

**Rebelling at the Front: Transforming the Sino-Tibetan Frontier in the Late Qing
Period**

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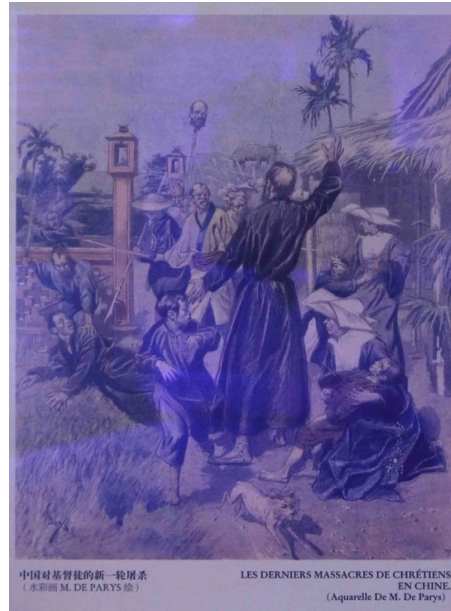
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Introduction

Ever since the second half of the 18th century, French Catholicism witnessed a robust expansion in the frontier societies of Southwestern China, despite frequent persecution of Christians.¹ The Treaty of Tianjin (1858) and of Beijing (1860) allowed for foreign missionaries to freely preach in inland China, and in consequence French missionaries had advanced as far as the Sino-Tibetan borders by 1864. However, the rising number of missionaries also caused riots by Buddhist lamas.² Finally, in March 1905, a significant rebellion broke out in the areas adjacent to Sichuan and Yunnan, marking the beginning of the largest lama-led rebellion in the late Qing. Notably, this time they targeted not only missionaries but also Manchu officials. Feng Quan, then the Assistant High Commissioner to Tibet, was assassinated by lamas in Batang (Sichuan). Meanwhile, hundreds of Catholic converts were massacred and Catholic churches burned. It took the Qing army over a year to suppress the riot, with lamas, local chieftains and fellow rioters either being killed or imprisoned.

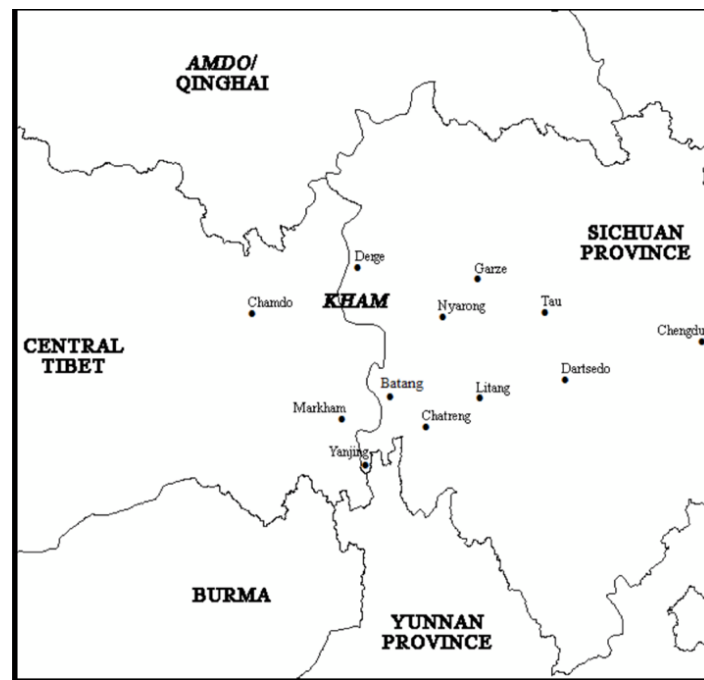


Picture 1: *Les Derniers Massacres de Chrétiens en Chine*, Aquarelle de M. De Parys, 1893

¹ Robert Entenmann, 'The Establishment of Chinese Catholic Communities in Early Ch'ing Szechwan,' in *Variétés Sinologiques* (Paris: Institut Ricci-Centre d'études Chinoises, 1995), 154

² See, for example, picture 1: *Les Derniers Massacres de Chrétiens en Chine* by Aquarelle De M. De Parys, 1893.

To fully comprehend the 1905 Tibetan rebellion, one needs to first understand the long-term and short-term historical background that allowed its genesis. Historically, the central sites of this rebellion belonged to Kham (康), a region under the Tibetan cultural sphere, situated on Tibet's borders with predominantly Sichuan, Yunnan, and Qinghai. Specifically, this included sites such as Dajianlu, Xiangcheng and Batang in Sichuan and Deqin, Weixi, and Cizhong in Yunnan (see Map 1). The inhabitants of these towns were of mixed ethnicity. With Tibetans constituting the majority of the population, the local culture was profoundly influenced by Tibetan Buddhism. There were, however, other ethnic minorities, such as the *Lisu* (傈僳族), the *Naxi* (纳西族), the *Nu* (怒族), or the *Hui* (回族), who often had to endure the whims of the local ruling classes.



Map 1: Major towns along Sichuan and Yunnan's frontier with Tibet in the 19th century³

Not long before the outbreak of the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion, the Sino-Tibetan frontier was confronted with challenges from both within and without. Externally, British forces armed with modern weaponry vanquished the poorly equipped Tibetans in 1904, giving birth to the

³ William M. Coleman IV, 'Making the State on the Sino-Tibetan Frontier: Chinese Expansion and Local Power in Batang 1842-1939,' Columbia University Library, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.7916/D8959FJH>

Treaty of Lhasa as well as a large indemnity of 7,500,000 rupees. Such an invasion not only served to contain Russia's influence in Tibet, but also acted as a means for the British to secure its long-desired free trade between British India and Tibet. In this sense, Tibet had become the arena of imperialist powers before the advent of the 1905 war. This, as we shall see, would bring about enormous changes in the relationship between Tibet and the Qing empire and thus affected the Sino-Tibetan frontier politics. Internally, the Xincheng reforms (1901-1911) initiated policies aimed at transforming the Chinese state. One of the key elements was to establish the New Army where soldiers were trained with modern Western arms and drill. This further enhanced the provincial military capacity which started as early as the Taiping Rebellion (1858) and allowed the provincial army to play a significant role amid the punitive campaign of the 1905 rebellion. More importantly, the late Qing reforms attempted to reverse the previous devolution of informal local administrations and strengthen the state's authority over the peripheries. These ambitions envisaged a significant transformation of the relationship between the local ruling powers, provincial authorities and the Qing state in the Sino-Tibetan borderland.

