

BY SWORD OR BOOK: STRATEGIES OF INTEGRATION AND TRANSFORMATION
ON THE MING DYNASTY'S NORTHWEST FRONTIER—THE CASE OF NINGXIA
THROUGH THE LENS OF THE JIAJING GAZETTEER

A Thesis
by
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Submitted to the Graduate School
at Appalachian State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

August 2014
Department of History

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Abstract

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Ningxia was an important military base in the early years of the Ming Dynasty. The region served as the first line of defense against constant attacks from Mongol tribes. To secure the area, the Ming state initially sent military governors and, later, court eunuchs to serve above any local government positions still in place. These military governors and eunuchs many aspects of governance in Ningxia well into the 1450s.

In the middle of the fifteenth century, the Ming officials in Ningxia began to use education as a long-term tool to integrate and pacify the region. Confucian temples and primary schools were constructed to be visual markers of imperial majesty and demonstrate the state's power. These institutions were designed to facilitate the civilizing of the Ningxia people and eventually change them from barbarians (*yi*) into ordinary people (*liangmin*) who could be governed easier.

The combination of direct military rule and long-term education programs were crucial components to the Ming state's attempts to govern and integrate Ningxia.

Acknowledgments

My committee members have all been instrumental in helping me finish this manuscript. Dr. Benno Weiner has been an excellent advisor and helped me to push through difficulties and challenges wherever they appeared. Dr. Dorothea Martin-Hoffman provided excellent edits on earlier drafts of the thesis and was exceptionally understanding and willing to work through time constraints. Dr. Wendy Xie guided me through the demanding task of translating sixteenth century Chinese. Dr. Scott Jessee provided exemplary commentary and was willing to work with the committee on short notice. A special thanks to Dianna Johnson, who helped me obtain and use the primary sources needed for this thesis.

To all of you, thank you. All peculiarities or typos remaining in the text below are wholly my own.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Pamela and Richard, who made me into the person I am today.

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**By Sword or Book: Strategies of Integration and Transformation on the Ming
Dynasty’s Northwest Frontier—the Case of Ningxia through the Lens of the Jiajing
Gazetteer**

Introduction:

“If the young boys and apprentices come to this [lecture room to study], isn’t it obvious that they will know their place? If they grow up learning to respect and listen to their teachers, they will then become much easier to instruct. The school will be able to wash away and cleanse the dirty old customs from these young boys and change their lives [for the better].”¹

-Chu Zhai, commenting on how Confucian practices will
“cleanse” the barbarians of Ningxia, 1428.

This quote from a selection in the *Ningxia Gazetteer* is an example of how Ming governors and administrators in Ningxia viewed the potential of the local people in the

¹ Hu Ruli 胡汝砺. *The Jiajing Ningxia Gazetteer* 嘉靖宁夏新志. 1540.
Reproduced in Yinchuan City: Ningxia People’s Book Publishers 宁夏人民出版社,
1982. 190-191.

region. The “dirty customs” from these “Xia people” (as Hu Ruli identifies them in the *Ningxia Gazetteer*), made them difficult to govern, adverse to taxation, and justified larger expense and attention from the Ming than was desirable. Situated along the border of Mongol territory, Ningxia was a vital first line of defense against the barbarians encroaching into Ming space. The Ming used a variety of different military and educational tools to attempt to subdue, control, and civilize the region so that the northwest border could be secured.

These “Xia people” had been semi-pastoral prior to Ming occupation in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. The Ming initially appointed military governors to the region to assume most administrative and defensive matters. During the middle half of the fifteenth century, droughts and famines throughout the southeast provinces of Zhejiang and Jiangsu increased grain and food taxation in Ningxia. The Ming state forced the “Xia people” to turn what had been ancestral pastureland into farmland for rice and millet. If they refused, their land was forcibly taken and settlers from Xian and other parts of Shaanxi and neighboring provinces were brought in to meet the newly increased grain demands.

While the land in Ningxia was under scrutiny for its farming capacity, Mongols outside the Great Wall posed a far greater challenge. Mongols routinely made incursions into Ming territory and Ningxia was one of their key areas of attack. Batu Mongke’s forces made substantial gains into Ningxia territory during the fifteenth century and represented the worst fears of the Ming administration. If Ningxia and parts of the

northwest frontier fell, then Mongols could sweep into the rest of Ming territory with impunity. Although Batu Mongke's attacks were eventually repelled, they only highlighted the growing need to secure the borders in Ningxia.

One of the ways that the Ming attempted to exercise greater control in Ningxia was to directly appoint court eunuchs to serve as governors. This was a substantial step for the Ming. Court eunuchs were not merely gentry but were members of the royal household. In the middle half of the fifteenth century, eunuchs began to be an important governing tool in Ningxia. The military governors appointed previously were then assigned to work directly under his control.

The Ming's ever-increasing military control over the region met with only middling success. The Mongols were generally able to be kept in check (aside from Batu Mongke) through a combination of new fort construction and almost a thousand miles of Ningxia-controlled patrols on the newly expanded Great Wall. However, the strict enforcement of curfews, martial law, and the deconstruction of local government structures engendered distaste from the people in Ningxia. On a few occasions, people in Ningxia burned many *li* of farmland in an open sign of resentment against authoritarian practices.² By the 1450s, it had become clear to the Ming that military occupation alone could not control Ningxia.

² Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 32-34.

The solution a few administrators devised was to educate and civilize the “Xia people” in Ningxia. This marked an important difference in the Ming attitudes toward Ningxia. At first, the Ming tried to occupy the province but they tried to turn the region into an imperial project. Many governors and administrators listed in the *Ningxia Gazetteer* and elsewhere (discussed in Chapter 2) argued that the best use of the Ming’s time and investment in Ningxia was to try and “wash the dirt of barbarity” off of the “Xia people.”

A few methods were employed to this end. A large Confucian temple was built in Yinchuan. Yinchuan had been the most important and populous city in Ningxia since the time of the Xi Xia Dynasty (1038-1227). In the late fifteenth century, a Confucian temple was completed and served as an example of the majesty of the Ming. The large complex was noticeable throughout the city and was lavishly decorated and well-staffed.

The temple doubled as a school where people could come to learn about Confucian values. This was an intentional and specific imperial project that Ming governors began to employ in the latter half of the fifteenth century. Many administrators believed that the “Xia people” could be civilized. They highlighted in internal communications as well as outward edicts how the people in Ningxia knew the relationship between the younger and elder brothers, husband and wife, and father and son. All of these are important Confucian relationships that demonstrate the importance of filial piety, propriety, and upright conduct.

The belief in many of these Ming administrators was that they could use these concepts that the Xia people already possessed in order to teach them about the most important Confucian relationship between the emperor and the people. The relationship was similar to the others in that the senior partner protected and helped the junior partner while the junior partner was subservient and obedient to the senior. The Ming administrators reasoned that if they were able to succeed they could transform the people into those who could pay taxes, serve in the military openly, and not need close and costly administration.

Although the Ming initially controlled Ningxia through military control and eunuch administration, eventually they expanded their imperial project in order to civilize and fundamentally change the nature of the people in Ningxia. Schools and temples served as a way to transform the people and improve their lives. All of this was important to the Ming state because of the defensive and economic interests in Ningxia. Ningxia was an important part of the overall defense network that stretched across the northwest frontier. If the imperial project in Ningxia failed, Mongols would be able to come into other, more vulnerable areas with impunity. It is because of these concerns that Ming invested so heavily in at first protecting and, later, attempting to integrate Ningxia.

Gazetteers as a Primary Source and the *Ningxia Gazetteer*

Some of the best and most valuable historical sources for studying regional history are local gazetteers. Gazetteers had been a thriving genre since some of the

earliest dynasties, and have persisted well into the twentieth century. By the Ming dynasty, every province and most prefectures produced gazetteers fairly regularly. Even large academic or religious institutions occasionally published gazetteers of their own.

Gazetteers were literally a “commentary on a place” (*difangzhi*) and looked a little like modern travel books. However, they served a far different purpose than those modern travel guides. Gazetteers were designed with the intention of governing and administrating. Information about important people, customs, and traditions were of the crucial to successful governance throughout China’s history. The tradition of gazetteer writing was one of the many tools dynasties employed to this end. Collections of gazetteers stored in the capital could inform new officials and scholars of the history and culture of problematic provinces and places. Gazetteers first became important during the Sui Dynasty (581-618) and remained valuable well into the Ming.

Gazetteers content could vary from time and place, but generally followed the same basic pattern. Maps of the region highlighting important landmarks like rivers, mountains, cities, and strategic passes usually started the volumes. Detailed descriptions of the geography, history, and important features of the area followed after the cartographic sections. Once those sections were complete, gazetteers could diverge in content based on the author’s intentions. Common themes were military considerations,

economic interests, character of local peoples, important families and clans, dangerous elements in the society, biographies, and collected literary works from local authors.³

Gazetteers were written generally by high-ranking officials and well-educated gentry. In the Ming dynasty, the vast majority of gazetteer writers achieved the *jinshi* degree. An impressively effective custom required *jinshi* candidates to serve as officials outside of their home provinces to cut down on potential biases and favoritism. This remarkably simple and potent requirement likely did cut down on a tremendous amount of corruption, although that was always a concern throughout China's history.

Because most *jinshi* degree holders and candidates were raised in one of the “big three” provinces in the southeast (Zhejiang, Anhui, and Jiangsu provinces) and had grown accustomed to the lifestyle and culture of the region, many officials hoped for appointments in geographically close regions. Some officials were afforded this luxury, but numerous others were sent elsewhere. Oftentimes officials who were sent to places that were far different from the culture they grew up in.⁴ Where rice and pleasure guardians may have been the norm for wealthy scholars growing up in Suzhou or Hangzhou, appointments to the far western or northern provinces of Sichuan or north of Hebei might require the official to stomach eating yak meat and drinking goat milk tea.

³ Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 208-213.

⁴ The term for this process was zhe 谪, which meant to banish or to relegate a high official to a minor post in an outlying region.

Culture shock in these circumstances was quite common and, sometimes, quite pronounced. Luckily for modern historians, these culture shocked officials noticed and lamented the differences in these distant regions. Gazetteer writers lived and worked in their assigned region for long periods of time and (hopefully) picked up local languages and cultural norms. The commentary these writers provide on distant border regions are invaluable and are often some of the best and most complete primary sources on minority groups during the Ming. At the height of the dynasty, well over a thousand gazetteers from all over the empire filled countless tens of thousands of pages of commentaries. Sadly, many of these gazetteers have since been lost. Unsurprisingly, the regions with the most extant gazetteers are the more populous and economically prosperous southern and southeastern coastal provinces and Hebei.⁵ These regions simply had a better developed literati culture with more libraries—and therefore more chances to have books survive into the modern era—than similar provinces in the interior and periphery.

Of the few gazetteers that are extant for regions away from China's cultural center, only one of them focuses on northern Shaanxi province. While there are fragments of other gazetteers that detail parts of far western China, the “New Gazetteer from the Jiajing Period” (*Jiajing Ningxia Xinzhi*) is the only complete work that focuses on parts of northwest China.⁶ There are almost no extant gazetteers for western China,

⁵ Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 213.

⁶ Since it is the only extant gazetteer from Ningxia, it will be referred to simply as the *Ningxia Xinzhi* or the *Ningxia Gazetteer*.

one of few is the *Ningxia Gazetteer*. This is partly because of how many regions in western China were autonomous (Tibet, for example) or difficult to control and therefore to staff with Confucian literati (as in Yunnan).

Ningxia was incorporated into Shaanxi province after it was conquered and brought into submission during the early decades of the Ming dynasty. Prior to Mongol occupation and the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), the Xi Xia state (1038-1227) ruled over modern day Ningxia. The Xi Xia was a large dynasty that rivaled the Northern Jin and Southern Song in size, military might, and influence on East Asia. The capital of the Xi Xia, Yinchuan, has remained Ningxia's most important city into the modern era. In the *Ningxia Gazetteer*, Yinchuan and Lingzhou feature as the two most prominent cities.

While the Xi Xia were as powerful as other contemporaneous Chinese dynasties, they were culturally quite distinct. Founded by pastoral Tanguts, the people in Ningxia had much more in common with their northern, rather than their southern and eastern, neighbors. Buddhism became an important part of everyday life in twelfth century Ningxia and local sects blended these new ideas with local beliefs and traditions. This syncretic mix of Buddhism and traditional beliefs lasted long enough to be recorded and commented on in the *Ningxia Gazetteer* in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. By the Ming period, a large Muslim population also resided in Ningxia, although the *Ningxia Gazetteer* has very little to say about those people. Throughout the Ming, attitudes were neutral or accepting towards Muslim and they were generally allowed to live and worship as they pleased.

When the Ming entered Ningxia in the latter half of the fourteenth century, it was as conquerors, not as liberators. The people in Ningxia had far more in common with the Mongol Yuan dynasty than they did with any Chinese administration. As will be discussed in Chapter 1, the people in Ningxia openly resisted Ming occupation. Ningxia was unlike other areas where the Chinese were simply reconquering or appropriating traditionally “Chinese” areas, but instead was a place of occupation.

Chapter 1:

By the Sword--Early Military Attempts to Subdue Ningxia

Introduction: Attempts at Martial Control as Detailed in the Ningxia Gazetteer

Ningxia was important to the Ming for a variety of reasons. Yinchuan and Lingzhou served as key military defenses against roaming Mongols across the Great Wall and were the first line of defense tasked with preventing incursions into more established Ming regions. The Ming placed such a heavy emphasis on defense in Ningxia that officials there were responsible for the defense of almost one thousand miles of critical perimeter guards on the Ming's northwest frontier. Ming troops and local militias learned to coexist along these patrols and the *Ningxia Gazetteer* recounts how the pressures from the Ming government continually influenced attitudes towards integration and fraternization between government and local soldiers.

Ningxia additionally attracted prolonged military attention from the Ming because of its importance to the rest of the dynasty economically. Famines and draughts in the southeast led to massive crop failures. The Ming's response was to increase grain tax burdens in those regions as well as in provinces that traditionally were not heavily farmed. Shaanxi and Ningxia in particular experienced almost a doubling of grain tax burdens throughout the sixteenth century. Desert lines the northern stretch of Ningxia and much of the farmable land had been used as pastureland since the Xi Xia Dynasty.

