the eastern skirt of county town 25 *li* distant, which played a symbolic significance in the Movement. Thirty thousand people participated in the conference, which became the *de facto* launch ceremony of the Kaifeng antitaxation movement. Li Yuanqing gave a public speech in the conference encouraging the people to protect themselves. A slogan was proposed in the conference as well, "Killing the tiger we shall share the meat; failing to kill we shall share the wound."

An incident occurred when the conference was underway, which was recorded in one of Chen Kuilong's memorials to the throne:

On 29th of the 9th month [November 6, 1904 CE], around the Zhitai village at the eastern skirt [of Xiangfu county town], a Huimin [Hui man,] Li Yuanqing, distributed fliers at the village's mosque and collected ten-thousand people. They claimed to be against crop taxation and would close shops for strikes. They prevented the entrance of grain and firewood to the county seat. At that moment, by coincidence, a team of [official] grain carts passed [the conference], [whereupon] the rebels [people at the conference] robbed the grain and burned the carts; furthermore, they destroyed telephone poles for more than ten *li* along the villages of Chagang, Xiaohuangpu and Zhaotaoying.¹⁷

In fact, the antitaxation movement was associated with a more drastic action. Apart from his identity as the leaders of the Cotton Society and the Tiger Society, Li Yuanqing was also

17 Chen Kuilong, "Memorial submitted to the Throne by Henan Governor Chen Kuilong concerning Xiangfu county people's uniting against crop-levies and the provincial administration's dispatching troops to have dispersed them" (on the 23rd of the 10th month of the 33rd year in the Guangxu reign [Nov. 29, 1904]), in *Ten years' historical documents concerning civil commotions prior to the 1911 Revolution*, 204-207.

member of a secret society, the *Renyi-hui* (Benevolence Society), which had become a secret anti-Qing society. The well-known Republican Rebellion in Henan several years after the Kaifeng antitaxation movement (in winter 1911), although a failure, turned out to be the plan of such a society; and Dan Pengyan, a Hui man, was one of the leaders of the failed rebellion.

The plan created between Li Yuanqing and the Benevolence Society was to employ the antitaxation movement to provoke a revolutionary rebellion in Henan. They planned to employ the festival of the City-God Tour Day, which was on the first day of the 10th month according to the Chinese calendar, to collaborate with Benevolence Society members within the Xiangfu county seat and the forces of the antitaxation protesters outside, in order to capture the county seat.¹⁸

I cannot confirm if the antitaxation movement was associated with a plan for revolution. According to the field research report of Zhao Xianglin, after the Bojiudian conference, "there arose a rumor in the county town, saying that the people would hold a rebellion in the festival of the City-God Tour Day."¹⁹ Clearly, the researcher did not investigate this topic deeply, simply recording to the "rumor." However, another researcher, Bai Zongzheng, argued that two important members of the Benevolence Society, Dan Pengyan and Yu Hualong, participated in the antitaxation movement; later, when the movement failed, Dan hid in Caoxian county, Shandong province (he finally sacrificed his life in the failed Republican Revolution in winter 1911 in Kaifeng), and Yu Hualong was arrested.²⁰ This seemed to be strong evidence of the movement's association with a further revolutionary action. Nevertheless, more research is needed to explore a possible association.

There must have been traitors who revealed the secrecy of the antitaxation movement. In fact, in the beginning period, when the 13 villages held meetings, two men who attended, Ran Lin and Zhang Jin, informed the administrative officials of the news. They were staff members of the Cart and Horse Bureau, and institution that provided services for the county administration. Ran Lin was a landlord from Yuanlou village and Zhang Jin was a vagrant from Zhangsanli village. When the other movement leaders became aware of this, they began to frequently change their meeting places to avoid the two men.²¹ The night before the Bojiudian Conference, some people discovered three strangers and reported this to Li Yuanqing. Later,

18 Bai Zongzheng, "Ying gutou—Li Yuanqing" [Hard-Bone Li Yuanqing], in *Kaifeng wenshi ziliao* [Historical Documents and Literature of Kaifeng] (Kaifeng: unpublished journal), no. 10 (Oct. 1990), 357-358.