Over the past few decades, international scholars have paid an increasing attention to the state incorporation of ethnic borderlands during the Qing era. Sinocentric understandings often portray modern Chinese state formation as a largely peaceful process where non-Han groups were assimilated by the Confucian culture and the economic prosperity of China proper.⁴ Since the mid-1990s, "New Qing History" scholars have studied Qing history through a revisionist approach.⁵ They make full use of newly opened sources in languages of ethnic minorities, especially those in Manchu. In lieu of being assimilated by Han Chinese, new Qing historians argue that the Qing rulers were able to sustain their Manchu identity, and China

⁴ See, for example, Ping-ti Ho, 'Salient Aspects of China's Heritage,' in *China in Crisis*, ed. Ping-ti Ho and Tang Tsou (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 1-92

⁵ The debate between Sino-Centric historians and New Qing historians began with Evelyn S. Rawski's Presidential Address on the Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History.

proper should be seen as only a part of a much wider Qing empire that extended into the Inner Asian territories of Tibet, Mongolia, Manchuria and Xinjiang.⁶ The Qing elites, at the same time, were able to achieve such expansion through conquering and colonising the minority regions.⁷ Yet, their emphasis on Manchu sources often led them to view the Qing's frontier management at the court level and ignore local events amid the expansion process. This project complements the wider historiography by incorporating local history to the analysis of frontier expansion in the late Qing period. It uses the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion as a lens to explore Qing China's frontier management at the local level and address the process through which the Qing managed to consolidate its power over the Sino-Tibetan borderland. On a broader level, it also examines what the incident reflected of the Sino-Tibetan relationship in the late Qing and the following decades.

In general, previous studies have approached the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion from three directions. The first group of historians interprets this rebellion in a similar vein to the anti-missionary rebellions in coastal China, exemplifying the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion as an anti-imperialist struggle. Liu Dingyin argues that the rebellion can be attributed to the Tibetan rejection of French imperialist expansion, the local Tibetans thus participating in a people's war.⁸ Nevertheless, such an interpretation ignores the specificity of the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion, namely that it took place in the Sino-Tibetan borderland and was initiated by Tibetan lamas. This specificity means that one cannot analyse the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion without understanding its local context. Another direction of research tends to analyse political

⁶ Some major works of new Qing historians involve: Evelyn S. Rawski, *The Last Emperors: A Social History of Qing Imperial Institutions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Mark C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Pamela K. Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005)

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Liu Dingyin and Han Junxue, 'Weixi jiaohan yu Zangzu renmin de fanqinlüe douzheng' [维西教案与藏族人民的反侵略斗争] (The 1905 Rebellion and Tibetan Buddhist's anti-imperialist campaign), in *Yunnan shehuikexue* [云南社会科学] (Yunnan Social Sciences) 5 (1990): 79-83

campaigns in the Kham together with the late Qing Tibet policy, leaving the impression that any events in the Kham were merely responses to the crisis in central Tibet.⁹ Recently, historians such as Xiuyu Wang interpret the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion as a result of the state expansion into Kham during the late Qing reforms.¹⁰ Primarily basing on Qing imperial decrees (*Zougao*), their research focus more on the perspectives of the Qing court as well as governors. They, however, did not pay the same degree of attention to the complex local geopolitical conditions in the Kham. In other words, they overlook the roles played by foreign missionaries and local ruling powers in sparking the rebellion.

Having identified such of the flaws in the existing literature, this project builds from previous scholarship and offers a more comprehensive account of the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion. It addresses the impetus, process and result of the 1905 war in sequence. Drawing extensively from a range of sources, predominantly the local and provincial gazetteers, missionary accounts, Qing official memorials and imperial decrees, it demystifies the incident from both local and governmental perspectives. The first chapter deals with the origins of the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion. It analyzes the underlying reasons underpinning the native authorities' decision to rebel against the Qing officials and missionaries. The second chapter discusses how provincial military managed to suppress the large-scale rebellions in Kham. It examines how the frontier provincial development laid the ground for Qing military's success and how these reflect the provincial power over the frontier regions. The final chapter synthesizes the implications of this rebellion on the Sino-Tibetan frontier politics and, more broadly, the Sino-Tibetan relationship.

⁹ Gele, 'Qingmo de gaitu guiliu he minzu maodun [清末的改土归流和民族矛盾](Restructuring Projects and National Conflict in the Late Qing)', in *Zangxue Renleixue Wenji* [藏学、人类学论文集](Articles on Tibetology and Anthropology), (China: Tibetology Press, 2008); Premen Addy, *Tibet on the Imperial Chessboard: The Making of British Policy Towards Lhasa, 1899-1925* (New Delhi: Academic Publishers, 1984), 364; Ryosuke Kobayashi, 'The Dalai Lama Government's Rule of Eastern Tibet (1865-1911): History of the Boundary Problems between China and Tibet,' in *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 76 (2008): 51-85
¹⁰ See for example, Xiuyu Wang, *China's last imperial frontier: Late Qing expansion in Sichuan's Tibetan borderlands* (Lexington Books, 2011)

This project argues that the emergence of French missionaries had threatened the authority of the native ruling class on the Sino-Tibetan frontier, a source of worry for the dominating lamas. In 1905, the Qing state's attempt to reinforce its borderland management further reduced the rights once enjoyed by the monasteries, giving rise to the outbreak of the Tibetan Rebellion. Prior to the riots, frontier provinces had enhanced its military and economic capacity as a result of rapid reforms in the late Qing period. This presaged the Qing army's success in the 1905 war. Post-war reconstruction took place shortly after the suppression, allowing the Qing to not only strengthen its power over the Sino-Tibetan borderland, but also extend its influence in Central Tibet. In all, the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion acted as the turning point of Sino-Tibetan frontier politics as well as the Sino-Tibetan relationship. While the traditional ruling class declined in influence, missionaries and Qing officials proceeded to become new expressions of authority in the region until the Qing's final collapse.

Chapter 1: The Outbreak: Origins of the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion

Before moving into analysing the origins of the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion, it is worth elaborating the scope of uprisings in Kham. The riot started from Batang, where more than 3000 Tibetan people gathered together to provoke large-scale armed protests against Qing officials, burning three Catholic churches there and massacred French missionaries. The Batang uprising soon spread to most of southern Kham. For instance, monks from Yangbajing monastery and Dongdrub monastery worked together with Batang rebels in leading attacks against Qing troops for months before being finally suppressed. In July 1905, Tibetans in northwestern Yunnan destroyed ten Catholic churches and killed a large number of Tibetan Catholics. To understand the origins of Kham uprisings, one needs to comprehend, respectively, Tibetan lamas' hostility towards Catholics and Qing officials as causes for the outbreak of the frontier war.

Missionaries: A New Form of Regional Authority

As already mentioned, upon the missionaries' arrival in Kham, they had received hostility from Tibetan lamas. In Batang, anti-missionary riots took place almost every few years: in 1873, 1879, 1881, 1887 and finally 1905. As such, the rebellion against missionaries in 1905 should be understood along with its preceding anti-missionary uprisings.

In general, the lamas' riots against French missionaries reflect the latter's disruption to the traditional political and economic relationship on the Sino-Tibetan frontier. Politically, the Chieftain System (土司制度) had largely shaped the political landscape of the Sino-Tibetan frontier before the arrival of the missionaries. Meanwhile, following the motto of 'governing the barbarians by barbarians' (以夷治夷), the Qing state's direct control of the region had been quite tenuous. Under such a system, chieftains were hereditary and had their own jurisdictions. All officials under their jurisdictions were supervised directly by chiefs rather than by the court. Furthermore, unlike other Qing officials, the chieftains' performances were

not recorded or assessed by the court, which again suggests a lack of central control.¹¹ In a sense, the chiefs had enjoyed large autonomy over regional politics before the entry of French missionaries. Additionally, Tibet's lamas were closely connected with the chiefs. According to Stéphane Gros, many lamas shared kinship with the chiefs, and a majority of Buddhist temples in the region were funded by the latter.¹² The gazetteer for Deqin notes the close relationship between lamas and local chiefs, for example when arranging annual meetings to negotiate political, military, and economic affairs.¹³ On the Sino-Tibetan frontier under only marginal governmental control, lamas as well as chieftains represented the religious and political authority in the region. Notably, even in the 18th and 19th centuries when the court tightened its control of the Yunnan and Sichuan provinces, towns on the Sino-Tibetan frontier remained dominated by lamas and chiefs.¹⁴ The court relied on the local ruling class's connection with Tibet to ensure the stability of its southwestern frontier.