One proposed solution to these tax pressures was to convert historical pasturelands around Yinchuan and Lingzhou into farmlands to grow rice and millet. To achieve this goal, people in Ningxia were required to turn their ancestral lands into farmland or, if they were unwilling or unable to do so, the land was taken from them and given to Han settlers. The locals in Ningxia frequently and violently opposed these reforms as attacks on their traditional heritage.⁷ The *Ningxia Gazetteer* details how the “Xia” people rose up and burned many *li* of farmland after government-led attempts to bring in settlers and farmers. This provoked the Ming to increase military presence in Ningxia and eventually directly appoint eunuchs to control the region. This pattern of military control and response demonstrates the importance the Ming placed on controlling and placating Ningxia.

The *Jiajing Ningxia Xinzhi* begins with a preface bemoaning an earlier version of a Ningxia gazetteer. The preface asks, “The gazetteer is already forty years old, and for that long time people have suffered; why not engage in textual criticism? [*kaozheng*]?”⁸ The practice of precise textual criticism (most closely analogous with modern philology) was growing during the latter half of the Ming Dynasty. Intellectual movements that sought to reinterpret and better understand old Confucian texts eventually bled over into other types of written works.⁹ In Ningxia, a scholar named Shou Li was reading the

⁷ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 32-34.

⁸ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 1.

⁹ The School of Evidential Learning was an important intellectual movement that started in the late Ming. The School consisted of scholars who sought to find the wisdom

extant gazetteer and noticed a litany of poor translations, misinformation, and outdated facts. He encouraged the creation of a new, revised gazetteer and eventually Hu Ruli was assigned to the job.

The new gazetteer was designed to build off and complete the work of the previous version's author, Ting Qingwang. Ting died when he was seventy and left the gazetteer incomplete. That original gazetteer remains lost today, but the revised *Jiajing Ningxia Xinzhi* retains much of the basic form and function of Ting's original work. All gazetteers, were designed to provide an on-the-field look at the important locations, practices, idiosyncrasies, and politics of a particular region. They acted as primers or guidebooks that could be disseminated to ministers traveling to a region for official visits. Copies were also kept at the capital so that officials there could make more informed judgments about administration in a particular region. Gazetteers were collected from every province's most important cities, smaller towns, and occasionally a few other important places. These gazetteers were an important part of the bureaucratic process that helps to explain how the Ming were able to control and administer large areas efficiently.¹⁰

of the past through exact, careful research. Their methods were similar to modern philological techniques; single words were scrutinized and debated until a higher understanding could be reached. See my previous work, *How Enlightened Was Qing China? How Kaozhengxue Scholarship Almost Sparked an Intellectual Revolution: Honors Thesis*, for a thorough analysis of some of the main players in the movement.

¹⁰ Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 209-213.

The *Jiajing Ningxia Xinzhi* was similar in form to most other gazetteers. There is an initial, quite lengthy, section detailing the particular geography of the region (where the more general term, *dizhi*, comes from). Rivers, crossings, bridges, walls, forts, and mountains are all discussed with excruciating detail in these sections. These sections were intended to serve as a guide that could help facilitate the creation of defensive fortifications.

In Ningxia, these defensive locations and geographic particularities were situated in the context of how they protected the dynasty's interests. The way the hills surrounded Ningxia and the path the Yellow River and the Great Wall took through the cities in the region was important information for administrators because it protected what the Ming viewed as an important economic asset. As pressures to feed an expanding population weighed on the Ming, Ningxia and Shaanxi province emerged as increasingly important centers of grain production. It was through this important context that the *Ningxia Gazetteer* framed initial military efforts.

Food Crises Place New Stresses on the Frontiers

Ningxia was an important place both because of its recent history and because of its newfound strategic importance. Expansions of the Great Wall under the Hongzhi Emperor (r. 1487-1505) pushed Chinese military presence deep into Gansu province. Outside of the initial costs of construction, the newly expanded perimeter needed to be regularly maintained and guarded appropriately. The Hongzhi Emperor divided the new sections of the wall into nine separate "garrisons" that were each responsible for

maintaining, patrolling, defending, and staffing large sections of the wall. The government installed at Ningxia was initially assigned with guarding an almost seven hundred mile section of the wall that stretched from Lanjing to the border of Gansu province.¹¹ During the reign of the Longqing Emperor (r. 1537-1572), Ningxia was additionally tasked with another three hundred mile garrison that ran in a parallel direction between Guyuan and Gansu province. By this point, the administration in Ningxia was responsible for overseeing almost one thousand miles of critical perimeter on the Ming's northwest frontier.

The threats to Ningxia and the Ming's frontier were numerous from both within and without. Ningxia was not always part of the Han Chinese sphere of influence and control. The Xi Xia that predated the Mongol conquest ruled from Yinchuan and was a powerful rival to the Southern Song and Northern Jin dynasties in the twelfth century. The hybrid Xi Xia state employed Chinese, Tibetan, and Uyghur people in its bureaucracy and was culturally distinct from Han-ruled dynasties. The Xi Xia were one of Genghis Kahn's first targets and were quickly incorporated into the Mongolian Empire. The region remained in Mongol territory and was later annexed into the Yuan Dynasty.

Importantly, the Xia people in the region were not nomadic like the conquering Mongols. Ruth Dannel argues that the Mongols even specifically recorded that the

¹¹ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 28-29.

Tangut rulers were more sedentary. Quoting from *The Secret History of the Mongols*,

Dunnell explains:

Styled “Burkhan-khan” (the Uyghur word for ‘Buddha’ [Burkhan] elided with the steppe royal title), the Xia ruler mentioned above promises Genghis, “[w]e shall become your right wing and we shall serve you.” But he warns that because the Tanghuts live in permanent camps and walled towns, when the Mongols go to combat, “We won’t be able to rush off and fight beside you...”¹²

This selection from *The Secret History of the Mongols* indicates how the Xia people were more sedentary than nomadic. Interestingly, neither *The Secret History of the Mongols* nor the *Ningxia Gazetteer* mention any Muslims in the region. Because the Mongols had been well acquainted with Buddhism but had less traditional contact with Islam, it wouldn’t be surprising for a Muslim population in Ningxia to completely pass under the radar. In the *Ningxia Gazetteer*, Hu was traditionally quite thorough in his description of the cultures and customs of the various cities and regions in Ningxia but doesn’t mention any Muslim presence. This seems to suggest that the people in Ningxia during the Ming were “Xia people” (not an ethnic demarcation today, but probably refers to Tangut or other semi-pastoral people) rather than Hui as are commonly associated with the region in the modern era. The semi-sedentary nature of the people in Ningxia explains both the presence of large cities (Yinchuan, Lingzhou) and the importance of pastureland to people from the region.

¹² Ruth Dunnell, *Xi Xia: The First Mongol Conquest, in Genghis Khan and The Mongol Empire*, edited by William Fitzhugh, Morris Rossabi, and William Honeychurch (Hong Kong: Airphoto International Ltd., 2013), 158.

After the Yuan fell, it was anything but certain that Ningxia and surrounding areas would be incorporated into the Ming dynasty. The cultural, religious, political, and historical traditions of the Xia people distanced them from immediate and peaceful annexation into the Ming Dynasty. It took the combined force of both the Hongwu and Yongle Emperors' military campaigns to expand Ming influence into areas in the Northwest like Ningxia. Even when the Hongwu Emperor conquered the region, the difficulties for the Ming were just beginning.

The entirety of the former Xi Xia was not incorporated into the Ming state. North of the Great Wall sections in Ningxia and western areas towards modern-day Xinjiang remained outside of the Ming's grasp and particularly troublesome. The Ningxia Gazetteer explains how the regions immediately outside of Ningxia perpetually threatened the borders. Hu writes, "The northwest of Ningxia is of extreme strategic importance, but just beyond the Yellow River armies raze the land and rebels betray the country. We can't even begin to understand the ravages of war [in that region]."¹³ From Hu's own perspective and other accounts in other official sources, it is clear that the area north of Ningxia was consistently problematic.¹⁴ Raids into Ming-controlled areas were common—at least into the Xuande period (r. 1425-1435), as far as the Ningxia Gazetteer suggests—and were led by "barbarians" north of the Great Wall.¹⁵ During the time of the

¹³ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 3.

¹⁴Sections of the *Mingshilu*, particularly the selections on the Hongwu emperor, touch on this topic.

¹⁵ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 32-33.

Yongle Emperor, Ningxia and the surrounding areas to the northwest were hotbeds of military problems.

The area directly controlled by the Ming was not less prone to problems. The vast majority of people living in Ningxia were not Han but rather a syncretic mix of indigenous pastoral people that Hu frequently refers to as the “Xia people” (*xiaren*). Whether Hu sees them as the people who inhabited the historical Xi Xia or the people who simply lived in contemporary Ningxia, he clearly saw them as different from himself. When Hu does not refer to the people as “Xia people,” he uses the more broad term “barbarian” (*yi*).¹⁶ *The Ming Histories* report that Shaanxi province had roughly four million people by 1393, making it one of the largest provinces outside of the Yangzi River watershed, with much of that four million located in or around Xian.¹⁷ Since Ningxia was not specifically recognized as a province (and, eventually, a Hui nationality Autonomous Region) until the twentieth century, accurate estimates about Ningxia's population during the Ming are difficult to ascertain. However, Yinchuan had served as the capital of the Xi Xia and was a major city during the Yuan dynasty. By the

¹⁶ *Yi* meant more than simply a barbarous person. The Han-Chinese controlled dynasties called those people who were “closer” to Han culture *yi* as a way to designate them as different from and more civilized than other less civilized people. See the introduction to Stevan Harrell, ed., *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 3-6 for more detail.

¹⁷ Charles Hucker, *Ming Government*, in *Cambridge History of China Volume 8: The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, Part 2*, eds. Denis Twitchett and Frederick Mote (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 14.

fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Yinchuan and the greater Ningxia region were major, albeit peripheral, population centers.

Ningxia's distance from the capital made it difficult to govern effectively and easily, but its distance did not remove the region from the larger concerns of the dynasty. The problems in Ningxia were closely related to administrative issues elsewhere in the Ming state. For example, during the Yongle Emperor's reign rapid population increases strained the already challenged rice-growing region in the south and southeast. New taxes only payable in grain were instituted throughout much of the major growing centers in the south in order to feed growing populations in far-away regions. Excessive taxes and an inefficient system of conversion that measured grain not in raw weight but in value of silver, cotton, or cloth led to an enormous amount of grain simply disappearing from the imperial record. The rapid reconstruction and renovation of the Grand Canal was intended to ease much of this burden, but the heavy tax demands of the project only exacerbated issues. Even worse, during periods of poor harvest, this system put an almost unbearable stress upon peasants. From 1419-1422, for instance, a massive drought led to widespread crop failures throughout Zhejiang province. Of a quota of almost 32 million piculs of grain, only 23 million piculs entered imperial granaries.¹⁸

¹⁸Hok-Lam Chan, *The Chien-wen, Yung-lo, Hung-his, and Hsuan-te reigns, 1399-1435*, in *The Cambridge History of China Volume 7: The Ming Dynasty 1368-1644, Part I*, eds. Denis Twitchett and F. W. Mote (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 254.

These poor harvests in the southeast meant that other regions had to overproduce to meet annual quotas. One of the areas that the Ming targeted for this project was Ningxia. Starting in the early 1400s, large areas of Ningxia were appropriated for growing grain. The Ningxia Gazetteer explains how large sections of grassland were turned into farmland over a multi-year period.¹⁹ However, the locals frequently were not as cooperative as the Ming government might have liked or intended. Banditry and raiding were commonplace, and it was not until late in the Yongle period and into Xuande's reign that parts of the region were internally stable. Many of these bandits and vagabonds were allowed to legally settle and own land after revolts had been put down. Additionally, Xian guards, families, and peasants were sometimes uprooted in times of trouble and were either directed to or found themselves in the areas around Ningxia.²⁰

During the Hongzhi period, the grain and salt tax requirements from Shanxi province (that then included much of Gansu and all of Ningxia) were doubled. In an edict to an imperial investigator Hongzhi said:

Shanxi will now be required to provide twice the amount of grain and salt [that it was previously]. The investigator of Shanxi in charge of the food and grain, have soldiers work previously unused land to grow food again (*tuntian*). I also put you in control of the storehouse and grain stores in Ningxia...Do not procrastinate or fail to be diligent, punish traitors and evil-doers, [do not let] your servants practice fraud or cheat, [do not let] the soldiers go without meals and proper food, and pardon minor offenses.²¹

¹⁹ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 23-25.

²⁰ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 38.

²¹ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 34.

Very clearly, the doubling of grain and salt taxes on this more distant province was directly connected with grain crises in the southeast. This tax demonstrates a deliberate attempt to further diversify and expand food-producing areas to feed an ever-growing population. In particular, the burden of grain production was to be carried by Ningxia and its surrounding areas, rather than the far more populous Xian in the southern portion of the same province. Ningxia was quickly becoming an invaluable but volatile region for the Ming dynasty.

Dangerous Troublemakers and the Strict Response from Beijing

The mixing of Ming officials, peasants, and state-sponsored farmers who moved into Ningxia alongside Tanguts and Hui Muslims occasionally led to violent outbursts.

The *Ningxia Gazetteer* details one such incident:

Before this [decree sent down by the Jiajing Emperor], opinionated and upset people continually harassed and criticized the government [in Ningxia]. Because of this, government officials hid or fled. To this day, troublemakers and locals say that they want to reduce the government that they see as arbitrary and dictatorial. We lost 12 *qing* of farmland [in the resulting riots], 9 *mu* of grain...²²

The gazetteer continues by explaining how the rioting and rebellious peasants put a substantial portion of the badly-needed farmland to the torch. In this particular section, Hu does not say whether or not the troublemakers were like him and transplanted from other regions or if they were part of the local population. However, elsewhere in the

²² Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 32-33.

gazetteer Hu frequently refers to the “barbarians” (*yi* 夷) that plague the government and people of Ningxia. The fact that he makes this distinction elsewhere, but specifically chooses not to use the word for this story suggests that perhaps the people of Ningxia had undergone a significant enough sinicization process by the Jiajing period that even though they were rebelling, Hu considered them non-barbarians.²³

The way that Ningxia was governed shifted dramatically based upon political opinions in Beijing. When the Yongle Emperor initially set up the garrisons and administration at Ningxia, it was almost entirely military-oriented. Hu says, “Yongle [was the] first to send administration to Ningxia. He set up Ningxia's government with tight security enforcement and proclaimed that a census should be taken by the military.”²⁴ Unfortunately for historians, the results of that census have been lost. The “tight security” that Yongle set up not only removed the local garrison and replaced it with Ming troops, but it also enforced curfews for the commoners. The desire to conduct the census specifically with the military guard paints a picture of local intimidation. Yongle created, in essence, a state of martial law in Ningxia and in Lingzhou (to the south of Yinchuan) in particular. It was this initial martial governance that sowed such

²³See Hu's discussion of the Xi Xia state in the introduction and proceeding chapter of the *Ningxia Jiajing Xinzhi* for his full description of these people. Surprisingly to modern readers, Hu identifies the “Xia People” (*xiaren*) as the dominant and major force in the region. This suggests that the strong Muslim presence in Ningxia is relatively recent.