19 Zhao Xianglin, "Field research on Li Yuanqing's anti-taxation movement in Xiangfu in 1904," 151.

20 Bai Zongzheng, "Hard-Bone Li Yuanqing," 358.

21 Zhao Xianglin, "Field research on Li Yuanqing's anti-taxation movement in Xiangfu in 1904," 147.

they learnt that one of the three men, who disguised as an *erhu*-player [the *erhu* is a musical instrument], was in fact a battalion commander of the Qing troops from Xiangfu administration surnamed Wang.²²

Recommended by Xaingfu county mayor Kong Fanjie, governor Chen Kuilong ordered a *fentong* (assistant bridge commander), Yang Rongtai, to be ready to “suppress” the rebellious villagers on the night of this same day; the troops surrounded the village at the second night. In fact, inhabitants from many villages around had gathered around the Zhitai village, in a crowd of several hundred thousand people, and were waiting for a rebellion to be launched with the ringing of a bell. Chen’s dispatching of troops proved that he had known of this plan. Chen later recalled in his memoirs:

Yang Rongtai and his troops arrived at the village [of Zhitai] on the first of 10th month, stationing themselves outside the village. He ordered a dozen of soldiers to change their clothes to spy on the village, but unexpectedly, they were besieged and were beaten and injured. One of the soldiers was seriously hurt; he was stabbed in the eyes and became blind. When the main troops went to the village, the bell rang and soldiers were surrounded by fire. The commander ordered that the soldiers could use their muskets to kill, but the rebellious people were not afraid of being punished by law, and fired at the soldiers first. Thus, they wounded Cui Zhenhe and several other soldiers; they also snatched a musket. They were aggressive indeed.²³

Actually, Qing troops attacked the village several times but all were repulsed by the villagers; finally, the Qing troops organized a stronger attack on the villagers and, started firing at them with muskets. Five of the villagers died on the spot, whereupon the villagers broke ranks and started to flee.²⁴

Several neighboring counties’ people came to help, including the anti-Qing Small-Sword Society from Tongxu county, but they were too late, and the massacre was over; the Qing troops, headed by Yang Rongtai, had withdrawn and the rebellion had failed.²⁵

22 Ibid, 150.

23 Chen Kuilong, Sketches in my dreaming banana-field chamber, 80.

24 Chen Kuilong, “Memorial submitted to the Throne by Henan Governor Chen Kuilong” (Nov. 29, 1904), 205.

25 Zhao Xianglin, “Field research on Li Yuanqing’s anti-taxation movement in Xiangfu in 1904”, 150.

IV. AFTERMATH OF THE KAIFENG ANTITAXATION MOVEMENT

Henan governor Chen Kuilong could be regarded as a typical figure of a corrupt bureaucratic institution in dynastic China, who regarded his office as his first priority; he only was responsible to his superiors and cared nothing about the people from lower classes. When dealing with the antigovernment activities, he strongly defended his constituted authority.

It is hard to learn much more about Governor Chen’s life, fortunately, a journal published in 1947 in Kaifeng revealed his experiences. His wife was a beautiful woman who was Prince Yin Kuang’s “dry daughter,” but the relationship between the prince and this dry daughter was “disgraceful.” Once, when Chen was dispatched by his superior to Sichaun, a southwestern province, for a position, the wife went to the Prince’s house during the night to request that he assign Chen to an office in Beijing, and her request was successful. This news was spread throughout Beijing at the time.