The native ruling power also claimed absolute rights over regional economy. Take the Ba Chöde monastery in Batang as an example, it not only enjoyed supreme leadership over civilians' spiritual and political life because of its close ties with Lhasa, but also acted as a major regional landowner. It is estimated that it administered as much as 40-50 percent of land in Batang and had its own trading interests.¹⁵ Chieftains and lamas often achieved such economic authority through means of exploitation. In order to monopolize regional commerce,

¹¹ Peng Hongjun, Zhang tu zhi min: Qing dai Yunnan xingzhenqu huafen yiji xingzheng guanli tizhi yanjin yanjiu [掌土治民：清代云南行政区划及行政管理体制演进研究]. (Development of Yunnan's Administrative System during the Qing) (Chinese Social Sciences Press, 2017), 158-161

¹² Stéphane Gros, 'Merchant Missionaries' New Religion: The First Steps of the French Catholic Missionaries in Northwest Yunnan, 1846-1865,' in *Territories, Communities and Exchanges in the Kham Sino-Tibetan Borderlands* (2011): 48

¹³ Committee for the Compilation of Local Gazetteers in Yunnan, *Deqin Xianzhi* [德钦县志] (Gazetteer for Xian District) , (Yunnan Nationalities Publishing House: 1995), 192

¹⁴ Liu Jinzhao, 'zhiguan kao ershier: zhisheng tuguang'[职官考二十二：直省土官] from *Qingchao wenxian tongkao* [清朝续文献通考] , 8964

¹⁵ Bray John, 'Trade, Territory, and Missionary Connections in the Sino-Tibetan Borderlands,' in *Frontier Tibet: Patterns of Change in the Sino-Tibetan Borderlands* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 164

they amortized highly lucrative goods, such as tea, salt, ox, iron and wool products, to civilians. Specifically, long-distance tea trade between towns in Kham and Lhasa became an important means through which Buddhist lamas imposed the sales of products on their clients and enforced mandatory delivery (See picture 2). As Bishop Félix Biet (1838-1901) notes in 1893:¹⁶

When it has a stock of tea to place, it divides it among rich families in accordance with their wealth and obliges them to take delivery, either in cash or on credit...It is a compulsory purchase.



Picture 2: Chinese coolies carrying tea to Dajianlu¹⁷

Overwhelming taxation also became a way of exploitation. It is recorded that each household approximately paid over 50% of its income to chieftains and monasteries, with up to one third of the total agrarian output used for tax payments.¹⁸ At the same time, loans were levied on those civilians who could not afford heavy taxation. People were forced to impawn their land

¹⁶ Groffier Valérien, 'Travaux Géographiques et Scientifiques des Missionnaires Catholiques en 1893,' *Bulletin de la Société de géographie de Lyon*, 1893, 141

¹⁷ Cooper, T.T. *Travels of a Pioneer of Commerce* (London: John Murray, 1871), 201

¹⁸ *Deqin Xianzhi*, 193

and properties to the ruling chieftains and lamas.¹⁹ Many debtors even became serfs to the ruling class.²⁰ In a sense, the economic relationship between local rulers and commoners provided a means for the former to acquire land and reinforce its authority over the population. Civilians, especially the ethnic minorities, were treated as subordinates by their rulers. Contemporary accounts illustrate how rulers manipulated the land and lives of commoners. Nobody dared challenge their authority for fear of revenge.²¹

Under these circumstances, the emergence of French missionaries provided commoners on the Sino-Tibetan frontier with an alternative to life in debt and dominance by chieftains and lamas. In the Aben village (阿本村) of Yunnan, missionaries had helped all converts clear their debts to the Menkong temple.²² In sharp contrast to chieftains and lamas' oppressive policies, early French missionaries in the borderland devoted themselves to providing educational and medicinal services to civilians.²³ Treating smallpox, teaching children, and taking care of orphans were all daily matters to French missionaries.²⁴ Taking Deqin as an example, it is estimated that there were over 200 Catholic converts by the beginning of the Republican era. Missionaries extended their influence by providing social welfare and eliminating the traditional economic bond between lamas and commoners. With an increasing number of converts, missionaries appeared to be a new source of power in the region. Meanwhile, this growing new authority challenged the supremacy once enjoyed by lamas and chieftains on the Sino-Tibetan frontier, whose hostility towards the missionaries only grew over time.

¹⁹ Gros Stéphane, 'The Salt, the Ox, and the Slave: Exchange and Politics in Northwest Yunnan, 19th-20th Centuries,' in *Territories, Communities and Exchanges in the Kham Sino-Tibetan Borderlands* (2008): 109-113

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Bin Liu, *Discussions on Yong Chang Chieftains* [永昌土司论], (Yunnan Department of Tong Zhi: 1887)

²² Missions étrangères de Paris, Letter, From Renou to Légrégeois in Bengka, Order Number DG320, 1855/07/08

²³ *Deqin Xianzhi*, 328

²⁴ Missions étrangères de Paris, Letter from the Father Jules Dubernard, Collection dirigée par Jean-Claude Didelot, 1881/04/01

To sum up, French missionaries on the Sino-Tibetan frontier exploited the political and economic inequality between the ruling class and commoners to their advantage. They thrived in places with tenuous central control but robust regional power, while they were limited by monastic authority along the Sino-Tibetan frontier. Whilst leading to a critical relationship with the lamas prior to the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion, the anti-Catholic rebellions can also be seen as a product of profound changes to the local traditional socio-political structure brought by the arrival of French missionaries.

Qing Officials: Restructuring the Qing Empire's Tibetan Frontier

Although the lamas' hostility against French missionaries antedated the rebellion, the nature of the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion was different from its precedents. In 1905, Qing officials rather than missionaries were the primary target of rioters. To understand the reasons for the 1905 Rebellion, one has to recognize the factors that drove Tibetans against Qing officials.