²⁴ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 32.

dissent among the people that they continually rebelled and burned fields, as mentioned above.

During the reign of the Zhengtong Emperor (1435-1449, 1457-1464), Ningxia was ruled with a similarly tight focus from Beijing. This time, however, the emperor wanted to have far more direct control in the area. Zhengtong sent a court eunuch, Wang Qing, to serve as the military governor in Ningxia. This was a direct order from the emperor, and Hu records the edict that appointed Wang Qing to his post in this way:

The emperor's orders say: Court Eunuch Wang Qing, you are now specially appointed to assemble army and administrators in Zhangtai [a fort] to guard all of Ningxia. Repair the city wall, train the horse regiments in the city, capture thieves and traitors, and always watch for outside attacks. Everything must go to supporting the troops [stationed there], you should work with the imperial inspector already there and work together to govern the place; you must not let individual viewpoints, stubbornness, or individual biases to get in the way and, if there are disagreements, keep them quiet. As the royal Eunuch, accept this decree and be exceptionally law-abiding and serve as a model for both the army and civilians. Work diligently day and night to repair both military affairs and the political situation so that the soldiers will be at ease. When our military might has risen up, all of the inhabitants of Ningxia will feel proper peace and contentment. Foreigners outside of the borders will submit from awe and the border will be taken care of. You can't allow your servants or officers to cause harm or disorder to disrupt your personal integrity...²⁵

Zhengtong's missive to Wang Qing is significant and is an important example of the type of control that the crown wished to exert upon border regions. Right from the beginning of the document, Zhengtong stresses the value of governing through both military and civilian channels. Instead of delegating military and civilian affairs to separate offices, Zhengtong specifically appoints Wang Qing to handle both roles. Wang was required to

²⁵ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 32.

attend to and work with the [Han Chinese] imperial inspector already in the city. While this is similar to the “tight security” that Yongle had set up in the region a few decades prior, by the Zhengtong reign the perspectives in the capital shifted enough to place an even larger role of governing to a singular court eunuch.

Eunuchs in Control

The policy of sending court eunuchs to govern certain regions and places was not unusual. By the Zhengtong period, there were thousands of court eunuchs and many were well-educated and, for the most part, reliable eyes and ears for the throne. While the disasters that eunuchs would eventually bring upon the Ming state in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries are well known, during the fifteenth century eunuchs were still mostly an incredibly useful resource for any competent ruler. Because of their education and importance to the throne, eunuchs were not infrequently sent to serve as minor officials throughout well-controlled regions.²⁶

However, eunuchs were only very rarely sent to border regions. In the southwest, for example, emperors were apt to give local chieftains substantial autonomy so long as they paid a certain amount of tax and swore fealty to the Ming. Eventually, it was hoped, the chieftains and their people would become so civilized due their dealings with Chinese officials that it would be possible to integrate their entire realms into larger provinces. This was an old technique first employed during the Han dynasty and is often referred to

²⁶ Mote, *Imperial China*, 602.

as “using the barbarians to govern the barbarians.” The benefits of this type of rule are numerous, and perhaps chief among them is the fact that you can leave the cost of substantial governance mainly to the chiefs already in place. This system was known as the native chieftain system (*tusi*) and was a common practice since the Song dynasty. During the Ming, the process was revitalized and was once again an important way that the state could control southwest border regions.²⁷

Because of the prevalence and rising popularity of the chieftain system in the Zhengtong period, it is somewhat surprising that a court eunuch was appointed to specifically rule over Ningxia. The efficacy of these *tusi* systems is partially what made them popular, and an edict from the junior vice-minister of rites, Zhou Hongmo, is informative about the general attitude towards the system. In 1480 he wrote a memorial that said:

I am a native of Hsu-chou prefecture. I am quite familiar with the tribal people's circumstances in Hsu-chou. In its four counties of Jung, Hung, Yun, and Kao, native chieftainships existed as long ago as in the Sung and Yuan dynasties. Tribal peoples governed tribal peoples; they were kept on a loose reign and that was all. The present dynasty replaced that system with regularly appointed civil service officials (*liu guan*) who could not speak the tribal languages and were uninformed about tribal matters. Their underlings, therefore, were free to engage

²⁷For a far more in-depth description of this system and how integration worked in the Southwest—particularly Yunnan—see John Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist: China's Colonization of Guizhou, 1200-1700* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center), 2007. Herman argues that the last three imperial governments continually attempted to bring indigenous-controlled Guizhou (Modern-day Yunnan) into state control via force, diplomatic methods like the *tusi* system, and, eventually, cultural conversion. Also see Leo Shin, *The Making of the Chinese State: Ethnicity and Expansion on the Ming Borderlands*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

in unrestrained oppression, inciting uprisings among them... When they [the natives] captured a Chinese, they would bind him to a tree and shoot arrows at him, saying: “you have been a plague on us all too long.” During the T'ien-shun and Ch'eng-hua reigns they repeatedly committed detestable acts... Their response [to government abuse] was then to pillage and plunder... In this way [by using the native chieftain system] the Han Chinese will not harass the tribal people, and the tribal people will not look with the enmity upon the Han. They shall then coexist in peace ever after.²⁸

Zhou's testimony of native Miao people in Sichuan and other border regions is very similar to the records that Hu provides of people in Ningxia. The cry of “you have been a plague on us all too long!” that the Miao supposedly shouted when they captured Chinese officials is reminiscent of local distrust of Ningxia military governance. Military abuses and mistreatment of minority populations was common throughout all of the Ming's border regions, and it created as much dissent and distrust in Sichuan as it did in Ningxia.

From Zhou's, and many others' points of view in Beijing, the human and economic costs of direct military or civil administration in the far border regions was simply too great. Frederick Mote translated the above memorial from Zhou Hongmo and followed with his own perspective about why the native chieftain system was problematic. He says:

That advice [from Zhou's memorial] was approved at the highest levels, but not implemented. Peace was restored by military means, to last for a decade or so. But the general restiveness of the Miao people in the southwest provinces, like that of most of the subject peoples, was cause for unending concern. In many places, to be sure, the native chieftainships persisted through the dynasty and into

²⁸*Ming Shi Lu*, 198, p. 2b ff. Translation from F. W. Mote, *The Ch'eng-hua and Hung-chih reigns, 1465-1505* in *The Cambridge History of China Volume 7: The Ming Dynasty 1368-1644, Part 1*, edited by F. W. Mote and Denis Twitchett (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 383-384.

the next, but those were mostly in the most peripheral regions. Where strategic concerns of the Ming state were perceived to be at stake, the relative autonomy of the non-Han minorities, then as later, was made to give way. During the mid-Ming there was still room for aboriginal tribes and nations to cede their ground and move farther on into more remote border regions.²⁹

According to Mote, the places where “strategic concerns of the Ming were perceived to be at stake,” were considered too important or risky to involve chieftains in governing parts of the state. The implication, then, is that Sichuan and other places in the far west and south that had minority peoples were of concern to the court in Beijing, but not to the extent that they needed to worry directly about the situation. Contrast this to the way that Ningxia was administered, at least in the early part of its occupation. Court eunuchs were sent directly to govern and serve as military governor and act as a direct link to the emperor himself.

The “civil service officials” (*liu guan*) that Zhou mentions in his memorial also worked in Ningxia, but they served under the local military governor.³⁰ During the Zhengtong reign, that military governor was court eunuch Wang Qing and his civil servants were civil in name only. Wang was instructed to oversee all aspects of their affairs and to make sure that their failures and abuses were covered up and hidden. In Ningxia, these civil service officials did not rank above military officers, as they did in other areas, but instead were supposed to work directly for them.

²⁹Mote, *Ch'eng-hua and Hung-chih reigns*, 384.

³⁰They start to be mentioned mostly after the end of the Zhengtong reign. See Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 37-38 for examples.

The Question of Integration: Changing Attitudes towards Fraternization

In a separate missive from the Zhengtong emperor, Ren Jie was summoned to serve under Wang Qing. His edict says:

The Emperor's instructions are: Military governor Ren Jie, you should count and organize all of the military officers, support the court eunuchs in integrating local and imperial officials, as well as the vice-director of military affairs and altogether protect the place of Ningxia. Train the horsemen, repair the city walls and moat, nurture peace between the army and the people, and safeguard the borders. Find thieves and rebels with the help of those in the [local] government and always be watching for opportunities or moments of war in order to defend and maintain peace on the borders. All of the troops and the military officers must work together with the imperial inspectors to make sure that everyone is preparing for the defense of the city. You must not allow yourself to become biased or stubborn [to particular officials or people] as irregular behavior will ruin matters. [By taking this post] you will receive the heavy responsibilities and burdens of royal government and you must strive to be impartial and fair in all you do. Nurture the troops and build up a strong fighting spirit, but don't embezzle money or seek personal profit [and stop the people's suffering], or you will incur a lifetime of suffering and regret. If you disobey these orders, supreme blame will be placed upon you.³¹

Perhaps the most striking part of this particular edict is that the Zhengtong Emperor instructs Ren to “support the court eunuchs in integrating local and imperial officials...” Ren was instructed to bring together Han Chinese government officials with native officials already in place in Ningxia. Similar to the native chieftain system, local officials were given important posts, but in a unique twist they were being integrated into an

³¹ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 33.

entirely Chinese system. The system designed for use in Ningxia, at least up to the Zhengtong period, was intended to bring local officials into an already functioning bureaucracy, with the eunuch Wang Qing at its head.

This concept of integration is important, because it is fundamentally different from the approach the Ming took to appropriating other border lands. “Integration” in the context of local officials likely meant to simply join and work together, but the implication is significant. As previously shown, in other border regions the Ming was more than willing to give local rulers some autonomy through the native chieftain system. Alternatively, some regions (like Sichuan) saw more pronounced military occupation and attempts at direct military control. At least by the Zhengtong period, a fusion of these two methods was implemented.

The picture that Hu paints of the military governors working towards this integration process is not very positive. He explains that a group of military governors in the Jiajing period specifically broke their orders and got blackout drunk the evening before an important military exercise. Hu says, “In the summer of Jiajing's 19th year, an official under the military governor held a drinking party and all of the common troops attended. They did this just before they were to go into battle and [were therefore] spreaders of fallacies to deceive the people. They were beheaded.”³² Hu does not specifically identified who ordered the beheading, but the implication from this

³² Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 34.

selection's place in the text is that the military governors brought great shame to the government and did not help to establish the kind of confidence required for military rule to run smoothly. Again, this is reminiscent of Zhou's account of incompetent and ineffectual officers ruining the locals' perception of the Ming's ability to effectively rule.

A few years before Zhengtong became emperor, the Xuande Emperor sent an imperial inspector to serve under the Ningxia governor. Among the various rules and requirements that Xuande gave to Yang Shouli was the mandate that he was not to allow “local people to join the army.”³³ It was common for militias and guard patrols to recruit local people into their ranks because it was otherwise almost impossible to keep a good number of government-issued troops in distant borderlands. In Ningxia, the Xuande emperor explicitly forbade this practice. While local chieftains in other areas were allowed to maintain some semblance of a militia, locals in Ningxia were not given that freedom.

Xuande's direct order to avoid recruiting local troops was short-lived. Late into Zhengtong's life, the court recognized that proper garrisons could not be maintained with only government-trained troops. High ranking officials in Beijing frequently debated how to manage border regions and the political wind at the end of Zhengtong's career took a rapid reversal. Instead of using only government military, a special governor would be sent to provinces to raise local militias composed entirely of native troops. Zhengtong reluctantly appointed just such an official to Ningxia, only to have the office

³³ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 34.

revoked in Chenghua's twentieth year (1484). Less than two years later, during the Hongzhi reign, another political wind blew through, Beijing and the office was reinstated. This back-and-forth was common throughout the dynasty and it was not unusual for attitudes and administrations to change dramatically over a short period of time.³⁴

During the Hongzhi reign, the emperor specially appointed a minister named Fu Zhong to be in charge of the newly reinstated position of the “Commander of Local Warfare.” He directly addressed Fu Zhong and detailed his responsibilities and duties for the two-decade defunct office. He told Fu:

The Emperor's orders say: Fu Zhong [you] will be specially appointed to be in charge of the “Local Warfare” position in Ningxia. You will command the guard and garrison [in Ningxia]. Find [and recruit] 3000 just and righteous local troops to be in your guard, make sure the cavalry's armor and supplies are in good repair, diligently train [the troops], foster a strong drive [within the troops], and prepare fresh water for all. Meet at Hua Ma Chi and eliminate thieves and brigands around Lingzhou, even if their command threatens your troops, you must unite your efforts and kill them. You must not shy away from battle [even if it is difficult] and you must devote your attention to the trouble on the frontier. The Royal Court recognizes your superior skill in these matters and hereby appoints you to this role with exceptional honor. You must be exceptional in your upholding of the law, you must be benevolent (*ren*) to those beneath you, courageous against your foes, and assign people to posts with good intentions. Use common military tactics and understanding, listen to the counsel of others, train your troops, and listen to the help of the imperial inspector. If some people's viewpoints are stubbornly biased [against one another about what to do], perhaps they will quarrel with each other, perhaps sections of the army won't work together, and if the officer's voice is soft, then the suffering will not be small. Strive carefully and justly.³⁵

³⁴ The *tusi* system was not static, even during the Ming. The policies that allowed local chieftains relative autonomy were being challenged by the mid-Ming period. For more discussion of this issue, see Shin, *Making of the Chinese State*, 73, 193.