Moreover, he is henpecked husband. Every time he went to court, the wife would hang the court beads for him (which was essential to court) before he set out for his sedan chair, otherwise he dared not leave. Once his wife got angry with him and refused to hang the beads, so Chen continued kneeling on the floor, waiting, until finally, a military general, who was waiting for him, could not endure it and came to pledge to his wife, causing Chen finally to be freed.²⁶

Politically, Chen was very conservative; for instance, as late as 1935, the republic had already been founded for 24 years, but when he celebrated his birthday at Shanghai, he still claimed that he could not “forget the royal favor” done for him.²⁷ To conclude our glimpse of Chen’s life philosophy, he always looked to his superior to protect his position and acquired interests; as to the people he ruled, they were not worth a straw.

To persecute the antitaxation protesters, Chen was merciless to all, as shown in the story of Li Yuanqing. Li fled to another Hui village and hid. At the same time, he continuously kept in touch with the local “Benevolence Society” to attempt to launch a further rebellion, but such a rebellion was not launched. According to Chen Kuilong, under the pressure that “one man’s crime will implicate his whole clan,” Li committed suicide by hanging himself in order to

26 Yang Ruoshi, “Chen Kuilong” in Wang Zhiqi, ed., *Xin Zhongguo* [New China] (Kaifeng: 1947), no. 1 (Sept. 1947), 19.

27 Ibid.

protect his clan members. This is popular account about his end.

In fact, and quite tragically, Li at last tried committing suicide to protect the clan, but in vain; he was hanged by his own brother, Li Yuan'an, together with the family of his brother's father-in-law in a neighboring county. His brother had opposed the antitaxation movement from the very beginning, and, he became terrified that the government would persecute the entire clan.²⁸ Only Li's death could save the lives of the clan. Indeed, the brother's action could not be regarded as "evil" considering that potential result.

The county administration, "confirmed it was [Li's] body, ordered it carried to the provincial capital, and had Li's head cut off; they had it paraded through many villages involving the [antitaxation] movement" for three days.²⁹ Then, they hung the head at Li's house yard gate for three days.³⁰ The villagers finally paid a ransom for the head and buried it.

Zhao Xianglin's field research on this anti-taxation movement, which was carried out from 1958 to 1963, identified evidence that seven Hui villagers in Li Yuanqing's village, Zhitai, was shot to death when the official troops attacked the village. Two more men, one of whom was Gao Junde from Changshang village, were hurt by soldiers and soon after, died. Another resister was named Li Fen; when the Qing soldiers searched the village after the massacre, Li refused the soldiers to enter his house, so they stabbed him to death. Fifty-two people were arrested, including 10 from Zhitai village; among them, half were Hui men. The arrested people were beaten black and blue; one of them, named Chen Song, was beaten to death at the court. Li Kejing, one of the 52 who were arrested, said, "The Qing authority was particularly alert to the Hui people. They tortured them more severely than the Han."³¹

Ahong [Imam] Hong Fuhai, who presided over the Zhitai village mosque, was sentenced to imprisonment for twenty years,³² because, as Chen Kuilong explained in his memorial to the throne: "When Li Yuanqing wrote propaganda leaflets and distributed them to villagers, Hong Fuhai did not stop him doing so" and thus committed the crime of *accessory*.³³ This seems absurd, as an imam is not authorized to prevent the community Hui people from using

the mosque—which is a public place instead of a religion place only, unlike those in foreign countries—for Hui public affairs. However, Li Kejing, one of people who had been under arrest, witnessed the trial of Imam Hong Fuhai. He said that Hong had argued at the court, asking, "What crime has Li Yuanqing committed? We the common people are good men. We do not have grain, so what can we pay for the grain-taxation?... You officials should be upright, and should not become idiots!"³⁴— this might be what provoked the officials to sentence him so severely.