One of the direct causes are the restructuring projects (改土归流) initiated by Feng Quan in 1905 as part of the Late Qing Reforms. Upon his arrival in Batang, Feng Quan showed a keen interest in reclaiming wastelands, as expressed in his memorial to the Qing court:

Batang has a mild and warm weather, with its lands fertile and suitable for farming. In a year's time, we plan to expand the arable land to over 1000 mu [equivalent to 67 hectares]. This figure will increase steadily in the coming years and the agricultural income can significantly add to our military expenditure in the frontier region.²⁵

²⁵ Ethnic Research Institute of Sichuan, *Qingmo Chuandian Bianwu Dangan Shiliao*[清末川滇边务档案史料] (Historical Archive Materials of Sichuan and Yunnan at the end of the Qing), (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1989), 38

Feng Quan's dedication to reclaiming lands in Batang irritated the local chieftains and lamas. Some of the uncultivated land had historically been venerated by them as sacred, farming on those lands was thus seen as a violation of their beliefs. More importantly, Feng Quan's project to reclaim the lands was a menace to the power of the local rulers. Land lost by chiefs and lamas weakened their political and economic authority. Furthermore, Feng Quan put forward a series of measures to eliminate monastic rights, limiting each monastery in Batang to no more than 300 lamas.²⁶ Lamas under 13 years of age were to be immediately secularized and dismissed.²⁷ In Feng Quan's view, this would lead to a surge in the secular population in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands, with more agrarian civilians able to feed themselves and to own lands.²⁸ The enmity unleashed by the lamas against the loss of their property rights over land and population helped trigger the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion. Shortly afterwards, Feng Quan passed away and his restructuring project ended in failure.

While Feng Quan's restructuring projects might be the immediate cause of umbrage among the local ruling class, one should acknowledge the underlying factors that contributed to the radical implementation of his policies. Above all, Feng Quan's policies were derivatives of a process where the Qing court strove to consolidate its power and ensure stability on the Sino-Tibetan frontier. Much earlier than Feng Quan's restructuring projects, Qing officials had recognized the urgency of ensuring its frontier security. In 1897, Gong Shou's memorial to the Imperial Majesty has clearly outlined this concern:

²⁶ Committee for the Compilation of District Gazetteers of Batang in Sichuan, *Batang Xianzhi* [巴塘县志], (Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House, 1993), 250

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

*The British had longed for exporting Indian tea to Tibet and gained high profits from the tea trade...Russians aspired to reach India through Tibet...If they found any excuses for intervention...disastrous consequences may happen.*²⁹

The Qing court also realized the significance of frontier stability. As such, Beijing prompted the Dalai lama to carefully select his officials and rigorously assess their performance in order to prevent any sort of foreign aggression.³⁰ Hence, one can note that out of national security concerns, ensuring stability in the Sino-Tibetan borderland was already becoming imperative to the Qing by the late 19th century.

Furthermore, while the court had realized the importance of frontier stability, the British invasion of Tibet in 1903-4 provided an opportunity for Qing to consolidate its power in the borderlands. As noted by Alex McKay, with the Dalai lama in exile and the withdrawal of British forces, the power vacuum allowed the Qing's High Commissioner in Tibet to reassert his authority and consolidate the Qing state's power in the frontier regions.³¹ At the same time, the British intervention drove the Qing court to seek changes in its frontier management. A Qing decree of 1904 outlined the fear of a decentralized political system confronting international interventions:

*Many officials have been reporting to me the severe situation in Tibet and advocated for strengthening control over Chieftain regions on the Sino-Tibetan frontier. As such, I will immediately arrange Xi Liang, You Tai and Feng Quan to make relevant adjustments in the frontier management.*³²

²⁹ *Qingmo Chuandian Bianwu Dangan Shiliao* [清末川滇边务档案史料], 35

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 36

³¹ Alex McKay, 'The British Invasion of Tibet, 1903-4,' *Inner Asia* 14, no.1 (2012), 17

³² *Qingmo Chuandian Bianwu Dangan Shiliao* [清末川滇边务档案史料], 39

Under these circumstances, Feng Quan's restructuring project in Batang was designed to serve the court's national security interests and consolidate the Qing state's power on the Sino-Tibetan frontier, as is highlighted by his memorial to the Imperial Majesty in 1905:

*We should immediately reassert control of Sichuan's frontier to Tibet. From Batang it takes us only ten days to arrive at the frontier...it is an ideal place for a garrison in case turmoil arises in the borderlands.*³³

For Feng Quan, on the one hand, implementing the land reclamation project could promote agricultural output in Batang. This would be crucial for feeding the Qing's frontier guards, preparing the army for future foreign interventions. On the other hand, eliminating monastic rights served to contain the lamas' military authority, preventing them from dispatching armies without Qing permission. This legitimized the radical implementation of Feng Quan's restructuring policies, which eventually led to the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion.

Therefore, while Feng Quan's restructuring project in Batang directly led to the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion, it is the Qing court's aspiration to defend its borderland and tighten frontier control that ultimately aroused umbrage from the native ruling class. As such, the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion reflects a dilemma confronted by Qing leaders in its final years: strengthening imperial frontier control could better position themselves to resist future foreign aggressions; nevertheless, it could damage the rights of the local ruling class and lead to violent opposition. Regardless whether the rebellions were directed against missionaries or Qing officials, they are intrinsically the outcome of changing regional politics in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands.

³³ *Ibid.*

Chapter 2: The Punitive Campaign: Expanding the Provincial Power

As early as in 1903, a memorial sent from Xiliang, then the Provincial Governor of Sichuan, notes that military forces must be employed to suppress Kham people when rebels take place, as the local people are “quite obstinate” and “barbaric.”³⁴ Such attitude towards Kham riots applies quite well in the suppression campaign of the 1905 Tibetan rebellion. Immediately after its outbreak, the Qing responded to the rebels with fierce punitive expeditions. In summer, the Sichuan Army under the command of the Chinese General, Ma Weiqi, crushed the Tibetan rebels at Batang, totally destroying their monastery. However, people in other parts of the Kham were still extremely hostile to the Qing Chinese and provoked frequent fights against the Qing military. As such, the second wave of troops led by Zhao Erfeng, later the Sichuan-Yunnan Border Affairs Minister, joined Ma’s forces and expanded the punitive campaign to the wider Kham region. It was not until June 19, 1906, that Zhao finally cleaned out the last pockets of resistance, with all of the surviving defenders executed. A full understanding of the Qing’s success in the punitive campaign thus requires us to demystify how the Qing military managed to quell the frontier rebellions and the roles played by provincial military elites in suppression campaigns.

One of the most crucial factors for the Qing’s success lies in the military reforms in the late Qing period. As already mentioned, the final decade of the Qing witnessed a rapid transformation in its military system, where the New Army enjoyed a much more superior military capacity compared to traditional Qing forces, such as the Eight Banners and Green Standard. Soldiers from the New Army often came from good social and educational backgrounds. Illiterate soldiers were discharged, and an increasing number of upper-class

³⁴ Elliot Sperling, ‘The Chinese Venture in Kham, 1904-1911 and the Role of Chao Erh-Feng,’ in *The Tibet Journal* 1, no.2 (1976), 12

youths saw it an honour to join the army.³⁵ Soldiers from the New Armies were also equipped with modern weapons and practiced Western drills.³⁶ Foreign officers were hired for training soldiers, and military schools were established in many provinces.³⁷ This set the stage for drastic military reforms in frontier provinces before and in the midst of the 1905 Tibetan rebellion.