³⁵ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 34-35.

Fu's task to find three thousand local soldiers demonstrates how dire the military situation on the Ningxia borders had become. Lingzhou was one of the first settlements controlled by Ming forces when Yongle began heavily reinforcing the area and now, during the Hongzhi reign, required the defense of a native militia outside of the Ming army regulars. These “local warfare” troops were to operate independently and outside of normal army troops and serve as additional reinforcements to already stretched-thin patrols.

The fact that the Ming was willing to recruit local militias in Ningxia may have indicated that the Xia People had been controlled long enough to be considered “commoners” and participate in the army freely.³⁶ There is a variety of reasons to dismiss this viewpoint. First, the edict to Fu specifically addresses the potential for “quarreling,” stubbornly-biased” people that he might recruit into his militia. It is unlikely that Hongzhi would refer to these potential soldiers in this manner if they were Han or, at the least, reasonably sinicized.³⁷ Second, Hu presents this Hongzhi memorial in the *Ningxia Gazetteer* directly after and in contrast with a previous Zhengtong edict that specifically stated that no native troops were to be allowed to join the army. It appears that he is attempting to demonstrate a change in attitude over time or, perhaps,

³⁶Although Hu never uses the term, *min* or *liangmin* referenced normal, everyday people who typically paid taxes and were not rebellious. Instead he uses the term *xiaren*, Xia People, to reference the people in Ningxia. Still, the fact that these Xia people were being invited into military posts represents a marked shift in attitudes towards the natives from earlier military operations. For the distinctions of these terms and words and what they meant to people in the Ming dynasty, see Hok-lam Chan, *Chien-wen*, 254-255.

³⁷It is rare that a text specifically refers to a particular group of people by name; it is assumed the reader understands who is being referred to. Five hundred years later, this can pose a challenge.

success in civilizing the Xia people. Last, the very name “Local Warfare” position insinuates a kind of grass roots participation in the army. These three points taken together strongly suggest that, at least by the Hongzhi period, the Ming's military position in Ningxia was so precarious they were willing to bring native people into the military or, at the very least, began to open up to the possibility of trusting these local soldiers.

The fort that Hongzhi mentions specifically to Fu in his memorial was an important strategic crossroads for the Ming to retain control along the western edge of the Ordos Desert. Hua Ma Chi was initially a raised earth style fort that sat in between two sections of the Great Wall. The area around Yinchuan is one of the few places where multiple sections of wall meet and required a special fortification to keep Mongols beyond the wall. By the Zhengtong era, Hua Ma Chi was substantially reinforced and had become a command post for garrisons that patrolled north and south along both walls. It is telling that the Ming were willing to entrust such an important strategic position at least partially to the defense of potentially untrustworthy native people.

In the early years of Zhengde's reign, another office was created to specifically defend Hua Ma Chi. The “East Pass” Commander was the “Local Military” Commander's counterpart. The Local Military Commander was required to lead militia troops, but the East Pass Commander was in charge of government troops at the same location. Even though, at this point, local and government troops appeared to be fighting alongside one another, they were organized into completely different regiments. Zhengde instructs the East Pass Commander to “Always be vigilant and alert, superintend

all of the government troops, always serve at the head of your troops and lead by example, always look for opportunities to suppress and kill rebels.”³⁸ Again, even though the danger surrounding Ningxia was great enough to warrant the recruitment of militia, there was still an official difference between government-trained Han Chinese troops and local soldiers. Even though the Ming had occupied Ningxia for over a century and a half, the region was still divided between Han and outsider.

Further provisions were made for other important passes. To the west of Yinchuan, a small outpost town called Zhuang Lang served as an early warning for potential Tartar raids into Ming-controlled territory. The pass was apparently so poorly-defended that the minister of war visited the area during Zhengde's reign. Hu recounts, “In Zhengde’s eighth year, the Minister of War Wang Ji went to the pass to monitor the area and noted that the poor fortifications on the western pass needed to be improved.”³⁹ Zhengde appointed Zhang Yu to the rebuilding and renovating task and detailed his instructions in a memorial that Hu records. Among a variety of other details, the emperor expected Zhang to work exclusively with government, rather than local militia, troops. The entrance to the west was to be guarded by Chinese soldiers instead of with locally-trained troops.

³⁸ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 35.

³⁹ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 37.

The Zhengde emperor also instructed Zhang to be careful in his dealings with locals. The emperor wrote:

Don't disturb local leaders, don't disturb the population into forced corvée and labor, or you will suffer from lack of trust and ruin your personal integrity. If anyone disobeys [you], you must not forgive them. The Emperor himself expects you to not overlook anything in your affairs.⁴⁰

The “lack of trust” that Zhengde worried about is reminiscent of the rebellions and dissent that the Ming had always encountered while occupying Ningxia. Even by the time of the Zhengde reign, there was still a very real and present worry that officials would mistreat locals to the point of revolt. The memorial's wording is also quite straightforward and sincere: “The Emperor himself expects you to not overlook anything in your affairs.” In other words, Zhang Yu was being warned that disruption of the peace and exploitation of the local people was a serious offense.

Hu notes in the *Ningxia Gazetteer* a variety of other important entrances into Ningxia. The middle pass that focused on Lingzhou and the eastern fort Xing Yu Ying received increased attention in the Jiajing and Zhengde periods, respectively. Lingzhou, long an important economic center in the region, became an important base of military operations in the Ming. By the Chenghua period, the city had expanded in population enough to rival the importance of Yinchuan.⁴¹ The Jiajing emperor wrote a memorial

⁴⁰Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 37.

⁴¹ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 37.

appointing Wang Qiong to the head of the guard in Lingzhou and stressing the importance the city played to the overall stability of the region. Jiajing instructed Wang:

The Emperor's orders say: the offices and bureaus [in Lingzhou] have conducted all matters and things [in accordance with] the Classic of History (Shijing). The town of Lingzhou is of central importance and was a communications hub [for previous movements of people in the region] and you must protect and guard the people and government of the area, work with the eastern flank commander, and wait in Lingzhou with your army of guards...Heng Castle was a large mound located near Clearwater Camp [in Ningxia]. You will administer that area without exception or question....Be vigilant and guard the area...⁴²

Interestingly, Jiajing highlighted how Lingzhou in particular was a model of good Confucian governance. The “offices and bureaus” conducted their business in accordance with the Classic of History, an important Confucian text. Lingzhou is the only town mentioned in the many edicts that Hu provides that is bestowed this imperial honor. The difference between the more sinicized Lingzhou and the more culturally Tangut Yinchuan appears to have been distinct enough to have been noticed in Beijing. Additionally, the creation of the new fort Heng near Lingzhou demonstrated a different approach than officials took east of Yinchuan.

Fort Heng was created during the Chenghua period and served as both a military defense and a communications center. To the east, along the path of the Great Wall, the Ming adopted a different strategy than the creation of a new fort. Xing Yu Ying was a series of walls and large mounds that were originally constructed by Tanguts during the Xi Xia and reinforced during the early Yuan years. The structure's original purpose was

⁴² Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 37.

to defend against outside invasion coming from the east. The potential invaders that the forts were originally constructed to keep out, the Han Chinese, repurposed the areas to keep Tangut people out of their native land during the Chenghua period. Furthermore, the Jiajing emperor mandated that the series of fortifications be built up and guarded by government troops.⁴³

Conclusion: Decades of Different Policies all Sought a way to Subdue Ningxia

The Ming's military policy towards Ningxia changed quite dramatically during the dynasty. Originally, Ningxia was simply occupied by government troops and was designed to be nothing more than one outpost among many on the expansive Great Wall. As the dynasty continued, Ningxia became more and more important, and the question of how to govern the region became a controversial issue. At times, the Beijing court favored policies that pushed for more tight-handed control over the people in the region. Curfews and military occupations were two tools that the Ming attempted to use to stamp out dissent and rebellion. At other times, more autonomy and agency was awarded to the locals. At various points (particularly after the Zhengde period) throughout the dynasty locals were allowed to serve in various military positions and in some civil administrative posts. Regardless of the prevailing political wind at any given time, within the space of a decade or two the policies regarding minority peoples in the region could completely shift.

⁴³ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 37-38.

The various problems that ailed the dynasty in the interior had a direct impact on how Ningxia was administered. Substantial grain shortages and famines in the southeast forced the Ming to look elsewhere to feed people. One of those solutions was to look to the large Shanxi province to double grain and salt quotas. A large portion of that tax burden fell upon areas other than Xian, particularly in Ningxia. As settlers and migrants were made into farmers, tensions again rose in the region. A clash of different cultures put pastoral Tangut Mongols right next to a settled agrarian farming society. Frequently, these clashes led to a loss of life and substantial farmland, further exacerbating relations in an already volatile area.

Danger loomed from without as well as from within. In the first century and a half of the Ming dynasty, the region was near-continuously ransacked by outside invasions from roaming Tanguts and other Mongol tribes. For example, Batu Mongke, a powerful Mongol warlord in the fifteenth century, raided so frequently into Ming border regions that it seemed as if he was always there. Historian Roy Miller says, “He [Batu Mongke] demanded additional opportunities for trade with China, and when his bid was rebuffed, he simply plundered so that ‘from about 1480 on not a single year passed without some major Mongol raid across the Chinese north-western frontier.’”⁴⁴ Batu Mongke was not an unusual aberration, but rather these types of raids and invasions were

⁴⁴Roy Andrew Miller, *Batu Mongke*, in *The Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368-1644*, edited by Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 18.

a fact of life in mid-Ming China. It is no surprise that the Great Wall was expanded so much in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Ningxia is unique among Ming border regions because court eunuchs were continuously used to govern the area. Whereas other borders used either the native chieftain system or civil administrators to govern, Ningxia was alone in placing members of the royal court directly into the area. This demonstrates the high importance and concern that the emperor and high officials placed upon Ningxia. Hu does not provide exhaustive details about how the eunuchs governed, but instead shows how they were intended to serve as the functioning head of the local government.⁴⁵ Both military and civilian officials reported to the eunuch and it appears that the eunuch even had the ability to appoint and fire as he saw fit.

All of these measures, debates, and strategies were aimed at pacifying the unrest in the region and hopefully turning Ningxia into a place that was “civilized” enough to stop worrying about. Attempts to integrate minorities into the army and civil service were held back by heavy-handed strategies that saw Han Chinese soldiers garrisoning historically-Tangut forts and fighting against enemies that were culturally quite similar to native peoples. Although the bulk of Hu's *Ningxia Gazetteer* focuses on the triumphs and

⁴⁵ Many of Hu's comments about the ways and methods the Ming officials governed are quite brief. Although there are exceptions to this (for example, the discussion of the different fort commanders above), Hu mostly assumes his reader is familiar with how the Eunuchs ruled. This makes it difficult for modern readers to assess his meaning.

failures of these military matters, there are significant sections of the work that focus on another important integration tool that the Ming employed: education.

Chapter 2:

By the Book—Ming Attempts to Wash the Dirt of Barbarity Away Through Education

Introduction

The government website for the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region includes an exhaustive list of all the important works that have been written in or about Ningxia.⁴⁶ Hu's *Ningxia Gazetteer* is listed among numerous other works of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. Perhaps the longest section is the collection of monuments and steles, *beiji*. The website divides the list of monuments into different dynasties. The period from the Tang to the end of the Yuan dynasty (roughly six hundred years) saw the creation of fourteen different monuments that are recorded on the website. Many of these older monuments commemorate significant burials and important rulers, particularly during the Yuan. Other monuments commemorate virtuous officials or important battles.

By contrast, in the roughly three hundred years of the Ming dynasty alone, over one hundred and twenty five steles and monuments were recorded. Many of the

⁴⁶Ningxia Government Website, “Ningxia’s Ancient Collected Works (宁夏历代艺文集),” www.nxwsg.gov.cn/wsyzj/201304/t20130410_1138468.html.

monuments in the Ming section deal with education, Buddhist ceremonies, and the building of schools. In a variety of sections in the *Ningxia Gazetteer*, Hu details the creation of some of these monuments. Usually, they were enacted to celebrate the creation of a school or the pacification of a group of people or region. They were specifically funded for and written by the imperial court and were intended to be outward displays of imperial majesty. The court wanted to demonstrate in real, concrete terms that the Ming was not there simply to exert military control and extract taxes and resources, but instead to civilize and lift up the people living there.

This process occurred simultaneously with the military attempts detailed in Chapter 1. The apparent failure of these military-based reforms to control and subdue the region sparked desire to use education as another governing tool. Confucian temples and a large school complex were constructed in order to visibly demonstrate the Ming's majesty to the people in Ningxia. The civilizing project was both discussed internally and presented externally as ordering the region along Confucian morals and sensibilities. One of the major themes frequently portrayed in edicts and memorials was the relationship between younger brother and older brother. The Ming state, of course, was the older brother and the people in Ningxia were the younger. Hu notes how the Xia people already recognize and understand the importance of family and could easily be trained to see how these same concepts apply to Ming state.

The Ming's goal in using education as a civilizing tool was, then, to turn the Xia people into civilized people who could pay taxes, provide grain, and would not need

military occupation in order to quell rebellious behavior. The various administrators and officials in Ningxia believed that the civilizing force of Confucian relationships and morals could help enlighten the Xia people and improve their lives. These were not barbarians so far removed from civilization that they could not be changed. Instead, the Ming wanted to “wash the dirt of barbarity” from their clothing and lifestyles to bring them into a more understandable and easily governable fold.

The Ningxia Confucianism Restoration Monument

One of the ways that the Ming attempted to bring civilization to the people in Ningxia was through the construction of large temple and school complexes. One such temple complex has an extant inscription commemorating its construction and value to the community. Peng Shi wrote the *Ningxia Confucianism Restoration Monument* in 1501 that appeared in front of a large Confucian temple in Yinchuan.⁴⁷ Although this text is not copied in the *Ningxia Gazetteer*, it has been recorded onto Yinchuan’s government website in a section detailing public work projects.⁴⁸ The temple is important because it represents an attempt by Ming officials to present both the majesty of the Ming state and to introduce Confucian ideals and concepts to the people in Yinchuan.

⁴⁷Ningxia Government Website, “Ningxia’s Ancient Collected Works (宁夏历代艺文集),” accessed July 31, 2014.
www.nxwsg.gov.cn/wsyj/201304/t20130410_1138468.html.