The young Hui man, Su Quanfa, also played an important role at the Bojiudian conference; and it was he who decided to stop the entrance of grain and firewood into the county seat and to rob the team of official grain and fired the carts, as Cheng Kuilong described in his memorial to the throne. After the movement, Su, like the two members of the Benevolence Society, Dan Pengyan and Yu Hualong, fled Xiangfu County. He wandered for over a year, first around the northern bank regions of the Yellow River, and later in the southern Henan. Then, seeing that the situation had calmed, he returned to his hometown.³⁵

The rebellion put Chen Kuilong in a dilemma. It was difficult to continue carrying out his original policy, and it was equally difficult to ban the policy. The pressures came from three factions: The first was the people who had rebelled and who had been persecuted. Even a year after, on December 11, 1905, Chen dispatched his followers, in disguise, to secretly investigate if Li Yuanqing had been really died.³⁶ He probably worried about somebody else's death being claimed as that of Li Yuanqing; such cases sometimes occurred in the prisons of the Qing dynasty.

A second faction was made up of people who did not join the rebellion but held the common hatred of the officials.

Finally, a third faction, as Chen described, consisted of "the high-ranking officials who were Henanese and who held their positions in Beijing [but] did not curse the evil peasants and praise my achievement; instead, they blamed me for acting with undue haste... —accusing letters to me were as many as snowflakes."³⁷

To solve the dilemma, Governor Chen ordered the county administration, and the mayor Kong Fanjie in particular, to reregulate the land registration: the land in this region was classified into five levels, and the government demanded the first three levels pay a very small

34 Zhao Xianglin, "Field research on Li Yuanqing's anti-taxation movement in Xiangfu in 1904," 153-154.

35 Ibid, 150, 154, respectively.

36 Ibid, 154.

37 Chen Kuilong, *Sketches in my dreaming banana-field chamber*, 80-81.

28 Zhao Xianglin, "Field research on Li Yuanqing's anti-taxation movement in Xiangfu in 1904," 155. Also, Li Jiangzhong, oral account, Wang Zhenfeng, ed., "Li Yuanqing kang liang" [Li Yuanqing led anti-taxation movement], <http://www.kfwhw.com/news/201014/n60142080.html> (viewed March 27, 2010).

29 Chen Kuilong, *Sketches in my dreaming banana-field chamber*, 81.

30 Zhao Xianglin states that the time was "for three days" in his research report ("Field Research," 153) while Li Jiangzhong states it was "for five days" (Li Jiangzhong, oral account, "Li Yuanqing Led anti-taxation movement).

31 Zhao Xianglin, "Field research on Li Yuanqing's anti-taxation movement in Xiangfu in 1904," 155.

32 Bai Zongzheng used the name "Hong Shuhai." See Bai Zongzheng, "Hard-Bone Li Yuanqing" in *Historical Documents and Literature of Kaifeng*, no. 10 (Oct. 1990), 358.

33 Chen Kuilong, "Henan Governor's Memorial" (Jan. 25, 1904), 11.

amount of taxes, while leaving the last two levels to be free of any payment. Even when the farmers did not report their actual amount of lands, they would not be censured. As for the so-called extra-registered land taxes for the past 18 years, the government never mentioned them again.³⁸ By winter 1905, the Qing court ordered that “Xiangfu county and other counties from Henan province, altogether forty-four in number, should be exempt from, or be postponed for the payment of, taxation —whether due to the famine [this year], or due to [other reasons] in the past years.”³⁹ In this way, all the old issues that had happened in Xiangfu now became history.

Li Yuanqing's antitaxation movement lasted for over a month; it had courageously influenced a dozen counties of the eastern part of Henan, especially in the counties of Chenliu and Kaocheng, and two more boarder regions of Yingzhou and Bozhou prefectures in Anhui province.⁴⁰ More fervent and larger-scale antitaxation movements followed the example of the Xiangfu Rebellion, and made their protest against the Qing government.

For the antigovernment activities, the three levels of officials were disciplined by the Qing court. The county mayor, Kong Fanjie, was removed from his post; the prefect of Kaifeng-*fu*, Shi Geng, was given a serious demerit; and Henan provincial governor, Chen Kuilong, was transferred to Jiangsu province in January 1906.