In Sichuan, military reforms had given birth to four battalions of the new army ahead of the 1905 war. By 1904, about 18 students had been sent to military academies in Japan by the Sichuan government, and the Sichuan Military Academy (*wubei xuetang*) was founded.³⁸ As Xiliang's memorial outlines, courses offered at the academy ranged from military strategy, geography, physics, surveying, to foreign languages.³⁹ Upon graduation, young officers would be proficient in battle tactics and assigned to battalions across the province.⁴⁰ This better guaranteed the quality of the forces, preparing the Sichuan army for frontier unrests which had prevailed since the late 19th century. Rigorous efforts were also made to shore up frontier vulnerabilities in response to the 1905 Tibetan rebellion. New militia forces were immediately recruited so as to enhance Ma Weiqi's and Zhao Erfeng's troops, while existing forces were converted into New Army units.⁴¹ Between 1904 and July 1905, Sichuan had raised 30 battalions of first-class reserves and 7 battalions of standing army soldiers.⁴² Meanwhile, a special Tibetan Battalion (*Zangying*) was assembled out of the troops in Sichuan's interior. According to Wang, this had three advantages over the old sentry system, in which Sichuan troops took turns in dispatching forces to Tibet. First, it could prevent the problem of

³⁵ Michael Gasster, 'The Republican Revolutionary Movement,' in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. John K. Fairbank, Kwang-Ching Liu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 508-509

³⁶ Feng Tianyu, 'The New Policies in Hubei,' in *China: How the Empire Fell*, 275

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 276

³⁸ Wang, 'China's last imperial frontier,' 12

³⁹ Xiliang, *Xi Qingbi Zhijun Zougao* [錫清弼制軍奏稿] (Xiliang's Memorials on Military Management), (Beijing: Wenhai Book Company, 1974), 363

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Wang, 'China's last imperial frontier,' 13

⁴² *Xi Qingbi Zhijun Zougao* [錫清弼制軍奏稿], 459

substitution, where draftees paid others to take their places.⁴³ Second, this assured that the soldiers could have sufficient time to become familiar with Tibet's terrain, customs and conditions.⁴⁴ Third, a permanent Tibetan Battalion would reduce the cost of transporting Sichuan forces to borderlands.⁴⁵

More importantly, an improved logistical system was set up to ensure the smooth transportation of food, weapons, and equipment to the Sichuan army. A government-recognised group of local representatives called *baozheng* acted as direct organisers and employers of local porters in the Sino-Tibetan borderland. Their duties involved, for example, recording the number of yaks and horses owned by each household and took charge of grain collection so that military resources could be extracted from those capable of rendering the service.⁴⁶ *Baozheng*, in this respect, provided a means through which the government could enter into direct contractual arrangement with local porters and thus monopolise over logistical services. As a result, the Sichuan government was able to create the most substantial forces in the Sino-Tibetan borderland in the last decade of the Qing's rule through reinforcing its military capability as well as logistical mechanism. This not only presaged the provincial military's success in the Kham campaigns, but also laid the foundation for the rising power of frontier provincial administrations before the collapse of the Qing, as will be discussed in the final chapter.

As of equal importance to the defeat of Tibetan rebels is the enormous increase in fiscal revenues of Sino-Tibetan frontier provinces in the late Qing. Elisabeth Kaske notes that by the end of the Qing dynasty, the Sichuan province had increased its revenue fourfold and shifted from being a recipient of interprovincial assistance into an integral donor province that

⁴³ Xiuyu Wang, 13

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 17

financed many civil wars in frontier provinces and contributed a substantial part of the central government revenue.⁴⁷ Historically, the central government had relied upon taxation from the Jiangnan region to support security operations in frontier provinces such as Sichuan and Yunnan. Yet, rebellions since the mid-19th century resulted in great losses of the Jiangnan revenue. In the context of frequent Kham frontier crises, the court could no longer afford sending funds to provincial military elites. This transformed the centre-province relations over fiscal revenue, as frontier provincial government began to gain more control over revenue to fund its military campaigns.

A crucial source of provincial revenue came from the land taxation. From 1753 to 1908, the land tax yield of Sichuan had multiplied more than ninefold as a result of dramatic increase in the rate of surcharges.⁴⁸ By the 1900s, Sichuan's average surcharges for modernization needs had reached 3.0 taels, more than double of that in the Shanxi province.⁴⁹ Particularly, two forms of surcharges, the "Subsidy (*jintie*)" and the "Contribution (*juanshu*)," had been imposed since the late 19th century to cover Sichuan's amounting military expenses.⁵⁰ The annual total amount of these two surcharges collected between 1881 and 1903 was as follows:⁵¹

Years	Subsidy (Taels)	Contribution (Taels)
1881-1882	1,195,033	1,968,154
1884-1885	1,185,175	1,850,149
1885-1886	1,193,937	1,875,681

⁴⁷ Elisabeth Kaske, 'Taxation, Trust, and Government Debt: State-Elite Relations in Sichuan, 1850-1911,' in *Modern China* 45, no.3(2019), 244

⁴⁸ Yeh-Chien Wang, *Land Taxation in Imperial China, 1750-1911* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 91

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 65

⁵⁰ Kaske, 'Taxation, Trust, and Government Debt,' 244

⁵¹ Zijian Lu, *Qingdai Sichuan Caizheng Shiliao*[清代四川财政史料](Compilation of Sichuan Fiscal Archives in the Qing Dynasty), (Sichuan: Sichuan Social Sciences Academy, 1984), 790

1886-1888	1,855,297	2,805,724
1896-1897	1,215,403	2,288,427
1900-1901	1,204,433	3,092,627
1902-1903	1,198,393	3,504,333

Alternative forms of taxation, predominantly the opium tax and the salt tax, also contributed largely to the fiscal revenue of frontier provinces. Before the 1906 anti-opium campaign, the substantial tax revenue (*likin*) generated by opium had served as the basis for costly provincial reforms in the late Qing period. According to Judith Wyman, Sichuan and Yunnan were China's greatest opium producers by the turn of the 20th century.⁵² In 1904, opium production in these two provinces were the highest among all Chinese provinces, with 200,000 piculs in Sichuan and 30,000 piculs in Yunnan.⁵³ With such enormous production capacity, it brought about an annual taxation of 2,552,000 taels to the Sichuan government, constituting 15 percent of the province's total revenue base.⁵⁴ In the meantime, salt production generated approximately 1,800,000 taels to the Sichuan government on a yearly basis.⁵⁵ From 1895 onwards, the Sichuan authority had started raising its salt taxation to cover the enormous indemnity incurred by foreign treaties as well as the increasing military expenses. In 1901, the salt taxation rose by the rate of 3 wen (a traditional Chinese currency equivalent to penny)/500g; and by 1906, it had grown by a further 2 wen.⁵⁶ In a nutshell, the substantial revenue of the provincial government served to finance costly frontier military reforms, which laid the foundation for provincial military's success in the 1905 war. Central fiscal authority, meanwhile, was undermined by provincial governments' growing power over revenue

⁵² Wyman Judith, 'Opium and the State in Late-Qing Sichuan,' in *Opium Regimes: China, Britain and Japan, 1839-1952*, ed. Timothy Brook and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi (University of California Press, 2000), 212

⁵³ S.A.M. Adshead, *Province and Politics in Late Imperial China* (Curzon Press, 1984), 51

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 92

⁵⁵ Committee for the Compilation of Sichuan Annals, *Sichuan Shengzhi: Caizhengzhi* [四川省志:财政志] (Annals of the Sichuan Province: Fiscal Annals), (Chengdu: Sichuan Renmin Publishing House, 1997), 19

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 41

collection and allocation. Thus, one should notice that the success of the Qing army in the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion reflected the rising provincial power in both military and fiscal terms.