⁴⁸Yinchaun City website, accessed July 31, 2014.
<http://dfz.yinchuan.gov.cn/SiteAcl.srv?id=1723748&aid=2008050862>.

The inscription begins with a statement of the various ways that Ningxia and the “Middle Kingdom” *zhongguo* had interacted over the centuries. Peng argues that the *yi* people in Ningxia had constantly been trying to create a state and that they never quite were as successful as they may have hoped. The reason for this, in Peng’s mind, was that the *yi* barbarian people in Ningxia lacked the civilizing power and presence of Confucianism to order their society and relationships in ways conducive to harmony and propriety. The memorial continues on to explain how and why the temple was built during the Yongle period. Peng writes:

Their school was set up in the early years of Yongle's reign. Military soldiers were used to build it and it was for the benefit of all who couldn't or didn't know justice and righteousness. If arranged in the holy and proper manner, all will learn from it and it will continue for many generations...Present-day imperial censor Zhang Gong received orders from the inspector-general of Ningxia to make sure the people of Ningxia flourish and prosper...At the start of Chenghua's sixth year (1470), the school was finished before September. The temple hall itself had many rooms with enough space left over for a government warehouse and granary, to a total of over one hundred rooms. The material [to build it] came from the mountains, the labor came from ordinary people, the extra resources and labor helped to paint and decorate the rooms, the officials were not wasteful, and success came quickly and rapidly!⁴⁹

Using language like “flourish and prosper” and “benefiting all who could not or did not know justice and righteousness” paints the picture of philanthropic, altruistic intentions. This fit in to common literati consciousness about the merits of civilizing projects.⁵⁰ However, as discussed above, the Ming court saw Ningxia as a vitally important strategic

⁴⁹Yinchaun City website, accessed July 31, 2014.
<http://dfz.yinchuan.gov.cn/SiteAcl.srv?id=1723748&aid=2008050862>.

⁵⁰ Harrel, *Cultural Encounters*, 3-7.

and economic region for the protection of the entire state. The fact that the temple was not finished until the latter half of the fifteenth century means that the construction effort only started after over a century of different military tactics to control the region. The likely explanation is that funding and building schools was a way to placate the population of Ningxia and introduce behaviors more conducive to easy governance.

It's also important to note the sheer size of the complex. This was not a small, inconspicuous temple. Instead, it was clear that it was meant to be seen. Even in a large city like Yinchuan, a building with over a hundred rooms and “space left over for a government warehouse and granary” was going to be a permanent figure in the public space, even if an exaggeration. This was intentional. A public display of the grandiose power and civilizing ability of Confucian orthodoxy could potentially go a long way in convincing the local population of the sincerity and authority of a new ruling government.

Also, the memorial specifically mentions that the large complex was built with resources from around the area. By highlighting that the wood came from the mountains and the other resources from the surrounding countryside, Peng was making a claim that the temple had a special attachment to the land. Peng additionally shows how government soldiers and local civilians worked to construct the complex. The image of soldiers and natives working side by side paints a highly stylized image of happy cooperation to achieve a common goal. As discussed previously, throughout the Ming's occupation of Ningxia this was often not the case. Frequently the two sides came to

violent clashes. Whether or not they actually were able to cooperate in building the temple together is unimportant for present purposes; the important issue is that the written presentation depicted and used that hypothetical harmony.

The monument inscription continues:

Because the school was built, adults increased their aptitudes [at various things], developed a deep set of morals, and created an honest and real foundation. Therefore, in all the land no one would have to go without education, and forever founding schools is a key priority.⁵¹

At least to Peng's eyes, the school's creation gave the people access to something previously lacking: morality. Educating the adults in the city for over thirty years created a real benefit for the people in Yinchuan. This is a far cry from esoteric learning and introspection. Rather, Peng argues that a solid (Confucian) education should be the baseline and foundation for all other worthwhile pursuits. It is important to note here that this particular memorial only stipulates the benefits the school had on adults. Many other schools and temples listed in the *Ningxia Gazetteer* mention how teaching children from a young age about the Confucian worldview creates good and just people.⁵²

⁵¹Yinchaun City website,
<http://dfz.yinchuan.gov.cn/SiteAcl.srv?id=1723748&aid=2008050862>.

⁵² Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 188-192.

Later on in the inscription, Peng seems to address the reader directly by hypothetically asking the difference between the locals' old schools and the school that then stood before them. Peng's inscription reads:

This present school [is designed to] teach and instruct, whereas ancient schools were quite different. Proper guarding of Ningxia requires study and knowledge because every soldier must guard the younger generation, they will then receive instruction in the way of knowledge. They will recite the ancient books [Five Confucian Classics], and study but a small part of the world and its knowledge. Enlightened men value their relationships and practice virtue in the world.⁵³

The Confucian education provided at this school, Peng might argue, was so fundamentally different from whatever education may have been available to previous generations that even soldiers benefit from the learning. The view of education as not only an end in itself but a means to other tangible ends is reminiscent of modern technical education. Technical schools provide education to do something specific: to build a house, learn how to be a plumber, etc. The Confucian school in Yinchuan was sold to the people on similar pretenses: come to the school and you'll be better at everything you do in your daily life.

This particular monument was not unique. The dozens of different monuments dedicating schools, Confucian temples, and places of learning were not created on accident. Education was yet another tool in the Ming state's arsenal to civilize and pacify the region. Civilizing the barbarians through education was important because it allowed

⁵³Yinchaun City website, <http://dfz.yinchuan.gov.cn/SiteAcl.srv?id=1723748&aid=2008050862>.

the Ming to avoid investing as much time and energy into subduing an unwilling population. This approach had a much slower payoff; if educating the people and civilizing them was to work, it would take many generations. The Ming officials in Ningxia, however, seemed to be dedicated to this idea and it demonstrates how sincerely they wanted to maintain the area.

When the Ming began building schools and other institutions in the area, the nature and disposition of the people in Ningxia was well known in the royal court. Far from trying to involve the people in Ningxia in the examination system, the goal appeared to be pacifying the region. Hu recounts stories of how the ancient ancestors of Ningxia were industrious, hard-working, but ultimately lacked a set of higher rules to govern themselves.⁵⁴ He uses stories like these to justify why their societies and states all eventually failed (conveniently leaving out how the contemporary Chinese dynasties succumbed to similar challenges). For example, Hu recalls how the Xiangbei people united under the Wuyuhun clan to create a new state in Ningxia contemporaneous to the Song dynasty and highlights how they lacked common modes of reason and law.⁵⁵ The ancient states in Ningxia failed, according to Hu, not for any external reasons but because internally they lacked the reason and clear thought that came from education and Confucian culture.

⁵⁴ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 188.

⁵⁵ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 191.

Primary Schools and the Children's Capacity for Proper Conduct

According to the *Ningxia Gazetteer*, attempts to bring a standardized education to Ningxia initially met mixed results. Although the efforts to build the Confucian temple mentioned previously were treated with fanfare, quickly the locals pushed back against this effort. The imperial censor in charge of the project, Wang Xun, was eventually expelled from office and forced to leave Lingzhou because of his project's failure. His replacement, Wang Shizhong, fared little better as people seemed to prefer the "holy sages of the past" to the introduction of new ideas. Hu recounts this story in the section on the education in Lingzhou:

Lingzhou is an ancient northern city. It was governed starting in the Western Han, but changed dramatically over the successive dynasties [and was taken away from them]. The glorious and magnanimous Ming founder Ming Taizu opened up all the land again to all, the greatest extent of which included Yinchuan, and created Lingzhou in order to act as a guardian for all of Ningxia...In the middle of the Hongzhi reign, an imperial censor named Wang Xun had the idea to create temples for people to study in, the result of which created a strong spirit in all the individuals and led to a new study of discourse. Before long, though, he was removed from office and expelled, along with his [ideas of] teaching and learning... Though there were many sages and masters [assigned to] Ningxia, the people were indignant and pushed them away...The people continued to look to the holy sages of the past and continually rebuffed the efforts of the current assistant in Ningxia Wang Shizhong.⁵⁶

Notice that the purpose of the Confucian temples and schools in Ningxia is quite different from the highly-focused Confucianism required to excel in examinations that was more common in other, more populous parts of the realm. The temples built in Lingzhou were

⁵⁶ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 188-189.

designed to instill a “strong spirit” in the masses and make them more accustomed to the customs and culture of their city’s occupiers.

The assistant disgraced and “rebuffed” by the people after building and managing the Confucian temple, Wang Shizhong, proceeded to write a scathing indictment of the local population. He laments:

[the people argue that] The government must rule according to the old ways and the military must be organized according to their ancestors. These Xia-people are transforming back into barbarians and must be brought back into line with good deeds and learning. The places where they live are empty and without enrichment, how can we bring them peace?”⁵⁷

Wang’s criticism of the people in Ningxia is loaded. His writings of the pushback to new military and governmental organization appear to reference the violent opposition mentioned in the previous chapter. The “old ways” of the “Xia-people” (*xia ren*) refers to not only the more accepted religious traditions (Buddhism, Islam), but also to the cultural relationship they shared with the Song. Because the Xia left no written dynastic history, it is difficult to ascertain the specific behavioral norms and cultural mores of the Xia people except through the lens of Chinese sources. Many Chinese literati in the Song and Yuan viewed the Xia as a “little brother” to the dominant dynasty; a perspective surely similar with Wang’s.⁵⁸ This conceptualization of the Xi Xia and its descendants as

⁵⁷ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 189.

⁵⁸ Mote, *Imperial China*, 172-175.

a little brother in need of guidance helps to explain why the creation of Confucian schools and temples was so important.

Wang also warns that the people are in the process of “transforming back into barbarians” by rejecting the teaching and education the Ming provide. Again, the differences between the Ming officials and the indigenous population in Ningxia never seemed as great as when both sides were trying to prove their cultural superiority over one another. Wang saw the homes and living situations of these people as vacant and without purpose, but not broken beyond repair. For him (and many other people involved in the imperial project in Ningxia), the key to “fixing” these people was the all-powerful and civilizing force of Chinese Confucian culture.

Wang Shizhong’s and Xun’s work at bringing Confucian culture to the masses in Lingzhou via temples and other adult institutions was not the Ming’s only plan of attack. The Ming funded the creation of a variety of primary schools aimed at children. Although their efficacy and the frequency with which they were built is unknown, these schools (*shexue*) had been in use since the Yuan dynasty and were popular enough to reintroduce in the Ming. Theoretically, the schools provided free, compulsory education to children who normally would have little or no educational access. Those children without education learned their morals, values, and worldviews from their elders who, in the case of Ningxia, were almost certainly not aligned with the cultural norms in Beijing. Providing a compulsory, standardized education let the government have at least a vague idea of how people might behave and act; a valuable asset to any state. To this end, the

schools' curriculum was a mixture of Confucian ideals and pro-dynasty rhetoric. While they were not always presented as such, it was no secret in official circles that the purpose of these primary schools was to win the hearts and minds of the children while they were young.⁵⁹

In Ningxia, these primary schools served another purpose as well. People who lived in the city limits of Yinchuan or Lingzhou were often far more settled and easy to deal with than those on the periphery. The bandits, raiders, and rebels that plagued Ming administration for centuries in Ningxia were not rooted in the cities but instead lived in the countryside. The primary school near Lingzhou was specifically built to teach the children of these rural people. Hu details how the new school was built to stand in contrast to the large temple inside the city, "Inside [of the city] has a temple with a master who helps perform the appropriate rites. In the 3rd year of Chenghua's reign, Guard captain Zhang Yi created [the primary school] in the new district to the west of the city."⁶⁰ The palace-like temples built in the cities of Ningxia, as discussed previously, were designed in large part to instill a sense of awe and trust in a ruling regime. If the dynasty could build monuments this impressive and authoritative, the argument goes, then certainly there must be some validity in their governing ability. Zhang Yi's new school was intended to instill that same wonder and awe.

⁵⁹ Hucker, *Ming Government*, 31.

⁶⁰ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 190.

In Ansai county, an official named Chu Zhai recounted the creation of that primary school. A far cry from the schools and temples in the southeast of the country that primarily served people whose ancestors all were versed in Confucian ideology, Chu highlights how foreign a Confucian school must have felt to these people. Importantly, their background does not preclude them from accessing the truths and enlightenment that Confucian culture brings; they simply need more time to get there. Chu's records state:

Lingzhou's old name was Shou Fang prefecture. It was located right along the Great River [Yellow River] and had lots of wasteland around it. During the course of the three dynasties, this situation was never given proper examination. During the Han dynasty, many ministers said that the area was inhabited by the *Tuyuhun* nomadic people [part of the *Xianbei* people]. During the Song dynasty, the Tuoba clan [ruled] most of Henan, one of the nine major prefectures of the time. Today, the Great Ming controls all the land under heaven and has been able to push these nomads out to the west, but their progeny and descendants still live in that region. They have mixed with the garrison troops and settlers that have come to the region and come to live among one another in harmony under many different village elders and chiefs.⁶¹

Chu focuses on how the Xianbei had been able to control the land, but not to make it thrive. The implication is that even though the Xianbei had mastered the region and created great states over the years, they were never able to use the land to its fullest. The term "wasteland" frequently accompanies the discussion of pastoral peoples and most closely references not how the land was a literal wasteland but rather how they never used the land for anything beyond what seemed like endless seas of pastures and grazing land. Pastures and grasslands are excellent for tending to sheep and cattle, but provide

⁶¹Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 190.

fairly little return in terms of grain taxes. As discussed previously, the grain and food tax burdens on Ningxia during this period (Xuande's reign) were substantially increased and, in some places, doubled. Without a massive change in land usage, the region could never hope to meet these increased demands. However, pastoral culture and pastureland were deeply intertwined; if the land was to be turned into good, productive, Ming-style farmland, then the pastoral people needed to be turned into farmers and peasants. Chu recognized this problem and his solution was to portray the previous, foreign occupation as a blight and shame against the land.