Even today, in the Kaifeng area, people still sing a folk ballad recounting that “nobody dared create a disturbance in Xiangfu, when Lord Li's peasants began to act like soldiers.”⁴¹ “Li Yuanqing's Antitaxation Movement” (also called “Mass Pledge at Bojiudian”) is a popular local opera that is often performed.⁴² Local people, regardless Hui minority or Han majority, memorialized this hero in their own ways.

Conclusion

The exploration of these two antitaxation movements that arose in the late Qing dynasty in central China's Henan province lead to five important conclusions:

First, when the Qing dynasty waned, two aspects, economic and political, were highlighted as predominant factors that accelerated the dynasty's destruction. Such conditions were extremely obvious in Henan, as the “Central Plains” played important roles; economically, Henan was one of the pillars of the dynasty, and politically, it served to centralize function to China.

Second, civil commotions such as petitions, parades, and rebellions became increasingly energized in the late Qing dynasty for various causes by various regional masses, different ethnic groups, and many kinds of secret societies, while antitaxation sentiments were the normal attitude in Henan. The two mass movements that occurred in Henan revealed the realities of economic oppression and political corruption of the local administrations of the late Qing government; the movements against these administrations should be regarded as proper measures by the people, who were attempting to defend themselves.

Third, Hui involvement in anti-Qing activities were part of modern Chinese history; they made their contributions to shake up, and finally to overthrow, the entire dynasty, and establish the Republic of China. The Hui-pioneered antitaxation movements in Henan were but an episode of the entire Hui participation in the anti-Qing activities; many researchers on Hui studies, however, have focused their attention on the Northwest and Yunnan province, and neglected the Hui and their activities in Henan.

Fourth, the rebellious manner and the ethnic Hui-Han relationships of the Hui movements in Henan were different from those of the Northwest Hui Rebellion and the Yunnan Hui Rebellion during the eighteenth century. The former united the Han Chinese to struggle against the government for their mutual interests; the latter held their rebellions to the Hui themselves, and Hui-Han ethnic conflicts in these regions were part of the rebellious contents. This was due to the factor that in the Northwest China and Yunnan, Hui populations were comparatively more dense and larger; while the Hui population distribution in Henan was scattered in every corner and, due to historical reasons, the Hui-Han ethnic relationships were comparatively relaxed.

Fifth, the rebellious nature of the Hui minority is similar wherever they live. They were more sensitive to any oppression. This perspective is closely associated with their way of life,

38 Zhao Xianglin, “Field research on Li Yuanqing's anti-taxation movement in Xiangfu in 1904,” 154.

39 Zhu Shoupeng, ed., *Guangxu chao donghualu* [Continued Donghua Record since the Guangxu Reign, originally printed in 1909] “Guangxu sanshiyi nian shi'er yue, 52” [December of the 31st year of Guangxu reign, item 52].

40 Da Zhenyi, “Biography of Li Yuanqing” in Bai Shouyi, ed., *Huizu renwu zhi* [Biographies of Hui Personalities] (Beijing: zhonghua shuju, 2009), 1518.

41 Zhao Xianglin, “Field research on Li Yuanqing's anti-taxation movement in Xiangfu in 1904,” 153. The Chinese originals are “Kaifeng Xiangfu re le qi, xingbing dazhang Li daye”.

42 Zhao Xianglin, “Field research on Li Yuanqing's anti-taxation movement in Xiangfu in 1904,” 155.

which is Islamic and which differs from the submissive Confucian and Buddhist traditions adhered to by the Han Chinese. In the examples in this article, the Sangpo Hui were the initiators of the antitaxation movement in Huiqing-*fu* and Li Yuanqing, and the Hui people in Zhitai village were the direct leaders of the Xiangfu anti-taxation movement. Such examples of the movements proved their rebellious nature. To explore this topic more deeply, an ethnic minority is always more united than the majority, having stronger collective and in-group awareness; this is particularly apparent during the period of oppression and aggressive treatment.

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