In addition to the development of provincial military and fiscal strength, the Qing's frontier officials played a critical role in the punitive campaign. Specifically, Elliot Sperling points Zhao Erfeng as the most important figure among the Qing's hard-line officials in the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion.⁵⁷ Zhao managed to quell the rebels owing to several reasons. From the outset, Zhao's personal character bears our attention. A contemporary British diplomat Eric Teichman depicts Zhao as a man differed in many aspects from the ordinary high Chinese official.⁵⁸ He was a pragmatic campaign planner who was always prepared to deal with changing circumstances during frontier campaigns and achieved his ends by both astute tactics and arm forces.⁵⁹ Taking his campaign in Xiangcheng as an example, when monks retreated to the monastery of Sang Piling whose walls were thick and made it an ideal defence site, Zhao was forced to surround the monastery and began months of siege. Notes from the British Consul-General at Chengdu provided a detailed account of Zhao's swift responses facing hardships:⁶⁰

For over a month the Chinese vainly tried to locate the source of the lamas' water supply...But the lamas had foreseen this move... they were in the end only defeated by a trick....After Zhao Erfeng captured lamas' message asking for help...he sent a party of friendly Tibetans...saying that they were men coming to help the garrison to escape...the ruse was extremely successful.

⁵⁷ Sperling, 'The Chinese Venture in Kham,' 16

⁵⁸ Teichman Eric, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 36-37

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ United Kingdom. Parliamentary Papers. 'Notes Regarding the Siege of Xiang Cheng.' *Further Papers Relating to Tibet*. Received on 22 February 1908. No. 229

In this sense, Zhao's shrewdness allows him to squash sporadic revolts in Kham and establish a solid position in Kham politics in the remained years of the Qing. At the same time, his motivation for war is associated with his phenomenal rise in the Qing's officialdom. Through his successful handling of the suppression campaign, he was awarded the title of *Bataru* (the highest Manchu military decoration) and the rank of *Shi-lang*, while being designated the Frontier Commissioner for Sichuan and Yunnan.⁶¹ Such mobility for Han officials was unprecedented under the traditional Eight Banners system. Thus, when the rebellion broke out, Zhao was led by his own career goals and saw this as a chance to exercise his military talents and consolidate his social position.

Overall, the Qing army's success in the suppression campaign stemmed from its military and fiscal strengths. Military reforms in the late Qing period enhanced the capability of frontier provincial army while strengthening the logistical system to support frontier campaigns. Expanding provincial revenue bases also helped to fund the rapid military development. Notably, hard-line frontier military elites such as Zhao Erfeng took advantage of his superb combat skills and played a critical role in stamping out riots across towns in Kham. In this sense, the punitive campaign of the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion acted as the testing ground for the rising provincial power in the late Qing period. While traditional ruling classes withdrew from the political stage, frontier provincial administrations began to hold an increasing power over the Sino-Tibetan borderland regions till the collapse of the Qing empire. This would allow them to conduct rapid restructuring projects in Kham once the war had terminated, which we will be discussing in the next chapter.

⁶¹ Zhao Erxun, *Qing Shi Gao*[清史稿](Historical Archives of the Qing Dynasty), (Zhonghua Book Company, 1998), vol.111, 3

Chapter 3: The Aftermath: Transforming the Qing's Sino-Tibetan Frontier

After the suppression of the 1905 riots, French missionaries received immediately a similar compensation as in previous missionary cases. With the traditional native ruling class in absence, they managed to suffer from fewer disruptions and pursue preaching activities more smoothly before the end of the Qing. In Batang, a courtyard once possessed by the native chieftain was gifted to French missionaries as the new Catholic church.⁶² In Deqin, the churches in Cizhong and Badong are still being used today, surviving the warfare of the Republican era and the Second World War. Nevertheless, the task of restructuring the Sino-Tibetan frontier also became ever more pressing. Feng Quan's sacrifice convinced the Qing officials that the traditional Chieftain System was perilous to the Qing empire's frontier management. As Xiliang's memorial to the Grand Council shows, Qing provincial elites believed that chieftains and lamas were increasingly arrogant, deeming the Qing state as weak. In this case, a comprehensive restructuring in the borderlands became indispensable.⁶³ Upon his appointment as the Frontier Commissioner for Sichuan and Yunnan, Zhao Erfeng submitted a memorial to the emperor in which he outlined six most urgent issues to be addressed in the borderland: 1) appoint Chinese officials to take over former roles played by chieftains and monastic leaders; 2) train more soldiers to maintain frontier security; 3) bring in Chinese settlers to work on land reclamation project; 4) exploit mineral resources in the region; 5) institute borderland trade and commerce; 6) promote education to civilize the "barbarians."⁶⁴ Though these proposals initially received official sanction from the court, Zhao had begun restructuring the Sino-Tibetan borderland from 1906 onwards.⁶⁵ Thus, this chapter explores the aftermath of the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion through analysing: first, how Zhao's restructuring plans were implemented in reality; second, the implication of his

⁶² *Batang Xianzhi*, 449

⁶³ *Qingmo Chuandian Bianwu Dangan Shiliao* [清末川滇边务档案史料], 66

⁶⁴ A more detailed summary of Zhao's proposal of restructuring projects was recorded in *Qingmo Chuandian Bianwu Dangan Shiliao* [清末川滇边务档案史料], 95-103

⁶⁵ Sperling, 'The Chinese Venture in Kham,' 19

restructuring projects on the late Qing's relationship with Tibet; and finally, the impact of such post-war reconstruction on the subsequent history of the Sino-Tibetan borderland.

Regional political and economic structure changed drastically after the punitive campaign, where Zhao took the initiative in leading a series of restructuring projects. The biggest political change would be the abolition of the Chieftain system. In Batang, the traditional ruling class was replaced by Han officials, who took direct control of the counties and villages in their jurisdictions. Meanwhile, frontier institutions were redesigned in an effort to incorporate the borderland into the imperial administration. For instance, Batang's strategic importance grew steadily as it rose from being a county (*xian*) to a prefecture (*fu*) in 1908.⁶⁶ Such change implies that the government started to pay an increasing attention to the borderland area since the outbreak of the Kham war. In terms of military organization, a specific Sino-Tibetan frontier army (*bianjun*) was set up immediately after the punitive campaign. By 1907, Zhao had added 3 more battalions to the frontier army; in two years' time, the number of soldiers in the frontier military had exceeded 3800.⁶⁷ This proved to be significant when the Tibetan military attempted to block the new army in Sino-Tibetan borderland regions in 1909; three battalions of frontier army led by Zhao were distributed to protect the new army before it finally reached Lhasa.⁶⁸

Economically, the old tax system in the Sino-Tibetan borderland was revoked. The Qing-era household registers, an important basis for tax collection, had excluded ethnic minorities, so that taxes were paid to the local chiefs and monasteries rather than to the local government.⁶⁹ In a sense, Zhao's reforms standardized the taxation payment in the Sino-Tibetan borderland

⁶⁶ *Batang Xianzhi*, 262. Prefecture (*Fu*), within the Qing Chinese government's chain of command, reports to *Dao*, both of which are administrative entities under the provincial government.