Chu's solution, of course, was that the Xianbei people who had inhabited Ningxia simply lacked the knowledge and enlightenment that Confucianism and Chinese culture provided. By embracing the traditional mores of Chinese culture, farming and productivity could soar. However, Chu's assessment of the native people in Ningxia is nowhere near as harsh as Wang Shizhong's or Wang Xun's indictments. Chu believed that the indigenous population and the Ming occupiers could live in peace and harmony. He wrote about that harmony as he continued his records:

During Xuande's reign, the area was turned into a communications hub and was important to the dynasty and its population boomed. Therefore, another city was created [to house the people] and a government official was instructed to command it and all the people in the region benefited. Over the years, [that city] has continued to expand and worked in harmony in the region. People played and lived in harmony and practiced correct and earnest work tending [their flocks] and tilling [the land]. These days, the people have started to try and open a local school in the ancient style [*yishu*], but many young boys have to go to the larger prefecture in order to continue their studies, and frequently cease [after trying for a while]. For the first three years of Chenghua's reign, Zhang TingFu was recruited and told to come here [to Lingzhou]. [He went on a journey to the

region], and noticed that many of the people in the prefecture [Lingzhou] didn't like studying and learning.⁶²

Perhaps an oversimplification, Chu remarks about how the indigenous people opened an ancient-style school. The “ancient-style” (*yishu*) almost certainly does not mean ancient in the Chinese sense but rather foreign and different (to Chu). It is no surprise that the local population attempted to educate its children, but Chu's records suggest that the new school seemed dangerous to the Ming and their imperial project. While it is possible that the young boys disliked studying and learning, Chu's implication is that the boys did not like learning the antiquated styles and lessons of their ancestors. This is most likely an embellishment, but it provides ample motivation to help those poor children by bringing them a useful Confucian education.

Chu also mentioned an important barrier for many young rural boys. A local school with limited funding had little chance of attracting quality teachers. Because of this, education was never compulsory and was quite basic. While Chu does not mention the particulars of the ancient-style school, it is clear from his depiction of the new, Confucian primary school that the former was completely outclassed. Chu continues:

While they were building the school, they used the best help available. They recruited soldiers living in the area to help build and construct the large structure, and the most skilled artisans painted beautiful pieces in the building for all to enjoy. In the back of the structure, many classrooms were built with numerous beautiful pillars. The east hall was called “The Place of High Virtues,” and the west hall was called “Vast Productivity.” Construction was started that year [Chenghua's 3rd] and was finished on July 27th. The area was cleaned and the school was provided with the finest materials. A Confucian scholar named Liang

⁶²Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 190.

Shitai was invited to come perform the opening ceremony and served as the school's first teacher. He helped to make the school flourish and thrive.⁶³

The picture of a quaint, one room schoolhouse is dwarfed by the magnificence of the education complex detailed here. One thing is absolutely clear: this building was not cheap to produce. The amount of time, energy, resources, and money that went into a building like this in rural northeast China must have been enormous. That fact alone demonstrates how important this enterprise was to the Ming. If the spectacle and imposing nature of a large compound were not paramount, a much smaller and more modest building could have done the job adequately. Instead, the Ming decided that what the building said on the outside was just as important as what was being taught on the inside.

As he continued his memorial about the rural school, Chu assessed the potential benefits the institution could bring to the community. In a striking and illuminating reflection on the situation of the students in the region, Chu says:

Although they may be barbarians, the foundation of propriety and understanding rests in the peoples' hearts. Even if they have different clothes, dress, and customs, their children still know the love of their family and kinsmen, and the younger respects the elder brother; compare that to other people, and they don't seem much different. The wisdom of the ancient sages is universal and can surely benefit these people and can guide and instruct them. With regards to education, they seem to have a sincere and honest drive to learn. Over time and over many years [this teaching] can and will change men so that they know the laws of heaven and earth.⁶⁴

⁶³ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 190.

⁶⁴ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 191.

Chu's analysis provides a window into the mindset and worldview of a Confucian-trained scholar in a land he has little in common with. While many others were quick to write off the "barbarians" completely (like Wang Shizhong), Chu gives them a far better assessment. It seems that Chu genuinely and earnestly believed in the civilizing power of Chinese culture in general. Many of his contemporaries likely shared this same conviction, but it is rare to see it laid out so plainly.

Can the Barbarians be Changed?

The gift of filial piety, compassion, and propriety is innate in all humans, according to Chu, and the solution is to provide them with tools necessary (Confucianism and Chinese culture) to refine those skills. The results of unleashing these skills for the people will be dramatic, Chu argues. He says, "If we are able to do this [bring them Confucianism], we can, without exception, change their customs and behaviors. Today their [the natives'] occupation may require them to be on horseback and wield their swords, but they possess the ability to fundamentally change their culture and conduct themselves like clear, levelheaded men!"⁶⁵ The power of education turns barbaric men into civilized men. This is a dramatic claim; Chu was well aware of the setbacks previous cultural appropriation attempts frequently encountered. It seemed as if every technique the Ming used to try to pacify the Ningxia people—creating large temples in the cities, taking over the functions of government, enforcing martial law, and separating

⁶⁵ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 191.

government and local soldiers—ended up failing or leading to violence. If done properly, Chu argues, educating and civilizing the rural young boys might just be the solution to solve many of their problems.

If it was not made plain before, as Chu continues his memorial he relays his perspective baldly and plainly to his readers:

If the young boys and apprentices come to this [lecture room to study], isn't it obvious that they will know their place? If they grow up learning to respect and listen to their teachers, they will then become much easier to instruct. The school will be able to wash away and cleanse the dirty old customs from these young boys and change their lives [for the better]. It will remove the brutish and noisy behaviors [of the boys], and instead fill their minds with delicate and graceful poetry. Learning rules and logic, the boys will stand up to a new way of thinking, as to make them no longer a burden!⁶⁶

Notice the language Chu uses to describe how the young boys will learn “their place.” This is a theme based on the familial dynamic between the younger and the older brother that Chu brought up earlier. It was important that people of all ranks behaved properly and that included knowing when one was supposed to yield to their superiors.⁶⁷ If the young boys go to the lecture halls and learn how to respect and honor their teacher, it seems to come naturally to Chu that they would turn into adults that would know how to submit to their emperor.

⁶⁶ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 191.

⁶⁷ The dynamic between brothers was only one of the five archetypal relationships meant to demonstrate proper behavior. Other important relationships were between father and son, husband and wife, and between the emperor and his people. These relationships would have been well known and immediately understood to anyone reading Chu's memorial.

Chu's metaphor of "washing away" the "dirty old customs" of the rural boys is quite dramatic. He paints their culture and customs as dirt to be cleaned by the civilizing shower of Confucian thought and rhetoric. The implication is that the culture and customs of the pastoral rural children (mostly *tuyuhun*) is fundamentally inferior and flawed. Their dress, their housing, their activities, and their very way of life is beneath what they could achieve if only the Ming could bring them propriety, proper rituals, and virtue. Far from the harmonious and happy mixing alluded to previously, Chu's description of the young boys' culture seems to cast the locals in a light that highlights difference and foreignness.

Chu's exhortation to continue and invest in the public schools in rural Ningxia were directed at the administration and royal courts. His perspectives were not shared with the local people and, even if they were, would not have been effective tools to explain why the people needed this large school complex. To do the job of convincing the everyday people why they needed such a massive structure, an inscription was constructed in front of the school. It reads:

Lingwu County [in Yinchuan] used up its farmland and it turned desolate. The Xianbei and their descendants plowed the land and tended to sheep and cattle as was their customs. [Today], the Great Ming encompasses all the land, even the remote regions [of Ningxia]. The soldiers and garrisons not only defended the region, but also lived there in harmony. However, the one who spends all his time tilling the land and tending the sheep and cattle can never devote themselves to their study. Outstanding instruction and direction can bestow clear and agile character. With education starting at early ages, it is possible for a thorough a complete transformation of the basic spirit. Therefore, fortune predicts that the

land will be good and prosperous if you hold and carry the classics to all those in your camp...⁶⁸

Chu here shows that he sincerely believes that if the people in Ningxia adopted a settled, Confucian lifestyle that their lives will improve in concrete, real ways. This inscription stresses the real, tangible things a Chinese-style education brings rather than focusing on esoteric benefits and learning. Although most in rural Ningxia were surely illiterate, public inscriptions were commonly read aloud and recited. This particular inscription utilizes a four-word refrain that was designed to be easy to listen to and remember. The immediate and direct message of the inscription is clear: have your children learn and grow here in this school and their lives will become immediately and tangibly better.

The inscription also suggests that the adoption of this Confucian lifestyle could fix the desolation of the land. In Confucian popular thought and culture, there is an idea that the behavior and organization of people directly impacted changes in the natural world. Droughts, earthquakes, storms, plagues, and other disasters could be symptomatic of a society that had been led astray from the intended way of things.⁶⁹ Of course, that intended way of ordering society was along Confucian lines.

As previously discussed, Ningxia was tasked with shouldering the grain and tax burdens when the traditional Ming heartlands could not meet the newly increased quotas

⁶⁸ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 192.

⁶⁹ This, along with outside conquerors, was one of the main ways that dynasties were perceived to have lost the “mandate of heaven.” Bad omens and portents like these listed here were symptomatic of a country that was incorrectly ruled and governed.

to feed an ever-expanding population. Famine, banditry, and droughts frequently interrupted supply lines and necessitated a diversification of crop production.⁷⁰ To that end, keeping Ningxia productive and under close control became an important enterprise. To achieve that goal, this inscription argues, people need to keep the tenants of Confucianism close to their hearts, “Fortune predicts that the land will be good and prosperous if you hold and carry the classics to all those in your camp...”⁷¹ The “classics” refers to the teachings in the Five Classics, the foundation of Confucian ideology. The meaning was unambiguous: take these lessons to heart and you will prosper in all things.

The results were not without setbacks. The primary school began construction during Xuande’s reign, but well into the Jiajing period locals pushed against and complained about these new strange customs and behaviors.⁷² This is not all that surprising, examples of forced cultural adoption in other parts of the world have met with similar backlash. In Chu’s and Zhang’s word there is a genuine sense of compassion and drive to help the people of Ningxia. Chu was stationed in Ningxia for over two decades; it is only logical he would develop some fondness for the land and its people. Most of

⁷⁰ One of these solutions was the introduction of new world crops. Foods like potatoes, yams, chiles, and, most importantly, corn all offered high returns on invested water and labor. The fact that they could thrive in places where rice and other traditional Chinese staples could not made them even more valuable. While many of these new world crops grew quite well in Ningxia, they were not introduced there into the latter half of the dynasty.

⁷¹ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 192.

⁷² Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 29-32.

the evidence suggests that the people bringing education and attempting cultural reform in Ningxia did so for what they believed to be good, altruistic reasons. However, it's clear that many of the people in Ningxia did not share the belief that those sentiments were sincere and altruistic. To the locals, it must have appeared as if parts of their tradition and heritage were being taken away from them.

Compulsory education was a massive undertaking for any dynasty, particularly one like the Ming that was bringing that education to people who never asked for it in the first place. The cost of building, maintaining, and staffing schools fell almost entirely onto the local government. Smaller institutions, charging tuitions, or subsidizing these schools could have made the projects much more cost effective, but these measures were never implemented in Ningxia. Instead, the overall benefits of creating a grand system that bred confidence and trust in the state was calculated to be well worth any cost.

Interestingly, Chu's and Zhang's comments suggest a deeper sense of responsibility that perhaps many Ming officials felt towards "barbaric" tribes. The schools were created so that they could know the true state of things, prosper, and live (what they considered to be) fulfilling lives. Even the military excesses that Zhang discusses seem to be entrenched behind a very real desire to do something to help these people. Officials in Ningxia recognized that a prominent education program could solve two problems at once: how to improve the lives of these people and how to civilize them enough to rule over peacefully.

Conclusion:

Using the Sword and Pen as Tools to Govern and Integrate Ningxia

Hu's Ningxia Gazetteer is important because it offers a glimpse into a periphery region from the perspective of an official trained in the Confucian canon. Sent into a sort of pseudo-exile and forced to live in what must have initially felt like the middle of nowhere, Hu must have felt like a foreigner in a strange land. This makes his commentary doubly important, because he notices and references things that seem strange or out of the ordinary. Since there is a wealth of sources detailing what would have been normal and ordinary for someone like Hu, the interested historian can paint a vivid picture of what life must have been like in a northwest Ming border region. Historians are fortunate to have such a meticulous and curious observer as Hu Ruli!

When the Ming initially occupied Ningxia, it was via the sword. Normal protocol in border regions full of non-Han people required a careful watch and an even tighter fist. For the first few decades of the dynasty, Yinchuan and other parts of Ningxia were put on nightly curfews in order to contain the population. This worked well enough for a time, but eventually the subjects in Ningxia became so disgruntled that they rose up and attacked the newly installed government. This became a regular occurrence and it was clear that a military occupation was untenable.

Shortly afterwards, the Ming attempted a new policy. Instead of ruling solely militarily, a eunuch was appointed to have complete control over the government affairs in the region. The issues of unchecked eunuch power during the Ming are well-known, but during the beginning half of the dynasty eunuchs served an especially important function in the machinery of the state. One of the few groups of people who had direct access to the emperor on a regular basis, eunuchs served as a sort of detached pair of eyes and ears for the regent wherever they went. Therefore, when Wang Qing was posted as the key official in Ningxia it was a very important turning point in Ming policy towards the region. Wang was given the authority and power to specifically choose who he placed in civilian as well as military posts. More than that, he was commanded to do so.⁷³

In other border regions, the Ming frequently adopted a policy called the native chieftain system (*tusi*). This type of policy well predated the Ming and was put into practice as far back as the Han dynasty. Colloquially, this was called “using the barbarians to govern the barbarians,” which in essence meant that the Chinese state was able to wash its hands of the day-to-day governing of a particular place. The benefits of such a policy were obvious: you received an annual tax in tribute, could sometimes levy soldiers or militia in times of need, and only very infrequently needed to become directly involved in petty affairs in so-called insignificant border areas. This policy was used most prominently in regions along the southern border and further west towards the

⁷³ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 31-33.

Tibetan plateau. That the policy was ubiquitous in other regions makes the policies of direct intervention in Ningxia stand out that much more.

To support the new eunuch, the Ming sent in a variety of soldiers from around other provinces (and also from nearby Xian) to act as garrisons. The state initially was terrified (perhaps rightfully so) at the potential for traitors and turncoats if the town guards were staffed with even a few native people. At first, only government troops were allowed to serve in any official military position, and commanders were specifically ordered to not let any native men into any places of real significance and importance. As they are apt to do, political winds in Beijing frequently changed on this issue, and during one decade natives might be excluded from the military and during another they might be included. Both sides of the argument voiced their opinions, but the overall intention was clear: if the military was organized a certain way in Ningxia, it would lead to easier and more efficient control in the region.

To reach these ends, the Chinese invested a monumental amount of money into creating forts, walls, and barricades in Ningxia. Yinchuan served as the head for two of the twelve eventual garrison patrols along the newly expanded Great Wall. Yinchuan and Lingzhou together were required to garrison and guard almost one thousand miles of terrain from the north following south and west along the Yellow River. This enormous task required a stable, harmonious base of operations in Ningxia and further raised the stakes for pacifying the population.

Another reason that Ningxia was so vitally important for the Ming to integrate was because droughts and poor harvests in China's traditional farming centers were frequent. Taxes for the reconstruction and extension of the Grand Canal put a heavy burden on those in the southeast and those taxes combined with near starvation levels of existence for many farmers created a real problem for the state. One of its solutions was to have other regions offset their rice and salt production. In the mid-fifteenth century, the grain tax demands of Ningxia and Shaanxi province doubled seemingly overnight. By this time, Ningxia was not only an important as a barrier against Mongol invasions, but it also was becoming a key food producer.

Luckily for the Ming, Ningxia had ample space for farmland. The problem, however, was that most of the area in and around Ningxia had traditionally been used as pastureland for the pastoral people who lived there. In the *Ningxia Gazetteer*, this land is often referred to as "desolate" or "wasteland." While it was not desolate in the modern sense that invokes images of dried bones in a barren desert, the fact that the land was not immediately suitable for farming meant the land in its current form was almost useless. To solve this problem, the Ming initially tried to bring in agricultural settlers from other regions in order to clear and till the land. While this seemed to work in the short term, begrudged natives attacked these settlers and burned acres of cropland in retaliation for losing some of their pastureland.

The Ming's solution to this new problem actually speaks volumes about their worldviews and perspectives on minority people and borderlands. Their idea was to

bring the people education: schools, temples, and teachers who would all instill a sense of good Confucian value in the pastoral tribes. The Ming initially built massive, multi-building temple complexes in Yinchuan and Lingzhou as a way of demonstrating authority and grandeur to the people. The new Confucian temples were clearly visible throughout most of the city and the people could not help but notice them. Like most of the Ming's efforts up until this point (the late fifteenth century), the measures were met with initial success, but eventually the native people rebelled against the seemingly forced acculturation the occupiers were bringing into their cities.

When these measures were met with scorn, the Ming officials in Ningxia instituted a system that was as significant as it was expensive. The creation of public schools throughout the realm had been commonplace throughout the dynasty, but the usage of special curriculum and free tuition on strategically important borderlands was quite remarkable. In the Xuande period, the Ming officials organized the construction of a large public school that was aimed at providing education for at least some of the young boys in Lingzhou. This school would not only teach them good, Confucian values but also teach them how to behave and know their place with respect to the dynasty. In Chu's words they would "wash the dirt of barbarianism away."⁷⁴

Chu's analysis of the young boys in Ningxia is quite remarkable. He argues that the people in Ningxia, like the people in all regions of the world, have the innate capacity to receive the propriety and good conduct of Confucianism. To prove his point, he

⁷⁴ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 192.

highlights how the young barbarian boys knew how to treat their parents and older brothers even before the school was built. These were not barbarians simply because of who they were or where they were born, they were barbarians because they lacked the education to be civilized. The way that Chu presents it, the Chinese almost have an obligation to civilize and lift these young children out of their poor state of affairs.

The positive side effect (or main purpose, depending on your perspective) of these education programs was to mold and shape the people of Ningxia into something that the Ming Chinese better knew how to deal with. After all, the Chinese at that point had almost two millennia of practice governing other people and had gotten quite good at it. The civilizing power and ideas of Confucianism could transform Ningxia into yet another successful, prosperous region in the Ming like all the others.⁷⁵

To summarize, the Ming first targeted Ningxia as an important place due to its strategic position. Right on the border between the Yellow River and endless hordes of Mongols, holding Ningxia meant protecting the rest of the country. After the Ming had occupied Ningxia for a time, however, they began to realize that pure military occupation could not keep the population stable and peaceful. The old tricks that they had used to subdue foreigners in other regions—like the native chieftain system—simply could not be applied to Ningxia. Instead, the Ming focused on something far more radical. Instead

⁷⁵ The reality and efficacy of Chinese governance throughout its dynastic history is clearly different from what the Chinese themselves saw. Where they saw an orderly, efficacious system, those who were being ruled would vehemently debate their perspectives.

of ruling a region full of foreigners, the officials in Ningxia attempted to turn those foreigners into proper Chinese men with proper Chinese values.

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Appendix A: Selected Translations from the Ningxia Gazetteer

A1) Preface and Introductory Matter⁷⁶

Revised Preface to the Ningxia Gazetteer:

The town of Ningxia first became a town in the xinyou (fifty-eighth year) of the Hongzhi cycle, written by the physician Hu Ru Lin and his assistant Wang Xun. In the Yihai of the Jiajing reign, in his leisure time Shou Li read over the gazetteer and the selections on dangerous problems and profits and losses and exclaimed: “The gazetteer is not yet 40 years old and for that long time people have suffered under false pretenses, why engage in textual criticism?”

Local gazetteers contain lots of history, so this volume contains comprehensive information of all sorts. Are tales from messengers and sufficient to make connections between these important ideas!? The northwest of Ningxia is of extreme strategic importance. Beyond the Yellow River, ancient armies razed the land and rebels betrayed the country. The whole Earth now enters into our country, from the smallest to the largest pieces of land. We can't even begin to understand the ravages of war. In the middle of Xuande's reign, Ting Qingwang, a feudal ruler, asked these deep questions.

⁷⁶ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 1-3

Studied in the old ways, he wrote the first Ningxia Gazetteer, but was left unfinished when he was seventy.

In the jiwei of Hongzhi, I was given imperial orders to correct and finish this gazetteer. I was instructed to include everything and leave nothing lacking.

A2) Military Matters and Eunuch Control in the Jiajing Ningxia Gazetteer⁷⁷

Eunuchs. Yongle first set this state of affairs. Set up Ningxia's government with tight security enforcement and set up a census using the horses. [Have the banner have five faces on it?]. During Tianshun's reign, court Eunuch Wang Qing received imperial orders to act as military governor of Ningxia. The orders said:

The emperor's orders say: Court Eunuch Wang Qing, you are now specially appointed to assemble army and administrators in Zhangtai (?) to guard all of Ningxia. Repair the city wall, train the horse regiments in the city, capture thieves and traitors, and always watch for outside attacks. Everything must go to supporting the troops [stationed there], you should work with the imperial inspector already there and work together to govern the place; you must not let individual viewpoints, stubbornness, or individual biases to get in the way and if there are disagreements, keep them quiet. As the royal Eunuch, accept this decree and be exceptionally law-abiding and serve as a model for both the army and civilians. Work diligently day and night to repair both military affairs and the political situation so that the soldiers will be at ease. When our military might has risen up, all of the inhabitants of Ningxia will feel proper peace and contentment. Foreigners outside of the borders will submit from awe and the border will be

⁷⁷ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 32-38.

taken care of. You can't allow your servants or officers to cause harm or disorder to disrupt your personal integrity...

In Jiajing's 18th year, he rescinded this decree. Before this, opinionated people continually harassed and criticized the government [in Ningxia]. Because of this, government officials hid or fled. To this day, unreasonable people say that they want to reduce the arbitrary and dictatorial government. We lost 12 qing of farmland or 47 mu...[Description of tax obligations of different effected areas]...[An explanation of how they collected a census of the 1470 different families in the immediate region to prevent trouble and find troublemakers].

Military Officials. The horse riders all stood together and were counted, along with different bannered troops from ten divisions. [List of pronouncements], and an imperial announcement said:

The Emperor's instructions are: Military governor Ren Jie, you should count and organize all of the military officers, support the court eunuchs in integrating local and imperial officials, as well as the vice-director of military affairs and altogether protect the place of Ningxia. Train the horsemen, repair the city walls and moat, nurture peace between the army and the people, and safeguard the borders. Find thieves and rebels with the help of those in the [local] government and always be watching for opportunities or moments of war in order to defend and maintain peace on the borders. All of the troops and the military officers must work together with the imperial inspectors to make sure that everyone is preparing for the defense of the city. You must not allow yourself to become biased or stubborn [to particular officials or people] as irregular behavior will ruin matters. [By taking this post] you will receive the heavy responsibilities and burdens of royal government and you must strive to be impartial and fair in all you do. Nurture the troops and build up a strong fighting spirit, but don't embezzle money or seek personal profit [and stop the people's suffering], or you

will incur a lifetime of suffering and regret. If you disobey these orders, supreme blame will be placed upon you.

The military officer responded by agreeing to do those things [list and repeating of the announcements back to the emperor].

In the summer of Jiajing's 19th year, an official under the military governor held a drinking party and all of the common troops attended. They did this just before they were to go into battle and [were therefore] spreaders of fallacies to deceive the people. They were beheaded.

Imperial Inspector and Imperial Censor: Xuande set this up. The Imperial Order said:

The Emperor's instructions are: Imperial censor Yang Shouli, I have specially appointed you to be the imperial inspector of Ningxia. Train the horsemen, reinforce the borders, comfort those officers who no longer work, and defend our prisoners and guard against outsiders. Make sure the farmlands are productive and your weapons sharp, and use slaves to repair the large fortification mounds. Have garrison troops and peasants start farming old areas to feed the army, and direct and superintend with careful thought. Forbid local chieftains from being appointed to the army and don't covet money. Violators [of small rules] should be dealt with compassion, violators [of heavy rules] should have much harsher punishment. Pursue legal issues of both the army and the public with equal interest, fraudsters should be expelled, but you should listen to all of them and deal with them in an appropriate manner. You must organize an army and officers to deal with all issues internal and external, but take your time and be prudent with your preparations. Officers, those who you consult, and even the military members who perform guard duty should all be listened to with open ears. To earn the trust and respect of those under you, rule with impartial but fair judgments on all things and call out the troops in great force. Meet opportunities with fast and swift judgment in order to unite all the different ranks of the troops and do as you see fit...

Vice Director of Military Affairs: In the Yongle period, the Emperor said:

The Emperor's Orders appoint: All government offices relating to the Vice-Director of Army Affairs are to be given to thou, Tao Xi Gao, to assist in defending Ningxia. Repair the walls moat, train the horse regiments, console and ready the troops, reinvigorate the ranks, eliminate thieves and bandits, do your duty to serve the chief commander, watch for opportunities to suppress [bandits/invaders], and subdue your enemies. Don't give into your base and carnal instincts for temporary relief. You must rule impartially and justly, be upright in your conduct, and you must not allow any of your actions to inflict suffering. The military is of significant importance [in Ningxia], and you must get along with the court Eunuchs, the military organizers, and the imperial inspector and work with all of them. You must not exhibit willful biases [toward anyone], and you must ensure that all of your errors are kept in secret [from the public]. If there is any trouble along the Yellow River, proceed to HuaMaChi (A city) ahead of any bandits with the cavalry to intercept and slaughter them...”

Investegators: In the 17th year of the Hongzhi reign...Ningxia was given a powerful garrison, substantial grain stores, and twice improved irrigation measures. In the Jiajing period, [Ningxia] was again given twice the allocation for irrigation and salt, and a substantial army at Lingzhou. An Imperial Edict said:

This edict provides Ningxia in Shanxi Province a double amount of grain and military stores...presently you will be in charge of protecting the grain stores in Ningxia alongside the provincial commander of all of Gansu, and you are to store all seven different categories of grains....

A similar edict said:

The investigator of Shanxi in charge of the food and grain, have soldiers open up a wasteland to grow food again (*tuntian*), and I will put you in control of the storehouse and grain stores in Ningxia. [A description similar to previous edict about the grain responsibilities]...Do not procrastinate or fail to be diligent,

punish traitors and evil-doers, [do not let] your servants practice fraud or cheat, the soldiers lack meals and proper food, and pardon minor offenses.

“Local Warfare” General: The Zhengtong reign founded the Local Warfare general position [in Ningxia]. In the 20th year of the Chenghua reign it was abolished. In the 16th year of the Hongzhi reign it was reintroduced. An edict said:

The Emperor’s orders say: Fu Zhong will be specially appointed to be in charge of the “Local Warfare” position in Ningxia. You will command the guard and garrison [in Ningxia]. Find [and recruit] 3000 just and righteous local troops to be in your guard, make sure the horse’s armor and supplies are in good repair, diligently train [the troops], foster a strong drive [within the troops], and prepare fresh water for all. Meet with Hua MaChi and eliminate thieves and brigands around Lingzhou, even if their command threatens your troops, you must unite your efforts and kill them. You must not shy away from battle [even if it is difficult] and you must devote your attention to the trouble on the frontier. The Royal Court recognizes your superior skill in these matters and hereby appoints you to this role with exceptional honor. You must be exceptional in your upholding of the law, you must be benevolent [ren] to those beneath you, courageous against your foes, and assign people to posts with good intentions. Use common military tactics and understanding, listen to the council of others, train your troops, and listen to the help of the imperial inspector. If some people’s viewpoints are stubbornly biased [against one another about what to do], perhaps they will quarrel with each other, perhaps sections of the army won’t work together, and the officer’s voice is soft, then the suffering will not be small. Strive carefully and justly.

In the ninth year of the Jiajing reign, Wang Qiong was removed from [this] office. In the tenth year, the position was turned over to Yang Zhixue.

East Pass Commander: Hua Ma Chi Ying was built in the eighth year of Zhengde. It was built to protect the eastern flank of Ningxia.⁷⁸ The [Zhengde] Emperor gave an edict that said:

The Emperor says: Command will be given to Zhou Ji Xun, and the appointment is to oversee the Hua Machi camp on the East Pass. Train the horse, repair the wall, shut gaps in the mounds [of fortifications], guard the fort, make sure that the [troops'] weapons and armor are sound, defend against bandits and raiders, and safeguard the realm. The army is the most central issue at hand, and you'll need to cooperate with the city officials for that end. Always be vigilant and alert, superintend all of the government troops, always serve at the head of your troops and lead by example, always look for opportunities to suppress and kill rebels. Don't recoil or flinch from danger, avoid sowing dissent among your ranks, and keep your mistakes secret [from the public]. Listen to all council and try to handle matters with dignity and rally the troops. Always work with the imperial inspector and always obey the council of your superiors [and likewise for your inferiors]. Deal with matters in a controlled manner, or your greedy pursuit of profit and wealth will injure and harm the people and invite crime [into the kingdom].