⁶⁷ Committee for the Compilation of Sichuan Annals, *Sichuan Shengzhi: Junshizhi* [四川省志:军事志] (Annals of the Sichuan Province: Military Annals), (Chengdu: Sichuan Renmin Publishing House, 1997), 27

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 28

⁶⁹ Peng, 'Zhang tu zhi min,' 161

regions. Dividing lands into upper, medium and low grades, the new mechanism requires owners of the “upper-grade land” to pay 40% of their harvests as quarterly taxation, while those of “medium-grade land” would pay 30% and “low-grade land” 20%.⁷⁰ This thus implied that all people, including chieftains and lamas, would be subscribed to taxation payment to the provincial government regardless of their former social status. As a consequence, it is recorded that in 1910 Batang government received a total land taxation of 2898 dan (a Chinese weight measurement equivalent to 50kg) of grains.⁷¹

Moreover, Zhao decided to proceed with Feng Quan’s land reclamation project in places like Batang and Xiangcheng. In order to develop unused wastelands, Zhao issued a proclamation to all district magistrates in the Sichuan province on February 7, 1907, inviting settlement in the frontier area:⁷²

Land in China is dear, the price of one mou ranged from 50 to 60 taels, while 20 to 30 taels must be paid even for the cheapest...Beyond the frontier farmers are simply invited to cultivate the ground, for which no price is asked, as a special act of compassion. Your efforts to improve the soil will be rewarded by its becoming your own property...the only payment...is the land tax at the time of harvest.

In the proclamation, Zhao had also listed a number of further advantages for those who wished to emigrate to the frontier areas:⁷³

⁷⁰ Batang Xianzhi, 188

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² United Kingdom. Parliamentary Papers. ‘Proclamation issued by his Excellency Chao Erh Feng, Commissioner in charge of the Yunnan-Szechwan Frontier, calling for settler for the new District of Batang’ *Further Papers Relating to Tibet*. Dated 7th February 1907. No. 182

⁷³ Ibid.

Emigrants who bring up their families will find that they can live much more economically than in China...The unmarried man, on the other hand, will find the women more numerous than the men among the border tribes. The females, moreover, are industrious...The over-populated state of Sichuan renders the struggle for existence very difficult...Why then do you not hasten to this promising land?

This proved to have an immediate impact on the land reclamation project. As the local gazetteer for Batang records, the Bureau of Reclamation had successfully expanded farmland in the county before 1911. It notes that over 200 external farmers were recruited for reclaiming Batang's uncultivated lands, building canals and weirs.⁷⁴ Alternative modern factories and institutions were set up in order to increase productivity and encourage regional commerce.⁷⁵ For example, in 1909, Zhao established a tannery in Batang, employing technicians from Chengdu as well as sending local forces to Chengdu factories for intensive trainings. Taking advantage of the abundant livestock resources and advanced techniques, the Batang tannery was able to produce leather goods of first-class quality with a minimum cost. As a result, it had achieved significant sales locally and in neighboring towns ever since its establishment; in 1910, its products were even awarded the highest prize for leather goods in China.⁷⁶

Last but not least, Zhao's restructuring projects embodied education as well as marriage reforms so as to conform the native people to the Chinese culture. In 1907, the Bureau of educational affairs was founded in Dajianlu, within which a printing press was established for the massive printing of textbooks. Chinese was made the official language for all courses, while Zhang buchong, a well-known Han scholar-official at Chengdu, was invited to take up

⁷⁴ *Batang Xianzhi*, 255

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 253

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 255

the chief editor for Kham's new textbooks.⁷⁷ At the same time, intermarriage between Chinese and Tibetans became widely encouraged. It is stipulated that those frontier soldiers who married the native people would receive one bucket of barley per household on a monthly basis; those who gave birth to children, moreover, could earn one bucket per person.⁷⁸ The intermarriage thus became an important means through which the Qing government could promote immigration to the borderland and sustain its frontier stability. In a nutshell, Zhao's administration in Kham successfully integrated the Sino-Tibetan borderland into the Qing state's imperial system through conducting thorough reforms in the institutions, military, economy, and culture of Kham districts. With its rising strategic importance, the Sino-Tibetan frontier evolved to become an integral part of the imperial territory before the demise of the Qing dynasty.

The restructuring of Qing's frontier also marks the beginning of the reshaping of the Sino-Tibetan relationship. For long, the Qing had struggled in its relations with Tibet. Even though a Qing imperialist representative (*Amban*) was sent to supervise Tibetan affairs in line with the Dalai Lama in 1727, the one who held actual power had been the Mongol-sponsored Gelugpa prelate, until the late 19th century. The Dalai and Amban had long exerted only nominal authority. After constant defeats in wars with foreign imperialist powers, the influence of Amban steadily declined over the 19th century. In a sense, the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion was a turning point for the Qing's relationship with Tibet. In 1908, Zhao Erfeng was appointed as Qing's last commissioner in Tibet. This allowed him to start consolidating borderland control beyond the Sichuan and Yunnan frontiers to Central Tibet. As noted by Gray Tuttle, Zhao's proposal of reforming Tibetan politics deeply threatened the Central Tibetan Buddhist institutions, prompting the Tibetan elites to appeal for help from foreign

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Zhao Erfeng, *Hanman Lianhun Tongchi* [汉蛮联婚通飭](Proclamation for Intermarriage Between Qing Chinese and Tibetans), in Zhaoerfeng Chuanbian Zoudu [赵尔丰川边奏牍](Memorials of Zhao Erfeng regarding Sichuan Borderland Affairs), ed. Wufengpei, (Sichuan Minzhu Publishing House, 1984), 205-206

nations against such reforms.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, the Qing government furthered its power in Central Tibet by helping the Tibetans repay their indemnity incurred by the Treaty of Lhasa. By taking responsibility for Tibetans' reparations, the Qing won Britain's recognition of its authority over Tibet.⁸⁰

Notably, the Qing's presence in Tibet reached its peak when the Qing sent the expedition to advance as far as Lhasa in February 1910. According to the British Parliamentary Documents, the Chinese police already in Lhasa and the forty Chinese infantry who arrived there fired upon inoffensive Tibetans in Lhasa.⁸¹ 1000 Chinese troops were at the time within only two days' march of Lhasa.⁸² This immediately allowed the Qing to gain firm control over Tibet and deposed the 13th Dalai Lama. Henceforth, one can notice that over the last years of its rule, the Qing progressively expanded its sphere of influence through reforms and forces, strengthening its power not only on the Sino-Tibetan frontier, but also in Central Tibet. However, it is worth pointing out that the socio-political structure it established was short-lived, with Tibetan Buddhist elites soon regaining power amid the political turmoil after 1911.