The Western Flank: In the beginning of the Xuande reign, the emperor ordered guards and garrisons [along the western flank]. In Zhengde's eighth year, the Minister of War Wang Ji went to the pass to monitor the area and eventually founded a larger fortification on the western pass. The Emperor said:

The Emperor announces that command will be given to Zhao Yu for the region on the western pass of Ningxia outside of Huanghe to join together with Zhuang

⁷⁸ Hua Ma Chi Ying was a portion of the great wall built at an important pass. It was initially designed to be a wall with a small fortification when it was built in 1437. Later, the Jiajing emperor order that the fortress be expanded and put under the jurisdiction of the Ningxia commanders. It was a very important site that allowed Ningxia to control traffic into and out of Ningxia.

Lang [city]. Capture bandits and raiders that infringe upon the area, and you must remain upright in your defense of the west[ern flank]. Drill the cavalry, staunchly defend the walls, and bring peace to the realm. Meet up with government troops and protect against invaders and bandits, watch for opportunities to exploit and take advantage of rebellions insurrections. You must be honest and just and take care of your sergeants [*junshi*]. Don't disturb local leaders, don't disturb the population into forced corvee and labor, or you will suffer from lack of trust and ruin your personal integrity. If anyone disobeys [you], you must not forgive them. The Emperor himself expects you to not overlook anything in your affairs.

Middle Pass Commander: In Jiajing's eighth year he ordered Wang Qiong to correct the guard in Lingzhou and the middle pass [of Ningxia]...The Emperor wrote:

The Emperor's orders say: the offices and bureaus [in Ningxia] have conducted all matters and things [in the manner of] the Classic of History (Shijing). The town of Lingzhou is of central importance and was a communications hub [for previous movements of people in the region] and you must protect and guard the people and government of the area, work with the eastern flank commander, and wait in Lingzhou with your army of guards...Heng Castle was a large mound located near Clearwater Camp [in Ningxia]. You will administer that area without exception or question. Give aid to and reinforce both the fortress and the troops, renovate the side [of the fortress that faces the exterior], drill the cavalry, and protect both the inside and outside [of the fortress] of evildoers. Be vigilant and guard [the area]...⁷⁹

Eastern Pass Cooperation: In the fifth year of the Chenghua era Xing Yu Ying was built. In Jiajing's eighth year it was further fortified and placed under the control of the

⁷⁹ Heng Castle was a castle on the north bend of the Yellow River. It was sporadically in use since the Wei Dynasty and was an important holding spot for military operations on the Great Wall in the Ming Dynasty. In 1507 the Zhengde emperor provisioned for the castle (fort) to be rebuilt and reinforced.

minister Wang Qiong. In his eighteenth year the high official Liu Tian Xia replaced [Wang Qiong] as general [of Xing Yu Ying]. The Emperor's edict stated:

The Emperor says: Zhao Lian will be given the general position for Ningxia's Eastern cohort Xing Yu Ying. Train the cavalry, repair and strengthen the walls, create a narrow pass through large mounds, and provide good weapons and armor to your troops. You must consult all your options and prepare with prudence from all who give you advice. Don't allow your biases to and conflicts with others jeopardize your governance. Approach every opportunity with the skill and guard of the government troops, watch for good opportunities as they present themselves, and surround yourself with good appointed officials and you will be successful. Don't hesitate or flinch from danger, and keep your mistakes hidden...⁸⁰

The Southern Pass Depends Upon Garrisons: In Zhengde's fifth year, the civil minister Yang Yi Qing recommended:

The northern town of Ping Lu and the southern town of Da Ba are separated by over 300 li and it is impossible for our troops to link the two together; this makes it very difficult to control [both at the same time]. Instead, we should give each city individual garrisons [so that they can better take care of problems]. In Jaijing's eighth year, Wang Qiong was garrisons in these cities was lacking vitality. In the fifteenth year [of Jaijing], the imperial inspector Zhang Wen Kui replaced Wang Qiong at the garrison posts.

The Northern Pass' Garrison: It [the northern pass] was constructed within sight of a southern fortification. Peasants were conscripted into work at the garrison and would

⁸⁰ Xing Yu Ying was a series of walls and fortifications to the southeast of Yinchuan. It was originally a Tartar forward base during the Yuan Dynasty but was repurposed by the Chenghua Emperor.

work [either as guards or conscripted laborers] for a long time. Barbarians [*yidi*] founded this place and eventually waned one day [the Xixia after the Mongols conquered the state], and because of that it was easy a location that was easy to defend and victory was swift. After about a hundred and fifty years the barbarians started to prosper and flourish with ample supplies, strong military forces without fear; would they grow even more powerful? Their workers [Xixia's] were all unrivalled in their industry and upright [in morals], but their rules and regulations didn't match our own. Careless regulations and behaviors can't form a strong state, so how did it happen [for the Xixia]? Past scholar Lu Xiang Shan [also known as Lu Jiu Yuan, one of Zhu Xi's main rivals] helped craft an imperial edict to send to all four corners [of the world] to ask the feudal lords and their ministers to submit [to the Southern Song] and it was somewhat successful, but the particulars are important. Even a single day of poor laws and regulations can put the people at risk of a larger calamity. His [JiuYuan] name was of the highest regard, and he was only just able to fulfill his [edict of integrating the barbarians] through chance. Present officials and offices now try [to incorporate the Xixia], but if Xiangshan couldn't succeed, what chance is there?

Ningxia's Management of taxes by a local magistrate: In the middle of the Chenghua years, it was chosen that Qingyang city in Ningxia should be the place for a government office.

Ningxia's East and West Section's magistrate of Taxes: Both locations receive a great amount of tax and grain frequently, but many officers and tax-collectors are greedy and try to keep things for themselves. In Zhengde's thirteenth year, an imperial inspector Wang Shizhong arrived [in Ningxia]. In the East he [the inspector] was received in Qingyang Fu [the office set up in the previous section] and in the West he was received in Pingliang Fu.

With Respect to Command: At the beginning [of the dynasty], local yamen ruled and governed with morals and laws. However, each yamen had their own viewpoints and perspectives and when it came time to make decisions [about the governing of the area], they became stubborn and unwilling to work together. Later on, Minister Zhang Tai assembled a militia and took control of the government positions of all the disparate yamen. He then appointed yamen who had similar viewpoints [to his own] and all throughout the realm benefited. It brought peace to the area.

A3) The Purpose and Building of the Large Confucian Temple in Ningxia

During the 13th year of the Hongzhi era, all of the inspectors and censors helped to build up Lingzhou. They built a Confucian school in the southwest corner of the city inside the walls and set up a system of instruction along the precedent set up by Lizhou..In

Zhengdai's 13th year, all of the imperial censors created a memorial to celebrate a thousand families learning at the school...the xingfu temple had an inscription that read:⁸¹

Lingzhou is an ancient northern city. It was first governed in the Western Han, but changed dramatically over the successive dynasties. The glorious and magnanimous Ming founder Ming Taizu opened up all the land again to all, the greatest extent of which included Yinchuan, and created Lingzhou in order to act as a guardian for all of Ningxia. The Yellow River embraces [the area] and the hills and mountains hug the land. Many civilian and military officials were created and served the people.

In the middle of the Hongzhi reign, an imperial censor named Wang Xun had the idea to create temples for people to study in, the result of which created a strong spirit in all the individuals and led to a new study of discourse. Before long, though, he was removed from office and expelled, along with his [ideas of] teaching and learning...Though there were many sages and masters [assigned to] Ningxia, the people were indignant and pushed them away...The people continued to look to the holy sages of the past and continually rebuffed the efforts of the current assistant in Ningxia Wang Shizhong. Wang lamented in a memorial:

[The people complain that] The government must rule according to the old ways and the military must be organized according to their ancestors. These Xia-people are transforming back into barbarians and must be brought back into line with good deeds and learning. The places where they live are empty and without enrichment, how can we bring them peace?

⁸¹ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 188.

A4) Memorial of the repair of the Confucian Temple in Ningxia⁸²

During the Han dynasty, Ningxia was a harmonious state on the northern borders. With its back to the mountains and its face in front of the [Yellow] river, Ningxia was defensible from all four directions. The Middle Kingdom possesses enough defenses to resist the pressures of the outside barbarians; where the barbarians attempted to steal and pillage, the Middle Kingdom persevered enough to resist them; and circumstances repeated this way [over the centuries]...

Their school was set up in the early years of Yongle's reign. Military soldiers were used to build it and it was for the benefit of all who could not or did not know justice and righteousness. If arranged in the holy and proper manner, all will learn from it and it will continue for many generations...Present-day imperial censor Zhang Gong received orders from the inspector-general of Ningxia to make sure the people of Ningxia flourish and prosper...At the start of Chenghua's sixth year (1470), the school was finished before September. The temple hall itself had many rooms with enough space left over for a government warehouse and granary, to a total over over one hundred rooms. The material [to build it] came from the mountains, the labor came from ordinary people, the extra resources and labor helped to paint and decorate the rooms, the officials were not wasteful, and success came quickly and rapidly!

⁸² <http://dfz.yinchuan.gov.cn/SiteAcl.srv?id=1723748&aid=2008050862>.

Because the school was built, adults increased their aptitudes [at various things], developed a deep set of morals, and created an honest and real foundation. Therefore, in all the land no one would have to go without education, and forever founding schools is a key priority.

This present school [is designed to] teach, whereas ancient schools are quite different. Proper guarding of Ningxia requires study and knowledge because every soldier must guard the younger generation, they will then receive instruction in the way of knowledge. They will recite the ancient books [Five Confucian Classics], and study but a small part of the world and its knowledge. Enlightened men value their relationships and practice virtue in the world. Parts of nature are intrinsic and valuable, but oh how it is wasted on things that are not real [probably the pursuit of money, greed, etc]...[peace within the people comes from education]...

A5) The Creation and Purpose of Primary Schools (*shexue*) in Ningxia

Primary School: Inside [of the city] has a temple with a master who helps perform the appropriate rites. In the 3rd year of Chenghua's reign, Guard captain Zhang Yi created [the primary school] in the new district in the west of the city. In Ansai county, Chu Zhai recorded this. His records read:

Ningxia's old name was Shou Fang prefecture. It was located right along the Great River [Yellow River] and had lots of wasteland around it. During the course of the three dynasties, this situation was never given proper examination.

During the Han dynasty, many ministers said that the area was inhabited by the *Tuyuhun* nomadic people [part of the *Xianbei* people]. During the Song dynasty, the Tuoba clan [ruled] most of Henan, one of the nine major prefectures of the time. Today, the Great Ming controls all the land under heaven and has been able to push these nomads out to the west, but their progeny and descendants still live in that region. They have mixed with the garrison troops and settlers that have come to the region and come to live among one another in harmony under many different village elders and chiefs. During Xuande's reign, the area was turned into a communications hub and was important to the dynasty and its population boomed. Therefore, another city was created [to house the people] and a government official was instructed to command it and all the people in the region benefited. Over the years, [that city] has continued to expand and worked in harmony in the region. People played and lived in harmony and practiced correct and earnest work tending [their flocks] and tilling [the land]. These days, the people have started to try and open a local school in the ancient style [*yishu*], but many young boys have to go to the larger prefecture in order to continue their studies, and frequently cease [after trying for a while]. For the first three years of Chenghua's reign, Zhang Ting Fu was recruited and told to come here [to Lingzhou]. [He went on a journey to the region], and noticed that many of the people in the prefecture [Lingzhou] didn't like studying and learning. While they were building the school, they used the best help available. They recruited soldiers living in the area to help build and construct the large structure, and the most skilled artisans painted beautiful pieces in the building for all to enjoy. In the back of the structure, many classrooms were built with numerous beautiful pillars. The east hall was called "The Place of High Virtues," and the west hall was called "Vast Productivity." Construction was started that year [Chenghua's 3rd] and was finished on July 27th. The area was cleaned and the school was provided with the finest materials. A Confucian scholar named Liang Shitai was invited to come perform the opening ceremony and served as the school's first teacher. He helped to make the school flourish and thrive.⁸³

Although they may be barbarians, the heart of logic and reason rests in the peoples' hearts. Even if they have different clothes, dress, and customs, their children still know the love of their family and kinsmen, and the younger respects the elder brother; compare that to other people, and they do not seem much different. The wisdom of the ancient sages is universal and can surely benefit these people and can guide and

⁸³ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 191.

instruct them. With regards to education, they seem to have a sincere and honest drive to learn. Over time and over many years [this teaching] can and will change men so that they know the laws of heaven and earth. If we are able to do this, we can, without exception, change their customs and behaviors. Today their [the natives'] occupation may require them to be on horseback and wield their swords, but they possess the ability to fundamentally change their culture and conduct themselves like clear, levelheaded men! If the young boys and apprentices come to this [lecture room to study], isn't it obvious that they will know their place? If they grow up learning to respect and listen to their teachers, they will then become much easier to instruct. The school will be able to wash away and cleanse the dirty old customs from these young boys, change their temperament [for the better]. It will remove the brutish and noisy behaviors [of the boys], and instead fill their minds with delicate and graceful poetry. Learning rules and logic, the boys will stand up to a new way of thinking, as to make them no longer a burden! A memorial read:

Lingwu county [in Yinchuan] used up its farmland and it turned desolate. The Xianbei and their descendants plowed the land and tended to sheep and cattle as was their customs. [Today], the Great Ming encompasses all the land, even the remote regions [of Ningxia]. The soldiers and garrisons not only defended the region, but also lived there in harmony. However, the one who spends all his time tilling the land and tending the sheep and cattle can never devote themselves to their study. Outstanding instruction and direction can bestow clear and agile character. With education starting at early ages, it is possible for a thorough and complete transformation of the basic spirit. Therefore, fortune predicts that the land will be good and prosperous if you hold and carry the classics to all those in your camp.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Hu, *Ningxia Gazetteer*, 192.

Vita

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