On a broader level, the impact of Zhao's restructuring projects on the Sino-Tibetan frontier was complicated. On the one hand, it seems that the achievements made by Zhao's reforms went into vain shortly after Zhao was killed by Sichuan revolutionaries in 1911. The resulting power vacuum soon led Tibetan troops and monastic leaders to move back into the Sino-Tibetan frontier area. In 1916, an American missionary who travelled in Kham states that the whole restructuring project had become a failure.⁸³

⁷⁹ Gray Tuttle, *Tibetan Buddhist in the Making of Modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 47

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 44

⁸¹ United Kingdom. Parliamentary Documents. 'Government of India to Viscount Morley,' *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Tibet*. Received on 3rd March 1910, FO 535/13. No.37

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Sperling, 'The Chinese Venture in Kham,' 30

On the other hand, the efforts made by Zhao would prove to have a lasting impact on the subsequent development of the Sino-Tibetan relationship as well as the establishment of the Xikang province. In 1912, the Simla Conference took place between the Chinese, British, and Tibetan authorities aiming to negotiate the autonomy of Tibet and the boundary between Tibet and China proper. The overlap of Central Tibet's authority and power with that of Qing over the borderland areas left the understandings of the territory of "Tibet" rather undecided in the conference.⁸⁴ The absence of any such definition of the boundary between China and Tibet eventually brought about China's armed intervention into Tibet in 1951. Furthermore, Zhao's legacy laid the foundation for the establishment of the Xikang province in years following his departure. In 1911, Fu Songmu, Zhao's successor as the Sichuan and Yunnan Frontier Commissioner, proposed that Kham should be converted into a Chinese province under the name Xikang. As *Records on the History of Xikang Province* notes, most of the areas that Fu proposed had been organized into Chinese administrative units under Zhao's governance.⁸⁵ Although this idea was revoked as a result of the collapse of the Qing empire, it marks the beginning of the process of which Kham was converted into an individual Chinese province. Two decades later, the Nationalist Government brought this initiative one step further through setting up the Xikang province in 1939. Zhao's reforms again played an important role in nationalists' preparation for establishing the Xikang province. For instance, the *baozheng* system left behind by Zhao's administration in Kham allowed Nationalist leaders to quickly reestablish this network of local representatives. It is highly likely that many former Qing *baozheng* representatives became Nationalist agents.⁸⁶ Significant parallels can also be drawn

⁸⁴ A more comprehensive account of the Simla Convention and its annexes could be found at: Treaties and Conventions Relating to Tibet, *Convention Between Great Britain, China and Tibet, Simla* (1914), <http://www.tibetjustice.org/materials/treaties/treaties16.html>. The draft convention decided that Tibet would be divided into "Inner Tibet" and "Outer Tibet." While the Outer Tibet (roughly corresponded to Ü-Tsang and western Kham) remained in the hands of Tibetan government at Lhasa, the Inner Tibet (equivalent to Amdo and Eastern Kham) would be subscribed to the Chinese jurisdiction. China immediately repudiated the draft convention in July 1914.

⁸⁵ Fu Songmu, *Xikang Jiansheng ji* [西康建省记] (Records on the History of the Xikang Province), (Zhonghua Printing Company, 1933)

⁸⁶ *Batang Xianzhi*, 491

between alternative reforms made by the nationalists and those by Zhao, especially in terms of economic restructuring, religious patronage and improved educational opportunities. These helped the Nationalist government to achieve growing power over the frontier area, ultimately allowing them to establish the Xikang province. Therefore, while Zhao's restructuring projects collapsed shortly after his death, his vision for the Sino-Tibetan frontier laid the cornerstone for the development of Kham in the following decades.

To summarize, immediately after the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion, Zhao initiated reforms in political, social, economic segments aiming to fully convert the Sino-Tibetan borderland to Chinese administrations. The series of reforms, then, largely reshaped the Sino-Tibetan relationship in the Qing's favor, as the Qing steadily expanded its influence over the Sino-Tibetan frontier and finally the Central Tibet. Although the post-war reconstruction was hindered by frequent warfare during the Republican Era, Zhao's reforms set the prelude to the establishment of Xikang province in the late 1930s. The rising power of Chinese regimes over the Sino-Tibetan frontier left the boundary between Tibet and China proper rather ambiguous.

Conclusion

This project has attempted to provide a more comprehensive account of the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion compared to previous scholarship. The first chapter has examined the 1905 rebellion along with preceding violence against missionaries in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands. Historically, with a loose central control, native powerholders enjoyed a large autonomy over their jurisdictions. Lamas and chieftains represented the absolute authority on the Sino-Tibetan frontier in both religious and political terms, and they exploited commoners economically through heavy taxation and commodity amortization. The arrival of French Catholics provided a means for commoners to remove their bonds with the native authority, which thus leads to a steady increase in the number of Catholic converts. As such, anti-Catholic hostility had persisted ever since the arrival of French missionaries, and we have traced such hostility to the missionaries' disruption of the traditional socio-political structures in the Sino-Tibetan borderland. In the 1905 rebellion, Qing officials were killed alongside French missionaries. As early as the late 19th century, the Qing central administration had realized the urgency of ensuring its frontier security. The British expedition to Tibet (1903-4) affirmed their worries and drove them to seek rapid changes in the frontier management. These laid the ground for Feng Quan's restructuring projects, which immediately irritated the local authorities and gave birth to the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion.

In the last decade of its rule, the Qing embarked upon the Xincheng reforms which aimed at transforming the Chinese state. Rapid military and political reforms resulted in amounting power of Chinese provinces.⁸⁷ The second chapter has analysed the suppression campaign in line with the wider contemporary historical context. By the time of the 1905 war, frontier provincial government had enhanced its military and fiscal strength so as to resist frequent unrests in the borderland. Also, the final years of the Qing gave birth to capable frontier

⁸⁷ Joseph W. Esherick and C. X. George Wei, *China: How the Empire Fell* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013)

officers such as Zhao Erfeng, who was able to make swift responses to constant riots across the Kham region. In brief, the punitive expedition reflected the rising provincial power over the frontier region. The suppression of Tibetan rioters, at the same time, marks the beginning of provincial authority's ambition to extend the Qing's influence into the frontier and ultimately the Central Tibet.

As the third chapter shows, though Feng Quan reforms were thwarted, they continued to show an effect after the suppression of the rebellion. Through a combination of forces and reforms, hardline frontier officials not only integrated the Sino-Tibetan borderland areas into the Chinese administrative system, but also used it as a starting point to advance as far as Lhasa. Although such achievements were destroyed by revolutions and chaos after the demise of the Qing dynasty, post-war reconstructions on the Sino-Tibetan frontier drafted the blueprint for succeeding Chinese authorities who wished to expand their power into Kham.

In all, our analysis of the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion has revealed significant political changes along the Qing's southwestern frontier amid its state expansion process. While previous scholars often examine the Qing's frontier expansion from the court's perspective, a careful examination of local-level events allows us to appreciate the complexity of factors that contributed to the Qing's expansion process. In the case of the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion, the conflict between the local ruling chieftains and lamas, foreign missionaries, and the Qing elites resulted in large-scale riots in Kham, while providing the opportunity for the Qing to extend its power into the borderland. From this point onwards, the power rivalry between Central Tibet and Chinese authorities over the Sino-Tibetan frontier became ever more prominent. Till today, the debate over Tibetan sovereignty remained heatedly disputed by international scholars. A holistic understanding of the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion could help us trace the historical roots for such controversies and thus provides more nuances to the ongoing debate.

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